



GREATER AKRON

AUDUBON

Matters

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My Witt's End – by Clyde Witt, editor

Migration Time

Hopefully, by the time you read this newsletter, winter will be only a memory. While our snowfall numbers were down this year, our chilly average temperatures were anything but average.

In spite of what the thermometer, calendar or groundhog might indicate, spring and the birds that wintered south of here are headed our way. Migration, a time for change and growth; for plants, birds and other animals.

There are also signs of migration within Greater Akron Audubon. While the details have yet to be finalized, we'll be migrating to an electronic newsletter in the fall, and with that, a new editor. I'm opting out of the leadership roll this time, just as geese change positions in that familiar V formation we're accustomed to seeing.

To follow this migration to the electronic newsletter, as with enjoying other migrations, will take some patience, attention and a bit of participation on your part. We've been collecting email addresses in hopes of building an electronic mailing list. Probably the way it will work, is that you will be notified when the newsletter is available for reading. You will be directed to the GAAS Web site (akronaudubon.org) or some other location for viewing. It will also be possible to just check the Web site to learn about programs and other important information. Most likely, until we get all the bugs worked out, you will receive a postcard notice reminding you to check the Web site for the newsletter.

Meetings

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Christmas Count. June is our annual picnic so the meeting place is not always the same. There are no meetings in July and August. Meetings are held at the Mingo Shelter in Sand Run MetroPark in the Merriman Valley. The entrance is off Sand Run Parkway, east of the ford and east of the Shady Hollow Pavilion. Check MetroParks maps at www.summitmetroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. The doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00. We usually start with a short business session before the main program. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend.

Programs

April 23: Here's a program that has many gardeners all abuzz. Judy Semroc, whose photos have graced the pages of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's publications, will talk with us about "The Importance of Pollination." This is an opportunity to learn about more than just the birds and the bees.

May 28: BYOP (Bring Your Own Popcorn). Back by popular demand will be the members' presentations of favorite pix. While our event does not have the same status as the Cleveland Film Festival, it always draws a great crowd. If you have some favorite pix, about 15 minutes worth in a PowerPoint presentation, contact Mark Purdy (purdy1812@gmail.com) and let him know to list you on the program. Fame and fortune await.

June 25: Annual GAAS Picnic. Once again we will have our annual picnic at the stunning Bath Nature Preserve. Thanks to the generosity of the University of Akron for the use of its field station building, we'll also have a presentation by Dr. Matt Shawkey, department of Biology. The nature preserve is owned by Bath Township, consists of over 400 acres, and contains a variety of habitats, including grasslands (with good populations of Bobolinks and Meadowlarks), wetlands, scrubland, deciduous forests, riparian corridors, ponds, and a remnant tamarack bog. UA has an agreement with the township for using the preserve for research and teaching. In addition, UA is responsible for the preserve management plan. There will no formal nature walk, but we encourage interested parties to bring their binoculars and go for a walk.

The potluck picnic will be at about 6:30pm, so there should be time for a walk beforehand or possibly after the picnic. For the picnic, GAAS will provide beverages and accessories (plates, cups, napkins, etc). Attendees only need to bring a potluck dish for sharing. To get to the Field Station, just drive past the first parking lot and continue on the road until it ends.

Around the Region

If you're looking for some close-by, in-and-outdoor activities, your first stop should be the online newsletter of the Metroparks Serving Summit County and its calendar of events for times and locations (www.summitmetroparks.org).

Here's a sampling:

April 20, 1 p.m. Join Naturalist Pat Rydquist and expert birding volunteers to see waterfowl and shorebirds stopping over at Springfield Bog. Spotting scopes will be provided. Dress for the weather.

April 22, 11:30 a.m. Here's an event for history buffs: See Akron through the skywalks with tour leaders from the Summit County Historical Society and Metro Parks. Meet at the Akron History Exhibit at Lock 3. In case of rain, bring an umbrella. Participants will get a sticker for free parking in parking in city garages. Street parking is metered. Lock 3 is located at 200 S. Main St.

May is warbler season, along with a host of other migrant species. Here's an opportunity to get out and see the best. Friday, **May 3**, 7:30 a.m., new and experienced birdwatchers can join Naturalist Pat Rydquist on Friday mornings through May 17 for spring bird walks along the Tuscarawas River migratory flyway. This is an excellent opportunity to see avian travelers on their way to summer breeding areas. Binoculars are recommended. All participants will receive a checklist and final tally of the birds seen this season.

A Really BIG Week in May

Registration is open for the Biggest Week In American Birding, an annual event sponsored by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory (www.bsbo.org) and a plethora of bird-friendly organizations. Organized and hosted by Black Swamp Bird Observatory, the "Biggest Week" is a 10-day festival featuring some of the best birding North America has to offer. If you are anywhere else in the world in mid-May, you are in the wrong place. Think about it: A 10-day birding event featuring workshops, guided birding activities, half-day birding bus tours, keynote speakers, and more. Among the myriad of events offered during the festival are identification workshops, Woodcock Extravanzas to observe the extraordinary displays of these woodland shorebirds, daily walks at the world famous Magee Marsh boardwalk and other area birding hotspots, evening keynote presentations, birding by ear workshops, and presentations on world birding. On top of all of that, birding guru Kenn Kaufman will be teaching several bird identification classes! Registration and program information is available at the organization's Web site. Tours fill quickly so don't wait to register.

Plan Ahead

Another event not to be missed is the Midwest Birding Symposium, September 19 to 22. The regional event attracts hundreds of bird to Lakeside, Ohio, on the south shore of Lake Erie for what will surely be the highlight of the birding year. Hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest, The Ohio Ornithological Society (www.ohiobirds.org), and the Lakeside Association, the 2013 Midwest Birding Symposium (MBS) is generating a lot of buzz and interest. The event features cruises to the Lake Erie Islands, great food, excellent world-class speakers, bird photography classes, vendors and hundreds of like-minded

folks. Registration is open at www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb2013.

Your Count Counts, Par II

Those of you who participated in Cornell Laboratory's Great Backyard Bird Count in February were part of a world-record setting group. The Lab reports bird watchers submitted more than 104,000 checklists, reported 623 species, and observed more than 17.4 million birds.

"Every bird species has a captivating story to tell," says Cornell Lab executive director John Fitzpatrick. "We're certainly seeing many of them in larger numbers farther north than usual, no doubt because of this winter's record-breaking mild conditions."

While milder temperatures may have tempted some birds, such as the Eastern Bluebird, Rough-legged Hawk, and many waterfowl to stay farther north during this GBBC, other species were moving in the opposite direction in search of food. The headline-grabber was the Snowy Owl—participants reported 428 sightings of these ghostly owls (quadruple the number seen last year), with record-setting numbers reported in the Midwest.

Common Redpolls moved southward too, looking for seeds; a few stragglers even made it all the way to California. Sandhill Cranes and Red-winged Blackbirds were migrating during the count. Plus, a flock of more than a million Tree Swallows darkened the sky in Ruskin, Florida, placing the species on the GBBC's top-10 list of most numerous birds for the first time ever.

Eurasian Collared-Doves and Great-tailed Grackles continued their recent, dramatic range expansions. Canadians reported twice the number of collared-doves as they did last year.

After 15 years of success in North America, the Great Backyard Bird Count was opened to the entire world for the first time in 2013.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with partner Bird Studies Canada, the four-day count typically receives sightings from tens of thousands of people reporting more than 600 bird species in the United States and Canada alone.

Rare and Endangered Plants in Ohio

A list of Ohio endangered, threatened, potentially threatened, and presumed extirpated native plant taxa was determined by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves with the advice and guidance of the Ohio Rare Plants Advisory. For a full list of plants and information, visit www.ohiodnr.com/Portals/3/heritage/2012-13-plant-list.pdf.

The current list contains 97 presumed extirpated, 242 endangered, 162 threatened, and 113 potentially threatened taxa. Only data from January 1, 1992 through December 31, 2011 were considered in assigning endangerment status based upon information in the Ohio Natural Heritage Database.

The first status list, issued in 1980, was largely based on preliminary lists of rare plant species compiled in the

for the Ohio Biological Survey. Since 1980, the status lists have been updated biennially. This list became effective on September 15, 2012 and will be revised again in 2014.

Information on these 614 plants is contained in the Ohio Natural Heritage Database and is generally accessible for research or environmental review through the Ohio Natural Heritage Database Program.

Six Ohio plants are also included on the federal list of endangered and threatened species. Running buffalo clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*) is federally endangered. Northern monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*), Lakeside daisy (*Tetranuris herbacea*), small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*), prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*), and Appalachian spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana*) are federally threatened.

Ohio's Invasive Non-Native Plants

Of the approximately 3,000 species of plants known to occur in the wild in Ohio, about 75 percent are native or have occurred in Ohio before the time of substantial European settlement, about 1750. The other 25 percent, around 700 to 800 species, are not native to Ohio, having been introduced from other states or countries.

Most of these species never stray far from where they are introduced (gardens, urban areas, agricultural fields), yet some become very invasive and displace native plants in woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and other natural areas. Non-native plants have been introduced for erosion control, horticulture, forage crops, medicinal use, and wildlife foods as well as simply by accident.

Sometimes we plant non-native plants for landscaping or wildlife habitat without realizing the problems they may cause when they escape into natural areas. Without natural predators or controls, invasive non-native plants are able to spread quickly and force out native plants. In Ohio, several non-native plants are invading woodlands and displacing native spring wildflowers. Other non-native plants are impacting our wetlands by creating monocultures. Native plant diversity is important for wildlife habitat as many animals depend on a variety of native plants for food and cover.

At the top of the list is Japanese honeysuckle, a woody semi-evergreen vine with opposite, oval leaves. The flowers grow in pairs, are white to yellow, and very fragrant. Fruits, also in pairs, are purple to black berries. This vine climbs and drapes over native vegetation, forming dense patches.

Habitat: Japanese honeysuckle thrives in disturbed habitats, such as roadsides, trails, fencerows, abandoned fields, and forest edges primarily in southern Ohio. Disturbances such as logging, road building, floods, and windstorms create an opportunity for this vine to invade native plant communities.

Management: Burning in combination with systemic herbicide application may be an effective control method. Herbicides can be applied to the leaves when native plants are dormant. Be aware there are native climbing honeysuckles in Ohio, such as *Lonicera dioica*.

Native Alternatives: Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), wild honeysuckle (*Lonicera dioica*), and virgin's bower (*Clematis virginiana*)

Japanese Knotweed is a shrub-like herb that grows up to 10 feet tall. Stems are smooth and the pointed leaves vary from broadly oval to almost triangular. Flowers are greenish-white and very small. The seeds are dispersed by wind. Once established, the plants spread by a system of underground stems reaching 60 feet.

Habitat: Japanese knotweed can grow in a wide variety of habitats. It is found in open areas, such as roadsides, streambanks, and woodland edges, primarily in eastern Ohio. It spreads quickly and forms dense thickets.

Autumn-olive is a fast-growing shrub or small tree reaching up to 20 feet tall. Its leaves are small and oval, dark green on the upper surface and silvery below. Small coppery dots occur on stems and leaves. This shrub has light yellow, aromatic flowers and produces large quantities of small, round red fruits that are readily eaten and spread by birds.

Other invasives include Buckthorns, Purple Loosestrife, Common Reed or Phragmites, Reed Canary Grass, Garlic Mustard, Multiflora Rose, and Bush Honeysuckles.

Riparian Birds of Ohio Scenic Rivers

One of the primary emphasis of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program is the maintenance and restoration of the forested corridors which cloak the stream banks of Ohio's scenic rivers. These forested corridors are variously referred to as riparian woodlands, forest buffers, or riparian corridor. Forested riparian corridors, even relatively narrow ones of a few hundred feet, support a rich diversity of breeding birds in Ohio. The quality and extent of these riparian woodlands will dictate the species which can be found.

Many species nesting along the riparian corridor such as the Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-throated Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Rough-winged Swallow, and even the parula warbler are associated intimately with the stream and occupy those habitats immediately adjacent to the stream channel itself.

Other species such as many of the flycatchers, woodpeckers, vireos, and warblers are found nesting in the interior portions of the larger forests and woodlands associated with these corridors.

Many of these forest interior inhabitants may be absent or vary rare along riparian corridors if these forested corridors are too narrow to provide the nesting habitats required by species.

Forested riparian corridors on Ohio rivers may vary in depth from as little as a single row of trees to extensive forests extending from hundreds to thousands of feet back from the stream channel.

In Ohio, riparian forests tend to be more extensive along rivers situated in the eastern half of the state. In the more urban and the agricultural lands of western Ohio, riparian forests are generally more constricted, seldom extending more than a few hundred feet back from the stream channel.