



GREATER AKRON

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Chapter Meetings

As we have done in the past, there will be no regular chapter meeting in December. Instead we will meet on December 20th after the Christmas Bird Count for a holiday gathering. (More on this below.) The first chapter meeting of 1999 will be held on January 26th. Our speaker will be Dan Rice, the executive director of the Ohio and Erie Canal Corridor Coalition. This is a great local resource, which helps ensure that nature lovers and birders will still have access to the green-space along the canal. Come hear more about this important project. The GAAS meets at the Seiberling Naturealm in Akron at 7:30 PM.

Witt's End

Is it Worth the Fight?

Recently, a business colleague was banging on the bars of my cage with a big stick when he said, "You environmentalists are fighting a losing battle. The U.S. is still going to need a million new houses a year just to keep even with population growth!" I thought of several ways to lower the population count by one, but let them pass. But it made me pause to consider if the fight to protect and preserve habitats for birds and other animals is worth the effort. Surprise! I decided it was worth the confrontation. And here are a couple of reasons why. These reasons are all recent and all have feathers.

Magnificent Frigatebird. Northern Wheatear. Ross's Gull. Red-throated Loon. Just saying the words kind of makes you salivate. Chasing thousands of miles to see one of

these creatures makes your heart race at about the same pace as your bank account depletes. Sometimes it's easy. Rarities can be found in your own backyard — as it was in my case.

Now none of these birds was a first for Ohio, but they are about as rare as hen's teeth. (Where does that expression come from?) The frigatebird, more accustomed to the skies above Disney World than Cedar Point, was spotted by hunters in a blind at East Harbor State Park. To his credit, when the fellow had the bird in his sights, he fired away—with a camera—preserving this rare sighting for us all.

The Northern Wheatear was discovered by Vic Fazio (a virtual magnet for rare birds) while sitting in his car at Big Island Wildlife Area in Marion County. Central Ohio is closer than Norway. The Ross's Gull, at Headlands State Park by Larry Rosche, another rare bird magnet. And the Red-throated Loon, my spotting, was at Lake Medina, a half-mile from my house and far from the Arctic Circle.

So what's the common thread here? Four people, in our normal habitats, anticipating the unusual. It can only happen if we fight to protect and preserve those dwindling habitats we have. As long as birds have wings they will turn up wherever they want. Let's make sure they have a place to land.

Go birding. You never know what you might find.

—Clyde Witt, president

Holiday Dinner



Helen and Lloyd Bresley have made arrangements at Papa Joe's Restaurant (1561 Akron-Peninsula Road in Akron) for our annual dinner after the Christmas Bird Count. We have a party room at Papa Joe's beginning at 6:00 PM on December 20th. We have the same arrangements as last time—no reservations are required. You can just show up after the count and hear the field reports while enjoying a five-course dinner. Here are the entrée choices you'll have this year:

- Smothered Chicken**
- Vegetable Lasagna**
- Char-broiled Center Cut Pork Chop**

Dinners also include soup, salad, side dish, dessert, tax and tip. There will also be a cash bar available. The cost this year will be \$15 per person (cash and checks only please). Please join us for a cheery evening with good food and the first reports on the Christmas Bird Count.

Ohio Has a State Office!

The National Audubon Society has announced the opening of a new state office, right here in Ohio. Steve Sedam, formerly of the Great Lakes Regional Office of the National Audubon Society, is now the Executive Director of National Audubon Society/Ohio. This is great news for Ohio chapters. In a recent letter chapter leaders Steve outlined some of his goals for Ohio.

Through advocacy, education, stewardship and chapter support, NAS/Ohio will focus exclusively on the needs of birds, wildlife, and their habitats in Ohio. We will also work diligently to make Audubon chapters in Ohio stronger, more effective institutions....

*The activities of NAS/Ohio will be guided by the **State Plan** that was drafted by a team of chapter leaders and staff. It was approved after all Ohio chapter leaders had an opportunity for review and comment earlier this summer.*

The immediate priorities for NAS/Ohio are:

- 1. Development**
- 2. Important Bird Areas**
- 3. NAS/Ohio Board of Directors**
- 4. Chapter Outreach**
- 5. NAS/Ohio Annual meeting**

What is the Christmas Bird Count?

(Ed. note: I always wondered how the Christmas bird count got started, and what it all means. If you'd like to find out more about this event, leave a message on GAAS central (644-0373). The following is taken from the NAS website www.audubon.org)

The Christmas bird count is an annual hemispheric early-winter bird census. Volunteers count every individual bird and bird species over one calendar day (from midnight to midnight), within well-defined geographic areas.

When did it all begin?

In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman was disturbed, as were many conservationists, at the slaughter of birds in the annual holiday event called the "side hunt." The team that shot the most birds and other small animals was the winner. As a protest, Chapman organized 27 friends in 25 locations on Christmas Day, 1900. Instead of shooting birds, they counted them.

Why?

Birds are indicators of the overall health of our environment. Christmas Bird Count data over time in any given area can provide valuable insights into the long-term health of bird populations and the environment.

Count rules are simple:

Each bird count is a circle 15 miles in diameter — approximately 177 square miles. Bird counters try to cover as much of the circle area as possible within a 24-

hour calendar day, counting each individual bird and species they see or hear in their designated sector of the circle. Representatives from each counting group meet at the end of the day to compile the master list and eliminate double-counting of birds. Bird feeders within the circle are also censused.

Today:

Over 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America and the Pacific Islands (all areas where the breeding birds of North America spend their winter) participate in about 1700 counts held during a two and one-half week period. The Christmas Bird Count itself has evolved into the largest and longest-running wildlife survey ever undertaken. (Sauer, Schwartz, and Hoover. 1996)

Shop NAS Online

Visit the Audubon Bookstore on-line at www.audubon.org/bookstore and support National Audubon Society. Every time that you purchase a book, magazine, software, or calendar from Barnes and Noble.com, by entering through the Audubon Bookstore, National Audubon Society receives 3% - 7% of your purchase back in royalties. Come and browse Audubon's Recommendations to review selections for your Essential Nature Library collection. Or, purchase one of our selected Top 10 Nature Books. Audubon's stunning calendars for 1999 and a complete collection of Field Guides are now available through just a click of your mouse.

Remember, you must enter Barnes and Noble.com through the National Audubon Society website, so bookmark this site now for all of your on-line publication purchases:

www.audubon.org/bookstore

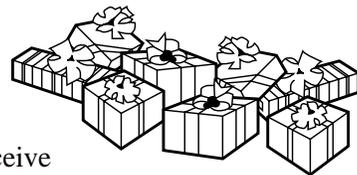
Or, you can enter through our homepage: click on Books, Gifts, and Travel, then click on

Books, Field Guides, and CD-Rom, and start shopping!

Birder's Wishlist?

Many of us still have holiday shopping to do (I know I'm not alone in this!), so here's a few ideas for the birders on you list. I polled the GAAS executive committee, and here's what we came up with—the things **we'd** all love to receive this season! (Aside from a guaranteed sighting of a rare bird—no way to put a ribbon on al Elegant Trogon.)

- an all expenses paid trip to the destination of your choice (Costa Rica, Belize, Youngstown,)
- binoculars or spotting scope



- tripod (to replace the old one which is held together with duct tape)
- padded binocular strap
- field guides and area guides to special birding sites
- ABA membership
- gift certificate to a local birding store
- bird seed and suet cakes
- bird houses
- bird bath heater
- warm clothing for Christmas Bird Count
- singing bird clock (but just make sure the recipient doesn't get a covey of them)
- a birder's "fanny-pack" designed to hold your field guide, bird list, and granola bars.
- bug repellent and poison ivy lotion
- bird song tapes (either the instructional variety or the sort that are just pleasant background sounds)
- birding software (for those who are **both** bird nerds and computer geeks)
- NAS bird-identification videos

Gull Ecology and Identification Workshop

Black Swamp Bird Observatory will host a gull ecology and identification workshop on Saturday January 23, 1999 from 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM at Clearview High School in Lorain, Ohio. Noted experts will provide informative programs on gull behavior, migration and vagrancy in the Great Lakes, molt and plumage changes and identification of selected species. A field trip will follow in the afternoon to Lorain Harbor and area waterways. Guest speaker Jon L. Dunn from Dayton and chief consultant for the National Geographic Society's Field Guide to the Birds of North America will assist with the program and lead the afternoon field trip.

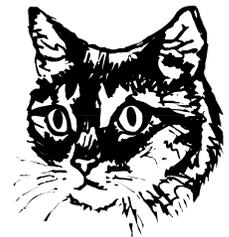
The workshop fee is \$25/person and includes a hot lunch. Pre-registration is necessary for this day-long affair; seating is limited. Call Julie Shieldcastle 419-898-4070 for reservations. Mail-in registration must be received by January 16th otherwise call for available seats. Please send check payable to Black Swamp Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 228, Oak Harbor, OH 43449.

Black Swamp Bird Observatory is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of our wildlife resources. The main objectives of the observatory are 1) to develop and promote sound stewardship of avian and other wildlife resources and the environments upon which people and wildlife depend, 2) to develop and implement research to aid in the management of wildlife populations, 3) to make observatory facilities available to amateur and professional biologists and students who are carrying out appropriate research, 4) to increase awareness and appreciation for wildlife values, and 5) to cooperate with other agencies/organizations or biologists with similar objectives.

Cats Indoors!

The American Bird Conservancy has launched a citizen education and action campaign to end the massive and unnecessary loss of birds and other wildlife to predation by domestic cats. Scientists estimate that free-roaming cats (owned, stray, and feral) kill hundreds of millions of birds and possibly more than a billion small mammals in the U.S. each year. Cats kill not only birds that frequent our backyards, such as the Eastern Towhee, American Goldfinch, and Song Sparrow, but also WatchList species such as the Snowy Plover, Wood Thrush, and Black-throated Blue Warbler, and endangered species such as the Least Tern and Piping Plover. Not only are birds and other wildlife at risk, but cats who roam free often lead short and painful lives, living on average less than 5 years, whereas indoor cats often live to 17 or more years of age.

The American Bird Conservancy has prepared informative educational materials on the impact of cats on birds, including documentation on cat predation, health hazards, and other dangers associated with free-roaming cats, legislative solutions, and practical advice on how to convert an outdoor cat into a contented indoor pet. These materials, prepared with the assistance of a technical advisory committee with representatives from the animal welfare, conservation (including National Audubon Society), veterinary, and scientific communities, will be a valuable asset to Audubon chapters, bird clubs, schools, and the general public. For more information please contact:



Cats Indoors!

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In Remembrance

A long-time outdoorsman and member of GAAS, Pinky Fuller, passed away recently. His family asked that donations be made to our chapter in lieu of flowers. Numerous memorial contributions have been made, and these funds will be saved for a special conservation project. The GAAS executive committee extends its thanks to the Fuller family for their kind gesture.