

**CUYAHOGA VALLEY TOWPATH TRAIL CENSUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2022**  
(CVTTC)

**HISTORY & FACTS of the APRIL CENSUS**

| APRIL      | 13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|------------|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 2010       | 2011                                    | 2012     | 2013     | 2014     | 2015     | 2016     | 2017     | 2018     |
| 49 / 758   | 50 / 975                                | 57 / 691 | 52 / 730 | 57 / 878 | 59 / 984 | 49 / 593 | 57 / 760 | 61 / 972 |
| 2019       | 2020                                    | 2021     | 2022     |          |          |          |          |          |
| 55 / 1,024 | 57 / 979                                | 59 / 698 | 52 / 740 |          |          |          |          |          |

- Most Species seen in April : 61 on 04/07/2018.
- Most Total Birds seen in April : 1,024 on 04/06/2019.
- Fewest Species seen in April : 49 on 04/02/2010 & 04/02/2016.
- Fewest Total Birds seen in April : 593 on 04/02/2016.
- Species Average in April : 54.9 Species.
- Total Birds Average in April : 829.4 Individuals.
- Lowest Temperature on April Census : 24-degrees F on 04/06/2013.
- Highest Temperature on April Census : 85-degrees F on 04/02/2010.
- Longest Time Afield on April Census : 10 hours & 25 minutes on 04/06/2019.
- Shortest Time Afield on April Census : 7 hours & 5 minutes on 04/02/2010.

**LAST APRIL'S FIELD REPORT**

|                          |  |                   |                                  |                 |                 |       |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| 04/03/21                 | <b>TOTAL SPECIES:</b>  | 59                | <b>START / END TIME:</b>         | 6:55am - 5:20pm |                 |       |
|                          | <b>TOTAL BIRDS:</b>  | 698               | <b>TIME AFIELD:</b>              | 10:15           | <b>FT. MI.:</b> | 14.40 |
| <b>ROUTE:</b>            | Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, with a stop at Trail Mix in Peninsula.  |                   |                                  |                 |                 |       |
| <b>TEMP.:</b>            | 28F ~ 57F  | <b>OBSERVERS:</b> | John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus. |                 |                 |       |
| <b>CONDITIONS:</b>       | Cold and frosty early, slowly warming with blue skies turning quickly to clouds; clouds moving out at 11:20am and turning warmer and sunny with blue skies and steady southerly breezes.   |                   |                                  |                 |                 |       |
| <b>TRAIL CONDITIONS:</b> | Fair; frozen early but thawing later; still plenty of winter ruts from Red Lock to the Ira Beaver Marsh boardwalk; a fair amount of storm-damaged trees from high winds on 03/25, most along the trail, not on it, except for one locust tree between Peninsula and Bolanz Rd. that was completely across the trail. |                   |                                  |                 |                 |       |
| <b>RIVER CONDITIONS:</b> | Normal to low - many exposed rockbars and sandbars.  |                   |                                  |                 |                 |       |

**THREE YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL**

On 04/06/19 we set a census high with 11 Belted Kingfishers seen along the census route. April is prime arrival time for this species in the Cuyahoga Valley as birds returning from the south join up with the few scattered birds (usually males) that called The Valley home during the bleak winter months.



## APRIL 2022's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

### BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

**DESCRIPTION:** Medium size with a big-headed appearance, prominent shaggy crest, and long, heavy bill. **MALE**: Slate blue above with a prominent white collar. Underparts white with a single blue breast band. Large bill has a gray base with a black outer half. **FEMALE**: One of the rare instances where the female is more colorful than the male. Similar to adult male, but with an obvious rufous band (the "belt" of the kingfisher) across the upper belly. The rufous also extends down the flanks. Short tail and small feet give kingfishers a top-heavy appearance.

**LENGTH:** 11" to 14 & 1/2"      **WINGSPAN:** 19" to 23"

**WEIGHT:** 127 to 175 grams, or about 4 & 1/2 to 6 ounces.

**VOICE:** A loud, dry, machine gun-like rattle, both while perched or in flight. Also a harsh "caar" note. Calls frequently and is often first detected by rattling call before seen.

**HABITS:** Lives wherever there is water, whether along seacoast or along rivers, creeks, ponds, lakes, mountain streams; usually solitary except during nesting season, and within territory has regularly used perches, usually on dead branch of tree over water or stake or pier along coast, from which it watches for prey in water. In flight it will follow course of stream or river, flying well below treetops along banks and utters its loud rattling call.

Eats mainly small fishes. Dives from perch into water or hovers and then dives headfirst from as high as 20 to 40 feet up. Disappears underwater for several seconds or often only a shallow dive with head below surface; after seizing fish, rises and returns to perch, where it beats fish on limb, then adjusts fish as to swallow it headfirst. Also eats small crabs, crayfishes, mussels, large tadpoles of bullfrog, small frogs, toads, newts, lizards, small snakes and turtles, moths, butterflies, insects, beetles, grasshoppers, insects, young birds, mice, and even berries. Along seacoast known to eat clams and oysters; has been found with its bill held fast in shell of live oyster and caught in same way by freshwater mussel. Disgorges pellets of fishbones, scales, and other indigestible parts of food.

**NESTING:** **NEST**: Horizontal or slightly upslanting burrow dug by pair in sand, clay, or gravel bank of creek, river, lake, pond, gravel or sand pit. May be far from water, about 3 to 4 inches in diameter, unlined, usually 3 to 7 feet long, rarely to 15 feet; may require 3 days to 3 weeks to dig depending on type of soil; nest chamber at end of burrow about 6 to 10 inches, often lined with clean white fish bones and scales from ejected pellets of present and previous occupants. Rarely nests in top of hollow stump or cavity in tree. **EGGS**: April to July, 5 to 8, usually 6 to 7, white. **INCUBATION**: 23 to 24 days and young leave nest at 23 days or more.

**HABITAT:** Around water - lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, creeks, coastlines.

**RANGE:** Throughout North America from Alaska to Newfoundland, coast to coast from Florida to Mexico and Central America. Northernmost birds completely leaving their breeding grounds for southern regions during winter. Accidental on the Azores, Iceland, and W. Europe.

**STATUS:** Common and conspicuous, the population appears stable.



**Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Belted Kingfisher in Northeast Ohio.**

|          |          |         |         |         |          |
|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Jan.     | Feb.     | Mar.    | Apr.    | May     | Jun.     |
| uuuuuuuu | uuuuuuuu | uuuuCCC | CCCCCCC | CCCCCCC | CCCCCCC  |
| Jul.     | Aug.     | Sep.    | Oct.    | Nov.    | Dec.     |
| CCCCCCC  | CCCCCCC  | CCCCCCC | CCCCCCC | CCCCuuu | uuuuuuuu |

- CCCCCCC** = Common to Abundant. Frequently encountered in this region during this time of year.
- uuuuuuuu** = Uncommon. Occurs regularly during this time of year but not frequently detected.
- rrrrrrrrrr** = Rare. These birds can occur more or less annually but are easily missed in their scant presence in the region.
- ooooooou** = Occasional. Limited history in this region and are not to be expected.
- \*\*\*\*\*** = Accidental. Few records in the past 60 years. Not expected in this region during this time of year.
- ||||||||||** = Fluctuating Abundance. May occur some years yet absent other years. Irruptive or overwintering birds.

**History of the Belted Kingfisher on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.**

|      | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017     |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|
| JAN. | 3    | 4    | 1    | 2    | 4    | 1    | 3    | 4        |
| FEB. | 3    | 5    | 3    | 1    | 5    | 2    | 3    | 3        |
| MAR. | 6    |      | 3    |      | 2    | 1    | 3    | <b>8</b> |
| APR. | 9    | 6    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 5    | 4    | 7        |
| MAY  | 2    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 3        |
| JUN. | 4    | 3    | 3    | 2    | 3    | 1    | 6    | 1        |
| JUL. | 2    | 3    | 5    | 3    | 2    | 2    | 4    | 2        |
| AUG. | 3    | 4    | 4    | 1    | 1    | 4    | 5    | 1        |
| SEP. | 5    | 5    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 2    | 2    | 1        |
| OCT. | 4    | 5    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 1    | 1    | 4        |
| NOV. | 1    | 1    | 2    | 2    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 4        |
| DEC. | 5    | 2    | 4    | 4    | 2    | 4    | 4    | 5        |

|      | 2018 | 2019       | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|------|------|------------|------|------|------|
| JAN. | 4    | 3          | 1    | 3    | 2    |
| FEB. | 1    |            |      | 3    | 1    |
| MAR. | 2    | 3          |      | 4    | 3    |
| APR. | 3    | <b>11*</b> | 7    | 5    | 3    |
| MAY  | 2    | 1          | 2    | 4    |      |
| JUN. | 1    | 2          | 1    | 3    |      |
| JUL. | 2    | 1          | 1    | 3    |      |
| AUG. |      | 1          |      | 2    |      |
| SEP. | 4    | 2          | 5    | 2    |      |
| OCT. |      | 1          | 1    | 4    |      |
| NOV. |      | 1          | 2    | 6    |      |
| DEC. | 4    | 4          | 3    | 4    |      |

**DID YOU KNOW?:** World-wide there are around 120 species of kingfishers but only three species in North America? The Belted Kingfisher is by far the most common in North America, with the larger Ringed Kingfisher only found in extreme south Texas, and the smaller Green Kingfisher in south Texas and extreme southern Arizona.

- \*** = HIGHEST COUNT TOTAL ON CENSUS.
- BOLD #** = HIGHEST COUNT FOR THAT YEAR.





*A male Belted Kingfisher, always on the ready and with keen eyesight, perches above the water for some unsuspecting prey.*

*(photo by: Jim Adams)*

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### **MARCH'S DID YOU KNOW?**

**DID YOU KNOW?:** None other than Roger Tory Peterson said this quote: "If I could paint like another wildlife artist it would be Robert Bateman." My father and I saw Robert Bateman several times when he was in Ohio for the usual circuit tours touting his artwork and the books on his works while he was visiting his distributor here in Ohio, Gallery One, which had galleries in both Fairlawn (now closed) and Mentor. One of the joys we got one time was when a young boy, maybe all of 6 or 7 years old, brought some of his bird sketches to show Robert. As the boy's parents stood by smiling, Robert was so gracious and tender with the child, telling him what he liked about the boy's sketches and telling him to keep up the good work and keep on drawing. My father and I were drawn to his works and the man - Bateman was the real deal.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Robert Bateman was born in Toronto in 1930. When he was six, his father had a house built on a lot in what was then the northwest corner of the city. It was on the edge of the affluent Forest Hill Village district, and it was also on the edge of the countryside, with a garden that spilled down into one of the ravines that run through the city. Through the ravine ran a railway line - a now long-defunct suburban service called the Belt Line - but in those years there were at most only two trains a day; the rest of the time the ravine was quiet, inhabited by birds and other small wildlife, and with a stream filled with minnows and tadpoles and painted turtles. It was the perfect place for a budding naturalist. Toronto is on major bird migration routes and every May birds would funnel up the ravine in tremendous variety. During a two-year period Bob recorded over one hundred species in his neighborhood, including, once, a flock of white pelicans spotted flying high overhead as he delivered newspapers.



**DID YOU KNOW?:**

When Bob was eight, his parents rented (and later bought) a cottage in Haliburton. This cottage - in fact the whole region - has been a constant factor in Bob's life. He has spent substantial parts of almost every summer there, and he goes there now with his own children. He wrote his undergraduate thesis in geography on the Haliburton region and has a ceaseless interest in every aspect of its human and natural history. As a child and a teenager there, his time was always filled. There were places to explore, specimens to catch and stuff, and pictures to complete, often to the exasperation of his brothers and parents who were occasionally ready for less single-minded recreations. If Bob has a spiritual home, it is the Haliburton cottage.

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

By the time he was twelve he knew that the primary interests in his life were going to be wildlife and art - although he didn't know in what combination - and he was painting systematically and regularly. He was obsessed with nature, and spent all his weekends with two friends, Alan Gordon and Don Smith (both of whom would become biologists), hiking and exploring around the edges of the city, spotting birds and climbing trees and cliffs to examine nests, sketching and noting everything he saw. Their adventures were always remembered by the variety and rarity of the species they saw. Most days after school Bob would go to the Bateman's sunroom and pore over all the illustrations of wildlife he could get his hands on. Among these were the drawings in Ernest Thompson Seton's "Two Little Savages", and the work of Walter Weber and Major Allan Brooks, a distinguished bird painter of the period, whose pictures appeared in "Canada Nature." Roger Tory Peterson's first and revolutionary "Field Guide to the Birds" had just been published and was an important catalyst to Bob's birding activities. Then he became familiar with the work of Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the great American bird illustrator. He looked at everything, and, often chivvied and encouraged by Alan, he tried all sorts of different styles. They both loved the work of Milton Caniff, the cartoonist of "Terry and the Pirates." A real artist, Caniff's cartoon panels were filled with detail and contained fully worked landscapes. At first the boys were not admirers of Audubon: they thought the poses of his birds were over-dramatic and eccentric, and it was only later, as they became more experienced bird-watchers, that they began to recognize his peculiar accuracy and genius.

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

When Bob was about twelve, his mother, with unerring good sense, sent him off with Alan to join the Junior Field Naturalists Club at the Royal Ontario Museum. He has always been grateful to her for this, for it was a turning point in his life. The museum, a handsome stone building on the edge of the University of Toronto campus, was still in the heyday of its initial growth, with a deeply committed and often unorthodox staff dedicated to the enlargement of its collections and to the dissemination of knowledge. The Junior Field Naturalists Club was part of the museum's Saturday morning program designed to give young people an introduction to science and art. It was run by a combination of volunteers and museum staff. In their first two years in the club, Bob and Alan spent much of their time learning bird carving from a retired tradesman named Frank Smith. A homespun character with an intense interest in the world around him, Smith had little formal education and no professional background in either wildlife or art. But he was a highly informed and enthusiastic naturalist who loved sharing his knowledge with young people. He was wonderfully skilled in carving balsa wood birds, including duck decoys - an art not much appreciated at that time - and the two years Bob spent with him became a fundamental part of his training as an artist. Even today it is often his habit when undertaking a painting to make a model of the subject (usually in Plasticine) trying different poses and viewing them from different angles.



**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*As Bob and his friends became familiar with the museum they discovered that its senior staff was surprisingly accessible. First there was James L. Baillie, the assistant curator of ornithology. Baillie had left school at sixteen and become a grocery delivery boy, but he had a passion for birds and at eighteen he got a job with the museum's ornithology section, where he had a distinguished career. He became one of the Royal Ontario's Museum's best known figures and had a birdwatching column in the "Toronto Telegram" for 28 years. At the museum he was determined to make himself available to the public, especially to young people. As a result his office was regularly invaded by troops of teenaged birdwatchers. Bob Bateman and his friends were regular visitors, learning about the museum's growing collections and developing their birdwatching skills and ornithological knowledge.*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*As he got a little older Bob began to pay attention to the quiet man in the office next to Jim Baillie's. This was Terence Shortt, the museum's chief illustrator and head of its Department of Arts and Exhibits. A modest, highly articulate, and rather elegant man, Shortt is a brilliant ornithologist and an outstanding bird painter. Like Jim Baillie, he had comparatively little formal training, other than a brief encounter with the Winnipeg School of Art. He joined the museum as a young man and soon after went on an extended field trip to the Arctic with F.H. Varley, an outstanding portraitist and a member of the Group of Seven artists who dominated Canadian painting in the 1920's and 1930's. Shortt says it was from Varley that he received his real education as an artist. Shortt's education in ornithology likewise was learned mainly on the job on many field trips and at the museum. Bob was dazzled by Shortt's knowledge of bird anatomy and behavior. On one occasion Bob found in Algonquin Park a feather he couldn't identify. He took it back to Terry who glanced at it and said, "I'm not sure. It's either the third or fourth primary from the left wing of an immature female goshawk." The only doubt in Shortt's mind was whether it was the third or fourth. A check with the museum's specimens confirmed that it was the third.*

*With his encyclopedic knowledge of ornithology, his artistic sensibility, and wide-ranging, humane imagination, Terry Shortt soon became a major and long-lasting influence on Bob Bateman. More than anyone else, he has encouraged Bob in the field of bird artistry. Shortt remembers Bob in those days as "a very personable young man, fair, clean-cut, and with steady serious eyes - not that he didn't have a sense of humor - but there was a direction in them. And I knew right from the start that this was a chap who, whatever he was going to do, was going to do it very well."*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*I could go on and on about Robert Bateman's life after these early years, but chose instead to focus on what the early influences were on his development as an artist of all things wildlife. He experienced so much early on that it was clear what his path would be. Unlike his friends from childhood who chose the scientific route and became biologists and scientific teachers, he chose the route that enabled him the freedom of not being tied down to the often mundane academic life. After trying many different artistic styles, and not sure where his direction lay, it was a 1963 Andrew Wyeth exhibition in Buffalo, N.Y. that set his path. He said, "Up until that time in the art world, the surface of the painting was considered important, and the subject was not. Wyeth was a realist whose pictures had great abstract strength. He was doing exciting painting in which the surface of the real world was important too." Bateman single-handedly opened the door for other wildlife artists that followed like Carl Brenders, Alan M. Hunt, and others that followed.*



**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*I chose Robert Bateman as the artist for this month's featured bird, the Belted Kingfisher, for two reasons? One, the painting of his is a good representation of what is normally encountered along the Cuyahoga River in winter (well, except for the more northern birch tree), and two, because of his analysis regarding the painting, giving us a look into the artists mind. Well, make it three reasons - I love his work.*

*"For me shape is probably the most important element in a picture. I'd like all my pictures to be made up of shapes that are interesting and strong in themselves, regardless of their content. The idea for "Kingfisher in Winter" began with a particular piece of landscape near our cottage that I began to recreate in my mind. Once I had made a sketch of the basic composition, I began to develop the shapes, the powerful, interlocking, light and dark, positive and negative shapes of the water and snow. I knew I wanted a bird in the picture, and eventually chose a kingfisher. They are not usually thought of as winter birds, but can often be seen in the snow, provided there is some open running water where they can fish."*

*"Within each of the major shapes I began to build in forms, and, as often happens, a theme emerged which I instinctively repeated in a variety of ways throughout the picture. In this case it is a sort of drooping the letter P. It appears in the snow at the top of the picture, a little in the position of the bird, then in the tree trunk where the main branch comes out, and then repeatedly in the overhanging snowbank at the bottom."*

*"Once the big, negative shape, the water, was established, I began to introduce the turbulence and rhythmic swirls that provide the action of the picture, again using the drooping P theme in a large, opulent pattern with smaller decorations overlying it. By putting a thin, whitish-gray glaze all over the water, but more thickly at the top, the water lay back and by comparison became richer and deeper towards the bottom. By graying the upper part of the water in this way I was also able to bring out the foreground of the picture which includes the kingfisher and the branch. Pure black and white and strong contrasting colours are the high cards to play in a painting. I use them very carefully and deliberately for the strongest effect. Here on the left side, the water gets very dark, though not pure black, so the tree in front stands out. Then on the right side, where the water is grayed, the black twig jumps out for the reverse reason. I used rust very selectively for the female kingfisher's characteristic flanks, and also on the underside of the peeling birch-bark. The other accent is the golden yellow of the few leaves remaining on the tree."*

**BOOKS FEATURING ROBERT BATEMAN'S ART**

1985 - "The World Of Robert Bateman"

1990 - "Robert Bateman An Artist In Nature"

1993 - "The Art Of Robert Bateman"

1996 - "Robert Bateman Natural Worlds"

2002 - "Robert Bateman Birds"

2010 - "Bateman New Works"





Bateman's "Kingfisher in Winter" from 1980, acrylic, original piece was 48" X 42", a familiar sight in the Cuyahoga Valley.

(painting by: Robert Bateman)



My late father Jim Vogus (right), rubbing elbows and talking shop with the master himself, the great Robert Bateman.

(photo by: Douglas W. Vogus)



**ROBERT BATEMAN - MAJOR HONORS AND AWARDS**

- \*\*\* *Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal - 1977*
- \*\*\* *Award of Excellence, Society of Animal Artists - 1979, 1980, 1981, 1986, 1990*
- \*\*\* *Artist of the Year, "American Artist" magazine - 1980*
- \*\*\* *Excellence Award in Arts for Contribution to Artistic Community, Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth - 1980*
- \*\*\* *Master Artist, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum - 1982*
- \*\*\* *Officer of the Order of Canada - 1984*
- \*\*\* *Member of Honor Award, World Wildlife Fund, presented by HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh - 1985*
- \*\*\* *Governor General's Conservation Award - 1987*
- \*\*\* *Lescarbot Award, Government of Canada - May 1992*
- \*\*\* *Rachel Carson Award, Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry - 1996*
- \*\*\* *Golden Plate Award, American Academy of Achievement - 1998*
- \*\*\* *100 Champions of Conservation of the 20th Century, National Audubon Society - 1998*
- \*\*\* *Order of British Columbia - 2001*
- \*\*\* *Rungius Medal, National Museum of Wildlife Art - 2001*
- \*\*\* *Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal - 2002*
- \*\*\* *ChevronTexaco Conservation Award - 2003*
- \*\*\* *Perkin's Partner in conservation Award, Wild Canid Center - 2003*
- \*\*\* *Roland Michener Conservation Award, Canadian Wildlife Federation - 2003*
- \*\*\* *President's Medal, The Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation of Canada - 2005*
- \*\*\* *Ideas for Life Award, Canadian Environment Awards - 2006*
- \*\*\* *Human Rights Defender Award, Amnesty International - 2007*

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| *** Terres, John K.                    | 1956 "The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of<br>North American Birds"<br><i>Alfred A. Knopf</i>  |
| *** Vogus, Douglas W.                  | 2010-present "The Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail<br>Census" (CVTTC ~ <i>Personal Records, Personal<br/>Experiences, and Mindless Ramblings</i> ) |