

HISTORY & FACTS of the AUGUST CENSUS

AUGUST	12-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
60 / 612	52 / 697	55 / 1,445	60 / 1,736	62 / 1,109	63 / 946	64 / 796	66 / 574	68 / 662
2019	2020	2021						
65 / 584	56 / 507	60 / 577						

Most Species seen in August : 68 on 08/03/2018.

Most Individual Birds seen in August : 1,736 on 08/03/2013.

Fewest Species seen in August : 52 on 08/06/2011.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in August : 507 on 08/07/2020.

Species Average in August : 60.9 Species.

Total Individuals Average in August : 853.7 Total Birds.

Lowest Temperature on August Census : 52-degrees F on 08/09/2014.

Highest Temperature on August Census : 92-degrees F on 08/06/2011 & 08/05/2016.

Longest Time Afield on August Census : 10 Hours on 08/02/2019 & 08/08-09/21.*

Shortest Time Afield on August Census : 5 Hours & 30 Minutes on 08/06/2011.

* = August 2021 Census was done over two days due to inclement weather prohibiting completion of Census Route in one day.

LAST AUGUST'S FIELD REPORT

08/07/20	TOTAL SPECIES:	56	START / END TIME:	6:40am - 4:25pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	507	TIME AFIELD:	9:45	FT. MI.:	13.51
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, with a stop at Trail Mix In Peninsula. Szalay's Farm & Market was so busy that we opted to just continue hiking.					
TEMP.:	61F ~ 82F ~ 81F	OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus			
CONDITIONS:	Partly cloudy and cool early, turning mostly sunny and warm; partly sunny with light breezes from 12:00pm until end of hike.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Ideal - other than heavy bicycle traffic.					
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Recently dropped back to normal; slightly turbid from rains earlier in week.					

FIVE YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On August 05, 2016 we had our second record of a Great Horned Owl on the monthly Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census, matching our high from earlier in the year in March. Although neither bird was seen, they were both heard. The August bird was heard at the start of the census at Red Lock, coming from the general direction of the woods above and east of the entrance to the Brandywine ski area. The March bird was heard hooting due east of Lock 24 between Riverview Rd. and the Cuyahoga River, about a half-mile north of W. Bath Rd.

AUGUST 2021's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*)

DESCRIPTION: Heaviest and most powerful American owl. A very large, bulky bird with prominent, widely spaced ear tufts; large, bright yellow eyes framed by typically tawny facial disks (pale in Arctic race); and bold white throat bib. Color ranges from very dark (Pacific Northwest, Canadian Maritimes) to sandy (desert races) or almost white (Arctic). Typical birds mottled above with rich pattern of chestnut, black, and grayish white; buff below, with heavy, dark brown horizontal barring.

LENGTH: 18" to 25" ~ with females larger than males

WINGSPAN: 35" to 60"

WEIGHT: Males at 245 grams, or 0.54-lbs, and females at 280 grams, or 0.62-lbs.

VOICE: Typically 3 to 6 deep, resonant hoots in many arrangements. A common format: male sings full-voiced hoot, follows with cluster of quickly uttered pulsing hoots, ends with two longer, full-voiced hoots - "HOO! Hu-hu-hu HOO-HOO!"; female answers with slightly higher, shorter sequence. (Lower pitch, greater complexity of male's call only recently ascertained.) Courting couples select special perch to sing duets at dawn and dusk. Pause between male's call and female's reply gets shorter as pair formation nears climax; songs of mated pairs often overlap. Nestlings have loud, throaty bark. First summer siblings call for food and stay in touch with sharp, husky whistle - "scheeeak!" - or raspy blend of whistle and scream - "khreek!" - tirelessly repeated from late afternoon well into the night, often with many variations, including catlike meows. Aggression displays accompanied by bill snapping, loud hissing, large repertoire of growls, grunts, and squeals. Capable of blood-curdling scream, seldom given.

HABITS: Prefers to stay hidden, especially due to harassment from jays and crows. Although mostly nocturnal will hunt during the daytime especially when raising young. Amazingly varied in choice of prey but has distinct preference for rabbits, rats, and mice, depending on locality and cyclic abundance. List of prey items includes opossums, muskrats, woodchucks, squirrels, gophers, and meadow mice; known to kill porcupines, skunks, and cats. Also large birds like ducks, geese, swans, herons, pheasants, grouse, turkeys, and chickens; medium-size birds such as woodpeckers, jays, and orioles; and many kinds of hawks and owls (on which it is a severe limiting factor). Eats bats, snakes, frogs, crayfish, and many kinds of fish; takes large insects like beetles and locusts and such other arthropods as scorpions. Predation of songbirds is minimal, but kills large numbers of crows by strafing their roosts at night and has even been documented descending chimneys to catch swifts.

When flushed, will usually stay low and head to nearest stand of suitable cover. Does not like to stay out in the open long. In the Cuyahoga Valley and surrounding environs, it prefers large stands of white pine, especially after the leaves of hardwoods have disappeared.

HABITAT: Remarkably adaptable. Wide variety of environments, from deep forests, desert cliffs, and woodlots to suburban estates, parks, and cemeteries. Roosts in dense foliage, pine groves, treeholes, old nests, cliff ledges, etc., from sea level to 11,000 feet.

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Great Horned Owl in Northeast Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC

- 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.
- OOOOOOOO = 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 Great Horned Owl on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.								
MAR.							1*	
APR.								
MAY								
JUN.								
JUL.								
AUG.							1*	
SEP.								
OCT.								
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021
JAN.				
FEB.				
MAR.				
APR.				
MAY				
JUN.				
JUL.				
AUG.				
SEP.				
OCT.				
NOV.				
DEC.				

DID YOU KNOW?:

My Father, while working as a park ranger for Summit Metro Parks, once had a Great Horned Owl grasping a skunk near the sled hill of Munroe Falls Metro Park? That was how he found the source of the strong skunk smell he encountered! Also, while we were looking for owls at night up at Whitefish Point, Michigan, we watched a Great Horned Owl come off one of the out-buildings near the light-house there and catch a bat on the wing! This ultimate predator doesn't fear much of anything, as evidenced by its extremely varied diet. There's not much it won't try to take down!

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

NESTING: *In old nests of hawks, herons, eagles, or crows; ledges in cliffs and rocky crevices; large cavities in trees, occasionally in man-made nest platforms, and sometimes even on the ground. Prefers abandoned nests of Red-tailed Hawk and regularly usurps active nests of this species. Eggs 1 to 6, usually 2 to 3, laid as early as January and February. Incubation by both sexes, 25 to 30 days. Young fly 9 to 10 weeks after hatching, often spend ten days to two weeks on ground (where fed and defended by parents) before full flight capability.*

RANGE: *Throughout North and South America, from tundra tree line south to Tierra Del Fuego. When it comes to migration, they are essentially sedentary. Some withdrawal from extreme northern limit of range in severe winters. Outside breeding season some individuals may wander widely.*

STATUS: *Common and widespread, although not typically encountered due to nocturnal nature. Still persecuted by farmer's due to predation of chickens or exotic waterfowl.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *The Great Horned Owl is a bird of many aliases? These include, but are not limited to, Big Hoot Owl, Cat Owl, Chicken Owl, Eagle Owl, Hoot Owl, Horned Owl, Virginia Horned Owl, and King Owl.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *Being an aggressive hunter, accidents are the norm? Some are killed by automobile traffic when flying across the roads at night; also from entanglement in string or wire, some electrocuted, some fly into objects, such as barbed-wire fences, or become impaled.*



You talkin' to me!? All business! The Great Horned Owl has been designed to be the ultimate predator.

(photo by: Paul Bruch)

DID YOU KNOW?: Owls have been revered for many thousands of years? Humans have always had great respect for owls and have often considered them supernatural in their powers. One of the earliest drawings showing an owl dates back to the early Paleolithic period - a family of Snowy Owls was painted on a cave wall in the Dordogne region of France.

Another important deity, the Sumerian goddess of the underworld, Lilith, is usually depicted with wings and talons and is always accompanied by two owls. Lilith's name is translated in the Authorized Version of the Bible as "screech owl." A tablet showing a likeness of Lilith and her owls dates back to 2300-2000 B.C.

The belief that owls were wise originated in the days of King Arthur, when Merlin was always shown with an owl on his shoulder. During the Middle Ages the owl became an important symbol of learning and intelligence. Even today this myth persists, as evidenced by this old anonymous nursery rhyme:

A wise old owl sat in an oak,
The more he saw the less he spoke,
The less he spoke, the more he heard,
Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?

DID YOU KNOW?: Owls have also been considered harbingers of evil and doom for centuries? Pliny the Elder, a Roman statesman, wrote of the owl: "... when it appears (it) foretells nothing but evil, (and) is more to be dreaded than any other bird..."

The Chinese believed that owls snatched away the soul, and whenever one heard the call of an owl, someone would say, "he's digging the grave." In many different cultures, to hear the call of the owl meant that death was coming. If the call was far away and muffled, death would come to someone close to you. If the call was clear and distinct, death would come to someone far away.

DID YOU KNOW?: The Aztecs associated the owl with the god of the dead and believed that anyone who hears the cry of the owl at night will die? In Italy this superstition takes on an unusual twist. If an owl is heard outside the home of someone sick, they were expected to die three days later. If heard outside of a home where no one was ill, someone in the house would get tonsillitis. In southern Australia many native tribes believe that bats looked after the lives of men, and owls were sacred to women. In some tribes it was believed that when the medicine men of the tribe died, their souls returned as owls. The owl, when it died, returned as a cricket.

DID YOU KNOW?: In Japan, owls were thought to have the power to ward off evil? The Japanese put pictures and figures of owls on their houses in times of famine or epidemic in the hope that their home would be spared. Many North American Indian tribes believed that eating an owl's eye could help one see at night, or could restore lost eyesight. In Yorkshire, it was believed that owl soup would cure the whooping cough. An owl feather under the pillow was thought to make one sleep peacefully at night. The owl turns up as a canny creature in Eskimo lore and is seen as a worthy antagonist to the sly coyote in the lore of the Zunis and other southwestern American Indians. Owl bet you never knew all that!

AUGUST'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?: In 1798, Edward Harris, Sr. purchased a house and farm, located near the center of Moorestown, New Jersey, where Edward Harris, Jr., the namesake of the Harris's Hawk and Harris's Sparrow, was born the following year? Edward Harris, Jr. was a farmer, horse breeder, philanthropist, naturalist, and ornithologist - a man of many hats - but how exactly did these birds get named after him?

DID YOU KNOW?: Harris was commemorated by John James Audubon in the common names of the Harris's Hawk and the Harris's Sparrow, as well as by John Cassin in the binomial of the Buff-fronted Owl (*Aegolius harrisii*), which is found in every South American country except French Guiana and Suriname.

DID YOU KNOW?: After inheriting the property at his father's death in 1822, Edward Harris, Jr. lived there and farmed the land until 1849. He met John James Audubon in 1824 after which the two men became close friends, Harris providing Audubon with some financial assistance for the publication of Audubon's lifework, "Birds of America." Harris took part in two of Audubon's expeditions: in the spring of 1837 in the Gulf of Mexico, and in 1843 along the Missouri River. He passed away on June 08, 1863 and is buried in his hometown of Moorestown, N.J.

DID YOU KNOW?: Edward Harris introduced the Percheron horse to America in 1839? He also established the first Percheron breeding line in the United States.



Early ornithologist, among other things, and close friend of John James Audubon, Edward Harris, Jr.

(photo courtesy of: Wikipedia)



Some serious horsepower! The Percheron in the United States can be traced back to Edward Harris, Jr. Percheron's are actually born black, then transition to the dappled gray. This is actually the same horse - five years apart!
 (photo courtesy of: r/Horses)

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*** Vogus, Douglas W. 2010-present "The Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail
 Census" (CVTTC ~ Personal Records, Personal
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*** Wikipedia --- Unfortunately, not many of my books had anything lengthy on
 Edward Harris, Jr. This left me no choice but to glean what I could from Wikipedia.