

HISTORY & FACTS of the DECEMBER CENSUS

DECEMBER	12-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
45 / 1,480	42 / 763	42 / 999	47 / 1,425	40 / 1,790	39 / 1,074	47 / 653	48 / 980	43 / 833
2019	2020	2021						
45 / 810	36 / 758	49 / 1,137						

Most Species seen in December : 49 on 12/03/2021.

Most Individual Birds seen in December : 1,790 Total Birds on 12/06/2014.

Fewest Species seen in December : 36* on 12/05/2020.

(* = 36 is the lowest species total ever on the census)

Fewest Individual Birds seen in December : 653 on 12/03/2016.

Species Average in December : 43.6 Species.

Total Individuals Average in December : 1,058.5 Total Birds.

Lowest Temperature on December Census : 19-degrees F on 12/04/2010.

Highest Temperature on December Census : 57-degrees F on 12/01/2012.

Longest Time Afield on December Census : 9:00 hours & 5 minutes on 12/03/2021.

Shortest Time Afield on December Census : 6 hours & 15 minutes on 12/04/2010.

LAST DECEMBER'S FIELD REPORT

12/05/20	TOTAL SPECIES:	36	START / END TIME:	7:55am - 4:55pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	762	TIME AFIELD:	9:00	FT. MI.:	13.51
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley with a stop at Trail Mix in Peninsula.					
TEMP.:	37F ~ 34F	OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.			
CONDITIONS:	Cloudy and calm early; brief sun and blue skies from 8:55am - 9:20am; window shut on that and back to cloudy; sleet/wet snow from 11:45am to 12:30pm; then gray and overcast; intermittent snow showers from 2:55pm to 3:20pm; intermittent wet snow/rain from then until the end of the census.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Wet and mostly sloppy.		RIVER CONDITIONS:	Above normal due to snow melt from 5-plus inches of snow that fell on 11/30 and 12/01.		

EIGHT YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On 12/07/2013 we set a census high of four Pied-billed Grebes on the monthly census. This is Ohio's most common grebe and can usually be found in the marshy environs of the Ira Beaver Marsh. When all the shallow areas start to freeze, these birds will move on to the open waters of the river. An uncommon nester in Ohio, in the Cuyahoga Valley they are most often encountered in spring and fall migration, and at times lingering into the winter months.

DECEMBER 2021's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

DESCRIPTION: *The Pied-billed Grebe has a diagnostic thick bill and fairly large head, and, unlike other North American grebes, lacks distinct white upperwing patches.*

BREEDING ADULT: *Face and throat black, neck sides gray; bill pale blue-gray with sharply defined medial band. **WINTER ADULT:** Face paler and throat whitish, neck sides browner and warmer; bill pale horn to grayish, without black band. **FIRST-YEAR:** Juveniles have head sides striped dark gray and whitish, and bill pale horn. The formative plumage after molting resembles the winter adult, but the head and neck average buffier.*

LENGTH: 11 to 13 & 1/2" **WINGSPREAD:** About 23"

WEIGHT: *Ranges between 9 to 19 ounces, typically 10 to 14 ounces.*

VOICE: *Usually silent except during nesting season, when utters loud, cuckoo-like call, "cuck cuck cuck, cow-cow-cow, cow-ah-cow-ah".*

HABITS: *This widespread chunky grebe is usually found singly or in small groups on ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. At times one of the shyest of grebes. In winter dives for shrimps in salt-water bays and estuaries, but more often on unfrozen freshwater ponds and marshes. Main food in one study was insects (43%); crayfishes (27%); fishes (24%). Some of fishes were carp, catfishes, eels, roach, sticklebacks, sculpins, silversides, top minnows. Insects were nymphs of dragonflies and damselflies, back swimmers, water boatmen, diving beetles, wasps, bees, ants. Also eats snails, spiders, frogs, tadpoles, some seeds and soft parts of aquatic plants. Rarely flies, usually escapes by diving with short leap forward, or slowly submerges, often with just its head sticking above the water. Like all grebes, very awkward on land.*

HABITAT: *Prefers marshes and ponds with emergent vegetation, also lakes, reservoirs, rivers and sluggish streams - rarely in saltwater.*

NESTING: **NEST:** *Built by both sexes, of reeds, rushes, sedges, algae, and occasionally mud, entire structure usually attached to grasses, reeds, or bushes growing in the water. Nest takes 3 to 7 days to complete, usually in shallows but sometimes on water several feet deep, and usually well-concealed. **EGGS:** Usually early April into late May, in Texas from March to September; 2 to 10 eggs, usually 4 to 7, initially blue-white or green-white, but soon stained brown, usually laid one per day as in other grebes. Eggs are covered by incubating bird before it leaves nest. **INCUBATION:** Mostly by female, 23 days, but variable. Streaked and spotted chicks can swim but crawl up on back of parent or cling to parent's tail and sometimes cling to each other. Parents sometimes feed chicks while they ride on parents' backs, and dive with chicks aboard, return to nest frequently with young. Two broods per year is fairly common.*

RANGE: *Wide-ranging from North America to South America; breeds as far north as Northwest Territories and below boreal forest line; winters wherever open water exists to the south.*

STATUS: *Stable or declining locally, especially in the East.*

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Pied-billed Grebe in Northeast Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
uuuuuuuu	uuuuuuuu	CCCCCCCC	CCCCCCCC	CCCUuuuu	rrrrrrrrrr
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
rrrrrrrrrr	rrrrrrrrrr	uuuCCCC	CCCCCCCC	CCCUuuuu	uuuuuuuu

- CCCCCCCC = 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 Pied-billed Grebe on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.		1			1	1		
FEB.					1			
MAR.		1			1			
APR.						1	1	3
MAY								
JUN.								
JUL.								
AUG.								
SEP.			1					
OCT.			3				1	
NOV.	1		3	2	1	1	1	3
DEC.			1	4*			1	1

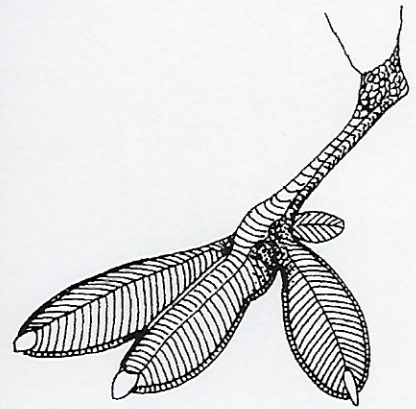
	2018	2019	2020	2021
JAN.	3			
FEB.				1
MAR.				
APR.	1			1
MAY				
JUN.				
JUL.				
AUG.				
SEP.				
OCT.				
NOV.	1			
DEC.				

DID YOU KNOW?: Grebes are diving and swimming birds that at first glance resemble small ducks, but their slender, pointed bills, never flat, have toothlike or sawlike edges as in ducks. Like coots and phalaropes, unrelated to grebes, they have lobed toes with partial webbing and are said to be one of the most perfectly adapted to water of all birds.

DID YOU KNOW?: The Pied-billed Grebe's scientific name can be broken down as "rump foot diver" as their feet are so far back that they have to have a

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

running start to take off from water and are clumsy on land. Although weak fliers, grebes that migrate south do so mostly at night, especially by moonlight.



Duck-like - but not like a duck? The lobed toes of a typical grebe foot.

Never far from water and often confused by non-birders as a duck - the Pied-billed Grebe's differences are many.

(photo courtesy of: Cornell University's All About Birds)



Three stripe-headed young Pied-billed Grebes follow a parent bird, the days of riding on the parents' backs now over.

(photo by: Paul Higgins)

DECEMBER'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?: Finishing out 2021's main "Did You Know" subject of how certain birds got their names, we have Spencer Fullerton Baird (1823-1887). As a boy he lived in Carlisle, Pa., where he and his brother discovered, then named and described, a bird new to science, the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. He ended up being one of the most brilliant, energetic, and influential zoologists of his time. According to T.S. Palmer (1928), "Baird did more than any other man of his time to advance the study of ornithology and other branches of zoology." Baird described and named several genera and many species of North American birds. He wrote with great exactness and helped make the definition of local subspecies of birds possible. He was a founder of the "Baird School" of ornithology so ably represented by Elliott Coues, Joel A. Allen, Robert Ridgway, John Cassin, Thomas Brewer, and others. The Baird's Sandpiper and Baird's Sparrow honor his name.

DID YOU KNOW?: Spencer Fullerton Baird was born in Reading, Pennsylvania on February 3, 1823 to Samuel Baird and Lydia McFunn Biddle, the third of seven children. The family relocated to Carlisle, Pennsylvania following the death of Baird's father from cholera in 1833. Baird entered Dickinson College as freshman in 1837, receiving his A.B. degree in 1840. Following graduation, Baird attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York for one year, but found he had a dislike for the medical practice and returned to Carlisle to continue with his studies. In 1843, the College conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts. And in 1856, an honorary degree of Doctor of Physical Science. During this time, Baird married Mary Helen Churchill, and the couple later had a daughter, Lucy Hunter Baird.

DID YOU KNOW?: Baird was offered a teaching position at Dickinson College in 1845 as Professor of Natural History, and became popular among the students for his practice of taking the young men out into the field to study the natural world. He became chair of both departments of natural history and chemistry in 1848. Throughout his time as professor, Baird continued to write on subjects of natural history, quickly becoming a respected ornithologist, zoologist, and naturalist. In 1850, Baird accepted a position as Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It reportedly took two freight cars to transport his collection of birds, lizards, fish, skins, and skeletons, weighing 89,000 pounds, from Carlisle to Washington. Many of these specimens can still be found in the Smithsonian Museums. Upon the death of Joseph Henry in 1878, Baird succeeded him as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. In addition to this post, Baird also served as Director of the National Museum from its founding until his death and as Secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences. He was an early member of the National Academy of Sciences, and served as a trustee for the Corcoran Art Gallery, Columbia University, and Dickinson College.

DID YOU KNOW?: A bibliography of his works from 1843 to 1882 contains nearly 1,200 titles, including "The Birds of North America", "Mammals of North America", and "A History of North American Birds". In 1871 Baird was appointed the first U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries by President Ulysses S. Grant and he would hold that position until his death in 1887. This position led Baird to spend a great deal of time in Woods Hole, Massachusetts as he was responsible for overseeing the founding of the Marine Biology Laboratory there. He died at 65 at Woods Hole on August 19, 1887 and was laid to rest at Oak Hill Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

See You on the Trail! - Doug



Man on a mission! The youth of today could learn a lot from the prodigious work ethic of Spencer Fullerton Baird.

(photo courtesy of: Encyclopedia Britannica)

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