

**HISTORY & FACTS of the FEBRUARY CENSUS**

FEBRUARY	13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
43 / 1,244	41 / 1,183	40 / 744	39 / 658	45 / 1,863	42 / 1,342	41 / 734	44 / 1,092	41 / 1,383
2019	2020	2021	2022					
44 / 2,451	39 / 1,017	47 / 2,591	42 / 1,371					

Most Species seen in February : 47 on 02/01/2021.

Most Individual Birds seen in February : 2,591 on 02/01/2021.

Fewest Species seen in February : 39 on 02/01/2013 & 02/01/2020.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in February : 658 on 02/01/2013.

Species Average in February : 42.2 Species.

Total Individuals Average in February : 1,359.5 Individuals.

Lowest Temperature on February Census : 9-degrees F on 02/01/2019 & 02/05/2022.

Highest Temperature on February Census : 47-degrees F on 02/01/2014.

Longest Time Afield on February Census : 9 hours & 50 minutes on 02/01/2019.

Shortest Time Afield on February Census : 6 hours & 20 minutes on 02/04/2012.

**LAST FEBRUARY'S FIELD REPORT**

02/05/22	TOTAL SPECIES:	42	START / END TIME:	7:35am - 2:20pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	1,371	TIME AFIELD:	6:45	FT. MI.:	9.50
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Deep Lock Quarry Metro Park to Riverview Rd. south to Bolanz Rd. to rejoin the Towpath Trail again, south to Ira Trailhead. Get picked up there by Michelle as I ended the census early due to terrible trail conditions. More below.					
	TEMP.:	9F ~ 24F				
CONDITIONS:	Cold and frozen; turning sunny with blue skies; then mostly sunny from 10:30am until end of census; all ponds and small creeks frozen.					
OBSERVERS:	Douglas W. Vogus.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Terrible and tiring; snow cover from 9-inches to 17-inches at start; "post-holed" from Red Lock to Lock 33, paralleling the fresh cross-country ski tracks; skier turned around at Lock 33, so followed one set of rutted tracks south to Boston; more "post-holing" from Boston to just before Stumpy Basin, as the ski tracks turned around there; created my own trail from just before Stumpy Basin to about the first third of the Stumpy Basin boardwalk, then followed one set of deer tracks for the rest of the boardwalk to Lock 31 (a.k.a. "Lonesome Lock"), then a single lane rut from Lock 31 to Deep Lock Quarry Metro Park, where I made the executive decision to walk Riverview Rd., paralleling the Towpath Trail, to Bolanz Rd. and rejoin the Towpath Trail from Bolanz Rd. to the Ira Beaver Marsh Trailhead. Snow cover decreased as I continued south to about 8- to 10-inches. Called it quits there as the Towpath Trail didn't even have a single lane rut from Ira Rd. to Merriman Valley, and choosing to avoid the cramped plow-line on the side of the road and vehicle traffic for the rest of the route.					
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Normal, free-flowing, and healthy looking.					

## SIX YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On 02/03/2017 we had our first and only record of a Ross's Goose on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census. Not only was it the only record of this species on the census, it was my first record of the species in Summit County. The goose was in amongst a large flock of Canada Geese in the horse pasture in Boston, just north of Boston Cemetery. Amazingly, we have of a record of this small goose for the census and not of the much more easily encountered Snow Goose.

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## FEBRUARY 2023's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

### ROSS'S GOOSE (*Anser rossii*)

**DESCRIPTION:** A small white goose with black wing tips in adults of both sexes, the Ross's Goose can be confused only with the Snow Goose. Its smaller body size, shorter neck, more rapid wing beat, and more highly pitched call distinguish it from the Snow Goose. The bill is pink and shows grayish "warts" on the base of the upper mandible. The short legs are pink. The juvenile is similar to the adult but variably washed dusky, particularly on the nape and back of neck. Hybridizes with the Snow Goose, intermediate in size and structure.

**LENGTH:** 22" - 26"    **WINGSPREAD:** 47" - 54"    **WEIGHT:** Males: 4.00 lbs.  
Females: 3.56 lbs.

**VOICE:** **CALL:** A high, nasal "hawhh." In flight not as loud and noisy as the Snow Goose; utters a grunting "kug," or a weak "kek, kek" or "ke-gak, ke-gak," similar to the call of the Cackling Goose.

**HABITS:** On their major migration area of concentration in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Ross's Geese feed on waste grain in wheat and barley fields. In the fall they use the larger lakes for resting, and in the spring they frequent the smaller runoff ponds, flying to the fields early in the morning and late in the afternoon. In the Klamath Basin they feed largely on barley, in the Sacramento Valley largely upon rice, in the San Joaquin Valley they utilize green grass. Commonly found in the company of other geese.

**HABITAT:** **BREEDING:** Wet tundra. **WINTER:** Wetlands, lakes, and adjacent agricultural areas.

**NESTING:** Ross's Geese begin nesting within a week of their arrival on the breeding grounds, a shorter span than is usual among other geese that nest in the Arctic. They prefer nesting in small colonies on islands in shallow tundra lakes, where they are afforded some protection from predators, especially the Arctic Fox. **NEST:** Female digs a small scrape and builds up mound in the depression with twigs of willow, birch, grasses, mosses, and lichens and lines it sparsely with down. **EGGS:** May to June, 2 to 6 eggs, usually 4 to 5, all white. **INCUBATION:** About 21 days; young and adults (after flightless molt period of adults) are both flying by late August.

**RANGE:** **MIGRATION:** Little is known about boreal staging areas in this species. However, the western population stops over in eastern Alberta and western Saskatchewan largely in September. From there they move through western Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Oregon into wintering areas in California by October. The eastern population moves through Hudson Bay and stages in eastern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, before moving south through the Dalotas to wintering areas in central Mexico, eastern Texas, and Louisiana. Spring migration begins as early as February and retraces the fall route, following the advance of snowmelt. Staging in Canadian prairies takes place mid-April to mid-May, and arrival in breeding grounds from the end of May to early June. Lingers later in wintering grounds than the Snow Goose.  
**VAGRANT:** Rare but regular east of the Mississippi.

**STATUS:** Common. Since the mid-1950's Ross's Goose populations have increased dramatically, some estimates give a 10 percent annual increase from the 1950's to the 1990's.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** The Ross's Goose name was given by early Philadelphia ornithologist John Cassin (see: "The Towpath Traveler" September 2017) in 1861 for Bernard Rogan Ross, Chief Factor of Hudson's Bay Company, Canada?

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Michelle and I's first sighting of a Ross's Goose in Ohio came on 01/08/11. Our second sighting was on 12/29/12 in Cleveland's inner harbor behind the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. There is no truth to the rumor that it was actually Diana Ross's Goose!



*The diminutive Ross's Goose has had a major increase in sightings in Ohio with its recent eastward expansion.*

*(photo by: Marshall Illiff)*

**Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Ross's Goose in Northeast Ohio.**

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
rrrrrrrrrr	rrrrrrrrrr	rrrrrrrrrr	rrrrrr		
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
			rrr	rrrrrrrrrr	rrrrrrrrrr

- 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 Ross's Goose on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.**

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

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
JAN.						
FEB.						
MAR.						
APR.						
MAY						
JUN.						
JUL.						
AUG.						
SEP.						
OCT.						
NOV.						
DEC.						

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

The breeding location of the Ross's Goose remained a mystery until June 1938, when A. Gavin found a nesting colony of about 100 birds 14 miles southeast of the Perry River delta, Nunavut, Canada?

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

Ohio's first accepted record of a Ross's Goose wasn't until 1982? The species is increasing in North America, spreading from west to east.

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

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*Nature never sleeps and is quick to return things to its natural state?*

*Two examples of this are right here in the Cuyahoga Valley. The human imprint on these two places now look as though man was never there, and that is a good thing. When the Cuyahoga Valley became a "National Recreation Area" in 1974 the federal government had their hands full with plenty of dump sites, abandoned buildings, and rundown homes that simply used the ravines behind them as their own "trash service." In my many years of off-trail hiking through the Cuyahoga Valley I have encountered plenty of these sites. They are easy to find if you know what to look for - old foundations or grown-over driveways, non-native plantings where the houses used to be, and the ravine behind these places showing rusted washtubs, old busted ceramic crocks, broken liquor bottles, tires, etc. The world is your trash can!*

*One place that showcases nature's resiliency is the Ira Beaver Marsh. Looking at it now, one finds it hard to believe what it's been through. The following is from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park's website of a brief history of the area and the story of redemption.*

### **THE STORY OF THE BEAVER MARSH**

*Throughout the year, the Beaver Marsh teems with life. Depending on the month, you may be serenaded by choirs of countless frogs, watch turtles swim among lily pads, glimpse a beaver nibbling on a willow branch, or hear Northern Cardinals call from snowy trees. The Beaver Marsh is among the most diverse natural communities in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The exceptional scenery and wildlife make it one of the park's most popular destinations. Here you can enjoy photography, bird watching, and sharing nature with family and friends.*

**MARSHLAND RESTORATION** - *Starting in the 1800's, land development drained the original wetland. The Ohio & Erie Canal came through. Darwin Carter had a dairy farm near Lock 26 in the early 1900's (see: "The Towpath Traveler from 03/2015). Later, Burl Tonkin ran an auto repair shop on a nearby property along Riverview Rd.. Burl loved to tinker, so it was surrounded by old cars and worn-out parts. The extended Tonkin family lived in three homes across the street in what is now Howe Meadow. Two other families had homes by what is now Ira Trailhead.*

*During the establishment of the national park, efforts by humans and beavers transformed this site back into a wetland. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the federal government purchased land here and removed the buildings. The young park envisioned a special event site on the west side of Riverview Rd. and considered building a parking lot for it on the east side. Around the same time, beavers started returning to the valley. They had been absent from Ohio for over a century, trapped out for their fur. Beavers gradually built a system of dams that flooded the area. By altering their environment and creating deep water, beavers can enter their lodge underwater and swim to gather building supplies and food, avoiding the dangers on land. Beaver dams and lodges were well established by 1985 when the land tracts were inventoried.*

*In the mid 1980's, the park began cleaning up small dump sites throughout what was now called "Beaver Marsh." The largest was organized by Sierra Club volunteers in 1984. Together with the National Park Service, they hauled away car parts, bed springs, and accumulated trash. Humans cleaned up and preserved the land. Beavers restored natural water levels, awakening long-dormant seeds in the soil. Wetland plants returned, creating habitat for diverse wildlife.*

***A VITAL RESOURCE*** - Ohio has lost nearly 90% of its wetlands to development. Nationally, 46% of endangered or threatened species need wetlands. Cuyahoga Valley National Park protects nearly 1,500 individual wetlands covering over 1,900 acres of parkland. Many of these are less than one acre. The 70-acre Beaver Marsh is significant because of its size, rich seed bed, complex water chemistry, and diversity of life.

To measure wetland health, resource managers use the Vegetation Index of Biotic Integrity (VIBI). Scientists found highly sensitive wetland plants such as Hairy Fruited Sedge, Skunk Cabbage, Marsh Fern, Speckled Alder, Buttonbush, and Sweet-scented Water Lily. In some degraded areas, invasive plants such as Narrow-leaved Cattail, Common Reed, and Purple Loosestrife are crowding out other species.

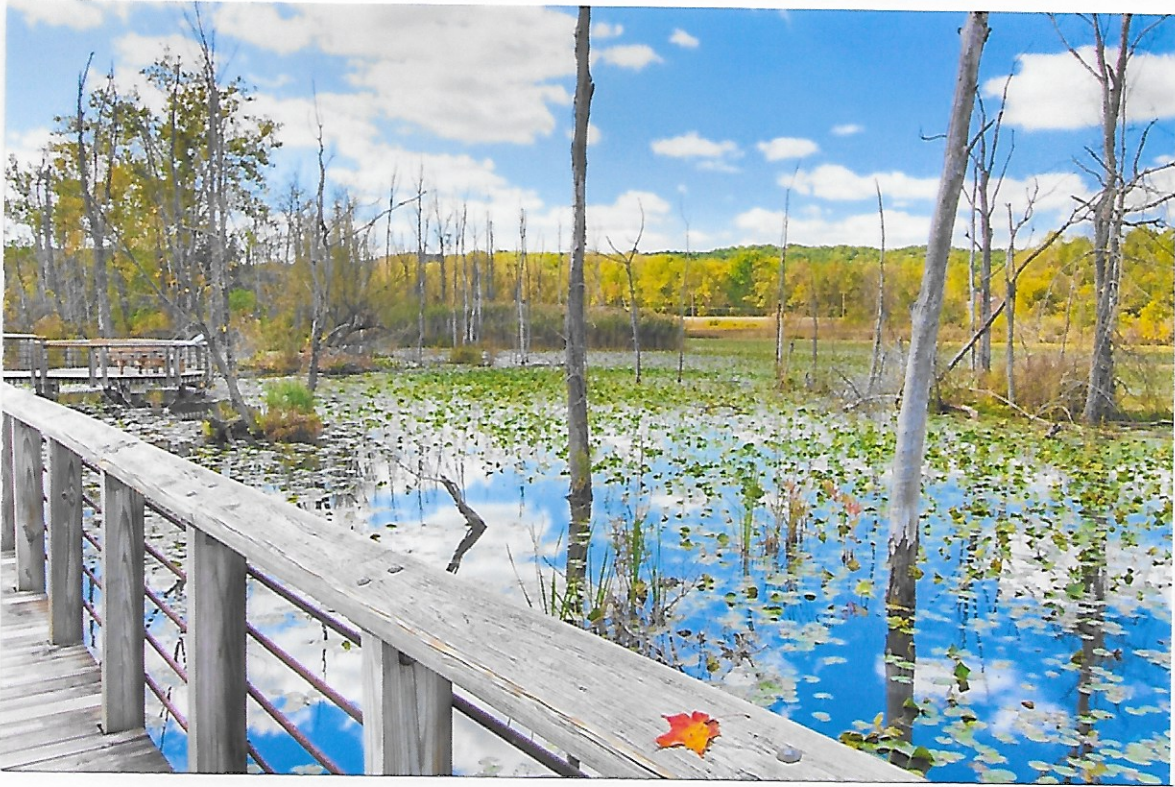
The VIBI plant surveys also confirmed that there are several microhabitats within the marshland, supporting distinct plant communities. This mosaic, in turn, supports a greater variety of wildlife.

The Beaver Marsh reminds us of what can happen when natural places are protected and natural processes are allowed to occur. However, we must remain vigilant to threats that could undermine its pristine qualities. As you enjoy the serene beauty and abundant wildlife, consider your role in ensuring that the Beaver Marsh has a bright future.



*Blast from the past - Burl Tonkin's automotive shop along Riverview Rd. circa the early 1980's. This would be looking north, with the Ira Beaver Marsh on the right and what is now the entrance apron to Howe Meadow on the left.*

*(photo courtesy of National Park Service)*



*A haven for both flora and fauna, the Ira Beaver Marsh is one of the crown jewels in Cuyahoga Valley National Park.*

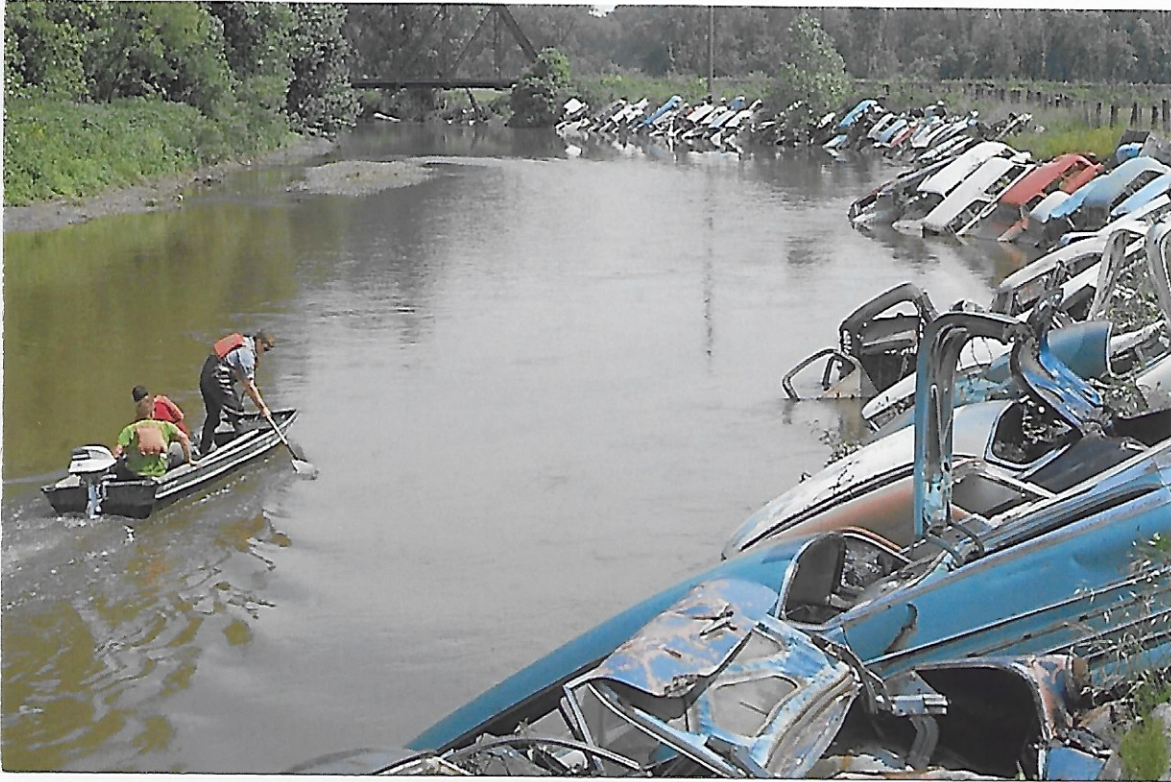
*(photo by: Jeffrey Gibson)*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*Since the inaugural Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census in 2010, the Ira Beaver Marsh has always been one of the most anticipated stops along the route? Sightings abound there, with some, like the Northern River Otter, being seen there exclusively. When it comes to bird sightings the beaver marsh is the best habitat along the route. These include waterfowl like Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser and Pied-billed Grebe. Marsh birds like Virginia Rail, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Green Heron and Marsh Wren. And yearly residents like Eastern Kingbird, Willow Flycatcher, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and Swamp Sparrow, as well as migrants like Great Egret, Purple Martin and Cliff Swallow.*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*The other site is not nearly as significant as the Ira Beaver Marsh, but interesting all the same. Prior to the Cuyahoga Valley becoming a National Recreation Area in 1974, and well before it was re-designated as a National Park in 2000, the park was in the hands of many locals, some just living there, but others farming the land. The following photo is of the Cuyahoga River bank along a farmer's field and the trouble he went through to keep his land from eroding into the ever-changing and flooding "crooked river." The location is just south of Vaughn Rd./Highland Rd. near Red Lock where we start the monthly census. The old iron trestle that lead to the Jaite Paper Mill is in the distance. Those of us old enough to remember the old "Keep America Beautiful" and anti-litter campaigns of the early to mid 1970's, with Native American actor-portrayer Iron Eyes Cody (who was actually of Italian descent), recall the tear streaming down his face as he witnessed what America had become, and sadly still is. If the sight of all that litter brought him to tears, he would've had a meltdown over this! The cars have since been removed and that farmer's field? Yes, it's overgrown, but still there.*



To me, a truly unforgettable photo documentation. Farm field erosion problems? Just call 1-800-JUNK-CAR!  
 A LIFE Magazine photographer captured this shot in 1968 as the Cuyahoga River was well on its way to becoming  
 the poster child for the Environmental Protection Agency. (photo by: Alfred Eisenstaedt)

**LITERATURE CITED**

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