

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

HISTORY & FACTS of the JANUARY CENSUS

JANUARY	13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
39 / 1,152	40 / 654	42 / 1,400	48 / 2,385	46 / 1,570	42 / 1,484	43 / 2,147	40 / 1,232	45 / 1,365
2019	2020	2021	2022					
42 / 740	41 / 785	47 / 1,014	41 / 1,508					

Most Species seen in January : 48 on 01/01/2013.

Most Individual Birds seen in January : 2,385 Total Birds on 01/01/2013.

Fewest Species seen in January : 39 on 01/01/2010.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in January : 654 on 01/01/2011.

Species Average in January : 42.7 Species.

Total Individuals Average in January : 1,341.2 Total Birds.

Lowest Temperature on January Census : 19-degrees F on 01/04/2010.

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

Longest Time Afield on January Census : 10:00 hours & 25 minutes on 01/01/2021 & 01/02/2021*.

* = due to "Winter Storm John" the 2021 census was done over two days. 01/01/21 was from Red Lock Trailhead to Peninsula and 01/02/21 was from Peninsula south to the end in Merriman Valley.)

Shortest Time Afield on January Census : 6 hours & 15 minutes on 01/04/2010**.

** = due to terrible trail conditions (snow and ice), the inaugural Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census in 2010 was cut short by almost 2 miles, and Michelle picked me up at the Botzum Trailhead parking lot just south of Bath Rd.

LAST JANUARY'S FIELD REPORT

01/01/21 & 01/02/21	TOTAL SPECIES:	47	TOTAL BIRDS:	1,014
START / END TIME:	01/01: 7:35am - 11:35am; 01/02: 7:50am - 2:15pm			
TIME AFIELD:	01/01: 4 hours; 01/02: 6 hours & 25 minutes = 10 hours & 25 minutes.			
FT. MI.:	01/01: 4.93 miles; 01/02: 9.10 miles = 14.03 miles.			
ROUTE:	Due to "Winter Storm John", this month's census was done over two days. On 01/01 we were able to make it to the Rt. 303 bridge in Peninsula, for shelter. After realizing the weather experts were wrong with, "the snow first, then freezing rain, then rain", John and I aborted the census due to heavy, steady rain. On 01/02, Michelle and I resumed the census from Peninsula south to Ira Trailhead, where Michelle departed, and I continued south to the end of the census in the Merriman Valley. 01/01: Red Lock Trailhead south to the Rt. 303 bridge in Peninsula; 01/02: Lock 29 Trailhead in Peninsula south to Merriman Valley.			
TEMP.:	01/01: 30F ~ 34F; 01/02: 36F ~ 37F			
CONDITIONS:	01/01: Cloudy; freezing rain at 10:20am changing to steady cold rain, turning into a downpour once we reached the Rt. 303 bridge in Peninsula; 01/02: Overcast with light mist ending at the start of the census; cloudy until 9:40am when the light mist returned, continuing until 10:30am; then cloudy and calm for the rest of the census.			

(continued)

OBSERVERS:	01/01: John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus (Red Lock Trailhead south to the Rt. 303 bridge in Peninsula, then picked up at Lock 29 parking lot.) 01/02: Michelle Vogus (Lock 29 parking lot in Peninsula south to Ira Trailhead) and Douglas W. Vogus.
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	01/01: Poor; many icy and slick sections, mainly in the middle of the trail; the boardwalk at Stumpy Basin was very treacherous and ice-covered; the rest of the trail turning slick and wet due to the rain. 01/02: Wet and sloppy due to heavy rain the previous day; a few patches of remaining ice, especially on the bridges.
RIVER CONDITIONS:	01/01: Swift and higher than normal. 01/02: Very high, muddy, and raging; all runs, creeks, and rivulets full-flow on to the Cuyahoga River; all ponds frozen except for one open area on the spring-fed northern end of the Ira Beaver Marsh from north end to the beaver lodge; no snow cover.

EIGHT YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On January 01, 2014 we set a high for one of Ohio's most common winter visitors, as we tallied 118 American Tree Sparrows along the census route. Although named a "tree" sparrow, these ground-loving sparrows' arrival in Autumn are a sure sign that the first snows of Winter are not too far behind.

American Tree Sparrows are often encountered in the Cuyahoga Valley from late Fall to early Spring, but much more frequently in successional fields and woodland edges above the valley riverbottom. This high sighting of 118 birds for the entire census was the only time we've hit triple digit numbers.

JANUARY 2022's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW (*Spizelloides arborea*)

DESCRIPTION: One of the hardiest of sparrows, this is the only one likely to winter in much of the far northern U.S. and southern Canada, where the Dark-eyed Junco can be found. At that season it is frequently mistaken for the Chipping Sparrow, but the two rarely overlap in winter. The American Tree Sparrow often occurs in flocks of up to 50 birds. In habitat and behavior, they are much like Field Sparrows, but American Tree Sparrows are more frequently at bird feeders. Gray head and nape crowned with rufous; rufous stripe behind eye; gray throat and breast, with dark central spot; rufous-buff patches on sides of breast. Back and scapulars are streaked with black and rufous. Outer tail feathers thinly edged in white on outer webs; grayish white underparts and two faint wingbars on wings.

LENGTH: 5 & 1/2" to 6 & 1/2" **WEIGHT:** Spring: 17.4 to 22.38 grams; Winter: 25 to 26 grams.

VOICE: **CALL:** Sharp, high, bell-like "tink"; sometimes with a more lispy quality. Flocks also give a musical "teedle-eet." **SONG:** Usually begins with several clear notes followed by a variable, rapid warble.

HABITS: Feeds largely on the ground or snow; scratches among dry grasses; eats almost exclusively on seeds of weeds and grasses; also insects and wild berries. Usually in flocks of 4 to 8 birds that stay together all winter, but congregates in larger flocks of 30 to 50 birds.

NESTING: **NEST:** Among stunted trees, shrubs just south of tundra and along Arctic coasts, on or near ground, in tussocks of grass, mossy hummocks of open tundra; in spruces or in dwarf willows, 1 to 5 feet up or on ground. Built by female, of grasses, plant stems, bark mosses, lined with ptarmigan feathers, dog hairs, lemming fur. **EGGS:** May to July; 3 to 6 eggs, usually 3 to 5 eggs, pale blue or pale green-white, spotted, speckled with browns over the entire surface. **INCUBATION:** By female, 12 to 13 days; young leave nest if undisturbed when 9 & 1/2 days old, when still unable to fly.

HABITAT: **BREEDING:** Breeds along edge of tundra, in open areas with scattered trees, brush. **WINTER:** Weedy fields, hedgerows, marshes, edges of groves of small trees, feeding stations.

RANGE: **BREEDS:** From northern Alaska to Labrador, south to central Alaska, northern British Columbia, northern Saskatchewan and central Quebec. **WINTERS:** From southern British Columbia, central Minnesota, northern Michigan, central Ontario, southwest Quebec, to Nova Scotia, south to northern California, central Nevada, central Arizona, central New Mexico, north Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Uncommon to rare west of the Rockies. **VAGRANT:** Casual to southern California, central Texas, and the Gulf Coast.

STATUS: Common wintering resident in Ohio with possible declines of the wintering population in the East.



One of our most common winter visitors, the American Tree Sparrow considers Ohio a great place to spend the winter.

(photo by: Alix d'Entremont)

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the American Tree Sparrow in Northeast Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
CCCCCCCC	CCCCCCCC	CCCCCCCC	CCCUuuuu	rrrrrooooo	
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
		oo	rrrrrruuuu	CCCCCCCC	CCCCCCCC

- 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 American Tree Sparrow on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.	18	29	7	22	118*	40	86	59
FEB.	71	24	7	11	17	13	33	27
MAR.	12	7	9	14	9	6	19	26
APR.		12	1	13	8	2	2	4
MAY								
JUN.								
JUL.								
AUG.								
SEP.								
OCT.								
NOV.	19	5	5			5	10	
DEC.	57	35	36	77	13	32	30	33

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
JAN.	24	7	15	5	6
FEB.	11	11	8	10	
MAR.	1	15	6	15	
APR.	4	11		2	
MAY					
JUN.					
JUL.					
AUG.					
SEP.					
OCT.					
NOV.	1			2	
DEC.	9	12	12	17	

DID YOU KNOW?: These hardy sparrows can withstand such cold temperatures as -20F, but have to have a plentiful food source to do so. Stomach content studies have shown one bird with 700 seeds of pigeon grass while another had 982 seeds in its crop alone!

DID YOU KNOW?: Banded birds reported to 6 to 8 & 1/2 years old and one reported at 9 years old when last seen.

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

JANUARY'S DID YOU KNOW?

So far as the subjects for "The Towpath Traveler," I often wonder what I will run out of first - subjects to write about or birds seen along the census route? Thanks to both my Mother and Father being gifted artists in their own right, I have loved art since I was a child, with most of my leanings towards wildlife art, specifically birds. I know, who would've guessed?! Having amassed quite a collection of birding field guides, as a youngster I got to know, visually, many of these artists' works and could often guess the artist just by looking at the painting. The certain nuances of each artist were evident to a young mind that studied these works as though at the end of every day there would be some kind of "birding test" I had to pass.

Whether it be the loose, action-packed oil paintings of (mostly) big mammals by Bob Kuhn, or the fine, no need for color, absolutely perfect pen and ink works of Ned Smith ("The Towpath Traveler" from April 2018) or, both my Father and I's personal favorite, Louis Agassiz Fuertes ("The Towpath Traveler" from December of 2017), to the underrated works of George Miksch Sutton, I experienced all these and more from my ever-growing personal library of everything bird book related, as well as inheriting my late Father's collection after he passed.

So, we will visit some of these fine artists and illustrators in 2022. Some will be artists that have done field guides, whereas others may produce works more along the lines of "fine art", and have done quite well, financially speaking, while some are underrated or even unknown, to some.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Two of my late Father's favorite bird artists, artists from his youth, were Walter A. Weber and Major Allan Brooks? Both of these artists are known mostly through their work with The National Geographic Society. In this issue we will explore the life and works of Major Allan Cyril Brooks.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *Canadian Naturalist, Ornithologist, and Wildlife Illustrator Allan Brooks was born at Etawah, northern India on February 16, 1869. Allan's father, William Brooks, was an engineer and ornithologist. He collected bird specimens for the British Museum. Allan was named after Allan Hume, ornithologist and founder of the Indian National Congress and personal friend of William Brooks.*

William Brooks hoped one of his sons would become an ornithologist and Allan showed some promise in this field early in his childhood. At the age of only two Allan often handled his father's bird specimens and was considered then to have a born talent for being a naturalist. Allan was sent to England in 1874 when he was about five years old and spent the next eight years living with his grandmother and maiden aunt while attending school in Northumberland.

DID YOU KNOW?: *A special friend of William Brooks, John Hancock, considered to be the father of modern taxidermy, spent a lot of time with Allan and taught him about butterfly collecting, botany, and basic taxidermy. It was said that Allan considered such things as board games or sports a waste of time and he preferred taking walks in the moors observing wildlife.*

In 1881, at the age of 54, William Brooks retired from his engineering profession and decided to take his family to Canada. Mary Brooks was in poor health and doctors recommended that the Canadian climate could be helpful to her. As well, William always wanted to be a farmer in Canada, a desire shared by many Englishmen at the time. The family (three boys and two girls) landed in Quebec and, shortly after their arrival, Mary Brooks passed away at the age of 42. She was buried in Quebec.

DID YOU KNOW?:

William then took his family to Milton, Ontario where he bought a 200-acre farm. It was about this time when Allan began sketching birds and the surrounding countryside. Some 25 species of birds nested in the area around the farm. Many famous ornithologists visited the farm and were a great influence on Allan. He learned how to prepare bird skins and accompanied a number of these men on field trips.

The family moved to British Columbia in 1887 and settled on a farm near Chilliwack. New species of birds and wildlife were available for Allan (who is now 18) and his skills as an ornithologist continue to grow. Within a year of arriving in British Columbia, William decided to return to Ontario. Two of his sons, Cecil and Ted, accompany him and Allan follows later in the year. However, by 1894, Allan and Ted return to B.C. and settle on a farm near the original Brooks home.

He spent much of his time between 1894 and 1900 doing sketches, obtaining mammal and bird specimens for various natural history museums in eastern Canada and the United States. The prices Brooks received for his specimens were low by today's standards. Small mammals and birds would fetch 25 to 30 cents each. Brooks sold a porcupine to Outram Bangs at Harvard University for \$3.00 and John Fannin at the Provincial Museum in Victoria paid him \$1.00 for a coyote. In 1897, Brooks was contributing his sketches and articles to the journal known as "Recreation." In a letter to his father in 1898 he writes, "...I have an article or two in it every month for which I get \$6.00 a month."

DID YOU KNOW?:

Between 1901 and 1910, Brooks spent much of his time traveling, sketching, painting, and contributing to ornithology books. A note in Brooks' diary reads... "Sketches wanted by W.L. Dawson. Coloured at \$5.00 each; black and white at \$2.00." Fifty-two species are listed and make up his first sizable commission work as an illustrator. The two-volume "Birds of Washington" would later be published in 1909.

DID YOU KNOW?:

During the winter of 1910-1911, Brooks took a six-week trip to California to work on the illustrations for Dawson's new book "The Birds of California." He returned in March of 1911 after having met with nearly every birdman and biologist in the state. In July of 1911, Brooks went to Vancouver for ten days to compete in the British Columbia Rifle Association matches. In August he went to Kamloops to compete in rifle matches there and to Armstrong in September for further matches. During 1912-13, Brooks devoted a lot of his time to the local rifle ranges. He also traveled to Vancouver to compete in an International Rifle Match then on to Toronto to compete in the rifle matches there. An entry in Brooks' diary for June 1914 simply reads "Left for England via Montreal, leaving the latter place on the 21st with the Canadian Rifle Team." Brooks was off to Bisley and the rifle matches taking place there.

DID YOU KNOW?:

War broke out while Brooks was at Bisley? After the matches he attempted to enlist in a Scottish regiment where it was discovered that he already held an officer's commission in the Canadian Militia (Lieutenant in the Rocky Mountain Rangers out of Armstrong). He was sent back to the training camp of the 1st Canadian contingent at Valcartier, Quebec. In the fall of 1914, at the age of 45, Lieutenant Brooks was off to England and the war in Europe. Upon his arrival in France he was promoted to Captain and a month later reached the level of Major in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

DID YOU KNOW?: Brooks' primary role in World War I was that of a sniper? His skills were such that he was mentioned in three dispatches and received the Distinguished Service Order. Brooks suffered some hearing loss while fighting and was eventually pulled from the trenches and put to the job of giving instructional courses on the rifle and sniping. During his time overseas, Brooks continued to observe and sketch wildlife even from the trenches. He sent many renderings to his friend Percy Taverner whom he corresponded with regularly. Brooks arrived back at the Okanagan Valley, his Canadian home since spring of 1897, on April 15, 1919. He quickly picked up where he left off five years previous and began observing and sketching birds. The war had changed him some and Brooks no longer desired to attend rifle matches or hunt big game. Instead, he devoted himself entirely to ornithology.

DID YOU KNOW?: In 1925, at the age of 57, Allan Brooks married 38-year old Marjorie Holmes of Arundel, England. An outdoors person and avid gardener, Marjorie created a splendid garden of colours at their home in Okanagan Landing. One morning she caught Allan crouched in the middle of her flowers with his shotgun across his knees. Allan was attempting to collect a hummingbird specimen. Marjorie lambasted him for using her flowerbed as a hummingbird blind. Allan surrendered his gun to his wife with the promise that no more collecting would take place on the premises. Allan and Marjorie announced the birth of a son, Allan Cecil Brooks, on January 2, 1926.

DID YOU KNOW?: Brooks traveled extensively after the war from 1920 to 1939, when, at the age of 70, World War II put an end to many trips abroad. 1920 saw him travel up the coast to Prince Rupert and the Queen Charlotte Islands in the spring. In the fall of 1920 he was off to eastern Canada to visit his friend Percy Taverner at the National Museum in Ottawa. From Ottawa he went on to New York to meet with American artist and naturalist Louis Agassiz Fuertes. 1924 saw him heading up the British Columbia coast to Skagway, Alaska. He completed a series of illustrations for Florence Bailey's "Birds of New Mexico" (1928). In 1931, Brooks traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Gilbert Grosvenor, editor of National Geographic Magazine to discuss illustrations for an upcoming issue. This visit actually marked the beginning of a series of illustrations that would be included in 20 issues.

November of 1931 saw he and his family board the "S.S. Niagara" at Vancouver and sailed to New Zealand to spend the winter near Allan's sister, Edith Swan, in Auckland. They stopped off in Hawaii and Australia. 1933 saw him prowling around New Mexico and California. In November of 1934, the Brooks family boarded the "M.S. Aorangi" to begin an around the world sketching and bird watching tour. Brooks' field notes during this tour are extensive and his paintings depicting the sea are exquisite.

DID YOU KNOW?: At least four major museums offered jobs to Brooks in his early years, including the Provincial Museum in Victoria, and he turned them all down? He was a free-lancer and a steady job would have driven him mad. In the field, Brooks usually wore knickerbockers along with game pockets strapped around his middle with wide straps slung over his shoulders. He also packed binoculars around his neck and sometimes a telescope. Canadian writer and naturalist, Hamilton Lang, said Brooks brought an air of dignity while collecting his bird specimens and "He tramped about the Commonage with the stiff backed plodding gait of an old country gentleman." He passed away on January 3, 1946 at age 77.



Artist, ornithologist, naturalist, marksman, war hero, world traveler - Major Allan Brooks was a man of many hats.

(photo courtesy of: Greater Vernon Museum & Archives)

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See You on the Trail! - Doug