

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

HISTORY & FACTS of the JUNE CENSUS

JUNE	13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
80 / 1,004	72 / 1,322	73 / 815	79 / 1,013	75 / 894	78 / 759	79 / 1,120	74 / 1,014	74 / 1,112
2019	2020	2021	2022					
74 / 1,177	79 / 770	73 / 814	77 / 760					

- Most Species seen in June : 80 on 06/05/2010.
- Most Individual Birds seen in June : 1,322 on 06/04/2011.
- Fewest Species seen in June : 72 on 06/04/2011.
- Fewest Individual Birds seen in June : 759 on 06/06/2015.
- Species Average in June : 75.9 Species.
- Total Individuals Average in June : 967.2 Individuals.
- Lowest Temperature on June Census : 44 degrees F on 06/07/2014.
- Highest Temperature on June Census : 89 degrees F on 06/04/2011.
- Longest Time Afield on June Census : 11 Hours & 50 Minutes on 06/03/2022 & 06/04/2022.
- Shortest Time Afield on June Census : 7 Hours & 15 Minutes on 06/05/2010.

LAST JUNE'S FIELD REPORT

06/04/21	TOTAL SPECIES:	73	START / END TIME:	6:20am - 4:00pm	
	TOTAL BIRDS:	814	TIME AFIELD:	9:40	FT. MI.: 13.63
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, with stops at Trail Mix In Peninsula and Szalay's Farm Market for lunch.				
			TEMP.:	59F ~ 82F	
OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.				
CONDITIONS:	Mostly cloudy with fading fog at the start, turning partly sunny until 10:45am; then mostly cloudy again until 1:15pm, then turning mostly sunny again and much warmer; pleasant southerly breezes throughout the day.				
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Fair. Some puddling and fallen branches from previous two days of steady rain; some fallen or snapped limbs and compromised (bent and hanging) trees from April 21st.'s heavy, wet snow. Many will need trimmed as they are hanging head-high above the trail, causing bicyclists and joggers to duck or go around.				
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Slightly above normal and muddy from previous two days of rain.				

SIX YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On 06/04/2016 we set a high for Wood Thrush with five. We also tied that high on 05/12/2017. One would think that this woodland songster would be more common on the river bottoms - but that hasn't been the case.

JUNE 2022's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

DESCRIPTION: A chunky, well-marked brown thrush of eastern North America. Sexes alike. Heavy-bodied, brown above with russet head; white underparts boldly marked on breast, sides and flanks with large round or oval black spots. Obvious white eye ring barely broken by dark gray eye line. Distinctive black-and-white striped auriculars and spotting on throat and cheeks forming streaks.

LENGTH: 7 & 1/2" to 8 & 1/2" **WINGSPREAD:** 13" to 14" **WEIGHT:** 42.7 to 52 grams

VOICE: **CALL:** A rolling "popopopo" and a rapid, staccato "pit pit pit" or liquid "quirt!"
FLIGHT NOTE: A sharp, nasal "jeeen." **SONG:** A beautiful, loud and sweet, liquid song with bell-like and flute-like notes, "ee-oh-lee, ee-oh-lay", calm, unhurried and peaceful. This song is usually introduced with quiet "po" notes, not audible at a long distance, and ending with a buzzy or trilled whistle.

HABITS: Males first appear in the southern U.S. in March and April and reach northeast Ohio by late April to early May. When arriving on chosen nesting territory they begin singing, early in the season from higher treetops, later only about 15-feet above ground and from ground, logs, and edge of nest. Catches insects from tree foliage but mostly on or near ground. Eats beetles, caterpillars, moths, grasshoppers, flies, bugs; also spiders, myriapods, sow bugs, snails, earthworms. Also eats berries of spicebush, dogwood, Virginia creeper, blackberries, elderberries, pokeberries, mulberries.

HABITAT: An almost exclusive woodland bird. Occasionally found on woodland edges during migration. Summers in low, cool, damp deciduous forests. Has been found on wooded slopes in New England up to 2,000 feet. Prefers dark, shady, undisturbed hardwood habitats.

NESTING: **NEST:** Much like that of robin but distinguished by dead leaves and mosses, also lined with rootlets, not grasses as in robin's nest, 6- to 50-feet up, but usually only 6- to 12-feet up, in crotch of shrub or tall tree, but prefers maple or beech saplings, often with piece of paper, white cloth, or cellophane conspicuously incorporated into nest. **EGGS:** April (in the South) to July, 2 to 5 eggs, usually 3 to 4, immaculate pale blue or blue-green. **INCUBATION:** By female, 13 to 14 days; young leave nest when 12 to 13 days old. Usually two broods each year.

RANGE: Nests from southeast South Dakota, central Minnesota, central Wisconsin, northern Michigan, southern Ontario, southern Quebec, northern Vermont, central New Hampshire, and southwest Maine, south to southeast Texas and Gulf Coast east to northern Florida, casually north to southern New Brunswick and west to southwest North Dakota. Winters from south Texas, Mexico to Panama; casually north to central Texas and Florida; casual in Colombia and Bahama Islands.

STATUS: Forest fragmentation and resultant cowbird parasitism negatively impacts populations in parts of breeding and wintering ranges.

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Wood Thrush in Northeast Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
*			uuu	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCcuuu	rrrrrrrooo	oooo***	*****

- 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.
- rrrrrrrrrrr = 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 Wood Thrush on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.								
MAR.								
APR.								
MAY	1			1	1	1	2	5*
JUN.	1			4	1	1	5*	1
JUL.		1	2	4	1	2	2	1
AUG.						1		
SEP.			1					
OCT.								
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
JAN.					
FEB.					
MAR.					
APR.					
MAY	3	2			2
JUN.	3	1		1	
JUL.		1	3	1	
AUG.		1			
SEP.					
OCT.					
NOV.					
DEC.					

DID YOU KNOW?:

The Wood Thrush has many local aliases? These include Bellbird, Song Thrush, Swamp Angel, Swamp Robin and Wood Robin. Although from the same family as the American Robin, you usually won't see this beauty seeking out earth-worms on your front lawn.

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



Beauty is more than feather deep - Terence M. Shortt's watercolor of a Wood Thrush (left) and a photo of a Wood Thrush in full song - a song that is virtually unmatched by any other Ohio breeding songbird.

(photo by: Andrew Spencer)

JUNE'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?: Yet another of my favorite bird illustrator's was Terence M. Shortt. Many of his works were displayed in the birding magazines I voraciously consumed as a youth. His paintings spanned the globe and were always amazingly detailed and accurate. Terence Michael (T.M.) Shortt was born of Irish ancestry on March 01, 1911, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He attended the Winnipeg School of Art before joining the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in 1930. Terry was promoted to artist-ornithologist in 1939 and chief of biology display in 1949. During his 46 years at the museum he took part in more than 30 expeditions to collect material for dioramas. He retired in 1976.

DID YOU KNOW?: Terry specialized in bird portraits, and his watercolor sketches of nearly 2,000 species have been exhibited widely. He also illustrated 26 books, including F.H. Kortright's "Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America," in which downy young of these birds were depicted for the first time (1943); L.L. Snyder's "Arctic Birds of Canada" (1956); J.P. MacKenzie's "Birds in Peril" (1977); and C. Hume's "From the Wild" (1986). Terry wrote and illustrated two books, "Not as the Crow Flies," a narrative of his expeditions (1975); and "Wild Birds of Canada and the Americas," with notes, observations, and sketches of a field artist (1977). Terence Shortt played an important role in the advancement of ornithology as a field observer and as an artist of outstanding perception and achievement. Terence M. Shortt, Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1939, died at Toronto on December 28, 1986.

DID YOU KNOW?:

I kept many of the articles pertaining to bird artists from my early issues of both "National Wildlife" and "International Wildlife" from my youth? The following is an article that Terence M. Shortt not only illustrated but wrote for "International Wildlife" on his trip to paint and observe the birds of Madagascar. I don't have the exact year, but it is safe to say that it was probably from the late 1970's or early 1980's. It gets one inside the artists mind.

On its taxiing run at Morondava in Madagascar, our aircraft startled four sandgrouse along the edge of the tarmac. There was no time to reach for the sketchbook in my flight bag under the seat, so I quickly drew the sandgrouse on an air sickness bag in ballpoint pen. That sketch joins the bee-eaters I drew on a table napkin while drinking tea in the gardens of the Tollygunge Club in Calcutta, the migrating buzzrd hawks scribbled on the backs of bank deposit slips in Winnipeg and the Bohemian waxwings I drew on a laundry list in the parking lot of the Elbow Inn motel in Calgary. When you're a bird artist, you make due with what you have.

Actually, for 46 years as a staff member of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and now as a full-time wildlife artist, I have sketched thousands of birds in dozens of places, from Uganda to the Arctic. If you are as crazy about birds as I am, you will know what I mean when I say that it is impossible to pick out a "favorite" species or place. But certainly one of the most alluring locations on earth for ornithologists and artists alike is the great red island where I sketched those four sandgrouse - Madagascar. There, 250 miles off Africa's east coast, is an incredible diversity of ecological communities: dry, mountain and humid forests as well as savannahs and semi-deserts where spiny succulents and grotesque baobab trees create a bizarre sensation of age-old decadence.

I recently spent several weeks sketching in the Malagasy Republic, as Madagascar is now known. Although it is 980 miles long and 360 miles wide, it hosts only 186 species of breeding birds - not many compared to, say, Colombia's 1,640 species. But the enthralling part is this: 131 of the birds live nowhere else in the world, a remarkable number considering Madagascar's proximity to the African continent.

Since many of these birds live at or near ground level, I spent much of my time squatting or stooping to look for them under the thick tangle of brush. In the process, I filled three 100-page sketchbooks with impressions of Malagasy birds. These, in turn, led to the finished studies that accompany this text - not paintings with full backgrounds, but a record of what the birds looked like to me. In the rarefied spectrum of ornithological hobbies, bird sketching rates somewhere between the simple pursuit of bird watching and the exacting process of capturing birds on film. I feel fortunate that back in the 1920's, when I first became interested in recording what birds look like, high-speed photography was still years away. The only camera that I owned was a one-speed, one-stop, one-focus Kodak Brownie - hardly the ideal equipment for birds. There was no choice left but to sketch.

Through the years, I have found there is no substitute for sketching from life as a method of learning about a bird's posture, the way it grips a branch, flicks its tail, raises a crest or holds its wings. Each sketch becomes a memory prompter that no photograph can equal, for the sketcher has participated, mentally and physically, in the observation and then creation of every line. Some younger outdoor artists use the camera exclusively to gather their reference material, and there is really nothing wrong with this, for the camera can be looked upon as merely an extension of human vision. But anything that does your work for you necessarily dilutes your personal involvement in that work.

My finished studies are based on field sketches, rather than photographs, and on subsequent observations of museum specimens, or skins. The sketches provide the postures and actions. The skins give proportions of wings, legs and toes, number of tail feathers and other details that are not readily observable in the field.

During my brief stint in Madagascar, I encountered something over two-thirds of the native birds and I sketched virtually everything that I saw. Included were quite a few of the that make the Malagasy Republic their exclusive home.

A sketch can't do everything, of course, and one of the most remarkable aspects of Madagascar bird life I could not draw is the song, which is rudimentary, almost larval, in character. There is no swelling dawn chorus like that in eastern America. For the most part, the vocalizations are made up of growls, groans, squawks and chaffering of couas and vasa parrots, the uninspired abrupt whistles of vangas, the unpleasant squeaks of sunbirds, the monotonous cries of cuckoos, and the mournful vociferation of the cuckoo-roller.

Color, on the other hand, is something that I can factor into my sketches. Only rarely does a bird sit still long enough to allow me to produce the opulent kind of "field sketches" sometimes seen in publications and which are purported to be from an artist's "field notebooks." My own scratchy sketches are scrawled hurriedly, as one might record an address or a telephone number in a harassed moment. To others, they are as indecipherable as a doctor's writing on a prescription. Yet, for me, each obscure jotting brings back vivid recollections of form, movement and even color.

My colors are taken from museum skins, but modified by my notes of color seen under natural light. For example, the Souimanga sunbird of Madagascar appears greenbacked under the controlled light of the studio, but as I saw it in the bright sun, its back was an indefinite pale-greenish gray and washed out amethyst. In bygone days, bird artists colored their birds so they could be compared to bird skins in a naturalist's collection. Today, our audience is made up almost entirely of outdoor people who see birds as they are.

Alongside one of my sketches, there may be a note: "Beak YZR 4/3." Those letters indicate that the creature's beak is orange, more yellow than red. The upper figure of the fraction denotes the hue's position on a scale of one to nine with respect to tone, or lightness and darkness. On a similar scale, the lower figure denotes the purity, or degree of degradation, of the hue towards slate, brown or olive. The symbol YZR 4/3, then, tells me that this beak was a fairly clear orange-yellow, about the color of a ripe apricot.

This quick recording system once produced an amusing incident. I was sketching in Kenya one day, scribbling at the edge of a thicket, when I became aware of someone peering over my shoulder. When I looked up, a gentleman muttered something of an apology and hastened off to join his female companion. He looked back at me and half-whispered something to his chum. I distinctly heard him say: "Nothing but scribbles that don't look like anything on earth. Must be one of those abstract artists. That or else he's nuts."

My field sketches are not laborious copies, that's for sure. Most are slapped down after one quick glance at a bird. Many are drawn after the bird has flown away. I am, in effect, drawing from a mental afterimage. It is much like the tactics of a personality caricaturist. He instantly notes the shape of a person's nose, the arch of the eyebrows, the general facial structure, the mouth and the teeth, the hairline. With practice, he can achieve the exaggerated likeness that makes a good cartoon. In the same way, the bird sketcher compares a new species with an old familiar bird - the norm.

In the years I spent working for the Royal Ontario Museum, it was my responsibility to prepare many bird specimens for research collections and for public display. This entailed dissecting many birds and setting up mounts and skeletons. Each exercise was an anatomy lesson, and that firsthand knowledge of the way birds are put together adds still another dimension to my art. I know what takes place with the bones and muscles under a bird's feathers when it runs, preens, raises its wings or engages in any of its normal activities.

In the field, all of that training and all those years of observation and sketching come together. Take, for example, my first thoughts on seeing the cuckoo-roller of Madagascar performing its aerial gymnastics, which went something like this: "Resembles a soaring buteonine hawk, wings outspread horizontally but inclined at a somewhat more forward angle, the tips of the outer primaries on a line with the beak... but when gliding preparatory to making one of its shallow bent-wing dives, the wings are held in a way unlike any other bird of my experience." So in this instance I concentrated on the glides. How were the arm bones flexed to produce that angle? What were the shoulder blades doing and how did that affect the scapular feathers? With a knowledge of avian anatomy, I can do a fair amount of a "piori" reasoning as to what is actually taking place up there, 80 feet overhead. That ability is especially helpful in a place like Madagascar, where the birds are so elusive and little-known.

LITERATURE CITED

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Eyes are proportionately large...an adaptation to life in the dim interior of the forest.



Song composed of a series of yodels, each beginning with a high note, followed by a low note and ending in a trill.



Lives in cool woodlands near water, lush mosses and oozy ground, where it searches for insects.



Only North American thrush marked with rounded, black spots on a snowy breast.



Builds its nest from sodden leaves, rotting bark and other wet materials that form a light, strong cup when dry



Preliminary sketches for the
wood thrush

(*Hylocichla mustelina*)

painted by Terence Shortt

Remove art prints by carefully pulling them away from the staples at the center of the open magazine.
Cut apart and trim before mounting.