

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

HISTORY & FACTS of the MARCH CENSUS

MARCH	13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
47 / 1,220	46 / 1,327	47 / 1,008	44 / 689	50 / 1,871	51 / 1,466	43 / 1,078	46 / 906	47 / 744
2019	2020	2021	2022					
44 / 1,721	48 / 681	50 / 692	56 / 1,221					

Most Species seen in March : 56 on 03/03/2022.

Most Individual Birds seen in March : 1,871 on 03/07/2014.

Fewest Species seen in March : 43 on 03/04/2016.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in March : 681 on 03/03/2021.

Species Average in March : 47.6 Species.

Total Individuals Average in March : 1,124.9 Individuals.

Lowest Temperature on March Census : minus 2-degrees F on 03/06/2015.

Highest Temperature on March Census : 56-degrees F on 03/02/2012 & 03/03/2020.

Longest Time Afield on March Census : 9 hours & 55 minutes on 03/06/2015.

Shortest Time Afield on March Census : 6 hours & 50 minutes on 03/04/2011.

LAST MARCH'S FIELD REPORT

03/04/21	TOTAL SPECIES:	50	START / END TIME:	6:55am - 4:20pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	692	TIME AFIELD:	9:15	FT. MI.:	14.10
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, along with part of the Stanford Hostel connector trail, a stop at Trail Mix in Peninsula, and hike Bolanz Rd. east to the bridge over the Cuyahoga River to look for waterfowl, then back to the Towpath Trail continuing south.					
TEMP.:	34F ~ 28F	OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.			
CONDITIONS:	Cloudy with winds from the N at 5-7mph, shifting to N/NW, then back to N; flurries starting at 11:45am until the end of the census, at times heavy, but no accumulation; temperatures slowly dropping throughout the day; no snow cover; windy last hour of the census; Dover Pond and Ira Beaver Marsh both ice-free.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Poor. Mostly frozen and rutted from bikes and heavy foot traffic when it was warmer, muddier in heavier traveled sections with puddling pushing bikers and hikers to the grassy edges; survey work going on at the north end of Stanford Swamp, rutted from survey vehicle; survey stakes along trail where river comes close to trail, as well as along the Cuyahoga River, which hopefully does not affect Towpath Trail access in the future.					
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Fast and muddy from snow melt and rain earlier in the week; no waterfowl in the river at all; little to no rockbars or sandbars visible.					

SEVEN YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On 03/06/2015 we set a census high for the Common Goldeneye. We tallied 35 of these diving ducks in the Cuyahoga River over the length of the census. With all the twists and turns of our "crooked river", one can only wonder how many were actually in the Cuyahoga Valley in the unseen portions of the river. With numbers much higher in larger bodies of water such as Lake Erie to the north, they readily take to the Cuyahoga River as the big lake starts to freeze over.

MARCH 2022's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*)

DESCRIPTION: Large, almost triangular-shaped head with sloping forehead. **MALE:** Has a green-glossed head with a round white spot between golden eyes and bill. Male in flight shows more white than any other duck except Common Merganser; underparts white and extensive white on back and wings make it appear very white except for dark head. **FEMALE:** Dull brown head, pale gray body, and black bill with yellow tip. In flight, large round dark head and short neck distinctive; exceedingly swift and strong flier. They take flight with fewer strides across the water than all other diving ducks - three or four strides and they become airborne.

LENGTH: 16" to 20" **WINGSPAN:** 25" to 32"
WEIGHT: **MALE:** 2.0 -3.2 lbs, avg. 2.37 lbs **FEMALE:** 1.6 - 2.8 lbs, avg. 1.74 lbs.

VOICE: Not noisy, male in courtship utters a harsh double note, "zee-zeee" or "zee-zee-at," resembling call of a nighthawk, and a rattling "rrrrt." Female a low-pitched, harsh "quack."

HABITS: An expert diver, they have been timed being underwater from 11 to 41 seconds, with an average of 30 seconds. Can dive to depths of 20 feet or more in search of shellfishes, but usually feeds in water less than 10 feet. Swims about underwater by propelling with its feet. An examination of 395 gizzards of Common Goldeneyes from 26 states and 5 provinces disclosed that 74% of the foods consumed were animal and 26% vegetable. Of the animal foods, 32% were crustaceans (mud crabs and other crabs, crayfishes, amphipods), 28% were insects (caddis flies, water boatmen, dragonflies, damselflies, and mayflies), 10% mollusks (blue and other mussels, and snails), and 3% fish. Plant foods comprised pondweed seeds, tubers, and leafy structures, wild celery, and seeds of pond lilies and bulrushes.

NESTING: **NEST:** Usually in a large tree cavity, usually close to, or over water, in open hollow at top of broken-off trunk, at heights varying from 6 to 60 feet above ground, in large hardwood trees such as elms, maples, and birches. Nest inside may be 5 to 15 feet below hole or hollow at which bird enters, and lined with pure white down. Will also use nestboxes. **EGGS:** May to July, 5 to 19 eggs, commonly 8 to 12 eggs, clear, pale green or gray-green. **INCUBATION:** By female, 28 to 32 days; chicks remain in nest for day or two or until strong enough to leap from nesting hole; female clucks and calls to young from water or ground below and leads them away. Young first fly at 56 to 62 days after hatching.

HABITAT: Breeds almost exclusively in the boreal forests of Eurasia, Canada, and Alaska. Although goldeneyes most commonly winter on the bays and estuaries along the coasts, they also frequent large inland bodies of water, preferring deep, clear water.

RANGE: The Common Goldeneye occurs across the Northern Hemisphere with the exceptions of Iceland and Greenland. Where in North America follows, but they also winter along the coast of Europe from Norway to Spain, the north coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas, and south to Iran. On the Asiatic Coast, they winter from the lower Kamchatka Peninsula along the coasts of Korea, Japan, and China south to Taiwan.

In North America, nests in coniferous forests from western and central Alaska and northern Northwest Territories, northern Manitoba, northern Ontario, northern Quebec, eastern Labrador south to southern British Columbia, northeast Wyoming, central Nebraska, northern Minnesota, northern Michigan, central Ontario, southern Quebec, northeast New York, northern Vermont, Maine, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Winters wherever open water, from southern edge of nesting range to Baja California (rarely), and to northern Iowa and central Wisconsin, and coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

STATUS: Common. Most data suggests population is relatively stable, but effects of habitat loss and alterations are of concern.



The aptly named Common Goldeneye is a beautiful winter visitor to Ohio, especially when viewed in the right light.

(photo by: Gary Kramer)

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

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	uuuuurrr	rrrooooo	
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
*			oorr	uuuuuCC	CCCCCCC

* = the only summer record was a female at Dike 14, (now Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve) on July 27-31, 1984

- 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.
- OOOOOOO = 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 Common Goldeneye on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.							1	
MAR.	1				8	35*		
APR.								
MAY								
JUN.								
JUL.								
AUG.								
SEP.								
OCT.								
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
JAN.	2				
FEB.	2	29			23
MAR.		5			
APR.					
MAY					
JUN.					
JUL.					
AUG.					
SEP.					
OCT.					
NOV.					
DEC.					

DID YOU KNOW?: The males exaggerated courtship display involves throwing its head backwards to its tail, then thrusting it forward, with rear leg kicks at times, and is well worth "googling"!

DID YOU KNOW?: During the brood-rearing period, the young of two or more females often become amalgamated, producing rather large "families" of dependent young?

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

MARCH'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?: *Some artists paint birds near where they have grown up, the birds familiar to them since their youth, only to move on to paint the rest of the birds within their country, whereas others move on from their native country, yearning to paint birds in places foreign to them, thus expanding their skills as an artist and the study of birds they are unfamiliar with. Then, in the case of Iowa artist Maynard Reece, you paint what you love most, and even when veering off course from it, you always return to what you love most.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *The one and only Roger Tory Peterson wrote the introduction to his 1984 compilation "The Waterfowl Art of Maynard Reece" and it follows...*

The Mississippi Valley is still the greatest flyway for waterfowl in the world, even though vast acreages of wetlands in the upper Midwest have been drained and turned by the plow. Fortunately, choice parts of this watery heartland have been set aside in federal and state refuges to insure that the hordes of ducks and geese that travel between their northern nesting grounds and the Gulf states will always have resting places. In this avian paradise Maynard Reece was born and there he spent most of his life painting his beloved wildfowl. In 1933, at age twelve, he won first prize at the Iowa State Fair for a drawing of mallards. He still has the ribbon.

It is no coincidence that most of the premier painters of American waterfowl have lived and painted in the Mississippi flyway, undoubtedly imprinted by their environment. The late Francis Lee Jacques, whose dioramas and decorative canvases grace half a dozen major museums, was born in the prairies of Illinois and lived out his later years in Minnesota. Owen Gromme of Wisconsin is another versatile museum preparator who turned his talents to waterfowl art. Indeed, that seems to be the way to go, believes Maynard Reece, who has followed a similar pattern after working as a preparator, taxidermist, and artist at the Iowa Museum of Natural History in Des Moines. He states, "You can get in the front door or the back door, but you have to get training somewhere - in both natural history and art. I have always been interested in painting wildlife. At the museum I learned taxidermy and began to study in the field."

Very few wildlife artists ever start as full-fledged freelancers. They usually take one of three routes: as commercial artist with some formal art training; as museum preparators; or as academics with degrees in wildlife or ornithology. Their gallery painting is usually initiated as a sideline. Commercial artists or museum preparators can make the switch later, if their canvases are bringing prices that guarantee a living, but academics are usually trapped. They risk losing tenure and the security that has accrued over the years.

It was during the 1960's when the market for sporting art and limited-edition prints blossomed that Maynard Reece really took off. He was already well known to Robert Lewin, a master printer and publisher, with whom he had worked in connection with the National Wildlife Federation's stamp program. So, when Bob and Katie Lewin launched Mill Pond Press in Venice, Florida, Maynard became their first artist. The fine printing was evident to collectors from the start, but the most positive reaction came from the midwestern sportsmen themselves, who recognized in Maynard a kindred spirit: "their kind of man," who knew their marshland environment intimately, with all its moods and ever-changing quality of light, and who knew the ways of the waterfowl they hunted.

This intuitive knowledge did not come without years of apprenticeship. But Maynard must have known what he wanted from the start, or perhaps he became hooked when he won that first prize at age twelve. When he graduated from high school he was irresistibly drawn to the Museum of Natural History in Des Moines where he met one of the most legendary wildlife conservationists of our time, J.N. "Ding" Darling ("The Towpath Traveler from February 2017), the powerful political cartoonist who was to become chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; a man who was instrumental in saving vast acreages of waterfowl habitat. Darling advised Maynard, "If you religiously make five or six sketches every day for five years, you will become an artist." Maynard took this advice, but felt that field sketches alone were not enough if he did not know anatomy. After a two-year stint with Meredith Publishing Company in Des Moines, where he learned some of the secrets of commercial art - paste-ups, spot drawing, and airbrush - he returned to the museum as staff artist and assistant museum director. There he learned taxidermy - "how a bird is put together." His first book - "Waterfowl in Iowa," with eight color-plates depicting thirty-six species in various plumages - was published in 1943. This was followed by a book on the fishes of Iowa. Because of his expertise in painting fishes, I recommended Reece to the editors of "Life" magazine, for whom I had been painting birds. Maynard devoted two years to his portraits of "Fresh Water Fish" and "Salt Water Fish" which graced the pages of that magazine in 1955 and 1957. Later, because of his proficiency with fishes, my publisher, Houghton Mifflin, approached Reece to illustrate "A Field Guide to Freshwater Fishes" in my series of field guides; but by then the demands for his superb waterfowl canvases and prints left him little time for more mundane and functional illustration.

Maynard was evolving from a painstaking delineator to a more "painterly" painter. The detail became less important than the fall of light and shade, the movement in space, and the three-dimensional activity that the top wildlife artists now strive for. Representational painting, in the academic manner if you will, is the only honest approach for the naturalist, who cannot be other than a realist; it is as valid a statement as any devised by the avant-garde fraternity.

Although Reece has painted everything from insects to botanical subjects, waterfowl have always been his main thrust. In 1949 he won the first Federal Duck Stamp Contest and has won that contest four times since. This is an extraordinary achievement when we consider that now as many as fifteen hundred artists annually enter this "waterfowl sweepstakes."

Although Maynard Reece continues to make his home in Iowa, he is by no means provincial. A museum buff, he has spent innumerable days studying the works of the masters at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and at the Louvre in Paris, as well as in the galleries of a dozen other art centers. During his months of army training in the Signal Corps at Red Bank, New Jersey, during World War II, he spent his leaves and weekends at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. It was at this venerable institution that he met Francis Lee Jacques, the great museum dioramist, with whom he established an immediate rapport because both were from the prairies and both were more obsessed with waterfowl than they were with other lesser birds. Perry Wilson, another fine museum artist, also took Maynard under his wing, as did Robert Cushman Murphy, James Chapin, and other ornithological giants. How could he miss? Obviously he couldn't.

Maynard Reece spends half his time in the field, much of it in his familiar Iowa wetlands; but aware that there is "a big world out there," his travels have taken him to the arctic tundra, the South American tropics, the African veldt, and even to Antarctica. The penguins captivated Maynard but did not divert him from the stately icebergs which he sketched in oil on small pieces of canvasboard. After a cruise on the Lindblad "Explorer" he showed me several of these sketches. "I can't get the turquoise, cobalt, and ultramarine from photographs," he explained. Photos don't pick up the refraction of light going through glacial ice." The innumerable transparencies which Reece exposes are used as a memory jog, not as a crutch. He depends more on his field sketches which tend to reinforce his highly trained visual memory. Some may be scarcely more than a few lines or a swatch of color, but enough to catch the essence of the subject.

DID YOU KNOW?: *One of Reece's last paintings was titled "Ninety Something-Mallards" and the idea behind it was, starting the painting in his 80's, he would add another Mallard to the painting for each birthday after that. He continued painting past the age of 95. "Painting is like therapy," Maynard Reece told the Des Moines Register in 2016. "It keeps me alive." Born in Arnolds Park, Iowa in 1920, Reece passed away on July 11, 2020. "Ninety Something-Mallards is displayed on the Iowa State campus.*



Maynard Reece, 95, with a painting of Canada Geese at his Des Moines, Iowa home in February of 2016.

(photo by: Zach Boyden-Holmes/The Register)



"Common Goldeneyes" by Maynard Reece, 1960 oil on canvas, with the crashing waves of Lake Superior as the backdrop.

(painting by: Maynard Reece)

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