

CUYAHOGA VALLEY TOWPATH TRAIL CENSUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - MAY 2021

HISTORY & FACTS of the MAY CENSUS

May	12-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
86 / 1,202	90 / 763	86 / 786	83 / 1,018	104 / 1,150	81 / 808	82 / 1,014	89 / 1,213	97 / 1,040
2019	2020	2021						
102 / 1,171	85 / 933	98 / 1,146						

Most Species seen in May: 104 on 05/09/2014.

Most Total Birds seen in May: 1,213 on 05/12/2017.

Fewest Species seen in May: 81 on 05/09/2015.

Fewest Total Birds seen in May: 763 on 05/07/2011.

Species Average in May: 90.2 Species.

Total Birds Average in May: 1,020.3 Individuals.

Lowest Temperature on May Census: 34-degrees F on 05/07/2020.

Highest Temperature on May Census: 89-degrees F on 05/07/2011.

Longest Time Afield on May Census: 15 hours & 20 minutes on 05/06/21 - 05/07/21.

Shortest Time Afield on May Census: 7 hours & 15 minutes on 05/08/2010.

LAST MAY'S FIELD REPORT

05/07/20	TOTAL SPECIES:	85	START / END TIME:	6:15am - 6:25pm	
	TOTAL BIRDS:	933	TIME AFIELD:	12:10	FT. MI.: 11.06
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Botzum Trailhead (route cut short by 2.05-miles due to time constraints).				
	TEMP.:	34F ~ 64F ~ 63F			
OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus (entire day's census route); Chris Medvedeff (Red Lock Trailhead to Boston Store Trailhead; then just north of Johnnycake Lock south to Ira Trailhead); Mark Medvedeff and Marc VanderArk (Red Lock Trailhead to Boston).				
CONDITIONS:	Unseasonably chilly early, turning sunny with blue skies; gradually turning mostly sunny with few clouds; then cloudy with variable winds shifting from NW to W, with a couple of gusts of 25-plus mph; one brief sprinkle, but never amounting to any rain; turning cloudy later and cooler.				
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Good - other than crushed limestone is still washed away at Brandywine Creek and railing is still broken from fallen sycamore at big island north of Lock 30 from April's thunderstorm and heavy rain damage.				
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Normal to slightly below normal; many rockbars and sandbars re-shaped after April's storm.				

TEN YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On May 07, 2011 we had two Prothonotary Warblers for the second consecutive year, tying the high from May of 2010. We then had two in the following month of June of 2011. Unfortunately, we have not seen any since, even though somewhat suitable habitat is available. All of these sightings were at the beginning of the census route near Red Lock Trail-head, which has the wet and swampy environment with plenty of dead trees and standing water that this beautiful warbler is associated with.

MAY 2021's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*)

DESCRIPTION:

ADULT MALE: Bright, golden yellow head and underparts; beady, black eye and long black bill; greenish back with bluish-gray wings and tail; white undertail coverts; large white tail spots; short tail. **ADULT FEMALE:** Similar to male, but greenish, olive wash on rear of crown and nape; smaller white spots on tail.

LENGTH:

5 & 1/4" to 5 & 1/2"

WINGSPREAD:

8 & 3/4"

WEIGHT:

about 16 grams

VOICE:

CALL: A loud, dry "chip" similar to the Hooded Warbler. **FLIGHT CALL:** Loud "seeep".
SONG: A simple, loud, ringing series of notes: "sweet sweet sweet sweet sweet sweet".

HABITS:

Hops about on floating driftwood or over inclining, half-submerged logs, peeping into crevices to catch beetles and spiders. Feeds clinging nuthatch-like to trees and dead snags. Also eats mayflies, caterpillars, larvae of aquatic insects and some seeds.

HABITAT:

Lives in damp and swampy riverbottoms with standing pools of water, low-lying woods that frequently flood, backwaters, willow-lined riverbanks and sluggish streams.

NESTING:

The only eastern wood-warbler that nests in natural and artificial cavities. **NEST:** Usually in rotted hollow of dead stub over water or near it, 3 to 32 feet up, usually 5 to 10 feet; also uses abandoned holes of woodpeckers or chickadees; dummy nests built by male, but functional nest completed by female. Nest is made of mosses, grasses, dry leaves, twigs; the cavity for eggs is a rounded, cup-shaped hollow lined with fine roots and feathers. **EGGS:** April (in the south) to June; 3 to 8 eggs, usually 4 to 6 eggs, rich cream color to pink, spotted with browns and grays. **INCUBATION:** 12 to 14 days; young first fly about 11 days later.

RANGE:

Mainly a medium-distance trans-Gulf migrant. Endangered in Canada. **MIGRATION:** Arrives at Gulf Coast by mid-March, New Jersey mid-April, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan by mid-May. Northern range into southern Ontario, east to Delaware, Atlantic Coast down to Florida, west (except for higher altitudes of Appalachians) to Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, and eastern portions of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and east Texas. Departs northern breeding areas in August, most by early September. **WINTER:** Mangrove swamps, dry tropical forest, southern Mexico through Central America (scarce north of Costa Rica) and Caribbean to extreme northern South America. Casual to southern Florida, southern Texas and California.

VAGRANT: Rare to casual in western states.

STATUS:

Fairly common, but often local. Stable to declining. Sensitive to habitat fragmentation on breeding and wintering grounds and the draining of swamplands.

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

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
			* rrrrrrrrrr	uuuuuuuu	uuuuuuuu
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
uuuuuuuu	rrrrrrrrrr	oooooo	*		

- 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 Prothonotary Warbler on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 - present.

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

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

DID YOU KNOW?: The genus name is from "protonotarius" from the Roman Catholic Church referring to a papal notary who wears a yellow hood. The species name "citrea" is from Latin referring to this bird's lemon color. Prothonotary Warblers have a striking yellow color unlike any other North American wood-warbler and the jet-black eye and bill really stand out when in view.

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



The yellow beacon of the dark riverbottoms, a male Prothonotary Warbler adds a splash of color to the swamp.

(photo by: Helena Reynolds)

MAY'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?: John James Audubon (1785-1851) was an artist, ornithologist, explorer, and frontiersman, and possibly the most popular naturalist of America, for whom the National Audubon Society was named?

DID YOU KNOW?: Audubon gained worldwide fame for "The Birds Of America," in which his 435 life-size, full color paintings of 489 species of North American birds were published in elephant folio size of 39 & 1/2-inches by 29 & 1/2-inches, untrimmed pages, beginning in 1827 in London. The serial publication and subsequent re-printings of this great work required 11 years and frequent trips by Audubon to and from America.

DID YOU KNOW?: His father was from France, and one would think that his mother, Anne, was too - but that was not the case. Jean Audubon left his wife back in Nantes, France and was one of the many well-to-do, rich whites on the island then known as San Domingo, now known as Haiti. As was customary with many of wealthy men on this French colonial island, he took a mistress. Not much is known about John James Audubon's mother, but he told tales that she was a Creole woman and quite beautiful. These may be stories he told to defer the true race of his birthmother, as Jean Audubon owned many slaves in his time and looked at them as meer commodities. It was said her name was "Mlle. Rabin" and that she died when John James was just an infant. His father then took another mistress and had a daughter named Rosa. To Jean Audubon's credit, he did not hide the fact that he sired two children while away and when he returned to France, amazingly, Anne took both children in and raised them as her own! His father was one of 21 children of which only 3 reached old age.

DID YOU KNOW?: Besides *"The Birds Of America"*, Audubon wrote an *"Ornithological Biography"*, published originally in five volumes, a 3,000-page series of life histories of all the birds he had illustrated in *"The Birds Of America"*.

DID YOU KNOW?: The New York Historical Society in New York City owns all but 3 of Audubon's life-size watercolors from which the plates of the double elephant folio were engraved?

DID YOU KNOW?: Audubon also collaborated with the Rev. John Bachman of Charleston, S.C., in writing and illustrating a three-volume work on American mammals, *"The Viviparous Quadrupeds Of North America"* (1846-54), two volumes of which were published after Audubon's death.

DID YOU KNOW?: He married Lucy Bakewell on April 05, 1808 and their marriage lasted almost 43 years, despite his long absences to finish his life's work. Together, they had two sons who would both become artists as well, Victor Gifford Audubon, born June 12, 1809, and John Wodehouse Audubon, born November 30, 1812. John Wodehouse would actually finish painting the animals for he and Bachman's book as his health began to fail and after his death.

DID YOU KNOW?: John James Audubon died from complications from a stroke and the onset of dementia? Alexander B. Adams' biography details his final years in a familiar scene to many of us who have lost loved ones to Alzheimer's - before it had a name:

He was famous now, respected, well off; the people he wanted to see came to him, he did not have to go out and seek them. It had all worked very much as he had hoped it would.

Then one day in 1846, after watching the mist rise from the river, he stepped before his easel to begin painting and found that the morning sun did not drive the mists away. At a distance, objects still stood bright and clear, but he could not remove the blurry fog that veiled his picture. He tried again the next day and the next, but struggle as he did, he could not see clearly enough to paint. The lines were wrong; he could not get the picture into focus; and finally he realized that, as an artist, he was finished. It was useless to struggle further. Reluctantly he turned over all responsibility for painting the animals to John, and from that moment, according to Lucy, "he drooped. Silent, patient sorrow filled his broken heart."

Gradually his interest in the book grew less and less; he slipped away from the world around him; his thoughts turned in upon himself; he began to have difficulty finding the right words to express his ideas, then he had fewer ideas to express; and in May, 1848, Bachman saw him and was horrified by the change. "Alas, my poor friend Audubon!" he wrote. "The outlines of his beautiful face and form are there, but his noble mind is all in ruins. It is indescribably sad." Lucy went for walks with him around Minnie's Land. He liked to have her read to him, and he especially enjoyed having Victor's wife sing a Spanish song, *Buenas Noches*, every night before he went to bed. But he was hardly aware, in 1849, that John had gone on a gold-mining expedition to California, a trip that was both costly and disastrous - the would-be miners were struck by cholera - but from which John returned to Minnie's Land safely.

It was a half-life that he was leading, devoid of dignity and remote from all that he had loved and worked for, a life of instinct rather than feeling and thought. Yet the years dragged on and the broken man continued his childish routine, the walks on which he had to be escorted, the one song repeated every night, the life of a child without the gaiety of childhood, until January, 1851, when he suffered a slight stroke, followed by partial paralysis and great pain. On January 22, his face gaunt and contracted, the large frame of his body an empty shell, he began to sink rapidly; and the end came on January 27, 1851.

"Before he died," Victor wrote Dr. Morton in Philadelphia, "he opened his eyes which had been almost closed for some time, and gave my mother, John, and myself a wistful and clear look - turning his head slightly to look on us. This way his farewell glance fell upon those he has loved so well."

There was no sound in the silent, hushed room. Then Lucy stepped quietly forward. Gently and lovingly, she reclosed the eyes which had seen so much beauty in America and portrayed it so others could see it too.

DID YOU KNOW?:

After Audubon's death and when the family's fortunes began to decline, Lucy sometimes gave art lessons in order to make a living? She so enthused one of her students, George Bird Grinnell, that he later founded the first Audubon Society for the protection of American birdlife.



Shearwaters are oceanic sea birds. Audubon's name was commemorated in the smallest North American species. This is Audubon's Shearwater, which can be found at sea during its migration up and down the Atlantic Coast.

(photo by: Jay McGowan)

See You on the Trail! ~ Doug



The man whose name is synonymous with birdwatching, a portrait of early ornithologist John James Audubon.

(painting by his son, John Wodehouse Audubon)

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