

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

**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 : 12 hours & 10 minutes on 05/07/2020.
- Shortest Time Afield on May Census : 7 hours & 15 minutes on 05/08/2010.

**LAST MAY'S FIELD REPORT**

<b>05/07/21</b>	<b>TOTAL SPECIES:</b>	98	<b>START / END TIME:</b>	6:25am - 5:20pm		
	<b>TOTAL BIRDS:</b>	1,146	<b>TIME AFIELD:</b>	10:55	<b>FT. MI.:</b>	13.85
<b>ROUTE:</b>	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley.			<b>TEMP.:</b>	43F ~ 57F	
<b>OBSERVERS:</b>	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.					
<b>CONDITIONS:</b>	Overcast with steady drizzle at the start, tapering off at 7:40am and ending at 8:10am; overcast changing to partly sunny and breezy at 11:15am, then back to cloudy until 1:30pm; then mostly sunny and pleasant for the rest of the hike.					
<b>TRAIL CONDITIONS:</b>	Wet with much puddling.					
<b>RIVER CONDITIONS:</b>	High and muddy from overnight rains.					

**FIVE YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL**

On 05/12/2017 we set a census high for the colorful and always talkative Common Yellowthroat. This species of wood-warbler is one of the most numerous in the Cuyahoga Valley from early spring to early fall, and has been known to linger into winter and occasionally overwinter. Their song is one of the easiest for beginning birdwatchers to familiarize with when it comes to the myriad calls of the 36 species of wood-warblers migrating through Ohio in the spring.

## MAY 2022's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

### COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

**DESCRIPTION:** Short wings, long tail; flesh-pink legs. Variable in size and length, depending on the 9 recognized species (or, subspecies?), though taxonomy is currently unsettled.

**ADULT MALE** : Broad black face mask, (it's Zorro mask), pale gray border above, behind; olive upperparts. Bright yellow throat and undertail coverts, paler belly. **ADULT FEMALE** : Plain, like male, but black mask and grayish border replaced with brownish olive; cheeks contrast with yellow throat. **IMMATURE** : Like adult female, sexes often indistinguishable, but a few males may show some black feathers on face or in malar area, exceptionally on auriculars.

**LENGTH:** 4 & 1/2" to 5 & 3/4" **WEIGHT:** 7.3 to 13.6 grams, or about 1/4 to 1/2 ounce.

**VOICE:** More often heard than seen. **CALL** : Includes a husky "tschep" and rapid chatter similar to the Sedge Wren's song. **FLIGHT CALL** : Low, unmusical, buzzy "dzip". **SONG** : A somewhat variable, loud and rolling, "witchity witchity witchity witchity wich" or finishing "wich-e-o".

**HABITS:** Male may breed with more than one female and he will scold intruders near nest with static, chattering notes, darting about wren-like. Will sing loud, distinctive song from the underbrush or from exposed perch. Feeds on small grasshoppers, dragonflies, damselflies, ants, mayflies, beetles, grubs, cankerworms and other caterpillars, moths, butterflies, flies, spiders, leafhoppers, aphids, gleaned from shrubbery, grasses, and weeds.

**NESTING:** **NEST** : Large, bulky, frequently on, or few inches above ground, attached in tussocks of grass, reeds, briers, sometimes in green plants such as skunk cabbage; sometimes in tall weed stalks, cattails, or shrubs up to 3 feet above ground. Made of dead grasses, sedges, weed stems, dead leaves, grapevine bark, dead ferns, lined with fine grasses, bark fibers, and hairs. **EGGS** : April to July; white or cream-white, speckled mostly at large end with browns, blacks, and grays. **INCUBATION** : By female, 12 days; young usually leave nest after about 8 days.

**HABITAT:** Prefers wetlands, especially low near ground in briers, damp brushy places, tangled rank weeds and grasses along country roads, by streamsides, margins of swamps, woods, and among cattail, bulrushes, sedges in freshwater and saltwater marshes, wet brushy fields.

**RANGE:** Wide-ranging from Yukon Territory east to Newfoundland, and coast to coast from Florida to California, absent only in interior of west Texas and southeastern New Mexico.

**MIGRATION** : Arrives in Southeast in late March; southern California and Arizona in late February; peaks late April to early May. Departs by mid-August, peaks in the East in September, in West in late September to early October, with stragglers into late October through much of range. **WINTER** : Dense vegetation, usually in or near wetlands in southern U.S. through Central America to extreme northwestern South America and northern Caribbean. A few to the Great Lakes. **VAGRANT** : Accidental in Greenland and the United Kingdom.

**STATUS:** Common, a short- to long-distance migrant. Stable to slightly increasing. Biggest threat is loss of wetland habitats and collisions with high-rise buildings during migration.

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

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
o*****	*****	*****	***ooorrr	uCCCCCC	CCCCCCC
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCUuurr	rrrrrrrrrr	ooooooo

- 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 Yellowthroat on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.								
MAR.								
APR.								
MAY	24	18	26	28	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	29	<b>44*</b>
JUN.	31	29	16	<b>31</b>	24	17	23	31
JUL.	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	22	28	32	<b>30</b>	33
AUG.	13	6	5	14	14	13	7	11
SEP.	1	5	9	9	4	7	8	5
OCT.	2	4	1	1		1	12	
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
JAN.					
FEB.				1 (male)	
MAR.					
APR.					
MAY	16	28	9	<b>24</b>	
JUN.	<b>36</b>	22	<b>19</b>	19	
JUL.	28	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	19	
AUG.	11	14	16	4	
SEP.	4	9	6	6	
OCT.		3	2	3	
NOV.					
DEC.					

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

Common Yellowthroats are common victims of the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird? Occasionally they will bury the cowbirds eggs under new nest lining, but cowbirds are very persistent. For some, it's a wasted migration, returning to breed just to host an inter-loper's young.

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



One of the most common wood-warblers in the Cuyahoga Valley, a male Common Yellowthroat belts out its familiar song.

(photo by: Bryan Hix)

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#### **MAY'S DID YOU KNOW?**

##### **DID YOU KNOW?:**

My Father grew up with the field guides of Roger Tory Peterson, then the only real, pocket-sized guide that one could actually take out into the field. Originally published in 1934, then again in 1939, and again in 1947, (which is the publishing I have of his), he had purchased his in 1952. Me always wanting options and with the mantra of, "one can never have too many field guides," I was partial to the "Golden Field Guide" that my Mother had bought for me before I was even a teenager. Though I loved Peterson's artwork, I at times, found them to be somewhat "flat" and preferred the artwork of the Golden Press guide that featured one of my other favorite bird artists, Arthur B. Singer. I'll quote the following article in whole from Jeff Spevak ("Democrat & Chronicle") and share this truly amazing, and mostly unknown story.

##### **ARTHUR SINGER'S LIFE WAS A DICHOTOMY OF BEAUTY AND BEAST** (July 28, 2017)

Arthur Singer hung out with the biggest names in jazz, collected records by the thousands, designed album covers for Duke Ellington and loved to dance.

He was part of some of the biggest covert operations of World War II, stories that were virtually unknown for 50 years, a series of spy-novel-like deceptions that one historian estimates saved the lives of thousands of Allied soldiers.

But all Singer wanted to do was paint birds. Beautiful paintings of beautiful birds. And he did so for almost his entire life until his death in 1990, a catalog that rivals the Babe Ruth of ornithological canvases, John J. Audubon. "In the thousands," says his son, Alan Singer. "He painted every species of bird in the U.S., in Europe, in the West Indies." And on to Borneo, an island in Asia, where he found his favorites - the birds of paradise. Singer filled more than 20 books with birds. Millions of books sold, including the Golden Field Guide series, "Birds of North America," one of the biggest-selling books of its kind.

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

His birds appeared on Franklin Mint collector plates (if you remember that china cabinet in your grandmother's dining room that you weren't allowed to go near). And Singer's 1982 series of 50 official state bird and flower stamps, with Alan painting the botanical environments, is one of the best-selling commemorative stamp sheets in the history of the U.S. Postal Service.

Singer's birds will come to roost next week in the Rochester Institute of Technology's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences' James E. Booth Hall. "Arthur Singer: The Wildlife Art of an American Master" opens August 7 in the RIT University Gallery, and runs through October 28. It's accompanied by RIT Press' publication of "Arthur Singer: The Wildlife Art of an American Master," a lavishly illustrated, coffee-table book by the artists' two sons, Alan and Paul Singer, that RIT Press people quietly hope could become its biggest-seller ever. "This will be the first time we've been able to show a cross section of our father's artwork, from when he was a teenager to his last years," says Alan, a School of Art professor in the RIT's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences. This show of more than 100 pieces dates back to his early animal drawings, done during trips with his mother to the Bronx Zoo and the American Museum of Natural History. "Big animals are the things that attract you when you're 10 or 11," Alan says. "He sold his first animal drawings when he was 15. Singer's life was a dichotomy of beauty and the beastly. The exhibit will also include images from his service during World War II, including color washes of a bombed-out church in France. And like many veterans, he kept the worst to himself. "He was pretty mum about this most of his life," Alan says. "It probably left an indelible impression. He was probably horrified."

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

Arthur Singer grew up in an apartment in North Manhattan, his father working retail, his mother sewing doll clothes for the toy store FAO Schwarz. "There was a tradition of things in his house that required serious hand skills," Alan says. Edith - "We called her Judy" - was a doting mother, "There were frequent trips to the zoo and the Museum of Natural History in New York City. It had dioramas of animals in their painted backgrounds, I think he was fascinated by that kind of thing." The childhood exposure to nature carried over into Singer's adult life, as he and Edith were raising two sons on Long Island. "Even from my first years, as a little kid, we were going to state parks, nature conservatories, anywhere outdoors, just to get out of the city," Alan says. "Every type of state park you can think of, he took us everywhere as a family."

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

Like Audubon, Singer shot his subjects so that he could preserve them for eternity. Unlike Audubon, he shot them with a camera, rather than a gun. "He was an avid photographer, and that presented the raw materials for his paintings," Alan says. And Singer pursued his subjects into their environments. "He took his art supplies outdoors, 'plein air' as they call it," Alan says. The elusive Nene Goose? "They're almost extinct, these birds are really, really rare. You have to go to Hawaii to find them. In fact, my father did that. Singer also took his family to the Caribbean to do the illustrations for "Field Guide to Birds of the West Indies," with text by the famed ornithologist James Bond. Not that James Bond, but close. An amateur bird watcher named Ian Fleming was living in the West Indies at the time, writing his first spy novel, and confiscated the name for his Agent 007. Like Singer, Fleming had experience in covert World War II operations, working for British naval intelligence; you have to keep an eye on these bird watchers.

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*Following birds into their habitat naturally brings an awareness of the environment. "The birder world in the '30s was a small group of folks, people who became aware of ecology," Alan says. "My father worked with the Sierra Club, the American Ornithology Union. Wildlife federations in the area frequently called upon my father to donate artworks to help them." Singer did not have to travel halfway around the world to see where we were heading. New York's contribution to the state bird postage-stamp series was the bluebird. When was the last time you saw a bluebird in New York? "When we lived on Long Island, you could walk down to the end of the block and see bluebirds," Alan says. "The population doubled in the time he was there, it changed the whole look of the place. Their environment has been encroached upon by development. Bluebirds live in open fields. Try to find open fields now. As people multiplied around the country, you could see we were heading into a situation where a lot of wildlife was being threatened." This was a subject that became "many, many discussions over the dinner table," Alan says. "My father was maybe not a political activist, but he was certainly working to a cause."*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*When not pursuing birds afield, Arthur Singer retreated to his book collection. "He had magazines and books going back to when he was a little kid," Alan says. "Anything about nature." The den of the family's home was dense with them, as well as a massive record collection, with Singer presiding over them like a pipe-smoking squire. "A lifetime's work of collections," Alan says. "I took care of his scrapbooks, which he kept in filing cabinets." Further cluttering the den were the tools of his trade. Singer worked in watercolor, tempera, oil, acrylic. The "serious hand skills" of his mother's doll-clothing work were passed on to the tiny brushes Singer preferred. "They're called zeros, or double-zeros," Alan says. "Like painting with a toothpick. He had terrific eyesight until he was 65 years old." Notables of the feathered world visited, including the acknowledged champion of bird-watching guides, Roger Tory Peterson. "He was a competitor, but also a friend," Alan says. "Roger was a guest in our house many times."*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*Jazz musicians were there as well. Singer frequented the jazz clubs of New York City and got to know many of the jazz players of the day, including Cab Calloway, Count Basie and Duke Ellington, sometimes even painting their portraits. "He would hang out with some of the greats," Alan says. "He met Duke when he was still a teenager. Ellington came to New York City because he had a scholarship to Pratt University as an artist. My father would go to the recording sessions, the studio in Queens where Duke's records were produced. He designed a record cover for Duke, he illustrated bandstands, he did advertisements." So while Singer is known almost exclusively as a bird artist, and birds are what he pursued throughout most of his life, as Alan points out Singer painted whatever was in front of him. So it could be jazz musicians. Or the war.*

**DID YOU KNOW?:**

*"Arthur Singer was one of the many artists who found their way into the 603rd Camouflage Engineers," says Rich Beyer, co-author with Elizabeth Sayles of "The Ghost Army," on which the 2014 PBS documentary of the same name is based. "When you're designing camouflage, you want the eye of an artist." These artists, whose training was all about capturing the reality of what they saw before them, were now creating visual deception. Their work was intended to throw off German intelligence. Design camouflage patterns that obfuscated the true nature of a warship, or create the illusion of troops where there were no troops.*

*"If you're creating a phony artillery battery, you need more than inflatable cannons with netting over them," Beyer says. "You need sandbags, and artillery shells spread around them to create the sort of detritus one would expect to see if you look at it from the air." Ellsworth Kelly, who would go on to become an acclaimed minimalist artist, was one of them. Bill Blass, future fashion designer. Art Kane, who shot some of the most-iconic photos in music history, including "A Great Day in Harlem," an image of 57 jazz musicians gathered around a porch. There was a guy who went on to make dresses for Marilyn Monroe, and a graphic designer who would create the Hamm's beer bear. "This amazing aggregate of talent," Beyer says. "One of the soldiers said it was sort of like an art graduate school."*

*A seemingly safe gig, out of harm's way. Until D-Day. A week after the Allies landed on the beaches, the 603rd Camouflage Engineers, 1,100 men, were shipped to France. "I think they were surprised to find themselves in the war zone," Beyer says. "Having been involved in this camouflage campaign on the other side of the English Channel, it was a rude awakening. One of them, John Jarvie, said, 'We didn't take this seriously, it was like it was a lark. Until people started to shoot at us and were trying to kill us'" Their assignments were historic, and remained top secret for half a century. "They were involved in 21 different deception missions from June 1944 until March 1945," Beyer says. The last one was the biggest, with the Allied troops poised on the west side of the Rhine River, ready to roll into Germany. But first, the 603rd Camouflage Engineers went to work. "Twelve hundred men with inflatable tanks and trucks and sound effects and radio deception, pretending to be two divisions of 30,000 men," Beyer says. It worked, with the real American Army crossing the river 10 miles to the north of the distraction. But these men, these artists, needed distraction themselves, distraction from the horror that was all around them. When there was a pause in their duties, the watercolors and sketch pads came out. Singer did a watercolor of a bombed-out bridge in Trier, a destroyed church in Treveres. "I got paintings from a half-dozen guys inside that church. They were all there together," Beyer says. Of Singer, he says, "He was an amazing watercolorist. His ability to paint on the fly was striking."*

*His fellow artists in the 603rd noticed. Here's what Jarvie says in "The Ghost Army":*

*"Arthur Singer, the bird artist, if we - they put us in some place that we were going to be in for two weeks, sure as shooting, one wall of that place would have beautiful birds and animals on it, done by Arthur. He'd do the whole wall, think nothing of it. And he never penciled it in or - he just took his brushes and painted it. He was that good."*

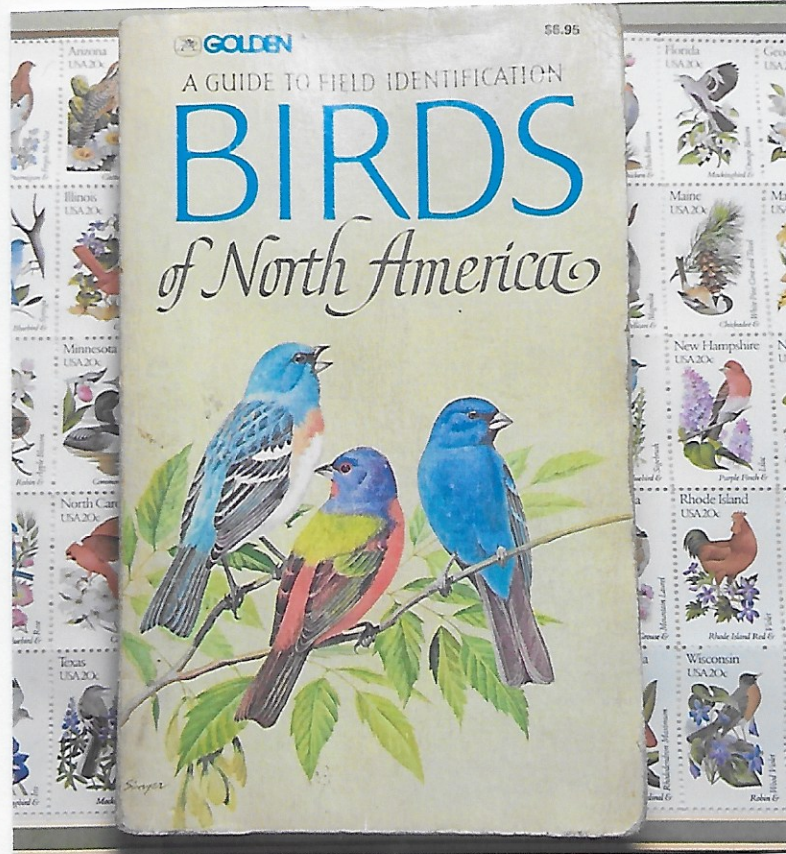
*He was good, but he was still a young man. None of them knew what was ahead. "It's like John Jarvie said to me, it was a big war and everybody went," Beyer says. "Most males of their age, it was what they were going to be doing."*

*Andrew Lazar, the producer who did the Academy Award-nominated "American Sniper," and the actor Bradley Cooper have optioned the rights to making "The Ghost Army" into a film. A tale of heroic artists. Fashion designers, photographers, the creators of Beer mascots, a painter of birds.*

*Arthur Singer died at age 73 of esophageal cancer. Maybe it was all those years of smoking a pipe. But the war didn't get him. "His art skills," Alan says of his father, "really saved his life."*



The Art(ist) of War - the pipe-smoking Arthur Singer was one of my personal favorites. (photo courtesy of: "Democrat & Chronicle")



"The Golden Field Guide" was quite the bargain for \$6.95. Filled with Arthur Singer's paintings, it defined my birding youth. (Golden Press field guide photo by: Douglas W. Vogus)

**DID YOU KNOW?:** My Mother, Jeannette, purchased Arthur Singer's U.S. Postal Service sheet of all the State Birds, (in the background), framed it, and passed it on to Michelle and I?

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