

**CUYAHOGA VALLEY TOWPATH TRAIL CENSUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2023
(CVTTC)**

HISTORY & FACTS of the NOVEMBER CENSUS

NOVEMBER	13-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
52 / 1,101	46 / 702	55 / 1,314	47 / 1,425	50 / 1,933	52 / 967	46 / 711	51 / 2,206	50 / 1,052
2019	2020	2021	2022					
47 / 1,106	43 / 793	51 / 1,302	46 / 1,109					

Most Species seen in November : 55 on 11/03/2012.

Most Individual Birds seen in November : 2,206 Total Birds on 11/04/2017.

Fewest Species seen in November : 43 on 11/07/2020.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in November : 702 on 11/05/2011.

Species Average in November : 48.9 Species.

Total Individuals Average in November : 1,209.3 Total Birds.

Lowest Temperature on November Census : 23-degrees F on 11/05/2011.

Highest Temperature on November Census : 77-degrees F on 11/05/2022.

Longest Time Afield on November Census : 9 hours & 40 minutes on 11/05/2021.

Shortest Time Afield on November Census : 6 hours & 55 minutes on 11/06/2010.

LAST NOVEMBER'S FIELD REPORT

11/05/22	TOTAL SPECIES:	46	TOTAL BIRDS:	1,109		
START / END TIME:	7:55am - 5:10pm		TIME AFIELD:	9:05	FT. MI.:	14.00
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, with a stop at Trail Mix in Peninsula.					
TEMP.:	63F ~ 77F ~ 76F	CONDITIONS:	Sunny with blue skies early, turning breezy with S/SW winds; turning partly cloudy at 9:30am, then cloudy with winds increasing, some gusts at 20-plus mph; unseasonably warm; turning back to mostly sunny from 3:15pm until the end of census. As the winds increased - the birds decreased.			
OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Good at start, but trail became increasingly littered with fallen branches and debris; heard two large trees fall, one being a large, old willow at Howe Meadow, heard from the Ira Beaver Marsh boardwalk, and witnessed another tree lose a 15-foot limb; one dead ash tree had fallen across the trail south of Ira Rd. and was in need of clearing. Heads up!					
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Low & mostly clear.					

SIX YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On 11/04/2017 we had our third sighting of a very difficult bird to find along the Cuyahoga River bottom lands - the Eastern Meadowlark. This tied a census high from 04/02/2010, 06/04/2016, and more recently, 03/03/2022. The lack of suitable habitat down in the river bottom is the reason for these four isolated sightings, as this species needs large meadows, farmland fields, prairies, fallow fields, etc., to have any success in rearing its young.

NOVEMBER 2023's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*)

DESCRIPTION: Rotund, stocky medium-size icterid with a long bill, short tail, strong legs, and pointed tail feathers. **SUMMER ADULT:** Cyptically patterned above; bright yellow below with bold black V on breast. Crown dark brown with white median crown stripe, dark postocular stripe, otherwise yellow supralores stand out on the paler face. Warm buff flanks crisply streaked brown. Back feathers edged white, but have complicated pattern of buff, and darker brown in centers. Outer three tail feathers largely or entirely white. Bill gray with darker culmen and tip, legs dull pink, eyes dark. **WINTER ADULT:** Pale tips cloud the black V on breast. Slightly more buffy yellow underparts, scaly upperparts. **JUVENILE:** Similar to winter adult, but paler yellow and breast V streaked.

LENGTH: 8 & 1/2" to 11"

WINGSPAN: 13 & 1/2" to 17"

VOICE: **CALL:** A buzzy "dzert"; also a chatter given by both sexes. **CALL NOTE:** A whistled "weeet." **SONG:** Three to five or more loud, sliding, descending whistles lasting approximately 1 & 1/2 seconds, "tsweee-tsweee-TSWEEOOO."

HABITS: White outer tail feathers show both when on ground and in flight, resembles quail in alternate quick flaps and sailing on set wings; perches on fence posts, utility poles or wires along grassy fields. Walks about on ground like a quail in grassy or weed-grown fields, roadsides and prairies. About 74% of food is animal: beetles, bugs, grasshoppers, crickets, weevils, caterpillars, scale insects, cutworms, ants, wasps, spiders, etc.; also eats grain (flocks in spring migration sometimes eat sprouting corn) and weed seeds.

HABITAT: Grasslands and old field habitats, farmlands and rangelands.

NESTING: On ground in depression 1- to 3-inches deep or in hoofprint of cattle or horses, in meadows, pastures, corn, wheat, alfalfa, and clover fields, weedy orchards, grass islands in plowed fields, prairies, grassy edges of highways or country roads, or edges of weedy marshes. **NEST:** Of dried grasses, plant stems, lined with grasses, pine needles, horsehair, often domed with grass, entrance on side, built against a dense clump of grass or weeds. **EGGS:** April through August, 3 to 7 eggs, usually 5 eggs, usually white, suffused with pink, spotted and speckled with browns or lavender. **INCUBATION:** By female, 13 to 14 days, usually two broods. May turn eggs five times in an hour. **YOUNG:** Both parents feed young which leave nest when 11 to 12 days old. Families gather together in small flocks in the fall.

RANGE: Diurnal migrant; northern birds move >620 miles, southern ones resident; many will overwinter just south of northern breeding range. Males usually arrive in northern U.S. and southern Canada in early April; two weeks later, when females arrive, resident male in established territory of about 7 acres now sings more. Eastern species nests to southern Canada, east of Great Plains, southern birds west to Arizona; wintering to southern states, Mexico and Cuba.

STATUS: Common, but general declines have been detected from the 1960's on due to habitat loss, mostly due to farms and fields being replaced by housing developments and large industrial parkways.

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

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
ooooo000	ooorrrrrr	uuuuuCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCCCCCC	CCuuuuu	uuuuurr	ooooo000

- CCCCCCC = Common to Abundant. Frequently encountered in this region during this time of year.
- uuuuuuu = Uncommon. Occurs regularly during this time of year but not frequently detected.
- rrrrrrrrr = Rare. These birds can occur more or less annually but are easily missed in their scant presence in the region.
- ooooo000 = 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 Eastern Meadowlark on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

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

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	DID YOU KNOW?:
JAN.							The best place to find an Eastern Meadowlark in the Cuyahoga Valley is where Meadowlark Lemon of The Harlem Globetrotters used to play when they were in town? The former site of the Richfield Coliseum off of Rt. 303 is a perfect example of the grassland habitat this species thrives in. A large swath of uninterrupted prairie devoid of trees. Music still plays at the old Coliseum site - that of the melodius, liquid call of the Eastern Meadowlark!
FEB.							
MAR.					1*		
APR.				(head)			
MAY							
JUN.							
JUL.							
AUG.							
SEP.							
OCT.							
NOV.							
DEC.							

- *** = HIGHEST COUNT TOTAL ON CENSUS.
- BOLD #** = HIGHEST COUNT FOR THAT YEAR.
- (head) = SEE PHOTO AT END OF ISSUE.



An Eastern Meadowlark in full song in early spring means better weather ahead for both birds and birdwatchers.

(photo by: Shelley Rutkin)

DID YOU KNOW?: Every year, as many as 1 billion birds die from colliding with buildings, especially those with extensive glass surfaces? During the day, these collisions result from birds mistaking reflections of open skies or nearby vegetation for the real deal. At night, when most birds migrate, lit-up buildings disorient and attract them, luring them not just off their migratory paths, but straight into collisions. These fatalities account for 2 to 9 percent of all birds in North America in any given year, making building strikes second only to feral and free-roaming cats as a source of human-caused avian mortality in the United States.

LIGHTS OUT CLEVELAND GROUP STANDS UP FOR BIRDS BY TURNING DOWN THE LIGHTS

By Zachary Lewis - The Plain Dealer - Published on August 30, 2019.

CLEVELAND, OHIO - They found nothing and they were ecstatic. After two hours of active scouting for dead or injured birds in the dark, a group with Lights Out Cleveland early Thursday morning was delighted to come up empty-handed, to find not one fragile flyer that had collided with a building and dropped to the ground.

It could have been worse. One morning in 2017, during the height of spring migration, volunteers with Lights Out Cleveland picked up 255 birds, most of them long-distance travelers en route to Canada or Alaska from Central or South America. Lights Out Cleveland volunteer Tim Jasinski estimates the group has picked up some 5,000 birds since its inception two years ago. The stories of those birds are virtually the same. For one usually weather-related reason or another, the unlucky creatures fly down into Cleveland looking to rest and eat, only to become disoriented by the combined effects of lighting, glass, and reverberant tall structures.

There, in the urban jungle, the light pollution that to humans is merely annoying often proves lethal to birds. After travelling hundreds or even thousands of miles, the weary migrants become confused in the city and fly into windows or glass walls and either break their necks or die falling. A few lucky individuals survive the incidents and get picked up, cared for, and released. "I feel like I'm contributing," said Sandy Brown, one of about 10 volunteers who went out Thursday with Lights Out Cleveland, one of the most comprehensive and scientific groups of its kind in the nation. "It's no fun to pick up the dead ones, but the live ones do get rehabilitation."

The list of victims is a bird-watcher's dream, if only the birds were alive and well. Tanagers, flycatchers, hummingbirds, warblers common and rare. All are regular casualties. Even woodcocks, drawn to flower beds and patches of grass and trees, can suffer the same fate. One day, someone picked up a Long-eared Owl. Dead birds are stored in plastic bags and marked with the date, time, and location of their discovery. Because volunteers traverse the same routes multiple times each morning, they can estimate the time of death with considerable accuracy. All are taken to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, where scientists log the information and use the birds for research and education. The tiny body-bags weigh virtually nothing, and the birds are shadows of their living selves. A neon fluff in life, a Yellow Warbler in death looks thin and faded. The Ovenbird's spots, usually visible from a distance, are barely bold enough up close to aid in identification.

It's impossible to say exactly why Thursday was so good. It could have been almost anything from the weather in Canada to the clear skies and high, patchy clouds over Cleveland. Late August is also early in the season. The majority of southbound migrants travel in September and October. One thing that undoubtedly helped: for the first time since Jasinski has been keeping track, one of the tallest buildings in Cleveland had turned off its lights. The largest of about 20 Lights Out Cleveland participants, 200 Public Square was dark Thursday morning. It had complied with the group's city-wide request to turn off lights from midnight to dawn during spring and fall migration. It was a larger version of what bird-loving humans do at their homes. By turning off its lights at night, the skyscraper had essentially done the same thing as those who put decals on their windows in hopes of preventing a few of the millions of deaths by strikes each year.

It's an easy step, Jasinski said, a simple way to reduce light pollution, preserve wildlife, and save both energy and money. "Who are we marketing to at 2 a.m., anyway," he wondered. "People are just not aware. They just don't realize how light affects birds." Another thing most people don't realize? How birds affect people. Birds may occupy the skies, but they don't live in their own separate world. They're part of the ecosystem that includes humans, and a vital one at that. They're pollinators, seed distributors, insect eaters, and prey for larger creatures. Allow migrants to diminish and humans put at risk the entire food chain and imperil some of the prettiest of what nature has to offer. "You wouldn't think these little birds affect us at all, but they absolutely do," Brown said. "Besides that, they're beautiful."

DID YOU KNOW?: Ohio Lights Out is a network of regional programs aimed at making urban landscapes safer for migratory birds? Lights Out is coordinated by the Ohio Bird Conservation, but is successful only through the collaboration and efforts of dozens of organizations.

BUILDINGS ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM

55 Public Square	Harbor View Development
200 Public Square	Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland
AECOM	Lake Erie Nature & Science Center
Carl B. Stokes Public Utilities Bureau	McCullough Science Center
Cleveland Botanical Garden	North Point Office Complex
Cleveland City Hall	One Cleveland Center
Cleveland Museum of Natural History	Oswald Center
Cleveland State University	Progressive Field
Dorn Color, Inc.	Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
Ernst & Young Tower	Rocket Mortgage Field House
Fifth Third Center	Skylight Office Tower
First Energy Stadium	Transaction Reality
George J. McMonagle Building	US Bank
Great Lakes Science Center	Willoughby Surgery Center

LOCAL PARTNERS

Cleveland Museum of Natural History - CMNH has been instrumental in helping to get a Lights Out program established in Cleveland. The museum houses birds that were killed during migration in their scientific collection.

Lake Erie Nature & Science Center - The center has been the major catalyst in the volunteer monitoring program. All injured birds are taken to the center for rehabilitation and release into the wild. The Lake Erie Nature & Science Center successfully released over 700 birds in 2017 alone.

Cleveland Metroparks - Metroparks of Cleveland help to recruit and manage volunteers for the monitoring effort in downtown Cleveland.

Akron Zoo - While we work to expand Lights Out through the Akron area, the Akron Zoo has been a major supporter of the Lights Out Cleveland initiative.

Lake Metroparks - The Wildlife Center at Lake Metroparks helps with the rehabilitation of bats and other wildlife found during monitoring of downtown Cleveland.

WHY DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND'S BRIGHT LIGHTS POSE DANGERS TO THOUSANDS OF MIGRATING BIRDS

By Peter Krouse - Published on February 21, 2022

Like moths to a flame, migrating birds looking to rest and refuel are drawn to the bright lights of downtown Cleveland. For many it will be their last stop.

Each year, thousands of birds heading to and from Canada and the tropics plow into downtown buildings, leaving many of the tiny, feathered visitors dead or wounded on sidewalks and windowsills. They meet their doom in the fall after their long Lake Erie flyover, and in the spring when they are headed back home. And each year teams of volunteers with Lights Out Cleveland

round up as many casualties as they can. Recruitment for the collection teams is starting now so volunteers can learn about the program and get trained on how to handle the birds, said Tim Jasinski, wildlife rehabilitation specialist with the Lake Erie Nature & Science Center in Bay Village. The teams will walk specific routes each day from 5 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., starting March 15 and lasting until the beginning of June, and then again from August 15 until about mid-November. The hope is to reach the birds before cleanup crews or the gulls and rats get to them. Also, building owners will be asked to dim their lights as much as safely possible from midnight to dawn during those times.

Since 2017, Lights Out Cleveland has collected more than 10,000 birds, Jasinski said, most of them during the fall when migrations include young birds leaving the boreal forests of Canada for the first time. About 150 different species over the city, he said, with some of the most common being warblers, thrushes, sparrows, woodcocks, and catbirds. The birds migrate at night. When they reach Cleveland they can be disoriented by the lights, when normally they would be following stars and the moon and other celestial cues, Jasinski said. They fly to the light and end up hitting glass windows. Sometimes they arrive in the city safely, but when dawn breaks, they get "trapped by the maze of glass," he said, and are drawn to the reflection of trees and green spaces in building windows.

The birds collected are placed in paper bags, which provide a quiet, dark place for those still alive, Jasinski said. The injured are taken to the Nature & Science Center, where they are hopefully nursed back to health and released. Dead ones are frozen and donated to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for research purposes. "The sad thing is about two-thirds of them are dead on average," Jasinski said.

On a more recent note, the following from NPR News details how specific conditions turn tragic.

NEARLY 1,000 MIGRATING BIRDS DIED AFTER CRASHING INTO CHICAGO BUILDING

October 9, 2023 by Claire Marie Schneider

Nearly 1,000 birds died late last week after flying into a Chicago convention center during their migratory journey south. 964 birds crashed into McCormick Place Lakeside Center, a mostly glass building located on the shore of Lake Michigan just south of downtown Chicago.

Douglas Stotz, a conservation ecologist with the Chicago-based Field Museum, called Wednesday evening the biggest night of migration Chicago had seen in the last century. "In one night we had a year's worth of death," he told NPR, noting that typically, between 1,000 and 2,000 birds die each year from flying into the building. The Field Museum monitors the building for dead or injured birds. Before getting to work on Thursday morning, Stotz saw what he described as "clouds of birds" in the sky. "We check McCormick Place daily during migration to pick up dead birds and to release ones that are still alive," he said. "When I went into the museum, it was way beyond what I could have imagined." He said the previous number of birds killed in a single day flying into the convention center was close to 200 to 300 birds. "The well-being of migratory birds is of high importance to us, and we are truly saddened by the incident," the convention center wrote in a statement posted to Instagram.

While millions of birds fly over the Windy City during fall and spring migrations, a confluence of specific conditions contributed to the unprecedented event last week. "October is always one of our busiest times of year," Annette Prince, the director of Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, told NPR. During the days leading up to the influx of birds flying over Chicago, birds hadn't been traveling "because weather conditions were not favorable," said Prince, who noted recent winds from the south prevented birds moving through the city. "Birds like to fly in the fall when there is a north or west wind because they're coming from areas north of us, and that gives them a literal and figurative tailwind to travel with," said Prince. Additionally, a storm south of Chicago forced birds to fly closer to the ground, said Stotz. "Birds don't really want to fly into those storms," he said.

Dead birds were found throughout the downtown area after this intense two days of migration. The Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate hundreds of millions of birds are killed annually in the United States due to building collisions. Light reduction, especially during key migratory times, can reduce the number of birds that die when flying through urban areas. "It would have made a huge difference to have the lights off," Stotz said, noting McCormick Place was aglow last week.

"Lighting at McCormick Place is turned off unless needed for our employees, clients, or visitors," the convention center said in its statement. "It is important to understand that there is an event going on at Lakeside Center this week, and thus the lights have been on when the space is occupied." Chicago's voluntary Lights Out program asks that tall buildings turn their lights out after 11p.m. every night until daylight during spring and fall migration dates. Stotz said most buildings downtown participate in the program, although "sometimes forget that they should be turning out the lights." McCormick Place said it participates in that program, "which has helped reduce the number of bird collisions on campus by 80%."

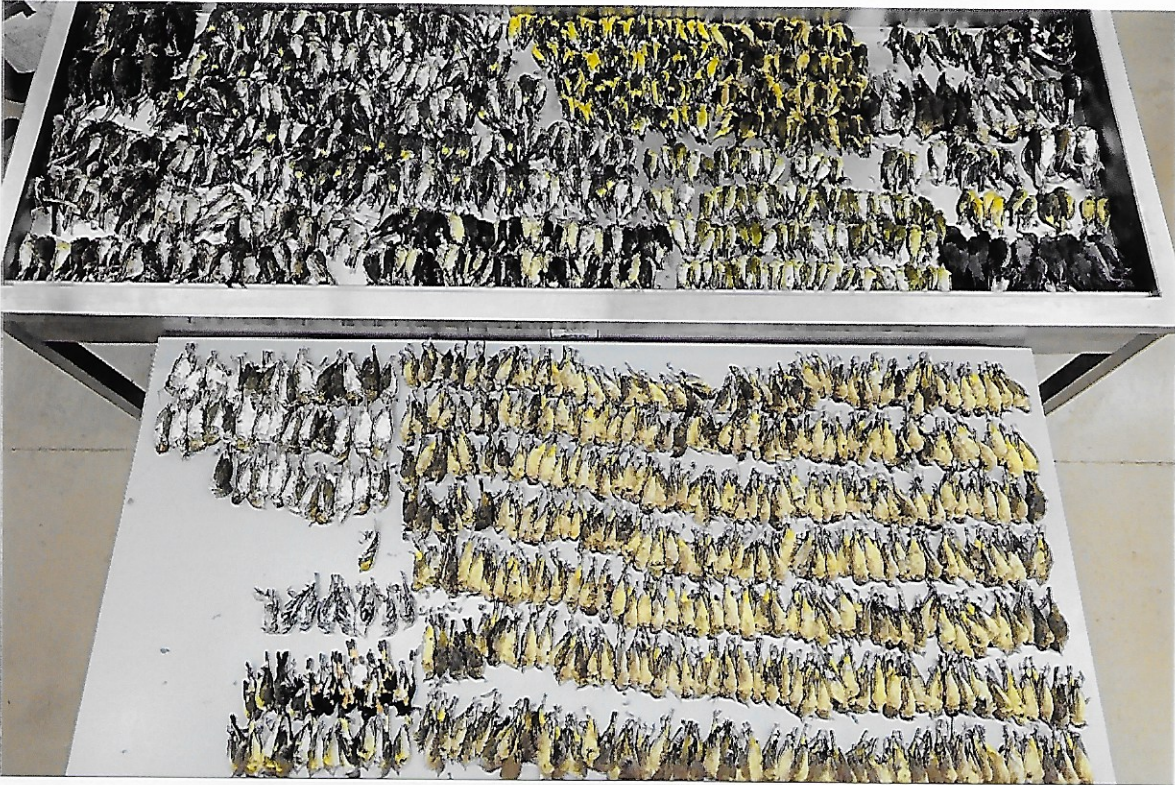
A 2021 study determined that decreasing the number of lit windows at McCormick Place could cut fatal bird collisions by around 60%. Management of the building "should be fully aware they are in a key location where it behooves them to take a serious participation in the Lights Out program," Prince told NPR. Still, Stotz said the Field Museum, along with other conservation organizations in Chicago, have urged McCormick Place to participate in the Lights Out program more consistently, but continue to get the same answer - that it's up to the client whether or not the lights are turned off. He added it's not just McCormick Place that's the issue. "This is a long, ongoing problem," Stotz said.

DID YOU KNOW?:

Lights Out Cleveland is short on volunteers? "It's been busy," Tim Jasinski, a wildlife rehabilitation specialist who nurtures birds back to health, told Scene. "We still need volunteers. Especially as it gets later in the season. According to Jasinski, Lights Out volunteers dread two specific high periods: the end of September, when warblers finish their trek over the Great Lakes; and the end of October, when the delayed species and sparrows will finally find their way over the shores of Northeast Ohio.

The problem Jasinski and his usual volunteer base of four face is that they're short on people. During the spring and summer, the Metroparks advertised volunteer positions with Lights Out, but, according to Jasinski, not enough showed up. "We're at least looking to get twelve people out there," he said. by: Mark Oprea - staff writer at Scene.

Interested? Contact the Lake Erie Nature & Science Center or Cleveland Metroparks.



Two full trays of carnage of southbound migrants that never stood a chance. Efforts gone to waste due to the bright lights and windows of the McCormick Place Lakeside Center. (photo by: Daryl Coldren/Chicago Field Museum)



An Eastern Meadowlark's head found under the Ohio Turnpike bridge on 04/03/21. Not a victim of flying into the bridge, but a probable victim of entering the Peregrine Falcon's territory - after all, some birds eat other birds. Whether flying into confusing glass buildings aglow with unnecessary lights or flying into a predator's hunting grounds, migrating birds face numerous obstacles on their spring and fall journeys.

(photo by: Douglas W. Vogus)

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