



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

January, 2017

Winter birding along Lake Erie

Winter along Lake Erie is brutal but experienced birders will confirm that ‘bad weather equals good birding’! Winter is also a great time to start your 2017 List with birds found only along the lake and only in January through March. Preparing for the weather means dressing in layers and bringing hand/



Mergansers on the Black River in Lorain.

Photo: M. Valencic

Conneaut (Conneaut Creek).

Most winters you can find more than 20 species of ducks including all three scoters, Harlequin and long-tailed ducks and thousands of red-breasted mergansers. Ten species of gulls in “all ages and stages” frequent Lake Erie plus Pomarine Jaegers and black-legged kittiwakes. Hawks, eagles, snowy owls and Peregrine falcons can be found on breakwalls and at Burke Lakefront Airport. You might even see a purple sandpiper!

So, study your white-winged gulls and female ducks before venturing out. Some gulls take three to four

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years to mature and look different at each stage. Watch the postings on the Ohio Birds Listserv and various Facebook sites for ‘good’ birds to ‘chase’ this winter.

—Matt Valencic

boot warmers and a microfiber cloth for cleaning snow and rain off your binoculars and spotting scope! Oh! And remember a stocking cap and hood for your parka!

With the closing of coal-fired power plants, the best winter birding is found where rivers empty into Lake Erie, especially after the lake freezes. Check eBird for HOTSPOTS near these rivers: in Lorain (Black River), Rocky River (The Rocky River), Cleveland (Cuyahoga River), Eastlake (Chagrin River), Painesville (Grand River), Ashtabula (Ashtabula River) and



Gulls near Cleveland Lakefront Preserve.

Photo: M. Valencic

From the Nest...

The New Year has begun! What wildlife adventures have you planned? Are you going to visit some new parks and preserves? Are you going to try for a “Big Year” on your bird list? Are you going to volunteer with natural history or conservation of natural resources projects? The more we are touched by



nature, the healthier we are both mentally and physically.

This connection to nature will set an example for our youth and will encourage them to keep preservation of our natural areas in the forefront throughout their lives.

There are many opportunities to participate and most of the events could not come about without you. The

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland has at least one outing or event each month. Why not make a New Year’s resolution to come on out and join us?

We will extend a warm welcome to you.

—Jim Tomko, President

Don’t forget to RSVP for our
Volunteer Open House on
January 8th!

eBird Tutorial

Creating your personal eBird Account

Ready to join the eBird community and start submitting your checklists? Let's get started.

Go to www.ebird.org and select **MY EBIRD** and hit ENTER.

On the right side find **CREATE AN ACCOUNT**

Fill in the requested information then select **CREATE ACCOUNT** to complete the process.

You are now ready to submit checklists.

eBird Tutorial

Submitting your first checklist or a new location

eBird is going to ask you some basic questions when you are submitting a checklist so review this tutorial and make some notes so you are ready when entering that first checklist.

Go to www.eBird.org and sign-in with your username and password

Select **SUBMIT OBSERVATIONS**

For your first observation or entering a new location you can use **FIND IT ON A MAP** by typing in the county and state like this **Geauga, OH**

A map will display showing many HOTSPOTS (red teardrops indicate entries within the last 30 days). If you were birding an existing hotspot click on the blue or red 'teardrop' and the name will appear on the right. Select **CONTINUE**.

On the next screen complete DATE and OBSERVATION TYPE and other information requested. **CONTINUE**

Your checklist appears. Either scroll down the list or type the bird name in the space on the right labeled Jump to Species. Enter a number seen for each bird. If you wish to make comments or include a picture select **Add Details** and enter that data.

When all entries have been entered answer YES or NO to "Are you submitting a complete checklist" then click **SUBMIT**.

Your completed checklist will appear. Review it for accuracy and make any changes you wish by using the **Edit** buttons on the right.

—Tutorials contributed by Matt Valencic

Bringing birds to Scouts

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about the effects of DDT on eagle populations, how bird study provided the data that helped result in a ban on DDT, and how further study shows that eagle populations have rebounded. They also used the photos in Matt's slides to learn about parts of the bird (I did have to confess that I have never heard anyone use the term "vent" in the field – we usually refer to "bird butts"). The boys also used free time to take a look at feathers and skeletons from the Education Center.

The classes were part of a 3-day Merit Badge Challenge event organized by Boy Scout Troop 269 in Aurora. The Challenge is offered over several months (this year in December, January, and

March), which allows the boys to get some of the requirements done between sessions so they can show the counselors what they have done at the next session. For the next session, the counselors will work with the boys to make sure they can use and care for binoculars and use a field guide. At the final session, they will discuss bird song and do the field trip.

The Merit Badge Challenge event brings together merit badge counselors and Scouts to give Scouts an opportunity to earn badges outside of regular troop meetings and summer camp. This year's event featured 28 merit badges, 23 merit badge counselors, and was attended by almost 300 Scouts.

—Barb Philbrick

Critter Corner



Rough-legged Hawk
(Buteo lagopus)

This is a northern visitor that appears in the local avifauna from the end of October through April. These are large hawks—21 inches long, a 53-inch wingspan and weigh over two pounds. Their size and profile is reminiscent of a thinner, trimmer red-tailed hawk. Rough-legged hawks have small bills and small feet as an adaptation to withstand the cold temperatures of the arctic.

They often hunt while on the wing by either hovering in mild breezes or "kiting" in the face of moderate winds. At a distance they are identified by their buoyant flight style soaring with their wings in a shallow upturned V. They have a steady flight and do not teeter while soaring as the turkey vultures do.

Another unique habit is to precariously perch on flexible tiny branches in the tip-top of trees which is quite a feat for such a large bird. When viewed from below the base of the tail is white with a single, dark, sub-terminal band. There are also dark "wrist" patches on the wings with dark tipped flight feathers giving the trailing edge of the wing a black outline. Up to 20 percent of our rough-legged hawks are dark morphs giving an overall dark underside but the characteristic tail pattern and silvery wing-linings are still visible.

They nest on cliff ledges in the arctic, building large bulky nests of sticks and twigs and even caribou bones where they lay three to seven pale greenish-white, dark-speckled eggs which are incubated for about 30 days. Like snowy owls the number of eggs laid is partially determined by the abundance of their favorite prey: lemmings.

These hawks are visible now over farm fields, grasslands and marshes. Try to catch a glimpse of these unusual hawks of the arctic before they return to their northern breeding grounds.

—Jim Tomko

In case you missed it!

Winter Solstice Hike
December 16, Aurora Sanctuary

As I headed out the door into the 16 degree temperature my wife Joanie informed me that the wind-chill "feel like" temperature was 4 degrees! The cloud cover was so thick we could not see the slightly waning full moon. But with the snow cover we did not need the moonshine or our flashlights except to inspect animal tracks in the snow. We had Southern flying squirrels scrabbling

on the trunks of a walnut and one of them, instead of racing up to the top of the tree, came down the trunk to investigate who these silly humans were in their wintery woods after dark. There was a wonderful muffled quiet stillness in the snow covered pine stand. And as we approached the final stretch of trail a coyote let out a call to add to the excitement of a great night hike.

—Jim Tomko

IBA update

I have completed entering eBird data from 1990 thru 2002. I entered all of the sightings as historical data as long as there was a date supplied. In the historical data section comments, I indicated that I made the data entry ("Salomon entry") as well as the initials or name of the person who actually made the sighting.

When selecting the species, I clicked on "details" and supplied additional comments that were made. If a species was seen at a specific park during a fairly narrow time frame (around six weeks), I made just a single entry at the earliest date and in the "details" section listed the dates/numbers of the

additional sightings.

I entered data for WC Best Wildlife Preserve/Best Lake, Rookery, Bass Lake, West Woods, Chardon Village, Beartown Lakes Reservation, Frohling (only one), Metzenbaum park, Holden Little Mountain and Holden general gardens. I did not enter any highlighted sightings made outside of the above listed sites.

The person we hired to do this work ended up bailing out, so I did all the data entry. This was a big job!

—Mary Salomon

(ASGC's IBA Project is an ongoing effort to preserve and enhance the Chagrin Valley Important bird Area.)

The Squawk



Send your comments, questions, or complaints to
info@clevelandaudubon.org

Did you know?

Rough-legged hawks are named because of the fact that they have legs feathered all the way down to where their toes meet the leg. Most hawks have no feathers on their lower legs.

It is believed that rough-legged hawks are able to see lemming urine tracks in the fields that they hunt allowing them to detect unseen prey. It is thought that the urine tracks reflect UV light which is invisible to humans but visible to these and a few other hawks.

—Jim Tomko

Non-ASGC Events

Festival of the Birds
May 5-7, 2017
presqueisleaudubon.org

Allegany Nature Pilgrimage
June 2-4, 2017
alleganynaturepilgrimage.com

Upcoming Events

Field Trips

Jan 8 3:00 pm
Novak Education Center
382 Townline Road, Aurora

Volunteer Open House

All volunteers!
Past, present and potential:
Join us for a little post-holiday cheer at our Volunteer Open House.
Come early (2 pm) for a hike in the Novak Sanctuary led by Jim Tomko and Matt Valencic.
Enjoy some good eats while hearing about volunteer opportunities with the ASGC for the coming year.

Check out the Novak Center—worth the trip if you've never seen it!

RSVP at info@clevelandaudubon.org

Sponsored by the Education Committee.

Jan 28 9:00 am
"Winter Tracks"
Molnar Sanctuary

So often we hike the woods and don't realize what other creatures share it with us due to their secretive, nocturnal habits. Snow cover can reveal all the traffic on our trails from a squirrel racing to a tree with the tracks of a fox in the chase. Let's see what stories we can read in the snow. Meet at the Molnar Sanctuary on the west side of Page Road a few hundred yards north of Mennonite Road in Aurora.

Feb 19 8:30 am
"Great Backyard Bird Count"
Aurora Sanctuary

Each year during the 3rd weekend of February, National Audubon holds the Great Backyard Bird Count where each of us can count the birds right out our window for as little as 15 minutes or for as long as you desire. When you are done you submit the count online at gbbc.org to be recorded and tabulated and shared with all. Help us participate in this event by joining us on our annual winter bird survey. Meet at the Bretschneider Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail just a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

Mar 25 9:30 am
"Waterfowl"
Ladue Reservoir

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A wry smile



"My New Year's
Resolution is to lose just
10 pounds. Only 15 to go."

Bringing birds to Scouts

On December 3rd, ASGC volunteers Matt Valencic and Barb Philbrick presented Bird Study merit badge information to twelve Boy Scouts. Boy Scout merit badges allow Scouts to examine subjects to determine if they would like to further pursue them as a career or vocation. Each merit badge includes requirements that the boys must fulfill before they can earn the merit badge. To earn the Bird Study merit badge, the requirements include being able to explain why it is important to study birds, show familiarity with terms used to describe birds, identify at least 20 birds, go on a field trip with people who are knowledgeable about birds, and build something that can benefit birds, such as a bird house or bird bath.

The first session discussed why it is important to study the birds and introduced parts of birds. Barb and Matt used a slide show and materials



"Parts of a Bird" illustration from the Bird Studies Merit Badge presentation.

borrowed from the Novak Education Center for the presentation. They were very pleased with the response. The boys were engaged and curious, and brought stories of their own interactions with birds to the class. They learned

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Volunteer Open House!
January 8, 2017 @ 3pm
382 Townline Road, Aurora
RSVP: info@clevelandaudubon.org

DATE MAIL

P.O. Box 381007, Solon, OH 44139



The Newsletter of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland