

Happy New Year!

In lieu of the January 2018 Newsletter, please enjoy these articles from the ASGC President.

From the Nest

I give great thanks to all of you who supported our annual appeal. Those much needed funds will be used to promote our mission of nature education and preservation. We appreciate your generosity. If you have not yet considered sending in a donation we would welcome it at any time. Again we thank you.

Did you do a Christmas Card Bird Count. Mine totaled 9 species including a pair of Japanese Cranes and Woodstock (yes of the Peanuts Comic fame)! In total there were birds on more than a dozen of my cards with Northern Cardinals being most common. How did you do?

This may be the year that you find that nemesis bird! Sometimes you have to make your own luck! Please remember that we are always in need of volunteers. Consider helping us out on an event or on a committee or even on the Board.

I wish you a remarkable year of birding.

Jim Tomko, President

Snowy Owls and Birding Ethics

The irruption of Snowy Owls is upon us! So far I have heard of just less than a dozen in Northeastern Ohio. These northern visitors attract quite a crowd when discovered. Many want to observe and photograph these large beautiful creatures but keep in mind that this species is not familiar with humans and human habitation. Many are juveniles and may have never encountered a human before. They are already stressed by a long migration, inexperience with hunting, encounters with new terrain and structures that do not occur on the arctic tundra and new predators and threats. They desperately need to conserve their calories and need their rest to restore the protective layer of fat and maintain their wonderful plumage to protect them from harsh winter weather. Close approach will disturb them, cause them to take flight and burn calories unnecessarily. They may even be flushed into moving traffic.

It is very difficult to know when an owl is under stress. You will not likely know when you are stressing an owl because they do not say anything or flit around from branch to branch. What owls do is turn their heads and stare at you. That is their stress reaction signal. Next they will flush and you may have chased them into a dangerous situation. You may think one flight can't hurt but remember hundreds of

us want to get a look at this owl adding up to lots of time not hunting and sleeping for the owl. If hundreds of us disturb the owl it will die.

Please let us all observe good birding ethics. That means no closer than 100 feet for owls on the ground and that also means that you should not be attempting a close up with your cellphone camera or other cameras unless you have a 500mm lens designed for telephoto photography. We all need to maintain a respectable distance to give the owls a chance to survive and allow others the chance for this wondrous observation. Good birding ethics helps both owls and the observers. Enjoy your winter birding!

Jim Tomko, President