



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

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COAC meeting a success

The Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters (COAC) held its semi-annual gathering last month via Zoom® with representation from all active chapters. The group exists to help each other grow and prosper in our mission as Audubon Chapters. Each chapter has strengths and they offer them to each other through ‘success stories’ and one-on-one sharing as requested. These semi-annual gatherings offer opportunities to network and to consider program ideas for our chapters from the presentations.

During this meeting we learned about the detrimental effects of light pollution on plants and animals from Carrie Elvy, Senior Naturalist at The Wilderness Center.

Dr. Andy Jones, Curator of Ornithology at Cleveland Natural History Museum, continued that thought by describing how migrating birds are fatally attracted to building lights at night and mirrored glass during the day, and what can be done about it. He also shared fascinating information on bird hybridization and how scientists use DNA to separate or combine species.

Sara Brink, Preserve Manager for The Wilderness Center, told us about their conservation burial ground, Foxfield Preserve, in Stark County. Most of us did not know such a place existed.

Tri-Moraine Audubon described how
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**Take action!
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Storm drain art



Who knew you could create art around a storm water drain? The students at East Clark Elementary School in Cleveland’s Collinwood neighborhood knew and created this beautiful mural on the sidewalk next to the drain. Here is a summary from one
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I.D. Challenge: Red-headed vs red-bellied woodpecker



Photos: M. Valencic

This is a challenge you will overcome quickly as you spend more time watching birds. But those new to birding often get confused when they see the very red crown of a red-bellied male (right) and proclaim it a “red-headed woodpecker”. Take a close look at the pictures while I describe the key differences.



Red-headed woodpeckers (RHWO) have a completely crimson red head, face and
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From the Nest...

Are your birdfeeders repaired, cleaned and full? They should be by now. You are likely seeing our year-round residents partaking of your offerings and some northern winter visitors are beginning to join in. There is great joy in seeing your avian neighbors feasting and the winter migrants



refueling and recuperating from their journey south. John Lillich gave us an excellent presentation via the “Zoom” internet platform sharing his tips and tricks discovered through a lifetime of bird feeding. Thank you John!

I encourage you to get out and enjoy our sanctuaries this fall. The Hach-Otis, Lillich Meadows addition is providing habitat not found in the woodland. Here

grassland, orchard, and wet field species are being found. The Novak Sanctuary is having trails improved and an observation deck constructed at the Beaver Pond.

It is a satisfying time to bird the field and forest because now you can get a good look at our feathered friends without the obstruction of leaves and lush grass.

The waterfowl migration is on!
—Jim Tomko, President

Take action!

Protect the ancient trees of the Tongass National Forest

As the country's largest national forest, the Tongass is critically important to birds, salmon, bears, people, and local ways of life – but it is at risk. The U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are about to remove protections that would open the land for destructive road-building and logging. Tell the Forest Service and USDA to halt the removal of protections for the Tongass. Visit audubon.org and search for Tongass.



Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse chicks in the Tongass National Forest.

Photo: Milo Burcham

Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*)

Here is a spectacular bird that occasionally visits platform feeders containing black oil sunflower seeds.

In our area purple finches are primarily winter visitors but in extreme northeast Ohio they can be year-round residents and rare nesters in the conifer or mixed conifer/deciduous forests.

This finch has an enormous bill for its size. The bill is much bigger than any comparably sized sparrow. Their usual diet consists of seeds, berries, buds, and insects. The males with their pale bills, raspberry-red head, back and breast fading to pink is a crowd pleaser.

Females are similar to a large sparrow heavily streaked with brown. She has a white eyebrow and jaw line with a brown cheek patch. There is no purple or red on the females.

I have frequently received calls from folks reporting purple finches at their feeders year-round. They have likely confused them with the more commonly seen non-native house finches.

House finch males have more of a bright red head and breast with a heavily brown streaked belly and back. Female house finches do not have the white eyebrow or white jaw line of the purple finch.

If you study that house finch flock this winter, you may get a nice surprise of a purple finch blending in!

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

House finches native to the west were sold as cage birds in the east. When federal agents were enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1940, many New York City pet store owners released their stock of house finches. By the mid 1960s (only 25 years later), the first breeding house finches were detected in Ohio. They have continued to expand westward where they will meet up with their long-lost relatives.

—Jim Tomko

“Bird Nerd” in Phoenix

Kimberly is a proud “East Clark Bird Nerd” (birding club at East Clark Elementary School in Cleveland) and was fortunate to make it to Phoenix in October for some birding. Here is a quick summary in her own words.

“Birding in Phoenix (Riparian Preserve at Gilbert Water Ranch) was really fun. I saw eighteen species of birds in the limited time we had to go birding. A very memorable bird for me was the Summer Tanager. I won't forget it because it was sitting on the end of a dead tree and the sun hit the wings just right, and it was so pretty. My favorite of all time was the Black-Chinned Hummingbird. It was so small! It was drinking nectar from the flowers with the other hummingbirds. Other highlights include Black Phoebe and American Avocets. I'm glad I studied the birds ahead of time on eBird. If I could describe it in one word it would be breath-taking!”



Kimberly Williams in Arizona

Richard ‘Buster’ Banish is the club's moderator and keeps the ‘Nerds’ excited about the wonder and awe of watching and studying birds. Does your school have a birding club? Perhaps you and your birding friends can help make that happen. Something to think about

—Matt Valencic

COAC meeting

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they established a native plants garden at a school in Lima, OH, with the help of the students.

And Canton Audubon closed the day with details about erecting a Chimney Swift tower at Sippo Lake in Canton.

If you thought “I would like to know more about that” then you understand some of the value of COAC. I am sure



future programs will arise across Ohio from the information shared by our generous presenters (all volunteered their time). If you would like to know more about COAC or consider participating, go to www.counciloac.org and check it out. ASGC is a Sustaining Member of COAC.

—Matt Valencic

I.D. Challenge

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even nape. Males and females look alike. Red-bellied woodpeckers (RBWO) have a red crown – the males' going from the bill to the nape while the females' crown starts above the eye and covers the nape. In both, the sides of the face and throat are a soft, tawny brown color.

The back of a RHWO is black-white-black because of the large, white wing patches that show when the wing is folded. RBWOs have a barred back from the nape through the tail feathers.

The front of a RHWO is all white including the undertail coverts. The RBWO is that soft, tawny brown, with a 'blush' of red on the belly (hence the name – red-bellied).

Finally, red-bellied are more abundant and found at feeders that are near woodlots. Red-headed are less abundant and prefer woods that are 'wet' or near water, like river bottoms and wetlands. Both eat insects as well as seeds and nuts, but red-headed are skilled at catching insects on the wing – like a flycatcher. And both nest in cavities they create in dead trees or dead limbs.

So, there you have it! Now you can help someone else get this I.D. straight!

—Matt Valencic

The Squawk



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

From an email:

I was wondering if I could be put in contact with the individual who is in charge of the Aurora Novak Preserve off of Townline Road. Recently we have had two trespassers stray off your path and have ended up in our backyard. We are familiar with your path and these do not connect to any trail leading to our home. I'm sure you can understand our concern. I look forward to your response.

—Melissa

Dear Melissa,

I am very sorry that some hikers at the Novak State Nature Preserve ended up on your property. The Novak Sanctuary is a dedicated State Nature Preserve but is owned and operated by the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. We have clearly marked trails and State Nature Preserve rules require that visitors stay on the trails. There are numerous other rules and regulations that must be adhered to such as no hunting, fishing, or collecting. No dogs, no camping, no fires...I do not know where your property is but I would

like to see how the trespassers got confused and ended up on your property. They may have been deliberately going off trail for whatever reason. If you do encounter that situation again, and feel comfortable talking to them you can tell them that they were in a state Nature Preserve and the regulations require them to stay on the trails. As an alternative, you could call the Aurora Police or the Portage County Sheriff depending on which side of Townline Road you live on. Adam Wholever is the State Nature Preserve manager for our area of the State and he has 2 rangers that patrol a huge area of Northeast Ohio. He could dispatch them to the Sanctuary but often the incident is long gone by the time they get there. There is a chance that they are patrolling nearby though.

I am very interested in what ideas you have to help control off trail incursions.

Thank you for contacting the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. We depend on the eyes and ears of neighbors because we are all volunteer organization with all of us participating on a part time basis. That means we are not overseeing the property all day on any particular day or even every day.

Your help is greatly appreciated.

Jim Tomko, President
Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

Upcoming Events

Third Thursday Series

November 19 7:00pm

"Migrating Waterfowl & Winter Birds"

Via Zoom®

November means waterfowl in NE Ohio and we have the perfect way to get ready. Register today for this Zoom® presentation that will acquaint you with the ducks, geese, swans, grebes and loons that will be here until lakes ice over, returning in February on their way north. We also welcome back some hawks, owls, sparrows and more that think this is a great place to spend the winter.

To register go to www.clevelandaudubon.org and look under EVENTS. Limited number of spaces available.

Drain Art

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of the students, Kimberly Williams:

"This weekend I participated in The Storm Drain Art Project. It was really fun! We painted a mural that included a Great Blue Heron and the lighthouse. We got lots of compliments on our mural. The organizer, Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, asked about Mr. Banish (moderator of the East Clark Bird Nerds) who was out of town. Thankfully, our school's Art teacher, Dee Mariani, represented our school. I really liked it and I hope people get the message about not putting harmful substances in storm drains."

Our thanks go to the dedicated teachers for sharing the message of responsible care of the environment.

And thank you students for taking action to help protect the environment. You are a great example to us all.

—Matt Valencic



Kimberley Williams and fellow students from East Clark Elementary School get creative around a storm drain.

DATED MAIL

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Winter finch forecast

Each year ornithologists, primarily Ron Pittaway, who study the boreal forest, make a prediction on which winter finches will irrupt into southern areas.

This prediction is based on a number of factors but one of the strongest indicators is how rich the boreal seed crop is. Depending on which conifer or mountain ash or birch seeds have failed to be abundantly produced certain bird species will show up in unexpected numbers and in unexpected areas.

This year's prediction is for purple finches to move south of the Canadian border in greater than normal numbers. It is possible that this may be a year for redpolls too. There are indications of the



Purple finch
 Photo: M. Valencia

spectacular evening grosbeak massing in eastern Ontario and moving southwest which is right toward us! Several birders have reported small flocks of pine siskins. A non-finch irruption already being seen are red-breasted nuthatches.

Take a detailed look at those finches this winter and you may end up seeing some special visitors!

—Jim Tomko

A Wry Smile



I finally did it! Bought a new pair of shoes with memory foam insoles. No more forgetting why I walked into the kitchen.

Website photo contest

You're invited to submit your photos representing the best of the season from one or more of our sanctuaries. The winning photo will be featured on our website's homepage and the winner will receive a \$10 Subway gift card. Fall pictures accepted until November 7. Check www.clevelandaudubon.org for full contest information.

Missed the fall deadline? We're having another contest for winter! So get out those cameras and click away!