



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

March, 2018

March birding

Are you ready to chase some new birds in March? Me too, so I checked eBird Bar Charts for Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake Counties and here is what I found. (see accompanying article to learn how you can explore eBird Bar Charts)

March is about waterfowl! Ducks, geese, swans, grebes and loons start their long treks north from our eastern and southeastern states. Most are bound for the 'pothole country' and boreal forests of Canada but some go as far as Alaska and the Arctic Circle. It's a long trip and the breeding season is short, so they need to be on their breeding grounds by ice-out. Once our lakes are ice free you will find new birds every day. They stay just long enough to rest and feed a little before moving on, so visit area lakes frequently.

We can expect 20+ species of ducks including canvasbacks, redheads, mergansers, northern shoveler, teal, ruddy ducks, goldeneye and even a few long-tailed ducks. There will be a big push of tundra swans with some trumpeters mixed in. Common loons will be on larger lakes with their numbers peaking in April. And there are always lots of horned grebes and coots mixed in for good measure. Finally, check wetlands for wood ducks!



Wood duck

Photo: M. Valencic

Woodies are 'cavity nesters' that prefer large trees or nest boxes in wetlands or wet woods. They are summer breeders in our area.

American woodcock will start arriving in old fields and damp forest areas. Visit shrubby fields just before dark to hear their 'peenting' and courtship flights. Wilson's snipe, red-winged and rusty blackbirds and tree swallows will fill the wetlands and wet woods throughout NE Ohio. Look for fox sparrows scratching the leaf litter in berry tangles and thickets. Closer to home listen for Eastern Phoebes singing their name near man-made structures.



Many of these birds are just passing through so get out as often as you can! And remember to record your sightings in eBird. eBird data made this article possible.

Good Birding!

—Matt Valencic

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Save the date!
ASGC Annual Meeting and Dinner

When: Saturday, June 2, 2018

Where: The West Woods, Geauga Metroparks

Speaker: Jim McCormac, Columbus Audubon Society

eBird Bar Charts for NE Ohio

Here is how YOU can see the data that make the "March Birding" article possible:

Go to www.ebird.org and select EXPLORE DATA

Scroll down the page and select BAR CHARTS

Choose your state (Ohio) then, on the right, COUNTIES

Scroll down the page and select

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From the Nest...

You did it! You made this year's Great Backyard Bird Count the most successful ever. The totals are not yet in but as of noon February 19th there was a two percent increase in participation with 111,000 checklists turned in representing 5600 species with Brazil in the lead reporting 814 species. Columbia is next with 772 species followed by India with 763 and Mexico



with 726! This citizen science will help ornithologists take the "pulse" of trends in bird populations.

On another note, please put Saturday June 2nd on your calendar so that you can attend the Annual Meeting. We will be gathering at Geauga Park District's amazing West Woods Nature Center. Our keynote speaker is recently retired ODNR biologist Jim McCormac. Jim is a successful author and amazing wildlife

photographer. For a "taste" you can visit his on-line blog about nature (jimmccormac.blogspot.com). He is an excellent, knowledgeable speaker who is sought after for his presentations. You will not want to miss this one!

—Jim Tomko, President

Spring bird walk schedule

Join us as we watch migratory birds return or travel through our area toward their summer breeding grounds during the 85th Annual Series of Spring Bird Walks. Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on Sundays, April 15 through May 20, 2018 at 7:30 am at the following locations:

Aurora Sanctuary - parking lot east of Page Rd. on E. Pioneer Trail, east of routes 306 and 43, Aurora. 216-337-2202

Bedford Reservation - Hemlock Creek Picnic Area parking lot, off Button Rd., Bedford. 330-715-6300

Big Creek Reservation - Lake Isaac, Big Creek Parkway, Middleburg Hts. 440-891-1710

Brecksville Reservation - Station Road Bridge Trailhead, off Riverview Rd. south of route 82, Brecksville. 330-467-3664

Gauga Park District - Various locations. Call 440-286-9516 for details

Hinckley Reservation - Bridge at the south end of Hinckley Lake, on State Rd., Hinckley. 330-625-5503

Hiram College - James H. Barrow Field Station, 11305 Wheeler Road, Hiram. 330-527-2141

Holden Arboretum - Corning Visitor Center parking lot, 9500 Sperry Rd., Kirtland. 440-946-4400

Huntington Reservation - Huntington Beach parking lot by water tower, 28649 Lake Rd., Bay Village. 440-808-1970

Lake Metroparks - Lake Erie Bluffs, 3301 Lane Rd., Perry Township. 440-256-1404, ext. 2112

Mentor Marsh - parking area on Headlands Rd., Mentor. 440-257-0777

North Chagrin Reservation - North Chagrin Nature Center parking lot, 401

Buttermilk Falls Parkway, Mayfield Village. 440-473-3370

Novak Sanctuary - parking lot north of Rt. 82 on Town Line Rd., Aurora. 330-388-9279

Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation - CanalWay Center parking lot, 4524 E. 49th St., Cuyahoga Hts. 216-206-1000

Rocky River Reservation - Rocky River Nature Center, 24000 Valley Parkway (1/4 mile north of Cedar Point Road), North Olmsted. 216-924-0188

Shaker Lakes - Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 2600 South Park Blvd., Shaker Hts. 216-321-5935

South Chagrin Reservation - Jackson Field, off Chagrin River Rd. (between Miles Rd. and Chagrin Blvd.), Moreland Hills. 440-473-3370

Don't miss the migration!
Cosponsored by - Cleveland Metroparks, Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Blackbrook Audubon Society, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, Gauga Park District, Hiram College, Holden Arboretum, Lake Metroparks, Medina County Park District, and the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

Gates Mills Bird Walks

We will be out rain or shine. Children with adults are welcome. Sundays, 7:30am
Leaders: John Lillich & Buster Banish

April 15 Sunnybrook Preserve

12474 Heath Rd (off Mayfield)
Chester Township

April 22 Orchard Hills Park

11340 Caves Road
Chester Township, (north of Mulberry)

April 29 Frohring Meadows

16780 Savage Road, Bainbridge Township

May 6 Squire Valleevue Farm

CWRU 37125 Fairmount Blvd., Hunting Valley, OH 44022

Use entrance on Fairmount Rd.

May 13 White North Property

3160 Chagrin River Road (Corner of River Road and Shaker Blvd.) Park next to garages on right side of property.

May 20 Squire Valleevue Farm

CWRU 37125 Fairmount Blvd., Hunting Valley, OH 44022

Critter Corner



River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*)

We have them! Since they are nocturnal and crepuscular we have not seen them but river otters have left their signs. For a number of years we have found mussel middens along the shore line of Fulton Pond in the Aurora Sanctuary. They have been seen in the Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River and in the upper Cuyahoga River as far south as Hiram and Mantua. And I have seen them in the impoundments of the Aurora Wetlands Park. This winter I discovered otter slide chutes in the snow traveling from the Aurora Branch to some of our vernal pools and back. But I am still waiting for a sighting report from Fulton Pond.

By the early 1900s, river otters were extirpated from Ohio due to over trapping, water pollution, and habitat changes. In 1986 ODNR began a seven year program of reintroduction by acquiring 123 wild river otters from Arkansas and Louisiana to be released in the Grand River, Killbuck Creek, Little Muskingum River and Stillwater Creek. Today they can be seen in over two-thirds of our counties, especially the eastern and south-eastern areas.

They prefer clean water streams, rivers, ponds and lakes. Adults range from 11-33 pounds and are up to 44 inches in length making them the largest member of the weasel family in Ohio. Their thick muscular tail can be almost 50% of their total body length. They have a very dense pelt, rich brown above with silvery throat and underside.

Young are born in the spring in a den with its entrance under water. Sometimes they will use abandoned Beaver lodges. The youngsters emerge from the den at 2 months and begin to eat solid food consisting of aquatic insects, crayfish, mussels, fish and rarely waterfowl and small mammals such as mice and young muskrats. The pups are weaned at 3 months and are self-

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Out with the old...

Looking for a new home this spring? Have we got a property for you! Newly remodeled (OK, completely rebuilt...) lake view home with all the amenities...

Produced by Steve Zabor Construction.

Photos: J. Tomko

River otter slide chute

Photo: J. Tomko



In case you missed it!

Great Backyard Bird Count 2/18/2018

We had a fresh light blanket of snow as we gathered for the Great Backyard Bird Count. All of a sudden Marty blurted out some sounds and pointed up for us all to see a fairly low flyover of a bald eagle. That is the way to start a bird walk!

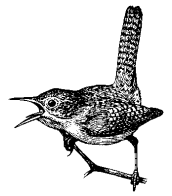
We had 18 species of birds and saw numerous mammal tracks in the snow. The ponds were still solidly frozen so we did not expect to see any waterfowl. But just as I was giving up hope for water birds, Marty again directed our

attention skyward and we saw 30 ring-billed gulls circling and soaring around and making those gull sounds.

We had a large number of eastern bluebirds to dazzle the eye whenever the sun emerged from behind a cloud to light them up. A belted kingfisher was heard traveling from one open water area to another. I submitted the count numbers to the Great Backyard Bird Count tabulators who will make them available to anyone who would like to study bird-life in our area.

—Jim Tomko

The Squawk



Wow, the Winter Wren I described in the February issue was enormous as wrens go! I said they weigh 3 to 4 ounces which would be as big as a Blue Jay or a Mourning Dove! But in reality they are only 0.3 to 0.4 ounces. I forgot the decimal point. They are only a tenth of the weight reported! My apologies.

—Jim Tomko

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

River Otter

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sufficient at 5 months. They remain in a family group for 8 or 9 months or until the next litter is about to be born in the spring. Offspring will travel up to 20 miles to establish their own territory. Wild river otters can live more than 10 years.

The reintroduction has been so successful that there is now a closely regulated trapping season for them as their population continues to expand. Keep a sharp eye on your local wetlands and let me know if you catch a glimpse of these amazing creatures.

—Jim Tomko

eBird Bar Charts

(Continued from page 1)

CONTINUE

Now find and click on [Cuyahoga](#), [Geauga](#), and [Lake](#) then click CONTINUE

Look for the month of March (column) then scroll down to see what birds are present (green bars).

If you wonder where people were birding to find certain birds, press the MAP button and start exploring the many locations on the map.

—Matt Valencic



This screech owl box was built by Aurora resident John Brozowski.

Upcoming Events

Field Trips

Speaker's Bureau

March 18 9:00am
"Waterfowl Wander"
LaDue Reservoir

I am constantly astounded by the blazing colors reflected in the resplendent breeding plumage of the drakes as they head north to their breeding grounds. This is a caravan style birding tour where we will stop at several favorite lakes and ponds in southern Geauga and northern Portage counties. Have a full tank of gas and bring some lunch money as we will end with a stop at a restaurant to tally, compare notes and share stories. Meet at the boat ramp parking lot at the end of Washington Street off of St. Rt. 44 in Auburn Corners.

April 7 7:30pm
"Timberdoodles!"
Novak Sanctuary

These shorebirds are a long way from the shore but they seem to love our wet fields for their courtship dance and flight display. In mild winters they start this activity as early as late February and crescendo to a peak in late March/early April. Come on out for a night display of song and dance that is like no other in our area! Please wear water-proof shoes and dress for the weather. Meet at Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Rd a little less than a mile north of St. Rt. 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

March 28 7:00pm
"Birds of Northeast Ohio: Beyond Your Backyard"
Presented by Matt Valencic
Lakewood Public Library
15425 Detroit Avenue, Lakewood, OH

Over 200 species of birds can be found in Northeast Ohio in a typical year. Get a close-up look at 100 of the most common residents, migrants and breeding birds of Northeast Ohio. This lecture is inspired by The Bluebird Effect, winner of the 2013 Ohioana Book Award and a 2017 Choose to Read Ohio selection. This event is supported by the State Library of Ohio with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Please recycle this
newsletter

Ready, set, shoot!

The 2018 ASGC Photo Contest will
begin accepting entries at midnight
on March 16th.

Categories are Birds of Ohio, Nature,
Fine Art, and Youth. Photos must be
submitted through our online form.

Entries close at midnight,
April 14th.

eBird 101: Speaker's Bureau program at West Woods attracts 50+ eager birders

Remember those eBird tutorials
you see in this newsletter? They are
now bundled together in a new
Speakers Bureau Program – eBird 101
– which was launched on February
18th at the West Woods Nature Center
in Geauga County to an audience of
55 interested birders. They included
folks who never use eBird, sometimes
use it and always use it. The program
was presented by Matt Valencic
(Audubon Society of Greater
Cleveland) and Linda Gilbert
(Naturalist with the Geauga Park
District) with live internet access to
eBird.org.

The program covered the most useful
and frequently used features of eBird,
including:

Exploring Data for Counties,
Hotspots, Bar Charts and Species Maps.

Searching Photographs and Sound
Recordings of specific species.

My eBird which allows you to sort,
summarize, print and share your
personal data and checklists.

Creating a new account, checklists
and uploading pictures to checklists.

Because of the live internet



More than 50 birders learned about eBird on
February 18th at Geauga County's West Woods
Nature Center.

connection, audience questions were
answered with actual demonstrations on
eBird. Because so much information is
presented, attendees received a six-page
handout that took them step-by-step
through many eBird features.

If you are interested in this or
another Speakers Bureau program for
your organization, please email us at
info@clevelandaudubon.org. You can
find a list of all Speakers Bureau
programs at www.clevelandaudubon.org
and look for the Backyard Naturalist
(Speakers Bureau) button on our home
page.

—Matt Valencic

DATED MAIL

