



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

April, 2019

Creating habitat: you CAN make a difference

The greatest threat to birds and other animals around the world is habitat loss. Habitat loss comes from many sources – some noble (advancing the common good) and some not so noble. On a grand scale we see things like destruction of old growth forests or municipal waste going directly into rivers and oceans. These issues are too big for most of us to address except to write our elected officials, at all levels, and insist they do something on our behalf – and we should do just that!

But we also experience habitat loss on a local level when housing or business development takes place where once a woods or meadow existed. This is a situation where we CAN have some positive impact.

In your own yard, consider replacing

some lawn with native plants like trees, shrubs, woody ornamentals, perennials and annuals. Native plants are hardier than many introduced species because they evolved with our local climate, insects and diseases. Vary the plantings in both height and variety to make the yard inviting to a variety of birds. Some birds live most of their lives in the treetops while others make their nests and look for food on the ground, under shrubs and bushes. Planting a variety of species also guarantees that when insects or disease come to visit you will not lose your entire yard (think Emerald Ash Borer or fungal diseases in wet, cool weather).

Beyond your own yard, you can encourage your neighbors and friends to

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ASGC Annual Meeting & Dinner

When:
Saturday, June 1, 2019

Where:
Lake Farmpark's Machinery Barn
8800 Euclid Chardon Rd.
Kirtland, OH 44094

Schedule:
3:00 pm Nature Walk
4:00 pm Social Hour
5:00 pm ASGC Business Meeting
5:30 pm Dinner
6:30 pm Carol Thaler "Biomimicry"

Cost:
\$30 adults
\$25 Seniors 65+/children under 15

RSVP by May 18:
info@clevelandaudubon.org

ID Challenge: Tree sparrow vs. Chipping sparrow

Some folks are satisfied calling all sparrows "LBJ's" – little brown jobs! But with a little study you can master sparrows – most of the time! 'Trees' and 'Chippies' are a good place to start. Let's take a closer look.

The tree sparrow is our 'winter sparrow' and the chipping sparrow our 'summer sparrow'. But during April we have both in NE Ohio. Their overall size is similar (6.5" vs 5.5"). Both have a rusty cap, small bill, unstreaked breast, fairly

long tails and they feed on the ground. They can be confusing if you only get a



Tree sparrow (left) and Chipping sparrow (right)
Photos: M. Valencic
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Are you ready for warblers?

May will be here before you know it and so will those beautiful, hyperactive and sometimes confusing WARBLERS! Get ready to enjoy them by attending one (or more if you like) of our WARBLER WARM-UP presentations around Greater Cleveland. Using more than 160 photographs we review field marks, group birds by color, behaviors, habitat and more. We do a close-up of NE Ohio's breeding warblers and show pictures of other species 'just passing through' during migration. See the "Upcoming Events" section for a full list of dates and locations.

From the Nest...

I hope you are enjoying the migration and are noting some of the unusual visitors that make an appearance at this time of year such as a white pelican at the Cleveland lake front, and a great cormorant that Jen Brumfield picked out of thousands of double-crested cormorants. The ducks are now



rapidly moving through our area. Matt Valencic has already detected Eastern phoebes. On March 24th I saw my first of the season tree swallows, wood ducks and an Eastern meadowlark. American woodcocks are engaged in their twilight dancing and singing accompanied by the spring peepers of the amphibian persuasion. Migration is getting into full swing —

make plans to experience it before it winds down.

Speaking of making plans, please reserve your spot for our Annual Meeting. As always, it will be fun and interesting. Our keynote speaker is from Great Lakes Biomimicry. Biomimicry is a way in which we humans can take some tips to plagiarize from Mother Nature and use some of her engineering

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Creating habitats

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start adding some native plants to their yards (sort of 'keeping up with the Jones's'!). They will beautify their yards while reducing lawn mowing and benefiting wildlife. Do you live in a community that has a home owners association? You can spread the word through that channel and suggest that any 'common areas' be planted in a similar manner. The same concept continues into your community. Let the village or city know that you care about habitat, and that the community will be more beautiful by adding native trees and other plantings.

Not sure where to begin? Check The



A 'layered' landscape at the Secret Arboretum in Wooster shows plantings at varied height.

Photo: M. Valencic

Native Plant Society of Northeast Ohio (www.nativeplantsocietyNEO.org) and (www.audubon.org/native-plants) for information.

—Matt Valencic

Sparrows

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glimpse as they disappear into the bushes, so let's see what is different between breeding males that can help.

The tree sparrow's bill is bicolored (lower mandible lighter than upper), while the chippy's is all black. The tree sparrow's breast has a central 'smudge' while the chippy's breast is clear. The tree's eyeline is 'rusty' and only behind the eye. The chippy eyeline is black, starting at the beak and going 'through' the eye. Chipping sparrows have a strong, white 'eyebrow' while the tree

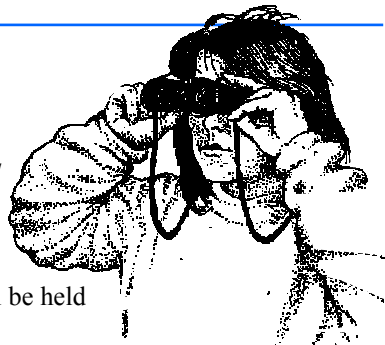
sparrow's eyebrow is the same gray as the rest of the face and nape. The song of tree sparrows is described as "high, sweet, whistled notes" while chipping sparrows have a "long, dry trill" that reminds you of a junco, which are also still here in April and singing their little hearts out!

Take advantage of April to compare these sparrows in the field. In a few weeks the tree sparrows will be gone and so will the confusion – until October when they overlap again!

—Matt Valencic

2019 Spring Bird Walk Series

Join us as we watch migratory birds return or travel through our area towards their summer breeding grounds during the 86th Annual Series of Spring Bird Walks. Celebrate one of the oldest citizen science partnerships with a total of 6,160 Spring Bird Walk checklists entered into eBird, dating back to 1955! Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on **Sundays, April 14 through May 19 at 7:30am.**



Locations: Aurora Sanctuary, Bedford Reservation, Big Creek Reservation, Brecksville Reservation, Gates Mills, Geauga Parks, Hinckley Reservation, Hiram, Holden Arboretum, Lake Metroparks, Mentor Marsh, North Chagrin Reservation, Novak Sanctuary, Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation, Rocky River Reservation and Shaker Lakes.

For a detailed list of locations, visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org.

New this year: **Saturdays** at River Styx Park, 8200 River Styx Rd., Guilford Twp., Wadsworth. Medina County Park District. **April 13 through May 18 at 7:30am.** 330-722-9364

Saturday, April 20 only: Paddock River Preserve, Aurora; **May 4 only:** John & Carol Lillich Meadows, Willoughby Hills; **May 18 only:** Spring Hill Park, Aurora.

Cosponsored by Cleveland Metroparks, Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Blackbrook Audubon Society, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Geauga Park District, Hiram College, Lake Metroparks, Medina County Park District, The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes and Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society.

Critter Corner

Photo: J. Tomko



Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*)

Have you heard them yet? These little 1-inch tree frogs are announcing that spring has arrived. Their color runs from tan to brown to gray with a dark "X" on their back and a "V" between their eyes. They have a slightly expanded disc on the tip of their toes.

The call from a single frog is astonishingly loud and piercing! It will make your ears ring. They frequent vernal pools, ponds, marshes, ditches, and other spring floodings where you can hear them singing their hearts out to attract the females from late March into early May.

Females favor males with louder, faster calls which are usually older, larger, and stronger males. These males will call partially submerged in the water or from elevated points on emergent vegetation. The less preferred younger, smaller males will sometimes quietly wait at the water's edge to intercept females on their way to the macho male in the water. A neat trick for the macho wanna-be!

Tadpoles hatch in 4 to 15 days depending on the temperature of the pool. They emerge from the pool as adults in 45 to 90 days depending on the pool's evaporation rate. In vernal pools it is a race against time. The faster the pool evaporates, the more rapidly they develop.

Another amazing thing these little beings can do is withstand sub-freezing temperatures by producing a glucose-like "antifreeze" that pulls water out of their cells, protecting them from the ice crystals that would have formed in the cells.

They over winter under leaf litter, rocks, bark, and logs. They spend their summer in trees, shrubs, tall grass clumps and other vegetation eating insects, spiders, mites, ticks and spring-tails.

Try to take an evening drive by a wetland to enjoy nature's spring chorus!

—Jim Tomko

In case you missed it!

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15 - 18

The final tallies are in from the Great Backyard Bird Count of February 2019. It is interesting to see what species were the most recorded. Thanks for your help in the largest "citizen science" project ever!

Here are the top 10:

Species	Number of Checklists
Northern Cardinal	56,785
Dark-eyed Junco	50,397
Mourning Dove	45,449
Downy Woodpecker	42,095
Blue Jay	40,386
American Crow	39,467
House Finch	37,726
House Sparrow	37,149
Black-capped Chickadee	35,757
White-breasted Nuthatch	33,284

The Squawk



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

From an email:

I'm writing because I have a mockingbird that has taken over my backyard feeder. No other birds are visiting my feeder because it is guarding against them. I'm

really excited to have this mockingbird, because I know they are somewhat uncommon for the area. But I am wondering how long it should be expected to stick around. What do you think I should do?

—Taylor

Dear Taylor,

Well that is really special to have a Northern Mockingbird in this part of the state! You are correct that they are unusual this far north. As you have noticed they are very territorial and will defend feeders and other food sources. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to stop a mockingbird from claiming the feeder for itself. The best thing to do is to stop all feeding activity for 7-10 days. The mockingbird will likely move on to another area. I know you probably cannot bear to stop feeding your other backyard feathered friends so as an alternative, you could add another feeder on the opposite side of the house. The bird cannot defend both places at once and that will free up the other feeder while the mockingbird is busy at its current feeder. It may move from one to another but cannot be everywhere at once.

—Jim Tomko

From the Nest

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that has existed for hundreds of thousands of years to make our life easier and treat our planet more gently.

I wish you an exciting spring of birding.

—Jim Tomko, President

From an email: I'm in Tuscarawas County. Is it possible that I saw a pair of nighthawks today (Feb 28)?

—Rick

Hi Rick,

I consulted the eBird bar charts to answer your question (this chart shows when to typically expect migrants to arrive and depart the county). While anything is possible, the bar chart for Tuscarawas County shows that this species is not expected until early May. It would probably require a picture to confirm a nighthawk sighting in March in NE Ohio.

—Matt Valencic

Upcoming Events

Field Trips, Etc.

April 12 7:30pm

"Woodcock Waltz"

Novak Sanctuary

The springtime courtship dance and flight of the woodcock is an annual must see. Join us for a twilight performance of the local Timberdoodles competing for the limelight trying to win their heart's desire. If the weather and mother nature is on our side, we should have a grand display with multiple performers. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Rd about a mile north of State Rt. 82 on the Mantua/Aurora border.

April 19 8:00pm

"Frog Fugue"

Aurora Sanctuary

Join us under the April full moon known as the Pink Moon where we will be entertained by resident artists of the frog and toad arena. Compare these performers to determine which is your favorite virtuoso. They will be singing their hearts out trying to out do their neighbors in quest of the finest partner the pond can offer. Meet at the Bretschnieder Park/Audubon parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Rd. in Aurora.

April 14 — May 19 7:30am

"Spring Bird Walk Series"

Aurora & Novak Sanctuaries

April 24 7:00pm

"Birds of NE Ohio"

North Royalton Public Library

Dates and locations for

"Warbler Warm-up"

April 7 2:00pm

Mobius Nature Center
929 E. Mennonite Road, Aurora

April 14 3:30 pm

West Woods Nature Center
9465 Kinsman Road, Russell Township

May 1 7:30pm

Cleveland Museum of Natural History
1 Wade Oval, Cleveland (lower level)

DATED MAIL

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An Audubon Moment

While vacationing recently in Tucson, Arizona, my sister and I had the privilege of witnessing the Raptor Free Flight program at the Sonoran Desert Museum. Raptor Free Flight is a birds of prey flight demonstration that occurs in the open desert showcasing natural behaviors of native birds. To encourage the birds to fly as low over our heads as possible, the audience was instructed to keep cameras, hats and hands below eyebrow level. No children on shoulders. If a bird were to strike such an obstacle, apparently, it might choose to fly too high to be seen, or not fly at all.

Sure enough, the first bird released, a great horned owl, flew in short bursts very low over our heads so that we could hear every feather rustle as she turned in mid-air. Wow!

Next we watched four Harris' hawks, a species not originally a desert native but now well adapted to the dry, hot environment. This hawk hunts in cooperative family groups, which I did not know.

My sister was convinced that, when offered their freedom, the birds would head for the hills. I thought they would stick around because there was food. I was correct. The birds' handlers and several volunteers were stationed around the audience with bags of chunked raw meat, which they would place surreptitiously in nearby low tree branches or hold in their gloved hands to tempt the birds to fly past our heads and come in for their close-up.

We saw many cactus wrens and other birds while in Arizona, but it was the raptors that provided the most memorable moments.

—Alison DeBroux



Do you have an Audubon Moment to share? Submit your short (200-300 words) nature story to info@clevelandaudubon.org. Pictures are appreciated but not required.

—Editor