



# The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)

November, 2019

## eBird alerts

Did you see the Baird's sandpipers at LaDue Reservoir during September and October? They were a special challenge to ID this year because they foraged almost exclusively IN the water (they are known as the sandpiper that stays OUT of the water!). How about the buff-breasted sandpiper at Mentor Marsh on September 12<sup>th</sup>?



eBird alerted enthusiasts to this "Florida only" limpkin, which showed up in Mentor on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

Photo: M. Valencic

Here, too, the bird was seen foraging IN the water rather than on dry land, its usually behavior. OK ... how about the limpkin at Veterans Park in Mentor? This 'Florida Only' bird stayed only one day (Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>) but many folks got excellent looks and pictures as the bird caught snails in the shallows of the lake. One more ... how about the LeConte's sparrow seen and photographed many times during October at Mentor Marsh – Wake Robin Trail! If you missed some, or all of these birds, you are not alone.

Not many years ago, nearly everyone posted their sightings on the Ohio Birds Listserv, an email service of the Ohio Ornithological Society. With the dawn of social media, many people migrated to Facebook and created groups interested in sharing information about Ohio or a specific county or a specific interest, like rare birds or bird

photography. If you are not a member, you don't hear about the birds being discussed.

eBird offers an alternative to joining all those groups while still being able to know about birds of interest to you. You need an eBird account (FREE) which only requires creating a username and password.

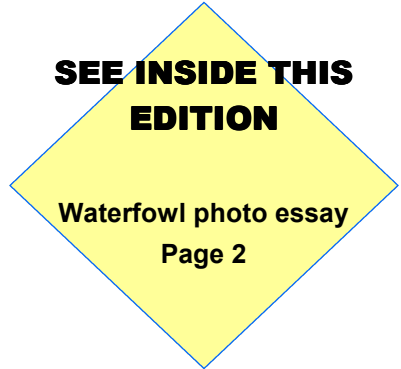
Once you get comfortable using

eBird and creating checklists, go to [MY eBIRD](#) and scroll down the page looking for [MANAGE MY ALERTS](#) on the right. Click on it and notice that you can subscribe to several different ALERTS for rare birds or birds you have not yet seen this year in a specific county or across the state.

You may create more than one alert and choose to receive email alerts once a day or hourly. You only receive an alert when there is something to report, like a limpkin in Mentor, OH! The alert lists the bird(s) you want to know about, the person(s) who saw it and a link to their eBird checklist, which often contains comments or pictures.

You may not be able to drop what you are doing when the alert arrives, but at least you will know what is being seen in your area. GOOD BIRDING!

—Matt Valencic



## 1/4 of North American birds lost since 1970

Almost anywhere you go, you can find birds. They scurry through the waves on every beach, wing over every prairie, raise chicks in every wood, and visit every backyard. But according to a new study, North America is home to nearly three billion fewer birds today compared to 1970—that's more than 1 in 4 birds that have disappeared from the landscape in a mere half a century.

"This was an astounding result, even to us," says lead author and Cornell Lab of Ornithology conservation scientist Ken Rosenberg.

The study, published in the journal *Science*, marks the first time experts have tried to estimate sheer numbers of avian losses in the Western Hemisphere. The study highlights that many birds we still consider common, like Baltimore Orioles, Dark-eyed Juncos and Barn Swallows, are actually posting heavy population losses. Altogether, the

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## From the Nest...

Going along with the spirit of the season, I want to thank all of you who have contributed time, talent, and funds to make our organization a success. It amazes me what this small handful of like-minded dynamos can accomplish.

I am not going to name names because I know I will forget someone.



But each and every one of you is a cog in the wheel and if any one of you was

not providing the thing that you do, we would greatly sacrifice our on-going finished product.

Actually we do not have a finished product! We are constantly refining, re-planning, and re-inventing to make it better and better.

I am putting out a call to those who

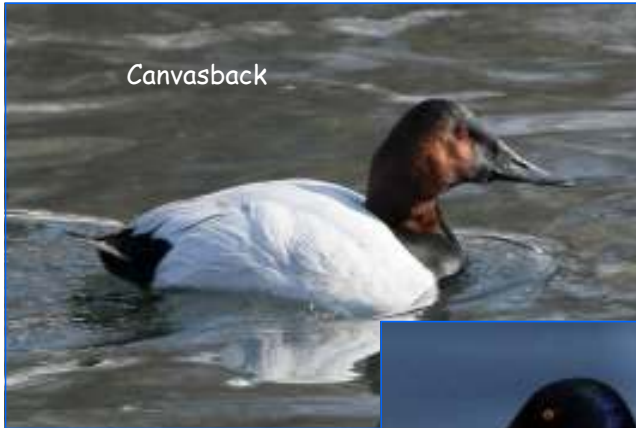
have the desire and passion to please join us.

And, a heart-felt thank you to those who already have!

—Jim Tomko, President

(Editor's note: Joining ASGC is easy! You can print membership and/or donation forms from our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org).)

## Birds to look for in November on lakes and ponds...



Canvasback

Photos: Matt Valencic



Northern Shoveler



Redheads



American Wigeon



Ring-necked Duck

## Critter Corner

American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*)



Photo: M. Valencic

Here is a misnomer! American tree sparrows rarely spend any time in trees. Most spend their summer north of the tree line on the tundra in shrubby areas or in areas devoid of trees. When they visit us during the winter, they again prefer shrubby areas or weedy open grasslands.

The name came from Europeans who noticed a similarity to their own European tree sparrow and the name stuck. This is a handsome, rusty-capped, gray-headed sparrow with two white wing bars and an unstreaked breast with a dark spot right in the middle. Look closely at its bicolored bill – dark on top and yellow below.

November is when they begin to appear at our feeders with a preference for black oil sunflower seed, hulled sunflower seed, nyger seed and millet. They are ground feeders so seed spilled or seed scattered on the ground is most enticing but they will also visit platform feeders.

These hardy sparrows can withstand blizzards and severe winter conditions often feeding during the storm. It is thought that they cannot survive without consuming 1/3 of their body weight a day. On their breeding grounds they switch their diet to mainly insects feeding their four or five young in a nest built on or near the ground next to a grass tussock or a shrub.

These birds will brighten your winter day. Keep a look out for them all winter and as spring approaches be careful to separate out the newly arriving and overall similar-looking field sparrow and chipping sparrow.

—Jim Tomko

## Hach Otis

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completed in 1944.

On Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup> I led two walks at Hach-Otis as part of the previous day's program. The first walk started at 10am and was attended by 30 hikers.

Starting a little after noon, I led a second hike into our newly acquired adjacent 50 acres. As advertised, this is not an easy hike, and only nine people chose to accompany me on this trip. At this time there are no trails into this area. Some sections are quite steep and to make the footing more difficult the ground, in many places, was covered with acorns. It was like walking on ball bearings.

The hike took us down approximately 150 feet in elevation to the Chagrin River flood plain below. Because of the difficulty in getting there, this area has seen very little human activity in the last 60 years.

Everyone thought this flood plain would be an excellent birding area and seeing it was well worth the effort it took to get there. Three hours later, we arrived back at the parking lot, safe and sound. All appreciated the day, the beautiful weather and fall colors across the Chagrin River Valley.

Hope to see YOU on the next Hach-Otis excursion!

—John Lillich

## In case you missed it



We had an abundance of gentian blooms this year with perfect weather for them to open to the sunny skies. Often, we discover the fringed gentians in patches throughout the

wet area where they grow but this season they were scattered here and there in very nice numbers. I am always astounded by the intricacy of the flower and the beautiful shade of blue that they exhibit.

In addition, we enjoyed the blooms of bottle gentian, nodding ladies tresses, calico aster and blue-stemmed goldenrod among countless others.

We were joined by a nice group of interested hikers from as far away as Canton, Ohio, including some members from their Audubon chapter. I was very pleased to have Stanley Stine, the city naturalist from Twinsburg, Ohio, join in to help lead the group.

Thank you to all who participated and made it a fantastic fall wildflower walk.

—Jim Tomko

## 1/4 birds lost

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research team analyzed the breeding population of 529 species by pooling data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl surveys, and 10 other datasets.

As expected, the study showed that birds that breed in at-risk habitats such as grasslands and the Arctic tundra are declining drastically.

More surprising were the far-reaching declines across habitats and bird types. About 90 percent of the missing birds came from 12 widespread bird families, including warblers, sparrows, blackbirds, and finches. Common birds found in many different habitats experienced some of the steepest drops. Feeder birds like the dark-eyed junco have declined by nearly 170 million individuals.

There isn't one single factor that can account for these pervasive losses. Habitat loss as well as multiple environmental factors including pesticide use, insect declines, climate change, and direct threats from outdoor cats and glass skyscrapers, are hitting birds from a range of angles.

While the results are troubling, there is some good news. Waterfowl as a group, for example, saw a population



Dark-eyed junco population has declined by 170 million in last 50 years.

Photo: M. Valencic

increase of 34 million individuals since 1970, thanks largely to wetland conservation efforts. Raptors, such as the bald eagle, also fared better with a gain of 15 million individuals because of the ban on DDT in 1972. These numbers show that taking steps like wildlife management, habitat restoration, and political action can be effective in saving species in steep decline.

Cornell and its partners (which includes the National Audubon Society) launched a website to share the findings and promote bird-saving solutions, including seven steps that anyone can take in their own lives. Visit [3BillionBirds.org](http://3BillionBirds.org) to view these steps and other ways you can help birds.

—Jillian Mock

(Excerpted from [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org))

## Upcoming Events

### Field Trips, Etc.

#### **November 16 2:30pm**

*"Leaf Crunching"*  
Molnar Sanctuary

The leaves of brown are on the ground! If we have a dry day we can crunch and kick through the many leaves blanketing the trail and forest floor! I love a November walk because without the leaves on the trees we are better able to see the wildlife and the lay of the land. Often on these walks we remark, "I didn't know that was there!" referring to a tree or boulder or wetland that had been obscured by summer leaf cover. Help us see what is new or newly discovered in this sanctuary with its varied habitats. Meet at the Aurora Dog

Park parking lot on the east side of Page Road a few hundred yards north of Mennonite Road in Aurora.

**Various Dates & Locations** (see below)  
*"Migrating Waterfowl and Winter Birds of NE Ohio"*

Once the pretty summer songbirds have departed for points south, what do birders do? They put on another layer of clothes and go looking for waterfowl – ducks, geese, swans, loons, grebes & gulls. This presentation showcases these hardy visitors along with hawks, owls and smaller birds like snow buntings, larkspurs and kinglets. If you don't like cold weather, ask about 'car birding', a

favorite alternative to walking when wind chills plummet! About 1 hour in length.

#### **November 6, 7-8 pm**

Friends of Hiram College Library,  
Prichard Room, 11694 Hayden Street,  
Hiram, OH

#### **November 13, 7-8pm**

North Royalton Library, 5071 Wallings  
Road, North Royalton, OH

#### **November 26, 7-8pm**

Akron Audubon, Mingo Lodge, 1501  
Sand Run Parkway, Akron, OH



**DATED MAIL**

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*A Wry Smile*



“The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is today.”  
 —Chinese proverb

**ASGC hosts the Burrough's Nature Club of Willoughby**

On Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup> I presented a one hour program on the history of our Hach-Otis Sanctuary to the Burroughs Nature Club in Willoughby. This was their regular monthly meeting. The meeting was preceded by a social period with lots of goodies and beverages. The church hall was packed, over 50 people in attendance, and the program was very well received.

Burroughs and ASGC have been linked through Hach-Otis since the early 1940s. The idea of preserving these old woods began with Ed Hach, a member of the Burroughs club, and other club members. Early in the 1940s they had put together 81 acres that included Edward

Hach's land along with property acquired from Harrison G. Otis.

The next consideration became, who would hold title and manage this property. Burroughs was not incorporated, therefore could not be the owner. The only other like-minded organization in the area was the Cleveland Bird Club, the forerunner of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, which was incorporated. The



Steep terrain and treacherous footing challenged hikers in the Hach-Otis Sanctuary's new section.

Photo: J. Lillich

Bird Club already owned and managed the 166-acre Aurora Sanctuary (believed to be the oldest privately owned nature preserve in Ohio). Transferring ownership to the Bird Club was a naturally fitting move and was

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