

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

April 2017



Ring-Necked Duck photo by Harry Spencer

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Bald Eagle photo by Harry Spencer

Program

Tuesday, April 4, 7 p.m.

Sandy Ridge Reservation

Andy Lance presents “Incorporating Native Plants in an Urban Landscape”

Andy Lance has a BS from Bethany College in West Virginia and an MS from the Bard Center for Environmental Policy in New York. He has worked with Cleveland Metroparks as field botanist for several years while teaching ecology and biology as an adjunct faculty member at Lorain County Community College. He returned to school to earn a PhD in biology at Case Western Reserve University in 2015. His dissertation research examines how manipulation of soil microorganisms can influence tree establishment in urban reforestation.

PLEASE NOTE

The April and May monthly meetings of Black River Audubon Society will take place at Sandy Ridge Reservation's Perry F. Johnson Wetland Center off Otten Road in North Ridgeville.

Field Trips

Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve

Saturday, April 15, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at 8701 Lakeshore Blvd.

Cleveland, Former Dike 14

Chuck Slusarczyk, Jr. to lead

Magee Marsh

Saturday, May 6, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at west end of boardwalk.

February Field Trip

Castalia Pond, Pickerel Creek, etc.

February 18, 2017

By Paul Sherwood

Saturday, February 18th, 2017 turned out to be a sunny, warm (40's and 50's) day for the annual Castalia Pond BRAS field trip. Even as a fan of sunny and warm, I knew that this did not bode well for this excursion that prides itself on being all about waterfowl. The day did not disappoint. Harry Spencer and Marty Ackerman met me at the south end of Castalia Pond at precisely 9:00 AM. Also at the pond were Canada geese, mallards, and an American crow. Marty and I also heard eastern bluebirds on the other side of the road. Had more of the area waters been frozen 15+ species of waterfowl would have been expected. At least we didn't have to worry about frostbite.

We then proceeded to the roadside petting zoo at the corner of US 6 and State Route 269 to look for the Eurasian collared doves. The doves also decided not to show, but we did get to see the resident bald eagles tending to their nesting duties. Another adult was also nearby. A fairly large flock of tundra swans was present at the North end of the road. We also added ring-billed gulls, herring gulls, American crow, American robin, red-winged blackbirds, common crackles and house sparrows along this stretch of road.

We then crossed State Route 2 to check out the Bayview Borrow Pits. Great egrets and common mergansers were seen here. We then drove through “Downtown” Bayview adding European Starlings.

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Medusa Marsh was our next stop. Here we added trumpeter swans, gadwall, American wigeon, American black ducks, mallards, northern shovelers, great blue heron, bald eagles, ring-billed gulls, song sparrows and red-winged blackbirds.

Our final stop was at the Sandusky Coal Docks. We found Canada geese, mallards, black-crowned night herons killdeer, ring-billed gulls, herring gulls, belted kingfisher and common grackles.

Harry and Marty had to go back to Lorain County at that point, so they dropped me off back at Castalia Pond and we parted ways. Thank you, Harry and Marty, for a great morning of birding. Come back next year so that we can try again.

Sandy Ridge Bird Hikes Begin Again

Waders, Warblers and Waterfowl will be the plan again at Sandy Ridge Metro Park as naturalist Tim Fairweather leads birders on Wednesday morning hikes, April 5 through May at 7:30 a.m. The popular hikes draw birders of all levels who hike and observe birds until 10 a.m. The hikers then head to the park’s Wetland Center to go over their lists while enjoying refreshments.

Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker

Brian Ellis Presents:

Adventures with Audubon

Come spend an hour in the studio of one of America’s greatest naturalists and wildlife artists. Listen to talks of his adventures as he finishes something no one had ever accomplished before: drawing every bird in North America! Audubon will enchant you with stories of his travels and travails in the wildest places on the planet.

In this interactive performance Audubon will bring to life bird behavior, focusing on the birds you are most likely to see as you go bird watching in this area. With lessons on field ecology, the scientific method, art history, and bird migration, the audience is invited to imitate birds and discuss the life histories of their favorite, feathered friends.



Storyteller Brian “Fox” Ellis portrays Audubon in this meticulously researched monologue, drawing from

Audubon's journals, essays, and letters to friends and colleagues. He will introduce the audience to the basic science skills of field observation, species classification, and bird behavior. He will explore the concepts of migration, habitat, niche, and adaptation. Ellis will also explain Audubon's techniques of painting.

This Black River Audubon Society Outstanding Speaker program, supported by Lorain County Metro Parks, will take place at French Creek Nature Center, April 1, 2 p.m.

And a Multi-County Special Event

“World Birding”

with

Dr. Bernie Master

Black River Audubon, Firelands Audubon and the Ritter Public Library will present Dr. Bernie Master as he presents his program “*World Birding*” at Ritter Public Library, 5680 Liberty Avenue, Vermilion on Tuesday, April 25 at 7 p.m.

Dr. Master, an internationally recognized conservationist, has a Life List that includes over three-quarters of the world's bird species, a total over 7,800 birds. He is the first American to see a representative of every bird family in the world. He was also honored by HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands for his contribution to conservation. A previously unrecorded songbird in Columbia, the *Vireo masteri*, or Choco Vireo, is named for his family and the discovery published in IBIS, October 1996.



He has served as an advisor to The Ohio State University Wetlands Park, an appointed board member of the Columbus Zoo and a member of Florida Gulf Coast University Everglades Restoration Advisory Board.

In addition, Dr. Master pioneered the first managed-care company in the country, serving Columbus and Dayton's Medicaid patients. The Columbus Education Association honored him with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in 1995.

Dr. Ritter's book ***No Finish Line*** will be available for purchase at the program for \$50, a significant savings over the Amazon price of \$85.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER

Dendroica fusca

By **Cathy Priebe**

The articles described the birds as “dripping from the trees, practically in your face and species galore.” I had also heard a few personal warbler experiences from friends and eventually my husband Dave and I could not resist making the hour plus trip.

Armed with a field guide and binoculars, we drove through warm, overcast, rainy skies in early May when the warblers were predicted to be stopping to eat and rest before flying over Lake Erie and beyond. I did not have any particular warbler in mind that I wanted to see, but Dave did. He wanted to photograph a Blackburnian warbler, often described as “firethroat” or “torchbird” in reference to its flaming orange throat.

The male Blackburnian is not a difficult bird to visually ID unless you see it from behind, as it has a black back with white streaks, much like a black and white warbler. It is, however, very hard to ID by its song as it is so high pitched you cannot always hear the end notes or you may not even hear the song at all. But there is no mistaking it when you see his fiery orange throat, eyebrow and crown patch glowing against the foliage, usually high in the canopy. The female shares much of the same color pattern characteristics as the male, but where he is bright orange, she is a soft orange yellow and her back is brownish gray. The male also sports a distinctive white wing patch with black streaked sides while the female has two white wing bars and very light side streaks.

A rare Ohio nester, the Blackburnian can sporadically be found breeding in hemlock forests in Mohican State Forest, Hocking Hills and a number of locales in north-eastern Ohio. During migration, they can be found in older growth trees like oaks and conifers as they forage in the treetops for insects such as flies, beetles and budworms.

After walking the Magee boardwalk trail for the better part of the day, we still had not seen a Blackburnian warbler. They had been spotted, but we missed seeing one each time. But we had seen a record number of birds, so we called it a day and headed home.

On a whim, we decided to stop at Old Woman’s Creek in Huron for a short hike. We had barely been on the trail for five minutes, when my husband excitedly pointed and exclaimed, “A Blackburnian!” There he was, directly above our heads, his feathers glowing like embers in a fire.

Migration is a beautiful and thrilling time of year for birders. We get a fleeting glimpse of birds that do not nest in Ohio, but briefly stop for us to admire as they journey to their breeding grounds. If you have not visited Magee Marsh during migration, I highly recommend you make it a priority this spring. It is almost indescribable what you will experience, but you will always remember your first trip.

References: Warblers of Ontario by Chris G. Earley; Birds of Ohio by Jim McCormac; Stokes Field Guide to Birds by Donald and Lillian Stokes; Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion by Pete Dunne.

A Birder's Diary:

Territories, Part I

By **Carol Leininger**

A territory may have a variety of functions – 1) to assure the pair sufficient food, 2) to familiarize the pair with nearby hiding places, 3) to prevent the population from exceeding the carrying capacity of the habitat, 4) to reduce the transfer of disease and parasites, and 5) to provide close contact between a pair without interference from others. There are also several kinds of territories.

Feeding territories can be seen in many birds. Hummingbirds chase others away from their feeder or patch of flowers – even when they are not hungry, they perch nearby and chase competitors away. Sanderlings feeding on a beach following the waves stay about 50 yards away from the next bird.

Roosting territories can be seen in blackbirds and scarlet ibises when they descend by the thousands at dusk in a grove of trees. The only territory defended would be the bird's perch at night. Some believe roosting together is also a way to communicate to others where the best feeding sites are to return to the next day.

Another interesting example is a **mobile territory**. Antbirds in the rain forest defend a small mobile source of food by following army ants. They defend choice hunting spots along the ant trail. But the most common territories are defended during the breeding season. (see next month's article)

If you have ever watched swallows line up on a utility wire, you will notice there is always a consistent amount of space between each bird (**individual distance**) If a bird gets a bit too close the other will fly off. Birds are just like humans – there is comfort in having companions, but not in your face!

CATTLE EGRET

Bubulcus ibis

By **Barbara Baudot**

I first observed a cattle egret poised on the edge of an inlet with other shore birds in the Parc Ornithologique du Pont de Gau, in the delta of the Rhone river. This reserve of ponds and marshlands, salted with dry lands, where bulls train for the arena, wild horses roam and grapes grow wild, characterizes the Camargue— the largest layover for thousands of birds on their voyages between Africa and Europe.

Most cattle egrets are not among these migrators. This bird thrives in semi-tropical and temperate regions around the world in the company of grazing mammals, including cattle, horses, African and Asian elephants, rhinos, hippos, ostriches

and even tortoises in the Galapagos. These large animals flush out succulent insects for the patient egrets, which also glean fish, frogs and small birds from wetlands on the edges of fields. Some egrets, depending where they live, do migrate to warmer climates for the winter. Usually, though, when they move on they are prone to follow the food source and not the sun.

Native to dry pastures in Africa, Asia, southern Portugal and Spain, the cattle egret rapidly extended its range in the 19th and 20th centuries. Buoyed by northeast trade winds they arrived in South America and the Caribbean in the 1870's. In the 1940's the birds appeared in North America and the Galapagos. And by the 1960's they were common in North America, as far north as the Great Lakes, and Canada, even Alaska. Concurrently, cattle egrets from Asia expanded into Australia and New Zealand, and from Africa to most of Europe as far north as Norway. Altitude and temperature matter not to cattle egrets following sheep grazing at altitudes as high as 14,000 feet in the Andes and on islands near Antarctica.

Cattle egrets appear solitary when tailing animals feeding on grasses in open fields, but by nature they are gregarious. At night they roost in flocks perched on branches in mangrove swamps or in trees bordering inlets. They nest in large colonies with other herons and egrets. Their nests, wherein 2-3 blue-green eggs lay, are platforms of twigs not far above the water's edge.

These egrets are suited in all white feathers except during nesting season when their heads, backs, and chest feathers grow long and turn yellowish-orange. Both male and female display the same coats of feathers. Normally their eyes and straight pointed beaks are yellow. Their beaks appear shorter than they are because their chin feathers grow forward under their lower mandibles. Their long legs may vary in color but usually are purplish-gray. They turn reddish-orange in mating season, as does the base of their beaks.

Having known all this, I needn't have gone so far to discover this special bird, because it was often in the cow fields next to home in central France. To me it was just a common egret. Never did I imagine that in its symbiotic relationship with farm animals it is a great asset to farmers. For this reason the French call the bird "egret guard-boeuf"—the egret which protects the cows.

References: Wikipedia and Cornell Laboratory.

The Endangered Species Act Is Under Attack. How Much Trouble Is It In?

(excerpted from Audubon.org)

"Forty-four years ago, the most important wildlife-conservation law in American history **passed the U.S. Senate with a vote of 92-0**. "Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed," **President Richard Nixon** said after ratifying the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

"But in the decades since, the ESA has come under attack. Industries have labeled it as radical and abusive. Flare-ups between states and federal agencies have led to years-long litigation over its scope. The assault has escalated to the point that now 20 (state) attorney generals are asking the Trump administration to revise the law. Meanwhile, long-time ESA-nemesis Rep. Bob Bishop [R-UT] is threatening to repeal it.

"An outright repeal, of course, would be extremely challenging. . . Given that the ESA is still popular among the masses – a small survey from 2015 shows that 90 percent of Americans support it to some degree – that isn't likely.

"Still, there are several other tactics opponents could take to undermine the act. One probable approach is tinkering with the act's protections: for example, repealing the provision that allows citizens to file lawsuits against the government or other private persons for failing to list or protect a species, or granting Congress a veto on expensive projects . . .

“Of all the options, starving the ESA of funding might be the most straightforward way to hurt it. Federal spending on endangered species declined by nearly \$100 million between 2012 and 2014, and Congress could demand further cuts . . .

“Support for the act is broad but not very deep,” says Patrick Parenteau, a professor and former director of the Vermont Law School’s Environmental Center. ‘It’s hard to find a champion with clout.’ So far, Rep. Raul Grijalva [D-AZ] has been one of the few politicians who’ve stood up for the act . . .

“In its relatively short and contentious lifetime, the ESA has helped dozens of species dodge extinction. In fact, it has a 99 percent success rate in keeping birds from going extinct . . . But the act is only as strong and effective as we allow it to be. Whether it’s by one well-aimed blow or a thousand tiny cuts, any dismantling of the ESA could reverse decades of hard-earned success, and deprive future species from the protections they need to survive.”

With the ESA endangered by legislative attack and Scott Pruitt as the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Audubon Society is encouraging us to prove our commitment by demanding our U.S. Senators continue protections of our clean air, water and endangered species of birds and all other animals.

Environmentalism was not a partisan issue when our immediate ancestors passed the Endangered Species Act. It should not be now but has become so. Work to protect the ESA and the Environmental Protection Agency. **JJ**