

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

January 2009

**Black River
Audubon Society**



**blackriveraudubon.org
Founded 1958**

Editors: Jack Smith and Harry Spencer

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Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

Program

Tuesday, January 6, 7 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

Bats

Tim Krynak

Naturalist, Cleveland Metro Parks

Tim Krynak has conducted both numerous educational programs for groups of all ages and professional-training workshops for Interpreters and Research Managers. He was awarded both the National Association for Interpretation Outstanding New Interpreter Award and Master Front Line Interpreter. He is especially known for his works with bats in Northern Ohio and has completed several research projects within the Cleveland Metro Parks and in conjunction with the National Park Service. In 2005 he founded the Las Galarias Foundation to raise funds for projects and programs of Reserva Las Galarias, in Ecuador. He serves as its president.

Young Birders

Saturday, January 10

Sandy Ridge Reservation

See LCMP Arrowhead for details

Field Trip

Saturday, January 17, 9:30 a.m.

Lorain Harbor and Avon Lake Power Plant

Meet at Marina parking lot, Lorain Harbor, on east side of pier.

Special Field Trip Report

Sunday, November 9

Sandy Ridge Reservation

From Western Cuyahoga Audubon's web site

www.wcasohio.org

Black River Audubon joined Western Cuyahoga Audubon for this trip to one of Northeast Ohio's prime birding spots. We were treated to eagles overhead, a variety of sparrows in the tangles, and great looks at coots and other waterfowl. We had a chance to learn quite a bit of natural history from naturalist Gary Gerrone. Twenty-four birders attended.



Mary Anne Romito

Bird species 42: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern

Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle (2), Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Red-Bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch,

Field Trip Report

Saturday, November 22

By **Tammy Martin**



Following a week of rain, snow, and overall gray weather, Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny, though cold with skiffs of snow covering the ground. Ignoring the low temps, an intrepid group of warmly-dressed birders gathered at the Wellington Reservation parking lot before heading across the street to the reservoir. Brave participants included Marty Ackermann, Dane Adams, Ken Austin, Kathy Carpenter, Nancy Dowdell, Marj Henderson, Mike Kapcoe, Dick Lee, Tammy Martin, Nan Miller, Wayne Shipman, Jack Smith, Jean Sorton, and Harry Spencer.

With scopes lined up along the shore of the Wellington Upground Reservoir, we surveyed the assembled waterfowl. As expected, large numbers of Canada geese swam nearby. Further out, many, many Ruddy Ducks fed, snoozed, and causally bobbed in the water. Fewer numbers (some singles) of Gadwall, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Loon (sorry I missed this one!), and American Coot were identified. The Pied-billed Grebe made an appearance, along with a few Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls. Above the water, a Red-tailed Hawk soared by, while a Dark-eyed Junco and Black-capped Chickadee fed in the trees near the parking lot.



H. Spencer

Once the cold made it through our many layers, we headed back to the Wellington Reservation for a warm-up walk. Charlie Sako (LCMP guide) met us and led us down the paved trail. Partway out, we took the gravel path and walked through the entire restored wet-prairie. Of course, many more birds were observed and heard in the many habitats of the reservation. These included Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, and Northern Cardinal.

Of special note were the several Eastern Bluebirds perched in the trees along the trail's edge, and the sparrows (American Tree, Song, and White-throated) and American Goldfinches observed feeding within the dried grassland plants. Great numbers of goldfinches obviously found the Wellington Reservation as rewarding as we did.

The true highlight of the outing, from my vantage point, was a pair of American Pipits. These accommodating birds fed along the trail, did their walking/tail-bobbing thing, then flew ahead a bit when we approached, basically leading the walk for nearly half a mile. Several members admitted that this was a "life" bird for them, which made the outing that much more special. Out-standing!! See you next month for some more great birding.

A Birder's Diary

By **Carol Leininger**

Although I've had many interesting birding experiences, my first sighting of a particular bird is often the most



exciting. I will never forget my first birding trip to Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, Canada. I was birding with friends from the Black River Audubon Society. We were walking across an open wooded area near the boardwalk when someone yelled, “Carol, don’t move!” I looked around, and all I saw were twigs and dead leaves on the ground. I was told that an American Woodcock was sitting on her nest (also called scrape) on the ground right in front of my hiking boots. I looked again and still couldn’t see her! I looked at the picture in my field guide and again at my feet. Still nothing! After about five minutes of staring at every twig and leaf in front of me, I finally saw her.

According to the Stokes Nature Guides in Bird Behavior, the female woodcock “...depends a great deal on her color for protection, so much so that she will not flush off the nest until practically touched.” The Stokes got that right!

Squatting on the ground motionless with markings similar to a dead leaf, it is the best example of protective coloration I have ever seen, including numerous woodcocks at Magee Marsh and in the Lorain County Metro Parks. Each sighting still takes me a while to find the bird pointed out by someone else.

The American Woodcock or timber doodle, as it is sometimes called, is a large chunky bird with short legs and neck, a big head, and a long flesh-colored bill. It is best seen when it moves, and I must say that I love its waddle! There are several things about this bird that really fascinate me in addition to its protective coloration and awkward movements. The tip of its bill is highly sensitive and mobile as it “feels” deep in the mud for earthworms. No other bird has a bill like the American Woodcock.

When the male is trying to attract a female, it performs a fantastic type of flight. At dawn or dusk the male performs in an open field by first flying high into the sky in a spiral type of flight with its wings making a whistling sound. Then it drifts down as a leaf might fall in a zig-zag manner. When it lands, it calls out “peent” quite loudly. No other bird courts its mate like an American Woodcock.

Oh, how I love the American Woodcock!

GBBC is Coming!

From National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The next Great Backyard Bird Count takes place February 13-16, 2009. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are calling on everyone to “Count for Fun, Count for the Future!” Participants did just that in record numbers for the 2008 count, submitting more than 85,000 checklists and identifying 635 species. Let’s break some more records this year!

How to Participate in GBBC

From: www.birdsource.org/gbbc

It’s as easy as 1,2,3!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 13-16, 2009. Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.
2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time.
3. When you’re finished, enter your results through our web page www.birdsource.org/gbbc. You’ll see a button marked “Enter Your Checklists!” on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on March 1, 2009.

Book Review: Surveys of Two Watersheds

Living in the Vermilion River Watershed (Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Firelands Chapter, and Oberlin College, 2008) edited by Mary Garvin and Jan Cooper;

Explorations of a Watershed: The Natural History of the Black River (Environmental Studies Program of Oberlin College, circa 2000) edited by Brad Masi

By **Harry Spencer**



The newly published book *Living in the Vermilion River Watershed* portrays the Vermilion River watershed ecology, and the older book surveys the Black River watershed. The former book articulates a convincing argument for the need to maintain and improve the current water quality of one watershed, and the second book details the progress in reducing considerably the unfortunate contamination of the Black River and its watershed.

Living in the Vermilion Watershed, serves many functions. It is a strikingly beautiful book that can be enjoyed just by looking at the profusion of illustrations of wildlife, maps, scenery, past and present residents, agricultural practices, and more, mostly in color. Stunning photos greet viewers on nearly every page. Its large size, 9 x 12 inches, makes it an attractive book to display on a coffee table. The publication is an outgrowth of an Oberlin College course titled Field Based Writing: Ecology of the Vermilion River Watershed, jointly taught by the co-editors. Probably the book serves as a valuable reference in that course. About the use of the book, Mary Garvin and Jan Cooper write "...we hope reading it will inspire as much pride in and curiosity about the Vermilion River and its watershed for you as we have found in editing it."

Twenty chapters are written lucidly by authors of diverse backgrounds including scientists, professional and amateur naturalists, residents, students, educators and teachers, writers, and photographers. Each chapter is complete by itself, and a reader may proceed through the chapters in any order. Birders, however, might want to start with the chapter titled *A Bird's Eye View of the Vermilion River Watershed* by David Kriska, a staff member of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. A somewhat random selection of other chapter subjects are geology, wild flowers, fishes, mammals, life on the river, and water quality.

The twenty-first chapter lists other resources to be consulted by curious readers.

The older book, *Explorations of a Watershed*, in spite of its comparatively drab appearance, is a worthwhile read. It contains much worthwhile information about the Black River watershed including geologic history, archaeological studies, control of flooding due to urban sprawl, beach ridges of Lorain County, and more. It lacks any information about recent progress in pollution abatement, and I am unaware of any updated version of the book. Nevertheless, I particularly enjoyed the chapters telling the history of the pollution-cleanup attempts in the watershed.

I recommend highly both books to anyone interested in conservation of nature's wonders.

Miniature King among the World of Birds

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus calendula*

By **Jack Smith**



Many years ago in my beginning bird-watching days, I heard a melodious loud bird song that I decided to trace down. I was amazed to see that it came from a tiny bird smaller than the smallest warbler, only 3 ¾ - 4 ½ inches long with a wing spread of 6 ¾ - 7 ½ inches. Maybe this small size is one of the reasons besides the crown as seen in the-photo below that it was named the Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

The naturalist who discovered the bird named it *Regulus calendula*. The genus name, *Regulus*, is a diminutive of rex, Latin for king, and the species name *calendula* is Latin for glowing in reference

to the crown of this bird.



Excited Ruby-crowned Kinglet/ William Bofinger

In mid-spring if you see a very small bird flitting about constantly flicking its wings while foraging for food, the chances are that it is the kinglet. It is a common migrant through Ohio in the spring and the fall.

Most of the time, however, you see only a tiny brown-gray bird with wing bars. The ruby crown isn't seen very often. Only the male has this hidden red-crown, and he only shows it when excited. Most of the time males and females look alike.

When I was hiking in a spruce-fir forest of the Presidential Range of New Hampshire in early summer, I watched a male in full regalia flitting about within close range. I wondered if he were trying to attract a mate or protecting his territory against a rival male. Because the area was in the most southern part of their breeding range, I wondered if there was a nest. I met with no success, however, in finding a nest.

Several years ago Bernie and Jean Pluchinski, and I were on a field trip to Magee Marsh. We watched several kinglets flitting about in the distance. With the intention of bringing the birds in closer, I pulled out my tape player and began playing the Screech Owl call. Lo and behold three kinglets with upraised crowns blazing came in to harass the predator Screech Owl. When excited, the males show how different they are from the females.

These tiny birds are constantly on the move foraging for any kind of invertebrate that can be gleaned from the leaves and stems. They will often ignore birders, particularly those standing still. I have had them foraging within an arm's length from my head.

In warmer climates such as that of Arizona and New Mexico, the kinglet is a year-round resident, but in most of the northern United States, the birds migrate in spring to the Boreal coniferous forest found throughout the upper reaches of Quebec to Alaska. In the fall the northern birds migrate to southern areas in North America.

The female constructs her nest some forty feet on average above ground in a spruce, balsam fir, or Douglas fir. She builds a deep hanging-cup out of moss lichens, bark strips, spider webs, twigs, rootlets, and conifer needles. She lines it with feathers, plant down, and animal hair.

She lays a large clutch of 7 or 8 eggs, except in the Pacific northwest where 9 to 10 are laid.

Why such a large clutch for such a tiny bird? Could this be an evolutionary phenomenon evolved over eons of time to ensure survival of species? If so, a large cluster size might compensate for a relatively high mortality rate of the small bird.

The white to pale-buff-with-brown-spots eggs are incubated by the female, who may be fed by the male. After the eggs hatch in 13 to 14 days, both parents feed the young. After an additional 16 days, the young fledge.

Rather than raise a second family, the birds begin their southern migration. In Ohio the Ruby-crowned Kinglets arrive after the Golden-crowned Kinglets in the spring and leave before the Golden-crowned in the fall. In local Christmas Bird Counts, Golden-crowned Kinglets are often recorded, but few Ruby-crowned Kinglets are.

Populations of Ruby-crowns Kinglets have fluctuated over the years since records have been kept. Harsh winters seem to be the main reasons for the declines, but currently the species is common and widespread.

What will be the effect of global warming? Tune in later!

References: *Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John K. Terres; *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufmann.

Message from National Audubon

Send a message to President-elect Obama

Sign the Petition at <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/repower>.

To revitalize our tattering economy and meet the immense challenges of global warming, we must transform the ways America and the rest of the world produce and use energy. At the cornerstone of the President's economic recovery strategy should be three closely related goals: cutting the pollution that causes global warming, repowering America with clean energy, and ending our dependence on oil. Investments in the energy efficiency and clean energy technology needed to meet these goals, and investments in protecting our health, our vulnerable communities and our natural resources from climate impacts, will rebuild our economy, create millions of green American jobs, and make a more just society.

Now is the time for action! Let President-elect Obama know that you support his efforts to Repower, Refuel, and Rebuild America.

We need to get our economy moving by building a clean energy future by:

- Moving towards 100% of electricity generated from clean sources such as wind and solar.
- Cutting our dependence on oil in half
- Creating 5 million new clean energy jobs
- Reducing global-warming warming pollution by at least 80%

Bluebirds 2008

Seventeen members of Black River Audubon monitored 265 bluebird nesting boxes at seventeen sites. Results: 109 bluebird eggs hatched, and 98 chicks fledged.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 27, 6:30 p.m.

Jack Smith's house, 304 West Ave, Elyria

Number of species identified on Black River Audubon's eBird site during November:	94
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New Species (Toronto Globe and Mail)

Submitted by **Tammy Martin**

- **Cedar Faxwing:** a highly evolved bird that employs telecommunications instead of bird song.
- **Purple Finch:** a nervous and twitchy bird, easily startled.
- **Either/or-iole:** indecisive bird, afraid to take existential leap.
- **Red-tailed Hawk:** a large bird that sits in a tree and stares at the landscape.
- **Stuffed Grouse:** elusive oven-ready game bird.
- **Northern Shriek:** greets the northern dawn with a frenzied, but meaningless, cry of alarm.
- **Evening Grosbeak:** nocturnal bird indigenous to city parks. Song is a series of loud, strident noises accompanied by rude language.
- **Black-capped Chickadee:** a small bird known for lengthy mastication of its food.
- **Hooded Merganser:** a duck that terrorizes other birds and steals their eggs.
- **Glossy Ibis:** a long-legged wader, always seen in the same place.
- **Power Mow:** a noisy bird that feeds on suburban lawns.
- **Storm Petrel:** an oilbird (genus Hydrocarbonae) indigenous to Exxon Province.
- **Toucan:** has miniature camera in its bill for live web casts.
- **Thumbingbird:** has learned to alleviate the stress of lengthy migrations by hitchhiking.
- **Redheaded Woodpecker:** a hot-tempered bird known to attack automobiles parked too close to its habitat.
- **Vowl:** a night hunter identified by its call of "AEIOU."
- **Long-billed Curlew:** a quiet bird, rarely seen after nightfall.
- **E-Gull:** a bird prone to making foolish investments in internet startup companies.
- **Goldfinch:** a nasty, nippy little bird