

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

March 2016



EUROPEAN ROBIN photo by Barbara Baudot

Editors: Harry Spencer, Cathy Priebe
Emeritus Photographer: John Koscinski
Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel

Field Trips

Wendy Park/Scranton Flats

Saturday, March 19, 2016, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at Edgewater Park, Cleveland

Chuck Slusarczyk, Jr. will lead

Cleveland Natural History Museum

Ornithology Department

(Behind the Scenes)

Saturday, April 16, 2016, 10:00 a.m.

Meet at CNHM lobby; Andy Jones will lead

(\$14 for adults/\$10 senior entrance fee)

Participant numbers limited to 20;

RSVP required to Tammy Martin at

Tammy.Martin@oberlin.edu or 440-308-5857.

Car pooling is recommended due to parking fee.

Wellington Christmas Bird Count

January 2, 2016

By Diane Devereaux



An enthusiastic group of twenty-four birders came together the day after New Year's in the southern half of the county for the annual Christmas Bird Count. The weather was better than might be expected, cloudy but without rain or snow and the temperature ranged from 26 to 36 degrees with only a moderate southwest wind.

Those better-than-usual conditions enabled the large group to cover more than 328 miles in the Wellington/Southern Lorain County area, totaling 55 person-hours while counting 52 species and 8,618 total birds.

Among the more interesting birds seen were 51 cedar waxwings, 71 horned larks and a single Lapland longspur and a Carolina wren. In addition, seven bald eagles and seventeen kestrels were counted. Both species are seen during most winters lately but are still striking since, not long ago, neither was seen in the area at any time of the year. The group was surprised, however, not to see any owls.

January Field Trip

Lorain Harbor and Avon Lake

January 16, 2016

By **Tammy Martin**



Our annual Lake Erie lakeshore outing brought over 15 participants to Lorain Harbor on a chilly, windy morning. Unlike last year, when we had inches of snow and ice to deal with, we found open water and only a sniff of snow. So, we began by scanning the harbor, finding Canada geese, ring billed and herring gulls, red-breasted and hooded mergansers, and horned grebes.

Following recent reports, we then hiked around the impound area in search of common redpolls. Half way around, we enjoyed good views of 3-4 redpolls, feeding with up to 15 American tree sparrows. (Thanks, Patty, for counting them!) An adult bald eagle flew over us as we made our way back to the parking lot, which always brings plenty of smiles, even to seasoned birders.

Next, we drove west, back over the Black River, to scan the former “Hot Waters” area. I’d stopped beforehand and viewed some nice species, so hoped they would still be there. And, yup, they were. Here, we added to our list: American black duck, mallard, northern pintail, lesser scaup, common goldeneye, common merganser, ruddy duck, and American coot.

Exhausting this location, we jumped back in our cars and headed east, stopping at the Sheffield Lake boat ramp. A nice batch of buffleheads (5 pairs) gave us good looks as they fed in the small “harbor,” along with numerous mallards. A quick scan of Lake Erie found nothing else of interest. So, off we headed to Avon Lake’s Miller Park.

Due to our unseasonably warm fall/early winter, the lake was still wide open.....no ice, so Miller Park was fairly empty. Luckily, Anne Cary found a great black-backed gull, and Mike Smith identified a double-crested cormorant. Total number of species for the trip was twenty—not bad.

Although our outing ended, I continued east to Euclid’s Sim’s Park in search of the female king eider that had been hanging out there with common goldeneye. Success! Nailed it and added a lifer to my list. Also, I slipped down to Medina County to get a better look at the visiting Eurasian brambling (my December ‘look’ was fleeting, at best). What an incredible bird! I do hope all of you were able to view this stunning visitor, from the finch family.

Jack Smith
Outstanding Speaker Series

April 9, 2016, 2 p.m.
Carlisle Visitor Center

Paul J. Baicich
will speak on

“The Dozen Most Important Things You Can Do for Birds and Bird Conservation”



Paul J. Baicich has been an active birder since his early teens in New York City. A former employee of the American Birding Association, he edited fourteen of their “ABA Birdfinding Guides,” edited *Birding*, ABA’s bi-monthly magazine, and served as ABA’s Director of Conservation and Public Policy.

His concerns include an abiding interest in bird conservation and studies in the breeding biology of North American birds. He co-authored (with the late Colin Harrison) *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds* (1997). Paul also has co-lead a number of birding tours and workshops in Alaska. These Alaska destinations include the Aleutians, the Pribilofs, the Seward Peninsula, and St. Lawrence Island.

Among his many other recent activities, he has worked for the National Wildlife Refuge System on a consultant basis on issues of popular birding and

parallel refuge receptiveness. In addition, Paul co-edits (with Wayne Petersen) the popular monthly *Birding Community E-bulletin*, Paul writes a regular column, “Quick Takes,” for *Bird Watcher’s Digest*, and he is an officer in the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp. In 2014, Paul received the Ducks Unlimited “Wetland Conservation Achievement Award” in the category of Communications.

Paul is also one of the co-authors (with Margaret Barker and Carrol Henderson) of the new book on the historic development of backyard bird feeding, *Feeding Wild Birds in America* (Texas A&M University Press).

According to Baicich, doomsday predictions and personal self-denial are not necessarily the best approaches to addressing our modern bird-conservation problems. In his talk, he will first identify the six most serious threats to birds today and then outline twelve modest – but highly – effective things we can do that will help birds, their habitats, and, ultimately, their future . . . as well as our own. It’s all understandable, doable, and can lead to a better future for the birds . . . and for us.

A Birder's Diary: Species Niches and Environmental Harmony

By **Carol Leininger**

I have always been fascinated by how many different species can live together in harmony. Each species has its own niche in the community. The niche is the position or role of a species within the community (not just its habitat). Few birds occur uniformly throughout the community. Most divide the space among themselves into strata based on the vegetation. A species does not always confine itself to one stratum for all its activities – it may nest in one place, forage in another, and perch and sing in still another.



In a dense forest the space may be divided horizontally or vertically. An example of horizontal stratification can be seen in the ponderosa pine forests of Colorado where three different species of nuthatches forage in the same tree. The white-breasted nuthatch forages on the tree trunk, the red-breasted nuthatch feeds on the large branches near the trunk, and the pygmy nuthatch gleans among the needles on the small outermost branches. I have seen this in Ohio where woodpeckers and nuthatches feed on the same tree trunk (woodpeckers forage as they climb upward while nuthatches forage as they descend). As they are looking for food under the tree bark from different directions, they don't seem to compete.

An example of vertical stratification can be seen in four warblers nesting in the same tree in the boreal forests of Canada. The Cape May warbler nests above fifty-five feet, the Blackburnian warbler nests between forty and fifty feet, the black-throated green warbler nests between fifteen and thirty-five feet and the magnolia warbler nests near the ground below fifteen feet. Thus there is no competition for nest sites on the same tree. Of course, their foraging and other activities may be in similar or quite different areas.

A bird's life may be a lot shorter than ours but it can be just as complicated in its interactions with other species.

EUROPEAN ROBIN

Erithacus rubecula

By **Barbara Baudot**

In October 2015, a bird struck our window pane at our summer home in Ougny, France. It fell to the ground and I picked up the tiny, apparently lifeless ball of feathers, intending to lay her on a table-bird-feeder where, if alive, she might recover. As I took a couple of steps, she broke loose from my hands, swooped down and mounted the edge of a large planter, where she remained for several minutes, long enough for me to fetch my camera and take many images of this tiny emissary of Nature, including the one on the cover of this issue of WINGTIPS.



Linnaeus in the 18th century originally named the bird *Motacilla rubecula*, in which the word *rubecula* is a diminutive derived from the Latin word *ruber*, meaning red. Later the species was moved to another genus and the species became *Erithacus rubecula*.

Like the American robins, European robins have an orange, rather than red breast, but at the time that Linnaeus named the European robins, the word orange was not used as a name of a color, so red was used instead. The bird was commonly called robin redbreast, a name later extended to our American robins.

European robins are small birds about the size of a house wren and feed on insects. Their mostly non-migratory range includes Iceland to Western Siberia, the Nordic countries, mainland Europe, and North Africa and the Fertile Crescent.

Reference: Wikipedia

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET

Regulus satrapa



GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET photo by Debbie Parker

By Cathy Priebe



We all have to admit that identifying birds is a perpetual learning process. No one is perfect, especially me. This reality struck home early in my birding career, not long after my first successful trip to Magee Marsh. It was early fall and returning migrants had markedly dwindled, leaving only resident birds getting ready for cold weather. Assuming that migration was over, I was excited when I spotted a very small drab bird, exhibiting warbler or flycatcher like behavior.

Wow, wouldn't that be cool to have a warbler or flycatcher this late in the season, was my first thought. I avidly followed this small critter as it flitted about the yard, moving so quickly that my binoculars could not focus on it long enough to give me a good view. This little guy would not sit still!! It took some time, but after consulting my mentors and numerous guidebooks, I finally identified this hyperactive bird as my first golden-crowned kinglet and a new yard bird.

The golden-crowned kinglet is a common fall and spring migrant in Ohio. Generally spotted in small flocks, it is not unusual to see solo birds foraging through bushes, conifers, and other deciduous trees. Smaller than the smallest warbler and even smaller than a ruby throated hummingbird, it is often confused with other birds but easily identified once one is familiar with its behaviors and very high-pitched song.

These plump small birds are generally gray green on top and white below with two wing bars, golden stripe on their head, white eye stripe and dark cheeks. The male golden-crowned also has a bright orange center in the middle of its crown that appears only when the bird is agitated or is singing. The female is similar to the male, minus the orange center on its head.

They are rare nesters in Ohio but they have been documented in the last two decades. The female will lay up to 9 eggs, incubating them for about two weeks.

Best places to see golden-crowns are at Lake Erie migrant spots in early October or May where they may number in the hundreds. I have spotted them in many of our local metro parks and urban settings in fall and spring.

Now that I have gained a better knowledge of what birds to expect each season, I am rarely fooled by our deceptive diminutive kinglets.

Some fun facts about kinglets;

*They eat arthropods and their eggs, tree sap and fruit.

*They are very territorial, but will hang out with mixed –species flocks (mostly chickadees) during winter and migration.

*Breed first at 1 year of age.

*Both sexes care for their young.

References: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche; *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* by David Allen Sibley.

Bluebird Basics Program Offered in Wakeman

Have you ever seen a bluebird? Are you interested in learning more about these beautiful native songbirds?

On Tuesday, March 15th, 2016, Fritz and Penny Brandau, members of the Black River Audubon Society and Ohio Bluebird Society, will give a presentation about eastern bluebirds at 7 p.m. at the Wakeman location of the Huron County Community Library located at 33 Pleasant Street, Wakeman, Ohio 44889.

This program will focus on how to choose the right bluebird habitat, what features to look for when choosing a bluebird nest box and how to monitor your nest box. We will also talk about bluebird predators and competitors and will show video of the family life of bluebirds. Please join us for a relaxing hour and learn how to welcome bluebirds into your life.

Since class size is limited, registration is requested by calling 440-670-3684.

Conservation Volunteer Needed

Black River Audubon Society maintains an interpretative trail along the woods and field at the northern end of the Lorain County Community College campus.

The trail, which winds through a patch of woods along North Campus Drive, presents an interesting stretch of native wild flower ecology with identification and interpretive leaflets available to those who wish to learn more about plants native to the area while taking a stroll through the woods.

BRAS is currently looking for a person, knowledgeable in botany, who can maintain this trail and the plant identifying signs for plants common in the area such as trillium, toothwort, bloodroot, wild geranium and Jack-in-the pulpit.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in taking on this project, contact Black River Audubon Society at P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036 or call 440-225-7801.

The mission of the Black River Audubon Society is to promote conservation and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through advocacy, education, stewardship, field trips, and programs for the benefit of all people of today and tomorrow.

Membership in Black River Audubon Society (without membership in the National Audubon Society). Subscription to WINGTIPS included. \$15/Year

Name _____

Address _____

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**Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036**

National Audubon Membership Application (Includes membership in Black River Audubon Society and subscriptions to both WINGTIPS and AUDUBON magazine): \$20/year,

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Chapter Code S52

Send your check to: National Audubon Society, Inc.

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New York, NY 10014

Attention: Chance Mueleck