

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

May 2010



*Common Goldeneye
Dane Adams*

Editors: Jack Smith and Harry Spencer
Photographer: John Koscinski
Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel

Program

Of Hawks and Men -- Modern Adventures with Raptors

John Blakeman

Biology Teacher and Naturalist

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

Carlisle Visitor Center, 7:00 p.m.

John Blakeman is a retired high school biology teacher and an expert on raptors with over 40 years of field and lab studies on birds of prey. His talk will illustrate the unique biology of most of the common diurnal raptors in Ohio, concentrating on the Red-tailed Hawk. Mr. Blakeman also is an expert on Ohio's tall prairie grasses and their restoration and currently is president of the Ohio Prairie Association.

Field Trip

Magee Marsh

Saturday, May 1, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at the far entrance of the Board Walk

Board Meeting

Tuesday May 25, 6:30 p.m.

Jack Smith's house, 304 West Ave, Elyria

Election of Officers, 2010-11

Some Community Activities

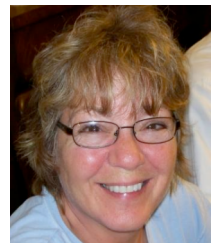
By **Debbie Mohr**, President

Black River Audubon has had a fun-filled and exciting year reaching out to groups of young people throughout our county. Not only did we teach young people about the amazing county we live in, but they also taught us.

Just to recap a few of our adventures: We spent seven weeks with the Boys and Girls Club of Lorain traveling the county. The young people learned about birds, archeology and the never ending wonders found throughout our area. At Mill Hollow we met with teachers, and the students learned about the wonders of Audubon Adventures and the places it takes us.

With a few of the Gifted Classrooms and High School Science students from the Elyria City School System, we hiked Sandy Ridge Metro Park to learn about birds and the wetland environment found there. At the Avon Middle School Science Fair, we shared information about birds, their food, and their preferred habitats. Endangered species found close to home were discussed. We supported a Boy Scout Eagle project to install bat houses and purple martin nesting boxes in Wellington Reservation. We worked with Lorain County Community College staff and students from their Ecology Program, discussing conservation issues, exploring the diversity of plants, trees and bushes, and surveying the variety of birds found on the LCCC campus.

Yes, it has been an adventurous year! I extend thanks to all members and friends who gave so freely of time, knowledge, love, and passion, not only for birds, but for the world around us. I know we made new friends and memories that will last a lifetime.



Field Trip Photos and Identified Species

Oberlin Reservoir, Caley Reservation, Wellington Upground Reservoir, and pancake breakfast at Chatham,
March 20, 2010

Photos by **Larry Morton**





Identified species: Canada goose, gadwall, American wigeon, mallard, canvasback, redhead, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, bufflehead, hooded merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruddy duck, pied-billed grebe, horned grebe, great blue heron, turkey vulture, bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, American coot, killdeer, Bonaparte's gull, ring-billed gull, mourning dove, red-bellied woodpecker, American crow, tufted titmouse, American robin, European starling, song sparrow, northern cardinal, red-winged blackbird, eastern meadowlark, American goldfinch, house sparrow.

A Birder's Diary

By **Carol Leininger**

If you're interested in birding out of the country, yet in a comfortable relaxed setting, the Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad is the place to go. I spent a week there while birding throughout Trinidad and Tobago with a group from the National Audubon Society. There are numerous cottages and rooms within easy walking distance of the main plantation house with its fantastic screened-in veranda, library, meeting rooms, and dining room.



My first day began with a glance out my cottage window at the gardens below where a smooth-billed ani sat on a shrub.

After a substantial breakfast, we were led on a hike on a muddy trail down deep into a gorge where we could peer into a large cave and see many oilbirds sitting on ledges with their eyes glowing in the light of our guide's flashlight.

As we returned to the gardens around the main

house, we heard a very interesting sound – Bong! Bong! Bong! It sounded like a church bell tolling. We were told it was a bellbird, and we searched all about to see it. Finally as we gave up and headed back for lunch, I happened to look back at the large tree we had been standing under during our search. On top of the tree sat a bearded bellbird! And a most peculiar looking bird he was with a white head and neck and three long black wattles dangling from the base of his bill.

After high tea on the veranda I relaxed and watched the many feeders situated just below the veranda. In just a few hours I saw several tanagers (turquoise, blue-gray, and palm), seven kinds of hummingbirds (rufous-breasted hermit, white-necked Jacobin, black-throated mango, tufted coquette, blue-chinned sapphire, white-crested emerald, and copper-rumped) and lots of delightful bananaquits.

After dinner just before sunset I returned to the veranda to see a large crested oropendola sitting on a tree limb just above a nest. Oropendolas are large black, yellow, and chestnut-colored birds about the size of a crow or a giant oriole. Their nests are long pendulous affairs several feet long and similar to oriole nests. This bird suddenly made some very loud and peculiar noises, rather like croaking and gurgling, and began to perform an interesting dance before flying off. This was one of those times when I wonder what the bird is trying to tell me. Is the bird simply showing off his or her nest, or has something quite exciting happened inside the nest that is worthy of celebration, or...?

Thus ended my first day at the Asa Wright Nature Center.

Common Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

By **Jack Smith**

Dane Adams' excellent photo of a male common goldeneye in breeding plumage adorns our cover. Notable features are the oval black head with splashing of greens, small golden eye, large rounded white spot under the eye, black beak, white breast, and black back patterned with black splashes against white sides. Females have brown heads, yellow-tipped beaks, mostly slate-brown bodies, each with a narrow white neck-band, and small amounts of white showing on secondary wing-feathers.



Birds of this species visit Ohio during the spring and fall migration season and in winter if water bodies are unfrozen. Common goldeneyes are the last waterfowl to migrate south in the fall and one of first to migrate north to open water habitats.

Its cousin, Barrows goldeneye with its crescent eye patch in front of its eye, is seldom seen in Ohio. A few, however, have been seen in Lorain County at Lorain Harbor and waters off Avon Lake.

Goldeneyes forage mainly by diving for their food, seldom dabbling mallard-fashion. Goldeneye diet varies with the season. Fall, winter, and spring food consists of crustaceans, such as crayfish, crabs, shrimp, amphipods, and small mollusks, as well as small fish, marine worms, frogs, and leeches. Summer food consists of aquatic insects. Additional fall foods are plant materials such as pondweeds.

A probable reason for the increased numbers of goldeneyes observed in recent years along the Lake Erie shores is the newly-available and ample zebra-mussel supplies.

In their wintering quarters near open lakes, including coastal waters of the United States, pair bonding begins. Males perform spectacular courtship displays in which they throw their necks and heads back to their rumps with their beaks pointing skyward. In this position they make grating calls resembling calls of the common nighthawk. Females contribute abrasive quacks to the discordant symphony. Finally they pair up.

In late winter after this pairing, the birds begin their northward migration to their breeding grounds in

the boreal forests of Canada and the US, including Alaska. Their flight is very fast and accompanied with a whistling sound that carries a long distance. Hunters, in fact, call this duck the Whistler. Male goldeneyes display more white in flight than other ducks except for common mergansers.

As a pair of goldeneyes approaches their breeding area, the female sometimes takes the lead. Along a lake she seeks large trees with potential cavities. When the pair finds a suitable cavity, usually between six and sixty feet above ground, the female deposits wood chips in it and lines it with down. Meanwhile the male aggressively attacks any intruders.

When the nest is complete, the female lays eight to ten olive-green to blue-green eggs. She incubates the eggs, at times leaving the nest to feed only after covering her eggs with down. After a couple of weeks the male departs to another area where he molts his flight feathers.

Sometimes when the incubating female is absent from her nest, another duck, such as a redhead, the champion parasitizer, lays an egg in the nest. In fact, over several days other ducks may add 10 to 15 eggs. Sometimes goldeneyes also deposit eggs in nests of other ducks.

At her nest, the female begins an imprinting process before her eggs hatch. She makes clucking sounds and the unhatched young respond with some sound.

The precocious ducklings hatch after 29 – 30 days. When the ducklings are one or two days old, the adult female begins calling from the ground. One at a time the ducklings emerge from the nest and flutter to the ground. Soon the adult leads the ducklings to water.

The young have very heavy coats of down that give them both insulation and buoyancy. They immediately begin to feed themselves, mainly with insects. Soon the young begin diving for other bits such as small crustaceans. But in spite of the attentive adult female, many of the young become prey for hungry northern pikes or airborne predators.

Before the young begin to fly in 60 to 65 days, the mother leaves her young to their own devices and seeks an area to molt. The males and female adults molt at separate times and in separate areas. They choose water habitats with lots of cover for protection, because they are flightless for some three or four weeks after the loss of flight feathers.

In the meantime, the young birds, through some innate behavior pattern, fly to the southern wintering grounds.

The numbers of this species apparently is stable. Populations have increased in local areas where nest boxes have been provided.

References: *Sibley Guide to Birds* and *Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* by David Allen Sibley, *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufman, *Birds of Ohio* by Bruce G. Peterjohn, *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America* by Jonathan Alderfer, *Smithsonian Birds of North America* by Fred J. Alsop III, *Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John K. Terres, and www.birdweb.org.

Scenic River status sought for two portions of the Vermilion River.

By **Harry Spencer**

The Scenic Rivers Program, Division of Watercraft, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, is seeking citizen comments about the potential Scenic River designation of two portions of the Vermilion River. Designation means that the river retains a majority of natural characteristics, although exhibiting some signs of human activities. The stream must include at least 25% of its riparian corridor in forest for a width of 300 feet.

The longer portion affected is the main stem of the river from the southern most marina



upstream to the Erie County line about two miles north of Wakeman. The second portion is the East Fork from Kipton to its confluence with the main stem.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Scenic River designation does not result in any loss of property rights and does not grant any public access to private property.

Some property owners are challenging Scenic River designation for these two portions of the Vermilion River.

Contact: Tim Kwiatkowski, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft 440-949-91232 or tim.kwiatkowski@dnr.state.oh.us

**What is the identity of this mystery duck
photographed by Dane Adams at the Oberlin
Reservoir?**

Answer on p. 8



Spring at LCCC

By **Dorothy Hagerling**

It's Wednesday, April 7, time for me to check out the wildflower walk at the north end of the LCCC campus. It was created by Black River Audubon with the cooperation of the college.

What is actually blooming on this warm spring day? Before I get onto the trail I see loads of Spring Beauties showing their pink faces in the grass. Along the trail are Cut-leaf Toothwort, yellow Trout Lilies, Virginia Bluebells (one large plant) and a big clump of that pesky Lesser Celandine, pretty and yellow but quite invasive. Very welcome are the many Large Flowered Trilliums.

Somewhere there should be a small patch of Drooping Trilliums, number 10 in the guide. I look around and find the number. Time will tell if it actually comes up. Hope the deer didn't get it.

Next I see number 17, which is Large Flowered Bellwort, just starting to bloom.

But where is Bloodroot? I know it's here somewhere. I get off the trail and poke around hoping to see number 4. Ah! There it is, but only the leaves. How disappointing! Should be in full bloom.

Back on the trail I find Blue Cohosh just opening up. Highbush Cranberry, a viburnum, has lost its number but I identify the shrub from its leaf and from last year's red berries.

Many of the trees are beginning to leaf out. Ironwood for instance. Two of them. I find a young Shagbark Hickory at the very end (or beginning) of the trail. And there is a lot of spicebush with its small yellow flowers.

In a week or so most of the trees will be sending out leaves. I like to watch the way they develop. So I'll be back then.

Mystery Duck



Long-tailed Duck



For an enlarged and scenic sample of WINGTIPS' official photographer photos see: <http://picasaweb.google.com/Koscinski22/>