

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

November 2012



REDDISH EGRET photo by DANE ADAMS

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Program

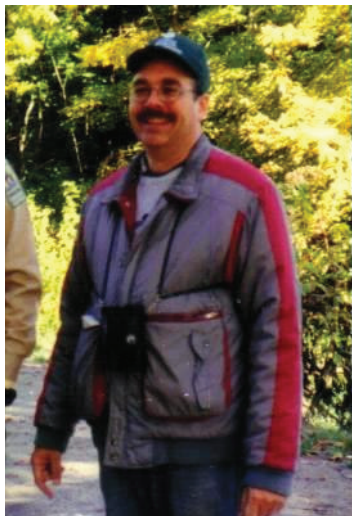
Carlisle Visitor Center

Tuesday, November 6, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

Bill Deininger

Birding without binoculars with Bill

Bill Deininger has been birding for about 40 years and recording bird videos for 10 years. He lives in Lakewood and helps lead the Sunday morning bird walks sponsored by the Audubon Society, at Rocky River



Reservation. Some of his bird videos can be found on YouTube.

Take a video bird walk with Bill Deininger and enjoy the antics of local birds without leaving your chair or raising your binoculars!!

Born and raised in greater Cleveland, Deininger has been birding since high school. “I am an obsessed birder,” he explained. “I have taken videos of many birds in the area and I’ve accumulated a vast library of local birds and their behaviors.” He also volunteers for the spring bird walks at the Rocky River Reservation.

Deininger, who is a member of the Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society and Kirtland Bird Club, stressed that the program is not a lecture but is intended to be interactive with comments encouraged by the audience.

This presentation is free to the public. For more information on programs, volunteering or memberships:

visit www.blackriveraudubon.org or call 440-225-7601.

Field Trip

Saturday, November 17, 2012

Sheldon Marsh at 9:00 a.m.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

Depot, 6:30 p.m.

Opposite McDonald’s, S. Main St. (Route 58), Oberlin

Reddish Egret

Egretta rufescens

By **Cathy Priebe**

“Moves like a mad linebacker, crouching and charging across the flats, leaping vertically with wings spread, turning, rearing its neck, jabbing left...right...then charging off again, with a bouncing, foot-pounding gait.” (Excerpt from *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion*)

Good grief, I want to see this bird!!

The reddish egret is North America’s rarest heron, with only 1,500 to 2,000 nesting pairs confirmed in the U.S. It lives and breeds primarily on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. The population is still recovering from the millinery trade slaughter, in which the birds were hunted for their colorful plumage often used to decorate hats. It now faces environmental disturbances



from boaters. Intensive coastal developments have also reduced its foraging habitats, especially in Florida. In Texas, the reddish egrets are classified as threatened, thus qualifying the species for special protection.

This year-round resident mostly is found in coastal areas where it hunts its prey on tidal flats, in lagoons, and in shallow salt-water ponds.

Smaller than a great blue heron, but larger than a little blue heron, the reddish egret has a large head with a straight, pointed, and bi-colored bill (pink with black tip); a long shaggy neck; long legs; and a sturdy body. The bird has two color morphs, white and dark. The dark morph, our front-cover bird, is the most common in North America. The head and neck are distinctly reddish, and the body is slate blue/gray.

By all accounts, it does not appear that a birder should have any trouble recognizing this bird. It has a unique and curious style of hunting that usually involves spinning, flapping wings, running and jumping. Pete Dunne fondly refers to it as “the Tyrannosaurus Rex of the Flats” due to its behavior and its “menacing, crazed expression”.

You can bet that I will be on the lookout for this awesome bird the next time I travel to Florida.

References: *Wikipedia*; *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America*; *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Sibley.

A Birder’s Diary

By Carol Leininger

It is important to prepare ahead if you want to really enjoy a day of bird watching. I usually have a pack of items always ready just in case.

Clothing depends on the season and birding site. Long pants and long sleeves, windbreaker and rain gear, hat, scarf, and gloves, even long underwear may be needed. Layering may be a good idea because you can add or subtract as the day progresses. Lots of pockets are also a must. It is best to exclude white items because white tends to alarm birds. Depending on the weather and birding site, boots for mud and traction and a spare pair can be helpful.

Organize your pockets to accommodate water bottle, snacks, pens, checklist or note pad, trail maps, sunglasses, insect repellent and sunscreen. A small mirror to point out bird locations and any small device to play bird songs would be nice to carry. Be sure there is a pocket large enough for your field guide.

I always have a book of county road maps in my car as well as a first aid kit and cell phone (turned off but available for any emergency). My ID, credit card, medical information, and a bit of cash are with me at all times. And, whatever you do, do not forget your binocs, spotting scope, tripod, and camera.

If you do not have a birding buddy, be sure someone knows where you are going. Have your car in good shape for the journey (full tank, spare tire, etc.).

And keep in mind where the nearest eateries and restrooms are located, also.

These items can be kept in a backpack ready all the time. They are important for complete enjoyment of your birding jaunt.



Environmental Education Materials Available

By **Dick Lee**,

For many years the Black River Audubon Society has encouraged and supported environmental education for the young people in our community by purchasing Audubon Adventures kits to be used by teachers, naturalists and homeschoolers. Audubon Adventures was developed by professional environmental educators for children in grades 3-5. The program presents basic facts that are scientifically accurate about birds, wildlife and their habitats. The goal of Audubon Adventures is to develop in young people an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the natural world in which we live. The program is packaged as a classroom kit (serving 32 students) or as an individual kit (serving one student). The theme of the 2012-2013 school year is *Sharing Our Earth*. Specific topics are *Sharing Our Shores; World of the Forest; Grasslands: A Prairie Tale; and Caring for our Planet-Be a Friend to Birds*. Included in each unit are student handouts, background information for the teacher, and both inside and outside hands-on activities. The kit also includes *Nature Journaling for Everyone*, a guide with helpful information, advice, and techniques for starting and keeping a nature journal. The kit has a chart which shows how the content meets national standards.



If you are an educator and desire to participate in the Audubon Adventures program and receive the **free** teaching materials or if you have any questions about the program, please contact Dick Lee at leedck@windstream.net or call 440-322-7449.

Conservation as part of Jack Smith's legacy

By **Harriet Alger**

The late Jack Smith was an experienced and expert birder with a broad interest in the natural environment and its preservation. Not only concerned with the preservation of parks, wetlands, and both state and federal wildlife areas, he also was greatly interested in restoration and preservation of small local urban and suburban areas with trees, bushes, and meadows, areas that provide havens for both resident and migrating birds, butterflies, bees, and healthy environments for resident humans. Jack was instrumental in establishing and maintaining two nature preserves on the campus of Lorain County Community College. He recently donated to the City of Elyria land for a small park bordering the West Branch of Black River.

As part of Jack's broad environmental focus, he supported the development of community conservation programs, particularly the National Audubon-at-home campaign. This three-year effort emphasized healthier yard and business environments, fewer barren lawns and less concrete and asphalt. Humans, resident birds, and migrating birds need such islands of respite.

Jack supported long-term rescue efforts for struggling bird species, such as Eastern bluebirds, purple martins, and American kestrels.

Black River Audubon needs to continue Jack Smith's legacy of conservation by cooperating with other like-minded organizations. Our ultimate objective should be obtaining the sustained efforts of our fellow residents, including businesses, in maintaining and improving our natural environment. We hope that many of our members and friends will volunteer to work with us in this important community educational campaign.

September Field Trip

By **Harry Spencer**

On a sunny, late-summer day, September 15, 2012, fifteen birders identified sixty-one species in a two and one-half hour walk along the Wet Woodland and Marshland Trails of Sandy Ridge Reservation. The hikers were mostly Black River Audubon members with a few welcome visitors.

Among birds identified were eleven warbler species, either migrating through the area or summer residents: black-and-white, Nashville, Cape May, magnolia, bay-breasted, chestnut-sided, blackpoll, black-throated blue, palm, black-throated green warblers, and American redstart.

Sandy Ridge consistently hosts many water birds, and we spotted several species: Canada goose, mute swan, wood duck, mallard, blue- and green-winged teal, northern shoveler, and pied-billed grebe.

The ponds were dotted with great egrets, a few great blue herons, and one or two green herons. No eagle was seen, but Cooper's, red-shouldered, and red-tailed hawks were. Killdeer, solitary sandpiper, and lesser yellowlegs represented the shorebirds. We identified red-bellied, downy, and hairy woodpeckers and northern flicker, but no red-headed woodpeckers. Some hikers heard an Acadian flycatcher and saw an eastern wood-pewee and an eastern phoebe. The vireo family was represented by warbling, Philadelphia, and red-eyed vireos. A red-breasted nuthatch tooted his horn, seeming to let us know that he had arrived to join the black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, and white-breasted nuthatch residents. Two swallows, barn and northern rough-winged, remained with the other summer residents.

Representing the thrush family were eastern bluebird, veery, and American robin. Of the many possible sparrows we saw only song and swamp sparrows.

Other species identified were: double-crested cormorant, turkey vulture, sandhill crane, mourning dove, chimney swift, ruby-throated hummingbird, belted kingfisher, blue jay, Carolina wren, European starling, red-winged blackbird, and American goldfinch.



Lessons from Hawk Mountain

by **Penny Brandau**

My husband and I love to go on vacations in the mountains in October to admire the fall foliage and see new places. This year we decided to go to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary near Kempton, Pa. to combine a love of hiking with a brand new experience for us- counting migrating raptors.



FRITZ & PENNY BRANDAU
On Hawk Mountain

I searched Hawk Mountain's online website before we left Ohio and learned that Hawk Mountain is the world's first refuge for birds of prey and is an international center for raptor conservation. It is a 2600 acre wildlife sanctuary which straddles the Kittatinny Ridge, an internationally significant migration corridor for hawks, eagles and falcons. Each autumn tens of thousands of raptors migrate past Hawk Mountain's many scenic overlooks.

When we arrived at Hawk Mountain we stopped first at the Visitor Center to get a trail-guide pamphlet and also learned a lot about identifying different raptors by flight silhouette and flight patterns, and we picked up some written materials to take with us. By now I was really excited to "hit the trail". The walk to the scenic South Lookout was easy, and wheelchairs could access this view. However, the hike to the North Lookout required

careful uphill hiking on a boulder-strewn path. When we finally reached our goal of the North Lookout I was surprised to discover that some serious and experienced birders had been sitting since sunrise in the official “counter’s nest”- a rock encircled vantage point. On a clear day the 200 degree panoramic view from North Lookout extends 70 miles! And we were blessed to have a clear day.

We quietly found a boulder near the “counter” and sat for several hours eagerly listening to the experts call out locations and species of approaching raptors. Hourly counts were radioed back to the Visitor Center by the official counter- to be posted on the website www.hawkmountain.org after 6 p.m. that day. As we watched the approaching birds, someone would call “osprey one-half glass over Hunter’s field” or “sharp-shinned hawk passing left of owl pole” or “bald eagle approaching directly from bump number two”. This was heady and exciting conversation!

We spent several hours that day peering through our binoculars, learning much about raptors, and enjoying the beauty of distant mountains covered in fall foliage. However, one final lesson was totally unexpected and yet breathtaking in its simple beauty. As I lowered my binoculars at one point around noon I happened to notice that an unusual, delicate butterfly had landed on a nearby bolder at my feet. I took a picture of it and the official observer told me it was a white admiral butterfly and had only been seen on the peak one other time.



WHITE ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY photo
By PENNY BRANDAU

I reflected that this final lesson from Hawk Mountain was truly a “life lesson”. Many times I am so intent on goals, looking ahead or behind me that I don’t take time to look around me. Beauty can be sometimes small, sometimes quiet, sometimes right at my feet or even hidden among the rocks in my life. It might not be the big soaring events....it might just be a fleeting moment’s lesson waiting for me to discover.

Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus

By **Harry Spencer**

The piping plover is a small sand-colored, sparrow-sized shorebird that nests and feeds along coastal sand and gravel beaches in North America, including those of the Great Lakes. With a total population of about 7000, the species is designated as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The following table illustrates that piping plovers are infrequently identified in northeast Ohio.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SIGHTINGS OF PIPING PLOVERS in NORTHEAST OHIO

Recorded in ebird.org

MAY 2007	HEADLANDS DUNES	LAKE CO.
JULY 2011	LORAIN IMPOUNDMENT	LORAIN CO.
APR 2012	HEADLANDS DUNES	LAKE CO.
AUG 2012	CONNEAUT SANDSPRIT	ASTABULA CO.
AUG 2012	CONNEAUT HARBOR	ASTABULA CO.

During January 2010, Dane Adams photographed in Florida the piping plover pictured below.

Along with many other birds, piping plovers were utilized for their feathers to decorate women’s hats in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Consequently the species suffered a population decline. Habitat loss and human activity near nesting sites in the decades following World War II led to further decline. The Great Lakes

populations eventually shrank to only around two dozen. Critical nesting habitats are now protected to help the population during breeding season, and populations have increased.

Their breeding habitats include beaches and sand flats on the Atlantic coast, the shores of the Great Lakes, and in the mid-west of Canada and the United States. The birds nest on sandy or gravel beaches or shoals. These shorebirds forage for food on beaches, moving in rapid bursts. Mostly piping plovers forage around the high tide zone and along the waters edge. They mainly eat insects, marine worms, and crustaceans.

In mid April, mating and nesting on the beach begin. Two to four eggs laid in scrapes in the sand and gravel are incubated by both parents and hatch in about four weeks. A chick feeds itself within hours of hatching.

Beginning in August, the birds migrate south to the Gulf of Mexico, the southern Atlantic coast of the United States, and the Caribbean region. Their northern migration begins in March.

References: *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* (Modification of 12 September 2012); *ebird.org*; *The Crossley ID Guide Eastern Birds* by Richard Crossley; www.dnr.state.oh.us.



PIPING PLOVER photo by DANE ADAMS