

WINGTIPS



WILD TURKEYS photo by Debbie Parker

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NOVEMBER 2018

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November 2018 Program
Tuesday, November 6, 7 p.m.
Carlisle Visitor Center, Black River Room

Ray Stewart
“The Pantanal of Brazil”



Ray Stewart is a retired teacher living in Amherst, Ohio. He is the founder and past president of Ohio Wetlands Association (OWA) and now serves as the board secretary and director of communications. Ray has a BA in Botany from Kent State University and Master of Arts from Ohio University in Latin American Studies. He recently completed a second MA in teaching through the Global Field Program at Miami University in 2014.

Ray has traveled extensively in Latin America and has returned from a 2017 birding tour in Brazil, the source of the material for his presentation. The Pantanal region is said to be the largest tropical wetland area in the world.

In addition, to the above accomplishments, Ray is a 2003 recipient of a Black River Audubon Society Hog Island scholarship.



JULIE ZICKEFOOSE

60th Anniversary Celebration Outstanding Speaker November 10, 2018, 1:30-4 pm

Nationally known author, naturalist, and illustrator Julie Zickefoose will help Black River Audubon Society celebrate its sixty years of birding on November 10, from 1:30-4 pm at Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center.

Co-sponsored with the Lorain County Metro Parks, the Jack Smith Outstanding Speakers program has featured a wide variety of speakers over the years. In this anniversary year, we are thrilled to bring back a widely-known and well-loved favorite. Julie Zickefoose, the author of *Letters from Eden*, *The Bluebird Effect*, and *Baby Birds: An Artist Looks into the Nest*, certainly fits that description.

Baby Birds is also the name of her presentation, an account of the 13-year project documenting the daily changes in the nestlings of 17 bird species from hatching to the day of fledging. More than 500 of her personal illustrations bring life to the pages of the book. Julie will share her influences as well as her artistic process, a must-see for any aspiring natural history artist. The work, wonder, and fun of studying baby birds, including being a foster mother for them, all make for an irresistible and highly inspirational presentation. Her books will be available for purchase after the program.

Ms. Zickefoose, who lives on an 80-acre sanctuary in southern Ohio, loves to encourage people to watch birds more closely and carefully. She speaks and leads trips at a number of birding festivals around the country and leads excursions in Latin America and Africa.

Black River Audubon Society was founded in 1958 through the influence of Jack Smith. The event will also highlight his contributions to the Society, its members, and birding in general down through the years. A reception will follow the program.

November 2018 Field Trip
Wendy Park/Scranton Flats
Saturday, November 17, 2018, 9:00 a.m.
Meet at Edgewater Park, Cleveland
(Leader to be determined)

September 2018 Field Trip Report

By Sally Fox

It was a hot, muggy morning when six of us met at Buckeye Woods Park in Medina County. Due to a last-minute conflict, our guide for the day was unable to come and none of us had visited the park or knew where to go. Luckily, Paul Sherwood arrived out of the thick fog and led us to the Schleman Nature Preserve area where no bikes are allowed (important since there was a huge bicycle meet in the park that day).

As we ventured off we walked through thick woods with open patches that traveled along a small stream. Much of the area had been an apple orchard with many old trees left behind. The path traveled through a stand of pine trees and toward the end we could see a pond in the distance.

We walked about three miles and ended up with thirty species: turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, killdeer, mourning dove, ruby-throated hummingbird, red-headed woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, eastern woodpecker, yellow-throated vireo, blue jay, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, wood thrush, American robin, gray catbird, cedar waxwing, Nashville warbler, black-throated blue warbler, black-throated green warbler, bay-breasted warbler, American redstart, eastern towhee, northern cardinal,

rose-breasted grosbeak, American goldfinch. It was nice to see so many fall warblers.

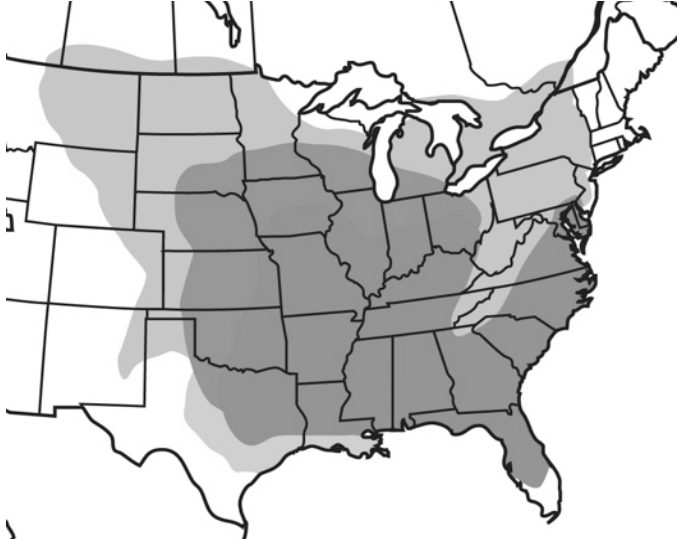
We hope to return and further explore this area, near Chippewa Lake, which has diverse habitats and offers opportunities to view waterfowl.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

Melanerpes erythrocephalus

By **Gina Swindell**

My husband Rob and I live in northwestern Lorain County, about a half mile off the lake. Our home nestles up to an area of brush and grasslands that are lined with oak trees on either side. This habitat supports a vast variety of wildlife - we have a backyard bird list of almost 50 species, in addition to herds of deer, rambunctious raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, chipmunks and, of course, squirrels. A stunning, regular visitor to our backyard is the red-headed woodpecker, one of six woodpecker species who visit. We are fortunate to have at least two breeding pairs who have been bringing their young to our suet feeders for several years.



Lorain County is on the edge of the “common” breeding area (dark gray) of the red-headed woodpecker. Ed. (from audubon.org/birds).

These birds were once so common “that orchard owners and farmers used to pay a bounty for them,” and “Audubon reported in 1840 that 100 were shot from a single cherry tree in one day.” Sadly, they have been declining for years and have even been listed, since 2012, on the IUCN red list as Near Threatened. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, they have declined by more than 2% per year from 1966-2014.

There are several reasons for their decline. The red-headed is one of only four woodpecker species that caches food, so the lack of dead trees, especially nut bearing trees, may be partly to blame. Some blame the introduction of European starlings to this country, as it is common for them to take over woodpecker cavities.

Rob and I started dabbling with photography a few years ago with a passion for wildlife photography. While we’ve had feeders for years, photographing our visitors has led me to notice them in greater detail. This year, I noticed that many of our avian friends were looking not so dapper. Particularly noticeable were the molting red-headed woodpeckers.

According to Cornell University’s *allaboutbirds.org*, “molting occurs in response to a mixture of hormonal changes brought about by seasonal changes.” Some species, such as woodpeckers, chickadees and hummingbirds, to name just a few, go through one complete molt each year. Others, such as warblers, go through a complete molt once a year as well as a partial molt prior to their breeding season. Fewer species, including the bobolink, go through two complete molts annually. There are also synchronous molters, which include ducks. These species molt all at once leaving them unable to fly for 2-4 weeks.

Feathers, like our fingernails, are “dead” structures. They wear out and have to be replaced. Some wear faster than others depending on the natural habitat of the species. If a bird loses an entire feather, it will not wait for the molt but start to grow one immediately.

The juvenile red-headed woodpecker sports a pattern of greys until it molts into the basic adult plumage in February. Adults molt, but unlike warblers, who can look very different depending on the season, their plumage remains the same once they are fully mature. The sexes are the same in all molts. These beauties are hard to miss if you’re lucky enough to see one.

With overall Ohio populations down 75% since 1970, it’s apparent just how lucky we are to have so many of them visiting our yard regularly.

The University of Toledo received a large grant this year to study wildlife at Oak Openings in Ottawa. One of their projects will be to monitor red-headed woodpeckers by fitting them with GPS units. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the data they obtained leads to an understanding of what we can do to reverse their decline. Hopefully they will once again be a common sight.

References: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, allaboutbirds.org; USGS, North American Breeding Survey.

WILD TURKEY

Meleagris gallopavo

By **Cathy Priebe**

Nature never fails to amaze me. While feeding the birds a few years ago, I walked up the rise at the back of our yard to look through the woods to see what might be flitting about. A large, dark shadow suddenly caught my eye as three wild turkeys gracefully sped through the field and into the adjoining woods. Wow, how cool was that?

This past spring, I was also fortunate to observe a female sitting on her nest at Indian Hollow Reservation in Grafton. Our group almost walked by without seeing her as she blended into the ground next to the trail!

The wild turkey has a story similar to that of many of Ohio's game birds. It was a prevalent species before settlers came and felled our forests, taking away their habitat. It did not take long for man to also find that the wild turkey was delicious, and by the early 1900s, they were hunted out of the state.

In 1956 and years thereafter, wild turkeys were slowly reintroduced in southeastern Ohio forests where they have gradually increased their numbers and are now widely found in woodlands and fields across much of Ohio.

Boasting the honor of being the largest game bird in North America, the male's bald head is reddish pink and blue. Their dark, iridescent body is slender and stronger than that of their domesticated cousins. Males have a red wattle, long central breast tassel, copper colored tails and white barred flight feathers. Females are smaller, less iridescent and usually do not have breast feather tufts.

Here are some intriguing facts about the wild turkey:

- It is a wild ancestor of the domestic turkey. It is wary and, despite its size (3 to 4 feet tall), this gobbler is a very elegant and strong flier.
- Even though it is a ground feeder, it roosts high in the trees. One of its favorite foods is acorns! It will also eat nuts, grains, seeds, vegetation, insects, frogs and lizards.
- Benjamin Franklin originally wanted the wild turkey to be our national symbol instead of the bald eagle!!!
- Turkeys will form flocks of 50 to 60 birds and can generally be found foraging in woodlands and cornfields.
- Their nest is a scraped depression on the ground lined with grasses and leaves. A female can lay as many as 20 eggs!!!



Wild Turkey (photo courtesy of Dimus, in Wikipedia)

I have certainly found a new respect for this interesting bird and I look forward to its next neighborhood visit!!

References: *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* by Donald and Lillian Stokes; *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America*; *Birds of North America* by Kenn Kaufman.

Celebrations: 1958 and 2018

The brand-new Elyria Audubon Society (eventually renamed Black River Audubon Society) capped off its successful inaugural year with a gala dinner celebration on December 9, 1958.

This year, Black River Audubon is bringing nationally-known author, artist, and naturalist Julie Zickefoose to speak at the group's combined 60th Anniversary Party and Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series event on November 10 at Carlisle Reservation. (See page 3.)

Unlike this year's celebration, the 1958 affair was by registration and ticket only. With no Metro Park facilities available then, the dinner was held in the Laporte Methodist Church.

Sixty years ago, the officers also brought a famous nature lover to address the gathering. The key speaker was Lou Klewer, outdoor editor of the Toledo Blade and past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

Klewer had just finished a trip devoted to nature photography around the world the year before. His lengthy jaunt resulted in a film "*The Zoo That is Africa*" which presented typical African wildlife. The world traveler was an avid birder with a lengthy life list, for the time, of nearly 900 birds.

The society had more than sixty members, from all parts of Lorain County, by the end of its first year. Surprisingly, it regularly drew that many individuals to its regular bird walks. A wide variety of programs were offered at the meetings. The society was also active in educational and conservation projects.

At an earlier meeting, Don Miller, the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram's own well-known outdoor editor, addressed 86 attendees. He showed the film "*Beautiful Birds of Ohio*" which had been shot by Karl Maslowski. If the last name is familiar, it's because Karl was the father of Steve and Dave Maslowski, the brothers who continue to put out the bird calendars that Black River Audubon sells today.

Miller had shown the film at Green Acres, the Lorain County children's home. He suggested to Elyria Audubon that it include those children in its birding trips.

A similar idea might be useful in 2018, beginning with the 60th Anniversary/Outstanding Speaker event on November 10. Ms. Zickefoose's program "*Baby Birds*" should be fascinating to young birders, as well as old.

References: "Audubon Society's Dinner Plans Set" in Elyria Chronicle-Telegram, Nov. 29, 1958; "Birdlovers Hear Talk By Editor" in Elyria Chronicle-Telegram, June 4, 1958.

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(but including Wingtips) is \$15 /Year**

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**“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.”**

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Molt or Mites?

Photo by Gina Swindell

The poor red-headed woodpecker above is much further along in its feather loss than in the photo on the back cover and looks like the northern cardinals sometimes seen at bird feeders. What is the cause? It seems that is an issue that is still open for some debate.

The problem seems to arise during molting season and could simply be an irregular loss of feathers for the individual bird. However, when entire patches go bare, it is also thought by some that mites, or poor nutrition, might be contributing to the bizarre look.

One source claimed that if it looks like a “bad hair day,” as in the back cover photo, the bird may simply be molting. But when patches of the head are totally bare, even exposing the ear holes, parasites could be the source of the problem.

References: “Ruffled Feathers: The Scraggly Life of Molting Birds” in blog.nwf.org; “Solving the mystery of what causes bald cardinals” in farmanddairy.com.





RED HEADED WOODPECKER (molting phase) photo by Gina Swindell

BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1958-2018: 60 Years of Birding

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