

# WINGTIPS

September 2015



BOHEMIAN WAXWING photo by Greg Pasek

## **PROGRAM**

**Caleb Wellman**

### **Mute Swans: Concerns and Management**

**September 1, 2015,  
7 p.m.**

**Carlisle Reservation**

**Visitor Center**



Few of our speakers have had a more varied professional background than Caleb Wellman. After receiving his bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management from OSU, he began his career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Ohio Wildlife Services program in 2004 and was responsible for monitoring and managing the presence and prevalence of raccoon rabies in eastern Ohio. Since 2011, he has served as the project lead for Ohio Wildlife Services involvement in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, focusing on

habitat and wildlife protection and restoration and invasive species management in Ohio's Great Lakes region. Specific projects include protecting freshwater turtle species, managing non-native mute swan populations and eliminating non-native invasive feral swine to protect resources and agriculture. Currently Caleb is Staff Wildlife Biologist of the Ohio Wildlife Services northern district office.

### **Field Trips**

**Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015, 8:30 a.m.**

**Cascade Park, Elyria**

Enter the park from Glendale, off West River Rd.

Jeanne Buttle Williams will lead the hike.

**Saturday, Oct. 17, 2015, 9:00 a.m.**

**Royal Oaks Park/Indian Hollow LCMP**

Meet at parking lot on Parsons Rd., east of Indian Hollow LCMP; Marty Ackermann will lead

## July Steel Mill Trail Field Trip



By **Tammy Martin**

Six avid birders (Marty Ackermann, Doug & Anne Cary, Dick Lee, Harry Spencer, and me) walked the steel mill trail from 31<sup>st</sup> Street north to Colorado Avenue and back on a sunny, Saturday morning in July. Finally, a day without rain!

Along this section of the Lorain County Metro Park's Black River Reservation, the varied habitat is striking. It almost resembles what you would imagine as a reclaimed 'moon-landscape.' Other park users, from bikers to joggers, made good use of the trail that morning, as well.

The birding was mild, but we did tally 36 species. Not bad for July. These included great blue heron, turkey vulture, bald eagle, American kestrel, killdeer, ring-billed gull, chimney swift, ruby-throated hummingbird, belted kingfisher, red-bellied and downy woodpeckers, northern flicker, eastern wood-pewee, warbling and red-eyed vireos, blue jay, American crow, barn swallow, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, house wren, blue-gray gnatcatcher, American robin, gray catbird, cedar waxwing, yellow warbler, chipping and song sparrows, northern cardinal, indigo bunting, red-winged blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, orchard oriole, and American goldfinch. The highlight towards the end was a quick glimpse of the lark sparrow that's been frequenting this area now for several years. Thanks, Marty, for locating such rare (for us) species.

Aside from birding we also noticed several dragonfly species (love the Green darners) and the blooming summer flowers. What a lovely day for a walk.....before it got TOO hot!

### Citizen Science Opportunity!

Sarah Mabey, our April 2015 presenter, has passed on an interesting request to BRAS members. Caitlin Elkins, a Hiram College rising senior is conducting nest composition research across an urban-rural gradient in both Ohio and Illinois. She is asking for volunteers to collect American robin, northern cardinal and gray catbird nests, in Ohio, and bring them in a sealed, zip-closure bag to our September 1 meeting.

The nest donors are also asked to provide the following information in the sealed bag:

Name of donor

Street address

Phone number (optional)

Email address

Height of nest

Location of nest: tree, shrub or man-made structure

\* if tree or shrub, list the species, if unknown, list as deciduous or evergreen

\* if man-made, list specific structure

Then bring the nest/s to the September meeting!

## **A Birder's Diary: Remember Water When Attracting Backyard Birds**

By **Carol Leininger**

To survive birds need water, food and shelter. With the proper habitat they can get all these necessities themselves. But bird lovers often provide water and food just to attract more birds around their homes.

Water is needed for drinking and bathing year round. Bathing and preening are vital for a bird to maintain its feathers. If feathers are not kept in good condition at all times, the ability to fly off quickly to avoid danger may be compromised. Watching bird behavior around water can be very entertaining – some birds plunge in and immerse their entire body, some just sit there and shake like a dog, and some are very cautious about the entire endeavor.

If you do not have a natural source (pond or stream) on your property, providing water can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. A cheap birdbath could be a natural depression on a rock or a shallow

dish on a tree stump. A more expensive birdbath could be of concrete or plastic on a pedestal. Birds are especially attracted to dripping or running water such as in a circulating waterfall or water garden. Drippers or misters are very popular.

Location is also important. Water sources should be near bushes or trees so birds can quickly find shelter from predators. They are best if located near where birds feed but not so close that droppings from feeders pollute the water. The base of the water container should not be slippery. Water depth should be one to two inches. Birdbaths should be kept clean at all times. In summer, they work best in a shady area. They need constant replenishing in the heat. In winter birdbaths work best in a sunny area and/or with a heating device.



### **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**

*Bombycilla garrulus*

By **Jim Jablonski**

It figures that one of the most appealing families of birds would only have three species within it. Luckily, two of the three waxwings, the Bohemian and cedar, are native to North America. The third is a distant and more colorful relative that resides in eastern Asia.



Once again, this relatively untraveled birder has to admit that he has never seen the Bohemian, which is native only to the western half of the continent, although one does occasionally appear in this area. But from what I have heard and read, it is an even sleeker and more elegant version of the classy cedar waxwings, which have always impressed me when I have come across their small flocks.

The Bohemian received its first name for its supposedly “unconventional and carefree lifestyle,” according to Kenn Kaufman. The term was first used for wandering nomadic artists, many from Bohemia in the Czech Republic today, who traveled across Europe in a rather laidback, non-

conforming manner. Perhaps the name was applied to this species of waxwing because the red and yellow waxy tips of its wings reminded one of artist's paints, while its communal roaming in search of fruiting trees was similar to that of its artistic namesakes who traveled seeking work and adventure.



Bohemian waxwing in “audubon.org”.

This bird's migratory habits take it to boreal forests in the winter when it can form flocks numbering in the thousands. Later it spreads widely during the summer in the west and northwest, even into urban areas. Specifically, it enjoys open areas in forests and around bogs. The increased planting of fruit trees in towns has led to its interest in urban areas.

A diet of insects in the summer and berries in the winter explains the Bohemian's seasonal choices of habitat – which makes sense, as they are able to feed their young insect protein in the forests.

Courtship patterns are as attractive as the birds themselves. Likely mates will often sit close to each other on the same branch while the male passes a berry or flower to the female. No crazy American woodcock performances for this stylish avian!

After courtship both partners build a nest of twigs, grass, moss and feathers high in spruce or other nearby trees. The female incubates the clutch of four to five eggs for about two weeks. Both parents cooperate in feeding the young for up to eighteen days. The young generation learns the waxwing life by remaining with the parents right through the fall and winter migrations.

In researching the Bohemian in Kaufman's "Lives of North American Birds," I checked out the bird's close cousin, the cedar waxwing. They seem very similar except for their range, with the cedar's covering all of the United States and the southern half of Canada.

Then, of course, there is the claim that the Bohemian is more attractive. I hope to test this in October when I take my first trip to the Northwest!

References: *Lives of North American Birds*, Kenn Kaufmann; *Bohemian Waxwing* in Audubon.org/birds.

## PAINTED BUNTING

*Passerina ciris*By

Cathy Priebe

My first encounter with a painted bunting happened in Florida at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Naples, Florida. After an exciting hike on their boardwalk trails, we took a short respite on seats outside of the visitor's center where a few cylinder bird feeders were hanging nearby. Suddenly, we were amazed to see a brightly rainbow colored bird land on a perch to feed. Others gathered to watch and we all decided that this was the highlight of our day, a painted bunting!!

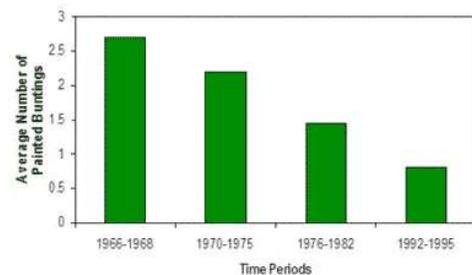


The painted bunting is a migratory, neo-tropical bird that breeds in two separate locales, one population in the Midwest and the other in the southeastern United States. The **western population** breeds in the southern and central midwest (Kansas and Missouri south to Texas and Louisiana) while the **eastern population** breeds along the southeast coast (North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida).

There is no mistaking the beautiful male with his bright blue head, red eye ring and yellow, green and red body. The female is almost all green with some greenish yellow and young males are also green until they molt into their colorful plumage in their second year.

Shy and usually hidden, the males will sing at the top of trees to attract mates, but will remain behind the greenery making it very difficult to spot them, despite their flamboyant finery. Nesting is usually in low, scrubby growth and shrubs. They will come to backyard feeders and prefer white millet seed.

Unfortunately, the eastern population of painted buntings has been in decline for several decades according to the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Data collected since 1966 show a 3.2% decline per year for painted buntings in the southeast region. One of the most likely reasons for their decline is habitat loss. Changes in agricultural practices and increased development along the east coast have decreased the amount of this vital shrub-scrub habitat. Also, the males are often a target for the caged bird market. Although their numbers are declining, they have not made the endangered list.



Graph of Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966-1995  
source: Patuxent Wildlife Research Center).

However, several organizations list the painted bunting as a species **in need of conservational efforts**, according to PBOT (The Painted Bunting Observation Team, a group of volunteer "citizen scientists" who are helping ornithologists learn more about the eastern population of painted bunting). PBOT states that "the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) lists the painted bunting as Near Threatened; they are a Species of Highest Conservation Concern (in North and South Carolina) and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (in Florida) according to those state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies; Partners in Flight lists the painted bunting as a highly ranked Species at Risk (4.29/5.00) and a Watch List Species for species of Continental Importance for the United States and Canada due to restricted distribution or low population size; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the painted bunting as one of its Focal Species (USFWS Focal Species Fact Sheet 2005)."

On a local note, there has been one rare sighting in Medina Township on May, 9 2004 of a male painted bunting as recorded in Birds of the Cleveland Region by Larry Rosche.

**References:** [www.paintedbuntings.org](http://www.paintedbuntings.org) (PBOT); Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion by Pete Dunne; The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior by David Allen Sibley; Birds of the Cleveland Region by Larry Rosche.



PAINTED BUNTING photo by Dane Adams

## Two Very Adaptable Species

By Jim Jablonski



What do you suppose I was thinking when I saw a giant excavator approaching an active bluebird nest at Lorain County Metro Parks High Meadows Park in Elyria? If you guessed, “*there goes the neighborhood!*” you are exactly right. Not long before, box #10 had produced five bluebird fledglings and its companion, box #9, had just released five tree swallows. But when EG Excavating began working on the extension of the North Coast Inland Trail through High Meadows, I assumed that was the end of the breeding season for those two boxes.

Little did I know! Box #9 was likely to remain empty anyway since swallows only produce one clutch a season but days after work began just a few feet away, the courageous bluebird parents began their second nest in #10. Talk about hometown loyalty! There must be something about that corner of the park with its large, nearby tree that attracts this pair since the boxes have always been productive.

As the work progressed, becoming even more invasive of the birds’ territory, our late spring rains became continuous, flooding the area as you can see in the photo above. The parent bluebirds bravely kept at their primary instinct, finishing the nest and producing four eggs while the heavy equipment crept closer. Box 9 was removed but Eric Gyory, the owner and operator of EG Excavating, promised he and his crew could, and would, work around #10.

They were as good as their word, despite being buzzed at times by the parent bluebirds. Meanwhile the hatchlings arrived and grew rapidly. The rains continued and the box’s pole threatened to tip but BRAS bluebird co-coordinator Fritz Brandau quickly added a support that held up the pole as mud was pushed against it.

The addition helped as the mud rose so high around the pole that eventually I had to look down into the box rather than up into it. I’m sure by now you have guessed the final outcome. The ability of two species, *Sialia sialis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens*, to adapt paid off in the long run. With some compromises along the way, all the hatchlings fledged. Eric Gyory, who enjoyed seeing the bluebirds develop as he worked around them, said, “*It would have been easier if they weren’t there but it wasn’t that much trouble to watch out for them.*” Words we should all consider in the modern world.

### You Can Now ‘*Lunch with the Birds*’

The Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative has been presenting an educational and entertaining “webinar” series entitled “Lunch with the Birds.” Experts in ornithology and birding have presented widely varied lectures on various bird-related topics such as “eBird 101,” Ohio’s Warblers, Raptor Biology and “Backyard Habitat for Birds.” The programs are presented the third Wednesday of each month. Past programs have been archived and can be seen at the following websites:

**obcinet.com/lunchwiththebirds, or  
youtube.com/obci1**

The presentation I listened to was *“The Ecology and Conservation of Migratory Birds Across the Full Annual Cycle”* by Dr. Chris Tonra of The Ohio State University. Dr. Tonra presented information on his research done on the linkages between events in the tropics and the American Northeast on birds such as everyone’s favorites – migratory warblers as well as others. This talk, presented on February 20, 2015 is easily accessible and presented wonderful information with excellent graphics. I would recommend checking it out. **JJ**

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