

# WINGTIPS



SNOWY EGRET photo by Debbie Parker

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		Editors: Jim Jablonski, Cathy Priebe, Harry Spencer Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel Photographer Emeritus: John Koseinski	<b>Non-Profit U.S. Postage Paid Elyria, Ohio Permit No. 50</b>

## **September Program**

Tuesday, September 5, 7:00 p.m.  
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

### **Craig Caldwell To the Edge of the Earth: Nome, Barrow, and the Bering Sea**



**Craig Caldwell "At the Edge of the Earth"**

Craig Caldwell was a dedicated birder long before it became a popular activity for baby boomers and others. A lover of nature since childhood, he became a birdwatcher early in the 1970's and morphed into an "obsessed birder" by the mid-90's.

He has been a National Audubon member since 1970 and a member of Audubon Miami Valley, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, Kirtland Bird club, American Birding Association and Ohio Ornithological Society, serving in a wide variety of positions in all of them.

Craig received a bachelor's degree in chemistry and has a masters degree in Soil and Water Science. In addition, he has a MBA in management. That education prepared him for a twenty-year career as a chemist in the environmental testing industry. He has also worked as a self-employed real estate investor and renovation contractor for ten years.

He asks Black River Audubon Society members, friends and visitors to join him in his journeys to the outer edges of Alaska and share the scenes and birds of Nome, Barrow, and the Bering Sea communities of Adak, St. Paul and Gambell.

## September Field Trip

### Letha House/Spencer Lake Wildlife Area

Saturday, September 16, 2017, 8:30 a.m.

Meet at 5745 Richman Rd., Spencer (Medina County)

Paul Sherwood to lead

### Harry Spencer Memorial Bird Walk

Saturday, May 20, 2017



(photo by Dave Priebe)

Above are some of the birders who turned out for the first Harry Spencer Memorial Bird Walk on May 20, 2017. The event was the inaugural hike in honor of long-time BRAS officer, birder and good friend Harry Spencer who passed away last spring at the very beginning of the bird migration season. We look forward to this walk as a meaningful Black River Audubon tradition in the future.

## Summer Field Trip Report

By **Tammy Martin**



Since our May issue of Wingtips, we have taken several worthwhile field trips. Although I'll skip listing a thorough accounting of them, let me share some of the highlights.

Guided by Chuck Slusarczyk, Jr., twelve local birders toured the Cleveland

Lakefront Nature Preserve. Much restoration of this site, formerly "Dike 14", has occurred since Cleveland Metroparks resumed management. By controlling phragmites, habitat has improved, especially for sparrows. Our group identified forty-eight bird species, ten of which were sparrows, including a very cooperative grasshopper sparrow. All had great views of this unexpected bird. Early butterflies (red admiral and spring azure) and several small DeKay's brown snakes rounded out the trip.

In May, we took our annual adventure to Magee. Eight birders tallied 85 species of spring migrants, as well as resident nesters along the boardwalk and Ottawa's wildlife drive. Although warblers seemed a tad late this year, we did find ten species. Other highlights included American woodcock, solitary sandpiper, American pipit, marbled godwit, and red-breasted nuthatch.

A small group of five toured Wyandot Wetland Meadows Preserve, Erie County Metroparks, in June with Paul Sherwood as our guide. This site includes varied habitat, such as meadow, woods, brushy fields, wetlands, and marsh (east end of Sandusky Bay). Our group identified 43 species, primarily nesters. A lone dickcissel, singing in the same location as found last year, was indeed a highlight for me.

And finally, I led our July outing to LCMP's Columbia Reservation, where six of us found 50 bird species. Not bad for July! This wetland restoration project along the Rocky River offers a nice mix of habitat for birds, plants, dragonflies, frogs, and reptiles. Seeing the yellow flowering bladderwort, a native carnivorous floating plant was a treat, but the sighting of an eastern box turtle made my day. This "Species of Concern" in Ohio is a real treat to find and observe. Thanks, Jeanne!

### **Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker**

Please don't miss hearing Sharon "Birdchick" Stiteler, this year's Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker on Saturday, November 18, 2017, at 2:30 p.m. at the Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center. Simply titled "Today's office," Ms. Stiteler will entertain us with tales from her birding adventures, including counting birds by plane above the Mississippi River, getting barfed on by pelicans, and searching for birds at a nude beach.

Employed as a ranger for the National Park Service, Ms. Stiteler also maintains the popular blog "Birdchick.com", speaks internationally, and regularly appears in national publications, on the NBC Nightly News, Minnesota's Twin Cities TV and radio stations, plus numerous birding publications. Her outdoor jobs are mostly full of beauty and adventure but come up short on bathrooms and normal food.

The energetic Ms. Stiteler will also lead the BRAS monthly field trip that morning at Sandy Ridge Reservation, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Join us for both events!

## **A Birder's Diary: Duck Stamps/Wildlife Legacy Stamps**

**By Carol Leininger**



Early settlers in North America were thrilled with all the natural resources this country held upon their arrival. Before Theodore Roosevelt convinced the government to protect our resources, millions of waterfowl were destroyed, some species to the point of extinction at the hands of market hunters and ambitious sportsmen. Natural wetlands were drained and filled for farming, housing and industrial development, greatly reducing waterfowl breeding and nesting habitat. Migration rest areas and wintering grounds were severely impacted. People did not realize that wetlands help to maintain ground water supplies, act as a filtration system for pollutants, and store flood waters.

In 1933, the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act began to stop this destruction. Now all waterfowl hunters must annually purchase and carry a Federal Duck Stamp. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sale of Duck Stamps goes directly into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to purchase wetlands and wildlife habitat for inclusion into the National Wildlife Refuge system. Over half a billion dollars has already gone into this fund to purchase more than five million acres of habitat.

Collectors and art enthusiasts consider these stamps miniature pieces of art and avidly support this program, as do conservationists, including the bird watching community. Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsors an art competition to pick the best stamp.

Junior Duck Stamps also support conservation education programs to help connect young people to the national world through science and art. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife also sells an Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp annually for conservation programs, specifically in Ohio. With all three of these stamps available to the public more people are contributing to conservation.

Did you know that Duck Stamps dollars were used to purchase Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge? Have you purchased your stamps this year? They can be purchased at Magee Marsh Bird Center, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge itself. According to naturalist Aldo Leopold,

*“There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot. Like winds and sunset, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them.”*

## **SNOWY EGRETS AND LITTLE EGRETS**

*Egretta thula and Egretta garzetta*



By **Barbara Baudot**

September in France; white, wispy feathered egrets fleck the Rhone delta - circling the skies, stalking their diet of small aquatic creatures, or peacefully roosting with larger egrets and herons. They may be native to this location or paused on a migratory path to the south of Africa or Asia. Immediately I assumed these were snowy egrets extending their presence beyond the Western Hemisphere.

I was wrong. These birds were “little egrets,” described in many sources as “the Old World counterpart to the very similar New World snowy egret.” Little egrets are occasional visitors to coastal eastern North America and the Caribbean Islands, particularly the Barbados where they have established a breeding colony.

The literature does not draw unambiguous distinctions between these species because most are so subtle or variable as to require comparative expertise to ascertain them. Some differences disappear with age, season and habitat. With few exceptions their food, breeding, and other habits are also similar.

The reason for the distinctness of their scientific names, however, is clear, the birds were identified by different scientists. If Linnaeus had classified the snowy egret, its scientific name would reveal a subspecies of garzetta. Instead, in 1782, the Chilean naturalist Juan Ignacio Molina erroneously labelled the snowy egret, *Egretta thula*, identifying the species as *thula*— the Araucano word for black-necked swan.

Black legs, striking yellow feet, and long black dagger-like bills contrast the white plumage of both species. Structurally very similar, the little egret may be slightly larger and taller than the snowy egret [but size variations within both species are common]. Some observers suggest that the little egret possesses a slightly rounder cranium slanting to the beak than the flatter-headed snowy egret. Generally the lores of the snowy egret are yellow-gold, while the little egret has greyish lores, a striking yellow iris, and pale yellowish skin under the lower half of its beak.

The coloring of lores, face skin, and legs, as well as the display of plumage change during breeding season when the snowy egret grows wispy feathers from its crown, nape and back. The little egret grows two long pointed feathers from the nape of their necks as well as many other wispy feathers.

Sadly, both species share a harrowing past. By the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, the little egret was virtually extinct in Britain and Ireland. Historic anecdotes tell this story. Over-hunted, egrets in large numbers were on the menu celebrating the coronation of King Henry VI in 1429. And, at the banquet honoring George Neville, Archbishop of York in 1465, 1,000 egrets were served. In 1804, Thomas Bewick confirmed this fact stating that if it were the same bird as listed in Neville's bill of fare "No wonder this species has become nearly extinct in this country!"

Another near extinction occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This time the extinction was for both species' plumage. The breeding feathers of both egrets were highly prized for women's hats from at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the midst of this fashion craze in 1886, the plumes of

the snowy egret were “valued at \$32 per ounce,” then twice the price of gold. Despite protection efforts in 1870-80 the plumage of 775,000 birds from the tropics was sold in London market in 1885, including snowy egrets from South America; and little egrets wintering in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Some historians see the plumage issue as marking the beginning of public protection of wildlife. Ironically, British women championing their protection led to opposition to killing birds for plumage. Notable progress was made by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was founded in 1889. Its members pledged not to wear plumage and established a network of international branches. The American Ornithologists Union was established in 1883, followed by the Audubon Society first founded in 1886. The French-Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) was established in 1912. Thanks to the work of early conservationists, international and national reforms were passed enabling the recovery of both species of egrets. Today, both the snowy egret and the little egret are among those of least concern on the IUCN list.

**References:** [crawlindex.com/reviews/snowy-egret-scientific-name.com](http://crawlindex.com/reviews/snowy-egret-scientific-name.com); Wikipedia; [heronconservation.org](http://heronconservation.org); *Handbook of The Birds of The World*: vol 1, Jd. Hoyo,A. Elliot,J. Sargatal; *The Handbook of Bird Identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic*, M. Beaman, S. Madge, C.Helm; [sibleyguides.com/bird-info/little-egret/](http://sibleyguides.com/bird-info/little-egret/); McCormick, John. 1995. *The Global Environmental Movement*, London: John Wiley.

## YELLOW WARBLER

*Dendroica petechia*

By Cathy Priebe



“Sweet, sweet, sweet, I’m so sweet” is the unmistakable song of the yellow warbler. This little, five inches long, bird’s arrival is a definite sign to me that spring has finally arrived in northern Ohio!!!

Found in nearly all habitats that border marshy or wetland brush, such as willow

thickets and near ponds, this sunny yellow creature is one of our state's most common breeding warblers. Arriving in April and leaving as early as July, the yellow warbler can sometimes be found in huge numbers during May migration, especially in western Lake Erie marshes.

The male is primarily yellow with a thick, black bill and black beady eyes and olive wings. When breeding, he has red streaks on his breast. The female, as always, is a pale comparison, dull yellowish overall with a shadowy streak pattern and is often mistaken for an immature bird. Both sexes have bright yellow panels on their tails, which is a unique characteristic to this warbler.

Even though the yellow warbler can be found nearly anywhere in Ohio, it often has trouble nesting due to cowbirds parasitizing their nests. It has been discovered that yellow warblers are able to recognize a cowbird's egg and will often build another nest on top of the existing structure to lay another clutch. Only a few bird species have this ability to determine that their nest has been compromised by cowbirds!! According to Jim McCormac, a stack of five yellow warbler nests was once found!!!

The female builds a sturdy cup nest in a shrub or small tree. The nest is constructed of weeds and grass and lined with down from plants and fur. She will lay 4-6 white, blotchy (brown spotted) eggs and incubate them for approximately two weeks. Both parents feed the babies. The young remain in the nest for about 8-9 days before fledging and are independent from their parents in three to four weeks. According to Wikipedia, 55% of all yellow warbler nests will raise at least one young.

#### **Other fun facts about yellow warblers:**

- Their favorite food is caterpillars, along with beetles, aphids and gypsy moths.
- Young warblers become sexually mature in one year.
- The male will fiercely defend his territory during breeding season.
- An adult yellow warbler has only a 50% chance of surviving from year to year. The maximum age found of a wild yellow warbler was 10.

- 1 out of 3 nests will suffer from predation each season.
- Other than cowbird predation, yellow warbler nests are often compromised by small hawks, snakes, owls and feral cats.
- They have acquired the nickname "summer yellowbird."

**References:** Wikipedia; Stokes Guide to Birds, Donald and Lillian Stokes; Birds of Ohio, Jim McCormac; Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion, Pete Dunne.

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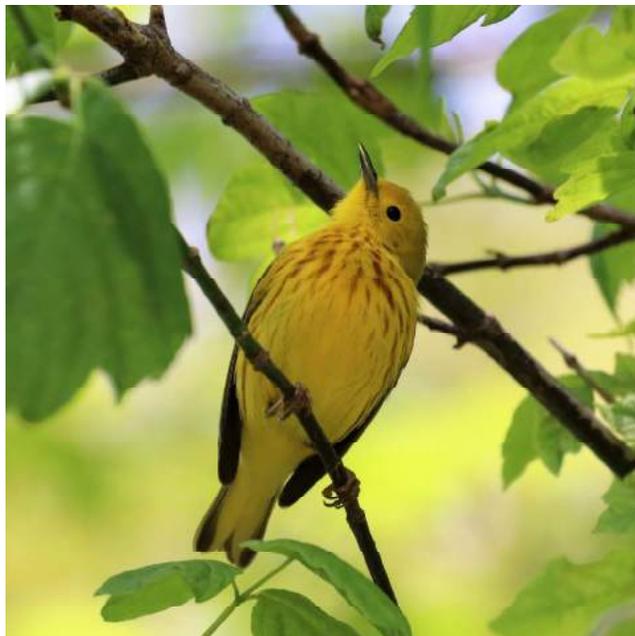
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**Yellow Warbler nestling (photo by Debbie Parker)**



**Yellow Warbler parent (photo by Dave Priebe)**



LITTLE EGRET photo by Barbara Baudot

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