

WINGTIPS



ATLANTIC PUFFIN photo by Rob Swindell

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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September 2018 Program

Tuesday, September 4, 2018, 7 p.m.
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

Tammy Martin Adventures in Ecuador



Now of Napoleon, Ohio, Tammy continues to work as a library cataloger at Oberlin College. She earned a BS/MS in Environmental Interpretation from The Ohio State University based on a deep love/interest in everything “natural”...especially birds! During college, Tammy worked as a seasonal naturalist on the Blue Ridge Parkway [North Carolina], for the National Park Service. She returned to academia for employment in the library field, during which time she and husband, Dan, raised twins Sarah and Andy. After their graduation, Tammy found time to revive her interest in birding and hasn’t looked back. International birding is now high on her agenda, as well as road biking with Dan, and spending time with Parker and Westin, their grandsons!

In the fall of 2017, Tammy Martin visited Ecuador, on her second international birding trip. This South American country, the fourth most diverse (birding-wise) in the world, holds over 1600 species of birds. No surprise, but the trip was fantastic! From the high altitudes of the Andes to lower Amazonia, the trip produced countless hummingbirds, tanagers, and antpittas, plus a number of surprises. Join Tammy as she recounts her “*Adventures in Ecuador.*”

September 2018 Field Trip

Buckeye Woods, Medina County

Saturday September 15, 2018, 8:30 a.m.

Meet at Buckeye Woods Shelter Parking Area.

(Debbie Parker to lead.)

Save the Date!

2018 is the 60th anniversary of the Black River Audubon Society. In commemoration, BRAS will celebrate the occasion with a reception following its annual Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker day, November 10, 1:30 - 4 pm at the Carlisle Visitor Center.

Julie Zickefoose, author/artist of “Baby Birds” will be our speaker. More description of the event will follow in future Wingtips.

Fond Farewell to the Birder's Diary

Long-time Wingtips writer and editor Carol Leininger has decided to put away pen and paper. After decades of involvement with Wingtips and approximately 100 “Birder's Diary” articles on all facets of birding, Carol has somehow decided she “has nothing more to write.” A statement that seems doubtful at best!

Although that claim is difficult to credit, she has definitely earned a break. Still, her informative stories, said by nationally-known birder Kim Kaufman to be the first article she turned to in Wingtips, will be sorely missed.

Carol always wrote the way nature intended, with pen and notebook paper, mailing nine articles each summer to the Wingtips editor. The process undoubtedly gave her the time to think more carefully about the stories, which generally needed very little editing.

Now, happily, our longest-serving writer will have the opportunity to do even more bird-watching. Thanks for your service, Carol!

ATLANTIC PUFFINS AND HOG ISLAND

By **Rob Swindell**

I first learned about the Puffin Project while participating in Dr. Steve Kress's Spring Field Ornithology online class from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. I was fascinated by the success of the project, which reintroduced Atlantic puffins to the coast of Maine after more than a century's absence. Kress's innovations have now been used in species

restoration projects around the world.

That was just one of the reasons I was excited to attend Audubon's Field Ornithology camp in Bremen, Maine. Among the adventures, the camp included a chance to see puffins on Eastern Egg Rock Island, the site of Dr. Kress's success. The camp featured presentations and workshops by nationally-known scientists and writers, field trips to local wildlife areas and islands, as well as time with bird-lovers from across the country. Hog Island is an historic and beautiful setting for the camp, offering both the chance for exploration and moments of quiet serenity. The absence of television and radio was a welcome break. We rose early, slept with the stars, and enjoyed outstanding home style meals—catered to meet any dietary restriction.

Located just off the coast of Maine we saw many species of birds on the island. American goldfinches sang beautifully throughout the day, purple finches dazzled with their amazing colors and ruby-throated hummingbirds buzzed the flower gardens. We were also treated to a proud turkey hen who paraded her chicks through the gardens each morning. A pair of ospreys lives on the island, just above the campgrounds, and is amazing to watch up close and through the 'ospreycam' which has a continuously running monitor in the dining room.

The trip offered some challenges as I am not fond of boats, particularly in the open waters, so the chance to see the puffins came with some trepidation. Fortunately, puffins are irresistible and the desire to see them in their natural habitat helped me overcome some of my fears. It was a bumpy ride, out into Muscongus Bay to Eastern Egg Rock, but I was not only able to survive the trip, but also find enough balance in the boat to get a few photographs.

In addition to the puffins, we saw razorbills, black guillemots, common loons, a Northern gannet, large colonies of double-crested cormorants, surf scoters, laughing gulls, common eiders, some terns and many other species.

There was also a teen camp, which followed its own ambitious programming—including spending a day on Eastern Egg Rock. It was refreshing to see young adults so engaged in nature and the study of birds. Some of them were already very talented in bird ecology and identification.

Finally, it was wonderful to meet so many other people who enjoy watching and learning about birds. It was fun trading stories (everyone I talked to got to hear about the roseate spoonbill I saw in New Russia Township just before leaving for camp). Many were also jealous at our proximity to Magee Marsh. The instructors and volunteers were so kind and helpful, working with birders of all abilities.



**The view of Hog Island and its camp buildings when one arrives.
Photo by Rob Swindell**

It was an amazing experience that I recommend all bird lovers. I am so grateful and would like to thank Black River Audubon for the scholarship that made this opportunity possible!

Editor's note: Black River Audubon Society makes scholarships available to the Hog Island birding camp each year. Travel expenses, as well as the camp cost itself, are paid for by BRAS to benefit the fortunate recipient. Check upcoming Wingtips editions for information on how to apply for a scholarship for the camp during the summer of 2019.

THE REDISCOVERY OF “OUR” ROSEATE SPOONBILL

By **Diana Steele**

Birding was epic this spring, but by mid-June I had decided to hang up my binoculars and tend to my garden. On Wednesday, June 13, I was in Erie County, finally buying plants. During lunch alone at a nearby restaurant, I logged into Facebook.

That's when I saw Maureen Bailey's post in "Ohio Chase Birds." A Kendal resident walking her dog had photographed a roseate spoonbill just outside Oberlin on Sunday, June 10.

Roseate spoonbills are native to coastal southern Florida and Texas. There were only two prior Ohio records, the last in 2002. A handful of spoonbills showed up in northern states early this June, possibly swept up in the winds of Tropical Storm Alberto, which traveled up the coast from Florida through Ohio at the end of May.

Maureen had just learned about the bird and was careful to note that it wasn't currently being seen. The photo clearly showed a roseate spoonbill standing on the rocks at the pond at New Russia Township Park and Nature Preserve. I said something more colorful than "Jiminy Christmas," left some cash on the table and jumped in my car. I don't normally speed, but this was an emergency! Someone needed to find that bird!

I raced out to New Russia Township. My bluebird trail and kestrel box are across the street from the park, and I had just checked the trail that morning. No big pink bird with a gigantic bill was there. I had even driven over to the pond to look at the multitudes of Canada geese. Nothing pink.

This time, I drove my usual circuit at high speed: the pond where the bird had been seen, the wetland and pond at my bluebird trail, the ponds at Kendal at Oberlin, and the cemetery in New Russia Township. No large pink bird was anywhere. I was beginning to think I was on a wild goose chase (ha, ha).

Birders were scouring wetlands in Lorain County—Sandy Ridge, Margaret Peak, Crook Street, Carlisle Reservation, etc. Each negative sighting was duly reported on Facebook. The bird was nowhere.

I finally gave up and came back to earth. I had to parent children, make dinner, and go to a meeting. After it wrapped up around 8:45 p.m., I thought I'd take one last look at the pond in New Russia Township Park in the fading light. I drove east along Butternut Ridge Road from Rt. 58, and at the entrance to the park, I slowed down and happened to glance left into a wetland in the middle of a farm field across the street, behind Drug Mart. I saw a large bird. Not pink, exactly, but the light was bad. Great egret? When it turned in profile, I could see what might be an enlarged bill. But I wasn't sure. And I had no binoculars.

I raced home, grabbed my bins, yelled to my family to join me (they declined), and sped back to Drug Mart.

I raised my bins and almost couldn't believe my eyes. There is **no** mistaking that spoon-shaped bill. My heart racing, I called Marty Ackermann, started an eBird checklist, and put out a terse message on my personal Facebook page, "I RE-FOUND THE NEW RUSSIA TOWNSHIP SPOONBILL!!!"

The bird was calmly wading through the reeds, eating and preening. I put my iPhone to my binoculars and asked Marty to tell me when the

bird was standing in profile, so I could capture its stunning and unique bill. When he said, “now!” I clicked.

The next two days I barely slept. The bird took off Thursday morning around 7 a.m. after being ogled by a crowd of birders. That evening, another crowd gathered, but by 9 p.m., nearly everyone had given up waiting. A teenage birder and I were the only ones left when the bird calmly floated in again at 9:20 p.m. On Friday morning, an even larger crowd had gathered before dawn, coming from all over the state. At 7, the bird took off again, and that was the last we saw of it in Lorain County.

Editor's note: People came to Oberlin from throughout Ohio and beyond, due to Diana's rediscovery of the roseate spoonbill. There were at least 30 hopeful birders the night I visited the New Russia Township Park, including a half dozen Amish men. Unfortunately, it never showed, at least not before darkness was falling.



The Oberlin roseate spoonbill riding a thermal. Photo by local photographer Ed Wransky.

Sixty Years of Birding: Chapters in BRAS History

Unlike today, the majority of Americans in the 1950's were said to be joiners, willing to take part in social groups dedicated to activities that interested them. Today, many, if not most, of us follow our interests online and tend to keep our distance from others if we can.

Things were very different in 1958. Jack Smith, Black River Audubon co-founder and benefactor led weekly birding hikes in Elyria's Cascade

and Elywood Parks. Eventually, those walks evolved into our current Audubon chapter.

Organizers also moved much more quickly in those simpler times. On January 30, 1958, the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram ran a notice that Harlie Stevick, general secretary of the local YMCA, which was affiliated with National Audubon, had called a meeting of a steering committee to plan a local chapter.

Just days later, the committee of Stevick, Elizabeth Yoder, P. F. (Perry) Johnson, and Jack Smith announced a meeting for February 11 at the Elyria YMCA. They were mailing invitations to likely members but were asking all interested people to attend.

Twenty-five prospective members attended. Johnson and Harry F. Dickinson were asked to plan programs for meetings on March 4 and April 1. In addition, Yoder, N.W. King, Raymond Hollabaugh, Lucille Griffin, and Ernest Enold were directed to develop a constitution for the new chapter.

Then, five weeks after the first public announcement, the brand-new Elyria Audubon Society, as it was first called, had its initial meeting with a program. Jack Smith's presentation included projections of birds along with recordings of their songs. The audience couldn't get enough and asked for a follow-up at the April 1 get-together.

In the business portion, the constitution was adopted with the regular meeting dates temporarily left open. In addition, Stevick was selected as the first president, Yoder, an Ely School teacher, was chosen to be Vice-President, Elaine Dirrem, a teacher at Eastern Heights became secretary, and Jack Smith, of Pierre Smith and Co., was made treasurer.

Bird sightings have been commented upon at the monthly meetings from the beginning. It was pointed out that a mockingbird had stayed around the feeders of W.H. Lance and W. A. Sayles throughout the winter.

All in all, a quick and very solid beginning to a 60-year history!

Reference: Elyria Chronicle-Telegram.

In our 60th anniversary year, Wingtips will run a series of historical chapters. *Editor*





Kate Pilacky, (second from right) with other Big Parade marchers

The Oberlin Big Parade

Oberlin has long been known as a hotbed of environmentalism. The community, the organizations based there, and the college have all learned to have fun while promoting nature and wildlife.

This past May, during the city's annual Big Parade, Kate Pilacky of Black River Audubon and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, helped organize a *protect the pollinators* group to emphasize the planting of shrubs and milkweed to provide habitat and food for bees and hummingbirds.

She also designed and fashioned costumes to emphasize this important purpose and to draw in the kids! BRAS members also met the public at a WRLC table while distributing plants and seeds to encourage helping pollinators.



**Black River Audubon membership only
(but including Wingtips) is \$15 /Year**

Name _____

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**Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon
P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036**

**“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.”**

**National Audubon Membership Application
(Includes membership in Black River Audubon
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**Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8
Send your check to: National Audubon Society,
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
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Attention: Chance Mueleck**



Black River Audubon Park's Big Day

May 19, 2018, turned out to be a wonderful day for BRAS, Elyria's Sunshine Rotary, local student volunteers, and area wildlife. Several dozen nature enthusiasts turned out to plant a dozen native but relatively rare and diverse trees. Others planted more at Elyria West Recreation Park and Lorain County Historical Society. Trees, shrubs, flowers, and milkweed, donated by Western Reserve Land Conservancy, were added to the garden bordering Black River Audubon Park's existing treeline to help attract pollinators and butterflies.

The volunteers were as diverse as the environment they were creating. Elderly, middle-aged, young adults, and teens all pitched in to make the day memorable. The pleasure the teens received from the experience was especially noted by their older colleagues. While National Honor Society students worked at the Black River Park, Elyria Teens Achieve Success (ETAS), which had already put in more than an hour at a Rotary location, planted six trees around the skateboarding site at West Rec. According to John Hammond of Sunrise Rotary, a number of ETAS students, when asked their most enjoyable activity of the group's year by the sponsoring Rotarians, picked the Audubon tree planting day!

The event was made possible by a \$2500 National Audubon Society grant awarded to BRAS through the Burke Trees for Birds campaign. National thought highly enough of the grant proposal written by our Andy Lance and Kate Pilacky that it was considered one of the best in the country out of 85 applicants. NAS hired photographers to record the activities. Their story is at <https://www.audubon.org/news/once-polluted-mess-now-healthy-riverside-park>. Photos and videos can be found at <https://nationalaudubon.box.com>.



ROSEATE SPOONBILL photo by K Caldwell

BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1958-2018: 60 Years of Birding

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