

WINGTIPS



EVENING GROSBEAK, photo by Chad Wilson

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DECEMBER 2022

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December 2022 Program

Tuesday, December 6th at 7 p.m.

Sandy Ridge Reservation Visitor Center

“Musings of a Naturalist Life”

Tim Fairweather



Tim is a recently retired naturalist with Lorain County Metro Parks. He started as a seasonal worker with summer camps way back in 1989, and then worked full-time at French Creek Nature Center for almost 10 years. He was appointed the Park Manager and Senior Naturalist at Sandy Ridge Reservation before it opened in October of 1999.

While Tim specialized in “all things birds” at Sandy Ridge, he considers himself more of a jack-of-all-trades naturalist. He’s just as comfortable talking: Dinosaurs, Plants, Insects and Spiders, Astronomy, Reptiles, and pretty much everything else. He really enjoyed sharing all that knowledge with the public through programming such as: Birding by Tram, The Big Sit, Monarch Tagging, Wildflower Walks, and Wednesday Morning Birding.

Tim was a naturalist with Lorain County Metro Parks for almost 33 years, having recently retired at the end of October. Through photos and stories, he will recount some of his favorite moments. He will also talk about his amazing recent trip to Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine (courtesy of Black River Audubon).

2022 Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, December 17th, 2022

Elyria Christmas Bird Count

Marty Ackermann to lead

Friday, December 30th, 2022

Wellington Christmas Bird Count

Meet at Wellington McDonalds, Rt. 58 at 7:45 am

(follow COVID protocols if applicable)

Paul Sherwood to lead

This year's **Elyria-area CBC will take place Saturday, December 17th, 2022** and will be organized by Marty Ackermann. He may be reached at 608-334-2552 if you wish to take part.

The **Wellington-area CBC will take place Friday, December 30th, 2022**. The leader is Paul Sherwood. His telephone number is 419-202-6080.

Please call the leader of the count you prefer. You do not have to be an experienced birder to take part in the event.

Applications for Hog Island Scholarships



Photo by Derrick Jackson, hogisland.audubon.org

Black River Audubon Society is again offering Hog Island birding camp scholarships for two adult educators or naturalists and one teen birder. The successful adult applicant will acquire additional skills to educate students and the public about bird conservation and wildlife and the environment in general. Similarly, the successful teen applicant will broaden their knowledge of birds and the environment in general. The scholarship will cover tuition, room and board, plus up to \$600 in travel expenses.

The goal is that recipients will follow the examples of others who have returned from Hog Island as ambassadors for conservation and environmental education in our communities.

Campers spend one week on the island off the coast of Maine learning from accomplished naturalists, birders, and educators. In the off hours, they can explore the camp's natural surroundings and rustic buildings that have a long history with National Audubon. No one has ever returned with complaints about the quality of meals served during their stay.

Two reservations have been made for the BRAS scholarship winners for the **Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week** camp, although other camps might be possible. One reservation has been made for **Coastal Marine Bird Studies for Teens**.

All application materials must be sent to Black River Audubon by February 12, 2023. Individuals interested in applying for the scholarship should contact Charlie Weil at BlackRiverAudubon@gmail.com or call 440-864-1617 for the application materials. Be sure to leave a message if calling.

For more details and description of the camping experience, go to hogisland.audubon.org

Evening Grosbeak

Coccothraustes vespertinus

by Chad Wilson

This is a fitting time to write about one of the most beautiful birds that can be seen (sometimes) in Ohio, the Evening Grosbeak! Most years these birds do not irrupt from Canada into Ohio in large numbers, but they are currently irrupting in the highest numbers that have been seen in years!

If you would like to attract an Evening Grosbeak to your bird feeders, you will need a tray feeder loaded with black oil sunflower seeds. The Grosbeak is a pretty hefty bird and tends not to land on the smaller feeders. However, if you attract too many, the feeders will be devoured in short order by these voracious birds.

Evening Grosbeaks have the largest bill size of any of Ohio's finches. The scientific name *Coccothraustes* means “Kernel Crusher”.

While seeing Evening Grosbeaks at your feeders is the easiest way to go, they also enjoy the fruit of box elder trees, which tend to be alongside streams.

The Evening Grosbeak is a songbird without a song. They do have a few simple calls, but they do not use any complex sounds to attract a mate or defend their territory.

While the Grosbeaks will devour seeds in winter, in the summer they enjoy feasting on insects such as Spuce Budworm.

The oldest recorded Evening Grosbeak was a male, and at least 16 years, 3 months old when he was found in New Brunswick in 1974. He was banded in Connecticut in 1959.

Before 1900, Evening Grosbeaks were restricted to western North America, and rarely ventured east of the Mississippi River. They expanded their range eastward all the way to New England in the

first few decades of the 20th century. Although it is not fully understood why, it might have to do with the proliferation of box elder trees, which offer them a consistent food supply.

Why are some years good for Evening Grosbeaks and other finches coming down from Canada and others not so good? Finches rely heavily on conifer and other boreal trees for food, especially their fruit and seeds in the winter. However, many of these trees produce food in cycles, producing an abundance of seeds in “mast years” and very little in other years. Scientists believe the trees evolved these synchronous mast-crop cycles to limit the food supply for squirrels, preventing their populations from growing too large and eating all the seeds. The birds, however, have wings, so they stay when the food is plentiful and head south when it is not.

So load up those tray feeders and keep your binoculars handy, and you just might be rewarded with an Evening Grosbeak visit this winter!

References: allaboutbirds.com; audubon.org; Kennedy and McCormac, *Lone Pine's Birds of Ohio*; Peter John, Bruce: *The Birds of Ohio*

The 10 Most Exciting Ohio Birds of 2022

By Chad Wilson

December is a great time to reflect back on the past year. These are some of the birds that got Ohio birders buzzing with excitement this year! (Editor's note, it is actually very difficult to figure out how many sightings a bird has had in Ohio, so take these numbers as an estimate.)

- 1) **Bullock's Oriole** - Marvin Raber found an incredible Bullock's Oriole on his property in Coshocton county on April 15th this year. He graciously allowed birders to come view it, and many got to see it even though it stayed only one day. It was the 6th Ohio record.
- 2) **Townsend's Solitaire** - Paul Miller found a Townsend's Solitaire on the Magee Marsh boardwalk on October 10th. It was about the 9th Ohio record. It stayed about a day and

a half before disappearing.

- 3) **Limpkin** - Rod Beaber found a Limpkin at Sippo Lake in Canton on September 12th. It played hide-and-go-seek with birders for a couple of weeks at various locations in the area. This was the 5th Ohio record, and only the second year ever that a Limpkin was seen in Ohio, with all the other records coming in 2019.
- 4) **Tri-colored Heron** - Erica Lawless found a Tri-colored at Maumee Bay State Park on June 10th. Although there are quite a few records for Ohio, this was the first one since 2017, allowing many birders to bag an Ohio lifer. It stayed around for a couple weeks and delighted many birders with point blank views!
- 5) **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** – A couple of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were found this year, one at Pipe Creek in Erie county and one in Licking county. While there are quite a few Ohio records, these were only the 10th and 11th records since 1991, making them a great bird to see.
- 6) **Loggerhead Shrike** – Chance Morris found a Loggerhead Shrike at our very own Lorain Impoundment on October 14th. While Loggerhead Shrikes used to be found in Ohio, they became an OBRC review species in 2002, and this would be about the 15th record since then. Sadly it was a one-day wonder, and insane winds the next day hampered efforts to re-find it.
- 7) **Brewer's Blackbirds** – The inimitable Danno Gesualdo found a whole mess of Brewer's Blackbirds at a farm in Erie county on April 14th. These birds are extremely difficult to find in Ohio. Soon afterwards, Ed Wransky had a couple of them at the Lorain Impoundment, but they vanished quickly.
- 8) **Golden Eagle** – Phil Steiner found a Golden Eagle in Resthaven near Castalia on January 15th, and Danielle Squire refound the bird on a tree in Sandusky county. What made this bird extra special is that it was chaseable! The tree Danielle found him in was a favorite of his that he kept returning to for weeks! Usually Golden Eagle sightings in Ohio are a quick flyover and then they are gone.

- 9) **King Eider** – A couple of King Eiders were found this year, one January 15th at Rocky River Park, and one February 21st off Sims Park. It had been a few years since a chaseable King Eider showed in Ohio.
- 10) **Whooper Swan*** – Found on a farm in Brookville, Ohio, this one gets an asterisk, because the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC) still needs to review it to see if it 'counts' as a wild bird. Some people raise them so they are usually thought of as escapees, but this one's wings were not pinioned nor were its legs banded. If the OBRC happens to validate it, it would probably shoot this bird all the way to number 1 on the list!

I have included pictures of all the birds on the back cover...the bottom of the inside back cover will have the names of each bird. Also, let us celebrate the top bird superstars of Ohio, the first Black-bellied Whistling Ducklings ever born in Ohio! As of this writing there are still eight babies, and they will probably be heading south soon! 2022 had a lot of great birds, now bring on 2023!

Leave your Hummingbird Feeders Up!



Rufous Hummingbird, seen November 14th 2021, photo by Chad Wilson

Although all the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have made their way south, October through December is a great time to attract vagrant hummingbirds from the western US. Rufous, Allen's, Calliope, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds have all been seen in

Ohio in the last few years. If you have any hummingbirds at your feeders this time of year, contact Black River Audubon on the website at <https://www.blackriveraudubon.org/contact-1> and let us know, it will almost certainly be an interesting one!

Xmas Gift Alert! Black River Audubon Apparel is Now Available!

Black River Audubon Society now has apparel and accessories available! They provide a chance to share your passion and pride for our organization in the community. T-shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, hooded and zipped sweatshirts, long-sleeve t-shirts, mugs, and more are available in a large selection of colors and sizes. Designs currently feature our logo in color, black & white, and white. More fun designs are coming.



Sample of Black River Audubon apparel

Black River Audubon has its own Artist Shop at Threadless, which offers convenient, on-demand printing. All orders are processed and shipped by Threadless and Black River Audubon receives the proceeds to help fund conservation and educational programs. Just go to blackriveraudubon.threadless.com. Threadless is also the chosen artist shop for National Audubon.

Black River Audubon Membership Only
(but including Wingtips) is \$15/Year

Name _____

Address _____

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Email address _____

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 Only
(Includes membership in Black River Audubon and subscriptions to WINGTIPS and AUDUBON magazine: \$25/year)

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Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8
Send your check to: National Audubon Society,
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attention: Chance Mueleck

To pay online, go to blackriveraudubon.org/membership and select the type of membership you prefer.

Chasing Jaegers!



Jaeger boat! (photo by Chad Wilson)
By Chad Wilson

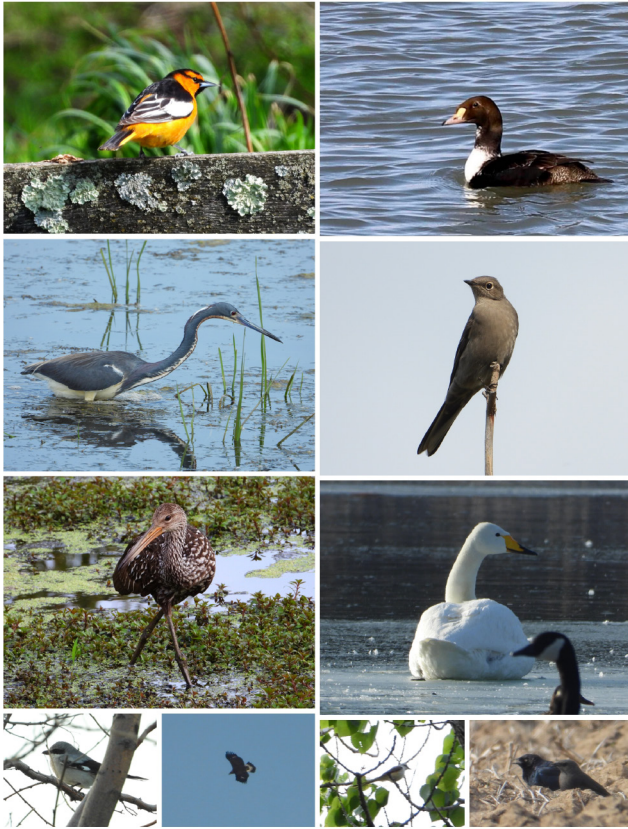
Jaegers are gull-like birds that breed in the far north of Canada and then some of them come down to migrate through the Great Lakes region in the Autumn months. They do not enjoy coming within sight of land, however, so they are very difficult to see for birders.

Jen “JB” Brumfield solves this problem by chartering a souped-up Hewescraft 250 Alaskan with twin 200 horsepower Yamaha motors. The boat heads up to 8 miles offshore, with JB scanning for birds the whole time. When a Jaeger is found, the boat captain floors it to keep it in view for the birders, resulting in thrilling chases at speeds up to 40 knots! I have been on three of these Lake Erie pelagic boat rides and I highly recommend them! Go to www.jaegerboat.com for more information!



Pomerine Jaeger (photo by Chad Wilson)

Back cover birds: Top row: Bullock's Oriole, King Eider Second row: Tri-colored Heron, Townsend's Solitaire Third row: Limpkin, Whooper Swan Bottom row: Loggerhead Shrike, Golden Eagle, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Brewer's Blackbirds



OHIO'S 10 BEST BIRDS OF 2022, top left photo by Danielle Squire, top right photo by Lenore Charnigo, all other photos by Chad Wilson



BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

"Birding Since 1958"

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