

WINGTIPS



WILD TURKEY, photo by Chad Wilson

Or Current Residents
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HERE

DECEMBER 2023

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December 2023 Program

Tuesday, December 5th at 7 p.m.

Sandy Ridge Reservation

“What's Happening at Sandy Ridge”

Tyler McClain



Tyler rescuing a Mallard duckling

Come hear about what is changing at Sandy Ridge Reservation. Tyler will be talking about conservation efforts and give updates on wildlife sightings.

Tyler McClain, an avid and accomplished birder, herper (reptile and amphibian enthusiast), and naturalist, is the newest land steward at Sandy Ridge. He will present an update on what is happening at the reservation.

Learn about the latest ongoing conservation efforts, including eliminating invasive species and reverting to native species. Discover ways you can create green spaces in your community and your very own backyard!

December Field Trips
All trips are on Saturdays
Guests Are Always Welcome!

Elyria Christmas Bird Count
December 16th, 2023, all day (various locations)

To take part in the Elyria area count contact
Marty Ackermann at 608-334-2552 or
email *martin.ackermann@oberlin.edu*

Wellington Christmas Bird Count
December 23rd, 2023, 7:15 a.m.

Meet at McDonalds (800 N. Main (Rt 58)) in Wellington
Paul Sherwood to lead

Turkey Tales

By Chad Wilson

This issue will probably reach your mailboxes right around Thanksgiving, so let's talk turkey! If you're looking for a write-up on the Wild Turkey species, go into the Wingtips archives on our Blackriveraudubon.org website and open the November 2018 issue to find Cathy Priebe's excellent article. But I'd rather recount some interesting interactions with them from my experiences.

Don't Mess With Turkeys

When visiting my parents in Saugatuck, Michigan, a few years ago, we ran into a man with his leg in a cast while waiting for a seat at a restaurant. My Dad asked him how he broke his leg, and he sheepishly grinned and said "Oh, I was trying to make the turkeys fly." Apparently it's a very niche sport in Michigan to chase Wild Turkeys in an attempt to get them to fly. Although they are good at flying, they don't much care for it. They are very fast runners (up to 25 miles an hour!) so getting them to fly is extraordinarily difficult and something of a badge of honor among that strange community. This poor soul did a one-legger down a woodchuck hole while attempting the feat. Turkeys 1, that guy 0.

Turkeys Will Mess with You

I was birding with a friend of mine who shall remain nameless. We were down in the Oberlin area, and as I was driving down a sleepy road I thought I saw movement in the woods. I backed the car up, and sure enough, a flock of Wild Turkeys approached through the woods. They were the first we had seen for the year, so I rolled the car windows down so we could get some photographs. As soon as I did, they sprinted for the driver side door! My friend shouted “Roll up the window! Roll up the window!” as the bore down on us. I got the window up in the nick of time, and the flock proceeded to surround my car. For a few minutes we were stuck, with those weird birds staring in at us from every side. Birds watching birdwatchers...touche'.



“We're surrounded”, photos by Chad Wilson

An Unexpected Encounter

One fine morning I was walking down the Sheffield Lake Recreation Trail (my favorite spot for warblers!) soaking up nature. I turned the corner to go over the bridge, and stopped dead in my tracks...turkeys! They had taken over the bridge, and even though I was very close, they show no signs of giving it up! Since they were there first, I shrugged and decided that bridge didn't need crossing that morning, and headed back the way I came.



“You Shall Not Pass!” photo by Chad Wilson

Smoky Turkeys

Have you ever heard of a Smoky Turkey? Also called “smoke morph” or “smoke phase” turkeys, they are a light gray with graphite and black details around the body, wings, and tail. This is a mutation caused by a recessive gene, and it is estimated that as many as 1% of all Wild Turkeys might have it. My buddy Phil Steiner caught this picture of one in the Sandusky area. I think they are amazingly beautiful and hope to see them one day!



“Smoky” Turkey, photo by Phil Steiner

Galapagos Islands and the Mindo Cloud Forest

By Charlie Weil



Galapagos Penguin, photo by Charlie Weil

In the summer of 2023 Beth and I had the opportunity to travel to Quito Ecuador and then travel to the Galapagos Islands. Ecuador is recognized as one of the best places in the world for bird watching. It geographically consists of Pacific Ocean seacoast, the high elevation of the Andes mountains and the Amazon rain forest on the Eastern side. This has resulted in a large diversity of birds and other species found in this country. This is the first of a series of articles to describe some of the wonders and learnings of our too short stay in this part of the world.

The people of Ecuador are very eco-friendly and have thoroughly embraced eco-tourism. Much to our surprise the country of Ecuador has significant crude oil reserves in the Amazon area. Just after we visited this summer there was a national election and one of the ballot issues was whether they would permit granting of

increased permits to enlarge the area in the amazon for drilling. Sentiment was high against potential threat to more Amazon area being developed and soon after we left, the expansion of the drilling rights was defeated. The Ecuadorians put their eco concerns ahead of their wallets as gasoline is heavily government subsidized in Ecuador. The Ecuadorians were also passionate about protecting areas like the Galapagos Islands and the Mindo Cloud Forest.

The Galapagos Islands are an archipelago of volcanic islands located about 560 miles west of Ecuador and not very far south of the equator. The islands were named for their famous giant tortoises which were plentiful at the time of their discovery. Much more about the tortoises in a later installment. The island group consists of 18 main islands, 3 smaller islands and 107 rocks and islets. During our visit, we were on Baltra, Santa Cruz and Isabela islands. We also traveled to Santa Fe Island to snorkel in a couple of bays enjoying the colorful fish and swimming with the green sea turtles.

Many of the islands are protected as part of Ecuador's Galapagos National Park and Marine Reserve. The permanent population of the Islands was about 33,000 people in 2020. Steps are being taken to limit any future growth of the permanent population. Visitors to the Islands are limited to about 300,000 people per year. The residents of the islands are highly dependent on the eco tourist trade and the covid closures of 2020-2021 economically devastated many small businesses. We were originally scheduled to make this trip during the covid years. We had to postpone and lost some money when local businesses with which we had reservations went bankrupt.

One of my goals during the trip was to see the Blue-footed Booby. I did get to see a small colony of the birds off in the distance after wading through a mangrove forest on Isabela Island. Unfortunately, I did not have either binoculars or a camera with me when the birds were spotted. We did get to see a pair of young Galapagos Penguins up close when they swam near by in the same

mangrove area. Beth did get a much better look at a colony of Blue-footed Boobies when we were off the coast of Sante Fe island.

Interestingly the famous Blue-footed Booby is only one of several varieties of boobies. There is also the Red-footed Booby, Brown Booby, Peruvian Booby and the Nazca Booby. The Nazca Booby is named after the tectonic plate on which the archipelago is located. Stay tuned for more trip highlights next month!



Saddleback Giant Tortoises, photo by Charlie Weil

Application for Hog Island Scholarship -2024

Black River Audubon Society is again offering Hog Island birding camp scholarships for one adult educator or naturalist and two teen birders. 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 & 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.

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

All application materials must be sent to Black River Audubon by February 16, 2024. 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*

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

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

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)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

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.

Eagle Scout Builds Chimney Swift Tower

By Chad Wilson

Jack Fink, an Avon Lake Eagle Scout from Boy Scout Troop 159, built a Chimney Swift tower for Black River Audubon Park in Elyria!

“I chose the Black River Audubon Society for my project because I like birds and I strongly support conservation, both of which align closely with the goals of the society.”

Chimney Swifts are a declining species that could use a little help with their nightly roosting places, as the old growth trees they used to use are almost all gone. The chimneys they have been using more recently are often no longer on modern houses, or, if they are, are capped, preventing the birds from roosting in them. Just like humans, Chimney Swifts need a place to sleep, and thanks to Jack, who with the help of family, friends, and his troop, now have some new shelter as of the weekend of October 8th -9th!



Jack Fink with his excellent Chimney Swift tower!



CHIMNEY SWIFT, photo by Chad Wilson



BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

"Birding Since 1958"

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