

WINGTIPS



LIMPKIN, photo by Chad Wilson

NOVEMBER 2022

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November 2022 Program

Tuesday, October 1st at 7 p.m.

Sandy Ridge Reservation Visitor Center

*Dragons, Damsels & Hummers: Learning, Loving & Luring
them to the Home Habitat*

Judy Semroc

**Dragons, Damsels &
Hummers:
Learning, Loving &
Luring!**



Judy Semroc is an area field biologist and naturalist, who spent the past 20+ years working in the Natural Areas Division as a Conservation Specialist with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. She has co-authored two natural history guides, *Dragonflies & Damselflies of Northeast Ohio* and *Goldenrods of Northeast Ohio: A Field Guide to Identification & Natural History*. Judy is also the founder and president of Chrysalis in Time, the first Ohio chapter of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) and serves on the board of the Ohio Bluebird Society and Ohio Ornithological Society (Conservation Committee). As a former petroleum geologist and middle school science teacher, Judy loves to learn about and share her passion for the natural world through interpretive hikes, Powerpoint programs and photography. Learn more about Judy's latest adventures and offerings through her new company, Nature Spark!

The beauty and unique behaviors of dragonflies, damselflies and hummingbirds are incredibly interesting and useful, especially in the home garden habitat. Join in on this program to learn more about these charming and helpful creatures including their natural history and ideas for how to attract them to your yards and gardens.

November Field Trip
All trips are on Saturdays
Guests Are Always Welcome!

November 19th, 2022, 9:00 a.m.
Wellington Upground Reservoir
47301 Jones Rd, Wellington, OH
Meet in the parking lot.
Diana Steele to lead

Limpkin

Aramus guaranauna
by Chad Wilson

Normally a bird whose northern range extends only into Florida in the United States, a Limpkin was spotted September 12th at Sippo Lake in Canton, Ohio, and continued to be seen off and on through September 27th! This would be the 4th or 5th Ohio record. The other sightings are all from 2019, so this is only the second year in Ohio history that a Limpkin has been documented!

Let's start with the bird's unusual name. It comes from their odd gait, which sometimes looks like they have a limp as they walk across their marshland habitat. They are definitely a cool customer and are somewhat tame around people unless threatened. The Canton one sure didn't seem to mind the presence of a dozen birders aiming cameras at it!

The Limpkin population has been exploding in Florida recently, perhaps due to invasive snails, *Pomacea maculata*, the Island Apple Snail, providing much more food than the native Apple Snails it usually consumes. The Canton Limpkin was also seen eating an invasive snail, the Chinese Mystery Snail. (As a side note, I had to look up what the mystery is: they are called “mystery” snails because females give birth to young, fully developed snails that suddenly and “mysteriously” appear.) So the Limpkin seems to have a wide variety of snails it likes to munch. Ohio and other states (they have been recorded in most of the Midwestern states this year), have benefited from this population explosion as the young Limpkins explore the country a bit before it gets cold.

The Limpkin is the only member of its taxonomic family, Aramidae. Although it resembles herons and ibises in general form, the Limpkin is generally considered to be more closely related to rails and cranes. DNA testing has supported that they are a unique family, although there are fossil records for other birds in the Aramidae family that lived in the Americas during the Miocene, 23 to 5.3 million years ago.

Nests may be built in a wide variety of places – on the ground, in dense floating vegetation, in bushes, or at any height in trees. They are bulky structures of rushes, sticks, or other materials. Nest building is undertaken by the male initially, which constructs the nest in his territory prior to pair-bond formation. Unpaired females visit a number of territories before settling on a male with which to breed. Pair-bond formation may take a few weeks. Courtship feeding is part of the bonding process, where males catch and process a snail and then feed it to the female.

The clutch consists of three to eight eggs, with five to seven being typical. The egg color is highly variable. The eggs are laid daily until the clutch is complete, and incubation is usually delayed until the clutch is completed. The incubation period is about 27 days, and all the eggs hatch within 24 hours of each other.

The young hatch covered with down, capable of walking, running, and swimming. They follow their parents to a platform of aquatic vegetation. They are fed by both parents. They reach adult size at 7 weeks and leave their parents at about 16 weeks.

The Limpkin is also known as the crying bird. I have never heard one call in person, but I urge everyone to stop reading this article and go listen to their call online. It is not quite as horrible as the call of the Yellow-headed Blackbird, but it's not good. Its call has been used for jungle sound effects in Tarzan films and for the hippogriff in the film Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

The Limpkin does not feature much in folklore, although in the Amazon people believe that when the Limpkin starts to call, the river will no longer rise.

Seeing the Limpkin recently was certainly one of the highlights of my birding year, and I wish this particular bird a long and happy life!

References: allaboutbirds.com; wikipedia, www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/science/five-facts-limpkins; www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquaticanimals/chinese-mystery-snail/index.html

New Lorain County Metropark Opens in Avon!

By Chad Wilson



Friendly Red-tailed Hawk at Avon Wetlands (photo by Chad Wilson)

Lorain county, already rich in metroparks, is getting richer! The new park is called Avon Wetlands at Miller Nature Preserve.

The parking lot is at the corner of Rieglesberger and Jaycox roads. It's a small lot that can hold about seven cars.

The trail consists of a couple loops, with a total hike of about a mile or so. The walking is perfectly flat and makes for a very easy hike. It contains a wetland area, forest edges and a prairie.

Danielle Squire and I went for a hike there last weekend to check it out, and were treated to a point blank young Red-tailed Hawk perched right above us, as well as a decent variety of shorebirds in the wetlands area. We saw both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, a Spotted Sandpiper, and two Solitary Sandpipers. There were also 9 Blue-winged Teal hanging out in the wetlands with some Mallards.

Interestingly, this park was not originally going to be a park. It was scheduled to become Creekside Place, a 49-home subdivision, but Avon residents, fed up with local flooding in the area, fought to stop the development. The land was sold to the city of Avon, who then sold it to the Lorain County Metroparks. Conservation stories like this warm my heart.

This park has been five years in the making and is still far from

complete. The metroparks are continuing to plant native plants, and they eventually want to install a bridge over French creek, as well as expand the parking and the trails. The trails will eventually connect east to Schwartz Park and west to Miller Nature Preserve. Kudos to everyone involved for protecting our wild spaces! Go check it out and see what you think!

References: westlife.com

Project Icebreaker

By Chad Wilson and outdoornews.com

The Ohio Supreme Court recently ruled 6-1 that the Lake Erie Energy Development Corp (LEEDCO) may proceed with the development of an off-shore wind turbine farm 8 to 10 miles off the Lake Erie Coast, near Cleveland.

This ruling paves the way for the first freshwater, offshore wind farm in North America.

As a birder and conservationist, I lean toward this being a bad idea. Yes, renewable energy is better than fossil fuels, but millions of birds migrate over Lake Erie every year. I don't know how many will be killed by the turbines, and since they will fall into Lake Erie I doubt anyone will ever know. I like to write my own stories, but while researching this I came across an article that is so perfect that I called the publisher to ask if I could reprint it. Following is that article from outdoornews.com, used with permission. (Note this article is from 2015, that's how long this project has been floating around.)

Wind power is one of the fastest developing energy sources in the United States. But how much of a threat is it to birds and bats?

There are strong concerns about the harm to birds and bats; Kirtland's warblers pass through the Lake Erie region during migration. There are maybe 3,000 of them left in the world, said Michael Hutchins, national coordinator of the American Bird Conservancy's Bird Smart Wind Energy Campaign. If only 10 to 20 are killed by wind turbines, that is a major loss. Many birds have even smaller populations than that, he said.

The ABC and the Black Swamp Bird Observatory support wind power when it is bird-smart, and believe that birds and wind power can co-exist if the wind industry is held to mandatory standards that protect birds.

“Before anyone can say if wind power is a possibility in an area of such heavy bird activity, there would need to be a preconstruction study that was scientifically sound and answered the question of what birds and how many are using the CLEB in all seasons,” said Kimberly Kaufman, executive director of BSBO.

LEEDCo, the Sierra Club Ohio, the Ohio Environmental Council, and others say the Icebreaker project presents a low risk to birds and bats in the CLEB, and that maintaining the status quo regarding Ohio’s energy system is unacceptable. Pollution from coal-fired plants kills 4,000 people in Ohio a year, said Eric Ritter, LEEDCo’s communications and strategy manager. The electric power sector in the United States is the major contributor to global climate change. That represents the biggest threat to bird species in the world.

“Ohio right now has about 32 coal plants and all together they have about 24 gigawatts of electric generating capacity,” Ritter said. “If you were to develop all of the areas that Ohio DNR identified as favorable or very favorable in Lake Erie, that would be almost 20 gigawatts. Our goal is a tiny fraction of that.”

“The Icebreaker project is a pilot project of what is planned to be a massive buildout in Lake Erie,” Kaufman said. “The longterm goal is about 1,700 wind turbines in the CLEB. BSBO has voiced objections to the project. Our concerns are, looking at the impacts to birds and looking at their preconstruction environmental assessment, we felt the science was very weak.

“You don’t have to be a Ph.D. ornithologist to look at the environmental assessment and see that there are serious insufficiencies,” she said. “Both in terms of the way that they assessed the number of birds using that portion of the lake, and their understanding of bird behavior and ecology was lacking. In assessing the bird movement in that area, one of the ways that they looked at the volume of nocturnal migrations was to take people out on a boat at night using night vision binoculars to watch for birds. That is not a sufficient way to evaluate night migration.”

LEEDCo has performed several risk assessments, Ritter said. The nonprofit company started working with regulatory agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DNR Division of Wildlife in 2008 to learn what preconstruction studies it needed to do. They agreed that a small-scale pilot project that was heavily instrumented would inherently reduce any risks. LEEDCo is committed to equipping the

project with the most state-of-the-art bird and bat monitoring equipment, Ritter said.

“We’re collaborating with stakeholders and subject matter experts from all around the world to design a really robust research agenda that answers some of the unknown questions and then to use that to inform how birds use the far offshore waters of Lake Erie and then use all of that to inform responsible development for future projects,” Ritter explained. “We have thoroughly surveyed all of the peer review literature about avian impacts for offshore wind projects in Europe, and about avian impacts of onshore projects in North America.”

ABC is trying to keep an open mind, Hutchins said. But it didn’t think that LEEDCo’s cursory environmental assessment proves that there are no endangered species in the area.

LEEDCo used radar studies to conclude that no endangered species would be affected by the project.

“I said, ‘can you tell a Canada warbler from a Kirtland’s warbler via radar?’” Hutchins said. “They said, ‘no, but we had people out there with binoculars during the day looking as well.’ These are nighttime migrants and a lot of times they’re flying at a couple of thousand feet. It depends on the weather conditions as to what height they fly and what routes they fly. During high wind or inclement weather they could be flying a very different route at different altitudes.”

On the other hand, Trish Demeter, the OEC managing director, energy and clean air, said OEC can see where the concerns are coming from and that they are legitimate. But OEC is confident that LEEDCo is doing its due diligence to be as protective as it can be of migratory birds and bats.

“We’re confident that they’ve done their homework and invested a lot to ensure that the siting of these turbines will have very little if any impact on the very important bird habitats that are in the Lake Erie region,” Demeter said. “There is always a risk when you’re building something that goes up into the air where birds and bats live; the developers of the project know that. They’re investing a lot more than is required of them in terms of seeing or understanding what those risks are for birds and bats in the area.”

The situation is a win-win for the environment and economic development in the region, Demeter said. She echoed Ritter’s comments that climate change and coal-fired power plants are what is hurting wildlife.

BSBO's and ABC's response, contained in a review of a LEEDCo white paper, said, "We understand the desire to move toward renewable energy in Ohio, and to replace the aging energy infrastructure based on non-renewable, polluting fossil fuels. We also understand that this will involve some tradeoffs, and that some birds may be killed at any wind energy development. That being said, as bird conservation organizations, we do not agree that our nation's ecologically important birds (and bats) should be considered 'collateral damage' in our fight against anthropogenic climate change."

The Sierra Club of Ohio disagreed and echoed the comments that climate disruption is the worst threat to birds and must be "hit head on," said Jen Miller, director of the group. Today's wind turbines use new technologies and there are new operational changes that can protect wildlife, such as shutting down turbines during migration.

"We use sonar to find out whether they're butterflies, birds, whatever, we find out where they are migrating and we make sure to shut down the turbine," Miller said.

"Even changing the color of blades can help," Miller said. "We found that gray, white, or silver tend to attract insects, which are then going to attract birds and bats. If you paint them purple, the insects are less likely to be attracted to the blades. It doesn't really look different from the ground because they are so high up but just changing the color of the paint reduces the insect population near them, which therefore reduces the amount of birds that come by."

LEEDCo is aware of these new technologies and operational changes. While it has not yet designed a system for postconstruction monitoring, it is committed to pushing the state of the art involving as many subject matter experts and stakeholders in the design as possible.

"We'll be able to collect data at this site that is totally unimpeachable and be able to advance the state of the science with regard to wildlife interactions," Ritter said.

However, the technology to record bat and bird deaths from wind energy facilities offshore is not well developed yet.

"We're afraid that if they're allowed to build it that we'll never know what they're killing and how many," Hutchins said.

References: www.outdoornews.com/2015/02/11/debate-continues-to-rage-over-wind-powers-effect-on-birds/; wky.com

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Ohio Duck History!



By Chad Wilson

The first-ever Ohio-born Black-bellied Whistling Ducks (photo by Chad Wilson)

Firsts in birding are always exciting. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks are always exciting (at least in Ohio). Put them together and you get a mind-blowing combination.

Ohio's first-ever documented successful nesting of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were discovered on an Amish farm in Wayne County on September 8th of this year and they continue today.

If you look at a range map, Texas and New Mexico are the only places that reliably has these birds. In the past few years, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks have been rare but increasing Ohio vagrants, and it was probably just a matter of time before one of them decided Ohio was a good place to raise the kids. That time is now, and the Ohio birding community has come from all over to witness these little superstars!

There were 10 ducklings initially, but they are down to 8 now, thanks to a lurking snapping turtle. Here's hoping that the rest of them make it to adulthood and come back to try to start families of their own in Ohio! I loved seeing them so much that I'm going to put another picture of them on the back cover!



OHIO'S FIRST BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKLINGS, photo by Chad Wilson



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