

# WINGTIPS



NASHVILLE WARBLER, photo by Chad Wilson

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OCTOBER 2021

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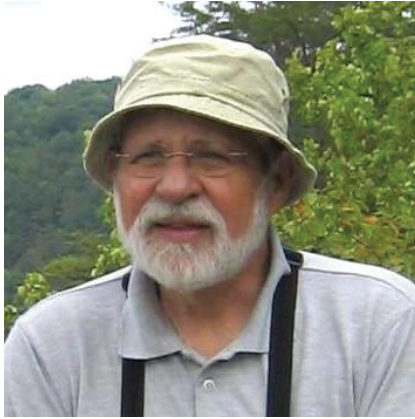
## **October 2021 Program**

Tuesday, October 5 at 7 p.m.

Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

### **Getting the Most from eBird**

**Ken Ostermiller**



**Ken Ostermiller scanning for birds**

Ken Ostermiller will provide an introduction to the eBird website and tips for using it so you can view your records, find birds nearby that you are interested in seeing, and plan where to go birding when you travel. Birders who use eBird are invited to bring their questions about how to use it most effectively. Ken will answer as many as possible during his program.

Ken works as a volunteer with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, reviewing hotspots in Ohio for the eBird website. He created and maintains, in cooperation with the Ohio Ornithological Society, a website, Birding in Ohio, <https://birding-in-ohio.com>, that describes over 4,000 birding locations in Ohio.

*Editor's note: Please check our website and your email as the event approaches for any Covid-related changes. We are subject to Lorain County Metro Parks health and safety protocols—which may mean that the size of the meeting might be limited or canceled altogether. We will make all reasonable accommodations as necessary, which may include the use of other media for the presentation or rescheduling the event.*

*We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we work to bring back local events while ensuring the health and safety of our members.*

## **October Field Trip**

### **Lights Out Cleveland**

**Saturday, October 16, 2021, 8:00 a.m.**

Meet at Lake Erie Nature and Science Center

28728 Wolf Rd, Bay Village

(Paul Sherwood to lead)

*Editor's Note: Field trips are subject  
to the local area's Covid rules.*

## **NORTHERN PINTAIL**

*Anas acuta*

By **Jim Jablonski**

One day early in my birding career I was struck by an especially stunning duck at Sandy Ridge Reservation. I knew all ducks were beautiful but this one stood out from the rest. The duck's obvious field marks--white stripes on the sides of its neck and a long, thin tail--made me realize this bird would be easy to identify. It certainly was as I quickly found it in my trusty Peterson's field guide. Since then, the northern pintail has been one of my favorite ducks.



**Northern Pintail, Fairfax County, Virginia  
Nick Vance/Audubon Photography Awards**

The pintail was likely to be one of the first ducks I identified during migration season. According to Kenn Kaufman, in **Lives of North American Birds**, it is one of the most numerous in the world, although it

has been in decline in some areas since the 1960's. Kaufman also points out that it is out-numbered by its close relative, the mallard. Although some birders pay little attention to common birds, we are incredibly fortunate that two of the most beautiful ducks exist in large numbers.

As close cousins, the northern pintail and mallard share omnivorous feeding tastes that can be accommodated in a variety of habitats. A dabbling duck, the pintail forages underwater by submerging its head and neck and finding food in the mud below. Nonetheless, it also forages in fields on seeds, insects, and waste grain. During summer, mollusks, crustaceans, and even small fish are added to its diet. Variety, both in food and habitat, is definitely the spice of life for the pintail and helps explain its worldwide presence.

Mate selection begins on the winter range along the entire southern United States but can continue until the pintails arrive on their western breeding grounds in the northern Great Plains and Canada, as well as Siberia. Once mating is settled, the female builds a nest on dry land near water before laying up to a dozen eggs. Within a few hours of hatching, the female leads her brood from the nest. She keeps watch over the precocial hatchlings as they feed themselves. Their diet is mostly insects, in order to take in necessary protein. The young are capable of flight in six to seven weeks.

The migration back to the south goes on through much of the fall. But the pintail's winter range may be changing. In an **audubon.org** website article "*Ducks Are Moving North as Winters Warm*," Rachel Fritts reports that "waterfowl hunters in the South have witnessed a slow-motion disappearing act" of many duck species.

Following up on these reports, wildlife biologist Rick Kaminski studied Christmas Bird Count surveys for the last 50 years and found that the winter numbers of at least 12 duck species, including pintails, are decreasing in the south and increasing in the north, including Canada. Warmer winters due to climate change are likely causing the shift. The northern pintails adaptability seems to be serving it well.

**References:** Kaufman, Kenn, "Northern Pintail," *Lives of North American Birds*; Fritts, Rachel, "*Ducks Are Moving North as Winters Warm*," audubon.org.

## **Bluebird Program Report**

**By Jim Jablonski**

Most of you may know that Black River Audubon's amazing bluebird program, with approximately 500 birdboxes distributed throughout Lorain County and beyond, is one of the most productive in the state. With that

much data to draw upon, the program's quarterly newsletter always provides fascinating information.



New monitors Anni Pilisy and Deb Ackerman check a box at the South Equestrian Center.  
(Photo courtesy of Penny Brandau)

Despite cold, wet weather that hampered the first round of breeding in April and May, a problem that seems to be a trend in recent years, the program's June 1<sup>st</sup> inventory reported a total of 457 young bluebirds. This was down from 489 in 2020. Nonetheless, 156 hatchlings had fledged by June 1, compared to just 96 the year before. Many more will be added in the final count that will include the second round of nesting. Those figures will come out in mid to late fall.

Boxes set out for bluebirds also benefit cavity nesting tree swallows. A total of 1,312 eggs were reported along with 270 hatchlings on June 1. Those numbers are unlikely to change much since tree swallows only produce one brood per year.

In addition, box monitors were excited to find a total of 21 black-capped chickadees, 16 of which fledged by June 1. None were recorded by the program last year.

Bluebird parents, as well as their human monitors, had to contend with flooding issues along some trails. One box was partially submerged as shown by mud on its floor! Fortunately, the box was empty at the time.

By October, tree swallows will have migrated out of our area. Bluebird migration, on the other hand, is more complicated. Some are

year-round residents in northern Ohio if they can count on a winter food supply, while others only migrate short distances. However, many do migrate to the southeastern United States.

## NASHVILLE WARBLER

*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*

By **Barbara Baudot**

I once saw a colorful Nashville warbler perched on the bottom branch of a bush in a meadow overgrown with brush and wild grasses, not far from the Carlisle Reservation Equestrian Center. He was singing his boisterous song, a ringing *teebit-teebit-teebit*, followed by *chipper-chipper-chipper*. His black eye, framed by a white ring, contrasted with his grey head; his back and wings were cloaked in olive green feathers; his throat and underbelly were bright canary yellow, save for white feathers covering his lower belly. This patch distinguishes Nashville warblers.

When the warbler I saw wasn't singing, he was hopping among lower branches pumping his short tail as he searched the ground and undersides of leaves for insects and larva.

Ohio and the entire mid-section of the United States are migratory territory for Nashville warblers travelling to breeding grounds in northeastern Canada and parts of northeastern American states. In August these warblers fly southwest to Mexico and northern reaches of Central America.

Nashville warblers maintain individual territories during the breeding season. The rest of the year they are gregarious, forming large mixed-species flocks for migration and wintering. They mate in springtime and remain monogamous throughout the breeding season. The female builds the nest, a cup of mosses, grasses, and leaves carved into the ground. The male feeds the female while she incubates her eggs. Both parents nourish the nestlings until they fledge.

Given its common name one might think the Nashville warbler was native to Tennessee. The name choice, however, was simply a matter of circumstance. In 1811, the pioneering bird observer, Alexander Wilson, saw this bird while strolling through a field near Nashville and named it after the city. The bird passes through but does not breed in Tennessee.

Nashville warblers fly over the Midwest and states west of the Rocky Mountains when migrating to and from their breeding grounds. Ornithologists divide these warblers into two sub-species depending on whether they breed and fly east or west of the Rockies. Both groups mingle in Mexico. When travelling to the north, eastern flocks split from

western ones and, unlike many migratory birds, follow the Gulf coast before turning northeast.

The birds of the western sub-species tend to be paler than those in the east. Other minor differences include song-tonality and perching preferences. For example, the eastern birds commonly sing in thickets close to the ground whereas birds of the western subspecies sing while perched on branches of tall, fire-blackened trees.

Nashville warblers belong to the Western Hemisphere's very large wood warbler family [*Parulidae*], which is unrelated to any old-world wood warblers. *Parulidae* include 18 genera and 129 species, largely concentrated in Central America. It is hard to conceive that such small birds, weighing only 2.5 ounces, travel thousands of miles a year. Moreover, the numbers of many are increasing while other bird populations are suffering serious decline. Nashville warblers benefit, however, from habitats where logging is frequent, and farmland is shrinking. Their breeding preference favors new growth and overgrown fields of bush, brush and saplings.

**Editor's note:** The wings of the Nashville warbler on the cover appear blue rather than olive green as stated in the article due to lighting differences.

**References:** [allaboutbirds.org/guide/Nashville\\_Warbler/overview](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/Nashville_Warbler/overview); [borealbirds.org/bird/Nashville-warbler](http://borealbirds.org/bird/Nashville-warbler); [ebird.org/species/naswar](http://ebird.org/species/naswar); [audubon.org/field-guide/bird/Nashville-warbler](http://audubon.org/field-guide/bird/Nashville-warbler).

## **The Avon Lake Power Plant Shutdown and Its Effects on Local Birding**

**By Chad Wilson**

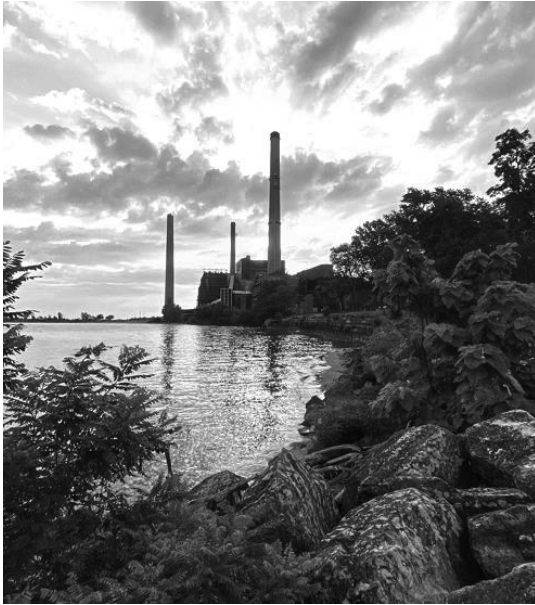
When flying into Cleveland's airport on a clear day, it is hard to miss the monstrously large power plant on the shoreline of Lake Erie in Avon Lake. The building absolutely dominates the landscape. But not for much longer! The First Energy Power Plant in Avon Lake was recently sold to Charah Solutions, which plans to tear it down over the next 2 to 3 years, clean up the area, and then redevelop the property.

There are a number of impacts as a result of this sale and demolition. First, and most obviously, the elimination of a coal-burning plant is a major benefit to humans and all wildlife, both in our area and across the nation.

Ironically, however, the removal of the plant will have an impact on winter birding along the lake. On the coldest days of winter, when Lake Erie freezes over, the running power plant expels warm water into the lake and keeps the area from freezing.

As a result, winter birds, flock to the area and turn it into a bird

playground. We were fortunate during a lake freeze in February of this year to see gulls and waterfowl overrun the water near the power plant. Gautam Apte, who is an expert at counting large numbers of birds, counted 81,450 birds at the warm water site on February 16th! That will end with the demolition of the plant.



**Avon Lake Power Plant**  
(photo courtesy of Ali Murf, converted from color)

Possible future uses of the restored area will also impact birding in one way or another. The mayor of Avon Lake, Gregory Zilka, supplied the following information about plans for the site.

*“At this point there are no definite plans to develop the property but that could change as the demolition and mitigation of the power plant property progresses. Obviously, the property has increased in value due to the big announcement. As the property is cleaned up, for example, the removal of the coal pile and potentially some of the industrial infrastructure, the land might become more desirable for home construction.”*

So, residential and commercial development of the area is quite likely. But development also offers other great opportunities! It’s my hope that county or city park systems might look into purchasing a nearby



wooded area and preserving the green space for birds and other wildlife. Also, if preserved as public land, the beach would definitely provide a great habitat for shorebirds. That would certainly make up for the loss of winter birding.

The birding of our area will certainly be affected by the demolition of the power plant and in the way it is developed afterward. It will be very interesting to watch the changes as they occur over the next few years! Happy birding, and, if Lake Erie freezes this winter, make sure you check out the warm water area for the last year of cold weather birding there!

## **Audubon Avian Quiz**

**By Gina Swindell**

1. How many different kinds of butterflies and moths lay their eggs on native oak trees in the United States?
  - a. 550
  - b. 50
  - c. 5
2. A chickaboom is:
  - a. The sound of many seabird chicks crowded together
  - b. A sharp rise in the number of seabird chicks in one year
  - c. A tool for returning seabird chicks to their rooftop nest
3. The word 'raptor' is based on an old word that means:
  - a. to cease and carry away
  - b. to see in the dark
  - c. to make a knocking sound
4. A bird's eyes fill about 50% of its head. To be comparable to a birds eyes, ours would have to be the size of a:
  - a. cantaloupe
  - b. baseball
  - c. golf ball
5. An albatross can soar for as long as 6 hours without moving its wings.
  - a. True
  - b. False

Answers provided at bottom of next page.



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“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.”

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Quiz Answers: 1) a, 2) c, 3) a, 4) b, 5) a

## **Mr. Guy Bob Haley, Piping Plover** **By Chad Wilson and Stephanie Pogachar**

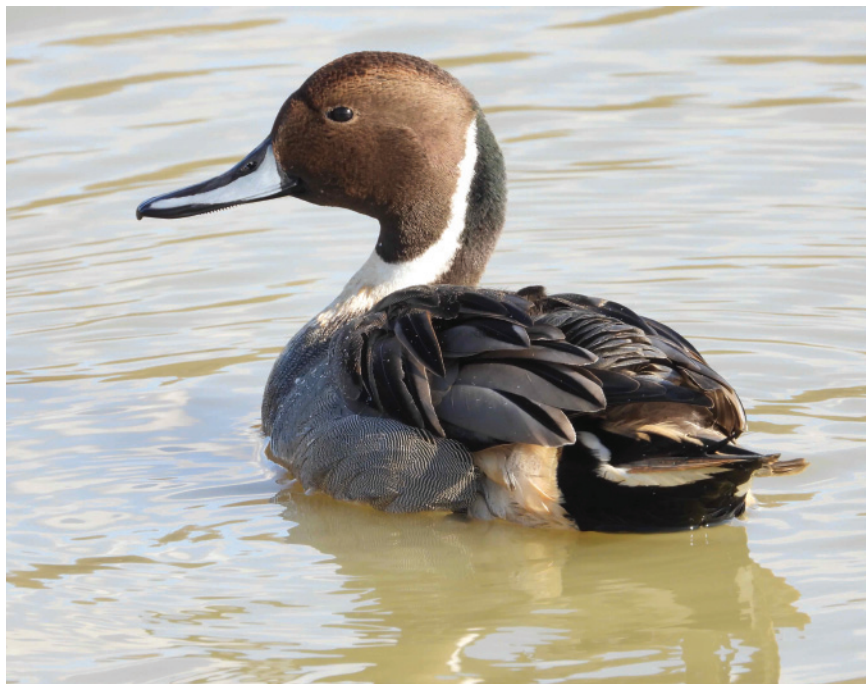


**Piping Plover at the Lorain Fishing Pier (photo by Chad Wilson)**

The Lorain Fishing Pier had a rare visitor on August 26<sup>th</sup>, namely this adorable Piping Plover! His name is Guy Bob Haley. Stephanie Pogachar found the bird and after reporting the sighting, Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team provided her with the following info:

"This plover was captive-reared this summer after the male and the rest of the chicks disappeared. From tracks it's thought that they were predated by foxes. It was 18 days old when it was brought into captivity from Silver Lake State Park, MI. This chick is known as Guy-Bob (named for its bands Green/Yellow on the lower left, and a Blue/Orange/Blue split band on the lower right...so GY-B/O/B. GY-Bob was released at Whitefish Point when it was 30 days old. It's great to hear that it has made it as far as Ohio."

The Great Lakes population of Piping Plovers are extremely rare, so this was a fantastic visitor! Good luck, Guy Bob!



NORTHERN PINTAIL, photo by Chad Wilson



## **BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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