

WINGTIPS



SANDHILL CRANE with NEWBORN COLT, photo by Chad Wilson

Or Current Residents
ADDRESS LABEL
HERE

SEPTEMBER 2023

Editors:
Chad Wilson
Marty Ackermann
Danielle Squire

Webmaster:
Rob Swindell

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Elyria, Ohio
Permit No.
50

September 2023 Program

Tuesday, September 5th at 7 p.m.

Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

“Ornithery: The Power of Birdwatching”

Holly Merker



Holly Merker in a therapy session

As far back as she can remember, Holly has found wonder, comfort, and grounding in birds and nature. As a kid, she explored streams, wetlands, beaches and forests learning about the other living organisms we share our planet with.

Holly is currently pairing her professional backgrounds in art therapy and over twenty years of professional bird guiding and environmental education, with a certificate in Wellness Counseling (Cornell Univ), coursework in Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and a Certification in Nature and Forest Therapy (ANFT) to create rich sensory experiences through nature-based wellness programs customized for her clients.

Holly is the author of two books that focus on pairing birds and personal wellness: the award-winning book *Ornithery: For Your Body, Mind, and Soul* (Crossley Books, 2021) which guides readers into deeper and more mindful experiences in nature through birds, and *The Power of Birdwatching/Die Kraft der Vogel Beobachtung* (Freya verlag, 2023, with Angelika Nelson).

Long to-do lists, digital demands, life can be busy! If we allow birds and nature to slow us down, we are practicing “self-care”. Research shows that connecting with nature actively reduces stress, depression, and anxiety, while helping build a stronger heart and immune system. Birds are gateways into deeper experiences with nature, magnifying these benefits. Through observation, we can learn not only about birds, but gain insight into our own lives while exploring our connection to the world around us. This fosters stewardship and bolsters conservation.

Within the program, we’ll delve into our connections to birds, how to maximize the wellness benefits of birding, and learn about the latest research surrounding the impact of birds on human wellbeing.

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

September 15th, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
Letha House Park (West)
5800 Richman Road
Spencer, OH 44275
Paul Sherwood to lead

2023 Summer Bird Recap Issue!
By Chad Wilson

Although Wingtips is a monthly publication, we do take the summer off (as many callers discovered when calling about their missing June Wingtips!), so there are 9 issues a year, from September through May. Since our last publication, which was written in April, there have been an incredible number of local birding highlights, so I'm going to make this issue about catching up on all the bird news that's fit to print!

Erieau, Ohio's First Ferruginous Hawk!

On May 3rd of this year a birder in Erieau, Ontario noticed a strange hawk that wasn't doing too well at the side of the road. It was a Ferruginous Hawk! She took it in for rehab, where it soon regained it's strength and was ready to be released.

Recognizing the opportunity to contribute valuable data to the study of vagrant and rehabilitated birds, Birds Canada, in collaboration with the Hawk Cliff Raptor Banders, arranged for the Ferruginous Hawk to be banded and equipped with a small cellular-GPS tag, also known as a Motus tag. There are Motus towers all over North America which get pinged when Motus-tagged birds fly over them, which is extremely useful for researchers. (Incidentally, Lorain County does not currently have a

Motus tower, but Black River Audubon is currently working on getting one installed near the Lorain Impoundment; more details to come later.)

So on May 20th, Erieau was released and began an epic journey across Ontario, then Michigan, Indiana, and in mid-June, Ohio! The trackers were not releasing the tracking data in real time for the safety of the hawk, but one day they did mention that the day before it was south of Norwalk. Armed with that information, Ben Meredyk spent the rainy morning of June 13th looking all over for it, and he actually found it in a farm field! It was so far from the road that it couldn't even be seen with the naked eye. I still have no idea how he did it. So a dozen or two birders got to see it before it took off when the rain stopped.

Nobody in Ohio has laid eyes on it since, but a few days afterward they updated the Motus map to show where it had been, and it visited us in Lorain County! Looking at the map below, you can see it flew over Wakeman, South Amherst, spent a good amount of time admiring Vermilion, and then headed southeast past Grafton and then out of the county. Wow! Although nobody laid eyes on it in Lorain County, it's amazing to know it visited us!



Erieau the Ferruginous Hawk and its travels in Lorain County (rainy photo by Chad Wilson)

The hawk then continued on to Southeast Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. It looks like they haven't updated the Motus map

since mid-June, so I'm not sure what that means. Hopefully this western U.S. bird is still sightseeing the eastern half of country!

References: <https://www.birdscanada.org/fho23>; <https://motus.org/dashboard/#e=profile&d=animals&s=356812104225477>

Sandy Ridge's First Successful Sandhill Crane Colt!



Sandy Ridge colt enjoying life, photo by Chad Wilson

There have been Sandhill Cranes at Sandy Ridge for years. There was even a sighting of a colt in 2021 but it disappeared after one day. But finally, in 2023, the pair had a colt that lived and has been captivating visitors at Sandy Ridge Reservation ever since!

It is thought that the former breeding pair at Sandy Ridge was infertile, but the infertile half of the pair was found dead in 2020, and the new pair has finally had success! The colt was probably born on April 24th this year, and has been a celebrity ever since! Go stop by Sandy Ridge and see how big it is now!

A Pair of Rare Visitors on One Day!

On April 21st this year, I was birding the Lorain Impoundment before dawn. As I was walking the loop, I noticed my first Green Heron of the year. Then I quickly saw my second, third, fourth, and fifth of the year...they were everywhere. So as I was walking around to the west side, I saw what looked like another one in a tree. I almost didn't raise my camera, but then I noticed it was different...a Tricolored Heron! Only the second record for Lorain County that I am aware of, it stayed put on the west side for about 5 minutes and then flew back into the thick phragmites, never to be seen in Ohio again. It turned up that evening at Presque Isle, Pennsylvania. So while it was a bummer that nobody else got to see it, at least it paid us a visit. I put a picture of this beauty on the back cover of this issue.

Since all the birders assumed it was still in the phragmites at the impoundment, I went back on my lunch hour to help look. As I was talking to a couple other birders at the south side of the impoundment, I noticed an odd blackbird. It was a Brewer's Blackbird, also a second record for Lorain County! Brewer's Blackbirds are rare for Ohio, and, compounding the issue, the males look almost exactly like Rusty Blackbirds, so they are difficult to identify. Luckily, this was a female, which you can tell apart from a Rusty Blackbird because it has a dark eye. This bird was nice enough to stay put for the rest of the day, and many birders were able to see it!



Brewer's Blackbird making a rare Lorain County appearance, photo by Chad Wilson

Ohio's Second-ever Heerman's Gull Found in Lorain County!



Heerman's Gull at Hot Waters, Lorain, photo by Chad Wilson

On April 29th, I was enjoying a posing Blue-winged Warbler at Miller Nature Preserve when Sarah Taylor put a message in my bird chat that simply said “Weird gull.” Then a picture came through of a Heerman's Gull! She and a couple of out-of-town birders came across it at the same time...it was in the parking lot of the Lorain Impoundment eating the leftovers of someone's Taco Bell lunch. It took off as everyone was driving there, but then Jory Teltser quickly refound it at Lorain Hot Waters. It stayed there about a half an hour before flying back to the marina at the impoundment, where it stayed pretty much until dark, delighting scores of birders!

The funny thing about this is that Ohio's first-ever Heerman's Gull was discovered by John Pogacnik and Jim Fry at Hot Waters in Lorain way back in 1980! So 43 years later, one shows up in the same place! The Heerman's Gull then disappeared for a while before Lori Brumbaugh found it at Euclid Beach on June 23rd. The

celebrity gull then stayed for about a month, alternating between Euclid beach and Edgewater beach before vanishing again. Pretty much every birder in Ohio that wanted to see it got a chance to spend time with this amazing rarity!

Lorain County's First-ever Limpkin!



A lovely Limpkin at Sandy Ridge Reservation, photo by Chad Wilson

On July 8th this year, Pamela Novak came across an odd bird wading in the creek at Kopf Reservation in Avon Lake. She posted a video of it in the Northeast Ohio Backyard Birder's Facebook group, and mayhem ensued as it was identified as a Limpkin!

I wrote an article about the Limpkin in last November's *Wingtips*, where I noted that sightings in northern states seemed to be rising, but I did not expect one to be in our very own county so soon! It stayed at Kopf reservation for a couple weeks, until it ate pretty much every slug in the creek. Then it moved over to Sandy Ridge Reservation, where Tyler McClain found it on July 23rd! It is still there as of this writing (August 4th), so go to Sandy Ridge and take

a look at this wonderful wader!

Extremely Rare Saw-Whet Owl Nesting Record in Lorain County!



Rescued Northern Saw-whet Owllet, photo by Tim Jasinski

On May 26th Lake Erie Science and Nature Center got a call about a Northern Saw-whet Owllet that needed help. The poor little guy had been mobbed by American Crows and was in pretty bad shape, but they fixed it up. The strange thing about this is that Northern Saw-whet Owls don't nest in Ohio! In fact there are only 3 nesting records ever for Ohio! The only active nest was found in Ashtabula County way back in 1931!

This owllet was found in our very own Lorain County somewhere around the Amherst area, although the exact location is not being shared for the owls' protection. While there have probably been some undetected nests in Ohio over the years, this is still a simply amazing discovery! All told, this was one of the most amazing spring/summers in Lorain birding history!

References: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/pdfs/species/NorthernSaw-whetOwl.pdf>

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.

Nesting Yellow-breasted Chats at Cromwell Park!

By Chad Wilson

Cromwell Park is a sore subject for conservationists in the area, as, despite all our efforts to save it, the City of Lorain's City Council approved the sale of it for development. It will soon become, of all things, a Kart racing track.

However, when I birded that lovely area on May 24th, I immediately heard the unmistakable vocalizations of a Yellow-breasted Chat! I tracked it down and saw it singing from the top of a small oak tree!

It turns out they are breeding there..this is the first nesting pair I've heard of in Lorain County since I started birding in 2018. Although Yellow-breasted Chats are common in many areas of Ohio, they don't seem to come north all the way to the lake very often.

The brushy habitat of the field with the fallen trees at Cromwell Park is ideal for this wonderful bird, and I urge everyone to go enjoy the amazing birding trail that goes through the park while it still is unspoiled by development!



Yellow-breasted Chat enjoying the serenity of Cromwell Park while it lasts.

Photo by Chad Wilson



TRICOLORED HERON, photo by Chad Wilson



BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

"Birding Since 1958"

P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036

Email: blackriveraudubon@gmail.com

440-541-9170

www.blackriveraudubon.org