

**Black River Audubon Society**

# **WINGTIPS**

April 2012



AMERICAN WOODCOCK/DAVE LOEBER

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## **Program**

Tuesday, April 3, 2012, 7 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

**Cheryl Harner**

Conservation Advocate

**Butterflies as Bio indicators: What can butterflies tell you?**



What are your butterflies telling you? That's right, even butterflies can tell you a lot about their environment. Cheryl Harner will teach you how to explore the idea of reading the field and interpreting a habitat and its corresponding butterfly and plant species.

"I have been interested in botany and butterflies since I was a kid," explained Harner, who also studies all forms of flora and fauna. "I am fascinated by the connections between plants and wildlife and I am determined to find ways to preserve their habitats."

Harner works for North Central Ohio Land Conservancy and is on the board for the Central Ohio Trust for Public Lands. "I am all about promoting Ohio's natural areas," she continued. "It all comes back to native plants and ultimately, that is what drives butterflies and birds."

For more in depth information about this speaker, visit:  
Weedpicker's Journal, [www.cherylharners.blogspot.com](http://www.cherylharners.blogspot.com).

**For information about membership, volunteer opportunities, and activities of Black River Audubon Society visit: [www.blackriveraudubon.org](http://www.blackriveraudubon.org) or call 440-322-0820.**

## **Field Trip**

Saturday April 21, 2012; 9:00 a.m.

**Augusta-Anne Olsen State Nature Preserve**

Parking lot located on West River Road,  
one mile north of Wakeman

## **The American Woodcock**

*(Scolopax minor)*

By **Cathy Priebe**



The American Woodcock is one of the most fascinating birds I have ever seen. However, they are not the easiest of birds to find. Inadvertently you have to stumble (not literally, of course) upon them and flush them from their leafy, camouflaged hiding place or better yet, go on an organized early spring “woodcock walk”.

And so I did. Many local metro parks offer this unique experience, and Sandy Ridge Reservation, in North Ridgeville, is where I saw my first woodcock aerial mating dance. Before I tell you about my walk, here is a little more background on our subject.

The woodcock is a very secretive, nocturnal creature and also our only woodland shorebird. It is commonly described as having a plump, oval-shaped body with an extremely long straight bill, large, gentle, and dark eyes, large head, and a short neck. In all of its plumages, the upperparts are a gray, black and buff pattern. The under parts are an orange buff. Not the prettiest of birds, but uniquely beautiful. Pete Dunne fondly calls the woodcock a “meatloaf on a stick” while others may call it a “timberdoodle”.

The species breeds from southern Manitoba and southern Newfoundland south to northeastern Texas and southern Georgia. They winter from central Oklahoma and southern Connecticut south to central Texas and southern Florida.

Damp second-growth forest, forest openings, overgrown fields and bogs are prime breeding and nesting areas for timberdoodles. Males usually reach their northern breeding grounds between mid-March and mid-April.

Earthworms are their main source of food, although they do consume insects and seeds. The nest is a scraped depression in the ground and is lined with twigs or grasses. The female, who alone incubates and raises the young, lays up to four eggs, buff with brown splotches. The nestlings hatch after 21 days and fledge within 28 days.

Displaying males perform at dawn, dusk, and all night when the moon is full. A loud “peent” call usually signals the beginning of an aerial display that has to be seen to be believed.

Back to the walk: A small group of us braved a chilly, but calm evening last April. We patiently waited and listened for the first “peent” that would direct our gaze toward the imminent courtship flight. I missed the first flight of the evening as my eyes adjusted to the hazy darkness. Luckily, the field contained more than one displaying male.

After a loud “peent”, a woodcock initially rises and flies in wide circles. Once it reaches a height of around 50 feet, the wings make a “twittering” sound as the bird flies higher. Finally, upon reaching 200 to 300 feet, the twittering lessens and he descends in a zigzag pattern to the ground. Wow, what a thrill to witness such a dance!!

According to Larry Rosche, author of *Birds of the Cleveland Region*, “No birdwatcher who has watched the antics and courtship flights of the timberdoodle has ever regretted it.” I wholeheartedly agree.

**References:** *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche; *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *The Shorebird Guide* by Michael O’Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson; *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* by Donald and Lillian Stokes.

### **Sandy Ridge Woodcock Walks 2012**

April 5                    7:30-9 pm

April 26                   7:30-9 pm

### **Sandy Ridge Snipe Hunt 2012**

March 27                   7-8:30 pm

## **A Birder’s Diary**

By **Carol Leininger**

The Isles of Shoals is an archipelago of eight islands just ten miles out from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The two main islands are Appledore (in Maine) and Star (in New Hampshire). Originally Appledore was the home of Celia Thaxter, one of New England’s popular authors (*An Island Garden*), and her cottage and garden are still maintained for visitors. Since 1973 the University of New Hampshire and Cornell University have offered courses at the Shoals Marine Laboratory on Appledore. Boats, dorms, a laboratory and conference center have replaced the hotel operated by Celia’s parents.



Appledore is a wonderful place to study the breeding behavior of herring and great black-backed gulls. Other birds nesting include double-crested cormorants, snowy egrets, black-crowned night herons, and glossy ibis. Eiders and black guillemots are also abundant.

Several years ago I spent a week there. It was in the early spring when the gulls were busy nesting and were unappreciative of human visitors walking amongst them! My fellow students and I wore raincoats and hats and carried big sticks above our heads as we toured the rookeries. Great black-backed gulls are especially feisty and will dive bomb as you walk by. Their hostility could lead to a bloody scalp!

Great black-backed and herring gulls do not tolerate each other while nesting. Both are present in enormous numbers with nests packed close together, although the two species tend to prefer slightly different locations on the island. Of course the larger great black-backed gull is the dominant species.

I remember finding feathers, wings, and dead bodies along the trail as I took an early morning walk. Obviously it was the site of a recent war zone. Because I was without my big stick for protection, I decided not to venture further on that particular trail.

The students, called barnacles, enjoy studying all types of marine life in addition to the birds. There are boats available for journeying to other islands for the enjoyment of the natural history of those islands. Just be prepared to climb over a lot of rocks everywhere.

Even at night, when the generators are turned off, it can be exciting just to visit the bathroom and flush the toilet to watch the twinkling dinoflagellates!

## Birders estimate more than fifty thousand birds during Christmas Bird Counts

	Elyria-Lorain	Wellington
Date	12/17/2011	12/28/2011
Participants	35	16
Number of species	65	64
Number of birds	45,498	7,381

In the following species list, the first number is the number of birds in the Elyria-Lorain CBC, and the second number pertains to the Wellington CBC.

snow goose 0, 1, Canada goose 1388, 3194, mute swan 2, 8, trumpeter swan 0, 7, gadwall 1, 0, American black duck 15, 3, mallard 495, 289, northern shoveler 10, 6, green-winged teal 6, 0, canvasback 1, 1, lesser scaup 4, 6, white-winged scoter 1, 0, bufflehead 14, 22, common goldeneye 1, 1, hooded merganser 17, 7, common merganser 0, 5, red-breasted merganser 26779, 17, ruddy duck 115, 357, wild turkey 18, 0, common loon 3, 0, pied-billed grebe 0, 6, horned grebe 1, 4, red-necked grebe 0, 3, double-crested cormorant 85, 4, great blue heron 8, 1, bald eagle 3, 5, northern harrier 0, 12, sharp-shinned hawk 0, 1, Cooper's hawk 6, 12, red-shouldered hawk 3, 1, red-tailed hawk 14, 0, rough-legged hawk 0, 2, American kestrel 7, 15, peregrine falcon 1, 0, American coot 0, 1, sandhill crane 2, 0, purple sandpiper 1, 0, Bonaparte's gull 83, 0, ring-billed gull 12623, 88, herring gull 49, 1, Iceland gull 1, 0, lesser black-backed gull 2, 0, rock pigeon 87, 97, mourning dove 158, 175, great horned owl 2, 0, barred owl 0, 1, long-eared owl 1, 0, short-eared owl 1, 0, belted kingfisher 4, 1, red-bellied woodpecker 41, 28, downy woodpecker 63, 36, hairy woodpecker 12, 4, northern flicker 8, 8, blue jay 108, 91, American crow 32 110, horned lark 22, 337, black-capped chickadee 161, 94, tufted titmouse 111, 32, red-breasted nuthatch 0, 3, white-breasted nuthatch 56, 25, brown creeper 3, 1, Carolina wren 4, 1, golden-crowned kinglet 4, 0, eastern bluebird 60, 30, American robin 13, 10, European starling 1641, 1381, yellow-rumped warbler 3, 13, eastern towhee 0, 1, American tree sparrow 129, 212, field sparrow 1, 0, song sparrow 27, 28, swamp sparrow 2, 2, white-throated sparrow 6, 3, white-crowned sparrow 0, 1, dark-eyed junco 295, 170, northern cardinal 158, 128, purple finch 2, 0, house finch 0, 36, pine siskin 0, 9, American goldfinch 84, 52, house sparrow 305, 182.

## Oberlin Teacher Awarded Scholarship

By **Dick Lee**

The Black River Audubon Society (BRAS) is pleased to announce Oberlin High School teacher, Donna Parrish, as the 2012 recipient of the Hog Island Scholarship.

Parrish, who teaches biology and environmental education, will be attending the program "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" in July. "I am applying for this scholarship so I can learn new and interesting ways to teach my kids about nature," Parrish wrote in her application letter. She also explained that kids need to be more aware of their natural surroundings, and this program is an excellent opportunity for her and her students.



Hog Island, which is off the coast of Maine, offers a variety of habitats and has been a beacon of environmental education since it was established 75 years ago. The camp boasts the late Roger Tory Peterson as one of its past directors.

Campers receive instruction from some of the nation's leading naturalists and educators, such as Kenn Kaufman, Stephen Kress and Scott Weidensaul. The rustic setting is designed to get participants "back to

nature” so they can truly experience the world around them. Parrish will walk some of the same trails as noted author, Rachel Carson, who found inspiration there for many of her books.

Black River Audubon has sent 29 educators to Audubon camps in the last 25 years. As BRAS educational chair, I can confidently state that Donna will return with new teaching skills and knowledge to pass on to the young people of our community. Participants such as Donna help fulfill the mission of our Audubon chapter, which is to promote conservation and restoration of our ecosystems and wildlife through education.

## Summer Azure Butterfly

(*Celastrina neglecta*)

By **Debbie Mohr**



Summer azures are very common butterflies of summer and can be spotted in all 88 counties of Ohio and throughout the eastern U.S. and southeastern Canada. Azure butterflies can be found in gardens, along roads and woodland trail, woodland edges and mud puddles. The beautiful light blue color makes them the palest of the azure butterflies. An observer can enjoy watching summer azures flutter up and down among the plants as they sip clover nectar.

At one time all of the azure butterflies were regarded as one species. Subsequently the azures have been split into nine different species.

The summer azures usually have several broods and can be seen frequently in May, June, August, and September. They are among the smallest butterflies in North America with an average wingspan of 0.80-1.25". Both male and female are pale blue with an extensive dusting of white scales. The upper side of the male is powdery blue, often with an ill-defined white patch on its hindwings. The female has whiter scaling on both forewings and hindwings. The underside of a hindwing is pale gray or white with black dots and a submarginal dark, zigzag line.

Eggs are whitish green, laid singly on flower buds of the host plants. The larvae feed on various flowers of trees and shrubs, holly, sumac and especially wingstem. As caterpillars, they have a win-win relationship with ants. While the caterpillars supply the ants with a sweet sugary substance from their abdomens, the ants protect the caterpillars from possible predators.

**References:** *Butterflies of Ohio Field Guide* by Jaret C. Daniels; *Butterflies through Binoculars, A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Eastern North America* by Jeffrey Glassberg; *Butterflies & Skippers of Ohio Field Guide* by Division of Wildlife.

**Internet:** [http://dnr.state.oh.us/Home/species\\_a\\_to\\_z/SpeciesGuideIndex/summerazure/tabid/6775/default.aspx](http://dnr.state.oh.us/Home/species_a_to_z/SpeciesGuideIndex/summerazure/tabid/6775/default.aspx)

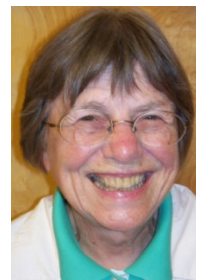
## Birding-by-Tram scheduled at Sandy Ridge



By **Harriet Alger**

In response to last year's increased requests for reservations, Black River Audubon and Lorain County Metro Parks are offering birding-by-tram every Thursday morning in May and June this year. Birding-by-tram is provided for experienced and beginning birders unable to walk the trail.

Because the tram stops when birds are seen or heard, trips take about two hours. Riders able to



walk can get out at each stop to use binoculars and scopes. Some riders bird while seated in the tram. Volunteer birders may walk beside the tram to help with bird location and identification.

The birding trips begin at 9a.m. Call Naturalist Tim Fairweather at 440-327-3626 for reservations. Seating is limited.



PURPLE MARTINS AT LAKESIDE/HARRIET ALGER

## **Purple Martin Symposium to be held at Lakeview Park on June 30**

By **Harriet Alger**

Lorain County Metro Parks and Black River Audubon will celebrate the success of the Purple Martin Colony established on the beach in Lakeview Park last year with a Purple Martin Symposium on June 30. The event will provide an opportunity to see the martins that have returned from their winter habitat in Brazil. Perhaps this year's fledglings can be seen, also.

The Symposium will feature speakers from the Amish community and the international Purple Martin Conservation Association.

Save the date and join the celebration at Lakeview Park on June 30!

## **OUTSTANDING SPEAKER SERIES**

Saturday, April 21, 2:30pm

Carlisle Visitor Center

The Black River Audubon Society and Lorain County Metro Parks are proud to sponsor another *Outstanding Speaker*, **Dr. Bridget Stutchbury** of York University. The lecture is based on her 2010 book *The Private Lives of Birds*.

## **History of Indian Hollow quarry industry available**

The newly published second edition of *The Lost Quarry Industry of Indian Hollow and Willow Park-Grafton, Ohio* by Chris Smith and Paul Justy is on sale for twenty dollars. Contact Paul Justy at 440-926-2478 or [pkjusty@frontier.com](mailto:pkjusty@frontier.com).





SUMMER AZURE  
DIANE DEVEREAUX