

WINGTIPS



SCARLET TANAGER photo by Debbie Parker

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APRIL 2019

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April 2019 Program
Tuesday, April 2, 7 pm
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

Kurt Sarringhaus and Steve Chavez
“Southern Africa 2017”



Leopard (Photo by Marcia Sarringhaus in Kruger National Park South Africa)

Kurt and Steve will take you vicariously through a safari to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana from September of 2017. Kurt will present a safari overview and photos of the animals, while Steve will present on African bird life.

Kurt is a native of Middletown, Ohio. He received his undergraduate degree from Ohio University in 1973 and Law Degree from Ohio State University in 1976. He practices law in Oberlin. He has been in love with Africa since he was little and became a lawyer when he found out he could not be Tarzan!

Kurt is married to wife, Marcia. They have 3 daughters: Lauren, Marisa, and Meredith. They also have 2 grandchildren.

Steve is a lifelong resident of Lorain County. Steve and his wife, Sherri, reside in Oberlin and are both members of Black River Audubon Society. Steve received his undergraduate degree from Kent State University, his Law Degree from the University of Akron and his LL.M. from the University of Florida. The 2017 trip was Steve's first venture to Africa but hopefully not his last.

April Field Trip

Saturday, April 20, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

Oak Openings

Meet at Oak Openings Lodge
5440 Wilkins Rd., Whitehouse, Ohio
Tammy Martin to lead

February 2019 Field Trip Report

By Sally Fox

Three of us met at the Castalia pond on a cold Saturday morning. Frequently when I've visited the pond in the winter there is a thick mist blanketing the water, making it difficult to see the waterfowl. That was not the case this day.

We had excellent views of American wigeon, Canada goose, redhead, canvasback, northern shoveler, lesser scaup, bufflehead, gadwall, and mallard. Moving on from there, we drove to Bayview catching Eurasian collared dove and mourning dove on the way with the resident wild turkeys in the back yards of Bayview.

A small woodlot along the way to Medusa Marsh had northern cardinal, blue jay, red-bellied woodpecker, house sparrow, and a golden-crowned kinglet vibrantly flaring its crown. Medusa Marsh, surprisingly, had several areas of open water where we saw great blue heron, trumpeter swan, common goldeneye, American black duck and bald eagle.

At Cold Creek and Mills Creek we added belted kingfisher, double-crested cormorant, ring-billed gull, and black-crowned night heron. Continuing through Sandusky, we stopped at the Cedar Point Causeway to see ruddy duck, pied-billed grebe and great black-backed gull.

We took a quick look at the feeders at Old Woman Creek to see downy woodpecker, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and European starling.

Our final stop of the day was at Sherod Park in Vermilion. Hundreds, if not thousands, of red-breasted mergansers and common mergansers were spread in the distance along with masses of gulls. So, our circle route gave us a nice mix of winter birds with a total of 35 species.

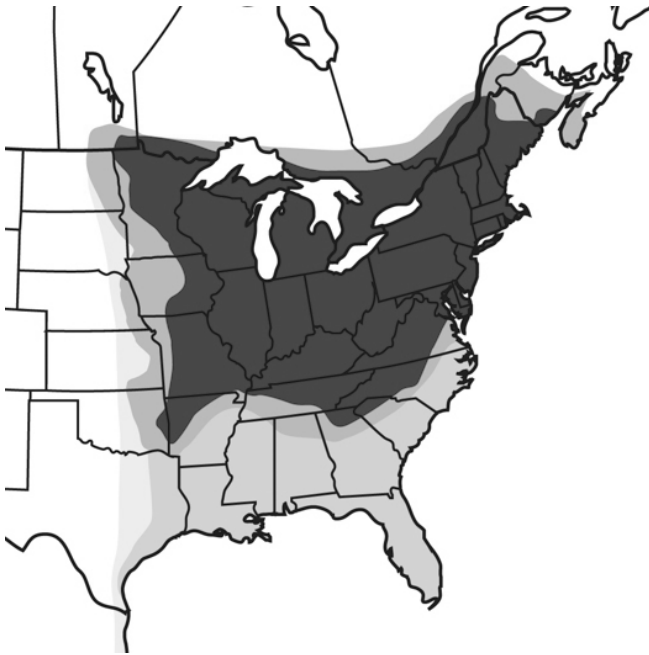
SCARLET TANAGER

Piranga olivacea

By **Barbara Baudot**

A flash of crimson red and black feathers flitted in and among berry brambles in our yard bordering several acres of tall oak and pine woods. It never rested long enough for me to catch more than a fleeting glimpse of one of nature's most striking birds. But it was long enough to awaken my curiosity and so I consulted bird guides and then more extensive studies of scarlet tanagers. And, so I learned that:

This harbinger of spring in Ohio, barely weighing an ounce, is a long-distance neotropical migrant that winters mostly in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, and travels via Mexico and Central America to its breeding destinations in the canopies of deciduous forests and expansive woodlands in the northeastern corner of the US and southern Canada.



Scarlet tanager breeding ranges. Darkest shading is most common. (From Audubon.org, North American Bird Guide.)

The male bird is among the most colorful and striking of our breeding birds. But he is only brilliantly crimson during the breeding season. The female like others in the cardinalidea family is much duller. She has yellow feathers on her undersides and olive-green back feathers, with darker shades on her wings. In fall, males trade red feathers for similar yellow-green feather dress and join other neo-tropical migrant species as they take off for South America.

The scarlet tanager is monogamous and aggressively territorial throughout its range. Seldom will one find high densities of scarlet tanagers. Early in the breeding season when establishing its territory, it sings incessantly from perches high in the trees. Its song is distinctive and often described as a hoarser version of a robin's call. Hidden in upper reaches of the forest, it is their chirping rather than their plumage that reveals their presence.

The scarlet tanager is largely insectivorous during the breeding season, foraging on the larvae of Lepidoptera and a variety of adult insects. But it will also eat fruit and berries and sometimes seeds. One can try to attract these birds by offering them jelly, meal worms, and pieces of orange.

Scarlet tanagers, like most migrants, have a tough life. Threats to their existence are many. Cold and wet weather can kill scarlet tanagers. Collision with TV and radio towers, windows of buildings and with cars are not infrequent on their migratory route. Development projects and expansion of industrial agriculture fragment their forest habitats leaving these birds vulnerable to high rates of predation and brood parasitism. Attacks by jays, grackles, and crows cause many nests on smaller forest plots to fail. Small mammals and snakes rob their nests. Owls and merlins take their toll. Brood parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds, occurs when the cowbird lays an egg in a tanager nest. The cowbird hatchling competes with tanager hatchlings for food and survival. Scarlet tanagers evolved to breed in the forest interior are helpless victims to brood parasitism.

Hiding their twig nests on the forks of higher horizontal branches in the deep forest interior offers the best protection to

nesting pairs of scarlet tanagers. And, while habitat fragmentation is causing populations of scarlet tanagers to decline significantly in some areas, on a global scale, scarlet tanagers are still a plentiful species. Thus, the IUCN classifies them as being of least concern.

References: “Scarlet tanager” in Wikipedia; “Cardinalidea” in Audubon Birds of America; neotropical.birds.cornell.edu; allaboutbirds.org/guide/Scarlet Tanager/overview; ebird.org/pa/news/focus-on-the-scarlet-tanager. Photo in Wikipedia borrowed from Mowbray, T.B., 1999, “Scarlet Tanager” version 2.0 in The Birds of North America (A.F. Poole and F.B. Gill, Editors). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. Original color placed in B&W.,

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

Protonotaria citrea

By **Cathy Priebe**

“The Golden Swamp Warbler” is one of the easiest warblers to identify, even if it is seen outside of its natural habitat, according to Pete Dunne, author and bird expert. It’s glowing yellow head and body, piercing black eyes, and blue/gray wings make this bird unmistakable.

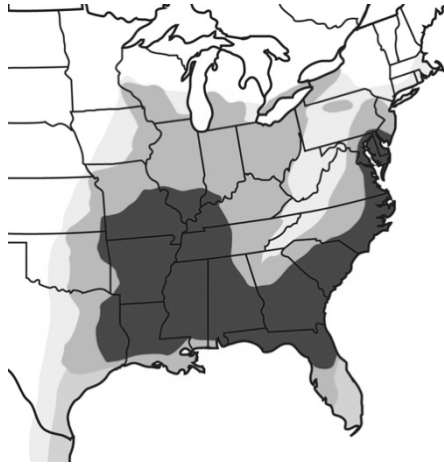
The prothonotary warbler breeds in Ohio and can be found in the lower vegetation near or above slow-moving water or loudly calling in the tree tops. It is a cavity nester, generally preferring old woodpecker nests or holes in dead trees, decaying stumps, or man-made nest boxes. Their nest can be as high as 10 feet above ground to near water level. The female lays 4 to 6 beige- brown spotted eggs and incubates for 2 weeks.

Due to the decline in wetland habitat in Ohio (and across the US), the prothonotary is listed as a near endangered bird according to the last OBBA survey. Prothonotary nest boxes have been strategically placed to encourage birds to breed in suitable areas along swampy or sluggish water throughout Ohio, including Sandy Ridge Reservation in North Ridgeville.

According to Tim Fairweather, head naturalist, these warblers have used the boxes in past years. “We had a pair I saw flying in the woods in 2018 but they did not use the boxes,” Fairweather pointed out. “They probably used a tree cavity.” Many of these

“trails” are proving to be successful and will hopefully help pull this bird’s status off of the “species of concern” list.

Another reliable place to see this warbler is Magee Marsh in Ottawa County, Ohio. Many pairs nest along or near the boardwalk each season and are very easy to view at the start of migration, especially if the trees have not yet leafed out.



Prothonotary warbler breeding ranges. Darker shading is common breeding, lighter shading is uncommon. (From Audubon.org, North American Bird Guide.)

Arriving on territory near the middle of March or early April, the male sets up his nest, usually using the same one from last season, if available, and waits for the female to inspect the handiwork. Their call is a bright, cheery “swee, swee, swee, swee” that is easy to recognize once you are familiar with it.

Every spring, we make a point of seeing this spectacular bird and it is always a thrill, no matter how many we are lucky to observe during our hike.

Here are some additional facts about the prothonotary warbler:

- It is one of only two wood warblers that are cavity nesters. The western Lucy’s warbler is also a cavity nester.
- Its foraging and movement behavior have been compared to a black and white warbler or a nuthatch.
- It cohabits with wood ducks, yellow-throated warblers, great crested flycatchers and Louisiana water thrushes.

- The prothonotary is often described as robust and portly, with a large wedge-shaped head and short, wide tail.
- The entire population leaves the US and Canada in early fall and heads to Central and South America for the winter.

Make sure you put this warbler on your list this spring, it's like seeing a golden ray of sunshine and will surely brighten your day!!

References: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion*, by Pete Dunne.

BRAS Awarded Another National Audubon Burke Plants for Birds Grant!

For the second consecutive year, Black River Audubon Society (BRAS) has been awarded a grant from National Audubon Society (NAS) to carry out a restoration project.

This year, BRAS will collaborate with Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) in a tree and shrub planting project in a prairie restoration field on Oberlin's Hamilton Street. The land conservancy owns 30 acres of former farm field and an adjoining 30 acres of woods, historically known as the Oberlin Great South Woods.

The two local conservation groups will partner in the project with a host of Oberlin organizations including: Oberlin College, Oberlin High School, Oberlin African-American Genealogy & History Group, Zion Community Development Corporation, Oberlin Heritage Center, and Oberlin Rotary.

The field has historical significance for the City of Oberlin as the former Copeland family farm. John Copeland, a former slave, and his wife Delilah came to Oberlin with their family prior to the Civil War and eventually bought the farm in 1862. Their son, John Anthony Copeland, took part in the 1858 Oberlin-Wellington rescue of an escaped slave. Later, he joined John Brown's raiders at Harper's Ferry, was captured, and executed, two weeks after Brown himself. The two events inflamed passions, North and South; some say leading to the Civil War in 1861.

The grant proposal, planned and written by BRAS board members Andy Lance and Kate Pilacky, was one of 20 that National Audubon chose to fund for 2019. NAS received a total of 61 proposals from 30 states. The \$2,900 grant will pay for plants and materials for a bird and pollinator garden featuring native trees, shrubs, and plants that may

have played a role in the lives of enslaved people escaping north for their freedom. A cherry tree will be planted in memory of the Copeland farm orchard on the land.

BRAS received a \$2,500 grant from the same NAS program last year. That money paid for trees and shrubs at Elyria's Black River Audubon Park on West Bridge Street and other sites. The project, in collaboration with the City of Elyria, Elyria Sunrise Rotary, and Elyria High School, was publicized widely on National Audubon's website.

BRAS Hog Island Scholarship Recipient

Liz McQuaid, Black River Audubon Society's 2019 Hog Island Scholarship recipient, is the latest in a long line of truly worthy birders who have been recognized for their services to environmental education in the past and into the future.

A birder for at least thirty years, Liz is currently a co-advisor with the Northeast Chapter of Ohio Young Birders (OYB) and volunteers regularly at Black Swamp Bird Observatory at Magee Marsh, despite living in Cleveland.

In her role with OYB, she coordinates field experiences, assists with the planning, attends the field events and provides mentoring for the students.

Liz will be attending Hog Island's "*Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week*" camp. She believes the week-long experience off the coast of Maine should add to her skills and give her "insights into how better to serve (OYB) members."

A warning from nine centuries ago, whether you are religious or not.

The high, the low, all of creation,
God gives to humankind to use.
If this privilege is misused,
God's justice permits creation to punish humanity.

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN, twelfth century
Benedictine nun considered by some to be the first
German student of natural history
(from *Earth Prayers from Around the World*, by
Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon)

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

Name _____

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**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
(Includes membership in Black River Audubon
and subscriptions to WINGTIPS and AUDUBON
magazine: \$20/year)**

Name _____

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Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8

**Send your check to: National Audubon Society,
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attention: Chance Mueleck**

Spring Is Coming to Sandy Ridge



Photo by Jim Jablonski

Sandy Ridge Reservation has announced its schedule of spring birding walks and related events.

Wednesday Morning Birding

Led by naturalist Tim Fairweather, the weekly bird walks are held every Wednesday, April 3rd through May 29th, from 7:30 to 10 a.m. Coffee, snacks, and bird listing follow in the Perry F. Johnson Wetland Center.

Birding by Tram

For those unable to walk the trail, tram rides will take place May 7, 14, 21, 28 from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Must preregister to reserve a seat.

Big Birding Weekend

May 11th and 12th, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Activities and displays inside the Wetland Center. Birding hikes are held both days 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

The Big Sit occurs on the trail's Observation Mound on May 11th, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations go to Sandy Ridge programming.



PROTHONOTARY WARBLER photo by Dave Priebe

BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

"Birding Since 1958"

P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036

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