

WINGTIPS



WILSON'S WARBLER photo by Arno Poerner, Oscoda, Michigan

MARCH 2019

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March 2019 Program
Tuesday, March 5, 7 pm
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

Tom Bartlett
“Bird Banding: A Tool for Studying Ohio’s Birds”



Tom Bartlett enjoying his work.

The Black River Audubon Society welcomes Master Bird Bander Tom Bartlett and his program **Bird Banding: A Tool for Studying Ohio’s Birds** on March 5, 7 pm, at the Carlisle Reservation Center, 12882 Nickle Plate Diagonal Road, LaGrange. According to Bartlett, “bird banding is a tool that has been used for over 100 years to study birds worldwide.”

The bird-banding process includes catching birds in nets placed strategically in their flight paths. Birds are carefully removed from the nets, placed in bags and carried back to the banding station.

It is said that John James Audubon once captured an eastern phoebe and tied a piece of thread to its leg. The following spring he noted the same phoebe came back to the same spot because it still had the thread on its leg. Bartlett’s talk covers how modern bird banding is done and shows some of the results.

Upcoming Field Trip

Hurdle Waterfall Park/Sprinkle Serenity

Saturday, March 16, 2019, 8:30 a.m.

297 Township Rd. 581, Sullivan Township, Ashland County
Paul Sherwood to lead.

WILSON'S WARBLER

Wilsonia pusilla

By **Cathy Priebe**

If you have been following my articles, you know that I absolutely love warblers. Knowing their songs, behavior, and proper habitat are all important keys to finding them during spring migration. All these hints, and more, are necessary, especially when trying to locate a Wilson's warbler.

My husband Dave and I had the good fortune of having someone point out our first one at Magee Marsh. But, after that encounter, finding this diminutive, hyperactive bird was nearly impossible for us, even at Magee. There was often said to be one near the end of the boardwalk trail along the water and shrubby plants that led to the parking lot. And, of course, a nice birder would show us where to look. However, we left the park many times in the early years without again seeing the dapper little yellow bird with the black cap. It should not be that difficult to find one, we always thought. It's not like we were searching for a Kirtland's warbler!

The Wilson's warbler is one of the smallest warblers and has been noted as one of the most active, flitting from branch to branch, fly catching, and constantly flicking its wings and tail. Sitting still is not one of its attributes, so knowing this behavior is helpful when trying to identify him. Their preferred habitat during migration and in their Northern boreal breeding areas is near slow moving water, brush and small trees.

The male Wilson's is bright yellow underneath and olive green above. His pink legs and sporty black cap make him easy to identify. The female is similarly colored but is less bright and has a faint cap. The Wilson's also has a very recognizable song, once you learn it.

Knowing warbler songs is ALWAYS helpful when your subject is either hiding, moving too fast or foraging too high in the canopy.

Another reason the Wilson's is difficult to find, even during the height of migration, is that they are "uncommon migrants" in our area. According to Jim McCormac, author of **Birds of Ohio**, "Even a good day might only yield a handful, or possibly a dozen, even along Lake Erie." It is also possible that we may totally miss them as they are very late migrants, passing through as late as early June. Most warbler fanatics are done before the end of May, so there are fewer individuals looking for them. This piece of information was unknown to me before this writing, so I am hoping to be successful in finding one this spring!



Wilson's warbler range map. (Audubon.org)

Even though we now have more technology and a better understanding of warblers and their behaviors, it is still not unusual to miss seeing a Wilson's warbler during migration. We have been lucky to spot them at Old Woman Creek in Huron on the trail to the left of the interpretative center. There was also one surprising visitor in our own backyard!!

Better weather and greener landscapes are just around the corner, so refresh your skills this spring and remember that warblers can be anywhere during migration, even in your backyard! Hope to see you on the trails!!!

References: *Warblers of Ontario* by Chris Earley; *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac.

COMMON and SANDHILL CRANES

Grus grus and Antigone canadensis

By **Barbara Baudot**

In January, not far from the upper banks of the Loire River, hundreds of common cranes graze on fields of stubble. A small flock of monogamous couples, some with their latest progeny, and a group of unattached birds move about. Typically, parents stroll side by side, adolescents following closely. Walking gracefully but warily, they poke their beaks in the mucky earth seeking kernels of corn, worms, small rodents, or slugs; and from surrounding hedges they snatch snails, old fruits and berries. They are very shy, so the slightest human effort to approach them is met by rapid takeoffs that are beautiful to witness.

Young cranes remain with both nurturing parents through one winter and spring migration. Then they join other unattached adolescents. Cranes are perpetually monogamous unless the partner dies or they fail to produce a young crane. Initial bonding begins between ages 3 and 7.

Cranes are known for their graceful dancing at any season of the year. A pair of cranes will even stop grazing and spontaneously engage in dance. Wings outstretched, they leap, swoop, then circle in the air; they bob their heads and repeatedly bow. Such displays accompany courtship, initiate copulation, and even ward off enemies. They can be a form of posturing or just exercise.

At evening, small flocks of common cranes gather in larger groups of fifty or more and fly in V-formation to beaches bordering nearby wetlands. Their loud calls communicate flight intentions.

In sand or shallow water, they often sleep standing on one leg, the other held close to their abdomens with their heads and necks tucked back on their shoulders. At dawn they return to feeding grounds.

In late February, thousands of cranes unite with others in staging areas readying to take off for their northern breeding grounds. The Lac de Der in northeast France is one of their principal centers.

Likewise, nearly a million greater and lesser sandhill cranes amass on the Platte River in Nebraska and other staging areas in the United States before heading to the northern reaches of their Canadian and northern U.S. ranges. The behavior patterns of both species are very similar.

After taking off, huge flocks of long-legged, long-necked, heavy bodied cranes circle skyward as they rise up on thermals to altitudes upward to 33,000 feet. Then they glide in organized formations day and night, elegantly beating their great wide wings when more speed is needed to cover great distances across seas, deserts, even the highest mountains.

Common cranes cover the widest geographic range. Breeding across the northern palearctic from Scandinavia through Siberia, they winter in southern Europe, central and east Asia, and Africa.

Both species breed where vegetation grows in standing water, constructing mounds of grasses and water plants in marshes bordering open wetlands. They usually lay two eggs.

Cranes are monomorphic, save that males tend to be taller. Sandhills and common cranes are cloaked in gray feathers and have red crowns of varying size. Both species camouflage themselves by daubing their feathers with mud. Often pictures of sandhills feature the rusty brownish result.

Many crane legends, myths, and symbols emerging over centuries extol the beauty, behavior, stature, intelligence and longevity of both species. Cave dwellers painted them. Egyptians sacrificed them to gods. The Irish and British kept them as pets. Cranes are symbols of happiness, fidelity and longevity in Japan, China, other East Asian countries and Siberia. Cranes carry small birds on their backs and taxi dead human souls to paradise. Fidelity is honored by embroidered cranes on Japanese traditional wedding attire. Crane dances are mimicked in native American costumes and dances.

Over the last century cranes have symbolized peace and the preservation of nature. *"The Cranes are Flying,"* the famous Russian film, marking the end of the Stalinist period, is a strong anti-war statement captured in flights of majestic cranes symbolizing hope for skies filled with natural beauty rather than birds of war.

The most poignant symbolic story of cranes emerged from the ashes of World War II. It tells of a young Japanese girl stricken with

leukemia as a direct effect of the bombing of Hiroshima. The girl resolved to fold a thousand paper cranes as the way to recovery. She was unable to finish, but her origami project was adopted and is pursued annually by Japanese school children. The thousand cranes symbolize hope for peace.

References: USGS; USFW.gov; Wikipedia; IUCN; USDA; All About Birds, Cornell Lab; Paul A. Johnsgard, *Cranes in Myth and Legend*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 70-74.

On Border Walls and Birds

By **Jim Jablonski**

A 2,000-mile border wall between the U.S. and Mexico will have enormous repercussions upon wildlife and birds as well as humans, according to a recent statement of the National Audubon Society.

Construction of the federal administration’s proposed wall is set to begin. Among threatened locations are the National Butterfly Sanctuary and the Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. The latter is part of the World Birding Center and hosts over 500 bird species, according to the NAS.



Map of U.S.-Mexico Border (from Wikimedia Commons).

In fragmenting a number of public parks, wildlife refuges, wetlands and other public lands, the wall, among other things, would:

- Destroy or fragment important bird habitat for over 500 species of birds.
- Result in weakening environmental protections such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Endangered Species Act.
- Create or worsen environmental risks like flooding, threatening birds as well as people.
- Diminish outdoor recreation and ecotourism opportunities.

Reference: “National Audubon Society Opposes Loss of Important Bird Habitat Because of Border Wall.”

Elyria/Lorain Christmas Bird Count 2018

Many thanks to the 43 people who took part in this year’s Elyria/Lorain CBC on December 15. It was a gray day but fine for birding without precipitation while the temperature rose into the low 40s. Participants covered 45 miles on foot and 251 miles by car, finding 61 species and 10,823 individual birds. Both numbers are down notably from recent years. A likely factor was that Lake Erie had little ice cover so birds that usually occur in large numbers were not near the shore. For example, red-breasted mergansers dropped from 5509 last year to only 10!

The species seen and the number of each are: Canada goose 2150, mallard 354, American black duck 32, northern pintail 1, blue-winged teal 4, greater scaup 1, bufflehead 2, common goldeneye 82, red-breasted merganser 10, common merganser 1, double-crested cormorant 1, horned grebe 1, Bonaparte’s gull 9, ring-billed gull 4334, herring gull 94, great black-backed gull 7, great blue heron 10, bald eagle 7, northern harrier 2, Cooper’s hawk 5, sharp-shinned hawk 2, red-shouldered hawk 7, red-tailed hawk 24, rough-legged hawk 1, American kestrel 6, short-eared owl 1, rock pigeon 90, mourning dove 105, belted kingfisher 7, red-headed woodpecker 3, red-bellied woodpecker 89, downy woodpecker 69, hairy woodpecker 9, pileated woodpecker 10, northern flicker 14, blue jay 262, American crow 18, northern mockingbird 1, eastern bluebird 70, American robin 107, cedar waxwing 161, black-capped chickadee 126, tufted titmouse 56, white-breasted nuthatch 74, red-breasted nuthatch 19, brown creeper 8, Carolina wren 25, golden-crowned kinglet 4, yellow-rumped warbler 5, dark-eyed junco 131, American tree sparrow 43, song sparrow 14, swamp sparrow 1, white-throated sparrow 38, white-crowned sparrow 3, house sparrow 459, house finch 98, common redpoll 1, American goldfinch 103, northern cardinal 115, European starling 1257.

Wellington Area Christmas Bird Count 2018

December 29th proved to be a productive day for the Wellington Christmas Bird Count with a total of 46 species spotted, up from 33 last year. Individual birds increased to 2,597.

Here are the species and their totals: Canada goose 375, mallard 6, common goldeneye 1, red-breasted merganser 1, wild turkey 6, rock pigeon 114, mourning dove 129, ring-billed gull 18, great blue heron 1, northern harrier 3, Cooper's hawk 2, bald eagle 5, red-shouldered hawk 2, red-tailed hawk 17, great horned owl 1, barred owl 3, belted kingfisher 1, red-bellied woodpecker 13, downy woodpecker 19, hairy woodpecker 1, northern flicker 4, American kestrel 19, peregrine falcon 1, blue jay 57, American crow 42, horned lark 6, black-capped chickadee 71, tufted titmouse 22, red-breasted nuthatch 41, white-breasted nuthatch 15, brown creeper 2, Carolina wren 3, eastern bluebird 16, American robin 104, gray catbird 1, European starling 1,141, cedar waxwing 46, house finch 11, American goldfinch 26, American tree sparrow 6, dark-eyed junco 25, white-throated sparrow 1, song sparrow 2, common yellowthroat 1, northern cardinal 35, house sparrow 181.

January 19 Field Trip Lorain Harbor to Avon Lake

With an impending blizzard forecast for late morning, nine people gathered at the Lorain harbor. There was a brisk wind blowing off the lake that made our eyes water and our glasses fog up. The harbor had the usual huge flock of gulls to scan through and we found ring-billed gull, herring gull, great black-backed gull, lesser black-backed gull, common merganser, and mallard. From there we went to the hot waters and added red-breasted merganser, American coot, common goldeneye, canvasback, redhead, bufflehead, Canada goose and ring-necked duck.

We continued on to the Avon Lake Power Plant, but by then the wind really started whipping and it began to snow. The only water fowl in sight was a large flock of mallards riding the waves east of the pier. So, we only had 14 species for the day, but it was time to head home and hunker down.

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(but including Wingtips) is \$15/Year**

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For more information on programs, volunteering or becoming a member, please go to www.blackriveraudubon.org or call 440-365-6465. Don't forget to LIKE us on Facebook.

“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)

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Send your check to: National Audubon Society,
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New York, NY 10014

Attention: Chance Mueleck

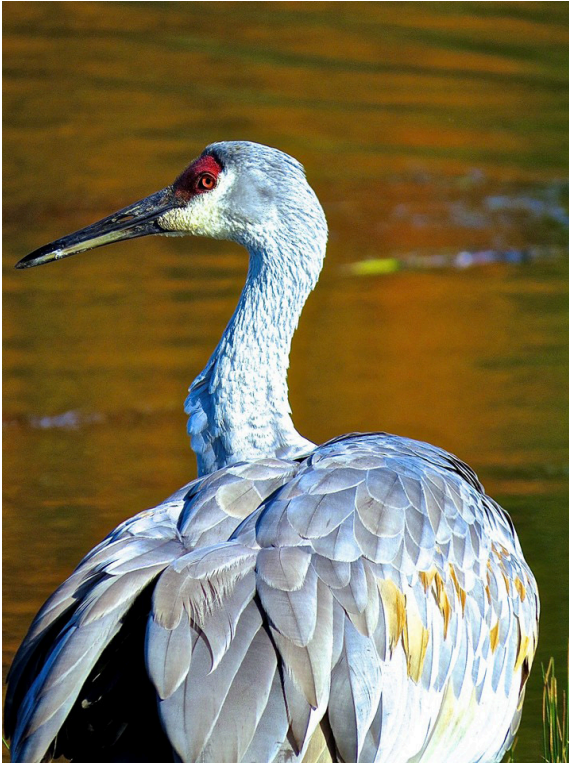


Common or “Eurasian” Crane

Photo by Barbara Baudot

The common crane has a wide range extending across the Eurasian landmass from Scandinavia to Eastern Siberia. Although declining in some areas, it is one of only four crane species that is not currently listed as “threatened,” a distinction it shares with its American cousin, the sandhill crane.

You can read about both species in Barbara Baudot’s article in this month’s Wingtips.



SANDHILL CRANE photo by Jeanne Buttle Williams, Elyria, Ohio

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