

# WINGTIPS



FEMALE RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD photo by Dave Priebe

MAY 2018

**Editors:**  
Jim Jablonski, Marty  
Ackermann, Tammy  
Martin, Cathy Priebe  
**Webmistress:**  
Arlene Lengyel

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## **May 2018 Program**

Tuesday, May 1, 2018, 7 p.m.  
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

### **Andy Jones Migration All Around Us: How Birds Navigate the Americas**



The Black River Audubon Society is pleased to present Dr. Andy Jones and his program *“Migration all Around Us: How Birds Navigate the Americas”* on May 1, 2018 at 7 pm at the Carlisle Reservation Center, 12882 Nickle Plate Diagonal Road.

For some five billion individual birds, a trip to Central or South America from North America is an essential and stunning annual accomplishment. Why do they make this grueling trip? How do they find their way to wintering grounds they have never seen before? Dr. Jones explains how ornithologists study the phenomenon.

Dr. Andy Jones, who is the Curator of Ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, is an expert on birds and their evolutionary history. He specializes in comparative phylogeography, the field that compares the geographic patterns of genetic variation among populations of a species with those of other species occupying the same habitat.

## **May 2018 Field Trip**

### **Magee Marsh**

Saturday May 5, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at west end of boardwalk.

## **Black River Audubon Park Tree Planting Celebration**

### **West Bridge Street, Elyria**

**Lorain County Pride Day, May 19, 2018**

Black River Audubon Society has been awarded a National Audubon Burke Trees for Birds grant. The Society will celebrate that good news by planting a wide variety of native trees at the City of Elyria's Black River Audubon Park and other local venues beginning at 9 a.m. on May 19<sup>th</sup>, Lorain County and Elyria Pride Day! National Audubon Society has named 2018 as the Year of the Bird and has funded the BRAS grant to plant trees and plants to improve bird habitat.

Together with Elyria Sunshine Rotary members, Elyria High School honors students, Key Club students and others, the local Audubon group will plant a dozen trees at the park on West Bridge Street next to the one-way bridge over the Black River. The Western Reserve Land Conservancy is providing financial help with the shipping cost of the trees. Black River Audubon founder and benefactor Jack Smith donated the land to the City of Elyria in the name of the local Audubon society. 2018 is the 60-year anniversary of the founding of BRAS.

National Audubon thought so highly of the grant proposal put forward by BRAS conservation chair Andy Lance and board member Kate Pilacky that it plans to have photographers on hand to record the event to promote its grant program in the future.

Plans are also being made to plant trees at Elyria's West Recreation Park, the Hickories of Lorain County Historical Society and the grounds of Lorain Historical Society.

In addition to a wide variety of bird-attracting native trees, BRAS, partnering with Western Reserve Land Conservancy, is planning to plant shrubs, milkweed, and wildflowers to attract birds and butterflies. The overall goal is to turn the small park into a mini-nature preserve just off Elyria's downtown center.

During the planting, which should take several hours, complimentary wildflower seeds and seedlings will be distributed to participants and visitors to the park.

# **March Field Trip Report Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area**

**By Paul Sherwood**

The Killdeer Plains field trip took place on Saturday, March 17, a cold day with intermittent drizzle mixed with some sunshine. One other BRAS member and I met in the parking lot at Pond #27. After settling into my car we took off to see what we could find. Within the first few moments we found what was probably the highlight of the day. Right on the side of the road were 33 Wilson's snipe. They continued feeding as if we were not there.

Our next surprise was at the upground reservoir. As I was telling my passenger what we could see at the reservoir (loons, grebes, diving ducks, etc.), we crested the hill up to the top of the dike to find ... not a drop of water in what was one of the deepest reservoirs in Ohio. Oh well!!! Other highlights included eastern meadowlark, trumpeter and tundra swans, bald eagle, eastern towhee, northern shrike, and both light and dark phases of rough-legged hawk. We left around 6:00 and did not see any short-eared owls, one of our hoped-for birds!

Others spotted were: Canada goose, wood duck, northern shoveler, gadwall, American wigeon, mallard, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, bufflehead, hooded merganser, common merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruddy duck, great blue heron, turkey vulture, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, killdeer, ring-billed gull, mourning dove, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, northern flicker, American kestrel, blue jay, American crow, horned lark, tree swallow, eastern bluebird, American robin, European starling, American tree sparrow, song sparrow, northern cardinal, red-winged blackbird, grackle, house sparrow.

## **Purple Martins Need Housing: You Can Help**

It's that time of year again; purple martins are headed back to Ohio after spending the winter in South America, specifically Brazil. And many are looking for a place to live!

Black River Audubon Society and the Lorain County Metro Parks are responsible for the successful martin colony at Lakeview Park, which is currently managed by BRAS member John Ryan of Grafton.

If you are interested in monitoring a colony, learning more about purple martins, volunteering to help with a martin colony, or even starting your own, contact John Ryan at [johnryan@ryanstmarie.com](mailto:johnryan@ryanstmarie.com). It's a great hobby and we'd enjoy having you join us. For more information about programs or volunteering, visit [blackriveraudubon.org](http://blackriveraudubon.org). And remember to like us on Facebook!

## **A Birder's Diary: Preparation Is the Key to Successful Birding**

By **Carol Leininger**



A good birder, like a good scout, should always be prepared. I keep binoculars and a bird guide in my car at all times and another set in my house by the window. If I travel far from home I pack the binoculars and a guide to take along. You do not have to be on a planned field trip to see something special.

Although I have traveled many times with birders, I have also had many unexpected sightings without any birders nearby. While studying the ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru, I saw an Andean cock-of-the-rock. While friends enjoyed the beach in Hawaii, I walked on a golf course and saw a Japanese white eye. While visiting one of the Russian tsars' summer palaces, I saw a stork standing on a nest at the top of a palace turret. As I was riding on a bus full of tourists, I glanced out the window and saw a kookabura sitting in a gum tree.

While studying in a library at Oregon State University, I happened to glance out a window and saw a beautiful violet-green swallow. I also enjoyed my English literature class at Otterbein University when I could watch a pair of baby screech owls stare out of their nest cavity throughout the Spring semester.

My chance encounters with exotic birds and life listers can go on indefinitely. You may be on a business trip, traveling on a school bus, or just looking out a window. Keep your eyes open and binoculars handy wherever you go for whatever reason – you never know what you might see. It is those little surprises that make life worthwhile. Just be prepared!

# RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, et al.

*Archilochus colubris*

By Cathy Priebe



I am a hummingbird fan. I wait in anticipation each spring for the first hummingbird to arrive. I look at the hummingbirds.net map and Journey North sightings website every day beginning March 1. My feeders are out by mid-April. My earliest arrival date for Grafton was April 24. Hummingbirds are amazing, and my husband Dave and I welcome them to our yard every year.

Last year, 2017, was an extraordinary year for Dave and me. We had a very good hummingbird backyard attendance record and, as always, we enjoyed watching and photographing these awesome birds as they sipped from flowers and feeders throughout the summer months. Even as summer turned to fall, a few stragglers remained behind, drinking up the remaining nectar from our late-blooming pineapple sage and feeders.

I also follow posts on Ohio Birds and was intrigued to discover there was a rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) hummer frequenting a feeder near Loudonville, Ohio just south of Mohican State Park in Knox County. Since I had had the good fortune to also host a rufous hummer 15 years ago, this seemed like a good opportunity to see this one. It was a beautiful sunny October day when we met the homeowner, Junior Nisely, who warmly welcomed us and informed us that the “second year hatch female rufous hummingbird” was just banded that morning by Allan Chartier and was still coming to the feeder. This was good news as sometimes birds will vamoose or leave for an extended period after they are banded. Within five minutes of watching the feeder, the little girl returned to eat and Dave was able to get some good photos to document our rufous adventure. What a glorious day! We later stopped for lunch and toasted our good fortune and life with a margarita.

Our second hummer adventure occurred on November 4, 2017 as we took a slightly longer drive south (near Columbus/Dublin) to Delaware County to visit the popular and very rare first hatch year wayward Calliope male hummer named “Cal”. The homeowners had their place ready to accept visitors with roped off viewing areas and ample parking. Tania Perry and husband, Corey, graciously welcomed us, and later we stood in awe (with a small group of other amazed birders) as we watched

Cal sipping from the feeders and on late blooming flowers. What a fabulous finish to our hummer year. But wait! We were not finished yet!

A fellow birder and member of BRAS, Patty McKelvey, posted on Ohio Rare Birds that she still had a ruby-throated hummer coming to her feeder in Lorain County (Sheffield) since the end of October and it was now near the end of November. Goodness, I could not resist, so I texted her to see if we could see this tough critter. On December 2, Dave and I met “Hapless Harry” (first hatch year male), as he was nicknamed. and documented his presence in the month of December. That same day, we travelled a mile down the road to meet another home owner, Jean, who also had a young male ruby-throated named “Chirplette”. What were the odds, two hummers a mile apart from each other? We speculated they were nest mates, possibly from a very late brood, as they appeared to be the same age. What was going on? Rufous, calliope and ruby-throated hummingbirds all hanging out in December in Ohio?

What a year. You are probably wondering about the fates of these hummers. The rufous female succumbed to the cold according to a post on Ohio Birds. The calliope and Harry took off to parts unknown around the second week of December. Chirplette found a temporary home with a rehabber as he was found near death after a snowstorm.

Why are these hummers staying so long or even appearing in Ohio? That is another story for another time. Have a happy hummingbird summer!!!!

## **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET**

*Regulus calendula*

By **Barbara Baudot**



If you are seeking me, better to look at the cover photo in this Wingtips edition. I am notoriously difficult to spot. I am the second smallest bird in North America. Aside from my ruby crest emerging brilliantly when I am courting or agitated, I am a tiny fluff of olive green and off- white feathers, 4 inches long and weighing a quarter of an ounce.

Only males have a ruby crest.

Otherwise, my mate and I bear the same plumage, including white tear-shaped eye rings and two white shoulder wing bars, the lower one

bordered by a black band. These markings give elegance to our forest camouflaged look.

Most of my foraging is concentrated near or among trees and shrubs where small bugs and spiders crawl. Sometimes seeds, fruits, and tree sap are satisfying. My feeding needs demand constant motion. I flicker my wings frenetically, stirring up insects as I move in fits and starts among the shrubs and low lying branches hunting insects, or as I fly out in short bursts for one flittering by.

You will see many of us flying through Ohio on our migratory paths back and forth from southern US and Mexico to the northern and mountainous regions of the lower American states, Alaska, and Canada. We live year round only in the Pacific Northwest. It is also almost impossible to see us in these northern climes because we build our nests and raise our families high in the tops of spruce and other conifer trees in the boreal forests. Our nests are small cups hanging from high branches. My mate lays a large clutch of eggs, often 12 in her brood. The fledglings fly after two weeks.

Although we are exceedingly small, our song is famous. It was my ancestor's singing that inspired John James Audubon's painting of us [Plate 195]. He calls us ruby-crowned wrens, *Regulus calendula*, and portrays us in exaggerated fashion. His critics doubt the authenticity of this depiction. Applying his creative license, he mixed our traits with our cousins, the golden-crowned kinglets. Perhaps he thought our species too dull but his painting certainly catches the flashing ruby crest.

Below is an excerpt from Audubon's diary. He wrote:

***On the 27th of June, 1833, while ... rambling over the deserts of Labrador, the notes of a warbler came on my ear, and I listened with delight to the bird perched on the top of a fir tree, and ... recognized it as the vocalist that had ... charmed my ear and raised my expectations. I had never heard the full song of the Ruby-crowned Wren, and as I looked [later] at it in my hand, I could not refrain from exclaiming. 'And so this is the tiny body of the songster from which came the loud notes I heard yesterday!' When I tell you that its song is fully as sonorous as that of the Canary-bird, and much richer, I do not come up to the truth, for it is not only as powerful and clear, but much more varied and pleasing to the ear.***

References: ""Ruby Crowned Kinglet" in Birds of America; [allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruby-crowned\\_Kinglet/lifehistory](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruby-crowned_Kinglet/lifehistory); [audubon.org/field-guide](http://audubon.org/field-guide); [birdnote.org/show/ruby-crowned-kinglet](http://birdnote.org/show/ruby-crowned-kinglet).



## **Land Conservancy's Pollinator Parade in Oberlin Oberlin, May 5, 2018, 10 a.m.**

In celebration of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy's preservation of 60 acres of the Oberlin Great South Woods and the planting of 10 acres of prairie habitat, the Conservancy is participating in Oberlin's Annual Big Parade on May 5 a.m. with a Pollinator Parade! The Conservancy is making costumes of bees, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds, all pollinators, for those taking part. If you are interested in being part of the parade, please contact Kate Pilacky as soon as possible at [kpilacky@wrlandconservancy.org](mailto:kpilacky@wrlandconservancy.org) or 1-216-224-4470.

Together with Black River Audubon, the Conservancy will be giving away free wildflower plants, seeds, and information about gardening for pollinators to create more habitat for them. If you would like to help at this table, please contact Ms. Pilacky at the phone number above.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy will also be spreading the word about the need for volunteers for its planting of wildflowers at its prairie project on Hamilton Street in Oberlin on May 20, weather permitting.

### **Cover Bird Disclaimer!**

Dave Priebe's front cover photo of a hummingbird is a wonderful shot of a hummingbird replenishing itself at an agastache bloom. But the hummer's left wing obscures its throat, causing some confusion over its identity. It was sent to several birding experts and the majority agreed it was a female ruby-throated hummingbird. Still, there were lingering doubts.

For example, Lanny Chambers, a "hummingbird guy," according to columnist Cathy Priebe, said:

**"Banders use the shape of the tip of the sixth primary wing to 'sex' immature ruby-throated hummingbirds. Unfortunately, the tips of both wings are obscured in the photo. Because the crown feathers appear to have buffy edges and the throat lacks the heavy stippling typical of a young male, I'm inclined to call it an immature female. But I can't be 100 percent certain."**

Thus we have one more example that things are not always clear-cut in nature.

## SUMMER EVENTS

This is the last issue of the season. Don't forget the coming events mentioned in this issue and Black River Audubon's summer field trips.

**June 16, 8:30 am** at Edison Woods of Erie County Metroparks  
Meet at the Rt. 61 entrance, south of Huron, Amy Didion, leader

**July 21, 9 am** at Johnson Woods State Nature Preserve  
13240 Fox Lake Rd., Marshallville in Wayne Co., Paul Sherwood leader

**August 18, 8:30 am** at Margaret Peak Nature Preserve  
10999 Butternut Ridge Rd. parking lot, Jeanne Buttle Williams leader

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**Send your check to: National Audubon Society,  
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**New York, NY 10014    Attention: Chance Mueleck**



Sandy Ridge Reservation (photo by Jim Jablonski)

## ***Sandy Ridge Reservation Is in Full Migration Mode***

One of northern Ohio's favorite birding hotspots is alive with birding activity again. The weekly Wednesday morning hikes have been held since early April and will continue through May. They go from 7:30 to 10:00 am and are followed by coffee, snacks, and checklisting in the Wetland Center.

### **Other bird-related activities are:**

#### **Birding by Tram**

Every Tuesday in May from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>, 9-11:30  
Designed for those who have trouble walking. Space is limited, so pre-register by the day before the program. Call 440-327-3626.

#### **Big Birding Weekend**

May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Birding Hikes 8:30-10:30 am both days  
Johnson Wetland Center Open House, 11-4 both days for birding displays and more.

#### **The Big Sit**

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 am to 2 pm. Birding marathon on Sandy Ridge Observation mound.



RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET photo by Debbie Parker

## **BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY**

*1958-2018: 60 Years of Birding*

**P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036**

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