

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS



BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER photo by Dane Adams

April 2014

Editors: Harry Spencer, Cathy Priebe

Photographer: John Koscinski

Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel

Program

April 1, 7:00 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

Jay Mager

Associate Professor

Dept. of Biological and Allied Health Sciences

Ohio Northern University

Acoustic Communication by Male Loons, Honestly....

Mager is Associate Professor of Biological & Allied Health Sciences at Ohio Northern University where he teaches courses in biology, ecology, animal behavior, ornithology, and wildlife management. His research interests are in avian behavioral ecology, conservation, and management, and he has spent many years studying loon behavior throughout various locations within the northeastern and central United States.

Board Meeting

March 25, 2014, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

The Jack Smith House, 304 West Ave, Elyria

Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series

Saturday, April 5, 2 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

Sponsored jointly by Black River Audubon and Lorain Metro Parks

Speaker:

Jim McCormac

Wild Ohio, the best of our Ohio Heritage

McCormac currently works for the Ohio Division of Wildlife specializing in nongame wildlife diversity issues, especially birds, and is a noted author and columnist.

He will briefly highlight the long awaited arrival of hummingbirds as spring approaches and then guide his audience on a trip from south to north, visiting five exceptional natural areas from the Ohio River to Lake Erie.



Field Trip

Saturday, April 19, 9:30 a.m.

Killbuck Marsh, Browns Bog, Funk Bottoms

Meet at Shreve Lake, Sally Fox leading

Lunch at Amish restaurant

A Birder's Diary: Birds of Paradise

By **Carol Leininger**

Many decades ago, the famous naturalist and explorer, Alfred Russel Wallace first observed the colorful birds-of-paradise birds performing their elaborate courtship displays. Recently, in a collaboration between the National Geographic Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, photographer Tim Laman and biologist Edwin Scholes published their beautiful photos and stories of birds-of-paradise in both the National Geographic (December 2012) and



Living Bird (autumn 2012). Laman and Scholes spent eight years finding and documenting all 39 bird-of-paradise species. The long treks along flooded trails and high climbs into the rain forest canopy required to study and photograph these fantastic birds were impressive feats.



WILSON'S BIRD of PARADISE
Photo from WIKIPEDIA

As a tourist and budding birder in 1973 I visited Papua New Guinea with a group that spent a few days leisurely touring villages in the highlands. Near one village we saw birds in cages, one so small that its occupant, a cassowary, could barely turn around. A larger cage contained several birds-of-paradise birds flying about. The vivid colors of the birds and the wire-like tail feathers of some interested me greatly.

After recently seeing Tom Laman's National Geographic photos, I now believe that one species in that Papua New Guinea cage was a greater bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea apoda*). During the trip I had no pictures to help me identify the birds. Even if my belated identification is correct, I cannot add greater bird-of-paradise to my life list, because I did not see the bird in the wild.

At another village I saw natives dressed in costumes performing a sing-sing (dancing and chanting). The dancer-chanters wore bird-of-paradise feathers in their head dresses, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and anklets. One native wore a long tail-wire through his nose.

My trip illustrated that sometimes a tourist sees some very interesting birds.

Editor's note: The current IOC World Bird List includes 41 species of Paradisaeidae (birds-of-paradise family). Apparently two species have been added to the family since the study by Laman and Scholes.

Preliminary results:

2014 Great Backyard Bird Count

Top 10 most frequently reported species: NORTHERN CARDINAL, DARK-EYED JUNCO, MOURNING DOVE, BLUE JAY, DOWNY WOODPECKER, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, AMERICAN CROW, HOUSE FINCH, TUFTED TITMOUSE, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Top 10 most numerous species: RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, SNOW GOOSE, CANADA GOOSE, EUROPEAN STARLING, MALLARD, RING-BILLED GULL, AMERICAN COOT, DARK-EYED JUNCO, AMERICAN CROW, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

Top 10 North American states/province greatest number of species: California, New York, Pennsylvania, Ontario, Texas, Florida, Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan

Decline in monarch butterfly migration

The once-thriving population of monarch butterflies that migrate from northern U.S. and Canada to Mexico each winter is dwindling, researchers report. The orange-and-black butterflies would fill up to 45 acres of Mexican forest each year, according to records kept over the past 20 years. But as of December 2013, they filled only 1.6 acres, the smallest area ever recorded. Environmentalists say the decline could be due to a number of factors, including illegal logging and the use of herbicides that have killed milkweed plants where the butterflies lay their eggs.

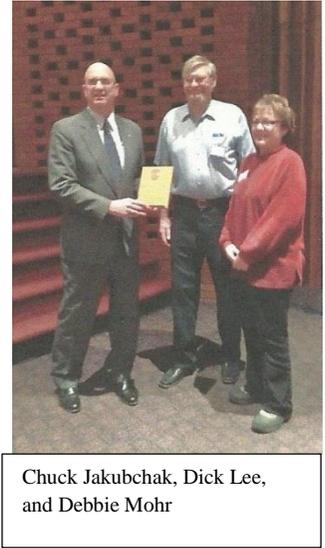
Source: The Washington Post

Jack Smith posthumously given the Ohio Bluebird Society's 2014 Wildlife Conservation Award

On February 22, 2014 at its annual meeting in Wooster, OH, the Ohio Bluebird Society posthumously presented its 2014 Wildlife Conservation award to Jack Smith. The award recognizes individuals and organizations committed to conservation.

Chuck Jakubchak, advisor to the Ohio Bluebird Society spoke of Jack's legacy: Jack worked for today, but planned wildlife initiatives to benefit tomorrow.

Upon accepting the award, Debbie Mohr, President, Black River Audubon Society of which Jack was a founding member, and Dick Lee, longtime conservation associate of Jack and Education Committee chair, Black River Audubon, described Jack's life and his effects on their lives and his molding of conservation ethos into the lives of many others.



Chuck Jakubchak, Dick Lee,
and Debbie Mohr

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER

Dendroica virens

By Cathy Priebe

At an early age I was bitten by the "bird bug", mostly observing common backyard visitors, such as robins and cardinals. As I grew older and wiser, I subscribed to a few popular bird magazines that extolled the popular warbler spring migration-stop at Magee Marsh in Ottawa, Ohio. The articles described the birds as "...dripping from the trees, practically in your face and species galore." I had heard also a few personal warbler experiences from friends, and eventually with my husband Dave made the hour-plus trip.



Armed with a field guide and binoculars, we drove through a warm, overcast, rainy day in early May when the warblers were predicted to stop to eat and rest before flying over Lake Erie and beyond.

We had no idea what to expect at the park, so we followed other vehicles to the designated area. There we were surprised to see wall-to-wall cars and people. Everywhere we looked we saw birders with binoculars looking up and pointing. And that was just in the parking lot! And there we saw our first warbler, a black-throated green.

A black-throated green warbler is often heard singing its distinctive zee, zee, zee, zu, zee song before it is sighted, floating seemingly effortlessly through the mid-canopy gleaning bugs and berries. A beautiful male's glowing yellow cheeks and dark black throat are distinctive. He also has an olive line through the eye, olive ear patches and crown, dark wings with two bold white wing bars, streaked sides, white lower breast, white belly, and white undertail coverts. A female is marked similarly but has a pale yellow throat and thinner wing bars.

The species migrates to Ohio as early as the beginning of April and is usually one of the last warblers to leave Ohio in the fall. The bird favors the boreal forests for breeding, but some birds breed in Ohio. Mohican State Park and Holden Arboretum are documented nesting sites, where their nests are usually in hemlock gorges.

Now that Dave and I are hooked on warblers, we don't have to go far to find black-throated green warblers. (We do, however, highly recommend making the trip to Magee Marsh in May!) Dozens of black-throated greens

along with other warblers briefly stop by our backyard every spring and fall.

If you don't look and listen for them, you could be missing a warbler migration stop in your own backyard!

References: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne.

Audubon Camp Scholarship Available

Again Black River Audubon offers a scholarship to educators and naturalists to enhance their knowledge and skills at the Maine Audubon Camp at Hog Island. The camper spends one week off the coast of Maine learning from some of the most respected naturalists and environmental educators in the nation.

The scholarship pays tuition and fees plus room and board. The recipient pays transportation costs.

Contact Dick Lee: 440-322-7449 or leedck@windstream.net.

SNOW

This four-letter alpha code for snowy owl, useful for banding records and short hand recording of identifications, perhaps is the most appropriate word for any avian species. For example, the alpha codes for our cover birds, BTNW and BAWW, are much less descriptive.

BLACK-and-WHITE WARBLER

Mniotilta varia

By **Jim Jablonski**

“Black-and white warbler! How boring is that?”

That was my uneducated response on the boardwalk the first time someone nearby spotted one and called out its name. The attitude was somewhat understandable for a Magee Marsh first-timer who had just identified brightly colorful magnolias and blackburnians.



I soon realized how wrong I was when I caught sight of the male black-and-white. Not only was the tiny bird spectacular in what sounded like drab plumage, unlike the other flitting warblers it allowed closer observation as it carefully made its way along the branch.

There was another advantage to my new discovery. The warbler's formal attire set it off nicely from the dozens of others that I always have to learn anew each spring. Along with a few others such as the yellow, redstart, chestnut-sided, the black-and-white is always well remembered at the start of each migration season.

There is something else that set the black-and-white apart from other warblers. It is the only species in the *Mniotilta* genus. The name means “moss-plucking” and comes from its unique habit of picking at the moss on tree trunks and branches.

The black-and-white's foraging makes it stand out also as it hops and creeps along branches and tree trunks like a nuthatch. The feeding style makes it a rather easy warbler to spot and a favorite, as I found, of beginning birders.

Despite being an insectivore, the male is a rather early migrant from its home in Florida, Caribbean and Central America. Its relatively long, slightly curved beak enables it to grab dormant insects under the bark of trees that



BLACK-and-WHITE WARBLER photo by Dane Adams

haven't leafed out early in the spring.

The female has a similar coloration but is grayer in areas where the male is jet black. When she arrives in the breeding grounds, the males get down to a drawn-out singing and fluttering courtship.

Afterward the two set up housekeeping in the woods, building cuplike nests on the ground, or less than two feet above it, under dead leaves and against large objects such as tree trunks or logs. Like many small birds, the black-and-white's clutch usually numbers four to five eggs, creamy white with brown tending toward the larger end.

Much like ovenbirds, the black-and-white's choice of nesting sites, together with forest fragmentation in North America, have led to frequent cowbird parasitism of nests placed close to the edge of the woods. In addition, their low

nests cause frequent nest predation. Both problems have caused its disappearance in many farming areas of the Midwest.

Males and females feed the hatchlings and if they survive, they fledge in only eight to twelve days despite needing a lot of work on their flying skills. Perhaps just getting above the ground is enough for the fledglings to ward off ground predators.

Despite suffering from predation, the black-and-white is a feisty warbler often getting into scrapes with others both on its breeding and wintering grounds. Perhaps they heard some one say "Black-and-white warbler! How boring!"

References: *The Birders Handbook* by Paul Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye; *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufman; *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* by Donald and Lillian Stokes; *All About Birds*, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

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