

# WINGTIPS

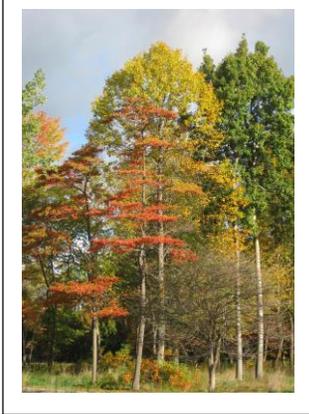
December 2015



NORTHERN CARDINAL photo by Bill Keaton

Editors: Jim Jablonski, Cathy Priebe, Harry Spencer  
Web Mistress: Arlene Lengyel; Photographer Emeritus: John Koscinski

## Readers' Photographs



Left three photos by Diane Devereaux. Right two photos by Jeanne Williams.

## Program

**Debbie Parker, Medina Raptor Center**

### **Raptor Rehab at Medina Raptor Center**

**December 7, 7 p.m.**

**Sandy Ridge Reservation, Perry F. Johnson Wetland Center (note location change)**



Debbie Parker of the Medina Raptor Center will explain the important activities of her organization to us at Sandy Ridge Reservation on December 7. Established in 1990, the MRC is one of Ohio's leading raptor rehabilitation facilities. According to Ms. Parker, "We treat over 400 birds each year. Most come to us with human-related injuries, such as motor vehicle collisions, poisonings (often by pesticides), gunshot wounds, and cat attacks. All receive individual attention, appropriate veterinary care, physical therapy, training and conditioning before return to the wild."

The MRC works with all birds including songbirds and waterfowl but specializes in birds of prey. Although veterinarians provide professional treatment, the center provides the post-treatment care.

In addition to her work at the center, Debbie is an equestrian rider/instructor and has a passion for wildlife that comes across in her photography. She also takes birds of prey to schools, nature centers and other public forums to introduce people to the different species and to explain their importance. Her photographs have been displayed at French Creek Nature Center.

# Field Trips

## Sandy Ridge (outer limits walk)

**Saturday, Nov. 21, 2015, 9:00 a.m.**

Meet at Perry Johnson Nature Center

Naturalist Tim Fairweather to lead

## 2015 Christmas Bird Counts

The longest running citizen science project will take place again this December as local birders take part in the BRAS-organized Christmas Bird Counts.

Beginning Christmas Day, 1900 to draw people away from traditional bird shootings, the CBC has been held around the country ever since and plays an important part in tracking bird populations.

This year's **Elyria-area CBC will take place Saturday, December 19, 2015** and will be organized by Marty Ackermann. He may be reached at 440-774-3220 if you wish to take part.

The **Wellington-area CBC will take place Saturday, January 2, 2016**. The leader is Diane Devereaux whose number is 440-458-2440.

Please call the leader of the count you wish to take part in. You do not have to be an experienced birder to take part in the event.

## Royal Oaks Metro Park October Field Trip

By **Jeanne B. Williams**



On a crisp, autumn day Marty Ackermann led ten birders around the trails of Royal Oaks, a newly opened addendum to the Indian Hollow Reservation of the Lorain County Metro Parks. The Royal Oaks name continues since it was used for the golf course that formerly occupied the area. The entrance is on the south side of Parsons Road just east of the main part of the Indian Hollow Reservation.

Royal Oaks is a wonderful addition to the existing Indian Hollow Reservation and has access to the Crook St. nature preserve for future connection and development. It is a 97-acre combination of wetland and meadow with many trees. There are 2½ miles of hiking/birding trails, 3 fishing ponds, and a half-mile fitness loop. The park is a perfect environment for nesting and migrating birds.

At the start of our walk, several eastern bluebirds entertained us from the top of mature sycamores and oaks. The habitat is definitely to the birds liking!

As we ambled along the wide, dry paths, we spotted a variety of birds allowing a few of us to take photos as the sun popped through some heavy dark clouds. Near the end we came upon a flock of mixed birds, warblers, tree sparrows and kinglets.

In total we identified 26 species of birds and beat the first frost of the season by some 20 hours. It was a great opportunity to learn from each other and share our love of birds!

# A Birder's Diary: Environmental Degradation and Birds

By Carol Leininger



Ancient human cultures used birds as indicators long before canaries were put in coal mines. A concentration of ospreys and bald eagles on a river in June meant the migratory fish had returned to spawn. The appearance of robins and swallows indicated that warm weather was on the way.

Even today it would be wise for humans to pay attention to bird indicators. Pesticide contamination (e.g. DDT) still is present in poorer countries where our birds winter, and who knows how much damage newer pesticides are doing. Declines in air and water quality (acid rain and mercury) are affecting wood thrush and loon populations. Predator poisoning affects California condors. The human population controls the world and all other populations on earth.

Losses of habitat have contributed to loss of ivory-billed woodpeckers and declines in red-cockaded woodpeckers, and spotted owls. Poor forestry practices and forest fragmentation are common. Whole ecosystems are being damaged – coastal beaches supporting piping plovers and least terns are disturbed and grasslands are lost to agriculture, harming prairie chicken and whooping crane populations. Global warming is changing the timing of migration and egg laying. Drier weather is causing prairie potholes and wetlands to disappear. Coastal flooding as sea levels rise will also destroy important feeding areas such as marshes and mud flats for many migrants. And, of course, humans continue to increase the number of skyscrapers and wind turbines with out much regard to migrating birds. Have we forgotten the significance of indicator species?

But, there is hope as more people begin to participate in citizen science projects. If you love birds, get involved in breeding bird surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, eBird, Great Backyard Bird Counts and Project Feeder Watch. Studying birds is an excellent way to monitor changes in our environment. Birds are great indicators if we only listen to what they are telling us.

## ***NORTHERN CARDINAL***

*Cardinalis cardinalis*

By Cathy Priebe



The northern cardinal, often called “the red bird” due to its flashy red plumage, is the most popular and recognizable bird in almost everyone’s backyard. Seven states, including Ohio, claim the cardinal as their state bird. Its handsome face is also a favorite logo for many sports teams.

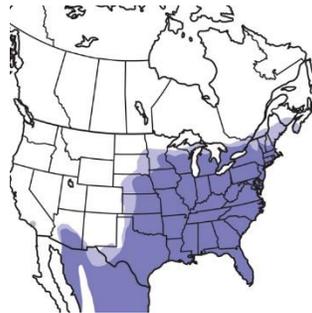
Slightly smaller than the American robin, the male cardinal is a vibrant red with a black border on the face, conspicuous crest, and a big reddish conical bill. The female is a buffy brown tinged with red.



**Northern Cardinal in [audubon.org/field-guide](http://audubon.org/field-guide)**

This showy bird can be found in almost all of the eastern United States in suburban backyards, small woodlands, city parks and of course, bird feeders.

Cardinals generally nest in thickets, dense shrubs, vine tangles and in the lower branches of small coniferous trees. The nest, built by the female, is an open cup of bark, twigs, leaves and other plant materials, lined with hair and fine grass. The female incubates 3 to 4 brown spotted whitish green eggs for about 2 weeks.



**Range of the northern cardinal in [Audubon.org/field-guide](http://Audubon.org/field-guide)**

“What cheer! What cheer! Purdy, purdy, purdy. What cheer!” is just one of the phonetic descriptions of the cardinal’s vocal repertoire. Males sing from exposed perches during mating season, but both sexes will sing all year.

But how does the male get away with being so colorful, especially in the Ohio winter landscape? The flamboyant males sing from high perches and do not trade their breeding plumes for a drab winter coat, which could make them an obvious target for a predator. Male cardinals are probably bright red and loud to advertise what good mates they’d make.

According to the [Birds of North America Online](http://Birds of North America Online), “brighter males have higher reproductive success, hold better territories, and offer more parental care. The intensity of a cardinal’s redness is related to what he’s been eating. So when females see a bright male, it’s a signal that he’s healthy and holds a good territory.”

Cardinals also tend to have very high survival rates, most likely because they don’t endure the stress of migration and they generally have two broods per season. The oldest recorded cardinals lived to be at least fifteen and a half years old (one recorded in Pennsylvania and another in Virginia).

Sunflower seeds are the cardinal’s favorite backyard feeder food. Mated pairs will often feed each other. They also glean seeds, berries and insects from low shrubs or on the ground. Cardinals are generally the first birds you see at your feeder at dawn and the last at dusk.

My favorite winter backyard scene is a snow-covered tree decorated with a dozen or more cardinals glistening in the sunlight. Happy Holidays!!

References: Pete Dunne's *Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America* edited by Jonathan Alderfer; *Birds of North America Online*; NestWatch.

## **A Bird in the Hand is Worth Two on the Hook!**

By **Philip Lyston**



Living in the Tidewater region of Virginia, it is easy to be enthusiastic about birding and/or fishing. After serving 20 years active duty in the Navy, I now manage to find time for both. I also have the luxury of watching herons, ducks, osprey, and the occasional kingfisher while I fish from a dock behind my home on a canal to the Elizabeth River.

While surf fishing the Atlantic at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, I often observe cormorants, dolphins, osprey, and pelicans seeking quarry similar to my own. On one occasion I was distracted by my competition, and the line from one of my rods drifted into shallow water parallel to the shore. A willet searching for a meal of its own became tangled in the loose monofilament. After several harrowing minutes (for both of us), I managed to get the frightened bird free and unharmed. Later that year, with my line perpendicular to the beach, a brown pelican cruising close to shore collided with my gear. More determined than scared, the pelican struggled to get free, and succeeded shortly after I cut my line.

Two summers after my ocean encounters, while fishing at home, I was the one being observed by an immature yellow-crowned night heron. Just as I made a cast, I realized the young bird took flight and was determined to get my lure. I yanked on the rod hoping to avoid yet another bird-fishing encounter, but the lure caught his leg and he promptly landed on a cross-brace beneath my dock. Thankfully the lure fell free and the heron seemed only a little rattled by the encounter.

Curious mallards frequently pester fishing bobbers drifting in the canal. Last summer a female was briefly tangled and flew away startled by the experience. In October, a duck got so tangled I was obliged to "land" her, and once liberated, she also protested loudly. I have since considered petitioning the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to add a weight and wing span for mallards to the list of trophy fishes!

## ***YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER***

*Setophaga coronata*

By **Jim Jablonski**



Migration season can be frustrating for this part-time birder. Every spring I have to relearn about half the warblers migrating through Northern Ohio. But one favorite, because I always recognize it quickly, is the yellow-rumped.

That may be because it arrives earlier, leaves later, and is even known to hang out in Ohio during the winter. But more likely its familiarity is due to the fact that it is very well named. Once you see that bright patch of yellow, low on its back, you know what you're seeing! The yellow under the wings and bright white patch on its throat make it certain.



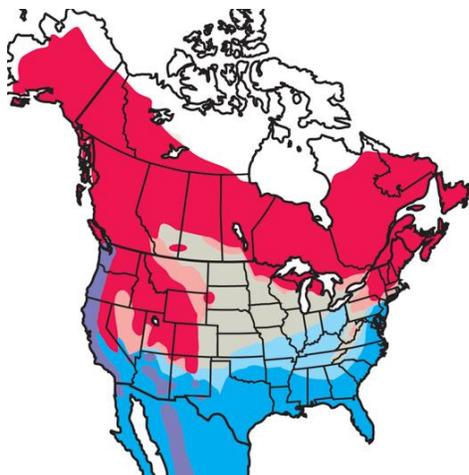
Yellow-rumped warbler in [audubon.org/field-guide](http://audubon.org/field-guide)

The yellow-rumped comes in two varieties that were once considered separate species. The former “myrtle,” the one with the white throat patch, is the variety that favors the eastern half of the continent. Out west, in the high plains and Rockies, lives its very close relative, the former “Audubon” warbler that has a bright yellow patch beneath its beak but a plainer face. Together, the two warblers cover nearly all of North America at some time during their yearly migrations.

The yellow-rumped’s interesting diet gives it the ability to migrate sooner and perhaps even stay year-round in relatively cold climates. As an omnivore, this warbler isn’t restricted to just seeds, or fruits, or insects. Along with some thrushes, vireos and phoebes, the yellow-rumped has evolved a digestive system adaptation “that enables them to switch in the fall from a diet of insects to fruits and seeds,” according to an article in the Autumn 2015 edition of **Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “Living Bird.”** This way the yellow-rumped can forage longer before migrating, thus allowing them to remain further north than most other warblers.

As a result of this evolutionary adaptation, Larry Rosche, in *Birds of the Cleveland Region*, reports that yellow-rumps are one of just a few warblers reported in all months of the year in our area.

Omnivores have the best of both dietary regimens and it definitely benefits them. The yellow-rumped is said to be the most abundant warbler in the U.S.!



Range of both varieties of the yellow-rumped warbler  
[audubon.org/field-guide](http://audubon.org/field-guide)

**References:** “Field Guide to Birds of North American” by Kenn Kauffman; “National Geographic’s Backyard Guide to the Birds of North America” by Jonathan Alderfer and Paul Hess; “*The Omnivore’s Migratory Advantage*” in *Living Bird*, Autumn 2015; “*Birds of the Cleveland Region*” by Larry Rosche; “Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region” by Donald & Lillian Stokes.



YELLOW WARBLER photo by William Bofinger

## **Environmental Education Materials Available**

For many years the Black River Audubon Society has encouraged and supported environmental education for the young people in our community by purchasing **Audubon Adventures** kits to be used by teachers and naturalists. Professional environmental educators for children developed Audubon Adventures for children in grades three through five. The program presents basic scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife and their habitats.

The goal of Audubon Adventures is to develop in young people an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the natural world in which we live. The program is packaged as a classroom kit (serving 32 students) or individual kit (serving one student). The theme of the 2015-2016 school year is '**Action for Planet Earth**'. Specific topics are **Habitats, Water** and **Energy**. Included in each unit are student handouts, background information for the teacher, hands-on activities for both inside and outside.

In order to best meet the curriculum requirements of Common Core, Black River Audubon orders topics popular in previous years.

Contact Dick Lee at [Leedck@windstream.net](mailto:Leedck@windstream.net) or 440-322-7449 to learn the available topics and choose the ones that you can integrate into your grade-level curriculum. All Audubon Adventures materials are available at no cost to educators.

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**Attention: Chance Mueleck**

**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.**