

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

February 2009

**Black River
Audubon Society**



**blackriveraudubon.org
Founded 1958**

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White-throated Sparrow

Banding as a Tool for Studying Ohio Bird Life

Tom Bartlett

Carlisle Visitor Center

Tuesday, February 3, 7 p.m.

Tom Bartlett is a retired high school biology teacher of 29 years. He is a very well-known birder in Ohio and has served on numerous Boards of various natural history and birding organizations, including being an original board member of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge on which he still serves and is currently on the Board of Directors of the Ohio Ornithological Society. He is a certified bird bander and trainer of bird banders.

Search for Gulls and Ducks

Young Birder's Club Hike: Lake Erie edition

Saturday, February 7, 9 a.m. to noon

Meet at French Creek Nature Center

Attendees will caravan to a couple of "hotspots" along the Erie shore. This club, co-sponsored by Black River Audubon Society and Lorain County Metro Parks, consists of 12 – 18 year olds and their adult companions.

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13-16, 2009

For more information go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc

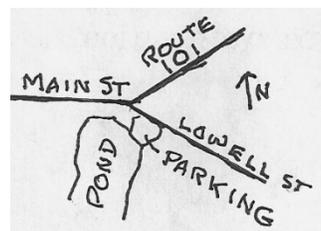
Sponsored by National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Field Trip: Water Birds

Saturday, February 21, 9 a.m.

Castalia Pond, Pickerel Creek, and Resthaven

Meet at Castalia Pond NE parking lot just off
Route 101.



Firelands Audubon invites **Black River Audubon** to a **Digital Slide Safari** and **Chili Supper**, Tuesday, January 27, 6:30 p.m., Osborn Park, Sandusky. Bring slides and a dish to share. Details at firelandsaudubon.org

A Birder's Diary

By **Carol Leininger**



Every May is exciting at Magee Marsh, but some are more exciting than others. I remember that one year I looked at birds next to the entrance to the boardwalk with about fifty other birders. A small warbler sat on a low limb at eye level close enough for me to touch it. He looked at me. I looked at him. I quickly observed as many field marks as possible, then consulted my bird book. I looked at the bird again and at the book again. I even looked back at the other birders and listened to some of their conversations. Then I looked at the bird once more before he flew. I finally asked the person standing next to me if she had seen the bird—no, she was looking at another, as apparently everyone else was.

When asked what I had seen, I whispered "a Kirtland's Warbler." Was I sure? Oh, yes, I was sure! Well, since it was gone, we proceeded along the boardwalk to look at other birds. While heading back to the entrance after

going around the loop, I heard people shouting –A Kirtland’s Warbler was seen at the entrance. With a smug look I said, “Yes, I saw it”, and continued on my way. I had identified an endangered species all by myself. Now I was a true birder!

A few years later I saw another Kirtland’s Warbler – this time on the beach at Crane Creek. I sometimes wonder how long it takes for word to get out to all the birders on the trails when such a sighting is made. I rushed over to the beach along with hundreds of other birders. I spotted him right away – he was in the center of a small area of beach completely surrounded by people, many with huge scopes and cameras. He hopped a few feet and the ring of birders moved with him, no matter which direction he went. I felt a little sorry for him – it was like a movie star surrounded by fans and no place to go. My friend, Betsy Miles, got some really good photos, one of which sits on my desk as a reminder of that day.

The Kirtland’s Warbler is an endangered species that is slowly making a come back. The birds breed in a small area of north-central Michigan that is now designated as a sanctuary. They wouldn’t be so rare if they weren’t so fussy about their breeding habitat – they nest beneath young jack pine trees (5 to 18 feet tall). If the trees are too young, the branches are too low, and if the trees are too old, the branches are too high – so the sanctuary is managed by burning trees to maintain enough of the right age at all times. If you think they have a difficult time during the breeding season, keep in mind that they spend the winter in the Bahamas. I have never felt the need to go to the Michigan breeding grounds (After all the birds stop here in Ohio.), but I wouldn’t be averse to visiting them in the Bahamas some winter!



Kirtland’s Warbler photo by Betsy Miles

Birders count 59 species, 11642 individuals during the Wellington CBC.

December 27, 2008

Contributed by **Erik Bruder**



Twenty-four participants (Dane Adams, Jenny Austin, Ken Austin, Erik Bruder, Jim Bruder, Dale Cary, Steve Chavez, Kathy French, Janet Haswell, Larry Haswell, Mike Kapcoe, Sue Kapcoe, Dick Lee, Tom Reed, Craig Rieker, Julia Schickel, Madeline Schickel, Paul Sherwood, Nancy Shipman, Wayne Shipman, Jack Smith, Jean Sorton, Joel Vormelker, and Dave Yoo) counted on a mostly cloudy day with temperatures between 55 and 65 degrees F.

Species followed by number of individuals: SNOW GOOSE 15, CANADA GOOSE 2288, TUNDRA SWAN cw (Identified on prior day), AMERICAN BLACK DUCK 4, MALLARD 331, RING-NECKED PHEASANT 2, GREAT BLUE HERON 2, TURKEY VULTURE 1, NORTHERN HARRIER 11, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK 4, COOPER’S HAWK 4, RED-SHOULDERED HAWK 4, RED-TAILED HAWK 46, ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK 6, AMERICAN KESTREL 45, RING-BILLED GULL 243, ROCK PIGEON 160, MOURNING DOVE 417, EASTERN SCREECH-OWL 1, BARRED OWL 2, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER 18, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER 3, DOWNY WOODPECKER 35, HAIRY WOODPECKER 8, NORTHERN FLICKER 17, PILEATED WOODPECKER 2, NORTHERN SHRIKE 1, BLUE JAY 90, AMERICAN CROW 144, HORNED LARK 26, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE 116, TUFTED TITMOUSE 36, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH 58, BROWN CREEPER 5, CAROLINA WREN 8, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET 2, EASTERN BLUEBIRD 27, AMERICAN ROBIN 11, EUROPEAN STARLING 6669, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER 14, EASTERN

TOWHEE 1, AMERICAN TREE SPARROW 30, CHIPPING SPARROW 4, SONG SPARROW 21, SWAMP SPARROW 2, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW 5, WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW 2, DARK-EYED JUNCO 119, NORTHERN CARDINAL 79, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD 16, EASTERN MEADOWLARK 3, COMMON GRACKLE 3, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD 3, PURPLE FINCH 4, HOUSE FINCH 34, PINE SISKIN 8, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH 100, HOUSE SPARROW 31

Obama Team Chooses Audubon-Board Chair Carol Browner for Key Post

From Audubon.org

Carol Browner, Chair of the Board of the National Audubon Society, has been named to the position of “Climate Czar” by President-elect Obama. Ms. Browner will lead the new administration’s policies on climate change and energy.

Ms. Browner is best known as the longest serving EPA administrator during the Clinton Presidency. Her position is one of several environmental selections Obama has recently announced, including physicist Steven Chu as energy secretary, New Jersey governor Jon Corzine’s chief of staff Lisa Jackson as head of the EPA, and Los Angeles deputy mayor Nancy Sutley as head of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.



Carol Browner

76 Species Recorded during December 2008 on BRAS eBird web Site

Founding Members of Black River Audubon at October Celebration of 50th Anniversary



Norma Kraps, Jack Smith, and Jane Coven
Photo by Linda Kraps

White-throated Sparrow

Zonotrichia albicollis

(Sam Peabody Bird)

By Jack Smith



“What is that beautiful eerie whistling song?” With the first edition of Peterson’s bird guide in hand, I quietly stole through the woods to trace down the origin of the song. “There it is!” With the aid of my binocs, I focused in on a striking sparrow with a white throat, yellow lores and white-striped head. Thumbing through pages, I came upon the White-throated Sparrow, a spitting image of my bird. There was my bird in a small tree three-quarters of the way up, and it sang again for me, before flying away. Wow! I found that I could imitate fairly well its song by whistling. In other bird books I found English words for the song: Old Sam Peabody-Peabody-Peabody.

This experience took place in my early days of bird watching in the forties.

Since that time I always stop, listen to, and marvel at this most beautiful song wherever I travel in late spring and early summer: in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, upper Michigan, or Ontario.

The scientist who first described the White-throated Sparrow named it *Zonotrichia albicollis*. The genus name, *Zonotrichia* derives from the Greek words zono, girdle or belt, and trichia, hair, referring to striped hair-feathers. The species name, *albicollis*, refers to white on the throat.

After observing many white-throats I arrived at the mistaken opinion that the birds with white throats but tan stripes were the females. In fact there are two forms or morphs, one white-striped and one tan-striped. Either morph can be male or female, and a tan-striped individual breeds with a white-striped one.

Males do most of the singing, although some white-striped females also sing.

The beautiful individual portrayed on the cover is a male or a female white-striped morph.

A visitor to spring woods may hear rustling among the leaves indicating a white-throat searching for insects. In our area during fall and early winter white-throats, along with other birds, feed on seeds of plants and weeds in open fields.

There are no confirmed recent Ohio breeding records. For nesting the birds migrate to the boreal forests of northern North America. In late spring and early summer I have heard white-throats singing in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, in upper Michigan, and in Ontario. If I had taken time for searching, I might have found their nests.

Nesting sites are usually on the ground and rarely in a shrub one or two feet above ground. Nests usually are well concealed in ground depressions. Females build the nests with grass, twigs, and pine needles, lined with fine grass, rootlets, and animal hair.

The female lays 4 to 5 pale blue to greenish-blue eggs marked with reddish brown and lavender blotches. As with many other species, she waits until the last egg is laid before beginning incubation. In response to an intruder, a female often runs ahead of the intruder before flying. When she returns she lands some distance from the nest then runs through the brush to the nest. While she is incubating, the male may bring food. The incubation period is 11 to 14 days. The nestlings leave the nest quite early in 8 to 9 days, several days before they can fly. A second brood is possible.

As summer wanes, the white-throats begin to migrate south, flying only at night, a characteristic they share with many passerines.

Surveys indicate a slight decline in population numbers. The serious habitat destruction caused by lumbering activities may accelerate this rate of decline.

References: *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufman, *A Guide to Bird Behavior*, Vol. III, by Donald and Lillian Stokes, *Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John K. Terres, *Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas* by B. G. Petterjohn and D. L. Rice.

A Winter Birding Moment

By **Bird Lady of Prospect Street**

One recent morning I looked out the bedroom windows and saw one of my favorite bird scenes. A light snow had fallen during the night and the lovely dark-gray juncos were busily pecking around for seeds. The contrast of colors of the peaceful snow and the busy birds was quite striking.



Northern Cardinal

SPECIES (CURRENT NAME)	NUMBER RECORDS	MEDIAN FIRST	EARLIEST RECORD	RANGE DAYS
RED-EYED VIREO	39	3-May	23-Apr	21
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	40	3-May	18-Apr	24
COMMON TERN	34	3-May	7-Apr	36
GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER	40	3-May	21-Apr	22
CERULEAN WARBLER	39	4-May	29-Apr	23
AMERICAN KESTRALT	40	4-May	23-Apr	19
SCARLET TANAGER	40	4-May	24-Apr	22
WHIPPOORWILL	40	5-May	19-Apr	25
LEAST FLYCATCHER	40	5-May	11-Apr	26
BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER	39	5-May	23-Apr	27
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBIRD	39	5-May	24-Apr	28
SEDGE WREN	15	6-May	26-Apr	24
AMERICAN PIPT	36	6-May	3-Apr	41
MAGNOLIA WARBLER	40	6-May	19-Apr	26
BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER	40	6-May	27-Apr	21
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER	40	7-May	30-Apr	16
ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	21	8-May	1-May	30
ORCHARD ORIOLE	38	8-May	23-Apr	27
INDIGO BUNTING	40	8-May	26-Apr	21
BLACK TERN	32	8-May	29-Apr	21
KING RAIL	19	9-May	19-Apr	31
EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE	40	9-May	26-Apr	25
PINE WARBLER	18	9-May	20-Apr	27
YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT	39	9-May	28-Apr	27
GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH	37	9-May	29-Apr	18
RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD	40	10-May	22-Apr	27
CAPE MAY WARBLER	16	10-May	27-Apr	27
BAY-BREASTED WARBLER	39	10-May	25-Apr	29
LINCOLN'S SPARROW	30	10-May	12-Apr	35
PRAIRIE WARBLER	19	11-May	29-Apr	22
LEAST BITTERN	22	11-May	21-Apr	28
YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	37	11-May	26-Apr	31
ACADIAN FLYCATCHER	38	11-May	26-Apr	31
NORTHERN PARULA	14	11-May	27-Apr	32
TENNESSEE WARBLER	17	11-May	1-May	29
HOODED WARBLER	30	13-May	22-Apr	37
CANADA WARBLER	40	13-May	28-Apr	22
PIPING PLOVER	23	14-May	1-Apr	47
LEAST SANDPIPER	29	14-May	18-Apr	34
SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER	23	15-May	27-Apr	28
SEMPALMATED PLOVER	23	15-May	24-Apr	26
PHILADELPHIA VIREO	21	15-May	26-Apr	28
BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO	37	15-May	4-May	17
WILSON'S WARBLER	38	15-May	5-May	16
DUNLIN	22	16-May	24-Apr	27
ALDER FLYCATCHER	40	16-May	3-May	21
BLACK-POLE	39	16-May	9-May	21
MOURNING WARBLER	24	16-May	7-May	21
RUDDY TURNSTONE	23	17-May	21-May	52
COMMON Nighthawk	38	17-May	18-Apr	31
YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER	16	17-May	14-Apr	36
CONNECTICUT WARBLER	28	18-May	3-May	24
OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER	14	18-May	29-Apr	29
DICKCISSLE	17	18-May	24-Apr	26