

# WINGTIPS

JANUARY 2015



DARK-EYED JUNCO photo by Dane Adams

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## **Program**

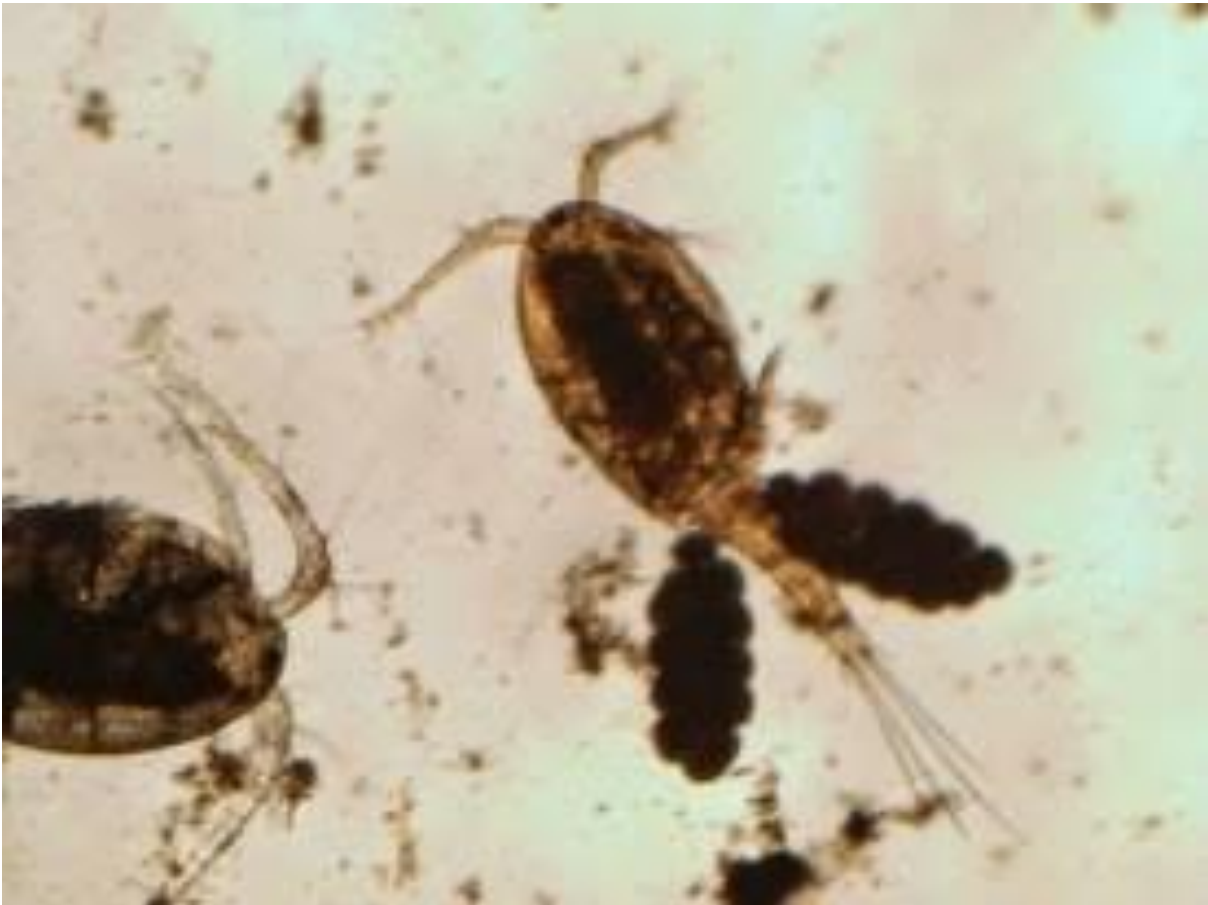
**John Lavelle**

Naturalist

## **Vernal Pools**

**January 6, 2015, 7 p.m.**

**Carlisle Visitor Center**



COPEPOD

**John Lavelle**, an amateur naturalist, has spent the last several years exploring a hundred different vernal pools throughout Lorain County. Mr. Lavelle's talk will provide an introduction to some of the lesser-known animals of the vernal pools of Lorain. Most of his presentation will cover the ostracods, copepods and cladocerans. He hopes to make our members and guests aware that life in these pools is very active.

Although some of us might not know what the term "vernal pool" refers to, we are all familiar with the reality. These are temporary pools that form in the spring after the snowmelt and heavy rain early in the year. Just think of the Sandy Ridge woods in April!

## Field Trips

Saturday, January 3, 2015

### Wellington Christmas Bird Count

January 17, 2015 (Saturday, 9 a.m.)

### Lorain Harbor and Avon Lake

Led by Tammy Martin

Meet at parking lot, Jackalope Restaurant, Lorain

## Save the Dates!

### Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series

Carlisle Visitor Center

Two renowned speakers have been scheduled for the *Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series* to be presented by Black River Audubon Society and the Lorain County Metro Parks.

**March 21, 2015, 2 p.m.**

**Joy M. Kiser**, librarian and author  
“America’s Other Audubon”



**Joy M. Kiser** began her professional career in 1995 as the librarian for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. In 2001 she moved to Washington D.C. to become the librarian for the National Endowment for the Arts. A year ago she relocated back to Ohio and currently lives in Cuyahoga Falls.

On March 21, 2015 Ms. Kiser will present a mini-documentary on the work of *America’s Other Audubon*, **Genevieve Estelle Jones** of Circleville, Ohio.

Ms. Jones, born in 1876, suffered from a broken heart after her father forbade her marriage to the man she loved. She then turned for solace to John J. Audubon’s *Birds of America*. Genevieve decided to create her own book illustrating the nests and eggs Audubon had left out of his work. Her beautifully rendered paintings rivaled the quality of Audubon’s own works. Unfortunately, the young artist died of typhoid fever before she could finish her work. Her father had her book finished.

Joy Kiser displaying Genevieve Jones work



**April 11, 2015, 2 p.m.**

Carlisle Visitor Center

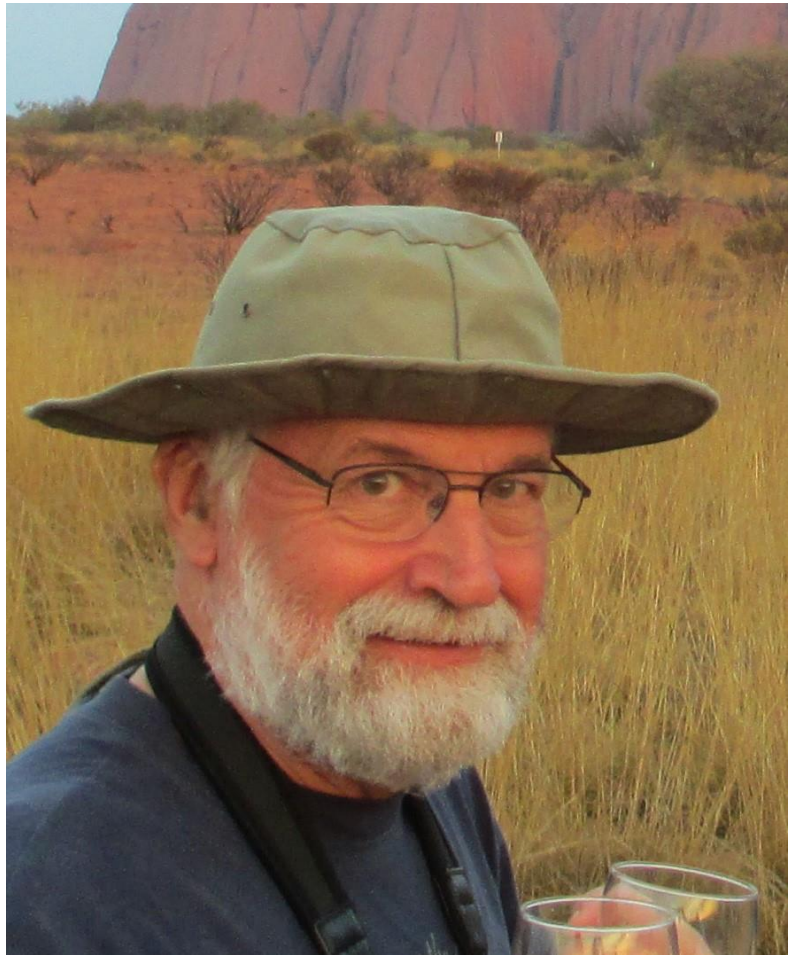
**Dave Horn**, Professor Emeritus of Entomology

The Ohio State University

**“A Forty Year Survey of Birds in Northwestern Hocking County, Ohio”**

**Dave Horn** owned a small cabin in the Hocking Hills for forty years and during that time regularly walked the same two-mile route at all seasons. He recorded all the bird species and witnessed the area’s ecological succession through shrub stage to small trees to mature forest. He was able to observe the general trend of the replacement of earlier bird species by others as the habitat changed.

A graduate of Harvard with Ph.D. from Cornell, Dr. Horn is Professor Emeritus of Entomology at The Ohio State University. His research has centered on arthropod-predator-prey relationships and the impact of prescribed fire and utility right-of-way construction on insects. He is active in the Columbus Audubon, Ohio Ornithological Society and has been an active birdwatcher for 63 years. He even has his field notes from 1952!



Dave Horn in the Australian outback

**November 15, 2014: Field Trip to  
Carlisle Reservation**

**By Harry Spencer**

In spite of the prediction of snow, Debbie Miller, Marty Ackermann and I met at the Carlisle Reservation Raptor Center and walked the Meadow Loop with a detour around the Daly Wetlands. Fortunately, we did not experience the serious precipitation of the snow belt to our northeast. The fall day was sunny, cool and calm.



While enjoying the walk, we did not identify many birds. Besides the usual fall birds: black-capped chickadees, blue jays, white-breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers and northern

flickers, we spotted several sparrows: song, American tree, and fox along the edge of the Wetlands. Altogether it was a pleasant hike with friends even if the birds were few in number.

## **A Birder's Diary: Orphaned or Injured Birds - How to Help Them**

By **Carol Leininger**

Many times people have asked me what to do about an orphaned or injured bird. First of all, ask yourself "how do you know it's an orphan?" Young birds that fall out of their nest, or their entire nest falls out of a tree during a storm, may be returned to the nest or the nest returned to the tree close to where it was originally. Most adult birds will not reject a bird or nest you have touched.



Perhaps the young bird left the nest on its own as it is trying to fly. The fledgling may sit on the ground or a bush with no adult nearby. This is not necessarily an orphan – the parents may know exactly where their young is and hear its cries and may eventually even bring it food. If the bird is still there the next day, perhaps it truly is an orphan and you might want to contact a rehabilitator at the Hawk Ridge Wildlife Center (400-315-9323). Only someone with the proper license and permit should handle the bird. A wild bird is not a pet!

Many birds fly into windows or get hit by cars and are truly injured. Sometimes they are just knocked unconscious for a short while and will recover and fly off. If there are predators nearby, it might be a good idea to cover the bird with a cardboard box until it recovers. Dark and warmth are all it needs. Birds under stress are not interested in water or food and certainly should not be handled. Small birds are less likely to recover than large raptors.

If rehabilitation is needed you should contact someone knowledgeable in this. A rehabilitator is trained and has a permit for this purpose. They also have the time and facilities to care for a bird 24/7 and even know a vet to help if necessary.

Ideally, an injured bird should heal to the point where it can be released back into the wild, but this does not always happen. At the Carlisle Visitor Center there are raptors that have healed but are no longer capable of surviving on their own in the wild due to lack of flight or sight. They are kept in cages and used for educational purposes by a licensed individual. Sometimes birds that die can still be used at parks and museums as taxidermy mounts or study skins. Again, one needs proper credentials to keep such collections. Even possession of an egg or feather is actually illegal.

Pat Leonard in "*Glass Action for Birds*" (Living Bird, Winter 2014) estimates that "365 million to a billion birds (are) killed each year by window collisions in the United States alone."

Daniel Klem, Jr. of Muhlenberg College has been studying bird-window collisions for many years and believes that most collisions are due to birds seeing a plant inside the window or a reflection of plants outside creating the illusion that the habitat continues uninterrupted behind the glass. Klem has found "that most birds will avoid windows with a pattern of vertical stripes spaced four inches apart, or horizontal stripes spaced two inches apart and placed on the outside of the glass (2x4 rule)". Glazing windows with patterns to reflect UV light (which most birds can see) does not seem to be as effective as once thought.

And then there is the bird that sees his own reflection in the glass during the breeding season and assumes it is a rival male. Good luck trying to convince him otherwise.

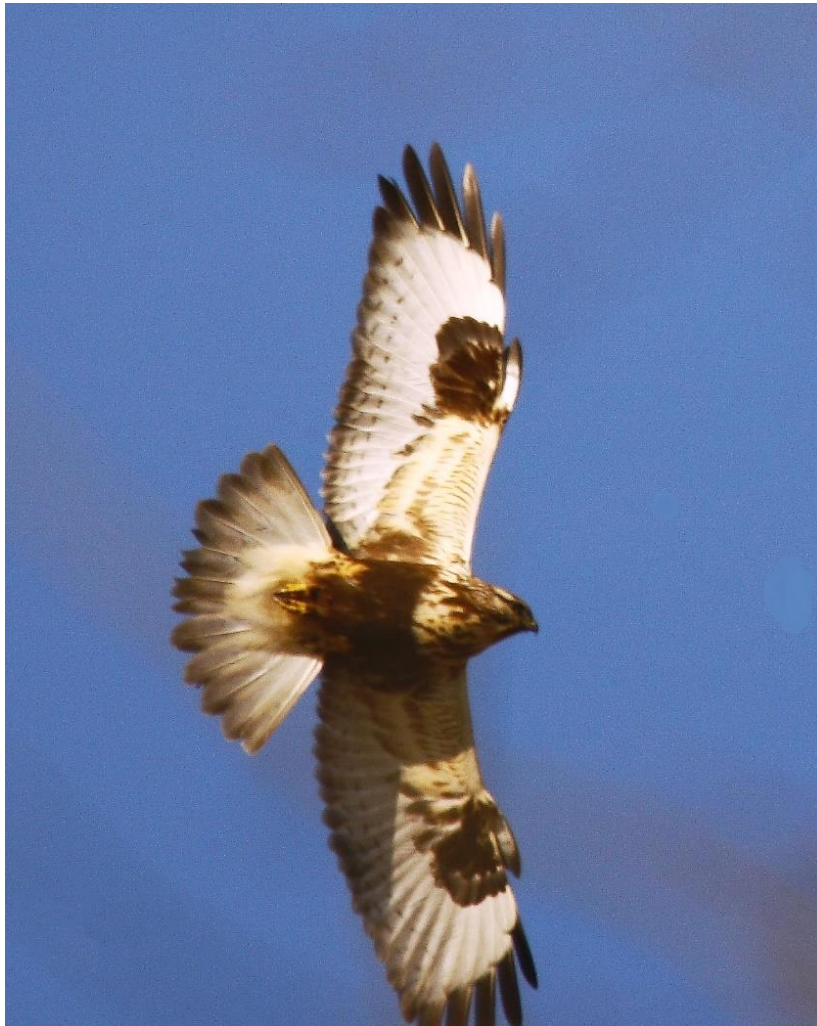
# ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK

*Buteo lagopus*

By **Jim Jablonski**

It seems I've seen more rough-legged hawks than I have realized.

A fairly large hawk at 21 inches, the rough-legged comes in two "morphs" of somewhat different coloration. The two versions display similar patterns but with



ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, light morph, photo by Dane Adams



different intensities of darkness. The light morph has dark patches at its "wrists" with somewhat lighter patagia (leading feathers between patch and shoulder of each wing). The dark morph's patagia are dark from wrist to shoulder. Both varieties have a flared white tail with a dark band along the tip. Its peculiar name comes from its legs being feathered down to the toes.

The rough-legged is a migrant, summering in the far north, its territory just above the southern-most reaches of Hudson Bay, before retreating to the northern Great Lakes and further south before the end of the year.

While at the arctic tree line, the rough-legged lives mostly on voles and lemmings, occasionally turning to birds and carrion. It often hovers while hunting, but sometimes

perches from a high point where it can watch for prey.

Of course, when it's a good year for lemmings, it's a good year for hawks.

The female can lay anywhere between two and seven eggs. A full diet of rodents usually enables her to produce in the higher end of the range. The nest is a platform made of sticks and grass, lined with down and feathers and laid out on slopes in the open tundra or a cliff or treetop if one is available.

The one annual brood usually takes 28-31 days to incubate and the nestlings require 39-45 days to fledge. The male does the foraging during the incubation period and nestling stages.



When the young are ready, the rough-legged tends to form loose flocks with others of its species for the migration south.



©Photo by Dane

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK  
photo by Dane Adams

Although the rough-legged is sometimes poisoned by bait intended for rodents and, for some reason, shot while eating road kill, its population numbers seem quite good over the long haul. Christmas bird count numbers seem to indicate a decline but all other counts give it a “least concern” status among conservationists.

The numbers can change from year to year however. It is well known that lemmings and other small rodents go through cycles of population boom and slumps that cause their predators to expand or contract their populations. When rodent numbers crash, the predators tend to “irrupt” to new areas for food, as snowy owls did last winter when lemming numbers suddenly crashed. Rough-legged hawks often do the same since they feed on the same species. Perhaps I really was seeing more hawks last year.

**References:** “*Rough-legged hawk*” in [birds.audubon.org](http://birds.audubon.org); “*Rough-legged hawk*” in [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org); “*Field Guide to Birds*” by Donald & Lillian Stokes; “*The Birders Handbook*” by Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin and Darryl Wheye; “*Lives of North American Birds*” by Kenn Kauffman.

# DARK-EYED JUNCO

*Junco hyemalis*

By **Cathy Priebe**

The “snow bird” is the more recognizable nickname for this fall and winter Ohio visitor. Arriving at most any time in the fall, this small dark gray and white sparrow usually foretells the end of warm weather and the approach of cold, snowy days as the birds gather under feeders to eat fallen seeds.



The males are dark slate gray overall with a white lower breast and white outer tail feathers that flash as they fly away. The female is brown instead of gray with the same white outer tail feathers and white breast.

The junco is considered a winter migrant, but there are a few areas in Northeastern Ohio where breeding has been documented, primarily in hemlock forests and gorges. The nest is a small cup built on the ground, usually concealed by tree roots or rocks. The female will incubate the 3 to 5 eggs for two weeks.

Juncos have a very identifiable long trill, similar to a chipping sparrow but more musical. Their call is a very loud and sharp chip. They usually depart in April but will sometimes linger into early May.

### **Some fun facts about dark-eyed juncos:**

- \* They sport a pink bill and usually their “expression is angry, almost sullen” according to Pete Dunne, author of the *Essential Field Guide Companion*.
- \* Take a closer look at your feeders this winter. You should notice that there are mostly male juncos and very few females, if any. The females generally go further south because they prefer warmer temperatures and it allows for less competition with the males for food.
- \* Males also prefer not to go too far south so they can get back to their northern breeding grounds faster to claim their territories.
- \* There was a documented nesting pair in a garage in Orange Village in 2003. They successfully raised three broods!
- \* Also pay attention for the rare appearance of the Oregon Junco. Very similar to the dark-eyed junco but has rusty sides. Dunne says they resemble a miniature eastern towhee.

**References:** *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche; *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* by David Allen Sibley



AMERICAN TREE SPARROW  
Photo by Dane Adams



## Competition Among Bluebirds

By **Jim Jablonski**

Even the gentle, loveable bluebirds are subject to the laws of natural selection when their habitats change



MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD  
photo from WIKIPEDIA



WESTERN BLUEBIRD  
photo from WIKIPEDIA

BRAS bluebird chairperson Penny Brandau recently sent me an article *“Battle of the Bluebirds”* from the North American Bluebird Society’s website that details the battle going on between the mountain and western bluebirds in Montana.

Both were in serious decline in Montana until birders put up thousands of bluebird boxes. As their numbers increased inter-species contacts increased as the mountain species came down into lower elevations and the westerns recolonized former areas.

Now global warming is changing the average temperature in the higher altitudes, where the two species are thrown into a cousin’s war. The article points out, “it may only be a matter of time before we see a substantial upward shift in the western bluebirds’ elevation range.”

It seems that, although smaller, the western is able to out-compete the mountain bluebird for territory. “If the battles over nest sites at the nestbox trails that crisscross Montana’s valleys are any indication, an upward shift of the western bluebird’s range may very well lead to the displacement of more mountain bluebird populations.”

There is a hope for the mountain species, ironically. The hotter, drier conditions in the west have increased the number of forest fires. And fires work to the advantage of the “highly dispersive” mountain bluebirds by creating suitable habitats for them.

**References:** Duckworth, Renee A. and Badyaev, Alexander V., *Battle of the Bluebirds*, [nabluebirdsociety.org](http://nabluebirdsociety.org), Fall, 2014; *Mountain bluebird*, *Western bluebird* in “*All about birds*”, Cornell Ornithological Society’s [Birds.cornell.edu](http://Birds.cornell.edu).