

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS

March 2009

**Black River
Audubon Society**



**blackriveraudubon.org
Founded 1958**

Editors: Jack Smith and Harry Spencer
Photographer: John Koscinski
Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel



Snow Geese/William Bofinger

Leading Birder Advocates Environmental Sustainability

Why birding has made me an advocate for environmental sustainability.

Larry Richardson, Director, Lake Erie Nature and Science Center

Tuesday, March 3, Carlisle Visitor Center, 7 p.m.

Larry Richardson has been the Director of the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center since 1988. Prior to that he was a State Park Ranger and Park Manager. He is an advocate for the natural environment and an avid and experienced birder, who has led local birding trips for over 25 years. He also leads expeditions to some of the most breathtaking and exotic birding hot spots around the world.

Young Birder's Club Hike: Waterfowl

Saturday, March 14, 8 to 10:30 a.m.

Sandy Ridge Reservation

This club is for 12-18 year olds and their adult companions. It is jointly sponsored by the Black River Audubon Society and the Lorain County Metro Parks.

Field Trip: Winter Waterfowl, Pancakes

Saturday, March 21, 9 a.m.

Oberlin Reservoir (meeting place), Wellington Reservoir, Pancakes at
Chatham

Twenty-three Birders Report 53,947 Birds of 69 Species: Elyria-Lorain Christmas Bird Count, December 20, 2008

Submitted by **Dave Bragg**



SNOW GOOSE 1, CANADA GOOSE 2422, WOOD DUCK 1, MALLARD 239, NORTHERN SHOVELER 3, CANVASBACK 2, RING-NECKED DUCK 3, LESSER SCAUP 24, BLACK SCOTER 2, BUFFLEHEAD 4, COMMON GOLDENEYE 25, HOODED MERGANSER 4, COMMON MERGANSER 1, RED-BREASTED MERGANSER 11061, RUDDY DUCK 8, WILD TURKEY 18, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT 2, GREAT BLUE HERON 1, BALD EAGLE 4, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK 2, COOPER'S HAWK 5, RED-SHOULDERED HAWK 1, RED-TAILED HAWK 24, AMERICAN KESTREL 2, AMERICAN COOT 3, KILLDEER 1, BONAPARTE'S GULL 1296, RING-BILLED GULL 34397, HERRING GULL 14, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL 12, ROCK PIGEON 63, MOURNING DOVE 85, GREAT HORNED OWL 1, BARRED OWL 1, BELTED KINGFISHER 1, RED-HEADED WOODPECKER 1, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER 1, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER 3, DOWNY WOODPECKER 50, HAIRY WOODPECKER 4, NORTHERN FLICKER 19, BLUE JAY 187, AMERICAN CROW 31, HORNED LARK 40, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE 133, TUFTED TITMOUSE 60, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH 1, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH 63, CAROLINA WREN 13, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET 5, EASTERN BLUEBIRD 56, AMERICAN ROBIN 112, EUROPEAN STARLING 2119, CEDAR WAXWING 5, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER 4, AMERICAN TREE SPARROW 163, FIELD SPARROW 3, SONG SPARROW 33, SWAMP SPARROW 44, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW 10, DARK-EYED JUNCO 185, LAPLAND LONGSPUR 5, SNOW BUNTING 2, NORTHERN CARDINAL 123, RED-WINGED

BLACKBIRD 7, COMMON GRACKLE 33, HOUSE FINCH 72, PINE SISKIN 2, AMERICN GOLDFINCH 348, HOUSE SPARROW 239

From Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society

Be a volunteer or supporter of this year's

ROCKY RIVER IMPORTANT BIRD AREA BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

In 2005, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society adopted the Rocky River Important Bird Area with a view to monitor bird populations in the Rocky River watershed (East Branch) as an indicator of ecosystem health. By collecting credible data, we hope to influence wise land use decisions that will help sustain the natural resources of the Rocky River watershed for future generations.

Are you a skilled Birder?

Would you walk 5 miles or 31 miles for a good cause?

Call Diane Sigler (440-237-0816) or Tom & Mary Anne Romito (216-741-2352)

Greater White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

By **Jack Smith**



Our photographs this month are visual studies of native geese. The photos below were taken by Dane Adams, the top two at the Wellington Upground Reservoir and the bottom one at the Norwalk Reservoir. The birds portrayed on the first page are Snow Geese, white phase, taken by William Bofinger at Caley, and the white-headed individual in the right photo is also a Snow Goose, but blue phase, also

called Blue Goose.

The photos indicate the relative sizes of the three species: Canada Geese are larger than either Snow Geese or Greater White-fronted Geese.

The Greater White-fronted Geese shown in the two photos below are mostly brown with a white narrow flank-line and a white patch between forehead and pink bill. Anser is the



Latin name for goose. The word albi comes from the Latin word albus meaning white and frons meaning forehead.

A few days after Dane Adams photographed the Greater White-fronted Geese at the Norwalk Reservoir, Peg and Harry Spencer went to that reservoir to see if the geese were still there. They were and at one point the birds climbed out onto the ice where their orange legs and feet were clearly visible. Only Greater White-fronted Geese and Emperor Geese, a rare Alaskan specialty, have orange-colored legs and feet.



During the migration season, Greater White-fronted Geese are not seen in large numbers east of the Mississippi River. In Ohio the species is considered occasional to rare in the western part of Ohio and accidental in our area. In recent years, I believe, an increased number of migrating birds has been seen.

In early March 2003, Joe Strong and I traveled to the Audubon Interpretive Center on the Platte River near Kearney, Nebraska to join a small group of Audubon birders including John Flicker. Late in the afternoon of March 3, in a blinding snow storm we made our way to a blind. I remember thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese alighting. The next day, however, was sunny, and we appreciated the sight of thousands of birds accompanied by a deafening din.



Amongst the cranes and Snow Geese were a couple of hundred Greater White-fronted Geese. These geese were migrating to their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra of Alaska and Western Canada.

During migration Greater White-fronted Geese fly day and night in V-formation, sometimes at high altitudes. They winter in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and Mexico. Western birds migrate along the Pacific flyway to California and Mexico.

Some breed in Greenland and winter in Ireland. Those that Joe and I observed during early March were migrating to their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra of Alaska and Western Canada.

During winter, the birds feed mostly on marsh grasses and freshly sprouted grain. In their northern breeding areas they add insects to their vegetarian diet. This added protein is needed by goslings for their growth.

The birds normally arrive at their breeding grounds in early May. Fifteen to twenty pairs of birds nest together in loose colonies. As with most geese and swans, the female of a pair selects the nest site, a hummock or small hill within an area of wet, marshy tundra. The female builds the nest of plant materials and lines it with her down as the last eggs are laid. She lays 3 to 6 dull white eggs, which soon become nest-stained, and incubates them, while the drake aggressively defends the nest. (I am reminded of being attacked by a Mute Swan when I approached too close to a nest.)

After 22 to 27 days, precocious goslings hatch. Shortly they walk, swim, and feed themselves under the protective eyes of both parents. The young fly after 38 to 45 days.

The juveniles mostly are colored brown without the white forehead. They are often misidentified as juvenile Snow Geese, blue morph, which are somewhat darker.

The birds can live for several decades. One female wounded and captured in 1903 or 1904 died in captivity in 1950. She laid eggs annually until the year she died.

The population fluctuates from year to year, and the species may require some survival help, especially the Tule Goose, a variety with a small population breeding in a confined region of western Alaska.

References: *Birds of Ohio* by Bruce G. Peterjohn, *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufman, *Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John K. Torres, *Field Guide to Birds of North America* by Roger Tory Peterson (First Edition of 2008).

A Birder's Diary

By Carol Leininger



Sometimes seeing an exciting new bird for my life list isn't quite as exciting as I had hoped. I saw a Painted Bunting during spring migration at a bird feeder just outside the Crane Creek Migratory Bird Center one year. It was a beautiful olive-green female. Oh, how I wished it had been a bright red, green, and blue male! I saw a Cock-of-the-Rock near Machu Picchu in Peru. Once again it was a beautiful rusty colored female. The bright orange male was not to be seen anywhere. Well, I added both birds to my life list. I did have a quick glimpse of a male Painted Bunting several years later in the southern United States, but my chances of seeing a real live male Cock-of-the-Rock are pretty slim. I'll probably have to be satisfied with a study-skin at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Nancy's Florida Journal

By Nancy Shipman

Relaxing on a January afternoon:



I am sitting outside in the bright sunshine enjoying a gentle breeze while watching and chatting with numerous horseback riders. Temperature is 65 degrees. Just glancing around this campground I have seen Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Carolina Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, cardinals, Tufted Titmice, phoebes, Downy Woodpeckers, and Barred Owls. This is possible because Wayne and I volunteer as Campground Hosts at River Rise State Preserve in Florida.

Our present position started with an internet search of Florida State Parks. One of the links on this website was "volunteer". The idea of helping park rangers and visitors appealed to us, along with the possibility of free camping. Therefore we applied on-line and were subsequently contacted and accepted. Now we enjoy three months in Florida assisting park personnel with maintenance and projects that might not be done without

volunteer help. Being a part of this team has made our stay more enjoyable. We also now have many new friends among volunteers and local visitors at this park.

Volunteer opportunities here in Florida vary greatly from park to park. Most national parks, wildlife refuges, state and national forests and other recreational areas utilize volunteers. We have met folks that live full time in their RV's or campers, traveling around the country volunteering at different parks. What a grand way to see our country and enjoy the outdoors.

An Ornithologist, a Biologist, and an Electrical Engineer Clarify Thrush Migration

By **Harry Spencer**



Bird migration is one of nature's wonders. How does a Ruby-throated Hummingbird navigate year after year between the feeder outside our window and the bird's tropical wintering grounds? Of course, it may be a different individual at our feeder each year, but if we do not get our feeder installed early enough in May, a hummingbird will hover outside our window seemingly to look for the feeder and its sweet contents. We like to think that the hovering bird is the same individual that fed at the feeder last year.

Miyoko Chu in *Songbird Journeys* (Walker Publishing Company, Inc., New York 2006) summarizes some fascinating accounts of experiments by an ornithologist, Richard Graber, an electrical engineer, Bill Cochran, and a biologist Martin Wikelski. They unraveled many aspects of thrush migration. Graber persuaded his friend Bill Cochran to design a radio transmitter light enough to be attached to the back of thrushes without impairing flight. By car and plane Graber and Cochran electronically followed thrushes with transmitters glued to their backs.

Graber followed one Gray-cheeked Thrush for over 400 miles from Illinois northward across Lake Michigan. Flying at night in a straight line at fifty miles per hour, the bird was undeterred by thunder storms that forced the human trackers to turn away. Cochran expanded the studies to include Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Golden Eagles, Merlins, Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcons, and others. Mostly he tracked thrushes, particularly Wood and Swainson's Thrushes. Following night flight, the thrushes rested during daytime hours while they searched for food in a limited area of underbrush. If they added enough fat to return their weight to an ounce or more, the birds generally continued their nocturnal journeys.

Cochran hypothesized that the birds principally navigated by some internal magnetic compass. He tested his idea by subjecting the birds to an altered magnetic field before takeoff. Sure enough the birds immediately flew westward rather than northward for the first night, but corrected their direction on subsequent night flights. The birds seemed to recalibrate their internal compass at sunset.

After tracking birds for more than twenty-five years, Cochran teamed with Wikelski and expanded appreciably the experiments. Their results confirmed Cochran's original conclusions.

Bird migration is amazing!

Ongoing World Bank Study on the Environmental and Social Challenges of Scaling Up Wind Power Development

Quick Summary. An ongoing World Bank study seeks to (i) identify good practices in managing the key environmental and social issues in wind power development and (ii) provide practical advice on how best to address these issues in the location, design, operation, and monitoring of future wind projects. Although wind power is commonly considered to be a key component of an environmentally sustainable, low-carbon energy future, it nonetheless poses significant environmental and social concerns. These include potentially significant harm to some bird and bat species (principally through collisions with wind turbines), public concern about the visual impacts, and issues related to benefits sharing and land tenure. Although this study seeks to distill the lessons learned from wind projects around the world, it focuses particularly on addressing the challenges of wind power development in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The study is due to be completed around June 2009.

Public Input Welcome. The study team welcomes constructive input from all interested persons. Please address any comments, or other information you wish to share with the study team, to George Ledec (gledec@worldbank.org) regarding environmental issues, and Kenn Rapp (krapp@worldbank.org) regarding social issues.

Adverse Biodiversity Impacts. Despite its enormous advantages of renewability and near-zero carbon emissions, wind power nonetheless poses significant environmental challenges. Of particular concern and complexity are the adverse impacts upon birds and bats, which can be significant for some species in certain locations. For **birds**, estimated collisions with wind turbines range from as low as 0.01 to as high as 60 or more birds per turbine per year, at those wind farms that have been systematically monitored for bird mortality. (Many wind farms still lack such monitoring, or the data, if collected, have not been publicly disclosed.) As wind power development continues to be rapidly scaled up, bird mortality rates might start becoming nationally or even globally significant from a conservation standpoint, particularly for those species (such as some birds of prey and seabirds) with low reproductive rates and frequent collisions with wind turbines. Examples of bird species that have experienced dramatic population declines around particularly high-risk wind farms are Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) at Altamont Pass, California, USA; White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) at Smola Island, Norway; and Eurasian Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) at Tarifa and Navarra, Spain. Also of conservation concern is the potential cumulative impact of many projected future wind farms within certain key bird migration corridors (such as the Texas coast, USA; Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Mexico; and much of Panama). Aside from collision-related mortality, some wind farms can make natural grassland or shrubland habitats unsuitable for certain birds of conservation interest (such as prairie grouse in North America and bustards in Europe, Asia, and Africa) that instinctively stay away from tall structures, even if very little native vegetation is cleared for the wind farm.

For **bats**, the potential conservation implications of large-scale wind power expansion may be even more problematic than for birds. This is because (for reasons that are still poorly understood) many species of bats are actually attracted to the wind turbines, and die either from direct collision or from major air pressure changes right around the spinning rotors. At some wind farms, particularly in wooded areas (such as mountain ridges in the eastern United States), bat mortality is substantially higher than bird mortality. Aside from birds and bats, other impacts of wind power development on biodiversity can include (i) in humid mountainous areas, the clearing of unique ridge-top vegetation for wind turbine platforms and connecting access roads and (ii) in offshore wind farms, a variety of impacts on marine life. Some of these impacts can be positive; for example,

offshore wind farms typically serve as small, *de facto* marine protected areas since fishing boats are excluded.

John Koscinski now displays many of his nature photos at
<http://picasaweb.google.com/Koscinski22>

Audubon Ohio Executive Director

Jerry Tinianow Resigns

February 6, 2009 – Washington, D.C. – The National Audubon Society and its Ohio Executive Director, Jerry Tinianow, have announced that Tinianow has resigned from his Audubon position to explore new opportunities for service to the community and the cause of conservation.

Audubon President John Flicker congratulated Tinianow on his successful career at Audubon. “Jerry has been one of our star performers and has provided outstanding leadership. Audubon Ohio has made tremendous strides under his guidance. He helped make our vision a reality on the ground in Ohio” said Flicker.

“I am proud of my accomplishments at Audubon Ohio,” said Tinianow. “As 2009 dawns with new national leadership, I am eager to pursue new opportunities to help our community, state and nation move toward greater sustainability and renewed commitment to the preservation of our natural resources. Though I have not yet committed to a specific path, I am confident that I will continue to make a substantial contribution.”

Tinianow joined Audubon in January 2003 after a 22-year career as a commercial trial attorney having served as a partner in two of Ohio’s largest law firms. While practicing law he also served in volunteer leadership capacities in several conservation organizations, including the Sierra Club, where he had been a national vice president. He had also chaired the City of Columbus’s groundbreaking “Priorities ‘95” environmental risk assessment and strategic planning project pursuant to appointment by former Columbus Mayor Greg Lashutka.

“I am very grateful to the National Audubon Society for giving me this opportunity to promote its agenda in Ohio at a critical time, and I wish it the best as it continues to grow its program here,” said Tinianow.

Members’ Photo Gallery



Photos taken by Nancy Dowdell during the November 22, 2008 Field Trip at the Wellington Upground Reservoir and the Wellington Reservation.



The Future Speaks

From *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* by Thomas L. Friedman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2008)

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a Twelve-year-old girl named Severn Suzuki addressed the plenary session. Here is an excerpt:

Hello, I'm Severn Suzuki, speaking for ECO – the Environmental Children's Organization. We are a group of twelve- and thirteen-year-olds trying to make a difference: Vanessa Suttie, Morgan Geisler, Michelle Quigg and me. We raised all the money to come here five thousand miles to tell you adults you must change your ways. Coming up here today, I have no hidden agenda. I am fighting for my future. Losing my future is not like losing an election or a few points on the stock market. I am here to speak for all generations to come. I am here to speak on behalf of the starving children around the world whose cries go unheard. I am here to speak for the countless animals dying across this planet because they have nowhere left to go. I am afraid to go out in the sun now because of the holes in the ozone. I am afraid to breathe the air because I don't know what chemicals are in it. I used to go fishing in Vancouver, my home, with my dad until just a few years ago we found the fish full of cancers. And now we hear of animals and plants going extinct every day – vanishing forever. In my life, I have dreamt of seeing the great herds of wild animals, jungles and rain forests full of birds and butterflies, but now I wonder if they will even exist for my children to see. Did you have to worry about these things when you were my age? All this is happening before our eyes and yet we act as if we have all the time we want and all the solutions. I'm only a child and I don't have all the solutions, but I want you to realize, neither do you... You don't know how to bring the salmon back up a dead stream. You don't know how to bring back an animal now extinct. And you can't bring back the forests that once grew where there is now desert. If you don't know how to fix it, please stop breaking it!...

At school, even in kindergarten, you teach us how to behave in the world. You teach us: not to fight with others, to work things out, to respect others, to clean up our mess, not to hurt other creatures, to share – not be greedy. Then why do you go out and do the things you tell us not to do? Do not forget why you're attending these conferences, who you're doing this for – we are your own children. You are deciding what kind of world we are growing up in. Parents should be able to comfort their children by saying “everything's going to be all right,” “it's not the end of the world,” and “we're doing the best we can.” But I don't think you can say that to us anymore. Are we even on your list of priorities?

My dad always says, “You are what you do, not what you say.” Well, what you do makes me cry at night. You grown-ups say you love us, but I challenge you. Please make your actions reflect your words. Thank you.