

# Black River Audubon Society

# WINGTIPS

MAR 2017



EASTERN BLUEBIRD photo by Barbara Baudot

Editors: Jim Jablonski, Harry Spencer, Cathy Priebe  
Photographer Emeritus: John Koscinski  
Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel

## **Program**

**Tuesday, March 7 at 7 p.m.  
SANDY RIDGE RESERVATION**

**NOTE LOCATION!**

**Tyler McClain**

## **Hog Island Adventure**



Tyler is a senior at Mohawk High School in Sycamore, Wyandot County, Ohio. He started birding at seven-years of age, has led birding walks for Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and volunteered at a banding station. He enjoys fishing and hunting in his spare time. At school, he plays on the basketball team and is a member of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions). He plans to study Environmental Science/Biology at the University of Toledo and become a naturalist.

He will tell us about his experiences at the Hog Island Audubon Camp.

## **PLEASE NOTE**

**The March, April and May monthly meetings of Black River Audubon Society will take place at Sandy Ridge Reservation's Perry F. Johnson Wetland Center off Otten Road in North Ridgeville.**

**This is due to Metro Park activities at Carlisle Visitor Center during those months. We apologize for any inconvenience.**

## **Field Trips**

**Killbuck Marsh/Funk Bottoms/  
Brown Bog, etc.**

**Saturday, March 18, 2017, 9:00 a.m.**

Meet at Shreve Lake parking lot, Sally Fox to lead

**Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve**

**Saturday, April 15, 2017, 9:00 a.m.**

Meet at 8701 Lakeshore Blvd.

Cleveland, Former Dike 14

Chuck Slusarczyk, Jr. to lead

# January Field Trip Lake Erie Shoreline

January 21, 2017

By Tammy Martin

Records were set this morning on our annual lakeshore birding outing; temperature records, that is. Twenty-five birders came together in Lorain for a balmy search for winter waterfowl, gulls, etc. Balmy? Yup. When we started, our weather apps noted 51 degrees . . . on JANUARY 21<sup>st</sup>!! Gotta be a BRAS record for us in January, don't you think? And, by the time we finished, our apps read 63!! Crazy! Now, back to birding.



As noted, 25 birders began by scanning the Lorain harbor, finding American coot, ring-billed, herring, and great black-backed gulls. Tried to make the great black-backed into a lesser black-backed, but alas, no. This distant roosting gull stood up, revealing its larger size, dark back, and pink legs. Next, we walked the entire path around the impoundment. And, why not, it was sunny, warm, and pleasant! Canada geese and mallards greeted us over the bank in the water; two very quiet American goldfinch flew over (no "potato chip-potato chip-potato chip" call); numerous American tree sparrows flitted in-and-out of the phragmites; a lone killdeer called; and, one horned grebe and one red-breasted merganser were spotted beyond the stone embankment. Only one merg!! Crazy for January!! But, the definite highlight for everyone was a fly-over of four Ross's geese! Wow!



After exhausting the impoundment, we drove to the Sheffield Lake boat ramp, picking up European starling, American crow, and house sparrow along the way. Once at the ramp, we studied closer gulls (same three species spotted in Lorain) before a couple of diving duck species appeared, common goldeneye and bufflehead. Plenty of scope views were enjoyed by all! Raptor-wise, we finally had a mature bald eagle fly by. Although we didn't add too many new species at the ramp, all continued to enjoy birding in comfortable, balmy weather. Again, crazy!!

Final stop led us to Avon Lake's Miller Road Park, just west of the power plant, where we tallied blue jay in the parking lot. Views from the pier added a pair of redhead ducks (male and female) and closer looks of red-breasted mergansers (both male and female). Final highlight was a peregrine falcon perched on one of the power plant towers . . . a truly stunning bird!

## SAVE THE DATES: APRIL 1 & 25

**On April 1, Brian "Fox" Ellis will be the speaker for The Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series at the French Creek Nature Center at 2:00 p.m.**

Mr. Ellis, a nationally known interpreter and storyteller, will be **sharing the life of John James Audubon**. Don't miss this entertaining and informative program.

**Black River Audubon and Firelands Audubon will welcome Dr. Bernie Master as he presents his program "World Birding" at Ritter Public Library, 5680 Liberty Avenue, Vermilion on Tuesday, April 25 at 7 p.m.**

Dr. Master, an internationally recognized conservationist, has a Life List that includes over three-quarters of the world's bird species, a total in excess of 7,800 birds. A previously unrecorded song bird in Columbia, the *Vireo masteri*, or Choco Vireo, is named for his family.

In addition, Dr. Master, a distinguished health care professional, pioneered the first managed-care company in the country, serving Columbus and Dayton's Medicaid patients. The Columbus Education Association honored him with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in 1995.

# EASTERN BLUEBIRD

*Sialia sialis*

By Barbara Baudot

During a snowstorm in New Hampshire in 2009, I first saw a bluebird on my feeder. I rubbed my eyes to make sure that I was not dreaming. Perhaps because I was so enchanted by the lore of the bluebird that his presence seemed more dream-like than real.



Thereafter bluebird visits continued throughout the year. In spring and summer they brought their families and fed their fledglings until they were independent. Each year an additional generation of bluebirds populated my deck. The thrill of seeing them never tempered. Instead I became increasingly fascinated; photographing them in all different conditions and situations and reading assiduously about them.

This beautiful bird probably has more widespread symbolic significance than any other bird on the planet. Although native only to North America, the bluebird is known around the world as the symbol of happiness, truth, and hope. In 17<sup>th</sup> century France, Madame d'Aulnoy wrote "The Bluebird," wherein to save his beloved, King Charming becomes a bluebird.

The 1908 stage play *The Bluebird* by the Belgian, Noble Prize winning Maurice Maeterlinck immortalizes the "bluebird of happiness." This play is the source of films, a Metropolitan opera, and presently an animated TV series in Japan. Maeterlinck's bluebird has profound symbolic importance. All birds ascending directly to their destination are said to symbolize truth. But, inspired by the ethereal blue of his feathers, Maeterlinck intends his bluebird to symbolize celestial truth from whence true happiness derives.

In following years a number of songs about bluebirds appeared. In 1934, Metropolitan opera tenor, Jan Peerce sang the "Bluebird of Happiness." Written for him by [S. Harmati](#) and [E. Heyman](#), it becomes Peerce's signature song. Recorded by RCA it tops billboard charts in the 40's. Peerce widely popularizes the bluebird as the symbol of happiness in the America.

"Be like the Bluebird" from the musical *Anything Goes* by Cole Porter in 1934 is another popular hit offering the same happy connotation of the bluebird. Other songs about happy little bluebirds include the 1939 song "Somewhere over the rainbow [where bluebirds fly]."

It was when I was taken to see the "Song of the South" in 1946, that the bluebird became indelibly magical for me. In this film, Uncle Remus famously sings "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, Zip-a-dee-day." An animated Mr. Bluebird with top hat and cane rides his shoulder and flits around along the path he trods through Disney's enchanting spring meadow. So many times my mind wanders to that bluebird making "ev'rything satisfactu'l."

This poetic association with bluebirds is the stuff of inner peace, inspiration and great expectations. Closer to the ground it lends energy, urgency, and impulse to caring for the real bluebirds in our neighborhood.

**References:** [youtube.com/watch](https://www.youtube.com/watch); **The Bluebird: A Fairy Play in Six Acts** by Maurice Maeterlinck; **Maeterlinck's Symbolism: The Bluebird** by Henry Rose; **Eastern Bluebird** in Wikipedia.

## A Birder's Diary: Berries and Birds in Your Backyard

By Carol Leininger

It is interesting to note that humans and birds are attracted by the same plant characteristics. Both enjoy plants that produce abundant fruits, flowers and have long lasting foliage. To attract the largest variety of bird species it is best to choose a variety of vegetation types, selecting plants that will bear food in different seasons.



Most berries start out green and then turn pink or red and finally blue or black when they are ripe and ready to eat. These colors serve as an indicator to summer birds that there is food on the way and make it easier for them to

find the ripe berries before they rot. Plants benefit from birds as well – birds ingest the seeds with the fruit, the seeds pass through their digestive tract and are deposited elsewhere as bird droppings.

Some berries contain high amounts of carbohydrate in the form of sugar. These are commonly produced in abundance during late summer when nesting is coming to an end and there are many newly fledged birds out foraging. Plants rich in carbohydrates include blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries, plums, cherries, and strawberries.

Other berries are rich in lipids and are produced in later summer and early fall as birds begin to store fat for their long migration southward, Spicebush, sassafras,

magnolias, bittersweet, and viburnums are high in lipids. Fruit from hawthorns is popular in midwinter and early spring, providing some lipids for over wintering birds and early spring migrants

Berries and fruits are important foods for bluebirds, catbirds, flickers, mockingbirds, robins, thrashers, and thrushes. You might want to keep this in mind if you plan to add new trees and shrubs around your property.

**Reference:** Audubon at Home, Autumn, 2005.

## BALD EAGLE

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

By Sally Fox

In the early 1960's, I had my first encounter with bald eagles, at least with a nest. I was sailing with my sister and her family to explore some of the lesser-known islands in Lake Erie: Green Island where we walked across the island on a cement path and crunched the empty shells of land snails, North Bass Island covered with grape vines and a few colorful residents. But my favorite island was Middle Island, a small island in Canadian waters between Kelley's Island and Pelee Island. Two structures stood on the island, a hunting lodge used in pheasant season and a large nest high in a tree close to the west end of the island. I was told this was the nest of the last pair of eagles to nest on Lake Erie following the demise of eagles due to DDT. I was amazed at its size and saddened by the loss. By 1979 there were only four nesting pairs of eagles in Ohio.



Skip ahead several years. Again, I was boating, but this time with my brother-in-law in an Old Town Canoe on Duck Lake in northwestern Michigan. We had paddled to a large bay surrounded by forest when I looked up and saw my first eagle. I was so excited I stood up (not a good thing to do in a canoe) but I will never forget the thrill of seeing that



BALD EAGLE photo by Mike Tylicki

magnificent bird with white head and tail shimmering in the sun against an impossibly blue sky. Over the next several years I would occasionally see an eagle or two at Duck Lake, but it was a long time before eagles returned to Ohio and Lake Erie.

The bald eagle, truly an impressive bird, is native only to North America. With an average body length of 31 inches and a wingspan of 80 inches the bald eagle is second only in size to the California condor. The female is the larger of the pair with the male weighing ten pounds and the female weighing twelve. Adult bald eagles have a snow-white head and tail, a dark brown body, and a heavy yellow beak. First year immature eagles are uniformly brown adding splotchy patches of white on their undersides during their second and third years. It takes four to five years for a bald eagle to attain its adult plumage.

Eagles feed on live and dead fish, waterfowl, small mammals, muskrats, squirrels, groundhogs, and will also eat carrion. Their habitat includes the shores of lakes, major river systems, and inland marshes where large trees are available for nesting. Their nests are massive, built in the crook of large trees. The largest recorded nest was in Vermilion. It measured 12 feet high, 8 1/2 feet across and was occupied for 35 years. A reproduction of this nest is outside the Carlisle Visitor Center. In Ohio eagles start their nesting period from late February to July, having a clutch of two and sometimes three, large, white eggs. About 30 days are needed for incubation and the chicks will fledge in 9-10 weeks.

Bald eagles provide an example of both the negative and positive effects of human activities on wildlife. Bald eagles



BALD EAGLES photo by Sally Fox

were first officially recorded in Ohio in 1861 and the first studies of bald eagles in Ohio took place in the 1920's. During the mid-1900's eagle populations were low, but plummeted by the 1960's due to loss of habitat, and the effects of the pesticide DDT. The eagles' eggs did not hatch because they were either infertile or the weight of the adult eagle broke the fragile eggshell. Bald eagles were declared an endangered species in 1967. Due to federal restrictions on pesticide use, wetland habitat protection, and reestablishment efforts by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife, there has been a steady increase in the number of breeding pairs of bald eagles. Based on a survey done by ODNR there were 207 nesting pairs of bald eagles in Ohio last year with 327 young.

This brings me to the pair of bald eagles on our cover. I am so fortunate to live on the shores of Lake Erie in Linwood Park in Vermilion. For the past several years, bald eagles that nest south of town have used a black walnut tree 600 yards from my front door as a lookout tree. Usually these were immature eagles. This year a pair of adult eagles have chosen a large maple tree a little to the east as their favorite lookout while the black walnut continues to be used as well. In the mornings, the birds sit in the trees for hours and will occasionally soar over the lake to swoop down for a fish. I never tire of seeing these fabulous birds. Maybe someday a pair will find the perfect tree for a nest here in Linwood. I can only hope.

**References:** *Bald Eagle Nesting Survey* by ODNR Division of Wildlife; *Bald Eagle Facts* by Ohio History Central; *Raptors in Ohio: Hawks* by ODNR Division Wildlife; *Birds of America* by Editor-in-Chief T. Gilbert Pearson; *National Geographic Magazine: The Eagle in Action, An Intimate Study of the Eyrrie Life of America's National Bird* by Francis H. Herrick, Sc, D.

## National Audubon Society and EPA

As discussed in Sally Fox's article above, the bald eagle, once on the road to extinction due to the widespread use of DDT, has been on the road to recovery through governmental conservation efforts since it was first declared an endangered species in 1967, fifty years ago.

The success story of the bald eagle, along with a number of other species such as the peregrine falcon, may be threatened in the future, according to Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold.

In an article placed on Audubon's website on January 17, 2017, Yarnold announced the organization's opposition to the nomination of Scott Pruitt as director of the Environmental Protection Agency. In the article, which also appeared in the Huffington Post, Yarnold outlined the reasons for national Audubon's opposition.

"Pruitt has repeatedly put the interests of the agricultural, oil, gas and coal industries, which have funneled more than \$300,000 into his election campaigns, ahead of protecting the health of the citizens who elected him to state office.

"This is a dangerous record for a man who has been nominated to lead the agency that should operate on the assumption that clean air and water are not Republican or Democratic issues, but basic American rights.

"The EPA does life-saving work for the birds we cherish, the wild places we treasure and the families we love. The Senate should not hand the . . . EPA to a man who has shown . . . that he has every intention to undo nearly a half century of progress."

## Hog Island Birding Scholarships

This year we offer two Hog Island scholarships to adults. Each scholarship covers tuition, room and board, and travel expenses. Our goal is that the recipients will follow the examples of those who have returned from Hog Island as ambassadors of conservation and education in our community.

The following camps have been particularly valuable to past participants: *Joy of Birding* (June 4-9), *Field Ornithology* (June 18-23), and *Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week* (July 16-21). For birding camp details and registration go to [hogisland.audubon.org](http://hogisland.audubon.org). Those interested in applying for the scholarship should contact Jim Jablonski at [jjjablon@aol.com](mailto:jjjablon@aol.com) or 440-365-6465.

**DON'T FORGET**  
**The Great Backyard Bird Count**  
**February, 17-20, 2017**  
**Go to [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org) to register**

**To receive Wingtips without membership in National Audubon – Application is \$15 /Year**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon  
P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036**

**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.**

**National Audubon Membership Application (Includes membership in Black River Audubon and subscriptions to WINGTIPS and AUDUBON magazine: \$20/year, \$30/2 years, \$15/year for students and seniors)**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8**

**Send your check to: National Audubon Society,**

**225 Varick Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**New York, NY 10014**

**Attention: Chance Mueleck**