

# WINGTIPS

September 2014



RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET photo by Dane Adams

## **Program**

**Jen Brumfield**

Cleveland Metroparks Naturalist/Artist

## **Birding Lake Erie by Land and Boat**

**Tuesday, September 2, 2014, 7 p.m.**

Carlisle Visitor Center



Jen Brumfield, well-known naturalist, artist, author and guide, returns to Black River Audubon for our September meeting.

Jen's talk will offer a new look at birding Lake Erie. Her trips from August through November have recorded point-blank looks at Sabine's gulls and pomarine and parasitic jaegers – species that are often difficult to see from shore. She explains the mystery behind fall waterbird migration on Lake Erie, while offering vivid photos of incredible birds and adventures on the lake.

## **Board Meeting**

September 30, 2014, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

The Jack Smith House, 304 West Ave., Elyria

## Field Trip

Saturday, September 20

### Sheldon Marsh

Meet in the Sheldon Marsh parking lot at 9 a.m. Paul Sherwood will serve as guide. Attend Lake Erie Wing Watch afterwards at nearby Osborn Metro Park. See related article on page 4 for details.

## Board Members 2014-2015

	<i>Term</i>	<i>End of Term</i>
BETTY LAKE	SECOND	2015
CATHY PRIEBE	SECOND	2015
DIANE DEVEREAUX	FIRST	2015
DEBBIE MOHR	SECOND	2015
JOHN RYAN	FIRST	2016
MARTY ACKERMANN	SECOND	2016
TERRI MARTINCIC	SECOND	2016
JIM JABLONSKI	FIRST	2016
TAMMY MARTIN	FIRST	2017
HARRY SPENCER	SECOND	2017
PENNY BRANDAU	FIRST	2017
LARRY WILSON	FIRST	2017

## Officers 2014-2015

President Debbie Mohr  
First Vice President Marty Ackermann  
Second Vice President John Ryan  
Secretary Jim Jablonski  
Treasurer Harry Spencer

## April 19th Field Trip to Shreve, Brown's Bog, and Funk Bottoms

By Nan Miller

Eight people led by Tammy Martin had a great day visiting several areas. The first was Wilderness Road (bisects Funk Bottoms) surrounded by open water and marshy land. It was very windy and cold, but yielded ducks and shorebirds. Next we went to Shreve Lake to meet the rest of the group. There our scopes revealed a black-crowned night heron. On the way to Brown's Bog a turkey ambled across the road. And Diane Devereaux photographed a pheasant.

Brown's Bog was the highlight for most of us. We found a singing white-eyed vireo and a Carolina chickadee singing both of his songs, so we were able to compare the three songs to the more familiar one of a black-capped chickadee. Fortunately we could visually compare the subtle differences in the plumages of the three species. We also noted last year's pitcher plants and poison sumac.

Back at Funk Bottoms we were able to add many more birds for a final day's total of 71 species.

And of course we enjoyed a fine meal at an Amish restaurant.

This is a great area to visit and I highly recommend a trip.



## Our New Format

I have always thought the only thing as constant as change is complaining about it. Hopefully, I will be proven wrong with our new *Wingtips* format. At co-editor Harry Spencer's suggestion, we have gone to a full-page, two-column document style that I think makes for clearer pages and easier reading with fewer awkward jumps in the text. To be honest it also makes for easier layout. I hope you like it.

Jim Jablonski, *Wingtips* Co-editor.

## June 21<sup>st</sup> Outing to Holden Arboretum

By **Tammy Martin**



Early Saturday morning, I met Debbie Mohr at Midway Mall and car-pooled to Holden Arboretum. Not knowing who else may venture East for our field trip, we were delighted when joined by Harriet Alger (now living in Cleveland), Jeanne Hrenko (from Euclid), and Steve Chavez (another Elyrian).

Cool temps allowed for a pleasant walk through the various portions of the arboretum, both natural and manicured. The variety of habitats led to us seeing and hearing many "good" birds. And, thanks to Harriet's birding app, we even communicated with and confirmed identity of several nesting species that normally migrate north of Ohio, such as Pine Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco.

One interesting non-bird creature that we happened to find along the path was a Red-spotted Newt, in its terrestrial stage (Google it!). Pretty sure I hadn't seen one of these fascinating amphibians since my youth! After tallying 44 species, we relaxed for a while inside the Arboretum's visitor center, giving us time to continue visiting with our Cleveland friends while Debbie shopped in the bookstore. Although it's a bit of a drive, Holden did not disappoint us with good birding, botanizing, etc. Make plans to visit on your own sometime!

## A Birder's Diary: COMMON GALLINULE, *et. al.*

By **Carol Leininger**



The last part of Ohio to be settled was the northwestern corner. According to Jim Mollenkopf who has written two books on the Great Black Swamp, travel in the 1700 and 1800's was practically impossible – "mud that could sink a horse to its chest" and swamp fever – discouraged most settlers. Today the only parts of this swamp still in existence are Magee Marsh, Metzger Marsh, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, all beloved birding areas.

Now, although John Denver seemed to think nothing ever happens in Toledo, Ohio, I beg to differ – what about the Toledo Mudhens? American coots (mudhens) love northwest Ohio, as do their relatives – gallinules, rails, and the sora. These chicken-like birds with colorful horny shields on their foreheads and lobed feet can be seen swimming, diving, and walking about in Ohio's marshes.

The American coot is black with a white bill and shield. The common gallinule (originally common moorhen) is black with a red bill (yellow at tip), a red shield and a white stripe on the side of its body. The purple gallinule is less common in Ohio) is bright purple with a bill and shield similar to the common gallinule but without the white stripe

If you are an Ohio snowbird, spending your winters in Florida, you might see more of the purple gallinule there. And perhaps you will also see a purple swamphen! This bird has just been added to the ABA checklist in February 2013. It looks a lot like the purple gallinule except it has a gray head. According to Bill Pranty, who wrote the article describing it in *Birding* (May/June 2013), "think of swamphens as gallinules on steroids." If you're looking for a bird to add to your life list, this is it!



PURPLE GALLINULE photo by Dave Priebe

**References:** *The Great Black Swamp: Historical Tales of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ohio* by Jim Mollenkopf; *Introducing the Purple Swamphen* by Bill Pranty in *Birding*.

## Lake Erie Wing Watch, Sept. 20-21

The natural birding areas of Erie County will be featured in this year's Lake Erie Wing Watch at Osborn MetroPark between Huron and Sandusky. Field trips and activities for beginner, intermediate and advanced birders will all be offered.

More information is available at 419/625-7783 or at lakeeriewingwatch.com.

### RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

*Regulus calendula*

By **Cathy Priebe**



We all have to admit that identifying birds is a perpetual learning process. No one is perfect, especially me. This reality struck home early in my birding career, not long after my first trip to Magee Marsh. It was early fall and migrants had markedly dwindled, leaving only resident birds getting ready for cold weather. Assuming that migration was over, I was excited when I spotted a very small drab bird, exhibiting warbler or flycatcher behavior.

Wow, wouldn't that be cool to have a warbler or flycatcher this late in the season, was my first thought. I avidly followed this small critter as it flitted about the yard, moving so quickly that my binoculars could not focus on it long enough to give me a good view. This little guy would not sit still!! It took some time, but after consulting my mentors and numerous guidebooks, I finally identified this hyperactive bird as my first ruby -crowned kinglet and a new yard bird.

The ruby-crowned kinglet is a common fall and spring migrant in Ohio. Generally spotted in small flocks, it is not unusual to see solo birds foraging through bushes, conifers, and other deciduous trees. Smaller than the smallest warbler, it is often confused with other birds but easily identified once one is familiar with its behavior and bubbly song. These plump, small birds are generally gray green on top and pale olive below with two wing bars and a broken eye ring. Male ruby-crowns also have a bright red crest that appears only when the bird is agitated or is singing. The female is similar to the male, minus the crest.

Nesting in boreal forests north of Ohio, the female will lay up to 12 eggs, one of the largest clutches of comparably sized North American passerines, according to Jim McCormac, author of *Birds of Ohio*.

Best places to see ruby-crowns are at Lake Erie migrant spots in early October or May where they may number in the hundreds. I have spotted them in many of our local metro parks and urban settings in fall and spring.

Now that I have gained a better knowledge of what birds to expect each season, I am rarely fooled by our deceptive diminutive kinglets

**References:** *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche.

### GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET

*Regulus satrapa*

By **Jim Jablonski**

*Frustrating!* That's the word that comes to mind whenever I think of these tiny birds, or their *ruby-crowned* cousins for that matter. Flitting from branch to branch and in and out of the foliage, they provide a great test of my slowly developing patience.

One thing I have learned is that energetic means small. These little guys measure just three and half inches placing them among our smallest birds.

At that size and corresponding quickness, it's no wonder that new birders are slow to identify them. But the yellow crowns on both sexes serve well as field marks.



Despite, or perhaps because of, their lack of bulk, the golden-crowned is a long-distance migrator as it nests in coniferous forests in northern Canada and winters as far south as Guatemala.

Small size might also explain its acrobatic feeding behavior. The golden-crowned hops among the branches of conifers, gleaning insects and spiders from the tips of branches. It will also feed on seeds, fruit and will even drink tree sap. While feeding, it often hangs upside down, goldfinch-style, or occasionally hovers to pluck a bug from the tree's bark. Compared to its ruby-crowned relative, this kinglet hangs more and hovers less.

During the mating season, the female builds a hanging nest using materials such as moss, spider webs, bark, twigs and leaves. The nest hangs below a branch and typically fifty feet above the ground.

When the nest is done, the female's real work begins. She produces 8-9 eggs in two layers. And that's only the first brood! Despite weighing about a quarter of an ounce, the female can raise up to 18 young in a season. That is undoubtedly a testament to the great eating in the bug-infested Far North.

Where is the male during all this? Not entirely a slacker, he feeds his mate during incubation and helps her feed the large nests of hatchlings. The male also defends his territory from other males.

When it comes time for the long trip south all animosities are forgotten. The little guys realize there is strength in solidarity, so they migrate with titmice, chickadees, warblers and ruby-crowns.

Once a bird of concern for conservationists, bird count reports state that golden-crowned numbers have come back from previous declines.

Fortunately, it looks like I can continue to work on my patience by searching for this frustrating but fascinating little bird.

**References:** *The Birders Handbook* by Paul Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye; *Field Guide to Birds* by Donald & Lillian Stokes; *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kauffman; *All About Birds*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology at [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org).



**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** photo by Dane Adams

## THE HOG ISLAND EXPERIENCE

By **Chuck Jakubchak**

Hog Island Audubon Camp in central Maine near the coastal city of Bremen is an experience unlike any other for a birder. There are beautiful birds to see and many trails to explore, but the value of the camp came from my total immersion into nature. The beauty of the island and the serenity of Muscongus Bay allowed me to fully escape the rigors of daily life.

Upon landing on Hog Island I realized that my ties to the outside world were cut off. There were no televisions, radios or public computers on the island so Internet access was impossible. Newspapers were not delivered to the island and the campers had no idea about current world events during the entire week. We had lost touch and that was an unforeseen blessing. Mother Nature provided our entertainment and she did a fabulous job!

The daily camp routine included organized trips, workshops and classes and each day began with a 7 AM breakfast and concluded with an educational, program that wrapped-up around 9 p.m. Each day's schedule contained an optional bird walk that began at 4:45 and although that sounds early, the 4:30 sunrise and morning chorus of birds helped to motivate me from a cozy bed.

Once up and out the door, the adventures began. When the surf was calm we traveled to islands in the bay to view breeding herring and great black-backed gulls, Atlantic puffins, roseate terns, Arctic terns and common Terns. While boating to the islands we routinely encountered black guillemots, common eiders, scoters, bald eagles and osprey. Aside from birds, I was able to see harbor seals and an occasional harbor porpoise that surfaced.

One morning was reserved for inland birding and I traveled to a wooded country road to find warblers and thrushes. Upon returning to home base we ate lunch and attended class, learning the mechanics of bird flight and anatomy. On the afternoon set aside for wetland and prairie birding, our morning class focused on taxonomy and the organization of field guides. Workshops were offered throughout the week that covered topics such as sound and video recording, bird banding and eBirding. No aspect of birding was missed during my week at Hog Island and it was not just about finding and identifying birds, it was about thorough avian education.

By the end of camp I had added ten new birds to my life list and had dramatically increased my ornithological knowledge. I had experienced thrills, such as seeing a harbor seal with her newborn pup nestled against her, and viewed gulls in their pristine, breeding environment. I felt privileged to see young birds in their nest, some of which had hatched only minutes before. I thank Black River Audubon for the experience and joys. Without the generous scholarship I would not have attended the camp and would have missed the incredible sights.

I hope that you will all attend my program on October 7<sup>th</sup> at the monthly chapter meeting. I promise to provide you with stories and photos that will make you consider attending Hog Island Audubon Camp in 2015.

If you like birds and nature, you must add Hog Island Audubon Camp to your bucket list.

