



Columbus Audubon Song Sparrow

November-December 2004
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Creature Feature

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

By Rob Thorn

The genus name marks it as a falcon, while the species name peregrinus means 'wanderer' in reference to its long-distance dispersal that allows them to reach almost anywhere on the globe. Peregrines are one of the few birds that have been sighted on every continent; many have been seen on very isolated oceanic islands.

Family: Falconidae. This is the family of highly-specialized aerial predators. Unlike most other raptors, which swoop down to grab their prey on the ground or on a perch, falcons usually drop on their prey in a dive, called a stoop, and grab it in the air or knock it out of the air. They mostly feed on flying prey, usually birds, and are built to 'fly down' their prey: they have a short, bullet-shaped body, huge wing muscles, and long tapering wings. Their huge eyes give them amazing visual acuity, and some experiments with captive peregrines have estimated that they can see a Post-It note from a mile away. The family has 58 species, ranging in size from the huge gyrfalcon of the arctic (which chases large grouse & ptarmigan) to the compact bat-falcon of tropical America.

Range: Circumpolar, peregrines are found nesting throughout northern North America and Eurasia, but they are nowhere common. In North America, there are three distinct regional groups. Birds of eastern North America were of the subspecies *anatum* (meaning 'duck hawk') and nested on cliffs all along the Appalachians and Alleghenies. These birds were extirpated by pesticide bio-accumulation during the 1950s-1970s. More isolated populations in the Canadian arctic (subspecies *tundrius* or Tundra Peregrines) and the Pacific Northwest coast (subspecies *pealii* or Peale's Peregrines) were less impacted by pesticides, probably due to their remoteness from agricultural areas. Since pesticides have been more tightly regulated, peregrines have naturally re-colonized some parts of the Rocky Mountains, but eastern birds have largely been repopulated by a captive breeding program started in the 1970s. It utilized captive Tundra and Peale's birds, so that most falcons re-introduced to the East, including resident Ohio birds, are of a mixed ancestry and don't have many of the old habits of *anatum* birds.

Field Marks: Very large dark falcon with very long wings. Most adult birds have a dark hood on their head that can project down into a 'moustache' between the eye and bill base, but this field mark can vary much between different races and different ages of birds. The relatively long, pointed wings appear dark in flight, and extend all the way to the tail on perched birds. Most Merlins are much smaller, being less than crow-sized. Prairie falcons, a rare newcomer to Ohio, are similar in size to Peregrines, but have a paler body and wings with distinct dark 'armpits.'



The stiff, powerful strokes of the long, dark pointed wings, coupled with the large dark bullet shape of the body give rise to an unmistakable Peregrine 'jizz' that most birders can pick up after only a few sightings. Occasionally Peregrines are seen soaring, especially around nesting areas, but more often they are seen briefly as they blast past with almost effortless speed.

Voice & Mating: Peregrines are seldom heard except around their nest sites, and there they give repetitive alarm calls or locator calls, usually a series of loud, stuttering 'rack' notes or a series of 'wichew' notes. Juveniles especially give this call to get their parents' attention. Peregrines favor nest sites on inaccessible cliffs or ledges of buildings. An adult pair lays claim to an area by roosting there together, defending it, and cementing their pair bond with spectacular aerial courtship

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The Song Sparrow is published by Columbus Audubon, a chapter of Audubon. Stefanie Hauck, editor, svhauck@aol.com; Karen Augenstein, associate editor, klaugenstein@insight.rr.com.

Audubon at Home grant update

Dempsey Middle School wetlands

By Beth MacLehose

The beginning of the school year has been very busy. My students and I have been working on several grants that will help improve and make better use of our wetlands. A technology grant we received enabled us to buy HOBO sensor probes so that we can record data on soil, air, and water temperature. The science classes throughout the entire school will be collecting data and compiling it in the spring.

With the Audubon grant, the students will also be taking water samples throughout the school year using the Healthy Water Healthy People test kit. This information, along with the temperature information, will be shared with professionals who can help students interpret the data and create a plan for maintaining the health of the wetlands.

The students have been taking digital pictures of many of the flowering plants and some of the animals we have encountered this fall. We have also had to use a regular camera with a macro lens to get some of the close up pictures we need. The students have been keying out some of the macro-invertebrates we've found in the wetlands. The use of a dichotomous key is one of the many state standards we



By Beth MacLehose

One of Beth's students at work in the wetlands behind Dempsey Middle School.

have been able to address while working on the field guide.

The librarian and I have been looking over field guides and we should have those ordered soon. Also, my students hope to complete taking pictures this fall. Through the winter they will take some additional photos, but spend the majority of their time organizing the field guide and adding the information to existing

pictures. By your next newsletter we will hopefully have a sample page done for you to see.

Thank you for all the help and support you have given my class, both through the grant and the time members have spent helping me gather the information the class needs to turn the wetlands into an educational area the whole community can benefit from.

My Vacation: Birding in Alaska

By Dave & (Roz) Horn

In August we completed a long-term objective by visiting our 50th state, Alaska. Rather than taking a standard cruise-plus-bus trip, we concocted a customized 16-day adventure with our friends and fellow birders, Columbus Audubon members Dave and Anne Rigney. (Dave was instrumental in early efforts to preserve what is now Clear Creek Metro Park.) Armed with maps, guidebooks and online resources, we flew into Anchorage, picked up our rental car and headed toward our first Bed & Breakfast via Potter Creek Marsh. There our adventuring began, but rather than give you a bird-by-bird account I'll mention highlights and impressions.

Our route took us to Seward and Homer, south of Anchorage, for four days each, then up to Denali National Park. At each "base camp" (cabins or B & Bs) we took day hikes or boat or bus rides. We had been advised to prepare for rain, cold and mosquitoes. We were told only 15 percent of visitors get to see Mt. McKinley because of clouds and fog. Except for one all day boating adventure we basked in the sunny 70s most days. It rained once. Mosquitoes seemed to be rare. We saw Mt. McKinley first from Anchorage, 100 miles away, and had splendid views of both sides of the mountain until it was obscured by smoke from distant forest fires the day before our departure.

I could write about 100 different ways to prepare salmon and halibut but I expect if you've read this far you're more interested in birds, wildlife and conservation. So ... moose seemed to be

everywhere, some in streamside alder thickets and some wandering suburban malls. Birds abounded but not in the variety we see in Ohio, and we struggled to top 100 species for the trip list. Sheer numbers made up for that; on one boat trip we encountered "Beehive Island" so named because the milling clouds of puffins, murres and kittiwakes appear as swarms of bees from a distance. The same trip produced seals and sea otters aplenty, porpoises, and fin and humpback whales. Bald eagles are a common sight along rivers and bays. Everywhere the land seemed limitlessly open and vast, especially in Denali Park where one dirt road winds 100 miles into wilderness with no other evidence of human activity as far as the eye can see. The wildlife in Denali is unaccustomed to humans except in the form of big green buses, so caribou, moose, grizzly bears and Dall sheep go about their business unmindful of our presence. We had excellent, repeated looks at all four. The business of Dall sheep is carried out on high ridges so one does have to hike uphill to get a good look, as Dave and Anne did.

We could easily have believed that Alaska is a vast and roomy wilderness waiting to be "tamed." Swarms of seabirds, streams chock full of migrating salmon, herds of wildlife, moose on every street corner, an eagle on every lamp post well, maybe I exaggerate (as Alaskans do), but I imagined my pioneer ancestors having had the same feelings as they confronted the apparently limitless forests of the "Ohio Country" 200-plus years ago. Passenger

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President's message: Looks like a Plan

On August 21, most of the Columbus Audubon Board participated in an all-day planning session. What emerged was a set of priorities around which we have developed and implemented a 2-year strategic plan.

We felt that the top issues facing Columbus Audubon in 2004 are: (1) Effective utilization of existing members in ongoing programs and recruiting new membership; (2) Expanded fund-raising and development of independent funding (as National Audubon anticipates contributing less to local chapter support); (3) Involvement of expert land and water managers in planning for Calamus Swamp; (4) Enhancement of local, chapter-only membership; (5) Developing outreach to non-traditional, under-represented constituencies especially in the urban area; and (6) coordination with Ohio Audubon in their ongoing efforts to involve Audubon in the Whittier Peninsula project.

Our plan directly addresses these issues, and we have developed a timetable to carry it out.

If this looks like a tall order, it is. The more people involved, the better, so if your phone rings or your "In" box lights up, please consider saying "yes" to a request to help out.

Or if you simply want to be involved in *any* aspect of Columbus Audubon, as a participant or a leader, please let us know. We can always use more hands and heads.

For those interested, I'll post some details of our planning on the website. Meanwhile I'll not take up any more of your reading time with administrative stuff, except to again thank the dedicated volunteers on the Board who help keep Columbus Audubon vibrant, active and the envy of many an Audubon chapter.

- Dave Horn

Ohio Wildlife Center's Fall Festival a big success!

By R. David Hoy
*Director of Operations
and Development*

The Ohio Wildlife Center shared its programs and facilities with the central Ohio community in celebration of its 20th anniversary on Sept. 25.

The First Annual Fall Festival attracted about 350 visitors to the new Outdoor Education Center north of Powell. Activities included nature walks, aquatic studies, fishing, wildlife presentations, art exhibits, puppet shows, children's art projects, displays from area conservation organizations and beautiful music provided by Lone Raven and Folk Wood Players. The OWC Café provided an array of food items for the guests.

Thanks to Columbus Audubon, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Metropolitan Park District of Columbus and Franklin County, The Nature Conservancy, City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Department – Nature Preserves, Ohio Bluebird Society, National Wildlife Federation Backyards for Wildlife, ODNR Division of Wildlife and the Ohio EPA for providing informative and interactive exhibits.

The main stage was busy all day with music, wildlife presentations and raffle drawings. About \$3,000 was raised from the event.

Funds raised will go to OWC education programs and rehabilitation services to treat injured and orphaned native wildlife species.

Thanks to everyone attending and volunteering at this event in helping OWC promote wildlife conservation.



By Darlene Sillick

(Above) John Arnfield mans the Columbus Audubon booth at the Ohio Wildlife Center's Fall Festival.

(Right) Children had the opportunity to gather tadpoles and other aquatic creatures from the OWC pond for study.



By Stefanie Hauck

Coming Up

Columbus Audubon activities are for nature enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. We invite you to join us for a field trip or program to learn more about birds and their central Ohio habitats, as well as other natural history topics. Our activities are free and open to the public and there is no need to register unless otherwise noted.

Field trips

Tour of Museum of Biological Diversity

Saturday November 6, 9 a.m.

Leaders: John Condit

Skill Level: All

Join John Condit, Curator of The Ohio State University Bio-Diversity Museum on a tour of the museum. This will prove to be a very interesting and worthwhile program. John has a wealth of knowledge and will be showcasing birds from all around the world. You will quickly learn that there is more to the museum than drawers full of feathers! Cameras welcome.

Directions: Take state Route 315 to the Kinnear Road/Lennox Town Center exit and turn right onto Kinnear Road. Follow Kinnear past the traffic light (Kenny Road). The museum is at 1315 Kinnear Road and is on the left side of the road. *For more information, contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azure-trails@columbus.rr.com.*

Hoover Nature Preserve

Saturday November 6, 9 a.m.

Leaders: Ken and Julie Davis

Skill Level: All

Join Ken and Julie Davis at Hoover Reservoir near Westerville. We will hit a few hot spots on Hoover looking for migrating sand wintering ducks. We may also find a few land birds as well. Meet at the Hoover Dam on Sunbury Road. **Directions:** Take I-270 north to state Route 161 east toward New Albany. Exit at Sunbury Road and proceed north about 2 miles. The parking lot near the dam will be on the right. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and scopes (if you have them) and be prepared to car-pool.

The Creeks to Pickerington Ponds

Sunday November 7, 9 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill level: All

With bird activity slowing elsewhere, the level areas south of Columbus start gathering late migrants and winter birds in November. We'll start at The Creeks, where the mix of wetlands, ponds, and fields is a magnet to wintering birds. The fields and shrubby edges here are often the best place close to Columbus to see a large variety of sparrows and finches. Then we'll hop over to the nearby Pickerington Ponds Metro Park to visit their beautiful new wetland areas. This man-made mix of marshes and pools harbors interesting waterfowl and a bevy of attendant raptors. We'll meet at the Heron Pond parking area of the Creeks.

Directions: Take I-270 to Hamilton Road, exit south, then immediately turn right onto Williams Road. The Heron Pond entrance is just over a mile west along Williams Road. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and scopes (if you have them). *For more information, contact Rob Thorn at (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.*

Waterfowl at Blendon Woods Metro Park

Sunday November 14, 2 p.m.

Leader: Steve Landes

Skill level: All

Join Steve Landes for a leisurely jaunt to one of central Ohio's

best spots for migrating waterfowl. We will search Thoreau Lake for ducks and other migrants. We will also see what we can find along the trails. If time permits, there will be an option to watch birds at nearby Hoover Reservoir as well. **Directions:** Take the Little Turtle Way exit off of state Route 161 east of I-270. At the exit, turn right onto Cherry Bottom Road. The park will be just ahead on the left. Meet at the Nature Center.

Autumn along the Scioto

Saturday November 20, 9 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill level: All

Migration should be ending as we survey the Scioto River north and south of the Green Lawn Dam. North of the dam, in the future Whittier Peninsula Park, the narrow riparian corridor will hold lingering migrants among its berry-encrusted bushes, while the Green Lawn Reservoir is a haven for cold-hardy waterbirds like herons and ducks. South of the dam, the bike path always holds surprises. Time permitting, we'll venture further south to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and its old lagoons, as well as some of the old river quarries. We'll meet at the south Scioto River boat launch. **Directions:** Take Whittier west from Front Street and make the first left turn. Dress warmly. *For more information, contact Rob Thorn, (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.*

Deer Creek State Park

Sunday November 21, 2:30 p.m.

Leader: Dave Horn

Skill level: All

Dave Horn will lead a trip at Deer Creek State Park. Periodically a sizeable flock of sandhill cranes stays in this area from about Nov. 10 to 25. To see them coming in to roost at sunset is a thrilling sight. If there are no cranes this year, there still may be interesting waterfowl to see. Meet at the Deer Creek Marina, off state Route 207 south of Pancoastburg. **Directions:** From Columbus, take I-71 toward Cincinnati, exit at state Route 56 to Mt. Sterling and pick up state Route 207 there. Look for a silver Ford Taurus, plate # "G BORO". *For more information, contact Dave Horn at (614) 262-0312 or horn.1@osu.edu.*

Ohio Wildlife Center Bird Count

Saturday December 11, 9 a.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All

Meet Darlene Sillick at the Ohio Wildlife Center's Cook Road facility in Delaware County. We will start to compile a list of birds we see on this property, adjacent to the Twin Lakes Nature Preserve. Wear warm clothes and boots/shoes as we will roam the edges and check out the bird feeding area for local and visiting residents. We will also go to the Twin Lakes parking lot to listen for a few minutes. If time permits, we will look for waterfowl near the Scioto River at the O'Shaughnessy Dam.

Directions: Take state Route 315 to Powell Road. Turn left. Follow Powell Road until it dead ends into state Route 257. Turn left and immediately turn right onto the O'Shaughnessy Dam. Drive over the dam and turn right at the traffic light onto state Route 745. Follow 745 about 4 miles. Look for the OWC sign

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CA Nature Program

Note: There is no nature program in December.

November Program

Ohio Listed and Rare Butterflies:
Their status and conservation

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

7:00 p.m. social time, 7:30 p.m. presentation
Innis House at Inniswood Metro Gardens

David Parshall, president of the Ohio Lepidopterists will talk about the status and conservation of Ohio's Listed and Rare butterflies. He has studied butterflies in North America for over 45 years. He is the leading expert on Ohio's butterflies. He has also studied arctic/alpine butterflies in Canada and is the principal author of "*Common Butterflies of Ohio*" for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. David is a noted photographer of butterflies. His photographs have won numerous awards and have appeared in several publications.

Columbus Audubon Fund-raiser

SAVE ON FINE JEWELRY AND REPAIRS

Sponsored By

Worthington Jewelers

692 High Street in Olde Worthington
(614) 430-8800

December 10 thru 12

You save **20%** on all non sale items and
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PLEASE BRING THIS COUPON WITH YOU

Invoice# _____ Date _____

Purchase Amount _____

*Offer does not apply to loose gemstones
or custom orders and can not be
used with any other coupons or discounts.*

Take note:

Audubon Ohio Needs Volunteers

Audubon Ohio needs volunteers to assist in the Audubon Ohio Office at 692 North High Street with office work, data entry, and event planning. They are looking for people who can volunteer about one day a week during daytime hours, have computer and organizational skills, and are willing to travel to the High Street location. Occasional tasks may be done from home. If you are interested, contact Christie Vargo at (614) 224-3303 or cvargo@audubon.org.

Conservation Committee seeking volunteers

The Columbus Audubon Conservation Committee is seeking a few more volunteers. We meet monthly (currently the first Tuesday) to research and discuss conservation issues relevant to the mission of Columbus Audubon. We also enjoy seasonal treats (currently, cider). If interested, please contact Dave Horn, (614) 262-0312 or horn.1@osu.edu.

New nature preserve opens

The O'Shaughnessy Nature Preserve opened to the public on Sept. 25. The 57-acre preserve is in the Twin Lakes Area of the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir and is managed by the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. It features different forest types, from the bottomland elm-ash woods to the oak-hickory uplands. It contains open fields, two streams and open areas of water from the reservoir. It is home to wildlife and is a stopover site for migrant birds. For more information, call the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department at (614) 645-3304.

Delaware County Bird Club slates programs

Please consider joining Delaware County Bird Club members at any of our programs this season. Meetings will be in the new science building on the Ohio Wesleyan University Campus, lower level of the building, second door on the right. Directions from Columbus: U.S. Route 23 north to the Williams Street exit, turn left and then turn left on S. Henry Street. Turn right before the tunnel and right again into the lot. For details, contact Edward H. Burt, Jr. at (740) 368-3886 or ehburt@owu.edu. You may also contact Darlene Sillick, program chair, at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.

Nov. 15 "Birds of Holland" - Maaik Versteegh, a visiting research student at Ohio Wesleyan will provide a brief introduction to the birds of Holland.

Dec. 13 "Sweet 16 and still counting" - Jed Burt will provide an overview of the Delaware Christmas Bird Counts since the start of the count in 1988. What species have increased? What species have decreased? What is common and what is rare? How do our results compare to other counts in the area? In North America? We will also discuss preparation for the 17th count on Dec. 19.

Dec. 17 - Last day to submit an estimate of the number of Horned Larks that will be seen on the Delaware Christmas Bird Count. Deadline is 5:00 p.m. Estimates must be received in writing or by email and you must participate in the Count to qualify. You need not be present at the dinner when the winner will be announced.

Dec. 19 - Delaware Christmas Bird Count - See page 6 for details.

Christmas Bird Count

Birders of all skill levels are invited to take part in 105th annual count throughout central Ohio

Editor's note: See the chart below for dates of seven central Ohio Christmas Bird Counts. A \$5 fee for field observers is waived for participants age 18 and younger and for feeder watchers.

History of the national and Columbus CBCs

This event was started nationwide in 1900 by eminent ornithologist Frank Chapman, and involves groups of enthusiasts going out to local parks, nature preserves, and any wild habitats to count all the birds they can find on a single winter day. It started as Chapman's alternative to the Christmas hunt, where all living things were fair game for teams of sportsmen, and it helped spawn the conservation movement in the United States. Now it is run by the Audubon Society and has expanded to hundreds of counts, with new ones added nearly every year since. Columbus' count, first reported in 1913, had several starts and stops, with just 19 counts conducted between the years of 1913 and 1954 when the count became an established tradition. The count has run continuously and was officially incorporated in 1971. Repeatedly done every year, long-running CBCs have become an effective narrative of the changes in the bird-life of different locales. In fact, the Christmas Bird Count has become the longest running environmental inventory run by volunteers.

Like any durable event, this one has some simple ground rules. The count must take place within an imaginary circle of 15 miles diameter and must take place on one day between Dec. 14 and Jan 5. Count circles don't move once started, and are carefully sited to take in as many good parks and preserves as possible.

The Columbus circle is centered just north of Bexley, so that it stretches from Upper Arlington east to Blacklick, and from Minerva Park south to Groveport. The area is decidedly urban and suburban, but it was much less so in the past. In this sense, our CBC has chronicled the birds' responses as Columbus has grown into a major metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, pigeons, starlings, and house sparrows have steadily increased, while many of their wilder cousins have declined. Still, a surprising number of wild bird species call Columbus a winter home, and the count will aim to document these birds' presence. Also, the count has repeatedly turned up rare migrant stragglers, toughing out the winter in the milder-temperature, feeder-enhanced neighborhoods of the city. Last year, we had a first-ever Rufous Hummingbird wintering at a feeder in Blendon Woods, a rare Orange-crowned Warbler

along the Scioto River near Marble Cliff, 7 sapsuckers, 9 red-headed woodpeckers, and a Rough-legged Hawk near Gahanna among the 76 species we found. We never know what rarities will turn up. Teams of birdwatchers will comb parts of the city inside the circle, looking for common birds and unusual rarities alike. Most of the major parks in the circle will have teams of birders. We need as many birders as we can recruit, since more eyes make spotting birds easier. Come out for the morning, or the whole day, or just keep an eye on your birdfeeders.

-Rob Thorn, Columbus CBC compiler

Other central Ohio CBCs

Hoover Reservoir Christmas Bird Count

This is the 48th year for the Hoover Reservoir Circle. Since the first count in 1956 there have been 131 species recorded within the circle. Meet at the parking lot at the Hoover Reservoir Dam on Sunbury Road. Participants gather at 8:00 a.m. to break into area teams. All are always warmly welcome and appreciated.

O'Shaughnessy Reservoir Christmas Bird Count

Meet at the McDonald's at the corner of Frantz and state Route 161. This is Jim Adair's last year as a compiler for the CBC. If anyone is interested in taking over his position next year please give him a call.

Delaware Christmas Bird Count

This is the 17th year for the Delaware Christmas Bird Count. There will be a potluck compilation dinner at the USDA lab at 6:00 p.m. that evening for all participants. Contact Jed Burttt for meeting place, time and information on the Horned Lark contest.

Kingston Christmas Bird Count (Chillicothe/Circleville)

The Kingston Christmas Bird Count, which has its center north-east of Chillicothe, has taken place each year since 1970. This count was started to monitor the large population of wintering raptors, which have recently shown a decline in number. This is what CBCs are about. They provide information that is essential to researchers that are monitoring long-term population trends in many species of birds. So if you are like me and the thought of watching endless hours of football on New Year's Day is not appealing, join Brad Sparks on the Kingston CBC.

Central Ohio Christmas Bird Count Schedules

AREA	DATE	ORGANIZER	PHONE	E-MAIL
COLUMBUS	Dec. 19	Rob Thorn	(614) 471-3051	robthorn@earthlink.net
HOOVER RESERVOIR	Dec. 18	Charles Bombaci	(614) 891-5706	charlesbombaci@aol.com
O'SHAUGHNESSY RESERVOIR	Dec. 18	Jim Adair	(614) 885-9523	adairjb@aol.com
DELAWARE COUNTY	Dec. 19	Jed Burttt	(740) 368-3886 (d) (740) 747-2936 (n)	ehburttt@owu.edu
LANCASTER	TBD	David Goslin	(740) 654-6917	gosnellarch@aol.com
KINGSTON (Circleville/Chillicothe)	Jan. 1	Brad Sparks	(614) 751-6622	birdmansparks@yahoo.com
BUCKEYE LAKE	TBD	Jeff White	(614) 890-3486	N/A

Coming up

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and turn left. The facility is at 6131 Cook Road. *For more information, contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Early Winter Waterfowl

Saturday December 18, 9 a.m.

Leader: Dave Horn

Skill level: All

Join Dave Horn to look for early winter waterfowl and other winter wonders. Meet at the Blendon Woods Nature Center. We'll start there, then look at Hoover Reservoir and maybe Alum Creek Reservoir. *For more information, contact Dave Horn at (614) 262-0312 or horn.1@osu.edu.*

New Years Day, New Start

Saturday January 1, 2005, 9 a.m.

Skill Level: All

Begin the New Year with the day outdoors, looking and listening for birds on this first day of 2005. We will travel to Highbanks Metro Park then on to Killdeer Plains. Meet at the Worthington Square Shopping Center parking lot, east of Kroger store. Bring water, lunch or snacks and warm layers so you can enjoy the day comfortably. *For more information, contact Mike Flynn at (614) 882-9493.*

Ohio Wildlife Center Bird Count

Saturday January 15, 2005, 9 a.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All, hot chocolate provided

Same trip as December 11. See page 4 for details. *For more information, contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area trip

Sunday January 23, 2005, 12:30 p.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All

Meet at the Worthington Square shopping center parking lot where we will organize and head north to a favorite winter grounds for many raptors and winter visiting passerines. We will have walkie talkies for cars and are planning to car-pool. Dress warm, bring food and drink and remember there are few restroom stops. *For more information, contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Avid Birders Field trips

Unless otherwise noted, participants should meet at the southwest corner of the Worthington Mall parking lot at the designated time. *November 13 at 5:30 a.m.* - Reservoirs, and perhaps Lake Erie. *December 4 at 5:30 a.m.* - Erie shore for gulls, waterfowl. *January 8, 2005 at 5:30 a.m.* - Erie shore for gulls, waterfowl, other winter birds.

Save the date!

Mark your calendars! The annual potluck is Feb. 15 at the Clintonville Women's Club.

Work trips

Work trips provide an opportunity for members to learn a new skill while communing with nature. These trips provide opportuni-

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Your Bird Reports

By John Arnfield

Jennifer Kolmas reported three Great Egrets at Pickerington Ponds Metro Park on Sept. 9. Based on nothing more than an unscientific general impression, it seems to me that these magnificent birds have been unusually abundant this year: I have seen one or more on many of the large and small water bodies in central Ohio in the past few months. A Red-tailed Hawk can be seen hunting and feeding on squirrels at the Mayhew Grove on The Ohio State University campus, according to Sharon Treaster. She describes how one horticulturist at the site was forced to duck in astonishment as the low-flying raptor sailed five feet above ground, searching for its next meal. She invites readers to visit the Mayhew Grove and meditate within this peaceful nook of native plants, shadowed by the Schottenstein Center.

The bird reports received since the last issue of the *Song Sparrow* have been dominated by fall migration observations. Paul Graham spotted a Common Loon on Sept. 14 on a pond along the west side of I-75, south of Bowling Green. This is an unusual sighting for September: maybe this was a non-breeding bird which remained in Ohio through summer. A Merlin was reported in mid-August from the OSU Olentangy Wetlands Research Park. It was consistently observed by dozens of birders while preening and feeding on songbirds on dead branches at the crown of a sycamore next to the Olentangy River. Merlins are small, compact and pugnacious falcons that breed in the northern open conifer forests and are rare in central Ohio at this time of the year. Unfortunately, no sightings have been reported since mid-September.

Chimney Swifts and Common Nighthawks have been very much in evidence over the period, as they migrate south. According to Darlene Sillick many more swift roosts have been documented this year. Swifts swirl around these chimneys like a reversed smoke plume before entering as sunset turns to darkness. Interestingly, this fall migration season, more roosting sites appear to have shifted frequently, rather than being used night after night, maybe in response to the predations of raccoons and some accipiters. Common Nighthawks also have been seen in abundance, says Darlene, moving over the city like large moths, and flying low over fields and woods near rivers and anywhere they can feed on plentiful flying insects.

September has seen an upsurge in songbird migration and the Blendon Woods Metro Park Nature Center viewing window has proved a productive place to observe southward-bound warblers. Reported on the *ohio-birds* list for that location have been Bay-Breasted, Black-and-white, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Blue-winged, Canada, Cape May, Cerulean, Chestnut-sided, Connecticut, Hooded, Magnolia, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Palm, Tennessee, Wilson's, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula and Ovenbird, along with many other varieties of migrants. The *ohio-birds* list also reports arriving Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows. Can winter be far behind and have you filled your feeders yet?

Keep an eye on those feeders, and on the woods, fields and lakes of central Ohio, and send your reports to bird_reports@columbusaudubon.org or phone them in to the Columbus Audubon phone line at (740) 549-0333. As always, please let me have your name and the date and location of your sighting.

Good birding!

Insects 101: Gone Buggy

On Sept. 12, Columbus Audubon's fearless president David Horn, armed with slides, insect specimens, nets, Petri dishes, water and a few other tricks up his sleeves, spoke about studying insects to 40 to 50 bug-eyed people at Highbanks Metro Park Nature Center. His stories and discussion riveted listeners to their seats.

Then for the fun part of the program, participants went outside to swing a net and carefully peek inside to see what might be creeping along the netting. Small Petri dishes held the 6- and 8-legged creatures while folks ooh'ed and aah'ed as they examined the critters. Spiders, katydid's, grasshoppers and many others were examined and then released back into the meadow edge. Thanks goes out to David for taking time out of his busy Sunday to give a 101 program for such eager pupils!



By Darlene Sillick

-Darlene Sillick Dave Horn leads the Insects 101 program at Highbanks Metro Park on Sept. 12.

101 class schedule

Columbus Audubon's 101 classes are free and open to the public and there is no need to register unless otherwise stated in the class description.

Winter Residents

Sunday November 14, 1-3 p.m., at the Highbanks Nature Center

Bird study skins will be on display to help practice your skills at identifying winter birds.

Purchasing a Telescope

Friday November 19, 7-9 p.m., at the Highbanks Nature Center

Before investing in a telescope, learn about the various features. We'll head outside with several types of telescopes for comparison. Bring your own telescope.

Owls 101

Sunday November 21, 5:30 p.m., at the Highbanks Nature Center

Learn about the owls of central Ohio before going on a 2-mile hike in search of something who gives a hoot.

Astronomy 101 Series

Wednesdays November 3, 10 and 17 from 7-10 p.m.

Coming up

Continued from page 7

ties to see areas in the state's nature preserves that the public does not often see. Participants get to go off trail to tour and learn about the area they will be helping to preserve with the preserve manager, who is often the trip leader on these outings. Tools and transportation are provided to adults at no cost. If a member chooses to bring their children, they must provide their own transportation. Recently trip attendance has been lagging so please consider joining us to help preserve Ohio's natural areas for future generations. (Note: no trip in December)

Elevating a Popular Footpath

Saturday November 13, 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Randy Beinlich

Leader: Jay Young

Classes will be held at the Ohio Wildlife Center's Outdoor Education Center (Cook Road facility). Each session will involve classroom and outdoor viewing time. Classes are designed for beginners and are guaranteed to leave you motivated to learn more about astronomy. You must register for the series by contacting Jay Young at (614) 251-4565 or young2@ohiodominican.edu.

New Ornithology 101 series!

John Condit, Curator The Ohio State University's Museum of Biological Diversity will be offering a new series of 101 classes on basic ornithology in January 2005. John also teaches ornithology at the university. The sessions will most likely be on Saturdays or one evening a week and will last about 2 hours. The series will be held at the biodiversity lab at 1315 Kinnear Road. Please pre-register by contacting Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com by Nov. 30, if you are interested in participating.

Assist Randy Beinlich, Central Preserve Manager in uplifting a sodden trail with gravel (utilizing mechanized assistance) in Stages Pond State Nature Preserve in Pickaway County. Alternative trail maintenance tasks will rotate volunteers' efforts. This kettle lake and adjacent marsh refuge attracts a variety of waterfowl during fall migration. Populations of quail, pheasants and several species of hawks inhabit the oak - hickory upland and open fields. Remnants of diverse botanical species will tease the novice and excite the avid naturalist's senses. Please call Roger Barber (Researcher & DNA&P worktrip coordinator) by noon Nov. 8 (614) 265-6467 to sign up, reserve space for transportation and determine tool requirements. Bring lunch and cup or water bottle for drinking. Meet at building E at Ohio Department Natural Resources Complex, 1889 Fountain Square (gatehouse entrance off Morse Road). For more information, call Sharon Treaster at (614) 292-1395.

Creature feature: Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

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courtship flights. They don't build a conventional twig nest, instead scraping out a shallow depression in the ledge sand. Often these aeries, as the nest sites are called, are re-used by the same pairs or successive pairs for many years. Some European aeries have histories dating to over a hundred years. Even skyscraper aeries in North America have histories dating back 20-30 years, so the birds are very faithful to successful sites.

Hunting & Diet: Peregrines are agile, fast aerial raptors. Their stoops are among the most spectacular of any falcon, since they rise to several hundred feet above their targets and fall with startling speed, knocking their victims out of the air in a puff of feathers. Because of this, they need open areas to hunt. You won't see Peregrines hunting in a forest or waiting around a feeder. These are birds of the open marsh or seashore, or the open skies above our cities. Peregrines are opportunistic feeders, tackling almost any medium-sized bird that strays into their hunting space. They are especially fond of small ducks and shorebirds, and I've often seen them sweep low and fast over a marsh or mudflat to knock down any waterfowl or sandpipers that startle into the air. As early as the 1930s, Peregrines were noted moving into large eastern cities like Toronto and New York to hunt the large populations of Rock Doves established there. Today many re-established urban Peregrines still have Rock Doves as a cornerstone of their diet, but will also take whatever else happens to come along. ODW monitors the nest sites of urban Ohio peregrines and notes the different birds brought back as food, and the list is surprisingly long and varied.

Once a peregrine has knocked down a target bird, it quickly turns and drops to grab its still-alive victim. It then kills the bird by using the notched beak unique to falcons to dislocate the neck. Most peregrines will try to conceal a kill or quickly move it to a secluded location, since large buteos and eagles will often try to steal it away from them. It has been said that an active peregrine often helps support one to three other hawks.

Peregrines have a long and checkered history with humans.

Their exhilarating hunting style has long made them a favorite with falconers, and birds were trapped for falconry in Europe since the Middle Ages. Like many hawks, wild peregrines were mistaken as threats to farm fowl and often shot as vermin, before hawk conservation efforts started to change their image in the 1940s-1960s. Unfortunately, nesting success declined precipitously around that same time, so that Peregrines became very rare in both Europe and America. The decline was ultimately tied to elevated levels of organochloride insecticides in the birds' tissues. Tighter controls on pesticide formulations stopped the reproductive slide, but not before nearly all Eastern U.S. peregrines had disappeared. A captive breeding program, spearheaded by Tom Cade at Cornell University, was successful at re-introducing many young birds to different areas of the East. Most of the re-introductions were made in cities, so that the birds could be better monitored and generate more publicity. The result is that now in the eastern U.S., Peregrines are more likely to be seen in large urban areas than around the wild mountain cliffs where they used to nest. Ohio has a generous share of these 'urban peregrines.' Re-introductions were started by hacking young birds at skyscraper nest sites from 1989-1993 in most large Ohio cities. The hacking process involves placing fledglings in nest boxes and feeding them (without revealing their human caregivers) until they become self-sufficient and acclimated to the site.

Presently there are nesting pairs in Columbus, Akron, Canton, Dayton, Toledo, Cincinnati, Ironton, and several pairs around Cleveland. Most of introduced peregrines in Ohio were named and carefully followed to see if and when they nested. For example, Columbus had its first nesting pair, Aurora and Bandit, in 1993, and they returned for four more years after that to raise a total of 19 young in a nest box situated high on the Rhodes Office Tower. Peregrines still use this site, and you can look for them around many of the tall buildings in the city. The Rhodes Tower and Lincoln Towers at The Ohio State University appear to be favorite perching areas. So if you hear some unusual commotion overhead, you might see one of our best bird restoration stories.

My Vacation: Birding in Alaska

Continued from page 2

pigeons on every lamp post? In Alaska, exhibits in visitor centers, and tour guides, told us that despite the "beehive" appearance, seabird numbers are down, as are numbers of several species of commercial fish. The Denali caribou "herd" is 10 percent of what it was four decades ago. Some of this could result from natural fluctuations that are notorious in Arctic animal populations. (Try lemmings, for instance). But it behooves all of us to support the conservation efforts that will enable future generations to enjoy this great American wilderness as we have. It works: The

sea otter is a huge conservation success. Simply by enjoying protection, sea otters have increased from near-extinction 100 years ago to repopulating the entire coast from the Aleutians right down to central California.

Yes, we did see 100 bird species, and I added six to my life list, including the Alaska state bird, the willow ptarmigan. Dave and Anne managed a few more lifers than six (not having lived in coastal California where many Alaskan birds overwinter). If anyone wants advice on Alaska travel, feel free to ask me, but keep in mind that based on my experience I think it's a land of endless sunshine, few mosquitoes and 100-mile vistas of Mt. McKinley.

2005 Entertainment Books for sale

The books will be available through December. Proceeds from the sale support Columbus Audubon's educational activities.

Accent on Wild Birds	1340 Grandview Ave., Grandview	486-7333
Better Earth	59 Spruce St., Columbus (North Market)	224-6196
Backyard Experience	3515 North High St., Columbus	261-0355
Wild Bird Supplies & Gifts	738 E. Lincoln Ave., Worthington	431-2473
Wild Birds Unlimited	21 Cherry Park Sq., Westerville	899-9453
Wild Birds Unlimited	5400 Riverside Dr. Columbus	766-2103
Wild Birds Unlimited	6839 E. Broad St., Columbus (Blacklick Shopping Ctr.)	860-1133
Wild Bird Center of Dublin	6535 Perimeter Dr., Dublin, Ohio	734-3333
Columbus Audubon	Dave Horn (<i>If you want an out-of-town Book, contact Dave directly</i>)	262-0312

Memberships

Memberships in Audubon and Columbus Audubon and gift memberships are available through Columbus Audubon

Audubon Membership

Includes membership in the national organization and Columbus Audubon; includes 4 issues of Audubon magazine and 5 issues of the chapter newsletter, local activities, and when submitted with our chapter code helps fund our programs. The rates below are available to **NEW** subscribers.

- _____ \$20 - 1-year introductory rate
- _____ \$30 - 2-year introductory rate
- _____ \$15 - 1-year student/senior rate

Columbus Audubon Chapter Only Membership

Chapter only membership includes 5 issues of the chapter newsletter, local activities and helps fund our programs.

- _____ \$20 - 1-year new membership
- _____ \$20 - Renewal (currently \$15 less than Audubon renewals)

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