



Columbus Audubon Song Sparrow

September-October 2004
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Creature Feature

American & Fowler's Toads (*Bufo americanus* and *B. fowleri*)

By Rob Thorn

These familiar amphibians are our representatives of the widespread genus *Bufo*, which is Latin for toad. Toads differ from other frogs in several important respects. Their dry, warty skin resists evaporation better, so toads can wander far from water as adults. They also have large bulging poison glands just behind their eye. These poison sacs make it advisable to wash your hands after handling a large toad, so that you don't accidentally lick your fingers or wipe your eyes. Despite their warty appearance, however, handling toads does not give warts. To be perfectly fair to toads, more of our warts probably come from contact with other people!



Family: Bufonidae. Toads fall in a large family of squat terrestrial frogs, with over 180 species in some 19-20 genera. Like most families of frogs, this one is more diverse in the tropics, but some 17 species make it into North America. All of them have the 'toad look', with a smallish head with big eyes, an alert upright posture, and rather short back legs so that they hop rather than jump. One big species, the marine toad (*B. marinus*) has even become an introduced pest in several places in the world, including Florida, Hawaii, and Australia.

Range: Both of these toads are largely eastern amphibians. American toads range from Labrador down to Mississippi, and can be found in almost any broadleaf forest near water. In Canada, they are largely restricted to riparian areas and lakeside forests, but in Ohio they can often be found in deciduous forests far from permanent water. Fowler's toads are somewhat more southern, ranging from southern New England and Lake Erie south to the Gulf Coast. They are very common in the swamp forests of the coastal plain and piedmont, but become decidedly less common inland. American toads are common and widespread in central Ohio. Fowler's toads are most common in southwestern Ohio, but there are many records of them from Pickaway and Ross counties south of Columbus, and they likely extend up the Darby Creek drainage.

Field Marks: Stout, upright little frogs, with dry warty skin in shades of brown-gray and clear speckled belly. Their upright alert stance is quite different from the prone lounging of most other frogs. They can range in size from tiny newly-metamorphosed toadlets less than a half inch up to big bruisers 4-5 inches from nose to tail. Since they lack adhesive pads on their toes, toads are never found up in trees or bushes. They are much more likely to be hopping across a forest trail or along the edge of a stream or wetland. American toads are the common toad of Ohio, and are mostly brown with some small black spots scattered across their back. Their belly is whitish with gray mottling. Fowler's Toads are more grayish on the back, with several large black spots across their sides and back. These spots are large enough to contain 2-3 warts in each. They also have a different shape to their head, with the poison glands right up behind a ridge that runs behind their eyes. Finally, their belly is most-

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Swift Watch: The Best Free Show in Town

By Jenny Bowman

This is the final article in a three-part series about my observations of chimney swifts.

Part III: The Morning After

My official counting of the chimney swifts at the 1919 Building in old Dublin began September 10, 2003 (3700 birds).

By Friday, Sept. 12, there were 4300 birds roosting in the chimney. Not having a clue about how they came out of the chimney, the next morning I arrived at 8:30 a.m. I saw very little activity until 10:25-10:40 when approximately 1000 birds exited the chimney. I planned to return the next morning before sunrise.

I knew that at least 4000 birds had roosted in the chimney on Saturday night. Sunday morning I arrived at the site at 6:50 a.m. It was nearly light but the sun had not yet risen. (*Note that sunrise was at 7:12 a.m.) Between 7:00-7:07 a.m 1200 birds “popped” out of the chimney. The chimney reminds me of a popcorn popper with the birds coming out like kernels of popcorn. All birds exiting the chimney headed North/Northeast (toward the Scioto River). At this point the data collection became difficult. At 7:11 and for the next 30 minutes, approximately 2/3 of those birds returned to the chimney. Were they “going back to bed” because there were not enough insects to feed that number of birds?

The temperature was 63 degrees. I wondered if the swifts entering the chimney were new migrants arriving, but then I learned that swifts migrate during the day. That meant that swifts would be leaving, not arriving. A few hundred birds remained out of the chimney and always circled it. Dick Tuttle of Delaware sent me some information about emerging swifts from a book called *The Birds of North America*.

It states that “Foot candles of light is a determinant as to when they roost and when they emerge. Swifts enter the chimney from 0-2 fc, and morning departures of 70% occurred at 0-7 fc. In Illinois, they left between 11.1 minutes with a standard deviation of 2.8 minutes before sunrise.”

In other words, swifts typically come out of the chimney 11 minutes before sunrise (give or take three minutes). I have found that to be true, but that only 1/4 to 1/3 of the roost exits at that time. My guess is that the swifts leave the chimney in stages as the light of the sun penetrates further down this extremely tall chimney. That would explain why I had seen 1000 swifts exit the chimney between 10:25-

Related Readings and Resources

Jed Burt of Ohio Wesleyan University recommends an out-of-print book entitled *Swifts in a Tower* by David Lack. Jed also recommends going to the Wilson Ornithology website. Go to the *Wilson Bulletin* and search for old articles by Ralph Dexter, professor at Kent State University, who observed swifts for 40 years. Another book is *Swifts: A Guide to the Swifts and Treeswallows of the World* by Phil Chandler.

On-line resources include:
www.birds.cornell.edu/BOW/CHISWI/
www.swiftwatch.org (College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA)
www.concentric.net/~Dwa/page48.html (Austin, TX)
www.concentric.net/~Dwa/page6.html
www.fan.nb.ca/fan/info/Recreation/BirdWatching/Swifts.html
www.rumford.com/swift.html

10:40 the previous morning.

To continue with the Sunday observation, by 8:20 there was not a bird to be heard or seen. I knew that 3500 swifts were probably still inside the chimney. By 10 it was 75 degrees and sunny with plenty of food sources available for the swifts. Between 11:40-11:50 I counted 500 birds leaving the chimney and then I had to leave the site. I figured that 3000 swifts remained in the chimney and it was already noon! It was frustrating to have observed for five hours and still not to have seen all of the birds leave.

On Oct. 4, 2003 Darlene Sillick came to count the swifts with me. The last bird entered the chimney at 7:33 p.m. and 2800 birds were inside. Darlene and I continued to visit, but since Darlene was still facing the chimney, at 7:38 she noticed more birds silently entering the chimney!

Between 7:38-7:46 an additional 200 birds entered the chimney! It seemed odd that these birds arrived when it was very dark and that they did so in total silence.

One other interesting morning observation occurred on Sept. 26, 2003. More than 2000 birds were roosting in the chimney. From 7:07-7:08 p.m., 80 birds came out but then a curious crow perched on the lip of the chimney and peered down inside. The crow moved on, but as of 7:50 when I

had to leave, no more swifts had emerged.

Other Roosting Sites

Mark Skinner mentioned this site on the list serve – the Masonic lodge one half block north of the intersection of Fifth and High. On Aug. 29, 2003 I observed unusual swift behavior at this site. This was before I began to count swifts, but I estimate that 1200-1500 birds entered the chimney between 8:30-8:35. At 8:30 the tight black “smoke ring” of birds suddenly tilted up to a nearly vertical ring so that all birds plummeted straight into the chimney. It was one of the most spectacular shows I have ever seen. I think there may be a tree near the chimney and that it would cause the swifts to tilt their “ring” up on end.

Rob Lowry of Powell mentions an older, unoccupied white house at 55 Olentangy St. in Powell. The house is east of the main intersection in Powell. Dick Tuttle observes swifts at the old armory in Delaware and reports his data to SwiftWatch.org. Rob Thorn of Gahanna has found large roosts at the old fire station in Gahanna, at the Masonic lodge in Westerville, at Yearling High School in Whitehall, and at Watterson High School in Clintonville. I have also observed a large roost across the road at Indian Springs Elementary near Henderson and High. Rob reports that big roosts in past years have included Grandview High School, Montrose Elementary in Bexley, and Hamilton High School south of Columbus. If anyone knows of other roost sites, please pass that information to Darlene Sillick.

Darlene has worked closely with Donna Daniel at ODNR Division of Wildlife, and last fall Skip Trask came out to the site to video the swifts.

The swifts return to central Ohio around April 15 each year. Donna posed an interesting question to me this spring. She asked if the swifts put on a similar show as they migrate north.

On May 5, 2004, I counted 750 birds entering the chimney between 8:52-8:57 p.m. On May 28 I counted 130 birds. The majority of them entered between 9:18-9:23pm. Typically during nesting there are only one or two pairs of swifts in each chimney. One wonders if this large chimney will accommodate more pairs of nesting birds, or are these 130 birds non-breeding?

Finally, Darlene is in contact with Robert Hinkle, Chief of Outdoor

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President's message: Dave Horn

Columbus Audubon supports recycling, which may be why I am your president again. If you're a relatively new member, I was president a few years ago and have been associated with Audubon for quite a while, starting with the third grade Junior Audubon Club at William Robinson School (Augusta, Georgia).

I won't tell you how long ago that was but I do want to share that some things don't change much: (1) then as now I was primarily interested in birds, (2) recruiting new members was and is important and (3) without volunteers there would be no Audubon.

I'd like to expand on this last point, because it's the reason I'm pleased to take on the presidency again. Columbus Audubon has one of the most enthusiastic and committed volunteer bases that I've worked with. The membership makes Columbus Audubon go, which makes my job so much easier. My main challenge is to coordinate the enthusiasm.

We are always looking for fresh ideas and new friends. Take a look at this issue of the *Song Sparrow*, and find something that interests you. Maybe simple participation is enough.

That's fine; come to a monthly program or a bird walk or Insects 101. That's how I got started. And if you want to get involved, go for it -- we have many volunteer opportunities and will be glad to hear from you.

If you have issues, concerns or ideas as this year unfolds, please contact me at 292-5961 (work), 262-0312 (home) or horn.1@osu.edu. (Be patient with the phone; we sometimes let the answering machine run so as to screen sales people.) Also, in case you're a relatively new member, I'm in the Entomology Department at Ohio State and I'm willing to answer -- or forward -- questions on insects and their relatives. (I've also been watching birds for a few years and might be able to answer -- or redirect -- questions about our feathered friends.)

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not thank Pete Precario for a job well done as president these past two years, and I'm really glad he's neither leaving town nor changing his phone number and/or e-mail.

- Dave Horn

Columbus Audubon receives grants

Columbus Audubon Receives Audubon at Home Grant

Columbus Audubon was recently awarded an Audubon at Home grant in the amount of \$1,000 for a wetland project at Dempsey Middle School in Delaware.

Teacher Beth MacLehose will use the grant to do some scientific testing of their mitigated wetland to determine the cause of low diversity in the wetland and surrounding habitat.

She also plans to partner local professionals at the Ohio Division of Wildlife, Delaware Soil & Water Conservation District and members of Columbus Audubon with students to have the flora / fauna inventoried. The inventory will be compiled to provide both students and the local community with "field guides" of the area.

This project will give students the opportunity to learn scientific methods of inventory in habitats and problem-solving skills. The surrounding community will benefit as they will have access to the natural area and have the opportunity to learn about wetlands and surrounding habitat.

The Audubon at Home program is a National Audubon

project with many state chapters (including ours) participating.

The Audubon Ohio Web site states that "Audubon at Home in Ohio is designed to help individuals become more conscientious of the conservation consequences of their everyday actions. By helping people become more aware how simple everyday actions can help protect bird populations and the environment, we are enabling everyone to bring conservation home."

Look for future updates on this worthy project in this newsletter. If you would like to become involved, please give Susan Setterlin a call at (614) 457-8130.

If you would like more information about the Audubon at Home program, visit the Audubon Ohio Web site at www.audubonohio.org/bsc/home.html

You can also contact this program's Ohio representative, Casey Tucker, at (614) 224-3303 ext. 15 or ctucker@audubon.org.

-Susan Setterlin

Columbus Audubon receives grant for education

A special thank you goes to trustee and field trip chair Darlene Sillick who through a Volunteer Cardinal Health Employee Grant program, presented a check for \$4,000 to Columbus Audubon at the June Board meeting. The money will be used for educational materials at programs, displays, exhibits and special events.

We will be adding some binoculars, program back-packs

and numerous other program items as well.

At Cardinal Health, Darlene has set up a bluebird trail, bird feeders, offered lunch-time walks and taken many employees and their families out birdwatching.

Columbus Audubon is very grateful for this valuable resource and the monetary gift and support from Cardinal Health through their Volunteer Employee Grant program.

-Darlene Sillick

Columbus Audubon presents new series of 101 classes

Audubon is pleased to offer another series of 101 classes! The first class is Astronomy 101 taught by Jay Young. This will have the same format as last year. Each class will focus on a different topic and the outcome is to make you more comfortable with understanding a variety of celestial objects. Each session will involve classroom and outdoor viewing time. Classes are designed for beginners and are guaranteed to leave you inspired and motivated to learn more of the wonders of the night-time

sky. Classes will be held at Ohio Wildlife Center's Cook Road site. You will receive information through email before the class begins. You must register for the Astronomy 101 class, which has space for 25 participants, by contacting Jay Young at (614) 251-4565 or young2@ohiodominican.edu or Darlene Sillick at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com. We will call those on the wait list from this past spring to give them first chance to register for the November classes.

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 unless otherwise noted.

September & October Field Trips

Shorebirds for Beginners

Sunday, September 12 at 3:30 p.m.

Leader: Steve Landes

Skill level: All

Meet Steve at the Hoover Reservoir Dam for an afternoon of fun, while learning where and when to find the sandpipers, plovers, and the other shorebirds which migrate through Ohio each year. We will focus on tips for finding and identifying this unique group of birds. **Directions:** To get to the parking lot at Hoover Dam, take state Route 161 east of I-270 to the Sunbury Road exit, and go north about 1.5 miles on Sunbury Road. There is a parking lot on the right, near the dam. We will meet at the information kiosk. Carpooling may be necessary from there. Bring binoculars, field guide and a scope if you have one. For more information, email Steve at Katbird103@aol.com.

A Swift Night Out: Series of three viewing events

Swift watchers needed to watch swifts: As you are challenged with the tongue twister, you will be additionally challenged and amazed while counting hundreds and thousands of swifts as they swirl and enter brick chimneys on some of our older structures. Join us to view and help count the swifts. Come with a lawn chair and be amazed as the chittering flying cigars twist about and appear as smoke entering the chimneys. For details, visit www.chimneyswifts.org. Please bring your clickers to help count. Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the following dates:

Thursday Sept. 9 at Sells Middle School & 1919 building in Dublin on state Route 161 between Riverside Dr. and I-270. Host is Jenny Bowman.

Sunday Sept. 12 at Sells Middle School, Host is Jenny Bowman.

Monday Sept. 13 at Hanby Elementary in Westerville at the corner of State Street/state Route 3 and Park Street north of I-270 and south of Uptown Westerville. Host is Doreene Linzell.

If you have any questions call Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or email azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.

Migration Along the Scioto

Saturday, September 18 at 8 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill level: All

Migration should be peaking as we survey the Scioto River north and south of the Greenlawn Dam. In the future Whittier Peninsula Park, the narrow riparian corridor highlights landbirds, while the Greenlawn Reservoir provides a nice target for waterbirds like herons and shorebirds. To the south, the bikepath is one of the best forest migrant traps in central Ohio. If we have time, we'll venture to the nearby Green Lawn Cemetery or to some of the old river quarries. Meet at the South Scioto Boat launch at 8 a.m. **Directions:** Take Whittier west from Front Street, and make the first left turn. For more information, contact Rob Thorn, (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.

Trip to Dawes Arboretum

Sunday, September 26 at 2 p.m.

Leader: Trustee, avid birder-photographer Mike Flynn

Skill level: All

Join Mike for an early fall trip to Dawes Arboretum near

Newark. This is a beautiful site that features a tremendous diversity of landscape and plants. This trip is designed to give an overview of the property, including the nature center, while we look for birds and wildlife. Meet in the parking lot of Cracker Barrel restaurant at Rt. 256. **Directions:** From Columbus take I-70 east to exit 112 (Rt 256) turn right (south). Take the first right and the Cracker Barrel is on the right. Meet at 2 p.m. We will return to Cracker Barrel for dinner. Call Mike at (614) 882-9493, leave a message and he will call you back.

Pickerington Ponds/Three Creeks Wetlands

Sunday, Oct. 2 at 8 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill level: All

Join Rob Thorn at Pickerington Ponds and Three Creeks Metro Parks. While wetlands and riparian areas are disappearing elsewhere, these two parks are expanding these habitats. We'll start at Three Creeks, where the narrow riparian corridors catch both early sun and migrants. While there, we'll also peek at their newly-developed wetlands to search for lingering shorebirds and early waterfowl. Then we'll hop over to the nearby Pickerington Ponds to see their enormous new wetlands areas. This vast new complex of marshes and pools will almost certainly yield interesting marsh birds and waterfowl, along with raptors and lingering landbird migrants. We'll meet at the Heron Pond parking area of Three Creeks at 8 a.m. **Directions:** Take US 33 southeast from downtown (or I-270) to Hamilton Rd, exit south, then immediately turn right onto Williams Road. The Heron Pond entrance is 1.2 miles west along Williams Road. For more information, contact Rob Thorn, 614-471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.

Attracting Birds to Your Backyard

Saturday, Oct. 9 from 10 to 11:00 a.m.

Leaders: Paula Ziebarth and Darlene Sillick

Paula and Darlene will give the program "Attracting Birds to Your Backyard" at the City of Powell Municipal offices located at 47 Hall Street, the first street west of the Liberty Road/Powell Road intersection. Paula and Darlene have been busy setting up bluebird trails in Powell and now want to teach residents how to encourage birds to pay a visit. They will encourage attendees to take part in the Christmas Bird count and the Great Backyard Bird counts with Cornell University and Audubon.

Trip to Big Island/Killdeer Plains Wildlife Areas

Mid-October. Date TBD. (See Web site for updates)

Leader: Expert birder Jim McCormac

Skill level: All

Join Jim on a field trip to Big Island/Killdeer Plains wildlife areas. Collectively, they total about 14,000 acres, and some 275 species have been recorded at both. Mid-fall sees a push of waterfowl into the region, and we should be able to study a number of species, with an outside chance for a rarity such as Greater White-fronted Goose appearing amongst the Canadas. You can be sure we'll be eyeballing those Canada Geese a lot more closely, too, now that the diminutive Cackling Goose has been split. These sites are a good place to find one. Both places are always productive for raptors, and we'll keep our eyes peeled for goodies like Merlin. Among the species to be expected, like Bald Eagle

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CA Nature Programs

Note: Due to construction, Dempsey Road is closed. An alternate route to Inniswood is to follow Schrock Road until it dead-ends into Hempstead, turn right and the entrance to the park will be on your left.

September Program Behind the Scenes at the Zoo Tuesday, September 28, 2004

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

Most people living in central Ohio are familiar with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium through frequent visits or Jack Hanna's television and print advertising campaigns. But people often do not know what goes on behind-the-scenes at one of the top-ranked zoos in the country.

In addition to being a world-class zoological facility, the Columbus Zoo is a leader in support of the conservation of wildlife and their habitats around the world.

During 2003, the Columbus Zoo awarded grants to approximately 80 field projects in 36 countries. From the endangered West Indian manatee in Florida to our closest relatives in the wild - the bonobos of the Congo - the Zoo is making a difference in the lives of wild animals.

On Sept. 28 Rebecca Rose, the Zoo's field conservation coordinator, will take us on a whirlwind tour around the globe with stops at a rescue center for confiscated wildlife in the jungles of Guatemala; an eco-tourism project to benefit sea turtles in the Caribbean; a research station in Papua New Guinea where scientists are working with local people to study elusive tree kangaroos; and back to Ohio where north of the Zoo a cutting-edge facility is working to protect North America's most endangered animals - freshwater mussels.

October Program Wonders of the Night-time Sky Tuesday, October 26, 2004

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

Our presentation will focus on the wonders of the night-time sky. Supported by a slide presentation, Jay Young will provide a look at key constellations, mythological stories found in the stars, planets, and "deep sky" objects such as galaxies and nebulae.

He will also provide instructions on how to observe and interpret a full lunar eclipse that will occur twenty-four hours following the presentation.

Join this "naturalist of the night-time sky" for a look at the heavens that have inspired, frightened, and otherwise influenced humankind since the beginning.

Jay Young is a business faculty member at Ohio Dominican University and an amateur astronomer. His interest in astronomy began at age 12 and, early in his career, he served as a science teacher at the Richardson Independent School District Planetarium. He has delivered many public programs on astronomy over the years including those currently offered at Highbanks Metro Park and in Columbus Audubon's Astronomy 101 series. For more information on 101 class locations and times, see page 3 of this newsletter or go to the Columbus Audubon Web site at www.columbusaudubon.org.

Take note:

CA Board meetings for September & October

Board meetings are held at the Museum of Biological Diversity at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month. All members are welcome to attend.

Ohio Wildlife Center slates activities

More information for both the events below can be learned by visiting <http://www.ohiowildlifecenter.org>. *Thursday Sept. 9*, is the 5th Annual Golf Outing and fundraiser at The Golf Club of Dublin and *Sat. Sept 25* OWC celebrates their 20th anniversary from 10-5 with fun wildlife activities, art and music.

Stratford needs exhibitors for its Harvest Fair

Stratford Ecological Center's Harvest Fair is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 2 from noon to 6 p.m. They are looking for organizations, earth friendly businesses and citizens groups that would like to put up an informational display, sell products or services, or advertise for potential clients/members. The Harvest Fair draws hundreds of people from all over central Ohio. Activities include hayrides, live music, cider making, kite flying, drumming, earth ball, kids' games, demonstrations, horseshoe pitching, living history, harvesting, and much more. Call Christa Hein at (740) 363-2548 or go to <http://www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org/>.

The Holden Arboretum to host programs by Kenn Kaufman in September

"Flying Gardens: How to attract butterflies and birds to your garden" will be presented on Friday, Sept. 10 from 7-9 p.m. The free lecture will be followed by refreshments and book signing. *"A Birder Looks at Butterflies"* will be offered from 1-2 p.m. Saturday Sept. 11. The cost is \$5 for arboretum members, \$8 for non-members. That evening, *"In the Field and Brunch"* will be offered from 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. The cost is \$25 for arboretum members and \$35 for non-members. Registration required for all programs. Call (440) 602-3816 to register.

The Delaware County Bird Club slates meetings

The Delaware County Bird Club meets on the 4th Monday of the month from September to April at 7:30 p.m. (social at 7 p.m.) in room 165 at the new Science building at Ohio Wesleyan University in the city of Delaware. Parking is on the south side of the new science building. Go to the lower level to room 165. The Sept. 27 speaker TBD; Oct. 25 speaker is Michael Packer, birder and astronomer.

Swift Watch

Continued from page 2

They have built the first of three swift nesting/staging "towers" at CanalWay Center, in the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation just four miles from downtown Cleveland. Two more towers will be built in other locations, and one of them will be equipped with a live Web camera. In September, four of the nature centers of the Cleveland Metroparks will present a "Swift Night Out" highlighting neighborhood roosts as staging areas. There will be three such programs in our area. See page 4 of this newsletter for details.

Jenny Bowman has been the music teacher at Scottish Corners Elementary School in Dublin for the past 15 years. She is an avid amateur birder who has traveled to 53 countries. Jenny has been observing and gathering data on the swifts at the 1919 building for the past two years.

2004 Birdathon exceeds \$10,000

By Katryn Renard

Once again, our birdathoners did a magnificent job at raising funds for Audubon. For the fourth year in a row, we raised more than \$10,000. Birdathoners, sponsors - you're terrific!! Thanks to all of you who participated for all your efforts and energy. This includes *A Georgian Manner* for donating a free night's stay at their stately B&B (won by Joe Meara) and *Eagle Optics* for their donation of a pair of binoculars (won by Andrea Haslage). Congratulations to both of our grand prize winners.

2004 was our 10-year anniversary and while we now seem to know what needs to be done to run the Birdathon, it takes many hands to make it happen. Special thanks go to the following people for their extra efforts: Bruce Renard, Elaine Smith, Dave Horn, Eileen Smith, Dale Williams, and Tamara James.

There were also several teams that stood out. Teams that raised over \$500 were the **Blackhawks**, **Deck Birds**, **Marsh Madness** and **Short Build Dowagers**. Teams that raised over \$1000 were the **Slate (Run) Colored Juncos** and **Swans and Coots**. The team that raised over \$1500 was the **Wild Birds Unlimited (Riverside)**. And then there was the team that went out in the wee hours of the morning to start their trek. They said they did everything wrong - they forgot their tapes of bird calls, they didn't do any advance scouting to determine the best spots for the most birds, and they even - heaven forbid - backtracked!

It was their most ruffled year ever. And yet it was their most successful year ever. **The Quick Three Beards** (all 4 of them) saw 174 species this year, besting their previous record by one bird! Not only that, they saw more species than any other team. Congratulations! Here the list of this year's participants and the number of species they saw.

COLUMBUS AUDUBON BIRDATHON



	Bev May Pete Precario	Scarlet & Gray Tanagers 54 Joe & Susanne Gatesman Mark Setterlin Susan Setterlin
	Gone With the Wrens 48 Mary Counter Christine Eitel Barry, Sarah, & Anne Eitel	Short build Dowagers 120 Gretchen Fluke Janet Holzworth Doreene Linzell Connie Wolcott
	Ladybirds Who Lunch 40 Tamara James Kristan Leedy	Slate (Run) Colored Juncos 93 Linda Benner Doug & Kristen Everman Andrea Haslage Susan Moore Lori Patterson Randall Rogers Lynn Taylor
	Lake Eyries 65 Nancy Bringardner Dale Brubeck Dee Grover Marilyn Jennings Susie Saager	Swans and Coots 70 Alan Cohen Clyde Gosnell Paul Knoop Katryn Renard Marlene WooLun Louise Warner
Backyard Experience Chick-a-dees 45 Gerry Brevoort Joan Frederick Nina Hawranick Cyndi Henderson Lynn Singleton Lisa Zider	Marsh Madness 118 Bill & Deb Marsh	Two Footed Boobies 84 Marcia Brehmer Marion Farber Melanie Shuter Mary Kay Wood
Chestnut Ridge Chachalacas 87 Eleanor Nunley Bill Reiner Eric Reiner	Metro Parks Stellar Jays 96 Jim Davidson Joe Meara John O'Meara Joel Wachtel	Two in a Bush 65 Patty DeMaria Elaine Fujimora Biani Moran
Coo Coo Birds 55 Deborah & Ken Buckley	Neat Nests 29 Scott, Kierstan, Sabrina, & Whitney Jaeb Fred Lancia Del, Jordan, & Myranda Parrott	Wild Birds Unlimited - Riverside 163 Michael Flynn Steve Landes Tom Sheley
Eastern & Western Kingbirds 99 Garnett Rogers Randel Rogers	No Egrets 70 Becky Cummings Elaine & Larry Smith Roger Stout Laura Thomas	Blackhawks 126 Ken Davis Julie Davis Jenn Sauter
Even Tempered Longspurs 54 Mary Ann Hrabley Liz Melick John Switzer Tom Thomson Julia Wolfrom Pat Wolfrom	Quick Three Beards 174 Dave Horn Dan Sanders Troy Shively Bill Whan	
Deck Birds 1 Cheri Brown Pat Barron	Roadrunners 139 Chris Frantz Dan Shepherd	

Creature Feature

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ly white, with only one large dark blotch on their chest.

Voice: American Toads make a long musical trill that is a common evening sound in Ohio wetlands in April and early May, especially after the first warm rains. The trill lasts from 8-20 seconds, and is repeated after a similar interval of silence. They can call from almost any shallow body of water, such as pond edges, flood pools, marshes, vernal pools, and even puddles. Once you've heard an American Toad, you don't easily forget the sound. It's also a good basis for comparison with Fowler's toad, which has a faster, shorter, less musical trill that has been compared to the stutter of a katydid, the bleat of a distant sheep, or even the cry of an irritated infant. Fowler's toads also tend to call later in the Spring, usually from May to mid June. An excellent site for sound IDs of these toads and other frogs is maintained by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History at <http://www.cmnh.org/collections/vertzoo/frogs/toads.html>.

Toads are probably not the most common frog in central Ohio, but they are the amphibian that most people will likely meet on a regular basis. Their dry warty skin and tolerance for long periods without water allow them to colonize many habitats that aren't very wet or marshy, and this includes suburban yards. If your yard has any brushy corner or wooded border, along with a source of moisture, there's a good chance you have a toad. Some people even put out little pots or ceramic toad houses to encourage toads to take up residence in their gardens, but the effectiveness of these efforts varies. In either case, if a toad has moved in, it's an indication not that you have an aesthetically pleasing yard, but that you don't use insecticides.

One of the secrets to toads' success is a very shortened tadpole stage. Toads can hatch from eggs and pass through tadpoles to tiny toadlets in 2-3 weeks, which is very fast for an amphibian. This allows them to lay their eggs in temporary pools or seasonal shallows, which limits their exposure to predatory fish and insects. The vegetarian tadpoles spend virtually all of their time swimming and eating, so they grow quickly. They imprint on a chemical that mom secretes onto their eggs, so that the tadpoles tend to band together and form a tight cloud of tiny dark tadpoles. This may keep them from wandering away from their shallow water haven to more dangerous deeper water, in the case of a pond edge.

Like most wetland-loving creatures, toads have been negatively impacted by the steady loss of Ohio's wetlands. They've been more adaptable than most frogs, but my own surveys of frogs in riparian corridors of Columbus have shown that American toads have had unstable populations indicative of a species with problems. While they can still be found in most suburban areas with some woodlands, most open subdivisions won't support them. Also the tadpoles are often absent from many roadside pools in Columbus, although it's unclear whether this is due to the adults being squashed trying to reach the pools or the pools being contaminated. Fortunately, toads respond well to the creation of new wetlands, and some of the best places to find them now are in created wetlands like those at Pickerington Ponds, Glacier Ridge, or the Three Creeks Parks.

So keep your eyes open for small brown hopping objects as you journey along the trails in these or other urban wetlands.

Your Bird Reports

John Arnfield

Melissa Holewinski lives southeast of Hilliard near Trabue & Wilson Roads. She noticed a new bird under her feeders in the wooded area of her back yard the morning of May 11, 2004. As it foraged higher and higher in a Sugar Maple, never once bobbing its tail, she knew it wasn't a Hermit Thrush. The even grayish-brown color with no reddish tints and the buffy eye ring convinced her it was a Swainsons Thrush. She had excellent looks at the bird every morning and evening through the following Sunday. She was surprised that a migrant would stay that long in one place. Hopefully, that indicates her back yard is an inviting bird habitat.

If you have any interesting bird sightings or behavioral observations, please send them in and we will try to use as many as we have space for in the *Song Sparrow*. Send them to the editor, Stefanie Hauck (svhauck@aol.com); to bird report compiler, John Arnfield (John.Arnfield@osu.edu); or call them in to the Columbus Audubon office at 740-549-0333. Please include your name, and the date and location of your sightings.

Eco-Weekend thanks

The Eco-Weekend Committee would like to say a big thank you to all who made the 32nd event a success. There were 58 programs offered this year in addition to the main Saturday evening program. Eco-Weekend was held in the rolling hills at Camp Oty Okwa west of Logan where we saw a total of 60 species of birds.

Programs included birding, insects, wildflowers, geology, bats, edible and medicinal plants, mosses, trees, reptiles, amphibians, raptors, astronomy, owl walks, canoeing, and many other activities. A special thank you to the camp staff, for the use of their wonderful facility and providing the food. Sincere thanks go to our Adult Consultants: Lindsay Benjamin, John Biesecker, Nichole Braun, Bob Brugler, Susie and Jarrod Burks, Leland Conner, Ann Cornell, Gary Coovert, Jim Davidson, Patty DeMaria, Mike Flynn, Elaine Fujimura, Frank Gifford, Elayna Grody, Dave Horn, Mike Huffenberger, Bob Klips, Paul Knoop, Jamie Kreps, Steve Landes, Jordan Lynch, Mitch Masters, Bob McDonald, Gisela McDonald, Joe Meara, Ralph Moran, David Paris, Christena Pheifer, Bob Placier, Barbara Ray of the Ohio Wildlife Center, Eric Reiner, Don Rice, David Sagan, John Schmidt, Darlene Sillick, Bruce Simpson, Tony Skrabak, Wendy Sorrell of Ohio Nature Education, Fred Steck, Sharon Treaster, Joel Wachtel, Tom Watters, John Wilson, Barb White and Natalie & Greg Wittmann. Thanks also to our Youth Consultants: Alyssa King, Kate Boylan, Meagan DeLauren, Don Rice, George Keeney (*Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades*); Rob Horsburgh Alyssa King, Allison Shaw, (*3rd, 4th and 5th grades*); George Keeney, Barbara Natterer, Annalese Lynch, Daisy Boyd and the camp staff for the ropes course, (*6th, 7th and 8th grades*).

And a special thanks to our tireless Eco-Weekend Committee: Deborah & Ken Buckley, Susie Burks, Mary Counter, Lois Day, Roz Horn, Linda Huffenberger, Alyssa King, youth coordinator; Liz Melick, Martina & Mike Venz and John Wilson. Next year, Eco-Weekend will be held April 29 - May 1, 2005. If you are interested in being on the committee or acting as a consultant (leader), call Columbus Audubon at (740) 657-0333.

-Eco Weekend Committee

Restored wetlands open at two Metro Parks

Two restored wetland areas opened to the public this summer at Pickerington Ponds and Glacier Ridge Metro Parks.

In June, Pickerington Ponds added 370 acres of restored wetlands to the park. The wetlands are near the Glacier Knoll picnic area on both sides of Bowen Road. What was farmland two years ago has now been transformed into a large, grassy wetland area that is teeming with hundreds of species of birds and other wildlife.

Restoration work was funded by grants from the Natural Resources Conservation Service Wetland Reserve Program and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program.

The park is open daily from 6:30 a.m. to sunset. It is located at 7680 Wright Road



By Stefanie Hauck
View of the Honda Wetland Education Area at Glacier Ridge Metro Park in Union County near Dublin.

near Canal Winchester. To get there take U.S. 33 east toward Lancaster for 6 miles. Turn left onto Bowen Road and go about 2 miles. The park entrance is on the right side of the road.

The new Honda Wetland Education Area at Glacier

Ridge Metro Park, which opened to the public in mid-July, is over 200 acres of restored wetland. It is also converted farmland.

Restoration work was made possible by a large donation from Marysville-based Honda of America.

The restored area also includes an observation tower where you can see several of the ponds and grasslands.

A boardwalk winds through the area enabling a close-up view of birds and other wildlife. Restrooms are located at the orientation/education center near the parking lot.

Most of the plants were planted by Metro Parks staff and the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District with the remainder appearing naturally.

The park is open daily from 6:30 a.m. to sunset. The new area is at 7825 Hyland Croy Road. You can get to the park by taking Post Road out of Dublin and turning right on Hyland Croy Road.

The wetlands area is on the right about 2 miles down the road.

-Stefanie Hauck

Suburban Bluebirds and Songbirds

By Robin Eisenbeis

I heard Darlene Sillick speak about bluebirds at Inniswood Metro Gardens in the spring of 2002. I was "hooked" and began monitoring a trail near my home a month later. Unfortunately this suburban trail had been overtaken by House Sparrows and as a new monitor I was only comfortable with removing the eggs and nests.

To my frustration, I would return the next week to find a new House Sparrow nest with more eggs. Darlene fortunately recognized my passion for bluebirds and allowed me to take over her trail of 10 years at OCLC (On-Line Computer Library Center in Dublin).

This trail has taught me so much about bluebirds. My children and I have handled more than 30 bluebirds! What fortune we have experienced.

As I became more and more passionate about bluebirds, I put up three boxes in our suburban yard. After meeting Paula Ziebarth, who wrote a wonderful article in the spring 2004 *Bluebird Monitor* about successes she has had with suburban bluebirding, I attached a bluebird box to the back of our mailbox just as she had done.

Within days, a pair of Tree Swallows discovered our box. Our family has named them Spirit (the male) and Swifty (the female). My children ages 8, 6 and 2 have enjoyed watching Spirit and Swifty build their nest, and were excited to discover each morning after sunrise another egg laid by Swifty.

She laid four eggs. They have become very accustomed to our busy family, with children playing in the front yard, and cars driving in and out of the driveway. We have enjoyed the territorial "divebombing" when we go to get our mail and then watching the pair patiently wait on our Fawnbrook Lane sign for us to return inside so they can return to their babies. Many of our

friends and neighbors have witnessed a Tree Swallow for the first time, in awe of their beauty. When the babies hatched, all of our family went out to hold the naked young. They truly "grew" on us and we were always welcomed home by Swifty's head sticking out of the box hole each time we drove into the driveway.

Unfortunately when we returned from a five day trip to Michigan in late June, we did not see Swifty's face sticking out of the box. When my six-year-old reached into the box to check on the babies they were dead. We were all very saddened by this misfortune.

Darlene gave us four possible answers: Because this is "suburbia" and we have neighbors who unfortunately let their cats roam, it is possible that a cat captured the female. (The male does not have the brooding feathers needed to keep the babies warm.) It could have been a snake or raccoon, or a Cooper's Hawk that captured the female. Or it could have been mosquito spraying by the city or neighbors. The experience that we all gained from the month of observing the Tree Swallow was such a gift.

We will continue to try to attract songbirds to our Bluebird boxes. The continual removal of House Sparrows is necessary to keep the boxes available for songbirds.

Fortunately, we have had success in 2004. We had five fledging chickadees in late May and we presently have a House Wren brooding five eggs in another of our boxes. The visit of a bluebird in April for a few weeks is all the encouragement we needed that there is a chance for a bluebird to make her home in our backyard in the future.

Robin Eisenbeis lives in Dublin.

Coming up

Continued from page 4

and Northern Harrier. We'll not only be after the charismatic mega-birds; micro-fauna is never ignored. In particular, this is a good time for migrant Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and if luck were really with us, Le Conte's Sparrow. Both sites have plenty of good habitat. Also, both of these wildlife areas occupy the former huge expanse of wet prairie known as the Sandusky Plains; there should still be evidence of some of the interesting prairie plants that are found in the area. Meet at 7:30 a.m., in the usual spot at the south end of the Worthington Square Mall parking lot. *Contact Jim at jim.mccormac@dnr.state.oh.us.*

Fall Migration Walk

Sunday, October 10 at 3:30 p.m.

Leader: Steve Landes

Skill level: All

Join us for a relaxing walk through beautiful Blendon Woods Metro Park. We will search for waterfowl and other migrating birds visiting and residing this time of year. Meet at the Nature Center parking lot. **Directions:** From state Route 161 east of I-270, exit at Little Turtle Way. Make a right, and an immediate right onto Cherry Bottom Road, the park entrance is ahead on the left. Once in the park, follow the signs to the nature center. Bring binoculars, field guide and a scope if you have one. *Steve's email is Katbird103@aol.com if you have questions.*

Hueston Woods & Aullwood Audubon Center

Saturday, October 16 at 7 a.m.

Leader: Casey Tucker

Cost: \$10 donation to support the Hueston Woods Nature Center and the Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm

Join Casey Tucker, Audubon Ohio's Education specialist, for trip to Hueston Woods State Park & Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the PetCo parking lot in near Lennox Town Center on Olentangy River Rd. We'll carpool to the park to explore the fall colors in one of Ohio's largest remaining stands of old growth Beech-Maple forest. Lunch will be at the Hueston Woods Lodge. We'll stop by Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm on the way back to see one of Audubon's premier educational facilities. *Contact Casey Tucker, (614) 404-1521(H) or (614) 224-3303 ext. 15 (W); or email him at ctucker@audubon.org.*

Migration Along the Scioto

Saturday, October 23 at 8 a.m.

Same trip as September 18. See page 4 for details. *For more information, contact Rob Thorn, 614-471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.*

Introduction to Birding at Killdeer Plains

Saturday, October 30, at 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Brad Sparks

Skill Level: All

Join Brad for a morning of birdwatching at one of the state's premiere wildlife areas. At this time of year there should be lots of waterfowl to sort through and some of the raptors that the area is known for should have returned from their northerly breeding grounds. The great thing about this area is you never know what will show up! This trip will also serve to introduce people that have never birded this area to the many diverse habitats that can be found here, so that they will be able to return to the area in the winter and experience the great birding on their own. We will meet for carpooling at the Worthington Square Mall at the corner of the intersection of High Street and Wilson Bridge Road. We should return to the mall by early afternoon. *Contact Brad Sparks at (614)-751-6622 or birdmansparks@yahoo.com.*

September & October Work Trips

New Beginnings at Gahanna Woods

Saturday, September 11 at 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Bill Loebick

Join Bill Loebick at ecologically diverse Gahanna Woods State Nature Preserve in east-central Franklin County. Discover a Gahanna jewel noted for spring wildflowers and the giant swallow-tail butterfly associated with the resident prickly ash population. Assist in redecking a small boardwalk. Explore and plug an extensive leak seeping from the button bush swamp. Avenge native plant displacement by removing persistent woody invasive species. Meet in the parking lot at Gahanna Woods, 1 mile east of Gahanna on Havens Corners Road, then 1 mile south on Taylor Station Road. *Call Sharon Treaster (614) 292-1395 (Columbus Audubon coordinator) by noon Sept. 8 to sign-up and determine tool requirements.*

Sneak Preview Trail Project

Saturday October 9 at 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Jeff Johnson

Assist Jeff Johnson, Southcentral District Manager in adding the final touches to the new accessible trail system at Conkle's Hollow in Hocking County. The dry cliff tops provide spectacular views of the sandstone gorge and seasonal fall color. Meet at building E at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Complex, 1889 Fountain Square (off Morse Road). Call Sharon Treaster (614) 292-1395 by noon Oct. 4 to sign-up, reserve space for transportation and determine tool requirements. Bring Saturday's lunch, cup or water bottle for drinking.

2005 Entertainment Books

We are again selling Entertainment Books, which will be available at the birdfeeding supply stores listed below, starting Sept. 1. Proceeds from the sale support Columbus Audubon's educational activities.

Accent on Wild Birds	1285 Grandview Ave., Grandview	486-7333
Better Earth	59 Spruce St., Columbus (North Market)	224-6196
Backyard Experience	3337 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
Columbus Audubon	Dave Horn	262-0312

(If you want an out-of-town Book, perhaps for a holiday gift, contact Dave Horn directly and he'll make it easy.)

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)

If this is a GIFT MEMBERSHIP, please fill out the recipient information below:

Recipient's name _____
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To change your mailing address, call Joe Meara at 614-781-9602 or e-mail casmem@juno.com.

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