

Columbus Audubon Song Sparrow

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Creature feature

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

By Rob Thorn

This is the 'red-headed' woodpecker that so many people in Ohio report from their feeders. One of the hidden bird success stories of the past half century has been this species' spread from its southern strongholds into the Midwest and Northeast. They're now very common in central Ohio, rivaling Downy Woodpeckers in abundance. It's named for one of its least visible field marks, while its scientific name alludes to the southeastern U.S. where it was first 'discovered' and where it is still very abundant.

Relationships: Red-bellies are woodpeckers, meaning that they share a very unusual biology adapted for spending much of their life on or in the trunks of trees. Their genus, *Melanerpes*, means 'black-neck' a funny reference to the black head of the Acorn Woodpecker, the first described member of the genus. This genus is mostly centered in the neotropics, but includes some of North America's most distinctive woodpeckers, including the Acorn woodpecker, the Red-headed Woodpecker, and the Lewis' Woodpecker. Almost all of these woodpeckers have a diet that includes many nuts and seeds along with the usual woodpecker fare of insects. Indeed, Acorn Woodpeckers and Lewis' Woodpeckers are closely tied to certain western oaks, while Red-headed Woodpeckers seem to be very partial to red oak acorns and American beech nuts. Red-bellies, in contrast, seem much more catholic in their tastes, enjoying a wide variety of nuts, berries, and suet.

Range: Eastern and central North America, extending from New Hampshire and southern Ontario south to Florida, and west to Texas and the Dakotas. Don't look for them west of the Great Plains; in fact, they don't even occur on the plains, but extend out the forested river valleys of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. This range is almost perfectly overlapped by different oak trees, and acorns are likely their food of choice during the winter if they cannot find a nearby feeder. Feeders, in fact, are probably one of the main reasons that Red-bellies were able to penetrate into the upper Midwest and New England starting in the 1950s and 1960s.

Field Marks: Red-bellies have so many good field marks that they should have been forced to share some of them with the other woodpeckers. Start with that beautiful 'zebra-striped back', with its narrow bars of gray and white. Add in the gorgeous helmet of orange-red that extends up over the crest of the head (but only to the back of the head in females). Toss in a clear white breast with a shading of red-orange on the belly. And don't forget about the light rump and the large white wing patches set off against the gray wings. Mix in a variety of distinctive calls and this is one easy bird to identify. In fact, for me it was the first bird I learned using a *Peterson Guide* at the tender age of eight in Florida. I already knew Mockingbirds, Blue jays, and Cardinals, but wondered about the big woodpeckers that were so common around our neighborhood.

Quintessential Woodpecker: Woodpeckers have some well-known peculiarities, and Red-bellies show all of these features. All woodpeckers have their biology shaped by their tree trunk-centered lifestyle. They have a swiveling toe that allows them to grip 2-up and 2-down, and they also have stiff tail feathers that they use to prop themselves against the trunk surface. This means that they don't really perch for extended periods



Courtesy of ODNR

Red-bellied Woodpecker.

See Creature feature, page 6

All about the Christmas Bird Count

More than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th Century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census"—that would count

birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the CBC. Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the enthusiasm of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five CBCs were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied a total of 90 species on all the counts combined.

The CBC is the oldest and largest citizen science event in the world. For over a hundred years, people have gathered together during the winter holiday season to count birds. For many people, this is an annual tradition that has passed from one generation to the next. In the process, they have created a vast pool of bird data that is the most comprehensive available for mid-December to early January. It is a fertile source of information on the status and distribution of early winter bird populations and is studied by scientists and interested people the world over. While there is a spe-

cific methodology to the CBC and you need to count birds within an existing Christmas Bird Count circle, everyone can participate! If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher.

If your home is within the boundaries of a Christmas Bird Count circle, you can report the birds that visit your feeder or join a group of birdwatchers in the field. If you have never been on a CBC before and you want to participate in a count this year, including feeder counting, please contact your count compiler prior to the count.

The CBC season is December 14 through January 6 each year. Your local count will occur on one day between those inclusive dates. If you have more than one local count, they will probably be conducted on different dates within the CBC season. You can pick the most convenient date, or participate in more than one count. The 108th CBC will be start on December 14, 2007.

Information from Birdsource.org and Audubon.org.

Columbus Christmas Bird Count takes wing on Dec. 16

Help us monitor central Ohio's wintering birds in one of the longest-running volunteer censuses in the region. On Sunday, December 16, we'll have teams of birdwatchers scouring the neighborhoods, parks, and wildlands of greater Columbus, looking for rarities and common birds alike. Christmas Bird Counts, or CBCs, have a few rules: you need to count within a 15-mile-diameter circle and you need to count on a single day within the count period (Dec. 14-Jan. 6). The Columbus count circle is centered just north of Bexley, so that it stretches from Upper Arlington on the west to Blacklick in the east, and from Minerva Park in the north to Groveport in the south. Key parks and preserves within this circle include Whetstone and the Olentangy Greenway, Griggs Dam, Greenlawn-Whittier, Blendon Woods, the Alum Creek Greenway, Blacklick Woods, the Blacklick Creek Greenway,

and Three Creeks Park. Even with all these parks, much of the count area is decidedly urban and suburban, although it was much less so when the count started back in the 1960s. Our CBC has literally documented the winter bird population changes as Columbus has grown from a small city into a major metropolitan area.

How have Columbus' wintering birds changed during that period? Some birds have not adapted to the changing landscape.

Open country birds, like meadowlarks, blackbirds, marsh harriers, and many kinds of sparrows, have definitely declined as much of the countryside has been turned into subdivisions. Some deep forest birds, like Red-shouldered Hawks and Pileated Woodpeckers, have slowly become rare as their habitats have become fragmented. Other birds have slowly disappeared for no obvious reasons. Red-headed Woodpeckers were formerly regu-

lar in the circle, but are now rare. Even though they're still widespread, Tufted Titmice have steadily declined. Towhees have declined to the point where they now hang on only in a few park areas. Hopefully these trends can be stabilized, and continued counts are the most direct way to monitor this change.

Other birds have adapted well, sometimes too well. Strictly urban birds, like pigeons, starlings, and house sparrows have all increased to the point where they've almost become nuisances. Crows, after a few down years due to West Nile Virus, appear to be rebounding. Other supposedly 'wilder' birds have been adapting to our suburban areas, including Coopers and Red-tailed Hawks, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadees, American Robins,

[See Columbus, page 11](#)

Central Ohio Christmas Bird Count Schedules

CIRCLE	DATE	COMPILER	PHONE	E-MAIL
COLUMBUS	Dec. 16	Rob Thorn	(614) 471-3051	robthorn@earthlink.net
DELAWARE	Dec. 16	Jed Burt	(740) 368-3886 (d)	ehburt@owu.edu
HOOVER RESERVOIR	Dec. 15	Charles Bombaci	(614) 891-5706	charlesbombaci@aol.com
O'SHAUGHNESSY RESERVOIR	Dec. 29	Darlene Sillick	(614) 761-3696	azuretrails@columbus.rr.com
KINGSTON (Circleville/Chillicothe)	Jan. 1	Brad Sparks	(614) 751-6622	birdmansparks@yahoo.com

Project FeederWatch

Help the birds this winter and contribute to science too!

By Judy Kolo-Rose

Feeding the wild birds throughout the winter months provides much-needed help for those who do not migrate south. After winter sets in, plants, seeds and insects are not as abundant. Providing a wide variety of food for the birds not only helps them survive, but provides entertainment and education for those of us relegated to the indoors during the frigid winter season. A perfect way to both help birds and contribute to important research is to participate in Project FeederWatch.

According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology Ambassador Judy Kolo-Rose, you can provide valuable "Citizen Science" data that the lab compiles to track trends.

Information collected from "regular folks" who become citizen scientists on behalf of the lab contribute valuable information about bird populations, diseases, species eruptions, patterns of movement, and much more.

Participating in Project FeederWatch is as easy and as putting up a feeder and watching it, for as little as 15 minutes a day every two weeks throughout the winter months.

The more feeders you put up with a variety of food types, the greater the variety of birds you can expect to attract.

Dr. David Bonter, leader of Project Feeder Watch at Cornell said, "People of all ages and skill levels are welcome to participate. The project begins in November, but you can join any time."

"Large-scale bird population studies would not be possible without our dedicated FeederWatchers," said Bonter. "By simply watching from their home, each observer broadens our window on the world."

To learn more about Project FeederWatch or to register, log onto www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call the lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473.

In return for your \$15 participation fee (\$12 for lab members), participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, a colorful poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions on how to file their reports, the FeederWatch Year in Review, and a subscription to the lab's newsletter, *BirdScope*.

For additional information about bird-feeding, Project FeederWatch, or any of the other Citizen Science projects sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology,



Photos by Judy Kolo-Rose

Woodpeckers at feeders attached to a tree.



Red-breasted Nuthatch at a feeder.

FeederWatch info

Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

There is a \$15 annual participation fee (\$12 for Lab members) which covers materials, staff support, web design, data analysis, and a year-end report.

The survey is conducted each winter starting on the second Saturday of November and running for 21 weeks, through early April. You may join at any time of year. The last day to sign up for any given season is Feb. 28.



Goldfinches mob a thistle seed feeder. Most of the finches in seen here are female.

Wild Birds Unlimited store.

We hope you decide to enjoy the birds and help science at the same time.

Happy birdfeeding this winter!

contact ambassador Judy Kolo-Rose at judy@kolorose.com, or visit your local

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.

Note: Field trip times, dates and locations are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If you plan on going on a trip, please contact the trip leader 24 hours ahead of time to make sure the trip has not been changed, postponed or cancelled. Also, check the Columbus Audubon Web site at www.columbusaudubon.org for any changes or additions to the field trip listings.

Field trips

Wednesday Walks at Whittier

Wednesdays, November 7 and December 5, 7:30 a.m.

Note: Wednesday walks are always held the first Wednesday of the month. Join Paul and Heather for a short walk around Whittier Peninsula to view wildlife as well as to watch the latest developments of the park and nature center. Meet at Lower Scioto Park in the boat ramp parking lot (Entrance is on Whittier Street, West of Front Street). Please note the new autumn start time of 7:30 a.m. For more information, contact Paul Gledhill at (614) 848-7666 or gledhillpaul@yahoo.com, or Heather Raymond at (614) 785-0342 or heather.raymond@epa.state.oh.us.

Glacier Ridge Metro Park

Saturday, November 10, 8 a.m.

Meet at the Honda Wetland parking lot at the southern end of Glacier Ridge Metro Park. We'll look for late waterfowl and late fall migrants. The Honda Wetland Education Area is one mile north on the left side of Hyland Croy Road. Directions: Take I-270 toward Dublin. Take 33/161 west (exit 17B) toward Marysville. Follow 33/161 west to the 161/Plain City/Post Road exit. Turn right at the light and then immediately left on Hyland Croy Road. Contact Earl Harrison at (614) 505-1123 or eharrison@ehe.osu.edu or Darlene Sillick azuretrails@columbus.rr.com (614) 761-3696.

Hoover Reservoir

Sunday, November 11, 1 p.m.

Meet at the Hoover Dam parking area on Sunbury Road just north of Central College Road. Hoover Reservoir has consistently been one of the most important stop over points in central Ohio for waterfowl and many other bird species. Join us as we travel to several key locations in search of eagles, hawks, geese, ducks, loons and other late fall migrants. Dress for the weather! Call Mike Flynn at (614) 769-1681.

Three Creeks to Pickerington Ponds

Saturday, November 17, 9 a.m.

While this part of the late fall has bird activity slowing elsewhere, the areas south of Columbus start gathering late migrants as well as interesting winter birds. We'll start at Three 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, and often hold lingering thrushes and warblers. Then we'll drive over to the nearby Pickerington Ponds to visit their myriad wetland areas. This man-made mix of marshes and pools harbors a good variety of waterfowl and raptors. Meet at the Heron Pond parking area. Directions: Take U.S. 33 southeast from downtown (or I-270) to Hamilton Road, exit south, then immediately turn right onto Williams Road. (**Note:** if you're heading south and turn right you are heading east.) The Heron Pond entrance is just over a mile west along Williams Road. Dress warmly. For more information, con-

CA November Program

New Zealand & the Cooks

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

7:00 p.m. social time, 7:30 p.m. presentation

Innis House at Inniswood Metro Gardens

Along with its green fiords and glacial peaks, New Zealand is the land of the true hobbits (Penguins and Kiwis). And the Cook Islands are like Hawaii was 25 years ago (including cost).

Round trip, they are an affordable island birding duo that will revitalize the spirit. Join world photographer Michael Packer on his vacation to this great "Ohio wintering ground."



By Michael Packer

Yellow-eyed Penguin.

tact Rob Thorn, (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.

Deer Creek Lake

Sunday, November 18, 2:30 p.m.

In some years a flock of Sandhill Cranes stays in the Deer Creek area from about Nov. 10 until the 25th, and it is a thrilling sight to see them coming to roost at sunset. Last year we were treated to five of them. Even without the cranes, Deer Creek Lake in November is good for migrating waterfowl. Meet at Deer Creek Marina, off state route 207 south of Pancoastburg. Directions: From Columbus, take I-71 toward Cincinnati, exit at State route 57 into Mt. Sterling and pick up 207 there. Look for a green Subaru Outback, license plate # MOTHMAN. For more information, contact Dave Horn, (614) 262-0312, horn.1@osu.edu.

Green Lawn Cemetery

Saturday, November 24, 9 a.m.

Over 200 species of birds of birds have been recorded at Green Lawn Cemetery and an early winter wander around the pit usually brings a few surprises. Join Darlene Sillick and John Wilson as they fill the bird feeders and look for the usual suspects plus a few surprises at one of the oldest cemeteries in central Ohio. The cemetery is located at 1000 Green Lawn Avenue. For directions go to <http://www.greenlawncolumbus.org>. Contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.

Birding the Urban Scioto River

Sunday, December 2, 8:30 a.m.

We don't usually think of the Scioto River as a winter birding

See Coming up, page 9

Notes from the field

Field trip to Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain

By Michael Packer

Mike Flynn told me before this trip he holds two places dearest to his heart – Pickerington Ponds here in Ohio and Hawk Mountain in the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania. Now that is a profound statement from a life-long birder who chooses his words as carefully as he observes.

Needless to say, I co-organized this trip without hesitation. Around the middle of September, nineteen Columbus Audubon members carpooled over eight hours to intersect one of the top migratory flyways in North America.

Up on the mountain at 10 a.m., thermals were rising, winds 0-15-mph, and the sky was partly cloudy and sunny. A weather front had come through the day before so the conditions were near perfect for falcon, hawk and eagle migration. Now all that is an amazing stroke of luck. But how does that saying go, “Birds have wings, and they don’t read forecasts, calendars or maps?” Our anticipation quickly turned to exultation. After finding a good vantage point, a sharp-shinned hawk rose into the sky about 30-feet away. A five-second look later one of the volunteer counters called out, “Osprey ... over four coming this way.” About a mile

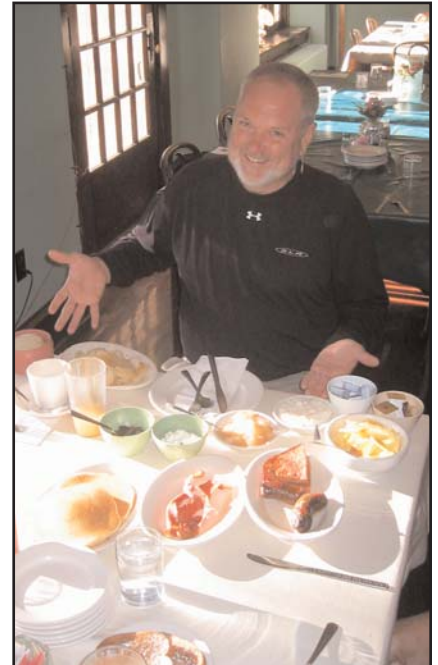


By Michael Packer

(Above) Columbus Audubon members have a little fun at Hawk Mountain. (Below) Breakfast at a local eatery.

out over Peak 4 (all landmarks are named to facilitate spotting) we could see the distinctive flight and wingspan of the osprey. A second later the day took off. A kestrel chased by a merlin popped up; ospreys kept coming with splashes of sharp-shinned sightings left, right and overhead, and an intermittent but non-stop broad-winged migration kept moving over Peaks 3, 4, 5 ... We looked northwest to focus on a northern harrier after finally identifying a

very distant black vulture. And then at about 12:30 p.m., we heard a counter call, “Kettle in the northeast.” Following the group as it passed overhead, I had my first sight of 40 to 50 broad-wings soaring high in a circle – the kettle moved amazingly fast in the high thermal jet stream. We saw at least four more groups of more than 40 broad-wings, flying in a parallel non-kettle formation. Mike and I hazard to guess their speed to be 50-mph. By the mid-afternoon, some half dozen bald eagles soared in for a finale and two peregrine falcons were seen. There was not much time to reflect. But before us was a breathtaking view of prototypical raptor migration that has gone on through millennia. And on a higher note, the magnitude and variety of raptors allowed many of us to witness the



dynamics of this social confluence for the first time. Adding the 50 or so turkey and black vultures seen, the total daily count of raptors, 930, was the highest for the season to date and covered 12 species.

See Notes, page 6

Spring 2008 trip to Prairie Ridge

Prairie Ridge Interpretive Site in Illinois

In early Spring 2008, Mike Flynn and Michael Packer lead a trip to Illinois where approximately 100 Greater Prairie Chickens remain within the Prairie Ridge Interpretive Site. At this time of year, and at the crack of dawn, the males start to court females. They strut, dance, display feathers and fill ornate orange sacs on the sides of their neck with air (the sounds made are a low “whoom-a-oom”). The trip is by reservation only and has a limited number of spaces. If the Smith’s Longspur is in the area, the group will seek it out along with other birds of interest. Contact Michael Packer, m.packer@yahoo.com or Mike Flynn (614) 769-1681.

Creature feature: Red-bellied Woodpecker

Continued from page 1

of time, but must rest or sleep clinging against a tree trunk, preferably inside a hollow cavity. Red-bellies, however, are better perchers than most woodpeckers, and can be quite adept at perching and reaching for bugs or fruit. I've even seen them flycatching after slow-moving bugs, but they're not very good at it.

Woodpeckers also have a unique head, with a chisel-like bill attached to a reinforced skull, underlain with an unusually long tongue attached at the back of the skull. All of this helps the birds hack, chisel, and probe insects out of dead or cracked wood. Red-bellies have all these traits, and to see one stick out its tongue to its full extent is amazing to the point of disbelief. Their head is so reinforced that Red-bellies are rarely recorded as victims in window-strikes, even though they do run into them regularly. The beak is not only sharp, but shows a sexual dimorphism: males have a noticeably longer bill than females. Possibly this helps them reach for deeper bugs, or maybe it's just a feature to impress females.

Voice: A surprising variety of sounds for a woodpecker. Probably the most distinctive is the harsh, rolling 'churrrr' locator call that Red-bellies give to keep track of one another. An equally unique call is the repetitive 'chiff, chiff, chiff' that they

give as they are climbing up a tree or hacking at some dead wood. When they confront another woodpecker they can give a flicker-like 'fleeeka-fleeeka-fleeeka'. And let's not forget drumming. Like all woodpeckers, Red-bellies drum to announce their territories. They give a loud rolling series of taps, made by rapping against a hollow branch, trunk, or even the eaves of a house. It's slower than the staccato raps made by Downies and Hairies.

In central Ohio, Red-bellied Woodpeckers can be found in almost any woodland or woodlot, even in the middle of suburbia. They need large trees to feed in and roost in, but other than that they seem very adaptable. In the summer, look for them around oak areas, such as Blendon Woods, Highbanks, or Sharon Woods Metro Parks. They will also accumulate in these areas in the fall, especially in years with good acorn crops. I've had up to a dozen in acorn-filled oak woodlots, which is a good number for a non-flocking woodpecker. In the winter look for them around feeders, especially those that have suet cakes. The feeder banks at the nature centers at Highbanks and Blendon Woods are often great places to watch them. Or better yet, set up your own feeders (don't forget the suet). Chances are good that you'll soon have a few visiting Red-bellied Woodpeckers to admire from the comfort of your own home.

Notes from the field: Hawk Mountain

Continued from page 5

Also, throughout the day, our attention was redirected to a unexpectedly large butterfly migration.

We saw over 500 Monarch Butterflies in loose churns blow by.

With that said, here are some quotes that convey the full scope of this CA adventure.

Lynn Wearsch said, "A 'peak' experience all the way around!"

Donna Siple said, "The weather was glorious, the raptors abundant, the meals comforting, and the group of travelers extraordinarily jovial. I can't remember ever laughing this much

on any other bird-related venture."

John Wilson said, "I traveled with Earl Harrison and Stephen Revard and we all had the best time talking. I think we solved many of the world's problems."

Tamara James said, "The Pennsylvania Dutch meals made the trip extra special. The impromptu 'locally-brewed birch (root) beer tasting' during dinner was the best way to cap a great day of hawk watching!"

Mike Flynn said, "Hawk Mountain was 'heart warmingly' familiar from my experiences years ago. Everything about the weekend was the highlight."

Ohio Young Birders Club needs members

By Darlene Sillick

Columbus Audubon is about to start a new project to help complete our goal to educate people of all ages in natural history and conservation in central Ohio. We have joined forces with the Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO) and we are now partnering with the Ohio Young Birders Club (OYBC) opening a supporting chapter in central Ohio through Columbus Audubon and BSBO.

This club is designed to work with 12 to 18-year-olds and will strive to:

❑ Create a community for young birders throughout Ohio ~ and beyond!

❑ Foster an interest in natural history and encourage young people to spend

more time outside.

❑ Connect young birders with adult mentors willing to share their time, knowledge and transportation!

❑ Offer encouragement and support to Ohio's future Ornithologists and Naturalists!

AND HAVE FUN!!

The OYBC is supported by its members. Cost is \$5 per young birder ages 12 - 18 or \$10 per supporting adults members. OYBC provides a chance to interact with other young people who share the same interest. Monthly meetings and activities will be planned locally and we will join in on BSBO/OYBC activities as time and interest permits. We would like

to encourage interested young adults to join in on a Christmas Bird Count this winter. Please see page 2 to contact a CBC compiler to join a local count. In January, we will meet and begin to plan the direction of our branch of OYBC.

Please visit the OYBC Web site. <http://www.ohioyoungbirders.org/home.htm>. If you are a parent of a 12 to 18-year-old interested in birds, birding and natural history please contact Darlene Sillick 614-761-3696 or at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com for more information. We want the kids to run this branch of the club and welcome support from parents as well.

Thanks from the OYBC committee, Julie Davis, Earl Harrison, Stephen Revard and Darlene Sillick.

Conservation Corner

Great Lakes issues continue

By Dave Horn

It has been nearly six years since the governors of the Great Lakes states vowed their support of efforts to keep outsiders from tapping into the world's largest freshwater system. The Great Lakes Basin Water Resources Compact is now before legislatures of several states, and only Minnesota and Illinois have ratified it. The compact includes conservation guidelines for water used inside the Great Lakes Basin and provides greater protection against diversions to faraway places like the growing urban areas of Phoenix, Az., and Las Vegas, Nv.

By supporting the draft Compact, governors merely signal their intention to submit it to their respective state legislatures, and to Congress, for approval. In order to go into effect, all eight Great Lakes states and Congress must approve the draft compact without change. We need to contact our representatives and senators in the Ohio legislature to make sure that happens.

You may recall an effort a few years ago by property owners along the Lake Erie shoreline to limit public access despite freedom of shoreline access laws going back to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Ohio's Governor recently released a vague statement in apparent support the Ohio Lakefront Group, which represents lakefront owners. The Governor's statement stems from an ongoing controversy over the extent of the Ohio's public trust over the waters of Lake Erie and the land under those waters.

Columbus Audubon, Audubon Ohio and many other environmental organizations believe that the State of Ohio holds the land up to the "ordinary high water mark" (OHWM) in trust for the use of its people, and that the people have the right to walk along any portion of the beach below that line when it is exposed due to lower lake water levels.

Owners, however believe that the public may only walk in (or perhaps on) the water and that the State of Ohio has no public trust above the line where the water meets the land, regardless of how high or low lake water levels are.

The Ohio Attorney General, Marc Dann, agrees with the Audubon position and it now looks like the matter will be settled in court. We will continue to monitor this issue and provide updates.

Also, cormorants are being shot in an effort to control their numbers on the Lake Erie islands. That is a subject for an upcoming *Song Sparrow*.

Your Columbus Audubon Conservation Committee welcomes your input to these and other matters, via e-mail, phone calls or in person. We can always use a few more folks. Currently our meetings are the second Tuesday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at Dave Horn's house.

- Dave Horn (with edited comments from Jerry Tinianow, Executive Director of Audubon Ohio)

Invasive species: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

By Dave Horn

Just when you thought it was safe, here comes the next insect pest. First, what's an adelgid? It's a small, sap-sucking insect closely related to aphids or "plant lice" and woolly adelgids are sometimes called "woolly aphids." The "wool" is a waxy secretion that makes the adelgid look like a tiny piece of cotton fluff. (A fairly common woolly adelgid occurs on beech trees in central and northern Ohio.)

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid apparently arrived from eastern Asia sometime before the 1950s. It now occurs from Massachusetts to North Carolina and has advanced through West Virginia to within 75 miles of the Ohio River. Isolated infestations have been found in northeastern Ohio, apparently imported from nurseries in the East.

What is the problem? As is often the case, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid has no



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

effective natural enemies, so populations increase to high levels, and when that happens, the trees are killed. It usually takes several years for trees to die. The good news, for people and trees in colder climates, is that the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is relatively intolerant of extreme cold, so trees in northern New England, upper Michigan, Wisconsin and Canada

are not at great risk. Southeast Ohio is not so fortunate and if the adelgid is established there we may see extensive tree mortality which would greatly detract from the scenic beauty of places such as the Hocking Hills. A lot of research is under way on management of the adelgid and it is possible that once it arrives in Ohio in great numbers there may be effective controls. Meanwhile, Columbus Audubon members who spend time outdoors in eastern Ohio should be on the lookout and report infestations to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry (or to me, and I'll pass the word along).

Helpful Web sites

<http://na.fs.fed.us/fhp/hwa/> and
<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/5209/default.aspx>

Columbus Audubon KIDS!

The Fall newsletter has hit the streets and the next issue is not far away! Contact Nadya Bennett, CA Kids Committee Chair to get your child's issue mailed to them and to sign up for our CA Kids monthly programs. You can contact Nadya at nadya2003@msn.com or (614) 306-8215.

Backyards for Wildlife

Help stop Global Warming in your yard

By Toni Stahl

Like the canary in the coal mine, birds are warning us that global warming is becoming an environmental problem that impacts us all.

Ohio is composed of small, privately owned parcels of land undergoing rapidly expanding urban sprawl. It's not too late to make a difference, but we're all going to need to work together.

If your yard looks something like our photo, you are on the right track with having native trees and native plants to keep our ecosystem in balance.

Have you noticed plants blooming earlier and invasive plants (those that harm natural places) and pests thriving? The global warming signs are here.

Birds are breeding and migrating earlier. They are gradually changing their ranges. For instance, once wintering primarily in Mexico, the Rufous Hummingbird is now increasingly seen in the Gulf Coast states.

In addition to sustainable actions within the home like changing to energy efficient appliances, you can add diverse native plants, reduce lawn area, reduce chemical use and remove invasive plants in order to improve environmental health.

Simple steps (like deciding where to add native trees) help global warming and save money on your heating and cooling bills. Evergreen trees protect your home from wind that blows from north and west and

Deciduous trees shade the south in the summer. These trees lose leaves in winter to allow sunshine to warm your home.

If urban sprawl continues with the same 1950's 'golf-course' lawn mindset, scientists predict that the Ohio Buckeye tree will no longer be able to survive in Ohio.

For more information, contact Toni Stahl or Marc Apfelstadt, e-mail: marc-a@columbus.rr.com, or (614) 791-0529 between 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.



Photo of our front yard in winter.

By Marc Apfelstadt

Resources to help fight Global Warming at home

More about what you can do to help birds and Global Warming:

'The Gardener's Guide to Global Warming' has more detailed information: www.nwf.org/globalwarming

'Climate Classroom' helps you explain global warming to children and has family activities too! Go to http://online.nwf.org/site/PageNavigator/ClimateClassroom/cc_homepage/

Ohio's Worst Invasive Plants - www.oipc.info

Stop Global Warming.org - www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_actionitems.asp

Global Warming International Center - <http://www.globalwarming.net/>

NRDC Global Warming site - <http://www.nrdc.org/globalWarming/solutions/default.asp>

Track Osprey migration from your home!

Hopefully some of you were able to watch one or several of the osprey platforms in and around central Ohio during nesting season. The male osprey based at North Alum Creek has again begun his trek south.

The Division of Wildlife has a page on their Web site where you can track one male osprey's migration from home!

The male osprey departed from his nest site at Alum Creek Reservoir and began his migration south sometime between September 14 and 17.

Satellite radar detected a transmitter signal as he crossed from Florida to Cuba on September 20 around 10 p.m., and again as he

landed in Cuba at 1 a.m. on September 21. The male reached Colombia on September 26 and Venezuela on September 27, a flight of 2,850 miles from Alum Creek.

The osprey is five days ahead of last year's migration and has another 750 miles to go to reach his wintering area.

He should winter near the Amazon River.

You can track him too by going to the following Web site www.dnr.ohio.gov/wildlife.

The Web site will be updated twice a week during fall and spring migration, so keep checking in to see how his migration is going.

Coming up

Continued from page 4

destination, but maybe this trip will change your thinking. We'll start at the Scioto-Whittier Metro Park, to look for unusual water birds and lingering land birds. Then we'll work our way up-river, looking at the series of dams, pools and quarries up past downtown and through Grandview and Marble Cliff out to Griggs Dam. The variety of habitats along this stretch of urban river is surprising, and attracts an equally surprising mix of birds. Perhaps we'll see the Bald Eagle that has started to patrol this area in recent winters, or maybe we'll find some of the elusive wintering Night Herons. Meet at the Whittier boat launch and dress for potentially bad weather. Contact Rob Thorn at (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.

Glacier Ridge Metro Park Winter residents

Sunday, December 2, 2 p.m.

Discover birds around the wetland on a one-mile hike. Public program sponsored by the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks and Columbus Audubon. Meet at the Honda Wetland Education Area. Call Earl Harrison at (614) 505-1123 or eharrison@ehe.osu.edu for more information. Co-leader is Chrissy Pheifer, Glacier Ridge naturalist.

Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area

Saturday, December 8, 11 a.m.

This wildlife area is famous for attracting a wonderful variety of hawks and owls and winter visiting passerines. Come cruise and wander over a few of the 8,625 acres as we search for our target birds. We will stay until dark to look for short-eared owls. Dress for the weather, bring snacks and water. Meet at the Worthington Mall parking lot (corner of U.S. 23 and Wilson Bridge Road) at 11 a.m. Contact Earl Harrison at (614) 505-1123 or eharrison@ehe.osu.edu or Darlene Sillick azuretrails@columbus.rr.com, (614) 761-3696.

Winter Birds at Pickerington Ponds

Sunday, December 9, 2 p.m.

The combination of seasonal ponds and rich wetland vegetation, with bordering woodlands, serve as a magnet for migrating waterfowl, shore birds and land birds. This two hour trip will cover four observation points at Pickerington Ponds. Directions: From I-270, take U.S. 33 east toward Lancaster about three miles. Take the Canal Winchester/State Route 674/Gender Road exit. Turn left onto Gender Road, go about a mile and turn right onto Wright Road. Go about a mile to Bowen Road and turn left. The Glacier Knoll picnic and parking area is about 0.25 miles on left. Call Mike Flynn at (614) 769-1681.

Christmas Bird Count at Glacier Ridge

Saturday, December 29, 8 a.m.

Meet at the Glacier Ridge Metro Park bulletin board by the picnic shelter in the main park area. Join the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count to search for winter birds both on and off-trail. Public program sponsored by the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks and Columbus Audubon. Leader: Chrissy Pheifer, Glacier Ridge naturalist.

New Year's bird walk at Blackhand Gorge

Monday, January 1, 2008, 10 a.m.

New Year's Day bird walk at Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve. Join leader Mike Flynn to hike the trails and see what's out and about as we start our 2008 bird list. Winter species will keep us company and we will be close to water, field and woods on our hike. The geology of the winter landscape tree silhouettes will be a wonderful way to usher in a new year of bird watching. Wear layers and good footwear and bring food and water. Meet at the Worthington Mall (corner of U.S. 23 and Wilson Bridge Road) and plan to carpool. If you are closer to Newark meet us at 11 a.m. in the main parking lot at Blackhand Gorge. Call Mike Flynn at (614) 882-9493.

Avid Birders field trips

November 10: 5:30 a.m. - Western reservoirs, etc.

December 8: 5:30 a.m. - Gulls, waterfowl along Lake Erie.

Go to <http://www.columbusaudubon.org/avids/avids.html>.

Other local nature related programs

Delaware County Bird Club programs

On Monday, November 26 at 7:30 p.m. Michael Packer presents his photographic journey in search of native Costa Rican birds and neo-tropical migratory birds that nest in Ohio. December 10: Goals for CBC.

The Wilds slates programs

All programs start at 10 a.m. unless otherwise indicated.

November 17: Hike 'n' Hayride.

November 24: Wilds Trail Day.

December 1: Wildcats.

December 8: Forest Exploration Day.

December 15: Wild, Winter Tour.

January 5, 2008: Raptor Field ID Day.

January 12, 2008: Eagle Survey Day- 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

February 9, 2008: Raptor Field ID Day.

Metro Park programs

Blendon Woods

Bird hike with Bruce Simpson

Saturday, December 15, 11 a.m.

Highbanks Metro Park

Family Theme Day: Owls

Sunday, December 2, 2-4 p.m.

Learn about the owls of Highbanks with games, activities, and a special visit from Ohio Wildlife Center staff and their live owls.

Chickadees and Friends

Saturday, December 8, 2 p.m.

Explore the unique behaviors of birds and the value of bird banding. Susan Setterlin will be presenting this program along with the reading of Aldo Leopold's essay "65290."

Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 15, 8 a.m.

Join us for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Glacier Ridge Metro Park

Winter Residents at the wetlands

Sunday, December 2, 2 p.m.

Discover birds around the wetland on a one mile hike. Sponsored by the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks and Columbus Audubon. Leaders: Earl Harrison, Chrissy Pheifer.

Owl Hike at the main park

Saturday, December 15, 5:30 p.m.

Listen for the calls of owls in both forests and fields on a 2-mile hike. Sponsored by the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks. Leader: Chrissy Pheifer, Glacier Ridge Naturalist.

GIAC update: Education as tool to meet conservation objectives

By Doreen Whitley

The mission of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC) is to awaken and connect participants to the beauty of the natural world in the heart of Columbus and inspire environmental stewardship in their daily lives. The story alone of the Whittier Peninsula restoration project and the discovery of the unique organisms that inhabit it, form a strong foundation for nature exploration and inspire stewardship. As the Whittier Peninsula is transformed we are working to ensure that we do not lose sight of our mission. We aim to do so through our building in its operations, our programs in their objectives, and in our conservation planning which drives the objectives of our programming.

Along with Audubon Ohio staff and our partners, we are currently working on a conservation plan for our site. Thanks to the diligent efforts of local birders our site was deemed an Important Bird Area (IBA) in June 2000. As an IBA, we are charged to protect and enhance the habitat of our site. For this reason the purpose of this plan is to identify specific management concern areas and set priorities for identifying conservation targets.

In turn through its programming, the GIAC acts as tool for reaching specific conservation targets for site specific resource management, as well as local and regional conservation issues. This allows the center to offer action oriented programs that empower and engage participants in “real life” projects with measur-



By Heather Starck

Livingston Elementary students help restore the northern tier of Whittier Peninsula.

ble results. We have already experienced success in this arena. Last year our fifth-grade class of IBA investigators at Livingston Elementary culminated a series of field studies with a restoration project on the northern tier of the peninsula. During the summer, the Urban Conservation Crew students helped us inventory the different habitats of the peninsula.

Over the last two years, dedicated Columbus Audubon volunteers have been conducting bird counts through monthly

walks. Heather Raymond and Paul Gledhill lead these walks on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 a.m.

The data from these walks is being used in the conservation plan to identify priorities and understand the next level of monitoring that needs to take place. It is exciting to watch as the plans for the Whittier Peninsula become a reality and reflect on the fact that much of it started from a simple bird watcher's list. So keep on birding and never underestimate the power of your lists.

Winter Survival Tips for the birds

Winter is just around the corner and now is the time to prepare habitats to help birds and wildlife survive the cold weather ahead. This year's cold spring and hot, dry summer wreaked havoc on some common natural food sources. A little habitat preparation and supplemental feeding on our part may go a long way to reduce stress and winter kill in the local bird populations. We have had early sightings of large number of Red-Breasted Nuthatches, as well as a few Pine Siskins, indicating inadequate food resources for them further north. Here are a few tips to help prepare your yard 'for the birds.'

Don't be too hasty in cutting or removing the dormant or dying flowers in your gardens. Leave some for the birds! They will glean seeds throughout the winter from these garden areas. Consider moving your

garden clean-up from fall to spring. Create brush piles with tree limbs, twigs and other debris for birds to use to escape the winds, snow and rain. This is a great use for Christmas trees at the end of the holiday season.

If you feed the birds, be sure to empty and clean all of your feeders. Start by removing seed and debris from feeders then loosening stubborn oils and dirt by soaking in very warm water for 15-30 minutes. A bio-degradable antibacterial dish soap can be added to this soak. Tube-style feeders can be taken apart and scrubbed with brushes if necessary. The gunky buildup in the bottom of wooden or plastic hopper style feeders can be scraped off with a flathead screwdriver or small putty knife. Feeders can be sterilized by soaking in a 10-percent bleach solution for at least 20 minutes.

Rinse and dry thoroughly before refilling. Be sure to regularly rake up and remove the waste materials and debris on the ground around your feeders. This is vitally important in helping to eliminate the potential for the spread of avian diseases. Nesting boxes can be cleaned out and sterilized in the same manner as feeders. Keep in mind some decorative houses may be damaged by vigorous cleaning. Birds generally use more energy to keep warm in winter months, so consider offering feed with a high fat content. Suet, peanuts, tree nuts and seed blends high in black oil, striped sunflower, and safflower seeds provide the extra calories birds need. Be sure to have food available for critical evening and early morning feeding periods, especially during cold and snowy conditions.

[See Winter survival, page 11](#)

Columbus and other area Christmas Bird Count information

Continued from page 2

Carolina wrens, Dark-eyed juncos, and American Goldfinches. Many of these birds are prospering due to the huge concentration of feeders in Columbus, while others take advantage of our extensive plantings of fruiting ornamental trees like hawthorns and Bradford pears.

Unless the weather becomes very cold, all teams should find large numbers of most of these species in every area of Columbus.

In fact, many of these species are much more common in suburban areas of Columbus than in more remote rural areas.

What other changes in our wintering birds are in store? Increasingly, we're finding hardy strays and wintering birds that were formerly rare or unknown from here during December.

Our list of wintering waterfowl has steadily grown as small numbers of teal, wood ducks, and shovelers have started to stick around in different ice-free ponds or creeks.

Unusual raptors, like Bald Eagles, Merlins, and Peregrines, are now almost expected in the winter here.

Sapsuckers and Flickers are now wintering in fair numbers in our ravines and parks.

Cedar Waxwings and hermit thrushes have become quite regular in recent years

('05 had record numbers of the latter), probably due to many planted fruit trees. Warblers other than Yellow-rumped have started to stay as well: we had pine warblers in '02 and '03 (count period), and an Orange-crowned in '03, and it's probably just a matter of time before we find a Yellowthroat, Palm, or a Black-throated Green.

All of these are birds we'll be hoping for on Count Day. And you never know what jaw-dropping rarity will show up, like a Rufous Hummingbird at a Blendon Woods feeder ('03), a Grasshopper Sparrow lurking in an OSU field ('05), or a Western Tanager flitting around a Grandview neighborhood ('06). That's what makes a CBC so fun.

This year's count will run all day on December 16.

Most of the major parks in the circle – Blendon Woods, Blacklick Woods, Three Creeks, Whetstone, South Scioto, and Greenlawn – should have teams of birders, and we'd love to have you join the teams.

We need as many birders as we can recruit, since more eyes means fewer birds missed.

So please plan to come out for the morning, or the whole day, or just keep an eye on your birdfeeders. Email me at robthorn@earthlink.net.

Rob Thorn, Columbus compiler

Hoover Reservoir CBC information

This will be the 52nd year for the Hoover Reservoir Circle. Past highlights include bald eagles, merlin, long-eared owl, Eastern screech, barred and great horned owls, and most species of waterfowl. Several areas of special note within the circle include Hoover Reservoir, Alum Creek Reservoir, Inniswood Metro Park, Sharon Woods Metro Park, Highbanks Metro Park and Camp Mary Orton.

The main assembly point for the circle is the parking lot at the Hoover Reservoir dam on Sunbury Road in Westerville. Participants gather at 8 a.m. to break into teams to cover the east and west shores of Hoover Reservoir and areas in the Hoover Nature Preserve. There will also be teams starting directly at Camp Mary Orton, Alum Creek Reservoir, Highbanks Metro Park and Sharon Woods Metro Park. The two Metro Parks have tied the count to programs to be led by each Metro Park's Naturalist, Suzan Jervey and Allison Shaw. All are always warmly welcome and appreciated.

If you plan to participate at an area other than Hoover Reservoir, please let me know so I can let the Team Leader of the area know to expect you.

Charles Bombaci, Hoover compiler

Winter Survival Tips for the Birds

Continued from page 10

Feeders should be checked after rain, snow and ice storms. Remove excess snow and ice from perches and seed ports to insure access to seed, and check to make sure seed is dry enough to flow freely from feeders.

And don't forget that birds need a clean source of water all year long! Consider adding a birdbath heater to an existing birdbath or installing a heated birdbath.

Water is a common life element for all wildlife, so don't be surprised if you see birds and wildlife not normally seen at your feed-

ers stop by for a drink, particularly during migratory periods or prolonged cold or dry spells. Finally, plan next year's landscaping projects to include fruit and berry producing shrubs and trees for the birds as well as edible seed producing plants to give birds a natural source of food throughout the year.

Author's note: Columbus Audubon's Bird Seed fund-raiser is a great source for high quality foods for the birds, so be sure to use the order form included in this newsletter or online to reserve your supplemental food resources for this season.

-By Tom Sheley, CA trustee

2008 Entertainment Books for sale

We are again selling Entertainment Books which will be available for \$25 each from the bird feeding supply stores listed below Sept.1 through December. Proceeds from the sale will support Columbus Audubon's educational activities and the Grange Insurance Audubon Center.

Accent on Nature	1390 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 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 (If you want an out-of-town Book, contact Dave directly and he'll make it easy)	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. 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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To change your mailing address, call Joe Meara at 614-781-9602 or e-mail membership@columbusaudubon.org.

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