

Delaware County Bird Club

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 35 No. 4

Delaware County Bird Club Newsletter

December 2020

DELAWARE COUNTY BIRD CLUB PROGRAMS

For the Fall of 2020, the DCBC is going virtual - Zoom meetings instead of in-person programs. We will hold them in the same time slot - on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 PM, except the dates will be altered slightly for the holidays in November and December. If you would be interested in joining such Zoom meetings, please send an email message to Rich Bradley **from the account you would use** for the Zoom registration. Your email will then be added to a list for use in sending Zoom links about the meetings. Please send your sign-up message to Rich Bradley at his **alternate email address** under the name Alan Bradley (marionspiders@gmail.com).

For December, the program will take place on December 14th. Rich Bradley will provide details of the Delaware Reservoir Christmas Bird Count on December 20th. Unlike previous years, the program this year will not be a long Powerpoint presentation of the history of the CBC, and our local Delaware Reservoir count. Rich will briefly remind everyone about the results of last year's Delaware Reservoir CBC.

One thing everyone can do is report any rarities and the results of any "scouting" trips within the Delaware Reservoir CBC count circle. If you don't know the limits of the count circle, you can download the Count Circle app available from the Apple App Store.

Rich will provide a short introduction to our plans for this year. We hope to have a socially-distant count. Each team is restricted to only family or "pod" members, no groups, even in the field. Many teams will be assigned to smaller separate portions of the count area, depending upon the ability to provide some coverage. Feeder or yard counts will also be gratefully accepted. There will be no pre or post count gatherings at all. Anyone who wishes to participate must contact Rich to discuss their target coverage area. Results will be shared with him (compiler) via email (marionspiders@gmail.com). Rich will also show you how to access a new archive of Christmas Bird Count data.

Finally, currently we have no presenter scheduled for the 22 January Delaware Bird Club Zoom meeting. If

you know of someone who would like to present a Zoom talk, or if you would like to, please contact Rich Bradley (spidrs@gmail.com).

COLUMBUS AUDUBON PROGRAMS

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center, host of Columbus Audubon programs, is currently open but at limited capacity. There are no Tuesday night programs on the calendar. Please check the GIAC website <https://grange.audubon.org/> and social media or call 614.545.5475 for updates. Also check in at the Columbus Audubon website for programming that remains available: <http://www.columbusaudubon.org/>

SAVE THE DATE - CENTRAL OHIO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Date TBA – Hoover Reservoir CBC

Contact: Lee McBride

leemcbride50@yahoo.com

614.360.8213

Date TBA – Buckeye Lake CBC

Contact: Jeff White

jlwhite2929@gmail.com

614.425.8016

December 20th, 2020 – Delaware Reservoir CBC

Contact: Rich Bradley

spidrs@gmail.com or bradley.10@osue.edu

Date TBA – Columbus CBC

Contact: Rob Thorn

robthorn6@gmail.com

614.551.0643

December 26th, 2020 – Darby Creeks CBC

Contact: Jen Moore

jenmoore@metroparks.net

614.774.0020

December 27th, 2020 – Killdeer Plains CBC

Contact: James Anderson
andersonjames03@gmail.com

December 31st, 2020 – O’Shaughnessy Reservoir CBC

Contact: Darlene Sillick
dsillick118@gmail.com
614.288.3696

TBA - Kingston CBC

Contact: Brad Sparks
birdmansparks@yahoo.com
614.751.6622

Please note, that if you don’t see a date posted here, it was not available to the Editor as of the publication date of this newsletter. Contact the person listed for that count or check the Columbus Audubon CBC web page at <https://columbusaudubon.org/citizen-science/christmas-bird-count/> which may or may not be fully up to date.

EVENING GROSBEAK ALERT

Rich Bradley sent this photo of a female Evening Grosbeak snapped at Mohican State Forest on 23 November 2020. There have been reports of Evening Grosbeaks from all across Ohio recently, many at feeders, so we should all keep our eyes out for them this winter.



BLACK SWAMP BIRD OBSERVATORY – BIRDS AT HOME ZOOM SERIES

Folks may enjoy BSBO’s new “Birds at Home” Zoom series. The sessions are free to members and students while there is a \$5 charge to non-members. For a complete list of upcoming workshops and keynote talks visit <https://www.bsbo.org/birds-at-home.html>.

LEAVE THE LEAVES

If you’re a fan of birds, butterflies, moths, lightning bugs, amphibians and other critters, consider “leaving the leaves” – don’t rake your yard this Fall, or if you do,

keep the leaves onsite in an undisturbed corner of your yard. Read more here: <https://xerces.org/blog/leave-leaves-to-benefit-wildlife>.

2020 FALL CHIMNEY SWIFT COUNTS, N=71

Dick Tuttle

For the eighteenth consecutive year, I counted migrating Chimney Swifts as they dropped into chimneys to spend their nights clinging to bricks and mortar before emerging after sunrise to hopscotch another one hundred or more miles to another welcoming chimney for another night’s sleep as they continue their journeys to their winter homes in Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, and Brazil’s northwest corner. Compared to their challenges, my part of the count starts with showing up at a public chimney one-half hour before sunset while staying alert, counting and recording by the minutes until one-half hour after sunset. It’s a peaceful hobby that has more to offer than swifts.

During previous years, I have downloaded a sunrise/sunset chart from the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C. that lists every day of the year. The chart was not available this year and their website said they were working on it, etc. Well, local newspapers list sunset times on their weather pages, so no problem.

I counted at eight chimneys, only two were not within the city of Delaware. On August 14, I counted 105 swifts at Sells Middle School in Dublin during a Swift Night Out organized by Darlene Sillick. I counted my season high of 1249 swifts at the Galena Village Hall on August 23, and the highlight of the evening was not the swifts, but an immature Bald Eagle that launched from the Big Walnut Creek to fly west across Galena.

The season started off with disappointments as Carlisle Elementary’s chimney failed to be active with swifts. I watched the chimney from my car for five nights between August 4 and September 9. Swifts were rare and when they did appear to “dip,” a term I use to describe an actual effort by a bird to fly closer to the chimney’s opening in order to scan and smell to appraise the chimney’s status as a possible roost for the night, but after one dip, each swift just flew onward toward a busier Delaware.

During my five nights at the elementary school, I saw a solitary rabbit once, and a flying bat once. Most exciting was counting eleven Common Nighthawks, or goatsuckers, on September 9. During my fall swift watch, I counted a total of 22 nighthawks that were migrating over Delaware between August 25 and September 11.

As I do every year, once I select a dominant chimney, I count at other chimneys every other night in order to acquire a list of active roosts. When it appeared that the Carlisle chimney was “dead” after failing to attract roosting swifts, the chimney at the Zion United Church of Christ became my new primary chimney. I sat in a director’s chair to count swifts at the church, and things

were going well until August 22 when no swifts entered. By September 7, the church's chimney was also declared dead, possibly because it was being used as a chimney. For five of the 17 nights that I counted at the church, a solitary rabbit entertained me as it grazed on green grass. And during eight nights, a bat really brought a smile to my face. It would fly in an east to west path before hovering over me at five to ten feet. Was it being curious? I never had any insects land on me, so I assumed the bat wasn't hunting, or was it just assessing its world before it left to hunt? Who knows?!

Oh, I should add that I don't worry about bats giving me rabies since during the early days of the Ohio Wildlife Center, I endured shots of rabies vaccine to make me immune.

During the decline of swift numbers counted at the church, August 28 became a new turning point as I counted 480 swifts entering Edwards Gym's northeast chimney on Ohio Wesleyan's campus. The second Wesleyan chimney that I watch each year is located on the north face of Gray Chapel and it had failed to house more than four swifts during my earliest counts. Therefore, Edwards Gym became my dominant chimney for my latest counts.

To count the gym's swifts, I sat in my car in the power plant/motor pool parking lot along Wilmer Street that is also known as the OWU Power House. I would roll down my window, listen to my radio, and read the time on my dashboard as I recorded data, and there was always more than swifts that won my attention.



The northeast chimney of Edwards Gym on the Ohio Wesleyan University campus is favored by roosting Chimney Swifts. The original function of the chimney has been replaced by modern equipment shown surrounded by the pink fencing.

While watching the gym's chimney from the parking lot, I was also scanning the sky over downtown Delaware. The Olentangy River is found nearly three

blocks east of the city's main downtown intersection and flying ducks became a common site as they flew into town seeking their aquatic hotel for the night. Not only the Olentangy, but some of its small stream tributaries were also sought.

Whenever I am walking in downtown Delaware, I check on the Delaware Run that flows east under some of the business buildings and under South Sandusky Street to emerge into the open flowing along the northern edge of Wesleyan's campus. Most times, I can watch Mallard ducks as they harvest food in the flowing stream.

During 31 of the 69 evenings that I counted in Delaware, I recorded 422 ducks in 80 different flocks, ranging from one to 17 ducks per sighting. I also recorded three flocks of geese that added up to 21 individuals. I am sure that a serious birder with a spotting scope, or a camera with a telephoto lens, would enjoy identifying the passing waterfowl.

Mammals counted during my swift nights at the gym's chimney included one rabbit for one night, single bats for eight nights, and a mature groundhog during six nights. The groundhog had a burrow near the Power House building where it would emerge to cross the street to graze on a steep hillside behind the Branch Ricky Arena. Initially, I was worried about the groundhog's safety since Wilmer Street has a fair amount of traffic, but I soon learned that the wise animal was blessed with good hearing and would break into a fast run to safely cross the street with time to spare. Of course, it has additional burrows in the hillside near the arena.

In mid-September, climate change became a visible reality as I watched the sky. On late afternoons showing no clouds, instead of a blue sky, skies were light gray. Then, TV's meteorologists revealed that Central Ohio was experiencing a gray haze of forest fire smoke carried in from our country's western states.

I found myself thinking about beavers in the western mountains as described in the 1913 book, In Beaver World by Enos A. Mills. Known by some as the "father of Rocky Mountain National Park," his book is still published and tells of beavers that lived in the Rocky Mountains. The obsessive dam builders would not be able to solve today's entire forest fire problem, but they could certainly help in some situations. The book is worth a read.

The swift's 2020 fall migration peaked on September 28 as 610 swifts dropped into the gym's chimney. Swift numbers always decline after a high number in September, and then there is always a minor increase in numbers during the last days in early October. Swifts usually circle repeatedly above their targeted chimneys before dropping in, but during the last days of the migration season, remaining swifts fly directly to the chimney to quickly drop in, requiring a concentrated focus on the chimney by the counter. Perhaps, they are running out of energy due to shorter days and lower

temperatures that lead to fewer flying insects that serve as their prey items.

The last day when swifts entered their nighttime roost was October 12 when 14 sought shelter. I spent the next night watching the gym's chimney to count zero swifts, and spent October 14 sitting in my director's chair watching the sky over downtown Delaware to make sure that no swifts were missed.

October 12 remains the average date for seeing the last swifts during my eighteen-year quest to describe their migrations. Annual last dates range from the earliest on October 6, 2004, to the latest of October 22, 2018.

During my nightly counts, I try not to forget to take with me a map downloaded from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and three swift study skins from Wesleyan's zoology Museum so I can explain what I am watching should I have questions to answer. I have state and federal permits that allow me to temporarily possess the study skins outside of the museum. I must submit detailed reports to the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the end of each year. When members of the public ask questions, I record the encounters as "programs" in my data book. This year, I recorded six programs totaling eight people. I enjoy these environmental interpretation events as members of the public, of all ages, become aware of Chimney Swifts that share our world. I believe that every human being should see swifts entering a chimney at least once in their lives. I have seen people that have lived for decades without ever seeing hundreds of birds dropping into a chimney. While watching the event for the first time, they became highly excited and impressed while feeling more alive.

In these modern times, more people, mostly girl and boy scouts, are leading projects to erect swift towers that mimic the function of chimneys used as roosts. Also, more retired chimneys are being preserved for nesting and migrating swifts. At OWU, members of the Buildings and Grounds Department confirmed that the NE chimney at the gym is no longer used as a chimney. Modern hookups are now doing the work of a chimney.

I would like to see modern bulletin boards installed so anyone rounding the corner of the gym could read about the natural history of Chimney Swifts and their need for chimneys and swift towers, and where they are from, and where swifts spend their winters. Yes, that's an educational process called environmental interpretation.

Videos that show how to build swift towers can be found on the Internet. Also, check chimneyswifts.org for much information and books that have the best plans for success.

Conserve on!

2020 Fall Chimney Swift Counts, N=71

When I record times, I prefer military time so morning and afternoon times are never confused. Simply subtract 12 from times greater than 12:00 to return afternoon times to standard time.

For the data listed below and for dates where swifts entered their chimney, earliest entry times are listed in the next to last column. Times of last entries make up the last column.

Carlisle Elementary School, 746 West Central Ave., n=5

August 4	zero swifts	watched 20:18 - 21:15
August 6	zero swifts	watched 20:13 - 21:12
August 10	zero swifts	watched 20:08 - 21:07
August 17	zero swifts	watched 20:07 - 20:57
September 9	zero swifts,	Left early - construction noise

Zion United Church of Christ, 51 West Central Ave., n=17

August 7	559 swifts	20:33 - 21:07
August 11	289 swifts	20:15 - 21:03
August 12	281 swifts	20:16 - 20:59
August 13	315 swifts	20:09 - 20:55
August 15	355 swifts	20:34 - 20:55
August 16	238 swifts	20:20 - 20:56
August 18	78 swifts	20:23 - 20:54
August 19	34 swifts	20:36 - 20:52
August 20	28 swifts	20:33 - 20:47
August 21	6 swifts	20:19 - 20:40
August 22	zero	watched 19:49 - 20:51
August 26	1 swift	20:35
August 29	1 swift	20:34
August 31	zero	watched 19:40 - 20:36
September 2	3 swifts	20:21 - 20:30
September 7	zero	watched 19:25 - 20:15
September 11	zero	watched 19:40 - 20:36

First Commonwealth Bank, 41 North Sandusky St., n=3

August 8	5 swifts	20:49 - 21:04
August 25	zero	watched 19:55 - 20:46
October 14	zero	watched 18:29 - 19:22

Gray Chapel, OWU, West chimney on North face, n=3

August 9	4 swifts	20:52 - 20:55
August 27	2 swifts	20:27 - 20:28
September 6	2 swifts	20:09 - 21:11

John Sells Middle School, 150 Bridge St., Dublin, n=1

August 14	105 swifts	19:49 - 20:52
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Galena Village Hall, 109 Harrison St., n=1

August 23	1249 swifts	20:00 - 20:45
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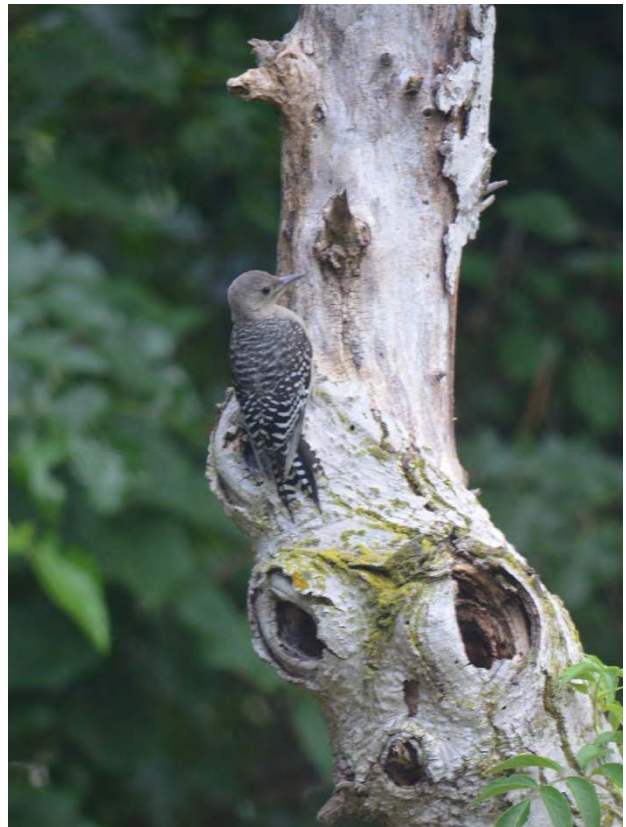
West Winter Street Chimney, Delaware

August 20	102 swifts	20:15 - 20:28
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Edwards Gym, OWU, North Chimney on East face, n=41

August 5	10 swifts	20:28 - 21:00
August 28	480 swifts	19:37 - 20:27
September 1	207 swifts	20:06 - 20:28
September 3	217 swifts	20:06 - 20:29
September 4	88 swifts	20:04 - 20:26

September 5	192 swifts	20:06 - 20:24
September 8	97 swifts	20:04 - 20:17
September 10*	157 swifts(76 today)	19:59 - 20:13
September 12	262 swifts	19:51 - 20:08
September 13	127 swifts	19:56 - 20:08
September 14	64 swifts	19:52 - 20:02
September 15	47 swifts	19:30 - 20:00
September 16	63 swifts	19:49 - 19:58
September 17	50 swifts	19:48 - 19:59
September 18	67 swifts	19:48 - 19:56
September 19	47 swifts	19:51 - 19:58
September 20	34 swifts	19:51 - 19:56
September 21	82 swifts	19:43 - 19:52
September 22	221 swifts	19:40 - 19:51
September 23	460 swifts	19:31 - 19:45
September 24	346 swifts	19:39 - 19:50
September 25	345 swifts	19:40 - 19:53
September 26	347 swifts	19:37 - 19:46
September 27	361 swifts	19:33 - 19:47
September 28	610 swifts	19:09 - 19:36
September 29	380 swifts	19:27 - 19:44
September 30	260 swifts	19:23 - 19:34
October 1	138 swifts	19:11 - 19:22
October 2	347 swifts	19:24 - 19:35
October 3	531 swifts	19:16 - 19:28
October 4	474 swifts	19:07 - 19:26
October 5	137 swifts	19:24 - 19:31
October 6	23 swifts	19:20 - 19:32
October 7	25 swifts	19:12 - 19:32
October 8	one swift	19:25
October 9	30 swifts	19:17 - 19:25
October 10	16 swifts	19:07 - 19:25
October 11	50 swifts	19:16 - 19:23
October 12	14 swifts	19:00 - 19:05
October 13	zero	watched 18:26 - 19:25



Can you identify this?

Christina Voise

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS?

Christina Voise

The November mystery “bird” was the nest of a Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), spotted at the Delaware Wildlife Area during the annual wildflower walk organized by Rich Bradley and Amy Tovar. Perhaps a hasty exit led to a couple eggs being pushed out of the nest. It seemed like an appropriate photo for November. And here is the mystery bird for December. Can you identify this?

Delaware County Bird Club Staff:

Program Coordinators: Rich Bradley and Amy Tovar

Newsletter Editor: Christina Voise (cdvoise@gmail.com)

Reporters: Rich Bradley, Amy Tovar, Dick Tuttle, Bob Harter and Ed Lux