



CLEVELAND REGION

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The Cleveland Museum of Natural History

and

The Kirtland Bird Club

THE CLEVELAND REGION

The Circle Has A Radius of 30 Miles Based on Cleveland Public Square

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Beaver Creek | 30 Lake Rockwell |
| 2 North Amherst | 31 White City |
| 3 Lorain | 32 Euclid Creek Reservation |
| 4 Black River | 33 Chagrin River |
| 5 Elyria | 34 Willoughby |
| 6 LaGrange | Waite Hill |
| 7 Avon-on-the-Lake | 35 Sherwin Pond |
| 8 Clague Park | 36 Gildersleeve |
| 9 Clifton Park | 37 North Chagrin Reservation |
| 10 Rocky River | 38 Gates Mills |
| 11 Cleveland Hopkins Airport | 39 South Chagrin Reservation |
| 12 Medina | 40 Aurora Lake |
| 13 Hinckley Reservation | 41 Aurora Sanctuary |
| 14 Edgewater Park | 42 Mantua |
| Perkins Beach | 43 Mentor Headlands |
| 15 Terminal Tower | 44 Mentor Marsh |
| 16 Cleveland Public Square | 45 Black Brook |
| Cuyahoga River | Headlands State Park |
| 17 Brecksville Reservation | 46 Fairport Harbor |
| 18 Akron | 47 Painesville |
| Cuyahoga Falls | 48 Grand River |
| 19 Akron Lakes | 49 Little Mountain |
| 20 Gordon. Park | Holden Arboretum |
| Illuminating Co. plant | 50 Corning Lake |
| 21 Doan Brook | 51 Stebbin's Gulch |
| 22 Natural Science Museum | 52 Chardon |
| Wade Park | 53 Burton |
| 23 Baldwin Reservoir | 54 Punderson Lake |
| 24 Shaker Lakes | 55 Fern Lake |
| 25 Lake View Cemetery | 56 LaDue Reservoir |
| 26 Forest Hill Park | 57 Spencer Wildlife Area |
| 27 Bedford Reservation | |
| 28 Hudson | |
| 29 Kent | |



CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN
PARK SYSTEM



PORTAGE ESCARPMENT
(800-foot Contour Line)

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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THE WEATHER
Winter 1986-1987

December - Temperatures averaged 32.6 degrees, 1.5 degrees above normal. The highest temperature, 57 degrees, was reached on the 9th, and the lowest, 14 degrees, on the 13th. Precipitation, on 13 days, totaled 2.82 inches, 0.07 above normal. Snowfall measured 1.1 inches and occurred on 5 days. Sunshine prevailed 18% of the time possible. Lake Erie water temperature was 47 degrees on the 1st and dropped to 37 degrees by the 31st. Transient ice cover on shallow waters first came on the 4th, was severe on the 12th, after which date the lake remained open at all times.

January - Temperatures average 27.4 degrees, 1.9 degrees above normal. Precipitation totaled 1.98 inches, 0.49 inches below normal. On 14 of the 16 precipitation days precipitation was in the form of snow. Sunshine prevailed 24% of the time possible. Lake Erie water temperature continued to fall and reached 33 degrees on the 25th with ice cover on the lake of varying severity thereafter.

February - Temperatures averaged 30.5 degrees, 3.1 degrees above normal while sunshine climbed to 46% of the time possible. Precipitation was 0.49 inches, 1.71 inches below normal. Snowfall was 5.0 inches. Lake Erie water temperature remained at 33 degrees and the lake was subject to extensive surface icing that regularly changed with wind and weather.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

With few exceptions, the harsh realities of winter bypassed the Cleveland area. Extensive ice cover did not develop on Lake Erie until February with the resulting wide-open lake hosting later than usual numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls. Snowy Owls remained along the lakefront and put in well-documented, but elusive, appearances in the Akron area. Continuing observations in the Euclid-Eastlake area again revealed a season long presence of large numbers of Common Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Winter birding requires a good amount of fortitude - the end product of area birders' search for the winter birds of the Cleveland area is that what follows.

Waterfowl - Excellent coverage of the Akron Lakes area has provided a continuous set of data about waterfowl movements in this area. Most unusual were wintering Snow Geese - two, possibly three, were seen at various Akron Lakes locations. December's mild weather was undoubtedly responsible for late lingering Tundra Swans - eight were at Mogadore on December 5 and two at West Branch on the 26th. Impressive tallies were made of Mallards - 4,000+ on December 9 at Lake Rockwell and 2,500 at several locations on January 25 (Rosche). When winter weather closes sheltered lakefront areas, the open waters of the Akron Lakes act as a magnet to draw Mallards, American Black Ducks, and other puddle ducks to their shores. A male Oldsquaw at LaDue Reservoir on December 1 appeared at a location which seems to attract this sea duck.

Waterfowl along the lakefront showed the typical peaks of late migrants in December and the influx of early migrants from mid-February on. Scaup ducks predominated in December with 1,400+ being tallied on the 13th and 19th (Klamm). Mid-February counts of Common Goldeneyes surpassed 2,000+ birds from the Avon Lake/Lorain area. This past winter did not produce lake ice conditions extensive enough to force thousands of early spring migrants, usually Common Goldeneyes, Greater Scaup, and Common Mergansers, to mass in vast numbers. Instead, open water offshore attracted many early ducks. Most interesting was a count of 15,000 Red-breasted Mergansers on December 5 (Klamm). Just several days later these same observers, covering the same area, reported only 18 Red-breasted Mergansers.

Gulls - The Cleveland Bird Calendar has emphasized gulls during the last few years. This group of birds, with many subtle identification characters that keep birders on their toes and with origins that encompass all of North American and beyond, dominates the Cleveland lakefront scene during the winter months. After all, there are not many places in North American where 11 species of gulls can be found in a single afternoon (See the Field Notes section for the details of a gull day that shows why this is true). To some readers, what seems to be lengthy commentary about gulls may be tedious, but the purpose of such is not only to impart identification tips but also to try to make readers realize what a resource the lakefront is for the study of birds. Who can not help but be awestruck by the mid-winter scene at Edgewater Park and/or Lorain Harbor where swirling masses of Bonaparte's Gulls, Herring Gulls, and Ring-billed Gulls literally stretch all along the lakefront horizon or blanket inter harbor areas. The lakefront is free for all to partake in, all you have to spend to enjoy it is your time. Satisfaction (and cold feet!) are guaranteed.

Counts of Ring-billed Gulls were consistently 30,000 or higher throughout all of December along the lakefront. Add to this number 20,000 Bonaparte's Gulls and 5,000 Herring Gulls on an average December day and you have an incredible spectacle of white birds. The open water off Edgewater Park produced a count of 35,000 Bonaparte's Gulls on the rather late date of January 24 but more spectacular was the sudden departure of these birds. Within a week only a handful of Bonaparte's Gulls remained with 300 at Lorain Harbor on February 15 being an unusually high tally for this month. The larger gulls were most abundant with the coldest weather of late January and February. Three-hundred fifty + Great Black-backed Gulls were at Avon Lake on January 24 (Hannikman) while highest counts of Glaucous Gulls was only six on February 17 and 18. Iceland Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were regularly noted throughout the season but with only single birds being reported at any one time. The smaller gulls were attracted to Edgewater. Here they undoubtedly felt at home with so many of their congeners, the Bonaparte's Gulls. One, rarely two, first-winter Franklins Gulls were observed until January 1 and five Little Gulls were present on January 24 (Peterjohn). Little Gulls were absent thereafter until two were found at Lorain on February 15.

Snowy Owl - Based on individual plumage characteristics, at least three Snowy Owls were noted along the Cleveland lakefront from Edgewater to Gordon Park. One bird was very light, one had moderate barring, and one had the heavy barring of a juvenile bird. The owls were seen daily from early December through mid-January with the last sighting on February 7 (Klamm). In late December, at least two Snowy Owls, again distinguishable by plumage, appeared in Summit and Portage Counties. These owls turned up when two were being seen along the lakefront so it was very possible that as many as five different Snowy Owls were present at one time or another during the winter. Snowy Owls even made some evening newscasts.

Blackbirds - Field activity in the Euclid-Willowick-Eastlake area the last three years has shown this area to harbor quite a substantial (for winter) population of Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles with smaller numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds and Rusty Blackbirds. Illustrative of what numbers can be counted from this area with the East Side Christmas Count on December 20 when many hundreds of Brown-headed Cowbirds and Common Grackles along with an estimated 60,000+ European Starlings passed over Lake Shore Boulevard near the Eastlake Power Plant. Trying to guess what areas the blackbirds will be frequenting on a particular day is a game of chance for observers who wish to do the searching, but the reward may be a schoolyard or churchyard full of squeaky blackbirds. Winter concentrations of blackbirds quite curiously seem to be confined to this far-eastern portion of the region as very few blackbird reports originated elsewhere. Small flocks of blackbirds, cowbirds, and grackles sighted in the last third of February were deemed to represent spring migrants rather than wintering birds.

Winter Finches - Winter finches just touched the Cleveland area. Largest number of Common Redpolls was 61 at Lakewood Park Cemetery on January 7 (LePage). Other reports from this location were 28 on January 4 and 42 on January 6 (Klamm). At the end of February a minor incursion of redpolls was noticed in the Akron area with many feeders, it was reported, hosting 40+ birds (Rosche). Two to six Pine Siskins in Northfield from the end of December to the end of the period was the only seasonally resident flock (Chaser). Lakewood Park Cemetery reports were 10 on February 19 and 4 on February 24. Two flocks, totaling 31 birds, were noted at University School on January 11 (Rickard). A flock of 15-20 Evening Grosbeaks on

Oak Hill Road in Peninsula during the entire season was unique for the winter (Maugans). Eighteen and ten birds on December 3 and 4 in West Geauga County was the only other significant report of Evening Grosbeaks away from the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (Kremm). With such a modest showing by Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks, it was not surprising that no crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks were noted.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Eared Grebe - It was an excellent December for this species - single birds were at Muni Light on the 5th, at Eastlake on the 6th and 7th, and at Wildwood on the 20th; two were at Lorain on the 6th (Klamm, Rosche, Hannikman, LePage).

Black-crowned Night-Heron - A rather bedraggled immature appeared from behind the western seawall at Eastlake late in the afternoon of January 4 (Hannikman, Rosche).

Turkey Vulture - A very early individual was recorded at Hale Farms in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area on February 21 (Maugans). The observer noted that the weather was warm (temperatures in the 40s) and sunny. These mild conditions may have induced this bird to move northward early.

Bald Eagle - A sub-adult bird flew past our observers at Perry on January 17 (Hannikman).

Laughing Gull - A winter-plumaged adult was found at Lorain on December 6 (Hannikman).

Common Black-headed Gull - An elusive adult appeared at Edgewater on five days from December 14 to 21 (Klamm).

California Gull - A first-winter bird was painstakingly studied at Eastlake on January 4 (Peterjohn). Verified records of this species in Ohio had heretofore been of adults so lakefront observers must now be on the look out for this difficult field identification.

Black-legged Kittiwake - First-winter birds were at Edgewater on December 14, 20, and 21 (Harlan, Klamm) and Lorain on February 21 and 22 (fide Hannikman).

Long-eared Owl - One was discovered at the F. A. Seiberling Nature Center in Akron on December 22 (Rosche).

Northern Shrike - An adult wintered at the same locality on Perry Park Road in Perry where one spent the winter of 1985-86 (Rosche).

Common Yellowthroat - One remained at Lake Rockwell from the beginning of December through February 1 (Rosche). This species had never been recorded in the month of February before.

Yellow-headed Blackbird - An adult male was located among a large flock of blackbirds on the baseball field at Upson School in Euclid on the afternoon of December 27 (Hannikman). The bird was relocated in the backyard of a nearby residence about one and one-half hours after its discovery.

FIELD NOTES

Is 12 Species Possible? - On the afternoon of December 14, 1986, Ray Hannikman and I took advantage of the excellent gull watching opportunities provided at the east end of the Edgewater Park Marina. Each year Bonaparte's Gulls gather at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River in numbers that take considerable skill in logarithms to count. In such concentrations exciting rarities can be located from time to time. We easily found a first-winter Franklin's Gull and were surprised by the number of Great Black-backed Gulls. We were joined by Bill and Nancy Klamm. Soon a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake, flying so close that it seemed that we could almost touch it, was found. Then Nancy excitingly called out, "there he is, there he is, a (Common) Black-headed Gull." Easily seen were all characteristics of an adult of this species. As the Common Black-headed Gull was flying west, an adult Little Gull was found among the masses of Bonaparte's Gulls. Its month-like flight and dark underwings set it apart from the Bonaparte's. We had seen eight species of gulls in less than 20 minutes! Ray and I departed for the East 55th Street Marina where the object of our search would be a Glaucous Gull. We found an immature sleeping among the gulls that blanketed the piers. Wow! Nine species, that was as well as we had ever done before. We drove to the Eastlake Power Plant with hopes of breaking into double figures. No problem. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was resting on the water near

on the water near the parking lot when we arrived. We scanned gull after gull searching for a first-winter Thayer's Gull that Ray had seen early in the morning. It was at least an hour before second-winter Thayer's Gull flew in to feed and then rest on the nearest seawall. We had just seen 11 species of gulls in a single afternoon! Is 12 species possible? I don't know, but then not many can say that they have seen 11 species in an afternoon either. LARRY ROSCHE.

Resident Population Trend Reversed and Nesting Success Increased in Breeding Colony of the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*). The resident population trend on the campus of Kent State University has been downward since 1955 when the count was 55 swifts. The lowest level was reached in 1985 with only 18 (mean for 31 years = 30.9). In 1986 the trend was reversed with a count of 26 swifts in residence. One pair failed to nest, but there were 11 nesting groups (9 pairs and 2 threesomes). The threesomes were in air shafts Q2 and S1. These two groups with a "helper" raised only three juveniles in each case, while four pairs raised the usual maximum of four juveniles.

Two nests fell from the wall during the rain storm of June 11. One pair (shaft A5) lost five eggs, but replaced the nest and succeeded in raising four juveniles. The other pair (shaft P1) lost four eggs, replaced the nest, but laid only two eggs in the second clutch.

Four eggs disappeared from one nest (E1) and were not replaced, although the mates remained in that air shaft for the balance of the nesting season. Another pair (A1) started nesting a month late, the four eggs laid disappeared, and the birds departed.

A total of 28 juveniles was produced (mean = 2.5/nest) compared to the previous year with 9 nesting pairs producing only 18 juveniles (mean = 2.0/nest). The 1985 resident population and nesting success was the lowest since this study began in 1944. In spite of an increase in size, the 1986 population was still below the mean of 30.8 (1955-86). Is 1986 a turn-around year following a long period of decline? RALPH W. DEXTER

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AN INVITATION: The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month except July and August at The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio 44106. Visitors are always welcome.

The Kirtland Bird Club sponsors a **WEEKLY RARE BIRD ALERT** at (216) 289-2473. Sightings of species rare in the region as well as other interesting migration and seasonal observations should be called in to the tape on Sundays as the tape is updated with current sightings each Monday. In the case of extreme rarities, e. g., Varied Thrush, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, the tape should be called the day of the observation.

Inquiries and correspondence regarding subscriptions to the Cleveland Bird Calendar should be addressed to:

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