

The Ohio



# CARDINAL™

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Winter 2000-01



*The Ohio Cardinal* is a quarterly publication devoted to the study and appreciation of Ohio's birdlife.

*The Ohio Cardinal* exists to provide a permanent and timely record of the abundance and distribution of birds in Ohio; to help document the occurrence of rare species in the state; to provide information on identification of birds; and to provide information on birding areas within Ohio.

*The Ohio Cardinal* invites readers to submit articles on unusual occurrences of birds, bird distribution within the state, birding areas in Ohio, identification tips, and other aspects of ornithology. Bird reports and photographs are welcome from any area of the state. Report forms are not a necessity but will be supplied upon request. Unusual species should be documented, and forms to do so are available upon request from the Editor, Publisher, and Records Committee Secretary.

<b>Seasonal Report Due Dates</b>	<b>Please send all reports to:</b>
Winter (Dec.-Feb.) - March 25	Bill Whan
Spring (Mar.-May) - June 25	223 E. Tulane Rd.
Summer (June-July) - August 25	Columbus, OH 43202
Autumn (Aug.-Nov.) - December 25	danielel@iwaynet.net

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### The Ohio Cardinal

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*On the Cover: Townsend's Solitaire* - Holden Arboretum, Lake Co., 25 January 2001.  
Photo by Gary Meszaros.

### Winter 2000-01 Overview

by Bill Whan

Looking back over the winter, we recalled the old story of the naval gunner who in a practice session first put a round a thousand yards left of the target, and on his next attempt another a thousand yards to the right, whereupon a statistician present cried out "Bull's-eye!" So it was, *on average*, a more or less normal winter, according to the seasonal statistics, but it was more complicated than that. Autumn ended cold, but the weather moderated during the first half of December before single-digit temperatures set in for the latter half, for an average of 8-10 degrees below normal for the month, and November-December temperatures the coldest on record on average. January, never truly warm of course, began cold but nevertheless ended up averaging warmer than normal, and February was 5 degrees warmer than usual overall.

Temperatures are important, but don't tell a winter's whole story. Two days in February featured 50-mph winds out of the southwest, and ushered in untimely arrivals of birds: on the 9<sup>th</sup>, apparent migrant killdeers and turkey vultures began to show up, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> a number of other more or less premature occurrences were noted. The season's third windiest day, 12 December, may have influenced the remarkable appearance of a summer tanager in Butler County, a palm warbler in Hamilton County, and even two varied thrushes in the northwestern quadrant of the state.

Amid such flux, some surprising stability endured. Two rare species stayed so long that even the most dilatory of birders got to see them. One of the aforementioned varied thrushes found a Findlay back yard inviting enough to stay there well into the spring season, and Ohio's fourth verified Townsend's solitaire—unlike its predecessors—hung around, putting on a five-week show in Lake County. Harlequin ducks and Harris's sparrows may not be so rare, but they are seldom as accommodating as the Grand Rapids duck that stayed long enough to proclaim his sex by molting into male alternate plumage, or the sparrow that haunted the same stretch of hedgerow for at least ten weeks in Wayne County. Nor are long-tailed ducks normally sedentary in Ohio, but a young female liked the spa-like setting of Castalia Pond enough to pass week after week there this season. We continued to find good numbers of snowy owls during the winter, but few stayed long in one place, complicating an estimate of exactly how many there were; only the (apparently) imperturbable habitué of Accommodation Road in Clinton County remained, satisfying humans' paradoxical twin lusts for novelty and predictability, until 7 February.

Numbers of the commoner waterfowl—mallards and Canada geese, for example—were huge, and the puddle ducks in general didn't do badly, considering frozen water in many places at times. Diving ducks were down considerably in numbers reported, some drastically. With a few interesting small-scale exceptions, raptor numbers and variety were unremarkable. Among gulls, no rarities were reported, but warm-water outlets along the frozen lakeshore during December and January concentrated good numbers of the less common species, and offered