

be not as definitive as one could desire. This would be an extremely rare bird in Ohio, and a very significant record for the interior US, and is deserving of a thorough examination based on current identification standards.

Varied thrush [p. 403]—The statement that the latest spring record was of a bird that “remained at a Parma Heights feeder through April 6, 1996” is misleading; actually this record is noteworthy more for the fact that the bird was never seen to visit a feeder, unlike almost all other Ohio records.

Swainson’s warbler [p. 458]—Certainly a very rare bird and one that can be difficult to document well. The statement is made that “There are also four undocumented spring records from the Cleveland-Akron area”; however, I am aware of documentations for two of these records, from May 1963 and May 1971. Hopefully the OBRC will provide long-overdue reviews for these records in the future.

Western tanager [p.480]—Similar to the above, a statement is made that “there are three undocumented sight records” for northeastern Ohio. I am aware of documentations for all three of these records; they also need to be assessed by the OBRC.

Spotted towhee [p. 480]—The OBRC accepts the first state record of this recently-split species as 4 May 1996 in Seneca County. Peterjohn’s acceptance of a 29 March 1946 record made by “three experienced birders” is somewhat puzzling, especially since he goes on to mention that “No other details are available for this sighting.”

Clay-colored sparrow [p. 487]—Here is a case where I suspect Peterjohn’s long-distance data-collection methods let him down. He cites two summer records, from Summit County in 1994 and Erie County in 1999, and states “While Clay-colored Sparrows remain accidental summer visitors, the establishment of a breeding population is a possibility.” I believe the omission of an absolutely indisputable nesting attempt at Battelle-Darby Creek Metro Park in Franklin County in June and July of 1996 was due to a lack of information rather than a deliberate decision. I assume he simply did not see the appropriate issue of *The Ohio Cardinal* [Vol 19(4)], a theory further supported by the absence of that issue’s seasonal summary from the literature cited.

I hope all of the above does not leave a negative impression of this monumental work. Obviously, differences of opinion will arise, and negligible errors always seem to creep into any project. The fact that so few major concerns are present should indeed be a testament to the painstaking effort and craftsmanship evident in the second edition of *The Birds of Ohio*. Even if you already have the first edition, you will want the second. Just keep in mind that you don’t always have to “go by the book.” Now go buy the book.

7072 Parma Park Blvd.
Parma Hts., OH 44130

A Review of B. G. Peterjohn’s *The Birds of Ohio* (Second Edition, 2001), with Emphasis on the Southwestern Counties

by David C. Dister

Like many birders, I was surprised that *The Birds of Ohio* (1989) had been revised by the author, Bruce Peterjohn, after only a decade. Once I heard that this edition was to appear without the beautiful artwork but would instead include reduced versions of the breeding bird atlas maps, it became clear that this would be a wholly new reference. And as *The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas* (Peterjohn and Rice 1991) is out of print, this was perhaps a timely decision.

At first glance, this compact 637-page book immediately appears “birder-friendly.” As a paperback, it is a book I would not hesitate to take on birding trips, or even leave in the car permanently. Who knows when a sighting will make one wonder, “could this bird be a new record?” Peterjohn’s latest effort is most welcomed.

The area covered in this review involves all or part of 12 southwestern Ohio counties designated as such by Peterjohn (1989): Hamilton, Butler, Preble, Clermont, Warren, Montgomery, Brown, Clinton, Greene, Adams (glaciated), Highland (glaciated), and Fayette. The principal source documents I consulted include *Birds of Dayton* (Mathena et al. 1984); *Birds of Southwestern Ohio* (Kemsies and Randle 1953); *Birds of the Hamilton County Park District* (Austing and Imbrogno 1976); and the aforementioned works by Peterjohn. *Birds of the Oxbow* (Styer 1993) was rarely consulted for this purpose as the vast majority of sightings do not specify whether they pertain to Ohio or Indiana locations, though most are likely in Indiana. Finally, quarterly issues of *The Ohio Cardinal* (TOC) from 1988 to 2000 were consulted.

The enormous amount of data presented in the 409 species accounts in *The Birds of Ohio* is impressive. However, it is unfortunate that the author chose not to update the atlas maps based on updated information that appears in the species accounts (for example, especially under-represented are pileated woodpecker and eastern phoebe on atlas maps for Montgomery County). On the other hand, there are many occasions in which published extralimital records are not included for lack of documentation (written, photograph, or specimen), which I believe to be a prudent strategy. On the whole, I found relatively few errors in comparing the source documents mentioned above and Peterjohn’s accounts, though about a dozen species accounts appear to have discrepancies, most with records in *The Ohio Cardinal*. In the Introduction, a geographical error from p. xxii of the first edition was not corrected: “6. Southwestern Counties: ...Greene, and Clinton, and west...” should instead read, “...Greene, and Fayette, and east.” A citation error for Pacific loon at Caesar Creek Reservoir should read “Conlon & Harlan, 1997;” not “Conlon & Harlan, 1996b” (the latter does not appear in the bibliography). Peterjohn displays his conservative approach in regard to a winter record for yellow-crowned night-heron for 26-29 December 1966 (Mathena et al.1984) that apparently was not documented; thus he states “There are no verified winter records for Ohio.”

Several editing/proofing errors are evident, such as a counting error found in the number of white ibis records for the state, which is five, not four. For turkey vulture, the author states that "flocks of 45 or fewer have sporadically wintered in southwestern Ohio," but in checking his citation of Kemsies and Randle (1953), they give no specific number. The same authors note that a bald eagle nest was located along Indian Creek (Butler County) in 1952, though Peterjohn misquotes the year as 1953. Another error is found for the ruddy turnstone reference to "...82 at Lake St. Marys on May 17, 1997," which should read May 18, and is given correctly in *TOC* (20(3):94). There is a misleading statement regarding black-crowned night-herons breeding at Gilmore Ponds in Butler County. Peterjohn states that five pairs nested in 1989 and 12 to 18 pairs since. According to Hays and Dykstra (*TOC* 23(4):182), the 1989 report is correct but between then and 1999, only in 1998 was there another colony—of 18 active nests. A major windstorm and predation destroyed that entire 1998 colony by 29 July. This information has been widely known among local birders, none of whom was apparently consulted.

A somewhat understandably overlooked record is that of an immature long-tailed jaeger specimen in spring 1950 from Greene County. The record is provided as part of an addendum to Kemsies and Randle (1953, p. 60), and apparently was missed. Elsewhere, under the account for upland sandpiper, Peterjohn states that "...the earliest...returned to Oxford (Butler County) on March 18, 1982," though the earliest date appears to be 16 March 1980 (Mathena et al. 1984).

For some unexplained reason, seasonal reports in some issues of *The Ohio Cardinal* are not listed in the bibliography, such as the Summer 1996 issue edited by John Herman and Robert Harlan, the Autumn 1998 and Winter 1998-99 issue edited by Bob Conlon, and the Autumn 1999 and Winter 1999-2000 issues edited by Bill Whan. Perhaps as a result of missing these issues, Peterjohn does not mention an inland male harlequin duck observed by many along the Great Miami River in Sidney on 16-17 January 1999 (*TOC* 22(2):27). Similarly, though a record of 10 avocets in Licking County on 21 April 1974 is cited, there is no mention of the 10 birds seen at East Fork Lake in Clermont County on 20 and 21 April 1990 (*TOC* 13(3):9).

As mentioned earlier, *The Birds of the Oxbow* (Styer 1993) may only be of peripheral interest, though a specimen of a trumpeter swan in the Ohio portion of the oxbow area from February 1982 is a significant record perhaps worthy of mention. And though Peterjohn gives 29 September 1996 as the latest record for alder flycatcher, Mathena et al. (1984) record a singing bird on 2 October 1977. For the northern saw-whet owl, strangely there is no reference to the confirmed breeding in the Dayton area in June 1941 (Mathena et al. 1984), yet "a May sighting in Cincinnati" is deemed noteworthy. Somehow, such gaps in the species accounts appear glaring, but perhaps only on a regional basis. Despite the above critique, I find the vast majority of Peterjohn's research exhaustive, thorough, and accurate. The author's conservative filter on data is something I tend to agree with on some questionable reports, such as his assertion that most CBC sightings of chipping sparrows are misidentifications. He also mentions that a reported clay-colored

sparrow was banded in Miami County during December of 1961, "but no details are available to support this record." Since a basic-plumaged chipping sparrow can be easily confused with a clay-colored sparrow, this cautious assessment seems reasonable to me. And lastly, Peterjohn offers this comment regarding winter sightings of Harris's sparrow: "There are at least eleven confirmed winter sightings and a number of unconfirmed records." Since basic-plumaged and immature birds can be easily confused with basic-plumaged Lapland longspurs, the author's perspective is sensible.

One final mystery posed by this treatment of the state's birds concerns the apparent decline of the white-crowned sparrow on CBCs in the last 20 years. Certainly, the breeding habitat of this northern bird is not in serious jeopardy. And, though raw numbers cannot be argued with, I suspect that at least part of the answer lies in the decline of participants on CBCs in our area, which peaked in Cincinnati during the 1970s.

In conclusion, while this second edition of *The Birds of Ohio* is packed with volumes of accurate data, more careful proofing and interaction with area experts would have caught many of the oversights mentioned above. In any event, by all means get a copy immediately, or at least before that vireo shows up on a CBC and demands documentation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author thanks David Styer for access to CBC volumes of *American Birds* dating from 1972 to 1992.

REFERENCES

- Austing, G. R., and D. A. Imbrogno. 1976. *Birds of the Hamilton County Park District and Southwestern Ohio*. Hamilton County Park District, Cincinnati.
- Kemsies, E., and W. Randle. 1953. *Birds of Southwestern Ohio*. Edwards Brothers, Inc., Ann Arbor.
- Mathena, C., J. Hickman, J. Hill, R. Mercer, C. Berry, B. Berry, N. Cherry, and P. Flynn. 1984. *The Birds of Dayton*. Dayton Audubon Society, Landfall Press, Dayton.
- Peterjohn, B. G. 1989. *The Birds of Ohio*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.
- Peterjohn, B. G., and D. L. Rice. 1991. *The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas*. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, Columbus.
- Styer, D. 1993. *Birds of the Oxbow*. Published by the author. C. J. Krehbiel Company, Cincinnati.

10163 Little Forest Dr.
Germantown, OH 45327