

**A friendly reminder . . .**

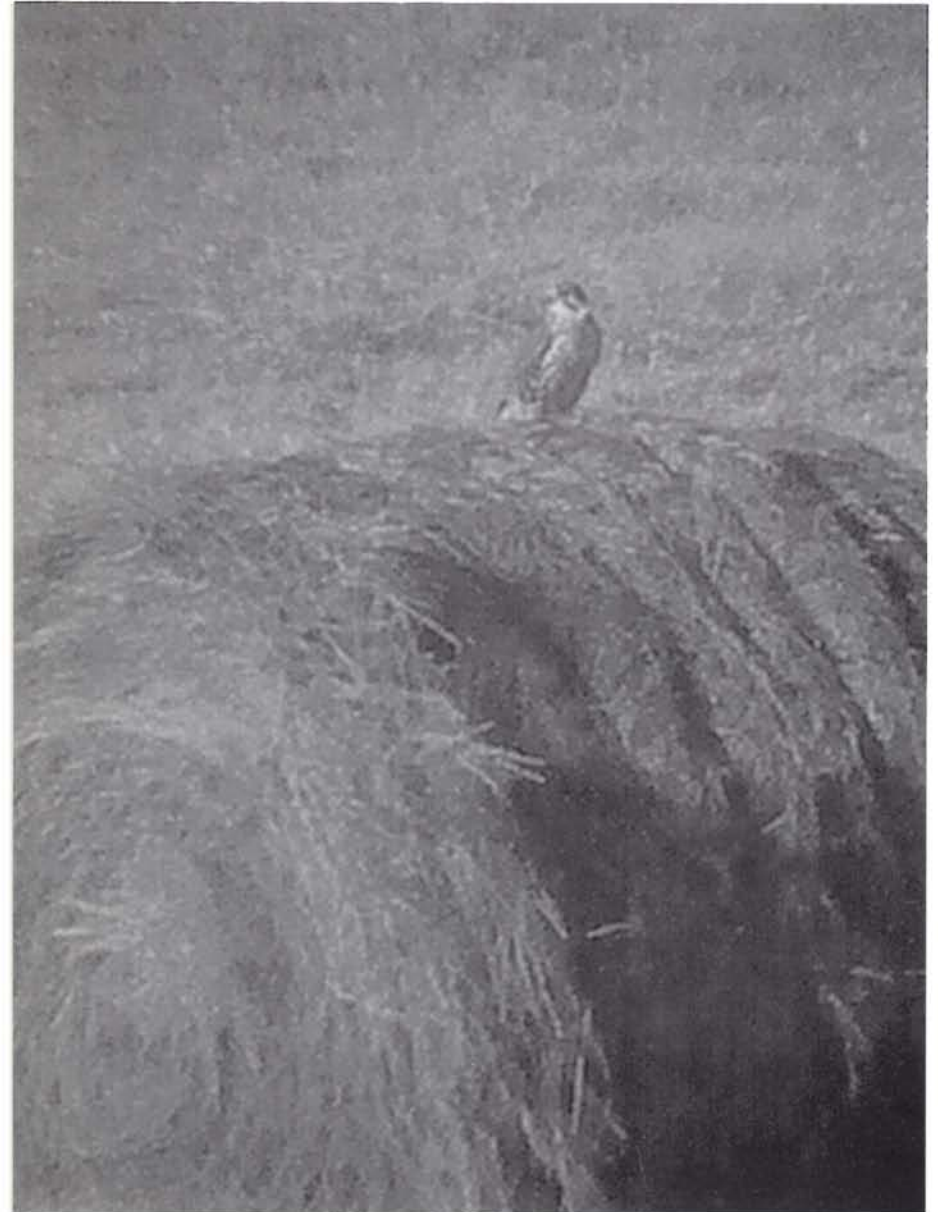
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<b>Winter 2003-04 Overview</b> by Bill Whan.....	49
<b>Winter 2003-04 Reports</b> by Bill Whan.....	52
<b>Further Afield</b> Robert Harlan.....	69
<b>Can You Hear Prebasic Molt?</b> Kevin E. Metcalf.....	74
<b>Short Notes: My Summer Guest</b> by John D. Kraus.....	80
<b>Short Notes: Monumental Merlins North and South</b> by Lori Brumbaugh and Lou Gardella.....	82
<b>Annals of Pelagic Birding in Ohio: Thick-billed Murre</b> by Bill Whan.....	85

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*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> Winter (Dec.-Feb.)—March 25 Spring (Mar.-May)—June 25 Summer (June-July)—August 25 Autumn (Aug.-Nov.)—December 25	<b>Please send all reports to:</b> Bill Whan 223 E. Tulane Road Columbus, OH 43202 <a href="mailto:danielel@iwaynet.net">danielel@iwaynet.net</a>
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### Subscriptions

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### The Ohio Cardinal

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**On the Cover:** Having just eaten a bird, possibly a meadowlark, this prairie falcon struck a familiar pose in a hayfield on reclaimed stripmine land in Meigs Twp, Muskingum Co. on 25 February 2004. *Photo* © Alan Ryff,

## Winter 2003-04 Overview

**Bill Whan**

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We enjoyed more or less normal winter weather this time, at least on average. The latter half of January was the harshest, averaging ten degrees F below normal with widespread icing, inevitably displacing water birds. These displacements concentrated waterfowl and gulls in open water statewide, making some assessments of their numbers and variety a little easier. All the same, aviators reported that the surface of Lake Erie did not freeze solid, and large numbers of these aquatic species were escaping our notice in slivers of open water far offshore. Something, perhaps the relative brevity of the cold snap, encouraged a variety of species to hang around in unaccustomed numbers. Certainly the waterfowl refugium at Camp Dennison in Hamilton County generated some impressive records. February had above-freezing temperatures on 24 of its 29 days in Columbus, and invited early northbound waterfowl.

Surprisingly, 156 species were reported in Ohio during our cold and snowy January, with five warbler species and five of shorebirds, apparently a record total and perhaps unexpected in view of the weather. What we learn about the numbers and distribution of birds in January is boosted by enthusiastic listers who increasingly go out of their way to seek out as many species as possible in the first month of the year. Their exertions are welcome in figuring out how many species are really around, and we wish they'd scour every corner of the state as thoroughly in every month of the year.

The season as a whole produced rather high reported numbers of a number of species: certain gulls (of 13 species), sapsuckers, owls, hummingbirds once again, pipits, and several half-hardy songbirds, along with some odd warbler and sparrow records. Sandhill cranes and tundra swans were also among species found in remarkable numbers throughout the season. A spotty but noticeable winter finch incursion was forecast—based on food sources to our north—and the best predictions were confirmed, as we had numbers of redpolls, siskins, nuthatches, and purple finches far better than last winter's. Predictions for minimal numbers of crossbills, grosbeaks, and Bohemian waxwings were also to prove well founded.

Last winter we recorded eight review species for the state—species sufficiently rare that documentation is required to add them to the official records. Our total of five was more modest this winter: Ross's goose (2), prairie falcon, California gull (2), rufous hummingbird 10 (eight rufous and two rufous/Allen's), and loggerhead shrike. Certainly the bird of the season was the prairie falcon that haunted areas of SE Muskingum County for three weeks, evading detection by hundreds of observers and staying far enough away to deprive the rest of views that would have confirmed its sex and age or produced a sharp photographic image; that on our cover, generously contributed by Alan Ryff, was the best we know of.

For years *The Ohio Cardinal* has featured a complete compilation of the state's Christmas Bird Counts—both "official" and "unofficial"—in its winter issue, but this time we cannot. National Audubon has experienced major problems with its