

List C, mercifully short, consists of former long-term nesters now seemingly extirpated as such. The kite, the prairie-chicken, and the raven disappeared as breeders long ago. Ravens show signs of re-occupying ancestral parts of their breeding range, and conceivably Ohio may host a few nesting pairs in years to come. The partridge, native to Eurasia, established itself for a few decades following introduction programs by game agencies early in the last century. Kites have reclaimed ancestral breeding territory to our south, and reintroduction projects have been suggested as close as Kentucky. Merlins, having survived organochlorine poisoning, are reclaiming their former nesting range continent-wide; recently, multiple birds overwintering in old urban cemeteries in Ohio raise hopes it may be restored to our breeding avifauna. No such hope remains for Bachman's sparrow, or for Bewick's wren, whose regional subspecies have all but vanished from the earth for undetermined reasons. The golden-winged warbler seems a victim of inexorable evolutionary forces, its numbers everywhere succumbing to genetic swamping from its near relative the blue-winged warbler, even though it participated in a mixed-species nest here as recently as two years ago. In addition, the yellow-crowned night-heron now hangs by the thread of two known nesting sites in the state (1-2 nests/year over the past decade); it could suddenly join List C.

List C: apparently extirpated former regular nesters

Swallow-tailed kite	Greater prairie-chicken
Bachman's sparrow	Common raven
Bewick's wren	Merlin
Gray partridge	Golden-winged warbler

Attempted reintroductions of the prairie-chicken, once abundant in places (sightings from the Toledo area in the 1830s reported thousands) have failed, as have introductions of viable populations of "replacement species" like ring-necked pheasant, gray partridge, and sharp-tailed grouse. It is not unimaginable that Ohio's native bobwhite, its population now largely sustained by releases, will follow the prairie-chicken into oblivion, or at least out of the game category. The loggerhead shrike may join this list soon; its last confirmed Ohio nesting took place in 2003 (as of this writing there it seems another nest has recently been found), and only Canada seems interested in restocking projects for less showy non-game species like this one.

The list of species recently discovered to have nested in Ohio is much longer than those that have apparently ceased to breed here, but this should not be cause for celebration. Many represent one-shot records, and most are rare as breeders, with little sign of increasing. Certainly the list of technically extirpated breeders would be longer had more attention been paid to occasionally nesting species in bygone days. Fewer than half the species in List B can be called regular nesters, and some of them have prospered all too well, at the expense of native nesters. All in all, there are just as many interesting conceivable reasons why certain species should be rare in Ohio as there are why others should be common, and keeping track of rare records helps by suggesting ways to understand them.



This impressive species narrowly escaped extirpation in Ohio following widespread deforestation 100+ years ago. Photo by Gary Meszaros in North Chagrin Reservoir on 18 April.

Spring 2006 Overview and Reports by Bill Whan.....	105
Further Afield by Robert Harlan.....	138
Substantiating Audubon's Washington Eagle by Scott Maruna.....	140
Recent rarities and first nesting records for Ohio by Bill Whan.....	151

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