

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

Rain dominated this fall's weather and many individual and cumulative records were set. In Aug, some northeastern communities had up to eight inches more rain than average; in the northwest, averages were exceeded by up to five inches. Paradoxically, the southwest quarter's summer drought lingered into Aug and rainfall was three inches below average at some stations. Tropical Storm Lee brought statewide rain during the week of 05 Sep and several stations set new daily records which were two or more inches above the previous ones.

The pattern continued beyond the end of the season. Despite the mostly dry summer in some areas, by the end of the year rainfall in every part of the state exceeded averages, and in about half of the state the excess exceeded 20 inches. The Cleveland area was especially wet: A new annual rainfall record had been set before the end of Oct and by the new year the total was nearly a foot more than the previous mark, a 21% increase.

Snowfall by contrast was generally sparse and light. However, a brief 11 Nov storm left 2.5 inches at Mosquito Lake, greatly exceeding the previous daily record of 0.8 inches set in 1986. A more widespread storm on 30 Nov set new records in several *Darke*, *Defiance*, *Paulding*, and *Williams* communities which beat the old ones by two inches or more.

Temperatures were essentially normal during the season. Almost all of the new record highs and lows were only a degree different from the old ones. The largest differences were in Gallipolis, *Gallia*, on 04 Sep (103° versus the previous 98°), and at Akron-Canton Airport on 13 Sep (32° versus the previous 37°). These high and low records were separated by only 10 days and 150 miles. (Weather data are from the Cleveland Plain Dealer, <http://water.weather.gov> and <http://www.extremeweatherrecords.com>.)

This fall was definitely loony: Twelve Red-throated, three Pacific, and two groups of about 400 Common loons were reported. The Honda Wetlands rail families (King, Virginia, and Sora) continued to delight viewers. American Avocets were both numerous and widespread. They and other shorebirds (and shorebird watchers as well) benefited from conditions at the Lorain dredge spoil disposal site until it closed for construction activities in early Sep. A viewing platform overlooking the Conneaut flats

opened in Nov. Armlerder Park in Cincinnati blossomed as a birding site with both heavy migrant traffic (including but not limited to shorebirds) and an interesting suite of nesters.

Larger than usual numbers of Little, Laughing, and Franklin's gulls were recorded and Ohio's first Black-tailed Gull began its long stay at Ashtabula just before season's end. Barn Owls showed up far from their *Holmes* stronghold. Rufous Hummingbird visits continue to increase. At least 10 Northern Shrikes, the most since fall 2007, arrived. Several warbler species overstayed their historical departure dates, though not their welcomes. And much-sought migrant sparrows found a congenial refueling stop on the Wake Robin Trail in Mentor Marsh SNP, *Lake*, where phragmites had been cleared.

This issue has accounts for 296 species and one sighting at the genus level. All but 10 of the "core" (non-review) species on the Ohio list were reported; the 10 are Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Goshawk, Thayer's Gull, Long-eared Owl, Chuck-Wills-Widow, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, and Common Redpoll. Every county except *Carroll*, *Gallia*, *Guernsey*, *Perry*, and *Shelby* produced at least one report.

The review species list is maintained by the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC). Sightings of 11 review species were documented for the OBRC. Those species' names are underlined in the accounts and are attributed to those who documented their sightings. This season, 10 species were reported but not documented, or the documentation was insufficient to establish a record. In a departure from previous practice, undocumented sightings are not listed in the Species Accounts. Those species are Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, Glossy Ibis, Mississippi Kite, Black Rail, Whooping Crane, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Common Raven. (Some species had both documented and undocumented reports.) The Committee and this editor urge birders to report all sightings of Review List species, of Core List species found at unusual times, of nesting by birds previously not known to nest in the state, and of course sightings of birds never before found in Ohio. Information on how to document rarities is available at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/records/documentation.php>.

Trumpeter Swan is a review species though it is not included counts above. Despite the fact

that they breed in Ohio, there are as yet no documented occurrences of truly wild birds here since introduction efforts began in the midwestern states. Three other species which have bred in the state and produce many undocumented sightings, but which are still on the review list, are Mississippi Kite, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Common Raven. The OBRC especially urges observers to document all sightings of these three recent arrivals (or returnee, in the case of the raven) so that their spread can be properly studied.

Data for these Species Accounts come from reports submitted directly to the *Cardinal*, reports to the OBRC, eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>), the Ohio-birds listserv (<http://birding.aba.org/maillist/OH>), rarebird.org (<http://rarebird.org/forum/default.asp>), and *The Bobolink*. The last, courtesy of its publisher Robert Hershberger, provides me with many reports which I otherwise wouldn't have easy access to.

Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow the *Check-List of North American Birds*, 7th Edition (1998) as updated through the 52st Supplement (2011). This document is published by the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union and is available at <http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/print.php>. In the species accounts, "normal" early and late dates are from Harlan *et al.*, *Ohio Bird Records Committee Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio*, 2008. Breeding ranges and isolated locations are from Harlan *et al.* and from OBBA II submissions. **County names** are in bold italics. Locations whose counties are of the same name, for example Ashtabula (city) and Delaware Wildlife Area, usually do not have the counties repeated. Shortened names and a few sets of initials are used for locations and organizations which occur repeatedly; these abbreviations are listed here. The term "*fide*" is used in some citations; it means "in trust of" and is used where the reporter was not the observer.

Armleder Park = a Cincinnati city park on the

Little Miami River, **Hamilton**

Blendon Woods = Blendon Woods Metro Park, **Franklin**

BRAS = Black River Audubon Society

BSBO = Black Swamp Bird Observatory

Buck Creek = Buck Creek State Park, **Clark**

Caesar Creek = Caesar Creek State Park, **Warren**

CPNWR = Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, **Ottawa**

Conneaut = the mudflats to the west of

Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**

CP = County Park

CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park, **Summit** and **Cuyahoga**

Darby Creek = Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, **Franklin**

East Fork = East Fork State Park, **Clermont**

eTT = eBird Trail Tracker data entry kiosk, usually found at National Wildlife Refuges and Parks

Headlands = Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve, Headlands Beach State Park, and adjoining waters, **Lake**

Honda Wetlands = a unit of Glacier Ridge MetroPark, **Union**

Kelleys Island = the island and adjoining waters, **Erie**

Killdeer Plains = Killdeer Plains State Wildlife Area, **Wyandot**

Lorain = the dredge spoil impoundment east of downtown, **Lorain**, unless otherwise noted m. obs. = Multiple Observers

Magee = Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, **Ottawa** and **Lucas**

Maumee Bay = Maumee Bay State Park, **Lucas**

Miami Whitewater = Miami Whitewater Forest County Park, **Hamilton**

MP = Metro Park or MetroPark depending on the system

Navarre = Navarre Marsh Unit of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Ottawa**

NP = Nature Preserve, except as part of CVNP

OBBA II = Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II

OWNR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Lucas** and **Ottawa**

Pleasant Hill Lake = Pleasant Hill Lake, **Ashland** and **Richland**; the dam is in **Ashland**

Rocky River Park = a Lake Erie-side location in that city, **Cuyahoga**

Sandy Ridge = Sandy Ridge Reservation, **Lorain**

SNP = State Nature Preserve

SP = State Park

SWA = State Wildlife Area

Villa Angela = the Villa Angela unit of Cleveland Lakefront State Park, **Cuyahoga**

WA = Wildlife Area

Wendy Park = a lakeshore Cleveland park, **Cuyahoga**

Winous Point = Winous Point Shooting Club, **Ottawa**