

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

It was a hot spring. March temperatures nationwide were well above average; in much of the Midwest, including Ohio, it was the hottest March on record. May was Ohio's third hottest ever. A heat wave between 20 and 25 March sent temperatures into the 80s, setting several new station records which were up to eight degrees higher than the previous ones. The first week of May also provided many record highs but most were only a degree or two above previous marks. Not surprisingly, neither month had any record lows. In contrast, April temperatures averaged near normal. That month had a few record lows and highs but none differed more than two degrees from the old ones.

Rainfall during each month of the period varied between 75% and 150% of normal almost everywhere, but of course there were exceptions. The Columbus and Toledo areas got double to triple their normal March rainfall. The area around the meeting of **Butler**, **Hamilton**, and **Warren** counties had about double its usual May rainfall. And for contrast, the northwest and the Lake Erie shore counties from **Cuyahoga** east had only 20 to 50% of their normal May rain. Though many individual stations set rainfall records, all of the increases were very small. Weather data are from the National Weather Service (<http://water.weather.gov/precip/>) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/temp-and-precip/maps.php> and <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/extremes/records/>).

The warmth promoted an early start for most plant growth. Several contributors commented on the precocious greenery. Insects, too, responded; Elliot Tramer said, "I saw my first mosquito [in **Lucas**] on March 20 (more than a month early)". If the warmth had been local, chances are that bird arrival dates would not have been affected. However, the widespread heat also accelerated migration; throughout the Species Accounts you will see references to arrival dates which are days (and sometimes weeks) earlier than historical norms. Early arrivals are not unique to this year though the number of them, and how early more than a few were, may be. All around the northern hemisphere researchers are documenting the phenomenon. Today's early dates will probably be the norm within a decade or two.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) recently opened a new birding venue and improved another. First, the new Estuary Trail takes you from the west end of the Magee parking lot to the mouth of Crane Creek, giving close views of mudflats and shores which before could only be studied with a scope. The woody part of the trail hosted a Kirtland's Warbler this spring. Second, for several years the Refuge has owned land on Benton-Carroll Road just south of Ohio Route 2. It's been a reliable spot for marsh and mudflat birds but parking was limited (and dangerous) and the sightlines tenuous. Now formally named the Boss Unit, it has a gravel lot and a viewing platform. OOS provided part of the funding for the platform. You'll see mentions of both sites in the Species Accounts.

About 300 bird species are either year-round residents, breeders, regular migrants, or regular winter visitors; I call this Ohio's Core List. Over 100 other species are infrequent visitors (some with only a single record). They, with all the species which have never appeared in the state, constitute the Review List, which is maintained by the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC). 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>.

Twelve review species were documented and the sightings are described within. Those species' names are underlined in the accounts and are attributed to those who documented their sightings. Twelve review species were reported without documentation. They are Glossy Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Mississippi Kite, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Black-necked Stilt, California Gull, Eurasian Collared-dove, Fish Crow, Common Raven, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Harris's Sparrow. (Some species had sightings both documented and not.) Because the OBRC had not completed voting on the documentation of several spring sightings by the end of this season, those whose documentation are in process are listed, though usually unattributed.

Data for these 302 Species Accounts come from reports submitted directly to the *Cardinal*; eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>); the Ohio-birds listserv (<http://birding.aba.org/>

maillist@OH); [rarebird.org \(http://rarebird.org/forum/default.asp\)](http://rarebird.org/forum/default.asp); reports to the OBRC; and *The Bobolink*. The last is courtesy of its publisher, Robert Hershberger.

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>. 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. County names for sites described in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus are also omitted. 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.

Abbreviations:

Blendon Woods = Blendon Woods MP,
Franklin
BRAS = Black River Audubon Society
BSBO = Black Swamp Bird Observatory
Clear Fork = Clear Fork Reservoir, **Morrow** and
(mostly) **Richland**
Conneaut = the mudflats on the west side of
Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**, unless
otherwise noted
CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park,
Cuyahoga and (mostly) **Summit**
Darby Creek = Battelle Darby Creek Metro
Park, **Franklin**
Edgewater = Edgewater unit of Cleveland
Lakefront State Park, **Cuyahoga**
eTT = eBird Trail Tracker data entry kiosk,
usually at National Wildlife Refuges
Fernald = Fernald Preserve, **Butler** and
Hamilton
Funk Bottoms = Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area,
Ashland and (mostly) **Wayne**
Frohring Meadows = Frohring Meadows Park,
Geauga
Headlands = Headlands Dunes State Nature
Preserve, Headlands Beach State Park, and
adjoining waters, **Lake**
Hoover NP = Hoover Nature Preserve,
Delaware
Hoover Reservoir = (mostly) **Delaware**, but the
dam is in **Franklin**

Kelleys Island = Kelleys Island and adjacent
waters, **Erie**
Killbuck Marsh = Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area,
Holmes/Wayne
Killdeer = Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area,
Wyandot
Magee = Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas**
and **Ottawa**
Malek Park = a nearly lakeside park west of
Conneaut, **Ashtabula**
Maumee Bay = Maumee Bay State Park, **Lucas**
Metzger = Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas**
m. obs. = multiple observers
Mohican SF = Mohican State Forest, **Ashland**
Mohican SP = Mohican State Park, (mostly)
Ashland and (slightly) **Richland**
MP = Metro Park or MetroPark, depending on
jurisdiction
Navarre = the Navarre Unit of Ottawa National
Wildlife Refuge, **Ottawa**
NC = Nature Center
NF = National Forest
NP = Nature Preserve (except as part of CVNP)
Oak Openings = Oak Openings Preserve
MetroPark, **Lucas**
ONWR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge,
Lucas and **Ottawa**
RBA = Rare Bird Alert
Sandy Ridge = Sandy Ridge Reservation,
Lorain
SF = State Forest
Shawnee = Shawnee State Forest, **Scioto**, unless
otherwise noted
Shawnee Lookout = Shawnee Lookout County
Park, **Hamilton**
SNP = State Nature Preserve
SP = State Park
Spring Valley = Spring Valley Wildlife Area,
Greene/Warren
WA = Wildlife Area
Wendy Park = a lakeside Cleveland city park,
Cuyahoga
Winous Point = Winous Point Shooting Club,
Ottawa
Zaleski = Zaleski State Forest, **Vinton**

Errata:

In the Winter 2011-12 issue, John Herman's 50 Common Loons (and the earlier reports of up to 400) were at the eastern, **Richland**, end of Clear Fork Reservoir.

Also in that issue, only Paul Hurtado reported the **Franklin** Thayer's Gull on 28 Jan.