

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

Most of this winter was very cold. Though Dec's average temperature was close to normal, those of Jan and Feb were far below their historical averages. Jan, in fact, was the sixth coldest on record for the state in the 120 years with data. Much of Ohio was below zero from 06 to 08 Jan. Feb was "only" the 18th coldest. On 04 Mar the Plain Dealer reported that the Great Lakes as a system were more than 90% ice-covered; most of the open water was on Lake Ontario while Lake Erie and the other three were essentially completely iced over. In Jan and Feb Cleveland Hopkins Airport had 10 nights with below-zero lows, the most since 12 such nights during the winter of 1983-84 (*Plain Dealer*, 18 Feb). No doubt many individual stations set record lows, but the website from which I used to glean that information has vanished.

Precipitation followed a different pattern. December was the ninth wettest on record. The southern third of the state had 1½ to two times its average rain and snow, and a band from the central west to the northeast had up to triple its normal totals. Only the far northwest was drier than normal but only by about 10%. Jan precipitation statewide was somewhat below average, though the southwest, northwest, and the Lake Erie shore had up to 150% of normal. Feb's precipitation ranked 78 out of 120, on the wet side of normal. The far south and the northern quarter had almost double their averages, the central counties were as much as 25% below average, and the rest of the state received 90 to 150% of its usual precipitation. Most Jan and Feb precipitation, of course, was snow. 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>).

Last winter we were invaded by finches; this year Snowy Owls staged their biggest southward movement in at least 50 years. They were seen in 35 states as far south as Jacksonville, FL, and one even showed up in Bermuda! Finches come south in response to poor seed production in their core range. Snowys were also thought to push

south due to food shortages, with our visitors being by and large malnourished. New information from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, however, indicates that this invasion was the result of a banner year for lemmings, the owls' favorite food. Snowy Owl brood sizes were much larger than normal, and well-fed juveniles went exploring. Jim McCormac expands on the invasion in a separate article.

Waterfowl were here in typical numbers, at least until Lake Erie and many inland waters froze. Red-necked grebes were more numerous and more widely spread than usual. More sandpiper species lingered into Dec than usual. This was the first winter in quite a while with no reports of Black-headed Gull. One vireo and five warbler species stayed into or through the winter. The previous two winters, both of which were much milder, each hosted 10 warblers during at least part of the season. A few sparrows which normally are last seen in Nov stayed into Dec or beyond. Though this was not a "finch year" a few of each of these visitors from the north dropped in.

This issue contains reports or mentions of 189 species, the second-highest count of the last five years. (Winter 2011-12 had 190). Seven definite or probable hybrids are also listed, split 4:3 between waterfowl and gulls. (These two families account for the majority of the observable interspecific combinations in North America.) I attribute this record count of hybrids both to the growing numbers of birders and to their ever-increasing skill and interest in the unusual. Another five entries are at the genus or family level.

This winter marked the 114th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). As is customary, Ned Keller summarizes the Ohio counts in a separate article which is accompanied by a table of CBC results. In the species accounts which follow this section I many times note the highest number of a species found. These values are for single birders or parties, usually birding in a relatively small area, and often are the counts from a single route within a CBC. However, I seldom include counts from an entire CBC, each of which is the result of many parties' efforts in scattered locales within a 15-mile diameter circle; those data are in the table.

This issue also includes a report of actions by the Ohio Bird Records Committee. After a period of inactivity, the Committee has returned to life under new Secretary Paul Gardner. I extend my thanks to Paul, the eight other OBRC members, and the observant birders who submitted the documentation herein reported and which will be reported in future issues of the *Cardinal*.

Nine review species are listed in the Species Accounts with their names underlined. Observers sent documentation for four of them directly to the OBRC, and the Committee will be examining their submissions. Reports of the other five species, and additional reports of two of the four, were made to eBird and other online venues. Though these are also forwarded to the Committee, many lack any substantiating detail and are not substitutes for formal documentation. Reports which the Committee can't evaluate can't be included in the official record. The seven possibly "orphaned" species are Brown Pelican, Northern Goshawk, California Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Raven, Harris's Sparrow, and Golden-crowned Sparrow.

The Records Committee and this editor urge birders to formally 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>.

Data for the following Species Accounts come from reports submitted directly to the *Cardinal*, reports submitted to The Bobolink, eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>), the Ohio-birds listserv (<http://birding.aba.org/maillist/OH>), rarebird.org (<http://rarebird.org/forum/default.asp>), Audubon (<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>), and the Cincinnati Bird Sightings Log (<http://cincinnatibirds.com/goodbird/sighting.php>). Previous issues have benefited from The Bobolink, which publisher Robert Hershberger made available in draft form. Our schedules now mesh, and this issue marks the first for which Robert provided copies of all the submissions he received. All of our 88 counties contributed reports, though those from Scioto were only from a CBC. Three species' sightings in addition to a CBC report came from Putnam and six species were reported in Van Wert. Dark-eyed Junco was the only species seen in every county.

Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow the Check-List of North American Birds, 7th Edition (1998) as updated through the 54th Supplement (2013). 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:

- Armleder Park = a Cincinnati city park on the Little Miami River, **Hamilton**
- Avon Power = the generating station in Avon Lake, **Lorain**
- Big Island = Big Island Wildlife Area, **Marion**
- Blendon Woods = Blendon Woods Metro Park, **Franklin**
- Caesar Creek = Caesar Creek State Park, **Warren**
- CBC = Audubon Christmas Bird Count
- CLNP = Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve (the former Dike 14), **Cuyahoga**
- Conneaut = the mudflats to the west of Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**
- CP = County Park
- CPNWR = Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, **Lucas**
- CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park, **Cuyahoga** and (mostly) **Summit**
- Darby Creek = Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, **Franklin**
- Deer Creek = the State Park is in Pickaway, the Wildlife Area is in **Fayette**, and Deer Creek Lake is in both but mostly **Pickaway**
- East Fork = East Fork State Park, **Clermont**
- Edgewater = the Edgewater unit of Cleveland Lakefront Metroparks, **Cuyahoga**

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

Fernald = Fernald Preserve, **Butler** and **Hamilton**

Findlay Reservoirs = several contiguous water bodies east of town in **Hancock**

Funk = Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area, **Ashland** and (mostly) **Wayne**

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

Hoover NP = Hoover Nature Preserve, **Delaware**

Hoover Reservoir = the northern 80% is in **Delaware**, but the dam is in **Franklin**

Kelley's Island = the island and adjoining waters, **Erie**

Killdeer = Killdeer Plains State Wildlife Area; a bit is in **Marion** but it's mostly in **Wyandot**

LaDue = LaDue Reservoir, **Geauga**

Lorain = the dredge spoil impoundment east of downtown in the city and county of the same name, unless otherwise noted

Lost Bridge = a Great Miami River crossing on Lawrenceburg Road near Elizabethtown, **Hamilton**, where a covered bridge was lost to fire in 1903

m. obs. = Multiple Observers

Magee = the boardwalk and immediate vicinity in Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas**, unless otherwise noted. The northern third of the causeway is also in **Lucas**, the rest in **Ottawa**.

Maumee Bay = Maumee Bay State Park, **Lucas**, unless otherwise noted

Medusa = Medusa Marsh, **Erie**, an informally named and privately owned area between Sandusky and Bay View

Metzger = Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas**

Mosquito Lake = Mosquito Creek Lake, also called Mosquito Creek Reservoir, **Trumbull**. Mosquito (Creek) Wildlife Area adjoins it.

MP = Metro Park, MetroPark, or Metropark depending on the system

NC = Nature Center

NP = Nature Preserve, except as part of CVNP

OBRC = Ohio Bird Records Committee

OOPMP = Oak Openings Preserve MetroPark, **Lucas**

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

ONWR Blausey and Navarre = Units of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge which are separate from the refuge's main body. Both are in **Ottawa**

Pickerington Ponds = Pickerington Ponds Metro Park, **Fairfield** and **Franklin**

RBA = Rare Bird Alert

Riverside NA = Riverside Natural Area, a preserve along the Great Miami River in **Hamilton**, **Butler**, which includes some upland as well

Rocky Fork = Rocky Fork State Park, **Highland**

SNP = State Nature Preserve

SF = State Forest

SP = State Park

SWA = State Wildlife Area

WA = Wildlife Area

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

Wilderness Road = a road which traverses Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area, **Wayne**, and adjoining farmland

The Wilds = a limited-access big-mammal breeding and research facility in **Muskingum**, also used generically to include the surrounding reclaimed Ohio Power strip mines

Errata:

The cover of the Summer 2013 issue showed it as Vol. 36, No. 3. The issue was No. 4; the interior pages were correct.

In the Fall 2013 issue (*Ohio Cardinal* 37:1) the "d" was dropped from Paul Gardner's name in the masthead; he's the Secretary of the OBRC.

In the same issue we mistakenly credited the Brown Pelican picture on page 10. The photographer was Ron Sempier.

And in that issue, in the "10 Years Ago" section on page 46, I listed Little Stint among the then-predicted newcomers to Ohio which had since arrived. One was reported a few years ago but the record was not documented for the OBRC, so that species is not yet on the official state list.

Addendum 1

The following items were omitted from the Fall 2013 Species Accounts:

Eastern Whip-poor-will

Michele Skolmutch posted to Ohio-birds that her husband had heard one near their house in *Holmes* early on 11 Sep. Ray Hannikman and Emil Bacik accidentally flushed one at Headlands on 28 Sep (*vide* Jerry Talkington).

Merlin

The OBRC has a report of an unusually large concentration of Merlins in *Huron*.