

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

It was another weird winter, weatherwise. Dec temperatures were above average, ranking among the warmest 15% of the 120 years with data. Precipitation, almost all of it rain, was below average. Only the southeast had as much as double its normal amount while the northwest received as little as half of its norm. Jan's temperatures were almost the opposite, with the month's overall average, average maximum, and average minimum all being in the lowest third of all years. Statewide precipitation was above average, though the northwest continued to be dryer than usual. The Dayton area had about double its previous norm. The 20 or so counties from *Sandusky/Seneca/Wyandot* east to the Pennsylvania line had at least 1.5 times their normal precipitation with pockets receiving double to triple the norm. Widespread snows began in late Jan and continued into Feb.

Feb was, almost literally, the killer. It was the second-coldest on record in Ohio; indeed, the entire eastern half of the country other than the deep south had similar conditions. According to the *Plain Dealer*, Lake Erie was 94% ice covered by 16 Feb. The *Plain Dealer* also reported that Feb was Cleveland's coldest ever, with the temperature never above freezing from 12 Feb into Mar. Many stations in the northeast set records for low temperature and the number of consecutive days below zero. Precipitation was also below average, in the lowest 20% of years, but a couple of areas got up to 150% of normal. However, the deep freeze meant that what fell, remained, and the northern half of the state still had snow on the ground through the first week of Mar. Ironically, Jan through Mar were "the hottest worldwide since record-keeping began 136 years ago" according to the *Plain Dealer* of 26 Apr.

Weather data are from the National Weather Service (<http://water.weather.gov/precip/>), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/temp-and-precip/maps.php> and <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/extremes/records/>), and the *Plain Dealer*.

This issue includes reports of 175 species, the lowest number since we editors began reporting on every species in the winter 2007-08 issue. Two winters since then have each posted 178. Six hybrids are also included, three of waterfowl, two of gulls, and one of a songbird (or should I say of songbirds?). Eight more reports are at the genus or higher taxonomic level, and reports of three subspecies are separately presented.

Despite the mild Dec, this winter was the first in many with no hummingbirds; the last sightings had been on 18 Nov. And no Harris's Sparrow visited, though they have otherwise been regular for many years. We had no Black-headed or California gulls, though the lack of open water probably contributed to their being elsewhere, and a Black-headed had been reported in Nov. Other gull species, such as Glaucous, Thayer's, Iceland, and the two Black-backed were seen much further south than usual. As always, a few shorebirds lingered past their usual departure times. Migratory songbirds also followed their usual pattern; the accounts include one vireo and five warbler species, both typical numbers.

This winter marked the 115th 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 usually 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. Three reports of two species which "shouldn't" be here in winter were reported on CBCs; I have not been able to see their documentation, if any. They are listed with that caveat.

Eight review species are listed in the Species Accounts with their names underlined. Observers sent documentation for six of them directly to the OBRC. Two sets have been accepted and the Committee will be examining the other submissions. Reports of the other two species, and additional reports of three of the six species which were documented, 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 five possibly "orphaned" species are Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Raven, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and Hoary Redpoll. Note that the OBRC, in actions described in the article later in this issue, has removed Eurasian Collared-Dove and Common Raven from the review list, but they were still on it during the winter season and so are mentioned here. In addition, the Committee has now received documentation for the Loggerhead Shrike reported as undocumented in *Gallia* this past fall.

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*, 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>). Data from *The Bobolink* were not available at press time and will be included as an addendum in a future issue.

You will see that the number of reporting counties for each species is now in most cases a simple parenthetical appendage—I got tired of trying to write the counts in a different way for each species. All of our 88 counties contributed reports, though those from *Putnam* were only from a CBC. Two sightings of one species in addition to a CBC report came from *Jackson* and seven species were reported in *Van Wert*. No species was definitely seen in every county, though because I don't know in most cases how sightings were distributed in multi-county CBCs, a few might have been. Red-tailed Hawks, Blue Jays, and European Starlings were seen in at least 86 counties, and 16 other species were seen in at least 80.

Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow the *Check-List of North American Birds*, 7th Edition (1998) as updated through the 55th Supplement (2014). 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, Columbus, and Dayton 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 “*vide*” is used in some citations; it means “in trust of” and is used where the reporter was not the observer.

Abbreviations:

Alum Creek = Alum Creek Reservoir, **Delaware**, unless otherwise noted
 Armleder Park = a Cincinnati city park on the Little Miami River, **Hamilton**
 Avon Power = the generating station in Avon Lake, **Lorain**
 Bayshore = a fishing-access point by the eponymous power plant, **Lucas**
 Big Island = Big Island Wildlife Area, **Marion**
 Blendon Woods = Blendon Woods Metro Park, **Franklin**
 Buck Creek = Buck Creek State Park, **Clark**
 BRAS = Black River Audubon Society
 Caesar Creek = Caesar Creek State Park, **Warren**
 CBC = Audubon Christmas Bird Count
 Clear Fork = Clear Fork Reservoir (or Lake), partly in **Morrow** but most of the birding is done in the larger **Richland** Section.
 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**
 East Harbor = East Harbor State Park, **Ottawa**
 Eastlake Power = the Lake Erie viewpoint east of the First Energy plant in Eastlake, **Lake**
 Edgewater = the Edgewater unit of Cleveland Lakefront Metroparks, **Cuyahoga**
 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**
 Kelleys Island = the island and adjoining waters, **Erie**
 Killbuck = Killbuck State Wildlife Area, **Holmes** and **Wayne**
 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**
 Mohican = Mohican State Forest and State Park. Many trails cross the boundaries so some reports include sightings from both without distinction.
 Mohican SF = Mohican State Forest, **Ashland**
 Mohican SP = Mohican State Park, (mostly) **Ashland** and (slightly) **Richland**
 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
 Old Highland Stone = that company's water-filled gravel pits, **Highland**
 OOPMP = Oak Openings Preserve MetroPark, **Lucas**
 ONWR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Lucas** and **Ottawa**
 Pickerington Ponds = Pickerington Ponds Metro Park, **Fairfield** and **Franklin**
 RBA = Rare Bird Alert
 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