

The Ohio



CARDINALTM

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Winter 1999-2000



The Ohio Cardinal is a quarterly publication devoted to the study and appreciation of Ohio's birdlife.

The Ohio Cardinal exists to provide a permanent and timely record of the abundance and distribution of birds in Ohio; to help document the occurrence of rare species in the state; to provide information on identification of birds; and to provide information on birding areas within Ohio.

The Ohio Cardinal invites readers to submit articles on unusual occurrences of birds, bird distribution within the state, birding areas in Ohio, identification tips, and other aspects of ornithology. Bird reports and photographs are welcome from any area of the state. Report forms are not a necessity but will be supplied upon request. Unusual species should be documented, and forms to do so are available upon request from the Editor, Publisher, and Records Committee Secretary.

Seasonal Report Due Dates

Winter (Dec.-Feb.) - March 25
Spring (Mar.-May) - June 25
Summer (Jun.-Jul.) - August 25
Fall (Aug.-Nov.) - December 25

Please send all reports to:

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On the Cover: **White-winged Crossbill** - Cleveland Hts., Cuyahoga Co., 13 March 2000. Photo by Laura Gooch.

Winter 1999-2000 Overview

by Bill Whan

Real winter lasted about three weeks this time around in Ohio. Not unlike a year ago, except about two weeks later, persistent snow and sub-freezing daily high temperatures arrived during the third week of January and lasted through the first week of February. There were conspicuous empty periods in the reports of certain species during that span; these gaps may not be obvious in the reports, where we tend to concentrate on the exceptional to the detriment of the routine. The gaps were likelier to be an ugly-weather result of reduced birder coverage than low bird numbers in some cases.

Because persistent bitter weather arrived late, we witnessed many late-lingering birds, a few of them indeed so late that one could make a case for them as early migrants. Swallows actually spanned the period, with no fewer than four new record late dates for northern rough-winged swallow in December, and early tree swallows in late February. Bitter weather having also departed early, a week of the season's only temperatures above 65°F began statewide on 23 February, accompanied by winds averaging above 10 knots in the southwest quarter, and resulted in some notably early arrivals, as well as a copious influx of expected migrants such as vultures, killdeers, and woodcocks.

Drought far to our north apparently depressed seed and fruit crops, and sent redpolls, grosbeaks, crossbills, siskins, and waxwings south in profusion, though not always to Ohio. We had but a single Bohemian waxwing report, but New England and the upper Midwest reported spectacular numbers. Grosbeaks in Ohio were nothing to brag about, nor were snowy owls. Rough-legged hawks and northern shrikes, however, seemed to be everywhere this winter, the latter seen at times well south of their customary range in the state. Florida had its first records of rough-legged hawks this winter. Siskins, and redpolls especially, had a good season. Golden eagles and merlins appeared in record numbers. More than a few tundra swans and some sandhill cranes apparently overwintered, or at least overlapped their migrations.

So it was a winter when a rose-breasted grosbeak could frequent a feeder up in New Brunswick at the same time a first-record snowy owl could be found in Florida's sand dunes. Closer to home, another apparent jaeger and a kittiwake showed up in southern Ohio, while mockingbird numbers were up in the north. Cave swallows might well have overflowed Ohio, but were not recorded, though many showed up across the Lake in Ontario, where a specimen examined turned out, still more amazingly, to be of the southwestern race *P. f. pelodoma*, and others of this species lingered into mid-December in New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reckoned this the warmest winter in the US since they began keeping records 105 years ago; in fact, the last three winters have, successively, been the warmest during that span, indicating a trend in which we might expect some fundamental changes in birds' movements. In view of all this, it is difficult to explain why relatively few of our half-hardy species—such as brown thrasher, gray catbird, eastern phoebe, etc.—were reported during the period. And it is significant that this winter did not come close to matching last winter's eight warbler and 11 shorebird species.

Four Review Species were reported, and details for all were sent to the OBRC: Bohemian waxwing, western grebe, Harris's sparrow, and two Ross's geese. In the