

The Ohio



CARDINALTM

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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 (June-July) - August 25
Autumn (Aug.-Nov.) - December 25

Please send all reports to:

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On the Cover: This western kingbird was digiscoped in Butler County's St. Clair Township on 15 July 2002 by Dave Russell.

Summer 2002 Overview

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For most of the year, birds use their adaptive skills freely. If an autumn storm drives them far afield, they can usually manage. Extraordinarily warm or cold winters may affect their food sources enough to induce them to spend the season at widely different latitudes. The breeding season, however, is different. Then birds become quite conservative in their habitat choices, sticking tight in all but the most extreme conditions. Thus, variations in weather may be less important in assessing our summer birdlife than at other times, simply because, except for migrants still on their way to or from breeding grounds to our north, or the occasional non-breeding wanderer, it is dominated by nesting birds. So we can simply say that both June and July were considerably warmer and drier than normal. As for illustrative data, three-quarters of Columbus's July rain fell on the 23rd; in Cleveland during the same month, on fully 10 days the temperature rose above 90°F.

We should not, however, downplay the almighty atmosphere's larger effects. It was probably the weather elsewhere—specifically in the Southeast, ravaged by drought of long duration—that affected the variety of our region's summer birds. As the season came to a close, unusual numbers of southeastern breeders dispersed more widely than usual into the Northeast and Midwest, presumably due at least in part to the drought's depletion of food sources. Extraordinary numbers of kites—Mississippi and swallow-tailed—were seen, and ibises, storks, odd herons showed up far afield in good numbers. Perhaps the heat kept Ohio observers indoors, for we had less than our share of reports of these rarities. Just next door, Indiana birders had, besides rarities from the west, white ibis, both whistling-ducks, and both kites. Our only southern stray this summer was a flyby Mississippi kite. Having complained about that, let's note that our count of four Review Species reported—adding to the kite a ruff, an extraordinary red-necked stint, and a western kingbird—was about average for the season, and there was much of interest beyond just rare birds.

And probably it was the unstable weather of spring, which made for such good fallouts of neotropical passerines this year in Ohio, that caused individuals of many species to trickle through unusually late into June. Tardiness was a theme for shorebirds, for example. June short-billed dowitchers tend to be failed breeders headed south early, usually near the end of the month, but one on 12 June probably represents a record late northbound migrant. There are very few records later than 16 June for semipalmated sandpipers still apparently northbound. White-rumped sandpipers have been recorded in small numbers during the second week of June, but flocks of 28 on the 8th then six on the 17th are quite remarkable. And as for Wilson's phalarope, we see them often in May and July, but all our published June records can be counted on one hand; this June alone we had as many as 10 Wilson's. Most were inland too, while historically ~80% of our 500+ recorded birds come from close to Lake Erie.