



*Published by*  
The Cleveland Museum of Natural History  
and  
The Kirtland Bird Club

# THE CLEVELAND REGION

The Circle Has A Radius of 30 Miles Based on Cleveland Public Square

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Beaver Creek               | 30 Lake Rockwell             |
| 2 North Amherst              | 31 White City                |
| 3 Lorain                     | 32 Euclid Creek Reservation  |
| 4 Black River                | 33 Chagrin River             |
| 5 Elyria                     | 34 Willoughby                |
| 6 LaGrange                   | Waite Hill                   |
| 7 Avon-on-the-Lake           | 35 Sherwin Pond              |
| 8 Clague Park                | 36 Gildersleeve              |
| 9 Clifton Park               | 37 North Chagrin Reservation |
| 10 Rocky River               | 38 Gates Mills               |
| 11 Cleveland Hopkins Airport | 39 South Chagrin Reservation |
| 12 Medina                    | 40 Aurora Lake               |
| 13 Hinckley Reservation      | 41 Aurora Sanctuary          |
| 14 Edgewater Park            | 42 Mantua                    |
| Perkins Beach                | 43 Mentor Headlands          |
| 15 Terminal Tower            | 44 Mentor Marsh              |
| 16 Cleveland Public Square   | 45 Black Brook               |
| Cuyahoga River               | Headlands State Park         |
| 17 Brecksville Reservation   | 46 Fairport Harbor           |
| 18 Akron                     | 47 Painesville               |
| Cuyahoga Falls               | 48 Grand River               |
| 19 Akron Lakes               | 49 Little Mountain           |
| 20 Gordon. Park              | Holden Arboretum             |
| Illuminating Co. plant       | 50 Corning Lake              |
| 21 Doan Brook                |                              |
| 22 Natural Science Museum    |                              |
| Wade Park                    |                              |
| 23 Baldwin Reservoir         | 51 Stebbin's Gulch           |
| 24 Shaker Lakes              | 52 Chardon                   |
| 25 Lake View Cemetery        | 53 Burton                    |
| 26 Forest Hill Park          | 54 Punderson Lake            |
| 27 Bedford Reservation       | 55 Fern Lake                 |
| 28 Hudson                    | 56 LaDue Reservoir           |
| 29 Kent                      | 57 Spencer Wildlife Area     |



CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN  
PARK SYSTEM



PORTAGE ESCARPMENT  
(800-foot Contour Line)

**THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR**

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### THE WEATHER

December - Temperatures averaged out a very cold 7.13 degrees below normal even though ten days of above normal temperatures occurred in the period following the 14th. Precipitation occurred on 19 days to total 1.57 inches, 0.79 inches below normal. Snowfall was 18.3 inches for the month. Lake Erie first developed extensive ice cover in the period from the 11th to the 15th, after which ice cover became variable and was not extensive until the 29th and thereafter.

January - Temperatures were the coldest in 105 years of records and averaged out an icy, 15.9 degrees below normal. Not a single day passed at above normal temperatures. Measureable precipitation occurred on 21 days and totaled 1.29 inches, 1.27 inches below normal. Snowfall was 21.1 inches. Lake Erie retained extensive ice cover all month.

February - Above normal temperatures occurred on 13 days so the temperatures averaged out only 2.57 degrees below normal. Most of the recovery from the cold was achieved in the last 7 days as temperatures had been averaging 6.71 degrees below normal through the 21st. Precipitation totaled 1.38 inches, 0.76 inches below normal. Lake Erie retained extensive ice cover through the 21st after which open water areas developed unevenly but with considerable extent.

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

In spite of bitterly cold weather and adverse field conditions, the 1976-1977 winter birding season was not an uneventful period. Among the highlights of the season were: (1) several reports of large concentrations of Common Mergansers along the lakefront, (2) observations of several species of northern gulls throughout the entire winter period, (3) the scarcity of reports of winter finches. Among the noteworthy gull sightings discussed in the following paragraphs is the sighting of the Cleveland Region's first Lesser Black-backed Gull. These and other highpoints of the season will be detailed in the following paragraphs and Noteworthy Record Section.

Waterfowl Unusually large flocks of Common Mergansers occurred at several points along the lakefront during late January and February. Representative high counts for the species were as follows: between 10,000 and 25,000 during late January at the Avon Lake Power Plant (Ward), approximately 4,500 on February 6 at Eastlake (Klamm), and about 2,500 at Lorain Harbor on February 13. (Stasko). Up to 3,500 were still reported on February 26 at Eastlake (Klamm).

During the latter third of February, bay ducks increased along the entire lakefront. Although Redheads, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, and Scaup ducks were continuously reported throughout the winter period from Lorain Harbor to Eastlake, counts approaching 2,500 were tabulated for the Canvasback at Lorain (Ward), while along the Cleveland lakefront maximum counts of Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes and Redheads neared 2,000 and approached 3,000 for the Scaup ducks.

Sea ducks were not recorded in any great numbers during the season. With the exception of one report of two birds, Oldsquaw were reported only as single birds. All three species of scoters appeared along the lakefront, with the White-winged Scoter being the most frequently reported; the maximum count for this species was five at Eastlake on January 20 (Rickard) and at Gordon Park on February 11 (Hoffman). Details appear in the Noteworthy Records section of the observation of the rarer Surf and Black Scoters.

Hawks As usual, regular reports of wintering Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels were received. Red-shouldered Hawks appeared on scattered dates throughout the winter, although one bird apparently wintered in an area around West Geauga County as it was seen on five separate dates during the period (Kremm). Both light and dark phase Rough-legged Hawks, an irregular winter visitor, and both male and female Marsh Hawks were observed throughout the month of December at Burke Airport. The birds apparently were more inter-

ested in the prey around the airport than disturbed by the traffic about the facility.

Accipiters wintered sparingly in the region. A Sharp-shinned Hawk became a regular visitor to a residence in Painesville where several times the hawk found easy prey of the birds that had gathered around the bird feeder (Miller). A Cooper's Hawk displayed similar behavior as it perched in a wooded area near a Solon residence before it took off (Surman). Other Cooper's Hawks were noted at the old Brooklyn Airport in December (Bacik, et al.), and adult specimens were seen several times along east-suburban freeways in late January and early February (Corbin). One can wonder at the reasons that these hawks were seen in comparatively open areas. The severe cold of late January and early February probably forced these normally rather elusive raptors into more open areas in search of prey.

Gulls No truly massive concentrations of gulls occurred during the winter. Largest number of Herring Gulls was 25,000 from Lorain Harbor on February 5 (Ward). Typical counts for this species were between 10,000 and 12,000 birds during late January and February. Along the Cleveland lakefront, highest numbers of Herring Gulls nearly coincided with the peak numbers at Lorain Harbor as counts of up to 14,000 were reported during mid-February (Klamm). Ring-billed Gulls showed a different pattern than its larger relative, at least along the Cleveland lakefront, for maximum numbers that occurred in Cleveland appeared in early December, 28,000 on December 5 being the largest number of birds observed. For the remainder of the winter, however, this species was reported in greater numbers at Lorain Harbor, with several counts during January and February of between 2,000 and 3,000 birds while along the Cleveland lakefront numbers ranged from several dozen to a maximum of about 2,100 on February 26. The other common wintering gull, the Bonaparte's, followed a pattern quite similar to the Ring-billed's early during the winter as numbers peaked at 14,500 on December 18 after which date the birds became scarce with only ten individuals being reported in January. A lone bird on January 23 was the last Bonaparte's Gull observed during the entire winter.

Both adult and immature Glaucous Gulls could usually be found at the favored gull concentration points along the lakefront during January and February. Numbers ranged from single birds to a maximum of eight birds on February 25 at Lorain Harbor (Ward). The other regular northern gull that occurs in our region, the Great Black-backed, reached a peak of 80 individuals on January 20 along the Cleveland lakefront (Hoffman). Details in the Noteworthy Records section reveal that the rarer Iceland Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake were observed not just on one or two occasions during the winter as is typical for these species when they do occur in our region but over a period of time that encompassed the entire winter.

Owls For the third consecutive winter, Short-eared Owls were attracted to Burke Airport in downtown Cleveland. Six was the highest count on December 11 (Hoffman) while at least two birds remained to January 22 (Klamm). No reports of Short-eared Owls were received from Grafton Prison Farm, an area where these owls had appeared the past two winters.

Other species of owls were reported from areas where the birds are permanent residents and where birders know where to find them. Barn and Long-eared Owls were reported from Kirtland Hills, while both Great Horned and Barred Owls were observed in areas where the birds are year-round residents. One negative aspect of the winter season was that no Snowy Owls were observed despite extensive coverage of the areas to which these Arctic denizens have been attracted in the past.

Carolina Wren Observations of Carolina Wrens were markedly reduced during the past severe winter. Data for the preceding four winters reveals the following numbers of these birds observed: 1972-1973 (52), 1973-1974 (24), 1974-1975 (45), 1975-1976 (88). Only ten individuals plus two birds that were regular feeder visitors to a residence until February 15 were counted during the past winter. It will be interesting to see how well can this little wren recover from the effects of the severe winter.

Winter Finches One disappointing aspect of birding during the past winter was the almost total absence, with the exception of the Purple Finch and the Pine Siskin, of winter finches. Only two reports were received of these sporadic transients: an immature Common Redpoll at Shaker Lakes on December 5 (Corbin, Leach) and a single Evening Grosbeak flying over the Memorial Shoreway near Burke Airport on February 20 (Hammond). One observer stated that the past winter was the first one in seven years that Evening Grosbeaks failed to appear at his home feeder (Fricker).

Only continuous report of Purple Finches was a group of up to six at a residence in West Geauga County throughout February (Kremm). others appeared irregularly at several locations throughout the region during the winter. Pine Siskins were reported only from Elmwood Park on the west side, three birds on December 12 and one bird on December 18, and a flock of six in pine trees at the Rocky River Interpretive Center on February 20 (all observations by Stasko). Pine Grosbeaks and both species of Crossbills were entirely absent from the winter reports.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-necked Grebe A winter-plumaged individual was observed at East-lake on January 20. Long, gray neck and direct comparison with Horned Grebes and other waterfowl present at the time of observation distinguished this bird (Rickard). This is the first January sighting of this always-rare migrant since 1962.

Black-crowned Night Heron Two adults and an immature were present at a private residence in downtown Lorain on January 25 (Ward).

Whistling Swan (1) At Perkins Beach, an immature specimen was observed on December 5 (Klamm). (2) An adult was present January 16 at the Avon Lake Power Plant (Stasko).

Snow Goose (1) An individual was observed at Hanging Rock Farm on December 18 (Bole, Jr.). (2) An adult blue-phase bird was with 115 Canada Geese off Mentor Headlands on December 19 (Hoffman). (3) An immature blue-phase specimen was seen at Sunset Pond, North Chagrin Metropark on February 6 (LePage).

Blue-winged Teal An early spring migrant was sighted in Olmstead Falls on February 27 (Hocevar).

Surf Scoter An adult male specimen was off Perkins Beach, December 11 (LePage).

Black Scoter Only report of this rare winter visitor was of a female at Lakewood on December 5 (Klamm).

Common Snipe (1) A single bird was observed on December 13, two birds on December 17, and one bird again on February 13 at Walden Pond in Aurora (Elder). No observations were made during January because of the observer's being out of town so it could not be determined whether the birds seen in December wintered in the area, but the sighting of a single bird on February 13 tends to support the speculation that at least one Common Snipe wintered at Walden Pond. (2) An individual was seen at Lake Isaac on December 26 (Besser, Hocevar).

Purple Sandpiper Only report of this hardy shorebird was of a single bird on the rocks at White City on December 7 (Hocevar).

Iceland Gull (1) At least two individuals, one adult and one immature, frequented the Gordon Park - Muni-Light open water areas from January 16 (Hoffman) to February 27 (Klamm). The adult bird was observed on January 24 (Jim Hoffman) at Gordon Park. (2) Both adult and immature birds were observed together at Lorain Harbor on January 23 (Klamm), while at least one immature specimen was sighted several times to February 26 (Ward). (3) An immature was at Eastlake on February 6 (Hoffman).

Lesser Black-backed Gull (1) A sub-adult bird was closely studied at mid-morning on January 20 at Gordon Park. Characteristics that were observed on this bird were as follows: charcoal-gray mantle, head, neck, and tail white with dark streaking appearing on the head and neck areas flesh-colored legs, and a black ring intersecting a developing red spot on a bill that was yellow at the tip and base. The period that the bird was under observation was about one-half hour (Jim Hoffman). (2) A second bird with the yellow legs characteristic of this species, was observed at Eastlake on February 5 (Talkington), and at Lorain Harbor on February 13 (LePage) and 20 (Ward). Other characteristics observed on this second bird were dark gray mantle and yellow bill with just a small black area at its tip.

In all four of the observations above in which a total of probably two individuals were involved, one key characteristic was mentioned by all four of the observers: *i. e.*, the slightly smaller, Herring Gulls being present at the time of all four sightings when the Lesser Black-backed was observed. If a judgement were to be made as to the stage of plumage of the two individual Lesser Black-backed Gulls noted during the winter, the first individual, the one with the flesh-colored legs, was probably a bird in third winter plumage while the second bird with the yellow legs was very close to the definitive adult plumage of either the fourth or fifth year. As European field guides point out, the Lesser Black-backed Gull is a highly variable species; sub-adult birds can have either flesh-colored or yellow legs along with various degrees of mottled streaking over the entire body.

The above records constitute the first observations of this European gull in the history of the Cleveland Region, as well as first records for the state of Ohio.

Little Gull (1) An adult bird was noted at Edgewater on December 4 and 5 (Klamm) and what was probably the same individual was at Gordon Park on several dates between December 11 and 29 (LePage, Hoffman). (2) Another adult specimen was observed at Lorain Harbor. December 5 (Hocevar).

Black-legged Kittiwake (1) Individual immature specimens were observed at Gordon Park December 2 and 3, January 9 and 27 (Hoffman, *et. al.*). Lorain Harbor; dates of observation range from December 5 to February 21 (Hocevar, Ward). Three birds were noted on February 6 at Lorain; this was the maximum count for the winter (Ward). All of the birds at Lorain were immatures.

Saw-whet Owl One was observed "in plain view, about ten feet up in a pine tree" at Donald Gray Gardens on February 16 (Vavrek) and what was presumably the same specimen was last seen on February 28 (Klamm).

Mockingbird (1) One was reported from Willoughby on January 2 and 6 (Huey). (2) An individual was present throughout the winter period at a residence in Eastlake (fide Hammond).

Brown Thrasher There were two feeder appearances in February: (1) one individual in Cleveland Heights on February 4 (Hoffman) and (2) one at an Eastlake residence, February 15 (Talkington).

Hermit Thrush (1) A solitary bird remained at Donald Gray Gardens from December 12 to 23 (Klamm). (2) Between December 13 and January 15 one was reported from a Shaker Heights residence (Besser). (3) One was observed on Christmas Count Day, December 18 at Lakeview Cemetery (Hoffman). (4) Only sighting from Kuhlman Woods this winter was a single bird on December 26 (Hannikman). (5) On January 3, one was seen at French Creek Metropark (Hlebcar). No Hermit Thrushes were reported after mid-January, the continuing bitter winter weather may have decimated the wintering population of these thrushes.

Water Pipit Buffy underparts, general brown coloration, and white outer tail feathers were the characteristics observed on this very tardy migrant as it bobbed along a shallow ditch in a field near Willoughby Junior High School on December 18 (Huey). Uncommon even during its customary mid-October to mid-November fall migration period, individuals of this species appearing in December are exceedingly rare.

Northern Shrike (1) One was discovered on December 5 at the old Brooklyn Airport and was subsequently observed through January 23 (Bacik, et. al.). During one period of observation the bird sang continuously for 45 minutes, its repertoire ranging from "thrasher-like warbles to loud squawks and high-pitched whistles." (2) A second bird was reported from Lakeview Cemetery on December 12, 18, and 19 (LePage, Hoffman).

Yellow-rumped Warbler (1) Individuals appeared on December 1 and 30, January 8 and 9 at a residence in Mentor (Hammond). The bird observed on January 8 was described as "sick or injured" while the bird seen the next day was "healthy". (2) A single specimen was around Squire's Castle, North Chagrin Metropark, on December 18 (Corbin).

House Finch Four males were found at two residences in Shaker Heights on December 30 (Besser).

Lapland Longspur Two were "sometimes alone and sometimes with Horned Larks" at Burke Airport on December 4 (Klamm).

Addendum:

Mute Swan Up to seven Mute Swans were observed on several dates during the winter at Lorain Harbor (many observers).

## FIELD NOTES

Pileated Woodpecker in Cleveland Heights At 3:30 p.m. on January 30, I chanced to look out to the east from my apartment in Cleveland Heights and noticed a large bird flying in a strange, undulating manner at a height of perhaps 75 feet. When it neared the building, I distinguished its long bill, head, and neck and, suddenly, extensive white patches in its back wings. Instantly I recognized it was a Pileated Woodpecker as it passed overhead and out of sight. Neither Forest Hill Park, which is immediately west of the apartment, nor any of the other small wooded parks in the city contain large dead trees from which this woodpecker normally obtains its food. Perhaps, however, the severe winter forced this particular bird to abandon its normal habitat to seek food elsewhere. - DONALD L. NEWMAN

[Ed. Note: Another Pileated Woodpecker was reported from a residential area in Cleveland Heights on February 20. This bird was a female and perhaps, like the individual above, was searching for food out of its preferred habitat. - JIM, JEAN, and DICK HOFFMAN]

Large Mourning Dove Roost Found. Jim, Jean, and Dick Hoffman had told me that they had seen many Mourning Doves coming in to roost in the orchard west of the last industrial building near the old Brooklyn Airport. More than 100 were counted. One day, Priscilla and I decided to see how many were coming in to roost so on January 1 from late in the afternoon until dusk, we observed the birds entering the roosting area. On this particular day we counted 287 birds. The birds were counted as they flew directly over our heads from the northeast. EMIL and PRISCILLA BACIK

A Brazen Barred Owl For some time I have been feeding birds on my patio. Occasionally one will hit a glass door and knock itself out. When this happens, I pick up the bird and hold it in my hands until it is sufficiently recovered for me to set it free. On the morning of January 17, I saw a stunned goldfinch on the patio. I had glimpsed a Barred Owl perched in a nearby tree, so I hurried to open the door and rescue the bird. Before I could grasp the goldfinch, the owl swooped down, pulled the bird from my fingers, and returned to its perch. There the owl sat and ate his breakfast, leaving me stunned at the turn of events. - ALICE PRUSNICK fide MARJORIE RAMISCH

[Miss. Ramisch herself reported a similar incident involving a Barred Owl attacking birds at her home feeder on January 31. Since both Mrs. Prusnick and Miss. Ramisch live in the same general area, it is highly probable that both incidents involved the same owl that was seeking easy prey at a home feeder. - Ed.]

A Hawk at the Feeder On February 9, a male and female Pileated Woodpecker were at the suet feeder for about 15 minutes. As I watched them, I became aware that they both had become motionless. A couple of minutes later I saw a hawk fly up from the back woods and settle in a tree about 40 feet from the tree where the woodpeckers were feeding. The hawk remained for about a minute and then flew about 300 feet into another tree. Several minutes later the hawk flew away. It was not until then that the woodpeckers resumed their movements and activity about the suet feeder. They had remained motionless for about 5 minutes. I have been observing Pileated Woodpeckers for about 25 years, but this is the first time I have witnessed such inaction on the part of these large birds. - WALTER KREMM

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AN INVITATION. The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month except July and August in The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle. Visitors are always welcome.

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Inquires and correspondence regarding subscriptions to THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR, should be addressed to The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.