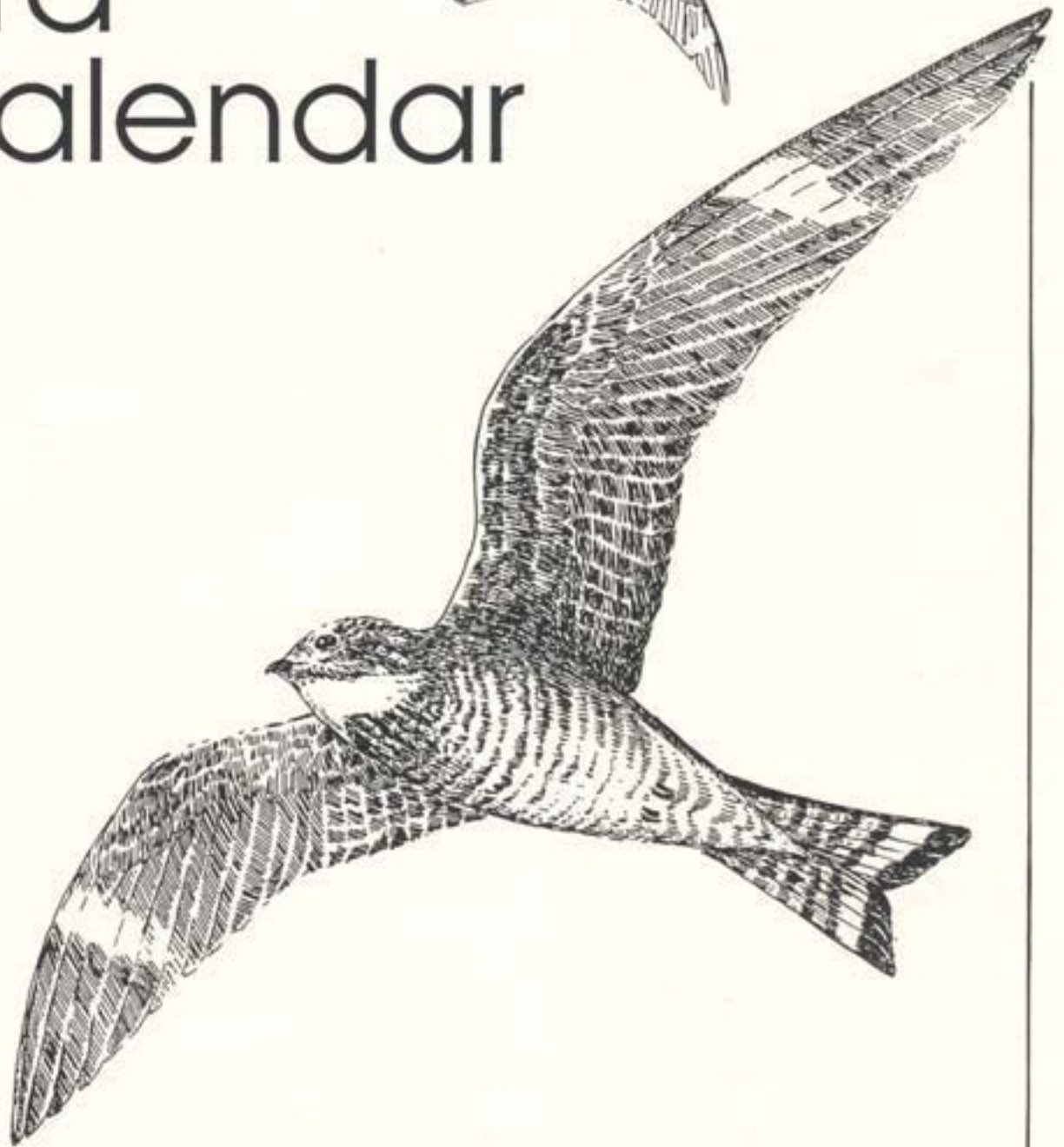


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Volume 89 Number 1

The Cleveland

Bird Calendar



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The Cleveland Bird Calendar was founded in 1905 by Francis H. Herrick of The Western Reserve University. The purposes of the publication are to provide information on the movements of birds through the Cleveland region, to monitor population densities of resident birds, and to help in the establishment of patterns of vagrancy for rarely encountered species of the region.

The Cleveland region includes Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake Lorain, Medina, Portage, and Summit Counties.

The Cleveland Bird Calendar is published quarterly by The Kirtland Bird Club and The Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Due dates for seasonal reports are as follows:

5 March - Winter Season

5 June - Spring Season

5 September - Summer Season

5 December - Autumn Season

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by Margret Krister, 1993.

The Cleveland Bird Calendar

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THE WEATHER

Winter 1992-1993

by William Klamm

December - This was the 8th wettest Dec. on record. Temperatures averaged 34.1°, 3.0° above normal. The high was 59° on the 31st and the low 13° on the 26th. Lake Erie temperature stood at 45° on the 1st and fell to 37° by the 31st. Sunshine prevailed 26% of the time. Precipitation came on 15 days to total 4.31 in., 1.56 in. above normal. The greatest fall in a 24 hour period was 2.81 in. on 30-31. Snowfall totaled 7.1 in. with the greatest amount in any 24 hour period at 3.6 in. on the 5th.

January - This was our 9th wettest Jan. Precipitation totaled 4.44 in., 2.40 in. above normal. This was distributed over 12 days with the greatest fall in any 24 hours amounting to 1.12 in. on 4-5. Snowfall totaled 8.7 in. with the greatest fall in any 24 hour measuring 3.1 in. on 9-10. The greatest depth on the ground was 3 in. on the 12th. Temperatures aver-

aged 32.3°, 7.5° above normal. The high was 61° on the 4th and the low was 9° on the 19th. Lake Erie fell to 33° on the 6th and remained there through the 31st. Skim ice on the lake first appeared on the 19th and varied thereafter with changes in ambient conditions. Sunshine prevailed 21% of the time.

February - This was the snowiest Feb. on record. Temperatures averaged 25.6°, 1.6° below normal. The high was 53° on the 5th and the low was -5° on the 25th. Lake Erie stayed at 33° and was subject to extensive and variable ice cover. Sunshine prevailed 37% of the time. Precipitation was distributed over 16 days and totaled 2.61 in., 0.42 in. above normal. The greatest fall in any 24 hour period was 9.53 in. on 22-23. Snowfall totaled 39.1 in. with the most in any 24 hour period measuring 14.8 in. on 23-24. The maximum depth was 21 in. on the 24th. This tied the all time record for the most snow on the ground in Feb.

Thirty Years Ago: The winter of 1962-1963 brought an invasion of Rough-legged Hawks to the region. A sick Le Conte's Sparrow was caught on 10 Dec. in LeGrange Township (Morse). It died 2 days later (to CMNH) and provided the first regional specimen of this species. Two Red-necked Grebes remained at Summit Lake through the period from 3 Feb. 1963 (DeSante). An Eastern Phoebe wintered in Northampton Township (Hjelmquist). A male Pine Grosbeak was in Gates Mills on 16 Feb. (Tramer).

Twenty Years Ago: An Orange-crowned Warbler was banded in Waite Hill on 2 Dec. 1962 (Flanigan). Another was in Kuhlman Woodson 10 Dec. (Hannikman). A Wood Thrush was seen feeding with a robin on 14 Dec. (E. Newman). A Dickcissel was at a feeder in Willoughby Hills on 16 Dec. (Proudfoot). A Boreal Chickadee was banded in Waite Hill on 23 Dec. (Flanigan, Klamm). A Northern Goshawk was in Waite Hill on 7 Jan. (Flanigan).

Ten Years Ago: A Red-throated Loon was at Lake Rockwell on 9 Dec. 1983 (Rosche). An immature Pomarine Jaeger was in Lorain on 12 Dec. (Elder, Rosche). A Parasitic Jaeger was at Wildwood Park on 11 Dec. and 26 Jan. (Corbin). Our first winter record of White-eyed Vireo was in Lorain on 18 Dec. (Peterjohn, Pogacnik). A Common Black-headed Gull was along the lakefront throughout most of the winter (Hoffman). An immature Black-legged Kittiwake was in Cleveland from 17 - 29 Jan. (Emery). The first Jan. record of Forster's Tern was at Edgewater Park on 6 Jan. and 8 Jan. (LePage, Hannikman, Rosche).

Comment on the Season

by Larry Rosche

The warm weather made for slow birding in December. By Christmas break I found myself wondering about the upcoming checklist additions, deletions, and changes by the American Ornithologist's Union, Will I get my Brown-capped and Black Rosy Finches back? Will there be several new species derived from the Solitary Vireo? Will they finally split the Golden Plover complex? After all the time it took me to get used to it, will my Green-backed Heron become Green again? Will "Bullock's" Oriole be resplit? Will this be the last issue of The Cleveland Bird Calendar that addresses Thayer's Gull as a full species? Good grief, there goes a bird from beloved state list. Why do I concern myself over things I have no control over?

Then in late December the first of 3 birds that would make this winter a memorable one was seen. A distant Slaty-backed Gull was seen and studied at Eastlake (see field notes) on 28 & 29 Dec. This bird obviously wintered on the lake and was reported by various observers from Fairport Harbor to Lorain where it was photographed in Lorain on 8 Feb. Nearly everyone got to see their first Ohio Green-tailed Towhee in Amherst Township (see field notes). It was found on 10 Jan. and remained through the period. A striking male Barrow's Goldeneye provided many their first opportunity to see this species in Ohio on 28 Feb. Not as spectacular as the aforementioned rarities, but nonetheless unique, was the high number of Common Mergansers along the shore of Lake Erie. Observers were hard-pressed to remember such a spectacle of this species. As always, thanks to our many reporters and kudos to Muggsi Krister for the new cover. The best of good birds this spring.

Winter 1992-1993

A **Common Loon** was out of season on 13-15 Jan. at Rocky River Park (TLP, WNK). Up to 8 **Pied-billed Grebes** were at Summit Lake on various dates (LK, CH, BO). The lake sported our only **Horned Grebe** after Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) on 14 Feb. **Double-crested Cormorants** continue to be easily found along the lakefront. Up to 12 could be found at Eastlake all winter (m.ob.). As many as 7 were in Lorain (RHL, NK). A bird was at Lake Medina on 13 Dec. (JH). Great Blue Herons found this winter to their liking. There were 30 counted along the Chagrin River on 19 Dec. (AJF). Elsewhere they were in smaller groups. Nonetheless, they were in higher than expected totals. An immature **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was seen on and after 29

Dec. at Eastlake (MG, LR). A trip along the Black River in Lorain found an impressive tally of 27+ on 17 Jan. by Dayton birder Doug Dister. As many as 6 were seen at the "hot waters" in Lorain throughout the period (m. ob).

Winter **Tundra Swans** are usually restricted to December when the last migrants are passing through. This season each month produced sightings. This probably serves as a reminder of just how mild most of the winter was. Fifty were at Lake Hinckley on 5 Dec. (JH). Five were off Perry on 27 Dec. (EB, RH, LR). The 45 over Punderson State Park provided an extraordinary count for the time of year (*fide* DB). A single was at Lake Rockwell 24 Jan. - 6 Feb. (LR, CH, EE). Another solo bird was at Lake Medina from mid-January (CW, JW, JVP, EE). Six **Mute Swans** were seen on the west side of Cleveland on 27 Dec. (WNK). A pair graced Lake Phippen on the balmy morning of

31 Dec. (LR, CH). They remained in the vicinity through the period. A blue phase **Snow Goose** was seen by Gary Gerrone in Lorain Co. on 22 Dec. A bird was in Mentor on 11 Jan. (JP).

Dabbling ducks were fewer than in the past few winters (See table 1). When I speak of wintering waterfowl, I mean those which stay after expected late December departure dates. Few surprises were noted in Dec. One to 2 **Wood Ducks** were found at North Chagrin through the period (KM, RR). A male spent the winter at Helen Wyman Park in Painesville. A **Green-winged Teal** was at Lake Isaac on 31 Jan. (RHL). A pair of early returnees were at Lake Medina on 11 Feb. (CW) and in Aurora on 22 Feb. (EE). **American Black Ducks** were common, but certainly not as abundant as expected along the lake. Wintering **Mallards** totaled in the 1000s. Nine **Northern Pintails** were at Lake Medina on

17 Jan. (JH, CW). A male was in Bath on 13 Feb. (NI). Another was located at Avon Lake on 28 Feb. (RHL). Only 3 reports of **Northern Shoveler** were received. Three were in the CVNRA on 13 Dec. (DAC), an immature was at Lake Isaac on 15 Dec. (RHL), and 3 were at Lake Medina on 19 Dec. (CW).

The divers were dominated by unprecedented numbers of **Common Mergansers**. As ice built up on Lake Erie, good concentrations were found. As many as several thousand could be found from Perry to Lorain. One favored area was behind the old Munny Light Building where the Klamms counted 1400. All were males! **Scoters** were noteworthy as well. The occurrence pattern maps certainly need updating when it comes to these species. Both Surf and White-winged were in fairly good numbers.

Canvasbacks were almost absent from our region. The high was 25 on the Mentor CBC. Also in low numbers were **Redheads**. Up to 3 **Ring-necked Ducks** wintered near the mouth of the Grand River (EB, RH, LR). Five were lingering at Lake Medina on 22 Dec. (LK). **Scaup** could be found in numbers of up to 1075 on a given day along the lake (WNK). Two **Oldsquaws** at Lake Medina most of Dec. made for an impressive inland report (JH, CW, DAC). The high tally for Oldsquaws at Eastlake was 6 on 2 Jan. (KM). Another was there on 27-28 Feb. (RH, TLP, m.ob.). A hen was at HBSP on 6-7 Feb. (RH, m.ob.). Three were in Lorain on 24 Feb. (NK). One to 2 **Black Scoters** were seen off Rocky River 23 Jan. (WNK, CH). Another was off Wildwood

Park on 9 Jan. (AJF). Sue Utterback reported a bird at Eastlake on 16 Jan. A high count of 30 **Surf Scoters** was made off Rocky River on 3 Jan. (CH). An immature male was at the mouth of the Grand River on 3 Feb. (LR). Three to five could be found in Avon Lake, Cleveland, Eastlake, and Lorain (WNK, TLP, EE, NK, m.ob.). **White-winged Scoters** were more widespread than usual, with up to 3 at Eastlake, Cleveland, Avon Lake, and Lorain (m.ob.). Two at Summit Lake on 23 Feb. represented a small inland movement (BL). **Common Goldeneye** numbers were in the hundreds along the lake (WNK, TLP). The inland high was 28 at Summit Lake on 27 Dec. (CH). **Buffleheads** were plentiful along Lake Erie (WNK). **Hooded Mergansers** remained in good numbers into Dec. A count of 64 was made at LaDue Reservoir on 3 Dec. (RR). A flock of 30 was lingering at Lake Medina on 22 Dec. (LK). **Common Mergansers** were in high numbers along Lake Erie never before experienced by most observers. Tallies of this species reached well into the 500 -2000 range from the Grand to the Black Rivers. As usual, a few **Ruddy Ducks** wintered at Summit Lake (LK, CH, B0).

Late vulture reports served as an indication of this past season's weather. It seems that each winter I make comments on accipiter totals on Christmas Bird Counts. Only one CBC

reported more **Sharp-shinned Hawks** than **Cooper's Hawks**. In defense of the compiler, the numbers were not significant.

Bob McCullough reported an out of season **Turkey Vulture** in Burton on 13 Jan. The Rosches saw another soaring over I-77 south of Akron on 23 Jan. Kopka noted one over the Ira Road Beaver Pond in the CVNRA on 7 Feb. Medina County's report came on 10 Feb. (JH). A bird was at Eastlake on 5 Jan. and another near Lakewood 20 Feb. (JP). Two adult **Bald Eagles** were seen through most of January at Lake Rockwell (LR, CH). A bird was seen at Russell Park on 1 Jan (AJF). A pair of adults graced Eastlake on 25-27 Feb. (EE, TLP, RR). **Northern Harriers** were seen regularly in Lorain Co. (NK, m.ob.).

Cooper's Hawks were common throughout the 7 county area. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were scattered about in small numbers. Tami Nielsen and Dan Best reported a bird stalking the feeding area at D. W. Meyer Nature Center (Big Creek Park) intermittently through the winter. Holt was the only other reporter to have one frequent his feeding station (Streetsboro) for more than a day. **Red-shouldered Hawks** have become relatively common from the CVNRA eastward (LR). A bird at Firestone Metropark was noteworthy (EP). Two at Lake Isaac on 5 Feb. (RHL) and a single in Columbia Station on 17 Feb. (BR) provided further proof of their widespread occurrence. **Rough-legged Hawk** reports were very few. Even in the traditional Lorain County areas they were hard to find. The only report from there was on 9 Jan. by John Herman.

*...unprecedented
numbers
of
Common Mergansers.*

WATERBIRD SURVEY FOR WINTER 1992 - 1993

| LOCATION | CLFW 12/12 | CLFW 12/127 | GR 12/27 | CLF 1/2 | CLFW 1/9 | CLFW 1/15 | CLF 1/31 | CLFW 2/3 | HBSP 2/3 | EL 2/17 | LOR 2/28 | EL 2/28 |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| PB GREBE | 1 | • | • | • | • | 1 | • | • | • | 1 | • | • |
| HORNED GREBE | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| DC CORMORANT | • | • | 1 | • | • | 2 | • | • | • | 11 | 2 | 8 |
| CANADA GOOSE | 44 | 17 | 23 | 19 | 38 | • | 38 | 8 | 120 | 120 | 80 | 200 |
| A.BLACK DUCK | 3 | 32 | 33 | • | 13 | • | • | 6 | 30 | 10 | 20 | 40 |
| MALLARD | 65 | 333 | 40 | 76 | 85 | 2 | 128 | 63 | 40 | 35 | 40 | 20 |
| GADWALL | 4 | 12 | 1 | • | 2 | • | 2 | • | • | • | • | • |
| CANVASBACK | • | 1 | 25 | 1 | • | 1 | • | • | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| REDHEAD | 7 | 33 | 3 | • | • | 6 | 12 | • | 15 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| RING-N. DUCK | • | • | 1 | • | • | • | • | • | 3 | • | • | • |
| SCAUP (sp) | 33 | 1075 | 45 | 148 | 120 | • | 28 | 305 | 85 | 55 | 120 | 80 |
| BLACK SCOTER | • | • | • | 2 | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| SURF SCOTER | • | • | • | 19 | • | • | 8 | • | 1 | • | 5 | 8 |
| WW SCOTER | • | • | • | 5 | • | • | 3 | • | • | • | 3 | 2 |
| C. GOLDENEYE | 53 | 254 | 15 | 154 | 148 | 319 | 180 | 200 | 20 | 20 | 50 | 80 |
| BUFFLEHEAD | 48 | 82 | 22 | 47 | 60 | 39 | 65 | 43 | 75 | 80 | 35 | 100 |
| HOODED MERG. | 4 | 1 | 1 | • | • | • | • | • | 1 | • | • | • |
| COMMON MERG. | 1 | 267 | 120 | 19 | 213 | 491 | 2161 | 1234 | 200 | 450 | 200 | 600 |
| RED-BR. MERG | 44 | 283 | 60 | 14 | 74 | 13 | 47 | 23 | 10 | 25 | 100 | 30 |
| RUDDY DUCK | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | 15 | • | • |

CLF = Cleveland; CLFW Cleveland West; GR = Grand River; LOR = LORAIN; EL =EASTLAKE POWER PLANT

Table 1.

Reports of **Ruffed Grouse** have become infrequent. The 2 seen at Russell Park on 1 Jan. were pleasant additions to the Burton CBC (AJF). Two **Wild Turkeys** were seen there the same day. The lakes, canals, and channels of Akron hosted numerous **American Coots**. A **Killdeer** was noted in Akron on 31 Jan. (EP). Another was in Brecksville on 3 Feb. (DAC).

December gull totals were lower than the norm. This was particularly true for **Bonaparte's Gulls** (TLP). The only sizeable gathering was an irregular flock of 200-300 at the mouth of the Grand River (EB, RH). An immature **Franklin's Gull** was a good find at HBSP on 29 Dec. (AJF). Another was at Eastlake on 5 Jan. (JP). An adult **Little Gull** was frequently seen with a large Bonaparte's Gull flock in Fairport Harbor during Jan.

(RH, m.ob.). Three were seen in Lorain on 10 Jan. (TB). Both adult and 1st winter **Thayer's Gulls** were reported from Lorain and Eastlake (m.ob.). A second winter Thayer's was at HBSP on 18 Jan. (RH). An **Iceland Gull** was at Eastlake on 2 Jan. and 7 Feb. (m. ob.). Another was in Lorain on 19-27 Feb. (TLP, RHL). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Eastlake on 6 Dec. (AJF). Another was seen at Lorain on 16 Jan. - 21 Feb. (ES, SU, m.ob.). A first winter **Glaucous Gull** could sometimes be in the mouth of the Grand River after 27 Dec. (AJF, m.ob.). As many as 5 were in Lorain on 19 Feb. (TLP, NK). Up to 2 were irregularly seen at Eastlake (m.ob.). A first winter bird was found at Eastlake on 15 Feb. by Bob Finkelstein and Perry Peskin. Hannikman spied a first winter bird at E. 72nd St. on 13 Feb. Away from Lake Erie (where they are very

noteworthy), singles were found at Oberlin Reservoir (NK) and Mayfield Heights (KM). **Great Black-backed Gulls** were as numerous as any time in history. Hundreds could be found from Perry to Lorain. **Ring-billed Gulls** continue to be conspicuous at the local shopping malls. A total of 32,879 was tallied on local CBCs.

Christmas Bird Count reports indicated that resident owls are managing well. Two **Eastern Screech-Owls** were found at Shaker Lakes on 19 Dec. (RHL). A **Barred Owl** was oblivious to cross country skiers and hikers at Hudson Springs Park for most of the season (JT). None of the invading owls were seen with regularity.

Resident woodpecker populations were stable and the winter population was augmented by a

SELECTED SPECIES TOTALS FROM LOCAL 1992 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (CBC)

| | BURTON | CLEVELAND | CUY. FALLS | ELYRIA/LORAIN | LAKEWOOD | MENTOR | WELLINGTON |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| GREAT BLUE HERON | 3 | 46 | 45 | 13 | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| CANADA GOOSE | 1116 | 1822 | 2067 | 1193 | 683 | 893 | 293 |
| A.BLACK DUCK | 2 | 113 | 64 | 13 | 159 | 94 | 2 |
| MALLARD | 107 | 667 | 1720 | 393 | 1612 | 465 | 12 |
| SCAUP (SP) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 1075 | 1088 | 1 |
| C.GOLDENEYE | 1 | 111 | 7 | 3 | 254 | 35 | 0 |
| BUFFLEHEAD | 0 | 50 | 12 | 42 | 82 | 99 | 0 |
| SHARP-SHINNED HAWK | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 1 |
| COOPERS HAWK | 8 | 4 | 23 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| RED-TAILED HAWK | 17 | 17 | 84 | 43 | 19 | 21 | 43 |
| AMERICAN KESTREL | 7 | 3 | 18 | 23 | 5 | 6 | 37 |
| MOURNING DOVE | 183 | 125 | 1317 | 268 | 80 | 217 | 110 |
| E.SCREECH-OWL | 3 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| GREAT HORNED OWL | 5 | 0 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| BELTED KINGFISHER | 2 | 12 | 20 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 0 |
| RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER | 15 | 55 | 68 | 22 | 15 | 27 | 13 |
| DOWNY WOODPECKER | 49 | 116 | 217 | 79 | 39 | 61 | 29 |
| HAIRY WOODPECKER | 13 | 26 | 49 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 5 |
| NORTHERN FLICKER | 6 | 11 | 22 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| BLUE JAY | 108 | 296 | 517 | 174 | 53 | 221 | 71 |
| AMERICAN CROW | 547 | 1017 | 1450 | 208 | 165 | 458 | 186 |
| Bc CHICKADEE | 217 | 410 | 968 | 273 | 93 | 322 | 160 |
| TUFTED TITMOUSE | 85 | 83 | 342 | 92 | 71 | 121 | 64 |
| RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH | 42 | 96 | 226 | 54 | 29 | 68 | 42 |
| BROWN CREEPER | 0 | 2 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| CAROLINA WREN | 5 | 23 | 50 | 16 | 8 | 18 | 1 |
| GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET | 4 | 1 | 40 | 4 | 14 | 12 | 1 |
| EASTERN BLUEBIRD | 34 | 30 | 50 | 50 | 0 | 8 | 20 |
| AMERICAN ROBIN | 6 | 89 | 82 | 273 | 90 | 1311 | 19 |
| CEDAR WAXWING | 38 | 59 | 296 | 77 | 4 | 6 | 32 |
| EUROPEAN STARLING | 963 | 4517 | 4214 | 3702 | 315 | 10670 | 2187 |
| YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER | 0 | 16 | 23 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| NORTHERN CARDINAL | 176 | 204 | 592 | 121 | 53 | 223 | 76 |
| A. TREE SPARROW | 90 | 100 | 434 | 91 | 31 | 102 | 21 |
| SONG SPARROW | 20 | 28 | 237 | 25 | 11 | 28 | 23 |
| SWAMP SPARROW | 0 | 4 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| WHITE-THROATED SPARROW | 15 | 59 | 123 | 46 | 6 | 83 | 5 |
| WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| DARK-EYED JUNCO | 178 | 385 | 524 | 334 | 0 | 243 | 141 |
| RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD | 15 | 5 | 32 | 0 | 3 | 186 | 0 |
| COMMON GRACKLE | 0 | 317 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 915 | 1 |
| BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD | 2 | 209 | 62 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 1 |
| PURPLE FINCH | 3 | 0 | 23 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 |
| HOUSE FINCH | 136 | 443 | 1473 | 219 | 200 | 159 | 80 |
| PINE SISKIN | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| AMERICAN GOLDFINCH | 140 | 310 | 835 | 284 | 75 | 113 | 136 |
| EVENING GROSBEAK | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| HOUSE SPARROW | 218 | 527 | 2171 | 791 | 200 | 535 | 503 |
| NUMBER of PARTICIPANTS | 18 | 67 | 84 | 72 | unknown | 48 | 16 |
| TOTAL SPECIES | 59 | 68 | 80 | 30 | 58 | 72 | 52 |

Table 2.

number of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** along the lakeshore. Birds were at Sims Park (RH),

Perkins Beach (WNK, TLN), and Rocky River MP (TLN). At least 2 remained at North Chagrin

through the period (RR). Tom Leiden found a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at the Snow Road

Picnic Area on 27 Dec. One wintered at the Seiberling Naturealm (WS). The count of **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** doubled that of Hairy **Woodpeckers** on most CBCs. **Northern Flickers** and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were as expected.

Horned Larks were numerous in rural Lorain and Medina counties (NK, LR). A leucistic **Black-capped Chickadee** was photographed by John Augustine at his feeder in W. Farmington. It had a very frosty look to it. A few years ago a bird just like this caused quite a stir in Canada. Listers from all over North America spent many dollars to see it in hopes that it was a Siberian Tit. CBC numbers of **Tufted Titmice** were good. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were locally common at Hinckley MP (WS). Another was in Bath on 14 Feb. (NI). **Brown Creepers** were regularly seen in the CVNRA and Sagamore Hills (DAC). A bird was seen at the D. W. Meyer Nature Center 21 Jan. (DB). **Carolina Wrens** seem to have a solid stock of breeding populations throughout the 7 county area. I doubt if there have ever been more. The only mid-winter Winter Wren was in a hemlock ravine at Whitlam Woods Park (Hamden Township) on 21 Jan. (DB). A small flock of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** was foraging on the ground at Hudson Springs Park on 8 Feb. (EE, JT).

Eastern Bluebirds and **American Robins** were widespread in fair numbers in Geauga, Lorain, and Portage



Red-headed Woodpecker (*Meianerpes erythrocephalus*)
by Bruce Glick

Co. (m.ob.). A count of 2000 robins was made as they were feeding on the grassy areas southeast of HBSP on 24 Jan. (LR). A week later the same phenomena was noted again (LR, JVP). On 3 Feb. I made an evening visit to the area and to count them as they went to roost in Mentor Marsh. I stopped counting after the total reached an almost unbelievable tally of 6,000. They were, at the time, still streaming into the marsh. At the Ravenna Arsenal in eastern Portage County, American Robins were so numerous that even the non-birding workers there commented on how many there were. A **Northern Mockingbird** was along West Island Drive on 6 Dec. (AJF). Another was seen off Oberlin Road on 19 Dec. (BR). A single bird was at Gordon Park on 1 Jan. (TLP). **Cedar Waxwings** were in excellent numbers in late January throughout the region (JA, NK, WS). They were common throughout Portage and

Summit Counties the last third of January. This represented an apparent southward push because they all but disappeared by February (LR, WS). A flock of 22 was in Sagamore Hills on 2 Jan. (DAC). As has been the case in recent winters, rural Lorain County provided the lion share of **Northern Shrike** reports. There were at least 5 sightings of what was thought to be at least 3 different birds through the period (BR, NK, KA). Most recently, birds were found by Dane Adams on Jones Road on 23 Jan. and by Dean Thompson west of S.R 83 along Route 2. Even our eastern reports for shrikes had a Lorain Co. connection. Birds were reported from Madison and Leroy Townships by a former Lorainite (JP). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were in expected small numbers.

Sparrows wintered in expected numbers. Some species were more conspicuous or numerous

than in the past few winters and at least one species (**Song Sparrow**) was thought to be in reduced numbers.

Stover found **Rufous-sided Towhees** to be common at Hinckley Metropark. Kopka counted 4 on 20 Dec. in the CVNRA. Few were reported elsewhere other than on CBCs. **American Tree Sparrows** were abundant. **Field Sparrows** were at Streetsboro Bog on 27 Dec. (CH), in the CVNRA on 2 Jan. (RHL), and wintered at Riverview Park (JP). A **Savannah Sparrow** that lingered at Gordon Park until 8 Dec. was noteworthy (EB). **Fox Sparrows** went unreported. A **White-crowned Sparrow** was a good find at Firestone Metropark on 27 Dec. (EP). **Dark-eyed Juncos** were very numerous. **Lapland Longspurs** were seen by a lucky few at Burke Airport on 16 Jan. (SU) and on 6 Feb. (BDL). **Snow Buntings** were more widespread in small numbers. The only sizeable (75) flock mentioned was, oddly enough, in Cuyahoga Falls on 15 Feb. (BO).

Blackbirds wintered in large numbers in the eastern lakefront suburbs. Increased diligence in the sector southwest of Akron has shown that many icterids are concentrated there as well. The many **Brown-headed Cowbirds** wintering in the region is reason for concern. More unique was the ability of several **Common Grackles** to winter in the Kent area. Vanderpoel and Pierce found several **Rusty Blackbirds** wintering at Fire-



Sooty-backed Gull (*Larus schistirogus*) Lorain, Ohio - 8 February 1993
by John V. Pogacnik

stone MP. This species has wintered at this location in the past.

Once again, invading finches were in short supply this winter. Flocks of Crossbills and grosbeaks have been absent from the region for a decade. Small flocks of **Purple Finches** were noted at Hinckley MP on 14 Feb. (TLN), at D. W. Meyer Nature Center on 24 Feb. (DB), and on 27 Feb. at North Chagrin (KM) A pure white **House Finch** was an infrequent visitor to the feeder of Perry Johnson in Elyria after 22 Dec. Only Bacik and Pogacnik reported seeing **Common Redpolls**. Few **Pine Siskins** spent the winter locally. Unlike siskins and redpolls, **American Goldfinches** were very common this winter. A high count of 150 was made in the CVNRA on 2 Jan. (RHL). Once again, **Evening Grosbeaks** preferred wintering in other regions of the country. No reports were received from the region.

NOTEWORTHY REPORTS

Brant - An amazing total of 17 was tallied on 19 Dec. during the Elyria/Lorain CBC (Gerrone, Pogacnik, Smallwood).

Harlequin Duck - The only report noted this winter was of an immature or female off North Perry on 26 Dec. (Pogacnik).

Barrow's Goldeneye - A sharp-eyed Craig Holt was able to single out a drake of this species among 100s of Common Goldeneyes at the Avon Lake Power Plant on 28 Feb. Many saw it later. This was the fourth report in the last decade.

Merlin - As has become the expected rather than the unexpected, birds were seen on the east side on several

occasions. A bird was in North Perry on 10 Dec. and one in Eastlake on 5 Jan. (Pogacnik). One was seen perched at the E. 55th St. Marina on 13 Dec. (Holt). A female was near the Lost Nation Airport on 23 Jan. (Fjeldstad). A bird was seen as it flew along I-90 near Bratenahl on 28 Feb. (Rosche).

Peregrine Falcon - A bird was seen in transit from the Cleveland Stadium area toward downtown Cleveland on 23 Jan. On 7 Feb. a single bird was at Burke Airport and was thought to be different than the birds in the downtown area (Klamm).

Purple Sandpiper - A bird was spotted by Ervin Miller and friends as it hopped about on the breakwall north of E. 55th St. Even though it was at a great distance, excellent views were obtained through a Questar spotting scope (m.ob.). A bird was on the breakwall at Headlands Beach SP on 23 Jan. (Fjeldstad).

Red Phalarope - Tom Bartlett saw one as it flew up the slip at Eastlake on 1 Jan.

California Gull - An adult bird was well described from Fairport Harbor on 7 Dec. (Pogacnik). Unfortunately, others who sought this elusive gull were unable to locate it anywhere in the region.

Slaty-backed Gull - A bird was found at Eastlake on 28 Dec. and was seen there on 29 Dec. and 7 Feb. (Peterjohn, Gustafson, m.ob.). It was photographed in Lorain on 8 Feb. (Pogacnik).

Black-legged Kittiwake - An immature was seen at Lorain 5 Dec. and 5 Jan. (Pogacnik). Another was seen at Headlands Beach SP and Fairport Harbor on several dates in early Feb. (Bacik, Pogacnik).

Barn Owl - A bird was flushed at Gordon Park on the East Side CBC on 16 Dec. (Rosche, Bacik, Hannikman). Attesting to the silent flight of the species, it flew within 15-20 feet of 2 other observers who were facing perpendicular to it and they failed to see it.

Snowy Owl - At least one bird wintered at Burke Airport (Klamm, LePage, Lozano, m.ob.). A bird was seen by a single observer in Fairport Harbor from 7 Dec. - 27 Dec. (Pogacnik).

Long-eared Owl - An injured bird was found in January in Eastlake and sent to rehab (*fide* Pogacnik). Tim Morgan found up to 5 birds roosting in the conifers at Caley Wildlife Metropark in Lorain County. Kraps and many others saw them into March. A bird was in Thompson on 27 Feb. (Pogacnik).

Short-eared Owl - Birds were seen near Girdled Road Metropark in early Dec. (Pogacnik). Five were seen over Wadsworth on the evening of 5 Feb. (Wert).

Northern Saw-whet Owl - A bird may have wintered in at River Road Park (Pogacnik).

Eastern Phoebe - The first winter report of this species in

my tenure as editor was from Eastlake on 30 Dec. (Harlan). This sighting was particularly interesting in that it was of 2 birds, one of which was singing.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - A extremely tardy individual was at Gordon Park on 16 Dec. (LePage). This is the second December in a row to have had this species reported.

Hermit Thrush - A bird remained at Seiberling Naturealm through February (Stover). A bird was in the company of White-throated Sparrows on Oak Hill Road on 22 Feb. (Rosche).

Gray Catbird - A bird was reported from Leroy Township on 9 Jan. (Pogacnik).

Ovenbird - Woody Stover and Jerry Ake were treated to a prolonged view of a bird as it fed on the parking lot at the Seiberling Naturealm on 6 Dec.

Green-tailed Towhee - A bird in outstanding plumage for the time of year, appeared at the feeder of Wendy and Howard Akin in Amherst Township on 10 Jan.

Chipping Sparrow - An immature bird was reported from Shaker Lakes on 16 Dec. (Harlan). A bird was at Elmwood Cemetery in Lorain on 19 Dec. (Pogacnik)

Yellow-headed Blackbird - A bird was sighted in Eastlake on 8 Feb. (Pogacnik). Inez Beck noticed a female feeding with cowbirds at her feeder in Wadsworth on 13 Feb.

FIELD NOTES

A tourist attraction in Amherst Township

by Wendy L. Akin

On Sunday, January 10, 1993, I woke up to find the ground covered with snow. After letting my dogs out and filling my bird feeders I returned to fix breakfast for the family. At 10 A.M. I looked out of the kitchen window and there was a bird in a tree that I had never seen before. I reached for my binoculars and a note pad to make a quick sketch. I marked down all of the identifying features. These were; copper cap, white and black striping by the eye, white patch on the throat, buff color under the tail, and olive coloring on the wings. My son came over to inquire about his breakfast and I told him that his scrambled eggs may burn, but mom was going to watch this bird. The bird hopped down onto our sandstone feeder where it scratched the seed and fed. After a short time it flew off and the eggs were saved. I was excited and told my husband about this "new" bird I had seen. He asked me if I knew what it was. I said no, but it scratches like a towhee.

Leafing through my Peterson's A Field Guide to Eastern Birds, I came upon our Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). Next to it was a picture of the head and shoulder of a Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*). I knew right away that this was my bird. I got my Field Guide to Western Birds



Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) Amherst Township 10 January 1993
by Howard Akin

(Peterson) for further information. The field guide told me that this bird should be in Arizona, Mexico, or New Mexico. When I looked up again, it was back. My husband came over for a look and returned to his Sunday paper. I was so excited I had to tell someone who would be excited with me, so I called my friend Dean Thompson. She told me she knew a couple of people to call, but that it would mean a lot of people coming over to my house once the word got out. Not comprehending the reality of her words, I told her to go ahead and make the calls.

It wasn't long before the phone started ringing and I was asked for permission to come view the bird. Despite a steady snowfall, about 20 people made it out to see the bird that first day. Dean was the first to arrive, the rest came from all over Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties. The towhee

came to feed at 20 minute intervals and all but the last arrivals got to see it. On Monday when I came home from work about 4:30 P.M., the street was lined with cars. I wondered what was going on. As I got closer to the house, I saw my driveway also was filled. What was going on was one out-of-place Green-tailed Towhee.

During the entire stay of the bird, all of the birders (nearly 400) have been very nice. They came from all over the state plus Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Indiana. There was even a couple from England who were "quite thrilled" when they got to see the towhee. Almost every weekend people have come out to sit in our driveway and wait for the towhee to show up. It's been quite an experience and most have been able to see the bird. Some people have come back for several visits.

As of the middle of March my towhee friend is still around and is seen almost daily. Some mornings it will be waiting in the forsythia bush for me to put out fresh seed. During our "blizzard" on March 13 it was again back at the feeder, where I had first seen it, scratching away at the feed.

A SLATY-BACKED GULL VISITS EASTLAKE

Bruce G. Peterjohn and
Mary E. Gustafson

On 28 December 1992, we discovered a Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) at the hot water outlet of the power plant on Lake Erie at Eastlake, Lake County, Ohio. It was initially observed about 3:45 PM and was watched until dark. It was observed at the same location on the following day, but could not be relocated afterwards. Both days were cloudy with heavy rain the afternoon of the second day. The bird was viewed at distances of 300-600 feet through a 48-64x scope.

Its overall size was slightly larger than a male Herring Gull, but smaller than a Great Black-backed Gull. As compared with a male Herring Gull, the Slaty-backed Gull had a noticeably larger head with a more sloping forehead and a flatter crown: this head shape was unique, but the head size approached a Great Black-backed Gull. The chest was also broader and heavier than a male Herring Gull, giving the bird a "front-heavy" appearance that was different from the other species of gulls present. The bill appeared to be

longer and slightly thicker than a male Herring Gull and lacked a distinctly bulbous tip. The gonydeal angle was relatively slight, creating a straighter appearing bill than the Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls. The bill was not as heavy as either sex of Great Black-backed Gulls. The primaries only extended marginally beyond the tail at rest, a very short primary extension compared to Herring Gull. In flight, the Slaty-backed Gull had more rounded wings than Herring Gulls.

The Slaty-backed Gull was in adult plumage except for two signs of immaturity: a dark subterminal band was present on the bill and a limited amount of black present near the tips of several central retrices. While these characteristics could indicate the bird was in its fourth year, other species of large gulls are known to retain these characteristics after their fourth winter. As a result of this variability in the characteristics of large gulls and the limited information published on Slaty-backed Gull, we are reluctant to positively age this individual.

The following description is derived from our combined field notes taken during the observation. The mantle color was definitely intermediate between Herring and Great Black-backed gulls, but no other species with intermediate mantle color were present for comparison. Mantle color varies somewhat depending on lighting conditions, from slightly darker than a Herring Gull to nearly as dark as a Great Black-backed Gull. The mantle appeared darker in flight

than when the bird was sitting. Without similar species in direct comparison, we cannot safely describe a precise shade of gray for the mantle color of this individual. Goetz *et al.* (1986) claim that Slaty-backed Gulls have slightly darker mantles than *graelisii*, Lesser Black-backed Gulls. But in fact, a recent comparison of skins at the United States Museum of Natural History indicates that there is greater variation in Slaty-backed Gull mantle color than indicated in the literature. Some Slaty-backed Gulls have mantles that are slightly paler than a *graelisii* Lesser Black-backed Gull, while others are slightly darker (D. Czaplak, pers. comm.). We believe the Eastlake individual to be of the paler mantled form of Slaty-backed Gull.

At rest, the mantle had broad white tertial crescents and the primary tips were darker than the mantle. The entire head and neck were streaked with brown, heaviest around the eye forming a dark patch on the sides of the face. This brown streaking extended onto the sides of the breast, while streaking of Herring Gulls was restricted to the head and neck. The remainder of the underparts were white. The bill was yellow with a dark subterminal band and a red spot on the mandible. The legs were pink and the iris was yellow, clearly visible within the heavy streaking on the face.

In flight, the black primary tips were reduced as compared to a Herring Gull. The underwing had white coverts and grayish

remiges, slightly darker on the outer primaries but not black as found on Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls. The amount and position of white on the outer Primaries was difficult to see from above since most of the white mirrors are on the inner webs of the feathers. These inner webs are frequently obscured by the overlying primaries, although a large white mirror was clearly visible on P10. From below, there was a large white mirror on P 10, and smaller subapical mirrors in P5-7, forming a small white "string of pearls" separating the black wing tip from the dark gray mantle.

Identification of extralimital large gulls can be challenging, especially Slaty-backed Gulls which are inadequately described in the literature. This individual was obviously not a Herring or Great Black-backed Gull based on mantle color and other characteristics. California and Lesser Black backed Gulls would be eliminated by their smaller size (they would never be larger than a male Herring Gull), leg color, and other characteristics. Of the dark-mantled gulls with pink legs, Western Gull was eliminated by the wingtip pattern (the subapical mirrors on P5-7) and the heavy brown streaking on the head and neck. Western Gulls have very limited head streaking in winter and typically appear white-headed at a distance. Yellow-footed Gull and the yellow-legged races (species?) of Herring Gull would be eliminated by leg color, the extensive head streaking, and the primary tip pattern. The dark

mantled races of Herring Gull would also be eliminated by the primary tip pattern.

Several hybrids could also be confused with a Slaty-backed Gull. A Herring X Great Black-backed Gull hybrid could have a similar mantle color, but would lack the heavy streaking on the head and neck: they typically have light streaking, slightly more extensive than a Great Black-backed Gull but not nearly as extensive as on this individual. The underwing pattern is also very different, with black on the outer primaries and lacking the subapical mirrors on P5-7. The reduced black primary tips on the upper primaries would also not be expected on these hybrids. Some Western X Glaucous-winged Gull hybrids can be fairly similar to a Slaty-backed Gull, but would lack the subapical mirrors and would show black underwing tips. These hybrids would also have less streaking on the head and neck and a thicker bill with a heavier gonydeal angle than a Slaty-backed. Streaking on the sides of the upper breast is typical of a Slaty-backed Gull but would not be expected on either of these hybrids.

The described characteristics are consistent with a Slaty-backed Gull and eliminate all similar species. This sighting provides the first record of Slaty-backed Gull from Ohio. There are 3-4 previous records from the interior of North America prior to 1992, plus an apparent sighting from the Niagara Falls area of Ontario during November-December

1992. As observers become more confident in the identification of Slaty-backed Gull, its vagrancy status in North American may be expected to change.

The Slaty-backed Gull was not observed along the lakefront again until 7 February 1993 when Larry Rosche and Ray Hannikman rediscovered it at the Eastlake Power Plant. This individual was also observed in Lorain on 8 February, when a series of photographs were obtained by John Pogacnik. These photos show that the primary coverts were mostly dark, another indication of immaturity on this individual. These dark coverts, in addition to the black mark on the bill and dark markings on the central rectrices, indicate this individual was either in advanced third-winter or delayed fourth-winter plumage. However, the bird was not an adult. The photos also show all of the diagnostic characteristics of this species, including the wing-tip pattern from above and below.

As shown in the photos, the mantle color of this individual falls well within the range of variability exhibited by Slaty-backed Gull specimens in the U. S. National Museum. This variability has not been previously described in the literature, but will be discussed along with other field characteristics of this species in an article that will be published elsewhere.

*Goetz, R. E., W. M. Rudden, and P. B. Snetsinger. 1986. Slaty-backed Gull winters on the Mississippi River. *American Birds* 40:207-216.

Notice: All reports to The Cleveland Bird Calendar are archived in the library of The Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Rare Bird Hotline: (216) 321- 7245 The hotline is sponsored by the Kirtland Bird Club. In cases of extreme rarities (i.e. Western Grebe, Mew Gull, Varied Thrush, Harris Sparrow, etc.) please contact the editors as soon as possible.

Invitation: The Kirtland Bird Club meets the first Wednesday of the month except July and August at 7:45 P.M. in The Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Field Study: On the first Sunday of each month a census is conducted at Headlands Beach State Park. The purpose is to study the long term occurrence patterns of migrant and resident birds of the Grand River and Fairport Harbor section of the region. For more information call Larry Rosche at 678- 9408 or Ray Hannikman at 261- 9552.

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Field reports, artwork, papers, and photographs should be directed to Larry Rosche, 7473 Sylvan Drive, Kent, Ohio 44240.