

HOW TO SEE A BLUE GROSBEAK IN OHIO

Tom Bartlett

Unless you're one of the lucky few northern or central Ohio birders to have seen this accidental spring migrant (in those Ohio areas), you have to go south to the Ohio River to find this now uncommon to rare annual nester.

First, however, learn the song, "a series of rich rising and falling warbles", which sounds finch-like to me. Normally, you will locate the bird first by its song.

Now, prepare to travel to Adams County, Ohio. I would suggest you do it in June when migrating birding slows and this species is singing on territory. The last half of May could, however, give you better views of some other species you may want such as Wild turkey, Ruffed grouse, Summer tanager, and Chuck-will's-widow, most of which can still be located, at least by sound, in June.

The Blue grosbeak is a rare summer nester in the Ohio counties bordering the Ohio River east to Meigs County and now uncommon in Adams County where it has been exceptionally reliable the last three years. Adams County has apparently been the recipient of the continuing northward expansion of this species. From 1985 through 1987, I observed 4-5 pairs and/or singing males. This summer (1988), I found one singing male and other males and females have been seen.

To find Blue grosbeaks in Adams County, go to West Union, Ohio. Then travel east on Ohio Route 125 to Ohio Route 348. Turn north on 348 and drive until 348 crosses Ohio Brush Creek. Immediately after crossing the creek, turn south on Township Road 148. Travel this dead end road or walk it listening and watching for the bird. It is on this road that I have had my best luck, finding four singing males in one mile in 1987, and one (I did not survey the entire road) in 1988.

The second best location for me is Waggoner-Riffle Road nearby in Adams County. If you are on T148 above, go back to Ohio 125. Travel east to the next intersection. This is Waggoner-Riffle Road. Head south on this road for about one and one-half miles until you encounter a large pasture on the east side of the road. This is the first pasture on this side of the road since Route 125. If you are at the correct pasture, you should be able to look northeast and see Buzzardroost Rock, across the pasture, up on the side of the mountain. This pasture should be searched from the road for the birds. Both male and female have been seen here several times in 1988.

If you are still unsuccessful, travel the length of Waggoner-Riffle Road searching for the bird. Keep in mind it is fond of pastures with some brush, a stream, and bushy roadsides. Waggoner-Riffle Road dead ends at the Rieveschl Preserve gate of the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and the Nature Conservancy. This road also has Yellow-breasted chat, White-eyed vireo, Northern bobwhite, Carolina wren and chickadee, Wild turkey, Grasshopper sparrow, Mockingbird, Prairie warbler, Whip-poor-will, and Chuck-will's-widow (heard at night).

A third location to check is County Road 2. Start in West Union and go south on Ohio Route 41 to Bentonville, Ohio. Here, drive County Road 2 south. Less than two miles of driving on this road will produce the habitat described above. Search this area. If you have driven more than two miles on this road, you have gone too far. Also look for Lark sparrow along this road. It has been seen here. Adams County is the second best place in the state (it is easiest to find at Oak Openings Park, Lucas County) to find this rare sparrow.

While in Adams County, look for Henslow's sparrow, Loggerhead shrike, Summer tanager, Orchard oriole, Pine warbler, and Black vulture. Black vulture nested this year and last at Abner Hollow Nature Preserve (held by the Nature Conservancy and the Cincinnati Natural History Museum) in the county.

But now I learn that this year is a bonus one for Blue grosbeaks. You can go to the Oak Openings of Lucas County, 150 yards south of Ohio Route 64 on Manore Road and from Manore Road observe a nesting pair of Blue grosbeaks in a large field on the west side of the road (details on this first northern Ohio nesting to be published later).

LOCATION CROSS REFERENCE

Alum Creek Res.	Delaware	Medusa Marsh	Erie
Aullwood Nature Ctr.	Montgomery	Mentor Headlands SP	Lake
Barberton	Portage	Metzger Marsh	Lucas
Beavercreek Res.	Seneca	Milan WA	Erie
Bedford Res.	Cuyahoga	Mill Creek Pk.	Mahoning
Big Island WA	Marion	Mohican SF	Ashland
Bluffton	Allen	Mosquito Creek	Trumbull
Bolton Field	Franklin	Northfield	Cuyahoga
Bresler Res.	Allen	Oak Openings Park	Lucas
Buck Creek SP	Clark	Oberlin Res.	Lorain
Caesar's Creek	Montgomery	O'Shaughnessy Res.	Franklin
Canfield	Mahoning	Ottawa NWR	Ottawa/Lucas
Cedar Point NWR	Lucas	Oxbow	Hamilton
CJ Brown Res.	Clark	Parma	Cuyahoga
Clark Lake	Clark	Pickerington Ponds	Franklin
Clear Creek	Fairfield	Pleasant Hill Res.	Richland/Ashland
Crane Creek SP	Lucas	Sandusky	Erie
Cuyahoga Valley NRA	Cuyahoga/Summit	Sandusky Bay	Erie/Ottawa/Sandusky
Darby Marsh	Ottawa	Sharon Woods MP	Franklin
Delaware Res.	Delaware	Sheldon's Marsh	Erie
Delaware SWA	Delaware	Shreve	Wayne
Dillon SP	Muskingum	Sims Park	Cuyahoga
Donald Grey Gardens	Cuyahoga	Spencer SWA	Medina
East Fork SP	Clermont	Spring Valley SWA	Greene
East Harbor SP	Erie	Springville Marsh	Seneca
Edgewater Park	Cuyahoga	Sugarcreek Reserve	Greene
Englewood Reserve	Montgomery	Summit Lake	Summit
Euclid	Cuyahoga	Tar Hollow	Ross
Findlay Res.	Hancock	Turtle Creek	Ottawa
Firestone Metropark	Summit	Union	Montgomery
Fort Ancient	Warren	Winton Woods	Hamilton
Funk	Wayne	Wolf Creek WA	Morgan
Germantown Reserve	Montgomery	Woodlawn Cemetery	Lucas
Gilmore Ponds	Butler	Killbuck SWA	Wayne
Glen Helen SNP	Greene	Killdeer Plains	Wyandot
Gordon Park	Cuyahoga	Knox Lake	Knox
Greenlawn Cemetery	Franklin	Lake Isaac	Cuyahoga
Hebron NFH	Licking	Laurelville	Pickaway
Hinckley Lake	Medina	Little Portage SWA	Ottawa
Hoover Res.	Delaware	Lunken Airport	Hamilton
Hopkins Airport	Cuyahoga	Mad River	Clark
Hueston Woods SP	Preble	Magee Marsh	Ottawa
Huffman Prairie		Marietta	Washington
Huntington Beach	Cuyahoga	Maumee Bay SP	Lucas
Huron	Erie	Maumee River Rapids	Lucas/Wood
Irwin Prairie	Lucas	Maumee State Forest	Fulton/Henry/Lucas
John Bryan SP	Greene		