

This, then, was the setting for what I consider as the Refuge's greatest day: August 1, 1993. It was hot, as expected. A west wind blew at 5-10 m.p.h., and the sky was mostly cloudy but the day was dry. Nine participants assembled at 8:00 a.m. at the headquarters parking lot. Since I had taken the so-called "death march" in July (Common Moorhen, Snowy Egret, et al.), it was my turn to go with the six others who chose the public (northwesterly) Blue Heron Trail route. Chris Crofts (Bob's nephew) and one other birder (obviously unaware of the consequences) proceeded east into No Man's Land.

At about 10:30 a.m., our Blue Heron Trail group emerged from the second Ottawa woods and turned north towards the old Bald Eagle nest site. As we walked along this dike, someone noticed a small group of mixed shorebirds including several Stilt Sandpipers and Short-billed Dowitchers not far from the edge of the dike. While looking at these birds, eventually our eyes simultaneously landed on a shorebird that was nearly the size of a Stilt Sandpiper, but had a gently decurved bill and bright cinnamon red coloration on the breast, neck, head, and underparts similar to a Red Knot. And yet, it wasn't a Red Knot. It took a few minutes for this breeding-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper to sink in. We probably wouldn't have been so astounded, really dumbfounded, if we had known the bird was there and were looking for it as you might look for a stake-out. We spent the next hour observing the bird from all angles, and really just enjoyed the moment. We also knew that this was a bird with a lot of paper connected to it (documentation). Eventually, everyone's interest was satiated and we moved on, leaving the bird behind. We arrived at the parking lot about an hour later than usual, trying to be cool and hide the silly grins on our faces as we realized that we had the bird that would certainly top the other group. However, Chris, who had beaten us back to the parking lot, seemed interested in our find, yet was more agitated by what his group had found: a Snowy Plover! Can you imagine that—a Curlew Sandpiper matched and perhaps topped by a Snowy Plover? Well, we really didn't take our letdown that seriously, but instead all rushed to the "goose pens" area of Magee Marsh WA (adjacent to the Refuge) where Chris had found the bird early in the morning and observed it again around noon at the conclusion of his walk.

I still marvel at Chris' identification feat. Virtually alone, without a scope and without having seen the species before, he noticed a whiter than usual small shorebird on a marsh flat. He used his field guide and binoculars and patient powers of observation to meticulously check each field mark on the bird for over an hour until he was reasonably sure that the bird was a Snowy Plover and not a Piping Plover. I'm not sure that I would have even considered the possibility of a Snowy Plover. We rushed to the area and quickly refound the bird. What a truly remarkable day—perhaps you can now see why I call it "Ottawa's Greatest Day".

Ed Pierce
520 Swartz Rd.
Akron, OH 44319

The 1993 Fall Hawk Flight in Northwest Ohio by Tom Kemp and Matt Anderson

During the fall of 1993, we again surveyed hawks migrating over the Oak Openings (Lucas Co.) in northwest Ohio. Observations began on September 1 and concluded on November 30. A total of 142 hours was spent looking for hawks. Raptors were seen on 24 days in September, every day in October, and 21 days in November. Largest movements each month occurred on September 18, October 13, and November 20.

Every species of diurnal raptor regularly occurring in northern Ohio was seen this fall. Rarest birds found were three Northern Goshawks and one Golden Eagle. The seasonal total of hawks was 4886, up more than 1000 birds from 1992. This increase was directly related to hours of observation; 52 more hours were logged in 1993 than in 1992. Birds seen per hour fell from 41.4 in 1992 to 34.5 in 1993.

Exceptional counts included 2010 Turkey Vultures (884 in 1992), 31 Ospreys (4 in 1992), and 412 Sharp-shinned Hawks (210 in 1992). Tardy birds included an Osprey on November 11 and a Turkey Vulture on November 25. October 23 produced the most species, with ten. With the exception of Broad-winged Hawk, Golden Eagle and Merlin, all species were seen in greater numbers in 1993 when compared to 1992. See the Table for a complete listing.

Although we have come to expect hawks on winds from virtually any direction, some days which to us look ideal for migration produce few or no birds. We still have a lot to learn about what is triggering these movements. Clearly, the birds know a great deal more about this than we do. We do think, however, that wind direction may alter the route the hawks take through the Toledo area. This may explain why some of our better days are those with east winds. Unfortunately, it fails to explain why southwest winds also produce good numbers of raptors over western Lucas County. Perhaps simply the sheer number of birds funnelled around western Lake Erie produce a "can't miss" situation.

Whatever the cause, the numbers of hawks seen over western Lucas County in the fall rival the fabled spring counts along Lake Erie's southern shore, despite far fewer hours of observation. It may be time to take a sabbatical and really get serious about counting these birds!

Tom Kemp
7021 Manore Rd.
Whitehouse, OH 43571

Matt Anderson
12005 Oak River Rd.
Whitehouse, OH 43571

1993 Lark Sparrow Observations in the Oak Openings Area
by Michelle T. Grigore

As part of an in-depth project entitled "Avian Habitat Preferences and Implications for Management of the Oak Openings' Savanna, Prairie and Dune Communities", I was able to closely observe the habits of nesting Lark Sparrows in the Oak Openings area (Lucas Co.) during the summer of 1993. While the overall project involved constant effort mist netting, point counts and vegetation surveys, no mist netting was attempted in areas where the endangered Lark Sparrow was known to occur. This was due to the concern that even the minimal disturbance of constant effort netting might endanger the nesting success of this rare species. In those areas where Lark Sparrows were known to be present, life history observations were made and limited banding of nestlings occurred.

Two sites were found to harbor Lark Sparrows: 1) the fields and sand dune areas along Girdham Road near Reed Road in Oak Openings Preserve Metropark (managed by Metroparks of the Toledo Area) and 2) Kitty Todd Preserve (Lucas Co.), managed by the Ohio Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The Girdham Road site consisted of two large fields separated by a north/south (Girdham) road. North and east of these fields, along Girdham Road, was the sand dune area. This latter area has been a reliable nesting site for a pair of Lark Sparrows for many years. Kitty Todd Preserve was included in the study because a pair of Lark Sparrows was observed there in April 1993. At Kitty Todd, a large "L-shaped" field and another smaller field were chosen for the study due to the presence of sand blow-outs, a feature which was also present at Oak Openings Preserve sites where the Lark Sparrow has had a history of nesting.

Five pairs of Lark Sparrows were observed during the 1993 breeding season: three pairs at Oak Openings Preserve and two at Kitty Todd Preserve. All were successful in fledging young in 1993 and three nests were found. Vegetation was surveyed around the nests after fledging to study habitat usage. A brief summary of the observations follows.

Precopulatory behavior was observed at Oak Openings Preserve Metropark by one pair of Lark Sparrows at Girdham and Reed Roads on May 9 and by one pair at the sand dunes on May 11. A third Lark Sparrow was seen at Girdham and Reed at this time, and the three birds spent much time chasing each other, using the entire field for this activity.

When Kitty Todd Preserve was surveyed on May 29, four Lark Sparrow fledglings still too young to fly were observed with their parents in the larger field. It was later estimated that these birds were 7 to 8 days old. On June 9 the second pair of Lark Sparrows at Kitty Todd were observed feeding young at their nest. By June 15 these young had fledged but were still on the ground in dense brush and grass.

1993 Oak Openings
Fall Raptor Watch

(T Kemp / M Anderson)

	SUMMARY			TOTAL	MAXIMUM COUNTS			MAXIMUM COUNTS		
	SEP	OCT	NOV		#	DATE	WIND	#	DATE	WIND
TURKEY VULTURE	125	1850	35	2010	450	10/13	ne/e	450	10/13/93	ne/e
OSPREY	14	16	1	31	4	10/2	rw	4	10/2/93	rw
BALD EAGLE	2	2	1	5	1	var		2	11/2/91	sw
NORTHERN HARRIER	1	6	6	13	2	10/23	sw	2	10/23/93	sw
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	141	242	29	412	57	10/23	sw	60	10/4/92	ø
COOPER'S HAWK	11	27	8	46	6	10/23	sw	6	10/23/93	sw
NORTHERN GOSHAWK	0	1	2	3	1	var		1	var 1993	
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	10	43	29	82	22	10/23	sw	33	10/31/92	ø/rø
BROAD-WINGED HAWK	1802	9	0	1811	1085	9/18	rw	1590	9/12/92	ø/sw
RED-TAILED HAWK	15	160	159	334	33	11/20	w	74	10/31/92	ø/rø
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	0	0	3	3	2	11/20	w	2	11/20/93	w
GOLDEN EAGLE	0	0	1	1	1	11/20	w	2	11/2/91	sw
AMERICAN KESTREL	6	26	0	32	14	10/2	rw	14	10/2/93	rw
MERLIN	0	3	0	3	1	var		1	var	
PEREGRINE FALCON	2	2	0	4	2	9/28	w	2	9/28/93	w
HAWK (SP?)	4	3	2	9						
ACCIPITER (SP?)	1	6	3	10						
BUTEO (SP?)	16	33	20	69						
EAGLE (SP?)	0	1	3	4						
SMALL FALCON (SP?)	2	1	1	4						
TOTAL	2152	2431	303	4886						
HOURS (EST)	38.8	69.8	33.3	141.8						
BIRDS/HOUR	55.5	34.9	9.1	34.5						