

## Book Review: Birds of the Oxbow by Jay Stenger

Birds of the Oxbow (An account of the birds near the mouth of the Great Miami River) by David Styer, illustrated by William Zimmerman. Printed by the C.J. Krehbiel Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45227. 230 pp., cost \$12.95 plus postage and handling.

Just west of Cincinnati and straddling the Ohio and Indiana border, the Great Miami River meets the Ohio River. This area was always, and remains today, an important staging area for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and other waterbirds. It is this area that is the subject of this eagerly awaited book.

As a detailed account of the occurrences and relative abundance of birds using a small regional area including both Indiana and Ohio, all birders and naturalists in the Tri-State area (Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky) will find the extensive data in this book useful and interesting. This project, long in the works, began in May of 1971 when the author first visited the Oxbow. Over the ensuing 20+ years he has kept detailed and meticulous records of all of his own sightings, and has included these sightings in his book. In addition, he pursued and accepted many other reliable records from numerous contributors, and has included these records as well. Uncountable hours were also spent researching museum specimens and collecting historical data from many other sources. These efforts have culminated in this comprehensive user-friendly book, which includes accounts of 276 species of birds seen in the Oxbow area, all but six having been reported there since 1970.

The book falls into two distinct sections-- the Introduction and the Species Accounts. In the Introduction, Styer describes the geography, geology, vegetation and ornithological history of the Oxbow, and provides specific information on waterfowl and shorebird usage of the area. This section also instructs the reader towards an understanding of the graphs found in the Species Accounts.

The Species Accounts make up the second section and main portion of the book. The accounts can generally be broken into three parts. The first part consists of written descriptions concerning the occurrences and relative abundance of each species. Where enough data has been collected, Styer may draw conclusions. In some cases of particularly rare birds, or where not enough data has been collected, the accounts are limited to the raw data. The accounts are thoroughly enjoyable to read and written in such a style that the author's genuine personality and love of his subject radiates through the scientific information. The accounts are unbiased, fair and not exaggerated. Where information is lacking or conclusions are unable to be drawn, it is so stated.

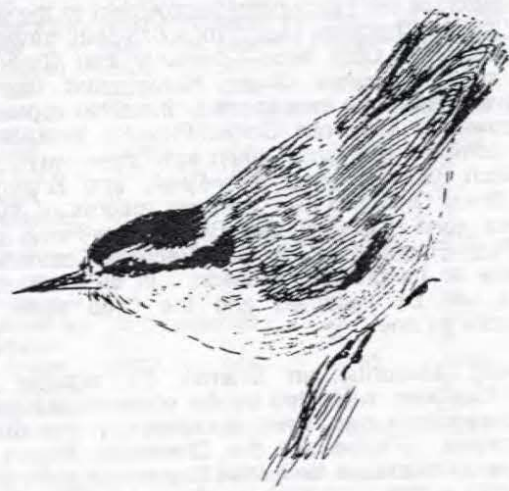
While one of Styer's passions is obviously birds, another is mathematics. As a doctor of mathematics and head of the University of Cincinnati's Math Department, Styer's expertise has enabled him to create a unique system of graphs which form the second portion of the Accounts. At a glance, each graph allows the reader to determine the date spans for the occurrence of each species and also depicts roughly how many individuals were present during those occurrences. Graphs were not made for species represented by only a few records.

The third portion of the Accounts section details the earliest and latest seasonal sightings as well as the maximum numbers for each regularly recorded species. It has been brought to my attention that this portion has a typographical error. Any listings for 4/4/83 by A. Knue is incorrect. The date should actually be 5/4/83. Unfortunately, this entry is found under a number of species, and often this date would represent earliest state records. Some species affected include Cattle Egret, Spotted Sandpiper, Tennessee, Yellow, Blackburnian, Blackpoll and Cerulean Warblers. The author has informed me that all sales of the book now include an errata sheet pointing out this particular error.

Many of the pages throughout the book are enhanced by sketches from well-known wildlife artist William Zimmerman. They add a pleasant touch as one turns the pages.

The fact that Birds of the Oxbow includes Indiana and Ohio records should not deter anyone who is "one-state oriented". While birders concern themselves with political boundaries, birds do not. It is safe to say that many of the birds passing through the Oxbow also pass through the remainder of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky on their migratory journeys. The data reflected in this book, while representative of a specific area in southwestern Ohio and southeastern Indiana, parallels quite well compared to other published material concerning the distribution of birds in the Tri-State area. David Styer's diligent efforts in collecting and producing this mass of information in an enjoyable, easy to use book is to be applauded. That this effort was a labor of love is reflected throughout its pages. Birds of the Oxbow can be ordered from Oxbow, Inc., P.O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, OH 45243, or from the Hamilton County Park District, The Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, The Cincinnati Nature Center or from ABA Sales.

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Red-breasted Nuthatch.

By Carole Jonson Babyak.