

CVNRA/Ira Road Nesting Study
by Mary Anne Romito

Over the past few years a group of us (Guy and Mary Kay Newton, Marian and Howard Zehnder, Ian Adams, Nancy Howell, Mary Lou Hura and myself) have birded the Ira Road beaver marsh area of the lower Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (Summit County). The towpath trail and boardwalk along the old Ohio & Erie Canal provides good access to the area. The habitats covered include swampy woodland, marshy wetland, small islands in the wetlands, second-growth fields and tall trees lining the canal. East of the canal and towpath, a large deciduous woodland borders the winding Cuyahoga River. During the summer of 1996 we decided to keep track of the nests we found in this area. Below is a complete list of the nests we discovered.

June 3:

- N. Flicker-- nest found in a tall dead tree. The nest hole was on the east side of the trunk approximately 8-10 feet from the top of the tree.
- E. Kingbird-- nest in a sycamore 150 feet up, south and west of the boardwalk.
- Tree Swallow-- nest 1.5 feet from the top of a 12 foot tall dead snag. Nest hole was on the north side. Snag was east of the boardwalk about 30 feet from the north end of the boardwalk.
- N. Rough-winged Swallow-- nest in a large root system of a big dead fallen tree in a bend of the Cuyahoga River east of the towpath.
- Warbling Vireo-- nest in a Virginia Creeper-hugged sycamore just west of the towpath. Nest was located on a horizontal branch on the northeast side of the tree. The nest branch hung 50 feet over the canal. No activity was noted at this nest on June 17.
- Yellow Warbler-- nest in a thick shrub of rose and honeysuckle. The bush was on the west side of the towpath along the path edge.
- Red-winged Blackbird-- nest being woven in new growth of Purple Loosetrife. Nest on a watery green island, north and west of the major observation deck on the boardwalk.
- Orchard Oriole-- nest in a sycamore on an island parallel to the towpath on the far side of the canal.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest found in a small sycamore on the lowest northward facing branch hanging over the canal. The tree is west of the towpath at the edge of the canal. This nest was not found on July 1, and the branch may have fallen.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a small sycamore located at the end of the island just south of the Orchard Oriole nest tree. Nest on the east side of the tree.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a sycamore 10 yards south of the major beaver dam in the canal.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest at the top of a thin dead snag covered with Virginia Creeper among a large group of dead trees west and south of the observation deck.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in the same sycamore as the kingbird. Nest hangs 30 feet above the canal.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a sycamore north and west of the boardwalk, hanging 50 feet above the canal.

June 10:

- Downy Woodpecker-- adult feeding young in a walnut tree covered with Virginia Creeper, over 400 feet from the northern end of the boardwalk.
- Hairy Woodpecker-- nest hole in a dead snag leaning against a tree with Virginia Creeper. Nest tree is between the towpath and the river.

- Great Crested Flycatcher-- possible nest on the back side of a dead snag in the canal just north of a Shingle Oak.
- Cedar Waxwing-- nest in a Shingle Oak, west of the canal at the southern end of the boardwalk.
- Warbling Vireo-- nest in a big sycamore at the southern end of the boardwalk, in the same tree as the kingbird mentioned above. Nest about 20 feet down from the top.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a big Silver Maple next to a house. Nest was on the west side of the tree approximately 100 feet from the entrance posts near the road.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a small sycamore at the south end of the southern pond. Tree is between the towpath and the canal. Nest is on the west side of the tree, 10-15 feet from the top.

June 16:

- Flycatcher (Willow?)-- a flycatcher was noted landing on dead bushes on the southern end of the northern island; it then moved north on the island to a nest.
- Warbling Vireo-- nest in same tree as the second Baltimore Oriole nest as listed for June 3. Tree is 20 feet tall and about four inches around.

June 17:

- Tree Swallow-- nest hole in a dead snag between the towpath and the canal. The snag was just south of the northern end of the southernmost island.
- Gray Catbird-- nest in an elderberry bush at the northeastern end of the boardwalk.
- Yellow Warbler-- nest in a rose bush on the west side of the canal about 150 feet south of the boardwalk.
- N. Cardinal-- nest in the center of a grapevine at the bottom of a small ash tree near where the Indigo Lake feeder trail meets the towpath trail.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in a sycamore 50 feet north of the boardwalk. Nest on the southeast side of the tree.
- Baltimore Oriole-- nest in the same tree as the "unknown" described below. Nest at the top of the tree.
- Unknown-- possible Am. Robin nest in a sycamore 50 feet south of the boardwalk. Strings of grass hang from the nest.

July 1:

- Mourning Dove-- nest in a spruce north of Pancake Lock. Nest on the third branch from the bottom.
- House Sparrow-- nest cavity in a dead snag on the second island from the north. Nest in the third hole down from the top. On July 8, this sparrow was noted taking nesting material from the Tree Swallow nest found on June 17.

July 8:

- Tree Swallow-- nest in the "deadest" willow at the northwest corner of the boardwalk. Hole is the third down from the top.
- Am. Robin-- nest in an ash tree at the end of the iris pond trail. Nest is at the end of the lowest branch on the east side of the tree.
- Am. Goldfinch-- nest in a small maple at the river bend. Nest is on the east side of the tree.
- House Sparrow-- nest in a dead snag slightly north of the House Sparrow nest described on July 1.

July 22:

N. Cardinal-- nest 50 feet south of the boardwalk in a rose bush between the towpath and the canal.

July 29:

E. Bluebird-- nest cavity in a dead snag north of Pancake Lock. The nest snag leans to the south and has vines at the bottom.

August 12:

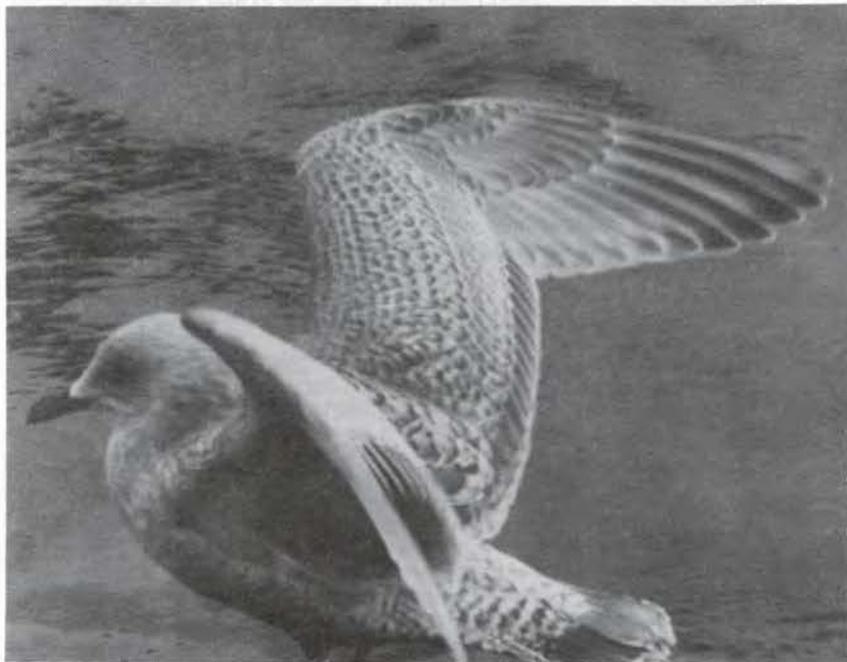
House Wren-- nest in a cavity of a dead snag just southeast of the bluebird nest found on July 29.

N. Cardinal-- nest in a bush just north of a Shingle Oak on an island in the middle of the beaver marsh. Bush has Virginia Creeper on it. Nest in a "Y" of the bush.

August 26:

N. Flicker-- nest cavity in a dead sycamore north of Pancake Lock. Hole is about 20 feet from the top.

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Thayer's Gull. C.J. Brown Res. (Clark Co.), 11/22/96.
Photo by David Brinkman.

Autumn 1996 Overview by Robert Harlan

"Alcid" is one word that I never figured out on typing when I became Editor of this journal some six years ago, yet this issue features the word prominently. Unquestionably, the Long-billed Murrelet in Seneca County Nov. 12-18 was one of the premier Ohio rarities of recent years. This season also included many other highlights, such as a Pacific Loon at Caesar Creek Lk. Nov. 24-26 and two Rufous Hummingbirds, at Loudonville and Luckey. Except for good numbers at Headlands Beach State Park, a rather lackluster passerine movement was perhaps offset by an impressive influx of jaegers along Lake Erie. While "winter finches" were nowhere to be found, Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area provided shorebird enthusiasts with a fine array of August rarities. It was nice to receive a report of 120 Black Terns from Metzger this season-- the highest reported count for the entire state since 1991 was 35 birds!

Perhaps you will forgive me as I muse a bit about my past six years as Editor. This issue will be my last as primary Editor, although I will stay on in a lesser role, at least for a time. Victor Fazio of Tiffin will begin to move into the Editor's role beginning with the Winter 1996-97 issue; the current Secretary of the Ohio Bird Records Committee and creator of an impressive internet birding empire should be no stranger to most of our readers. We wish him the best.

So what do six years and 23 issues reveal? During this time span, Ohio birders discovered six species for the first time ever within our boundaries: Snowy Plover (1993), Smooth-billed Ani (1993), N. Lapwing (1994), Royal Tern (1995), Spotted Towhee (1996), and Long-billed Murrelet (1997). Some other great birds include Gyrfalcon, White Ibis, Green-tailed Towhee, Bewick's Wren, Western Tanager, Lark Bunting and Fulvous Whistling-Duck, to name but a few.

Speaking of Ohio birders, I would like to thank everyone who subscribed, contributed bird reports and authored articles during my tenure. Ohio is not a particularly large or particularly small state, comparatively; but 88 counties is still a substantial area to cover well. Almost 275 Ohio birders contributed bird reports, ranging from one rarity to thousands of daily occurrence records, over the past 750 pages. Future Ohio birders will owe you all a debt of gratitude for this degree of statewide coverage. But perhaps our biggest debt of gratitude should go to Ed Pierce; without him, there would be no Ohio Cardinal, plain and simple. Thanks, Ed.

Back in the Spring 1991 issue, I wrote of "The Big Picture"...."Future bird students can make valid comparisons only if provided with both accurate and complete data. Without this type of information, a piece of the scientific puzzle is lost-- and since this puzzle is infinitely large, we need all the pieces we can get. Obviously, the puzzle will never be complete, but with more pieces available to us, the clearer the picture becomes." Hopefully, we have all helped to make that picture at least a little bit clearer.