

Evening Grosbeak: Seven were in *Ashtabula* on 15 Dec, then six in *Lake* on 2 Jan (both **J. Pogacnik**). In the Mohican **SF M. Gingerich** found 45 on 17 Jan, where **B. Glick** found 30 on 29 Jan. On 28 Feb **B. Finkelstein et al.** found a male and six females in N. Olmstead, *Cuyahoga*.

CONTRIBUTORS: We are grateful to the following persons who shared their observations and other data to make this report possible: Scott Albaugh, Kirk Alexander, Scott Andres, John Augustine, Carole Babyak, Emil Bacik, Nick Barber, Lynn Barnhart, Bob Barrett, Tom Bartlett, Sue Baxter, Dan Best, Marsha Blair, Nancy Brundage, Byron Burnett, Mike Busam, Neill Cade, Ron Cass, Ann Chasar, Dwight Chasar, Bob Conlon, Leroy Curtis, Mable Daily, Dave Dister, Doug Dunakin, Micki Dunakin, Curt Dusthimer, Marc England, Leroy Erb, Vic Fazio, Bob Finkelstein, Anders Fjelstad, Ed Folts, Bob Foppe, Larry Gara, Matthew Gingerich, Bruce Glick, Adam Goloda, Frank Greenland, Pat Haddad, Joe Hammond, Betty Hardesty, Rob Harlan, Bert Hensel, John Herman, Dave Hochadel, Judy Hochadel, Dick Hoffman, Jean Hoffman, Chuck Holliday, Craig Holt, Nancy Ibsen, Phyllis Jones, Ned Keller, Tom Kemp, Cal Keppler, Don Kinsman, Charles Klaus, Dennis Kline, Dorothy Kohl, Bob Lane, Denise Lane, Jason Larson, Tom LePage, Greg Links, Paula Lozano, Jim Lucas, Ed Masel, Charlotte Mathena, Winnie McClanahan, Jim McCormac, Kevin Metcalf, Bruce Miller, Jolan Miller, Kathy Noblet, Doug Overacker, Lester Peyton, Ed Pierce, Bob Placier, John Pogacnik, John Rakestraw, Jim Reid, Frank Renfrow, Rich Rickard, Craig Rieker, Mary Anne Romito, Tom Romito, Larry Rosche, Sue Ross, Bob Roysse, Darlene Sadler, Dave St. John, Marian Saxe, Sterling Saxe, Ed Schlabach, Robert Schlabach, Tim Schrock, Wilma Seiler, John Shrader, Elaine Snively, John Snively, Bill Stanley, Bruce Stehling, Jay Stenger, Judy Tisdale, Ann Toneff, Bill Toneff, Sandy Wagner, Bill Whan, Clyde Witt, Scott Wright, Stan Wulkowicz, Leroy Yoder, Marian Zehnder. We are indebted as well to the editors of *The Bobolink* and *The Cleveland Bird Calendar*, and to the online resources managed by Vic Fazio III.



A star of the Winter 1997-98 season, this immature lark bunting entertained many during its multi-week stay in Holmes Co. Photo by Bruce Glick in February 1998.

Oh, What a Month it Was!

Every birder is familiar with the lists so many of us keep, lists of everything from our yard to the world. Listing games can add to our hobby's enjoyment or, at their most extreme, become a pathological extension of our already compulsive behavior.

Minnesotans admit to recording birthday lists, bird-bath lists, non-motorized big days, species big days (14 species of sparrows currently lead the state), nest lists and, of course, personally-found state lists, in which no staked-out birds can be counted, or birds pointed out to the observer by someone else.

Californians have NIBS lists (containing No Introduced Bird Species). ABAers follow a 95% rule for big days (95% of the birds seen by a group must have been seen by all members), requiring self-sustaining 10-year populations of exotics before listing them, and 24 hours after release for listing captured birds. Some of my friends claim to keep copulation lists (bird with bird, that is).

In January 1998, certain factors coalesced to stimulate the listing response in some Ohio birders. Seeing a hundred species by 1 March used to be an informal goal, but when El Niño brought warm, unwintery conditions, accompanied by a lot of vagrant birds, a hundred began to seem like a realistic goal for January to some of us. Birders in Licking County (Curt Dusthimer), Tiffin (Tom Bartlett), Cleveland (Rob Harlan and Sandy Wagner), Millersburg (Bruce Glick), and Akron (Jim Reyda and Ed Pierce), apparently independently seemed to sense this possibility in the number of species still lingering from the Christmas counts.

Available in northern Ohio in January, for example, were Say's phoebe, lark sparrow, lark bunting, northern waterthrush, Virginia rail, common snipe, wild turkey, black vulture, savannah sparrow, northern shrike, short-eared owl, killdeer, dunlin, American pipit, chipping sparrow, hermit thrush, eastern towhee, rusty blackbird, ruby-crowned kinglet, sandhill crane, king rail, marsh wren, great egret (three birds, the only previous overwintering having occurred in 1982-83), and Brewer's blackbird—a most unusual collection of species for the state at any given time of year.

Combining these 23 species with the usual winter residents, including the finches (both crossbills, common redpoll, evening grosbeak, pine siskin) and lingering half-hardy species (brown thrasher, gray catbird, yellow-bellied sapsucker, wood duck, double-crested cormorant), Rob Harlan and Sandy Wagner had 100 species by January 11th, and Bruce Glick by the 16th.

Bruce birded 18 of the available 31 days in January, generally his slowest month at work. Although he missed ruffed grouse—Rob and Sandy were on the other side of the bush and saw it flush—he and the Harlan/Wagner team would tie at 122 species for the month. Fortunately for them, a recount on the last day of the month “found” one species for Rob and Sandy that they'd forgotten to list—an accounting error—and an overlooked call of a brown thrasher—an auditory error—to make up their total. Bruce's previous January high had been 99 in 1997; previous to that he'd been in the low 90s.

Curt Dusthimer tallied 100 species on the last day of the month with rough-legged hawk at The Wilds, and was able to claim a "two-phoebe winter," drifting south to Tar Hollow SP for the eastern.

Tom Bartlett reached his 100 species by the end of the month as well, and had such fun doing it that he continued seeing 100 species every month for the rest of 1998. Much like the bunny of the famous advertisement, he just kept on "ticking."

Jim Reyda and Ed Pierce dutifully networked the sightings of others and ended with 109 and 108 species respectively, when Jim saw the field sparrow that popped out of the brush, and then back in forever, before Ed could get an eye on it.

This friendly competition against the clock shows that the most compulsive Minnesotans and Californians have nothing on us. The fun of reaching an unusually lofty birding goal can occupy us nearly totally when the chance is there. Anyone for a game of Ohio monthly life lists?

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A January century list seems a lot more obtainable when rarities like this Say's phoebe appear. This bird was found in Knox Co. on 11 December 1997 and remained for the listers until 7 January 1998. Photo by Bruce Glick.

Spring 1998 Overview

by Bill Whan

After such an extraordinarily mild winter, it seemed natural to expect as extraordinary a spring migration. And so it might have been, had we been privileged to witness it. As it was, continued warm weather, diminished stopover habitat for shorebirds, and favorable winds zipped many northbound migrants through Ohio in a hurry, often by night or high above us, and in many ways the migration was a lackluster affair. No doubt we had any number of early arrivals, and very few late ones, but there were no notable fallouts, no remarkably high counts of birds, and few amazing "you should have been here yesterday!" migratory events. Indeed, we might have seen still earlier arrivals, but birds involved in such overflights may never have touched down here. Research is beginning to reveal a trend toward earlier migration among many species, and ornithologists are wondering if temperatures may be more decisive for some species than length of daylight as a spur to migration. Species dependent upon flying insects seem good candidates in this case, and extensive research by Peter Dunn at the University of Wisconsin has shown tree swallows are nesting on average nine days earlier than they did fifty years ago.

The season's most dramatic weather event was an enormous storm on 9 April that brought hail and heavy rain statewide (4 inches in six hours in places), but was especially violent along the western Lake Erie shore, where many trees were blown down and low areas flooded by an extra 43" of Lk Erie water blown in by its winds. The Magee Marsh bird trail, for example, was inaccessible without wading for several days, and not opened to the public in its entirety until 22 April. Though doubtless hampering observer coverage of the migration in this area, the storm's most important effect on migrating birds was probably the flooding of agricultural fields close to the managed marshes, resulting in some marginal but usable foraging areas for migrant shorebirds. Areas such as low-lying farmland southeast of the intersection of Routes 2 and 19 and some bean fields along Park Colony Road west of Reno Beach attracted a lot of birds, and a lot of observers.

Overall, the season was quite warm statewide, with no snow in April or May. Spring's unaccustomed warmth was no abrupt departure; even Cleveland had received only 0.2" of snow in February. Especially warm was May, with temperatures in Cleveland 6.4°F above normal; the figure was 6.1°F in Columbus and 3.7°F in Cincinnati. April averaged quite wet, in large part due to the aforementioned storm, with Cincinnati's precipitation a full 6.0" above normal. Waterfowl, especially the cold-tolerant species and many others breeding north of us, passed through very quickly. Some shorebirds found stopover sites in fields, and Lorain's harbor impoundment continued as the best spot for shorebirds in the state, albeit with a somewhat disappointing 19 species reported overall. Some exciting rarities were seen—three jaegers, plus black-headed and mew gulls. At least as exciting were finds of common raven, Bewick's wren, and Swainson's warbler in the state. All in all, 10 Review Species were found, adequately documented, and accepted to the Ohio records. The flood of passerine migrants—orioles, tanagers, warblers, flycatchers, and the like—did not touch down all that often here, and counts tended to be low, with no memorable concentrations, though there was no reason to think their real numbers were down. Some observers expressed some grumpy reservations about the season, but for the connoisseur there were many things to savor.

For instructions about interpreting the reports, see the foot of the Winter 1997-98 Overview on page 39.