

Book Review

Louis W. Campbell, with Clair Gavin. *The Marshes of Southwestern Lake Erie*. Foreword by Harold Mayfield. Ohio University Press. 1995. 247 pp., color/b&w illus., notes, bibliog., app., index. Cloth \$45; paper \$24.95.

Ohio birders will relish a work devoted to the extensive wetlands between Toledo and Port Clinton, the scene of fondly remembered adventures for so many of us. In *The Marshes of Southwestern Lake Erie*, the late Lou Campbell, for many decades the dean of Toledo naturalists, examines the wildlife of the area with a particular emphasis on its birds. Especially interesting is his story of how their marshland habitats have fared since passing into the care of humans during the past two hundred years.

Campbell is certainly correct in calling these marshes, changed as they have been by human interventions, the "most primitive lands in Ohio," and few will argue with his assertion that they still "shelter more birds, more mammals, more snakes...., and more amphibians per acre than anywhere in Ohio." The first third of the work, "A Wetlands Almanac," portrays a calendar year in the life of the marshes as told by a sensitive and experienced naturalist, with evocations of the changing scene through four seasons in the lives of marsh creatures.

The almanac offers fascinating stories and voluminous natural history detail, but much of what makes these marshes unique must wait for the book's second part. Here, anyone who has spent enough time afield in the legendary venues of the area—Ottawa, Magee, Cedar Point, Metzger, etc.—will find engrossing the story of the interactions of humans and wild animals and their habitats in a setting only fairly recently altered from its unspoiled primeval state. Only fifty years ago, all the marshlands between Toledo and Sandusky were in the hands of private gun clubs, many of their members millionaire industrialists, who jealously guarded entry for fear of poaching. Then, as Campbell tells the tale, over a span of only fifteen years the larger marshes were acquired by the State and Federal governments, mostly because the costs of providing good hunting and trapping while keeping Lake Erie at bay—expensive dredging, pumping, dike construction, repairs after floods and storm damage—had finally grown too much for private owners to bear. This transition in ownership occurred at a critical juncture, as it happened, just as profit-hungry developers were able for the first time to dream realistically of converting the marshes to human habitats. The establishment of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in 1961, for example, narrowly missed foundering on the planned "Holiday Shores" development—an ill-advised project of 778 homes, a bathing beach, marinas, and an airport—just then being envisioned for what is now the heart of the Refuge.

In the early nineteenth century, long before the gun clubs and the developers, French fur-traders settled near where the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant stands today, at a time when thousands of acres of wild rice swayed in the currents of Maumee and Sandusky Bays. The beaches of the area—and beaches there were, as in 1915 sand from 50 to 250 feet in width extended well along the shoreline east of Little Cedar Point—and the mouths of the creeks (Cedar, Crane, Turtle, Toussaint, Rusha, and La Carpe) were where pioneers and entrepreneurs gathered, as nearly all transportation was by water. Inland, the terrain was less friendly, with dense swamp forests and trackless wildernesses of marshland. In the Toussaint Marsh, an early explorer de-

scribed prairie grass "about seven feet high and so thick that it would easily sustain one's hat—in some places a cat could have walked on its surface." Fishing camps formed near the estuaries early on, and in years to come logging communities further inland had lumbered nearly all of the Black Swamp forest by 1875, building canals connecting to the Lake—Cooley and Ward, for example—which still exist to this day. Metzger Marsh, for example, was diked and drained for onion fields early in this century. In 1929 the lake ruptured the wall and flooded Metzger Farms, and only in the present decade was a new dike constructed. Some of this history is told in a series of maps that show the land and waters as they looked over thousands of years past. Here and in the text the reader learns to recall the historical personages of the region in the names of its marshes, tiny villages, and back roads, names like Bono, Reno, Howard, Navarre, Lamb, and Magee.

The book is worth reading for the story of Little Cedar Point alone. During the War of 1812, refugees walked here across the ice from Monroe, Michigan, and their descendants live in the vicinity to this day. The Point, visible to the east from Metzger Marsh WA, is now a part of Ottawa NWR pretty much off-limits to the public, but in the 1830s it hosted a lighthouse, and then in the 1880s a tavern and a fifteen-room clubhouse for a shooting club, eventually vandalized and burned by boaters in 1972. Smugglers carrying Canadian whiskey made landfall here during the Prohibition era. During the early 1940s, the large sandbar offshore hosted 5000 nesting common terns, along with the last verified nests of piping plovers in Ohio. President Eisenhower came here to hunt pheasants during the 1950s, and gun club administrators, anxious to ensure his success, stationed hidden employees out in the grass to toss captive birds up when he passed by. It was in this marsh, so the story is told—though Campbell is too modest to mention it in this book—that in one day he found over 130 species of birds while walking along a single row of cottonwoods.

The story of the marshes is in an important sense the story of the long struggle Ohioans—settlers, hunters and trappers, developers, and managers of public lands alike—have carried on with Lake Erie. With time, human priorities grew so important that total containment of the unpredictable Lake, with all its violent storms, seiches, and changing long-term water levels, became paramount. Controlling water—in the interests of fostering maximal numbers of waterfowl and/or muskrats, keeping Route 2 dry, straightening and deepening channels of the creeks, protecting nuclear plants, draining lands for agriculture, building canals to ship produce and lumber, etc.—remains the major theme of the region's recent history. Campbell gives mixed reviews to most such projects, at least in terms of their effects on wildlife, but concludes in the end that hunters and trappers have been, at least by default, the salvation of the marshes.

The book closes in its final third with an examination of recent trends in the abundance and distribution of some of the area's birds, specifically bald eagles, herons, cormorants, gulls and terns, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Many of the species examined have been the subjects of studies or management interventions by wildlife specialists attached to public lands. Interestingly, its final two paragraphs relate how it was the *failure* of modern measures to contain Lake Erie—specifically the breaching of dikes by the storms of 1973, which flooded areas near Veler Road in the Ottawa NWR—that resulted in observations of extraordinary numbers of shorebirds when two square miles of mudflat persisted for six years in this usually carefully-controlled area. Extensive

appendices close the book, enumerating the species of mammals, reptiles and amphibians, plants, and birds—twenty pages devoted to the latter—now encountered in the southwest Lake Erie marshes.

The marshes are no longer wholly wild, of course. Many species present two hundred years ago do not appear in these compendia, and too many of the species that do appear are less-than-welcome exotics transplanted from other continents. In many ways the birdlife has suffered less than the vegetation—wild rice and eelgrass, for example, have disappeared in the first case and nearly so in the second—or the fishes, whose diversity in the marshes is but a tiny fraction of what it used to be. Purple loosestrife and carp impoverish the marshes far more than starlings or house sparrows. Finally, there is, a reviewer is obliged to note, the occasional small imperfection in the accounts of wildlife of the marshes: in the case of birds, May is not the best time of year here for long-billed dowitchers, or Baird's or western sandpipers, and there is as yet no accepted record of MacGillivray's warbler in Ohio—but with small exceptions the science and the field expertise are solid, far more so than in any comparable work.

Lou Campbell, over six decades of field work and data collection and analysis, helped develop the bird references and records we all use. He acted as mentor to more than one generation of Ohio's best birders. He is part of the history of the marshes he describes, having been the first birder to visit many of them, beginning in the 1920s. All birders who have spent time in these marshes, as well as those who hope one day to do so, will enjoy and profit from this intriguing work. *Bill Whan*

Recent Actions of the Ohio Bird Records Committee

The Ohio Bird Records Committee exists to increase knowledge of Ohio's birdlife by validating records of birds, maintaining for the public archival records of occurrences of rare birds in Ohio, and establishing the official state list of species. The OBRC relies vitally upon the voluntary participation of the birding community in sending in records of their sightings. *The Ohio Cardinal*, as a journal of record, does not treat reports of OBRC Review Species as established until accepted by the Committee, and hence will not normally pass along to the public reports of rarities not supported by documentation submitted to the OBRC. The Review List, which includes all species sufficiently infrequent in Ohio as to require documentation (specimen, photograph, tape recording, full written description) for their inclusion in the official historical record, was last published in this journal this spring, in Vol. 22, No. 3, p 99.

Volunteers for this effort come not only from the ranks of reporters in the field; others agree to serve three-year terms on the OBRC, subject to election by the subscribers to *The Ohio Cardinal*. They are your representatives in establishing official bird records for all of us. Current members of the eleven-member Ohio Bird Records Committee, and their counties of residence, are:

Jim McCormac (Franklin), Secretary	Tom Kemp (Lucas)
Craig Holt (Portage)	Jon Dunn (Montgomery)
Rob Harlan (Cuyahoga)	David Dister (Montgomery)
Bob Conlon (Franklin)	Dave Hochadel (Trumbull)
Jay Stenger (Hamilton)	Bill Whan (Franklin)
Kevin Metcalf (Geauga)	

Retiring members, whose terms expire with the March 2000 annual meeting, are Dave Hochadel, Jon Dunn, and David Dister (as serving out Tom Bartlett's unexpired term). The Committee is grateful to these individuals for their service, and appreciative of their contributions. Members taking their places on the Committee at the annual meeting are: Bernard Master (Franklin), Larry Rosche (Portage), and David Dister (Montgomery). The Committee welcomes these new members.

We are grateful to OBRC Secretary Jim McCormac for the following update of actions taken by the Committee since our report in the previous issue.

ACCEPTED RECORDS: Documentation received from the observers specified for the following species on the indicated date(s) was judged sufficient to verify the record by at least nine members of the committee.

Long-billed Curlew—Holmes County, 1 Oct 1999, observer Bruce Glick
Pomarine Jaeger—Clermont County, 30-31 Oct 1999, observers Jay Lehman, David Brinkman
Philadelphia Vireo—Cuyahoga County, 18 Nov 1999, observer Haans Petruschke
Ruff—Lucas County, 5 Sep 1999, observer Chris Crofts
Ruff—Erie County, 14 Aug 1999, observer Bill Whan
Yellow Rail—Cuyahoga County, 30 Sep 1999, observers Joe Hammond, Dan Sanders

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED: Documentation received for the following species received fewer than six votes to accept; such votes, it is important to note, do not reflect upon the sighting itself, but on the adequacy of the documentation to validate it for the permanent record.

White Ibis—Pickaway County, 2-5 Sep 1998
California Gull—Lake County, 1 Jan 1999
Long-billed Curlew—Lucas County, 25 May 1999
White-winged Dove—Lorain County, 24 May-3 Jun 1999
Wilson's Storm-Petrel—Ottawa County, 9 Aug 1997
Ruff—Lake County, 29 Jun 1999

RECORDS IN RECIRCULATION: These records are currently being recirculated among members of the committee, the documentation for which having received between six and eight votes to accept.

Pine Grosbeak—Paulding County, 20 Oct 1999
Yellow Rail—Marion County, 15 Aug 1999
Harris's Sparrow—Holmes County, 22 Dec-25 Mar 1999
Mississippi Kite—Summit County, 4 Jul 1999
Western Kingbird—Muskingum County, 6 Aug 1999
Common Ground-Dove—Cuyahoga County, 5-6 Nov 1999

In addition two species—MacGillivray's warbler (Stark County, Jan 1999) and Glaucous-winged gull (Cuyahoga County, Jan 1989)—will receive final consideration at the annual meeting, having failed in three recirculations to meet criteria for acceptance or non-acceptance. *Bill Whan*