

## Black-crowned Night-Herons at Merwin Street

One of the best places in northeastern Ohio to see Black-crowned night-herons (BCNH) is in the Flats area of Cleveland along the west bank of the Cuyahoga River between the Center St. and Columbus Rd. bridges. From a vantage point along Merwin St. on the opposite bank, you can scan up and down the river. Contrary to Peterjohn's findings in *The Birds of Ohio* (1989) that only small groups of BCNH are seen in spring and fall migrations along central Lake Erie, this area often hosts double-digit numbers in April-May and again in September-November. In fact, I have counted 30-50 BCNH on numerous occasions in both seasons, with a high count of 100 on 8 April 1994.

Why do BCNH use this bend of the Cuyahoga as a staging area? I assume the reasons include an assured supply of food and the presence of habitat necessary for roosting birds. In addition, BCNH may have been using the banks of the river for a long time. Reports suggest that when General Moses Cleaveland arrived in 1796 he found swamps lining both sides of the river. Accounts written by early settlers describe clear water and abundant fish and wildlife. It seems logical that BCNH were here at that time, and likely long before the arrival of the settlers of the Western Reserve.

Today, from the Merwin St. vantage point on the east bank, you see across the river a hillside covered with vegetation from W. 25<sup>th</sup> St. down to the river's edge. You may have difficulty imagining that in the mid- to late 1800s a maze of 22 streets known as Irishtown Bend, the home of immigrants who worked nearby, covered this same area. Since the 1950s, as far back as I can remember, there hasn't been any permanent housing here. This situation will not last much longer, however, as development encroaches from the north. A sign advertising new condos for sale sits at the corner of Center and Riverbend Sts., only a stone's throw from Irishtown Bend.

The best time to see the Merwin St. night-herons is early in the morning, before they disappear into the thick cover on the west bank. Keep your eyes open, because you never know what else might put in an appearance, like the yellow-crowned night-heron of May 2000! This and nearby spots seem attractive to other interesting species, too, especially in winter: there are recent records of black-legged kittiwake, Iceland/California/lesser black-backed gulls, red-necked grebe in the immediate area, and five pomarine jaegers spent part of the spring of 1997 near the harbor entrance. You can access the Flats and Merwin St. in several ways. Here is one from Cleveland's Memorial Shoreway (Rtes 2/6/20): exit at West 3<sup>rd</sup> St. (from the west) or West 6<sup>th</sup> St. (from the east) and continue south to St. Clair Ave. Turn right (west) on St. Clair, which descends into the Flats after it crosses W. 9<sup>th</sup>. Turn left (south) on Old River Rd. and at the second stop sign turn right (west) on Center St. (some maps call this Columbus Rd., but it is signed Center St.). Continue to a stop sign at the corner of Center and Merwin Sts. (landmarks at this corner are the Flat Iron Café, Crooked River Brewery, State Fish Co. and the Center St. bridge). Turn left (south) on Merwin St., going slowly through this congested area during business hours. After crossing a rough set of railroad tracks by Cereal Food Processors, continue to the end of the street and park under the mulberry tree next to the *Salvage Chief*, the vessel usually moored there.

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## Recent Actions of the Ohio Bird Records Committee

The Ohio Bird Records Committee exists to increase knowledge of Ohio's birdlife by validating records, maintaining for the public archival records of occurrences of rare birds in the state, and establishing the official list of Ohio bird species. The OBRC depends on the help of birders in the field who supply details of their sightings of rare birds. Birds considered rare comprise the Review List, which last appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Ohio Cardinal*; these species require acceptable documentation (written details, photo, sound recording, and/or specimen) to enter the official record. *The Ohio Cardinal*, as the journal of record for the state, will not treat reports of Review List species as established until accepted by the OBRC, and hence will not usually publish reports of these species unsupported by documentation submitted to the Committee.

The OBRC does not review sightings, of course, only documentations of sightings. The Committee cannot decide if a given species was seen, but only if the documentation from those present at the sighting verifies, for the historical record, the species' occurrence. All documentations, with Committee actions thereon, are archived for researchers, and all its records—with the exception of the identities of voters on vote-sheets—are available to the public. We offer here, as a general rule, only very brief summaries of OBRC actions, details of which are available from Jim McCormac, Secretary of the OBRC, upon request. We are grateful to him for supplying information for this report. Current voting members, in addition to the Secretary, are: Bob Conlon, Dave Dister, Rob Harlan, Craig Holt, Tom Kemp, Bernard Master, Kevin Metcalf, Larry Rosche, Jay Stenger, and Bill Whan.

**ACCEPTED RECORDS:** Documentations received from the observers specified for the following records were judged sufficient to verify them by at least nine of the eleven members of the Committee.

Tricolored Heron—Sandusky County, 31 May-1 June 2000, observers Adam Blank, Joe Hammond  
White-faced Ibis—Guernsey County, 12 May 2000, observer Amy Lavy  
Swallow-tailed Kite—Hamilton County, 5 May 2000, observer Bruce Stehling  
Purple Gallinule—Hocking County, 30 April 2000, observers Connie Wolcott, Janet Holzworth  
Black-necked Stilt—Van Wert County, 22-24 May 2000, observer John Perchalski  
Black-headed Gull—Ashtabula County, 18-22 March 2000, observers Ed Schlabach, Jonathan Kline, Jim McCormac  
White-winged Dove—Logan County, 10 June 2000, observers Rosalyn Rinehart, Mary Misplon; a new Ohio record—see article in this issue.  
Spotted Towhee—Cuyahoga County, 22-29 October 1998, observer Larry Rosche  
Painted Bunting—Ottawa County, 13 May 2000, observers Doreene Linzell, Connie Wolcott, Gretchen Fluke, Janet Holzworth, Bill Whan

**RECORD IN RECIRCULATION:** This record is currently in recirculation, the documentation for which having received between six and eight votes to accept.

Townsend's Solitaire—Medina County, November 1994

In addition, documentation has been received for sightings of Mississippi kite; documentation is being sought from observers for reports of spotted towhee, Kirtland's warbler (two sightings), and ruff. *Bill Whan*