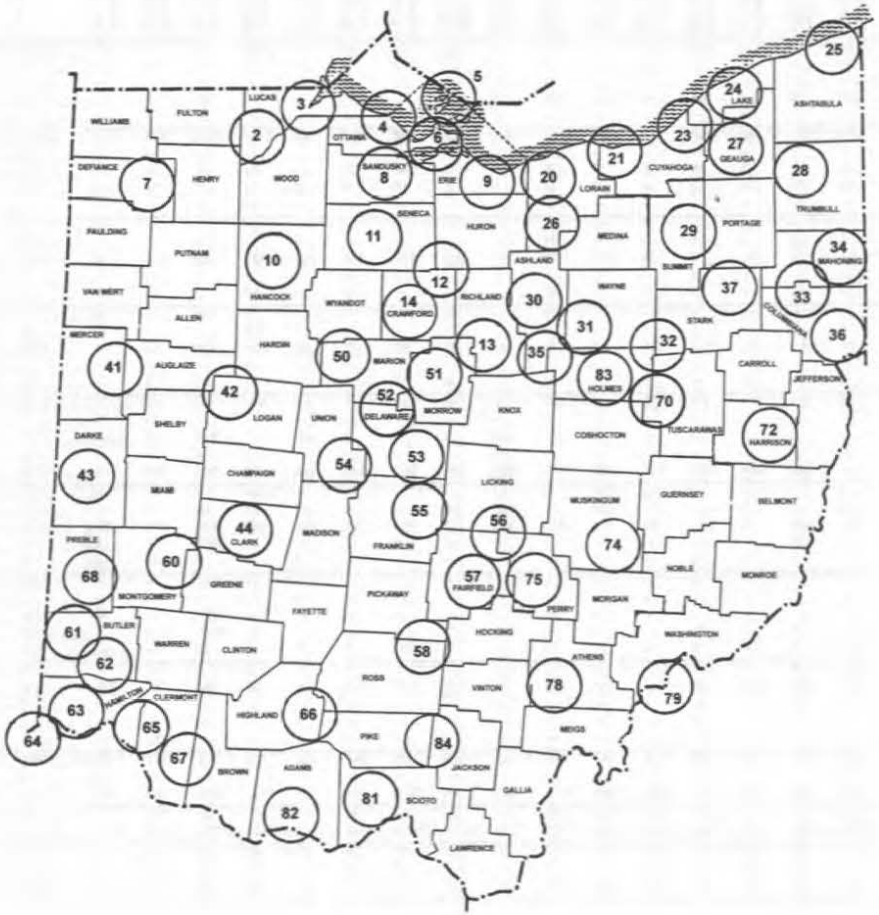

The 2000-01 Christmas Bird Count areas. Numbers within circles correspond to count numbers in the preceding article.

Short Note: Cedars and Waxwings

On a clear, calm day in April 2000, we received four calls from Adams County residents living around our Edge of Appalachia Preserve. This 13,000-acre preserve has been owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy and the Cincinnati Museum Center for the past 40 years, and consists in large part of heavily-forested rugged terrain and associated habitats. Our callers were concerned that some one was apparently setting fires along the hillsides in our Wilderness Preserve. They seemed genuinely alarmed, and the conditions were such that we decided to respond quickly. Chris Bedel of the Cincinnati Museum Center and I donned our Nomex (fire-resistant clothing) and helmets, and loaded tools in the truck to go out to see what we could do, and whether it would be better to call the Fire Department.

As we approached the area we could clearly see smoke rising from the hillsides and drifting upslope. As we came closer we noticed the smoke was rising from the red cedars *Juniperus virginiana* for the most part, and upon closer inspection we found that these cedars were not in fact in flames, but pollinating at an astounding rate! Between us we had 18 years of experience in this habitat, and we had never seen anything like this. Throughout the year these familiar trees of the limestone soils of the local Bluegrass region went on to produce a truly amazing fruit crop. Later, they were literally covered in the small blue berries (actually cones) typical of the species, so much so that the trees appeared more blue than green.

It should not perhaps have surprised us that when this year's Christmas Bird Count took place on 16 December, we had the highest count of cedar waxwings ever recorded in our 26-year history of counting—an astounding 2092 birds! Our previous high had been 542 waxwings in 1998. I should also note that our count also encountered some of the worst weather on record, with heavy rain throughout, conditions which kept our out-of-car hours way down, so who knows how many waxwings we might have counted on a clear day? Not only that, but don't we have to ask how the waxwings knew we had such a crop?

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The all-time Ohio high for a CBC count of this species is 2746 birds, tallied in Cincinnati in 1989, perhaps under similar conditions (see Tom Kemp's article in this issue). This winter, D. Brinkman found 1389 in nearby East Fork State Park on the following day (17 December) with far better weather, as did the Cincinnati CBC with better weather on 30 December with 2346 waxwings.—Ed.