

*The Ohio*



# CARDINAL™

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Winter 2002-03





*The Ohio Cardinal* is a quarterly publication devoted to the study and appreciation of Ohio's birdlife.

*The Ohio Cardinal* exists to provide a permanent and timely record of the abundance and distribution of birds in Ohio; to help document the occurrence of rare species in the state; to provide information on identification of birds; and to provide information on birding areas within Ohio.

*The Ohio Cardinal* invites readers to submit articles on unusual occurrences of birds, bird distribution within the state, birding areas in Ohio, identification tips, and other aspects of ornithology. Bird reports and photographs are welcome from any area of the state. Report forms are not a necessity but will be supplied upon request. Unusual species should be documented, and forms to do so are available upon request from the Editor, Publisher, and Records Committee Secretary.

### Seasonal Report Due Dates

### Please send all reports to:

Winter (Dec.-Feb.) - March 25  
Spring (Mar.-May) - June 25  
Summer (June-July) - August 25  
Autumn (Aug.-Nov.) - December 25

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### Subscriptions

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### The Ohio Cardinal

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**On the Cover:** This common eider was photographed along Lake Erie in Fairport Harbor, Lake County, on 8 January 2003 by Gary Meszaros.

## Winter 2002-03 Overview

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Some said it was just a return to normal. Not so. The winter of 2002-03 was harsh, abnormally snowy and cold. Following November's unrelenting volleys of cold fronts, December's first week delivered daily departures from normal of -13, -4, -15, -16, -9, -14, and -11°F. And that was our mildest month. December had 17, January 22, and February 23 days of below-normal temperatures, with averages of -1.1, -4.5, and -5.1°F below normal respectively. Our winter birds are not much inconvenienced by air temperatures unless their food sources are affected, mainly by snow cover or the freezing of water. And there was plenty of both this time. Cleveland had more than 30 inches of snow in January (and 28 days of it), and Columbus over 26 inches in February. Aerial waterfowl counters reported their near-shore Lake Erie survey areas ice-covered from mid-December through the period in the shallow western basin. From mid-January on, the Ohio shoreline to the east was locked in brash ice and jagged floes except for a few transient leads and pools near warm-water outlets. Inland reservoirs by that time were thickly sealed in sheets of ice.

Lake Erie's nearly 10,000 square miles of surface never froze completely, but it was a near thing. Unusual numbers of waterfowl in swift water in the southwest quarter of the state probably consisted partly of birds driven south by ice and, later in the season, early migrants bottled up by it. At the Camp Dennison gravel pits in Hamilton County the cessation of quarrying, the prohibition of hunting, and by some point the sheer numbers of birds that kept water from freezing, contributed some notable records for the southwest. It seems the scenic virtues of this spot have attracted the attention of developers, and in winters to come we can probably anticipate only Canada geese and mallard X somethings at "Duck Lake Estates." Outflows of artificially-heated water at power plants in Toledo, Avon Lake, and Cleveland hosted good varieties of ducks, and excellent opportunities for observing them. Also quite easy to study there were unusual large gulls—so unusual that species that would be new for Ohio were reported by multiple observers. The OBRC will be studying the documentation of these and other rare gulls, but the rest of us were at least able to enjoy numerous glaucous and Thayer's/Iceland gulls in many (some might say too many) plumage variations at close range.

Rare review species documented for the OBRC or already accepted included northern gannet, Ross's goose, king and common eiders (both remaining from the fall season), black-headed gull, California gull, rufous hummingbird (from the fall season), rufous/Allen's hummingbird, and loggerhead shrike (also since last fall). Winter finches were hard or impossible to find, and followed recent biennial fluctuations. Half-hardy species seemed not much less often reported than in warmer winters. Pipits and sapsuckers put in noteworthy appearances, and certain warblers—ovenbird, yellow-throated warbler, and pine warbler—surprised us all. Golden eagles again wintered in Muskingum County, three of them this time for an extraordinary modern record.