

other reports came from in or near Mohican SP during Jan (*Ashland and Knox*), with a high count of two at a feeder in the park 31 Jan (**T. Bartlett**).

Exotic species: **Eurasian Goldfinch**: a ♀ spent most of the winter at feeders south of Mt. Hope in *Holmes*; photographed 31 Jan by **B. Glick**. Almost certainly an escaped bird.

We are grateful to the following persons who reported observations during the season: Angie Adkins, Matt Anderson, Nancy Anderson, Lynda Andrews, Thomas Archdeacon, Wendell Argabrite, Hank Armstrong, Tom Bartlett, Erich Baumgardner, James Beachy, Jim Bednarik, Jon Benedetti, Greg Bennett, Chris Betrus, Brad Bolton, Mike Bolton, Charlie Bombaci, Jill Bowers, David Brinkman, Jeff Brown, Lori Brumbaugh, Jen Brumfield, Gina Buckey, Chuck Buechele, Don Burlett, Jed Burt, Mike Busam, Jason Cade, Neill Cade, Craig Caldwell, Kyle Carlsen, Ron Carter, Craig Carver, John Castrale, Paul Chad, Allen Chartier, Ann Chasar, Dwight Chasar, Suzanne Clingman, Tim Colburn, Bob Conlon, Sam Corbo, Ralph Corley, Rick Counts, Rich Cressman, Chris Crook, Becky Cullen, Sarah Dalton, Donna Daniel, Laura Daniele, Leo Deininger, Fred Dinkelbach, David Dister, Russell Dougherty, Doug Dunakin, Micki Dunakin, Curt Dusthimer, Jason Estep, Bob Evans, Ginny Fantetti, Linda Fayerweather, Vic Fazio, Duane Ferris, Cathy Fetzer, Bob Finkelstein, Mike Flynn, Bob Foppe, Tom Ford, Kim Fredritz, Frank Frick, Jim Fry, Larry Gara, Lou Gardella, Paul Gardner, Ann Gayner, Dante Giancola, Bruce Glick, Jeff Grabmeier, Darlena Graham, Bret Graves, Charlotte Greenfelder, Elayna Grody, Kevin Groff, Don Hadley, Joe Hammond, Sharon Hanse, Lois Harder, Betty Hardesty, Rob Harlan, Andrea Haslage, Jim Haw, Christine Hawley, Jeff Hays, Bill Heck, Stan Hedeon, Dave Helm, Michele Hendrick, John Herman, Jim Hickman, Hank Hiris, Sally Hiris, Dave Hochadel, Judy Hochadel, Levi Hochstetler, Dick Hoffman, Jean Hoffman, Craig Holt, Dave Horn, Bill Jackson, Bob Jacksy, Julie Karlson, Ned Keller, Tom Kemp, Isaac Kerns, Molly Kerry, Everitt Kitchen, Ron Kolde, Paul Knoop Jr, Marijo Knowles, Dan Kramer, John Kraus, Mike Kroeger, John Kuenzli, Bob Lacker, Steve Landes, Bob Lane, Denise Lane, Jason Larson, Amy Lavy, Jay Lehman, Gabe Leidy, Tim Leslie, Greg Links, Doreene Linzell, Norman Lowe, Rob Lowry, Paula Lozano, Bernard Master, Charlotte Mathena, Jim McCormac, Kathy McDonald, Eric McElroy, Joe McMahon, Julie Means, Brian Menker, Gary Meszaros, Kevin Metcalf, Jim McCormac, Bruce Miller, Greg Miller, Kent Miller, Ben Morrison, Donald Morse, Heather Nagy, Ed Neubauer, Melvin Nisely, Lach Ohman, Ann Oliver, Helen Ostermiller, Ken Ostermiller, Doug Overacker, Al Parker, John Perchalski, Stacy Peterson, Haans Petruschke, Ed Pierce, Bob Placier, Don Plant, John Pogaenic, Cathy Priebe, Scott Reeves, Frank Renfrow, Steve Richards, Richard Rickard, Craig Rieker, Bill Rinehart, Bryn Roberts, Keith Robinson, Randy Rogers, Mary Anne Romito, Tom Romito, Ed Roush, Larry Rosche, Bob Royse, Dave Russell, Dan Sanders, Randy Sanders, Bob Sargent, Willie Sarno, R.G. Sauer, Steve Schafer, Regina Schieltz, Jessica Schultz, Ron Sempier, Bill Shively, Troy Shively, John Shrader, Diana Shuler, Thomas Simmons, Harry Slack, Tim Smart, Dave Smith, Nick Smith, Tom Smith, Elaine Snively, Su Snyder, Doug Snapp, Chris Spagnoli, Brad Sparks, Bill Stanley, Jay Stenger, Mike Sweeney, John Switzer, Sue Tackett, Carol Takacs, Rob Thorn, Elliot Tramer, Jane Van Coney, Sandy Vincent, Sandy Wagner, Suzanne Wagner, John Watts, Wayne Wauligman, Bill Whan, Pete Whan, Paul Wharton, John Wilson, Connie Wolcott, Alan Wormington, John Yochum, Leroy E. Yoder, Marvin Yoder, Sheryl Young, Sean Zadar, Bill Zimmerman, Mark Zloba. We gratefully acknowledge information received from the editors of *The Bobolink* and internet resources managed by Ned Keller and Chuck Anderson. Thanks to Allen Chartier for tireless labors and first-rate documentations for many of the season's hummingbird records. 🐦

Further Afield

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Maybe you've followed the same trail. I've visited South Carolina's I'on Swamp, if only out of tribute. Scared up plenty of hunters, but no Bachman's warblers. I've visited the pastures of western Galveston Island, Texas, if only out of tribute. Saw wads of whimbrels and scads of cattle, but no Eskimo curlews. I've visited Louisiana's Honey Island Swamp and South Carolina's Congaree Swamp, if only out of tribute. Saw a pile of pileateds, but the ivory-billed somehow eluded me. I've even made the pilgrimage to the Passenger Pigeon Memorial at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, if only out of tribute. Doffed my cap (a rarity in itself) to Martha, the last of her kind, who lived in captivity all her life until succumbing at the Zoo in 1914. Did the same for Lady Jane and Incas, the world's last known pair of Carolina parakeets, who also lived and died at the Cincinnati Zoo, in 1917 and 1918, respectively. I visited these sites, expecting nothing, and saw what I expected to see. I think that you might do the same, if only out of tribute.

Sometimes it's altogether too easy to forget *why* you do what you do. As Editor of *The Ohio Cardinal* from 1991 through 1996, until just recently Ohio compiler for *North American Birds*, and currently as a member of the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC), and as, it has been my responsibility and privilege, in conjunction with the efforts of others, to monitor Ohio's birding records; it is a responsibility and a challenge that I take seriously. But frankly, the task is time-consuming, endless and monotonous, and can grow somewhat numbing over a period of years. I realize that bird populations and movements are never static, and their fluctuations always demand careful attention. But for the most part, these movements are readily predictable, coming and going at about the same time, year after year, and in roughly the same numbers, given similar conditions. Of course, various populations trend upwards or downwards, but they usually do so quite slowly, and sometimes almost imperceptibly. But it is precisely these slow, almost imperceptible changes that can be the most pernicious, sneaking up on us and melting away what we didn't even know was in danger.

Personally, I found that years of record keeping had almost served to anesthetize me. Fourteen years is barely a hiccup in the big picture of birding history, but it is long enough to instill a sense of sameness and repetition, despite the vagaries of each particular migration season, and despite the occasional spicy dash of rarities. But I'm glad to say it took only a single visit to Columbus this January to remind me *why* I do what I do, and hopefully, in some small degree, it will also encourage you to do what you can do.

This particular visit was to the Museum of Biological Diversity, part of the College of Biological Sciences at The Ohio State University, as a participant on a recent Kirtland Bird Club field trip. In preparation for our visit, John Condit, our host and the Museum's Curator of Higher Vertebrates, made available a wide variety of bird specimens for our perusal, featuring all of Ohio's warbler species (including, Vol. 27, No. 2 ❖ Winter 2003-04

of all things, an unrecognized 1947 Washington County specimen of Swainson's warbler—Ohio has only one other specimen of a Swainson's Warbler, also from 1947!), a collection of vireo nests, and a handsome collection of dowitchers and shrikes, allowing for in-the-hand comparisons. But also lying on the countertop were specimens of even greater interest: a Bachman's warbler, an Eskimo curlew (collected in Ohio, by the way), an ivory-billed woodpecker, a passenger pigeon, and a Carolina parakeet. A dusky seaside sparrow, now considered a subspecies, added its lifeless form to the somber gathering. Of course, the pigeon and parakeet and the sparrow are all certainly extinct. The warbler, curlew and woodpecker, if they survive at all, exist only in a murky dreamer's dream on the edge of nothingness. Although the warbler has never officially been recorded in Ohio (it has nested as close to us as south-central Kentucky, however), the curlew, woodpecker, pigeon, and parakeet all occur on the official OBRC list of the birds of Ohio. In reality, it hardly matters which have been recorded here; what matters is that, in all likelihood, they will never be seen alive by anyone, anywhere, ever again.

I suppose it was the injustice that struck me at first, as I handled each specimen one by one—the thought that the actions and inactions taken by nameless others over the years have deprived us today of the opportunity to appreciate these species as they were meant to be appreciated. After a while, though, it occurred to me that although these specimens were silent, they could not be silenced. Their muted testimony will speak volumes to those who will listen. It is our responsibility to hear what they have to say. If I hear them correctly, they wish us to appreciate their loss, and to appreciate our loss, and to take the steps necessary to ensure that their story is never forgotten, and never repeated.

For some species teetering on the edge, the so-called “extinction vortex” may already be unavoidable. For others (the vast majority of species, thankfully) the odds are still in their favor. We can help keep it this way by monitoring and conserving all the species that are still here with us. This is a task that we all must share. Our individual backgrounds are unimportant. I am not a trained scientist—but I don't need to be. I am not an activist—I've always been low-key. I am not a self-promoter—it just goes against the grain. I am not a rich man, with money to spare—but I do what I can, when I can. But if you can use any of these attributes for the greater good, that's fine with me. You know where you fit, and what you need to do. Speaking personally, over the years I believe I have accumulated a good working knowledge regarding the abundance and distribution of the birds of Ohio. I am also analytical, and occasionally have been accused of being a tad obsessive (this has occurred five times, and I have a detailed record of each). These traits naturally led me into editing and compiling duties; I like to think that by using these skills, I have been able to uphold my part of the bargain. But enough of this self-promotion.

But where then to begin? Reporting bird observations to centralized record keepers is always a good start, and a worthy exercise, regardless of one's individual background. These records, when distilled, help to establish our current thinking on bird abundance and distribution, and simultaneously serve as benchmarks for future research. Every season, we take a snapshot (the seasonal summary) of each

species' ups and downs, and uniformities, and preserve this image by publishing the condensed results from many observers in the permanent, printed historical record. Although I'm sure many would disagree, I feel that the preservation of permanent data on internet web sites is inherently less desirable than preservation on the printed page. Long-term availability of these web sites is always in question. Also, text and graphics can easily be manipulated without any acknowledgement that such has taken place. I also note a pervasive, transient “anything goes” attitude on the web; this degree of casualness does not serve the historical record, our benchmark for future researchers, well. Obviously, there are exceptions, but my gut tells me to “get it on paper” whenever possible.

So what do these compilers and record keepers look for in the reports they receive? Although there are several different layers of reporting opportunities available (local, state, regional, national and international in scope), all compilers require each record to provide at least these basic pieces of information: the species, the number of individuals observed, the date of the observation, the site of the observation, and the name of the observer. Any other information, such as age and plumage of the bird, unusual behavior, etc. is also welcomed. Photographs are always desirable, especially for verification of rarities. Compilers have a much easier job when contributors submit their reports in the current American Ornithologists' Union checklist order, as portrayed, for example, in the current online version of the *Ohio Bird Records Committee Checklist of the Birds of Ohio*, at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/dnap/chcklist/BirdChecklist.pdf>.

Potential reporters are also very well served to familiarize themselves with their local, and if possible, statewide birdlife before submitting a report. Compilers are much more likely to accept an observation of a rarity when the observer's overall report indicates a familiarity with what is normally expected in their area. For instance, a report of three Carolina chickadees at Magee Marsh without any additional comment may be nothing more than a typo, but it also may indicate a lack of familiarity with chickadee ranges in Ohio. If this hypothetical observer was indeed unfamiliar with Ohio chickadee ranges, then it seems very likely that he/she did not make the necessary effort to distinguish between Carolina and the vastly more likely black-capped chickadee. Whenever an observer provides a wide-ranging seasonal report to the compiler, and includes observations of expected species, and not just a list of rarities, compilers can thereby gain a better grasp on the observer's experience. I feel that most compilers are much more appreciative when observers make an honest acknowledgement of *lack* of experience with a species, rather than with an attempt to portray more experience than has actually been gained. Inexperience is not necessarily or automatically a good reason for a compiler to *doubt* a record, but a bumpy reporting track record just might be. Always be conservative when submitting a report; if in doubt, leave it out. Our responsibility as reporters and as compilers is to provide our best and most accurate record for future researchers.

Any good-faith exchange of information is always appreciated and worth the effort, regardless of whether any particular record ultimately sees publication. For

instance, I actually once received a report of a pterodactyl. Doubting that this report was made in good faith, I chose not to publish it. It's true that I may have buried the scientific breakthrough of the year (or even the decade!) by not publishing the report, but I still have a high degree of confidence in my decision. Also, a pterodactyl isn't even a bird.

For printed media, space is always at a premium, and choices must be made. Compilers simply cannot print everything that is reported to them, and they must choose what they publish based on many factors, of which degree of rarity is only one. Rarity can take many forms—a species can be rare throughout the year, or perhaps be unusual in only a part of the state, or perhaps only at a particular time of year. Also, compilers typically seek records of unusually high or low numbers of individuals for a given site or date. All of these factors, any many more, must be considered when making each publish/don't publish decision. It is also necessary to keep in mind that the likelihood of any particular record being printed diminishes as the geographic scale of the publication grows wider; as the scale grows, so do the number of records competing against each other, with only the most noteworthy records acquiring the limited (and valuable) publication space. One definite advantage that internet archives have over print media is their ability to store a much larger volume of data. Unfortunately, the long-term availability of this information sometimes must come into question, as web sites disappear or become dormant.

As mentioned earlier, there are several different layers of reporting opportunities available. The first opportunity to report is on the local level. Here in the northeastern quadrant of Ohio, for instance, there are two excellent local journals, each covering a different group of counties. The stately *Cleveland Bird Calendar* has been dutifully recording the changing bird populations of the Cleveland area since 1905. Editor Larry Rosche (7473 Sylvan Drive, Kent, OH 44240, or email at lorofs@aol.com) would likely appreciate any reports you can provide from that region. Just to the south of the *Bird Calendar's* area, *The Bobolink* has covered the birds of east central Ohio since 1997 in a scholarly yet entertaining fashion. Bruce Glick (6692 C.R. 624, Millersburg, OH 44654, or email at bhghlick@valkyrie.net) is your man on the scene here.

In general, local publications and local compilers have a broad interest in all birds that occur in their areas. Of course, any potential reporter should always report what he or she believes to be of national or state significance to their local compilers, but local compilers are also interested in what might be unusual or interesting locally. For example, an American woodcock would be of local interest anywhere in Ohio in July, if only because they are difficult to find at that season. They are not rare, and in fact are common in many areas across the state in July, but just try finding one for an out-of-state birder in this month. A local publication would be more likely to print such an observation based on local interest alone, whereas it probably wouldn't see publication in a journal of wider geographic scope, due in part to space considerations, and in part to the species' overall range and abundance.

The next layer of reporting is the statewide layer. In Ohio, the seasonal reports in *The Ohio Cardinal* have filled that role for 25 years now. Over the past several

years, Editor Bill Whan has done yeoman's duty as compiler and author of the seasonal reports. He may be uncomfortable in printing these accolades here about himself, but let's see if he leaves them in; they are well-deserved. His postal and email addresses appear on the inside cover of every issue of this journal.

If by chance you don't usually read through the seasonal reports section, take a glance now. If you find yourself scanning for records that you had submitted, you've already done your job. If you find yourself thinking, "Hey, I had more Green-winged teals than what this dope lists as the high count", or "Here it says that least bitterns were reported in six counties, but this chump doesn't even mention the bird in Medina County that every single person on our field trip saw this past May." If you find that you can improve upon the published accounts, it has now become your job to do just that. Don't wait for someone else to report, even if the birds you saw were also seen by others, or were seen at a frequently-birded location, such as the Magee Marsh Bird Trail. Did you feel that? That is called responsibility, and it has just fallen on you.

On a regional and national scale, *North American Birds* magazine, once published by the National Audubon Society, but now overseen by the American Birding Association, is the quarterly journal of record. The United States is broken down into a variety of regions, based on political and physiographic boundaries. All of Ohio now falls in the unfortunately-named "Eastern Highlands and Upper Ohio River Valley Region", along with all of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Up until a few years ago, Ohio was divided between the "Middlewestern Prairie Region" and the "Appalachian Region", but now we are all together in the single, new region. One of the new Regional Editors for our new region is Victor W. Fazio III (dromaius@bright.net). Vic would be happy to see any reports you can provide (hold the pterodactyls, please). His address is 18722 Newell St., Floor 2, Shaker Heights, OH 44122. Based on information from throughout the region, Editors choose the "noteworthy" of the noteworthy among all sightings reports, from all three states, and prepare their reports for publication in *North American Birds*.

It's not an easy task to get a record published in *North American Birds*. I used to think that I had won a small victory whenever one of my sightings made the cut. After considering the warbler, the curlew, the woodpecker, the pigeon, and the parakeet, I now believe that the mere act of submitting a report is a small victory in itself. I also believe it is now your turn. 🦋