

Juvenile herring gulls in Gallia Co. on 12 June 2004. Photo by Wendell L. Argabrite.

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### Licking Reservoir Trip

May 29, 8 A.M. to May 31, 8 P.M. 1902

by Lynds Jones

We found this text in a packet of papers of Lynds Jones (1865-1951) of Oberlin, Ohio, one of the state's eminent ornithologists. Probably an early draft of an article never published, it was typed on the reverse of five sheets of stationery of *The Wilson Bulletin*, the journal Jones founded and edited for many years. A long-time member of the faculty at Oberlin College, Jones founded the *Wilson Ornithological Society*, and was the first university professor of ornithology in the United States, as well as author of *The Birds of Ohio: A Revised Catalogue* (1903). Among Jones's companions on this birding trip were I. A. Field, author of *The Birds of Licking County* (1903), and William Leon Dawson, author of *The Birds of Ohio* (1903). Published here for the first time, this piece describes field trips taken at Licking Reservoir (its name officially changed to Buckeye Lake in 1894) at the end of spring 1902. By 1898, the last Ohio Canal boat had passed through the locks on the lake, and the area was a popular tourist destination, called the "Playground of Ohio." In the year of Jones's expedition, for example, among other events it hosted a YMCA event attended by a thousand persons, and a picnic for 500 children. Amenities of the day included two dancing pavilions, numerous resorts and hotels (the Glass Hotel charged \$10 a week by 1911), marinas, liveries, ball fields, arcades, and two newspapers. Nevertheless, it seems some wild areas remained in 1902.

Here there is much to interest the student of Ohio's ornithological history. Readers will notice a ratio of 50 least bitterns to one great blue heron and other striking differences from today's avifauna, an early record of brant which Irving [1903:134] himself called a "doubtful record" and of long-billed curlew which he [ibid, p.136] duly reports without qualification. Dawson, for his part (1903) merely reports the curlew as "now [a] rare migrant," without mentioning this sighting, and includes the brant in his hypothetical list, saying it was uncertain as to whether the nominate or the "white-bellied brant" was involved on this occasion. It is also interesting to compare Jones's account here with Trautman's work (1940) on the bird life of Buckeye Lake, based on his studies there not too many years later, between 1922 and 1934. —Ed.

PARTICIPANTS; Irving A. Field, Granville, E. J. Arrick, McConnelsville (29-30), W. L. Dawson, Columbus (30). Lynds Jones, Oberlin, Ohio. Board and room at the hotel managed by Mr. Glass. Dinner out 30. [the numbers refer to May dates in 1902]

Work began recording the birds as soon as we could get our clothes changed, which was about 8:30 A.M. We took boats at once, one for Arrick and I, another for Field, with his gun. I rowed across to the swamps bordering the south side of the New Reservoir. It is about half a mile from the hotel and due south. A little further west there is an extensive island with a large peach orchard and a dwelling



house. The part facing the reservoir is now planted to corn. There is probably ten acres of corn land on this island. Strawberries of a fine quality and large size have been allowed to run wild in the peach orchard, and were just ripening on our first day out. We gorged ourselves the second day!

We first went into the marshy ground at the west end of the island, left our boats in about a foot of water among the cattails, and waded out keeping a sharp lookout for swamp birds. We had no more than entered the rim of submerged vegetation rods out from the first cattails when the Least Bitterns began to start up. We had counted above a dozen before searching the dry ground of the island. I had scarcely stepped out of the boat before running upon a nest with four eggs of the Least Bittern. In this swamp a number of unfinished nests, and one with three and one with two eggs were found. Here the Red-winged Blackbirds were nesting in large numbers, but most of the nests contained young or were empty, the young having left. A very small proportion contained eggs.

At the beginning of an arm of the swamp which extended into the island toward its south side, on the east end, I ran upon a nest containing eight eggs of Florida Gallinule [*common moorhen*]. Like the Least Bittern, this nest was elevated above the water fully a foot, but with a runway of roads extending down to the water. The nest was made of the same materials. The Least Bittern's nests were more elevated, some of them fully three feet, and with no runway of reeds. The nests were fairly well made, and slightly hollowed in the middle.

After some further search here, which revealed two Long-billed Marsh Wrens in the drier parts of the reeds, and innumerable Traill's Flycatchers in the bordering marshes, we went to another island of small extent, but with rather large trees which grew upon an elevated place. This bunch of trees was surrounded by water, on the south by the canal proper, on the east and north by an extensive border of cattails, gradually fading into the regulation marshy land with narrow leaved cattails and further by submerged plants and lily [*sic*] pads; on the west there was a considerable growth of crooked water willows. In one of these willows, in a natural cavity there was to be a Prothonotary Warbler's nest. We first heard the warblers, then saw them making somewhat regular trips to and fro across a small clear space, and finally discovered one of the birds carrying material for a nest. There seemed to be three males and one female, but the males were fighting. In the cattails the Long-billed Marsh Wrens were numerous, and we found several unfinished nests. Here, also, the Least Bitterns were very numerous, and we heard the Virginia Rail and started up one Sora. It was here that the American Bittern got up and flew over to the larger island.

As we looked over to the old reservoir, from the tow path, we saw a single Black Tern flying over the water. The old part was clearer water.

I was prepared to see a body of water besprinkled with standing dead trees, and filled with rotting stumps and fallen timber, making progress with a boat difficult and hazardous. On the contrary, the water was an unbroken expanse, except for the island which dotted the surface, some of them mere points of land with a few trees or brush, some larger and used for summer residences, some wholly submerged and known only by the thick growth of cattails, usually surrounded by a coarse

submerged water plant and lily pads. The snags and stumps and logs were mostly conspicuous by their absence. There were no standing dead trees, and the stumps were scattered and few, and mostly mere points of wood, or like stakes sticking up out of the water. A few logs lay just underneath the water.

The water vegetation, that which lay just beneath the surface of the water, and that which lay just at the top of the water—floating lily pads and the like—was interesting from the standpoint of the boatman. In some places there was a *Spyrogira*-like thing with that water plant which grows in long strings, having clusters of needle-like leaves sticking out all around the stem, something like a hemlock. When the oars went down into this mixture they came up loaded. The lily pads and the coarse submerged waterplant [*sic*] retarded progress seriously. In some places these plants were so thick that it was almost impossible to push through. In a few places we had to pole the boat along. Of course these islands of vegetation occurred only in the places where the water was less than two feet deep. In deeper water only scattered lily pads were found, and in still deeper places, which was the larger proportion of the reservoir, there was no vegetation. We saw both the yellow and the white lilies.

On the way home to dinner I picked up the Least Bittern's set of four and the Florida Gallinule [*sic*] of eight eggs. Arrick rowed to the west end of the large island, on the way home, where we stopped to eat strawberries, and I rowed the rest of the way.

After dinner we rowed down toward the east to some small islands, where more Coots and Florida Gallinules were recorded, and everywhere in the swampy vegetation, Least Bitterns. After reconnoitering several likely places for water birds, we rowed to the north side where the dyke forms the boundary to the reservoir, and visited an extensive swamp below the level of the reservoir. Here the Prothonotary Warblers were more numerous. The Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat and Field Sparrow were added to the list. I ought to have said that before coming to this swamp we visited the east side where there were some high woods and more swamps. Here we found some good water to drink, and in the woods the Oven bird, Screech Owl, Woodcock, Green-crested Flycatcher, and several other less uncommon birds.

Against a strong head wind we made our way home, and arrived just in time for supper. After supper Field skinned a Least Bittern and I blew the eggs I had taken. Before I had finished the job I walked Dawson, from Columbus. We soon went to bed, prepared to get an early start on the morrow.

May 30. Dawson, Field and I started out at 4 o'clock. Arrick did not waken until the call to breakfast. We took a boat apiece and crossed to the large island, putting up the bitterns and Green Herons, and noting the Barn, Bank, Tree and Rough-winged Swallows overhead. As we stepped out upon the dyke a flock of Blue-winged Teals appeared overhead. While crossing a single Solitary Sandpiper flew across the water, and Cliff Swallow joined the troops of other swallows and Purple Martins. From the dyke separating the new from the old reservoir I sighted some ducks on the south bank of the old reservoir. They proved to be Lesser Scaup. We dragged one boat over the dyke and rowed out to make sure. On the way back to



breakfast there was nothing unusual. We did not see the Osprey which was feeding yesterday morning.

After breakfast we took two boats, Field and Arrick in one, Dawson and I in the other, and made for the east end of the reservoir, twelve miles away. Stopping at the Prothonotary Warbler swamp on the way down we added the Scarlet Tanager to our list. It was here that Dawson and I made search for nests of Prothonotary, finding several not occupied. In climbing one rotten stub that looked well for a nest, it broke short off letting me down about eight feet into the mud and slime of the swamp. My left hand got badly skinned in the fall. All along this dyke the Prothonotary Warblers were numerous.

From the swamp we rowed to the 'Floating Island', some six miles down the reservoir. This may have grown up since the reservoir was made, but if so I doubt if it is really the result of a raft of wood in deep water. It has all the appearance of an extensive sphagnum moss and cranberry bog with a fringe of crooked willows, dogwood and poison sumac or oak. A purple orchid was in bloom. This island looked to be some twenty acres in extent, separated from an elevation of land on which large trees were growing, by a narrow strip of water. This is on the north side of the reservoir. This region is one of numerous small islands and narrowing clear water. It has the appearance of nearness to the end of the reservoir; but I was told that there is considerable clear water further east.

We stopped in the large woods north of the 'floating Island' and recorded White-breasted Nuthatch, Hummingbird, Bobolink on the outskirts, and Orchard Oriole.

From here we pushed on and turned north into an arm of the reservoir that extends perhaps a mile north between low hills. On the east side of the end of this arm there is a considerable woods which contains large trees and considerable underbrush. On the water we saw more Lesser Scaup Ducks, two males and six females, Green Herons and Least Bitterns. In the woods an Olive-backed Thrush was singing, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher made himself known, and a great Blue Heron passed overhead. Here, also, we heard a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Some extensive swampy looking tracts to the south in another blunt projection of the reservoir, gave us a good deal of trouble. There was too much vegetation to make work here practicable. After beating about with little success we went to one of the low log houses on a low island where we got some good water, and ate dinner. On the way over two Black Ducks flew across the water, and a single Greater Yellow-legs howled at us. All around we could hear swamp birds complaining in the thick vegetation, but none but Coots could be seen. It was very annoying.

After dinner we made back for the hotel along the south shore where islands and retreats for ducks abound. Here we were very fortunate in putting up a Brant, the first one I ever saw to recognize. He allowed us to approach within a stone's throw before taking wing.

There was nothing more of special interest before reaching the swamps lying east of the large island opposite the hotel. Here we put up a Florida Gallinule for Dawson's benefit, and he or Field found a nest containing six eggs. We visited the strawberry patch again and gorged ourselves. I got uncomfortable! We did not

try to do more work, but went to the hotel, about 4:30 P.M. and waited for Dawson's train, which was late. When he had gone the three of us took supper, and then waited for Arrick's train, which was late also. When he had gone we turned in. While waiting for Dawson's train a Vesper Sparrow was heard singing and a Nighthawk squeed overhead. The day's work netted 77 species, not counting some small sandpipers which were seen flying across the water low down, in compact flocks. On the whole it was a very successful day's work.

Saturday morning at 4:30 we left the hotel and walked down the north dyke about a mile. There appeared flying rather high over the reservoir a flock of seven Long-billed Curlews! They swept over to the west and appeared to light near the strawberry island. Just as we were starting back to go over to them they appeared again flying east over the water, and this time came within easy range. There was no mistaking them. We saw nothing of interest during the rest of the morning. After breakfast we started up the railroad track to study the fauna away from the water and in the larger woods. We walked several miles north and west, but added only Bluebird and Bartramian Sandpiper to the list. Vesper Sparrows proved to be fairly common. Bobolinks and Meadowlarks were not very numerous. Only two Sparrow Hawks were seen. We came back to reservoir at 11 o'clock and took boats for the purpose of taking a picture of the gallinule's nest. On the way over four terns appeared, two of which were clearly Common and two were so much larger that we decided they must be either Caspian or Royal. At first we pronounced them Am. Herring Gulls, but a closer view decided the point that they were terns beyond doubt. A flock of smaller terns came in which Field thought were smaller than the Common, but I was not sure enough to give them any other name. A Black Tern joined the company. There was not time to get the gun before dinner so we waited and went out for them after dinner. They were not to be found anywhere! We also spotted a Red-breasted Merganser on our row over both before and after dinner. After our unsuccessful search for the tern we beached our boats and walked down the dike for the Prothonotary Warbler's nest and four eggs. I took them and got them safely home. I also gathered the six Florida Gallinule's eggs, which proved to be well addled. Supper and packing closed the day.

The weather was about all that could be desired, everything considered, everything considered. Thursday opened decidedly frosty at Edison, but seemed somewhat less cold at the reservoir. The day warmed up and was pleasant for work on the water and in the swamps. Friday was all that could be desired. The morning was just a little chilly. Saturday began in a shower, was mostly cloudy all day but clearing toward evening. Saturday began in a shower, was mostly cloudy all day but clearing toward evening, with a shower at about 2 P.M. Every day a rather stiff breeze sprang up from the south west rather late in the afternoon.

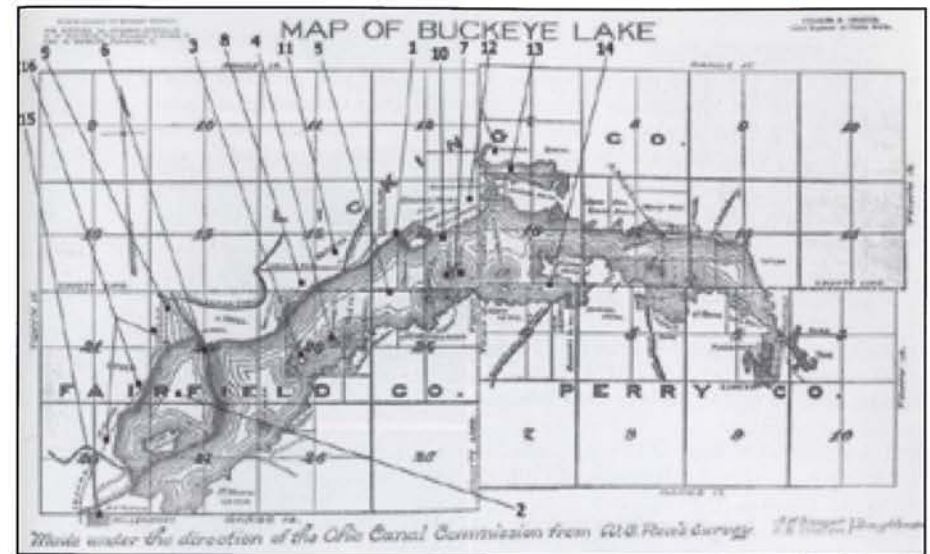
At Granville no special effort was made to record birds, but a list was kept for comparison. The list of species follows, with the relative abundance of each given. Superficially the fauna of the Licking reservoir region and of Lorain County seem to be very similar in most respects but with two notable exceptions. There we recorded no House Wrens, but the Prothonotary Warblers were numerous.



## BIRDS SEEN AT LICKING RESERVOIR, MAY 29, 30, 31, 1902

1. Bonaparte's Gull, 1.
  2. Caspian Tern, 2.
  3. Common Tern, 9.
  4. Black Tern, 2.
  5. Red-breasted Merganser, 1.
  6. Black Duck, 3.
  7. Blue-winged Teal, 10.
  8. Lesser Scaup Duck, 20.
  9. Brant, 1.
  10. American Bittern, 2.
  11. Least Bittern, 50.
  12. Great Blue Heron, 1.
  13. Green Heron, 10.
  14. Virginia Rail, 10. G.
  15. Sora, 4.
  16. Florida Gallinule, 4.
  17. American Coot, 10.
  18. American Woodcock, 1.
  19. Greater Yellow-legs, 2.
  20. Bartramian Sandpiper, 2.
  21. Spotted Sandpiper, 10. G.
  22. Long-billed Curlew, 7.
  23. Solitary Sandpiper, 5.
  24. Killdeer, 4. G.
  25. Bob-white, 10. G.
  26. Mourning Dove, C. G.
  27. Turkey Vulture, 2. G.
  28. American Sparrow Hawk, 2.
  29. American Osprey, 1.
  30. Screech Owl, 1.
  31. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 10. G.
  32. Black-billed Cuckoo, 3. G.
  33. Belted Kingfisher, 5.
  34. Hairy Woodpecker, 2.
  35. Downy Woodpecker, 4. G.
  36. Red-headed Woodpecker, 10. G.
  37. Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2.
  38. Flicker, 10. G.
  39. Nighthawk, 3. G.
  40. Chimney Swift, T.C. G.
  41. Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 3.
  42. Kingbird, C. G.
  43. Crested Flycatcher, T.C. G.
  44. Phoebe, 10. G.
  45. Wood Pewee, C. G.
  46. Green-crested Flycatcher, 10. G.
  47. Traill's Flycatcher, C. G.
  48. Blue Jay, T.C. G.
  49. American Crow, T.C. G.
  50. Bobolink, 5. G.
  51. Cowbird, 1.
  52. Red-winged Blackbird, C. G.
  53. Meadowlark, C. G.
  54. Orchard Oriole, 5. G.
  55. Baltimore Oriole, C. G.
  56. Bronzed Grackle, T. C. G.
  57. American Goldfinch, C. G.
  58. Vesper Sparrow, 10. G.
  59. Field Sparrow, 5. G.
  60. Song Sparrow, C. G.
  61. Towhee, 2.
  62. Cardinal, C. G.
  63. Indigo Bunting, C. G.
  64. Scarlet Tanager, 3. G.
  65. Purple Martin, T. C. G.
  66. Cliff Swallow, 4.
  67. Barn Swallow, T.C. G.
  68. Tree Swallow, 20.
  69. Bark [sic] Swallow, C.
  70. Rough-winged Swallow, 20.
  71. Cedar Waxwing, 15. G.
  72. Red-eyed Vireo, C. G.
  73. Warbling Vireo, C. G.
  74. Yellow-throated Vireo, 5. G.
  75. Prothonotary Warbler, C.
  76. Yellow Warbler, C. G.
  77. Oven-bird, 3.
  78. Maryland Yellow-throat, C. G.
  79. Yellow-breasted Chat, T.C. G.
  80. American Redstart, 15.
  81. Catbird, C. G.
  82. Brown Thrasher, 5. G.
  83. Carolina Wren, C. G.
  84. Long-billed Marsh Wren, C.
  85. White-breasted Nuthatch, 5.
  86. Tufted Titmouse, 5.
  87. Chickadee, 2.
  88. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 1.
  89. Wood Thrush, T.C. G.
  90. Olive-backed Thrush, 1.
  91. American Robin, C. G.
  92. Bluebird, 5. G.
- A small sandpiper.

The Granville horizon includes those marked G, and the following additions:  
Dickcissel. Lark Sparrow. Chipping Sparrow.



Map courtesy Donna Fisher Braig, from her book *My Buckeye Lake Story*.

## Legend for map

1. Glass Hotel – The front steps remain today in the village of Buckeye Lake.
2. New Reservoir – The lake west of the Ohio Canal towpath, extending south from Sellars Point. On today's maps called the New Lake.
3. Orchard Island — Today the location of many summer homes.
4. Round Island – Until 2005 known as Rownd Island and owned by Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants, who had a summer residence there.
5. Old Reservoir – The area of the Lake east of the towpath extending south from Sellars Point.
6. Sellars Point – The towpath extended from this peninsula to Millersport.
7. Beech and Elm Islands — Presently occupied by residential homes, but the early names remain.
8. North Bank – The earthen dam that extends from just east of the Glass Hotel (1) to Sellars Point (6).
9. Lakeside Woods — Remains today west of Sellars Point, south of Fairfield Co. Twp. Rd. 404.
10. Cranberry Bog – Shrinking in size but extant today, it does not appear on this 1900 map.
11. Big Woods – Today it can be seen north of the North Bank, extending from west of the Glass Hotel site to just East of Sellars Point. It is north of St. Rt. 360.
12. Bounds Woods – This woods remains near the former Blue Goose Restaurant.
13. Maple Bay – Known previously as Maple Swamp.
14. Little Buckeye — Known previously as Little Buckeye Swamp.
15. Millersport — The village at the western end of the lake.
16. Steam Railroad — Today an abandoned Penn Central Railroad line, extending from the village of Millersport to the north.

### Acknowledgments

Jones's typescript was saved from oblivion by E. & S. Wood, who purchased them at an auction several years ago and subsequently donated them to the Ohio Ornithological Society, whence they will join the Jones archives at Oberlin University. Everyone interested in the history of Ohio ornithology owes them a debt. We are also very grateful to Gina Buckey, who lives on the north shore of Buckeye Lake, for research into the history of the site, including work on the map. Vicki White of the Buckeye Lake Museum was very helpful with references, as was Donna Fisher Braig.

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A young glaucous gull from 4 Feb in Cleveland, photographed by Gary Meszaros. This second-winter bird retains the bicolored bill of the first-winter, but looks overall chalky-white, lacking extensive brownish vermiculations.



An adult Iceland gull in perfect plumage, photographed in Cleveland 1 Feb by Gary Meszaros. This is our local "Kumlien's" form, which does not always show such dark and prominent black in the primaries



Adult glaucous gull, photographed in Cleveland 1 Feb by Gary Meszaros. Compare the head and bill structure to the Iceland gull.

## Gulls of Lake Erie



This view of the apparent herring X great black-backed gull shows underwing details. Photo by John Pogacnik from Cleveland 29 Jan.