

## Highs and Lows of 1980

Several bird report contributors responded to the call to tell you of their most exciting and most disappointing birding adventures of last year. Here are their stories:

### Charlotte Mathena

On November 26th after a morning of disappointing birding, Anne Van Roekel and I were homeward bound on a very busy road, when I sighted at some distance a few birds flying in a half vee formation. When their large size became apparent, I pulled the car off on the berm as traffic whizzed by. The birds flew over the car with long necks stretched and long legs trailing their gray bodies. SEVEN SANDHILL CRANES. Unbelievable, seven sandhill cranes flying over a residential and commercial area. I recklessly pulled the car into traffic and not too safely turned left in front of speeding cars to chase the cranes that had disappeared south along a narrow road. After speeding a one-half mile, we spotted the birds ahead; only to be amazed as they soon circled over a farm and came down. We sped 100 yards up the farmer's drive to his house and saw the cranes about 90 yards out in a field of very short grass. The farmer came out and after deciding we were crazy but harmless, said we were welcome to stay and watch those "turkeys". We sat in the car and gawked at the cranes as they preened and walked around. Although not alarmed, after 25 minutes of rest, they took off, circled the field and flew away to the south. Anne and I sat there almost disbelieving that we had seen seven majestic cranes walking in a field that was not more than 1½ miles from the busy Dayton Mall shopping center. We figured if we had been driving home 30 second sooner or later, we would have missed seeing them fly over. Sometimes birders are lucky.

Nothing has been terribly disappointing but this was the most so: In July we were headed for St. Mary's Fish Hatchery to see the latest good birds in the area. It is normally a 1½ hour drive, but because the freeway was partially closed for repairs, it was a 2½ hour drive for us. We were all hot and impatient when we arrived. Then the bad news was the four American avocets had flown. The other shorebirding there was mediocre that day. A trip for naught. But then all birders expect those kinds of days. But the avocet is such a beauty to miss.

### Ray Hannikman

Drive-in Snowy Owl. On the evening of November 10, 1980 Dave Corbin and I observed some unusual behavior exhibited by the Snowy Owl that was frequenting Wildwood Park here in Cleveland. To be sure, the owl was there, on the beach, close to cars (and rats), and seemingly oblivious to his audience of admirers. Besides doing typical Snowy Owl things like perching on buildings, posts, and boulders, Dave and I observed the owl drinking or cleaning its bill in water. After the owl had eaten a rat, it flew to a puddle in the parking lot and dipped its beak several times into the water. The bird also flew over to the yacht club basin and repeated this same procedure at the water's edge. Whether the owl was washing its beak or drinking could not be ascertained. Whatever the owl was doing, it provided us with an excellent evening of entertainment.

### Bruce Stehling

My highlight was watching a Glossy Ibis feed in a pool beside a road in southeastern Franklin County. Jim Fry told me about it and 20 minutes later I saw it.

However, the Brant at Huntington Beach was the other extreme. I drove 175 miles to Huntington and saw only a Black Labrador catch a stick from the water. How exciting.

On November 8, I was at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and saw a beautiful sight. I was watching about 3,000 Canada Geese when they all started taking flight. An animal was chasing some deer causing the flight. What noise! All of the geese were in the air. The animal was a big white-tailed deer buck with a large rack. In all the noise and feathers flying the deer got scared and just stopped and looked into the sky at the geese. That was a sight you don't see every day.

#### Hermann Kind

My birding highlight of the year was the sighting of an adult Ferruginous Hawk at Point Reyes, California. This hawk circled low over a grassy hillside and then alighted on a raised hummock within 100 yards of us and perched there for some time while we focused our scope on it for an excellent observation. This took place on the 28th of January. I have seen this hawk before but never as close or as well as this time.

The greatest disappointment of the year was an unsuccessful attempt to see a Glossy Ibis that had been observed for several weeks near Lithopolis, Ohio. We did not learn of the presence of this bird until it had been there for a few weeks and when we went out there the day after we learned about it, it was no longer there.

#### Vic Fazio

Certainly, for me, the highlight of the year came May 11 at Magee Marsh with the discovery of a Cinnamon Teal. However, this was only just compensation for the disappointing and frustrating time I had in late February and early March. Going to school in Springfield, Ohio has its disadvantages. One of these was having to sit around while the Heermann's Gull and Tufted Duck were at Lorain. As it was I was able to bird Lorain, February 9, March 2, and March 15 but I missed both birds by as little as 24 hours.

#### Jim Fry

The birding highlight of my year was February 12 at the Muny Pier in Lorain when at 1:10 P.M. John Pogacnik pointed out to me, Arden and Erdine Thompson the Heermann's Gull he had just moments before discovered. The Heermann's Gull was my 300th Ohio life ABA bird. Just 25 minutes earlier, John had shown me another life bird, a Thayer's Gull, which as number 299.

My most disappointing moment was when I arrived at Huron on July 28 and found out that the Arctic Tern Bruce Peterjohn had discovered the day before was gone.

#### Matt Anderson

Disappointments: Driving several hours out of our way to go to Mt. Evans in Colorado to get Brown-Capped Rosey Finch, Ptarmigan and Pine Grosbeak only to find that the road to the top was still closed because of snow (on June 20). Being on the verge of identifying a group of about 10 ducks as Mexican Ducks only to be kicked off the property. We ended up not finding them anywhere else. Being within five feet or so of a calling Black Rail at Irwin Prairie for about

five minutes without ever seeing the darned thing.

Highlights: The Big Day on May 12 with Tom Kemp, Eric Durbin and Pete Montion on which I recorded 166 species of birds - 27 more than my previous high. Picking up 83 new species on a trip to Arizona and Colorado when I only expected in the vicinity of fifty.

Overall, the highlights far outweighed the disappointments of 1980.

#### Jerry Cairo

My disappointing moment of the year came on May 31, 1980. While in the waters of Toussaint Creek, my two birding companions saw a King Rail from the bank while I never saw the bird. My birding highlight was on May 11, 1980 when I saw my first spring overflight in Ottawa County.

#### John Herman

My birding highlights for 1980:

The Ohio Cardinal getting more subscribers and bird report contributors plus the vastly better, expanded content of the magazine than that of the magazines first two years issues;

The varied thrush at Mansfield, Ohio feeder, 10 February - 12 March 1980;

The 34 white-fronted geese at Wayne County Plain Twp. (Blach Leyville), 23-27 March 1980.

And so it goes. What is one man's highlight may well be another's disappointment. Welcome to 1981.

#### Register Your Feeder

David Reed, President of the Black Swamp Chapter of the Audubon Society is conducting a bird feeder survey in Ohio. He asks any Ohio feeder enthusiast to help him by contributing information as to the number and type of species using their feeder. He supplies the feeder report forms and you count the maximum number of each species using your feeder on any one day selected by you twice each month. This research project has been successful for a number of years in Michigan. Mr. Reed received a research grant from the Ohio Audubon Council for this work. If you'd like to help, write:

David Reed, President  
Black Swamp Audubon  
15-374 Rd. TR #1  
Napoleon, Ohio 43545