

Summer 2008 Overview and Reports

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Summer 2008 was certainly eventful, and a substantial amount of reporting culminated in an impressive list of 247 species plus two hybrids, and 14 species on the Ohio Bird Records Committee's review list. No doubt, a high percentage of birders participating in the third field season of the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/>) resulted in many Ohio counties that typically experience below-average birding effort during the period receiving more birding coverage. Survey efforts during the June–July reporting period have produced more than 70,000 breeding bird observations, and these data are likely an underestimate of total birding efforts, since not all data have been logged electronically. Hopefully, intriguing discoveries (e.g., an increase in Common Raven observations and tantalizing reports of Swainson's Warblers in far eastern

Ohio) will continue to bring renewed birding interest to diverse yet under-visited areas. In addition, many great finds during the period reinforce the fact that great birding is not always confined to those jewels of conservation and preservation.

An interesting group of species with a more westerly distribution (e.g., Burrowing Owl, Least Tern, Black Rail, Black-necked Stilt) materialized in Ohio during the period. Although it is difficult to substantiate, might unusual weather patterns and above-average precipitation in western regions of the Midwest be implicated? Flooding in agricultural areas around Bellevue (a "pothole" region on the **Sandusky/Seneca** county line) attracted several species of waterbirds, with many interesting species remaining to breed (for instance, a report of a Lesser Scaup hen with downy young). Historically, the hydrology of this area is well known and ornithological accounts reference notable concentrations of waterbirds from this area during years with abnormal precipitation patterns. Flooding in the summer of 1984 produced conditions that attracted many species of waterbirds and was thoroughly documented in Ohio's first breeding bird atlas (Peterjohn and Rice 1991).

Birding attention at the flooded Bellevue site throughout the period provided a large percentage of the reported shorebird observations. In addition, appropriate draw-down conditions at a few state wildlife areas in northern counties and reports from other well-birded locations (e.g., Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**) resulted in 27 shorebird species for the period in Ohio. Summer patterns of shorebird occurrence in Ohio

are nicely illustrated by exploring data from eBird (Figure 1), further emphasizing the usefulness of citizen science data and valuable birder contributions to publications such as *The Ohio Cardinal* and *North American Birds*. (eBird [<http://www.ebird.org>] is a joint effort of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and the National Science Foundation, and represents a way for any birder or professional ornithologist to contribute birding observations to a comprehensive database [part of the larger Avian Knowledge Network, <http://www.avianknowledge.net/>]. eBird is enormous in scope and “citizen scientists” can contribute their birding data from any location in the Western Hemisphere. Plans to make this a truly global effort are now in the works.)

Mean temperatures across Ohio were in the low to mid 70°s F for June and July. Mean temperatures across the state consistently were warmer than normal in June, whereas mean temperatures in July deviated only slightly below the norm. The July mean temperature in southwestern Ohio was 2.0 degrees below the normal mean. The relatively mild July weather provided pleasant field conditions and may have encouraged increased birding coverage during a season that typically experiences below average birding efforts. The majority of Ohio experienced above average amounts of precipitation during June, especially in central and west-central counties. With the exception of extreme northeastern Ohio and a sliver of the northwest from Toledo

west to the Indiana border, the state was drier than average during July.

The following conventions are used throughout all seasonal reports. Common names that have been underlined are on the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC) Review List, meaning that observers should send supplemental documentation of these species to the OBRC for consideration. County names are in bold and italicized. Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow published guidelines from the North American Check-list Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union (1998: 7th edition), including published supplements complete through the 49th Supplement. The following abbreviations are used in these accounts:

fide = “on the authority of”; typically a record submitted by a third party

m. obs. = multiple observers

MP = Metropark

NP = National Park

NWR = National Wildlife Refuge

OBBA2 = Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II, 2006-2010

OBRC = Ohio Bird Records Committee

ODNR = Ohio Department of Natural Resources

ODOW = Ohio Division of Wildlife

SNP = State Nature Preserve

SP = State Park

WA = Wildlife Area

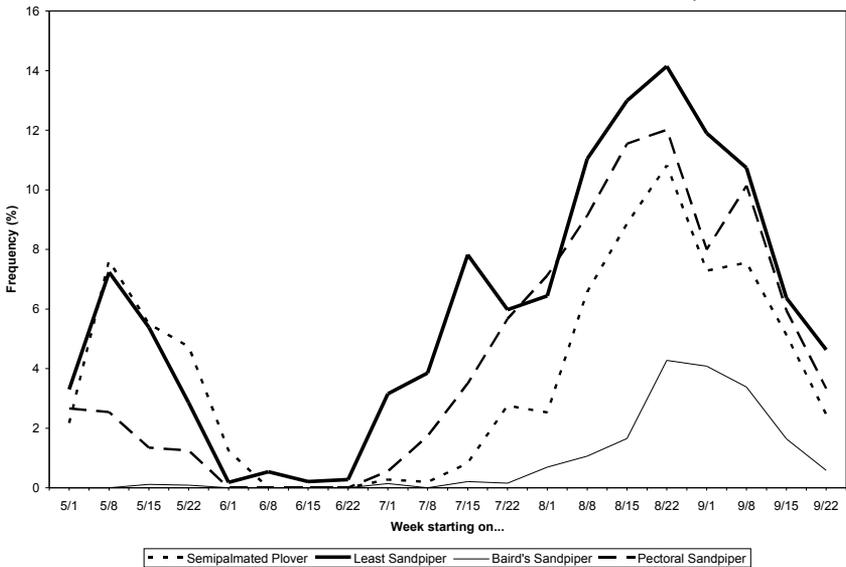


Figure 1. Timing of occurrence in Ohio during spring and fall migration (2004-2008) for four shorebird species (Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Baird's Sandpiper). Data provided through voluntary citizen science efforts (eBird 2008).

Canada Goose: Detected on approximately 25% of all eBird checklists for the period (noted in 67 counties). As could be expected, Ohio's second breeding bird atlas shows the species present in all atlas regions (recorded in over 1,200 atlas blocks with a 78% breeding confirmation rate).

Mute Swan: Beginning in the 1980s, this introduced species spread throughout the Great Lakes region and first attempted nesting in 1987 at Cedar Point NWR, **Lucas** (Peterjohn and Rice 1991). The past two decades have seen a substantial increase in the species, and this period holds records from the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II in 21 separate Atlas blocks representing 14 counties. Most block records (81%) are located in northern counties. Mated pairs are occupying small farm ponds; one recently arrived pair turned up at a gravel quarry pond in **Clermont** (Robert Foppe).

Trumpeter Swan: The estimated 74% survival rate of fledged Trumpeter Swans is certainly contributing to the establishment of a viable breeding population after reintroduction efforts in Ohio. In 2008, the Division of Wildlife reported 28 nesting pairs but no known expansion of their distribution (Dave Sherman). Breeding bird atlas data reflect this established population with occurrence in 40 individual survey blocks to date. This reporting period produced records from nine counties: **Lorain, Marion, Muskingum, Portage, Ottawa, Richland, Sandusky, Trumbull,** and **Wyandot**. Trumpeter Swan is currently an OBRC review species, and care should be taken when differentiating between true vagrant and introduced individuals.

Wood Duck: Reported to the OBBA2 from 245 survey blocks (more than 40% representing observations



Wood Ducks are familiar breeders throughout Ohio anywhere that nest cavities (whether man-made or natural) are available in proximity to water. This 05 Jul photograph by Dave Lewis provides breeding evidence for this species for North Chagrin Reservation in Cuyahoga.

of fledged young). Observations of downy young spanned the entire reporting period; each of the 64 OBBA2 reporting regions has records.

Gadwall: Craig Holt reports a likely straggling male from the **Lorain** impoundments 05 Jun; possible breeders were observed at Sandy Ridge Reservation, **Lorain** on 04 Jun (Tim Fairweather). Breeding pair numbers in the marshes of the Lake Erie Western Basin were below average this year (*vide* Mark Shieldcastle); however, breeders were detected at Ottawa NWR, **Ottawa** on 07 and 19 Jul (Douglas Vogus, Chris Pierce). Robert and Sandy Harlan reported a pair at Dorset WA, **Ashtabula** on 08 Jun and a pair at Pickerel Creek WA, **Sandusky**, on 22 Jun. Of special note was a probable nesting pair during Jun at the very productive “pothole” region south of Bellevue, **Seneca** (Tom Bartlett).

American Wigeon: The flooded Bellevue “potholes” (York Township, **Sandusky** and Thompson Township, **Seneca**) held American Wigeon in early Jun where nesting was considered probable at best (Becky Cullen, Tom

Bartlett, Robert Harlan). A pair was also observed at Pipe Creek WA, **Erie** on 21 Jul (Ryan Steiner), which currently represents the second of only two probable OBBA2 block records.

American Black Duck: only three pairs of probable breeders were reported to the OBBA2; one pair on 10 Jun in **Sandusky** (Erin Cashion, Jake Straub); a second pair 11 Jun at Ottawa NWR, **Ottawa** (Mark Shieldcastle); and a third in **Erie** 16 Jul (Mark Shieldcastle). Chris Pierce reported three individuals 28 Jul at Sandy Ridge Reservation (**Lorain**). A pair at Conneaut, **Ashtabula**, on 19 Jun represented a possible breeding pair (Lukas Musher).

Mallard: Reported in every OBBA2 survey region to date; reported to the OBBA2 from 376 survey blocks during this period.

Blue-winged Teal: Downy young were reported from **Hancock**, **Lucas**, **Ottawa**, **Seneca**, and **Wood**. Remarkably, five nests were found, all on 07 Jun, in the recently restored wetlands in eastern **Hardin** (Richard Counts).

Northern Shoveler: Six individuals

(five males and one female) were observed at the Bellevue “potholes” (both **Sandusky** and **Seneca** sides) on 01 Jun (Robert and Sandy Harlan). One pair was found at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, **Mahoning** on 02 Jun and apparently stuck around through the summer with unknown breeding status (William Jones). Atlas records show three pairs observed; one in **Hardin** (07 Jun; Richard Counts), another in **Sandusky** (10 Jun, Erin Cashion, Jake Straub), and a third in **Ottawa** (16 Jul; Mark Shieldcastle). Nesting appeared likely at the **Hardin** wetlands site, where the pair acted aggressively towards the observer upon detection; a male shoveler was seen a week later at this same location. Two birds were observed at Miami-Whitewater Wetlands, **Hamilton** on 07 Jun (Joe Kappa).

Northern Pintail: Five individuals (four males and one female) were observed at the Bellevue “potholes” (**Sandusky** and **Seneca** sides) on 01 Jun (Robert Harlan). Successful breeding was probable at best for this site but Ohio’s only confirmed breeding record came from the **Hardin** wetlands on 29 Jun; Richard Counts observed the species sporadically throughout Jun until eventually observing a pair with independent young. A single bird was observed in **Lucas** on 31 Jul (Doug English) and single birds were also observed 05 Jun and 19 Jul at Big Island WA, **Marion** (Charlie Bombaci) and on 30 to 31 Jul at Conneaut, **Ashtabula** (James E. and David H. Yoder).

Green-winged Teal: Recorded in **Ashtabula**, **Hardin**, **Lorain**, **Lucas**, **Ottawa**, **Sandusky**, and

Seneca, with nice totals reported from **Hardin** (17 individuals on 26 Jun) and **Ottawa** (12 individuals on 19 Jul) during the period. Breeding confirmations were practically nonexistent, with the only known successful breeding attempts coming, remarkably, from the famous eastern **Hardin** wetlands on 29 Jun: seven downy chicks were accompanied by one female—the second confirmed breeding record for the species at this site since frequent breeding bird surveys were initiated in 2006 (Richard Counts). Another group of young was found mid-Jun at the Bellevue “potholes” in **Seneca** (Tom Bartlett). In all, three pairs of teal were observed at this site. A likely early migrant was detected at Conneaut (**Ashtabula**) on 22 Jul (Craig Holt). **Note:** *Although missing the reporting period by just two days, a probable breeding pair of teal was observed at a Big Island WA wetland (Marion) on 30 May.*

Canvasback: A late migrant in **Hamilton** was rare this far south on 01 Jun at Miami-Whitewater Wetlands (Paul Wharton).

Redhead: Most exciting was a first county nesting record for **Hardin** obtained 19 Jul when Richard Counts observed nine chicks following a hen—Redheads were present at the wetlands since early Jun. A breeding confirmation also came from **Ottawa** on 16 Jul (Mark Shieldcastle). Probable breeding was suspected at Cedar Point NWR (**Lucas**) on 26 Jun (Mark Shieldcastle). One pair was present at the Bellevue “potholes” on the **Sandusky** (York Township) side on 01 Jun, with a single drake still present in exactly the same location 22 Jun (Robert and Sandy Harlan). An apparently injured bird