

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

It was a snowy winter. A storm on 06 Dec dumped 7.6 inches on Youngstown, which shattered that date's 1962 record of 4.7 inches. For over a week starting 10 Dec the temperature statewide was seldom above freezing and snow was widespread. A brief respite on 01 and 02 Jan led to a few record high temperatures in the 50s and 60s. A big snow event in the northeast on 08 Jan grew statewide by 14 Jan. Another storm crossed the southern half of the state on 21 Jan, leaving four to five inches at many stations. Despite this much snow, however, total precipitation for these two months was below the long-term average almost everywhere.

February also brought much snow to the northern half of the state, with two events (01-08 and 21-26 Feb) contributing to precipitation totals up to five times the averages in some areas. Between the snows the temperature soared (for Feb) into the 60s, setting record highs at many stations.

Carole Babyak wrote that her home turf in Warren, *Trumbull*, had over 50 inches of snow in Dec (the all-time high there for any month) and also received a record seasonal total of 103.7 inches.

Historically, hard winters have led to population crashes of some species; Northern Bobwhite and Carolina Wren come to mind. However, because this winter's temperatures were seldom, and only briefly, in single digits or below, even this amount of snow may not have severe long-term effects. Spring numbers will tell. The snow certainly hampered travel for birders, though!

Winter is the season of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), the Audubon Society program which has accumulated over 100 years of population data from citizen scientists. Ned Keller provides some insight into this winter's counts in a separate article which is accompanied by a table of CBC results. In the species accounts which follow this overview I many times note the highest number of a species found. These values are for single parties, usually birding in a relatively small area, and often are the counts of a single route within a CBC. However, I generally do not include data from an entire CBC, each of which is the result of many parties' efforts in scattered locales within a 15-mile diameter circle; those data are in the table.

Most of the species discussed in this issue were present for the entire season, and this feature is

seldom noted in their accounts. These birds are either year-round residents or visitors which arrived before Dec and whose last sighting was after Feb. The date of first or last sighting, as appropriate, is provided for species which were not here all winter.

The following accounts include 178 species, three hybrids, and one observation at the genus level. This species count is lower than those of the last three winters, which may have been the snow's acting on the birds or on birders. Waterfowl and gull species numbers were high. This year's five shorebird species is much fewer than last year's 11. Last winter six warbler species were reported; this year there were four. It was not a finch invasion year: Only two White-winged Crossbills were reported, and no Red Crossbills, though numbers of redpolls and siskins were fairly high.

There were 13 review species reported this winter, compared to nine in 2009-10. (Review species are found less than annually, or their annual occurrence has only been for a few recent years.) The Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC) maintains the core and review lists and is the repository of the documentation supporting them. Unfortunately five of the reported review species, and one of the reports of another, remain undocumented for the OBRC. The Committee urges birders to report all sightings of Review List species, of "regular" species found at unusual times, of nesting by birds previously not known to nest in the state, and of course sightings of birds never before found in Ohio. Information on how to document rarities is available at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/records/documentation.php>.

Trumpeter Swan is a review species though it is not included in the above count of 13. Despite the fact that they breed in the state, there are as yet no documented occurrences of truly wild birds in Ohio since introduction efforts began in the midwestern states. This is the one review species for which the OBRC does not expect documentation, unless of course it is of a demonstrably wild bird. Another species which has been documented to breed in several locations in the state, but which is still a review species, is Eurasian Collared-Dove. The OBRC especially urges all observers to document sightings of it so that the spread of this recent arrival can be studied.

Review species' names are underlined in the species accounts. Reports whose documentation

has been accepted by the OBRC include the names of the observers. Reports for which no documentation was submitted or whose documentation was not considered sufficient are listed anonymously.

Taxonomic order and nomenclature are those of the Check-List of North American Birds, 7th Edition (1998) as updated through the 51st Supplement (2010). This document is published by the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union and is available at <http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/print.php>. **County names** are in bold italics.

The shortened names and a few sets of initials listed below are used for some locations, organizations, and programs which occur repeatedly. The term “*fide*” is used in some citations; it means “in trust of” and is used where the reporter was not the observer.

Armleder = Armleder Park, Cincinnati,

Hamilton

Avon Power = the GenOn generation plant in Avon Lake, ***Lorain***

BSBO = Black Swamp Bird Observatory, Oak Harbor, ***Ottawa***

Caesar Creek = Caesar Creek SP, ***Warren***

CBC = Christmas Bird Count

CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park, ***Cuyahoga*** and ***Summit***

Eastlake Power = the FirstEnergy generation plant in Eastlake, ***Lake***

Fernald = Fernald Preserve, ***Butler*** and

Hamilton

Kelleys Island = Kelleys Island and adjacent waters, ***Erie***

Killdeer = Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area,

Wyandot

m. obs. = multiple observers

MP = Metro Park or MetroPark, depending on system

NP = Nature Preserve, except as part of CVNP
OBBA II = Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II
ONWR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge,

Lucas and ***Ottawa***

SF = State Forest

SNP = State Nature Preserve

SP = State Park

WA = Wildlife Area

Weather data are from www.weather.gov/precip and www.extremeweatherrecords.com. In the species accounts, “normal” early and late dates are from Harlan, *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio, 2008*. Breeding ranges and isolated locations are from Harlan and OBBA II submissions.

I am again indebted to Robert Hershberger, editor and publisher of *The Bobolink*, for providing many reports which would not otherwise be easily available to me.

Errata: The Fall 2010 masthead contained two errors. The Cardinal’s second publisher was Edwin C. Pierce and the fourth editor was Robert Harlan.

In the Fall 2009 issue Wilson’s Phalarope account I mistakenly transposed Larry Gara’s report of one bird at Grand Lake St. Marys, ***Aug-laizel/Mercer***, on 20 Oct, creating the incorrect statement that the high count was 20 on 01 Oct. The high count appears to have been two seen by Regina Schieltz in ***Darke*** on 02 Sep.

I repeated the error in the Fall 2010 American Avocet account. Larry Gara reported five avocets on 27 Oct at Caesar Creek SP, not 27 on 05 Oct. He commented, “What a sight!”, which is true even for a group of five. The high counts were of eight at Conneaut, ***Ashtabula***, on 24 Aug (Craig Holt) and 10 at Sandy Ridge Reservation, ***Lorain***, on 02 Sep (BRAS).