

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON — SPRING 2011

By Craig Caldwell

It was a very wet spring. March and May precipitation was as high as three times the average in many areas, and April's was quadruple the average at some stations in the southwestern and south central parts of the state. March precipitation included many snow events which set new daily records but most were small increases. Ashtabula, however, received almost seven inches on 12 Mar; the previous record for that day was two inches. Where it didn't snow in March, it rained, and the rain continued at a fairly steady rate through April. May's rain was concentrated in series of storms in the middle of the month. The only exceptions to the general wetness were the Lima area in March and the southeast in May, both of which were dryer than average.

March temperatures set a scattering of daily highs during the third week and nine daily lows, all in the northeast, on the 29th and 30th. April and May each had a moderate number of new daily highs and one daily low. All of the new temperature records were only a degree or two different from the old ones. (Weather data are from <http://water.weather.gov> and <http://www.extremeweatherrecords.com>.)

The popularity of spring hawk watching is increasing and the effort often yields high numbers of songbirds as well. Many northbound daytime migrants, especially raptors, turn east or west when they reach Lake Erie rather than cross it, so parks on or near the shore are prime locations to settle down on a lawn chair and enjoy the parade. Jen Brumfield did just that on 10 April in Cleveland's Edgewater Park; in 6 ½ hours she counted hundreds to thousands of raptors, Blue Jays, American Robins, and many others. Several other watch sites and watchers are also mentioned in the species accounts.

The number of birders, their skill, and their use of eBird and other electronic reporting systems are all increasing. It's hard to know whether the relatively large numbers of Red-necked and Eared Grebes, Northern Goshawks, and several other species reported this spring result from those factors or mean that more birds were here. Calculating sightings per party-hour at selected sites is outside the scope of the Cardinal's Species Accounts, but perhaps a reader would like to tackle the task and write an article for us.

Singles of many warblers and other species appeared earlier than usual. They may have been part of the nationwide general shift to ear-

lier northward movement or simply adventure-some individuals.

The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II (OBBA II) was launched in 2006 to define the current status of avian breeding in the state. It is especially intended to identify changes in breeding ranges since the original Atlas, which covered the years 1982-87. OBBA II was planned to be a five-year project but was expanded to include 2011. This spring and summer many dozens of observers made special "block-busting" surveys to fill gaps in the data. The OBBA II efforts during the three months of Spring 2011 resulted in about 17,000 individual observations.

In the Species Accounts you will see the phrases "breeding evidence", "confirmed to breed" or other references to nesting. Evidence or confirmation is defined by any of several types of activity, among them nest building, distraction displays, an adult seen carrying food or a fecal sac, or of course by actually seeing eggs or young birds. In this context it excludes simple territorial singing and drumming. It should also be emphasized that lack of confirmation in an area does not mean lack of nesting – the old saw "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" applies. In addition, the mention of breeding in the following accounts applies only to Spring 2011.

The data for the Species Accounts which follow, and for those of the Summer season, were from reports received directly from observers, the OBBA II database, eBird, the Ohio-birds listserv, and a few other online sources. The editor extends special thanks to Robert Hershberger, editor and publisher of *The Bobolink*, for allowing, indeed encouraging, the use of reports from that journal. Normal range, abundance, and dates of presence are from Rob Harlan's *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio, 2008*.

This issue has accounts for 311 species, four hybrids, and one sighting at the genus level. Twenty-three of them, an unusually large number, are review species. These are "wild bird species encountered infrequently enough in the state that documentation (specimen, photo, sound recording, and/or full written description) is required for inclusion in the official record". The review species list is maintained by the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC), from whose website (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/site/committee/about.php>) the above definition is taken.

Unfortunately, nine of the review species, and some of the reports of six others, remain undocumented for the OBRC. The Committee and

this editor urge birders to report all sightings of Review List species, of Core List 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 23 above. Despite the fact that they breed in Ohio, there are as yet no documented occurrences of truly wild birds here since introduction efforts began in the midwestern states. In addition, a Chukar sighting is described but not included in the 23. Three other species which have bred in the state, but which are still on the review list, are Mississippi Kite, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Common Raven. The OBRC especially urges observers to document all sightings of these three recent arrivals (or returnee, in the case of the raven) so that their spread can be properly studied.

Review species' names are underlined in the species accounts. Reports of sightings whose documentation has been accepted by the OBRC include the names of the observers; those 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 52nd Supplement (2011). 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. Shortened names and a few sets of initials are used for locations (and for three organizations and a group of individuals) which occur repeatedly; these abbreviations are listed here. The term "*fide*" is used in some citations; it means "in trust of" and is used where the reporter was not the observer.

Abbreviations:

Big Island = Big Island Wildlife Area, **Marion**
 Blendon Woods = Blendon Woods Metro Park, **Franklin**
 BRAS = Black River Audubon Society
 BSBO = Black Swamp Bird Observatory
 Caesar Creek = Caesar Creek State Park, **Warren**
 Conneaut = the mudflats to the west of Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**, unless otherwise noted
 CP = County Park
 CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park, **Cuyahoga** and (mostly) **Summit**

Darby Creek = Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, **Franklin**
 Delaware WA = Delaware Wildlife Area; mostly in **Delaware** but extends into **Marion** and **Morrow**
 Edgewater = the Edgewater unit of Cleveland Lakefront State Park, **Cuyahoga**
 Ellis Lake = the local name for a wetland complex off Union Center Blvd. in Fairfield, **Butler**; not to be confused with Ellis Lake, **Wyandot**
 eTT = eBird data entry kiosk
 Fernald = Fernald Preserve, **Butler** and **Hamilton**
 Headlands = Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve, Headlands Beach State Park, and adjoining waters, **Lake**
 Kelleys Island = Kelleys Island and adjacent waters, **Erie**
 Killdeer Plains = Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area, **Wyandot**
 Lorain = the dredge spoil impoundment at the mouth of the Black River in the city of Lorain, **Lorain**, unless otherwise noted
 Lost Bridge = a Great Miami River crossing on Lawrenceburg Road near Elizabethtown, **Hamilton**, where a covered bridge was lost to fire in 1903
 Magee = Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas** and **Ottawa**
 Maumee Bay = Maumee Bay State Park, **Lucas**
 Metzger = Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas**
 m. obs. = multiple observers
 MP = Metro Park or MetroPark, depending on the system
 Navarre = the Navarre Unit of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Ottawa**
 NF = National Forest
 NP = Nature Preserve (except as part of CVNP)
 Oak Openings = Oak Openings Preserve MetroPark, **Lucas**
 ONWR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Lucas** and **Ottawa**
 Ottawa-Lucas Road = runs east from Rte. 2 along the border of the two counties. Most of its length is within ONWR.
 RBA = Rare Bird Alert
 SF = State Forest
 SNP = State Nature Preserve
 SP = State Park
 Shawnee Lookout = Shawnee Lookout County Park, **Hamilton**
 Shawnee SF = Shawnee State Forest, **Scioto**
 Springville Marsh = Springville Marsh State Nature Preserve, **Seneca**
 WA = Wildlife Area
 Winous Point = Winous Point Shooting Club, **Ottawa**