

COMMENTS ON THE SEASON

By Craig Caldwell

Last winter's mildness was in some respects repeated in 2012-13. Dec temperatures were well above average – overall the month was among the warmest 10% of the 118 years with data. Jan temperatures were also above average. Though that month's average scored at only the 70th percentile, 67 record highs were set, some of them eight to 10 degrees above the previous marks. Individual Feb temperatures were about average as was the month as a whole. For the second winter in a row no daily record lows were set in any month. In contrast to last winter, however, Lake Erie did achieve substantial ice cover.

Dec was the fourth wettest on record (summing rain and snow); Pennsylvania and New York were similarly affected. Ninety-eight stations set new daily records, many with increases of more than an inch. The second half of Dec delivered eight to 14 inches of snow across the northern half of the state and up to 18 inches in the snowbelt east of Cleveland. The last week of Dec set 84 daily snowfall records, among them two at stations in *Darke* which recorded 10 and 11 inches compared to previous records of less than 2 ½ inches. Jan precipitation was about average for the state as a whole though the northwest received up to three times its normal amount. Curiously, adjoining states' Jan precipitation amounts were either well above or well below average. Feb was dryer than usual here and in Indiana, New York, and Pennsylvania. Modest numbers of daily records for either snowfall or total precipitation were set in Jan and Feb and most of them were small increases.

Weather data are from the National Weather Service (<http://water.weather.gov/precip/>) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/temp-and-precip/maps.php> and <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/extremes/records/>).

The big bird news this winter was finches! Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway of Ontario (Canada) Field Ornithologists provide an annual winter finch forecast. Last fall they noted that conifers and other favored seed-producing trees had poor crops and so predicted major southward movements of the birds which depend on them. As I stated in the Fall 2012 Comments, they were so right! We experienced our biggest finch invasion since 2008-09. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology noted that Common Redpolls reached 36 states. Red Crossbills, Common and Hoary redpolls, Pine Siskins, and especially Evening Grosbeaks were more numerous and more widespread than in any previous year which I could examine. White-winged Crossbill numbers and distribution were also a delight though they didn't match those of 2008-09. Ethan Kistler has provided maps which dramatically show how widespread was the invasion.

This winter marked the 113th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). As is customary, Ned Keller summarizes the Ohio counts in a separate article which is accompanied by a table of CBC results. In the species

accounts which follow this section I many times note the highest number of a species found. These values are for single birders or parties, usually birding in a relatively small area, and often are the counts from a single route within a CBC. However, I generally do not include counts 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.

This fall and winter, the sheltered courtyard of Jennings Hall on the Ohio State University campus hosted several birds which stayed there well past their usual departure dates. Do we have our own Magic Hedge, or are these sightings due to the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect? Stay tuned...

Ohio has 296 bird species which are year-round residents, breeders, regular migrants, or regular winter visitors; I call this Ohio's Core List. This Cardinal issue contains reports for 184 of them, a typical winter count. Four hybrids are also listed and there are two entries at the genus level. Among the 184 are 10 warblers, a number which ties last winter's record. Several other "summer" birds lingered as well, and not just at Jennings Hall. The numbers of waterfowl, shorebird, and gull species were typical of recent winters.

More than 100 species are infrequent visitors (some with only a single record). They, with all the species which have never appeared in the state, constitute the Review List, which is maintained by the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The OBRC received or downloaded documentation for 18 review species. Records for seven occurrences of six species were accepted and are attributed to the reporter(s) in the accounts; one record was not accepted. The reports of the other 11, and additional reports of two of the accepted species, are in process. The names of the species with accepted or submitted reports are underlined in the Species Accounts section.

Undocumented or unaccepted reports of Review List species are not published in the Species Accounts. One report of Smith's Longspurs was documented but not accepted; another report was not documented for the Committee. Western Grebe, Black-headed Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Raven, and Hoary Redpoll each had some undocumented reports in addition to the documented ones which are among the 17 above. Accounts for Trumpeter Swan (an introduced species with no truly wild birds ever documented here) and one escapee from captivity are also provided but they are not included in the numbers of Review List species above.

The Records 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>.

Data for the following Species Accounts come from reports submitted directly to the *Cardinal*, eBird

(<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>), the Ohio-birds list-serv (<http://birding.aba.org/maillist/OH>), rarebird.org (<http://rarebird.org/forum/default.asp>), Audubon (<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>), and *The Bobolink*. The last source is courtesy of its publisher, Robert Hershberger. The growth of eBird has enabled me to acquire much more data than were available to previous *Cardinal* editors. Only recently, for instance, have some seasons achieved the milestone of having reports from every county. This winter eight species (Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, and Northern Cardinal) were seen state-wide. Red-tailed Hawk, American Crow, and Tufted Titmouse each missed that list by one county.

The volume of eBird data, however, poses another problem – I can individually examine only a tiny fraction of the entries, so I surely miss many comments which would enliven these pages. I really do value the reports sent directly to me and the additional notes a few eBirders send me to supplement their entries.

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. A few of these accounts include notes on previous unusual winter records. These data are from Bruce Peterjohn's *The Birds of Ohio* (2001) and *The Ohio Cardinal* since that date, and are usually not individually credited. "Normal" early and late dates are from Harlan *et al.*, *Ohio Bird Records Committee Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio*, 2008.

Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow the *Check-List of North American Birds*, 7th Edition (1998) as updated through the 53rd Supplement (2012). This document is published by the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union and is available at <http://www.aou.org/check-list/north/print.php>. County names are in bold italics. Locations whose counties are of the same name, for example Ashtabula (city) and Delaware Wildlife Area, usually do not have the counties repeated. County names for sites described in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus are also omitted. Shortened names and a few sets of initials are used for locations and organizations 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:

Armleder Park = a Cincinnati city park on the Little Miami River, **Hamilton**
 Bayshore = a fishing access point east of the First Energy plant in Oregon, **Lucas**
 BSBO = Black Swamp Bird Observatory
 CBC = Audubon Christmas Bird Count
 CLNP = Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve (the former Dike 14), **Cuyahoga**
 Conneaut = the mudflats and adjoining water to the west of Conneaut Harbor, **Ashtabula**

CP = County Park

CPNWR = Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge,

Lucas

CVNP = Cuyahoga Valley National Park, **Cuyahoga** and (mostly) **Summit**

East Fork = East Fork State Park, **Clermont**

Eastlake Power = the Lake Erie viewpoint east of the First Energy plant in Eastlake, **Lake**

eIT = eBird Trail Tracker data entry kiosk, usually found at National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks

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

Findlay Reservoirs = several contiguous water bodies east of town in **Hancock**

Headlands = Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve, Headlands Beach State Park, and adjoining waters, **Lake**

Hoover NP = Hoover Nature Preserve, **Delaware**

Hoover Reservoir = the northern 80% is in **Delaware**, but the dam is in **Franklin**

Kelleys Island = the island and adjoining waters, **Erle Killdeer** = Killdeer Plains State Wildlife Area; a bit is in **Marion** but it's mostly in **Wyandot**

Lorain = the dredge spoil impoundment east of downtown, **Lorain**, unless otherwise noted

m. obs. = Multiple Observers

Magee = Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, **Lucas** (north of the causeway) and **Ottawa**

Maumee Bay = Maumee Bay State Park, **Lucas**, unless obviously otherwise

Mohican = Mohican State Forest and State Park.

Many trails cross the boundaries so some reports include sightings from both.

Mohican SF = Mohican State Forest, **Ashland**

Mohican SP = Mohican State Park, (mostly) **Ashland** and (slightly) **Richland**

MP = Metro Park or MetroPark depending on the system

NC = Nature Center

NP = Nature Preserve, except as part of CVNP

NWR = National Wildlife Refuge

OOPMP = Oak Openings Preserve MetroPark, **Lucas**

ONWR = Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, **Lucas**

and **Ottawa**

Rocky Fork = Rocky Fork State Park, Highland

SNP = State Nature Preserve

SP = State Park

SWA = State Wildlife Area

WA = Wildlife Area

Wendy Park = a lakeshore Cleveland park, **Cuyahoga**