

## COMPARING DISTRIBUTION NUMBERS OF FRANKLIN'S GULLS IN OHIO OF NOV. 1998 AND 2015

By John P. Herman

During the Novs of 1998 and 2015, strong west winds brought unusually high numbers of Franklin's Gulls to Ohio, indeed to all of the Eastern US. The distribution of these gulls varied, with birds in Nov 2015 appearing at many more locations away from Lake Erie than during 1998. Interestingly, their peak period of occurrence in both years was from 12 to 23 Nov. The first Franklin's reported during autumn 1998 was seen on 04 October at Farnsworth MP, **Lucas** (Whan 1999), while the first autumn report during 2015 was on 02 Sep at Pleasant Hill Lake, **Richland** (Caldwell 2016). The last Franklin's during the winter of 1998-99 was seen at Lakeshore MP, **Lake**, on 24 Dec (Whan 1999b). The last seen during the winter of 2015-16 was at Wendy Park on 26 Dec (Caldwell 2016b). Most of this past winter's gulls did not linger more than a few days at any location.

The sixteen counties with sightings between 12 and 23 Nov 1998 and the peak counts of Franklin's Gulls in each are: **Ashtabula** (8), **Auglaize** (28), **Clark** (9), **Clinton** (6), **Erie** (1), **Hancock/Sandusky** (20), **Lake** (47, with a combined count of 111 in the period), **Lorain** (7), **Lucas** (23, Greg Links, pers. comm.), **Marion** (70-85), **Medina** (2), **Paulding** (6), **Pickaway** (2), **Warren** (1), and **Wyandot** (15) (Whan 1999, Rosche 1999). During 12 to 23 Nov 1998, the only Franklin's reported in Ohio south of 40 degrees 25 minutes latitude were those at Caesar Creek (**Warren**), Cowan Lake (**Clinton**), C.J. Brown Reservoir (**Clark**), and Deer Creek SP (**Pickaway**). The top five counts for that period were 70 to 85 at Washburn Road, **Marion**, on 14 Nov, 47 at Lakeshore MP, **Lake**, on 21 Nov (Bill Whan, pers. comm.), 28 at GLSM on 14 Nov, 23 in **Lucas** on 13 Nov, and 20 in fields in **Hancock** and **Sandusky** on 16 Nov (Whan 1999; eBird; Greg Links, pers. comm.). No Franklin's were reported in Sep and a total of seven birds were distributed among among three locations in Oct (Whan 1999; eBird).

In contrast, the first Franklin's Gull sighting of fall 2015 was a bird on 02 Sep at Pleasant Hill Lake, **Richland**, and three more were reported later in the month at other locations (Caldwell 2016, eBird). A dozen Ohio locations had Franklin's in October 2015, with a maximum of eight at Indian Lake SP, **Logan**, on the 17 Oct (eBird).

The 32 counties with sightings and their

peak counts during 12 to 23 Nov 2015 are: **Allen** (9), **Ashtabula** (5), **Clark** (20), **Clermont** (3), **Cuyahoga** (29), **Defiance** (1), **Delaware** (1), **Erie** (22), **Franklin** (1), **Geauga** (1), **Hancock** (54), **Hamilton** (1), **Harrison** (2), **Holmes** (1), **Lake** (32), **Logan** (26), **Lorain** (13), **Lucas** (15), **Mahoning** (1), **Mercer** (3), **Montgomery** (6), **Ottawa** (1), **Pickaway** (3), **Richland** (31), **Sandusky** (2), **Seneca** (18), **Stark** (19), **Summit** (1), **Tuscarawas** (1), **Warren** (1), and **Wood** (1) (eBird; Ohio-Birds listserv; rarebirds.org; Yoder 2016; C. Caldwell, pers. comm.). The top five counts during the month were 54 at the Findlay Reservoirs on 15 Nov, 32 at Fairport Harbor, **Lake**, on 13 Nov, 31 at Clear Fork on 12 Nov, 29 at Edgewater on 13 Nov, and 26 at Indian Lake SP, **Logan**, also on 13 Nov (Caldwell 2016; ebird; Ohio-Birds listserv). The Seneca Lake, **Noble**, record of 17 Oct, the Walnut Creek area, **Holmes**, record of 13 Nov, and the Tappan Lake, **Harrison**, record of 14 Nov may be first county records. The Atwood Lake, **Tuscarawas**, and the Pine Lake, **Mahoning**, sightings, both on 14 Nov, are rare for those locations.

A minimum count for the Franklin's Gulls in Ohio during 12-23 November 1998 is 308, while a minimum count during the same period of 2015 is 324 (Caldwell 2016; eBird; Ohio-Birds listserv; Rosche 1999; Whan 1999; and Yoder 2016).

The magnitudes of the Franklin's Gull movements into Ohio during the Novs of 1998 and 2015 stand out. Normally these gulls in autumn are uncommon along the Lake Erie shoreline and at reservoirs and lakes at the western one-fourth of Ohio, uncommon to rare at reservoirs and lakes at glaciated central and north-central Ohio away from Lake Erie, and rare at best at reservoirs and lakes in un-glaciated Ohio.

The number of counties with sightings between 12 and 23 Nov 2015 was double that of the same period in 1998, and more southern counties were included. This is no doubt due in part to a significant increase in the number of birders and their skill level. Quite possibly, the weather pattern was different in 2015 than it was in 1998, and moved gulls more inland from Lake Erie. "When the gales of November remembered" (G. Lightfoot), Franklin's gulls can occur at Ohio in large numbers.

