

Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio River Valley



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The season saw the commencement of the second *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas*, a five-year survey of the state's breeders. Early indications of range expansions were seen for Sandhill Cranes and Clay-colored Sparrows. The wet early summer put interior shorebird habitat at a premium, although the mild temperatures made the searching bearable. After a drop of over a meter during the previous six years, Lake Erie is again near maximum

levels, inundating shallows of the Western Basin that have been host to tremendous shorebird concentrations.

Abbreviations: B.I.W.A. (Big Island W.A., Marion, OH); C.V.N.P. (Cuyahoga Valley N.P., Summit/Cuyahoga OH); Hoover (Hoover Res., Delaware/Franklin, OH); G.M.L. (Glen Morgan L., Berks, PA.); O.D.W. (Ohio Division of Wildlife); O.N.W.R. (Ottawa N.W.R., Ottawa/Lucas, OH); P.I.S.P. (Presque Isle S.P., Erie, PA); P.V.P. (Peace Valley Park, Bucks, PA); S.N.P. (State Nature Preserve); S.R.C.F. (Susquehanna R. at the Conejohela Flats, Lancaster, PA).

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

The usual few Common Loons lingered into the season, with singles 24 Jun at Woodbury W.A., Coshocton OH (S. Hull) and P.I.S.P. (BCo), 29 Jun in Richland, OH (G. Cowell, Jr.), and 13 Jul in Hancock, OH (B. Hardesty). Unusual was a Horned Grebe 29 Jun near Bayshore I. on the Susquehanna R., Dauphin, PA (PS). In Ohio, single American White Pelicans remained from the spring season at the Paradise Fish Farm, Mahoning through 17 Jul (B. Jones, CH), through the summer in

Berlin Twp., Huron (fide M. Rutger), and another appearing 12 Jul at Farnsworth Park, Lucas (J. Fosnaugh), while 4 birds appeared at Metzger 19-22 Jun (A. Osborn, SB). Seven Least Bitterns were found at G.M.L. 4 Jun (KL). Post-breeding dispersal of Great Egrets into Pennsylvania was evident at P.V.P., with 20 on 11 Jul (C. Crunkleton, ER) and at S.R.C.F., with 85 on 31 Jul (DH). At least 20 ad. Snowy Egrets occupied breeding sites in the Western Basin of L. Erie (m.ob.). Elsewhere, one was seen at Sandy Ridge Metropark, Lorain 5 Jun (TF). Up to 3 Little Blue Herons were present at O.N.W.R. through the period (m.ob.). A post-breeding wanderer was discovered 23 Jul in Delaware, OH (J. McCormac, J. Switzer). Cattle Egrets away from L. Erie included 2 at Pickerington Ponds, Franklin/Fairfield, OH 2 Jun (J. Watts). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Maumee Bay S.P., Lucas OH 17-24 Jun (D. Bollin et al.) was unexpected. An imm. *Plegadis ibis* was seen near Albany Twp., Berks 25 Jul (L. Simpson).

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A pair of Snow Geese summered near Oley, Berks, PA. Three imm. birds from this family group moved on in Jun (RK). A pair of unmarked Trumpeter Swans continued from the spring season in Lawrence and n. Beaver, PA (m.ob.). A Tundra Swan was noted at S.R.C.F. during the last week of Jul (DHo et al.). Inland Ohio Mute Swans were reported from Wayne, Ashland, Knox, Hamilton, and Clinton. Wood Ducks in se. Pennsylvania numbered 300 at G.M.L. 15 Jun (KL). A hen Gadwall with 5 young at Conneaut 6 Jul may represent a first breeding record for *Ashtabula*, OH (CH). An American Wigeon remained in Hamilton, OH 20 Jun (RF). Errant Northern Pintails included a male in Adams, OH 9 Jun (GMI) and 2 males at Funk Bottoms W.A., Wayne OH 27 Jun (SS). The latter site held a male Green-winged Teal the same day. Ring-necked Duck males in Ohio lingered in Holmes 25 Jul (SS), Delaware 23 Jun (RL), Ottawa 19 Jun (JL), and Lorain 9 Jun (TF). A male in Plain Grove Twp., Lawrence, PA 6 Jun (MV) rounded out the reports. A male Lesser Scaup was at the latter location 27 Jun (MV). A male Canvasback was at Bayshore I., in the Susquehanna R., Dauphin, PA 29 Jun (PS). A male Surf Scoter was at Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana, PA 1 Jun (MHi et al.). A rare breeder in se. Pennsylvania, a female Common Merganser with 8 young was observed along the Delaware R., Bucks in late Jun (m.ob.); 2 females along the Schuylkill R. near Shoemakersville, Berks 20 Jul could not be confirmed as breeders. The species remains unconfirmed as a breeder on the Cheat R. in West Virginia, but mid-summer counts

SA In 2004, Ohio's Bald Eagle population reached a modern-day record, with 108 Bald Eagle nests in the state—the first time ever that Ohio has recorded over 100 nests. This is the 16th consecutive year that the state's eagle population has increased both its numbers of breeding pairs and the number of offspring produced. Of those 108 nests, 73 successfully produced young eagles for a total of 127 eaglets fledged in 37 Ohio counties. In addition, 21 new nests were identified in 15 counties. Six of those counties (*Hardin, Harrison, Muskingum, Pickaway, Putnam, and Richland*) recorded their first eagle nests in modern history. With so many eagles, nests sites may be at a premium in some areas. This year saw a pair successfully fledge young from a goose platform (see photograph below). Initially built on the surface of an ice-covered pond, the nest was moved to the platform after the spring thaw. Two young hatched, but on the morning of scheduled banding of the young and placement of boards under the nest to allow for branching, one young jumped off the nest, became entangled within a mat of algae, and drowned (O.D.W.).

of up to 20 at Rowlesburg (GF) fuel anticipation. Single late Red-breasted Mergansers were at P.V.P. 7 Jun (SF, A. Mirabella) and P.I.S.P. 12 Jun (MV). Inland Ruddy Ducks were limited to 3 into late Jun in Wyandot, OH (RC) and a pair 10 Jun in Franklin, OH (JWa), with no reports of broods.

A few of the spring-season Mississippi Kites continued into summer in Pennsylvania, with a single bird at Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana 1 Jun (MHi et al.) and another on the same date in East Drumore Twp., Lancaster (TA). The Brood X cicada irruption in Bucks, PA attracted a pair of Mississippi Kites 19–27 Jun (ph. ER, ph. T. Ford-Hutchinson, m.ob.). The birds were seen to feed almost exclusively on cicadas. A Mississippi Kite soaring over Morgantown, WV 2 Jun († B. Johnson) provided a rare record for the state. Remarkable numbers of non-breeding Bald Eagles remained in Ohio, with an unprecedented 39–42 gathered at Metzger 20 Jun–1 Jul (SB, JL). There were at least 75 Bald Eagle and 14 Peregrine Falcon pairs nesting this season in Pennsylvania (*fide* D. Brauning). A Peregrine Falcon that was shot near Tullytown, Bucks, PA did survive but cannot be released. The bird was originally banded as a nestling on the Throg's Neck Bridge, NY. Adding to recent summer appearances by the species in Ohio, a Merlin was seen 16 Jul in Lake (JP).

RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Listed as "State Endangered" in Ohio, King Rails were much in evidence this season. Two sites hosted up to 2 birds each in Pickaway, while a pair and 3 young were widely viewed at Prairie Oaks Metropark in adjacent Franklin (JWa, m.ob.). The only L. Erie report involved a single bird at Mallard Club Marsh W.A., Lucas, OH 1 Jul (JL). Thirty-four Common Moorhens in s. Lawrence and n. Beaver, PA in late Jun was a good total (B. & G. Dean). However, this species continues to decline in se. Pennsylvania. None were found breeding this year at John Heinz N.W.R., Philadelphia, a site that historically contained up to 10 pairs. American Coots continue to do well at

G.M.L., with 8 ads. and 2 juvs. 15 Jun (KL). Sandhill Crane continue to expand its breeding range within the Region. In Pennsylvania, a new nest site in Cambridge Springs, Crawford had 2 ads. and 2 juvs. present through Jun (m.ob.). Unusual were singles seen flying past Trexlertown, Berks, PA 16 Jun (M. Wlasniewski) and near Erie



This Mississippi Kite was one of two at Lake Galena, Peace Valley, Bucks County, Pennsylvania 19–27 June 2004 (here 20 June) that fed very heavily on emerging Brood X cicadas but apparently did not attempt to nest. All states in the region recorded kites in 2004. Photograph by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.



The burgeoning population of breeding Bald Eagles in Ohio has resulted in some nesting pairs accepting "nontraditional" nest sites. Without precedent, a pair at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in Wyandot utilized a fibreglass "goose tub" just a meter off the pond's surface (here 20 May 2004). Photograph by Tim Daniel/Ohio Division of Wildlife.

N.W.R., PA 29 Jul (K. Goodblood & J. Stanley). In Ohio, Medina saw its first confirmed nesting (*fide* LR). In Lorain, nesting was unsuccessful, while a bird to the w. in Erie 8 Jun was novel (J. Bednarik). Successful nesting took place in Williams at a new locality (JP), where 2 young were noted 27 Jun. A lone bird in Wyandot through 5 Jul apparently remained unmated (RC), while at nearby B.I.W.A., 2 birds 28 Jun were in suitable nesting habitat (B. & C. Long).

The spring Black-necked Stilt flight carried over into the summer. A male and female lingered at B.I.W.A. 9 Jun (J. Fry, m.ob.). The pair was suspected of a nesting attempt before heavy rains flooded the site. An individual was also present at O.N.W.R. 6–7 Jun (E. Pierce, R. Hinkle). A final sighting came 12–21 Jul from Pickerel Creek W.A., Sandusky, OH (ph. SZ). A flight of American Avocets was detected early across the Region. The 14 Jul arrival saw 2 birds in Williams, OH (JY), 2 in Hamilton, OH (RF), and a single in Cleveland (GL). Another wave had singles at P.I.S.P. 22 Jul (BC) and Metzger 23 Jul (J. Estep). Also 23 Jul, 3 set down in Caesar's Creek S.P., Warren, OH (LG), while up to 4 birds were intermittent at Conneaut 21–31 Jul (W. Shaffer, BCo). The Pennsylvania flight also included a bird at S.R.C.F. 30 Jul (DHQ) and a pair at Hidden Hollow G.C., Schuylkill (T. Clauser et al.). A Semipalmated Plover at Cowan L., Clinton, OH 11 Jun (LG) was a late spring migrant, but a 19 Jun Black-bellied Plover at O.N.W.R. (JL) was harder to categorize, being on the cusp between the two migration seasons. Lesser Yellowlegs peaked at P.I.S.P. with 200+ on 31 Jul (BCo). Twelve Solitary Sandpipers was a good count at Ambridge

SA A **Lesser Nighthawk** was found alive 28 Apr at the base of the handball court wall at the Federal Correctional Facility in *Gilmer, WV*; it died shortly after being discovered. Prison staff contacted an inmate there with extensive birding experience (and 745 birds on the ABA Area list). Recognizing it was not a Common Nighthawk, the inmate made use of field guides in the prison library to determine that it was a Lesser Nighthawk. Prison authorities made arrangements for wildlife rehabilitation center staff to pick up the specimen, which was subsequently reviewed by the West Virginia Bird Records Committee. It was accepted as a first state record and also constitutes the first Regional report.

Res., *Bedford, PA* 23 Jul (MV). Up to 3 Willets were found at P.I.S.P. 4–31 Jul (BCo, JM, MV), one of them possibly the Willet on the nearby Conneaut mudflat 21–31 Jul (W. Shaffer). A pair of Upland Sandpipers

Conneaut with 55 birds (CH), while no more than 30 Least Sandpipers were reported from any one locality. A spring flock of 6 White-rumped Sandpipers 4 Jun in Bryan, Williams, OH was the best tally (JY).

A flock of 5 Stilt Sandpipers in *Berkeley* 31 Jul (MO) was the shorebird highlight in West Virginia.

GULLS THROUGH OWLS

The scattering of inland Laughing Gulls included at least 2 at P.I.S.P. 12 Jun and 10 Jul (MV). The only Franklin's Gull dropped into Buck Creek S.P., OH 9 Jul (DO). Extraordinary as a mid-summer record from the Western Basin of L. Erie, a **Little Gull** was present on Kellys I., *Erie*, OH 18 Jun (TB). Mid-summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls are annual in Pennsylvania, but this year's numbers were interesting, with 17, including 2 ads., at the Penn-Warner Tract, *Bucks* 11 Jul (DF) and up to 19 at Martin's Creek, *Northampton* (RW). A single bird was also present at P.I.S.P. 21–31 Jul (JM). Pennsylvania's newest Herring Gull nesting site at Dashiels Dam on the Ohio R. at Pittsburgh produced 6 young (m.ob.). A Least Tern was found at S.R.C.F. 19 Jul (DHo). Spring migrant Black Terns on 1–2 Jun were at L. Nockamixon, *Bucks*, PA (A. Koch) and at Ohio sites in *Hocking* (J. Fry) and Williams (JY).

A pair at Hartstown Marsh, *Crawford*, PA 19 Jun (M. Byler) was likely breeding. A fallout of Black Terns across five sw. Ohio counties 31 Jul involved more than 200 birds. The largest concentration was of 100 birds at East Fork S.P., *Clermont*, OH (D. Morse, Jr.). This flight was also evident in Pennsylvania, with 9 at Bald Knob, *Allegheny* 30–31 Jul (R. Gallardy, B. Smith). A well-described **Eurasian Collared-Dove** appeared in a *Wilmington, Clinton*, OH backyard 7–10 Jun (LG); if accepted, this would constitute a 2nd state

record. Numbers of both cuckoos, especially Yellow-billed, were exceptional in se. Pennsylvania, possibly owing to the irruption of the Brood X cicadas. Barn Owl numbers in Pennsylvania have dropped dramatically in recent times, so a successful fledging of 6 young from a box in *Rehrersburg, Berks* was encouraging (R. Bonnett). The *Wayne/Holmes* population in e.-cen. Ohio fared well, with 19 nests producing 84 chicks (*fide* O.D.O.W.).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WRENS

A singing Olive-sided Flycatcher 30 Jun–1 Jul at Hogback Ridge, *Lake* (JP) was intriguing: Ohio's last breeding record was in 1932. Another Olive-sided at Big Bailey Wetlands, *Athens*, OH 7 Jun (B. Placier) was a late migrant. Three pairs of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were at Coalbed Swamp, *Wyoming*, PA, the state's only nesting location (D. Gross). South of normal breeding range, an Alder Flycatcher was present for several weeks near Oley, *Berks*, PA. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found in *Lebanon*, PA 9 Jun (ph. C. Bethoud, ph. T. Johnson et al.). The *Adams*, OH outpost for the species hosted a Loggerhead Shrike 10 Jun (GMi), but completely unexpected was a bird in *Logan*, OH 9 & 26 Jul (T. Shively). Bell's Vireos fared well in Ohio. Apart from the annual *Clark* site, pairs were recorded at Stage's Pond S.N.P., *Pickaway* 16 Jul (DO) and near Columbus 20 Jun–19 Jul (R. Thorn, S. Landes, m.ob.). A record 20 Blue-headed Vireos were found on three *Huntingdon*, PA B.B.S. routes in Rothrock S.F. (GG). W. Pennsylvania's 2nd Fish Crow nesting colony was discovered in Jul in North Braddock, *Allegheny*. The site contained two pairs with 2 young each (M. Fialkovich, G. Malosh, D. Wilton). A Red-breasted Nuthatch near Rector, *West-*



This male Black-necked Stilt was one of a pair in residence at Big Island Wildlife Area, Marion, Ohio 20 May through 9 (here 4) June 2004—part of an unprecedented influx of the species into the Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio River Valley region. Photograph by Jay Lehman.

was confirmed nesting in *Butler*, PA (GW), one of the few nesting sites in the state. At least 2 Whimbrels frequented P.I.S.P. 18–31 Jul (BCo, JM), possibly contributing the single at Conneaut 23 Jul (D. Sanders). Singles appeared farther w. to *Cuyahoga*, OH 30 Jul (GL) and Metzger 19 Jun (SS et al.), the latter an exceptionally rare mid-summer record. Away from L. Erie, a flock of 9 was found at the Penn-Warner Tract, *Bucks* 23 Jul (DF). A Marbled Godwit was at S.R.C.F. 31 Jul (DH). Eight Red Knots were at P.I.S.P. 31 Jul (JM). A Dunlin in alternate plumage 12 Jul at Pickerel Creek W.A., *Sandusky*, OH (SZ) continues the string of mid-summer records well before the normal fall arrival of the species. The small *Calidris* flight, whether late spring or fall, was exceptionally weak, as birders and birds alike were hard-pressed to find suitable habitat. The maximum count for Semipalmated Sandpiper came 26 Jul at



This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found and photographed 9 June 2004 in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, about the thirteenth for the state. The species has been appearing in summer more frequently to the north and east of breeding range in recent years. Photograph by Tom Johnson.

moreland, PA in mid-Jun was a good find (ML), and one in District Twp, Berks, PA 10 Jul was s. of the known breeding range (RK). Another s. to Van Wert, OH 31 Jul (J. & J. Perchalski) may have presaged an early irruption. Twelve Golden-crowned Kinglets, including 8 downy young, were in Shelocta, Indiana, PA in Jul (MHi). Two pairs of Brown Creepers at Hoover in cen. Ohio 1 Jun (C. Bombaci) were noteworthy. The 6–8 singing Sedge Wrens in Butler, PA in Jun (GW) were part of a shift eastward that included 3 at Funk Bottoms W.A., Wayne, OH through 25 Jul (SS, m.ob.) and a territorial bird in Morgantown, WV through 7 Jul (GF). A count of 17 Marsh Wrens at Conneaut Marsh, Crawford, PA 26 Jul was considered high (RFL), and an odd summer record of the species came from Paulding, OH 20 Jun (D. & M. Dunakin).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Three pairs of Golden-winged Warblers were located in a small breeding plot near Powdermill, Westmoreland, PA in early Jun (ML). A Yellow-rumped Warbler 17 Jun in Cleveland (GL) was a late migrant. But what does one make of a closely studied male in s. Ohio at Buzzard's Roost S.N.P., Ross 24 Jun (K. Sieg, D. McFadden)? A Black-throated Blue Warbler 3 Jun in Cleveland (GL) was a late migrant. Cerulean Warblers appear stable in Pennsylvania; in the Ligonier Valley, Westmoreland, good numbers were detected in several Atlas blocks (RCL, ML). Late Blackpoll Warblers were at Hawk Mt., Berks, PA 23 Jun (C. Waters) and 15 Jun in Cuyahoga, OH (LR). Several marginal/potential breeding species were noted within the Oak Openings park system of Toledo: a Mourning Warbler and a Black-throated Green Warbler were found 18–21 Jun (RN et al.), while a Blackburnian Warbler was present 16 Jun (M. Anderson). One pair of Blackburnian Warblers found in Coalbed Swamp, Wyoming, PA 14 Jul marked the 11th consecutive year this species has been found at the state's only breeding locale (D. Gross). Prothonotary Warblers continued to be found in new areas, including a pair breeding at Churchville Res., Bucks, PA (C. Steiber, M. Corn). A record-tying 183 Ovenbirds were listed on three Huntingdon, PA B.B.S. routes at Rothrock S.F., but the 9 American Redstarts recorded was well below average (GG). A late Northern Waterthrush was banded at Powdermill Banding Lab, Westmoreland, PA 6 Jun, and an early fall migrant arrived there 18 Jul (A. Leppold, RCL, B. Mulvihill). The species was also early in nw. Ohio, where banded 30 Jul in Seneca (TB). A late Connecticut Warbler report involved a singing male at

H.B.S.P. 2 Jun (R. Hannikman).

Summer Tanagers surged into the far nw. of Ohio, with 9 birds in the Oak Openings, Lucas 18 Jun (G. Links). Clay-colored Sparrows continue to chart new ground in cen. and w. Pennsylvania, with a bird "all summer" at Black Moshannon S.E., Centre (N. Bolgiano), 2 singing males at Snow Shoe, Centre (G. Young), one at Keystone



This Dickcissel spent about a week in Lancaster City Park, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 8 (here) through 26 June 2004; it was the only bird of its species present here and did not nest. Photograph by Tom Amico.

Res., Armstrong 26 Jun–3 Jul (MHi), and another at Gipsy strip-mine area, Indiana (MH). Wayward Lark Sparrows were e. to Ashland, OH 29 Jun–1 Jul (D. Spreng, T. Leslie) and s. to Hamilton, OH 3 Jul (P. Wharton). Two Grasshopper Sparrows at Erie International Airport, PA 13 Jun–6 Jul were unusual (JM). Away from their strip-mine haunts, Henslow's Sparrows may be increasing: 20 occupied a single field in Wyandot, OH 24 Jul (RC). A male White-throated Sparrow in early Jun in Athens, OH (M. Boyd) was outdone by a bird in Hamilton, OH 28 Jun (S. Corbo). A late migrant White-crowned Sparrow 1–6 Jun was at Sugar Creek, Tuscarawas, OH (J. Miller), while a singing male at Marblehead, Ottawa, OH 2–4 Jul (E. Tramer) was altogether lost. A first summer record for Medina, OH, a Dark-eyed Junco was on territory through 19 Jun (R. and S. Harlan).

At least 3 male Blue Grosbeaks were found at the Penn-Warner Tract, Bucks, PA 27 Jul, a local stronghold (DF). Remarkably, away from the enclave in s. Ohio, this species may be more readily found in the Oak Openings on Michigan's doorstep: 7

were found 15 Jun (RN) in but one section of the park system. The species bred north to Union and Pickaway, while an individual was e. to Tuscarawas, OH (E. Schlabach). At the Philadelphia Airport, where this species has nested for many years, none could be found (JCM). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Preston, WV 25 Jun may have represented post-breeding dispersal (GF).

A Dickcissel frequented the Lancaster City Park, Lancaster, PA 8–26 Jun (ph. TA). The species also appeared s. to Jefferson, WV 21 Jun (MO). After a decline in the late 1990s, Western Meadowlarks appear to be stable in Ohio, with birds in Wood through Jun (C. Anderson), Williams 27 Jun (JP), and for the first time since 1946, Summit 20 Jun–2 Jul (D. Vogus, m.ob.). Unusual was a Red Crossbill at Spruce Flats Bog, Westmoreland, PA 5 Jun (D. Tetlow). Pine Siskins, including 8 young, were found in Johnstown, Cumberland, PA in Jun (K. Georg), and fledglings were observed at Powdermill, Westmoreland, PA in early Jun (ML). Non-breeding single birds in Pennsylvania were noted in Erie 16 Jun (D. Peters) and Indiana 3 Jun–6 Jul (M. Cunkleman), with 4 in Monroe (RW). Both Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins were widely reported in West Virginia in Jul (m.ob.).

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State of the Region

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The Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio Valley form a complex Region, comprised, in crude terms, of the eastern highland forests (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 28, the Appalachian Mountain region), which covers West Virginia and most of Pennsylvania, the western prairie peninsula (BCR 22), and the plains along the southern edge of Lake Erie (BCR 13); southeasternmost Pennsylvania has modest areas of Piedmont (BCR 29) and even Coastal Plain around Philadelphia (BCR 30). The Region straddles two major flyways, the Mississippi River in the west and the Atlantic flyway in the east. In between, the contorted Appalachian and Allegheny ridges of West Virginia and central Pennsylvania are famous for passages of migrant raptors and songbirds.

The Prairie Peninsula was the easternmost portion of Eastern Tallgrass Prairie (BCR 22) that extended into the western half of Ohio. These original grasslands have been reduced to 1% of their original expanse, having largely been converted to agriculture. Many of the species tied to this habitat have disappeared (Greater Prairie-Chicken) or have dwindled substantially (Upland Sandpiper) in Ohio. Much of these lands still lie along a major flyway adjacent to the Great Lakes basin, a critical corridor for waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds; the restoration of habitat within this area is thus a continued high priority, despite the near-absence of native prairie. Through the 1990s, substantial acreage was brought under the auspices of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in the Farm Bill, and there was some amelioration in populations of several grassland species. However, it has become apparent that only 50% of the lands within the program in Ohio are compliant with an important component of the conservation requirement of the program (S. Hull, O.D.N.R., pers. comm.). Half the CRP lands in Ohio are mowed mid-season at about the peak of the breeding cycle for many grassland nesters. Unexpectedly, the salvation for some grassland species in the Region has been the reclamation of strip mine lands along the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. Here Henslow's and Grasshoppers Sparrows—both species in decline in the suburban states of the East—are very much at home. Wet prairie restoration, in the form of wetland mitigation projects, has been modestly successful in some areas. The Big Island–Killdeer Plains complex is the largest such wetland in Ohio away from Lake Erie. In recent years, several innovative restoration techniques have been introduced at Big Island, where dikes are left open-ended, permitting a variety of water levels to persist; this has resulted in a remarkable increase in avian diversity.

Lake Erie conservation efforts must take into account the different avifaunas of the lake's three bathymetric divisions—the Western, Central, and Eastern Basins. Only a small portion of our Region involves the deep Eastern Basin. In recent years, deaths of hundreds of waterfowl and dozens of loons have been documented within this basin. While botulism is the likely culprit, exactly why it should now exhibit a greater lethality than in the past—and what may hold it in check elsewhere in Lake Erie—is a mystery.

In the Central Basin, a shoreline long impacted by the industry and urbanization of the Lorain–Cleveland Lakefront, successes in habitat conservation are small and hard won. What "progress" there has been—a greater number of lakefront parks, for instance—has largely been offset by their status as "multi-use facilities" (read: open-lawn recreation), which results in the removal of "unsightly" vegetation that once sheltered migrant songbirds. A new threat on the horizon may be the installation of wind turbines in the offshore waters: it was recently announced that a demonstration turbine will be built on the Cleveland lakefront. While it remains to be seen just what obstacle these structures may represent with regard to migrant waterfowl (e.g., the quarter-million Red-breasted Mergansers that stage each November between Huron and Cleveland), Ohioans share the concern that has been voiced elsewhere in the country over the potential negative impact such turbines may have.

The shallow, marsh-fringed Western Basin is the greatest single Important Bird Area (IBA) identified in the Region, home to Ohio's greatest numbers (and greatest diversity) of

passerines and non-passerines alike. The Western Basin has been the focus of any number of national and regional conservation plans, with notable successes here, though many challenges lie ahead. Shorebird data gathered in the past decade have supported the recent designation of the area as a regionally significant component of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The Magee Marsh Boardwalk now rivals Point Pelee National Park in Ontario for viewing warblers and other Neotropical migrants in the spring.

Slowly, a recognition of the import of Ohio's resources has seeped into the consciousness of officialdom, and a more nuanced understanding of the conservation priorities of this Region has materialized with the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, which brings together a wide variety of interested parties. As this consortium proceeds, it will find that habitat is very much at a premium, with significant dollar amounts now attached. And of that extant natural habitat that may be available, there is little if any that has not been negatively impacted by invasive species (e.g., Zebra Mussel, *Phragmites*). Questionable management practices have produced further impediments. Several expansive wetlands counted on Ohio's rolls are far from the avian productivity one might anticipate: the history of many wetlands—such as a marl bog stripped of that substrate, leaving nothing but bedrock; or the past application of copper sulfate to reduce the "threat" of cattails choking—is especially disturbing given that Ohio has suffered greater wetland loss than any other state. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' revised numbers put the loss of wetlands at 94%, a figure greater than that usually cited for California.

Montane deciduous and mixed forests cover much of southeastern Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and the conservation concerns there are more familiar, especially in Appalachian forests proper. The usual threats such as logging and fragmentation of habitats exist on scales both large and small, and with them come attendant problems of invasive,



The deadly effects of West Nile virus on raptors is here represented by birds (mostly Great Horned Owls) turned into a single wildlife rehabilitator, Mona Rutger, from around Sandusky Bay, Ohio between 20 August and 20 September 2002. The mass mortality of raptors across the Region may have resulted in rising raccoon populations and an increase in rabies cases. Photograph by Mona Rutger.

exotic plants, deer over-browsing, cowbird penetration of mature forests, and feral cats. Population woes in the highlands may not match those on the East Coast, but growing human populations are an issue in eastern Pennsylvania, where land conversion continues unabated, and bird species tied to open country and early successional habitats are almost uniformly in decline except where reclaimed strip mines provide patches of habitat.

Energy demands in more densely settled areas are high, and several wind farms are in operation or under construction along the mountain ridges of the Allegheny Front in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Bird mortality at cell towers throughout the Region, such as those lining the Lake Erie shoreline outside Toledo, has as yet to be investigated, though their heavily guyed structures stand within the path of many migrant songbirds. Television towers such as that in Youngstown, Ohio kill scores of Ovenbirds and Red-eyed Vireos, among other species, each autumn (G. Meiter, pers. comm.), but their owners are not required to mitigate such losses of protected species. While the issue of bird strikes at wind farms and cell and television towers requires a watchful eye, it pales in comparison to the steady loss of most of the important bird habitats in the Region.