

Greater Mohican Audubon News

YOUR LINK TO TOMORROW'S ENVIRONMENT • SERVING ASHLAND, RICHLAND, WAYNE & HOLMES COUNTIES

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GREATER MOHICAN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The GMAS membership offers local newsletter and events and helps us to fund our programs. Each Chapter Supporter will receive a free nametag to wear at chapter functions.

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Greater Mohican Audubon Society,
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Chapter Code S72

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Greater Mohican Audubon Society (GMAS) is dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of birds and other wildlife through environmental education and the conservation and restoration of habitat.

MISSION

P.O. BOX 907 • ASHLAND, OH 44805

Greater Mohican Audubon Society



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www.gmasohio.org

SPRING 2009

GMAS CALENDAR

***Sat. Mar. 14** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Secrest Arboretum, 1680 Madison Avenue, Wooster, Ohio. Meet at Visitor Pavilion. GMAS Board Meeting will be held following the walk.

***Sat. Mar. 28** Shreve Migration Sensation. See article in this issue.

***Sat. Mar. 28** No Byers Woods walk today. See you at the Shreve Migration Sensation.

***Sat. April 11** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Malabar Farm, located near Pleasant Hill Lake on Bromfield Road in Lucas. Meet at the Visitor's Center.

***Sat. April 25** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Byers Woods, located 4 miles south of Ashland, just east of State Route 60 on CR 1754. Meet in the parking lot. GMAS Board Meeting will be held following the walk.

***Sun. Apr. 26** 1PM. Wildflower Walk at Fowler Woods in Richland County led by Sam Weyrick and Cheryl Harner. For more information, see gmasohio.org.



***May 1-3** Mohican Wildlife Weekend. See article in this issue.

***Sat. May 9** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Secrest Arboretum, 1680 Madison Avenue, Wooster, Ohio. Meet at Visitor Pavilion.

***Fri. May 15** Deadline for GMAS Board nominations. See article in this issue.

***Sat. May 23** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Secrest Arboretum, 1680 Madison Avenue, Wooster, Ohio. Meet at Visitor Pavilion.

***Sat. Jun. 13** 9AM-11AM. Bird Walk at Malabar Farm, located near Pleasant Hill Lake on Bromfield Road in Lucas. Meet at the Visitor's Center. GMAS Board Meeting will be held following the walk.

***Sat. Jun. 27** 9AM-1PM. Bobolink and Butterfly Festival at Byers Woods (more info in next newsletter and at www.gmasohio.org).



WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS

This winter has seen an invasion of White-winged Crossbills. This medium-sized finch is a bird of the boreal forests of Canada. The boreal forest consists mostly, of course, of conifers. The most interesting and unique thing about the two crossbill species, is that their beaks are especially adapted for extracting seeds from the cones of coniferous trees. If you look up a photo or drawing you will note how the bill tips are crossed. What is the point of this "deformed" beak? It is better to pry the scales of cones apart to get at the seeds. The bill holds the cone scales open while the seed is removed with the tongue. You can actually hear the cones popping as a group is feeding. White-winged Crossbills with lower mandibles crossing to the right are approximately three times more common than those with lower mandibles crossing to the left.

What should I watch for? Look for a 6-7 inch striped finch with a short, notched tail. The males have a pink to red body color while the female is darker with yellowish head and rump. Some of the females we saw in Lexington had a beautiful peachy-orange color. Both have black wings with two large white wing-bars. Immature birds have a variable amount of streaking, brownish flight feathers, and smaller wing-bars than adult. A similar species would be the Red Crossbill, which has similar reddish males and yellow-green females, but they lack the bold white wing-bars in all plumages. The male is more brick red. The juvenile crossbill could be confused with the Pine Siskin, but siskins have a straight, thinner bill and yellow in the wings.

So why the excitement this year? The White-winged Crossbill's summer range is from central Alaska to Newfoundland and southward to the northern United States. Its range extends farther southward in the western mountains to New Mexico. They are also found across northern Eurasia. In the winter months it usually remains throughout its breeding range, but in some years it may wander much farther southward.

Why does it move sometimes in winter? The flocks will move large distances between years tracking the cone crop from place to place. In the north they prefer smaller, softer cones with small seeds, such as black and white spruce and tamarack. Individual White-winged Crossbills can eat up to 3,000 conifer seeds each day. The report from the north-woods is that the cone crop is not good this year. This past summer the flocks were searching all over the north woods for extensive spruce cone crops. Reports came from Alaska, Yukon, Hudson Bay Lowlands, Ontario, Quebec and many northern states such as Michigan and New York. This winter the spruce cone crops are generally low in most of Canada and with the exhausted seed supply, the birds have invaded



Male White-winged Crossbill on 1/22/09.

Photo by Linda Stoller

(article continued on page 2)

**NOMINATIONS FOR
GMAS BOARD**

Nominations for GMAS Officers, County Representatives, and Committee Chairs are currently being taken for terms beginning July 1, 2009. The GMAS board meets at least 6 times a year. If you would like to volunteer for a position or would like to nominate someone, please contact GMAS President, Cheryl Harner, at harner1@bright.net on or before May 15, 2009.

southward, extending south into the central United States. The last major invasion of Ohio and the mid-Atlantic states that I was able to find was in 1972.

Where should I look? Here in Ohio we are likely to see them on spruce (we have seen them on both Norway Spruce and Blue Spruce), eastern hemlock and sometimes white pine. I would check out any good size hemlock or spruce with lots of cones. You will note that they often hang upside down on cones. The largest flocks locally, or maybe in all of Ohio, have been reported from Mohican. Once again the natural value and unique habitats of the Mohican Forest are being demonstrated.

—Steve McKee, Lexington

MOHICAN WILDLIFE WEEKEND 2009

Don't miss Mohican Wildlife Weekend, May 1-3, 2009. Dr. Jim Bissell, Director of Conservation for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, will give the keynote address Friday evening at Mohican State Park Resort. His topic will be Rare Natural Communities of Northeast Ohio. He will give an overview of the rare species on the CMNH preserves. His presentation will be followed by bat banding in the Mohican Gorge.

Saturday's activities include a bird walk from 9-11, co-sponsored by Greater Mohican Audubon Society and Ashland County Park District. Gary Cowell and

Tim Leslie will take the path above Pugh Cabin at Malabar Farm to see spring flowers and foliage, birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians. The walk will start at the Visitor Center. Another walk for bird enthusiasts will be led by Tim Leslie at Ohio Bird Sanctuary on Sunday, 9-11. He will be looking for both resident and migrating species. For a complete program, please visit the website: <http://mohicanwildlifeweekend.com/>.

—Louise Fleming, Ashland

NINTH ANNUAL SHREVE SPRING MIGRATION SENSATION—MARCH 28, 2009

The ODNR Division of Wildlife, Friends of the Killbuck Marsh, Inc., The Wilderness Center, Greater Mohican Audubon Society, Triway Local Schools, Shreve Library, and Shreve Business & Community Association present the ninth annual Shreve Spring Migration Sensation on Saturday, March 28, 2009. Registration will open at 7:00AM at Shreve Elementary School, 98 N. Market Street (St. Rt. 226), Shreve, Ohio, with free maps to the Help Stations (located in the marsh and at three other sites, all near Shreve). Pancake Breakfast sponsored by Shreve School Relay for Life from 7-10 in the lower level of Shreve Elementary School.

Volunteers with spotting scopes will be stationed at each site from 8AM-noon. There will be a vendor hall and workshops. Scheduled speakers include:

8:30AM-9:15AM – Chuck Jakubchak - "The Birds of Shreve"

10:30AM - 11:15AM – Kevin Higgins - "25 Years of Change Observed in the Killbuck Valley"

12:30PM - 1:15PM – Miles Reed - "Africa to Killbuck Valley Marsh"

1:30PM - 2:15PM – Chad & Chris Saladin - "Peregrine Falcon"

2:45PM - 3:30PM – Jim McCormac - "Wild Ohio: The Best of Our Natural Heritage"

3:45PM - 4:30PM – Kenn Kaufman - "Understanding What You See for Better Bird ID"

Children's programs are scheduled throughout the day.

Cost is \$10 per person—\$15 per family. For more information, please call Jacki Chamberlain at the Wayne County Convention Bureau at 1-800-362-6474.

GMAS ENCOURAGES YOUNG BIRDERS BY SUPPORTING LOCAL AND STATE EFFORTS

Young Birders in the four county GMAS area are lucky to have options. As a past partner with Ohio Young Birders, GMAS will continue to support their efforts and encourage local youth to attend field trips, programs and youth conferences held by the Oak Harbor based Black Swamp Bird Observatory.

This group is designed for older youth, and their calendar can be found on the BSBO website which is also linked to the GMAS young birder web page. If youth have questions, or need help securing a ride to an Ohio Young Birder event, please contact Bianca Davis at rubinzracn@sssnet.com; she is our designated ambassador to OYBC.

If you would like to learn more about Ohio Young Birder's Club, you'll want to meet the founding leader, Kim Kaufman. Kim and her husband Kenn will be attending Shreve Migration Sensation, March 28th 2009, where Kenn is slated to speak.

For younger bird watchers in our area, contact GMAS member Lisa Durham, birdsong95@embarqmail.com. Lisa is a park ranger who has developed Malabar Young Birders, based out of Malabar Farm State Park. She offers monthly walks and trips to encourage young birders develop their interest in nature. Designed for the beginning birder, Lisa can help you with optics, by providing "loaner" binoculars during field trips.

Another opportunity will be Youth Scholarships for the 2009 Ohio Ornithological Society's Conference in Perrysburg, Ohio. Contact Cheryl Harner if you would like more information about attending this event.

Be certain to watch for all the latest birding news for youth on the GMAS young birder's web-page. Whatever the age or ability, GMAS wants to help youth become better birders and have more fun in the field.

—Cheryl Harner, GMAS President

LOCAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Several local records fell during the 109th Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) sponsored by the National Audubon Society.

A record high 90 species were found by a record 35 participants, plus 4 feeder watchers during the Wooster CBC on January 1, 2009. Good finds were a Greater White-fronted Goose, 5 Cackling Geese, a Turkey Vulture, a Peregrine Falcon, a Gray Catbird, a Pine Warbler, a Chipping Sparrow, and 3 White-winged Crossbills. The Wooster CBC was compiled by Roger Troutman, who has been involved with this count and the Mohican CBC for 52 years.

Roger's other count, the Mohican CBC, celebrated its 60th anniversary on December 27, 2008. It tied its own record high from last year with 80 species, plus 6 count week birds. 40 participants discovered good finds such as a Sandhill Crane, a Chipping Sparrow, 55 White-winged Crossbills, and 108 Pine Siskins.

Tim Leslie compiled the Ashland CBC held on December 20, 2008. A record 26 participants found a record high 81 species including 16 new individual species high counts. Unusual finds were 2 Canvasbacks, 21 Redheads, 3 Northern Bobwhites, and 1 Winter Wren.

Steve McKee compiled the Mansfield CBC held on December 14, 2008. 24 participants found 66 species and 4 count week species including a Merlin and 51 Pine Siskins.

The Millersburg CBC was held on January 3, 2009, and compiled by Dennis Kline. Always well attended, 102 participants found 86 plus 4 count week species. Unusual finds were a Merlin, 3 Eastern Phoebe, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2 Common Yellowthroats, and 46 White-winged Crossbills.

For more information about these and other CBCs, see www.audubon.org.

—Su Snyder, Wooster

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GMAS BYLAWS—VOTE TO BE HELD IN JUNE 2009

Each year the members of Greater Mohican Audubon Society convene an annual meeting in June to vote for the new slate of officers. General members are also encouraged to attend and cast their vote.

During the June 2008 meeting two motions carried that would require an amendment to the GMAS Bylaws. In order to encourage the democratic process of our entire body of members, the following amendments to our bylaws are being put forth in writing now, and will be voted upon in June.

The first deals with the length of term an officer shall serve. The membership voted to extend the terms by one year, constituting two-year terms of office, which would require a change in bylaws.

Our bylaws currently state:

Article 3

Section 2. The Directors shall be elected or appointed for the term of one year, beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Elections shall be conducted yearly in June. All members of the Board of Directors shall be members in good standing of GMAS.

There will be a motion to change Section 2:

The Directors shall be elected or appointed for the term of two years, beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Elections shall be conducted yearly in June. All members of the Board of Directors shall be members in good standing of GMAS. President, Vice President, Ashland and Richland Co. Representatives to be elected on odd years, and Secretary, Treasurer, Wayne and Holmes Co. Representatives to be elected in even years.

There will also be a motion for an addendum to:

Article 2

Section 3. Notice of any meeting, at which GMAS business is to be transacted, shall be given not less than thirty (30) days before the date of the meeting. Notice of such meetings may be published in the GMAS newsletter, on the website, or other means of notification.

Which shall read:

Any changes to the date or time of a board meeting require at least a one-week notice.

—Submitted by Cheryl Harner, President GMAS

OOBAAI BIG COUNTY ATLASING COMPETITION

As many of you are aware, some species of birds begin breeding activities fairly early in the calendar year. As a result, much of the survey efforts invested in the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II could begin as early as January and continue through the spring before the bulk of survey activities characteristically commence in June. We would like to announce a Big County Atlasing Competition that will mainly focus on documenting early-season breeders from February through April. Think of it as a Big January but for 3 months instead of one. Here are some of the competition specifics:

- #1 This competition will take place at the COUNTY level.
- #2 Visit the priority block map that has recently been updated (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/Priority%20Block%20Map.php>). This map shows county borders in relationship to all the priority blocks. A quick scan of the map shows counties, like Allen County, that have little or no survey coverage in their priority blocks. Allen County has 5 or so blocks with ZERO data.
- #3 When you see a county that you're interested in surveying for the competition, send me an email or give me a call. Registration in the competition is on a first-come first-serve basis. AND, you are not limited to registering for just one county.
- #4 Ideally, we need help in the counties that have little to no survey coverage but we may consider registration for counties with more thorough coverage at this point. Please get in touch with us with your competition requests and questions.
- #5 The goal will be to tally as many block-species observations that you possibly can. The main objective will be to spend as much time as possible in the priority blocks for your particular county, but species "ticks" from non-priority blocks in your county will also count. A scoring example would be: ...you tallied calling Eastern Screech-Owls in 10 priority blocks in Ashland County. But you also tallied calling owls in 3 non-priority blocks. On the way to scout locations for likely screech-owl

habitat, you found an old heron rookery in a sycamore tree (atlas code 'UN'). You now have an Ashland County score of 14.

Species that have safe dates beginning at some point during the February to April period are:

- Ring-necked Pheasant (begins 4/1)
- Hairy Woodpecker (begins 3/15)
- Ruffed Grouse (begins 4/1)
- Pileated Woodpecker (begins 3/15)
- Wild Turkey (begins 4/1)
- Horned Lark (begins 4/20)
- Northern Bobwhite (begins 4/15)
- Carolina Chickadee (begins 3/15)
- American Woodcock (begins 4/10)
- Black-capped Chickadee (begins 4/15)
- Rock Pigeon (safe dates active year-long)
- Tufted Titmouse (begins 3/15)
- Great Horned Owl (begins 2/1)
- Carolina Wren (begins 4/1)
- Barred Owl (begins 2/1)
- European Starling (begins 4/15)
- Eastern Screech Owls (begins 4/1)
- Northern Cardinal (begins 3/15)
- Belted Kingfisher (begins 4/15)
- Common Grackle (begins 4/15)
- Red-bellied Woodpecker (begins 3/15)
- House Sparrow (begins 2/1)
- Downy Woodpecker (begins 3/15)

As you can see, there are plenty of species that factor into the mix including the fact that many species will begin nesting activities before safe dates that don't begin during the February to April period. And, leafless trees make it easy to spot used nests like heron rookeries or Baltimore Oriole nests!

Prizes for the competition will be announced later but anyone interested in taking part in this competition should call or email Aaron Boone (boone.70@osu.edu OR 614-247-6458). Upon registering for a county to survey, Aaron will send you maps for each priority block in the county along with data forms and a set of competition instructions. Please let us know if you have any questions.

—Aaron Boone, Columbus

WORDS FOR THE BIRDS

In a previous issue of this newsletter, Erwin Riedner from Wooster, challenged us to learn the definitions of the following "bird" terms: Syrinx; Isotherms; Remiges; Polyandry; Bergmann's Rule; Archaeopteryx lithographica; Functional lateralization; Hallux; Malar; Lek; Barbules; Irruption; Cranial kinesis; Zygodactyl; Furcula; Columella; Reverse sexual dimorphism; Neotropical; Pipped and Pipping; Nictating membrane; and Zugunruhe.

Erwin supplied us with the answers, two of which are listed below. Watch upcoming newsletters for more definitions.

Bergmann's Rule - This general rule, named after Carl Bergmann, describes the gradation increase in body mass observed in most warm-blooded species (birds, bears, even people) that correlates with decreasing environmental temperature averages: individuals living in colder regions tend to be larger than those living in warmer areas. An example often cited is the size differential between Downy Woodpeckers living in Florida versus those living in Minnesota, where the latter are on the average 11% larger. However, factors such as diet and genetics complicate this rule, so it's not an absolute.

Archaeopteryx lithographica - The fossilized remains of a feathered reptile from the Jurassic period (155-135 million years before present). Found in 1861, the fossil provides strikingly vivid evidence of the evolution of birds from reptiles and has been referred to as the "Rosetta Stone" of biology, meaning it is one of the most important discoveries in science in providing a phylogenetic link between the two groups. Among its bird-like traits are asymmetrical wing feathers with a smaller leading edge and a larger trailing edge, a characteristic shared by all flying birds and most pronounced in strong flyers, although the flat sternum of Archaeopteryx suggests it may not have been as strong a flyer as the asymmetrical feathers suggest, and it may have been a glider as well. Seven specimens are now known. One, a fully articulated one (discovered in 1877), is housed at the Humboldt Museum in Berlin

NEW OBRC ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF OHIO

The Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC) announces the publication of the new Ohio Bird Records Committee Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio.

Since the most recent OBRC checklist appeared in 2004, eight species have been added to the official Ohio state bird list. Of course, many other noteworthy sightings of recent years have also affected the way we view the abundance and distribution of Ohio's birds, and they are treated in the checklist as well.

More importantly, this new publication is not just an updated edition, but a much expanded resource. It features graphical representations of occurrences, as well as text annotations, for all 420 Ohio bird species now accepted by the OBRC, including records through August 2008. It also reflects all current AOU decisions as to taxonomy and nomenclature.

Suitable for use in the field or as a convenient desk reference, the new OBRC checklist is larger and longer, with 60 pages of text. New features include a more readable format, scientific names, a quick-find index, check-off boxes, and a brief historical overview for most species based on Ohio birding references published in 1882, 1903, and 1968.

Robert Hershberger, of Time & Optics, Ltd., in Mt. Hope is the distributor. He will be selling copies (individual and bulk) through the mail, at his store, and through his catalog. By mail, single copies will be \$3.75 each, which includes shipping and sales tax. Single copies will be \$2.99 each at the store.

For bulk orders of 50 or more, the price will be \$1.99 each, plus shipping and sales tax if applicable. Please contact Robert at 330-674-0210 or toll free at 866-308-0727 if you have any questions regarding availability.

The address is:
Time & Optics, Ltd.
6954 CR 77
Millersburg, OH 44654

This project has been strictly a volunteer effort by the OBRC, in hopes that all Ohio birders benefit from this publication.

—Ohio Bird Records Committee

OHIO IBA BOOK

Our anxiously awaited first and limited edition of *The Important Bird Areas of Ohio* will be available soon. This book catalogues birdlife at dozens of sites throughout Ohio and has been touted as the premier guide for Ohio birders, wildlife scientists and environmental educators.

Available for \$19.95 plus shipping & handling, each reserved copy will be signed by author John Ritzenthaler, a 20-year Audubon scientist and active birder. Reserve your signed copy now by sending an email to ohio@audubon.org. Please list IBA Book in the subject line and include your name, area code and phone number as well as your e-mail address.

—Audubon Ohio

WINTER BIRDING



*Snow Bunting
Snow Bunting & Lapland Longspur
Horned Lark
taken in Holmes County on 1/19/09.*

Photos by Steve Endres