

The Cleveland

Volume 85  
Number 1

# BIRD CALENDAR



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***The Cleveland Bird Calendar*** was founded in 1905 by Francis H. Herrick of The Western Reserve University. The purposes of the publication are to provide information on the movements of birds through the Cleveland region, to monitor populations, densities of resident birds, and to help in the establishment of patterns of vagrancy for rarely encountered species of the region.

The Cleveland Region consists of a seven county area including Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Summit counties.

The Cleveland Bird Calendar is published quarterly by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and The Kirtland Bird Club.

Due dates for field records from contributors are as follows:

- 15 March for the winter season
- 15 June for the spring season
- 15 September for the summer season
- 15 December for the fall season

Cover design: **Bonaparte's Gull** by Thomas Kellerman, 1989.

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December 1988, January, February 1989

Volume 85

Number 1

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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*Design and Production by Melody Oakes*

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## THE WEATHER

Winter 1988/1989

by William Klamm

**December** - Temperatures averaged 31.3 degrees, 0.2 degrees above normal. The extremes reached a high of 61 degrees on the 20th and a low of 4 degrees on the 12th. Lake Erie water temperature was at 46 degrees on the 1st and dropped to 34 degrees by the 31st. The lake provided open water at all times but some protected basins and inland water experienced variable ice cover. Sunshine prevailed 37% of the time possible. Precipitation came on 13 days and totaled 2.49 inches, 0.26 inches below normal as water. As snow, this measured 17.9 inches.

**January** - Temperatures averages 35.0 degrees, 9.5 degrees above normal. The extremes reached a high of 62 on the 31st and a low of 13 on the 3rd. Lake Erie remained

open all month even though the lake water temperature reached 33 degrees by the 18th and remained constant thereafter. Sunshine prevailed 50% of the time possible.

Precipitation was distributed over 12 days and totaled 2.07 inches as water, 0.49 inches below normal. Of the total, there were 3 days of snow measuring 6.6 inches.

**February** - Precipitation was measurable on 17 days and totaled 1.73 inches as water, 0.47 inches below normal. This included snow measuring 13.8 inches. Temperatures averaged 26.1 degrees, 1.3 degrees below normal. A high of 59 degrees on the 1st and a low of 7 degrees on the 9th provided the extremes. Lake Erie, at a constant 33 degrees all month, kept open water through the 8th. Extensive ice cover was present on the 9th and after. Open water holes and fissures developed and refroze with changing winds and weather thereafter. Sunshine prevailed 50% of the time possible.

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## REFLECTIONS:

**Thirty Years Ago:** The editor of The Cleveland Bird Calendar was Donald Newman. Some of the contributors were Dr. David DeSante, current director of Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Dr. Ralph Dexter, professor emeritus at Kent State, Ray Harm, noted wildlife artist, Bert Raynes, author of The Birds of The Grand Tetons, and Dr. Elliot Tramer, well published ornithologist at the University of Toledo. A Red-throated Loon was observed 17 Jan. - 31 Jan. 1959 at Summit Lake (DeSante, *et al.*). The Cleveland Region's first record of Harlequin Duck was at Perkins Beach (Henderson, Raynes, Klamm).

**Twenty Years Ago:** Three Pine Grosbeaks were in Moreland Hills 8 Dec. 1958 (Shaper). An immature Baltimore Oriole was in Chagrin Falls 1 Dec. 1958 (Clark). (Editor's note, could this have been a Bullock's Oriole?) Possibly the largest incursion of Evening Grosbeaks to date was noted throughout the region (Dexter).

**Ten Years Ago:** Hundreds of robins wintered in the Cleveland Region. A Blue-winged Teal was at Shaker Lakes 16 and 22 Dec. 1978 (Fazio). A late Spotted Sandpiper was at Wildwood Yacht Basin 2 Dec. 1978 (Kellerman). Gull watchers were beginning to identify immature Thayer's Gulls. A first winter Thayer's Gull was scrutinized at E. 72nd St. 14 Jan. 1979 (Hannikman, Hoffman.)

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

by Larry Rosche

The winter season proved to be rewarding to the dedicated field observers in the Cleveland Region. Feeder watchers and outdoor enthusiasts located a remarkable total of 131 species during the period. Readers should enjoy learning of the excellent numbers of waterfowl that wintered locally. The flocks of diving ducks were greater than any in recent memory. The Christmas Bird Counts were at the high end of expectancy except for the weather plagued Wellington Count. Compilers are to be thanked for their input.

Rare ducks and gulls seemed commonplace. Several contributors were able to locate ten species of lard in a single day along Lake Erie. Observers from all over Ohio could be found in Cleveland on every weekend. This winter was truly Cleveland's turn to star on a statewide level (ornithologically speaking). It is an editor's dream to have so many rarities viewed by many. Good birding!

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### WINTER 1988-89

Common Loon numbers abruptly dropped off after early December. Pied-billed Grebes wintered in small numbers at various Lake Erie warm water outlets while the usual group of 7-10 lingered in the Summit Lake Area. Eared Grebes remained though 10 Dec. at Headlands Beach State Park (hereafter Headlands BSP). Up to twelve Double-crested Cormorants were counted along breakwalls in Cleveland throughout the period. This was a good number for the time of year. Great Blue Herons could be found along the major waterways of The Cleveland Region in small numbers. Two Black-crowned Night-Herons were tallied on the Elyria-Lorain Christmas Bird Count (hereafter CBC) 17 Dec. (Pogacnik).

A minor movement of Tundra Swans was reported in mid-December by several contributors. An adult Tundra swan was studied on the Mentor CBC 31 Dec. (Hannikman, Henderson, Rosche). A swan of disputed origin was behind Munny Light in Cleveland in January.

Knowledgeable observers disagreed as to its species. Mute Swan is certainly the most likely of the four types of swan being mentioned. The feathered lores on this specimen led to spirited discussions as to its true identity. At least two Wood Ducks wintered in Akron. Two males and a female were a surprise in Cleveland 16 Jan. (Hoffman). Harlan reported a Green-winged Teal at Lake Isaac all winter. Black Duck totals were very good throughout the Cleveland Region. January Northern Pintails are rare. One in Cleveland (m.obs.) and ten in Barberton (Wert) were good news. Northern Shovelers were local rarities at North Chagrin Reservation 10 Dec. (Kellerman) and Shaker Lakes 29 Jan.- 4 Feb. (Fazio). Gadwall numbers were normal but American Wigeon seemed to be down.

Diving ducks were very well represented this winter. Many commented on the unusually high numbers of Canvasbacks. Redheads and Scaup were numerous as well. Harlequin Ducks staged an invasion of sorts with 7-10 individuals being located. Oldsquaws were fair with a high of 4 in Cleveland on

several dates (m.obs). Black Scoters are extremely rare after December. Thus reports of five in Cleveland 15 Jan. (Pogacnik), two in Eastlake 11-13 Feb. (Hoffman, LePage, Rosche), Cleveland (Klamm) 24 Feb., and Avon Lake 25 Feb. (Pogacnik) were very good. Surf Scoters were not to be

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### *...high numbers of canvasbacks.*

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outdone. At least four visited Lorain in mid-winter including a striking male (m.obs.). White-winged Scoter reports were widespread along Lake Erie with a high of 19 off Cahoon and Rockledge 9 Jan. (Klamm). Two were at Springfield Lake 26-28 Feb. (Rosche). Common Goldeneye numbers were building in late February with 1000 in Cleveland and 1800 in Lorain (Fazio). Buffleheads were regularly found throughout the winter along Lake Erie. Hooded Mergansers were in the there usual small numbers while high numbers of Common Mergansers were noted in Lorain in late February. The

### Selected Waterfowl / Greater Cleveland Jan. — Feb. 1989

Date	1/ 2	7	8	8	17	21	29	2/ 11	12	17	25	26
Location	C/RR	LN	AL	GP	C/RR	CLF	AL	EL	LN	C/LN	C/LN	AL
PB. Grebe	•	•	3	•	1	•	2	•	1	•	•	•
Snow Goose	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	1	•	•
Canada Goose	22	50	300	•	135	20	500	200	60	88	150	2500
A. Black Duck	14	200	48	750	73	100	40	275	120	35	500	75
Mallard	436	60	900	250	438	100	600	200	300	470	300	950
Gadwall	2	•	6	•	•	•	•	•	12	2	12	7
American Wigeon	2	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2	2	•	1
Canvasback	380	1000	•	100	2500	600	•	30	1400	2400	3000	21
Redhead	243	20	•	250	326	900	•	30	500	600	2000	35
Scaup Duck (sp)	756	600	•	2500	1500	1700	•	30	800	1900	1600	27
WW. Scoter	3	•	•	1	•	•	•	•	6	•	•	2
C. Goldeneye	10	40	2	10	2	60	4	30	200	21	300	71
Bufflehead	8	30	2	20	17	35	•	20	43	19	40	13
Hooded	1	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	•
C. Merganser	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	170	6	•	•
RB. Merganser	5	•	•	50	1	2	•	•	31	2	20	1
Ruddy Duck	•	•	15	•	•	•	14	•	2	•	•	14
A. Coot	•	•	60	•	2	•	80	•	10	•	2	90

C/RR - Cleveland to Rocky River; LN - Lorain; AL - Akron Lakes; GP - Gordon Park; CLF - Cleveland Lakefront; EL - Eastlake

great flock of Red-breasted Mergansers all but disappeared after the first third of December. A considerable increase in their numbers was obvious by the end of the period. The usual ten to fifteen Ruddy Ducks wintered on Summit Lake (Kopko).

The first Turkey Vulture of the year reported was near Hudson 28 Feb. (Osborne). One to two immature Bald Eagles were seen intermittently through the period at Lake Rockwell (Rosche). This location has produced sightings in every month in recent years. Is it because no boating is permitted on the lake? Only seven reports of Northern Harrier were turned in, most were males. Accipiters were busy visiting feeding stations with Cooper's Hawk reports outnumbering Sharp-shinned

Hawk by a wide margin. Red-shouldered Hawk reports were up with a regular bird in Stow (Tisdale) and a pair daily in Gates Mills (Kremm). Geauga County appears to be a stronghold for this species; seven on the Burton CBC supports this premise. Sixty-nine Red-tailed Hawks were counted on the Cuyahoga Falls CBC demonstrating how common they are or at least how conspicuous. Rough-legged Hawks were reported from Burton, Cleveland, Lorain,

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## *Gull numbers were spectacular.*

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Medina, Richfield and Wellington.

Wild Turkeys may soon be added to the checklist of The Birds of the Greater Cleveland Region. Fjeldstad reported one at Russell Park in Geauga County and Ferris reported eight on the Burton CBC. Henderson had a Ring-necked Pheasant visit his Hudson feeder in late January for the only report not on a Christmas Bird Count. Ruffed Grouse were very scarce and Northern Bobwhite was not encountered during the report period.

Gull numbers were spectacular. Ten species could be found at the end of E. 72nd St. on a given day. Little Gulls were impressive from early January through early February. High counts of nine were noted by several observers. All ages of

this species could be seen regularly at E. 72nd St. (m.obs.). Bonaparte's Gulls lingered, in numbers in excess of 35,000, into February. Ring-billed and Herring Gull totals must have approached six digits. Thayer's Gulls were present in small numbers and a second winter plumaged bird allowed itself to be video-taped by Bill Klamm 11 Feb. at E. 72nd St. The first Iceland Gull was found 3 Dec. in Lorain (Gustafson, Peterjohn). Small numbers were encountered there and in Cleveland afterward. A high count of three was on the Elyria-Lorain CBC (Pogacnik). The high for Cleveland was two on several days (LePage, m.obs.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls were tallied on both the Cleveland and Elyria-Lorain CBC's with four and eight respectively. Glaucous Gulls were late in arriving but about average in February. LePage's high count was 4 on 27 Feb. at E. 72nd St.

Reports of seven species of owl reached this desk. A very accommodating Barred Owl roosted along of Bath Road and was viewed by many in Summit County. Short-eared Owls were found in the Gordon Park Landfill on at least nine occasions (m.obs.). The remains of a freshly killed Short-eared Owl were found there by the Hoffmans 23 Dec. Two winter reports of Northern Saw-whet Owl were very good indeed (see Noteworthy Records).

Belted Kingfishers were conspicuous along Canal Road in Valleyview. Woodpeckers were in fair numbers. A few Red-headed Woodpeckers pleased CBC compilers. The only January report was at

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## *Bluebirds continue to improve.*

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Perkins Beach the fifteenth (Hannikman, Rosche). It appears that Red-bellied Woodpecker has become our second most common wintering piciformes. Red-bellied Woodpecker reports vastly outnumber Hairy Woodpecker reports. Northern Flickers were fairly common all winter away from Lake Erie. A wintering Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Tallmadge was very unusual. This is the third year in a row for this location (Stover).

Two hundred Horned Larks were noted in Lorain County 22 Jan. Hundreds of American Crows were moving along Lake Erie by the end of February. A flock of 300 crows in Shaker Lakes was unusual for the location 16 Jan. (Fazio). Red-breasted Nuthatches were very scarce as they were in the fall. Brown Creepers were widely reported in small numbers. Four on the Mentor CBC reflected their relative density along Lake Erie. A total of 16 Brown Creepers on the Cuyahoga Falls CBC was above normal (Szabo).

Carolina Wrens were found wintering in places where they had previously been absent. Four in Lakeview Cemetery were the first in twelve years (Hoffman). They were noted in

Shaker Lakes as well. The absence of Golden-crowned Kinglets elicited comments from all seven counties in The Cleveland Region. Eastern Bluebirds continue to improve. The CBC totals were: Burton (10), Cleveland (17), Cuyahoga Falls (31), Elyria-Lorain (20), Mentor (9), Wellington (14). American Robins could be found daily and 408 on the Mentor CBC reflect their ability to thrive in the nursery areas of Lake County. Cedar Waxwings received mixed reviews. Henderson and Ferris noted a large decline from the previous year, whereas Hoffman and Stover considered them in normal numbers.

Yellow-rumped Warblers were rarely located and no Rufous-sided Towhees were reported as wintering. A few Swamp Sparrows survived the season at The Gordon Park Landfill which is quite unusual in Cleveland. Large mixed flocks of American Tree Sparrows, Song Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos could be found in traditional wintering grounds in The Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area and West Branch State Park. A gathering of 20 White-crowned Sparrows near Wellington was a treat for the Greater Akron Audubon Society's field trip 22 Jan. (Rosche, m.obs.). Blackbirds were in excellent numbers in their usual Lake County haunts. The only Pine Siskin report was from Huntington Beach 17 Jan. (Pogacnik). American Goldfinches were plentiful at feeders and in weedy fields. Fondrk was the only reporter to find Evening Grosbeaks. He saw four in Chesterland 27 Jan.

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**NOTEWORTHY RECORDS**

**Red-throated Loon** - The bird found near the mouth of the Grand River 24 Nov. 1988 remained through 6 Dec. (Rosche, m.obs.).

**Red-necked Grebe** - A winter plumaged bird was documented from Summit Lake 4 Dec. (Kopko).

**Tufted Duck** - A male was described at Lorain 11 Feb. (Pogacnik). If accepted by The Ohio Rare Bird Records Committee it would be The Cleveland Region's second.

**Harlequin Duck** - Seven to ten were in the Cleveland Region from late December through February. Two were at Headlands BSP 22-24 Dec. (Hoffman, m.obs.). Three were in Rocky River 24 Dec. (Klamm). A female was in Lorain 31 Dec. - 22 Jan. (Gerrone, m.obs.). Fondrk found a pair of males in Mentor-on-the-Lake 8, 15 Jan. Two immatures near Gordon Park were first noted by Pierce 14 Jan. and were seen by many through 24 Jan. Fazio located two males at Avon Lake 26 Feb.

**Bald Eagle** - Heflich reported a subadult in Valleyview 12 Dec.

**Merlin** - Three reports constituted a high number for a species that normally does not winter locally. Rickard described one at Burke Airport 22 Dec. Another was on the Mentor Christmas Count 31 Dec. (Webster). The Fjeldstads had one 23, 27 Jan. and 3 Feb. in Willoughby.

**Peregrine Falcon** - An immature was video-taped by Bill Klamm as it terrorized the ducks and gulls at E. 72nd St. on 16 and 26 Feb. (If only all rarities could be so documented.)

**Ruddy Turnstone** - Lucky Christmas Count participants found a healthy bird in Lorain 17 Dec. (Pogacnik, m.obs.). It was last reported 17 Feb. (Fazio).

**Dunlin** - A straggler was first reported by LePage 9 Jan. in

Lorain. It was last reported 3 Feb. (Fazio).

**Red Phalarope** - A juvenile was seen at E. 72nd St. from 4 Dec. - 1 Feb. (Hoffman, Klamm, m.obs.). Hannikman located one at Headlands BSP 10 Dec.

**Pomarine Jaeger** - The influx of jaegers continued well into winter. The high count of four was on 3 Dec. in Cleveland (Hannikman). Another was at Avon Lake the same date (Pogacnik). Two were at E. 72nd St. 7 Dec. (Hoffman). One was observed at Headlands BSP 4 Dec. and three were tallied on the Cleveland Christmas Count 17 Dec. (Hannikman, Rosche). Three were swimming together off Perry Park 31 Dec. to the delight of the Mentor CBC compiler (Hannikman, Heflich, Peskin, Rosche). Unbelievably, birds lingered well into January. They were: 2 Jan. Avon Lake (Pogacnik), 5 Jan. Edgewater Park (LePage), 14 Jan. E. 72nd St. (2) (Harlan, Rosche), 17 Jan. Perry Park (Fjeldstad), 18 Edgewater (Pogacnik).

**Laughing Gull** - Very rare in December, a single was in Eastlake 2 Dec. (Fjeldstad).

**Common Black-headed Gull** - Reported only from Lorain, this individual eluded almost everyone who sought it. Sightings were 17 Dec. and 2 Jan. (Pogacnik).

**Mew Gull** - A first winter brachyrhynchus race bird was detailed and photographed in Eastlake 11 Dec. (Hannikman, Rosche). It was reported there 17 Dec. (Fjeldstad) and again 25 Dec. (Gustafson, Peterjohn). This report is being reviewed by The Ohio Rare Bird Records Committee.

**California Gull** - A first winter bird was in Fairport Harbor 4 Dec. (Hannikman, Rosche). Adult reports were as follows: 15 Jan. E. 72nd St., 22, 27 Edgewater Park (Emery and Harlan), 29 Jan. Cleveland, 25 Jan. Lorain (Gustafson and Peterjohn), 8 Jan., 26 Feb. Lorain, 14 Jan. E. 72nd St. (J. and L. Pogacnik).

**Black-legged Kittiwake** - An immature was first noted in Lorain 7 Jan. by Pierce, it was seen intermittently afterwards. One was at Avon Lake 22 Jan. (Gustafson, Peterjohn). Another was located by C. Johnston and Harlan at E. 72nd St. 18 Feb.

**Sabine's Gull** - The first record of a wintering Sabine's Gull in North America was reported by Pogacnik 14 Jan. at Edgewater Park. It was located at E. 72nd St. by Pierce 24 Jan. and was seen by many afterwards. Kellerman saw it at the Wildwood Yacht Basin 4 Feb.

**Common Barn-Owl** - One of the few winter records in The Cleveland Bird Calendar history was described to Fazio by two nuns in Shaker Heights.

**Snowy Owl** - A bird was at Burke Airport 8 Dec. - 4 Feb. (Klamm).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** - One remained at the Seiberling Naturealm through 12 Feb. (Stover, Szabo). The Fjeldstads photographed one in Madison 7 Jan.

**Varied Thrush** - A male was discovered in Westlake 18 Dec. and remained through the period. (Graff, Cavanno).

**Gray Catbird** - Two reports were remarkable for the season. The first was noted off S. Marginal 1 Dec. (Hoffman), another was in Bratenahl 17 Dec. (Klaus).

**Northern Shrike** - An excellent showing for this usually difficult to encounter species. Birds were: 1 Dec. - 28 Feb. Gordon Park Landfill (Klamm, m.obs.), 18 Dec. - 5 Feb. Kent (Rosche, Stover, Tisdale, Wert), 21 Dec. West Branch State Park (Rosche), 25 Dec. - 16 Jan. Boston Heights (Stover, m.obs.), 13 Jan. Elyria (Gerrone).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** - A male was reported by Kellerman 15, 22 Jan. in Willoughby. A male was photographed by Fazio 28 Feb. in Mentor-on-the-Lake.

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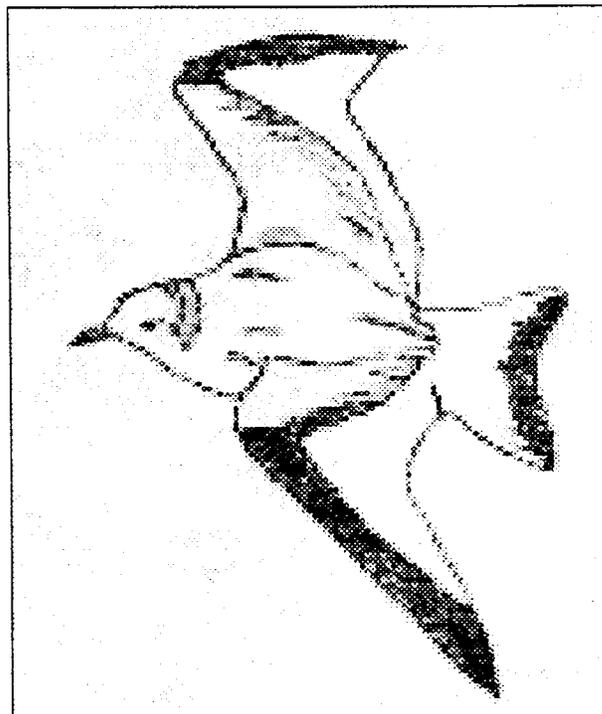
## FIELD NOTES

### PROBABLE FIRST UNITED STATES RECORD OF WINTERING SABINE'S GULL

by Ray Hannikman

**Truly one of the most remarkable birds** ever to have occurred in the Cleveland Region was the Sabine's Gull that was present, first at Edgewater Park and then at East 72nd Street, from about January 9, 1989 to at least the twelfth of April. The sighting of a Sabine's Gull in September, October, or November (the months this species has usually been noted in Ohio) is always noteworthy, but a wintering bird observed over an extended period of time appears unprecedented in North America. When I heard that J. Kirk Alexander and later John Pogacnik had seen a first-winter Sabine's Gull at Edgewater Park in early January, I really wanted to see the bird. After all, Sabine's Gull is supposed to acquire this plumage only after it has reached its wintering grounds - off of southern Africa or the west coast of South America! Edwin Pierce found the gull at East 72nd Street on January 24 and Tom Lepage and Rob Harlan saw the bird. Larry Rosche and I got to East 72nd Street early on January 28th and spent a couple of hours searching for the bird. Larry had just told me he expected me to find the bird when he spotted the Sabine's Gull on the rocks at the end of the breakwall. A Sabine's Gull in the month of January in North America - incredible.

Extensive observations of the gull were undertaken during the next several weeks. The gray back of the bird, much different than on juvenile Sabine's Gulls, kept extending farther out onto the wings as observations continued into late March. Other field marks of first-winter Sabine's Gull that were noted on this bird were the white forehead and dark half-collar on the back of the neck. Throughout its stay the bird could be found around the rocks at the end of the breakwall where it bathed, fed by



picking up moss at the water line, or just sat around with the other gulls. The bird fed right at the bridge of the CEI hot water outlet and often times came within a few feet of the observers gathered to see it. After the gull had caught a few fish, it would fly out over the breakwall only to return from 15 minutes to 1 hour later. When ice covered the lake the Sabine's Gull would sit out on the ice among the other gulls. Good studies of the differences between first-winter Sabine's Gull and first-winter Little Gull were possible when both were together at East 72nd Street in early February.

Perhaps the most unusual behavioral observation of the Sabine's Gull occurred on February 25 when the bird was observed pecking, as if trying to free, a Bonaparte's Gull that had gotten stuck on the ice near the breakwall. I later freed the Bonaparte's Gull and saw no indication that the Sabine's Gull was trying to injure the Bonaparte's Gull.

Ohio birders were afforded a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with our wintering Sabine's Gull. Those who took advantage of it were fittingly rewarded by the spectacular show this bird put on.

## RARE BIRD IN WESTLAKE

by Floran D. Graff

My wife and I like nature. During the winter months especially we try to feed and attract birds and animals to our backyard. I made and hung two screech owl boxes and one flicker box. Owls have moved in but no flickers. There are two bird tables, one suet holder and one seed dispenser. The seed used is about 90% hulled sunflower with small amounts of safflower and black oil sunflower. To this we add cracked corn. The net result is happy birds and happy gardener as all gets eaten and there is nothing left to clean up in the spring.

On the afternoon of Sunday, December 18, our friend Lee Cavano called to see if we had seen a screech owl that day in one of our owl boxes. This was the day of The Christmas Bird Count and he wanted to add a screech owl to his list. Unfortunately we had not, but were happy to say a Varied Thrush had made an appearance that same morning. Being a relative novice regarding birds I didn't realize this was such an unusual visitor, but later when so many people were interested and came to our house to see our little friend, I must say I am now convinced.

The thrush has been a regular visitor the past two months. In fact only one day it wasn't seen, probably because we were away most of the day. He doesn't stay very long at any one time. The usual pattern is to alight on a bird table or on the ground, pick up some seed, then fly back into a small wooded area behind our yard. There is quite a tangle of small trees and brush plus some large spruce and hemlock adding up to a lot of cover. He only stays in our yard a minute or less at any one time. Seed seems to be the food he prefers as any suet on the bird table is, as near as I can tell, passed over. Generally the thrush can be expected when other birds are already present; in fact when the bluejays arrive the thrush is more likely to show. He is a striking bird with a prominent dark band across the breast much like that of the jays. The legs and feet are a bright orange-pink.

You might wonder how we recognized a Varied Thrush so quickly. Well, this is our second one! In 1981, the year Mt. St. Helens erupted, another Varied Thrush was in our immediate area for several weeks. At that time we were content to identify and call the local Audubon number. No one seemed all that interested

so that was about it. Fortunately this time the word got through. We did meet some very nice people as a result and hope to have made some new friends.

## NOTES ON A RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

by Walter Kremm

Jan. 29, 1989 — In the early afternoon I looked out our front window and saw a Red-Shouldered Hawk on the ground about 65 feet away at the edge of our fish and frog pond. I focused my binoculars on the hawk and saw he had a large water snake in his talons. The snake was moving a bit but completely helpless. The hawk clutched the snake by the head and occasionally struck the head with his beak. Then he managed to lift the big snake, which was fat and about 2 1/2 feet long, just off the ground three or four times until he had moved it about fifteen feet behind a large taxus and out of sight. A half hour later I went outside and looked for the snake and found it under a nearby hemlock. The hawk had eaten the head and upper part of the snake. A bit later I saw the hawk in a tree alongside the pond, and then it flew away leaving the decapitated snake behind.

## HARLEQUIN DUCKS

by Andrew Fondrk

On Sunday, January 8, two male Harlequin Ducks were observed on Lake Erie at Painesville Township Park located about two and a half miles east of Fairport Harbor. Both of the gray-blue ducks had the white markings of a male including the distinctive patch at the base of the bill and vertical stripes just in front of the wings. The flanks of one of the birds were a dark chestnut color while the other was a light brown. One appeared to be an adult male while the other an immature male. The adult male's white head stripe was bordered with chestnut.

The two ducks were alone and near shore. They were frequently diving and spent little time on the surface. Occasionally one would surface with a small fish in its beak. A very strong wind was blowing from the southwest. Moderate waves were breaking over small rocks that had fallen into the lake due to erosion. The lake was clear of ice and air temperature was 40 degrees. What appeared to be the same two ducks were seen at the same place one week later.

## THE OWLS OF THE CLEVELAND REGION

by Larry Rosche

Raptors, particularly owls, create an enthusiasm in observers that few other species can duplicate. Because of their tolerance to non-threatening human behavior a "staked-out" bird will literally be inundated by the birding community. Indeed, when a Northern Saw-whet Owl is found it is besieged by photographers and birders alike. Snowy Owls will even cause a stir on local newscasts. When a field is found with wintering Short-eared Owls it is not uncommon to see a nightly caravan of owl enthusiasts waiting for dark and the emergence of the owls. A conifer stand with Long-eared Owls will be tramped into muddy paths by the continual parade of observers.

This treatise will deal with the nine species of owls which have been documented in the Cleveland Region. A tenth species, Great Gray Owl, was alluded to by Williams (1950) but details were inadequate for acceptance by The Ohio Rare Bird Records Committee. Each species has its own unique place in the Cleveland Region and although some owls are more glamorous than others each will be detailed.

### Common Barn-Owl

This species has declined from a fairly common permanent resident to a rare migrant and extremely rare nester. As late as 1949 Common Barn-Owls were nesting on Euclid Avenue. The only nesting reports found in *The Cleveland Bird Calendar* after 1950 were in Stow (1964) and Parma (1980). There have been reports of summering birds in Geauga County but none have reached the desk of *The Cleveland Bird Calendar* editor. The most recently observed bird was at Sims Park 29 March 1986.

Common Barn-Owls declined drastically in Ohio during the fifties

and sixties according to Peterjohn *et al.* (1987). Craighead (1956) noted that they no longer were wintering in Northern Michigan by the early nineteen fifties. The factors in this decline are difficult to pinpoint but changes in farming and pesticide usage certainly did not favor the owls. What then of the city owls. Their disappearance occurred simultaneously. One can only speculate as to the reasons for their demise. Twenty-one reports from 1950 indicate a mid-March to late November pattern of occurrence. The only December report was in Kirtland Hills (1967).

### Eastern Screech-Owl

This is the Cleveland Region's most abundant owl. This species occupies urban, suburban and rural niches throughout the area. Nesting is usually in April and feeding of the young corresponds with the passerine migration. VanCamp (1975) writes that adults generally do not wander far from their nesting sight. Young on the other hand usually disperse to a



by Pamela Suzanne Jonas

distance of greater than 10km. Perhaps the best time to locate this species is in fall and early winter. Young birds are trying to establish their own territories and can be coaxed into calling by even the poorest of imitations. Because they occur in a wide variety of habitats one simply needs to find a quiet streamside and imitate their call. Results are either immediate or not at all.

### Great Horned Owl

This large predator is one of our most common raptors. They raise their young in abandoned nests and can often be found in association with heron rookeries. They are usually paired by late January and on the nest in February. They are fairly secretive but are to be looked for in old cemeteries or mature woodlands. Driving roads and looking for old hawk nests when the leaves are absent is a good way to help yourself find potential nesting sights for this species. They are crepuscular to a degree and

should be looked for as a silhouette against a late evening sky.

### **Snowy Owl**

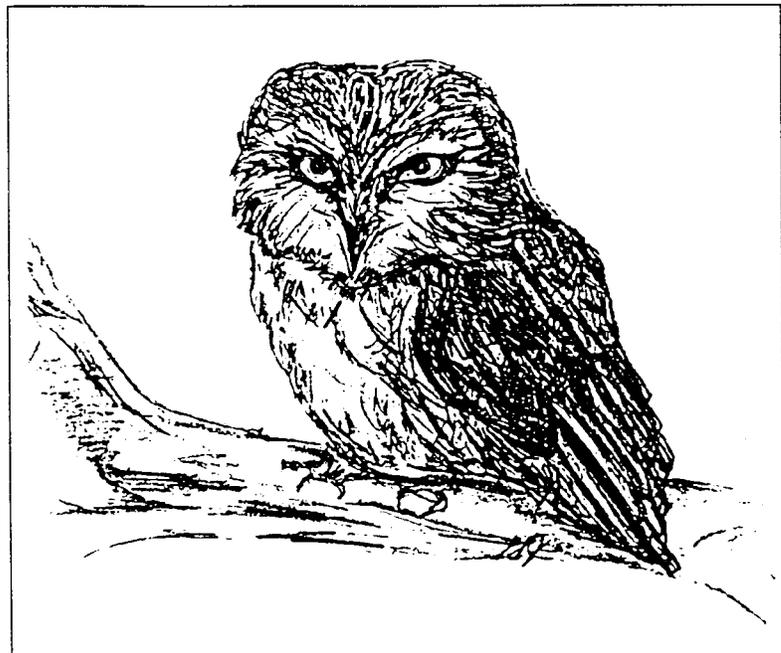
This species is probably the most documented of all owl species. These beautiful arctic invaders are conspicuous and diurnal. They establish winter territories and remain for many weeks. At this writing they are considered to be rare to uncommon visitors. In 1941-42, an invasion of 100 to 150 birds in the region must have been spectacular (Williams). Sightings after 1950 have never come close to that number. They usually arrive after mid-November and sometimes linger into April. Our earliest record is 22 Oct. 1955 near Hach-Otis Sanctuary and our latest departure was 23 Apr. 1961 at Burke Airport.

### **Northern Hawk-Owl**

This is a casual winter visitor to the Cleveland Region. Five records have been published to date. On 10 Nov. 1927 one was collected in Pepper Pike by R.J. Kula. Another 5 Dec. 1940 was reported by B.P. Bole at the Holden Arboretum. A bird was seen 24 Dec. 1940, 1 Jan. and 6 Jan. 1941 in Northfield by R.J. Kula. The fourth record was at Clifton Beach 2 Mar. 1957 and was observed by William and Nancy Klamm. The most cooperative owl was reported in Lorain 3-20 Jan. 1968 by C. Dolbear and others. This species is not to be expected and records south of the Great Lakes are very few in recent years.

### **Barred Owl**

This is a fairly common owl but has a more selective habitat preference than the other two common species of local owls. This species prefers mature woodlands especially beech forests with ravines. They can sometimes be found in urban areas where the lots are large and heavily wooded. The wetlands of Geauga County, deep woods of The Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area and Hinckley Metropark are excellent places to find this species. They nest later than Great Horned Owls



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and are more likely to be coaxed into view during the daylight hours.

### **Long-eared Owl**

This species is thought of as a rare migrant and winter resident. Reports have decreased in the eighties but this may simply reflect fewer attempts by observers to locate them. Traditional areas have been developed for housing and new areas have yet to be found by observers. These are difficult birds to detect and are very nocturnal. Although there are records for all months no confirmation of nesting has been reported to *The Cleveland Bird Calendar* for the region. Spring migrants are usually found in late-March to mid-April. Fall appearances are less patterned. November has the most dates but they have been encountered as early as August.

### **Short-eared Owl**

These owls are currently rare to uncommon migrants. They seem to be noticed along Lake Erie with much greater frequency than inland. This is another species for which there are records for all months. This suggests breeding but the most recent summer report was

of 3 birds at Burke Airport In 1975. They wintered in small groups in Lorain and Summit Counties in the early eighties. They use group hunting techniques and watching this is a fascinating experience. Spring migrants usually appear in April and can be seen into May. Autumn migrants range from late September through November.

### **Northern Saw-whet Owl**

Presently Northern Saw-whet Owls are considered rare at any season. Scheele (1962) considered them to be uncommon and when one considers the size of this owl it is easy to see that they can be overlooked. There are records for all months and Juveniles have been found in the summer. Northern Saw-whet Owls are most likely to be encountered along Lake Erie migrant traps in migration. Cleveland has two areas which have produced regular sightings over the years: Erie St. Cemetery and Donald Gray Gardens. Birds should be looked for from mid-March through April. In the fall they generally are found from late October to early December. There are records from all seven counties in the Cleveland Region. ■

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ANNOUNCEMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

INVITATION:

The Kirtland Bird Club meets the  
first Wednesday of the month except  
July and August at 7:45 P.M. at the  
Cleveland Museum of Natural  
History. Visitors are always  
welcome.

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