



# THE KIRTLAND WARBLER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Kirtland Bird Club, Cleveland, Ohio

www.KirtlandBirdClub.org and www.ClevelandBirdCalendar.com

2017–2018 Membership Year, No. 3, Spring Issue

## Monthly Meetings

Guests are always welcome — Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month except July and August, 7:30 PM

**Wednesday March 7, 2018**

## Migration Ecology of a Declining Migratory Songbird

### the Rusty Blackbird

Presented by James Wright



One of the most rapidly declining songbirds in North America is the Rusty Blackbird (85-95% decline over 50 years). Very little is known about their behavior and habitat requirements during migration, so we studied the species during spring and fall migration at a high-traffic stop-over site in northern Ohio. We utilized an automated telemetry array in the western Lake Erie basin and across Ontario to track landscape-scale movements of radio-tagged birds during and after migratory stopover events. We found that their behaviors and habitat use closely resemble shorebird migration strategies, where birds congregate to forage for several weeks at key staging areas. Our description of Rusty Blackbird stop-over habitat use and behavior will help inform conservation and management practices across the species' migratory range.

Bio: Jay got his start in avian ecology “birdwatching” at a young age in Rhode Island, but it wasn’t until several years ago that he became a fully-fledged “birder.” In the interim he graduated from Vassar College with a degree in Environmental Studies, and spent his 20s traveling the world. After a stint as an English teacher in Thailand, he worked as a marine fisheries observer, studied seals in Antarctica, and returned to his old love of birds with a long string of avian conservation and ecology jobs. These projects brought him to the field technician promised lands of Alaska, California, and Hawaii, as well as a number of other stunning and exotic locales. In 2015 he met Dr. Chris Tonra at The Ohio State University, and was happily promoted from field bum to graduate student. He recently completed a Master's degree studying Rusty Blackbird migration ecology, and is now pursuing a PhD studying the influence of oak masting cycles on Blue Jay caching behavior and over-winter survival

***The Kirtland Warbler*, the newsletter of the Kirtland Bird Club (KBC), Cleveland Ohio, is published quarterly.**

**It contains KBC meeting and trip information, web site updates, other events and programs of interest, as well as issues of local concern. A subscription to *The Kirtland Warbler* is a benefit of club membership.**

**Your contributions of articles, event information, photos, and drawings are always welcome.**

**Please send submissions to the New President Dave Dvorak or to [info@kirtlandbirdclub.org](mailto:info@kirtlandbirdclub.org).**

## Monthly meetings

**Wednesday April 4, 2018**

### **Carry-over Cascade: Linking Winter Habitat, Arrival, Breeding, and Post-fledging Survival in a Migratory Songbird**

**Presented by Elizabeth Ames**



Understanding carry-over effects is fundamental to understanding changes in migratory populations and their conservation, as many are in enigmatic decline. The objective of this study is to explore carry-over effects between wintering and breeding events, and examine not well known life-cycle stage, the post-fledging period, in a migratory songbird of conservation concern, the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*). We monitored arrival timing, breeding success, and estimated post-fledging survival in 2016 and 2017 at the Hoover Reservoir Nature Preserve. We found a surprisingly low rate of fledging success for both natural cavity and box nests, an unusual arrival pattern, and a relatively high rate of post-fledging survival. The results of our research help to fill important gaps in the Prothonotary Warbler's full annual cycle and provide a critical estimate of the success of a long running nest box program.

After graduating from Wilmington College of Ohio with a B.S. in 2007, Elizabeth traveled around the country and world working as a research technician on various field ecology projects. Most of this research focused on avian ecology which ignited her passion for birding and conducting avian conservation research. She has spent considerable time working in the tropics in places such as Hawaii, Panama, Jamaica, and Florida, and in the rugged tundra of Alaska, the breathtaking expanse of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and on the Southeast Farallon Islands off the coast of California. These experiences helped to fuel her passion for research and led to her current PhD research, in the Tonra Lab of Avian Ecology at OSU, examining carry-over effects and the full annual cycle of the Prothonotary Warbler, a species of conservation concern in Ohio



Thanks to member of the *Kirtland Warbler*  
Committee who reviewed and edited this issue:  
Paula Lozano .

**Wednesday May 2, 2018**

### **Lessons from A. B. Williams: The Composition and Dynamics of a Beech-Maple Climax Community from 1930 to Today.**

**Presented by Ryan Trimbath**



Museum archives are rich in valuable scientific and natural history resources, but they remain hidden to scholars, students, and scientists if they are not discoverable. In recent years, progress has been made to expose these hidden collections and make them available to the public through digitization and storage in online repositories. As a young scientist trying to understand the natural history of forest communities in Northeast Ohio, Trimbath turned to the Archives of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History where he discovered a hidden treasure of field notes, maps, and journals documenting the work of Arthur Baldwin Williams. A. B. Williams was a naturalist who studied the forests of Northeast Ohio in the 1930's. This collection has been the focus of a collaborative project, "Discover – Explore – Connect," which will have made these resources accessible to the public and used as an educational tool through the

development of a curriculum for 6-12 grade students. The A. B. Williams collection has also inspired local scientists to resurvey the same forests as Williams to document changes in forest community composition. For his talk Trimbath will introduce the A. B. Williams collection, curriculum and preliminary present results and future plans for resurvey efforts.

Ryan John Trimbath graduated from Ohio University with a degree in Wildlife & Conservation Biology and has since pursued a career studying forest ecology. Ryan has worked as a field biologist on a number of projects throughout Ohio, Maryland, New Hampshire, Oregon and Wisconsin for groups including Ohio State University and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. He received his M.S. in Biology from the University of Akron in 2014 where he studied the combined effects of exotic earthworms and White-tailed deer on forest plant communities. Currently Ryan coordinates the deer management program at Cuyahoga Valley National park and is a PhD candidate in the Integrated Biosciences program at the University of Akron. Over the past six years Ryan has been managing and studying forest communities in Northeast Ohio.

## Upcoming fieldtrips



### **SHREVE MIGRATION SENSATION**

**Saturday, March 17 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m**

Location: Shreve Elementary School,  
598 North Market St. (SR226), Shreve, OH 44676

**Leader: Self-guided**

**Description:** This peak spring bird migration event includes self-guided tours with experts located at help stations throughout the Killbuck Wildlife Area, which covers over 5,600 acres and is Ohio's largest wetlands complex. At Shreve Elementary School and throughout the wildlife area, enjoy a full day of "sensational" family-friendly activities in addition to six workshops offered by well-known experts in their fields. Admission is \$15 individual and \$20 per family and includes all events and workshops. There is no fee to explore the wildlife area on your own or in groups of people.

**Directions:** Shreve is located on State Route 226, south of Wooster. Arteries that lead into Wooster are State Routes 83, 30, and 250. From Wooster, take State Route 3 south and bear left on State Route 226.

### **DUCKS AT LADUE RESERVOIR**

**Sunday, March 25 9:00 a.m.**

Location: 17799 Valley Rd, Chagrin Falls, OH 44023

**Leader: Matt Valencic**

**Description:** March is all about waterfowl on the open water, and there is usually plenty of water, even if the reservoir is low. We will look for as many as 20 duck species; Loons; Tundra and Trumpeter Swans; Coots and Grebes; Osprey; Bald Eagles; Cooper's, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks; and all the year-round birds in the fields, forest and edges along Valley Road and elsewhere.

**Directions:** Ladue Reservoir is in Geauga County near the intersection of State Routes 44 and 422 at Auburn Corners. We will meet at the boat house on the south end of Valley Road.



### **EARLY MIGRATION AT COLUMBIA RESERVATION**

**Saturday, April 28 9:00 a.m.**

Location: 25145 Royalton Rd, Columbia Station, OH 44028.

**Leader: Rich Kassouf**

**Description:** We will look for early migrant songbirds and other species.

**Directions:** Columbia Reservation is located in Lorain County on State Route 82, just west of State Route 252.



## Upcoming fieldtrips (continuation)

### PEAK MIGRATION TIME AT HACH-OTIS SANCTUARY

**Saturday, May 19 9:00 a.m.**

Location: Willoughby Hills, OH 44094

**Leader: John Lillich**

**Description:** Hach-Otis Sanctuary is 161 acres of mostly mature upland beach/maple forest, flood plain, meadow, and swamp forest. Portions along the Chagrin River rise 150 to 170 feet above the river, giving a very scenic view of the Chagrin River valley below. These cut banks provide nesting habitat for three to four colonies of Bank Swallows, with usually 60 to 80 nest cavities per colony. Also plan to see Belted Kingfisher, Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Great Horned, Barred and Screech-Owls. Mammals abound such as Red Fox, Coyote, White-tailed Deer.



**Directions:** Hach-Otis is located in the city of Willoughby Hills at the end of Skyline Drive. From I 271, exit onto I 90 east.

From I 90, exit onto State Route 91 (SOM Center Rd.). Take SOM Center Rd. south to US Rt. 6 (Euclid-Chardon Rd.). Then take Chardon Rd. east to State Route. 174 (River Rd.), and River Rd. north to Skyline Dr. (approx. 600 ft.). Skyline Dr. ends in the Hach-Otis parking lot.

## Results of the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count

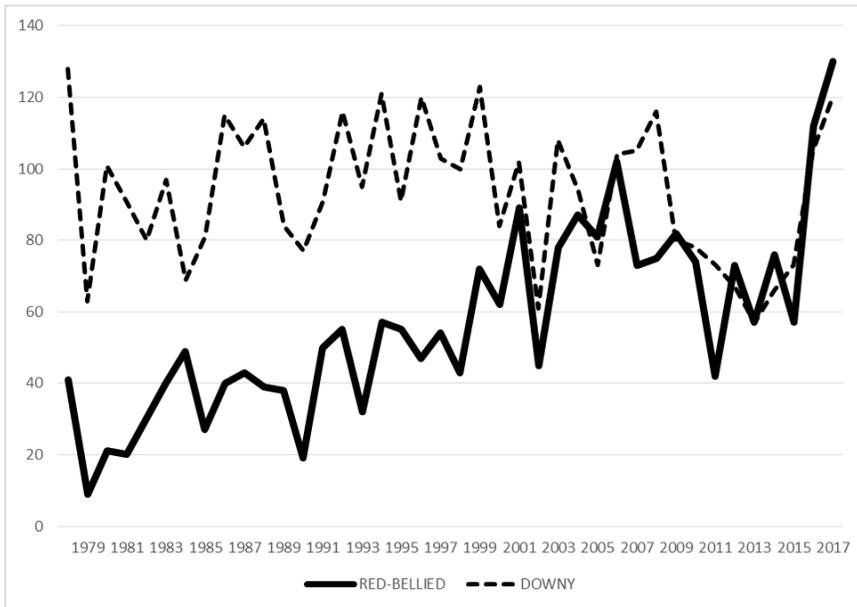
**By Dr. Andy Jones**

This season's Cleveland Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on December 16th, 2017. Sixty-one birders were in the field plus another six feeder watchers submitted data for the day. The day was cloudy, with scattered flurries in the afternoon; the temperature remained in the 30s all day. Small bodies of water were frozen, but Lake Erie was open. The CBC's 15 mile diameter circle covers the east side of Cleveland, and includes popular birding sites like Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, Lake View Cemetery, Shaker Lakes, and North Chagrin Reservation, as well as under-birded areas like Hach-Otis State Nature Preserve and the recently created Acacia Reservation in Beachwood. This CBC circle is supported by the Kirtland Bird Club and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Cleveland CBC observers reported a total of 83 species, tying for third-highest in the history of the count (the highest total ever was 87, in December 2013). There was also a "count week" bird; Great Horned Owl was reported the day after the count. This high number was thanks to strong coverage throughout the circle, and a diversity of waterfowl and gull species found on the lake. Almost all of the likely waterfowl were recorded (including all three scoters), and most of the expected gulls were present (including the count's second-ever Black-legged Kittiwake). For the last few years, Jen Brumfield has led a party that conducts part of their count from East 55th Street; this lakeside spot is outside of the circle, but the party only counts the species seen on the north side of Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve which is inside the circle. From this vantage point, they picked up several key species that would have been undetectable from any other vantage point.

## Results of the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count (continuation)

No new species were added to the Cleveland CBC this year. Two species were found in record numbers; five Barred Owls was a new high count (four have been reported in multiple prior years), and 130 Red-bellied Woodpeckers eclipsed the previous high of 112 which was set just last year. Red-bellied Woodpecker numbers have been on the increase for decades, with impressive increases in the last two years. Meanwhile, other sedentary woodpecker species like Downy Woodpecker have remained relatively stable (see graph).



Meanwhile, other sedentary woodpecker species like Downy Woodpecker have remained relatively stable (see graph).

This fall and early winter has been a partial irruption year for some northern finches, with Red Crossbills and Common Redpolls on the move throughout the Midwest, but both species were absent from this year's CBC. Pine Siskins were common (51 recorded this year; record high was 68) as were American Goldfinches (276 recorded this year; record high was 332). Blue Jays were also abundant, with 423 recorded (the record high is 464).

There were several notable misses, mostly those "half hardy" species which typically winter south of the region but linger into the winter when it is mild. This includes Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow. Peregrine Falcon and Eastern Screech-Owl were also missed this year.

This late fall and early winter has seen an impressive irruption of Snowy Owls in our area, with as many as ten being seen in a day within Cuyahoga County along the lakefront. However, none were recorded on the count. Their main locations - the harbor's breakwall and Burke Lakefront Airport - are outside the Cleveland circle. As a result, there have never been more than two individuals recorded on the Cleveland CBC.

Thank you to everyone for participating in this year's Cleveland Christmas Bird Count .



Red-headed Woodpecker in Oakwood Green Park (South Euclid). Photo A.Kozlenko

## Poetry corner

### **BIRD CHAT**

*By Bill Toneff*

Let's get it right before we go further,  
Don't say bird-watcher, always say birder.

If you're a pretty good birder, eyes like a hawk,  
Be sure you know how to talk the talk.

Always say "trash birds" for the birds you don't love,  
Whether Rock Pigeon or whether Rock Dove.

Your birding grade will stay at D,  
"Til you call the Turkey Vulture a TV.

You'll stay at C and be thought a phony,  
'Till you call the Bonaparte's Gull a Boney.

People will know that you're finally a pro  
When you call the Mourning Dove a MoDo.

You'll be an ol' pro and not quite rate,  
If you keep calling the Wigeon a Baldpate.

You'll be really old and sort of a turtle,  
If you call the Yellow-rumped Warbler a Myrtle.

Since it's important how one talks and acts,  
Be casual when you throw in "Empidonax."

Try to be nice to the birder who's new,  
And doesn't have a clue when you say, "Great Blue."

On the hawk tower be an alpha male,  
And call out, "The hawk on the left's a Tail."

If anyone's impressed just be bolder,  
And wait for the chance to say, "There's a Shoulder."

Seabirds are great, but oh the magic  
In saying, "We just got back from a pelagic."

For your cholesterol problem it's Lipitor,  
For the Sharpy-Cooper problem, it's Accipit(o)r.

Use Sharpy, Semi-Pal, Merg as the word  
And the all time favorite – Lifer-Bird.

P.S. I'm now so bad, my club's struck a bargain,  
I can go on the van trips if I cut the jargon.

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Publisher of:

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