



THE KIRTLAND WARBLER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Kirtland Bird Club, Cleveland, Ohio

www.KirtlandBirdClub.org and www.ClevelandBirdCalendar.com

2020—2021 Membership Year, No. 2, Winter Issue

Monthly Meetings

Kirtland Bird Club meets on the first Wednesday of each month, September through June at 7:30 p.m.

Each meeting includes announcements, some club business, and a speaker program. Meetings are free and all are welcome!

Because of COVID19 we are meeting via Zoom instead of at our usual location, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Our field trips are also on hold. We look forward to resuming in person gatherings in the future! If you are not a member and want to participate, contact us info@kirtlandbirdclub.org

Wednesday, November 4, 2020, 7:30 PM

Birding Panama's Hotspots!

Presented by Carlos Bethancourt



Blessed with incredible natural beauty and biodiversity, Panama boasts over 1,000 bird species, hundreds of mammals, reptiles & amphibians, and a staggering number of butterflies, dragonflies, beetles and plant species. Carlos will take us on a photographic journey of the tropical birds, bizarre mammals, unusual reptiles & amphibians and spectacular habitats from the Canal Zone, into the foothills of western Panama, and then on to the wilds of the Darién in eastern Panama - all the favorite hotspots. From toucans to hummingbirds, mouse opossums to tongue-wielding Orange Nectar Bats, Carlos will keep you spellbound with his stories of discovery and vivid images. Panama is indeed the country of amazing natural history



Keel-Billed Toucan. Photo by Carlos Bethancourt

and a favorite destination for birders who want to explore some of Central America's famous hotspots.

Carlos Bethancourt, who will be joining us from Panama, is Lead Guide and Marketing Manager for Canopy Family, an ecotourism business in Panama. Carlos has been guiding birders, including a few members of the Kirtland Bird Club, to many areas of Panama since 2000. See more about Canopy Family and Panama's treasures at www.canopytower.com

Monthly Meetings (continuation)

Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 7:30 PM

Winter Birds and Birding in Northern Minnesota

Presented by Laura Erickson



From Boreal and Great Gray Owls to Boreal Chickadees and Hoary Redpolls, you never know what birds are going to show up in northern Minnesota in winter, but they're sure to be interesting. Laura Erickson, who has lived in Duluth for four decades, will talk about the area specialties and the best strategies for finding each one, how they survive as the temperature plummets to 40 below and colder, and how birders can survive looking for them in those conditions.

Laura Erickson is author of the *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Minnesota*, *101 Ways to Help Birds*, *Into the Nest: Intimate*

Views of the Courting, Parenting, and Family Lives of Familiar Birds, and the brand new *Love Lives of Birds*; columnist and contributing editor for *BirdWatching* magazine; and producer of "For the Birds," the longest-running radio program about birds in the United States (since 1986).



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



Monthly Meetings (continuation)

Wednesday, January 8, 2021, 7:30 PM

Ornithology Discoveries in 2020

Presented by Dr. Andy Jones



Dr. Andy Jones returns for his annual talk to the Kirtland Bird Club to highlight the recent exciting findings from the world of ornithology. There are thousands of academic papers published every year on the biology of birds. These new discoveries are sometimes highlighted in newspapers, magazines, and on your Facebook feed, but far too many simply don't get the public attention that they deserve. Dr. Jones will highlight the taxonomic changes that birders will want to know about, as well as other discoveries that will simply make you a more observant and more informed birder. This talk will cover many exciting aspects of bird biology that were discovered in

the last two years.

Dr. Jones holds the William A. and Nancy R. Klamm Chair and Curator of Ornithologist at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. He received his BS in Biological Sciences from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and his PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Jones originally hails from east Tennessee, where his passion for natural history began at an early age; his first field notes were a count of toads in his front yard at age five. His current research involves the evolutionary history of birds, diagnosing new hybrid combinations, and migration insights from Lights Out Cleveland. Dr. Jones is responsible for the Museum's collection of avian specimens, which consists of over 35,000 study skins as well as thousands of nests, eggs, and skeletons. His other tasks include providing various services to the scientific community, the media, the Museum's exhibitions and education divisions as well as the public at large. Dr. Jones has served as the Secretary of the American Ornithological Society since 2014, and in 2017 was elected as a Fellow of that organization.

Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 19, 2020

Coordinator: Andy Jones

Description: The Kirtland Bird Club has a long tradition of supporting the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count. There are groups that cover a variety of locations in parks, neighborhoods, and along the lakefront. Everyone is welcome to participate, including individuals who count birds at feeders in their yards. The map of the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count circle is on the Kirtland Bird Club website at www.kirtlandbirdclub.org. The COVID rules are still not finalized, but we will need to comply with all safety regulations, including social distancing. More details will be issued later.

Directions: To sign up for the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count on the East Side, contact Andy at ornitholoco@gmail.com.

President's Letter



This has been a busy Fall for the KBC!

We continue to bird – from home or elsewhere being mindful of COVID precautions!

We continue to come together as a club despite COVID – on Zoom!

We're seeing new visitors at our programs through word of mouth and through our outreach efforts including our notices on Eventbrite.

We're welcoming new members to our ranks.

Our speaker programs have brought us exciting speakers from near and far. Our next two programs, November's about Birding in Panama and December's about Birding in Northern Minnesota, will be fun and will enrich us as birders.

Our Bird ID sessions are teaching us field marks and behaviors for birds of the season. So far we've had sessions that focused on spring mi-

grants, confusing Fall warblers, and waterfowl, and we're looking forward to more!

- We've added a regional bird calendar to our website so we can post more events our members might find interesting.
- We're posting videos of most of our programs on YouTube – the links are in our archives.

We're doing this to revitalize the Kirtland Bird Club, but we need your help to keep moving forward! How can you help?

- Be our tech person or find us a tech person – we need people to help with YouTube (especially video editing), G suite, Weebly, and Eventbrite
- Do outreach – identify and get contact info for organizations that might have shared interests in birds or where we might find people interested in birds– such as community clubs, gardening clubs, nature centers, parks, schools, book shops, libraries, etc.
- Write articles for our newsletter – possible topics: how I became a birder, my favorite place to bird, a recent unusual sighting, poetry, good birding stories
- Invite guests – friends, family, colleagues, people you talk to in the field – to attend our meetings
- Recruit birders, including new birders, to join our club
- Respond to our upcoming survey
- Help with bird surveys at Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve
- Join or renew your membership – here's the link: <https://www.kirtlandbirdclub.org/become-a-member.html>

I will be thrilled to hear from you about how you can help – to keep us moving forward!

Patty Kellner

Fall on the Cleveland Lakefront

By Gautam Apte

Fall is an exciting season for many birders, with a more prolonged and leisurely migration window offering more opportunities to enjoy migrant action than the jam-packed rush of spring migration. Fall also offers some more chances to catch a glimpse of some birds that may take different migratory pathways in the spring, and many birders pour their effort into finding these “fall specialties” while still enjoying the show of our more expected passage migrants.

A lot of fall birding revolves around habitat. The focus for birds in the fall is cover. Dense fields, thickets, and

brush piles along the lake provide some of the best stop-over habitat available for migrant passerines, while the fall insect hatches along the lakefront provide plentiful fuel for exhausted birds dropping into the lakefront. Most of the passerine migrants that are often targeted by birders in the fall can be found in this type of habitat, almost always remaining silent and undetected before continuing south to their wintering grounds on the Gulf Coast. Sedge Wrens, Grasshopper, Nelson’s and Le-Conte’s Sparrow, Connecticut and Orange-crowned Warbler and more fall specialties can all be found by working these dense fields, thickets, and hedgerows at length. Patience is key here. I often spend an hour or more simply strolling back and forth along the east-west fence line of the entrance to the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, usually finding a new species or three popping out of the grass with every repeated pass I make



Sedge Wren, Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve

For those not inclined to spend time walking fields for what are often poor and brief views of skulky brown passerines, fall migration also offers great viewing opportunities for many other species. Good numbers of northern boreal-breeding owls move south through Ohio for the winter, and the Cleveland area is one of the best places in the state to search conifer stands for these secretive raptors. Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls are the most sought-after roosting species in the area, and any patch of conifers can provide potential stopover or wintering habitat for these two species. They are almost always challenging to find, but extremely rewarding when the hard work pays off

Long-eared Owl, northern Ohio



Fall on the Cleveland Lakefront (continuation)

Many folks relax their birding efforts for the season after the peak push of warblers and sparrows, and often miss out on the spectacular waterbird migration that occurs along the lakefront. With frequent checks of weather and wind conditions, birders can capitalize on huge waterbird flights at close range past lakefront watchpoints. Lake Erie holds massive concentrations of Red-breasted Mergansers each fall, with estimates of up to 75% of the world population on the lake at a single given moment. These are undoubtedly our most common migrants but loons, diving ducks, gulls and even jaegers can also be seen in the right conditions. I encourage every birder to try to take a few hours and watch the lakefront on a windy day this November, enjoying the stream of mergansers and picking out any other species you can!



L to R: Common Merganser, Common Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Merganser. Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve

The Kirtland Warbler, the newsletter of the Kirtland Bird Club (KBC), Cleveland Ohio, is published quarterly. It contains KBC meetings and trip information, web site updates, other events and programs of interest, and 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 welcome. Please send submissions to the Editor, Anna Kozlenko or to annajulnes@yahoo.com

Big Sit 2020: Nature Center at Shaker Lakes Edition

By Laura Gooch

For the past sixteen years, Julie West has organized an October Big Sit on the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes boardwalk. Although this year's October 11 Sit was physically distant and lower key than previous years, the day was spectacular and the small crew was dedicated. Best of all, the birds were hopping and fluttering all



around. Between 6:15 AM and 7:00 PM we observed 70 species from our spot on the marsh boardwalk, smashing the highest previous count of 55 species! We also saw 4 species that had not been observed during any previous Big Sit.

Julie and I arrived a bit more than an hour before sunrise, hoping that we would hear a Barred Owl. Since mid August, we have arrived at the Nature Center an hour before sunrise three days each week to set up mist nets for Julie's migration banding station. However, we've only heard the Barred Owl once this year, and that was in August. We figured it was a long shot, but worth a try.

As we settled onto opposite corners of the marsh observation platform, we were greeted almost immediately by scattered high, buzzy chips from White-throated Sparrows. Then, at 6:30 AM, we were elated to hear a distant, "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-aaaall?" repeated faintly a few times over the next minute or two. Our Barred Owl had not disappointed! Mallards quacked from the Lower Shaker Lake. A few minutes later, a large, half-seen, dark shape with rectangular wings and head and tail fading into the lightening clouds flew low overhead. Was it? Yes, we decided it could be nothing else: Bald Eagle! A Song Sparrow sang a half-hearted practice tune, and a Winter Wren rendered its delightful wood-fairy tinkle nearby. The day was off to a terrific start!

Andy Jones joined us as the sun rose, and Paula Lozano, Allison Ting, Claire Johnson, Ben Fambrough, Patty Kellner, and Bela Anand-Apte all appeared and lingered as the day went on. Toby Briskin, Christi Carlson, and Kim Pastrick stopped by briefly to lend support.

And the birds! The marsh was popping with sparrows and forbs-loving warblers, and the surrounding oaks and willows were hosting other warblers, kinglets, woodpeckers, and other species. We quickly tallied all the likely sparrows: Song, White-throated, White-crowned, Swamp, and Lincoln's. Chipping Sparrow was not so numerous, but a handful made an appearance, and we added a lone Field Sparrow later in the day. Warblers were not far behind, with numerous Yellow-rumped (Myrtle), Nashville, and Tennessee Warblers.

Big Sit 2020: Nature Center at Shaker Lakes Edition (continuation)

A pleasing number of Orange-crowned Warblers were mixed in with that group. Black-throated Green, Magnolia, and Palm Warblers put in cameo appearances, as did a Common Yellowthroat and a late-lingering American Redstart (a first for the Big Sit).

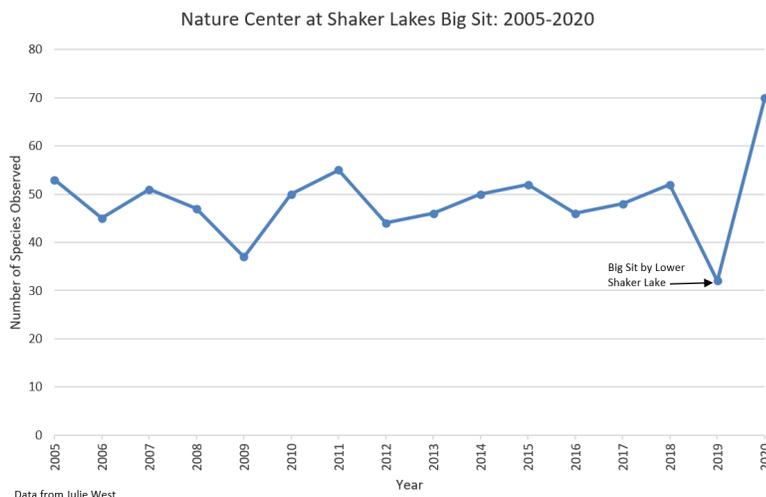
By 9 AM we had tallied 46 species, far surpassing our previous low species count from the boardwalk of 37 species. And the birds just kept coming. Around 9:30, Andy called, “Look up! An owl! A Short-eared Owl!.” And there, cruising north to south, high but not too high, was an unmistakable, large, thick-bodied owl, well seen by everyone. Another first for the Shaker Lakes Big Sit, and certainly a surprise for the day. We kept up our scan of blackbird flocks to make sure there were not Rusty’s mixed in with the Red-wings. Sure enough, I spotted two birds in-coming from the Lower Shaker Lake and shouted, “Look at these birds!” Two Rusty Blackbirds perched briefly in the top of a dead ash tree, then dived further into the trees near the boardwalk. They made several appearances later in the day, giving more observers good looks.

By noon we had surpassed the previous high species count of 55 species. During the average Shaker Big Sit, most species are seen by midday, and the activity and the excitement die down a bit as the afternoon goes on. Not so much this year. Birds kept popping in and out of the marsh, and although we added fewer new species as the day went on there was always plenty to watch, and new species kept ticking in. At 1:30, Ben called out, “Black Vulture!” Suppressing disbelief, we all looked up – Yep: unmistakable white wing tips, short fan-shaped tail, black head. Another new species for the Sit, and a Cuyahoga County first for me!

As evening approached, Andy spotted our fourth new species for the Big Sit. Flying so high that they were hard to see without binoculars, were two late-lingering Common Nighthawks, circling and plucking insects. Near 7 PM, the final bird of the day was one that we been surprised to miss: a Hairy Woodpecker bounced overhead, gave its signature cackle, and disappeared into the trees.

The Nature Center boardwalk is a pretty busy place on a nice fall Sunday, especially during the pandemic. Throughout the day, curious passers-by, some with binoculars and an interest in birds, stopped to chat and

ask what we were up to. We managed to show one keen young teenager a warbler or two and score a lifer Orange-crowned Warbler for another birder. We mentioned Kirtland Bird Club to some who seemed especially interested. Julie explained that the Big Sit was an annual event, done in coordination with Big Sits around the world. It is a 24-hour event most years, but we did not spend the night this year because of the pandemic. Julie usually provides a feast of sloppy Joe’s and ratatouille and other goodies, but, again, not this year.



Besides being a delightful day of social birding, the Nature Center Big Sit is a fund-raiser for Julie’s Nature Center at Shaker Lakes bird banding station. If you are interested in supporting her work, you can still donate online at shakerlakes.org or by sending a check to the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 2600 South Park Boulevard, Cleveland 44120. Note “Big Sit” in the comments or on your check’s memo line.

Despite some adjustments for COVID-19, this year’s Shaker Lakes Big Sit was a wonderful day of birding with friends. The birds cooperated to make it truly extraordinary. Join us next year on the second Sunday in October!

Nature Center at Shaker Lakes

THE BIG SIT

Total Species Count 2020

Our total of 70 species exceeded our last high of 55 species in 2011. Four of these 70 species had not been recorded on any of our 15 previous Big Sits, indicated by an asterisk. Of these four, Short-eared owl and Black vulture, both flyovers, are very unusual to see in our area, even in the air! The four new species bring the total seen and heard across all 16 Big Sits to 94!

American crow
American goldfinch
American redstart*
American robin
Bald eagle
Barred owl
Belted kingfisher
Black vulture*
Black-capped chickadee
Black-throated green warbler
Blue jay
Blue-headed vireo
Brown creeper
Canada goose
Carolina wren
Cedar waxwing
Chimney swift
Chipping sparrow
Common nighthawk*

Common yellowthroat
Double-crested cormorant
Downy woodpecker
Eastern phoebe
European starling
Field sparrow
Golden-crowned kinglet
Gray catbird
Gray-checked thrush
Great blue heron
Hairy woodpecker
Hermit thrush
Herring gull
House finch
House wren
Lincoln's sparrow
Magnolia warbler

Mallard
Mourning dove
Nashville warbler
Northern cardinal
Northern flicker
Orange-crowned warbler
Osprey
Palm warbler
Pine siskin
Purple finch
Red-bellied woodpecker
Red-breasted nuthatch
Red-shouldered hawk
Red-tailed hawk
Red-winged blackbird
Ring-billed gull
Rock pigeon

Ruby-crowned kinglet
Rusty blackbird
Short-eared owl*
Slate-colored junco
Song sparrow
Swainson's thrush
Swamp sparrow
Tennessee warbler
Tufted titmouse
Turkey vulture
White-breasted nuthatch
White-crowned sparrow
White-throated sparrow
Winter wren
Wood duck
Yellow-bellied sapsucker
Yellow-rumped warbler

Special thanks to Julie West and all who participated!

Kirtland Bird Club Member Bert Szabo turns 100 on December 4th

By Ray Novotny,
Naturalist Emeritus Mill Creek MetroParks Youngstown & Mahoning County.
raynovotny@yahoo.com



Unfortunately, the stork didn't deliver Bert in time to bird with the good doctor Kirtland, but he arrived on Earth about a week before the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History met to sign the articles of incorporation. And he's more than a year older than his eventual employer, now named Summit Metroparks.

I met Bert during autumn 1981 and became better acquainted beginning about two decades later. As his century milestone approaches, it's my honor collect a bit about him and share it with you.

Quick Q & A
(Suggested by Patty Kellner)

Q. What does he consider his biggest accomplishment?

A. As Kirtland Bird Club president, opening the membership to anyone.

Q. Are any of his offspring into birding?

A. Bert's son Mark retired from a naturalist career at Huron-Clinton Metroparks in Greater Detroit. Grandson Howard is a naturalist with Milwaukee County Parks. They are both interested in birding, but are not die-hards.

Q. Where can birders make the biggest impact now in the current state of the world? A. Support conservation organizations.

Q. What was his best sighting ever?

A. Birds in Africa and Central America.

Q. Favorite place to bird?

A. Summit Metropark's Firestone Metropark and Crane Creek State Park.

Testimonials

According to longtime dear friend Marie Morgan, she and Bert go back to the 1970s with bluebird boxes and bird banding. They birded every Friday for at least 20 years (the pandemic stopped them in March and they hope to continue when possible). After breakfast at Michael's AM in Akron, they drove a route in the Cuyahoga Valley that took a couple of hours. Of the many species they observed two highlights stand out:



a Lark Sparrow and also a Cliff Swallow in a mixed flock of Bank and Rough-winged Swallows. Their cherished sighting of a Northern Wheatear required a road trip in September 2009 to an Amish farm in Holmes County.

Larry Rosche: “I have known Bert for half a century at least. He introduced me to the Kirtland Bird Club and it was one of the most important events in my life. I met so many wonderful birders through the KBC, many of them are no longer with us, but some still remain. Bert was the first to explain to me the relationships of plants and animals in a way I could grasp easily. Over the years, his influence and knowledge has remained with me in that I fully enjoy every creature that flies and I have the ability to locate the habitats a particular species prefers. Thanks Bert.”

Mark Szabo: “Dad has often talked about how the trees were dripping with warblers back in the 1960s. Because of Dad’s impact, I can pull a book titled, *Peterson Field Guide to the Warblers* off a bookshelf and say, “See this name here – Larry Rosche (who did the

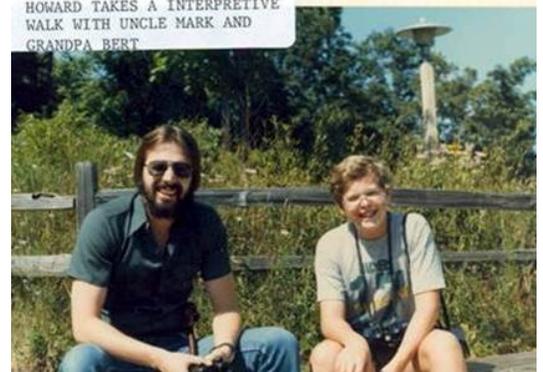
maps) – my father got him started birding. Larry surpassed Dad in skill, which we all hope that some of those we inspire do surpass us in skill. What better compliment is there than that?”

Mark continues: “Dad's strong point (and biggest birding accomplishment) has always been his ability to turn people onto birding in a way that is gentle, helpful and unthreatening. He has mentioned how impressed he is when he meets a child who is already a competent, knowledgeable birder. That gives him hope for the future. I have observed many instances when people on the boardwalk at Crane Creek have made statements akin to: ‘Hi Bert. You wouldn't remember me but you got me interested in birding in the early 1970s.’ Dad often has said that it's a shame he can't always remember the people, but these are truly heartwarming situations to observe.”

Bert's Grandson Howard Aprill remembering.
For Christmas 1980, when Howard was 10 years old, Bert gave him a copy of the hot-of-the press *Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds (East of the Rockies)*. Howard had no idea so many birds existed! He's certain that this was the beginning of his interest in nature and science. Not long after, Bert also gave Howard his first pair of binoculars.



HOWARD MAY DECIDE TO BEGIN A CAREER NATURALIST
HOWARD TAKES AN INTERPRETIVE WALK WITH UNCLE MARK AND GRANDPA BERT





Bert with his Subaru Forester purchased in October 2020

Next year marks 30 years since Bert retired: In his final article “Natural History of a Naturalist” he closed with:

“The pollution of our planet, the loss of forests, plants and animals must be our major concern. They are biological time clocks ticking off the time when man may no longer persevere. We cannot separate natural history from human history – each is dependent upon the other. Protecting our environment is essential for the health and welfare of future generations. It is my hope that I have contributed somewhat to this endeavor.”

I’m sure you will all agree with son Mark’s assessment, “This was quite a humble statement for such a lustrous career.”

In 2010, to his complete surprise, 100 of his family and friends celebrated his 90th birthday with him. As I said my goodbyes, I always added

“See you in ten years.” But because of COVID, we may have to wait until his “and a half” in June or 101st to gather to laud his longevity.



Howie, Dad and Mark 5-10-15

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KIRTLAND BIRD CLUB, a Northeast Ohio Birding Club



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