



# THE KIRTLAND WARBLER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Kirtland Bird Club, Cleveland, Ohio

www.KirtlandBirdClub.org and www.ClevelandBirdCalendar.com

2016—2017 Membership Year, No. 3, Spring Issue

## Monthly Meetings

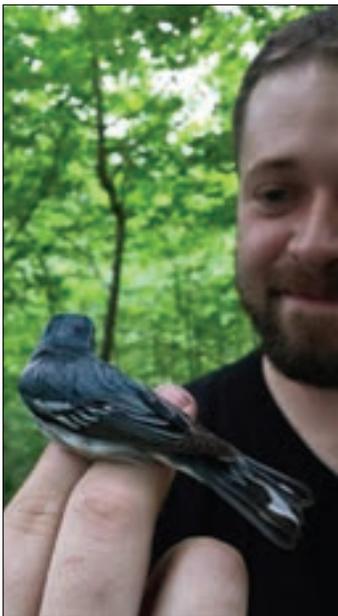
Guests are always welcome — Cleveland Museum of Natural History...Parking is free.

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

### Wednesday March 1, 2017

## **The Struggles of Rearing Young in the Forests of Southeastern Ohio: A peek into the Secret Lives of Hooded Warblers**

**Presented by Brandan Gray**



Hooded Warblers build their nests low to the ground in hardwood forests throughout eastern North America. Nesting near the ground puts these little birds and their young in reach of many common predators. Recently, another danger has entered the forests. As humans create edge habitat through the forest via trails and roads, the Brown-headed cowbird (a nest parasite) follows and is wreaking havoc on many small songbird populations.

Through video recording Hooded Warbler nests in Southeastern Ohio, we are better able to understand the interactions between warblers and cowbirds and assess the impacts cowbirds have on small bird breeding success. During this talk, I will discuss the general feeding and breeding ecology of Hooded Warblers and their susceptibility to Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism (there will be lots of videos!).

Brandan has always been passionate about nature. He can think of nothing better than a good hike through the woods, camping with friends, trout fishing, mushroom hunting, just being in the presence of nature. Because he wants his great-great-great grandchildren to be able to experience those same joys, he decided quite early on that he wanted to devote his life to conservation. He began his career in ecology with a BS in plant biology studying Pennsylvania native orchids at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA. Then, he moved to Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania where he received a MS in avian ecology trying to understand how bird communities inhabiting the forest around streams change when streams are altered by people.

As he saw an influx of Brown-headed cowbirds into his mature forest sites when streams were channelized, he began thinking about how devastating they must be to the species nesting there. Thus, he moved to Ohio University where he currently studies the breeding ecology (and the pressures of the Brown-headed Cowbird) of the Hooded Warbler. Aside from his day job as a biologist, he also enjoys baking and cooking, making beer and wine, drawing and painting, and managing his little “farm”.

***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).**

**Wednesday April 5, 2017**

## **Song Structure and Variation of the Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) in the Appalachian Mountains**

**Presented by Courtney Brennan**



The Veery is a Neotropical migrant thrush whose breeding range spreads across southern Canada and the northeastern United States, and their breeding range narrows as it continues south through the higher elevations in the Appalachian Mountains. Despite their wide distribution, this species is poorly understood in many regards- including a clear and basic description of song structure and an investigation into geographic song variation. This lecture presents an updated description of Veery song and singing patterns and on how elements of Veery songs vary geographically across the Appalachian Mountains

Courtney Brennan is a Cleveland native and graduated from Cleveland State University with a Master's degree in Environmental Science with research focused on birdsong variation. Her work at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History began in 2013 as avian specimen preparator before being promoted to Collections Manager for the Ornithology Department. As Collections Manager Courtney assists curator Dr. Andy Jones in the care and maintenance of the museum's 35,000 avian study skins, 4,000 eggs and nests, and its 1,000 osteological specimens. She also coordinates weekly volunteer specimen prep sessions, which adds approximately 500 new specimens to the Ornithology collection annually. Courtney also teaches basic lab techniques to summer interns, volunteers, and undergraduates in the museum's DNA lab. She also assists Dr. Jones in his research.

**Wednesday May 3, 2017**

## **Birding in Hungary and Spain**

**Presented by Dwight Chasar**

Dwight and Ann Chasar birded in eastern Hungary in October 2011 and in Catalonia, Spain, in October 2016, each for 4 days. About 100 species of birds were seen in each country. This talk will cover some of those birds, as well as some history and scenes from Hungary.

Dwight is a past president of the KBC and a long time volunteer of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. He enjoys birding, reading about birds and birders. He does bird investigations, writes and gives presentations about these topics.



## Upcoming Field Trips

### ***Ducks and Cranes At Sandy Ridge Reservation***

**Sandy Ridge Reservation, Lorain County**

**Sunday March 26, 2017**

**Trip Start: 9:00a.m.**

**Trip Leader: TBA**

**Address:** 6195 Otten Rd. North Ridgeville,  
OH 44039

**Description:** Sandy Ridge should have some exciting migrants going through this area. Get a taste of Spring and have your fingers crossed that the Sandhill Cranes have returned.



Photo: Anna Kozlenko



### ***Early Warblers At Cuyahoga Valley National Park***

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Cuyahoga County**

**Sunday April 23, 2017**

**Trip Start: 9:00 a.m.**

**Trip Leader: Lukas Padegimas**

**Description:** Yellow-throated Warblers, American Bittern, and

Eastern Screech Owl are our target species for this hopefully beautiful sunny April day!

**Directions:** 13513 Station Rd., Brecksville OH 44141. Meet in parking lot near bridge.

### ***Later Spring Warblers at CLNP***

**Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, Cuyahoga County**

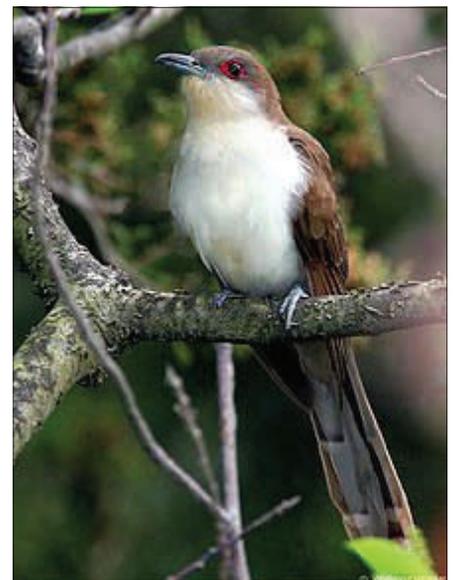
**Saturday May 27, 2017**

**Trip Start: 8:30 a.m.**

**Trip Leader: Lukas Padegimas**

**Description:** We will search for various migrants within Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve. Our targets are Canada Warbler, Mourning Warbler, and Black-billed Cuckoo.

**Directions:** Location: 8601 Lake Shore Blvd, Cleveland OH



# President's Corner

## Waves of Migration

By David Dvorak (Photographs by author)

My favorite time of the year for birding in Ohio is the spring when waves of migrants fill the sky with birds. From week to week, weather permitting, birds move north and at times fill the airways with calls.

At the end of winter depending on weather, especially wind direction and speed, waterfowl fill the sky. Usually by March 1 we have waves of water fowl moving north. Ducks, geese, loons, grebes, and swans are heading to breeding grounds. Hearing the tundra swans calling in the early morning is invigorating.

The popular birding destinations begin to be productive early on. The marshes fill with ducks of many kinds including mergansers, red heads, and scaups. Hanging out in marsh vegetation are wood ducks, mallards, and teals feeding for the journey north.



One day about 20 years ago I counted 23 common loons on the lower Shaker Lake and 5 at Horseshoe Lake . A heavy spring snow forced loons to land. The Shaker Lakes are a productive birding location the entire spring season.

Tundra swans are attracted to the marshes of western Lake Erie especially the Ottawa NWR. Some years snow geese are plentiful at Ottawa along with an occasional Ross's goose. Horned and pied-billed grebes are mixed in with the larger waterfowl. Some years black brant stop along the shores of Lake Erie especially in the area of the new Cleveland Lake Front Nature Preserve, formally known as Dike 14.

By the end of March swallows begin to pass through our area with barn and tree swallows staying to nest. As the waves along Lake Erie pound the shores waves of birds are moving north with a strong wind. On the edge of forests there is a build up of eastern phoebes, the first of the flycatchers to arrive in northern Ohio, followed by kingfishers and occasionally early least flycatchers. By mid April waves of passerines fly north with south winds and can be picked up by radar as "clouds of migrants". When birds fly into cold fronts there are "fall outs" of birds needing to feast to build up flight power.

Weather affects migration daily. Check the forecasts at visitor centers or at local news stations. Magee Marsh gets waves of birds and birders who come in crowds. Birds of all types can be seen here, especially passerines like sparrows, warblers, vireos, tanagers grosbeaks, cuckoos, wrens, and flycatchers. Some years even Kirtland's Warblers can be seen.

A birding hotspot east of Cleveland is Mentor Marsh .The forest around the marsh is very good for passerines especially warblers and sparrows on the edge of the marsh. From early spring until late May shorebirds are migrating to northern tundra and prairie nesting grounds. Shallow water wetlands attract the most shorebirds like the pools of Ottawa NWR along Benton-Carrol Road where black-bellied and golden plovers can be seen some years. Large wading birds like herons, egrets, and rails can be found feeding in many marshes. They usually start arriving in our marshes by mid March. Sandhill cranes can be seen at Sandy Ridge Reservation in Lorain County or flying overhead with their distinctive calls.



Hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures migrate throughout the spring. Some owls are migratory like the small saw-whet owl. Others nest in our area like screech owls.

So have fun getting lost in waves of birds!

# Results of the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count

By Andy Jones



More than fifty birders went afield on December 17th, 2016 for the Cleveland Christmas Bird Count. This is the 116th year of Christmas Bird Counts. Temperatures were in the 30s for most of the day, and overcast conditions gave way to some intermittent showers in the afternoon. Cleveland'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 newly created Acacia Reservation in Beachwood. This CBC circle is supported by the Kirtland Bird Club and Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

This year, birders found a total of 78 species, which is above the count's historical average (it is rare for the count to exceed 80 species). No new-to-the-count species were found this year, but there were several notable sightings.

Like last year, the late fall and early winter weather was quite mild. Waterfowl and gulls did not reach northeastern Ohio in large numbers until later in the season. Lake Erie had virtually no ice by late December, so many of these late-arrivals lingered in the area. As a result, several new high count records were achieved, including 62 Gadwall (the previous high count was 34), 14 Northern Shoveler (previous high of 12), 393 Ruddy Duck (previous high of 185), 9 Pied-billed Grebe (previous high of 8), and an incredible 2,708 Redhead (previous high of only 368)! Several woodland species were reported in record numbers as well, with 61 Wild Turkey (previous high of 39), 19 Red-headed Woodpecker (previous high 13), and 112 Red-bellied Woodpecker (previous high 102). Blue Jays were abundant this year, with 368 counted (high count was 464). Other unusual sightings included 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and 1 Gray Catbird (11th count record). As with last year, there were very few winter irruptive species; just 8 Red-breasted Nuthatches, and no reports of Purple Finch, crossbills, redpolls, or Pine Siskin.

Thank you to everyone for participating in this year's Cleveland Christmas Bird Count! Please join us next year...

## Protect Our Parks Campaign

By Renee Wellman and Nataliya Merkoulouva

We are anticipating an onslaught of bad legislative bills attacking public lands, parks, and rivers in Congress this spring. Of special concern are the Antiquities Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We believe that the actions of Senator Portman will significantly affect these issues, so we need to build a solid grassroots network that can take action within the first few months of this new Congress and presidency.

Here in Cleveland, we are working to convince Senator Portman to defend these bedrock environmental protections. This spring we'll be organizing community events, collecting petition signatures, building a broad coalition of local groups & more to show our Senator that we support wilderness and won't stand to see it disappear.

**Call-In Day:** Call Senator Portman's office at 216-522-7095 to leave the following message-

*"My name is \_\_\_\_\_, a constituent from Cleveland. I'm calling Senator Portman asking him to please make the protection of our parks and public lands a high priority. I'm deeply concerned that some of our nation's most successful tools for protecting our parks, such as the Antiquities Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund are at risk in this new congress and that iconic landscapes like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge -- America's last great frontier -- could be threatened by industrial development interests I would like to respectfully remind Senator Portman that he has a responsibility to both Ohioans and all Americans to safeguard our parks and public lands for future generations."*

**Photo Petition:** Take a photo outside of a friend and a selfie holding a sign that says "Sen. Portman, please protect the Antiquities Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund." We hope that individuals will post them on Facebook or on Instagram using @senrobportman and #protectourparks. However, you are also asked to email Renee at [renee@greencorps.org](mailto:renee@greencorps.org) so she can make a collection of them for further use.

# CLNP Bird Survey Report

**By Laura Gooch**

(photographs by author)

As many of you know, KBC (together with Western Cuyahoga Audubon, Greater Cleveland Audubon, and Black Swamp Bird Observatory) began systematic bird surveys at Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve (CLNP) in July 2014. Surveys have continued at a steady pace since then, with an average of more than 2 surveys each week. By the numbers (as of 2/13/17):

Surveys completed – 308

Points counted – 5,036

Species documented – 187

Individuals birds counted during point counts – 111,866 (note that the same individuals will have been counted on multiple days)

Hours spent counting at points – 420



Total hours spent on surveys – 1,029

Total volunteer hours in the field – 1,415 (includes time spent for each individual when multiple surveyors worked together on a survey)

Estimated hours in data handling and reporting – 1,000

Total checklists uploaded to eBird – 4,857 (one for each point count, plus an overall checklist for each survey)

Number of weeks with at least one survey – Well... most weeks! We have missed a handful of winter weeks when snow was too deep or winds and temperatures too severe to allow surveys.

Number of volunteers who have participated - 30

Number of regular surveyors – 10-12

That's a lot of observations, and a tremendous amount of time and effort! However, it's still only two and a half years of data. When we began the surveys, our plan was to continue for 3-5 years. At this point, we intend to continue for at least five years.

What have we observed with all the time and effort so far? First, CLNP is host to a wide variety of breeding birds. A partial list of probable breeding birds includes Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush (2015 only), American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow (2016 only), Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, and American Goldfinch.

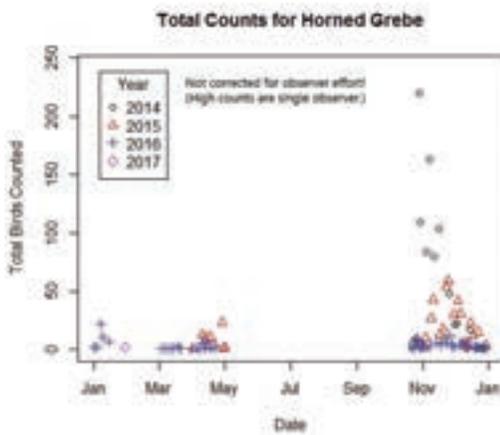
Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush (2015 only), American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow (2016 only), Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, and American Goldfinch.

# CLNP Bird Survey (continuation)

We don't really have enough data yet to say much about trends over time, but it is possible to note a few interesting differences between years. The observations below are preliminary, and should be taken with a grain of salt. (In particular, counts have not been corrected for observer effort. Most of the counts were made by one observer, and most of our surveys have included all 17 points. However, data include some counts with more observers, and some incomplete surveys.)

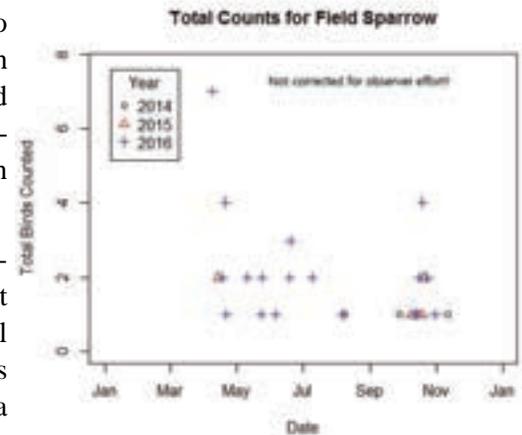


Fluctuation in the number of Horned Grebes on Lake Erie provides an example of an interesting observation. In late 2014, the Horned Grebe counts were dramatically higher than it has been in subsequent years (see figure). In late October 2014, over 200 birds were counted from points on the east side of CLNP (one observer on a single day), and more than 50 birds were observed on 5 other days. The highest count in 2015 was on the order of 50 birds, and the high count in 2016 was about 10 birds.



A few species have been observed to breed at CLNP in only one of the two breeding seasons surveyed. Field Sparrow was observed throughout the summer for the first time in 2016 (see figure). Wood Thrush sang through the breeding season in 2015, but not in 2016.

Winter counts at CLNP can be pretty quiet – five minutes of observation at a point can sometimes result in no birds being seen. Downy Woodpeckers are a reliable and amusing companion during these slow count days. On average, the number of Downies observed during the winter seems to have increased each year since the winter of 2014-15, although numbers since the beginning of 2017 may be a bit lower than in the early part of 2016 (see figure).



In addition to counting the common birds, surveyors have enjoyed the company of birds that are a bit unusual, or that seem to be lingering at CLNP out of their regular season. In the fall of 2016, we had the pleasure of an unusual number of Marsh Wren sightings, and a Barred Owl made regular appearances through the fall and early winter. Regular observations of a Gray Catbird, a Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Northern Mockingbirds have kept us amused throughout this mild winter.

Making regular, systematic surveys in one place has allowed our surveyors to gain an appreciation for the nuances of changing habitats and the fluctuations of the seasons. A survey morning is not always exciting, but it is always interesting, and always provides a certain sense of separation from the everyday and immersion in a different reality. One of our most regular surveyors says it is always the best morning of his week.

Would you like to join us? We'd love to have you, whether you can survey a day every now and then, one day a month, or one day a week. You are welcome to form a team and survey together or break the survey up amongst team members. If you are interested, contact Laura Gooch at [lgooch@alum.mit.edu](mailto:lgooch@alum.mit.edu).

## KIRTLAND BIRD CLUB, a Northeast Ohio Birding Club



### **Kirtland Bird Club**

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Cleveland, Ohio 44109

Publisher of:

*The Cleveland Bird Calendar*

*Birds of the Cleveland Region and the Field Book*

*The Kirtland Warbler*

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