



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

Vol. 39 No. 4

April 2003

April Program

Thursday, April 17, 2003

Members Bird Photographs/Slides/Digital Anyone?

Rescheduled by popular request, the April program will be bird slides taken by members. Please remember to **try** to limit the number of slides to about 10 to 20 per member, so that everyone gets a chance to show their photographs. I know it's tough, especially for me (Jay Lehman)! For those into digital photography, there is a digital projector available at the Sharon Woods visitor's center where our meetings are held. I plan to have my laptop computer there, to show a few of my digital photos. My laptop has a 100 MB zip drive, as well as a floppy drive and a CD-ROM drive. You are welcome to use your zip disk on my laptop provided that you can assure that your disk is virus-free! Only one of these drives can be used on my laptop at a time. Conversion requires shut-down and start-up, so let me know in advance of your plans, so we can plan for the conversion during normal slide presentations by others. If your photos are on another type of disk, you will need to provide your own laptop computer. If you need additional information, contact Jay Lehman at 527-4701 (home), 622-2399 (work) and leave a message or lehman.jg@pg.com.

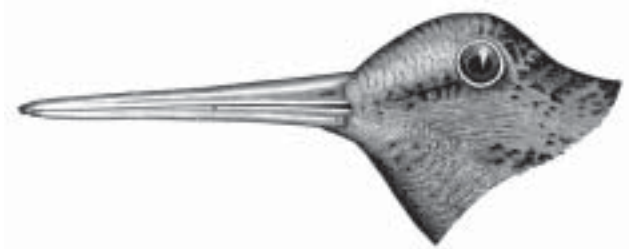
Mark Your Calendar:

The May program will feature Jim McCormac, secretary of the Ohio Bird Record Committee, on "Ohio's Rarest Birds".

April Field Trip

Spring Bandout

Saturday and Sunday April 26th and 27th Clear Creek Valley Hocking Co. Ohio. This weekend field trip will be in conjunction with the Ohio Bird Banding Association Spring Bandout. The Bandout is a bird banding project started in 1984 to monitor bird populations in the Clear Creek Valley. At this time of the year both migrants and early breeders are present. Clear Creek Valley is a Columbus Metro park (<http://metroparks.co.franklin.oh.us/clear.htm>) which offers great hiking and early spring birding. To register contact Jeff Hays 521-4477 or JLHAYS@fuse.net.



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Hidden Gems

contributed by Jay Stenger

Like many birders, I enjoy visiting and exploring new places and discovering their avian treasures. There are many well known and excellent birding locations in our immediate tri-state region that are frequently birded by many folks. And rightfully so, because they are proven and consistent spots. But there are also an equally impressive number of regional locations that seem to be virtually ignored and receive little attention, if any, from area birders. Some of these sites are not birded at all and other sites are birded by only a few who are aware of that particular site's charms, usually by someone who lives or works nearby.

Having a few favorite spots like this, I decided to make a list and quickly came up with over forty area sites that I seldom, if ever hear a birding report from. Not having put too much thought into it, I am sure there are many more I did not consider. As is human nature, people have a tendency to follow, to go with the flow. Birders are no different in that we usually go with the sure thing. The Oxbow, Miami Whitewater, East Fork SP, Muscatatuck NWR, Spring Grove Cemetery and several obvious other sites are proven places and that's where most of us go birding. The following list is what I call "Hidden Gems". Little visited locations that have great birding potential. The next time you are thinking about going birding and want to try something different, try one of these spots. In addition to new discoveries you might find a new favorite place. I whittled my original list down to, in my opinion, the Top 10. It was a difficult "cut" and I could be easily swayed to change my list by a good argument.

My criteria for choosing a "Hidden Gem" is as follows;

1) The location has to be reasonably close to Cincinnati. A 2 hour drive from downtown

would certainly be a limit, preferably much closer. The "Birdathon Area" might be a good guideline.

2) It doesn't matter if the location is a small or large area as long as it has some ornithological significance. Some examples of what I mean would be the presence of a great diversity of species at least seasonally, a migrant trap, a rare, unique or extensive habitat, or the regular occurrence of rare or unusual species.

3) The site has to be infrequently visited and seldom reported by Greater Cincinnati birders. It doesn't matter if the site is well known or not, as long as it is seldom birded. Some visitation by a few birders does not disqualify as long as the area isn't regularly birded by more than a few people.

4) Aesthetics should be considered. Accessibility, peace and quiet, natural beauty and other positives should be considered.

One final note. The Voice of America Park and the Camp Dennison Gravel Pits would have made the Top 15 as little as 2 years ago. But their current popularity has increased so much over the past year or so that they are now regularly visited by many birders and no longer are "hidden".



The Top 10 Hidden Gems

1) INDIAN CREEK STATE WILDLIFE AREA, Brown Co. OH (1,799 acres)

Only 20 miles east of the Cincinnati Nature Center, located just south of US 50, 1 mile east of Fayetteville, this fairly large area has diverse habitats including wetlands, grasslands and woodlands. A great variety of birds present throughout the seasons, it is unbelievable this beautiful spot is almost never birded, especially by east side birders!

2) WINTON WOODS, Hamilton County Park District (HCPD), OH (2,465 acres)

The most heavily visited park in the HCPD might also be the most under-birded. This centrally located site is only regularly birded by a handful of folks who live nearby. For the most part ignored by regional birders, the settling pond and Winton Lake are major attractors of waterfowl and waterbirds. Black-crowned Night Herons feed here, up to 9 species of raptors nest, and a large diversity of migrant and breeding birds can be found. Prothonotary and Pine Warblers nest and extensive pine woods attract interesting winter visitors.

3) GLENWOOD GARDENS, Hamilton County Park District, OH (335 acres)

This newest addition to the HCPD has 2.5 miles of hiking (no bikes or blades) trails along a Sycamore lined stream and habitats that include meadows, fields, thickets and woodland and several ponds and marshy areas. Contiguous to Winton Woods (2,465 acres) and Trillium Trails Wildflower Preserve (86 acres) they combine for a greenbelt of 2,886 acres that run along a four mile stretch of the West Fork of the Mill Creek, smack dab in the middle of a heavily populated area. Glenwood has a diverse number of species, especially semi-open country and riparian species. Excellent during songbird migration.

4) BIG OAKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, Ripley County, IN (50,000 acres)

A large section of the Jefferson Proving Ground is now a NWR and the closest one to Cincinnati. About 30 miles east of the Oxbow, this relatively new and significant site is for the most part closed to the public. For now only 4,000 acres are open to public use. In future years this will become a regularly visited site by local birders. Habitats include extensive woodlands and grasslands and beaver ponds. Largest population of Henslow's Sparrow in Indiana (800 singing males) and many Blue Grosbeaks.

5) MIDDLE CREEK PARK (228 acres) & BOONE CLIFFS (74 acres), Boone Co. KY

Boone Cliffs, a Nature Conservancy property, is well known to local birders, but seldom visited nonetheless. Visited regularly by a handful of Northern Kentucky birders and on most of the annual field trip schedules, but not by the general masses. Middlecreek Park, located on KY 18 at Middlecreek Rd., is even less visited.. Diverse habitats in the area include woodland, riparian, successional and maybe the area's best mature forest. Only reliable area for Worm-eating Warbler in area. Breeding Hooded Warbler and Broad-winged Hawk, Whip-poor-Will, Summer Tanager, Northern Parula, Prairie Warbler and Chat all along a 4 mile stretch of Middle Creek RD..

6) MT. AIRY FOREST & ARBORETUM, Cincinnati Park Board, OH (1,471 acres)

The largest and best known Cincinnati Park, very few birding reports from here (everybody is over at Spring Grove Cemetery 2 miles away). Extensive woodlands, conifer plantings and shrubby areas. A great migrant songbird location and a diverse breeding population. The Arboretum is a great place to start your visit.

7) SYCAMORE STATE PARK, Montgomery Co, OH (2,373 acres)

Located southwest of Dayton near Trotwood this large and little known State Park lies along a 3.5 mile stretch of picturesque Wolf Creek. Woodlands, Sycamore lined creek, open areas and extensive pine woodlands attract a sizable bird population. Dayton birders usually find Long-eared and Saw-whet Owls annually. This park is only 30 miles north of Hamilton Ohio.

8) TWIN CREEK METRO PARK (1,000 acres) & GERMANTOWN RESERVE (1,400 acres), Montgomery Co, OH

These two Dayton/Montgomery Co Parks are only 3 miles apart and can be easily birded together. Taken together they offer diverse habitats. Twin Creek runs through a picturesque wooded valley with steep open grassland covered hillsides that usually hold Henslow's Sparrows. Germantown has diverse habitat including mature deciduous and pine woodlands and open areas that attract a large number of species. Just north of Middletown and reached via Route 4, both parks are also near Hook Airfield where Upland Sandpipers have often been found..

9) INDIAN CREEK PARK (135 acres) & PATER LAKE SWA (194 acres) Butler Co., OH

These two small, but lovely spots are adjacent to each other. Indian Creek is a Butler Co. Park and Pater Lake is an Ohio State Wildlife Area. Beautiful, rushing and clear Indian Creek (a different one) flows through both properties. Set in a rural location near Riley OH, these two spots have a bit of a migrant trap effect and are excellent in spring and summer.

10) ATTERBURY FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA, Johnson Co IN, (6,206 acres)

Located at the limits of our "region", but a fantastic area. Even Indiana birders don't seem to get to this spot to often. Famous in the late 80's and early 90's for its Bell's Vireo colonies (now gone?), this large area still is home to a number of grassland species such as Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Sedge Wren, Bobolink, Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows. May still have a large cuckoo population. Lots of open and shrubby areas, marshes and lakes and woodland lined Sugar Creek. Great spot any time of year, but especially spring, summer and fall.

Next month #11 through #20 Hidden Gems.



Birding Monitoring Workshop

How You Can Put Your Birding Skills to Work by Adopting an Important Bird Area

- * **WHERE:** Hueston Woods State Park, College Corner, Ohio, in Preble County about 5 miles north of Oxford.
- * **WHEN:** Sunday, April 13, 2003 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- * **COST:** \$10.00 / person (includes handouts, continental breakfast, snacks, and lunch).
- * **MEALS:** Provided, vegetarian options will be available.
- * **REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** April 7, 2003.
- * **INFORMATION and REGISTRATION:** Call Audubon Ohio at 614-224-3303 or e-mail John Ritzenthaler at jritzenthaler@audubon.org

Count, own, act ...use your birding skills to count birds, take ownership of an Important Bird Area, and act for bird conservation by becoming involved in a program that has worldwide scope — the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) program. There are nearly 100 IBAs that have been identified around Ohio. IBAs are areas critical to bird conservation. Visit our web site at www.audubon.org/states/oh/oh for information about IBAs.

Audubon Ohio and the Audubon Miami Valley Chapter with support from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation are presenting a monitoring workshop to enlist birders for surveying birds on their favorite IBAs. We hope that individuals or groups will adopt an IBA and engage in some form of regular bird censusing suited to the site. This workshop is scheduled for Sunday, April 13, 2003 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It will be held at the Hueston Woods Lodge at Hueston Woods State Park, an IBA in Preble and Butler Counties, Ohio. The outdoors agenda will include methods for observing birds and conducting surveys of

your favorite sites. We will cover point counts, transect counts, area searches, nest searches, and bird banding plus an exciting new web-based data entry system called E-bird. Participants will be able to volunteer to census birds on IBAs in Ohio and see their data used in conservation on these sites. All skill levels are welcome.



Passenger Pigeon by eMail

You can choose to receive your copy of the Passenger Pigeon by eMail instead of getting a paper copy through the regular mail. Getting the newsletter by eMail will save the Bird Club the expense of printing and mailing your copy, and you will receive it several days sooner than the paper copy would arrive. You will need to have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. If you do not already have it, a free copy can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

To sign up for this service, send an eMail to the editors at keller@one.net. You can switch back to a paper copy at any time.

Indian Creek Wildlife Area

contributed by Jay Stenger

It is almost unbelievable that this fantastic spot is so little known. Most of the birders I talk to have never even heard of this place. This is certainly one of my favorite places and I don't even get there near enough. This seldom birded spot is situated pretty conveniently to area birders, particularly those who live on the east side of town. Located in northern Brown County Ohio, just a couple of miles southeast of Fayetteville, Indian Creek SWA is easily accessed from either US 68 on its west border or US 50 from the north. Located about twenty-four miles east of the I-275, US 50 exit, this hidden gem is actually closer to birders who live in Milford or Anderson Township for instance, than either Miami Whitewater or the Oxbow would be. I always stop, both on my way to and from my Rocky Fork Lake visits, as it is literally right on the way. But it deserves better than that, as one could easily spend most of a day, if not all day in this picturesque spot. To reach this spot take US 50 east and go 3/4 of a mile past Fayetteville and turn right onto Snowhill Rd. Follow Snowhill Rd for about a mile and turn right onto Campbell Rd.

This area is owned by the state of Ohio and managed by ODNR as a fish and wildlife area. It is moderately hunted for upland game and waterfowl in the fall and early winter, but the rest of the year is seldom visited except for a few fishermen. Its wildlife area status means there are only primitive restrooms available and no picnic tables, bike hike trails, campgrounds, playgrounds and other amenities available to the visitor, which all lends to keeping visitation down and peace, quiet and tranquility up. It is open to wildlife observation year round, and while many birders avoid hunting areas during those seasons there are no restrictions on birding the area at that time.

The property consists of 1,799 acres of mostly flat terrain except where it is traversed by

beautiful Indian Creek which flows west to east through the entire property and eventually into the East Fork of the Little Miami. The surrounding countryside is mostly extensive rural farmland. The area is easily accessed by well graded gravel roads and ample parking areas. There are no designated trails but you are permitted to walk and go anywhere in the area you like, although birding along the quiet roadsides allows for easy walking. For such a moderately sized area, there is quite a bit of habitat diversity. Partly wooded and partly open country, there are about 50 ponds totaling 65 acres of water, many ringed in cattails with emergent vegetation, scattered throughout the area. In addition there is a 56 acre wetland managed primarily as a Green Tree Reservoir. Most of the west side is open pond with shallow mudflats most of the year and an earthen dike makes for easy access and viewing. The water levels in this wetland are kept low from spring through early fall to allow emergent vegetation and Pin Oak, Silver Maple and Black Willows to thrive and then flooded in late fall and winter. The timing of this plan is good for shorebirds and long-legged waders, and later, good for waterfowl. The swamp-like wooded portion of this wetland is on the east side of the impoundment and many dead trees are also present, making this an excellent place for Red-headed Woodpeckers, Prothonotary Warblers and Tree Swallows.

The area also has many acres of grassy, weedy and brushy fields in varying degrees of succession, 150 of these acres are managed as native prairie and planted with Big Bluestem and Indian Grass. Hedgerows and shrubby edges border the fields and woodlots. The management intends to eventually restore all the open areas in native plants. While there is no extensive mature forest here, there are sizable woodland areas with mature trees and closed canopies. There are two

distinct woodlands, one composed of Beech/Maple and the other Oak/Hickory. The riparian corridor of Indian Creek is also wooded and lined with Sycamores and Cottonwoods. There are even some small areas of White and Red Pine plantings. ODNr plants some of the refuge in crops to attract wildlife and there is adjacent extensive cropland, pastures and woodlots on private farmland. All of this makes for an abundant and diverse avian population.

At times extensive mudflats become exposed, which attract a variety of shorebirds and waders. sometimes in excellent numbers. On 10/08/96 my son Jack, who had just turned 9, and I were birding the pond when he said to me, "Dad I think I have a dark ibis here", which after close inspection proved to be a Glossy Ibis. Many ducks commonly visit this and other area ponds. Joe Bens and I once saw 6 Surf Scoters here on 10/20/93. Many of the small marshy ponds found scattered throughout the area can be attractive to marsh birds and dabbling ducks especially in migration, although Blue-winged Teal have summered. This area may also have a bit of a migrant trap effect for songbirds as much of the surrounding areas are pretty open. The few times I have been here in April, May, September and October, I have always found lots of songbird activity. I once saw a large flock of Purple Finches here in April '90 that I estimated at over 200 birds. On 9/24/89 Ned Keller and I found a Golden-winged Warbler and a quietly perched Sharp-shinned Hawk watching us and the warbler.

During migration expect decent numbers of ducks and modest numbers of shorebirds and when water levels are right excellent numbers. The same goes for long-legged waders except for Green Heron which probably breeds and Great Blue Heron which is always present. Waterbirds that prefer deep water such as loons and gulls are generally absent although grebes and cormorants are regular and an occasional tern may show up. American Woodcocks display commonly in spring and nest and Northern Bobwhite and Wild Turkey are common year round. This is Red-

tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Eastern Screech and Great Horned Owl country and Red-shouldered Hawks and Barred Owls are also resident.. Accipiters are present in migration and Cooper's Hawk is year round. Northern Harrier is a winter resident as are Tree, White-throated, White-crowned, Swamp and Fox Sparrows, juncos, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Song and Field Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Meadowlarks and Horned Larks are permanent residents. All of our woodpeckers are resident including Pileated. During spring and fall migration, expect any migrant songbird that occurs regularly in Ohio. This is an excellent migrant warbler spot. Summer residents include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Pee-wee and Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Great-crested, Willow and Acadian Flycatchers, all of our swallows, Wood Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Warbling, White-eyed, and Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow, Yellow-throated, Blue-winged, Prothonotary and Kentucky Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Louisiana Waterthrush, .Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Indigo Buntings and Grasshopper Sparrows. I once had a Henslow's Sparrow here and suspect they are still present.

The point is this wonderful location has been overlooked and underbirded and it's birding potential has been untapped. There are sure to be surprises here for anyone that decides to extensively bird this area. This area is good spring, summer, fall and winter. You won't regret it if you decide to visit.



<http://w3.one.net/~keller/cincybirds/goodbird/sighting.htm>

Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:
Jeff Hays
521-4477

President:
Paul Wharton
353-3403

Treasurer:
Peggy Gatch
831-3378

Newsletter:
Ned Keller &
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941-6497

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