



White-throated Sparrow © Allan Claybon

the passenger
Pigeon 

February 2012
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FEBRUARY

Below we are reprinting an excerpt of "A Birder's Almanac", written by Bill Whan. Bill, a long-time Ohio birder and member of the state bird records committee, is an authority on the birds of Ohio. The almanac traces the migratory patterns of birds through the state of Ohio, month by month. The full text can be viewed online at: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/almanac/introduction.php>

February generally begins just as cold and dark as January, but by the end of the month many signs of renewal have emerged. Many birds—finches, doves, cardinals, sparrows, meadowlarks, larks—will have begun singing regularly by then, and hawks—residents and even wintering visitors—will have begun courting. Eagles lay their first eggs by month's end, while immature eagles hang out in adolescent gangs. Flocks of black-birds and robins persist widely. Woodcocks may begin beeping in the southern counties early in February. Later in the month kill-deers, turkey vultures, cranes, and male red-winged blackbirds will have prominently arrived in the state from the south. All the wintering birds—such as snow buntings, longspurs, winter finches,



American Woodcock © Allan Claybon

rough-legged hawks and harriers and owls, the "white-winged" gulls, northern shrikes, merlins, etc.—will stay with us through the month, albeit in smaller numbers, adding to variety. February brings us many more birds than it loses.

It depends on the weather, but in general during the last week of February, if encouraged by even a mild thaw or slight southern winds, a massive movement of ducks occurs, the most dramatic of several lurches northward by these eager water birds, and the courtship rituals that began in January will reach a peak; spring ducks are less wary than those during the fall hunting seasons, and more readily admired in bodies of water statewide. It is a magnificent spectacle.

- Bill Whan

Bird Club meeting

Soul Birding: Reevaluating Life and Self during a Big Year

Speaker: Matt Stenger, 2011 Big Year Birder



Altamira Oriole © Matt Stenger

Matt Stenger, a Cincinnati native, was bitten by the birding bug at age 8. This ultimately led to an associates degree in Recreation and Wildlife Management from Hocking College. He considered himself fortunate to land a job as a naturalist with the Hamilton County Park District. He spent 11 years in this position, working at Sharon Woods for the first 1.5 years before transferring to Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve.

While with the Park District, he took great interest in sharing his passion for all things in nature with park visitors. Wildflowers, insects, trees and (of course) birds are among his favorite topics.

In 2010, Matt's life took an unexpected turn, giving rise to a total reevaluation of self. He decided to respond to this change in fortune by returning to his first love...birding. Cashing in his retirement fund, he launched his ABA area Big Year on January 1, 2011. Working with far less resources than the typical Big Year birder, Matt relied primarily on driving his own vehicle across North America. And, for the most part, his vehicle was his bedroom! Despite the obvious limitations, Matt ended 2011 with a year list of 681 species.

So, join me at Sharon Woods to hear Matt's tale of his grand adventure...the places, people, experiences and (of course!) the birds that helped him to rediscover birding and himself. Having followed his blog (716birds.com) all year, I can guarantee you lots of great photos!

-Steve Bobonick

thursday, february 16th
7:00 p.m.
sharon woods visitor center

around the valley . . .

Oxbow, Inc.

Field trip

Saturday, February 25th, 8:00 a.m.

Location: Oxbow Preserve

Leader: Paul Wharton, (513) 353-3403, pwharton@fuse.net

Meet: upper Oxbow parking lot

Cost: Free

Audubon Society of Ohio

Field trip

Sunday, February 26th, 8:00 a.m.

Location: East Fork Lake State Park

Leader: Joe Bens, (513) 353-4229, joebens@live.com

Meet: South swimming beach parking lot

Cost: Free

Cincinnati Nature Center

Bird walks

Saturday, Feb. 11th – Mike Kravitz

Saturday, Feb. 25th – Bill Stanley

Meet in the Rowe Woods parking lot at 8 a.m. CNC daily admission fees are \$8.00 for adults, \$3.00 for children 4-12 and free for children 3 and under.

Bird Club f

Sunday, February 12th
8:15 a.m.

Location: Spring Grove Cemetery
Leader: Mark Gilsdorf, (513) 253-6062, markg74@gmail.com

Meet: At Spring Grove Cemetery along the road just beyond the tunnel from the main entrance on Spring Grove Avenue.

Because of its many ornamental coniferous plantings, Spring Grove has historically been a good location to find “winter” finches, if in fact their irruptions have brought them this far south. Unfortunately these winter finch “invasions” into our region are usually far and few between. During minor “irruptions” these species may be found in northern Ohio but don’t make it this far south. However during major irruptions it is always possible that a few of these species will show up down here, as was the case in January and February of 2009 which saw an unprecedented number of White-winged Crossbills move into our area. I’m not sure that this is a major irruption year but there have certainly been a number of wide spread reports of these species from the northern portions of Ohio and Indiana (and other states) this winter.

Seeing if we can find any of these winter finches will be our primary goal on this field trip. White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill and Common Redpolls are all possible. OK, they’re a bit of a long shot, but there will be other interesting species around as

well. Some other wintering species that we have good chances of finding at the cemetery include Pine Siskin (a more common winter finch), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush and sparrows. At least one Red-headed Woodpecker and Merlin are wintering at the cemetery and even an early Pine Warbler is possible at this date.

So come out and join our trip leader Mark Gilsdorf for what should be an interesting walk among the hemlock and spruces of Spring Grove. The more eyes and ears we have the better our chances are of finding birds. After Spring Grove, Mark may take a side trip to another nearby location depending on current reports at the time. Regardless, the trip should be over by noon.

Directions: The Spring Grove Cemetery main entrance is located on Spring Grove Avenue just west of the Winton Road intersection. To find our meeting spot drive in the main gates and go straight. You will go through a short tunnel. Just beyond the tunnel pull over and park alongside the road. You can visit the Spring Grove Cemetery website at: <http://www.springgrove.org/Cemeteries.shtm>

Jay Stenger
Field Trip Co-ordinator
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field trips



Juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker © Lana Hays

Cast Your Vote for Prothonotary Warbler

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Greetings... There's an election underway to name the official bird of Butler County MetroParks. They have a list of birds that you can choose from on their online voting form. The list is not really very interesting, and according to early results, Northern Cardinal is leading by a comfortable margin. Here are the top seven leaders so far:

Northern Cardinal - 182
Pileated Woodpecker - 114
Great Blue Heron - 98
Eastern Screech Owl - 95
Wild Turkey - 71
Red Tailed Hawk - 10
American Robin - 8

I humbly propose a write-in candidate for official Butler County MetroParks bird: Prothonotary Warbler.

Unlike the current leader Northern Cardinal, Prothonotary Warbler is a bird that requires someone actually leaves his or her home or gets out of the car in order to see one. Prothonotary Warblers breed at a few of our MetroParks sites--Gilmore Ponds, Rentschler Forest, Woodsdale, come to mind; they are "pretty birds" and have a high bunny hugger factor--right up there with Northern Cardinals though not likely to surpass Eastern Bluebird; they are migratory birds and anyone reading this doesn't need another boring lecture about neotropical migrants . . .

I think we could easily out-vote Northern Cardinal and the other candidates on the MetroParks bird ballot if we got behind Prothonotary Warbler as a write-in.

Voting is as easy as clicking the link below and typing in "Prothonotary Warbler" in the box marked "Other":

"<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e5ftm-55hgvxyl11m/start>"

or go to <http://www.yourmetroparks.net/> and click on the link to the voting page at "Decision 2012" on the right side of the home page under the Nature's Corner section.

Whether you're a Democratic, a Republican, an anarchist, a Marxist, Maoist or a Tea Party supporter, I think Prothonotary Warbler is a suitably unoffensive candidate for the official bird of Butler County MetroParks. True, they make some "life style" choices that many of our fellow Butler Countians would find appalling, and they have the nasty habit of coming into our country merely to raise their young before fleeing back across the southern border at the first sign of a decrease in daylight (and none of them have ever paid a penny in taxes) . . . yet I urge you to look beyond such trivial matters and vote for Prothonotary Warbler.

Vote early and often. Encourage your friends and family to vote. Make a drinking game of it, if you wish. Let's save Butler County MetroParks from making a very dull and predictable mascot out of the Northern Cardinal. I even have a powerful chant that the banders among you might make use of:

Who do we want?

PROW!

*When do we want him?**

NOW!

*= feel free to alternate the masculine pronoun "him" with the feminine pronoun "her" during your public demonstrations. Our movement strives for inclusion. Nor do we wish to raise the hackles of nativists, so, again, don't mention that Prothonotary Warblers only live in Butler County long enough to raise their young before leaving the country. There are some among us who cannot abide by such practices. Yet we need their votes, too, so lie, dissemble, prevaricate, waffle, fence-sit, as necessary.

As of Friday, January 20, two proud citizens have cast their write-in ballot for Prothonotary Warbler. Join us. Make us a mighty force.

"Fight the power," brothers and sisters!

-Mike Busam



Prothonotary Warbler © Lana Hays



Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

Cincinnati Bird Club
c/o Newsletter Editor
6270 Orchard Lane
Cincinnati, OH 45213

- President: Bob Foppe
Program Chair: Steve Bobonick
Field Trips: Jay Stenger
Newsletter Editor: Mark Gilsdorf
Treasurer: Lois Shadix
Park VIP: Jay Lehman

2011-2012 Dues:
If you haven't sent in your dues yet for the September 2011 - May 2012 birding season, please fill out the form below and mail it in along with your membership fees.

Visit us on the Web at:
http://www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub/index.php

Lois Shadix (lshadix@fuse.net), 2928 Saddleback Dr, Cincinnati, OH 45244

Make your check payable to Cincinnati Bird Club, and mail to our Treasurer:

Individual \$12.00 Family \$15.00 Student (under 18) FREE

Yes I would like to receive my newsletter via e-mail. E-mail

Form fields for Name, Address, and Phone.

Bird Club Membership