

WINGTIPS



YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD, photo by Chad Wilson

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APRIL 2023

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April 2023 Program

Tuesday, April 4th at 7 p.m.

Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

***“A Connecticut Yankee Goes to Washington:
Senator George P. McLean, Birdman of
the Senate”—Author Talk***

Will McLean Greeley



Will McLean Greeley grew up in West Michigan with a passion for American history, politics, and birds. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Michigan and then a master’s degree from Michigan in archives administration. After retiring from a thirty-five-year career in government and corporate market research, he embarked upon a three-year research and writing journey to learn about his great-great-uncle George P. McLean and his legacy. *A Connecticut Yankee Goes to Washington* is his first book.

The author will provide a 30-minute overview of his new biography of Senator George P. McLean, sponsor of the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This is a full-scale biography the person most responsible for ending the needless, wholesale killing of birds at a critical point in time. The author will trace McLean’s rise from obscurity as a Connecticut farm boy to national prominence. McLean came to know seven US presidents and spent 18 years in the US Senate. Greeley’s book has been endorsed by ten ornithologists and historians, including David Allen Sibley, birding authority, and Dr. Donald Ritchie, Historian Emeritus for the US Senate. *A Connecticut Yankee Goes to Washington* was published by the Rochester Institute of Technology Press in March 2023.

April Field Trip
All trips are on Saturdays
Guests Are Always Welcome!

April 15th, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
Bacon Woods
51211 North Ridge Road, Vermilion
Sally Fox to lead

Elyria/Lorain Christmas Bird Count 2022
By Marty Ackermann

This year marked the 123rd Christmas Bird Count and the 64th count in the Elyria-Lorain circle, which was created in 1958 by the Black River Audubon Society. This year the count was held on December 17 with 43 people participating. They counted for 72 hours, covering 44 miles on foot and 273 miles by car, while another 5 persons counted at their feeders. The result was 74 species and 24,312 individual birds reported, which are within the range of the numbers in the last decade. Notable for this count are the first ever reports of Black Vulture and Red-necked Grebe and only the second report for Red-throated Loon.

The species seen and the number of each are: Trumpeter Swan 7, Canada Goose 1964, Mallard 353, American Black Duck 6, Northern Shoveler 27, Green-winged Teal 5, Redhead 2, Ring-necked Duck 1, Lesser Scaup 1, Bufflehead 27, Common Goldeneye 3, Red-breasted Merganser 2602, Hooded Merganser 4, Common Merganser 21, Ruddy Duck 242, Double-crested Cormorant 48, Common Loon 6, Red-throated Loon 1, Red-necked Grebe 2, Horned Grebe 9, Pied-billed Grebe 4, Ring-billed Gull 14464, Herring gull 28, Great Blue Heron 24, American Coot 22, Sandhill Crane 2, Killdeer 7, Wild Turkey 30, Black Vulture 5, Bald Eagle 25, Northern Harrier 3, Cooper's Hawk 7, Red-shouldered Hawk 13, Red-tailed Hawk 26, American Kestrel 13, Barred Owl 3, Eastern Screech Owl 1, Rock Pigeon 229, Mourning Dove 52, Belted Kingfisher 2, Red-headed Woodpecker 12, Red-

bellied Woodpecker 66, Downy Woodpecker 87, Hairy Woodpecker 15, Pileated Woodpecker 6, Northern Flicker 16, Blue Jay 310, American Crow 35, Northern Mockingbird 3, Eastern Bluebird 59, American Robin 71, Cedar Waxwing 7, Black-capped Chickadee 136, Tufted Titmouse 97. White-breasted Nuthatch 84, Brown Creeper 5, Carolina Wren 24, Winter Wren 1, Golden-crowned Kinglet 3, Eastern Towhee 1, Dark-eyed Junco 481, Field Sparrow 2, American Tree Sparrow 96, Song Sparrow 27, Swamp Sparrow 3, Fox Sparrow 1, White-throated Sparrow 55, White-crowned Sparrow 1, House Sparrow 451, House Finch 136, American Goldfinch 153, Northern Cardinal 171, European Starling 1168, Red-winged Blackbird 10, Common Grackle 225.

Thanks to all who participated!

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus

By Chad Wilson

“He succeeds in pressing out a wail of despairing agony which would do credit to a dying catamount” - William Dawson, 1923

Mr. Dawson was referring to one of my favorite birds, the Yellow-headed Blackbird! How a bird can be so beautiful and yet sound so hideous boggles the mind, but it makes it one of the most fun birds with which to spend time.

As Ohioans, we are on the very eastern edge of the Yellow-headed Blackbird's range. They are rare in Lorain County (as of this writing there is one hanging around with a flock of blackbirds by the Lorain County Regional Airport that is tough to find), but there is one spot in Ohio where they are showing up consistently in spring and summer...Howard Marsh! It is well worth the trip to Howard to spend time with these magnificent specimens.

Yellow-headed Blackbirds often nest in the same areas as Red-winged Blackbirds. The larger Yellow-headed Blackbird is the dominant bird and has no trouble displacing the Red-winged

Blackbirds from the choicest nesting spots. They are also very aggressive toward Marsh Wrens, who have been known to destroy eggs of other species. They Yellow-headed Blackbird's breeding season ends before the Marsh Wren's, however, so the Marsh Wrens often move in to the prime locations afterward.

Male Yellow-headed Blackbirds can have as many as eight females in the territory they defend. The male helps feed the first nestlings, but all the subsequent females have to feed their nestlings alone. Because their nests are always over water, the nestlings sometimes fall in the water and have to swim back to vegetation. The incubation time for the eggs is 11-13 days, then the young leave the nest after only 9-12 days, and are ready to fly about 3 weeks after hatching.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird's scientific name, *Xanthocephalus*, means "yellow head." The oldest known Yellow-headed Blackbird was at least 11 years, 8 months old. It was found in Nebraska in 1995.

When looking for Yellow-headed Blackbirds in mixed blackbird flocks, look both for the yellow head and white patches on the wings in flight. The "easiest" way to see one in county is to go to the Lorain Impoundment at dusk on a sunny day and scan the tens of thousands of blackbirds that fill up the trees right before they go to roost in the phragmites. It is definitely a needle in a haystack search but it is worth the effort when you find one!

References: allaboutbirds.com; audubon.org; Kennedy and McCormac, Lone Pine's Birds of Ohio; Peter John, Bruce: The Birds of Ohio



Looking for a Yellow-headed Blackbird at the Lorain Impoundment (yes there is one in here)

Underbirded Gems: Crook Street Wetlands

By Chad Wilson



Don't be afraid of the closed gate, you can park 4 cars outside of it

Lorain County is one of the best birding counties in Ohio (we are 5th in Ohio for all-time bird species seen at 335 species!). In fact, we have so many great places to bird that some people aren't even aware of some of the lesser-known ones. Thus “Underbirded Gems” will be a semi-regular feature in Wingtips going forward.

In this issue we'll talk about probably THE most underbirded gem in Lorain County: Crook Street Wetlands.

Where is it, and where to park?

This place is so underbirded that neither Google Maps nor Apple Maps will take you there. Luckily Crook Street is a rather short street in Grafton so you will see the small gravel parking lot about halfway up the street. If the gate is closed, as it often is, you can still park on the outside of it. The coordinates for it are 41.2639529, -82.0722592

Why is Crook Street Wetlands so fantastic?

The sad fact of Lorain County birding is that the northern locations, especially the ones right on Lake Erie, attract far more birders than most of the southern locations. This is never more true than with this place...not many birders I talk to even know it exists.

However, if you are in the Grafton area, and can take the trouble to find it even though your phone doesn't know it exists, it is definitely worth a fall hike. As the name implies, it is a wetland park. There is a pond right off the parking lot and the hike takes you up the right side of the pond, through some beautiful woods, then around the south side of the wetlands where there are meadows, then back toward the parking lot on the west side of the wetlands.

The mix of wetland, woods, meadows, and open sky make this a great place to hike for those of us who get bored by just one type of habitat. This is a place where I'm always scanning the sky for raptors, as it seems to be on a major bird highway of some sort.

191 species of birds have been ebirded at Crook Street Wetlands. The rarest birds that have been seen there were a Tri-colored Heron in 2017 and a Little Blue Heron in 2018.

Hiking is totally flat. There can be flooding/mud issues in the Spring in the woods section of the loop, and keep your eyes out for groundhog holes while walking back to the parking lot on the east side of the wetlands, but overall it is just an easy, pleasant hike.

While it is a little out of the way for some of us northerners, it makes for a perfect length of a hike with just the right habitat diversity. Check it out if you're in the area!

Storm Wigeon!

By Chad Wilson

After 5 years of wanting desperately to see a Storm Wigeon, my dream finally came true as one was reported at the Chippewa Inlet Trail North in Medina County on March 1st of this year!

Storm Wigeons are not their own species, but instead the name refer to American Wigeons with a recessive gene that gives them

an odd, and beautiful, coloration on their face. A "Storm Wigeon" is not a subspecies or a really old prime adult. If so, they would be just as common as the normal gray pepper cheeked American wigeon. They are actually an American Wigeon that carries a rare recessive gene that is being expressed. They lack the pigment that gives a wigeon the peppering in the cheeks. Instead the cheeks are creamy to white, like the crown of the head and a vibrant green iridescent that looks really enhanced on these individuals from the eye to the nape and only certain individuals carry it.

The term "storm" came from old time hunters that hunted the west coast. When they got a huge storm (cold front) from the north it brought down these beautiful rare wigeons.

There are many common names for them: white-cheeked, white-faced, cream wigeon, but for the most people the name "storm" stuck.

In Ohio, seeing a Storm Wigeon can be even more difficult than spotting the Eurasian Wigeon, so it's a real treat to find! There is a picture of this beauty on the back cover!

Bird Trivia!

1) What % of the world's bird species live in the Rainforest?

- a. 30
- b. 50
- c. 80

2) Falconry started in Europe in the Middle Ages?

- a. True
- b. False

3) What % of all birds migrate?

- a. 20
- b. 40
- c. 60

4) Where is the largest library of bird sounds?

- a. Cornell
- b. Harvard
- c. Smithsonian

5) Is a bird's call different than its song?

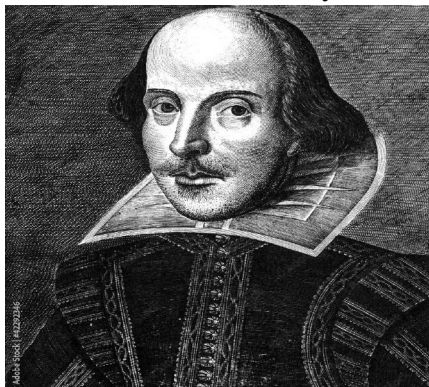
- a. Yes
- b. No

6) Starlings came to North America because of William Shakespeare?

- a. True
- b. False

Answers:

- 1) b. 50% of the world's bird species live in the rainforests of the Amazon and Indonesia. Rainforests, which cover less than 3% of the earth's surface, account for more species than any other ecosystem.
- 2) b. It's believed to have started 4,000-6,000 years ago on the steppes of Mongolia where they still hunt with golden eagles.
- 3) b. Birds make seasonal journeys to breed, find food, and avoid cold weather. Some move just a few thousand feet from lower to higher altitudes while others make arduous journeys of thousands of miles.
- 4) a. Cornell University's Macauley Library archives photographs, audio & video recordings of 96% of the world's birds.
- 5) a. Calls are short, usually made up of a few notes, and are used to communicate position or warn of danger.
- 6) a. Some 60 bird species are mentioned in the works of William Shakespeare. In 1890, a Shakespeare enthusiast decided it would be a good idea to have them all in America. He released 60 starlings in Central Park; there are 200 million here today!



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Ruth Skillicorn

Susan Jagoda

Susan Jagoda

Susan MimsTom Greene

Tracey Adams

Chickadee Level

Audrey Ferner

Barton Kinzel

Bill Jordan

Charles Ryba

Charles Schiffer

Christine Malasca

Claire Breen

David Lenter

Edward Finley

Eric Magnuson

Eugene Haponek

Gail Schaffer

Hidden Hollow Participant

Jan Koeppe

John Elder

John Titus

Judy QueenKate Levin

Laura Ward

Melanie Dahl

Mellisa Hyde

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Nancy Bingham

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AMERICAN "STORM" WIGEON, photo by Chad Wilson



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