

WINGTIPS



ADULT SABINE'S GULL, photo by Chad Wilson

NOVEMBER 2023

Or Current Residents
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Editors:
Chad Wilson
Marty Ackermann
Danielle Squire

Webmaster:
Rob Swindell

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November 2023 Program

Tuesday, November 7th at 7 p.m.
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center
“Without a Field Guide”
Nicole Robinson



Join us for an evening of poetry that will feature award-winning poet, Nicole Robinson. She will read from her recent book, *Without a Field Guide*, which explores her unsentimental yet deeply joyful regard for the natural world.

All are invited to also bring and share a poem about birds and/or nature (written by self or other). The evening will conclude with a Q&A and book signing.

Nicole Robinson is the author of the collection of poems, *Without a Field Guide* (Unbound Edition Press). Her recent poems have appeared in the *Columbia Journal*, *The Fourth River*, *Great River Review*, *Grist*, and elsewhere. Robinson is the recipient of an Individual Excellence Award for poetry from the Ohio Arts Council and currently serves as the narrative medicine coordinator at Akron Children's Hospital.

November Field Trips
All trips are on Saturdays
Guests Are Always Welcome!

November 18th, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
Oberlin/Wellington Reservoirs
Oberlin address (meet here at 9):
43885 Parsons Road, Oberlin, OH
Wellington address (will go to afterwards):
47301 Jones Rd, Wellington, OH
Paul Sherwood to lead

Notes from the President
By Rob Swindell



I wanted to share some information about a project we are supporting in 2023-24:

Black River Audubon Society has partnered with several other local Audubon Chapters to support an international program called MoSI, which works to “study the ecology of Neotropical migrant birds on their wintering grounds, and our regional science and conservation programs conducting avian research, population monitoring, and conservation work in several geographic regions using diverse methods from point counts to emerging wildlife tracking technologies.”

The program is managed by The Institution of Bird Populations, a nonprofit organization founded to study the declines in bird

populations (we've lost almost 3 billion birds since 1970). MoSI is a "collaborative, international network of bird monitoring stations across the northern Neotropics that bolsters conservation efforts through population monitoring. Since 2002, the program has operated more than 250 stations in 22 countries."

Local Audubon chapters provided \$2,850 in support of this program this year. Black River Audubon Society contributed \$500 to help fund the two MoSI bird banding stations, Ometepe and Los Guatuzos, in Nicaragua.

Their work focuses on answering these questions:

- What factors affect site persistence on the wintering grounds?
- Where are the problems most acute, on the breeding or non-breeding grounds?
- What factors drive population declines?
- What is the relationship between population change and weather, climate, or habitat loss on the wintering grounds?
- What can we do to reverse declines?

We're proud to support this effort as part of our commitment to bird conservation. Soon, we should have some exciting news about another bird-tracking project we have been working hard to implement in Lorain County—MOTUS.

Thanks for your support of Black River Audubon and projects like this that provide valuable scientific information to researchers.



MOSI, and MOTUS Towers like this one, both collect valuable bird data, photo from Motus.org

Sabine's Gull

Xema sabini

By Chad Wilson



The vastness of Lake Erie, photo by Chad Wilson

I boarded a Jen Brumfield pelagic boat on September 17th this year, knowing that anything could be seen or nothing could be seen. Lake Erie may be the second-smallest Great Lake, but once on a boat, far from shore, its immense size is on display.

I was hoping for Red-necked Phalaropes, as I had never seen those in Lorain County before. I was rewarded about 5 minutes into the trip by a pair of them swimming along doing their Phalarope things. I was happy, but we still had hours to go, and we were all hoping something special would show up.

We weren't disappointed, as an adult Sabine's Gull appeared for us in Erie County! It is extraordinarily rare to see an adult bird anywhere in Ohio; virtually all our Sabine's Gull sightings are juveniles. We zoomed alongside it for awhile, taking pictures, and then lost it. But on our way back we saw it again, flying east, and

rode alongside it as it flew into Lorain County! Wow, what a bird! Everyone on the boat was ecstatic!

Sabine's Gulls are a bit unusual in that they are primarily pelagic, spending most of their lives at sea, unlike many other gull species. They breed in the high Arctic. During the breeding season, Sabine's Gulls exhibit fascinating courtship rituals. Males engage in aerial displays, gliding gracefully through the air and calling out to potential mates. Once paired, they select a nesting site on the tundra, usually near freshwater lakes or ponds. Their nests, often placed among low vegetation, provide a safe haven for their eggs and chicks. The females typically lay two to three eggs, and both parents share the responsibilities of incubation and feeding.

Sabine's Gull is the only member of its genus, and in some ways acts more like a tern than a gull. Its closest gull relative is the beautiful Ivory Gull. Their evolutionary path diverged from a common ancestor over 2 million years ago!

Among many other differences from typical gulls, Sabine's Gulls have an unusual molt schedule. Juveniles don't molt into their first-winter plumage until they reach their wintering grounds in the Southern Hemisphere. Adults on the wintering grounds molt all their feathers before beginning their northward migration to the Arctic breeding grounds. And they have a partial molt in late fall/early winter, once they arrive at their wintering grounds.

Another way this gull is unusual is that it kind of acts like a Killdeer. When a predator threatens a Sabine's Gull's nesting area, the gull performs a distraction display, pretending to be injured and leading the predator away from the nest. This tactic is common among shorebirds, but rare among gulls.

So we have a tern-like, shorebird-like gull that is very difficult to see except on the open water. And it is strikingly beautiful! Sign me up, I'm a huge fan of this strange bird!

References: <https://www.allaboutbirds>; Birds of Ohio by Kennedy and McCourmac

College Scholarship Recipient Chosen for 2023

By Danielle Squire



Benjamin out in his element, photo by Danielle Squire

This past September, the Black River Audubon Society selected the first recipient of their new annual college scholarship! The scholarship of \$1,000 was arranged by vote of the BRAS Board earlier in the year and a Scholarship Committee was formed. The committee met on several occasions to construct the criteria for their intended candidates. For eligibility, applicants are required to:

- Be a resident of Lorain County
- Provide proof of completion of a minimum of 24 college level credit hours

- Have of a minimum of a 2.75 GPA
- Demonstrate community involvement or environmental activities
- State intent to enroll in a program leading to a 4-year degree in Environmental Studies, Forestry, Marine or Wildlife Biology, Sustainable Agriculture, or related fields

The scholarship recipient is chosen by a separate committee composed of at least three Black River Audubon Society members, at least one of these being a Black River Audubon Society board member.

We are happy to introduce Benjamin Rudnickas to our Wingtips community!

“I am a current Lorain County Community College student in pursuit of an Associate of Science with aspirations to earn my Bachelor of Ecology/Wildlife Biology. From a young age I have always had a strong curiosity for nature, frequenting many local reservations. This passion has translated into my involvement in several environmental efforts throughout my K-12 years including: recycling work, garbage collection in state parks and invasive plant removal. Most recently, I had the opportunity to work for the Specialty Gardens at LCCC performing an array of tasks such as seed sowing, plant pricking and propagation of many local plant species as well as performing routine garden maintenance. Additionally, I had the chance to perform individual observation of insects within the garden spaces, identifying, documenting and contributing my findings to an on-campus biodiversity report. My time spent in the gardens has only engrossed my love for plants further where I now maintain a large collection of both native and non-native species, many of which I grow hydroponically in a simple setup I built. Eclipsing my fascination for plants is my absolute obsession with reptiles. I have built a bioactive enclosure for my leopard

gecko featuring a variety of arid plants and many tiny organisms such as isopods and springtails that function as decomposers. I am currently assembling a second enclosure based on the environment of New Caledonia and I am excited to continue expanding my personal plant and reptile collection in the future. Additionally, I look forward to other opportunities to get involved in the environment and/or research on my journey to become a wildlife biology/research ecologist, ultimately using that position to raise further awareness for the protection of our planet.”

Benjamin sends his deepest gratitude to the Black River Audubon Society and our community for supporting his education and his dreams. The Black River Audubon Society is proud to present this scholarship to such a dedicated student and look forward to contributing to the success of students in the future.

The scholarship will become available for applicants in Spring 2024. All applicants must have their completed forms submitted, including two recommendation letters, by April 1st. A winner will be announced by May 1st of the same year and will be awarded \$1,000 to the college of their choice by Fall of the fiscal year.

Congratulations Benjamin!



Lorain County Community College, photo from LCCC.org

Black River Audubon Membership Only
(but including Wingtips) is \$15/Year

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Email address _____

Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon
P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036

“The mission of the Black River Audubon Society is to promote conservation and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through advocacy, education, stewardship, field trips, and programs for the benefit of all people of today and tomorrow.”

National Audubon Membership Application Only
(Includes membership in Black River Audubon and subscriptions to WINGTIPS and AUDUBON magazine: \$25/year)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8
Send your check to: National Audubon Society,
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attention: Chance Mueleck

To pay online, go to blackriveraudubon.org/membership and select the type of membership you prefer.

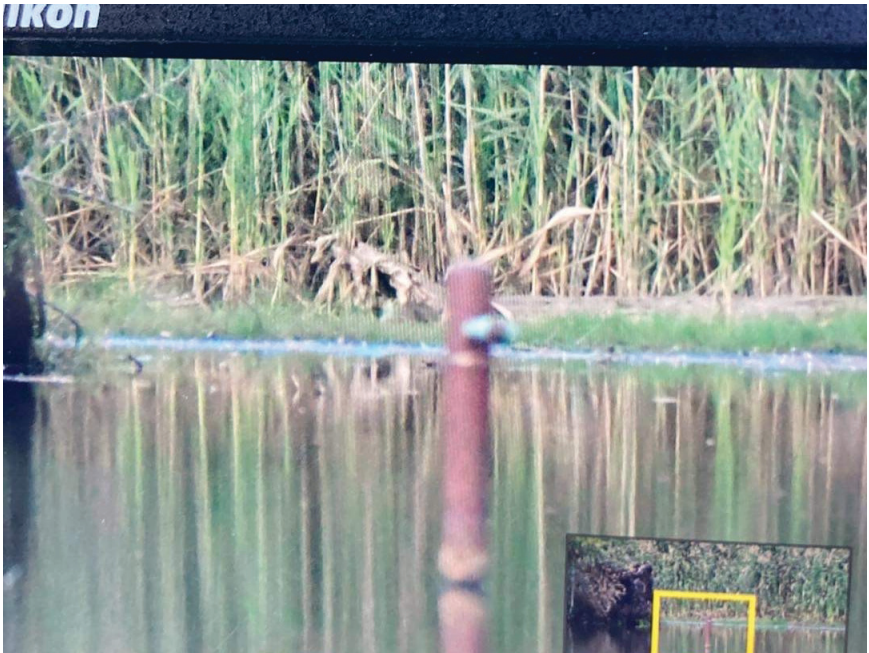
Another Bird ID Story

By Chad Wilson

A couple weeks ago, a birder posted a message on the Ohio Rare Birds Facebook group that they thought they were looking an American Flamingo in a pond from their office window, but they weren't sure and didn't have any optics with them, so they were hoping some kind birders could come and help.

They didn't have to ask twice, as many birders converged on the pond in question. Initial scans of the pond revealed a Great Blue Heron and some Canada Geese. But they were chatting with the birder through messenger and they said they also saw the heron and geese, so the birders kept looking from different angles, to no avail.

The original birder eventually was freed from work and got a closer look, and this was the culprit:



It turns out they were looking at a distant pink pipe through distorted glass, and it made it really resemble a flamingo to the naked eye! Stories like this happen all the time to pretty much all birders at some time or another, and it's always fun to get to the bottom of the mystery!



JUVENILE SABINE'S GULL, photo by Chad Wilson



BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

"Birding Since 1958"

P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036

Email: blackriveraudubon@gmail.com

440-541-9170

www.blackriveraudubon.org