

**Black River Audubon Society**

# **WINGTIPS**

**February 2012**



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## **Program**

Tuesday, February 7, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

### **Caretaker or Casanova? Interactions of Testosterone and Behavior in Longspurs and Buntings**

**Sharon Lynn**

Associate Professor of Biology, College of Wooster

We all love watching birds taking care of their babies. But have you ever noticed that sometimes only one parent is feeding the kids? Where is dad and why is mom always stuck with babysitting?



Sharon Lynn, Associate Professor of Biology at the College of Wooster, will explain this parenting conundrum using information she has learned by studying the nesting/breeding behaviors of chestnut-collared and Lapland longspurs, snow buntings and rufous-collared sparrows.

Describing her field of expertise as “environmental endocrinology”, Lynn has been researching hormone/behavior inter-actions in songbirds since 1995. Her primary focus has been on paternal behavior, aggression and acute stress. Her talk will provide some interesting insights into what actually affects and/or controls paternal care in birds.

## Field Trip

Saturday February 18, 2012

Castalia Pond and Pickerel Creek,

Meet at Castalia Pond, 9:00 a.m.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

Adapted from National Audubon

The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is coming up February 17-20, 2012. Here are some useful tips for:

### Attracting Birds in Winter

In many parts of North America, colder temperatures, falling snow, and freezing lakes and rivers make it harder for birds to survive. Here are a few tips to make life a bit easier for them and to attract them to your yard so you can count them when the GBBC rolls around!

- **Fill your feeders early.** Many people only start feeding birds once winter arrives, but it can take weeks for birds to find your feeders. Put them out sooner or keep them filled year-round.
- **Offer a bird buffet.** Different species of birds have different food preferences. Safflower or black oil sunflower seeds appeal to the greatest variety of birds. Finches go for nyger seed (thistle), and suet will lure in woodpeckers, wrens, and blue jays.
- **Install a hot tub.** Not for you—for the birds! Heated bird baths are a great way to attract birds in winter when other water sources may be frozen. You can buy bird baths with built-in heaters, or just add a waterproof heater to an existing bird bath.
- **Provide shelter.** Help birds remain safe from predators. You can buy or build bird houses or roost boxes, or create a brush pile. Plant evergreens or recycle a Christmas tree to give birds a place to rest or hide.

Find more tips at *Audubon at Home* and *All About Birds* or contact [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org).

## Hog Island Camp Scholarship Available

By Dick Lee

Black River Audubon has been offering scholarships for campers since 1988. We have sent many educators, naturalists and community leaders who have returned to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to educate our community and our young people about conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats. We continue this practice by offering to pay tuition, room and board to a qualified candidate who is willing to follow the footsteps of those who have gone to Hog Island and come back as ambassadors of conservation and education in our community.



The camper spends one week off the coast of Maine learning from respected naturalists and environmental educators such as Kenn Kaufman, Scott Weidensaul, Pete Dunne and Stephen Kress.

Hog Island campers love its natural setting and rustic 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings. Campers stay in a dormitory or in rooms with twin beds. Delicious meals are served family style in a communal dining room.

The following camps have been particularly valuable to past campers; Field Ornithology (June 17-22), Joy of Birding (June 10-15 & June 24-29), Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week (July 19-24). For more details see the website [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org).

Individuals interested in applying for the scholarship should contact Dick Lee (440-322-7449) or [leedck@windstream.net](mailto:leedck@windstream.net).

# Cattle Egret

By Harry Spencer



On November 22, 2011 William Bofinger snapped this photo of a cattle egret at the New Russia Township Nature Preserve and Park at the corner of Butternut Ridge Road and State Route 58. In *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Roche, published in 2004, cattle egrets are listed as occasional migrants with the latest fall date of sighting as November 8, 1982.



Cattle egrets are the smallest of the white egrets, although only slightly smaller than snowy egrets. In non-breeding plumage, cattle egrets have short yellow bills and black legs. Their diet consists of insects and other invertebrates.

Kenn Kaufman in *Lives of North American Birds* calls the range expansion of the cattle egret one of the great avian success stories. From Africa the species spread to South America in the latter half of the nineteenth century and arrived in North America in the latter half of the twentieth century. The birds have

also colonized the Australasian region.

## A Birder's Diary

By Carol Leininger

Why on earth do so many people go to Hinckley, Ohio on March 15 to welcome home turkey vultures? I often see the birds before that date. I guess they fly around Lorain County a while because they know it's too early for their proper dignified arrival in Hinckley.

Most bird species tend to arrive in their breeding area on the same date every year. Palm warblers arrive here around April 20, hooded and prothonotary warblers around May 1, and gray-cheeked thrushes around May 10. Just ask the robin or the swallows returning to Capistrano – the early bird gets the worm or, the best pick of breeding sites.



You want to see TVs (turkey vultures)? Go to a garbage dump. Norma Kraps and I once counted over 30 TVs sitting together on the roof of a small shed near the Oberlin Landfill on Butternut Ridge Road.

When you see lots of TVs circling in the sky, you know there is something stinky down below. They are one of a very few birds with an excellent sense of smell, and they thrive on road kills. Their red-skinned heads are devoid of feathers so they don't get messed up sticking them into messy carcasses. On hot days they may defecate on their legs to cool off.

Turkey vultures tend to roost at night in groups. There is nothing more spooky than to see a group sitting in an old pine tree at dawn or dusk.

I understand that vultures and the US Air Force share friendly skies. Studies say that encounters between vultures and low flying Air Force planes cause \$50-60 million in damage annually -- at least two planes are lost yearly.

Seeing these giants soaring on thermal updrafts over the countryside makes me wish I could fly to enjoy the view. Their upswept wings in a flattened V formation swaying and tilting in flight is quite a sight.

## **Trumpeter Swans**

By **Harry Spencer**

In early November 2011, Dane Adams photographed two trumpeter swans on a pond at his wildlife refuge in Brighton Township. A photograph of one of the birds is shown at the beginning of this issue of WINGTIPS. They represented the 204<sup>th</sup> species of birds that he has identified on his property. Congratulations Dane!