

WINGTIPS



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REDHEAD photo by Debbie Parker

Or Current Residents	ADDRESS LABEL	HERE	JAN. 2018	Editors: Jim Jablonski, Cathy Priebe
				Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel
				Photographer Emeritus: John Koscinski
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January 2018 Program
Tuesday, January 2, 2018
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

Mark and Luke Costilow
“Private Land Management and
Wetland Restoration”



Mark Costilow examining wetlands (family photo)

Mark Costilow is currently the Mayor of Amherst, owner of Amherst Cinema, a published author, and his family owns a 500-acre property intertwined with sustainability and conservation.

He and his wife Cheryl are the parents of Luke, who graduated recently from West Virginia University with a degree in wildlife and fisheries management. Their daughter Audrey is a sterile processing technician at Mercy Hospital.

Coffee Creek runs through the Costilow property in Ashtabula County and is the headwaters of the Grand River watershed. The Costilows have worked over the past twelve years to restore the wetlands and enhance the wildlife habitat on the property.

Mark and Luke will share how they have accomplished this restoration, their continued work in managing their natural paradise, and how similar work can be funded.

In addition, both Costilows are accomplished wildlife artists and will bring along some of their award winning, hand carved duck decoys.

December/January Field Trips

2017 Wellington Area Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Contact Diane Devereaux, 440-458-2440 for details

Lorain Harbor to Avon Lake

Saturday, January 20, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

Meet in the parking lot behind Jackalope Restaurant

Tammy Martin to lead

November Field Trip Report

Sandy Ridge Reservation

By **Sally Fox**



Several inches of rain were forecast on November 18th, the Saturday of our field trip to Sandy Ridge, so only four of us met with Sharon Stiteler in the parking lot. We debated about going to the Lorain Harbor to bird from the car, but the rain had stopped for the moment and it looked like there was a break on radar so we decided to chance a walk.

Sharon was our speaker for the Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series that afternoon and agreed to lead our walk that morning (*See back inside cover*). So off we went. On the wooded path we heard or saw pileated woodpecker, blue jay, tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, and northern flicker.

As we walked toward the viewing mound, sparrows were in abundance, flitting among the tall weeds. Here we saw American tree sparrow, song sparrow, swamp sparrow, white-throated sparrow, and white-crowned sparrow. As we walked along, Sharon shared her vast knowledge and stories with us and was an absolutely delightful guide.

The water areas provided stunning views of northern pintail, gadwall, American black duck, mallard, northern shoveler, green-winged teal, hooded merganser, double-crested cormorant, great blue heron, ring-billed gull, and Canada goose. A red-shouldered hawk

flew by to land in a near-by tree, giving us a remarkable show, and bluebirds brightened the day in the weeds to the left.

As we walked the rest of the path we saw mourning dove, European starling, yellow-rumped warbler, northern cardinal, house finch, American goldfinch, and house sparrow for a total of 34 species. Surprisingly, in the cold, we also saw a live green frog and examined the black teeth of a dead shrew.

We returned to our cars just as the sky opened and it started to pour! Our timing couldn't have been better. After a cold, damp morning we were ready for a hot cup of coffee and lunch with Sharon.

REDHEAD

Aythya americana

By **Cathy Priebe**

Identifying songbirds, especially in various plumages, can be challenging even for the most accomplished birder. Adding to the difficulty is the constant motion of the bird and the vegetation that can obscure the view.

So when I decided to visit Sandy Ridge Reservation to check out duck migration



for the first time, I was happily surprised to find that identifying them was a lot less difficult. The ducks generally stayed in one open area of water for an extended period of time so I could get the right ID. Sometimes it was necessary to bring a scope for a closer look since many of the ducks tended to gather away from the shore, but viewing waterfowl was a nice relaxing change of pace from chasing little song birds all over creation.

I found my first redhead swimming in the waters at Sandy Ridge along with a variety of other very cool migrating waterfowl. The redhead male is a very handsome duck with its cinnamon red round head, gray sides, black breast and blue-gray bill tipped with black. The female is, overall, a mottled warm brown, same bill, and light cheek and chin patches.

The redhead is a diving duck, searching for pondweeds, duckweeds and other vegetation and water insects for its meal. They

will dive as deep as 10 feet for food, but occasionally they will dabble, tilting forward with their tail raised.

Primarily a fall (Oct.-Dec.) and spring (March-May) migrant, the redhead is also a rare Ohio nester. Nesting pairs have been discovered in the western Lake Erie wetlands. The female lays about a dozen to 14 greenish eggs in a basket shaped nest of reeds and sticks suspended over water and vegetation. The female incubates the eggs for about a month.

During migration, redheads also favor large inland bodies of waters such as Wellington and Oberlin reservoirs (located in Lorain County) where I have also had the good fortune to see them. Here are some more interesting facts about redheads.

- * They are very shy and spook easily.
- * The male redhead's mating call sounds like a cat meowing.
- * The male redhead is often confused with male Canvasbacks and the redhead female is sometimes mistaken for the ring-necked female duck.
- * Female redheads tend to lay eggs in other duck's nests, especially canvasbacks. This behavior often causes host ducks to abandon their nests.
- * Redheads are also called "bay ducks" because they prefer inland waters, large rivers and, in coastal areas, bays.

References: *Stokes Field Guide to Birds*, Donald and Lillian Stokes; *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, David Allen Sibley; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide and Companion*, Pete Dunne; *Birds of Ohio*, Jim McCormac.

A Birder's Diary: Plumage and Molting

By Carol Leininger



A feather begins as a pinfeather surrounded by a sheath growing out of a follicular cavity. When the sheath breaks down and falls away, the feather unfolds. The feather itself is dead tissue and cannot repair itself if broken or worn out. But, most birds go through a periodic renewal as their feathers molt annually. A new sheath and feather pushes the old feather out and replaces it.

The first plumage of a bird is referred to as the natal down which is molted to produce the juvenile plumage, then the first winter plumage, and then the first nuptial plumage.

Some birds take several years to reach their adult plumage – for example, a bald eagle only gets its white head and tail when it reaches seven years of age. Birds vary in the duration and timing of their molt. Since growing new feathers takes a great deal of energy, molting usually occurs before migration, but after breeding. The molt is partly governed by hormones. so the male and female may differ in their timing.

Something I find most interesting is the sequence of molting of the wing and tail feathers. The shedding and replacement of individual wing feathers follows a specific order and it is always symmetrical. Both wings shed and replace the same feathers at the same time, one or two pair, starting with the primaries and then the secondaries. The primary feathers are shed beginning with the innermost and progressing to the outermost. Secondary feathers are shed outermost to innermost and only begin when most of the primaries are finished. The tail feathers are also shed and replaced symmetrically. In most songbirds this usually starts from the center feathers and works toward the outermost. However, with grouse and pheasants the process is just the opposite.

It is only by molting their feathers in such an interesting and symmetrical manner that most birds are able to continue to fly and escape predators throughout this time and energy consuming activity. Loons and grebes are a few of the birds that do not molt symmetrically but lose all their feathers at once and are thus rendered flightless until they are replaced.

LILAC-BREASTED ROLLER

Coracias caudatus

By **Barbara Baudot**



In Botswana, an early morning in late May 2016, Dominique Michal took the cover picture of a lilac breasted roller. Winter was approaching and the mating season was over. The bird was alone, perched high in a tree, watching and waiting its prey. Later he [or she] would dive down and

scoop up a small rodent or reptile and carry it up to a high perch before dismembering it.

During his African Safari, Dominique spotted only two of these African rollers. Yet these non-migratory birds are so abundant in eastern and southern Africa and the south Arabian peninsula, that they are in the IUCN category of least concern. However, they are rarely seen beyond their habitats, featuring open woodlands and savannah grasslands with only scatterings of trees and scant human presence. Despite its elusiveness, the beautifully plumed lilac breasted roller is unofficially the national bird of Kenya and recently reported in Botswana.

African rollers are 14-15 inches long, with wingspans of 20 to 23 inches and forked tails trailed by two long thin streamers, perhaps to help them retain balance when performing their acrobatic feats. They share the colorful appearance of kingfisher and bee-eater relatives: notably blues, pink-lavenders, turquoise, and cinnamon browns. The brilliant pastel plumage of both sexes is juxtaposed to their dark black beaks.

The lilac breasted roller is one of 11 species of rollers in the family *Coraciidae*, identified by French scientist Rafinesque in 1815. This family derives its English name “roller” from the behavior of its members, notably during breeding season when males will rise to great heights then plunge in swoops and dives simultaneously uttering dissonant cries to attract mates. Similar behavior is seen in territorial flights.

Monogamous as well as monomorphic, African rollers mate for life. Nesting takes place in a natural hole in a tree where the female lays a clutch of 2-4 white eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs and aggressively defend their territory and their nest—even challenging raptors.

Lilac breasted rollers have many physical features common to the nine families in the order *Coraciiformes*, including motmots, bee-eaters, todies, ground-rollers, cuckoo rollers, and three families of kingfishers. They have large heads set on short necks, bright plumage, weak feet and short legs. Distinguished from *passerine* birds by the arrangement of their toes—these rollers’ two inner front toes are connected, but not the outer one, a trait known as syndactyly. The weakness of their feet and legs is shown in their movements. They do not hop or move along perches but use their feet for perching, manipulating their environment, and occasionally making lurching leaps along the ground.

Rollers reside in warm regions of the Old World. Africa, home to most species, is likely where they originated. The migratory European species populates different environments in southern and east central Europe, while the Indian species inhabits Asia from Iraq to Vietnam. Interestingly, fossil records reveal their presence in North America during the Eocene age between 33 and 59 million years ago. Although inhabiting lands far removed from Ohio, the lilac breasted rollers share the notable *near passerine* features of our familiar backyard birds including kingfishers, hummingbirds, and woodpeckers.

References: Various articles in Wikipedia; Lilac-breasted roller - Species text in *The Atlas of Southern African Birds*; Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan, *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara*, krugerpark.co.za/africa_lilac_breasted_roller ; *Coracias caudata*.

Fight the Bird-Killer Amendment! **(Taken from Audubon.org, November 8, 2017)**

In reaction to a bird-killer amendment introduced today by Representative Liz Cheney (R-WY) and passed by the House Committee on Natural Resources, National Audubon Society President and CEO David Yarnold said,

“Rep. Cheney is giving oil and gas companies and other industries a free pass to kill birds with impunity. This amendment guts the most effective bird conservation law that has been on the books for a century, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Under Cheney’s amendment, companies would have no responsibility for bird deaths. We will engage our 1.2 plus million members to stop this and any other attack on the laws that save birds.”

The MBTA is one of Audubon’s earliest victories. Congress passed the MBTA in 1918 in response to public outcry over the mass slaughter of birds, which threatened egrets and others species with extirpation. The law prohibits killing or harming America’s birds except under certain conditions, including managed hunting seasons for game species. The law protects more than 1,000 bird species in part because industries implement commonsense best management practices like covering tar pits and marking transmission lines.



An oiled brown pelican



Healthy brown pelican

Facts and figures on industrial causes of bird mortality in the United States:

- * Power lines: up to 175 million birds per year
- * Communications towers: up to 50 million birds per year
- * Oil waste pits: 500,000 to 1 million birds per year
- * No reliable mortality estimates, but an infamous 2013 incident in Canada incinerated an estimate 7,500 birds

Audubon members can take action and urge their legislators to vote against any legislation that includes language weakening the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Applications for Hog Island Scholarships

For the past three decades BRAS has offered educators, naturalists, and community leaders the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills at Hog Island to educate our community about bird conservation, wildlife in general, and the environment.

This year we offer two scholarships to adults that cover tuition, room, board, and travel expenses. Our goal is that the recipients will follow the examples of those who have returned from Hog Island as ambassadors for conservation and education in our communities.

Campers spend one week on the island off the coast of Maine, learning from accomplished naturalists, birders, and educators.

Past scholarship winners have loved the camp's natural surroundings and rustic 19th-century buildings. Delicious meals are served in a communal dining room.

Reservations have been made for two lucky BRAS Hog Island scholarship winners: one for *Field Ornithology* will be presented June 18 to 23rd and one for *Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week* will run from July 15 to 20th.

For more details and description of the camping experience, go to *hogisland.audubon.org*. Individuals interested in applying for the BRAS scholarships should contact Jim Jablonski at *jjjablon@aol.com* or 440-365-6465. *JJ*

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**Black River Audubon membership only
(but including Wingtips) is \$15 /Year**

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**Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon
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**“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
(Includes membership in Black River Audubon
and subscriptions to WINGTIPS and AUDUBON
magazine: \$20/year**

Name _____

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

Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Recap

Sharon “Birdchick” Stiteler



The “Birdchick” at rest

By **Tammy Martin**

This year’s Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker Series featured Sharon “Birdchick” Stiteler, birder-extraordinaire, from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Why did I choose this year’s speaker? Well, her name kept appearing as a speaker at past birding events (Midwest Birding Symposium, Biggest Week, etc.), so I assumed Sharon would be a worthy choice. Then I read her book, “1001 Secrets Every Birder Should Know,” which made me laugh, chuckle, and smile, from the Acknowledgments to the end. In fact, let’s see if this makes you smile . . . the final paragraph from her Acknowledgments:

“Oh, yeah and every bird on the planet, thank you to you guys too. You rock. Well, except maybe for that one pelican who threw up on me and gave me pouch lice. You didn’t rock nearly as much as the other birds.”

This sort of humor appeared throughout Sharon’s presentation, “*Today’s Office*,” in which she described her full-time career as a birder. Sharon has persevered as a bird bander (remember the pelican with pouch lice? Think chiggers!!), bird counter for various utility companies, bird guide (domestic and international tours), and educator (National Park Service Ranger/Naturalist). As a tech-oriented individual, Sharon also demonstrated how to digi-scope without an adapter. It takes a steady hand, but works!



LILAC-BREASTED ROLLER photo by Dominique Michal

BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1958-2018: 60 Years of Birding

P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036

440-365-6465

www.blackriveraudubon.org