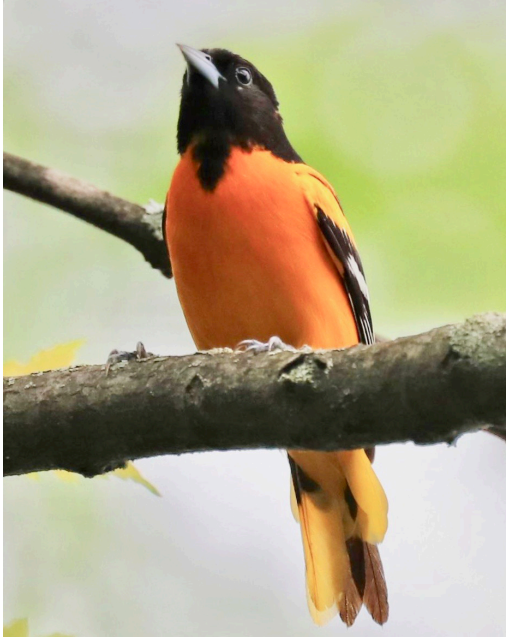


WINGTIPS



BALTIMORE ORIOLE photo by Dave Priebe

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MAY 2019

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May 2019 Program
Tuesday, May 7, 7 pm
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center

Christine Barnett, Thirsty Squirrel Farm & Apiary
“Beekeeping and Caring for Other Pollinators”



Christine Barnett and friend (photo courtesy of Ms. Barnett)

Here is your chance to learn the BUZZ about bees! Take a closer look at the lives of native pollinators and learn the variety of bees in your own back yard. We will visit the importance of pollinators, find out what you can do to help them, and talk about how different bees are used in agriculture. Then we will dive into the beehive to learn what it takes for a beekeeper to be successful and what that means to different beekeepers. You may even BEE inspired to take care of a beehive of your own! We will end by discussing the differences between local raw and store-bought honey. The final treat will be a taste of honey straight from the comb, produced by bees living right here in Lorain County!

Christine has been a beekeeper with Thirsty Squirrel Farm & Apiary for over four years. She is an OSU certified Pollinator Advocate and an Apiary Diagnostic Instructor for the Ohio State Beekeepers Association. Extremely involved in promoting beekeeping, Christine is a member of several associations including: Lorain County, Greater Cleveland, Tri-County, and Ohio State Beekeepers Association. Also an educator, she is the Beekeeper and Wildlife Program Specialist at Lake Erie Nature & Science Center where she teaches a number of beekeeping classes and is a mentor for high school beekeepers in the Project Wildlife program.

Please note: This May edition of Wingtips is the last you will receive until the September issue. All summer field trips are given below.

May-August Field Trips

Saturday, May 11, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

Magee Marsh

Meet at west end of boardwalk

Saturday, June 15, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

Meadowbrook Marsh

8577 E. Bayshore Dr., Marblehead
(Paul Sherwood to lead)

Saturday, July 20, 2019, 8:30 a.m.

French Creek Reservation

(Meet at the French Creek Nature Center, Leader TBD)

Saturday, August 17, 2019, 8:30 a.m.

Schoepfle Gardens

11106 Market Street, Birmingham
(Meet in the parking lot, Marty Ackermann to lead)

March 2019 Field Trip Report

By Sally Fox

Four of us met at Hurdle Waterfowl Park ten miles south of Wellington on a cold March morning. We were warned by our leader, Paul Sherwood, to bring boots since the trails could be rather wet and he was right! At times we had to walk through a few inches of water and parts of the trails were muddy and soggy. In spite of that we had an interesting walk.

The trail begins with woods on the left and an open field to the right. Here we saw northern flicker, blue jay, northern cardinal, American robin, American crow, common grackle, red-winged blackbird, tufted titmouse, downy woodpecker, house sparrow, song sparrow, and tree sparrow. But the highlight of the walk was black-capped and Carolina chickadees within feet of each other providing excellent views, calls and songs for comparing the two.

Continuing, the trail opened to a large pond with Canada goose, mallard, lesser scaup, tundra swan, ring-necked duck, and, bufflehead. Circling back around a smaller pond we added wood duck, white-breasted nuthatch, and mourning dove.

From there we drove a half mile further south to Sprinkle Serenity Park. The pond there held green-winged teal, American wigeon, trumpeter swan, gadwall, turkey vulture, and red-tailed hawk.

Our final stop on the way home was at the Wellington Reservoir. The wind had picked up and was quite chilly. Most of the waterfowl were species we had already seen, but we did add canvasback to our tally. So, our total for the day was 30 species and two interesting parks to visit in the future.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

Icterus galbula

By Cathy Priebe

Note: Portions of this article appeared in Wingtips six years ago. It provides a good account of how to attract one of our favorite birds to your backyard!

One spring I saw my first Baltimore oriole as it landed on my hummingbird feeder. I was immediately hooked. Every spring I placed numerous orange slices on tree limbs in my yard. I filled special oriole feeders with orange nectar. For some reason they did not return. Was I putting their food out too late in the season?

My husband joked that at least the yard looked festive, decorated in bright shades of orange. I told him that if they stopped and could not find any food the birds would go elsewhere. He laughed and let me continue my mission.

One year, the first part of April was much warmer than usual, so I decided to put out my oriole buffet a bit earlier than in past seasons.

When an unexpected cold snap with dreary, rainy skies arrived, I happened to see an oriole eating from a soggy orange, and my spirits lifted. Soon it seemed as if the sky had started raining orioles. They dropped into my yard by the dozens. Before the week was over, I was feeding close to 100 Baltimore and orchard orioles! We even constructed a table, by placing a piece of plywood over a wheelbarrow, to support double-sided pet-dishes filled with orange fluid. I traveled all over town hunting for oranges. It was crazy, but so much fun, too!

I invited anyone and everyone who would believe me to come over and see this spectacle. It lasted for two weeks. I later learned that this event, popularly called a fallout, does not happen very often, especially in someone's backyard!

Throughout the years that followed, my relationship with orioles has continued. Spring initially brings at least three dozen oriole visitors to my yard, most of them spreading out and nesting in our neighborhood. The parents bring the babies to our yard to feed, so there is always an oriole nearby all summer!

Orioles like suburban areas and open deciduous forests, orchards and parklands. They eat fruit (berries) and glean bugs high in the tree-canopy.

My place is a one-stop shop for orioles. I now have plenty of native plants that the orioles use for food and they also use plant fibers and grasses to construct their hanging pouch nest. The female lays four or five pale-gray to bluish-white eggs in the nests. She incubates her eggs for about two weeks.

The first-year male will soon have gorgeous orange and black feathers while the female, a yellowish orange, is a pale copy of him. These handsome birds are members of the blackbird family.

Here are some suggestions on attracting orioles to your yard:

***Start in early April.** My oriole buffet includes halved oranges conspicuously placed on tree branches and nectar feeders. **I don't put the grape jelly out until I see my first oriole.**

*Grape jelly, an oriole favorite, also attracts catbirds, scarlet tanagers and the occasional raccoons. Make sure you take your jelly feeders in at night if raccoons live nearby. Wasted jelly and damaged or missing feeders can be costly.

*Oriole nectar or jelly feeders can be purchased at your local feed store or specialty bird shops. I have taken a small plastic container, a short drink glass or jar, clothes hangers and made my own feeders. Use your imagination.

I highly encourage bird lovers to feed orioles and also plant native food sources for them like mulberry trees or berry bushes. They are amazing to watch, and you will enjoy them for years. Remember, if you do not feed them, they will not come!

Good luck!

Reference: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac

The Great American Lawn and Climate Change

By **Jim Jablonski**

You may know by now that I am obsessed with the harmful effects of grass. No, not *that* kind. I mean the type that surrounds nearly every American home, including, unfortunately, my own.

Fortunately, I am in good company. The National Audubon Society also sees a problem with the wasteful American desire for “putting-green” lawns.

In a March 22, 2019 article by Janet Marinelli in *Audubon.org*, the author pointed out that with 40 million acres of lawn in the U.S., grass constitutes “our largest irrigated crop.” It’s a crop that is cut and edged every third day by one person I know, and, at least weekly by nearly everyone else.

Some people, the article points out, justify all this activity by assuming that grass, like nearly all plants, soaks up carbon dioxide, thus helping fight climate change. However, the maintenance of lawns produces more carbon dioxide than it takes up and all that care “account(s) for 4 percent of CO₂ emissions nationwide.”

What can we do to reduce this problem? Simply, as Marinelli’s lead-in to the article states, we can “*Lose the fertilizers, power tools, and water-hogging plants . . .*”

Since the production of one ton of synthetic fertilizers results in four to six tons of carbon entering the atmosphere, produce your own organic fertilizer by composting trimmings. Going natural in this way, not only eliminates the greenhouse gases connected with artificial fertilizers but also reduces refuse sent to landfills.

Marinelli advocates “people power” as replacement for all the lawn care gadgets taking up room in our garage. Leaf blowers are a special pet peeve of mine. Not only do they use a lot of power, using them seems to be nearly as much work as raking. Electric tools, compared to gas-powered, may produce somewhat less immediate air and noise pollution but still contribute to climate change.

Even watering a lawn is a climate change issue. Pumping and distributing water accounts for 3 to 4 percent of national electrical use and a significant portion of that goes toward lawn watering. Native shrubs and plants generally need less watering than grass.

The final, and best, way to counter the effects of raising small pastures around your house is to “lose the lawn,” i.e., do away with much of the grass, replacing it with trees, shrubs, and ground cover.

This will eliminate the climate-damaging mowing and much of the watering and fertilizing while providing a healthy mix of plant life. Exactly what our local birds and other wildlife want!

Reference: “*Your Yard Is a Stealthy Fossil Fuel Guzzler – Give It a Climate Makeover,*” by Janet Marinelli in **Audubon.org**, **March 22, 2019**.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

Zonotrichia albicollis

By **Barbara Baudot**

In summer, White-throated Sparrows sing their clear whistles in northern forests. Adults may have head stripes of either white or tan, and scientists have found some odd differences in behavior between these two color morphs. Widespread and common. J.J. Audubon

It was a beautiful early spring morning. I was looking out the window on to my wooded back yard and saw a bird I had never seen before. It resembles other genera of the passeridae family with the conical bills of seed eating birds. It has a noticeable white feather bib that seems to grow out from the bottom of its beak and covers its throat. Thin black lines extend from the edges of its beak across its bib. It has two black stripes on the top of its head separated by a bright white stripe, and over its eyes yellow lores merge into two other white stripes that extend with the rest of the headdress to the back of its head. Two more black and white strips sit below the eye. Its chest and the lower sides of its head are lightly mottled gray.

Seeing my neighbor Harry Spencer in his yard feeding his birds, I call him over. He comes and identifies this bird as a white-throated sparrow and points out another bird in the back of the garden that has the same noticeable white bib as the bird described above, except that light tan stripes and darker reddish-brown stripes take the place of the black and white feathers, and the lores are a paler yellow. I had not seen the tan-brown variety because it was too well camouflaged by the earth and brown leaves that covered the ground. Both birds are now hopping about flipping leaves and poking their beaks around, presumably feasting on generous servings of bird seed fallen from the feeders above them. Harry points out that white-throated sparrows favor areas with plenty of brush and undergrowth. They even build their open cup nests among leaves on the ground or the lower branches of trees and brush.

Harry offers some amazing facts about these two birds. One might have thought that the duller of the two birds was either the female or the male or that the duller bird was a juvenile waiting for his adult feathers. But neither of these common assumptions is correct. These birds represent feather and behavioral morphs of their own particular species. They are like two different sides of a coin and when they breed the couples contain one of each morph. Thus, each monogamous couple consists of one dark brown and tan and one black and white-headed bird. It does not matter which color is male or female. Both birds are monomorphic. Moreover, their behaviors are complementary. The black and white bird is more aggressive and sings more loudly especially the male; the tan variety is more nurturing, calm, and quiet. The tan female is the most desirable mate. Both the males and females share parental responsibilities. However, the couple with the tan and brown mother has the most secure brood.

These feather and behavioral morphs render this species truly unique among birds and intriguing for ornithologists, who are still busy studying their genetic material.

Just now these boreal forest songbirds may be visiting us in Ohio, stopping over on their migratory path to the northern woods of Canada, their habitual breeding grounds. In the autumn they will head south and east in the US and into Mexico. Their numbers are still high, and they are listed by IUCN as of least concern. But today they are also more vulnerable to loss of habitat. They are also victims of many predators, given that they forage and nest close to the ground.

It is amazing how looks can be so deceiving and that the most interesting birds are species of rather ordinary appearance.

References: Discussion with **Harry Spencer; White-throated sparrow** in Wikipedia; houstonaudubon.org/birding/gallery/white-throated-sparrow; Allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-throatedSparrow/id; Audubon.org/.../the-fascinating-and-complicated-sex-lives-white-throated; Birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/white-throated-sparrow.

The Continuing Threat to Bees

By Jim Jablonski

Most of us know that honeybees, and other pollinators, have experienced drastic declines in numbers over recent years. Nonetheless, the current administration in Washington rescinded a two-year old ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) last year. They can now be used in national wildlife refuges. Researchers have found these to be directly linked to the decline of bees.

An online article in *The Guardian* states that a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service explained the change as required to raise plants to help migratory birds such as ducks and geese for hunters who use the refuges. The article went on to state that Ryan Zinke, the Secretary of the Interior under the current administration, favors the expansion of hunting on public lands. The refuges affected by the lifting of the ban amount to 150 million acres through the country.

Bees, and other useful insects, can die off from a variety of causes including invasive parasites, but the use of neonicotinoids is increasingly seen as a major factor. The chemicals are said to show up in all plant parts, including the nectar collected by bees. Even small amounts of the insecticide attack the brain and immune systems of the bees, causing them to become disoriented and apathetic, leading to the collapse of the colony.

Given the attitudes of the current administration and many in Congress, the best temporary approach may be state bans on the pesticides. But this is only a partial and scattered approach, given our mixed attitudes on the environment. In the meantime, since neonicotinoids permeate the food we eat, we have to wonder, “What are they doing to us?”

References: [“Trump administration lifts ban on pesticides linked to declining bee numbers.”](#) The Guardian, August 3, 2018; Erik Stokstad, [“European agency concludes controversial ‘neonic’ pesticides threaten bees.”](#) Science, February 28, 2018; Steve McDaniel, [“The bees are dying.”](#) The Baltimore Sun, February 7, 2019.

National Recognition for Ohio Young Birders

Let’s be honest. Ohio, nowadays, is rarely seen as a national leader. However, that’s changing in birding. If you haven’t seen it yet, the Spring 2019 edition of Audubon recognized Ohio Young Birders (OYB) as a model for the rest of the country and the world.

Founded by six teens just 13 years ago, OYB was organized with the aim “that no kid should have to go it alone” with her/his passion for birds. Most young birders have to struggle against the “uncool” stereotype of their favored pastime. But in OYB they find plenty of others with the same interest and have the opportunity to develop leadership potential as well as their birding skills.

The group is still small with 120 members statewide, but the teens have taken the lead in organizing the group and advising others in twenty states and even the African nation of Uganda. Their message to others is “dream big but start small.” Along the way they are proving Ohio can still produce leaders. **JJ**

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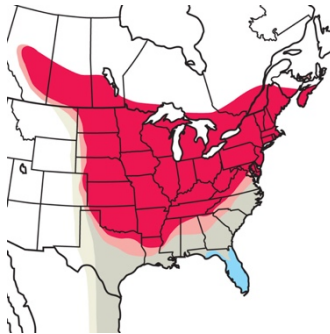
More on Baltimore Orioles



First Year Baltimore Oriole

(photo courtesy of Jeanne Buttle Williams, taken at Cascade Park, Elyria)

The sketchy-looking individual in the above photo is a first-year Baltimore oriole male. Their distinctive plumage, unlike any other North American bird, develops during the fall of their second year.



As can be seen in the breeding range map above, Baltimore orioles have a breeding range throughout most of the eastern half of the U.S. Still, they sometimes can be difficult to attract to backyard feeders. Read suggestions on how to do so in Cathy Priebe's article inside.



WHITE-THROATED SPARROW photo by Rob Swindell

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