



CLEVELAND REGION

The Cleveland Bird Calendar

Published by

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History

and

The Kirtland Bird Club

THE CLEVELAND REGION

The Circle Has A Radius of 30 Miles Based on Cleveland Public Square

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Beaver Creek | 30 Lake Rockwell |
| 2 North Amherst | 31 White City |
| 3 Lorain | 32 Euclid Creek Reservation |
| 4 Black River | 33 Chagrin River |
| 5 Elyria | 34 Willoughby |
| 6 LaGrange | Waite Hill |
| 7 Avon-on-the-Lake | 35 Sherwin Pond |
| 8 Clague Park | 36 Gildersleeve |
| 9 Clifton Park | 37 North Chagrin Reservation |
| 10 Rocky River | 38 Gates Mills |
| 11 Cleveland Hopkins Airport | 39 South Chagrin Reservation |
| 12 Medina | 40 Aurora Lake |
| 13 Hinckley Reservation | 41 Aurora Sanctuary |
| 14 Edgewater Park | 42 Mantua |
| 14 Perkins Beach | 43 Mentor Headlands |
| 15 Terminal Tower | 44 Mentor Marsh |
| 16 Cleveland Public Square | 45 Black Brook |
| 16 Cuyahoga River | Headlands State Park |
| 17 Brecksville Reservation | 46 Fairport Harbor |
| 18 Akron | 47 Painesville |
| 18 Cuyahoga Falls | 48 Grand River |
| 19 Akron Lakes | 49 Little Mountain |
| 20 Gordon. Park | Holden Arboretum |
| 20 Illuminating Co. plant | 50 Corning Lake |
| 21 Doan Brook | |
| 22 Natural Science Museum | |
| Wade Park | |
| 23 Baldwin Reservoir | 51 Stebbin's Gulch |
| 24 Shaker Lakes | 52 Chardon |
| 25 Lake View Cemetery | 53 Burton |
| 26 Forest Hill Park | 54 Punderson Lake |
| 27 Bedford Reservation | 55 Fern Lake |
| 28 Hudson | 56 LaDue Reservoir |
| 29 Kent | 57 Spencer Wildlife Area |



CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN
PARK SYSTEM



PORTAGE ESCARPMENT
(800-foot Contour Line)

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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WEATHER
Winter 1977-1978

December - The month was slightly cooler than usual and typically dreary as temperatures averaged out 1.1 degrees below normal and sunshine prevailed only 10% of the time possible. Precipitation was measurable on 18 days that totaled 3.51 inches as water which was 1.15 inches in excess of normal. This included snow on 9 days, most of which came in the period from the 3rd through the 9th, but totaled 23.1 inches for the month. Lake Erie remained mostly open with some moderate shoreline and slush ice occurring at times, but ice cover became extensive after the 26th. Some bays, shallows, and inland waters acquired extensive ice cover by the 11th.

January - Record snow falls and blizzards characterized the month. On the 26th, the barometer fell to 28.28 inches, the lowest ever recorded here. Snow occurred on 19 of the 20 days on which the precipitation was distributed. The total accumulation as water was 3.67 inches which was in excess of normal by 1.11 inches and as snow, the 42.8 inches far exceeded the old record of 28 inches for the month. The harshest periods started on the 9th, 20th, and 26th. Temperatures averaged out 6.8 degrees below normal and sunshine prevailed 14% of the time possible. Lake Erie exhibited variable shoreline ice and scattered floes the first 4 days after which extensive ice cover was sustained.

February - As the coldest month in this century and the 3rd coldest month in Cleveland history, Lake Erie maintained extensive ice cover and the terrain was never free of snow cover which reached a maximum of 21 inches on the 2nd. The total seasonal snow accumulation reached 81.4 inches on the 7th exceeding the 81 inch record for an entire winter season. Temperatures ranged from a minimum of - 4 degrees on the 4th to a maximum of 36 degrees on the 25th and 28th, but averaged out a very cold 11.2 degrees below normal. Precipitation was measurable on 14 days with the snowfall amounting to 10.8 inches. As water, this totaled only 0.48 inches and was in deficit by 1.70 inches. Sunshine climbed to 53% of the time possible.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Even though the weather was cold and record snow cover persisted throughout January and February die-hard birders, oblivious to discomforts like cold hands and frozen feet, sought the birds of the season. The rarer and more spectacular finds included three species heretofore unknown in the Cleveland region: Varied Thrush, Thayer's Gull, and Hoary Redpoll. For those of you who kept watch at your home feeder, there was always the possibility that a blizzard-tossed Lapland Longspur or Snow Bunting would settle in for a few days to recover from winter's latest onslaught. However you birded the winter, the following paragraphs of commentary, noteworthy records, and field notes should bring back memories of an altogether fascinating season.

Waterfowl Single Common Loons were reported from the Cleveland lakefront on three dates to December 10, thereafter none was found. Small numbers of Horned Grebes remained on Lake Erie until the end of December after which sightings were limited to four birds on three dates from Summit Lake in Akron. Here, too, were the only significant numbers of Pied-billed Grebes. 25 on January 29 was the highest count (Tveekrem).

Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers were tallied in impressive numbers during late January and throughout February. Highest counts were 2,500 Goldeneyes at Lorain Harbor on February 5 (Ward) and 4,000 Goldeneyes along the Cleveland lakefront on February 19 (Stasko). By the end of February counts of Goldeneyes had decreased to 1,500 birds on February 25 at Lorain Harbor and 1,600 birds at Cleveland February 26 (Stasko). Greatest numbers of Common Mergansers were at Lorain Harbor and the Avon Lake CEI plant. 10,000 Common Mergansers were estimated between Avon Lake and Lorain Harbor on February 5 (Besser), 12,000 were noted at Lorain Harbor alone on February 12 (Stasko).

Oldsquaws and White-winged Scoters, both uncommon winter visitors in our area, were recorded in small numbers both at Lorain Harbor and East 72nd Street. Maximum counts for Oldsquaw were six birds daily in February at Lorain Harbor (Ward) and six birds noted off East 72nd Street in late December (Klamm). Eight White-winged Scoters were observed at Lorain Harbor on February 12 (Hoffman, Stasko), and up to four individuals were noted at East 72nd Street in February (Hannikman).

Gulls Birders from all over the State of Ohio were lured to the cold, windswept open water areas along the Lake Erie shore-line in search of those gull specialties that have become a regular part of winter birding in our region. From late December to early January there was a considerable east to west movement of Bonaparte's Gulls along the Cleveland lakefront. With the thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls came Little Gulls. Six Little Gulls were at various Cleveland lakefront locations on December 26 (Klamm). Also on December 26, five Little Gulls were present at White City (Hannikman). Both the Bonaparte's Gulls and the Little Gulls quickly departed. The January 15 report of two Bonaparte's Gulls and one Little Gull at Lorain Harbor was the last date of record for the two species (Hoffman).

At Lorain Harbor, Great Black-backed Gulls reached a maximum of 108 birds on January 19. Four Glaucous Gulls were there on February 5 (Ward). The Arctic gulls were also recorded at Summit Lake in Akron. Four Glaucous Gulls and two Great Black-backed Gulls were observed from February 20 to 26 (Tveekrem). For details of the spectacular gull sightings at the East 72nd Street CEI plant in Cleveland see the Field Notes section for an extensive report based on almost daily coverage of this gull hot spot.

Carolina Wren The drastic decline in the local population of Carolina Wrens continued to be reflected in contributors' reports for the winter period. Single birds observed on December 17 and 18 were the only individuals reported. Two successive bitter winters have seriously depleted the local population of this species.

Winter Finches Common Redpolls were present throughout the region from early December to the end of February. Largest flocks were reported from the Akron area and the old Brooklyn Airport. Up to 125 Redpolls were observed through-out February at a residence in Stow (Dunning, Tveekrem). Also present at a residence in Akron during February was a flock of Redpolls whose numbers had swelled to more than 80 birds by February 26 (Tveekrem). The largest flock from Cleveland was the more than 100 Redpolls in a transient flock on February 4 at the old Brooklyn Airport (Bacik). Other notable Redpoll flocks were as follows: (1) At Lower Shaker Lakes, 50 were counted on December 25 (Besser). Numbers dwindled as only 15 to 25 Redpolls were noted between January 28 and February 26 (Schwartz). (2) 55 were observed in Mentor on January 6 (Dunning). (3) Lakewood Cemetery hosted 44 birds on December 25 and 60 birds on December 31 (Klamm). (4) 60 Redpolls were reported near Tiede-

man Road on January 7 (Hoffman). (5) Up to 35 were present at a residence in Macedonia from January 27 until the end of period (Schwartz). (6) From the western end of the region Redpolls were described as "common everywhere" at Lorain with as many as 40 being present at Lakeview Park (Ward). In addition to the larger flocks mentioned above, many contributors listed smaller numbers of Redpolls at their home feeders. With deep snow covering many fields, the bird feeders became very attractive to the seed-loving Redpolls.

A flock of 25 to 40 Pine Siskins was present at Lower Shaker Lakes throughout December and to at least January 7 (Schwartz). Other notable flocks of Siskins were 40 birds on the West Side Christmas Count on December 18 (Stasko) and another 40 at a feeder in Akron on February 8 (Biscan). Otherwise, Pine Siskins occurred in small flocks that tended to linger at suburban feeding stations.

Evening Grosbeaks persisted at several locations. Among the larger flocks were: (1) a flock whose numbers varied between five and 50 for the entire period in Kirtland Hills (Bole, Jr.); (2) six to eight were regular at a feeder in Chagrin Falls. Maximum numbers occurred on December 2 and January 19 with 34 and 32 birds respectively (Sheldon); (3) 30 were noted at Warrensville Farms on February 2 (Knight); (4) From mid December to mid-January a flock of about 25 Grosbeaks, wandering from feeder to feeder, was present around the Twin Lakes area near Kent (fide Dexter); (5) 30 occurred in mid December in Brecksville (fide Dexter); (6) 11 females and six males on December 10 was the largest count from the Akron Metroparks (Szabo fide Dexter). Smaller flocks occurred at several locations and on various dates throughout the period.

Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks were entirely absent from contributors' reports. See the Noteworthy Records section for the occurrences of the White-winged Crossbill.

House Finch A truly remarkable concentration of House Finches developed during December and early January at the feeder near the Maintenance Center of the Rocky River Metropark. Three birds were first noted on December 8. Greatest numbers were recorded on January 1 and January 2 with 125 and 75 individuals present. Thereafter numbers declined that by the end of January no House Finches were present (Davies, Klamm, Stasko). The 125 birds in January has been the largest flock of House Finches thus reported in the Cleveland area.

Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting Good numbers of Lapland Longspurs and several large flocks of Snow Buntings added diversity to the winter's birding. From 300 to 500 Snow Buntings were reported for much of February at a mobile home park in Elyria (Dolbear, Johnson, and Ward). Observers witnessed the Snow Buntings and smaller numbers of Lapland Longspurs, normally birds of open fields and beaches, in trees near the park! This highly unusual behavior was not unique to this flock as similar behavior was observed in a mixed flock of 100 Snow Buntings and 20-40 Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks at the Goodyear Aerospace plant in Akron (Szabo). Lapland Long-spurs also appeared at home feeders. 30 Longspurs spent half a day on January 28 eating corn in a backyard in Mentor (Fais), and two Long-spurs, joined by 20 Horned Larks, appeared at a feeder on January 26 (Siebert) and remained until February 3 (Siebert). The appearance of the largest flocks of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings coincided with the Great Blizzard of January 26 and 27. The incredibly harsh weather conditions of these two days, along with subsequent continuing long periods of bitter weather, forced not only the Long-spurs and Snow Buntings but also many other species to seek food and shelter near human habitations.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-throated Loon - One was sighted off Edgewater Park on December 11 (Klamm).

Red-necked Grebe - (1) One remained at Summit Lake in Akron from January 29 to the end of the period (Biscan, Tveekrem). (2) Another individual appeared at Lorain Harbor on February 22 and also remained until the end of the period (Ward et al).

Black-crowned Night Heron - An immature was observed on December 24 at Edgewater Park (Stasko).

Surf Scoter - Only winter report was of an individual off White City on December 17 (Klamm).

Black Scoter - (1) A female remained off Perkins Beach from December 3 to December 24 (Klamm). (2) A male was reported from Lorain Harbor on February 5 (Ward).

Goshawk - (1) Late in the morning of December 8, an adult flew over the parking lot at the Holden Arboretum (Hammond). The observer noted that some of the primary feathers at the tip of the right wing were missing. (2) An immature was reported from several locations around Akron from at least January 28 to the end of the period (Biscan).

Merlin - One "struck down a male Cardinal, circled around, and then picked it up off the ground" at Hanging Rock Farm on December 26 (Bole, Jr.).

Purple Sandpiper - One was observed walking along the edge of the lagoon at White City on December 22 (Corbin). Probably the same individual was noted at White City from December 31 to January 7 (Hannikman et al). During this time the bird engaged in some un-shorebird like behavior: it flew around with the star-lings that were in abundance on White City Beach and on one occasion the bird landed on the headworks building of the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant!

Dunlin - Two late stragglers were at White City on December 2 (Corbin, Klamm).

Red Phalarope - One appeared on December 2 at White City where it was observed to walk occasionally along the edge of the lagoon (Corbin, Klamm).

Iceland Gull - (1) Lorain Harbor observations were as follows: one second-year bird on January 19 and one adult and second year bird on January 23 (Ward). (2) Akron's first Iceland Gull appeared at Summit Lake on February 14 and remained until the end of the period (Biscan, Tveekrem). The bird was in the buffy plumage of the first year. See the Field Notes section for the report of the Iceland Gull sightings at the CEI plant in Cleveland.

Lesser Black-backed Gull - (1) An adult was found among the many many thousands of gulls at the CEI plant at East 72nd Street on February 5 (Hannikman et al). Slate-grey mantle, small beak, and direct size comparisons with Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls led to the identification of this gull. Identifiable photographs were taken to confirm the region's second record of this European gull. (2) Another adult was at Summit Lake from February 20 to 26 (Tveekrem). This individual had the characteristic yellow legs of this species whereas the individual observed at Cleveland had pale legs and light pinkish feet. Some adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls in winter plumage have the pale legs and light pinkish feet noted on the Cleveland bird. This field mark must be remembered when attempting to identify this species.

Thayer's Gull - An adult was intensely scrutinized at Lorain Harbor on January 15 (Hoffman). Primary wing tip pattern of much less black in these feathers plus the eye color that was not the clear yellow of adult Herring Gulls led to the identification of this bird as a Thayer's Gull. Experience with adult Thayer's Gulls at Niagara Falls greatly aided in the identification of this bird.

With the publication of the 32nd Supplement to the A. O. U. Checklist in April 1973, Thayer's Gull attained full species status. Previously, the bird was considered a subspecies of the Herring Gull. The species nests on islands of the high Canadian Arctic and winters mainly along the coast of western North America from British Columbia to California. In recent years Thayer's Gulls have been observed in small numbers in eastern North America, most notably from the Buffalo and Rochester, New York areas and Niagara Falls, Canada. With more birders gaining experience with this species, Thayer's Gull should now be a species to be looked for in the Cleveland region.

Franklin's Gull - A tardy bird was at the East 55th Street Marina on December 2 (Klamm).

Snowy Owl - On December 17 a single bird was observed at Eastlake. During the period of observation the owl was seen to feed upon a gull (Klamm).

Saw-whet Owl - This tiny, nocturnal owl was noted December 17, 18, and 24 in Kuhlman Woods (Hannikman, Bacik).

Brown Thrasher - One flew across a clearing in Kuhlman Woods on January 14 (Hannikman).

Varied Thrush - A finely plumaged male was a regular visitor to a feeder in Mentor from about December 18 to January 5 (Fais et al). Characteristics observed were the orange eye stripe and orange wing bars, the barring on the sides of the breast, and the black breast band. The bird was seen foraging on the ground for raisins, apples, and other food that had been provided and sitting both on a redwood fence and in an evergreen tree. Local residents and visiting birders also reported the thrush from different locations in the immediate neighborhood during the nearly three weeks the bird was under observation.

Not only a new species for the Cleveland region but also for the State of Ohio, the appearance of this well-known western species can not be regarded as totally unexpected. Its tendencies to wander far to the east of its normal wintering range from British Columbia to California have been well-documented recently as American Birds lists 26 records of Varied Thrush from eastern North America during the winter of 1976-1977 and 10 the previous winter (American Birds 31:302; 30:687). Calls to rare bird alerts in various eastern cities indicated that another rash of sightings of Varied Thrush occurred during the winter of 1977-1978.

Northern Shrike - About mid-morning on February 8, one appeared at a residence in Solon (Surman). The shrike landed on a branch over the bird feeders, saw no prey, and soon departed.

Hoary Redpoll - Among the 80+ Common Redpolls which frequented the feeder of an Akron residence was a distinctly whiter individual on February 28 (Tveekrem). Field marks noted on this bird, the Cleveland region's first Hoary Redpoll, were pale pink breast, completely unstreaked white rump, and a "good deal" of white in the tail and wings. Direct comparison with Common Red-polls were made at the time of observation in order to complete the documentation of the presence of a Hoary Redpoll. Attempts to band the Hoary Redpoll failed as the bird apparently departed this particular feeder sometime after February 28.

Essentially a paler version of the Common Redpoll, and thought by many experts to be conspecific with this species, the Hoary Redpoll is truly a denizen of the Arctic. Breeding from Alaska across the highest latitudes of the Canadian Arctic, the Hoary Redpoll is only very infrequently noted along the northern tier of states. When the bird does appear, it is almost invariably in the company of the Common Redpolls.

White-winged Crossbill - (1) A male was observed intermittently from December 27 to January 19 at a residence in Fairview Park (Combs et al). (2) Far to the east, another male fed on sunflower seeds twice during the day on January 18 (Miller). The observers noted that many hemlock seeds were on the snow the next morning, causing them to think that more White-winged Crossbills were in the area. None, however, was observed.

FIELD NOTES

Close Encounters of an Icy Kind On December 30, a lone Double-crested Cormorant was noted on the ice near the entrance of the East 55th Street Marina. We observed the bird walking on the ice and its unsuccessful attempts to become airborne. The reason was that the bird had a glob of ice about the size of a pound of butter frozen to its tail. The cormorant continued to walk a twisting course to the seawall of the impoundment behind the Muny Light Plant. After clambering up the sandstone blocks of the seawall, the ice and the bird's tail were lost.
- WILLIAM AND NANCY KLAMM

Planes, Car Doors, and a Short-eared Owl One day in the middle of February, I watched a Short-eared Owl late in the afternoon at Burke Airport. The bird was perched on the bent pipe or bar that sticks up out of the ground at Aviation High School. The owl jumped noticeably at the slamming of a car door. Minutes later, however, when a plane passed just above the bird, it did not even stir! - EMIL VAVREK

Winter Concentration and Rarities Among the Large Gulls

Herring Gulls were not numerous along the shore of Lake Erie while open water remained. In mid-January the lake was rapidly closing. On the evening of January 13 a movement of gulls to feed at East 72nd Street was apparent. On January 14 our estimates were 500 Herring and 1,000 Ring-billed Gulls. Four Great Black-backed Gulls and two Bonaparte's Gulls were also present. The numbers of Herring Gulls were somewhat higher there on January 15, but a larger number of gulls was present at Lorain Harbor. In addition to the numerous Herring and Ring-billed Gulls there were at least 25 Great Black-backed Gulls, five Glaucous Gulls, a few Bonaparte's Gulls, an immature Little Gull, and an adult Thayer's Gull. On January 23 at Lorain and Avon Lake there were about 5,000 Herring Gulls, about 1,000 Ring-billed Gulls, about 25 Great Black-backed Gulls, and ten Glaucous Gulls. On January 24 only five gulls remained at East 72nd Street. Peak number in January had been 10,000 birds.

In early February East 72nd Street began to experience a large influx of gulls. The largest concentration of gulls we have ever seen at East 72nd Street occurred on February 5. More than 50,000 gulls, predominately Herring Gulls, were on the ice and in the water. 307 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted, but we estimated that there were at least 400 present, as an area where 40 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted earlier in the day could not be seen and the groups of gulls farthest out on the ice could not be properly censused. 14 Glaucous Gulls were tallied though 20 is a probable estimate for the above reasons. The numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls and Glaucous Gulls were unprecedented in the history of the Cleveland region. Also on February 5 two Iceland Gulls, one an adult of the Kumlien's race, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull were found.

At Avon Lake and Lorain Harbor numbers of gulls dwindled throughout February until only a few hundred were seen on February 26. One immature Glaucous Gull remained at each locale. At East 72nd Street the enormous concentration slowly diminished to a more normal 10 - 20,000 birds at mid-month, and to only 5,000 birds at the end of the month. Contrary to the otherwise falling numbers of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, sightings of white-winged gulls increased. The numbers of Glaucous Gulls remained in excess of ten during mid-month. From February 18 through 20 a probable immature Glaucous X Herring Gull hybrid remained at East 72nd Street. Only two Glaucous Gulls were counted at the end of the month.

Iceland Gulls were the most remarkable phenomenon. Our sightings of Iceland gulls began with an adult on January 21 and increased during February. Our last Iceland Gull was seen on February 22. Although there is very little difference among individual adult birds of the nominate race and among individual first-year immature birds of the nominate race, many Iceland Gulls we observed were more advanced immatures and adults of the Kumlien's race. The differences in the plumage variations of both races enabled us to make a fairly accurate judgment of the total number of Iceland Gulls observed during the season. The number of recognizably different Iceland Gulls was at least nine of which three were identified as kumlieni. Five birds on February 19 was the best one day's total we recorded for the winter. All our sightings of Iceland Gulls occurred at East 72nd Street.

The appearance of several individuals of the Kumlien's race of the Iceland Gull subsequent to our identification of a Thayer's Gull has been very helpful in demonstrating the plumage differences between the two species. None of the later Iceland Gulls of the Kumlien's race showed more than an insignificant amount of gray in the primaries. The outermost primary showed the darkest gray, only faint gray was visible on the inner primaries. The Thayer's Gull, however, displayed a definite black pattern in several of the primaries, though this pattern was much more limited than that of the Herring Gulls. The primary pattern of the Thayer's Gull was something like halfway between the patterns of Herring Gulls and the Iceland Gulls of the Kumlien's race.

In all, gulls made a most extraordinary appearance during the winter. Ten of the 15 species of gulls known to have occurred in the Cleveland region were recorded during the winter of 1977-1978. The appearance of a Thayer's Gull marked the third winter in succession that a species of gull heretofore unknown in our area was recorded. - JIM, JEAN AND DICK HOFFMAN

AN INVITATION: The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month except July and August in The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle. Visitors are always welcome.

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Inquiries and correspondence regarding subscriptions to THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR should be addressed to The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Attention Helen Yenkevich, Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.