



# WATERBIRDS OF OHIO *cd guidebook*

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



# WATERBIRDS OF OHIO | INTRODUCTION

This CD contains 138 species of birds that occur in Ohio's wetlands. Many of these sounds were recorded in Ohio, and each species includes songs and calls that are typically heard. Habitat can be a clue to a bird's identity, and many birders also use mnemonics – memory devices – to help learn and remember songs. Refer to the text in the booklet that accompanies this CD for helpful information regarding habitats, and tips that might aid in learning these sounds, as well as good places to look for them.

Unlike songbirds, which are in the order Passeriformes and are renowned for their singing, most of the birds on this CD are non-passerines. For many birders, using vocalizations to identify these species is not nearly as important as for the songbirds, and for the most part, this group of birds do not "sing," at least in the way that an American robin or hooded warbler does. However, as you will see, many of the birds included here make a fascinating array of sounds. We may not hear all of them as they migrate through Ohio, as they generally vocalize only on their nesting grounds; some species herein don't breed here. Also, some species included are rare. Nevertheless, it is educational to be aware of their calls, and this knowledge adds to one's appreciation of the species. Also, some of these are marsh birds, and far more likely to be heard than seen, so knowing their sounds will help birders find them.

We have also included phonetic pronunciations of the scientific names of each species. While knowing the technical names is not vital, they do reveal an interesting history of the birds' name in many cases. Scientific names are binomials – the first name is the genus, and the second is the species. In brackets after each is the definition of these words, which were given to the bird at the time it was first described to science – often over two hundred years ago, although some have changed since then. A wonderful resource for learning more about bird etymology is *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*, by Ernest A. Choate (1985).

Knowing the sounds of our birds is important to becoming a better birder, as many birds are quite secretive and hard to see, but their calls are easily heard. The birder with knowledge of songs and calls will find more birds, including many that would otherwise go undetected. In some cases the best way to confirm an identification is by the song or call. Finally, learning the vocalizations of Ohio's birds can greatly increase one's enjoyment of the natural world.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED UNDER BEST SPOTS

- MP = Metropark (county)
- NWR = National Wildlife Refuge
- SNP = State Nature Preserve
- SP = State Park
- WA = Wildlife Area
- NP = Nature Preserve



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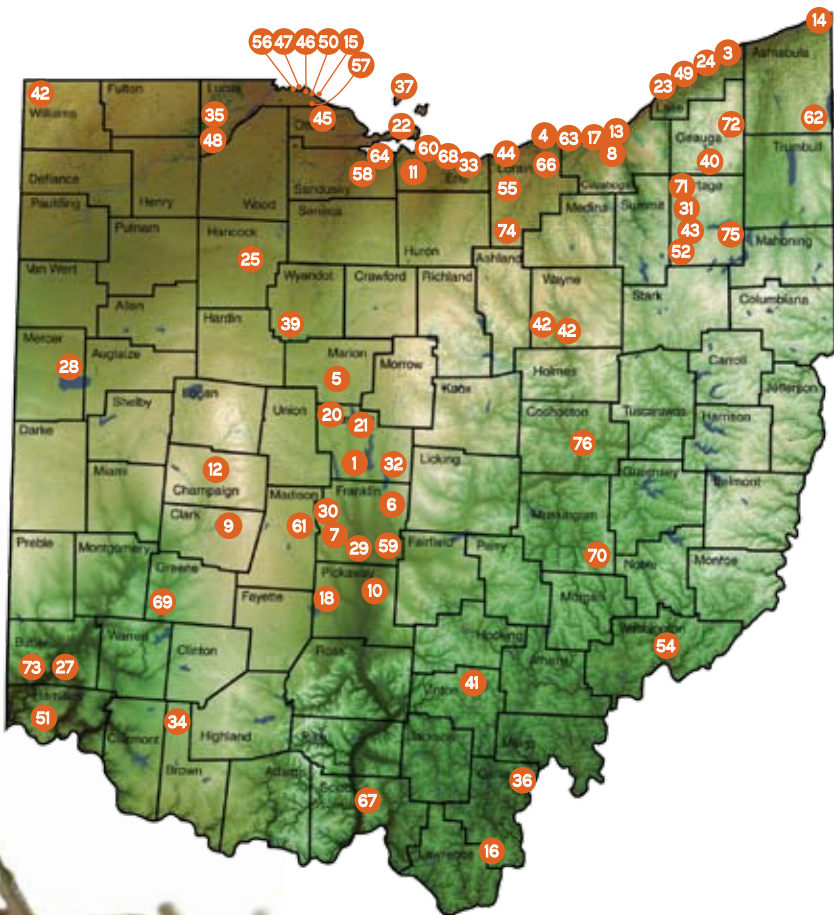


## WATERBIRDS OF OHIO | “HOT SPOT” LOCATIONS

1. Alum Creek Reservoir
1. Alum Creek SP
3. Arcola Creek MP
4. Avon Lake Power Plant
5. Big Island WA
6. Blendon Woods MP
7. Bolton Field
8. Burke Lakefront Airport
9. C.J. Brown Reservoir
10. Calamus Swamp Preserve
11. Castalia Duck Pond
12. Cedar Bog State Memorial
13. Cleveland Lakefront SP
14. Conneaut Harbor
15. Crane Creek SP
16. Crown City WA
17. Cuyahoga River
18. Deer Creek Reservoir
19. Delaware Reservoir
20. Delaware WA
21. East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street
22. East Harbor SP
23. Eastlake Power Plant
24. Fairport Harbor
25. Findlay Reservoir
26. Funk Bottoms WA
27. Gilmore Ponds Preserve
28. Grand Lake St. Marys
29. Green Lawn Cemetery
30. Griggs Reservoir
31. Herrick Fen NP
32. Hoover Reservoir
33. Huron Pier
34. Indian Creek WA
35. Irwin Prairie SNP
36. Joseph Wilson WA
37. Kelleys Island
38. Killbuck WA
39. Killdeer Plains WA
40. LaDue Reservoir
41. Lake Hope SP
42. Lake La Su An WA
43. Lake Rockwell
44. Lorain Harbor
45. Magee Marsh WA
46. Mallard Marsh WA
47. Maumee Bay SP
48. Maumee River Rapids/Farnsworth MP
49. Mentor Headlands SP
50. Metzger Marsh WA
51. Miami Whitewater MP
52. Mogadore Reservoir
53. Mosquito Creek WA
54. Muskingum River
55. Oberlin Reservoir
56. Oregon Power Plant
57. Ottawa NWR
58. Pickerel Creek WA
59. Pickerington Ponds MP
60. Pipe Creek WA
61. Prairie Oaks MP
62. Pymatuning SP
63. Rocky River
64. Sandusky Bay
66. Sandy Ridge Reservation
67. Scioto River
68. Sheldon Marsh SNP
69. Spring Valley WA
70. The Wilds
71. Tinker’s Creek SP
72. Upper Cuyahoga River
73. Voice of America Park
74. Wellington Reservoir
75. West Branch SP
76. Woodbury WA

Under each species account in this booklet is a section titled “**BEST SPOTS.**”

The general location of these sites is shown on the accompanying map. Please see the listing of contact information for the various agencies and organizations in the back of the booklet to learn more about them.



## *ANSER ALBIFRONS* • AN-SER [GOOSE] AL-BIH-FRONS [WHITE FOREHEAD] **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** TRACK 2

This Arctic-nesting goose is a relatively rare visitor to Ohio, and is often found in association with Canada geese. We generally only get single birds or small groups, but occasionally a larger flock occurs, such as the 97 that were at Big Island Wildlife Area on March 16, 1985. The greater white-fronted goose makes a rather shrill, high-pitched “laughing” sound that is distinctive, but likely to be lost in the cacophony of calls from other geese.

### **RANGE:**

Can turn up anywhere, but large wetlands along Lake Erie and western Ohio are best.

### **HABITAT:**

Often seen in croplands such as old corn fields; marshes, borders of ponds.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

The western Lake Erie marshes, such as Magee Marsh WA and Ottawa NWR; Mercer, Killdeer Plains, and Big Island wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## *CHEN CAERULESCENS* • CHIN [GOOSE] SEE-RULE-ESS-ENS [BLUISH] **SNOW GOOSE** TRACK 3a

Until 1983, this species was considered to be two species – snow and blue goose. Although very different in appearance, they are just color morphs. Because Ohio lies along the eastern edge of the range of lesser snow geese, we get relatively few birds. An incredible exception was a flock of 150,000 in Mahoning County in October, 1952. Some overwinter in the western Lake Erie marshes, normally as singles or small flocks. Snow geese are vocal, making a loud nasal trumpeting call that is distinctive.

### **RANGE:**

Can turn up anywhere in the state, but the larger wetlands are more likely to attract them, and unglaciated southeastern Ohio has the fewest records.

### **HABITAT:**

Frequently forages in crop fields; shallow wetlands; sometimes roosts on lakes.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes; large interior wetlands like Mosquito Creek and Funk Bottoms wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (WHITE MORPH)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (BLUE MORPH)

## 7 *CHEN ROSSII* • CHIN [GOOSE] ROSS-EE-EYE [BERNARD R. ROSS, 1827-1874, CHIEF AGENT FOR THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY]

### ROSS'S GOOSE TRACK 3b

Our first record of this pint-sized goose came in 1982; since then there have been several dozen reports, and Ohio normally gets several birds annually. The increase in Ross's goose numbers reflects the overall increase in Arctic-nesting goose populations and the eastward expansion of this species. While visually similar to snow geese, Ross's are much smaller – mallard-sized – and have a much stubbier bill which lacks dark pigment known as the “grinning patch.” Vocalizations are similar to the snow goose, but higher pitched.

**RANGE:**  
Most records are from western Ohio; could appear wherever large concentrations of geese occur. Almost always occur as single birds.

**HABITAT:**  
Crop fields and shallow marshes; sometimes ponds or lakes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Most likely where large numbers of Canada geese flock, such as Magee Marsh WA, Mercer WA, or Killdeer Plains WA.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## *BRANTA CANADENSIS* • BRANT-AH [TO BURN, REFERRING TO CHARCOAL COLORS OF PLUMAGE] CAN-AH-DENS-ISS [OF CANADA]

### CANADA GOOSE TRACK 4a

Canada geese are a ubiquitous part of the Ohio landscape, and as they are quite vocal, their loud honking calls are well known. Most Ohio birds are of the “giant” subspecies, and these nest throughout the state. We also get fair numbers of highly migratory Arctic-nesting Canada geese, of the “Interior” subspecies, that are generally smaller than the giants. Spectacular are the enormous flocks of highly migratory geese that stage up in the western Lake Erie marshes – their collective honking can be heard for great distances.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
All manner of wetlands, lakes, shorelines – even very urban areas.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found almost anywhere; western Lake Erie marshes in migration.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

## **C** *BRANTA HUTCHINSII* • BRANT-AH [ *TO BURN*; REFERRING TO CHARCOAL COLORS OF PLUMAGE ] HUTCH-INZ-EE-EYE [ FOR THOMAS HUTCHINS, 1730-1789, EXPLORER ] **TRACK 4b**

This species was only “created” in 2004, when the American Ornithologists’ Union split the Canada goose into two species. The large forms, of which there are seven subspecies, remain as the Canada goose. The smaller forms - four subspecies - are now considered distinct, as the cackling goose. Ohio gets small numbers of the Arctic-nesting cacklers each year, and they are most readily distinguished by their tiny size - similar to a mallard. They give high-pitched squeaky cackles - quite different from the Canada goose.

**RANGE:**  
Could occur anywhere, but most likely wherever large flocks of Canada geese congregate.

**HABITAT:**  
Same as Canada goose.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Most known records come from the western Lake Erie marshes, in the vicinity of Magee Marsh WA and Ottawa NWR, and Mercer WA in western Ohio.



Canada goose in background

PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## **B** *BRANTA BERNICLA* • BRANT-AH [ *TO BURN*; REFERRING TO CHARCOAL COLORS OF PLUMAGE ] BUR-NIK-LA [ *BARNACLE*; REFERRING TO THE SEA ] **TRACK 5**

Brant are very much geese of the sea, and are only rare migrants in Ohio. Small numbers pass through the Great Lakes in fall migration, en route to the Atlantic Coast from their high Arctic breeding grounds. Virtually all of our records are from the shoreline of Lake Erie. As they typically occur as single birds or very small groups, and rarely vocalize in migration, this is not a species too likely to be heard in Ohio. They produce a rather pleasant rolling chuckle; distant flocks sound somewhat like barking dogs.

**RANGE:**  
Almost exclusively along Lake Erie shoreline; very few records elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Rocky breakwalls, sheltered impoundments, mudflats, beaches, and grassy fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Harbors at Conneaut, Lorain, and Huron; beach and adjacent grassy areas at Maumee Bay SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



## **M** CYGNUS OLOR • SIG-NUS [GREEK FOR SWAN] OLE-OR [CELTIC FOR SWAN] **MUTE SWAN** **TRACK 6a**

While the name implies that these birds are soundless, such is not always the case. Mute swans can deliver a variety of hisses, bugles, and other sounds. They also produce loud humming sounds from their primary flight feathers while on the wing, unlike our other swans. Mute swans are a European introduction, brought over to beautify ornamental ponds. They have escaped to the wild, and feral populations are expanding, causing increasing problems as these swans are aggressive and can displace native waterfowl.

**RANGE:**  
Most common in the vicinity of Sandusky Bay along Lake Erie, but birds can be found virtually anywhere, sometimes in very urban settings.

**HABITAT:**  
Ponds, lakes, and marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Sandusky Bay,  
East Harbor SP,  
Mogadore Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: JIM MCCORMAC / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

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## **T** CYGNUS BUCCINATOR • SIG-NUS [GREEK FOR SWAN] BUX-IN-ATE-OR [A TRUMPETER] **TRUMPETER SWAN** **TRACK 6b**

This is the largest of the native North American waterfowl. Males can weigh 23 pounds, stand four feet tall, with a wingspan of up to seven feet. By the early 1900s trumpeter swans were imperiled, reduced to a few thousand birds in the western U.S. and Canada. Recovery of the species has been successful, and efforts to reintroduce them in Midwestern states began in the 1980s. Ohio joined this effort in 1996, and swans can be found in several locales today. They issue a loud bugling sound that carries great distances.

**RANGE:**  
Released at several sites, including the western Lake Erie marshes and Big Island and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas. Mostly sedentary and only occasionally seen away from areas where established.

**HABITAT:**  
Large marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The western Lake Erie marshes, particularly Magee Marsh WA



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

**T** *CYGNUS COLUMBIANUS* • SIG-NUS [GREEK FOR SWAN] COLE-LUMB-EE-AIN-US [*COLUMBIA RIVER*; LOCATION OF ORIGINAL SPECIMEN]  
**TUNDRA SWAN** TRACK 7

This is our only highly migratory swan, and the large flocks that pass through in spring and fall are spectacular sights. There have been records of groups numbering into the thousands, but flocks of a few dozen would be more typical. This species was once known as the “whistling swan,” although the sounds they make are more reminiscent of geese, or perhaps dogs heard from afar. “Tundra” is a much more appropriate moniker, as this species nests in the extreme northern reaches of North America.

**RANGE:**  
Can appear statewide, but most flocks are detected near Lake Erie, and throughout northeastern Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Open marshes, lakes, flooded fields; sometimes forages in agricultural fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Along the Lake Erie shoreline, especially the western marshes; Funk Bottoms, Mosquito and Killbuck wildlife areas; inland lakes like LaDue Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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**W** *AIX SPONSA* • AIX [A KIND OF WATERFOWL; GREEK] SPON-SA [*BETROTHED*; AS IN DRESSED FOR A WEDDING]  
**WOOD DUCK** TRACK 8

Few species represent conservation success like the wood duck. Nearly wiped out by the early 1900s, some scientists feared their extinction was eminent. Today, thanks to protection of habitat, implementation and enforcement of hunting regulations, and erection of numerous nest boxes, “woodies” are again common. The drakes of this cavity-nesting duck are among the world’s most beautiful birds. Their voice, however, is a raucous squeal reminiscent of a stuck pig.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide, although it becomes scarce in winter.

**HABITAT:**  
Streams, large rivers, swamps, and marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The wetlands in Killbuck WA have plenty; canoeing Ohio’s streams is an excellent way to find wood ducks.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## **G** *ANAS STREPERA* • AN-AS [A DUCK] STREP-ER-AH [NOISY] **GADWALL** TRACK 9

The drake gadwall is one of our most handsome ducks, but in an understated way. Their sleek gray plumage is offset by a black rump, making for an easy identification with a good look. Females are quite similar to female mallards, but gadwalls have a conspicuous white wing patch (speculum). Wigeon also have white in the wing, although the white is on the forewing. Gadwalls have a very nasal-sounding quack, interspersed with squeaky whistles – quite unlike other dabblers.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide in migration; rare, local breeder in western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Marshes; sometimes ponds, lakes, and rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Hardy; small numbers occur along Lake Erie and bigger rivers in winter; easily found in migration at Pickerington Ponds MP, Miami-Whitewater MP, and other wetlands, and reservoirs such as Lake Rockwell.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (MALE)  
PHOTO BY: © R.&N. BOWERS / VIREO (FEMALE)

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## **E** *ANAS PENELOPE* • AN-AS [A DUCK] PEN-EL-O-PE [DISTORTION OF THE GREEK *PENELOPS*, MEANING A TYPE OF GOOSE] **EURASIAN WIGEON** TRACK 10a

Wigeons are great wanderers, and this Eurasian species makes regular pilgrimages to North America, and Ohio gets a few a year. Interestingly, our American wigeon turns up occasionally in Europe. Locating a Eurasian wigeon amongst the flocks of spring waterfowl is always memorable – not just because of their rarity, but also because of the drake's showy plumage. Females are very hard to separate from female American wigeon, and may go undetected. Likewise, sounds of the two species are similar.

**RANGE:**  
Rare; most sightings from the western Lake Erie marshes, but could turn up anywhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Marshes, occasionally ponds and lakes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Ottawa NWR, Magee Marsh WA and vicinity; search American wigeon flocks carefully.

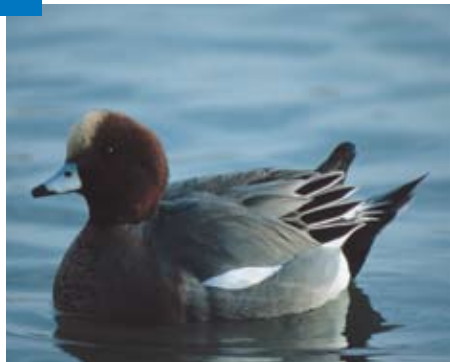


PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

## ANAS AMERICANA • AN-AS [A DUCK] AM-ER-IH-CAN-AH [AMERICAN] AMERICAN WIGEON TRACK 10b

Wigeon are very vocal birds, and one of the characteristic sounds of a spring marsh packed with waterfowl is the high-pitched whistling of drake American wigeons. Females are much quieter, uttering soft quacks. An interesting facet of American wigeon behavior is their penchant for “kleptoparasitism” or piracy. Lusting for deepwater vegetation beyond their reach, wigeon sometimes frequent deep waters where divers like redhead and lesser scaup feed. When the diver surfaces, the wigeon snatches the food.

### RANGE:

Statewide in migration; rare breeder in western Lake Erie marshes.

### HABITAT:

Wetlands, lakes and ponds. Sometimes in deep water where they steal food from diving ducks.

### BEST SPOTS:

Easily found statewide in migration. The duck pond in Castalia is a great place to observe wigeon, along with many other waterfowl species in winter.

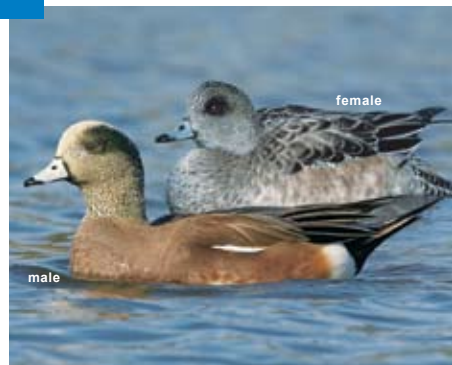


PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## ANAS RUBRIPES • AN-AS [A DUCK] RUB-RIP-EES [RED FOOT] AMERICAN BLACK DUCK TRACK 11

Black ducks look a bit like very dark female mallards, but are distinctive with their prominent white underwings, and red feet and legs. In fact, the scientific epithet *rubripes* means “red foot.” Males and females are very similar in appearance, which is rare among waterfowl. The most frequent natural hybrid among waterfowl is a cross with this species and the mallard; these hybrids share features of both species and turn up with regularity. The vocalizations of black ducks are indistinguishable from mallards.

### RANGE:

Statewide in migration; rare nester in northern half of the state. Hardy, and will winter where open water is found.

### HABITAT:

Marshes, ponds, and large rivers; often forages in agricultural fields.

### BEST SPOTS:

Easily found in migration; many overwinter along the Scioto River valley if open water is available.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

## MALLARD *ANAS PLATYRHYNCHOS* • AN-AS [A DUCK] PLAT-EE-RIN-KOSE [BROAD BILL]

TRACK 11b

This is the most recognizable duck in North America, and the ancestor of most domestic ducks. Amazingly, the mallard was not a particularly common nester in Ohio until the last 50-60 years or so. Today, they are ubiquitous and can be found with ease nearly anywhere. The classic loud quacks of the mallard are produced by the females; males have a deeper, quieter quack. Mallards are our most common breeding waterfowl, but large numbers also pass through in migration.

**RANGE:**  
Common throughout the state.

**HABITAT:**  
All manner of wetlands and water bodies.  
Often forages in fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
This species should not be a problem to find no matter where one goes.

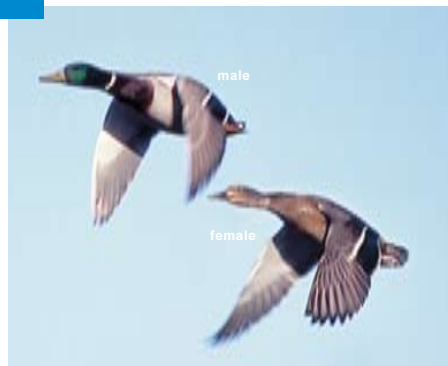


PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

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## BLUE-WINGED TEAL *ANAS DISCORS* • AN-AS [A DUCK] DIS-CORS [DISC OF THE MOUTH; REFERENCE TO WHITE CRESCENT ON DRAKE'S HEAD]

TRACK 12a

Blue-winged teal are our least hardy waterfowl, often not arriving until May, and sometimes departing in August. They are very rare in winter. They can be easy to miss, too, as blue-winged teal like to lurk in relatively dense marsh vegetation, as do other teal. Drakes make a rather harsh, low quacking sound – *kek, kek, kek* – and females can sound similar, but less harsh. The males often can be heard delivering a rather melodious peeping sound, often given in flight.

**RANGE:**  
Common throughout Ohio in migration; nests at least sparingly throughout unglaciated Ohio, more commonly to the north.

**HABITAT:**  
Prefers shallow, densely vegetated marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Any wetland or marsh should have this species in migration; large numbers stage in the western Lake Erie marshes in migration.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## *ANAS CLYPEATA* • AN-AS [A DUCK] CLIP-EE-ATE-AH [FURNISHED WITH A SHIELD; PROBABLE REFERENCE TO DRAKE'S CHESTNUT SIDES] **NORTHERN SHOVELER** TRACK 12b

These ducks are sometimes known as “spoonbills” with good reason. The huge, spatula-like bills of shovelers are used for straining small animal life and seeds from the shallows. Because of this, they are usually found in very shallow wetlands. An interesting fact about shovelers is that they are extremely faithful to their mates; pair bonds last longer than any other duck found at this latitude. Northern shovelers are not particularly vociferous, but occasionally can be heard giving quiet quacks, or a low chuckling sound.

### **RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; breeders are fairly rare and mostly confined to the western Lake Erie marshes and a few other large wetland complexes.

### **HABITAT:**

Marshes. Shovelers prefer very shallow water suited for their feeding style.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Common in appropriate habitat throughout the state in migration; small numbers overwinter at the Castalia duck pond.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## *ANAS ACUTA* • AN-AS [A DUCK] A-CUTE-AH [SHARP; REFERENCE TO DRAKE'S TAIL] **NORTHERN PINTAIL** TRACK 13

Pintails are tough, pushing north as soon as spring thaws melt the ice. However, their peak fall migration is quite early. They are also good walkers and frequently feed in flooded fields. Early naturalists in Ohio considered the Northern pintail to be the most common duck passing through the state. After 1970, populations declined sharply due to habitat loss – a situation that is being reversed due to better wetland conservation practices. Females give soft, hoarse quacks; males deliver melodious whistles, particularly in spring.

### **RANGE:**

Can occur anywhere in migration, but most move through glaciated western Ohio. Rare breeder in western Lake Erie marshes, and other large wetlands in northern Ohio.

### **HABITAT:**

Often seen in flooded agricultural fields; prefers marshes and open wetland habitats.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

The Lake Erie marshes attract large numbers and smaller but consistent numbers can be seen at Funk Bottoms, Killdeer Plains, and Big Island wildlife areas.

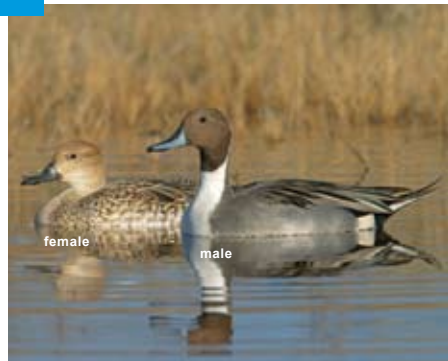


PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## ANAS CRECCA • AN-AS [A DUCK] KREK-AH [FROM GREEK *KREKO*, BASICALLY MEANING "INCESSANT CALLING"]

# GREEN-WINGED TEAL **TRACK 14**

Tipping the scales at under a pound, this is the smallest dabbling duck in North America. Green-winged teal are a spectacle in flight, too, as they fly like erratic bullets, providing one of the more challenging targets for waterfowl hunters. Unlike the blue-winged teal – which they are not that closely related to – green-winged teal are very hardy and begin appearing in early March. Both sexes deliver rather shrill peeping whistles suggestive of spring peeper frogs.

### **RANGE:**

Common statewide in migration; hardy, and small numbers overwinter where open water is found. A rare nester in the western Lake Erie marshes.

### **HABITAT:**

Shallow marshes, flooded fields, and well-vegetated shorelines. Flocks often roost on the weedy borders of mudflats in late summer and fall.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Marshes statewide harbor green-winged teal in migration. The largest concentrations are in the Sandusky Bay marshes.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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## AYTHYA VALISINERIA • AY-THÉE-AH [A KIND OF WATERBIRD] VAL-ISS-IN-AIR-EE-AH [FOR *VALLISNERIA*; GENUS OF EEL-GRASS, A FAVORED FOOD]

# CANVASBACK **TRACK 15a**

The scientific epithet of this species is instructive. *Vallisneria* is the genus of eel-grass, an aquatic plant highly favored by canvasbacks. As invasion of zebra and quagga mussels into Lake Erie resulted in clearer water allowing underwater photosynthesis, eel-grass (our species, *Vallisneria americana*) has again become common. Big flocks of “cans” occur around beds of this plant, such as in Maumee and Sandusky bays. While largely silent in migration, they give harsh growling sounds, and males produce bizarre hoots.

### **RANGE:**

Can occur statewide in migration, but the biggest concentrations are along Lake Erie.

### **HABITAT:**

Sometimes found in open marshes, especially in spring, but prefers deep waters of lakes and rivers.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

The waters of Lake Erie near Maumee Bay SP support large numbers in fall and winter; large lakes such as Wellington Reservoir in migration.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

## REDHEAD *AYTHYA AMERICANA* • AY-THÉE-AH [A KIND OF WATERBIRD] AM-ER-IH-CAN-AH [AMERICAN]

TRACK 15b

Drake redheads look somewhat like drake canvasbacks, but lack the steeply sloping forehead and gleaming white body of the latter, and have bluish bills. Redheads are very common migrants statewide, and are often seen in borrow ponds along freeways, particularly in spring. They nest rarely in the western Lake Erie marshes, and occur in winter where open water is found. Redheads give a low, nasal quack. Males in spring deliver strange sounds sometimes described as “cat-like.”

### RANGE:

Common statewide in migration, and often overwinters where open water is available.

### HABITAT:

Frequents open marshes, especially in spring. Often seen in open waters of lakes, ponds, and reservoirs – even roadside borrow ponds.

### BEST SPOTS:

Easily found statewide in migration.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## RING-NECKED DUCK *AYTHYA COLLARIS* • AY-THÉE-AH [A KIND OF WATERBIRD] COLL-AIR-ISS [COLLARED; IN REFERENCE TO DRAKE'S NECK BAND]

TRACK 16

This species is often the most widespread diving duck in migration away from Lake Erie, and they turn up on nearly any water body. Ring-necked ducks are more like dabbling ducks than other divers, in that they can leap into the air without a running start. This species frequents shallow marshes, too, like dabblers. While occasional summering birds have been noted, there are no Ohio nesting records. Not often heard in Ohio, ring-necked ducks give odd growls, whistles, and soft hissing sounds.

### RANGE:

Common statewide in migration; not especially hardy and wintering birds are uncommon.

### HABITAT:

Lakes, ponds, and marshes; often frequents the latter more than other divers.

### BEST SPOTS:

Often frequents roadside borrow ponds, such as those along Interstate 71. Killbuck, Killdeer Plains, Big Island, Spring Valley wildlife areas and the Wilds attract many, as does Mogadore Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



## GREATER SCAUP AYTHYA MARILA • AY-THÉE-AH [A KIND OF WATERBIRD] MARE-IL-AH [CHARCOAL ; REFERS TO PLUMAGE] TRACK 17a

Separating the two scaup is not easy, and they are often confused. For the most part, greater scaup are not nearly as frequent as are lesser scaup, and occur in peak numbers on Lake Erie in winter. Greater are rare to uncommon at best away from Lake Erie. Greater scaup have a more rounded head shape, generally appear to have brighter white bodies, a larger, wider bill, and a more extensive white wing stripe. Seldom heard in Ohio, this species produces rough growls and somewhat wigeon-like whistles.

**RANGE:**  
Primarily a species of the open waters of Lake Erie; much scarcer southward.

**HABITAT:**  
Mostly deep open waters; Lake Erie, large inland reservoirs and rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Shoreline of Lake Erie, such as Cleveland Lakefront SP, and open waters near power plants at Lorain and Oregon in winter.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## LESSER SCAUP AYTHYA AFFINIS • AY-THÉE-AH [A KIND OF WATERBIRD] AFF-IN-ISS [RELATED ; PROBABLY IN REFERENCE TO GREATER SCAUP] TRACK 17b

Our most abundant migrant diving duck, often found in association with redheads and canvasbacks. Much more common than the greater scaup, except along Lake Erie's Central Basin during hard winters. Numbers in spring and fall can be staggering in the Western Basin: 100,000+ at one time in Maumee Bay during fall migration. Can also be frequent in winter, wherever open water is found. Summering birds are found occasionally, although the last confirmed nesting was in 1937. A frequent call is an onomatopoeia of the name – a rough *scaup*.

**RANGE:**  
Common throughout the state in migration and, more locally, in winter.

**HABITAT:**  
Marshes, ponds and lakes, large rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found in appropriate habitat throughout the state.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## HARLEQUIN DUCK *HISTRIONICUS HISTRIONICUS* • HISS-TREE-ON-IH-CUSS [HISTRIONIC; MEANING "STAGE PLAYER," REFERRING TO PLUMAGE] TRACK 18a

One of our rarer ducks - only a few are found each year. Not only that, but they are striking in appearance and interesting in behavior. However, most harlequins seen in Ohio are females or subadults, not the spectacular adult males. This is now one of the rarest ducks in eastern North America; they breed in northeastern Canada and the population is only about 1500 birds. Although unlikely to be heard here, among other sounds the males produce a whistle said to be suggestive of a spotted sandpiper.

**RANGE:**  
Almost exclusively along Lake Erie; rarely along the Great Miami and Maumee rivers.

**HABITAT:**  
Very much a bird of surf, harlequins prefer rough water of river rapids and turbulent zones around breakwalls and jetties.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Stone jetties in Lake Erie, such as at Huron, Mentor Headlands SP, and Lorain.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## SURF SCOTER *MELANITTA PERSPICILLATA* • MEL-AN-EET-AH [BLACK DUCK] PER-SPISS-IL-LATE-AH [CONSPICUOUS] TRACK 18b

Sometimes known as "skunk-heads" due to the white patches on adult male's heads, the surf scoter is numerically probably the second most common of the three scoters, after the black scoter. These bulbous-billed divers are sea ducks; much more common along ocean coasts than on inland freshwater. Most surf scoters in Ohio are immatures or females - not the spectacular adult males. While mostly silent as they pass through Ohio, surf scoters can produce harsh croaking sounds, and males occasionally make a whistle.

**RANGE:**  
The largest numbers are seen on Lake Erie; occasional birds appear on inland reservoirs.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water of lakes; rarely large rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Open waters of Lake Erie, particularly the vicinity of Cleveland Lakefront SP or Maumee Bay.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## WHITE-WINGED SCOTER MELANITTA FUSCA • MEL-AN-EET-AH [BLACK DUCK] FUSC-AH [DARK] TRACK 19a

Until fairly recently, the most frequent scoter in Ohio; now it is the scarcest. Rather than a decline in this species, changes in scoter status may reflect an increase in the other two species due to changing ecological conditions in Lake Erie. White-winged scoters are easily told from the other scoter species by their white wing speculums. As with black and surf scoters, most white-wingeds seen in Ohio are female or subadult birds. Creates a low, harsh rolling *kraak, kraak, kraak*, but mostly silent away from breeding grounds.

**RANGE:**  
Primarily Lake Erie; occasionally seen on inland reservoirs and large rivers.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Offshore waters of Lake Erie, from Huron to Cleveland.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (MALE)  
PHOTO BY: © ARTHUR MORRIS / VIREO (FEMALE)

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## BLACK SCOTER MELANITTA NIGRA • MEL-AN-EET-AH [BLACK DUCK] NIG-RA [BLACK] TRACK 19b

Numerically, the most frequent scoter most years. Flocks numbering into the hundreds are occasionally seen on Lake Erie. Cold, blustery November days are best for scoter-watching on Lake Erie, as this is when flocks are most likely to be observed passing by offshore. Often, a few surf and white-winged scoters will be intermixed with black scoter flocks. Scoters are sea ducks; an apropos name as they spend most of their lives along coastal areas of oceans. Males emit a curious piping whistle, rarely heard here.

**RANGE:**  
Like other scoters, most observations are from Lake Erie, with occasional records on inland water bodies.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Large numbers sometimes occur in Lake Erie offshore from the mouth of Rocky River on Cleveland's east side; this area of the lake produces many sightings.



PHOTO BY: © RICHARD CROSSLEY / VIREO

## CLANGULA HYEMALIS • CLANG-U-LA [NOISE] HY-EM-AL-ISS [OF WINTER] LONG-TAILED DUCK TRACK 20

Long known as “oldsquaw,” the name of this handsome sea duck was recently changed to the more politically correct current name. Ohio just misses the peak Great Lakes migration; on Lake Michigan tens of thousands occur routinely. Long-tailed ducks are much scarcer here; a dozen or so reports in a good year; however, thousands are reported from eastern Lake Erie. They can be noisy; the collective calls from large flocks can be heard for nearly a mile. Males produce clear, yodel-like calls; females make soft quacks.

**RANGE:**  
Primarily Lake Erie; occasionally large inland reservoirs and lakes.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Lake Erie along the Cleveland lakefront probably produces the most sightings; many records, including a flock of 53, from LaDue Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## BUCEPHALA ALBEOLA • BUE-SEF-A-LA [BULL HEAD] AL-BEE-OLE-AH [LITTLE WHITE HEAD] BUFFLEHEAD TRACK 21a

These tiny, cavity-nesting ducks are sometimes called “butterballs,” and are a common migrant, although they don’t nest here. Ohio supports a globally significant concentration of bufflehead in late fall and early winter in the Lake Erie waters around Kelleys Island, where several thousand birds congregate. The genus name *Bucephala* means “bull-headed,” and a good look at a bufflehead will bear that out. Males make a low growl; females a rough burry somewhat crow-like *craak, craak, craak*.

**RANGE:**  
Common migrant statewide, peak numbers along Lake Erie; winters where open water can be found.

**HABITAT:**  
Generally deep open water of lakes and big rivers; occasionally enters open waters of marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Globally significant concentrations – several thousand birds – stage around the Lake Erie islands in fall and early winter.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*BUCEPHALA CLANGULA* • BUE-SEF-A-LA [BULL HEAD] CLANG-U-LA [NOISE]  
**COMMON GOLDENEYE** TRACK 21b

One of the hardiest ducks, goldeneyes winter as far north as open water can be found, and the males can be seen performing their comical courtship displays as early as February. Common goldeneyes are sometimes called “whistlers” because of the distinctive noise produced by their wings in flight. Interestingly, it is the males whose wings produce this sound; females are mostly silent in flight. Courting males make a short buzzy sound suggestive of an American woodcock.

**RANGE:**  
Occurs statewide in migration, with greatest numbers along Lake Erie. Will overwinter wherever open water is found.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water of large lakes and rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The open waters around Lake Erie  
power plants in winter.

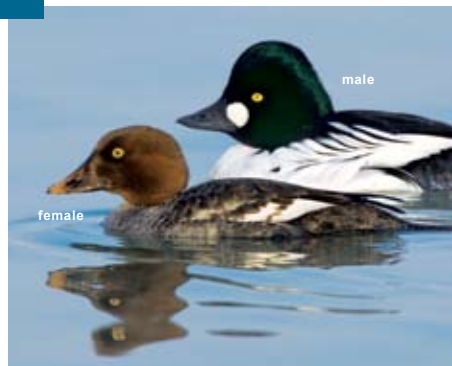


PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*LOPHODYTES CUCULLATUS* • LO-FOD-IH-TEES [A DIVER] KOOK-YOU-LATE-US [HOODED]  
**HOODED MERGANSER** TRACK 22

Two cavity-nesting ducks regularly breed in Ohio, this one and wood duck. Hooded mergansers often use wood duck boxes, and nesters have increased because of this. Wood ducks resemble hooded mergansers in flight, as both have long tails, but a useful ID tip for flying birds is the head position. Wood ducks hold their head up in relation to the body, above horizontal, while the merganser holds it down, below horizontal. This species produces low, guttural croaks and a characteristic whistling from the wings in flight.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide in migration; breeders mostly in the northern half of the state. Hardy and will overwinter if open water is available.

**HABITAT:**  
Migrants frequent lakes and large rivers; breeders are found in marshes, ponds, and along large rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Hoover Reservoir, Lake Erie marshes,  
Deer Creek Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## *MERGUS MERGANSER* • MERG-US [A DIVER, AS MENTIONED BY PLINY] MERG-ANZ-ER [DIVER GOOSE] **COMMON MERGANSER** TRACK 23a

In spite of the name, this species is the second most common merganser in Ohio, after the red-breasted merganser. Sometimes known as “goosanders,” these are large birds – an adult male can be over two feet long and weigh 3 ½ pounds. Males are distinctive; females resemble red-breasted merganser females, but are easily separated by the clean white throat that abruptly contrasts with the richer rusty red head coloration. Rarely heard here, but gives rough, jabbering croaks and other low, harsh notes.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide in migration; most common in winter on Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open waters of lakes and rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Huge concentrations can be found in winter in the vicinity of Maumee Bay.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

# 22

## *MERGUS SERRATOR* • MERG-US [A DIVER, AS MENTIONED BY PLINY] SAIR-ATE-OR [A SAWER; REFERS TO BILL] **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** TRACK 23b

Mergansers are strictly fish eaters, and are sometimes called “sawbills,” as their bills have sharp serrations to help the bird better grasp slippery fish. Lake Erie is an extremely important staging area for this species, with huge numbers congregating in November and early December. Some observers have estimated as many as 250,000 seen from one spot in a day – a huge percentage of the overall population. Not often heard here, but utters low guttural croaks and higher-pitched cackling sounds.

**RANGE:**  
A common migrant throughout the state; large numbers on Lake Erie, and will overwinter where open water occurs.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water of lakes and large rivers; sometimes marshes in migration.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Lake Erie overlooks such as the Bass Islands, Huron Municipal Pier or Cleveland Lakefront SP where huge numbers can be observed in late fall/early winter.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (FEMALE)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (MALE)

*OXYURA JAMAICENSIS* • OX-YUR-AH [SHARP TAIL] JAM-A-SENSE-ISS [OF JAMAICA; LOCALE OF ORIGINAL COLLECTION]  
**Ruddy Duck** TRACK 24

Part of a small group of ducks known as “stifftails,” ruddy ducks are distinctive no matter the plumage, due to their small size and tail often held erect like a wren. They resemble large bumblebees in flight with their rapidly whirring wings and erratic course. Ruddys do not become airborne easily, either – launching takes a long run over the water’s surface into the wind. Rare breeders here, male ruddys are not likely to be heard, but when courting they deliver a funny sound reminiscent of a lawn mower starting up.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide in migration; small numbers breed in the western Lake Erie marshes and occasionally elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Lakes, ponds, and large rivers; sometimes large marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Big numbers can occur in migration on Sandusky Bay and large reservoirs, such as Findlay, Oberlin, Wellington, and Mogadore.

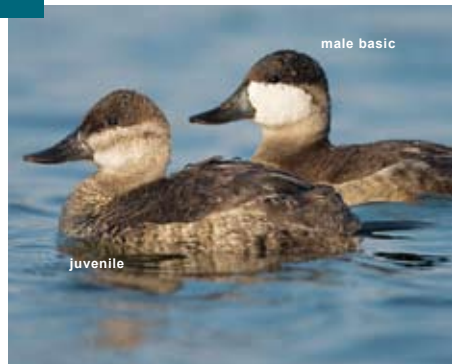


PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*GAVIA STELLATA* • GAV-EE-AH [GULL; REASON FOR USE UNCERTAIN] STEL-LATE-AH [STARRED; REFERS TO BACK PATTERN IN WINTER PLUMAGE]  
**Red-throated Loon** TRACK 25a

Small numbers of red-throated loons pass through Ohio in migration, and oftentimes they are mixed in with the much more frequent common loon. This species can be easily distinguished, even at a distance, by their pale plumage and thin, upturned bill held above horizontal. Adults in breeding colors are distinctive, but rarely seen here – almost all of our birds are drably plumaged non-breeders. While not likely to be heard in Ohio waters, this loon makes a variety of often piteous sounding wails and mournful cries.

**RANGE:**  
Most observations are along Lake Erie during large flights of common loons, but turns up regularly on large inland reservoirs.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water of lakes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Shoreline of Lake Erie in November; Alum Creek and C.J. Brown reservoirs, and Lake Rockwell.

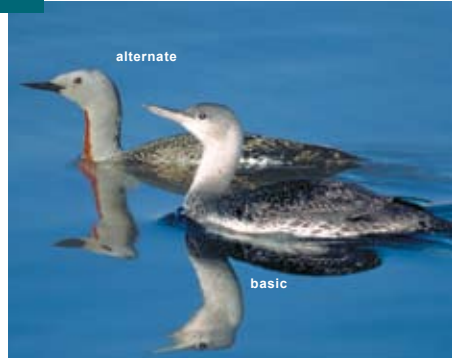


PHOTO BY: © TOM VEZO / VIREO (ALTERNATE)  
PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (BASIC)

*GAVIA IMMER* • GAV-EE-AH [GULL; NONSENSICAL AND REASON FOR USE UNCERTAIN] IM-MER [DIVER]  
**COMMON LOON** TRACK 25b

The plaintive cries of common loons are well known to people who visit Canada's back country lakes in the summer. Although this is a common migrant through Ohio, only rarely is a bird heard vocalizing here. "Singing" is largely confined to the breeding grounds, which are well to the north of us. Common loons often migrate in loose flocks, and nearly a thousand birds have been spotted in one day along Lake Erie, and as many as 400 have put down at one time on favored inland reservoirs.

**RANGE:**  
Occasional to common throughout Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Deep, open water of lakes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Alum Creek Reservoir often gets large numbers in migration; any inland reservoir is likely to host loons; big flights along Lake Erie.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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*PODILYMBUS PODICEPS* • POD-IL-IM-BUS [DIVING GREBE] POD-IH-SEPS [RUMP FOOT]  
**PIED-BILLED GREBE** TRACK 26

If you find yourself lurking around a marsh, and hear something that sounds like it belongs in the jungles of Africa, chances are it is a pied-billed grebe. This tiny waterbird creates a big sound; an accelerating, descending series of low, throaty clucks that is quite distinctive. Pied-billed grebes are talkers, too, and their vocalizations are a common part of the sounds of the marsh. Easily our most common grebe, this species breeds in the larger wetland complexes, and is a common migrant.

**RANGE:**  
Easily found statewide in migration; breeds in large wetlands.

**HABITAT:**  
Prefers lushly vegetated mixed emergent marshes; in migration often uses ponds, lakes, and larger rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Large wetlands like Spring Valley, Big Island, and Metzger and Magee Marsh wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



## *PODICEPS AURITUS* • POD-IH-SEPS [RUMP FOOT] ARE-EE-TUS [EARED] **HORNED GREBE** TRACK 27a

While not often heard outside the breeding grounds, which are primarily in western Canada, horned grebes make high-pitched series of squealing notes – very different from the pied-billed grebe. Breeding plumaged horned grebes pass through in small numbers in spring, and are stunning sights with their golden ear tufts, and reddish-rufous and black plumage. However, most birds molt into this plumage after they arrive on the breeding grounds, so most Ohio birds are in much drabber gray and black basic plumage.

### **RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; occasionally overwinters, particularly on Lake Erie.

### **HABITAT:**

Normally open water of lakes, ponds, and large rivers; sometimes in marshes, particularly in spring migration.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Pickerington Ponds MP, waters of Lake Erie near Maumee Bay SP, large inland reservoirs.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE / BASIC  
PHOTO BY: © ROB CURTIS / VIREO (ALTERNATE)

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## *PODICEPS GRISEGENA* • POD-IH-SEPS [RUMP FOOT] GRIS-EJ-IN-AH [GRAY CHEEK] **RED-NECKED GREBE** TRACK 27b

These big grebes are rare visitors to Ohio, although sometimes pronounced invasions occur. Such flights often follow on the heels of severe weather that drives them south from the Great Lakes, and can result in many grebes “grounding out.” They mistake wet or icy pavement for water and set down, and as their feet are set so far back on their bodies, are unable to take flight again. Red-necked grebes in breeding colors are a splendid sight, but virtually all Ohio birds are in drab blackish-gray and white basic colors.

### **RANGE:**

Can occur statewide, but most records are from Lake Erie.

### **HABITAT:**

Deep, open water of lakes and large rivers; rarely in big marshes.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie; large inland reservoirs such as Grand Lake St. Marys.



PHOTO BY: © ARTHUR MORRIS / VIREO (ALTERNATE)  
PHOTO BY: © KEVIN T. KARLSON / VIREO (BASIC)

*PODICEPS NIGRICOLLIS* • POD-IH-SEPS [RUMP FOOT] NIG-RIH-COL-ISS [BLACK NECK]  
**EARED GREBE** TRACK 27c

Eared grebes are similar to but much rarer than horned grebes. We get less than a dozen reports most years. This species is a westerner, breeding throughout much of the western U.S. Breeding plumaged birds are distinctive, but most Ohio records are of drab basic plumaged birds. They can be told from horned grebes by their thin, dark-tipped bill, duskiest head and neck, and higher peaked head shape. Not likely to be heard here, but eared grebes make a variety of chattering notes, and a song suggestive of a sora.

**RANGE:**

Scattered records throughout western and northern Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Lakes and ponds; sometimes appears on very small ponds and settling basins.

**BEST SPOTS:**

For years, C.J. Brown Reservoir had several that returned annually, and this reservoir and others like it are good spots to watch for this species, as is Lake Erie.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*PELECANUS ERYTHORHYNCHOS* • PEL-EH-CAN-US [WOODPECKER; FROM GREEK PELEKAN, BIRDS WITH NOTABLE BILLS] E-RITH-RO-RINK-OSE [RED BEAK]  
**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** TRACK 28a

Numbers of this spectacular, enormous western species are increasing in Ohio, and it is becoming routine to find them in our waters. Weighing up to 16 ½ pounds and with a wing span of nine feet, they can't be missed. Fond of soaring, white pelicans occasionally catch thermals and rise so high they disappear from sight. The huge pouch under the bill, which they use to scoop up fish, can hold up to three gallons of water! Pelicans don't normally vocalize away from nesting sites, but can create piggish grunts.

**RANGE:**

Can occur anywhere in the state, but most reports are from the Western Basin of Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**

Pelicans prefer wide open expanses of water  
- lakes, reservoirs, and large rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie, Hoover Reservoir, other large lakes.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*PHALACROCORAX AURITUS* • FAL-AK-RO-COR-AX [BALD CROW; AS APPLIED BY PLINY] ARE-EE-TUS [EARED]  
**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** TRACK 28b

The population explosion of cormorants has been phenomenal. Like several other high-end predatory birds, they were decimated by unregulated use of the chemical DDT, which wrought havoc on cormorants' reproductive systems. By the mid-1960s, only a few cormorants were seen annually. Today, flocks numbering over 30,000 birds are seen along Lake Erie, and nesting colonies are expanding, to the detriment of associated nesting herons. Cormorants are mostly silent, but can produce low croaks and grunts.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide; will overwinter where open water is available.

**HABITAT:**  
Lakes, ponds, marshes, open waters of Lake Erie.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Huge numbers occur on Lake Erie; any inland water body.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

adult

27

*BOTAURUS LENTIGINOSUS* • BO-TAUR-US [A BITTERN] LEN-TIJ-EN-O-SUS [FRECKLED]  
**AMERICAN BITTERN** TRACK 29

There is no mistaking the spectacular sounds made by this secretive heron. A nickname is "Thunder-pumper" because of the bizarre song, which sounds like a pump being run under water. This sound carries great distances, and is frequently given at night. Because of the loss of wetland habitats, American bitterns are not nearly as common as they once were. When surprised, bitterns often attempt to camouflage themselves. Holding their neck and bill stiffly erect, they blend remarkably well with the cattails and other plants.

**RANGE:**  
Migrants can occur anywhere; nesters are rare, confined to large marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Dense marsh vegetation. Migrants sometimes turn up in odd places.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The western Lake Erie marshes, Spring Valley and Big Island wildlife areas, Sandy Ridge Reservation.



PHOTO BY: © MARTY SEDLUK

*IXOBRYCHUS EXILIS* • IX-O-BRY-KUS [REED BOOMER; TRANSLATION AND MEANING UNCERTAIN] EX-IL-ISS [SMALL]  
**LEAST BITTERN** TRACK 30

Of the regularly breeding Ohio marsh birds, this is one of the most secretive. Least bitterns are easier to hear than see; heading to an appropriate marsh after dark is the way to locate them, as they often sing nocturnally. The calls are suggestive of a cuckoo, at least from afar. One of the least known American birds is the “Cory’s” least bittern, which was a dark morph with rich dark chestnut plumage. There was one Ohio record of this morph, in 1907, but no one has seen a Cory’s anywhere in the U.S. since 1928.

**RANGE:**  
Migrants can occur statewide; breeders confined mostly to large marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Dense emergent marshes, particularly where there are thick cattail stands.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Mallard Club, Big Island, and Metzger Marsh wildlife areas, Sandy Ridge Reservation.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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*ARDEA HERODIAS* • AR-DEE-AH [HERON] HE-RO-DEE-AS [A HERON]  
**GREAT BLUE HERON** TRACK 31a

This is by far our most common and easily found heron, and many people are familiar with the hoarse, guttural squawks that they give when flushed. Great blue herons nest colonially in rookeries, and some of the bigger ones contain hundreds of nests. The largest Ohio colony is on West Sister Island in Lake Erie, which at its peak had about 2,400 nests. This heron is much hardier than other wading birds, and they commonly overwinter wherever open water can be found.

**RANGE:**  
Common throughout the state.

**HABITAT:**  
All manner of shallow, open water; sometimes hunts in fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found about anywhere; large numbers in western Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

*ARDEA ALBA* • AR-DEE-AH [HERON] AL-BA [WHITE]  
**GREAT EGRET** TRACK 31b

This bird is the symbol of the National Audubon Society, which was formed to stop the slaughter of herons for their showy plumes. This southern heron is near the northern reaches of its range in Ohio, and tends to be uncommon away from the expansive western Lake Erie marshes. Great egrets are our second largest heron; only the great blue heron is bigger. They are increasing, and may turn up anywhere in the state, especially in late summer. Creates rapid, somewhat harshly metallic series of clucks and croaks.

**RANGE:**  
Found sparingly in interior; reaches peak abundance in western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Shallow water of marshes, ditches, wet fields, river edges.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Marshes in the vicinity of Magee Marsh WA and Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

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*EGRETTA THULA* • E-GRET-AH [EGRET] THOO-LA [CHILEAN NAME, BESTOWED BY CHILEAN NATURALIST JUAN IGNACIO MOLINA, 1740-1829]  
**SNOWY EGRET** TRACK 32a

The spectacular head plumes of this species were once highly coveted as decorations for women's hats. At the height of their popularity in the hat trade, in the late 1800s, snowy egret plumes were worth more than their weight in gold! This led to destruction of a large percentage of the population, but they have since recovered nicely. Snowy egrets are generally quite rare in Ohio, only being found reliably in the western Lake Erie marshes. They produce very harsh choking squawks; quite similar to great blue herons.

**RANGE:**  
Occurs rarely throughout interior; uncommon but reliable in the western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Shallow marshes; sometimes wet fields, pond margins, and river banks.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The causeway road through Magee Marsh WA; Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*EGRETTA CAERULEA* • E-GRET-AH [EGRET] SEE-RULE-EE-AH [DARK BLUE]  
**LITTLE BLUE HERON** TRACK 32b

A number of southern wading birds stage late summer “irruptions”; large numbers move north after the breeding season. This species, which breeds primarily in coastal southern Atlantic and Gulf states, occasionally irrupts north to Ohio in large numbers. More typically, we get a dozen or less reports annually. First year birds are white and look very much like snowy egrets, but their legs are entirely greenish and their bills lack any yellow at base. Little blue herons create hoarse, choking squawks similar to great blue herons.

**RANGE:**  
Can occur anywhere, but most likely in the western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Shallow marshes and similar habitats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The vicinity of Magee Marsh WA and Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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*BUBULCUS IBIS* • BUE-BULK-US [CONCERNING CATTLE] EYE-BISS [/IBIS; A PUZZLE AS TO WHY APPLIED HERE]  
**CATTLE EGRET** TRACK 33

This odd, very terrestrial heron is not native to Ohio; we had our first record in 1958. Cattle egrets are natives of Africa, and first appeared in North America in the early 1950s. They seemed to peak in Ohio in the mid-1970s to mid-80s, and have slowly declined since. Cattle egrets are not strictly wetland birds; they often forage in dry pastures and fields. Their name is fitting, as they frequently follow cattle, picking up the insects they stir up. Makes a short series of metallic clucks.

**RANGE:**  
Can turn up anywhere, but most likely near western Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**  
Dry fields and pastures, often in association with cattle.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The most reliable area is fields near the junction of State Route 4 and Bogart Road, in Perkins Township, Erie County, but they appear anywhere in the state.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

**BUTORIDES VIRESCENS** • BUE-TOR-IH-DEES [RESEMBLING BITTERN; PROBABLE MEANING, ORIGIN CLOUDY] VEER-ESS-ENZ [BECOMING GREEN]  
**GREEN HERON** TRACK 34

The call of this species is a good one to know, as you are as likely to hear a green heron as see one. They are primarily a species of streams, and when flushed, emit a loud, distinctive *kowp* sound. Green herons often call at night when flying overhead, too. Unlike many other herons, this species does not nest colonially; they make their very flimsy stick platforms in shrubs, usually close to water. An interesting behavioral facet is their use of tools; green herons sometimes drop feathers on the water to lure fish.

**RANGE:**  
Common throughout the state.

**HABITAT:**  
Streams and rivers; marshes;  
shores of lakes and ponds.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Canoeing streams is an excellent  
way to observe green herons.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

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**NYCTICORAX NYCTICORAX** • NIK-TIH-COR-AX [NIGHT CROW]

These largely nocturnal herons are likely more common than suspected, but tend to hide in thick vegetation during the day. At night, they often give a very distinctive, deep *quawk* call that reveals their presence. There are few known nesting colonies of the black-crowned night-heron in Ohio; the largest is on West Sister Island in Lake Erie. At peak, this colony contained 3,000 nests; it has shrunk alarmingly in recent years, and is now around 500 nests. They are hardy and sometimes overwinter in favored spots.

TRACK 35a

**RANGE:**  
Statewide, but generally uncommon  
and local outside of a few hotspots.

**HABITAT:**  
Often found roosting in thick vegetation  
along streams, lakes, and wetlands;  
hunts in rivers and marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The western Lake Erie marshes; Olentangy  
River near the King Ave. Bridge in Columbus;  
the vicinity of "The Flats" along the  
Cuyahoga River in Cleveland.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (JUVENILE)  
PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE (ADULT)

## NYCTANASSA VIOLACEA • NIK-TAN-AS-AH [NIGHT QUEEN] VI-OLE-ACE-EE-AH [VIOLET] YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON TRACK 35b

This extremely rare breeder is at the very northern limits of its distribution in Ohio. There are only a few known breeding locales, and all are very small. Adults are quite distinctive, but immatures closely resemble young black-crowned night-herons. They can be separated by their much thicker, black bulbous bills, longer legs, and much smaller white speckling on the wings. Yellow-crowned night-herons sound similar to black-crowns, but their calls are higher-pitched and not as harsh in quality.

### RANGE:

Migrants, while very rare, could appear anywhere.

### HABITAT:

Often associated with rocky streams and rivers; wetlands.

### BEST SPOTS:

Griggs Reservoir on the Scioto River in Columbus; watch for them on the floating yellow barrels above the dam after dusk.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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## PANDION HALIAETUS • PAN-DEE-ON [ANCIENT KING OF ATHENS; MISTAKENLY AND INAPPROPRIATELY APPLIED] HAY-LEE-EE-TUS [SEA EAGLE] OSPREY TRACK 36a

Often referred to as “fish hawks,” this magnificent bird of prey has made a remarkable comeback as an Ohio breeding bird in recent years. In 1995, ospreys nested successfully in the state, for the first time in decades. Each year sees more nests, and in 2005, there were at least 37 pairs. Like several other species of fish-eating birds, unregulated use of DDT led to massive reproductive failure for ospreys; banning the chemical has aided in recovery. Ospreys produce loud, piping whistles, and are quite vocal.

### RANGE:

Statewide in migration; increasing nesting population.

### HABITAT:

Large water bodies; lakes, ponds, rivers, wetlands.

### BEST SPOTS:

Nests at upper end of Alum Creek Reservoir, Delaware Reservoir. Many are seen from the observation tower at Magee Marsh WA in late April and early May migration.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



## **BALD EAGLE** *HALIAEETUS LEUCOCEPHALIS* • HAY-LEE-EE-TUS [SEA EAGLE; ALTHOUGH SPELLING IN ERROR] LOO-KO-SEPH-AL-ISS [WHITE HEAD] **TRACK 36b**

For such a large, noble bird, the sounds produced by bald eagles are surprisingly wimpy – high-pitched, thin whistles and cackles. Perhaps this is why the movie industry has sometimes dubbed in the sounds of the more macho-sounding red-tailed hawk when showing eagles. The comeback of the bald eagle has been amazing. From a low of four nests in 1979, there were at least 125 nesting pairs in Ohio in 2005. Like the osprey, the eagles' recovery is in part due to the purging of DDT in the environment.

### **RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; nesting pairs increasing.

### **HABITAT:**

Generally around large water bodies such as lakes, wetlands, and big rivers.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Can't be missed around Magee Marsh WA and Ottawa NWR; many in the vicinity of Sandusky Bay, as at Pickerel Creek WA; Killdeer Plains and Mosquito Creek wildlife areas. Hoover Reservoir in winter has become a good spot.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

adult

33

## **NORTHERN HARRIER** *CIRCUS CYANEUS* • SER-KUS [A KIND OF HAWK] SY-AN-EE-US [DARK BLUE; FOR BACK COLOR OF ADULT MALE] **TRACK 37**

Once known as marsh hawk, Northern harriers are one of our more easily identified raptors. They hunt low over grasslands, with wings held in a distinctive dihedral (V-shape). The white rump is also a conspicuous field mark. This is a common migrant and winter species; nesters are much rarer, although they occasionally breed in large marshes and grasslands. While mostly silent, harriers occasionally utter a loud, shrill whistle, particularly when disturbed near nests. Winter birds sometimes give low gruff, low barks.

### **RANGE:**

Statewide in winter; breeders rare and primarily in northern third of state and sometimes in massive reclaimed strip mines in southeastern Ohio.

### **HABITAT:**

Mostly in large grasslands; hayfields, pastures, successional fields, and reclaimed strip mine grasslands. Also around large marshes.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Magee Marsh WA, the Wilds, Big Island and Killdeer Plains, and Indian Creek wildlife areas.

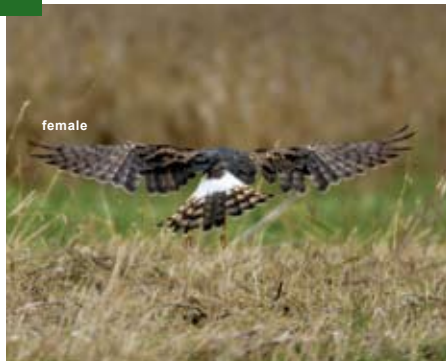


PHOTO BY: © MARTY SEDLUK

female

**Y** *COTURNICOPS NOVEBORACENSIS* • KO-TURN-IH-KOPS [APPEARANCE OF QUAIL] NOV-EH-BORE-AH-SENSE-ISS [NEW YORK]  
**YELLOW RAIL** TRACK 38a

Yellow rails are a bit enigmatic in Ohio. They are rare, but undoubtedly more pass through than is suspected. Peak fall migration is early October. This small rail is very secretive, spending much time walking under matted layers of vegetation, like mice. Hearing one is the only likely way of detecting a yellow rail, and they give a distinctive series of metallic clicks, which can be mimicked by tapping two stones together. Be mindful of Blanchard's cricket frogs (recording on this track), which sound similar.

**RANGE:**  
Scattered records from western and northern Ohio; one 1909 nesting record.

**HABITAT:**  
Prefers dense sedge meadows; migrants may use marshes and hayfields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Most recent records come from along the boardwalk at Irwin Prairie SNP and the Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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**B** *LATERALLUS JAMAICENSIS* • LAT-ER-AL-LUS [LURKING RAIL] JAM-A-SENSE-ISS [OF JAMAICA; LOCALE OF ORIGINAL COLLECTION]  
**BLACK RAIL** TRACK 39

Easily the most secretive and poorly known marsh bird that probably is a regular migrant, black rails are one of the most coveted sightings a birder can make anywhere. Spotting one is highly unlikely; virtually all are detected by their distinctive *kik-e-doo* calls. While not a species an Ohio birder can expect, it is worthwhile to be familiar with the call of the black rail, just in case. The males typically sing at night, compounding the difficulties of detecting one.

**RANGE:**  
Scattered reports from all but the unglaciated hill country of southeastern Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Dense wet sedge meadows are preferred; migrants may use other wetlands.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Could appear almost anywhere; no single spot has accumulated a pattern of records.



PHOTO BY: © BRIAN SMALL / VIREO

## **KING RAIL** *RALLUS ELEGANS* • RAL-LUS [A RAIL] EL-EH-GANZ [ELEGANT] TRACK 40a

Formerly the most common rail nesting in Ohio, the king rail is now the rarest, and is listed as endangered by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. For rails, these are big birds; about the size of chickens. And unlike other rails, this species is often rather bold, venturing beyond the dense confines of cattails and other marsh vegetation where they can readily be observed. King rails typically deliver a series of uniformly spaced, metallic clicking notes, and a somewhat shrill, descending *kick-errr* sound.

### **RANGE:**

Rare migrant statewide; most breeders are in the western Lake Erie marshes.

### **HABITAT:**

Mixed emergent marshes with dense stands of cattails and other aquatic plants.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Mallard Club WA and vicinity; occasionally nests as far south as central Ohio, such as at Killdeer Plains WA and Prairie Oaks MP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## **VIRGINIA RAIL** *RALLUS LIMICOLA* • RAL-LUS [A RAIL] LEE-MIK-OLE-AH [MUD INHABITER] TRACK 40b

This rail, like the Sora, is far more common than is generally thought, but very secretive and not likely to be seen. Like many marsh-dwelling birds, Virginia rails are best detected by knowing their vocalizations. An often heard call is a rapid, metallic *kid-ik, kid-ik, kid-ik*; sometimes they give a distinctive descending grunt. This is the second most common breeding rail in Ohio, after the sora, but like many wetland birds, Virginia rail numbers have declined in correlation with our loss of wetlands.

### **RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; nests in larger wetlands, mostly in northern half of the state. Rarely but regularly attempts to overwinter, usually in cattail marshes.

### **HABITAT:**

Densely vegetated marshes; occasionally buttonbush swamps and other wetlands.

### **BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes;  
Sandy Ridge Reservation;  
Pickerington Ponds MP;  
Killbuck WA.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

**SORA** *PORZANA CAROLINA* • POR-ZAN-AH [THE CRAKE; CRAKES ARE OLD WORLD RAILS] CARE-O-LINE-AH [OF CAROLINA]  
**TRACK 41**

The numbers of this small rail can be staggering in a good marsh during peak migration, but the casual observer would never know it. Their bodies are laterally compressed, which allows them to slip through dense marsh vegetation with ease. Soras are rather vocal, frequently delivering their somewhat plaintive, ascending *ker-wee* calls. When alarmed, they issue a sharp *eek*. Another oft-given call sounds a bit like a horse's whinny. This is our most common rail, both in migration and as a breeder.

**RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; breeders are mostly in northern half of the state.

**HABITAT:**

Lushly vegetated emergent marshes; sometimes wet fields and meadows.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes; Killbuck, Spring Valley, and Big Island wildlife areas; Herrick Fen Nature Preserve, Calamus Swamp Preserve, Miami Whitewater Forest; wetlands, even small ones, in migration.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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**COMMON MOORHEN** *GALLINULA CHLOROPUS* • GAL-LIN-U-LA [HEN] KLOR-OPE-PUS [GREEN FOOT]  
**TRACK 42a**

The cacophony created by moorhens really enlivens the summer marsh - they create loud chicken-like clucking and various hoarse strangled screams. Often, their presence in a large marsh may go unnoticed until a moorhen sounds off, which then often inspires a surprising number of others to join in. This species was long known as the "common gallinule." Compare the calls of this species with that of the American coot, which can occur in the same marshes and sounds somewhat similar.

**RANGE:**

Statewide in migration; nesters mostly in larger northern Ohio wetlands.

**HABITAT:**

Mixed emergent marshes; heavily vegetated lake and pond margins.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes; Killbuck, Big Island, and Spring Valley WA.



adult

PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

*FULICA AMERICANA* • FUL-EE-KA [A COOT] AM-ER-IH-CAN-AH [OF AMERICA]  
**AMERICAN COOT** TRACK 42b

Often referred to as “mud-hens,” American coots are a very common migrant, but uncommon to rare as a nester, mostly in Lake Erie marshes. This species is not nearly as shy as its rail brethren, and often swims out in the open like a duck. Coots can create quite a cacophony, and along with common moorhens, are responsible for many of the strange, jungle-like sounds that come from the marshes. They commonly deliver harsh, chicken-like clucks; female calls are lower-pitched than males.

**RANGE:**

Common statewide in migration; most nesters are in northern half of the state.

**HABITAT:**

Very opportunistic; coots will inhabit nearly any type of water body, and often flock in large numbers on lakes in migration. Breeders use mixed emergent marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Big migratory flocks on Findlay Reservoir, Grand Lake St. Marys and western Lake Erie marshes. Common nester in western Lake Erie marshes, such as Metzger Marsh WA.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*GRUS CANADENSIS* • GROOS [CRANE] CAN-AH-DENS-ISS [OF CANADA]  
**SANDHILL CRANE** TRACK 43

The overall population of sandhill cranes has been steadily increasing, and so have Ohio sightings. They often travel in flocks, flying very high, and their loud, rolling calls carry great distances; often the cranes will be heard long before they come into view. Some recent fall migrations have brought reports of nearly 1,000 birds in Ohio. In 1987, the first modern nesting record of sandhill cranes in the state was discovered, and several other nesting locales have been discovered since.

**RANGE:**

Most migrate through western Ohio; scattered breeding locales in northern third of the state.

**HABITAT:**

Large marshes and wetland complexes; migrants often rest on shores and mudflats of lakes and in agricultural fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Deer Creek Reservoir sometimes has fall roosts; Funk Bottoms WA; most migrants detected in western half of state.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*PLUVIALIS SQUATAROLA* • PLUH-VEE-AL-ISS [RAINY] SQUAT-AH-ROLE-AH [VENETIAN NAME FOR THIS SPECIES]  
**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** TRACK 44a

These gorgeous plovers are unmistakable in spring, when they are decked out in showy alternate plumage – checkered white and black above, and jet black below. Fall birds are a different story; they closely resemble fall American golden-plovers. Among other differences, black-bellied plovers always have black axillars, which is the area under the wing where it meets the body – the “armpit.” This species gives an ethereal, haunting three-note whistle, often delivered from high on the wing and carrying long distances.

**RANGE:**

Can occur statewide in migration; most likely in western and northern Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Spring migrants often used flooded agricultural fields; prefers large open mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Habitats vary annually depending on water levels; Hoover Reservoir, Ottawa NWR, Funk Bottoms WA.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (JUVENILE)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (ADULT)

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*PLUVIALIS DOMINICA* • PLUH-VEE-AL-ISS [RAINY] DOM-IN-IK-AH [ST. DOMINGO OF HISPANIOLA; PLACE OF FIRST COLLECTION]  
**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** TRACK 44b

One of spring’s most stunning spectacles – if you are lucky enough to catch it – is the mobs of American golden-plovers that stage in freshly turned agricultural fields. Sometimes several hundred will congregate in the otherwise barren fields, and their plaintive cries sometimes mix with those of migrating Lapland longspurs – another arctic-bound traveler. American golden-plovers sound similar to black-bellied plovers, but have a one or two note whistle, which is higher-pitched and more monotone.

**RANGE:**

Most birds pass through the western and northern parts of Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Freshly plowed, muddy fields, especially in spring; large mudflats and exposed shorelines.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Driving country roads in western Ohio in April and looking for newly plowed fields; Big Island, Funk Bottoms, and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas; Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (JUVENILE)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (ALTERNATE)

*CHARADRIUS SEMIPALMATUS* • CHAR-ADE-REE-US [A PLOVER] SEM-EYE-PALM-ATE-US [HALF WEBBED; REFERS TO FEET]  
**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** TRACK 45a

These small plovers look like a tiny killdeer with one breast band. They are common migrants, and may be becoming more common. As populations of Arctic-nesting geese like the snow goose have boomed, they have created localized disturbance of the tundra which produces better semipalmated plover nesting habitat. An oft-given call is a clear whistle - *chur-wee* - that carries long distances. When alarmed, they give a loud, hard series of notes - *kip-kip-kip* - delivered in rapid succession.

**RANGE:**

Statewide, wherever good mudflats can be found.

**HABITAT:**

Primarily a species of open mud, although they will range into wet grassy fields, vegetated upper reaches of mudflats, and river and lake shorelines.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Reservoirs in fall, when lower water levels expose mudflats, Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*CHARADRIUS MELODUS* • CHAR-ADE-REE-US [A PLOVER] MEL-ODE-US [A MELODY; REFERS TO CALLS]  
**PIPING PLOVER** TRACK 45b

These diminutive and beautifully marked plovers mimic the color of their preferred habitat well. Their sandy brown plumage blends well with the sands that they favor. Piping plovers used to nest on the larger Lake Erie beaches; unfortunately disturbance and destruction of these delicate habitats has caused this species to disappear as an Ohio breeder. The last nesting record was in 1942; they are rare migrants now. As the scientific epithet *melodus* suggests, they have a pleasingly melodic two-noted piping call.

**RANGE:**

Most birds are detected along Lake Erie; occasionally on inland mudflats. We only average two to four records annually.

**HABITAT:**

Sandy beaches are preferred, but migrants use large mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie beaches, and mudflats areas near the shoreline.



PHOTO BY: © JEN SAUTER

**KILLDEER** *CHARADRIUS VOCIFERUS* • CHAR-ADE-REE-US [A PLOVER] VO-SIF-ER-US [*VOCIFEROUS*; REFERS TO NOISY CALLS]  
**TRACK 46**

Easily our most visible and wide-ranging shorebird, and also the hardiest of the common species. Spring migrants appear in late February, and some birds will overwinter, at least in mild years. Killdeer have adapted well to man-made habitats, and can often be seen on large lawns, and often nest in the gravel of parking lots, driveways, and even rooftops. Their scientific epithet - *vociferus* - is apt, as killdeer are very noisy in announcing the presence of potential threats, like people.

**RANGE:**

Common throughout the state; some birds even overwinter.

**HABITAT:**

More opportunistic than other shorebirds; lawns, fields, mudflats, gravelly roadsides and parking lots, lake and river shores, etc.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Easily found statewide, except perhaps in winter.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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**AMERICAN AVOCET** *RECURVIROSTRA AMERICANA* • RE-CURVE-ER-OST-RA [BILL BENT BACKWARDS] AM-ER-IH-CAN-AH [AMERICAN]  
**TRACK 47**

One of the most striking shorebirds to be found in Ohio waters, avocets are unmistakable in any plumage. They are rare visitors, but the numbers seem to be increasing, possibly because the overall population may be growing. Avocets sometimes engage in communal feeding, advancing through the shallows in a line, perhaps to better flush small animal life from the bottom. They give a rather shrill, yelping cry somewhat reminiscent of a lesser yellowlegs.

**RANGE:**

Migrants can turn up anywhere, but are most likely along Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**

Usually forages in shallow water of mudflats and marshes.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Ottawa NWR, Lake Erie dredge spoil impoundments such as at Conneaut; Hoover Reservoir, Big Island and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



## **G** *TRINGA MELANOLEUCA* • TRIN-GAH [A SANDPIPER] MEL-AN-OH-LOO-KA [BLACK WHITE; REFERS TO PLUMAGE OF BACK] **GREATER YELLOWLEGS** TRACK 48a

This is a big, hardy sandpiper – greater yellowlegs sometimes arrive by early March. A common puzzle facing new shorebirders is separating this species from the lesser yellowlegs. Greater are more massive, with a proportionately bigger, slightly upturned bill, and thicker legs with pronounced “knees.” Voices are diagnostic – greater have a louder sharper call that is usually at least three notes, *tew, tew, tew!* Yellowlegs are early warning systems for other shorebirds, alerting the mudflat community to invaders.

**RANGE:**  
Migrants are common statewide, and are one of the first sandpipers to arrive, and the latest to depart.

**HABITAT:**  
Marshes, mudflats, edges of lakes, etc. Often forages in deeper water than other shorebirds.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Often frequents flooded fields in spring; Big Island and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas, Pickerington Ponds MP, Hoover Reservoir; the Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## **L** *TRINGA FLAVIPES* • TRIN-GAH [A SANDPIPER] FLAVE-IP-EES [YELLOW FOOT] **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** TRACK 48b

A smaller version of the greater yellowlegs, this species weighs about half as much on average, and is proportionately much less bulky. It also typically outnumbers the greater by a wide margin in migration. The best physical characteristic for identification is the bill – straight and no longer than the length of the head in this species; upturned and longer than the head with the greater. Calls differ markedly, too. The lesser typically gives a two note whistle, much less loud and ringing as compared to the greater yellowlegs.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide; often one of our most common migrant sandpipers.

**HABITAT:**  
Flooded fields, verges of ponds, marshes, mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Flooded fields near the confluence of the Ohio and Scioto rivers in spring; wetlands statewide; the Lake Erie marshes from April to October.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*TRINGA SOLITARIA* • TRIN-GAH [A SANDPIPER] SOL-IH-TARE-EE-AH [SOLITARY]  
**SOLITARY SANDPIPER** TRACK 49a

A well-named species, solitary sandpipers are almost always seen alone, or perhaps a few in loose association. Like most of our shorebirds, they are strictly migrants, breeding far to the north of Ohio. Unlike other shorebirds, though, this one is an arboreal nester, using abandoned nests of American robins and rusty blackbirds, primarily. Solitary sandpipers sound much like spotted sandpipers, but calls are given with a uniform, even pitch; spotted vary in frequency and typically drop at the end of the call series.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide in migration. One of the more frequently encountered sandpipers in unglaciated hill country, as they frequent small ponds and beaver wetlands.

**HABITAT:**  
Often favors habitats shunned by other shorebirds: wooded swamps, beaver-engineered wetlands, margins of small ponds, and stream corridors.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
While mudflats are used, look for them at non-typical shorebird haunts like river margins, the pond at Blendon Woods MP, and Lake Hope SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*ACTITIS MACULARIA* • AK-TITE-ISS [DWELLER ON THE SEA COAST] MAC-U-LAR-EE-AH [SPOTTED]  
**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** TRACK 49b

This is one of only three commonly nesting shorebirds in Ohio, the others being killdeer and American woodcock. It also occupies a non-traditional shorebird niche, being associated with rocky shores and gravel bars of streams, and similar habitats. Spotted sandpipers are very distinctive in their constant teetering, a bobbing motion created by raising and lowering their tail. This species sounds similar to the solitary sandpiper, but the loud, whistled calls typically vary in pitch and drop near the end.

**RANGE:**  
Occurs statewide as a nester and a migrant.

**HABITAT:**  
Might be called a "rock-piper"; very attracted to rocky shorelines, gravel bars, and riprap. Nests primarily along streams and rivers; migrants, especially in fall, will use mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Canoeing streams in summer is an excellent way to observe spotted sandpipers.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

# WILLET *CATOPTROPHORUS SEMIPALMATUS* • CAT-OPT-RO-FOR-US [BEARING MIRRORS; REFERS TO WINGS] SEM-EYE-PALM-ATE-US [HALF WEBBED; REFERS TO FEET]

TRACK 50

At rest, willets are nondescript, chunky sandpipers. When they take flight, the bold white wingstripe is revealed, making for easy identification. When flushed, willets sometimes let loose with a salvo of their loud, ringing namesake call – *will-will-willet!* Willets are not common here, and they should be watched for particularly in fall migration. Normally they are seen as single birds, but flocks numbering as many as 50 birds have been reported on occasion.

## RANGE:

Most likely along Lake Erie, but rarely occurs throughout the interior.

## HABITAT:

Very much a species of open mudflats in Ohio, typically near the water's edge; frequents beaches along coastal wintering areas and Lake Erie; occasional on shorelines of lakes and other habitats.

## BEST SPOTS:

Sheldon Marsh SNP; Ottawa NWR; Pickerel Creek WA; spoil impoundment at Conneaut Harbor.



adult basic

PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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# UPLAND SANDPIPER *BARTRAMIA LONGICAUDA* • BAR-TRAM-EE-AH [FOR ORNITHOLOGIST WILLIAM BARTRAM, 1739-1823] LONG-IH-CAUD-AH [LONG TAIL]

TRACK 51

This stunning sandpiper has, unfortunately, become one of our rarest breeding birds and is now listed as threatened by the Division of Wildlife. They breed in grasslands, pastures and unkempt agricultural land with a mosaic of old fields and crop lands, and sometimes the grassy expanses of airports. The wintering grounds are in southern Argentina, about 6,000 miles to the south. Their song is a haunting, ethereal whistle delivered on the wing; alarm and flight calls are rapid, liquid *quip-ip-ip-ip* sounds.

## RANGE:

Migrants can occur anywhere; breeders rare and scattered mostly in northern and western Ohio.

## HABITAT:

Low, grassy fields such as around airports; fallow fields and ungrazed meadows; hayfields and pastures.

## BEST SPOTS:

Fields in the vicinity of Ottawa NWR; Bolton Field airport in Columbus (spring migration); Killdeer Plains WA; Voice of America Park in Butler County near West Chester.



adult

PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## WHIMBREL *NUMENIUS PHAEOPUS* • NEW-MEN-EE-US [NEW MOON; REFERS TO BILL SHAPE] FEE-OPE-US [DUSKY FOOT] **TRACK 52**

Our only regularly occurring curlew, whimbrels are easily recognized by their long, down-curved bill and striped head. They are not easy to find, however; relatively few pass through, and those birds seldom linger for more than an hour or so in any spot. Furthermore, they tend to skulk in vegetation, making them hard to see. Whimbrels breed in the high Arctic, and one must travel there to hear their song, an eerie rolling whistle. Calls suggest a yellowlegs, but are more rapid and tinnier, with more notes to a series.

**RANGE:**  
Mostly along the shoreline of Lake Erie;  
quite rare elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Mudflats; spoil impoundments along  
Lake Erie are good spots; marshes;  
sometimes grassy expanses of airports.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Spoil impoundments along Lake Erie at Lorain,  
Huron, and Conneaut; marshes at  
Ottawa NWR and vicinity.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

adult

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## HUDSONIAN GODWIT *LIMOSA HAEMASTICA* • LI-MOSE-AH [MUDDY; REFERS TO HABITAT] HEE-MAST-IH-KA [BLOOD-RED; BREAST COLOR IN BREEDING PLUMAGE] **TRACK 53a**

This is an uncommon migrant, occurring almost exclusively in the fall. Spring migrants are extremely rare, as this species engages in an elliptical migration route that takes them west of the Mississippi River in spring, and east of the river in fall. In fall, many adults fly nonstop from Canada to South America, completely over-flying Ohio; most of our birds are juveniles. Song, heard only on Arctic breeding grounds, is a hurried, high-pitched three-noted laugh-like sound; calls are two-noted and sound like a squeeze toy.

**RANGE:**  
Only regular in the marshes of western Lake Erie; occurs sparingly elsewhere where big mudflats are found, such as Hoover Reservoir and Killdeer Plains WA.

**HABITAT:**  
A species of open mudflats; the genus name *Limosa* means "mud." Often feeds in deep water just beyond the exposed mud.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The marshes of western Lake Erie attract the largest numbers, but they can turn up on any large mudflats in northern and western Ohio.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

alternate

basic

# MARBLED GODWIT LIMOSA FEDOA • LI-MOSE-AH [MUDDY; REFERS TO HABITAT] FED-OH-AH [UNKNOWN ORIGIN AND MEANING] TRACK 53b

A rare migrant, this giant sandpiper dwarfs most other shorebirds on the mudflats. The long, upcurved bill is half the length of the bird's body! Population dynamics are interesting; this species occurs in three geographically isolated breeding populations, each wintering in separate locales. Our birds are likely from the Great Plains population. Rarely heard here, but the most frequent call is a strident two-syllable *wee-kee wee-kee*; occasionally a gull-like *kwerrrr*; deeper and less squeaky than the Hudsonian godwit.

## RANGE:

Most observations are from the western Lake Erie marshes and elsewhere along the Lake Erie shoreline, but can appear at large inland mudflats throughout most of Ohio.

## HABITAT:

A species of large, wide-open mudflats, often foraging in belly deep water.

## BEST SPOTS:

Never common, and usually only one or two birds are seen at one time. The western Lake Erie marshes are best; occasional on large mudflats elsewhere.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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# RUDDY TURNSTONE ARENARIA INTERPRES • ARE-IN-ARE-EE-AH [ASSOCIATED WITH SAND] IN-TER-PREZ [INTERPRETER; ALERTS OTHER SHOREBIRDS TO DANGER] TRACK 54

Ruddy turnstones are great wanderers, turning up on every continent but Antarctica after dispersing from their Arctic breeding grounds. Their spade-like bill is effective for flipping over small rocks in search of food, but they also are known to pirate and eat eggs from tern colonies, and often scavenge on carrion. Spring birds are resplendent in their bright, parti-colored plumage, but even fall birds are easily recognized. Calls are soft, high-pitched *wikki-wikki-wikki* sounds, sometimes accelerating into a jumbled chatter.

## RANGE:

Primarily along the shoreline of Lake Erie; rare to uncommon at inland locales.

## HABITAT:

Sandy beaches and rock riprap are the favored haunts; occasionally on mudflats.

## BEST SPOTS:

The beach and shoreline at Crane Creek SP and Maumee Bay SP; Lake Erie harbors and impoundments such as at Lorain and Conneaut.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

**RED KNOT** *CALIDRIS CANUTUS* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] CAN-UTE-US [FOR CANUTE, FORMER KING OF ENGLAND] **TRACK 55**

Spring is the best time to see red knots – they are resplendent in their distinctive, brick-red breeding plumage. They are scarce at that season, though; most move through Ohio in the fall, when they are in drab gray basic plumage. We get only small numbers, and the overall population seems to be in severe decline and has become a species of conservation concern. Calls, typically given in flight, are a soft *weet-weet*, *weet-weet-weet*, usually given in series of threes, somewhat reminiscent of a spotted sandpiper.

**RANGE:**  
Most likely along or near the Lake Erie shoreline; small numbers or individuals occasionally appear at large inland mudflats.

**HABITAT:**  
Open mudflats; occasionally beaches and flooded fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Spoil impoundments along Lake Erie, such as at Conneaut; mudflats at Ottawa NWR and vicinity; occasionally at inland sites like Hoover Reservoir and Funk Bottoms WA.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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**SANDERLING** *CALIDRIS ALBA* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] AL-BA [WHITE] **TRACK 56**

The quintessential “beach-piper”; this is normally the small sandpiper that people see chasing the waves at the beach. They are actually rushing in to grab small invertebrates exposed by retreating waves, deftly darting back before the next wave crashes in. One of the most wide-ranging shorebirds in the world, breeding in the high Arctic and has been observed on nearly every continent after dispersing. Their calls are quick, sharp, slightly squeaky *quit quit quit* notes, often given in a rapid, short series, most often in flight.

**RANGE:**  
Most frequent along the Lake Erie shoreline, but small numbers regularly appear at inland locales throughout glaciated Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Sandy beaches are preferred; sometimes uses rocky riprap and mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Beaches at Maumee SP, Crane Creek SP, and Mentor Headlands SP; occasionally at inland mudflats such as at Hoover Reservoir.



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*CALIDRIS PUSILLA* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] PEW-SIL-AH [VERY SMALL]  
**SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** TRACK 57

Our most common small sandpiper, or “peep,” along with the least sandpiper. There are five “peeps”: this species, Western, least, white-rumped, and Baird’s. Semipalmated is most easily confused with Western sandpiper; that species is much scarcer and typically has a thicker and longer, more downcurved bill. Semipalmated sandpipers give a very rapid series of high, shrill notes, along with lower, more drawn out grating calls. The other peeps tend to have more musical, less mechanical-sounding calls.

**RANGE:**

Occurs commonly statewide; wherever suitable habitat occurs.

**HABITAT:**

Open mudflats, typically foraging at or near the water’s edge on the wettest portions of the mud, but will range into higher, drier areas.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Easily found wherever habitat is; big numbers in late summer/fall in western Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*CALIDRIS MAURI* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] MOR-EYE [FOR ITALIAN NATURALIST ERNESTO MAURI, 1791-1836]  
**WESTERN SANDPIPER** TRACK 58

Spring Westerns are very rare; most birds pass through in late fall, after the similar semipalmated sandpipers have left. Westerns can usually be told from the semipalmated by the larger, drooping bill, paler head, and slightly rusty scapulars. Their calls are quite different, though. The Western sandpiper has a very distinctive fast rolling *brrrrrrr* call, as well as squeaks reminiscent of an American woodcock’s wing noise made during courtship flights. Flocks make sounds suggestive of a distant flock of house sparrows.

**RANGE:**

Most birds move along Lake Erie; rare to uncommon inland.

**HABITAT:**

Mudflats and exposed lake shorelines, tending to remain in the wettest areas near water, even foraging in shallow water.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Ottawa NWR and vicinity; good inland locales include Hoover and C.J. Brown reservoirs.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*CALIDRIS MINUTILLA* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] MEN-U-TIL-AH [VERY SMALL]  
**LEAST SANDPIPER** TRACK 59

Aptly named; the smallest sandpiper, and very common in Ohio. The five species of “peep” sandpipers all look rather similar, but the least is the only one with yellowish legs. They also tend to look browner overall, and are very diminutive and rotund. The serious shorebird-watcher would do well to become acquainted with the calls of this species, as they are common sounds in the mudflat community. Typical vocalizations are a drawn out, scratchy *creeeekkk*, sometimes drawn out into a rolling call.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide spring and fall.

**HABITAT:**  
Mudflats, flooded fields, lake and pond margins, etc., usually on wet exposed mud, but not foraging in water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found in season wherever habitat occurs.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*CALIDRIS FUSCICOLLIS* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] FUSK-IH-COL-ISS [DUSKY NECK; MISLEADING, DOES NOT HAVE THAT FEATURE]  
**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** TRACK 60

This is a heavy hitter of the migratory bird world; white-rumped sandpipers winter in southern South America - over 6,000 miles south of Ohio! White-rumpeds look most similar to Baird’s sandpiper in that both have long wings projecting beyond the tail, but that species is much browner overall and usually in a different habitat niche. This species typically forages at water’s edge or in shallow water. They make high-pitched, squeaky calls that are distinctive, but easily lost among the calls of louder shorebirds.

**RANGE:**  
Most are seen along Lake Erie, but small numbers turn up throughout interior.

**HABITAT:**  
Large mudflats, often foraging in wettest areas near water’s edge or in shallow water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Any locale attracting numbers of shorebirds is likely to host some in season, but the big mudflat complexes along Lake Erie are best.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** *CALIDRIS BAIRDII* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] BAIRD-EE-EYE [FOR ORNITHOLOGIST SPENCER F. BAIRD, 1823-1887] **TRACK 61**

Like the white-rumped sandpiper, this species winters in southern South America many thousands of miles south of Ohio. There are few spring records, as their northward journey takes them west of the Mississippi River; southbound migrants pass through the Midwest and Ohio. Baird's has longer wings than all other "peeps" but the white-rumped; an adaptation allowing them to make long flights. A common call is an upslurred *eeeekkk*, suggestive of a plover like the killdeer; song an interesting series of buzzy rattles.

**RANGE:**

Almost strictly fall migrant; uncommon throughout glaciated Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Typically occupies drier upper reaches of mudflats, often foraging in low mudflat vegetation like creeping lovegrass (*Eragrostis hypnoides*).

**BEST SPOTS:**

Large mudflats, such as Hoover and C.J. Brown reservoirs, and Lake Erie shoreline wetlands and spoil impoundments.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

juvenile

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**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *CALIDRIS MELANOTOS* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] MEL-AN-OH-TOES [BLACK BACK] **TRACK 62**

One of our most common sandpipers, often forming large flocks. One of the first to return in spring, pectorals appear by mid-March. In large areas of suitable habitat, they can be present in the hundreds or more; 2,300 were tallied in one late March day in the western Lake Erie marshes in 1986. The typical call is a soft, grating *chiirrr*; one of the more commonly heard sandpiper calls.

**RANGE:**

Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**

Versatile; flooded fields, mudflats, lake shores, even sod farms and other grassy expanses.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Easily found in appropriate habitat; Big Island WA and vicinity attracts many.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *CALIDRIS MARITIMA* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] MARE-IT-EE-MA [BELONGING TO THE SEA] **TRACK 63**

This species is only to be expected along the shoreline of Lake Erie; there are only three records away from this region. They are never common, with only a handful of sightings annually. Purple sandpipers occur in the most severe weather conditions of any of our shorebirds, as most pass through in November and early December on their way to the Atlantic Coast. Not often heard here, but gives fairly loud, explosively squeaky *kip kip* sounds, sometimes accelerated into a series.

**RANGE:**  
Strictly along Lake Erie shoreline, primarily from Sandusky east.

**HABITAT:**  
Almost always seen on rocky breakwalls jutting into Lake Erie; occasionally on beaches and natural rocky shorelines of the Lake Erie islands.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Mentor Headlands SNP and Fairport Harbor, Avon Lake power plant, vicinity of Cleveland Lakefront SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

basic

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**DUNLIN** *CALIDRIS ALPINA* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] AL-PINE-AH [*ALPINE*; REFERS TO ALPINE-LIKE TUNDRA BREEDING HABITAT] **TRACK 64**

Our most common migrant sandpiper, especially in late fall. Spring birds are gorgeous, with rich rufous-red backs and black bellies. Fall birds are more somber, but can be distinguished by their long, downcurved bills. Dunlin almost always occur in flocks, sometimes numbering into the thousands. They can be quite hardy, often remaining into early winter. Most common call is a loud, harsh, grating *jeer jeer*; flocks in flight often create a mini-cacophony of sound.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide; largest numbers in western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**  
Mudflats, shorelines, flooded fields, etc; dunlin often forage belly deep in water.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Ottawa NWR and vicinity produce greatest numbers, but easily found statewide.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

alternate

basic

*CALIDRIS HIMANTOPUS* • CAL-EYE-DRISS [A GRAY SPECKLED SANDPIPER] HE-MAN-TOPE-US [LEATHER STRAP FOOT; REFERS TO LONG LEGS]  
**STILT SANDPIPER** TRACK 65

Stilt sandpipers are stunning in spring, with their rich brown barring below and chestnut cheek patches. Unfortunately, they are rare then and much more frequent in fall when their colors are much duller. Still, the long greenish legs, long slightly down-turned bill, and medium-large overall size render them fairly distinctive. The typical call is suggestive of a yellowlegs; a short, melodic whistle. While not heard here, males on the Arctic breeding grounds deliver an incredible cacophony of trills and chatters.

**RANGE:**

Most frequent along Lake Erie; small numbers pass through most of Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Mudflats, shallow marshes, flooded fields, etc. Stilts normally forage in belly deep water, often in association with yellowlegs and dowitchers.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie marshes and spoil impoundments; big interior wetlands like Funk Bottoms WA and Pickerington Ponds MP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*TRYNGITES SUBRUFICOLLIS* • TRIN-GIT-EEZ [HAVING TO DO WITH A SANDPIPER] SUB-ROOF-IH-COL-ISS [REDDISH BELOW THE NECK]  
**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** TRACK 66

A dapper, plover-like sandpiper that is rare in Ohio. Strictly accidental in spring; almost all records are in fall. Like the Baird's sandpiper, their northward journey is west of the Mississippi River; south-bound migrants move east of there. Buff-breasted sandpipers breed in the high Arctic, just about as far north as is possible. There, this normally shy and retiring bird becomes extroverted and the males launch into elaborate courtships; however, it does not make elaborate sounds - just soft clicks and other quiet notes.

**RANGE:**

Uncommon but regular along Lake Erie; rare in interior.

**HABITAT:**

Might be termed a "grass-piper"; favors dry, sparsely vegetated zones of mudflats, grassy expanses of airports and sod farms, and even large lawns near Lake Erie on occasion.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lawns near the beach at Maumee Bay SP, Burke Lakefront Airport, Lake Erie spoil impoundments as at Conneaut, and Hoover Reservoir.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

LIMNODROMUS GRISEUS • LIM-NO-DROME-US [MARSH RUNNING; NOT MUCH OF A RUNNER, REALLY] GRIS-EE-US [GRAY]  
**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** TRACK 67a

Dowitchers are very distinctive; the only real source of confusion might be Wilson's snipe, but that secretive species has a prominently striped head. However, separating the two species of dowitchers is not easy. Short-billed is much more common in Ohio than long-billed; exceptionally early (late March-April) or late (after late September) are likely to be long-billed. Vocalizations can help in identification; this species makes soft mellow whistles, the notes usually paired or tripled, and suggestive of lesser yellowlegs.

**RANGE:**

Common statewide; largest numbers in western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**

Mudflats, shallow marshes, and flooded fields; normally forages in belly-deep water.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Marshes and spoil impoundments along Lake Erie; Big Island and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas, Gilmore Ponds Preserve, flooded fields anywhere.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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LIMNODROMUS SCOLOPACEUS • LIM-NO-DROME-US [MARSH RUNNING] SKO-LO-PACE-EE-US [WOODCOCK THAT COURSES ABOUT THE MARSH]  
**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** TRACK 67b

Very similar to the short-billed dowitcher, but not nearly so frequent. Most flocks are seen in late fall, in October, and are composed of juveniles. This is a very typical chronology of Arctic-nesting shorebirds; adults leave the breeding grounds first, and pass through Ohio several weeks before the juveniles. The two dowitchers look similar in breeding and juvenile plumages, and nearly identical in winter plumage. They are best separated by voice: short-billed gives a mellow *tu-tu-tu*; long-billed gives a sharp, thin *keek*, sometimes doubled or trebled.

**RANGE:**

Can occur statewide, but most birds are seen along Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**

Similar to short-billed dowitcher.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Most are seen in the western Lake Erie marshes, but small numbers regularly appear anywhere that suitable habitat is present.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (BASIC)  
PHOTO BY: © TOM VEZO / VIREO (ALTERNATE)

## WILSON'S SNIPE GALLINAGO DELICATA • GAL-IN-A-GO [A HEN] DEL-EE-CATE-AH [DELICATE] TRACK 68

This species was known as the common snipe until 2002, when it was split from the Eurasian birds with which it was formerly considered conspecific. Snipe are secretive, but far more common than most would suspect. When flushed, they rocket away with a rapid zigzag flight uttering a low, harsh, *scape scape*. The male's courtship display is spectacular; ascending high into the air, the bird suddenly drops rapidly earthward, and wind rushing through the tail feathers produces an ethereal winnowing sound.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide in migration; breeders very rare in northern quarter of Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Marshes, wet meadows, sedge meadows, ditches, occasionally on mudflats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The most consistent breeding locale is Irwin Prairie SNP, where displaying males can sometimes be heard in spring along the boardwalk. Any appropriate habitat can harbor large numbers in migration; Toussaint and Delaware wildlife areas are great spots.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## AMERICAN WOODCOCK SCOLOPAX MINOR • SKO-LO-PAX [THE WOODCOCK] MINE-OR [SMALLER; AS COMPARED TO THE EURASIAN WOODCOCK] TRACK 69

The courtship of this comical sandpiper is a harbinger of spring. Males return as early as late February, and immediately begin displaying. They establish a display territory on the ground, where the male delivers a nasal *peent* note very similar to that of the common nighthawk. Then, he launches skyward, and as the bird ascends the outer primary feathers of the wings create a rapid twittering sound. On the rapid descent, the wind rushing through these feathers creates an odd, squeaky series of notes, along with vocalizations.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide; occasional birds overwinter.

**HABITAT:**  
Typical haunts are brushy pastures and woodland borders, usually in damp areas. Sometimes found in older woods, and drier fields. Rarely overwinters in the presence of seepages that keep the ground unfrozen.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Killdeer Plains and Resthaven wildlife areas; Irwin Prairie SNP; Spring Valley WA; Pymatuning SP.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

## WILSON'S PHALAROPE PHALAROPUS TRICOLOR • FAL-AH-ROPE-US [COOT-FOOTED] TRI-COL-OR [THREE COLORS] TRACK 70

Of the three phalaropes, this one is probably most likely in Ohio. They are never common, though, with only small numbers reported. Also, care must be taken to separate them from the similar red-necked phalarope. Wilson's phalarope is a rare breeder, with nesting records at Big Island WA in 2000 and again in 2002, and at Ottawa NWR. The call is an odd, low grunting sound: *woomf, woomf* with a distinct nasal quality. Listen for it carefully in the recording; the loud piercing call in the foreground is a marbled godwit.

**RANGE:**  
Most along western Lake Erie in and around the big marshes; scattered birds elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Mixed-emergent marshes, vegetated ponds and other water bodies; occasionally feeds on mudflats. Not nearly as prone to swimming in deep, open water as the other two phalaropes.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Magee Marsh WA and vicinity, Big Island WA, Funk Bottoms WA, Sandy Ridge Reservation.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## RED-NECKED PHALAROPE PHALAROPUS LOBATUS • FAL-AH-ROPE-US [COOT-FOOTED] LO-BATE-US [LOBED; REFERS TO FEET] TRACK 71a

Phalaropes depart from the avian norm; sexual role reversal is a defining feature of their behavior. Females are larger and brighter than males, and leave the incubation of eggs and what little care of the young that takes place to the males. Both sexes – particularly females – are gorgeous in breeding colors, but most of the birds that we get are in basic plumage, and care must be taken to separate the species. Calls are very different from Wilson's phalarope; typical are hard, sharp notes suggestive of a sanderling.

**RANGE:**  
Most likely in the western Lake Erie marshes; occasional elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Often in open marshes and mudflat complexes; almost always swimming in shallow water. Occasionally seen in deep, open waters of lakes, particularly in fall.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Western Lake Erie marshes;  
large wetland complexes statewide.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*PHALAROPUS FULICARIA* • FAL-AH-ROPE-US [COOT-FOOTED] FUL-EE-CAR-EE-AH [A COOT; ANOTHER REFERENCE TO THE FEET]  
**RED PHALAROPE** TRACK 71b

This is the most pelagic (ocean-going) of the phalaropes, and it is the rarest Ohio species. Small numbers pass through, almost exclusively on Lake Erie; they are very rare away from the lake. It is also a very late migrant, with most records coming from October and November – well after the other two phalaropes should have passed through. Females in breeding colors are stunning; however virtually all Ohio birds are in drab non-breeding plumage. Flight call is similar to red-necked phalarope, but generally higher-pitched.

**RANGE:**  
Almost all are seen on Lake Erie;  
very few records elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Open waters of Lake Erie, most  
typically along stone jetties and  
breakwalls in sheltered harbors.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Harbors at Lorain, Conneaut, Huron,  
and around Cleveland Lakefront SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (BASIC)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (ALTERNATE FEMALE)

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*STERCORARIUS POMARINUS* • STER-COR-AIR-EE-US [HAVING TO DO WITH DUNG, REFERENCE TO FORAGING HABITATS] POM-AH-REEN-US [A LID BEAK]  
**POMARINE JAEGER** TRACK 72

This species is seen most frequently of the three jaegers, although at one time it was thought that the parasitic jaeger was most numerous. Jaeger means “hunter,” an apropos name for these aggressive birds. They are often seen chasing and badgering gulls, attempting to rob them of their catches. If all the gulls resting in a harbor along Lake Erie suddenly erupt into flight, it’s worth watching to see if a jaeger is around, as they tend to provoke a reaction. Mostly silent here; sometimes utters short, nasal gull-like barks.

**RANGE:**  
Almost all records are along Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**  
Open waters of Lake Erie; jaegers are  
attracted to large gull congregations, as  
they routinely engage in kleptoparasitism  
(robbing other birds of their food).

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Lake Erie ports and harbors, especially  
where large numbers of gulls gather.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

**LARUS ATRICILLA** • LARE-US [A GULL] AT-RIH-SILL-AH [BLACK TAIL; REFERS TO JUVENILE PLUMAGE]  
**LAUGHING GULL** TRACK 73a

Anyone who has visited the shorelines of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts knows this gull, as it is often the dominant species there. They are much scarcer as inland vagrants away from the ocean, and Ohio gets a dozen or so reports annually. The common name is very fitting – laughing gulls do sound as if they are laughing. When many of them are together, the sound can't be missed, but as we typically only get one individual at any one time, their calls blend with the other gulls.

**RANGE:**

Most reports are from Lake Erie, but they can and do appear on any large lake or river throughout the state.

**HABITAT:**

Large lakes and rivers, most often Lake Erie, and most likely to be detected where large gull congregations occur.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie and large inland reservoirs, especially where there are large flocks of ring-billed gulls.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (ADULT ALTERNATE)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (ADULT BASIC)

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**LARUS PIPIXCAN** • LARE-US [A GULL] PIP-IX-CAN [AZTEC WORD FOR MEXICO, PLACE OF THE FIRST COLLECTION]  
**FRANKLIN'S GULL** TRACK 73b

These diminutive gulls are sometimes called “prairie pigeons,” with good reason. Their small, delicate stature is somewhat pigeon-like, and the primary breeding grounds are in the prairies of the northern Great Plains. We get relatively few, mostly in late fall, although an occasional invasion occurs, at which time dozens might be reported. Franklin's gull gives a loud, piercing *ayyeeahh* of three syllables, and also a harsh, rapid *kek-kek*, usually given in pairs. Calls lack the maniacal quality of laughing gull.

**RANGE:**

Can occur on any large body of water statewide, but most records come from Lake Erie and western Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Large open lakes, rivers, and Lake Erie, although sometimes seen feeding in agricultural fields, particularly recently plowed ones.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Lake Erie harbors with large gull concentrations in November and December, and large inland reservoirs.



PHOTO BY: © ARTHUR MORRIS / VIREO (FIRST YEAR)  
PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (ADULT ALTERNATE)



*LARUS MINUTUS* • LARE-US [A GULL] MIN-U-TUS [VERY SMALL]  
**LITTLE GULL** TRACK 74a

Ohio's first record of this European gull was in 1923, but they didn't become regular visitors until the 1960s. Now, we get numerous reports annually. The time to watch for them is in November and December, when enormous flocks of Bonaparte's gulls stage along Lake Erie. Little gulls are often seen in association with them, and the adults stand out well with their sooty black underwings. Little gulls have a distinctive call - a tern-like *kek kek* or short, rough, grating yelps but good luck hearing them in the pack.

**RANGE:**

Virtually all are along Lake Erie; there are only a handful of inland records.

**HABITAT:**

Open waters of Lake Erie; the relatively few inland records have been from large reservoirs. Most often found in association with flocks of Bonaparte's gulls, which are attracted to winter kills of gizzard shad at power plant water outlets.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Fairport Harbor, Conneaut Harbor, Eastlake Power Plant, Lorain Harbor, Cleveland Lakefront SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (ADULT BASIC)  
PHOTO BY: © STEVE YOUNG / VIREO (FIRST YEAR)

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*LARUS PHILADELPHIA* • LARE-US [A GULL] PHIL-A-DEL-F-EE-AH [OF PHILADELPHIA; LOCALE OF THE TYPE COLLECTION]  
**BONAPARTE'S GULL** TRACK 74b

The seasonal shifts in this species' distribution are profound. In spring, we get small flocks moving north through the state, looking resplendent with their black hoods. In fall, numbers are far greater, with huge concentrations along Lake Erie peaking in November and December. Numbers estimated at 100,000 have staged at favorable locales. Sometimes, rare gulls like little or black-headed gulls are found in these flocks. Bonaparte's gull makes a tern-like grating *grrr grrr*; flocks create a cacophony.

**RANGE:**

Statewide, but greatest numbers along Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**

Open waters of lakes and large rivers. Collects in great concentrations along Lake Erie in areas where there are large winter kills of gizzard shad.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Biggest numbers are at Lake Erie power plants, such as Eastlake, Avon Lake, and East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in Cleveland.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*LARUS DELAWARENSIS* • LARE-US [A GULL] DEL-AH-WARE-EN-SIS [OF THE DELAWARE RIVER; LOCALITY OF FIRST SPECIMEN]  
**RING-BILLED GULL** TRACK 75

This is the default gull throughout Ohio, at nearly every season. With a few exceptions, mainly along Lake Erie, and then primarily in winter, are other species commonly found. Ring-billed is the species that frequents urban situations such as landfills and mall parking lots, and inland reservoirs, which they often use to roost at night. This species is one of only two gulls that breed in Ohio, the herring gull being the other. Their call is commonly heard and familiar; a drawn out, loud yelping.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide, with greatest numbers along Lake Erie.

**HABITAT:**  
Large lakes and rivers; often forages and rests in big parking lots and landfills, and frequently feeds in freshly plowed agricultural fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found statewide.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*LARUS ARGENTATUS* • LARE-US [A GULL] AR-JEN-TATE-US [SILVERY]  
**HERRING GULL** TRACK 76a

One of the world's most widely distributed gulls, ranging nearly world-wide in the Northern Hemisphere; the herring gull is most common along Lake Erie in Ohio. Small numbers can be found elsewhere, usually in flocks of ring-billed gulls. This species, like other large gulls, takes four years to obtain adult plumage, so young birds look quite different from adults. The call is a loud, clear bugling yelp that rises above the cries of ring-billed gulls, and they often give a softer three or four note *eh-eh-eh-eh* call.

**RANGE:**  
Most common along Lake Erie; numbers swell in winter. Regular inland, but much less common than ring-billed; numbers are greater in winter. Often fairly common in colder months along the Ohio River.

**HABITAT:**  
Like many gulls, this is an omnivore, meaning they eat nearly anything. Often found around landfills and dumps, lakes, big rivers, Lake Erie harbors, etc.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Most easily found along Lake Erie; herring gulls often perch on the lights along the State Route 2 bridge over Sandusky Bay. Check ring-billed gull flocks inland; a few herring gulls will often be mixed in.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

## LARUS FUSCUS • LARE-US [A GULL] FUS-KUS [DUSKY] LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

TRACK 76b

The first lesser black-backed gull in Ohio wasn't seen until 1977; they have become increasingly frequent since then. Now, we average as many as two dozen or more reports each year. Most are in winter along Lake Erie, but reports from inland locales and outside of the winter season are increasing. This European species is on the increase throughout the east, too. While picking a lesser black-backed gull out of the pack by its call would be difficult, they definitely have a lower, hoarser sound as compared to herring gulls.

### RANGE:

Almost all records are from late fall through winter along Lake Erie, but they are increasingly turning up at inland locales.

### HABITAT:

Waters of Lake Erie, particularly where large gull congregations occur. Perhaps most easily found around warm water outlets of power plants when the lake is frozen.

### BEST SPOTS:

Power plants at East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in Cleveland, Avon Lake, Eastlake, also occasionally along Maumee River/Farnsworth Metropark rapids.



adult basic

PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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## LARUS GLAUCOIDES • LARE-US [A GULL] GLOK-OH-EYE-DEES [LIKE THE GLAUCOUS GULL] ICELAND GULL

TRACK 77a

This is an Arctic species, normally only coming as far south as Lake Erie in winter. The Iceland gull is a gorgeous species, mostly lacking dark pigment in the wing tips, giving them a very pale, ghostly appearance. Thayer's gull, another Arctic species that is closely related, also is a rare but regular Lake Erie winter visitor. Iceland gulls are normally outnumbered by the similar but more robust glaucous gull by a factor of two or three. The calls are similar and hard to differentiate from the herring gull.

### RANGE:

Almost strictly along Lake Erie in winter; there are very few records inland.

### HABITAT:

Most easily found when Lake Erie freezes, and concentrates gulls around open water at warm water outlets of power plants.

### BEST SPOTS:

Power plants at East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in Cleveland, Avon Lake, Eastlake, also occasionally along Maumee River/Farnsworth Metropark rapids.



adult

first year

PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (ADULT)  
PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (FIRST YEAR)

## *LARUS HYPERBOREUS* • LARE-US [A GULL] HY-PER-BORE-EE-US [BEYOND THE NORTH WIND] **GLAUCOUS GULL** TRACK 77b

A massive beast, exceeded in size only by the great black-backed gull, and capable of swallowing a European starling in one gulp. This Arctic visitor stands out well among the packs of winter gulls, as they are very pale in all plumages, and larger than most of their associates. The colder and more brutal the winter, the more glaucous gulls we get, but one-day totals exceeding 10 birds are exceptional. As befits their size, glaucous gulls have a loud, deeper-pitched call that is otherwise similar to the herring gull.

**RANGE:**  
Almost strictly along Lake Erie in winter;  
very few inland records.

**HABITAT:**  
Similar to the Iceland gull.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Same as the Iceland gull.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## *LARUS MARINUS* • LARE-US [A GULL] MARE-EEN-US [MARINE] **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** TRACK 78

This is huge bird – the biggest gull in Ohio and the world, weighing over 3 ½ pounds with a wing span up to 5 ½ feet. Before 1930, they were rare in Ohio and the Great Lakes, but have steadily increased since then, and now winter concentrations of several hundred birds are regular. They are almost strictly Lake Erie birds; there are very few inland records away from the northern tier of counties. As befits such a massive beast, their calls are very deep and loud, and stand out amongst the cacophony of gull flocks.

**RANGE:**  
Only to be expected along Lake Erie,  
more common to the east, with  
numbers increasing in winter.

**HABITAT:**  
Open waters of Lake Erie. Winter gull  
concentrations around warm water outlets  
of power plants attract large numbers.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found in winter along the Lake Erie  
shore, especially from Huron eastward.  
Cleveland Lakefront SP is a good  
place to observe them.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*XEMA SABINI* • ZEE-MA [NAME OF AN UNKNOWN BIRD] SAY-BIN-EYE [FOR EDWARD SABINE, 1788-1883]  
**SABINE'S GULL** TRACK 79a

One of the hardest regular Ohio birds to find, let alone hear. Sabine's gulls are mostly pelagic, meaning that they live most of their lives at sea away from the breeding grounds. Small numbers pass through the Great Lakes in fall, but almost all are seen as flybys, and don't linger long. You have to be in the right place at the right time. A gorgeous and diminutive gull, the tern-like Sabine's is very distinctive and easily identified. Its calls are also tern-like, but it is mostly silent in migration and not likely to be heard here.

**RANGE:**

Most records are from Lake Erie, although they appear every other year or so at large inland reservoirs.

**HABITAT:**

Large water bodies, primarily Lake Erie. This species, like most of the other small hooded gulls, are primarily piscivorous (fish-eating). They generally aren't attracted to landfills or other artificial environments like the bigger, more omnivorous gulls, preferring to forage for small, live fish which they dip from the water. The best way to look for Sabine's Gull is to watch Lake Erie from a good vantage spot on blustery October days, and hope one flies by. The calls are short, shrill tern-like notes.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Places with a good view of Lake Erie, particularly around river mouths such as the Huron and Grand rivers.



adult basic

PHOTO BY: © RICHARD CROSSLEY / VIREO

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*RISSA TRIDACTYLA* • RISS-AH [KITTIWAKE] TRI-DAK-TIL-AH [THREE TOES; THREE FORWARD TOES PROMINENT DUE TO REDUCED HIND TOE]  
**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** TRACK 79b

Kittiwakes are rare, regular visitors to Lake Erie, but very seldom do they linger in any one spot. November and December are the months to watch for them, and cold, blustery days with north winds are best. Virtually all kittiwakes recorded in Ohio have been first-year birds, which are distinctive with their prominent black wing markings and black collar. Kittiwakes are ordinarily highly pelagic (ocean-going), and are one of the world's most common gulls. Their name derives from one of the calls – *kit-e-wake*, *kit-e-wake*!

**RANGE:**

Waters of Lake Erie; very few records elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**

Open waters of Lake Erie, sometimes entering sheltered harbors to rest or feed with other gulls. Very rarely on large inland lakes and rivers.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Cleveland Lakefront SP and vicinity, Eastlake Power Plant and Conneaut and Lorain harbors.



first year

PHOTO BY: © ANDY PAPADATOS / VIREO

*STERNA CASPIA* • STERN-AH [A TERN] CAS-PE-AH [*CASPIAN SEA*; SITE OF FIRST COLLECTION]  
**CASPIAN TERN** TRACK 80

This is a monstrous tern, the world's largest. They resemble gulls more than terns due to their size, but the stout orange-red bill and dark cap are unique. Caspian terns are global, turning up on every continent but Antarctica. While they breed on the Great Lakes, there are no Lake Erie nesting records from Ohio, although they are common migrants. Often the migrant adults are accompanied by young, who are dependent upon them for months. The call is a very loud, grating sound that is somewhat heron-like.

**RANGE:**  
Most common along Lake Erie;  
scattered migrants elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Large water bodies, lakes, big rivers,  
and Lake Erie.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Mudflats, wetlands, and dredge impoundments  
along Lake Erie; large inland reservoirs.



adult alternate

PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*STERNA HIRUNDO* • STERN-AH [A TERN] HEER-UN-DOE [*A SWALLOW*; FOR ITS OVERALL SHAPE AND APPEARANCE]  
**COMMON TERN** TRACK 81a

This and the black tern are our only two nesting terns, and unfortunately both have become quite rare as breeders. Common terns are currently listed as endangered by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Recent efforts by the Division to bolster nesting colonies by creating floating nest platforms have been successful in reestablishing breeders along Lake Erie. In migration, common and Forster's terns often mix in large flocks; then the differences in vocalizations can be heard, as the former is noticeably higher in pitch.

**RANGE:**  
Most frequent along western Lake Erie, where  
the only nesting colonies are found. Migrants  
can be found in small numbers in the interior.

**HABITAT:**  
Large water bodies;  
lakes, big rivers, and Lake Erie.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Nesting colonies can be observed at Pipe Creek  
and Magee Marsh WA; migrants easily found  
along Lake Erie. Smaller numbers occur on  
large interior lakes.



juvenile

adult alternate

PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

## FORSTER'S TERN STERNA FORSTERI • STERN-AH [A TERN] FOR-STER-EYE [FOR ORNITHOLOGIST JOHANN R. FORSTER, 1729-1798] TRACK 81b

Forster's terns haven't been found nesting in Ohio, but they breed in southeastern Michigan on Lake Erie, and may be found nesting in the western Lake Erie marshes someday. They are common migrants, often forming large flocks, and non-breeding birds are easily told from common terns by their black "ear patches." Their calls are similar to common terns, but lower pitched and easily separated if the two are together. The rasping *jeer* call suggests the sound made by common nighthawks in their display dives.

**RANGE:**  
Most common along Lake Erie;  
scattered migrants elsewhere.

**HABITAT:**  
Large water bodies;  
lakes, big rivers, and Lake Erie.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Lake Erie shoreline, particularly large mudflats  
where flocks congregate. The mouth of Crane  
Creek at Ottawa NWR often attracts many.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (ALTERNATE)  
PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS (BASIC)

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## BLACK TERN CHLIDONIAS NIGER • KLEE-DO-NEE-AS [DENOTING A SWALLOW] NY-JER [BLACK] TRACK 82

Black terns are quite unlike our other terns, both in appearance and habits. They are primarily marsh dwellers, although migrants are found on ponds, lakes, and other habitats. At one time, this was a common nester in the western Lake Erie marshes; in recent years numbers have dropped precipitously and now it is listed as endangered. Black terns have a very graceful, buoyant flight that is quite distinctive even from afar; their call is a harsh, squeaky *EEK EEK* sound.

**RANGE:**  
Mostly found along western Lake Erie; small  
numbers pass through the interior.

**HABITAT:**  
Mixed emergent marshes, particularly breeders;  
migrants might be found on any water body,  
and sometimes mix with other species  
of terns in flocks.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The large marshes of western Lake Erie in the  
vicinity of Metzger and Magee Marsh  
wildlife areas and Ottawa NWR.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

*CERYLE ALCYON* • SER-IL-EE [A SEA BIRD] AL-SEE-ON [THE KINGFISHER; AFTER CERYX AND ALCYON OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY]  
**BELTED KINGFISHER** TRACK 83

Most of the year, kingfishers are loners, vigorously defending their hunting territories against other kingfishers and protesting the presence of any other perceived invaders. This is why they give a loud, raucous rattle when they are flushed along a stream or pond. Often, after catching a fish, through spectacular dives, sometimes from considerable heights, the kingfisher returns to a perch and dispatches its victim by beating it against a branch. This species is hardy, and can be found in winter wherever open water occurs.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
Open water with fish; streams, rivers, ponds and lakes, etc. Breeders require eroding banks in which to construct nest burrows.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Canoeing streams is a surefire way to see kingfishers.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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*EMPIDONAX ALNORUM* • EM-PID-OH-NAX [KING OF THE GNATS] ALL-NOR-UM [OF THE ALDERS]  
**ALDER FLYCATCHER** TRACK 84a

The alder flycatcher was not officially recognized as a species until 1973; prior to that it was lumped with the willow flycatcher under the name "Traill's flycatcher." These two species remain among the very few birds that cannot be told apart visually; one must hear their vocalizations to be certain. Fortunately, with a bit of practice, that isn't too hard. Alders give an explosive upslurred *three-beers!* as their song, and the call is a flat *pep*, slightly suggestive of the call note of the olive-sided flycatcher.

**RANGE:**  
Migrants occur sparingly statewide, although commonly along the Lake Erie beach ridges; local and uncommon nester mostly in northern quarter of the state.

**HABITAT:**  
Wet thickets and damp, brushy fields. Prefers wetter haunts than the willow flycatcher, and often found in high quality wetlands such as fens.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Territorial birds often found at entrance to Cedar Bog State Memorial, Irwin Prairie SNP, Herrick Fen Nature Preserve, and beaver wetlands in northeast Ohio.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



## WILLOW FLYCATCHER *EMPIDONAX TRAILLII* • EM-PID-OH-NAX [KING OF THE GNATS] TRAY-IL-EE-EYE [FOR DR. THOMAS STEWART TRAILL, 1781-1862] TRACK 84b

This species is a perfect example of how helpful recognition of songs can be as an identification aid. Willow flycatchers are part of a group of five small Ohio flycatchers that all look very similar, but have quite different vocalizations. Willows, which occur in overgrown shrubby areas and willow thickets, deliver a loud, somewhat nasal *FITZ-bew!* and a dry *whit* call note, suggestive of least flycatcher. Its song and habitat are similar to the much scarcer alder flycatcher, and these two species can only be separated by voice.

**RANGE:**  
Fairly common to common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
All types of shrublands, even in fairly dry fields, but prefers moist areas dominated by willow thickets.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Moist successional habitats in reclaimed strip mines, such as Crown City and Woodbury wildlife areas; Ottawa NWR, Lake La Su An WA, and Tinker's Creek SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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## PURPLE MARTIN *PROGNE SUBIS* • PROG-NEE [PROGNE OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY, WHO WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A SWALLOW] SOO-BIS [NAME OF AN UNKNOWN BIRD] TRACK 85

Few birds are as intimately associated with people as the purple martin. Historically, they would have nested in large tree hollows, but humans have been enticing them to nest close at hand since early Native Americans began placing hollowed out gourds near their villages. Today, martins are entirely dependent upon man-made nest boxes for breeding sites. Martins are highly migratory, wintering as far south as southern Brazil. Their pleasant, liquid gurgling notes are distinctive.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide, wherever people have erected nest boxes that martins deem acceptable. Can occur anywhere, especially near water, in migration.

**HABITAT:**  
Large, open areas, particular those with water bodies nearby.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Best observed near nesting sites; plentiful around the visitor's center at Magee Marsh WA, and easily found in the Holmes County Amish country.



PHOTO BY: TIM DANIEL / ODNR DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

**T** *TACHYCINETA BICOLOR* • TAK-EE-SEE-NET-AH [SWIFT MOVER] BI-COL-OR [TWO COLORS]  
**TREE SWALLOW** TRACK 86

This is our hardiest swallow; the first spring arrivals may appear in late February/early March, and linger into late November. Tree swallows are cavity nesters, and the proliferation of nest boxes erected for Eastern bluebirds has also benefited this species. The largest numbers of tree swallows are always around wetlands, and in late September/early October, enormous congregations can form, sometimes numbering into the thousands. Tree swallows give melodious, liquid twitters and higher pitched chirps.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
Open country with water nearby;  
peak numbers in large marshes and  
wetland complexes, particularly  
with dead, standing timber.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Delaware WA, Magee Marsh WA and vicinity,  
Killbuck WA, Spring Valley WA,  
reservoirs statewide in migration.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

**N** *STELGIDOPTERYX SERRIPENNIS* • STEL-GID-OPT-TER-IX [SCRAPER WING] SER-RIP-EN-ISS [SAW WINGS]  
**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** TRACK 87a

This undistinguished brown swallow is common along most of our waterways, but does not generally form big colonies. They nest in subterranean burrows, and as the scientific name implies, they are capable of constructing these with the aid of their specialized wings. Increasingly, Northern rough-winged swallows are learning to use small diameter drainage pipes for nest sites – sometimes far from the stream banks they normally use. Their call is a low, rough *bzzt, bzzt* – similar to the bank swallow.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
Most frequent along streams and rivers, but  
also seen over lakes, ponds, and marshes,  
particularly in migration.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Streams and rivers; often by standing on  
a bridge with a good view, one can watch  
Northern rough-winged swallows as  
they hunt low over the water.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

*RIPARIA RIPARIA* • RE-PARE-EE-AH [BANK OF A STREAM]  
**BANK SWALLOW** TRACK 87b

A well-named species, as bank swallows are intimately associated with eroding soils of steep banks along streams. They have also learned to construct their burrows in sand and gravel piles at quarries. These burrows can be up to two feet deep, and the bird excavates them using its wings, feet, and bill. Bank Swallows nest colonially, and colonies may number into the hundreds of pairs. Their calls are somewhat similar to the Northern rough-winged swallow, but are rougher and more grating, and with a faster delivery.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide, especially in late summer/early fall when large flocks form.

**HABITAT:**  
Forage over water of streams and lakes; most numerous around nesting colonies.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Big rivers like the Scioto and Muskingum and large sand and gravel quarries. Huge flocks stage in late summer in favored areas, such as around Sandusky Bay.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

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*PETROCHELIDON PYRRHONOTA* • PET-RO-KEL-EE-DON [A ROCK SWALLOW] PEER-HO-NO-TA [FLAME-COLORED BACK; REFERS TO RUMP]  
**CLIFF SWALLOW** TRACK 88

While probably our scarcest breeding swallow, cliff swallows are on the increase. They have adapted well to using bridges and dams as nest sites, and new colonies appear each year. This is in marked contrast to their historic use of cliffs and rock faces, as the scientific name implies. Suspected cliff swallows seen after October should be scrutinized – they may be vagrant cave swallows. Calls have a sweet, scratchy quality, quite unlike our other swallows. A rough grating call is often given near the nest.

**RANGE:**  
Fairly common statewide; rarely forms large autumnal flocks as do other swallows.

**HABITAT:**  
Hunts over open water of big rivers and lakes; bridges, dams and other structures near water provide nesting spots. Also nests on large barns in Amish country, where locals encourage them by providing small wooden shelves high under eaves.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Big bridges and dams, West Branch SP, Hoover Reservoir, and the State Route 32 bridge over the Scioto River in Pike County.



PHOTO BY: © GARY MESZAROS

*CISTOTHORUS PLATENSIS* • SIST-OTH-OR-US [A SHRUB LEAPER] PLAY-TEN-SIS [RIO LA PLATA; SOUTH AMERICAN LOCALE OF TYPE SPECIMEN]  
**SEDGE WREN** TRACK 89a

Generally a rarity, sedge wrens are notoriously erratic in their movements and where they appear from year to year. Sometimes they don't appear on territory until July or August, and they often utilize nest sites for only one year. They are best detected by song, as sedge wrens prefer dense stands of grasses or sedges, and stay hidden in the vegetation. Their songs somewhat resemble the dry, staccato chatter of an old sewing machine; quite different from the liquid gurglings of the Marsh Wren.

**RANGE:**

Most are detected in the western and northwestern part of Ohio.

**HABITAT:**

Large sedge meadows, and damp grassy fields; sometimes hayfields.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes such as Magee WA; Killdeer Plains and Big Island wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*CISTOTHORUS PALUSTRIS* • SIST-OTH-OR-US [A SHRUB LEAPER] PAL-UST-RIS [OF MARSHES]  
**MARSH WREN** TRACK 89b

The liquid gurgling notes of marsh wrens have a mechanical quality, and give away this small bird's presence in the cattails. This is a well named species; marsh wrens are strict wetland inhabitants, and prefer larger marshes. They are particularly fond of extensive cattail stands, and proliferation of exotic plants has adversely impacted their habitat. As about 90 percent of Ohio wetlands have been lost since European settlement, marsh wrens have declined as well. They often occur in loose colonies, and frequently sing at night.

**RANGE:**

Most likely in the northern half of Ohio, but might occur wherever large wetlands are found.

**HABITAT:**

Mixed-emergent marshes, prefers dense cattail stands.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie marshes such as Magee WA; Spring Valley, Big Island, and Killbuck wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

**AMERICAN PIPIT** **TRACK 90a**  
*ANTHUS RUBESCENS* • AN-THUS [A KIND OF BIRD, FROM LEGEND IN WHICH A BOY WAS TURNED INTO A BIRD] RUBE-ESS-ENS [REDDISH]

For a bird of wide-open landscapes, pipits are amazingly inconspicuous. Their muted tones blend well with the damp earth and sparse vegetation of the open ground that they frequent. An interesting trait of pipits is that they walk rather than hop, as most songbirds do. Huge numbers can pass overhead in migration, but one must be attuned to their calls to detect them. Pipits sound much like horned larks (listen to recording on this track), but their calls are sharper and more incisive, and all on the same pitch – *pip-it! pip-it!*

**RANGE:**  
Common migrant statewide, but less so in unglaciated hill country, where habitat is scarcer. Large numbers in March/April along Lake Erie shore.

**HABITAT:**  
Mudflats, barren agricultural fields, grassy expanses such as at airports, etc. Many birds are detected as they fly over; only by knowing the calls will they be detected.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Maumee Bay SP and vicinity in spring migration, where 1,000 or more have been recorded flying over in a morning. Mudflats and suitable habitat statewide, particularly around Killdeer Plains and Big Island wildlife areas.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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**YELLOW WARBLER** **TRACK 91**  
*DENDROICA PETECHIA* • DEN-DROY-KA [TREE-DWELLER] PET-EK-EE-AH [PURPLISH SPOT; REFERRING TO THE RUSSET UNDERPART STREAKING]

The yellow warbler's song could best be described as cheery; a loud, fast *sweet-sweet-I'm-so-sweet!* It is a frequent sound, too, as this bird is a very common breeder throughout Ohio. Although the song can be quite variable, the distinctive tone remains the same, and it can usually be easily recognized. Beware of chestnut-sided warblers, though, which can sometimes sound extremely similar. Yellow warblers are one of our first neotropical species to depart in fall; most are gone by mid-August.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
Prefers willow-dominated thickets, but found in all manner of scrubby habitat.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Absolutely abundant around the western Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*PROTONOTARIA CITREA* • PRO-TONN-O-TAR-EE-AH [AN AUTHORIZED SCRIBE; CATHOLIC CLERGY WHO WORE YELLOW] SIT-REE-AH [*CITRUS*; REFERENCE TO COLOR]

## PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

TRACK 92

Our only cavity-nesting warbler, this species is an inhabitant of wooded swamps. While most use natural cavities in dead trees, they can be enticed to use appropriate nest boxes placed in suitable habitat. A nesting box trail has been created at Hoover Reservoir, greatly increasing populations. Prothonotary warblers have a rather unmusical, loud song – a monotone series of *zwee zwee zwee* notes that carry for considerable distances. Overall, this species is uncommon, and not often found away from breeding sites.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide, but generally uncommon and local.

**HABITAT:**  
Wooded swamps and forests along slow-flowing streams.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The upper end of Hoover Reservoir, Killbuck WA, upper Cuyahoga River near Burton in Geauga County, and the western Lake Erie marshes.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*SEIURUS NOVEBORACENSIS* • SEE-YOUR-US [TO WAVE TAIL] NOVE-EE-BORE-AH-SENSE-ISS [OF NEW YORK; LOCALE OF TYPE SPECIMEN]

## NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH

TRACK 93a

This species is a common migrant, but rare as a nester – breeders are confined to limited areas in northeastern Ohio. Confusion between this and the Louisiana waterthrush is common, as they look similar. Louisiana waterthrushes are rarely encountered away from their breeding habitats, even in migration, and return much earlier than Northerns. Their voices are different as night and day, though (both species are on this track). Northerns have a rich, forceful three-part song, and a sharper, more metallic *chink* call.

**RANGE:**  
Migrants common statewide; rare breeder in northeastern Ohio.

**HABITAT:**  
Swampy woodlands are the breeding habitat, and even migrants select this habitat if available.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The pond at Green Lawn Cemetery, bird trail at Magee Marsh WA; appropriate habitats statewide in migration.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*GEOTHELYPIS TRICHAS* • JEE-O-THLY-PIS [FINCH OF THE EARTH] TREE-KASS [A THRUSS; NOT VERY APROPOS]  
**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** TRACK 94

Yellowthroats are one of the most common warblers breeding in the state, and their loud *wichity wichity wichity* song is commonly heard in all types of wetlands. They normally lurk in dense vegetation and are hard to see, but making squeaking or pishing sounds often lures them briefly into view. This is also a hardy warbler, and occasionally will attempt to overwinter in marshes. Then they may be best detected by listening for their loud *tchek* call note, often given in response to pishing.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide.

**HABITAT:**  
All manner of wetlands;  
occasionally drier brushy fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found in suitable  
habitats throughout Ohio.



male  
PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*AMMODRAMUS LECONTEII* • AM-O-DRAM-US [SAND RUNNER] LAY-CONT-EE-EYE [FOR DR. JOHN LE CONTE, 1818-1891]  
**LE CONTE'S SPARROW** TRACK 95a

Of our regularly occurring sparrows, this is the hardest to find. Le Conte's sparrows lurk in dense wetland vegetation, and are shy in the extreme. Even pishing - which can be very effective for luring retiring sparrows out for a look - seldom attracts them. This is too bad, because they are quite attractive if one is able to get a look. Their song is an insect-like trill suggestive of a Savannah sparrow, but beginning with a few stumbling introductory notes. However, they rarely sing away from the northern nesting grounds.

**RANGE:**  
Similar to Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow.

**HABITAT:**  
Like Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow,  
but may have a tendency to frequent  
somewhat drier areas within these habitats.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Same as those listed for  
Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*AMMODRAMUS NELSONI* • AM-O-DRAM-US [SAND RUNNER] NEL-SON-EYE [FOR EDWARD WILLIAM NELSON, EXPLORER AND NATURALIST, 1855-1934]  
**NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** TRACK 95b

This is a secretive sparrow, skulking in the marsh vegetation and difficult to glimpse. They are more frequent than thought, but there are only a handful of sightings each year, mostly in the fall. The best shot at seeing one is to search dense vegetation – including giant reed (*Phragmites*) – in late May and late September/early October in marshes along Lake Erie. Pishing sometimes draws them briefly into view. The hoarse insect-like song is almost never heard here, being given primarily on the breeding grounds.

**RANGE:**  
Mostly detected along Lake Erie, but can be found at large interior wetlands.

**HABITAT:**  
Dense vegetation of marshes, wet sedge meadows, damp fields, sometimes drier overgrown fields. Overgrown dredge spoil impoundments on Lake Erie are good places.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Big Island and Killdeer Plains wildlife areas, Magee Marsh WA and vicinity, Arcola Creek MP, Miami Whitewater MP.



PHOTO BY: © BRIAN WHEELER / VIREO

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*MELOSPIZA LINCOLNII* • MEL-O-SPEEZ-AH [SONG FINCH] LINK-OLN-EE-EYE [FOR THOMAS LINCOLN, 1812-1883, PART OF AUDUBON EXPEDITION; DISCOVERED THE SPARROW]  
**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** TRACK 96

The genus *Melospiza*, to which this species belongs, is renowned for their singing ability. Unfortunately, Lincoln's sparrow is not often heard here, as they don't sing much in migration. Their song is a rich, complex series of vibrant warbles. About this species, Audubon said "we found more wildness about this species than any other inhabiting the same country" referring to the Labrador expedition on which Lincoln's sparrow was discovered. The call note is a fairly distinctive soft chip note – useful in locating these skulkers.

**RANGE:**  
Relatively common statewide in migration, but easily overlooked.

**HABITAT:**  
When available, uses wet woods and forages on the ground, often in and around tree roots. Also brushy thickets and overgrown fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
The bird trail at Magee Marsh may be the easiest place, but can be found in good habitat statewide.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE



*MELOSPIZA GEORGIANA* • MEL-O-SPEEZ-AH [SONG FINCH] GEORGE-EE-AIN-AH [OF GEORGIA; THE TYPE SPECIMEN WAS COLLECTED THERE]  
**SWAMP SPARROW** TRACK 97

This is another of our trill-singers, like the chipping and field sparrows. However, swamp sparrows occupy a very different habitat than the others – wetlands. Their song has a rather metallic quality, as well, and seems slower in tempo than the others. Also, it is unlikely that any of the other similar-sounding species would be singing in wetland habitats. Swamp sparrows are quite hardy and often overwinter, particularly in cattail marshes. Listening for their hard, sharp metallic chip call is a good way to find them.

**RANGE:**  
Statewide in migration; breeders primarily in northern half of state.

**HABITAT:**  
Wetlands, especially those dominated by cattails and other non-woody plants.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Abundant at Magee Marsh WA,  
Springville Marsh SNP,  
Maumee Bay SP.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

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*AGELAIUS PHOENICEUS* • AG-EL-AY-US [FLOCKING] FO-NEECE-EE-US [RED; FROM GREEK WORD FOR COLOR OF DYE BROUGHT BY PHOENICIANS]  
**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** TRACK 98

An abundant bird, red-winged blackbirds are one of the more obvious species along our roadsides. The males are prone to perching on fences, wires, and the tops of shrubs and delivering their raucous *conk-a-ree-onk* song. Frequently they accompany their singing by flashing their brilliant red epaulets, which they display by folding their wings out and forward. They reach peak abundance in wetlands. Females are quite different and resemble sparrows, but notice differences in size, habits, and bill shape.

**RANGE:**  
Common statewide; may be rare or absent in winter.

**HABITAT:**  
All types of open habitats, roadsides, wet meadows, cattail marshes, etc.

**BEST SPOTS:**  
Easily found throughout Ohio.



PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE

*EUPHAGUS CAROLINUS* • YOU-FA-GUS [GOOD TO EAT; AS DESCRIBED BY JOHN CASSIN] CARE-O-LINE-US [THE CAROLINAS; LOCALE OF THE TYPE SPECIMEN]  
**RUSTY BLACKBIRD** TRACK 99a

Rusty blackbirds breed in the boreal forest north of Ohio, but migrate through in good numbers, and occasionally overwinter. This is a good example of a species that is generally far more likely to be detected by sound than sight. Because of the nature of the habitat that they frequent, rustys are often hard to see, but they regularly emit their loud, squeaky gurgle, which is often likened to the sound of a poorly oiled door hinge being opened. Their call note is a low, flat chek.

**RANGE:**

Common migrant statewide; rare in winter.

**HABITAT:**

Wet woods and swamps, buttonbush thickets and other wooded wetlands. Occasionally, especially in winter, will forage in fields.

**BEST SPOTS:**

Western Lake Erie wetlands; Calamus Swamp Preserve, Killbuck WA, Mosquito Creek WA, Joseph Wilson WA, wet woods statewide.



male  
PHOTO BY: © MICHAEL PATRIKIEV / VIREO

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*XANTHOCEPHALUS XANTHOCEPHALUS* • ZAN-THO-SEF-AL-US [YELLOW HEAD]  
**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** TRACK 99b

These stunning birds are on the extreme eastern edge of their range in Ohio, and are quite rare here. Most years, only a handful of territorial males appear in the western Lake Erie marshes, and it seems likely that most of them remain unmated. Large blackbird flocks are worth picking through, though, as occasionally a yellow-headed blackbird is found this way. As beautiful as the males are, they'll win no contests for singing ability. They deliver comical sounding croaks and wails - interesting, but decidedly unmusical.

**RANGE:**

Virtually all birds are found in the large western Lake Erie marshes.

**HABITAT:**

Mixed-emergent marshes, often dominated by cattails. Sometimes uses stands of giant reed (*Phragmites australis*).

**BEST SPOTS:**

Magee Marsh WA,  
Ottawa NWR,  
and Metzger Marsh WA.



female  
male  
PHOTO BY: © ROBERT ROYSE (MALE)  
PHOTO BY: © TOM VEZO / VIREO (FEMALE)

## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SITES IN THIS GUIDE

### **COLUMBUS AUDUBON**

P.O. Box 141350 • Columbus, OH 43214  
(Calamus Swamp)  
740-549-0333

[www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org)

### **FRANKLIN COUNTY METROPARKS**

1069 W. Main St. • Westerville, OH 43081  
(Blendon Woods, Pickerington Ponds, Prairie Oaks)  
614-891-0700

[www.metroparks.net](http://www.metroparks.net)

### **GREEN LAWN CEMETERY**

1000 Greenlawn Ave. • Columbus, OH 43223  
614-444-1123

[www.greenlawncolumbus.org](http://www.greenlawncolumbus.org)

### **HAMILTON COUNTY PARK DISTRICT**

10245 Winton Woods Road • Cincinnati, OH 45231  
(Miami Whitewater)  
513-521-7275

[www.hamiltoncountyparks.org](http://www.hamiltoncountyparks.org)

### **LAKE COUNTY METROPARKS**

11211 Spear Rd. • Concord Township, OH 44077  
(Arcola Creek)  
440-639-7275

[www.lakemetroparks.com](http://www.lakemetroparks.com)

### **LORAIN COUNTY METRO PARKS**

12882 Diagonal Rd. • LaGrange, OH 44050  
(Sandy Ridge Reservation)  
440-458-5121

[www.loraincountymetroparks.com](http://www.loraincountymetroparks.com)

### **METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY**

2051 Timberman Rd. • Hamilton, OH 45013  
(Gilmore Ponds Preserve)  
513-867-5835

[www.butlercountyohio.org/countyparks](http://www.butlercountyohio.org/countyparks)

### **METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA**

5100 W. Central Avenue • Toledo, OH 43615-2100  
(Maumee River Rapids/Farnsworth Metropark)  
419-407-9700

[www.metroparkstoledo.com/metroparks](http://www.metroparkstoledo.com/metroparks)

### **OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

1982 Velma Ave. • Columbus, OH 43211  
(Cedar Bog State Memorial)

614-297-2300

[www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org)

### **OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 14051 • Columbus, OH 43214  
(site guides to many locales listed herein)

[www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org)

### **OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

14000 West State Route 2 • Oak Harbor, OH 43449  
419-898-0014

<http://midwest.fws.gov/ottawa/ottawa.html>

### **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**

6375 Riverside Drive, Suite 50 • Dublin, OH 43017  
(Herrick Fen)  
614-717-2770

[nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/ohio/preserves](http://nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/ohio/preserves)

### **THE WILDS**

14000 International Rd. • Cumberland, OH 43732  
740-638-5030

[www.thewilds.org](http://www.thewilds.org)

### **OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF NATURAL AREAS AND PRESERVES**

2045 Morse Road, F-1 • Columbus, OH 43229

(state nature preserves)

614-265-6453

[www.dnr.state.oh.us/dnap](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/dnap)

### **OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

2045 Morse Road, C-3 • Columbus, OH 43229

(state parks)

614-265-6561

[www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks)

### **OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF WILDLIFE**

2045 Morse Road, G-1 • Columbus, OH 43229

(state wildlife areas)

614-265-6300

[www.wildohio.com](http://www.wildohio.com)



## FAST FACTS ABOUT OHIO'S WETLAND BIRDS

- 417 species of birds have been recorded in the state
- About 300 species occur annually, and 144 (48%) are dependent on wetlands
- About 180 species breed in Ohio every year
- Of the 180 breeding species, 62 (34%) depend on wetland habitats
- Ohio has lost over 90% of the wetlands that were here prior to European settlement
- Today, there are about 650,000 acres of wetlands in Ohio, out of 28.6 million acres (about 2% of the state)
- Thirteen species of birds that are wetland-dependent are listed as Endangered or Threatened in Ohio, out of 27 total species in these categories (48%)
- Waterfowl have driven habitat conservation more than any other group of birds. Since 1934, 119.3 million federal duck stamps have been purchased - 2.19 million in Ohio - raising \$671.1 million for acquisition of wetlands
- One of the largest concentrations of any bird in Ohio are red-breasted mergansers - an estimated 250,000 can stage in November/December on Lake Erie between the islands and Cleveland
- The biggest Ohio bird is the trumpeter swan, which can weigh 23 pounds and have a wing span of nearly seven feet
- The highest altitude documented for a North American bird in flight is 21,000 feet, by a mallard
- The long-tailed duck has been documented diving to depths of 200 feet under the water



## BIRDING GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN OHIO

One of the best ways to get involved with birding is to join a group of like-minded people. Fortunately, Ohio has a number of active groups throughout the state that have many birders as members, and most of these organizations host field trips regularly. Listed below are the names and contact information for many of the state's birding groups.

### APPALACHIAN FRONT AUDUBON SOCIETY

(South-central Ohio)

P.O. Box 67 • Mount Orab, OH 45154  
937-444-4803

### AUDUBON OHIO

(Statewide)

692 North High Street, Suite 208  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614-224-3303

[www.audubon.org/chapter/oh/oh](http://www.audubon.org/chapter/oh/oh)

### AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

(Cleveland area)

The Park Building  
140 Public Square • Cleveland, OH 44114  
216-861-5093

[www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)

### AUDUBON SOCIETY OF OHIO

(Cincinnati area)

3398 West Galbraith Rd. • Cincinnati, OH 45239  
513-741-7926

<http://home.earthlink.net/audsocohio>

### AUDUBON SOCIETY/MAHONING VALLEY

(Youngstown area)

P.O. Box 3214 • Youngstown, OH 44512  
<http://members.cboss.com/audubonmv>

### AUDUBON MIAMI VALLEY

(Butler County area)

P.O. Box 556 • Oxford, OH 45056  
[www.audubonmiamivalley.org](http://www.audubonmiamivalley.org)

### BLACKBROOK AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Lake County area)

7573 Dahlia Drive • Mentor, OH 44060  
440-255-0961

[www.blackbrookaudubon.org](http://www.blackbrookaudubon.org)

### BLACK RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Elyria/Lorain area)

304 West Avenue • Elyria, OH 44035  
[www.blackriveraudubon.org](http://www.blackriveraudubon.org)

### BLACK SWAMP AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Defiance area)

P.O. Box 7086 • Defiance, OH 43512  
[www.blackswampaudubon.org](http://www.blackswampaudubon.org)

### BLACK SWAMP BIRD OBSERVATORY

(Northwest Ohio)

P.O. Box 228 • Oak Harbor, OH 43449  
419-898-4070

[www.bsbbird.org](http://www.bsbbird.org)

### CANTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Canton area)

P.O. Box 9586 • Canton, OH 44711  
330-832-2491

### CINCINNATI BIRD CLUB

(Cincinnati area)

11 Mound Ave. • Milford, OH 45150  
[www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub](http://www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub)

### COLUMBUS AUDUBON

(Columbus area)

P.O. Box 141350 • Columbus, OH 43214  
740-549-0333

[www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org)

### DAYTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Dayton area)

1375 East Siebenthaler Avenue  
Dayton, OH 45414  
937-293-4876

[www.dayton.net/audubon](http://www.dayton.net/audubon)

### EAST CENTRAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Newark area)

P.O. Box 55 • Granville, OH 43023  
[www.eastcentralohioaudubon.bravehost.com](http://www.eastcentralohioaudubon.bravehost.com)

### FIRELANDS AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Sandusky area)

P.O. Box 967 • Sandusky, OH 44870  
419-433-2883

### GREATER AKRON AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Akron area)

P.O. Box 80056 • Akron, OH 44308  
330-315-5213

[www.akronaudubon.org](http://www.akronaudubon.org)

### GREATER MOHICAN AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Mansfield area)

P.O. Box 907 • Ashland, OH 44805  
<http://audubon.qjb.net>

### KELLEYS ISLAND AUDUBON CLUB

(Lake Erie islands)

P.O. Box 42 • Kelleys Island, OH 43438  
[www.kelleysislandnature.com](http://www.kelleysislandnature.com)

### KIRTLAND BIRD CLUB

(Cleveland area)

4310 Bush Ave • Cleveland, Ohio 44109  
216 556-0700

[www.kirtlandbirdclub.org](http://www.kirtlandbirdclub.org)

### OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

(Statewide)

PMB 111 343 West Milltown Rd.  
Wooster, OH 44691  
[www.obsbluebirds.com](http://www.obsbluebirds.com)

### OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(Statewide)

P.O. Box 14051 • Columbus, OH 43214  
[www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org)

### PRESIDENT R. B. HAYES AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Fremont area)

P.O. Box 92 • Fremont, OH 43420

### SCIOTO VALLEY BIRD AND NATURE CLUB

(Chillicothe area)

P.O. Box 87 • Chillicothe, Ohio 45601  
740-775-2247  
[www.svbnc.org](http://www.svbnc.org)

### SHAWNEE NATURE CLUB

(Portsmouth area)

4362 Swauger Valley Road  
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662  
740-820-8382

### TOLEDO NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

(Toledo area)

19800 Sugar Creek Rd.  
Bowling Green, Ohio 43402  
[www.toledonaturalist.org](http://www.toledonaturalist.org)

### TRI-MORAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

(Lima area)

P.O. Box 5648 • Lima, OH 45802

### WESTERN CUYAHOGA AUDUBON SOCIETY

4310 Bush Avenue • Cleveland, OH 44109  
216-741-2352

[www.wcasohio.org](http://www.wcasohio.org)

## BIRDS IN THE BACKGROUND

As all of the recordings on this CD were made in the wild, there are some cuts in which other species can be heard in the background. Rather than being a distraction, these incidental sounds are interesting, as they help place the listener into the habitat, whether it is a Lake Erie marsh or the Manitoba tundra. These calls also provide good practice for birders wishing to test their birding by ear skills. The following is a list of species that can be heard in the background of various tracks – see if you can recognize them.

Alder Flycatcher	Marsh Wren
American Crow	Mourning Dove
American Goldfinch	Northern Cardinal
American Robin	Northern Parula
American Wigeon	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Baltimore Oriole	Palm Warbler
Barn Swallow	Purple Martin
Bobolink	Red-eyed Vireo
California Gull	Red-winged Blackbird
Canada Goose	Ring-necked Pheasant
Chorus Frog	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Common Raven	Savannah Sparrow
Common Tern	Song Sparrow
Common Yellowthroat	Spring Peeper (frog)
Grasshopper Sparrow	Swamp Sparrow
Green Frog	Tennessee Warbler
Herring Gull	Tree Sparrow
Horned Lark	Tree Swallow
House Sparrow	Tufted Titmouse
House Wren	Warbling Vireo
Indigo Bunting	Western Meadowlark
Killdeer	White-crowned Sparrow
Lapland Longspur	Wilson's Snipe
Least Flycatcher	Winter Wren
Lesser Yellowlegs	Wood Thrush
Mallard	Yellow Warbler
Marbled Godwit	

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Cattle Egret – C.A. Sutherland  
Short-billed Dowitcher – C.A. Sutherland  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron – C.A. Sutherland, W.W.H. Gunn  
White-winged Scoter – W.W.H. Gunn  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper – W.W.H. Gunn  
Bufflehead – W.W.H. Gunn  
Common Merganser – W.W.H. Gunn  
Red-breasted Merganser – W.W.H. Gunn  
Common Goldeneye – W.W.H. Gunn  
Red Knot – W.W.H. Gunn  
Canvasback – W.W.H. Gunn, A.A. Allen  
Stilt Sandpiper – W.W.H. Gunn, A.A. Allen, T.A. Parker III  
Baird's Sandpiper – W.W.H. Gunn, L.J. Peyton, J.P. Meyers  
Hooded Merganser – W.W.H. Gunn, C.D. Duncan, O.H. Hewitt  
Lesser Scaup – W.W.H. Gunn, R.C. Stein  
Lesser Black-backed Gull – D. Stemple  
Eurasian Wigeon – D. Stemple, M.P. McChesney  
Piping Plover – G.A. Keller  
Sabine's Gull – C.C. Duncan  
Harlequin Duck – G.M. Bell  
Purple Sandpiper – M. Dyer  
American Black Duck – S.R. Pantle  
Least Bittern – G.F. Budney, A. Kirk, P.P. Kellogg  
American White Pelican – R.S. Little  
White-rumped Sandpiper – C.A. Marantz

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Little Gull  
Iceland Gull



DIVISION OF WILDLIFE • ODNR

For more information about Ohio's native wildlife, please contact the Division of Wildlife at:

2045 Morse Road, Bldg. G  
Columbus, OH 43229-6693

**1-800-WILDLIFE**

(1-800-750-0750 Ohio Relay TTY only)

[www.wildohio.com](http://www.wildohio.com)

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ted Strickland, Governor • Sean D. Logan, Director  
David M. Graham, Chief

# DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



## MISSION STATEMENT:

WE ARE DEDICATED TO CONSERVING AND IMPROVING THE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES AND THEIR HABITATS, AND PROMOTING THEIR USE AND APPRECIATION BY THE PEOPLE SO THAT THESE RESOURCES CONTINUE TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OHIOANS.

THE ODNR, DIVISION OF WILDLIFE IS THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING OHIO'S FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES. THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE DIVISION COMES FROM THE SALE OF HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES, FEDERAL EXCISE TAXES ON HUNTING, FISHING, AND SHOOTING EQUIPMENT, AND DONATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC. WE CARE ABOUT ALL WILDLIFE AND MAINTAINING STABLE, HEALTHY WILDLIFE POPULATIONS. OUR CHALLENGE IS TO BALANCE THE NEEDS OF WILDLIFE, HABITAT AND PEOPLE.



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