

Net Results

SUMMER/FALL
2003

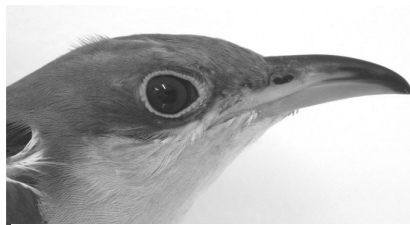
The breeding birds of Wayne Co.

Atlas project off to a good start

Twenty years ago, hundreds of volunteers canvassed Michigan to map all the bird species nesting in the state, down to the quarter-township (or “block”). The result was the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Michigan*. Once again, it is time to Atlas our breeding birds.

RRBO is coordinating field work in Wayne Co. for the Breeding Bird Atlas II project. State funding to the Atlas headquarters at Kalamazoo Nature Center was delayed, so

2002 and 2003 have not been the full scale efforts likely to materialize over the next few years. Even so, in 2002 there was evidence of nesting of 114 species in the county. Atlas workers categorize breeding evidence at three levels: possible, probable, and confirmed, depending on the behavior. For example, a male singing during the breeding season would be considered “possible”, but an adult bird carrying



Are Yellow-billed Cuckoos nesting at UM-Dearborn?

food would be listed as “confirmed.” Thus, it isn’t necessary to actually find a bird nest to confirm a species, but Atlas volunteers do need to carefully observe many types of bird behavior.

Sixty-two species were confirmed in 2002. Highlights were two pairs of

Least Bitterns probably nesting at Crosswinds Marsh, about 150 pairs of state threatened Common Terns on the bridge piers at Grosse Ile, a territorial Sedge Wren in northwest

Wayne Co., and Cliff Swallows confirmed in four blocks, including over 100 nests along the Rouge River in Dearborn.

Great Blue Herons once nested in good numbers on Stony Island in the Detroit River, but changing water levels and habitat eliminated the colony. Recently, a heron colony was discovered

(Continued on page 2)



More about our logo on page 4

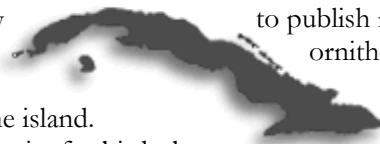
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Wayne Co. Atlas	1
RRBO in Cuba	1
All the birds banded!	2-3
Wayne Co. dragonflies	3
List of publications	4
About our logo	4
Donation form	4



RRBO continues work in Cuba

In February 2002 and January 2003, RRBO’s Julie Craves traveled to Cuba on U.S. Treasury-department licensed tours. Between the two trips, much of western and central Cuba was visited, and nearly every day at each location, a survey was conducted, focusing on North American migrant birds wintering on the island. Cuba is a critical wintering and stopover site for birds, but U.S. policy hinders bird research there, and much is still not known about the winter ecology of many of “our” birds in Cuba.



RRBO set up a simple protocol for surveying birds, to be used on future tours. A database was established to compile bird sightings, and Craves offered to publish results and act as a contact for Cuban ornithologists.

The 2003 surveys were a huge success, with the discovery of the second Cuban record of Ruby-crowned Kinglet, first winter records of Tennessee Warbler and Canada Warbler,

(Continued on page 2)

RRBO in Cuba

(Continued from page 1)

and noteworthy observations of seven other species. A paper is forthcoming in the *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology*, and Craves has already helped in the English translation of two papers by Cuban ornithologists.

One member of the 2003 survey team was Dr. William Moore, a professor from Wayne State University. His specialty is woodpeckers, in particular flickers. Cuba is home to Fernandina's Flicker, an endangered species found no place else on earth. Moore is planning a three-year project in Cuba working with Fernandina's Flicker, completing an accurate census and using DNA analysis to determine gene flow between populations. Craves has been tapped as a project leader, and RRBO will play an important role in the conservation of this globally endangered species.

"In recent years, 'eco-tours' have become a popular form of travel, and many tour companies include trips that focus on birdwatching and attract people with strong bird identification skills. As these tours have become established, the recognition of the potential conservation value of observations made on these trips has increased. In some cases, the goal of contributing to conservation efforts has led tour leaders to more conscientiously document bird sightings by groups that incorporate natural history into their itineraries."

— from an upcoming paper by J. Craves and K. Hall on bird observations in Cuba.

Travel to Cuba is logistically difficult, and the political situation seems ever-changing. The birds don't know this, however, and RRBO hopes to continue this important work in this beautiful and misunderstood country.

Breeding Bird Atlas

(Continued from page 1)

in Sumpter Township, hosting around five nests. Herons nest in dead trees, usually near water, and the single tree housing the colony doesn't allow room for much expansion. This year, RRBO discovered a single heron nest in Westland at a small swamp which also has limited room for growth. Herons have a tenuous grip in the county.

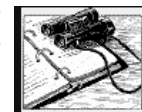
Here in Dearborn in 2003, a pair of Cooper's Hawks attempted to nest on campus. Two nests were partially constructed before the pair disappeared. The male was a young bird in his first breeding season, so perhaps he was



A Great Blue Heron nest is a rare sight in Wayne Co. This adult and two chicks were in Westland.

not experienced enough for his older mate. A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers was present all summer, but we could not observe them constructing a nest or feeding young. Drats! It would have been our first campus nesting record. A pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos seen in July was tantalizing; this secretive species can be very difficult to confirm.

For more information on the Atlas project, including how to volunteer and results from the 2003 field season, click on the link on the RRBO web site (www.rrbo.org).



Summary of Birds Banded by RRBO fall 1992 through spring 2003

Sharp-shinned Hawk	10
Virginia Rail	1
Killdeer	1
American Woodcock	9
Mourning Dove	23
Black-billed Cuckoo	6
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
Eastern Screech-owl	8
Northern Saw-whet Owl	34
Common Nighthawk	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2
Downy Woodpecker	129
Hairy Woodpecker	20
Yellow-shafted Flicker	80
Eastern Wood-Pewee	7
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	40
"Traill's" Flycatcher	211
Least Flycatcher	151
Eastern Phoebe	15
Great Crested Flycatcher	20
Eastern Kingbird	17
White-eyed Vireo	6
Blue-headed Vireo	13
Yellow-throated Vireo	2
Warbling Vireo	72
Philadelphia Vireo	48
Red-eyed Vireo	206
Blue Jay	130
Barn Swallow	1
Black-capped Chickadee	327
Tufted Titmouse	53
Red-breasted Nuthatch	7
White-breasted Nuthatch	15
Brown Creeper	21
Carolina Wren	34
House Wren	238
Winter Wren	20
Marsh Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	182
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	303
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	8
Veery	113
Gray-cheeked Thrush	191
Swainson's Thrush	1162
Hermit Thrush	625
Wood Thrush	134
American Robin	1718
Gray Catbird	2378
Brown Thrasher	31
Cedar Waxwing	229
Blue-winged Warbler	16
Golden-winged Warbler	5
"Brewster's" Warbler	3
"Lawrence's" Warbler	1
Tennessee Warbler	163
Orange-crowned Warbler	79
Nashville Warbler	312

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Virginia's Warbler	1
Northern Parula	3
Yellow Warbler	245
Chestnut-sided Warbler	118
Magnolia Warbler	525
Cape May Warbler	17
Black-throated Blue Warbler	111
Yellow-rumped Warbler	946
Black-thr. Green Warbler	53
Blackburnian Warbler	14
Palm Warbler	188
Bay-breasted Warbler	50
Blackpoll Warbler	252
Black-and-white Warbler	115
American Redstart	359
Prothonotary Warbler	1
Ovenbird	296
Northern Waterthrush	139
Louisiana Waterthrush	1
Kentucky Warbler	1
Connecticut Warbler	24
Mourning Warbler	66
Common Yellowthroat	261
Hooded Warbler	1
Wilson's Warbler	184
Canada Warbler	88
Yellow-breasted Chat	7
Summer Tanager	2
Scarlet Tanager	14
Eastern Towhee	11
American Tree Sparrow	84
Chipping Sparrow	43
Clay-colored Sparrow	4
Field Sparrow	39
Savannah Sparrow	16
Fox Sparrow	79
Song Sparrow	799
Lincoln's Sparrow	188
Swamp Sparrow	273
White-throated Sparrow	1307
White-crowned Sparrow	352
Dark-eyed Junco	480
Northern Cardinal	349
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	52
Indigo Bunting	142
Red-winged Blackbird	210
Rusty Blackbird	1
Common Grackle	126
Brown-headed Cowbird	74
Orchard Oriole	1
Baltimore Oriole	85
Purple Finch	20
House Finch	153
Common Redpoll	1
Pine Siskin	3
American Goldfinch	1392

RRBO hits the 20,000 mark!

Total: 20,184

Other things that fly

One of the most unique things about RRBO is its focus on urban natural areas. Despite the fact that the world is rapidly urbanizing, relatively little bird research concentrates on the populations and needs of birds in urban areas.

RRBO is not only working on urban birds, but also urban insects. Beginning in 2001, RRBO began examining the distribution and abundance of odonata – dragonflies and damselflies – in Wayne County in cooperation with the Michigan Odonata Survey based out of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology in Ann Arbor. As the state's population center, southeast Michigan has been fairly well surveyed for odonata.



Elfin Skimmers are normally found only bogs and fens. Finding one in a Wayne Co. retention basin was a surprise!

Wayne County, of course, is heavily urbanized and most of its wetlands have been destroyed or degraded. Considering these factors, one might expect there is not much to be learned about the distribution of dragonflies in the county.

Not so! RRBO has documented, with specimens, 29 new species of odonata for the county! They range from the smallest odonata species in North America, the Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*) and the Elfin Skimmer (*Nannothemis bella*), to the large and conspicuous Russet-tipped Clubtail (*Stylurus plagiatus*), a Michigan species of special concern. Of the 162 species found in Michigan, 84 have been found in Wayne Co., although some have not been verified by a specimen or recorded in decades. RRBO is working to bring the county list current. Here are some of our successes.

A week before being found in Wayne Co. in 2002, the Citrine Forktail was unknown from the state of Michigan. RRBO's Julie Craves and Darrin O'Brien located the first state record in Lenawee Co., while doing an odonata survey for the Nature Conservancy. They then found the species in Northville Twp., where it was located breeding again in 2003. The Russet-tipped Clubtail is one of several large species new to the county found along the Huron River. Others include the Royal River Cruiser (*Macromia taeniolata*) and Arrow Clubtail (*Stylurus spiniceps*). Also along the Huron was another new state record, the Flag-tailed Spinyleg (*Dromogomphus spoliatus*), which Craves and O'Brien found in 2002. It was later verified by a specimen by Carl Freeman; Craves again verified this species in 2003.

There is a new link on the RRBO web site to the Odonata of Wayne Co. You'll find a checklist, photos, links, and a list of RRBO publications on dragonflies and damselflies. Stay tuned for more exciting discoveries of these fascinating insects!

Many thanks to our 2003 volunteers...

Dea Armstrong, Andy Dettling, Jim Fowler, Christine Hofer, Julie Jedlicka, Beth Johnson, Greg Norwood, Darrin O'Brien, Elan Oneal, Nancy Parachini, Sally Petrella, Jerry Sadowski, and Suzanne Vedder.

Rouge River Bird Observatory

Environmental Interpretive Center
 University of Michigan-Dearborn
 Dearborn, MI 48128
 Phone: 313-593-5338
 Email: jac@rrbo.org



About our Logo

The University of Michigan-Dearborn is located on property that was once the home of Henry Ford. Ford was not only an industrial leader, but a great nature and bird lover -- he was instrumental in convincing Congress to pass the Migratory Bird Treaty in 1913.

Throughout Ford's estate, Fair Lane, there are carvings and other representations of birds. The bird in our logo is taken from the copper ventilator covers in the powerhouse at Fair Lane. Our logo reflects the historical nature of our location.

Recent RRBO literature contributions

- Craves, J.A. 2001. Notable new dragonfly records. *Michigan Birds & Natural History* 8:185-188.
- 2002. A preliminary list of the Odonata of Wayne Co. *Michigan Birds & Natural History* 9:7-16.
- 2002. Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) with red feathers banded in Wayne Co., MI. *Michigan Birds & Natural History* 9:199-205.
- Craves, J. A. and K. R. Hall. 2003. Notable bird sightings from Cuba, winters 2002 and 2003. *Jrl. of Caribbean Ornithology* 16:31-34.
- Craves, J. A. and J. A. Fowler, Jr. 2003. Twenty-five years of the Detroit River Michigan-Ontario Christmas Bird Count. *Ontario Birds* (accepted, in press).
- Craves, J. A. and D. S. O'Brien. 2003. *Dromogromphus spoliatus* (Odonata: Gomphidae): New for Michigan. *Great Lakes Entomologist* (accepted, in press).
- 2003. *Ischnura hastata* (Odonata: Coenagrionidae): New for Michigan. *Great Lakes Entomologist* (accepted, in press).

We need your support

The Rouge River Bird Observatory is a unique endeavor, since intense study of such a wide variety of birds is rare in an urban area. Ecological research of this nature requires a long-term commitment to data-gathering.

RRBO is supported entirely by memberships and donations. The University of Michigan-Dearborn generously provides facilities and administrative services. But all of our operating expenses come from external sources. Only with continued outside funding will the data and information we are compiling make a valuable contribution to bird conservation and ornithological research.

Yes, I/we want to support the work of the Rouge River Bird Observatory		Enclosed is my/our gift of:		
Name _____		\$25	\$100	\$150
Address _____		\$200	\$500	\$1,000
City _____ State _____ Zip _____		Other \$ _____		
Charge gift to: Visa Discover MasterCard AmEx				
Account Number: _____	Expiration Date: _____ / _____			
Signature: _____				
Make checks payable to the University of Michigan-Dearborn. If you/your spouse work(s) for a matching gift company, please include your matching gift form. FOR OFFICE USE EID _____ 303732				