

# Delaware County Bird Club NEWSLETTER



Vol. 41 No. 2

February 2026

## Full annual cycle research of the Eastern Whip-poor-will in the Midwest

Dr. Chris Tonra will discuss work his lab has done with multiple collaborators to better understand the breeding, migration, and overwintering ecology of the declining Eastern Whip-poor-will. He has used a combination of surveys, tracking technology, and genetic techniques to get a better picture of what may be causing the 70% decline in numbers of this charismatic and culturally important species.

Dr. Chris Tonra has been a birder since age of 12, growing up on Long Island in New York state. He completed his masters degree in Wildlife Biology at Humboldt State University in California and his Ph.D. at the University of Maine in Biological Sciences, before spending time as a postdoctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. He is now an associate professor of Avian Wildlife Ecology in the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University. His research program focuses



**An Eastern Whip-poor-will.**

### DELAWARE COUNTY BIRD CLUB PROGRAMS

The Delaware County Bird Club in-person meetings and program presentations have resumed. They take place on the fourth Monday of each month, September through April, except in November and December when they are held on alternate days to accommodate the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Meetings are held in the lodge at Deer Haven Park at 4183 Liberty Road, Delaware Ohio, 43015. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., programs begin at 7 p.m., and are followed by reports of local bird sightings and socializing. Meeting dates can also be found on the Preservation Parks of Delaware County calendar at this link: <https://preservationparks.recdesk.com/Community/Calendar>

*Continued on Page 4*

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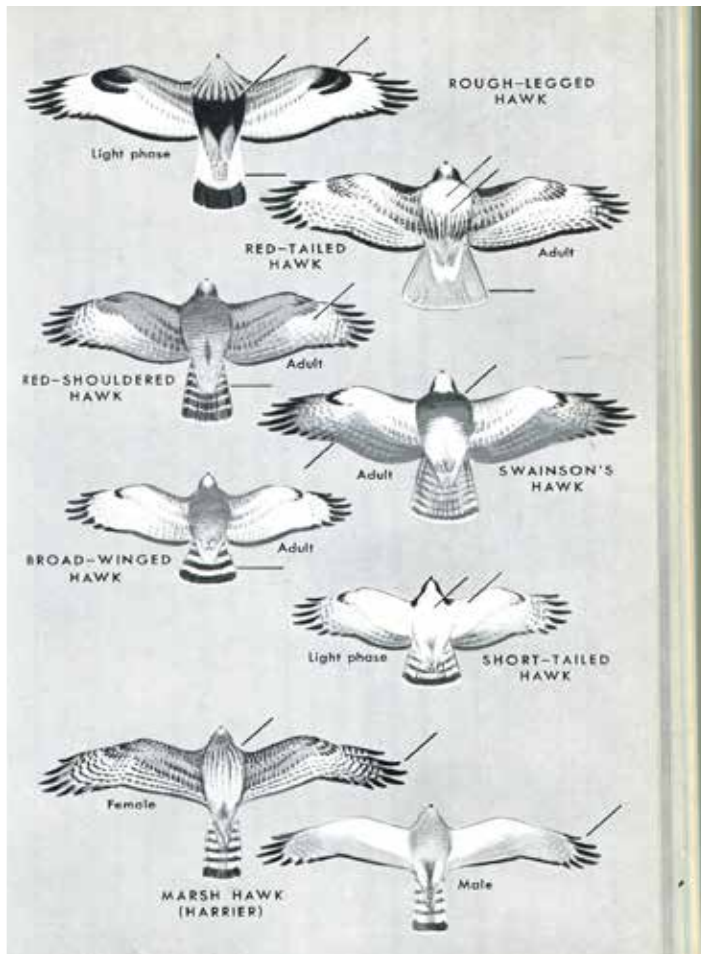
Reporters: Rich Bradley, Amy Tovar, Bob Harter and Ed Lux

# Birdwatching in the 1960's

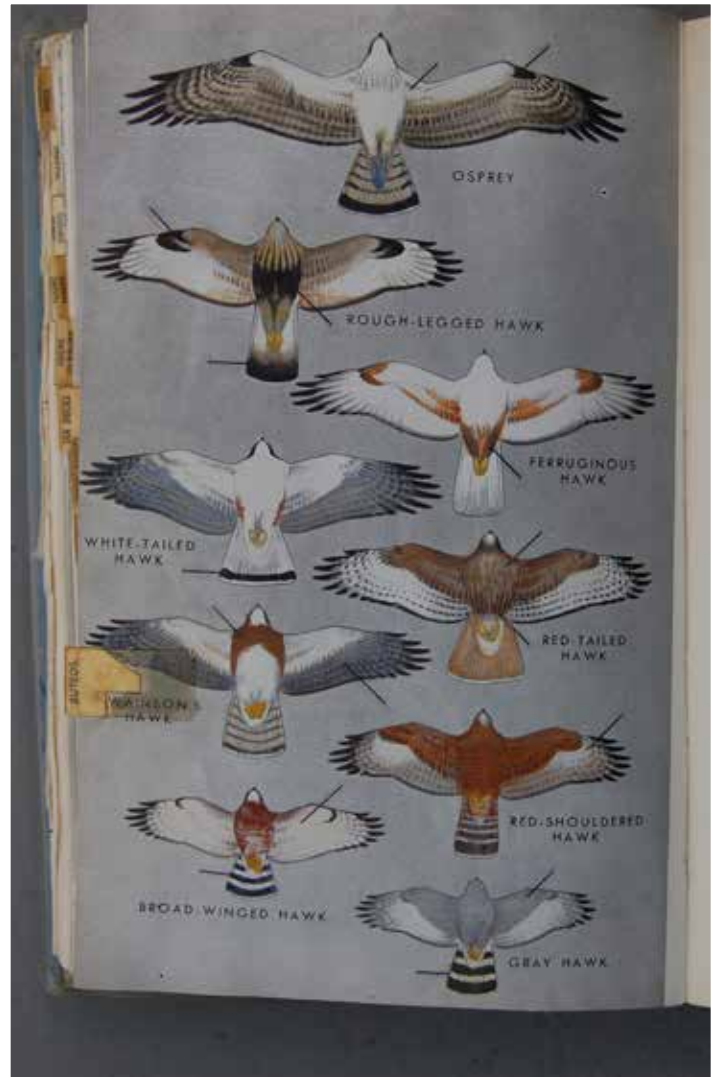
By Rich Bradley

Here is a story I wrote about an event in my first year of birding. I was in the eighth grade at the time (1963). Bird-watching (as it was always called then) was still a fairly rare activity. Before I even knew about local Audubon Society field trips, I had met a friend, Richard Milne, with a similar passion for all things bird-related. He was the person who introduced me to many of the local hotspots, and let me know about his recent sightings. Of course, there were no cell phones, there was no internet, and the only rare bird reports came via informal phone chains. Relatively soon there were "rare bird hotlines" that you could call and listen to a recorded message about rare bird sightings. But at the time I was ignorant of those resources. Every new bird, no matter how common, was a big thrill for me.

I was late, and I knew it. My friend Richard had just called; the migration was on. I grabbed my binoculars and field guide, strapped them onto my bike rack, and sped off peddling madly. It was a couple of miles away to where Richard would be waiting and I was afraid that I'd miss the action. Rounding a corner the strap on my rack slipped and my copy of the Peterson guide fell into the road. Luckily my binoculars were undamaged, but the field guide was run over by sev-



Peterson field guide buteos, original.



Hand-colored buteos.

eral cars before I could, dodging through the traffic, collect the remains. Even at this time in the morning Palos Verdes Drive West was a busy street. I was heartsick; I spent hours painting over the black-and-white plates with watercolors, so that my book was in full color. I bundled the intact sections of the book with the loose pages I had retrieved and peddled on. I did manage to save all parts of the book, but it was never the same. When I did get to the "lower forest" trail, actually a fire break, maintained through the dense chaparral and eucalyptus of the hillside, the birds were wonderful.

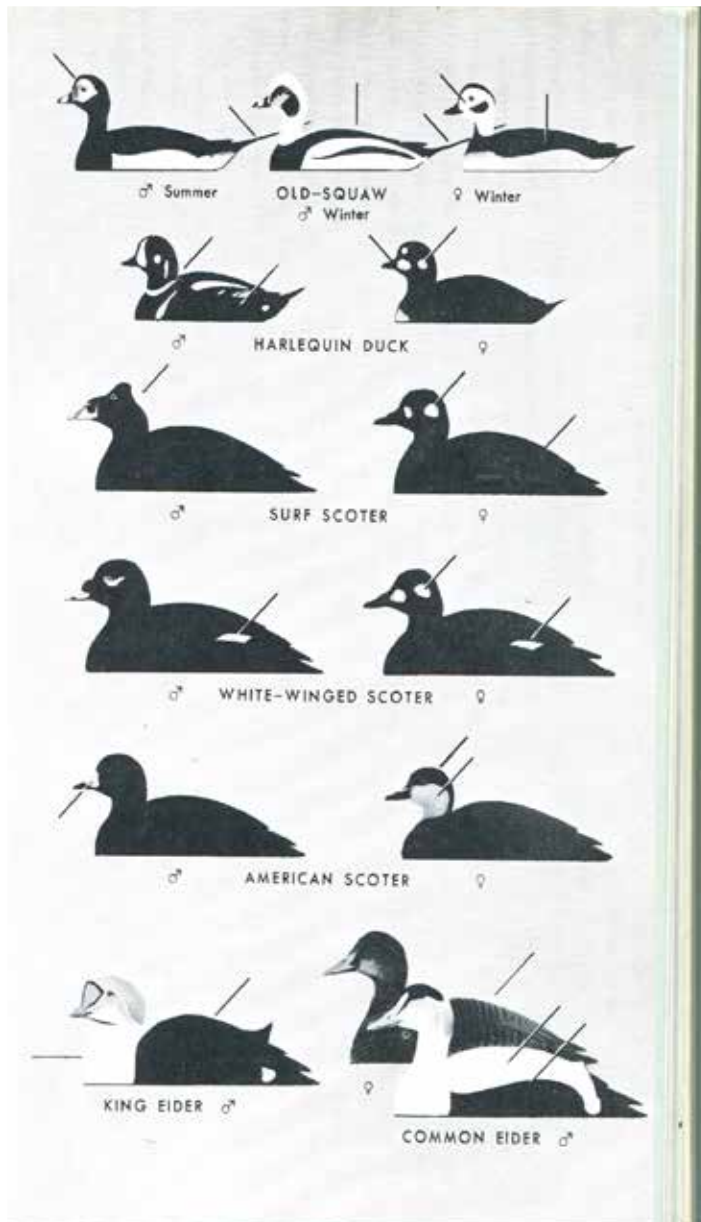
That day, I had no idea that migration was a phenomenon stretching over weeks, I just knew I had not experienced it. As we walked, we saw many beautiful spring plumage male Townsend's and Hermit Warblers, gorgeous yellow Wilson's Warblers with their distinctive black skull caps, and somber Orange-crowned Warblers plus many others. I remember particularly a male Brown-headed Cowbird standing on a telephone pole, his distinctive brown head clearly visible in

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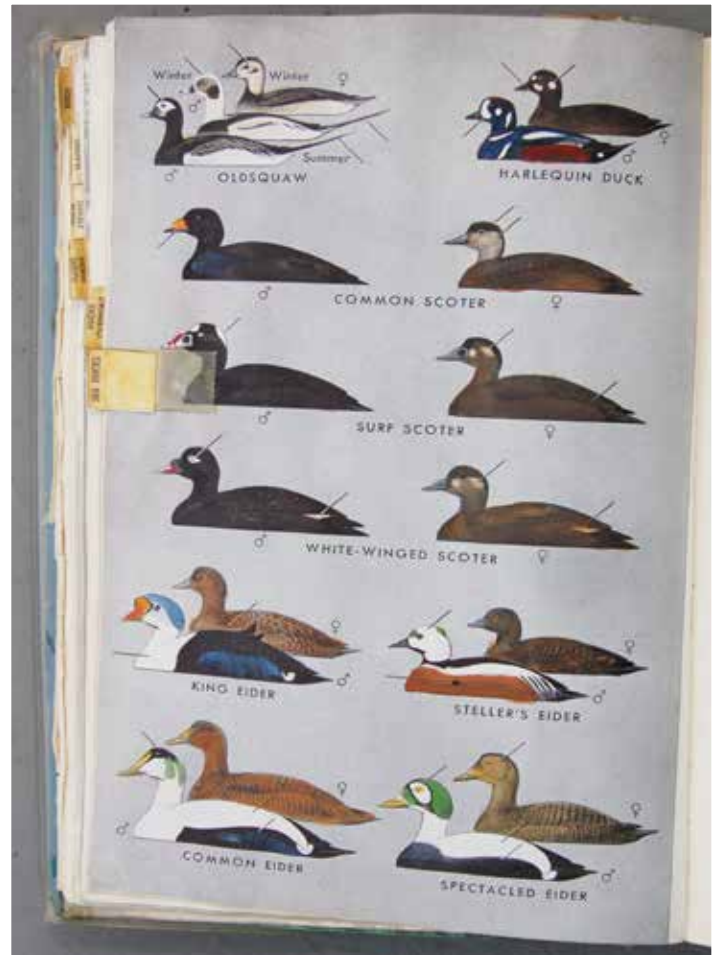
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the sun. Thinking back now, I realize that these were very common birds, but they were new to me on that day and thrilling. When I got home, I lovingly fashioned a new spine and white-glued the pages in the correct order. I used the guide this way for quite some time. I eventually saved up enough money to replace the repaired but tattered, Field Guide to Western Birds, with a new copy. I dutifully colored in those black-and-white plates again. I eventually gave away my older, damaged veteran guide to another beginning bird-watcher. I still have the second hand-colored guide, but it too has suffered. The pages when inevitably wetted by rain dry, the watercolor acts like glue and the pages stick together.

When opened, the surface pulls off, removing both my painting and the original printing. Several of the pages have been damaged this way, but this was long after I had memorized them anyway.



Peterson field guide seaducks, original.



Hand-colored seaducks.

## Audubon Photo Contest

One of the most respected nature photography competitions in the world, the Audubon Photography Awards celebrates the beauty and diversity of birds by honoring the best photos and videos of birdlife. Entrants from around the globe will each be eligible for cash prizes and a chance to have their images featured in Audubon magazine.

This year, in addition to \$5,000, the Grand Prize winners will receive a voyage to Antarctica with HX Expeditions to combine birding, conservation, and exploration on a one-of-a-kind trip.

The entry fee is \$15 per image or video for individuals in the U.S. and Canada (excluding Quebec). No payment is required for submissions to the Youth division for entrants who are 13 to 17 years of age. The contest will close on March 4th 2026 at 12 p.m. (noon) U.S. Eastern Time; 11 a.m. CST; 10 a.m. MST; and 9 a.m. PST. Go to <https://www.audubon.org/photoawards-entry> to enter.

# February Program

*Continued from Page 1*

on filling knowledge gaps in the annual cycles of migratory birds, in particular their habitat and movement ecology. He is also the chair of the Olentangy River Wetlands Research Park at OSU, the only RAMSAR site in Ohio and a research and education facility focused on wetlands and associated habitats in Columbus.



Tonra attaches a transmitter to a whip-poor-will.

## Can you identify this?



Answer will be in our next issue. The mystery bird for February was photographed at Char Mar Park on March 1, 2018.


The mystery bird photo for January was a Cedar Wax-wing taken at Delaware Wildlife Area in June of 2024.

**Columbus Audubon  
Monthly Program**

*A Voice For Birds: How Audubon Advocacy is Driving Policies Forward to Protect Ohio Birds with Marnie Urso*

February 24, 2026 | FREE EVENT

6:30PM: Refreshments, Bird Quiz, Enter Door Prize Raffle  
7PM: Conservation Spotlight Ruth Seggerson and Linda Bauer followed by Featured Speaker Marnie Urso  
8PM: Winners Announced for Door Prize and Bird Quiz



Audubon  
Photograph by Mary Lundberg

Registration Required at [tickets.audubon.org/grange/events](https://tickets.audubon.org/grange/events)  
505 W Whittier St, Columbus, OH 43215 | [columbusaudubon.org](https://columbusaudubon.org)

## Columbus Audubon February Program

Join Columbus Audubon for our 2025 - 2026 in-person Monthly Program series in partnership the Grange Insurance Audubon Center on Tuesday February 24, 2026. Keynote speaker Marnie Urso will discuss Audubon Great Lakes' policy priorities in Ohio and across the Great Lakes region - and how you can be a voice for birds! The program will begin with a Conservation Spotlight by Ruth Seggerson and Linda Bauer who will provide updates about the community Friends Garden. The Featured Presentation will begin immediately following the Conservation Spotlight. Winners for the door prize and bird quiz will be announced after the presentations.