



December 2020 Virtual Field Trip: Sandy Ridge Reservation

Bird Walk Leader: Michelle Brosius
WCAS Board Member and Field Trip Co-Coordinator

Sandy Ridge Reservation



*Photo: Two Bald Eagles Find Perches at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Tom Fishburn*

“Sandy Ridge Reservation is a 526-acre wetland and wildlife preserve located in North Ridgeville. Since opening in 1999, the park has become one of the most popular sites for birding in Lorain County.

The Wet Woods Trail leads through a wetland forest where visitors may spot wildlife including white-tailed deer, fox, squirrel, and the elusive great horned owl. This normally quiet stretch of woods provides a front row seat for spring amphibian songs and the warbler migration. After less than a half-mile the Wet Woods Trail connects with the Marsh Loop Trail.

The Marsh Loop Trail is a 1.2-mile trail that circles the wetlands of Sandy Ridge, a dike-enclosed restoration area. The expansive marsh habitat, along with open water and scrub/shrub wetlands is home to a number of waterfowl, wading birds, and shore birds.

Bicycles, pets, and fishing are not permitted on the Wet Woods and Marsh Loop Trail. Bicycles and pets are permitted (on a handheld leash) across the park on the Meadow Loop Trail. This trail offers a short one-mile walk around the wet meadow which is a great place to watch the monarch migration.” – Lorain County Metro Parks, [Sandy Ridge Reservation](#)

Target Species



American Tree Sparrow

“Plump and long-tailed, American Tree Sparrows are busy visitors in winter backyards and weedy, snow-covered fields across southern Canada and the northern United States. Hopping up at bent weeds or even beating their wings to dislodge seeds from grass heads, they scratch and peck the ground in small flocks, trading soft, musical twitters. Come snowmelt, these small rusty-capped and smooth-breasted sparrows begin their long migrations to breeding grounds in the tundra of the far North.” – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [American Tree Sparrow](#)



Photo: American Tree Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Target Species (cont.)



Winter Waterfowl

Waterfowl are typically described as birds that have flat bills and webbed feet, such as ducks, swans, and geese, that require an aquatic habitat. “Winter” waterfowl are those described birds who are found locally during the winter season.

Trumpeter Swan

“Trumpeter Swans demand superlatives: they’re our biggest native waterfowl, stretching to 6 feet in length and weighing more than 25 pounds - almost twice as massive as a Tundra Swan. Getting airborne requires a lumbering takeoff along a 100-yard runway. Despite their size, this once-endangered, now recovering species is as elegant as any swan, with a graceful neck and snowy-white plumage. They breed on wetlands in remote Alaska, Canada, and the northwestern U.S., and winter on ice-free coastal and inland waters.” – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [Trumpeter Swan](#)

The Trumpeter Swan adult is all white whereas juveniles are duller with gray-brown plumage. The juvenile’s duller feathers on the head and neck will continue into spring.



*Photo: Young Trumpeter Swan Stretching Its Wings at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Tom Fishburn*

Target Species (cont.)



Winter Waterfowl (cont.)

American Black Duck

“The American Black Duck hides in plain sight in shallow wetlands of eastern North America. They often flock with the ubiquitous Mallard, where they look quite similar to female Mallards. But take a second look through a group of brown ducks to notice the dark chocolate-brown flanks, pale grayish face, and olive-yellow bill of an American Black Duck. Numbers of this shy but common duck declined sharply in the mid-twentieth century. Hunting restrictions have helped to stabilize their numbers, although habitat loss remains a problem.” – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [American Black Duck](#)



*Photo: American Black Duck in Summit County, Winter 2017
by Tom Fishburn*

Mary Ann & John Henderson

40 Species



Mary Ann and John birded **THREE** times!

Our first visit was on December 8. The temperature was 32F, and it was overcast and chilly! Tim Fairweather, the park director, was leading a small group on a walk around the ponds. We saw 31 species of birds, including **5 duck** and **3 hawk** species, plus the local pair of **Bald Eagles**. When the walk ended, we stayed at the ponds, wanting to get a better look at the ducks, while the group returned through the woods. While they were walking, they spotted two **Great Horned Owls**!

We visited again the next day. This time we brought the scope, wanting to get better looks at the ducks. We saw 26 species, including 7 species of ducks...the **Pintails** being our favorite. The local **Sandhill Crane** also made an appearance. He is very nonchalant about visitors. I have attached a photo that I took in October...he was walking alongside me down the trail through the woods!

Tim had told us that a late Common Yellowthroat warbler had been seen near the end of the woodland trail. We missed the bird on both visits, but saw pictures another birder had taken on December 9. While we did not see any Blue-wing Teal, those too have been reported recently.

Tip!

If you are carrying a scope, consider parking near the back entrance, in the Sandy Ridge housing development, on Songbird Lane (off Center Ridge Rd.). This will put you closer to the ponds, and you won't have to carry your scope as far.



*Photo: Sandhill Cranes at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Mary Ann Henderson*

Mary Ann & John Henderson (cont.)



List for December! (8, 9, & 22)



Photo: Sandhill Crane at Sandy Ridge Reservation in October 2020 by Mary Ann Henderson

- Canada Goose
- Trumpeter Swan
- Northern Shoveler
- American Wigeon
- Mallard (over 200!)
- American Black Duck
- Northern Pintail
- Green-winged Teal
- Hooded Merganser
- Mourning Dove
- Sandhill Crane
- Ring-billed Gull
- Great Blue Heron
- Cooper's Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Great Horned Owl
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Carolina Wren
- Brown Creeper
- European Starling
- American Robin
- Eastern Bluebird
- House Sparrow
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- American Tree Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- White-throated Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Northern Cardinal

Eric Pros



Eric visited Sandy Ridge on **December 18** at 1:00 p.m.



*Photo: Lake Scene at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*



*Photo: Eastern Gartersnake at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*

“This most common of Ohio’s gartersnakes is found across the state. Found in moist areas, such as damp woods and grasslands, and the edge of ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers.” – Ohio Division of Wildlife, [Reptiles of Ohio Field Guide](#)

Eric Pros (cont.)



*Photo: Lake Scene at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*



*Photo: Great Blue Heron at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*

Eric Pros (cont.)



*Photo: Lake Scene at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*



*Photo: Red-shouldered Hawk at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*

Eric Pros (cont.)



*Photo: Great Blue Heron at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*



*Photo: Lake Scene at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*

Eric Pros (cont.)



*Photo: Lake Scene at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*



*Photo: Sandhill Cranes in Flight at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Eric Pros*

Allen Rand

34 Species



Al birded on **December 20.**

It was cold and not much was happening, but there were signs of wildlife. Saw the work of a beaver and mother nature after the most recent storm. Lots of birds at the feeders up front and **Mallards** dominated the ponds. **House Sparrows** were the most numerous songbirds. **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and **Brown Creeper** were surprises since most have migrated by December. Got a nice close up look at a **Red-shouldered Hawk** having lunch.



Photos: Red-shouldered Hawk by Al Rand

Allen Rand (cont.)



Photo: Beaver Activity by Al Rand



Photo: Storm Damage by Al Rand

Allen Rand (cont.)



Photo: Northern Shoveler by Al Rand

Bird List

- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- Northern Shoveler
- American Wigeon
- Mallard
- American Black Duck
- Mourning Dove
- Ring-billed Gull
- Great Blue Heron
- Bald Eagle
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- White-breasted Nuthatch

Allen Rand (cont.)



Bird List (cont.)

- Brown Creeper
- European Starling
- Eastern Bluebird
- American Robin
- House Sparrow
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- American Tree Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- White-throated Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Northern Cardinal



Photo: Lodge at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Al Rand

Michelle Brosius

16 Species



Michelle visited Sandy Ridge on **December 29.**

I visited Sandy Ridge Reservation on Tuesday, December 29 from 8:50 – 11:20 a.m. It was a cold morning at a consistent 28°F the entire duration of my visit, but at least the sun was out, making it a lovely morning and encouraging a flurry of bird activity.

Tufted Titmouse, as well as **Red-bellied** and **Downy Woodpecker** were present on the Wet Woods Trail leading to the wetland. When I arrived at the marsh I was instantly greeted by a multitude of sparrows along the Marsh Loop Trail. I usually take the Marsh Loop Trail clockwise, but since the activity was to my right (with no visible bird life straight ahead), I veered from my habit and took the trail counterclockwise. In all, I counted 25 **Song Sparrow** along the entire loop and one **Swamp Sparrow**. The Swamp Sparrow was not a lifer for me, but this is the first time I located and identified one myself, which is almost as gratifying as finding a lifer.



*Photos: Swamp Sparrow at
Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Michelle Brosius*

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



However, never fear! I stopped to observe more sparrows a little further along the first leg of the trail when a **Brown Creeper** caught my attention! This is indeed a lifer. I watched this little bird for several minutes as it “creeped” up a few trees before disappearing. As I moved along, the second leg of the Marsh Loop Trail proved to be a good location for **Dark-eyed Juncos** this morning.



Photos: Brown Creeper (left) and Female Dark-eyed Junco (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Michelle Brosius

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



*Photos: White-breasted Nuthatch at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Michelle Brosius*

Six **American Goldfinch** were spotted on the third leg of the loop trail, and then as I was rounding the final corner a **White-breasted Nuthatch** got my attention from within a grove of trees with its [ik-up](#) call.

A flock of **Canada Geese** then descended upon the marsh. I never thought I would be thankful to see a Canada Goose, but I hadn't seen any waterfowl or American Tree Sparrow yet, so this flock meant I had in fact achieved an observation of a target species for this field trip. A **Belted Kingfisher** also flew in a few moments later, which is always a great bird to see.

After taking more pictures of **Song Sparrows**, of which there were plenty, I headed back down the Wet Woods Trail toward the parking lot. I decided to take the connector trail around the pond near the nature center to see if I could log any additional species for the eBird list, and it was worth it as a **Black-capped Chickadee** was seen!

In all, I had 16 species, 144 individual birds, and a very pleasant (although chilly) morning. Sandy Ridge Reservation is beautiful and full of life any time of the year.

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



Photos: A very photogenic Song Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Michelle Brosius

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



Photos: Song Sparrow Caught in a Breezy Moment at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Michelle Brosius

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



Photos: Song Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Michelle Brosius

Michelle Brosius (cont.)



*Photo: Brown Creeper at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Michelle Brosius*

Bird List

- Canada Goose
- Great Blue Heron
- **Belted Kingfisher**
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- **Brown Creeper**
- Eastern Bluebird
- American Goldfinch
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Song Sparrow
- **Swamp Sparrow**
- Northern Cardinal



Shaun Missig

23 Species



Shaun visited Sandy Ridge **FIVE** times!

I visited Sandy Ridge 5 times in December. 12/6, 12/12, 12/13, 12/20, 12/26 with all visits taking place between 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Sandy Ridge has been a favorite of mine since a friend told me about it early in 2020. The abundance of wildlife is astonishing to me. I have never seen so many species in one place that wasn't a zoo. I thought things would be different in winter, but I was mistaken. Yes, there were birds that had flown south, and other critters that had gone into hiding, but the sheer amount of life still out and about was amazing! 12/6 was my best day, and I took the most pictures that day. There was still snow on the ground, and the temperatures were holding nicely for a few laps around the park. 12/26 was the worst day I was there. The temperatures plunged to the low 20's and wind chills were below that. I love the cold, but this was even cold for me! I did find some life in the forest though, as the trees provided much needed protection from the wind. Once you made it out to the main trail by the water, the wind cut through every layer of clothing, and it was not comfortable. Even the animals thought it was too cold and the amount of time spent and pictures captured was very little.



Photo: American Tree Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



December 6



Photos: Song Sparrow (left) and Dark-eyed Junco (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



Photos: Blue Jay (left) and Tufted Titmouse (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



December 12



Photos: Bald Eagle Pair (left) and Eastern Bluebird (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



*Photo: Sandhill Crane at Sandy Ridge
Reservation by Shaun Missig*

Shaun Missig (cont.)



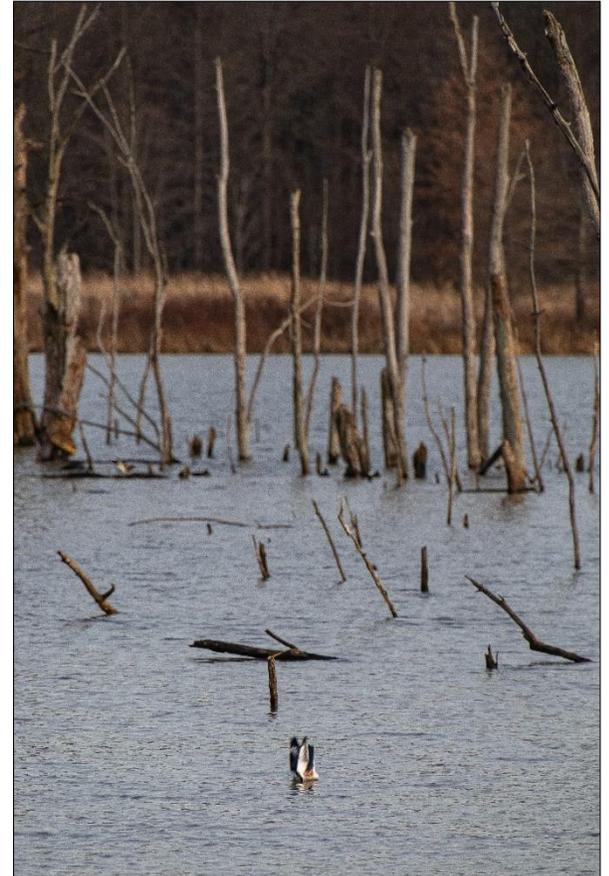
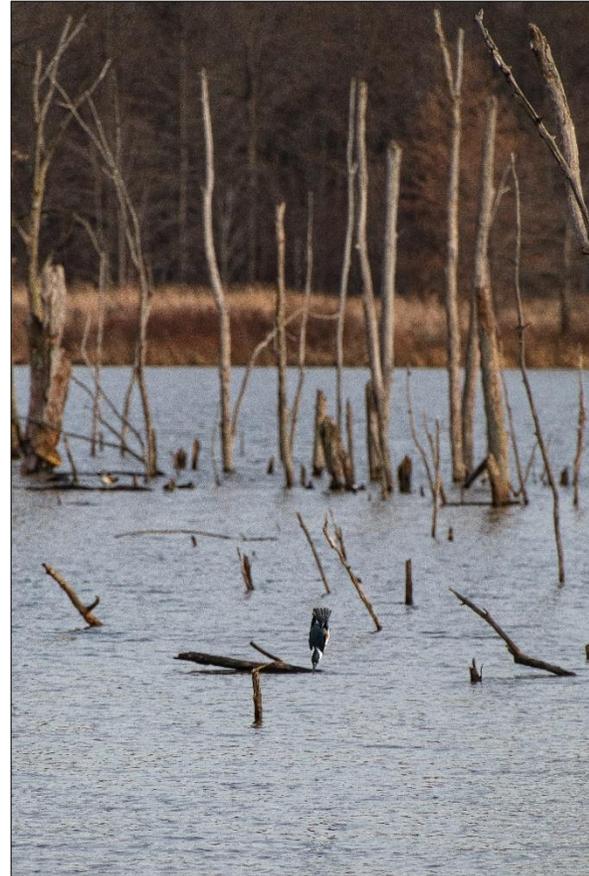
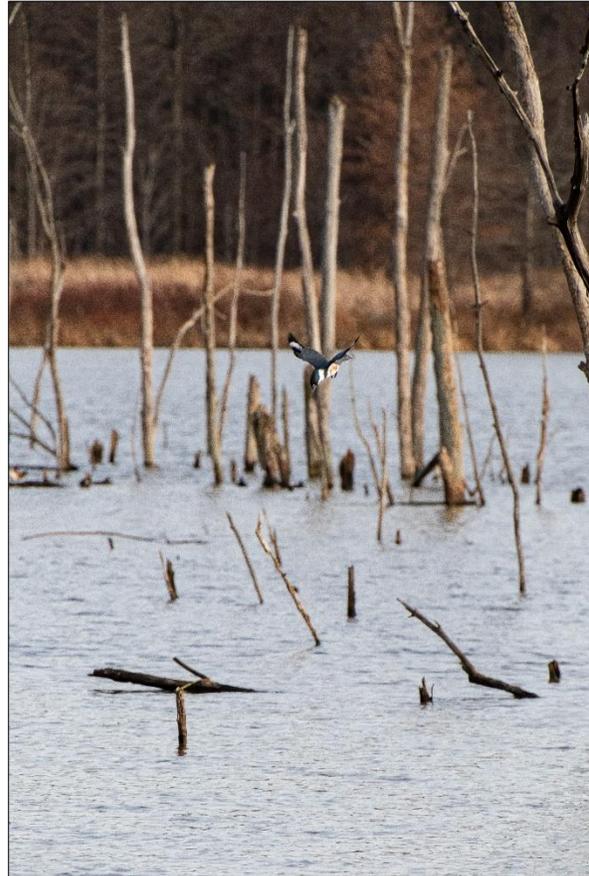
December 13

One of the highlights for me was photographing a **Belted Kingfisher**. On almost every visit, there was a kingfisher bouncing from limb to limb on the water in search of its next meal. I decided that I would watch this bird for a large portion of my visits, and I'm glad I did! I switched my camera into manual focus and waited for my shot. My patience paid off as I was able to capture several dive bomb sequences trying to catch a fish. I will always be fascinated by these birds and their abilities.



Photos: Belted Kingfisher Dive Sequence on December 13, 2020 by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



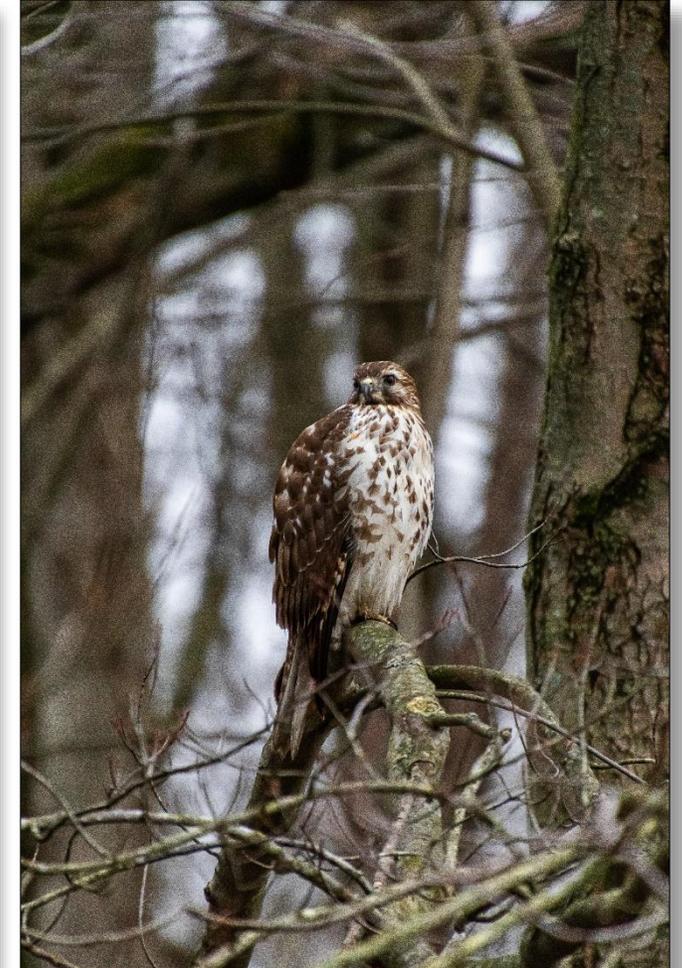
Photos: Belted Kingfisher Vertical Dive Sequence On November 29, 2020 at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



December 13

My trip on 12/13 was full of many great pictures, and it started off with one of the adult **Bald Eagles** perched by its nest! The Eagle was just in my range, and I held the shutter button down hoping at least 1 shot would come out. After this, I did not see any of the eagles again for the remainder of my visit. For as great as the start of the day was, Sandy Ridge had one more trick up its sleeve for me as I left. I was almost out of the woods when I saw a larger bird swoop in and land on a branch. I was too far away at that point to identify it, and I continued to move closer. I made sure to stop at many points on my way up the path to get shots of this bird before it potentially flew away. I continued getting closer as I went up the path and I was ready for this bird to fly. It had definitely seen me by now, but still it stayed on the branch. I was practically underneath this bird, and it didn't have a care in the world! It was almost as if this bird wanted its picture taken. It stayed perched for quite a while, and many others got pictures of it as well. That bird was a juvenile **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and this was an experience I will never forget. 1 week later I saw an adult Red-shouldered Hawk and it was not as friendly when it came to pictures. I was able to get a few shots, and then it flew off into the woods.



Photos: Bald Eagle by Nest (left) and Red-shouldered Hawk (right) by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



Photos: Great Blue Heron (left) and Fox Squirrel (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



December 20

12/20 yielded less results due to the water being mostly covered by ice. However, as I walked the path, a **Great Blue Heron** flew low to the water and was fairly close to where I was walking. I have seen Great Blue Herons my entire life, but never that close! Their wingspan is very large for how compact their wings get when folded. This was truly a breathtaking sight! I also saw a large flock of gulls standing on the ice that appeared to be resting. Most of the other waterfowl and birds were not out during my visit.

Sandy Ridge is an amazing place to visit any time of the year. I will continue to frequent this location to expand my knowledge, and hopefully capture more of its beauty.

Photo: Great Blue Heron at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



Photos: Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk (left) and Mature Red-shouldered Hawk (right) at Sandy Ridge reservation by Shaun Missig

Shaun Missig (cont.)



Photo: White-throated Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Species List

- Fox Squirrel
- Downy Woodpecker
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Blue Jay
- Tufted Titmouse
- Red-headed Woodpecker (juvenile and adult)
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Black-capped Chickadee
- **American Tree Sparrow**
- White-throated Sparrow
- Song Sparrow

Shaun Missig (cont.)



Species List (cont.)

- Northern Shoveler
- American Black Duck
- Belted Kingfisher
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Bald Eagle (adult)
- Eastern Bluebird
- Northern Flicker
- Sandhill Crane
- Northern Cardinal
- Chipmunk
- American Goldfinch
- Red-shouldered Hawk (juvenile and adult)



Photo: Red-shouldered Hawk at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Shaun Missig

Nancy Howell

31 Species



Nancy birded on **December 11.**

December started off a bit rough with a snowstorm on December 1. After a few days, damage to vegetation assessed and with the snow melting, it was time to head out to Sandy Ridge Reservation, one of the Lorain County Parks and site of December's Virtual Field Trip for Western Cuyahoga Audubon.

Friday, December 11 was a beautiful day with sunshine and temperatures in the mid to upper 40's. It hardly seemed like a December day. Christmas was just a couple of weeks away and I was thinking what ARE the colors of the holidays? Red and green? Blue and white? Silver and gold? Red and white? Nature takes on many colors and on my visit to Sandy Ridge the sky hit the blue and white color palette, while the birds seemed to like the reds. Upon arrival, even before parking the car, a **RED-shouldered Hawk**, perched near the entrance driveway, then dove into the vegetation presumably to catch a meal.

After getting myself and the spotting scope ready to hit the trail, I heard a **RED-bellied Woodpecker** and immediately after a **RED-headed Woodpecker**, two species I hoped to see. Small birds were visiting the feeder near the nature center, **Tufted Titmouse**, **Black-capped Chickadees**, **Dark-eyed Junco** and more. Walking the trail through the wet woodland, several Red-headed Woodpeckers were calling and flying around, most higher in the trees. **Blue Jay**, **White-breasted Nuthatch** and **Downy Woodpecker** were a few species sighted.



Photo: Red Fruits of a Rose Species by Nancy Howell

Nancy Howell (cont.)



Photo: Hooded Merganser at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Exiting the woods and coming to the open wetlands that make Sandy Ridge famous, **Mallards**, **American Black Ducks** and **Canada Geese** were the first waterfowl encountered. **Song** and **American Tree Sparrows** plied the brushy areas where the woods and wetlands join. A single **Bald Eagle** perched near the nest, but then flew over the wetlands and perched on a dead snag. Magnificent! I took the time to scan the water with the spotting scope and other waterfowl noted were several **Northern Shoveler**, a trio of **Hooded Mergansers**, a few **Green-winged Teal**, and, surprise, a single male **Wood Duck**. I had hoped for a few more species of waterfowl, but other birds that utilize wetlands, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Great Blue Heron**, and **Ring-billed Gull** were seen.

Taking the trail around the wetland was easy walking since it is flat. There is a viewing hill to overlook much of the marsh. Along the trail a few **Song** and **Swamp Sparrows** and **American Goldfinch** appeared in the brush and vegetation near the viewing hill. A dead tree near the hill also had a small flock of **Eastern Bluebirds**. That area does have more vegetation so songbirds are more likely to be seen. The back portion of the trail was quiet initially then near a viewing platform a number of **American Tree Sparrows**, **White-throated Sparrows**, more **Song** and **Swamp Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Junco** were moving in the vegetation. They seemed agitated and were continually giving call notes. Was it my presence or was there something else that caught their attention?

Nancy Howell (cont.)



The trail passes by a housing development that abuts Sandy Ridge and a few homes have bird feeders. This is the area where more songbirds were located - **Northern Cardinal**, **Blue Jay**, **House Finch** and **House Sparrows**, **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Tufted Titmouse**, **White-breasted Nuthatch**, **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpecker** as well as more of the various sparrows noted earlier.

I had anticipated seeing the **Sandhill Cranes** that are usually there, but so far ... oh, wait ... as I rounded the next corner, there they were, a pair of cranes poking around in the shallow water. Hoo-ray, I didn't miss them. Another **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen perched along a tree line by a small agricultural field.



Photo: Sandhill Cranes Feeding in the Marsh by Nancy Howell

Nancy Howell (cont.)



In that same area was a small oak tree cut down by beaver. Oaks are usually not a favorite tree of beaver. I also noticed and photographed a trail the beaver had made as it pulled branches of trees from the tree line, across the path, and into the marsh where it has its cache by the lodge.



Photos: Small Oak Cut by Beaver (left & middle) and Trail Beaver Made Dragging Branches into the Marsh Across Walking Path (right) by Nancy Howell

Nancy Howell (cont.)



The day was warming up nicely and birds seemed few and far between as I rounded the final corner. More **sparrows** along the way as well as **Downy** and **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**. Heading back through the wet woods two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** would land on trees that were laying on the forest floor which made the birds so easy to see. The dark tree trunks really enhanced the black, white and deep red of the birds.

Returning to the parking lot, the **Red-shouldered Hawk** that I saw coming in was perched near the lot and photographers were enjoying the bird's presence.



Photo: Song Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Nancy Howell (cont.)



Photo: Northern Shovelers in Flight at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Bird List

- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- Northern Shoveler
- Mallard
- American Black Duck
- Green-winged Teal
- Hooded Merganser
- Sandhill Crane
- Ring-billed Gull
- Great Blue Heron
- Bald Eagle
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Eastern Bluebird
- House Sparrow
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- American Tree Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- White-throated Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- Northern Cardinal

Tom Fishburn



Tom visited Sandy Ridge **TWO** times!

I visited Sandy Ridge twice in December, on the 3rd and the 22nd. I especially enjoyed being there two days after the big snowfall. And of course I was thrilled the **Sandhill Cranes** were there both times I visited. Although some folks think that the single crane is the one named "Kevin" I don't think anyone can be sure of the December birds. Tim Fairweather wrote that he can't tell males and females apart. He wrote a female had been there for 20 years when it started laying eggs. One died this year (unsure which) and he believed the other resident had left. Then the two birds showed up. I spoke to another worker there on the 22nd. He said he was unsure of which two birds they were. Much fun just the same.

One thing disappointed me in that I did not see more variety of waterfowl/ducks. But I expect that was because of much of the wetlands was frozen when I was there. I was glad to see the **Northern Shovelers** on my second visit. And I did get to see the two resident **eagles** on my first visit (none on the second). Along with a few others it made for two good December visits.



Photo: Northern Shoveler at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



*Photo: Bald Eagle Perched in the Middle of the Wetlands
at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn*



After Tom's first visit, he interviewed Tim Fairweather, Senior Naturalist/Park Manager of Lorain County Metro Parks, to gain further insight into certain aspects of the park.

Tom: My first impression when I got out to the main wetland area was how few of the old trees were left. I have not visited often but I have noticed on previous visits the trees were disappearing. So, I am wondering if the December 1st snowstorm had an effect, or if in general the age of the trees along with previous storms perhaps was taking a toll on the wetlands?

Tim: The trees have been dropping over the years. They died over twenty years ago when the area was flooded for the wetland. Their toppling was inevitable but the perches that remain are useful for the eagles, hawks, herons, egrets, kingfishers, etc.

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Tom: I was happy to see the Sandhill Crane on the day of my visit. I expected this bird to have flown south for the winter by now. What do you expect?

Tim: The “resident” pair we’ve had here for the past 20 summers nested again this year (again unsuccessfully). Not long after that I had a call from a neighbor from an adjacent housing development about a sick crane in her yard. Following up with Tim Jasinski from Lake Erie Nature and Science Center, I found out the crane died. Not sure if it was the male or female because they didn’t sex it. So we had one of the “resident” birds remain through the fall. By the way it was acting, I’m assuming it was the male (he kept chasing the other crane away). The female would have been over 20 years old based on when she first arrived here and started laying eggs.

And to answer your question as to when they leave, normally end of November-beginning of December when we start freezing up, then they would be back the beginning of March. The “resident” male is now gone for this year.



Photo: Sandhill Crane at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



*Photo: Sandhill Crane
at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn*

Tom: Also, is this bird a male as indicated by it being named "Kevin" (after Janice Farrel went to examine it to see if it was well)? And would you know if this is the same bird that has been there for years, and unsuccessfully able to mate?

Tim: The crane that has been still hanging out is the one that some people have given a human name to. (I don't think it's a good idea to name wild animals, they are not pets!) Anyways this bird showed up over a year ago and hangs out on the trail and sometimes by the front door of the Johnson Wetland Center. There are populations of cranes that grow up in Florida and Michigan that get habituated to humans and places where humans are, like golf courses and parks. They don't act very wild, actually seem very tame. So when I see people getting too close to this bird on the trail, I try to educate them as to why they should not. It's a wild animal, not a pet.

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Tom: Regarding the eagle pair, I understand there was some drama not long ago (if I got the story right) an intruding female fought and killed the resident female. Is that intruder now the resident female? Can you brief us on what you understand happened?

Tim: This is the notice I sent out in April 2018 when the eagle brouhaha went down:

“A non-resident female eagle attacked the resident female. The resident female was found later on a road-side in North Ridgeville, and taken to Lake Erie Nature and Science Center to rehab but died. The non-resident female then chased off the resident male, and then took the eaglet out of the nest, and by all accounts, dispatched it.

I checked the nest this morning and there are no adults or eaglets. Nature is Nature, a similar thing happened out here a few years back. Matter of fact, the resident female that just died, killed the original resident female. People get attached to these birds, and sometimes things like a camera make it worse in these situations.

Sandy Ridge had two totally different eagles nesting then when they started in 2002. And we probably will again. But to think of where nesting eagle populations have come in Ohio since the 80's is mind-blowing!!! You get spoiled seeing eagles everywhere.”

This was back when we had an eagle-cam online, but it was constantly having issues working due to its remoteness, and was scrapped. Oh, and the “resident” male hooked up with the “non-resident” female the next day!



*Photo: Two Bald Eagles at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Tom Fishburn*

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Tom: Finally, are any owls around possible to view? Are any owls on nests this early or will that happen later in the winter?

Tim: Yes, Great Horned Owls are around but they aren't reliably viewed. Just gotta check the trees cause you might get lucky. They start nesting usually mid-January to February.



Photo: Great Blue Heron at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn



Photo: Trumpeter Swans at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Photos: Song Sparrow at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



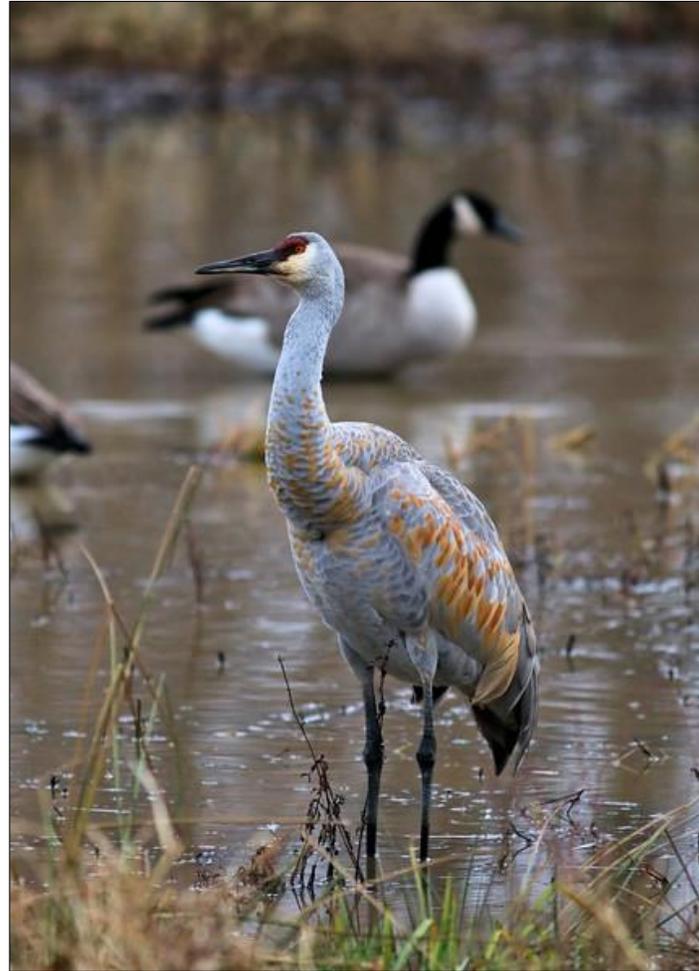
Photos: White-breasted Nuthatch (left) and Great Blue Heron (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



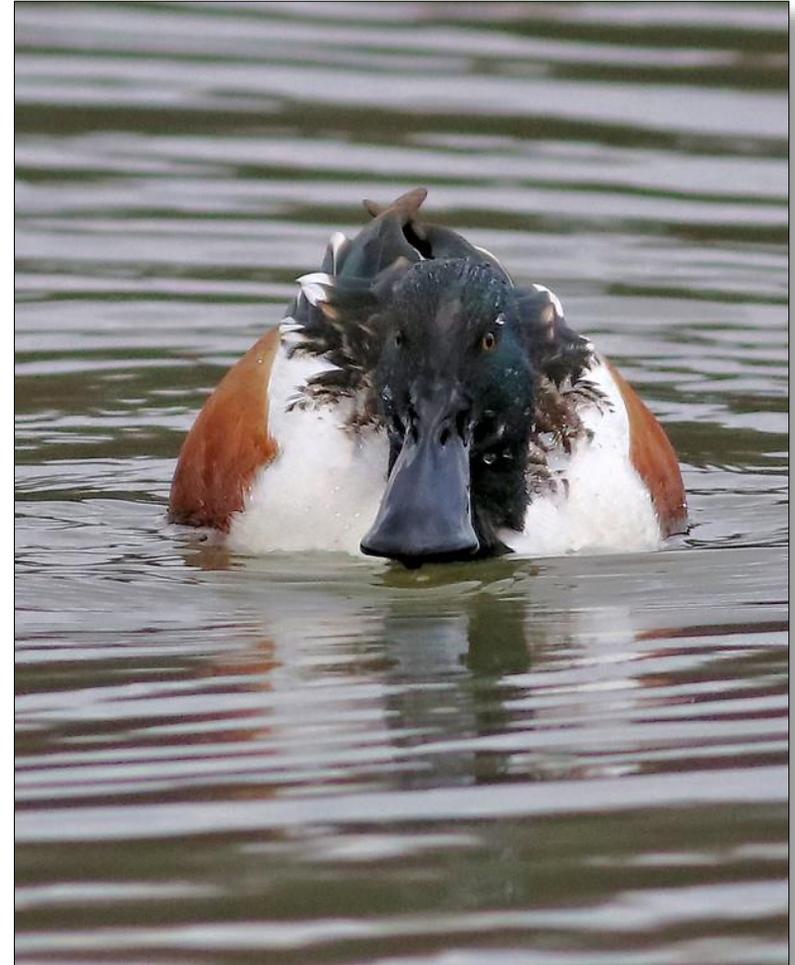
Photos: Red-shouldered Hawk at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Photos: Sandhill Crane Sharing the Marsh at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Tom Fishburn (cont.)



Photos: Northern Shoveler in Flight (left) and Northern Shoveler Afloat (right) at Sandy Ridge Reservation by Tom Fishburn

Thank you!



*Photo: Sandhill Crane "Puts on the Brakes" at Sandy Ridge Reservation
by Tom Fishburn*

Mary Ann & John Henderson
Eric Pros
Al Rand
Shaun Missig
Nancy Howell
Tom Fishburn

&

**Lorain County Metro Parks for
Sandy Ridge Reservation!**

Sandy Ridge Reservation is located at 6195
Otten Road, North Ridgeville, OH 44039.

Visit wcaudubon.org for more virtual field
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