



Logo artwork by Jim Glover

THE OHIO ATLASER

Newsletter of the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II

THE 2007 ATLASING REPORT

By Aaron Boone and Paul Rodewald
Ohio State University

This past spring and summer Ohio birders were out *en force* documenting nesting birds across the state, and we are very grateful for everyone's strong dedication and investment of time and energy in this project. It was a very good field season with many interesting surprises. Survey efforts continued to expand across Ohio and volunteers have now documented a phenomenal 108,000 records of nesting birds for the Atlas (and 2007 records are not yet fully compiled!). We congratulate all of you on your many discoveries!

After two breeding seasons, the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II has documented an amazing 202 species with 175 species actually "confirmed" as nesting. To put this into perspective, Ohio's first breeding bird atlas tallied 193 species during the entire five year project and evidence confirming

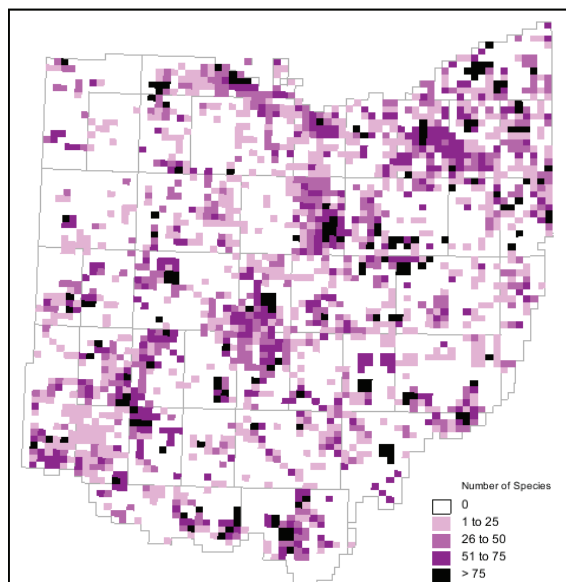


Figure 1. Survey Coverage after 2007 Atlasing Season

breeding was obtained for 182 of those species. As a side note, we encourage everyone to look over the complete Atlas species list, which is available on the Atlas website or upon request. If there are missing species or missing records for any area of the state, please enter them on the website or let us know so that we can track down these valuable records (the quickest way to access current Atlas data is by clicking on 'View Results' at <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/OH/Main/>).

In early June, there was a lot of excitement near Logan in Hocking County where a birder at the Brass Ring Golf Course observed a soaring Mississippi Kite while playing a round of golf (a perfect example how valuable atlasing can take place anywhere and at any time!). The bird's presence was quickly confirmed by many other birders and speculation about its breeding status escalated when it seemed that a pair of kites was present. At one point, two birds were observed copulating and at least one bird was repeatedly seen carrying food to a specific wooded area. The fact that the golf club is private prevented significant exploration in order to locate a nest, but the grounds staff was well informed about watching for signs of nesting. This paid off in a big way at the end of August when the grounds manager relayed a message that three kites were

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A Strategy for Effective Atlasing

by Aaron Boone
Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II

Conducting surveys for Ohio's second breeding bird atlas is not that different from your typical day of birding. True, there is a specific way observations should be recorded, but many birders already keep tallies of birds seen for a given outing. Believe it or not, these simple birding lists can add useful data to the Atlas. Whether you take state or county listing to the extreme or simply make mental notes of new species in your yard, keeping track of birds in some form or another is all you really need to get started as a volunteer for the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. Simply put, atlasing is incredible fun! Atlasing can be much like listing or participating in a Christmas Bird Count with the added benefit of observing fascinating breeding behavior. In fact, many volunteers have commented that atlasing is the most rewarding birding they have ever done.

Know Your Block's Habitats

The goal of any breeding bird atlas project is to document all bird species nesting in every Atlas block. Successfully recording species diversity in your block is certainly driven by habitat diversity, and "birding by habitat" may be the best approach to effective atlasing. It can often be challenging to find a large variety of habitat types within a roughly 10 square mile area, but this too adds to the fun of the atlasing process. You will quickly learn that exploring every nook and cranny of a block often yields some interesting surprises. Even if a clump of vegetation doesn't look like much, go ahead and give it a look. In Columbus, for example, patches of habitat within city limits have yielded great finds, such as Upland Sandpiper, Bell's Vireo, Lark Sparrow, and Blue Grosbeak.

If you're not terribly familiar with the types of habitat in your block before you actually start surveys, the most effective way to become familiar is to get out and explore your block's road network. Many roadways in rural areas are very quiet, and they frequently traverse great habitat that can easily be birded from the roadside. It's best to avoid atlasing along busy highways as roadside stops are dangerous, and noise from traffic makes it harder to detect singing birds. Late autumn or early spring might present the perfect opportunity to get out and explore all stoppable locations along roadways in order to scout your block's habitat diversity. Winter can also be a great time to explore habitats but the lack of vegeta-

tion may make it difficult to see what "looks good" for nesting birds.

Map Out a Survey Route

Once you have an idea of the roads and accessible habitats in your block (also see page 9), start planning a survey route. We suggest selecting a series of stopping locations that sample most if not all representative habitat types. If possible, it's a good idea to establish multiple stopping locations per habitat type, since stopping in more places will increase your species list and your chances of detecting less common species. For example, try to stop at all points where roads cross waterways because species like Belted Kingfisher or Eastern Phoebe may occur at only one of those waterway crossings. When you've established a good route, try to survey the route three or more times during a field season to increase your chances of detecting less visible species.

Mapping Tools

Another way to explore a block's potential is to review the variety of mapping resources that are available for the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. Thanks to internet mapping technology, each block map comes in a variety of versions. Careful examination

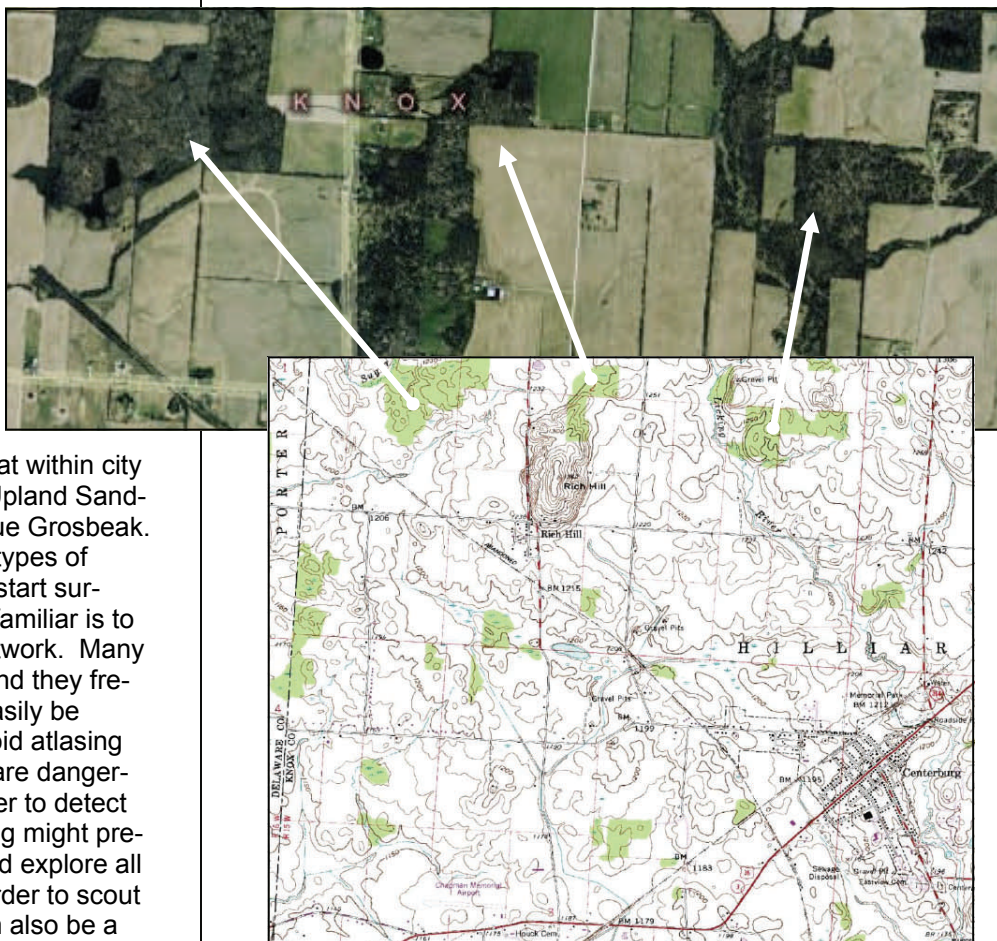


Figure 2. Satellite imagery of large forested plots in Atlas block 58B4CW.

of these maps will frequently reveal patches of habitat that may not be obvious when you're in the field. Of course, the majority of these areas will likely be private property, but select parcels of private land may be worth investigating, so investing effort into contacting certain property owners may pay off in a big way.

Figure 2 depicts a topographic map for block 58B4CW, which contains scattered wooded areas. A quick scan reveals some sizeable woodlots near the northern border but unfortunately, there are no roads providing easy roadside access to these areas. Closer inspection shows the wooded area to the northwest to be the largest. Also, the topo map shows wetland symbols associated with the area, which could yield even more interesting possibilities. Switching over to an online mapping resource, a bit of high resolution imagery shows certain areas in this wooded area that might correspond to wet spots. Depending on the ease of determining property ownership, it might be useful to focus on at least 1-2 areas per block that could hypothetically add to your block's species list. In the case of block 58B4CW, an atlas observer secured permission to access this patch of habitat. The woods were in fact a wooded wetland in the form of scattered swampy areas with buttonbush. There were many great birds in the tract including Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, American Redstart, and an especially noteworthy Northern Parula. Subsequent roadside surveys in this block didn't provide additional records for many species that were recorded in this tract of land. In reality, it is probably not worth the effort that goes into tracking down several property owners per block. However, focusing efforts on securing entry permission for one or two parcels of land could contribute significantly to your species list. This will be important for blocks where habitat patches (wooded areas, wetlands, grassland) constitute islands in a landscape dominated by agricultural or urban areas. Online mapping tools or printed resources should help to narrow down prime areas to explore.

Think about Your Goals

Now that your survey plan has been established, what next? A good approach would be to start thinking about a species goal for your block. We can use data from the first breeding bird atlas to develop a realistic species goal. In general, 70 species is an excellent starting goal for a block. Ohio's first atlas documented an average 78 species per block (as low as 48 and as high as 115.) Ohio's five physiographic regions can give some insight as to what you might expect for your blocks (Figure 2), but a realistic species goal should be based on your block's habitat diversity and data from the first Atlas. Information about species recorded during the mid-1980s is available online for all priority blocks (or upon request at any time). If you are surveying a non-priority block, you may want to review species lists for surrounding

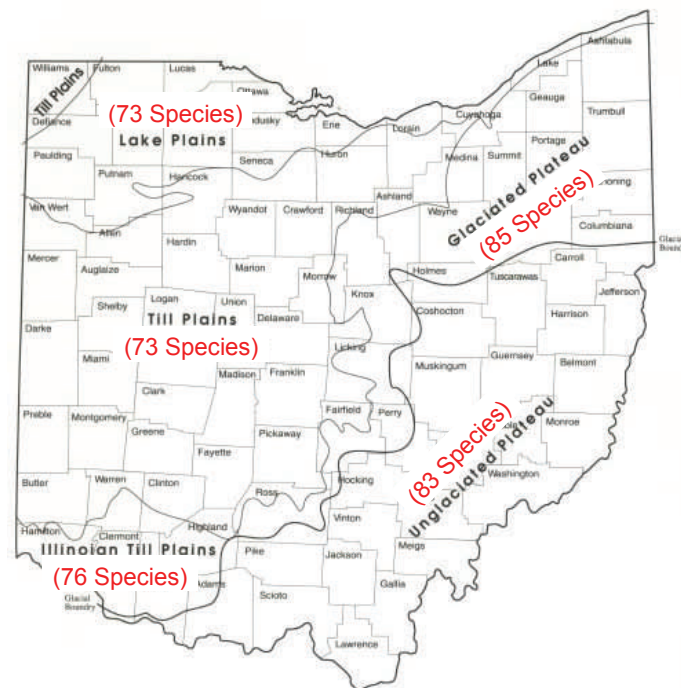


Figure 3. Average number of species recorded in blocks of each of Ohio's five physiographic regions in the first OBBA (Peterjohn & Rice 1991).

blocks to get an idea of what is possible for the general area. Keep in mind that replicating the exact species list is not a priority but knowing what species have occurred locally will be a good guideline for species you might be overlooking. For more information on block coverage goals, see page 9 in the *Atlas Volunteer Handbook*.

Using Time Effectively

Efficiency in the use of your field time will be key, especially considering that excess unproductive time spent in one block could be devoted to a neighboring block with little or no coverage. Judging the productivity of your field time might be challenging so it may be useful to keep a log or timeline of how many new species you add during each bout of atlasing. Let's think about an example. You decide to set a goal of 75 species for your block based on the block's habitat diversity and data from the first atlas. For your first day in the field, a complete 5-hour canvas of your block on an early June morning quickly generates a list of 45 species. Subsequent days in the field gradually increase your species total and after 15 field hours, you've accumulated 70 species. Have you noticed that it is getting very hard to add new species? The fact that you already have 70 species is fantastic, but strategy is now key in order to make the most of your future time investment.

Your next step should be looking for holes in your block's species list. Looking at this report will quickly reveal species that should or could be present. Future survey efforts should be focused on filling in these gaps. You may be missing several nocturnal species or some very common species, like Northern Cardinal,

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that were somehow overlooked. It is good to have a direction in mind while atlasing. The “let’s go see what I can find today” mindset isn’t terrible, but it is less effective for surveying a block once you have a high species total.

Now that you have an idea of what additional effort is required, review your block for areas that could add new species. If you are surveying a priority block, keep on track towards the 25 hour goal that OBBA II is seeking. If you are surveying a non-priority block, pay close attention to your species pay-off per time invested. If you are up to 20 hours of effort and have only added 1 or 2 species in the past 5 hours despite focused effort, you may want to consider moving on to another block and discussing with Regional or Project Coordinators about giving complete status to your

blocks.

An additional suggestion for detecting the most species: spread your survey effort throughout the breeding season. Early spring can be good for nesting owls and raptors. Late summer atlasing (for example, mid-July to early-August) can also be very *rewarding* despite the fact that birds tend to be more quiet. Many species are still actively feeding young during this period, so it is a great time for increasing the number of breeding confirmations on your list.

Atlasing is great fun and certainly has the potential to improve anyone’s birding skill. The possibilities for increasing the knowledge of Ohio’s nesting birdlife are numerous. Learn what atlasing is all about today and sign up to survey one or more atlas blocks! We guarantee that you won’t be disappointed.

INTERNET MAPPING RESOURCES

Those of you with internet capabilities have access to a great deal of freely available mapping technology. It is now possible to access high-resolution aerial imagery for all parts of Ohio. Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/maps/>) provides incredible aerial detail for many parts of the state. Where Google fails to provide enough aerial detail for picking out general habitat types, Windows Live Local (<http://maps.live.com/>) will likely fill in any gaps. We have yet to run into an area in Ohio that doesn’t have exceptional detail through this website’s “aerial” feature. In addition, Windows Live Local has a free beta version of an interactive globe program similar to Google Earth. This mapping software is unlike anything we’ve ever experienced. Although the Windows Live Local sites are not linked directly with Atlas block boundaries, the technological capabilities are beyond useful and will give your atlas planning a whole new perspective. If you have an interest in any of these sites, please contact our office and we’ll provide you with whatever information you might need.)

Atlas Block Finder - <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/blockmap/statemap.php> (uses Google Maps interface)

Printable Atlas Block Maps (USGS topographic maps) - <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/OH/Main>

Google Earth - <http://earth.google.com/> (free interactive “virtual globe”)

Windows Live Local - <http://maps.live.com/>

Microsoft Virtual Earth - <http://www.microsoft.com/virtualearth/> (another free interactive “virtual globe”)



High resolution aerial imagery near Conotton, Ohio (Harrison County) - Virtual Earth



Same area viewed at a 45-degree angle to reveal 3D topography along Conotton Creek Trailway

Nesting Species Spotlight: Bell's Vireo

by **Bill Whan**
Columbus, Ohio

These feisty little southwestern birds extend their range sparingly into Ohio. They are a review species as close as Michigan. Our local race, the easternmost *Vireo bellii bellii*, is the most colorful, differing from western birds in its brighter yellow undertail and flanks and greener upperparts. Still, it is a small and fairly drably-plumaged species.

It is our least common vireo as a migrant and breeder, but records have increased in recent times. Bell's vireo records in Ohio now involve more than thirty counties—east almost to West Virginia in Belmont County, in the north from Williams to Ashtabula counties, and south to the Ohio River—most from glaciated landscapes in central and western Ohio. With few exceptions, reports came on spring and summer dates indicative of breeding status, but not always has nesting been documented. This is what you would expect from males singing out on the fringes of the breeding range.

As a nester in Ohio, this vireo prefers open areas with scattered thick underbrush. Nests are placed low (generally six feet off the ground or less), and a dense overstory is not usually present. Many territories have been found in railroad or power-line rights of way, hedgerows, or successional areas, often in urban settings, or in otherwise unpromising scrubby areas. Observers used to looking for this species in western riparian brush will find that they prefer drier uplands in Ohio. Bell's vireos have established strongholds in reclaimed strip-mine sites in Indiana and Kentucky; there are as yet few reports from such settings in Ohio, where they would nevertheless be well worth looking for.

For those unfamiliar with the male's distinctive vocalizations, its marginal habitats and fairly drab appearance make Bell's vireo easy to overlook. The peevish nasal song—some have called it that of "a vireo with an attitude"—is unmistakable and easily recognized once learned, however, and males are conspicuous and fearless in holding territories during the May-July nesting season. Re-nestings may persist into July, since predations by cats and cowbirds are

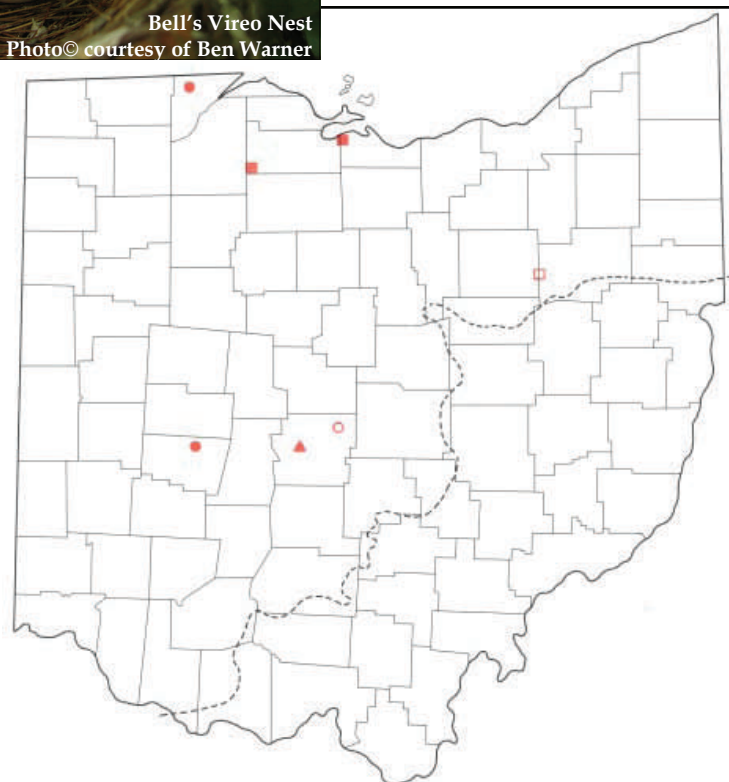
common challenges for this species. Insects form most of their diet. Nest-building takes five days or so, incubation of the 3-5 eggs 14 days, and chicks take 11-12 days to fledge. Males assist in incubation, making nesting status easier to verify.

Bell's Vireos went undocumented in Ohio until 1962, when Donald Borror taped songs of a male in a Columbus city park. Since that time reports have grown more frequent, either because of increased vigilance by observers or incursions from populations to the west. Brushy margins of roads at Buck Creek SP produced breeders or probable breeders for many years, but in recent seasons they have been absent or at least harder to find, perhaps because of maturation of the plants in the habitat. Probably, their local numbers have

not increased as rapidly as our expectations that we might find them. It is also quite likely that many still go unnoticed. Finding this species would be a particularly rewarding bonus for listening in marginal habitats that are less than pristine, such as brier patches, tangles of brush in open areas, thickets along roadways, old strip-mines, utility cuts, railroad tracks, fencerows, etc.



Bell's Vireo Nest
Photo© courtesy of Ben Warner



Breeding Distribution of Bell's Vireo
from Ohio's first Breeding Bird Atlas (1982-1987)©
Image courtesy of the Ohio Department of Natural Areas & Preserves

Gallia County Block Busting

by **Brad Sparks**
Columbus, Ohio

Southeastern and south-central Ohio contains some of the most picturesque areas in the state. Rugged hills are dominated by hardwood forests and the many streams and rivers harbor extensive riparian areas. When hayfields and large grasslands in the reclaimed strip mining areas, such as Crown City Wildlife Area, are added in, a great variety of habitats are represented in the region. This diversity allows for good numbers of breeding species to thrive in the region. The wood-warblers are represented by almost twenty species, and there are four species of vireo present, as well as many other migrants from the Neotropics. The reclaimed strip mines now host many species not historically found in this part of the state, including Henslow's Sparrows and Dickcissels.

In short, this is just a great part of the state for breeding bird diversity. However, one species that does not thrive here is the birdwatcher. Sparsely populated, the area lacks major urban areas, so there are not a lot of observers in the area, despite the presence of many birding opportunities. This creates a dilemma for me and the other regional coordinators for the Breeding Bird Atlas in this corner of Ohio. How can we get adequate coverage of blocks here? I think one solution is to hold blockbusting events. For those not familiar with this term, blockbusting involves a group of birdwatchers who meet in a remote spot and spend a few days intensively surveying the surrounding atlas blocks. This kind of social/working event is great for getting lots of coverage in an area that might not otherwise receive it.

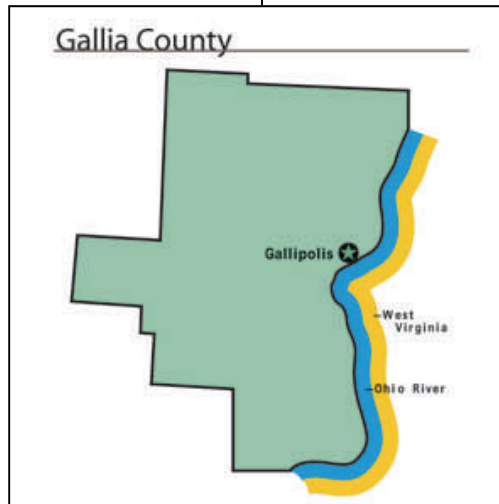
So, on the weekend of 8-10 June 2007, I and 11 other volunteers descended on the campground at Lake Vesuvius National Recreation Area, near Ironton, for a weekend of blockbusting. The majority of the birders were from the Columbus Avid Birders group, which sponsored the event, but volunteers from Cincinnati and Cleveland also came. The biologist at the Wayne National Forest arranged for us to use the group campground area at no charge. It was a great campsite, despite some distant dogs that barked all night! The weather and the birding were excellent all weekend. Most of the locally breeding warblers were observed in addition to many other exciting birds, such as Blue Gros-

beaks, Summer Tanagers, Northern Bobwhites, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Margaret Bowman and Elizabeth Clingman made the best find of the weekend. They located four adult Yellow-crowned Night-

Hérons at a small farm pond in western Gallia County! There was only one other known nesting site in the state this year, so these birds were a very significant find. Later searches failed to relocate the birds, but we were able to talk to the landowner. He informed us the birds had been present all spring and the previous summer. We were unable to confirm breeding, but that many birds at that time of year suggest possible nesting in the area. We are hopeful that future searching will confirm this rare nester. This discovery proves how difficult it is to predict what might be found in this

under-explored region of the state.

The blockbusting event was a weekend full of great birding and camaraderie. Overall, 95 species were observed with eight observed as possible breeders; 43 species were probable breeders while 44 were confirmed as nesters. We contributed a cumulative 71 survey-hours for 26 Atlas blocks during the weekend. I think is truly astounding. This blockbusting weekend was such a great success that I plan on organizing another next summer!



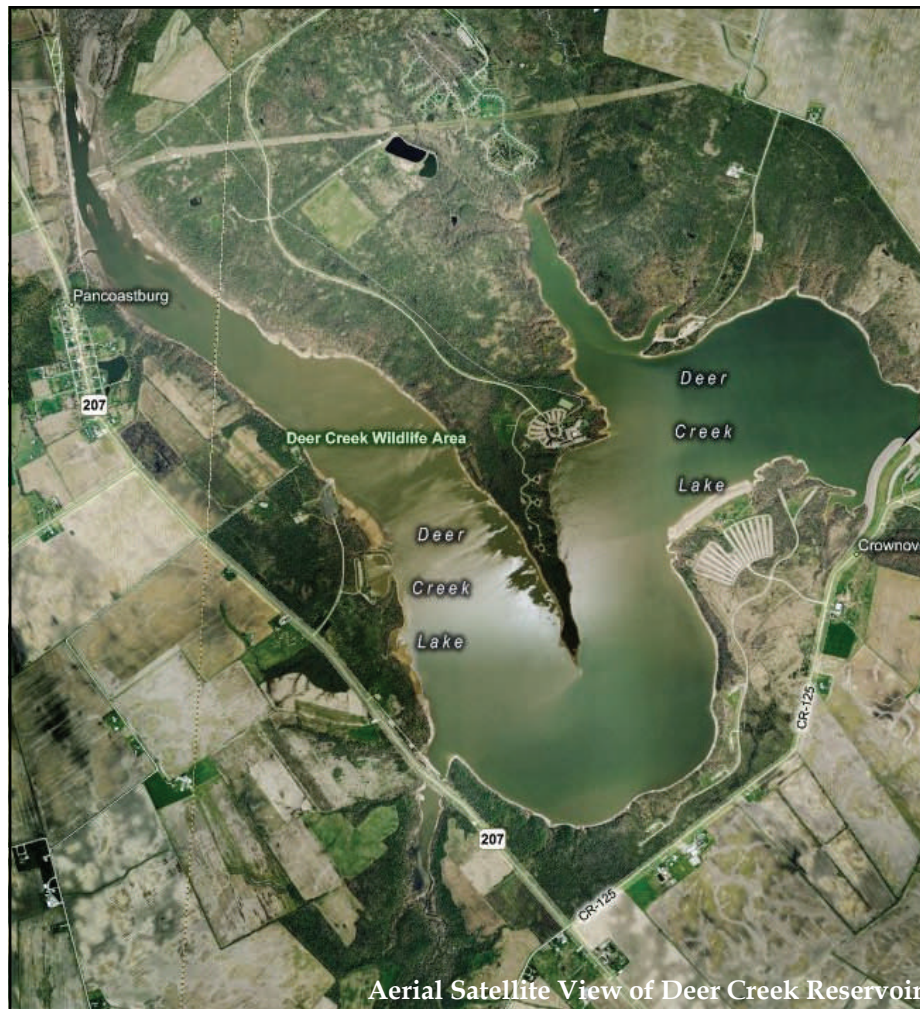
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron ©
Photo courtesy of ODNR-Division of Wildlife

Atlasing Opportunity Abounds at Deer Creek (Fayette & Pickaway Counties)

by Robert Royse
Columbus, Ohio

I started birding in Ohio in the early 90's soon after the completion of the first atlas project. While I missed out on the fun that first time around, the actual published atlas was still available for purchase and was an invaluable resource as I began to trek around the state looking for birds. (This first atlas is now available online at the OBBAI website.) When the second atlas project was announced I was very interested and wanted to participate, but I usually travel in June for a birding adventure in some remote location out of the state. Circumstances this year kept me closer to home during June, so I immediately jumped on the chance to do some atlas work. And I had as much of a birding adventure this year as I ever had in past Junes while poking around the mountains of New Mexico, the forests of Manitoba, or the plains of Montana. When looking into some potential areas to focus on for my atlas work, Aaron Boone suggested the Deer Creek area. That's an area that I had visited often, but mostly during the late fall and early spring migration periods. The truth is that I really had no idea what nested there for sure, and nobody else did either. In fact the same can be said for most of the state, which is why this atlas project is being done in the first place. I took on 6 atlas blocks and began to get out and explore. It did become a great adventure poking around areas that were new to me and never knowing what I'd find in the next woodlot, field, or small cluster of bushes.

Obvious highlights for this initial year of atlas work would of course be finding uncommon Ohio species nesting in my blocks such as 2 pairs of Bell's Vireos and 4 pairs of Blue Grosbeaks. Most of the fun came from just observing the common species in a new light. By carefully watching and listening to species that often don't seem to warrant much attention in order to determine their nesting status even the most experienced birder can find new things every day. How many birders who haven't done atlas work can tell apart the various woodpecker species by the call notes of their chicks in their nest holes or have ever seen a Common Yellowthroat hop on the ground doing its distraction display? Not only is atlas



Aerial Satellite View of Deer Creek Reservoir

work a fun adventure, you're actually contributing data towards a constructive purpose rather than just ticking things off a list that anyone besides yourself would care about. Anyone who has leafed through Peterjohn's book *The Birds of Ohio* can see how much the breeding status of many species has changed within the state in just the past 100 years and how incomplete this knowledge was back then. I see this atlas project as an opportunity to contribute something useful from my birding towards the long term study of birds in Ohio.

This year I put in about 150 hours between 6 blocks which included lots and lots of walking (great exercise!), some driving along back roads, and even a kayak trip down the Deer Creek. While my atlas blocks contained much public land in a state wildlife area and a state park, it also contained much private property. I was initially hesitant about asking permission to look over that land, but that was unfounded. The land owners that I talked to were willing to let me

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look around when I asked. Farmers that do set aside some interesting looking habitat seem to have an interest in the wildlife using it and gave me free rein to go where I wanted. A quarry also gave me permission to check out some no longer actively used parts of their property after signing a liability form. Some little isolated woodlots in the middle of agricultural areas can contain a surprisingly wide variety of species. It never can hurt to at least ask permission to go anywhere.

My atlas work this year was done mostly in June, which is probably the best month to do the bulk of the atlasing, but is by no means the only time.

Getting started sooner would have been helpful for some early nesters. It's amazing how inconspicuous common birds like chickadees and woodpeckers can be while they are nesting.

Next year during my May birding for migrants, I will definitely keep my eyes open for nesting activities wherever I go. Likewise in July when birds aren't doing much exuberant singing anymore, it can be a good time to confirm the nesting status species when recent fledglings are out and about. Atlas data also doesn't have to be limited to just your atlas blocks. You can add data onto the OBBAI website for anywhere in the state. I made two trips last spring and summer to visit some friends in Licking County in an unowned block and was able to add data for some 65 species from just a few hours of poking around their and their neighbors' properties.

Keeping your eyes and ears open wherever you head during the breeding season can help add data to the atlas.

If there was a negative side to atlas work it

was seeing how vulnerable some habitats are, particularly for the grassland nesters. Summer reports to the Ohio-birds listserve frequently mentioned the mowing of hayfields where species like Grasshopper Sparrows and Bobolinks were nesting. This was especially true in my own atlas blocks. This wasn't limited to just hayfields in private farmland. The biggest concentration of destroyed nests of Grasshopper Sparrows and Dickcissels were within state wildlife area property. How can atlas work help remedy this problem? I wish I knew.

Keeping track of everything couldn't be easier than just coming back from a day's outing and submitting data onto the OBBAI website. Every outing invariably resulted in finding more species for whatever block I was in or at least resulted in upgrad-

ing the nesting status of previously recorded species. The maps at the OBBAI website already offer an interesting summary in the changes taking place in the distribution of some species since the original atlas project. The recent northward expansion of the Northern Parula comes to mind. That's a species I found in two of my blocks this year but was unrecorded anywhere in the area during the first atlas project. As fascinating as the maps are to study already, the amount of atlas work still needed is glaring. It would be a pity if all those maps don't become complete and accurate.

There are still many places still unclaimed. If you haven't participated yet, you have missed out

on two constructive years of some very fun birding, but fortunately there are still three years left.



Bell's Vireo (Pickaway Co.)
Photo© of a territorial male by Robert Royse
www.roysephotos.com

Atlasing Quick Tip: Free County Maps!

Large fold-out county maps are usually available, free of charge, from a county's Engineer office. These maps contain substantial detail that is often not possible to illustrate in other mapping products such as online resources or the DeLorme Gazetteer. County maps frequently illustrate little-known county parks and cemeteries. The latter are especially useful for providing safe pull-outs where you can scan the surrounding landscape and listen. Also, these maps show critical stream crossings, which are great places to pull over for a quick listen.

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being seen and the “youngster was being especially noisy.” This news got a confirmation team out to the course faster than you could have said “first Ohio nesting record”. These efforts were very successful and both photo and video documentation were obtained of a noisy fledgling being fed freshly caught cicadas by an adult.

Atlas volunteers came up with many other great finds. Of particular note were several records for Lark Sparrow away from their expected nesting area in the oak-openings region of northwestern Ohio. Since the atlas started, we have records for Lark Sparrows (mostly confirmed) at locations in Tuscarawas, Franklin, Green, and Hamilton counties. Blue Grosbeaks are also being found in many new areas, including places that may not seem to be prime areas for atlasing activity. For example, while the two of us were following up on a report of Lark Sparrows on Columbus’ south side, a fledgling Blue Grosbeak was found behind a nearby shopping complex! This is

one more example of how “urban atlasing” can come up with fantastic finds in unexpected places. Other great observations include Upland Sandpipers at Don Scott airport within the I-270 beltway surrounding Columbus, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in Gallia County, an unexpected King Rail in Summit County, a Nashville Warbler in Trumbull County, and a new report of a territorial Clay-colored Sparrow—this one coming from Williams County. And, yes, Ohio finally had its first probable breeding record for Eurasian-collared Dove and the species was ultimately recorded in three western Ohio counties (Mercer, Darke, and Preble Counties),

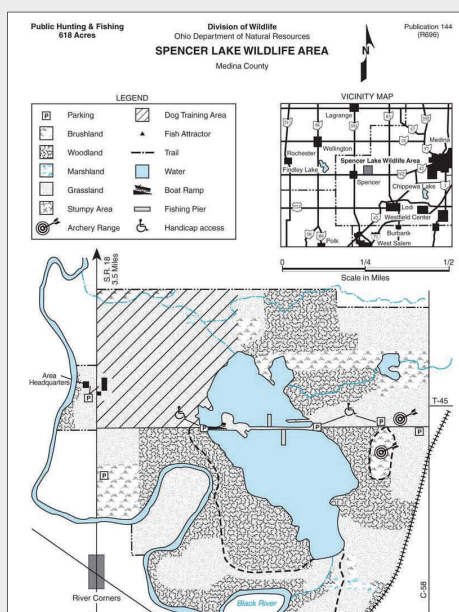
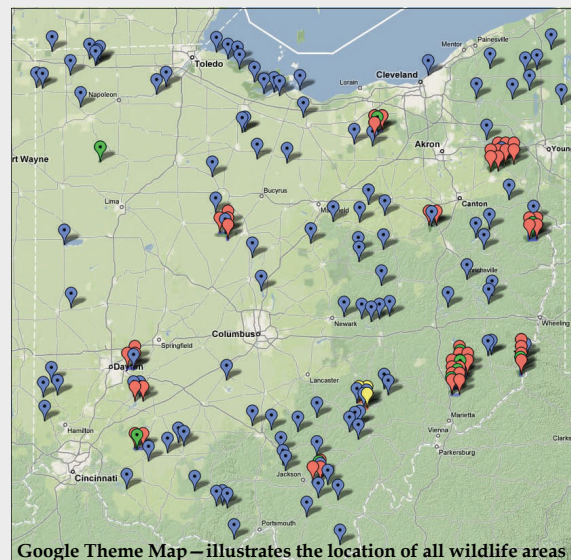
It was encouraging to see all of these great finds in addition to the tens of thousands of important bird observations being logged throughout the summer. And it was especially exciting to see a significant increase in the number of new Atlas blocks receiving data. There are now 1,789 blocks (40% of total blocks) with tallied observations (see Figure 1)

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Ohio Wildlife Areas and Recreation Trails: Easy Access to Great Atlasing Areas!

Sometimes, atlasing may be more difficult because a particular block has very little if any public land. Granted, roadside birding in rural areas can be very rewarding but it is always nice to get on the ground to do a bit of exploration. Fortunately, Ohio has a wealth of publically accessible Wildlife Areas. All said, the Ohio Division of Wildlife has set aside thousands of acres in dozens of wildlife areas across the state (see map inset-maps available at www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/). These are great places for birding and they all need to be surveyed for the Atlas. Many of the state’s wildlife areas have received little to no survey coverage to date. In the near future, an interactive Google Maps link will be posted to the main OBBA II website showing all Ohio Wildlife Areas and the Atlas blocks they are associated with. Stay tuned for this exciting development! In the mean time, please contact us if you know of a wildlife area that you

would like to survey yet are unaware of the correct Atlas blocks.



Map Available for Spencer Lake Wildlife Area

Besides great wildlife areas, did you know that Ohio is criss-crossed by old railways that have been converted into nearly 80 separate biking/walking trails? If not, give the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy a quick look (www.traillink.com). These trails are spread across the state and provide the opportunity to transect over 2,200 miles of public Ohio! Considering that an Atlas block is around 3 miles to a side, Ohio railways may provide access to over 800 Atlas blocks! The Buckeye Trail (www.buckeyetrail.org) alone is over 1,300 miles long. The Conotton Creek Trail in northern Harrison County, for example, hits 6 different blocks in about 11 miles. Interestingly, there are just a handful of Atlas records for this county! Check out your nearest Rails-to-Trails section and find out what blocks you can access. As always, please contact us with any question about what blocks contain specific areas of interest (614-247-6458; obba2@osu.edu).

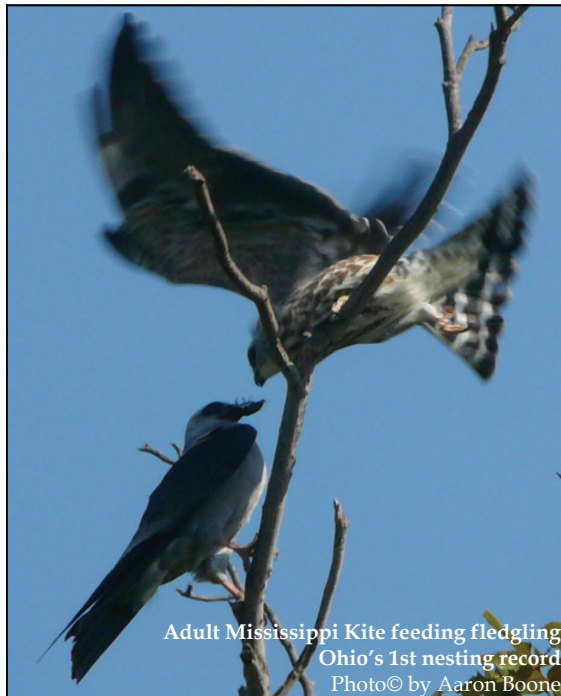
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and this represents more than a 2-fold increase in statewide coverage since the early part of April 2007. This increase in coverage also brought the Atlas to many new areas away from Ohio's main urban centers.

The current level of effort demonstrates that OBBA II has solid volunteer participation. So far, 575 volunteers for Ohio's second Atlas have contributed more than 15,000 field hours, driven 62,000 miles, and have practically equaled the number of bird records as in the first atlas (1982-1987). For comparison, nearly 500 birders working on the first Atlas spent over 30,000 hours in the field, which resulted in more than 102,000 breeding bird records.

The current level of volunteer involvement is very encouraging, yet there is much work that still remains. Although OBBA II has seen a great deal of progress in the past two years, we need all the help that we can get, especially considering the expanded coverage goals of Ohio's second atlas. We now need to fully evaluate all that the project has achieved and continue our pace of expanding survey coverage into more rural areas, where logistical issues may become an important issue in years to come. We have learned a lot so far, and we plan to use this knowledge to make the remaining 3 years as productive as they need to be. If you are currently surveying blocks for OBBA II,

please think about what remains to be done to complete your blocks in 2008 and make plans to expand your surveys into uncharted territory. Finally, please help to spread the word about the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. If you know anyone with an interest in birds, let them know that we need their help – this is among the most important contributions that you could make to the Atlas!



Adult Mississippi Kite feeding fledgling
Ohio's 1st nesting record
Photo© by Aaron Boone

Save paper! Inquire at obbaz2@osu.edu about receiving *The Ohio Atlas* through email.



****Inquires concerning the submission of articles or photographs for publication in this newsletter should be directed to Aaron Boone, Project Coordinator.**

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Atlas Staff Directory

The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II is a joint project of The Ohio State University, School of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources-Division of Wildlife. The Atlas Advisory Board includes Audubon Ohio, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, Ohio Ornithological Society, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife. This large-scale effort is made possible only through the assistance of hundreds of citizen volunteers, and other in-kind contributions from conservation groups, and federal, state, and local government agencies in Ohio.

