

# **Birds** of the **Toledo Area** *2026 Edition*



**Matt Anderson**

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*Edited by Matt Kemp and Rob Harlan*

*Foreword by Kenn Kaufman*



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*Photo credit: Piping Plover chick – Maumee Bay State Park (July 4, 2021) | Luke Robertson*

# Foreword

Kenn Kaufman

When I moved to the Toledo area in 2005, I did not expect to be surprised by anything about the birdlife here. True, I had only scant experience in Ohio. But I had gone birding all over North America for years, and on that basis, I figured I could predict exactly what birds I would see here, and when.

I was wrong.

Every time I went out in northwestern Ohio, I saw things that surprised me. Every time, I came home with questions. Is this too early in spring for a Scarlet Tanager to arrive? Will these fall migrant Hermit Thrushes stay for the winter? Is it unusual to see more than a dozen Fox Sparrows in a day? I felt like a beginner again.

Fortunately, I soon found the answers to all my questions – in a book that had just been published in 2002. *Birds of the Toledo Area* was a gold mine of information, distilling the deep knowledge of five top experts in the field. It clearly detailed the seasonal status of the hundreds of bird species known in this region and gave directions to many of the best birding spots. This volume soon became as essential to me as my binoculars. Practically every day, I found myself checking it to clarify the status of species I had seen (or missed). The book was my constant companion as I learned about the birdlife of my fascinating new home territory.

And this territory IS fascinating. Three great natural features—the western Lake Erie marshes, the former Great Black Swamp, and the unique Oak Openings—come together here, with significant tracts protected in parks, refuges, and reserves. Lake Erie exerts a powerful influence on bird migration, with vast numbers of water birds using the lake itself and vast numbers of land birds pausing along its southern and western edges. Birding is good here every day of the year.

One of the great pleasures of birding is that it is both predictable and unpredictable. It is reassuring to go out at a particular season and find the birds we expect to see. At the same time, we can hope for something completely unexpected.

*Continued on next page...*



# INTRODUCTION

*Blue Jay – near Cedar Point NWR (April 28, 2010) | Brian Zwiebel*

## Background and Premise

This book is an updated treatment of the abundance, distribution, and particularly noteworthy sightings of birds of the Toledo area. The last compilation of the area's birdlife was by Anderson, et al., *Birds of the Toledo Area*, published in 2002 by The Ohio Biological Survey and Toledo Naturalists' Association.

There are five reasons why this update is needed. First, the abundance of many birds has changed. Sadly, the numbers of many species are down significantly, not just locally, but as part of a general phenomenon of biodiversity decline across the planet. On the other hand, some birds have increased in the Toledo area, and those success stories also need to be told. Second, there are many new birding "hot spots" that did not exist 20 years ago. Third, 26 species have appeared for the first time in our area since the last edition was published. Fourth, birding has grown



*The predecessors and key resources – 1940, 1968, and 2002 | Matt Anderson*

explosively in the past 20 years, and the Toledo area has become a prime birding destination for thousands of people from the U.S. and foreign countries, especially during the peak of spring migration in May. Finally, the book will be of historical interest to birders decades from now, by providing a baseline for comparison as the abundance and distribution of our birds inevitably change.

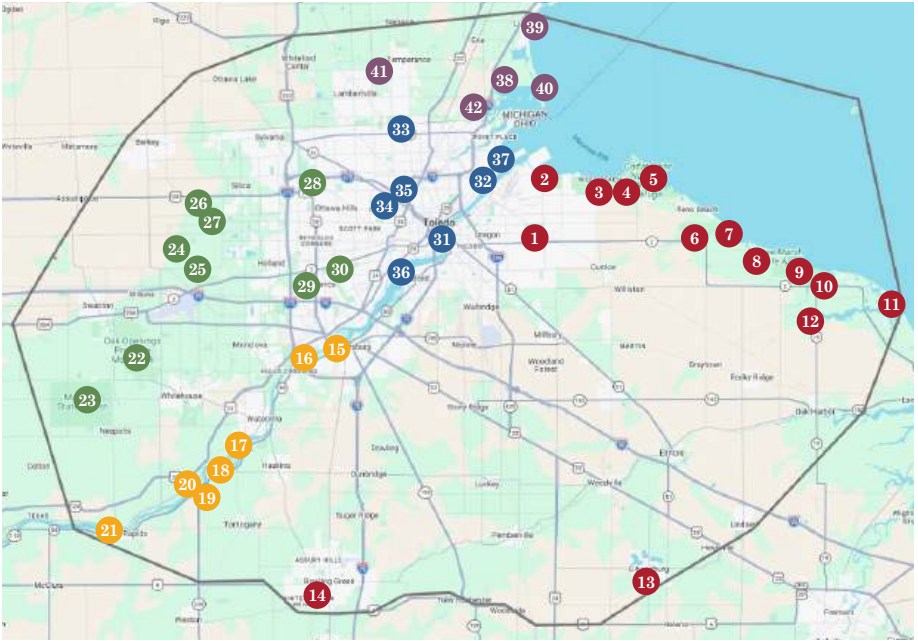
We recognize that much information on birding locations and a species' local abundance can be gleaned from online sources such as eBird. These are incredible resources in many ways, but the data are diffuse and scattered. Here, that information is synthesized and placed in historical context, all in a readily



# **SITE GUIDES** *to* **BIRDING LOCATIONS**

*Oak Openings Preserve Metropark | Abby Anderson*

# KEY TO BIRDING LOCATIONS



## East and South of Toledo

1. Pearson Metropark
2. Bayshore Road
3. Maumee Bay State Park
4. Mallard Club Wildlife Area
5. Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge
6. Howard Marsh Metropark
7. Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area
8. Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
9. Magee Marsh Wildlife Area
10. Turtle Creek
11. Navarre Marsh
12. Toussaint Creek Wildlife Area
13. White Star Park
14. Wintergarden Woods, St. John's Nature Preserve, and Black Swamp Preserve

## Maumee River - Perrysburg to Grand Rapids

15. Orleans Park
16. Side Cut Metropark
17. Farnsworth Metropark
18. Weirs Rapids
19. Otsego Park
20. Bend View Metropark
21. Grand Rapids, Providence Metropark, and Mary Jane Thurston State Park

## Oak Openings Region and SW Toledo

22. Oak Openings Preserve Metropark
23. Maumee State Forest
24. Sandhill Crane Wetlands
25. Kitty Todd Preserve
26. Secor Metropark
27. Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve
28. Wildwood Preserve Metropark
29. Andersons Farm/Brookwood Metropark
30. Swan Creek Preserve Metropark

## Urban Toledo

31. Middlegrounds Metropark
32. Manhattan Marsh Preserve Metropark
33. Greenwood Park
34. Ottawa Park
35. Woodlawn Cemetery
36. Walbridge Park
37. Cullen Park and Bayview Park

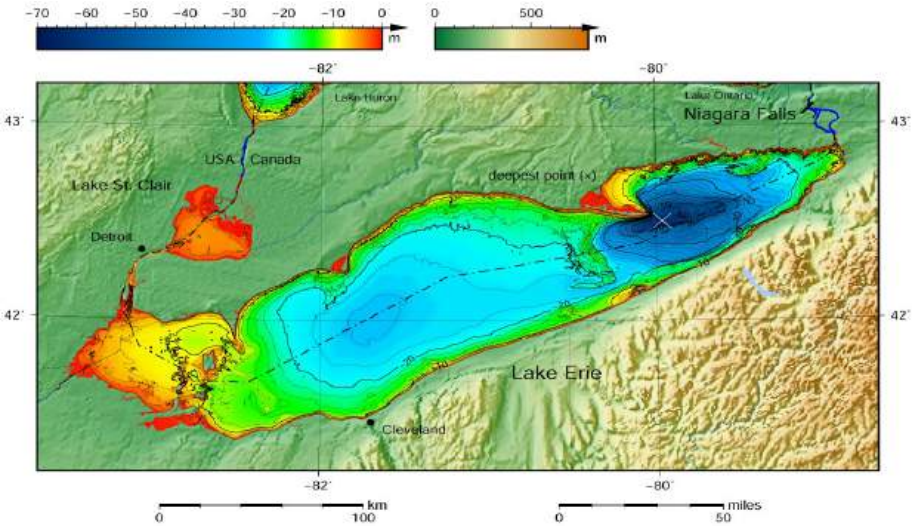
## Southeast Michigan

38. Erie Marsh Preserve
39. Luna Pier
40. Woodtick Peninsula
41. Indian Creek Park
42. Lotus Drive Mudflats

Map design and layout | Abby Anderson

## Birding Sites East of Toledo

Ohio Route 2 (Navarre Avenue) provides convenient access to most of the birding hot spots on the east side of the Toledo area. These sites are described below, mostly in a west-to-east sequence. A couple of sites south of Toledo are also included in this section.



*Depth chart of Lake Erie, highlighting the shallowness of the Western Basin | Wikipedia.org*

### ● Pearson Metropark

Pearson (620 acres) consists of a southern tract of mature forest with a few open recreation areas, and a northern section of brushy fields and wetlands. The forest is a remnant of the “Great Black Swamp” that once covered much of northwest Ohio east of the Maumee River. Expect typical resident forest birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, and titmice. During spring and fall, Pearson can be quite good for migrant songbirds. The newer northern section provides habitat for wetland and shrub/scrub species. The main entrance to Pearson is located just north of Route 2 on Lallendorf Road. A Window on Wildlife attracts a variety of feeder visitors during the colder months.

### ● Bayshore Road

On Bayshore Road just east of the decommissioned power plant there is a sign for Bayshore Fishing Access. On the west side of the parking area there is a foot bridge leading to a good gravel path that takes you to the plant’s former hot-water outflow channel. The channel was a premier spot for rare gulls when the power plant was fully operational. Although the turbines have been shut down, there is still enough outflow to maintain a lagoon of open water throughout the winter, attracting gulls,



# SPECIES ACCOUNTS

*Eastern Bluebird – Wildwood Preserve Metropark (May 12, 2025) | Rick Nirschl*

## BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

**Status:** Very rare visitor.

**Habitat:** Marshes, ponds, small lakes.

This stunning southern species has been quickly expanding its range northward, so it is not surprising the Toledo area has added this duck to its bird list. On May 12, 2014, a group of eight was discovered at Pearson Metropark (Steve Ritt)—the first for our area. They spent the entire day there, allowing scores of happy birders to see them. Since then, there have been at least six additional records. Most are from between May and July, with a record of a single bird on September 1, 2024, at Ottawa NWR (Kelly Bryant). These unusual ducks are as likely to turn up on a small local pond as they are in the western Lake Erie marshes, so birders should be vigilant. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks have successfully bred to the south in Ohio and are likely candidates to breed here someday. They have nested near Wooster, Ohio annually for the past few years.



*Black-bellied Whistling-Duck – Russell Road and  
Ohio Route 2 (June 7, 2019) | Andrew Simon*

## FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK *Dendrocygna bicolor*

**Status:** Accidental.

**Habitat:** Marshes.

Three of our four occurrences of this cousin of the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck are from the fall of 1962: October 14 (Edwin Sobota and Gary Schwalbe), ten in the Erie Marsh; October 19, one at Metzger Marsh; and October 20, nine in the Toussaint Marsh. These were the first records of this species for both Ohio and Michigan. A Fulvous Whistling Duck on display at the Magee Marsh Visitor Center

## KENTUCKY WARBLER *Geothlypis formosa*

**Status:** Rare spring migrant, very rare summer resident, extremely rare in fall.

**Habitat:** Mature woods, often near wet areas and ravines.

The Toledo area is near the northern limit of this handsome warbler's range. Difficult to find at any time, the best chances for finding one is at migrant traps during spring migration or learning of territorial singing males in May or June in the Oak Openings. Unfortunately, they were found there during breeding bird censuses in just six of 12 years from 2013-2024, with more than one only once (two birds in 2017). Although they probably nest in the Oak Openings with some



*Kentucky Warbler – Oak Openings Preserve Metropark (May 8, 2023)*  
*Geoff Malosh*

regularity, definitive breeding evidence has been lacking since 1963. Northbound birds are most often encountered between the final days of April and the middle of May. April 18, 1993, may be the earliest arrival date. Since such small numbers make it this far north, and they are quiet when heading south, we have very few fall records. There may be only five: September 7, 1964 (Bob Crofts), August 19-22, 1978, at The Andersons Farm (Brookwood Metropark, Matt Anderson), September 20, 1994, August 19, 2010, at Irwin Prairie (Ryan Schroeder), and September 22, 2015, along the Magee Marsh Bird Trail (Terry Bronson). The largest one-day count may be four, found by Tim Thompson along the Magee Marsh Bird Trail May 2, 2018.

## COMMON YELLOWTHROAT *Geothlypis trichas*

**Status:** Common migrant and summer resident, rare in winter.

**Habitat:** Cattail marshes, wet thickets.

Forest, and Secor Metropark. Finding five or more in a day is not difficult if familiar with their song. As many as ten have been found in a day in the Oak Openings. They have apparently become more common the past couple of decades. The average number of singing males on the Oak Openings Region breeding bird censuses more than doubled from eight in 1990-1995 to 17 in 2013-2025. Thirty were found during the 2024 census. Spring migrants pass through mostly during the first half of May, although there are many late April records at migrant traps. An exceptionally early bird was found April 4, 1986. Once they stop singing in late summer, Hooded Warblers become decidedly harder to find, and most have departed by mid-September. A couple of surprising out-of-season birds were found November 25-29, 1961, in Toledo (Irene E. Youngs) and December 9, 1986 (location not specified). The latest fall departure otherwise may be October 14, 2019, in Oak Openings Preserve Metropark.

### AMERICAN REDSTART *Setophaga ruticilla*

**Status:** Common migrant and uncommon but very local summer resident.

**Habitat:** Wooded areas.

Flashy and strikingly different than other warblers, American Redstarts are one of our more common migrant warblers. Prior to the 1940s, Lou Campbell described American Redstarts as our third most common breeding warbler behind Common



*American Redstart – Magee Marsh (May 17, 2016) | Tony Dvorak*

Yellowthroats and Ovenbirds. That is certainly no longer the case. The breeding population tumbled considerably by the 1950s, and they have been uncommon and localized since. During the nesting season, American Redstarts are mostly confined to Secor Metropark and areas just south of there as well as wooded corridors along

and mid-May and southbound migrants from late August through about October 10. A huge flight estimated at more than 150 birds was observed along the Magee Marsh Bird Trail May 13, 1978. This species has been found as early as April 13 (1996), and there are at least three June records including June 9, 1943, and, more recently, June 2, 2006, at The Andersons Farm. A thoroughly unexpected bird at the Magee Marsh Bird Trail July 20, 1981, may have been an extraordinarily early migrant. There are at least four November records, the latest being November 10, 1996, at Bayshore Power Plant (Tom Kemp) and November 28, 1998, at Consumers Power Plant in Erie, Michigan (Greg Links).

### **CERULEAN WARBLER** *Setophaga cerulea*

**Status:** Rare and decreasing spring migrant, very rare summer resident and fall migrant.

**Habitat:** Wooded areas in migration, mature woods in summer.

Unfortunately, the buzzy song of this sky-blue beauty is mostly a thing of the past. While singing males have been found into early or mid-June sporadically in recent decades, the last evidence of breeding was in 2007 when Tom Kemp found a pair



*Cerulean Warbler – Metzger Marsh (May 1, 2022) | Rick Nirschl*

carrying nesting material just south of Mallard Lake in Oak Openings Preserve Metropark. The last couple of June records were from Oak Openings Preserve Metropark in 2021 and Secor Metropark in 2017. The latter site was the species' last local stronghold—one to three pairs were consistently present there in June



# TOLEDO AREA BIRD LIST

*Common Yellowthroat – Magee Marsh (May 5, 2011) | Brian Zwiebel*

# TOLEDO AREA BIRD LIST

● *very rare or accidental*   ● *locally extirpated*   ● *extinct*

1		Black-bellied Whistling-Duck ●	41		Ruddy Duck
2		Fulvous Whistling-Duck ●	42		Northern Bobwhite ●
3		Snow Goose	43		Wild Turkey
4		Ross's Goose	44		Ruffed Grouse ●
5		Greater White-fronted Goose	45		Greater Prairie-Chicken ●
6		Brant ●	46		Gray Partridge ●
7		Cackling Goose	47		Ring-necked Pheasant ●
8		Canada Goose	48		Pied-billed Grebe
9		Mute Swan	49		Horned Grebe
10		Trumpeter Swan	50		Red-necked Grebe ●
11		Tundra Swan	51		Eared Grebe ●
12		Wood Duck	52		Western Grebe ●
13		Garganey ●	53		White-winged Dove ●
14		Blue-winged Teal	54		Mourning Dove
15		Cinnamon Teal ●	55		Passenger Pigeon ●
16		Northern Shoveler	56		Eurasian Collared-Dove
17		Gadwall	57		Rock Pigeon
18		Eurasian Wigeon ●	58		Groove-billed Ani ●
19		American Wigeon	59		Yellow-billed Cuckoo
20		Mallard	60		Black-billed Cuckoo
21		American Black Duck	61		Common Nighthawk
22		Northern Pintail	62		Chuck-will's-widow ●
23		Green-winged Teal	63		Eastern Whip-poor-will
24		Canvasback	64		Chimney Swift
25		Redhead	65		White-throated Swift ●
26		Ring-necked Duck	66		Ruby-throated Hummingbird
27		Greater Scaup	67		Rufous Hummingbird ●
28		Lesser Scaup	68		Limpkin ●
29		King Eider ●	69		Sandhill Crane
30		Harlequin Duck ●	70		King Rail
31		Surf Scoter	71		Virginia Rail
32		White-winged Scoter	72		Sora
33		Black Scoter	73		Common Gallinule
34		Long-tailed Duck	74		American Coot
35		Bufflehead	75		Purple Gallinule ●
36		Common Goldeneye	76		Yellow Rail ●
37		Barrow's Goldeneye ●	77		Black Rail ●
38		Hooded Merganser	78		Black-necked Stilt
39		Common Merganser	79		American Avocet
40		Red-breasted Merganser	80		Black-bellied Plover



## The Toledo area is one of America's premier birding destinations.

Home to The Biggest Week in American Birding, the Toledo area attracts birders from across the globe and boasts great birding in all seasons. This thoroughly updated book covers what you need to know about the region's birdlife...

- Accounts for all 381 species known to have occurred. Included are status, habitat, dates of occurrence, record early and late dates, and high counts.
- Site guides for the area's top birding destinations.
- Information on history, changes in bird life, and why the birding is so good.
- Scores of photos by some of the area's most talented bird photographers.

