

Diane Sigler

237-0816

Thanks David!

A Rare Unforgettable Moment

Picture the scene -- a beautifully cool summer morning in at the edge of Mill Stream Reservation in Cleveland's exemplary Metro Parks. Having just driven my wife to her post as music camp nurse at Baldwin-Wallace College, my "scouting" a few of my assigned IBA (Important Bird Area) nesting sites along the East Branch of Rocky River concluded by walking a nearby loop back to my parked car. Pausing briefly to enjoy a small flock of Cedar Waxwings relishing the profusion of honeysuckle berries, with the rising sun at my back, I turned down a well-defined slashing through a major power line easement. I had hardly walked more than a dozen paces when a flurry of activity in a small dead tree abutting the trail stopped me in my tracks (the kind of tree remains to be determined).

Expecting to see perhaps contain a flycatcher or two (an Eastern Kingbird was later observed in the same tree 7/4/07), I beheld instead a number of Robins including several recently fledged spotted juveniles. Perfect light conditions quickly alerted me to the realization that Robins were not the sole occupants of this otherwise nondescript tree as a female Northern Oriole, a pair of Gray Catbirds, at least one Black-Capped Chickadee, and a female Northern Cardinal busily engaged feeding a young Cowbird were also present. Following its foster-parent's every move, the hungry Cowbird flew or hopped from branch to branch as additional species flew in and out of the same crowded tree some of them perching only inches away from a bird of a different feather or species. Almost unnoticed during these proceedings was the presence of a tiny female Ruby-Throated Hummingbird at the end of one of the branches (a brilliantly plumaged male "Hummer" whizzed by a very short time later).

Looking up above the steel towers, I saw a Red-Tailed Hawk pursued by a blackbird which upon closer inspection proved to be a male Northern Oriole. Could this colorful *icterid* have been the heroic mate of the female Oriole in the small tree in front of me? Was it possible that instead of taking cover from a *buteo* Hawk known to be less of a threat to passerine birds than raptors classified as accipiters that at least some of the birds in the tree felt more secure being able to keep a close watch on the soaring raptor from their unobstructed vantage point? If so, as realized since, why was this particular tree almost always full of birds with or without the presence of a bird of prey? Such were my somewhat muddled musings.

As if these sighting were not enough to take in for the first minute or two of my trail walk, alighting on a small branch directly ahead between me and our amazing tree was a Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher holding tightly in its beak an insect nearly half a long as itself. Seemingly oblivious to my presence, the Gnatcatcher was apparently trying to figure out how it might be able to ingest its super-sized breakfast which it finally managed to accomplish before rather elegantly scraping the side of its beak on a twiglet "napkin" its perch before darting off into the thick underbrush next to the walking trail.

Clearly this was one of those rare moments overflowing with opportunities for experiencing firsthand in such concentrated form common yet personally seldom observed samplings of avian behavior. The female Cardinal's compliance in satisfying the appetite of a ravenous young Cowbird recalled the wonderment of a scene decades earlier in Southwestern Connecticut as I chanced upon two adult Cowbirds with a fully grown breast-streaked juvenile quietly perched on the same branch between them. What primeval instinct motivated that still only days old Cowbird to bond and likely spend the rest of his or her days with this parasitic duo (supposedly the young bird's biological parents) which would also mentor this young bird to propagate its race by victimizing the nests of dozens of potential foster parents in a variety of habitats?

The fascinating display that materialized that morning in a matter of seconds was repeated the very next day as by walking in the opposite direction during an early evening visit with my wife and our granddaughter resulted in an equally amazing influx of varied species, again, in the same small tree: ubiquitous Robins and Catbirds, a Common Flicker, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow to name but a few. That other people as well as occasional leashed pets passed but a few feet beneath them did not lessen the steady flow of winged creatures from entering or leaving the exposed branches of what many would understandably initially dismiss as a rather ugly seemingly useless candidate for the fireplace but which for a privileged few of us proved to be an unusually welcoming arboreal gathering place or sanctuary providing a veritable visual feast of what my wife, granddaughter and I refer to as "God's birds." Ample reasons also exist to sound the ecological concern in the familiar words of the cautionary plea, "Woodman, spare that tree!"

kmb

Rocky River Important Bird Area Forest Bird Survey

POINT NUMBER MS16

DATE 7/4/07
month day year

TIME 6:53
(Survey began)

RESERVATION Mill Stream Run
LOCATION

OBSERVER Ken Ballas
RECORDER Ron Pictner

COMMENTS: TRUCK NOISE 4TH OF JULY

WEATHER

TEMPERATURE 67
°F

SKY Mostly Sunny (>75% clear) Partly sunny (25-75% clear) Mostly Cloudy (<25% clear)

WIND Calm (still; no leaves moving) Slightly breezy (leaves move) Breezy (small branches sway) Windy (large branches sway)

SPECIES	Singing Male	Male			Female			Unknown			TOTAL
		0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	
RB WOOD PECKER	✓		1								1
GREAT CREEPY CATCHER			1								1
ROBINS			III								3
BLUE JAY				1							1
TUFTED TITMUSE	✓			1							1
CARDINAL						1					1

Rocky River Important Bird Area Forest Bird Survey

POINT NUMBER 11520

DATE 7/4/07
month day year

TIME 7:09
(Survey began)

RESERVATION Mill Stream Run

LOCATION

OBSERVER Ken Rallar

RECORDER Ron Puchner

COMMENTS:

WEATHER

TEMPERATURE 66
°F

SKY Mostly Sunny (>75% clear) Partly sunny (25-75% clear) Mostly Cloudy (<25% clear)

WIND Calm (still; no leaves moving) Slightly breezy (leaves move) Breezy (small branches sway) Windy (large branches sway)

SPECIES	Singing Male	Male			Female			Unknown			TOTAL
		0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	
GRAY CATBIRDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			171							3
ROBINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			11							2
R.E. VIREO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		1								1
YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1									1
CARDINAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			1							1
GOLDFINCH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			1							1
CHIPPING SPARROW				1							1



Rocky River Important Bird Area Forest Bird Survey

POINT NUMBER MS 06 DATE 7/4/02 TIME 5:36
month day year (Survey began)

RESERVATION Mill Stream Run
 LOCATION

OBSERVER Ken Balla
 RECORDER Ron Piefner

COMMENTS:

WEATHER

TEMPERATURE 66
°F

SKY Mostly Sunny (>75% clear) Partly sunny (25-75% clear) Mostly Cloudy (<25% clear)

WIND Calm (still; no leaves moving) Slightly breezy (leaves move) Breezy (small branches sway) Windy (large branches sway)

SPECIES	Singing Male	Male			Female			Unknown			TOTAL
		0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	
WOOD THRUSH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	1	1							2
REDFEED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		1								2
WOOD PEWEE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	1								2
WHITE BREASTED NUTHATCH			1								1



Rocky River Important Bird Area Forest Bird Survey

POINT NUMBER MS23

DATE 7/4/07
month day year

TIME 8:54
(Survey began)

RESERVATION Mill Stream Run

LOCATION

OBSERVER Ken Ballas

RECORDER Ron Pinter

COMMENTS:

WEATHER

TEMPERATURE 68
°F

SKY Mostly Sunny (>75% clear) Partly sunny (25-75% clear) Mostly Cloudy (<25% clear)

WIND Calm (still; no leaves moving) Slightly breezy (leaves move) Breezy (small branches sway) Windy (large branches sway)

SPECIES	Singing Male	Male			Female			Unknown			TOTAL
		0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	0-25 m	26-50 m	>50 m	
ROBIN	✓										12
WHITE BREASTED NUTHATCH											1
GOLDFINCH	✓										1
CRACKLE											3
STARLING											1
RED WING BLACKBIRD											1
RED SHOULDERED HAWK	✓										1
HOUSE FINCH	✓										1
CHIPPING SPARRROW	✓										1
CARDINAL	✓										1
BLUE JAY											1

BLUE JAY ♂

Gulls



Observed at MS23 Tuesday 6/5/07 beginning at 9:46 a.m. (1st of 3 observation dates)

American Robin (11)
Red-Bellied Woodpecker (2)
Common Crackle (3)
Eurasian Starling (8)
Northern Oriole (1)
Blue Jay (1)

20+ Cedar Waxwings (just outside of pt. area possibly checking out Serviceberry tree)

Observed at MS23 6/12/07 beginning at 7:00 a.m. (2nd of 3 observation dates)

Northern Cardinal (3)
Red-Wing Blackbird (2)
American Robin (8)
Eastern Goldfinch (3)
Blue Jay (1)
Great-Crested Flycatcher (1)
Northern Oriole (1)
Common Grackle (1)
Great Egret (1)
Chimney Swift (1)

Rough-winged Swallows, Mallard Ducks, Canada Geese et al. nearby

6/28/07 Barely outside of my point range, a Spotted Sandpiper was observed feeding along the dam spillway while a singing Catbird was heard barely within range.

6/29/07 Downy Woodpecker, House Sparrow, Mourning Dove, many Robins (20+), Cowbird, Killdeer

Unidentified Heron (Little Blue?), other sandpiper

Observed at MS23 7407 beginning 8:54 a.m. (3rd of 3 observations with Ron Pintner)

American Robin (12)
White-Breasted Nuthatch (1)
American Goldfinch (1)
Common Grackle (3)
Starling (1)
Red-Winged Blackbird (1)
Red-Shouldered Hawk (1) ?
House Finch (1)
Chipping Sparrow (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)
Blue Jay (1)

Share or perhaps send the following addendum to BWD

Observed at MS02 6/5/07 beginning at 8:55 a.m. (misty rain; still overcast)

Downy Woodpecker (2)
Gray Catbird (1)
Red-Bellied Woodpecker (2)
Yellow Warbler (1)
Eastern Screech Owl? (1)
Northern Oriole (1)
Great-Crested Flycatcher (1)
Pileated Woodpecker (1)

Just outside of area Carolina Wren, Chipping Sparrow, Towhee (R. B. Gull overhead)

Observed at MS02 6/12/07 beginning at 7:40 a.m. (2nd of 3 observation dates)

Gray Catbird (2)
Pileated Woodpecker (1)
Northern Oriole (1)
Song Sparrow (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)
Rufous-sided Towhee (1)
American Robin (1)
Black-Capped Chickadee (2)

Just outside of range Carolina Wren, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak (in range 6/21 and 6/28),
Yellow Warbler

*Add to those observed nearby 6/21 and 6/28

Cedar Waxwings, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds
Eastern Cowbird, Common Flicker et al.

Observed at MS02 7/4/07 beginning at 8:05 a.m. (3rd of 3 observations)

Red-Bellied Woodpecker (1)
Northern Cardinal (2)
American Robin (3)
Rose-Breasted Grosbeak (1)
Warbling Vireo (1)
Northern Oriole (1)
Blue Jay (1)

Observed at MS06 6/5/07 beginning at 8:08 a.m. with light rain (1st of 3 observations)

Red-Bellied Woodpecker (1)

Red-Eyed Vireo (1)

Tufted Titmouse (1)

Observed at MS06 6/12/07 beginning at 8:15 a.m. (2nd of 3 observations)

Red-Eyed Vireo (2)

Great-Crested Flycatcher (2)

Red-Bellied Woodpecker (1)

White-Breasted Nuthatch (1)

Observed at MS06 7/4/07 beginning at 7:36 a.m. (3rd of 3 observations)

Wood Thrush (2)

Red-Eyed Vireo (2)

Wood Pewee (2)

White-Breasted Nuthatch (1)

Observed at MS16 6/5/07 beginning at 7:36 a.m. (1st of 3 observations)
Turnpike, parkway traffic noise

Red-Eyed Vireo (2)
American Robin (2)
Northern Cardinal (2)
Great-Crested Flycatcher (1)

Observed at MS 16 6/12/07 beginning at 8:58 a.m. (2nd of 3 observations)

Red-Eyed Vireo (2)
Northern Oriole (1)
Great-Crested Flycatcher (1)
Wood Pewee (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)

Observed at MS 16 7/4/07 beginning at 6:53 a.m. (3rd of 3 observations)

Red-Bellied Woodpecker (1)
Great-Crested Flycatcher (1)
American Robin (3)
Blue Jay (1)
Tufted Titmouse (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)

Observed at MS20 6/5/07 beginning 7:05 a.m. steady drizzle (1st of 3 observations)

Red-Eyed Vireo (1)
Wood Thrush (1)
Tufted Titmouse (1)
American Robin (1)

Observed at MS20 6/12/97 beginning 9:08 a.m. (2nd of 3 observations)

Red-Eyed Vireo (2)
Gray Catbird (2)
American Robin (2)
Ovenbird (1)
White-Breasted Nuthatch (1)
Downy Woodpecker (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)
Blue Jay (1)
American Goldfinch (1)

Observed at MS20 7/4/07 beginning 7:09 a.m. (3rd of 3 observations)

Gray Catbird (3)
American Robin (2)
Red-Eyed Vireo (1)
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (1)
Northern Cardinal (1)
American Goldfinch (1)
Chipping Sparrow (1)