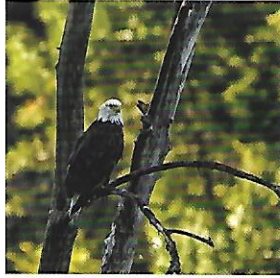


# Birding and Fall Migration at Caesar Creek State Park

By Rick Hoffman, President Nature Association of Caesar Creek and Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist  
Photos by Marlon Carr

Feel like trying something new? How about birding? Caesar Creek State Park is an ideal place to see the autumn color changes and the fall migration of birds. The park is a birder's paradise of habitats- woodlands, prairies, marshes and a lake. Each type of area attracts different species of avian wildlife. Caesar Creek State Park has 3,741 acres of which, 2835 is the surface area of the lake. The lake shoreline is forty miles in length.



Robert G. Thobaben, a Master Permittee since 1976, has been banding songbirds for thirty-five years at Caesar Creek Visitor's Center. Once caught, they are banded, their data recorded and are released. He has kindly shared his data on the fall migration from September 1 until November 15th for the years 2003-2017. There are 81 migratory song birds, and eleven songbirds that are permanent residents of the park. The fall migration of song birds has four times the numbers of birds than the spring migration does. Fall migration is poorly understood since the birds are quiet and vegetation is thick. Over the past fourteen years, the data shows that the bird migration peaks in early October and tapers off through November, so now is the ideal time to try birding.

Whether you are trying birding for the first time, or are a current enthusiast, there are several tools you can use to make your venture more successful. The Caesar Creek Visitors Center front desk has a free spread sheet which shows the Christmas Bird Count Summary for the Park for the years 2005-2012. Also available in their book store is a pamphlet entitled "Birds of Caesar Creek" by the Friends of Caesar Creek, which is a wealth of information for a first-time birder to the area. It has a small map of the lake with seven vantage spots for birding clearly marked and a description of each, on two pages entitled "Scoping the Lake". There is also a complete Caesar Creek Lake bird checklist with an occurrence code: A-Abundant, October 2018

C-Common, U-Uncommon, O-Occasional, R-Rare, V-Very Rare, and X-Accidental. It is minimally priced at \$1.00.

Don't forget about technology, there are two apps for cell phones from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that are very useful when birding. The first is Merlin, a bird ID guide that uses your cell phone location and the date when used, connects to the second app, E-Bird, to search a data base to determine which birds were most likely to be encountered on that date and place. There are three ways to use it: Start a Bird ID using an algorithm, do a photo ID, or Explore bird groups by pictures such as hawks etc. Once you select and identify your bird, it will play all the bird's various calls.

E-Bird allows birders to record their sightings. Below are some of the "Hot Spots" for birding at Caesar Creek State Park.

- Caesar Creek Wildlife Area
- Beach
- Mound Road
- Spillway
- Boat Ramps
- Campgrounds
- Observation Tower
- Ward Road
- Visitor Center
- Harveysburg Road
- Nature Center
- Gorge Loop Trail

Depending on which type of birds you would wish to follow through the fall migration will govern where you want to start your birding adventure. Regardless of where you start, you will be rewarded. Make sure to stop by the Nature Center to see the resident Red Tail Hawk, Stryker, and Screech Owl, Scout. ■

Steven Lee is an avid birder at Caesar Creek State Park and has provided a list of birds that are most likely found here during the fall migration.

**Waterfowl:** Gadwall, American Widgeon, American Black Duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Sandhill Crane, Caspian Tern, Common Tern.

**Shorebirds:** Solitary Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Least Sandpiper.

**Warblers:** Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Cape Mat Warbler, Black-throated Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Western Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Canada Warbler.

**Songbirds:** Hairy, Downey & Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Blue jays, House Finches, Cardinals, House Sparrows, Carolina Wrens, White-breasted Nuthatches, Tufted Titmice, and Carolina Chickadees.

**Others:** Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Warbling Vireo, Sedge Wren, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Water thrush, Hermit Thrush, Lincoln's Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow.