



Bird Watching at its Best

Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society and has long been recognized by bird watchers as an ideal area for observing birds. The great variety of habitats in the national park makes it possible to observe more than 200 bird species throughout the year. Bird watching continues to be one of CVNP's most popular activities.

Observing the interesting behavior of something as small as a ruby-throated hummingbird or as large as a great blue heron holds a special appeal to some. To others the reward is in experiencing something totally new, or in seeing so many different kinds of birds in one location.

So grab a field guide and a pair of binoculars, and see what experiences await your discovery. This guide is organized to help you find the best bird watching locations in CVNP. Each of the locations has sub-captions stating the habitat, followed by detailed descriptions of the types of birds found there and when they are best seen.



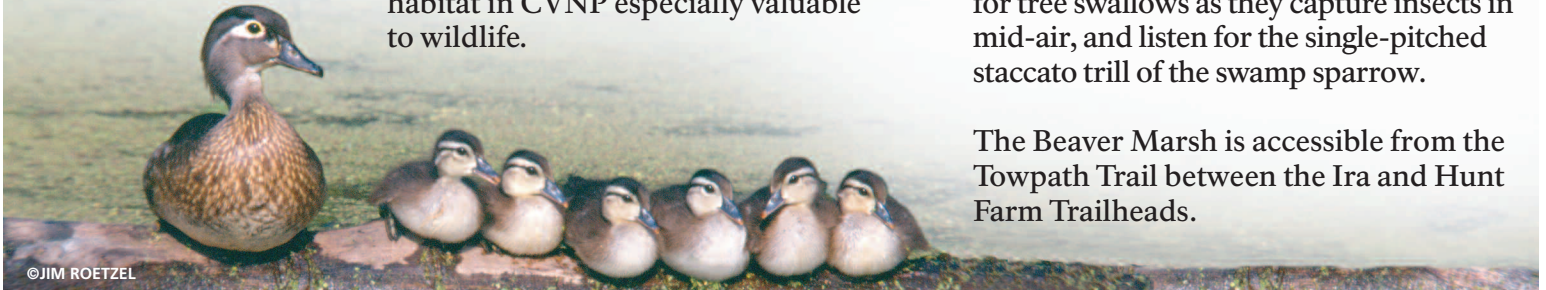
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Beaver Marsh / Mixed Wetland

This is a good place to visit during the waterfowl migrations in March and November. Wetlands provide essential feeding and resting places to migrating birds. Less than 10 percent of Ohio's original wetlands still exist, making this habitat in CVNP especially valuable to wildlife.

A walk along the boardwalk often provides great bird watching opportunities, especially during summer, when it is possible to see birds at close range and in their peak breeding plumage. Watch for families of wood ducks in the water, look for tree swallows as they capture insects in mid-air, and listen for the single-pitched staccato trill of the swamp sparrow.

The Beaver Marsh is accessible from the Towpath Trail between the Ira and Hunt Farm Trailheads.



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Ledges / Hemlock and Mixed Ravine Forest

The cool, moist hemlock and yellow birch forests along the towering sandstone ledges provide us an opportunity to watch birds in an area more typical of the mixed evergreen forests of Canada. The Ritchie Ledges are a micro-environment, a small area that creates its own environment. As water slowly flows through the sandstone, it keeps this place cooler during the summer than the surrounding areas, providing a specialized bird habitat. Solitary vireos, winter wrens, hermit thrushes, and black-throated green warblers are frequently observed here during the late spring, when bird

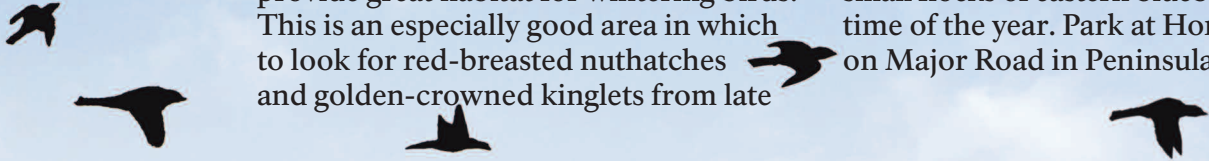
watching is best. A few of these more northern birds stay through the summer and nest here. The Ritchie Ledges are located in the Virginia Kendall area of the national park. Parking is available at Happy Days, Ledges Shelter, and Octagon Shelter.



Horseshoe Pond / Mixed Evergreen and Fields

A walk along the Tree Farm Trail takes us through a former Christmas tree farm, now rich with mixed conifer trees that provide great habitat for wintering birds. This is an especially good area in which to look for red-breasted nuthatches and golden-crowned kinglets from late

October through early March. The large open areas surrounding the evergreen forests are excellent places to look for small flocks of eastern bluebirds most any time of the year. Park at Horseshoe Pond on Major Road in Peninsula.



Bath Road and Pinery Narrows / Floodplain and Mixed Swamp

From February until July, great blue herons nest in treetop colonies called heronries. The four-foot tall herons with their seven-foot wingspans are most impressive during the breeding season when, in peak plumage, they perform their courtship displays. The Bath Road heronry can be observed throughout the entire breeding season from a pullout along Bath Road. In contrast, it is best to visit the Pinery Narrows heronry in the early spring before the views become obscured by leaves. You can view this heronry from the Towpath Trail by following the trail 1/2-mile north

of the Station Road Bridge. On the west (river) side, watch for a small clearing just before the bridle trail junction. From here look across the river for the heronry and listen for the birds' loud, primitive-sounding call.

In 2007 a pair of adult bald eagles nested in the Pinery Narrows heronry and successfully raised one eaglet, the first to be born in Cuyahoga County in over 70 years. Both adult and juvenile bald eagles can be seen flying overhead, fishing in the river, or perched in the nest area.



Former Coliseum Site / Grassland

The demolition of the Richfield Coliseum in 1999 brought an unexpected benefit. Restoration of the building site and parking lot created a new grassland habitat that is benefiting many bird species, several of which have been in decline due to loss of habitat. During the summer breeding season, five species in particular can be found here: eastern meadowlark, bobolink, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and Henslow's sparrow. Because these birds nest on the ground, we ask visitors to stay on the edge of the grassland during nesting season (April to August). Disturbance of the nests could result in nest failure.

Migration brings other interesting species to the grasslands, including various hawks and shore birds. On winter evenings at dusk, short-eared owls can be seen flying low over the dried grasses hunting for voles and other rodents.

To reach the former Coliseum site, park in an unmarked grassy lot along the north side of State Route 303, just west of the intersection of I-271. If conditions are wet, park carefully along the road just before it narrows.



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Get Involved

CVNP offers programs and other opportunities to bird watchers of all skill levels. You can attend one of many regular bird walks or volunteer to help with seasonal bird censuses. These opportunities are listed in the park's Schedule of Events, available at all visitor centers and online at www.nps.gov/cuva. You are also invited to become involved in efforts to understand and preserve sensitive bird populations.



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**Cuyahoga Valley
National Park**

www.nps.gov/cuva
www.dayinthevalley.com