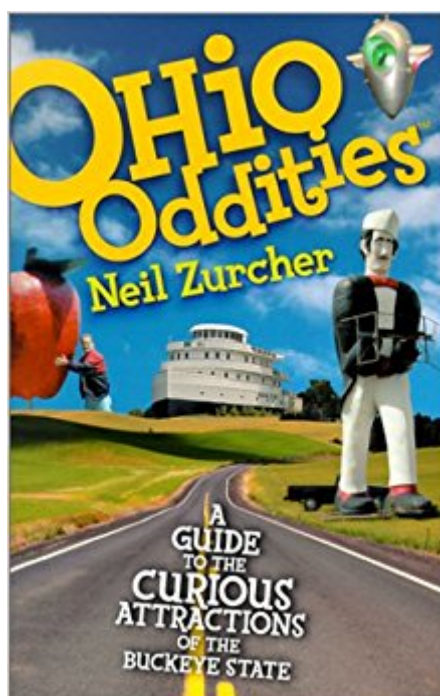


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# Ohio Oddities: A Guide To The Curious Attractions Of The Buckeye State



## Synopsis

Ohio's a bland and ordinary Midwestern state, right? Ha! You must never get off the highway. The Buckeye State has no shortage of strange, silly, goofy, quirky, eccentric, and just plain weird people, places, and things if you know where to look. And no one has looked in more places for Ohio's oddities than Neil Zurcher, the popular Fox8 TV travel reporter who makes his living on the road seeking out unusual destinations. This book collects the most remarkable things he's found in and about the Buckeye State, including: Mysteries. Like the 'bottomless'; Blue Hole of Castalia and Ashtabula's famed Headless Chicken who lived without a noggin for 38 days. Big things. Like the World's Largest . . . Crystal Ball . . . Gathering of Twins . . . Easter Basket . . . Cuckoo Clock . . . Peculiar claims to fame. Like the 'Oldest concrete road in America,' the 'World's fastest pumpkin carver.' Strange collections. Like the Objects Swallowed by Citizens of Lima; the nation's only vacuum cleaner museum; and the world's largest collection of popcorn poppers and peanut roasters. Notable citizens. Like Balto the Wonder dog, cheesemaking firewalker Komar the Magnificent, and Buckeye Chuck, the weather rodent. And the just-hard-to-explain. Like the Wellington ATM shaped like a Victorian horse and buggy or Ohio's strange attachment to the bathtub from the U.S.S. Maine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Neil Zurcher has reported on unusual travel destinations for Fox8 TV for more than 20 years. His popular 'One Tank Trip' reports are the longest-running local travel segment on

television. He also writes regularly for AAA Ohio Motorist magazine and is the author of three other books: Neil Zurcher's Favorite One Tank Trips, More of Neil Zurcher's One Tank Trips, and One Tank Trips Road Food. All have been local bestsellers. Zurcher received the Distinguished Service award from the Society of Professional Journalism and the "Silver Circle" award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Former governor of Ohio George Voinovich called him "One of the most respected and knowledgeable travel writers in the state."

**NORTHWEST OHIO The Headless Chicken Ashtabula** A little over a half-century ago, a chicken in Ashtabula, entered the record books and probably caused more than a few nightmares. On New Year's Eve, 1946, John and Helen Marrison were preparing to celebrate with a nice chicken dinner. Back in those days, at least in Ashtabula, when you wanted chicken for dinner you didn't head for the freezer. You picked up your ax and headed to the chicken coop. John did just that, selecting an especially active White Rock rooster that had probably awakened him too early one too many times. As he had done countless times before, John grabbed the rooster by the legs and laid its neck against an old railroad tie. Knowing that his wife was rather partial to cooked chicken necks (she considered them a delicacy), John aimed high with his impromptu guillotine. He had grown up on a farm and had dispatched hundreds of chickens, and there didn't seem to be anything unusual about this job; the head parted from the body as expected, and the bird flopped around a bit and then went still. John was now overdue for work at the gasoline station, so he pushed the lifeless bird into a bucket and carried it down to his basement, leaving the messy plucking job to his wife. But when Helen Marrison later went to prepare the bird, the bucket was empty. Then she saw it—a headless chicken running in circles around her basement! For some people an incident like this would be nightmarish, but Helen Marrison was made of sterner stuff. She just picked up the phone and called her husband. John assured her this was probably just a delayed muscle reaction and that the bird would soon lie down permanently, and she would then be able to get it ready for the cooking pot. But when John came home that evening and went into the basement, there was the rooster still walking around! The sight of the headless rooster, alive and kicking, kind of dulled John and Helen's appetite for fresh chicken. So they then decided to try and help the rooster continue his battle to live. John put some spider webs into the still-seeping wound where the head used to be to help stop the bleeding, and he placed the bird in a box. Over the next few days, neighbors heard about the strange event and began tramping through John and Helen's house to see the headless wonder. Then the media caught on. The local

paper, the Ashtabula Star Beacon, ran a front-page story on January 2 reporting that the rooster was "as perky as can be"; and "strutting around the living room." The rush was on. Reporters from Cleveland and even national papers started to descend on Ashtabula, stopping at the police station for directions to the home of the headless walking chicken. That was when Mrs. L. B. Butler of the Ashtabula Humane Society got into the act. Mrs. Butler arrived at the Marrison home with two sheriff's deputies in tow, demanding that John immediately dispose of the rooster in a humane manner. John refused. He reasoned the rooster really wanted to live and didn't seem to be in any pain, and in fact was acting almost normal. Instead of dispatching the bird, he took it to Doctor Whitwood, a Jefferson veterinarian. The doctor performed some minor surgery on the bird's neck so that more food and water could be fed directly into its crop, along with a little gravel to help digestion. When he came out of the operating room, he said it was his opinion that because the brain is located in the head is what tells us if we are in pain, the rooster must not be feeling any ill effects. The Humane Society backed off and left the matter to be argued in the newspapers over the next few weeks. Some readers urged the bird be saved; others argued that the rooster must be hurting and should be put to sleep. While all this was going on, John Marrison said the rooster seemed content. He fed it every day, using a spring from an old corset and an apple peeler to force the food into the bird's digestive system. But then in February, while feeding the bird, John accidentally disturbed the scab over the place where the head used to be, and despite John's continued efforts, the bird began to weaken. It died, for real this time, a day later, on February 7, 1947. By now John had really grown attached to the bird, so he sent it to a taxidermist to be mounted. He kept it for many years in his garage. John was never again able to kill a chicken. But he did admit that he sometimes would order chicken in a restaurant. Copyright © Neil Zurcher. All rights reserved. This text may not be reproduced in any form or manner without written permission of Gray & Company, Publishers.

Having lived in Ohio for only seven years - being a transplant from Tennessee, I have made it a point to learn as much as possible about my adapted state. In the process I have visited every one of the 88 counties in the Buckeye state and many of them several times over. Being a travel writer, I probably know Ohio better than most natives. So when I picked up "Ohio Oddities" by Neil Zurcher I didn't really expect to learn much that I didn't already know. How wrong I was. This delightful book is chock full of information which is sure to lead even the most experienced traveler (including the armchair variety) to new discoveries. People with an inquisitive streak will thoroughly enjoy reading the many interesting tidbits of culture and history that are in "Ohio Oddities." Even after exploring all

88 Ohio counties, more than half of the things chronicled here were new to me. It's an absolute goldmine of information that could only have been written by a man who has spent a lifetime "discovering wonderful little curiosities around the state." Thanks Neil Zurcher, for a fun book which gives me lots of reasons to get out and explore Ohio again.

I moved to Ohio and thought this might be interesting as places to see or at least read about. I loaned it to my brother and apparently he loves it as I've never gotten it back.

The book is in perfect condition--brand new. The author has a neat sense of humor. We Buckeyes have some things to make us proud and some things to make us scratch our heads. A fun read!

I have a friend who I met while interning in Cleveland who still remembers the first thing I ever said to him: "Did you know the average person eats a pound of bugs a year?" It was one of the many facts I gleaned from *Grossology: The Science of Really Gross Things*. I can't say that my bug fact was the smoothest ice breaker, but it was clearly memorable. For some off facts about Ohio, refer to Neil Zurcher's *Ohio Oddities*. Sample Facts:- The First Traffic Light The first traffic light was invented by some men in Asheville, Ohio. It looked nothing like today, but resembled more of a UFO.- World's Fastest Pumpkin Carver Jerry Ayers, from Baltimore, Ohio, can carve a pumpkin in under two minutes. He's even listed in the Guinness Book of World Records.- Largest Working Model of a Mousetrap If you ever have a mouse the size of a large man, head to Lisbon, Ohio, to get your hands on a mousetrap that measures about 10 by 4.5 feet.- Former Home of the Underwear Festival Remember those red long johns with the flap in the back? They were invented in Piqua, Ohio. In honor of the town's great invention, Dav Pilkey chose it as the setting for his children's series *Captain Underpants*.- First Banana Split Soda Shoppes would not be complete without a banana split on the menu. They have "Doc" Hazard at Hazard's Drug Store in Wilmington, Ohio, to thank for that invention.- Birthplace of Clark Gable Cadiz, Ohio, may not be known for a lot of things, but it is where Clark Gable was born and grew up. You can still go and see the house where he was born.- Headless Chicken One of the weirder facts in this book, in Ashtabula, Ohio, a couple cut the head of a chicken to eat it for dinner and the chicken didn't die until a month later. The couple let the headless chicken live in their basement and even fed it, admiring its will to live. *Ohio Oddities* probably isn't a book you will read in one sitting, but guaranteed you'll use facts from the book in conversation. Come on - who doesn't want to hear about a living headless chicken?

Please do not let the title of this book mislead you. The author, Neil Zurcher, Cleveland Press Journalism Hall of Fame inductee, and, Fox TV-8 "One Tank Trip" travel-show host, certainly introduces the reader to many "oddities"

We are a family of Ohioans who love this book. I have lived here for several years and never knew there were such interesting things to see and do in a state that I had thought was so boring. Even my 11 year old son who hates to read devoured this book. We plan to search out several of Mr. Zurcher's suggestions next summer!!!!

Some of the most interesting features of Ohio are now brought to light by Zurcher. Some curiosities we have heard of, but never investigated. Now it is all before us to study and then go see for ourselves. This book adds much to the appeal of traveling around Ohio. If you like adventure of a curious nature, this book is for you.

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