



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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November Program

WHAT'S NEW WITH AVIAN FLU?

**Patricia M. Dennis, Veterinary Epidemiologist,
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo,
Ohio State University**

**Monday, November 12, 2007
Rare Book Room
Cleveland Museum of Natural History**

**Reception and Coffee: 6:45
Chapter Meeting: 7:15
Program: 7:30**

We have all followed news in recent years about strains of "avian flu" that may have the capacity to mutate into a new form that can be easily transmitted to humans, creating a pandemic rivaling the horrible flu epidemic of 1918. Avian flu has not been in the news as much of late, but research is, of course, ongoing, and we all have a stake in learning as much as we can about recent developments. Our November speaker is eminently qualified to inform us on this important subject.

Dr. Patricia (Pam) Dennis is assistant clinical professor and veterinary epidemiologist in a partnership between the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine at Ohio State University. The mission of the program is to assess the health, diseases and environment of captive and free-ranging wildlife populations, to improve and monitor the health and well-being of these populations, and to provide research, education and outreach opportunities in wildlife health. As part of this position, Dr. Dennis has created a surveillance program for avian influenza viruses in zoo birds at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. She is actively involved in developing a similar program in zoos across the country.

Prior to her current position, Dr. Dennis completed her PhD studies at The Ohio State University in the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. The focus of her epidemiologic research was on the survivability of captive black rhinoceroses in the United States. Dr. Dennis received her DVM from North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine. She is a Diplomate of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. She completed an internship in large animal medicine and surgery at North Carolina State University, and then completed a clinical residency in zoo and wildlife medicine at the University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine.

As we enter the flu season this approaching Winter, join us for an important discussion of how avian flu is affecting and can affect bird and animal species, including, potentially, US!

This program is free and open to all. No reservations are necessary. Parking at the Museum of Natural History is free.

Thelma G. Smith, 1918-2007

Greater Cleveland Audubon notes the passing of longtime member Thelma Smith on September 21. Mrs. Smith, whose husband Kent H. Smith was one of the

founders of Lubrizol Corporation, was a supporter of Audubon for many years, even donating her time to work in the Aurora Sanctuary in the 1990's.

Thelma and Kent Smith are well known in the Cleveland area for the work of the Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust, established in 1971 and formerly known as the 1525 Foundation. The trust is the major local sponsor of "Nature", an educational program that airs Sundays on WVIZ, Channel 25. Mrs. Smith also supported environmental initiatives such as saving Singer Bog, near Akron-Canton Airport, from development. The Kent H. Smith Trust will continue to award grants based on the Smiths' guidelines.

The Joint Audubon/Native Plant Society Walk on September 29: A Plantsman's Perspective

By Tom Sampliner

Cool crisp autumn like weather brought out members of both groups for an enjoyable field trip to various sites near the lakeshore in Mentor. Certainly the birding highlight had to be the circling of a bald eagle. He was sharing the thermals with a turkey vulture.

Obviously, I will be giving a summary from a plant specialist's perspective of what we saw. Due to habitat loss there is little left of Ohio's natural heritage of lakeshore lands which consist of dunes and swail, beach, savanna and adjacent forest. The plants we leaders most often pointed out were the disjunct species from the Atlantic coast, meaning they make a jump from that shoreline to our region of the Great Lakes.

On the way into the Headlands Dunes Preserve, we pointed out a short tree with leaflets in threes and seeds with wide wings encircling the seed. This wide, thin wing tissue enables better wind dispersion; nature's airplane wings. This is the wafer ash, (*Ptelea trifoliata*). In our area, lakefront beach forest zone is the best location to seem them. They belong to the largely tropical Rutaceae family. While this family might not strike a familiar cord, certainly your breakfast members of the group, oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes should.

Once inside the preserve, we began to see some of the dune building grasses that have thick mats of rhizomes that trap tiny particles and hold them in place, thereby building these formations we now observe. Atop dunes nearest the beach, tall vase-like clumps of grass held tall tawny crowded flowering stalks aloft. These tight inflorescences waved in the breezes looking somewhat like wheat; these were American Beach Grass, (*Ammophila breviligulata*), a threatened species in Ohio.

I pointed out the succulent low growth of a plant that had a few tiny white or pink florets still going right out on the sandy beach. This was (*Cakile edentula*) Inland Sea Rocket, a potentially threatened species in Ohio. In their current condition they reminded one of season ending conditions of the impatiens stems in so many yards. Too bad there were so few florets left.

Sprawling dark green plants in large colonies with compound leaves with oval leaflets and tendrils at branch ends helped us recognize the disjunct state population of the now out of flower beach pea; (*Lathyrus japonica*), a threatened state listing. Too bad none of the pretty hot pink flowers were visible; good excuse to come back in June and July next year.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND S 70

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Finally, one more state-listed species was highlighted. A sprawling succulent plant that looked a lot like relatives that grow out of sidewalk cracks or in gardens. This was the seaside spurge, (*Euphorbia polygonifolia*). Whereas gardeners and homeowners generally remove the common relative, these rare plants should be sought after.

This is just a brief floristic summary of some highlights from the trip. Hopefully all enjoyed the excellent comfortable weather and the exchange of our different specialties. The grilled hotdogs and drinks supplied by the Native Plant Society along with the several contributed participant side dishes made for an enjoyable, welcome festive lunch break. Hopefully all agree this was educational, fun and certainly calling for more of these joint ventures.

editor's note: ASGC certainly endorses the idea of expanding our relationship with the Native Plant Society and of following up on Tom's suggestion that we take advantage of opportunities to share our activities as often as possible!

Common Birds in Decline and Citizen Science

The oxymoron in National Audubon's latest State of the Birds report draws attention to our growing realization that even species we take for granted as being plentiful have suffered very large population declines in the last forty years. Their wellbeing is not at all assured, even though they do not qualify for inclusion in Audubon's *Watchlist* which names species such as the California Condor and Blue Winged Warbler that are under actual threat of extinction. The *Common Birds in Decline* list includes species that have experienced population declines greater than fifty percent over the last forty years.

For the first time, the data supporting the *Common Birds in Decline* list comes from both Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (in its 107th year) and the U.S. Geological Survey's Breeding Birds Survey (begun in 1967). Both surveys rely heavily on volunteer citizen scientists to gather the data needed to understand how bird populations are doing throughout the year.

Representative species for Ohio with their percentage declines over the last 40 years include:

Northern Bobwhite	-99%
Grasshopper Sparrow	-97%
Green Heron	-82%
Cerulean Warbler	-80%
Red-headed Woodpecker	-78%
Eastern Meadowlark	-75%
Northern Flicker	-67%
Red-winged Blackbird	-64%
Yellow-breasted Chat	-63%
Field Sparrow	-59%

This troubling information also, of course, reinforces the importance of our chapter's mission to preserve habitat for birds in our four wildlife sanctuaries, as loss of habitat accounts for much of the decline in bird populations. It specifically draws attention to our Novak and Aurora sanctuaries as Important Bird Area sites and our chapter's efforts to monitor species during the breeding season. Finally, it underscores how vital your support of ASGC's conservation mission is.

Field Trips

Jim Tomko

Audubon Turkey Hunt! 10:00 AM, Saturday, November 17, Aurora Sanctuary.

NO! Do not bring guns! We will be hunting with binoculars and cameras for the elusive but ubiquitous Turkey who makes himself very scarce at this time of year! We will search the forest for signs of these awesome birds as the leaves crunch under our feet, alerting them to our approach. We may be lucky and catch them off guard. Join us for a fun and informative walk where we will discuss the natural history of this American Native prior to your Thanksgiving Holiday. Park in the Aurora Sanctuary parking lot on the south side of East Pioneer Trail, a few hundred yards east of its intersection with Page Rd. in Aurora.

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