



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

November, 2015



The "Bird Babes" team poses with their Audubon Plush Birds.

Photo: K. Cochran

We sponsored our first team birding event, the Chagrin River Bird Quest, on October 9th and 10th. The weather was cool but sunny, a perfect day for birding!

Nine teams participated and included family groups, adult couples and groups of friends, and two teams of teenagers.

Teams checked in at Look About Lodge in the South Chagrin Reservation on Friday evening to pick up their

Bird Questers enjoy a perfect fall day

complementary t-shirts, bird checklists, and maps. Then several teams joined the "Owl Prowl," an optional bird walk offered by the Cleveland Metroparks. Four other bird walks were offered throughout the day on Saturday.

After a busy day of birding, teams returned to Look About Lodge on Saturday for an awards celebration, socializing, and a generous spread from A Dab of Class Catering. In addition to the food, ASGC provided awards certificates to the winning teams, and Audubon Plush Birds to all the children and young people participating (and to some of the adults!). The top three winning teams were: 3rd Place—Team Maddie Cope (39 species); 2nd Place—The Moebius Mob (45 species); and 1st Place—Two Wings (51 species).



Matt Valenic, Bancroft and Ruth Twaddell of team Two Wings win first place with 51 species.

Photo: K. Cochran

Congratulations to all the teams!

The Chagrin River Bird Quest was designed for families and friends to enjoy the outdoors together, whether they were experienced birders or never birded before. It was also intended to raise awareness of the importance of the Chagrin River Watershed and IBA

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IBA Committee set to begin work

What is an IBA? An Important Bird Area, determined by the National Audubon Society, is a "site where significant numbers of birds concentrate for breeding, migration, or wintering." The Chagrin River Corridor IBA is a relatively intact contiguous riparian corridor surrounded by developed residential area, and includes Holden

Arboretum, Penitentiary Glen, North and South Chagrin Reservations, Chapin Forest, and the Audubon Sanctuaries in Aurora and Willoughby Hills. The ASGC has begun an initiative to concentrate conservation and monitoring efforts within this IBA.

With that in mind, President Jim Tomko created the IBA Committee,

consisting of Joe Malmisur as Chair, Sarah Mabey as Chief Scientist, Mary Salomon as Chief Survey Compiler, Harvey Webster as Advisor, Alison DeBroux as Publicist, and Stan Searles as facilitator and coordinator with other organizations, with Jim standing by to help where needed.

"We will all be called upon to fill in with other than assigned duties from time to time," Jim says. "It is not just the seven of us undertaking this. Our role is to plan and orchestrate. Also it is not just a one year project. It will be ongoing and I am sure it will evolve as the years go on. This is just a start."

A project of this magnitude requires lots of planning and organization, and thinking "three and four moves ahead," according to Joe Malmisur. "I believe in order to achieve our objective of improving bird habitat throughout the entire IBA area, thus improving species diversity and numbers, it must be 'More

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From the Nest...

We are continuing to plan our strategy for the Important Bird Area (IBA) program in the Chagrin River Valley and its tributaries from Streetsboro and Mantua to Lake Erie. Our successful kick-off event was a good natured competition called "Bird Quest" that was the brain-child of our Education Committee headed up by our Vice President Alison DeBroux. We hope that this fun event will become an



annual affair. It is a mini version of the famous World Series of Birding tailored to our area and our size and open to all from beginners to accomplished birders. Maybe next year you can join in. Keep alert for upcoming events and opportunities in which you can get involved. We need your help in many capacities and hope you will consider donating some of your time and energy to this cause.

—Jim Tomko, President

ASGC partners with Willoughby – Eastlake Schools

Boardwalk and trail maintenance always has a line in the Sanctuary budget. Nature has its say on the condition of trails. Our largest challenge here at Hach-Otis is finding the labor to get the job done. This year, we were able to accomplish some much needed trail maintenance and offer an opportunity to some students in the Willoughby-Eastlake School System at the same time.

Trustee Bill Kennelly's son is teaching an experimental class in a program called "Introduction Vocational Course Centered Around Experiential Learning and Training." He suggested that his "Success Academy" partner with Audubon at Hach-Otis on a project to repair damage to the boardwalk. We unquestionably had a need, since the original walk is now about 35 years old.

When repairs to the boardwalk are completed, the group will reset erosion barriers on the old logging road and put a new roof on the parking lot bulletin board.

The 15 students range in age from 11 to 14, and come from several schools in the district. We began by touring the Sanctuary. Bill tells me no one in this group has ever been in any type of woods before. I'm sure that's true because I was, and still am, hard put to keep up with their



Teacher Bill Kennelly (the younger) helps students plan and estimate materials.

Photo: J. Lillich

stream of questions. This is hands on learning for them. They began by identifying and marking areas for repair, measuring and estimating materials needed. ASGC purchased all supplies and materials. The material is cut at the



Done for the day...

Photo: J. Lillich

WE Tech Center's wood shop, and the group brings the pre-cut pieces with them.

Since this project began, I have witnessed major changes in these students. The improvement in their attitude, enthusiasm and excitement about the project has been quite obvious. I sincerely hope

this project will be as beneficial to the students as it is to our Audubon Society.

—John Lillich

IBA Committee

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than just birds!."

We need to target "groups who can have a direct effect on improving bird habitat within the IBA," Joe says. "In addition with working in concert with the park districts, Holden, and other public entities we need to focus on private individuals who ... have more than 10 acres of woodland and must have a management plan. Most of them

have a conservationist slant to them already and might be receptive to helping us in our mission."

We need to work with private and public landowners in any way we can. Our goals are lofty, but we believe they are achievable. If you live in the Chagrin Valley watershed and would like to know how you can help, please contact us at info@clevelandaudubon.com.

—Alison DeBroux

Bird Questers

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(Important Bird Area), and kick off a new ASGC initiative to rally protection for this critical tract of varied habitat and migration pathways.

We would like to thank Stan Searles for his time and talent as the event's emcee; Mary Salomon and Jenn Clark

who judged our teams' efforts; and especially the Cleveland Metroparks who provided invaluable promotional support and hosted the evening's festivities at Look About Lodge.

Look for next year's Chagrin River Bird Quest, sure to be even bigger and better!

—Alison DeBroux

Critter Corner



Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

People often tell me of an "owl" they hear almost every morning. It is more likely the mournful call of the mourning dove. "Ooooooh ooo ooo ooo."

These long-tailed birds will soon be controlling access to your bird feeder as few other species can displace them. They do not appear aggressive, but due to their size (12 inches) smaller birds cannot budge them. They love the handouts of black-oil sunflower seeds, cracked corn and millet. Seeds make up over 95 percent of their diet.

With their subtle colors of smooth, gray-buff and a pinkish wash on the sides of their neck and under-parts they are very soothing and attractive birds. They have black spots on their upper wings and white tips on the outer tail feathers can be seen in flight. This species has a proportionately small appearing head and a pointed tail. Often they can be identified even before being seen by the winnowing whistle that their wings make as they explode into flight.

Mourning doves are in the pigeon family and are the only native species of that group found in northeastern Ohio. The only possible confusing species is the rare, non-native Eurasian-collared dove which is very similar in size, color, and shape but have a black collar around the back of their neck and no black spots on the upper wings.

Mourning doves are rapid flyers which makes them the most popular—although challenging—game bird in Ohio. More mourning doves are harvested each year than all other migratory game birds combined. Mourning dove hunting season takes place from early September through early November.

Resident birds begin nesting early in the spring. Their loosely constructed nest appears to be no more than a jumble

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In case you missed it!

The late summer weather must have been just to the liking of our fringed gentian patch as it produced one of the best displays in recent years. Those blooms are a most wonderful hue of blue-violet and with the fringed petals opening to the sky the sight of them was quite stunning! We were fortunate to have a mostly sunny afternoon so that the flowers were wide open. They are “migrating” though, as they were denser



Photos: J. Tomko

in areas where they were sparse last year. It is as if they are testing the different micro-habitats to find the best place to sink their roots. We saw some of the more common bottle or closed gentian along the shoreline of Fulton Pond. Also of note were the many blue asters of which most were New England aster and the countless white asters of which most were calico aster. The orchid family was represented by nodding ladies tresses. Beautiful yellow goldenrod filled the

Mourning Dove

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of haphazardly laid twigs and pine needles on a fork in a tree branch or on a shelf up to 50 feet high. Rarely they nest on the ground. Often you can see the two unmarked white eggs through the bottom of the nest! Despite its appearance it is sturdy and is woven by the female with materials supplied by the male. Incubation is by both parents

for about 15 days with the female usually taking the night shift. The young fledge about 15 days after hatching. There are often two or more broods per season.

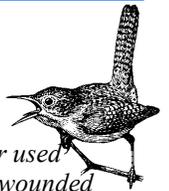
These birds are now gorging themselves at your feeding station as they ready themselves for the coming winter weather.

—Jim Tomko

fields. In the woodland the delicate wreath or blue-stemmed goldenrod brightened the forest floor. We found a small stand of beige colored goldenrod known as silverrod. It was a fine way to say goodbye to summer and welcome our glorious autumn.

—Jim Tomko

The Squawk



“Would you donate a new or used spotting scope to me I am a wounded disabled veteran this would be used for birding and my therapy. Thank you.” Mel Commeree.

If you can help, please contact *The House Wren*.

Correction:

The photos accompanying our October cover story were taken by Carol Lillich, not John Lillich, as was indicated.

Send your comments, questions, or complaints to info@clevelandaudubon.org

Upcoming Events

The Backyard Naturalist

November 7 3:00—5:00pm

“The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail”
Jeffrey Hall, President, Bartramian Audubon Society

Not many places in the United States can match the Texas Coast for outstanding birding opportunities. The Lone Star State initiated the development of birding routes, with maps and signs, to renowned spots as well as lesser-known locations, and many other states have now followed suit. This presentation visits famous hotspots like Santa Ana, Aransas, Laguna Atascosa, and Rockport/Fulton along with many of the hidden gems of the Gulf Coast.

Jeffrey Hall's articles and photographs have appeared in *Living Bird*, *NJ Audubon*, *Underwater Naturalist*, and numerous other publications, as well as the Pennsylvania

Society for Ornithology's website. Over the last two decades, he has given



over a hundred presentations to birding groups, nature and wildlife organizations, and photography clubs. He served four terms as president of Washington Crossing Audubon Society in New Jersey. Jeffrey retired in 2011 after 25 years of teaching biology at the Pennington School in New Jersey. He lives in Franklin, Pa. and is president of Bartramian Audubon Society and also active in Seneca Rocks Audubon Society.

The Backyard Naturalist is held at our Novak Education Center, 382 Townline Road, Aurora.

Field Trips

November 14 3:00pm

“The Leaves Are Down...”
Molnar Sanctuary

Without the leaf foliage our views will not be impaired and we will easily see the terrain and other topographical features of the landscape. Join us to see the changes that have occurred 1 year after clearing the southern fields at the Molnar Sanctuary. Last autumn Kenny Kresina spent many hours using a specialized machine to cut and grind the European buckthorn that was too robust for our brush-hog. He has done some plantings since then but the battle has just begun. Meet at the Molnar Sanctuary parking lot on the west side of Page Road a few hundred yards north of Mennonite Road in Aurora.

December 18 7:00pm

“(Close to) Winter Solstice Hike”
Aurora Sanctuary

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A Wry Smile



If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you; that is the principal difference between a dog and a man.

—Mark Twain

Autumn color walk wet and cold

We often have an October snow flurry and our Autumn Leaf Color Walk produced those first frozen flakes! Even though the sun was obscured by clouds for most of the hike, the leaves showed us wonderful shades of maroon, red, yellow, gold, and brown. Another highlight was the sighting of a fox sparrow near the trail head kiosk. Quite a few robins were flitting about and

calling. Black-capped chickadees, tufted titmouse and white-breasted nuthatch kept us company along the trail. Several bottle gentians were still in bloom but most of the summer's flowers had gone to seed which will carry all of our seed eating residents through the winter. This was an excellent and enjoyable way to celebrate the changing season.

—Jim Tomko

Did You Know?

According to recent breeding bird surveys, mourning doves are the second most abundant bird species in North America. Red-winged blackbirds are number one.

Mourning doves, like most species in the pigeon family, produce a thick liquid rich in fat and protein from glands in their crop called pigeon milk. The hatchlings push their bills deep into the parent's throat to receive this nutritious food. It is not milk at all but has all the nutrients necessary to nourish a fledgling mourning dove. Perhaps this may be, in part, why they are able to nest so early in the spring.

—Jim Tomko



You just never know what you might see on an ASGC Field Trip! Oreo the pig walked the entire two-mile loop in the Aurora Sanctuary!

Photo: J. Tomko

DATED MAIL

