



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

P.O. Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139-8037 Ph: 216 556 5441

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

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ASGC volunteers are unique

Our volunteers are unique, special individuals. They are concerned with the "plight of the natural world," which volunteer Sue Graham says is among her reasons for volunteering with the Audubon Society. "I've always embraced nature and all its plants and animals which rely upon a healthy environment," she continues. "I think it's extremely important to transmit that need for a healthy environment to others, especially children."

Sue has always been involved in teaching children, both at the elementary and pre-school levels, including a stint

as Children's Librarian in both the Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights libraries. After moving to Twinsburg, she developed a nature class for pre-schoolers called "Nature Nook."

Retired from teaching, Sue is one of those special individuals who devotes more than her share of time to volunteering. She has been a member of our Education Committee for a number of years, and has helped out at more than one of our outreach tables at the Tinker's Creek Festival in Hudson and at Earth Day at the Zoo. She is also involved in

(Continued on page 3)



Sue Graham reads *The Best Nest* during Scout Day, February 27, 2016.



Jim Tomko shows some young bird lovers how feathers work.

4th Scout Day a big success

The 4th Annual ASGC Scout Day was held on February 27th and deemed to be yet another successful educational program!

Although the response was not as overwhelming as last year, we still needed to have 2 sessions. We mixed things up a bit this year and educated 10 Cub Scouts alongside 6 Girl Scouts for the morning

session. The afternoon session consisted of 11 Girl Scouts. All participants were between Kindergarten and 3rd grade coming from Aurora and surrounding communities.

We would not have such a successful program without all the volunteers. We met on the Thursday before the Saturday program to set up nine stations and prepare the take-home items. The program ran like clockwork and you couldn't tell the new volunteers from the seasoned ones.

Starting out at the registration table with Alison DeBroux, the scouts then decorated a bag to put all their take-home items in. Sue Graham got them started on their bird adventure by reading *The Best Nest* by P.D Eastman.

Each 'flock,' or team of three scouts, then rotated to the various stations.

Sarah Cochran and Nicole Ryman were very adept at the newly modified bird song and ID station. Newcomer Matt Valencic (who on Thursday did what any avid birder would do and polished the lenses on all our binoculars!) was a big hit at the Binocular station, despite the Blue Jay identification card flying away with a wind gust. Jim Tomko, running the Feathers, Bones and Wings station, showed the scouts that even if they had wings, they could not fly. Kathryn Craig taught them that if they had beaks, they may not like the worms, bugs, nectar and seeds and birds eat. Jan Slife walked

(Continued on page 3)

From the Nest...

The migration is upon us and exciting things are on the way! Already we are seeing tree swallows, phoebes, chipping sparrows, yellow-rumped warblers and pine warblers. The bulk of the waterfowl have moved north to their breeding grounds.

A great way to improve your birding



skills or share your accomplished skills is to join in on one of the 83rd Annual Spring Bird Walks (see page 2). The walks begin in 19 locations simultaneously (see our web site for locations).

Some birders choose a different walk each Sunday and others attend the same one to watch the migration change as the season progresses. Beginners are

welcome and you will learn as we go. The more eyes and ears that we have the more species we will see!

All the data is compiled and logged into ebird for all to use. This data goes back 82 years! Thank you to Cleveland Museum of Natural History personnel for entering historic and current data. Please join us to help out.

—Jim Tomko, President

83rd Annual Series of Spring Bird Walks

Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on Sundays, April 10 through May 15, 2016 at 7:30 a.m. at the following locations:

Aurora Audubon Sanctuary Parking lot east of Page Rd. on E. Pioneer Trail, east of routes 306 and 43, Aurora. 216-337-2202

Bedford Reservation Hemlock Creek Picnic Area parking lot, off Button Rd., Bedford. 330-715-6300

Big Creek Reservation Lake Isaac, Big Creek Parkway, Middleburg Heights. 440-891-1710

Brecksville Reservation Parking area at Station Rd. Bridge Trailhead, off Riverview Rd. south of route 82, Brecksville. 330-467-3664

Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve Lakefront Office parking lot, 8701 Lake Shore Blvd., Cleveland. 440-887-1968

Geauga Park District Various locations, Geauga County. 440-286-9516

Hinckley Reservation Bridge at the south end of Hinckley Lake, on State Rd., Hinckley. 330-625-5503

Hiram James H. Barrow Field Station (Hiram College), 11305 Wheeler Road, Hiram. 330-527-2141

Holden Arboretum Main parking lot off Sperry Rd., Kirtland. 440-946-4400

Huntington Reservation Lake Erie Nature & Science Center, 28728 Wolf Rd., Bay Village. 440-471-8357

Lake Metroparks Lake Erie Bluffs, 2901 Clark Rd., Perry Township. 440-256-1404, ext. 2112

Gates Mills Bird Walks Sundays at 7:30 a.m.

Leaders: John Lillich & Buster Banish
We will be out rain or shine. Children with adults are welcome.

April 10
Sunnybrook Preserve, 12474 Heath Road
Chester Township, Chesterland

April 17
Orchard Hills Park, Caves Road, Chester Township, north of Mulberry

April 24
Frothing Meadows, 16780 Savage Road,
Bainbridge Township

Mentor Marsh Parking area on Headlands Rd., Mentor. 440-257-0777

North Chagrin Reservation Sunset Pond, off Buttermilk Falls Parkway, Mayfield Village. 440-473-3370

Novak Audubon Sanctuary Parking lot north of Rt. 82 on Townline Rd., Aurora. 440-543-6399

Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation Visitor Center parking lot, Whittlesey Way off E. 49th St., Cuyahoga Hts. 216-206-1000

Rocky River Reservation Rocky River Nature Center parking lot, 24000 Valley Parkway, North Olmsted. 216-924-0188

The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes 2600 South Park Blvd., Shaker Heights. 216-321-5935

South Chagrin Reservation Jackson Rd. parking lot, off Chagrin River Rd. (between Miles Rd. and Chagrin Blvd.), Moreland Hills. 440-473-3370

Co-sponsored by Cleveland Metroparks, The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, Geauga Park District, Lake Metroparks, Lake Erie Nature and Science Center and the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.



Snapping turtle: more than just birds can be seen on a Spring Bird Walk!

Photo: M. Valencic

May 1
Squire Valleevue Farm, CWRU,
Use entrance on Fairmount Road

May 8
White/North Property, 3160 Chagrin River Rd. Park next to garages on right side of property

May 15
Squire Valleevue Farm, CWRU
Enter through Valley Ridge Farm, off Chagrin River Road, 0.7 miles north of Fairmount

Critter Corner



Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*)

The spotted salamanders held their annual “social” in early March after our first “warm” rain of late winter.

Spotted salamanders are in a family of mid- to large-sized salamanders called the “Mole” salamanders. They are very secretive, spending most of their lives underground eating worms, slugs, snails, insects, pill bugs, millipedes and spiders. Occasionally they may be found under rocks, fallen logs, and other ground debris.

Over a period of several wet nights in late winter or very early spring when the vernal pools are full of water they enter the pool to meet and greet each other. Then the male starts a frenzied dance of undulation, tail waving, and lower jaw rubbing trying to coax the female to choose him! The adults are in the pool about 5-14 days.

The female lays 50 to 250 eggs in a gelatin-like ball that can swell up to four inches in diameter. The eggs hatch in 20 to 60 days and the tadpole-like larvae race against time to develop into terrestrial creatures before the vernal pool dries up for the season. In rapidly evaporating pools the larvae miraculously speed up their development and can transform in as little as 60 days although they end up a smaller size than in a more stable aquatic system.

Spotted salamanders can reach up to 9 ½ inches long. They are a dark grayish-brown with two rows of yellowish-orange spots down their back. They are predators but are also prey themselves to raccoon, opossum, mink, kingfisher, herons, and snakes. American woodcocks have been seen dining on the larval salamanders at one of our vernal pools. The biggest threat to their survival is the vanishing woodlands and the draining of the forest vernal pools.

—Jim Tomko

A trip to the vernal pool



Spotted salamander



Spring peeper



Wood frog

Photos: J. Tomko

Volunteers

(Continued from page 1)

Twinsburg's Historical Society and the Cleveland Natural Science Club, volunteers with both the Cleveland and Summit County Metroparks, and sings in the choir at Laurel Lake in Hudson.

She readily admits to being a little old-fashioned. "I still hang my laundry outside when weather permits and iron our clothes." (Even when a grandchild pointed at the iron and asked, "Granny, what is that?")

Would that we were all as unique as Sue Graham. Old-fashioned or not, she will not be dissuaded from her beliefs, insisting that she enjoys "all the dandelions in our yard because of my refusal to use weed killer."

—Alison DeBroux

Scout Day

(Continued from page 1)

the scouts through the Feet are Neat station. Sue Graham continued on her nest theme and showed them her vast nest collection. Betsy Siman, working at the owl pellet dissection table, showed them that being a bird of prey might not hold the most appetizing diet. Julia Toth facilitated our craft for the program helping the scouts decorate a bird mask. Katie Cochran showed the scouts how to make a bird feeder out of a bagel. Special thanks to Betsy for providing an excellent lunch for the crew of volunteers.

We look forward to planning our 5th Annual Scout Day in 2017!

—Kathy Cochran

Upcoming Events

Call for Entries

Hey Shutterbirds!

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is sponsoring our first ever photo contest. Categories are: Birds, Landscapes, People in Nature, Fine Art in Nature, and Youth. A \$15 donation for up to three photos is requested. There will be one Grand Prize and great prizes will be awarded to first through third place in each category! Complete rules and submission information is available at www.clevelandaudubon.org

2016 Annual Meeting

Our 2016 Annual Meeting will be June 4th at the Nature Center of Shaker Lakes. We will announce the winners of our first ever photo contest! As always, a bird walk will precede the festivities, which begin at 4pm. Cost is \$20 per person, \$10 for seniors and children. Make your reservations now at info@clevelandaudubon.org.

April 9 7:30pm
"Woodcock Watch"
Novak Sanctuary

This time of year an earnest display is occurring at twilight that has gone on for centuries. The male woodcock is desperately trying to woo the hen to join him on his "peenting pad" where he takes off in a fantastic flight display showing his fitness to be a father. This begins as early as late March and continues sometimes through May. The courtship display is amazing to watch and the birds often will allow fairly close approach if there are quiet and motionless observers. Join us for an evening performance at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot located on the east side of Townline Rd. less than a mile north of St. Rt. 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

April 16 8:30pm
"Frog Slog"
Aurora Sanctuary

The concert will be in full swing as the early season singers will be trying to outdo their neighbor's voices. Bullfrogs, green frogs and gray tree frogs will be mostly silent waiting for warmer waters and the wood frogs are likely done but spring peepers, western chorus frogs, leopard frogs, Pickerel frogs, and American toads will be in their element with furious competition to attract a mate. Join us for a night walk on a possibly muddy trail where you will be glad you wore rubber boots and brought along a flashlight. Meet at the Bretschneider/Audubon Sanctuary parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail just a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora

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Or send an email to info@clevelandaudubon.org

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A Wry Smile



Kids today don't know how easy they have it. When I was young, I had to walk 9 feet through shag carpet to change the TV channel.

—Anonymous

IBA Initiative update

The Chagrin River Corridor is a great ribbon of forest, old field and wetlands amid towns and farmland. Determining the current quality of this habitat for birds and other wildlife will go far in figuring out how to improve and preserve it.

Clay Graham, a recent graduate of Hiram College, offered insights to the IBA committee from his literature review. Habitat quality is assessed by looking at the habitat or by looking at the birds in relation to multiple habitats. Vegetation measurements are not sufficient to describe habitat quality, and behavioral observations provide limited information. Body condition is another variable. Lean birds may choose a habitat with more food yet more risk, while a fatter bird is able to choose territory with less risk but less food. There are differences in habitat selection among year-round residents versus migratory birds. The committee discussed focusing our energies on

measuring avian diversity, which has fewer variables than habitat quality.

Another consideration in meeting this goal: *how* to accomplish our measurements? Clay's review also brought up the issues of using citizen science as a research tool. The quality of observers and observer bias is a serious issue. Volunteers may not want to put in the required effort if the sampling area is boring (no species are present), or if the area is difficult to access. We may get the best results if we tailor our citizen science program around a specific question relating to an already existing data set (such as eBird data).

Next month we will be looking at an analysis of trends in spring migration species and finalize our two-year objectives for the project. Prior to the June breeding season, we hope to enlist key conservation partners to plan and execute our first joint diversity survey of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.

—Alison DeBroux

Photo contest open for submissions!

Enter your best photos now at www.clevelandaudubon.org.

DATED MAIL

