



# The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)

September, 2016

## 2016 Annual Dinner bigger than ever!

Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland held its Annual Dinner at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes. A near capacity crowd enjoyed wine and cheese, stuffed mushrooms, and a catered dinner of chicken Marsala, bistro potatoes and roasted vegetables. The dessert tray of canoli, brownies and lemon bars disappeared as if it had never been.

Part of ASGC's Annual Dinner is an informal chapter meeting, during which new officers and slate of trustees are elected. All currently serving trustees were re-elected. A new vice-president, Steve Zabor, was elected. President Jim Tomko, Secretary Carol Lillich, and Treasurer John Weber will continue in their current roles.

Following the elections, Jim Tomko awarded Ken Kresina a special award for his years of behind-the-scenes



service. Sharon Swaney received the Award of Merit (in photo) for her work on our website, and Alison DeBroux received the Warner Seeley Award.

This evening marked the official announcement of the winners of our first ever Photo Contest. Many of our winners attended with their friends and families, and everyone enjoyed seeing their photos on display. See page 2 for a complete list of winners.

The program for the evening was "A Galapagos Adventure," photos and commentary by Jeffrey Hall.



## Team birding challenge returns September 16 - 17

The ASGC will present its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Chagrin River Bird Quest this September 16 – 17. The Bird Quest is a 24-hour team birding challenge in support of the Chagrin River IBA Initiative begun in 2015. Teams of birders of all experience levels explore the Chagrin River corridor from Lake Erie south to Audubon's bird sanctuaries in Aurora in search of resident birds and early migrants.

Teams with little birding experience or wishing to upgrade their skills can attend a Birding Workshop on September 10, held in cooperation with The Holden Arboretum and simultaneously at the Novak Education Center in Aurora.

The Quest begins at 4:00pm on September 16 with Team Check-in at the Cleveland Metroparks' North Chagrin

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## House Wren editor receives Seeley Award

This award was started by, and named after, Warner Seeley, an original member of The Cleveland Bird Club. He put money into the budget and asked that it be used to give an award each year to an outstanding member of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland who made a special contribution that year to the club. Recent recipients include President Jim Tomko, former president Dan Melcher and former web master Bob Salomon.

The 2016 award went to Alison DeBroux for her work as newsletter editor and chair of the Education Committee. Alison is honored to be included among this august company. She lives in Aurora around the corner from the Novak Education Center with husband Jim, two dogs and four elderly cats.



## From the Nest...

What a fantastic birding summer this has been. The breeding bird surveys went smoothly with the only "wrinkle" being the sound of the 17-year periodical cicada calls masking some of the bird songs in the Aurora Sanctuary. Thanks to Mary Salomon we are accumulating many years of data to compare and



contrast. It shows our breeding bird species' diversity to be fairly stable. This ongoing evolution will help us and others make management decisions in the future.

Our new-found member and birding dynamo, Matt Valencic, has energized us with his enthusiasm and offers to help wherever he can. He has developed a Birding Merit Badge program for the

Boy Scouts of America and we hope to host several classes this year. He is trying to plant the "birding bug" in our young people to influence their decisions for a lifetime.

Under Joe Malmisur's leadership our Important Bird Area (IBA) project is slowly but steadily progressing with care that it holds up to scientific scrutiny. We hope to do some autumn migratory

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Hiram College student Cole Soldo accepts the Grand Prize Award from contest committee chair Jim DeBroux. One of the three photos representing his winning "Body of Work" is in the background.

From most images I discerned what you love about birds and nature. That might be the amazing shapes, colors, textures, expressions and situations to be witnessed and captured with a lens.

Technical strength included exposures that captured the details of feathers, talons, and beaks; shutter speeds that arrested or expressed motion; depth of field that led the eye to the correct focal point in the composition. Originality was given for that

### 2016 Photo Contest Winners

of all elements to create an arresting visual "decisive moment" and some idea about the subject formed by action of light, gesture, and other formal elements.

The best work goes beyond being illustration to create for the viewer a world that inspires and uplifts. Don't be



3rd Place: Landscapes  
Kathy Cochran, Aurora, OH  
*"The pelicans and gulls reminded me of kids lined up to cheer "O-H-I-O" for OSU!"*

#### Other Winners:

Birds: Daniel Zaas (1st), Kathleen Price (2nd), Ann Sonnendecker (3rd).

Landscapes: Rob Swaney (1st), Irene Reti (2nd).

People in Nature: Lauren Tullis (2nd), Clyde Witt (3rd).

Fine Art: Doug Bryant (1st), Katherine Petey (3rd).

Youth: Katie Cochran (2nd), Sarah Cochran (3rd).

**Congratulations to all our winners!**



1st Place: People in Nature  
Brad Imhoff, Mt Vernon, OH

something new I may have not seen before or considered.

Artistic merit was for the coming together

of all elements to create an arresting visual "decisive moment" and some idea about the subject formed by action of light, gesture, and other formal elements.

The best work goes beyond being illustration to create for the viewer a world that inspires and uplifts. Don't be

discouraged if you did not receive an

award this year. Going about with a camera and curiosity is reward in itself. I share your love of nature and photography and hope you will continue to brave the wild in search of that next great image and magical encounter with life.

*Professor Linda Bourassa  
Gelbke Fine Art Center, Hiram College  
Juror for 2016*



1st Place: Youth  
Madisyn Weaver, Dover, PA



2nd Place: Fine Art  
Mary Defer, Hiram, OH  
*"I snapped this shot during the golden hour while on a spring hike, on Radar Hill overlooking Athens, OH."*

## Critter Corner



### N. Red-Bellied Snake

*(Storeria occipitomaculata)*

Like a kid that never grew up I am constantly turning over rocks, logs, boards and debris to investigate who lives under there. I am always careful to gently reposition the item in its original place. Recently I turned over a piece of scrap metal on the edge of the Aurora Sanctuary and discovered a small eight-inch, dark gray snake about the diameter of a pencil with three pale spots on the nape of its neck. When I turned it over it had the most beautiful scarlet belly. The Northern Red-bellied Snake!

These snakes do not bite when captured and even if they did their teeth are so small and their bite is so weak that they cannot break the skin. They do, however, release musky cloacal secretions which cause many predators to drop them.

The Northern Red-bellied Snake is one of the smallest snakes in Ohio, beginning life at three inches with an adult length of eight to ten inches. The longest recorded was 16 inches. The females do not lay eggs but bear live young from late July to early September.

These snakes are usually found in deciduous or mixed woodlands and adjacent fields and bogs, preferring moist habitats. Their most common prey are slugs, snails, earthworms, pill bugs, insect larva and small salamanders. They themselves fall victim to other snakes, large salamanders, skunks, raccoon, turkey, hawks, owls, and chickens.

As cold weather approaches they hibernate in groups of their own species and other small species in ant hills, under stumps, in animal burrows, in fissures in rocks, in cracks and spaces of root systems, and in old building foundations. This neat little snake occurs in clusters meaning that they are common in one area and very sparse in others. We are very pleased to discover them next to the Sanctuary.

—Jim Tomko

## In case you missed it!

July 8 “*Summer Twilight Walk*”

We had ideal summer weather for our twilight walk with very few of the little “vampires” biting us. Alison kept spotting tiny, newly emerged American toads in the wet ruts along the trail. We had numerous birds singing their end of the day songs: American robin, American goldfinch, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, downy woodpecker, song sparrow and wood thrush. As we turned to hike out

we heard the distinctive call of a scarlet tanager. We had little hope of spotting this canopy specialist but we persisted in scanning the tops of the trees. There he was! Even though the color was subdued with the darkening sky it was a beautiful experience. As the light faded we noted the change from daytime annual cicadas calling to nocturnal katydids calling. It was a great hike with a great group of hikers!

—Jim Tomko

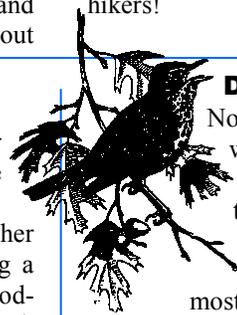
### From the Nest

(Continued from page 1)

bird surveys within the Chagrin River Valley. Contact us if you would like to help.

Thanks to Alison DeBroux and her Education committee we are offering a second annual Bird Quest. This good-natured, fun contest should excite both beginners and accomplished birders alike. Come on out to a fun family weekend celebrating the birds while contributing to the IBA project at the same time.

—Jim Tomko, President

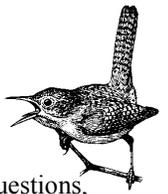


### Did you know?

Northern red-bellied snakes will curl their upper lip scales back exposing their tiny teeth when threatened but rarely try to bite. When they do strike it is most often with a closed mouth. Some red-bellied snakes have been known to “play dead” by stiffening and tuning over on their backs exposing their red bellies when picked up by a predator.

—Jim Tomko

## The Squawk



Send your comments, questions, or complaints to  
[info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

### Bird Quest

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Nature Center or in Aurora. Teams will pick up maps, bird checklists, and free t-shirts. The Quest ends 24 hours later at 4:00pm on September 17 when teams return to the North Chagrin Nature Center for the Quest Celebration, and turn in their completed checklists. Prizes will be awarded for the most species of birds found, and for fun things like Most Unusual Team Name and Team that had the Most Fun.

All Bird Quest activities and materials are free. Questers not only will have a great time enjoying nature but their participation will help conserve and improve the natural beauty of the Chagrin River.

To register, visit [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org) and click on Bird Quest.

## Upcoming Events

### Chagrin River Bird Quest

A 24-hour team birding challenge in support of the Chagrin River IBA.

**September 16 at 4pm to**

**September 17 at 4pm.**

*Pre-Event Birding Workshop:*

September 10, 2 locations & 2 times:

The Holden Arboretum—1-3pm

Novak Education Center—3-5pm

*Team Check-in:* September 16, 4-6pm.

North Chagrin Nature Center or Novak

Education Center. Get your **free** t-shirts!

*Quest Celebration:* September 17,

4-6:30pm, North Chagrin Nature Center.

Prizes and **free** food!

Register at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org).

### Bird Quest Field Trips

**Sept 16 8:30 pm “Owl Prowl”**

**Aurora Sanctuary**—Join us for a night hike at the Aurora Audubon Sanctuary.

Meet at Bretschneider Park in Aurora.

Leader: Jim Tomko

**Sept 17 8:00 am**

**Aurora Sanctuary**—Start your checklist off in the varied habitats of the

Aurora Audubon Sanctuary. Meet at

Bretschneider Park in Aurora. Leader:

Jim Tomko

**Sept 17 8:00 am**

**West Geauga Commons**—The

Commons is in the south-central part of

the IBA (near Fairmont Blvd and Rt. 306). Leader: Matt Valencic

**Sept 17 9:00 am**

**The Holden Arboretum** (Registration required)—Travel a loop through

woodland and field habitat. Meet at the

Corning Visitor Center. Leader: Stan

Plante

**Sept 17 2:00 pm**

**North Chagrin Reservation**—Leave from the Nature Center then you're right

there for the Quest Celebration at 4:00

pm! Leader: Jeff Riebe

### Regularly Scheduled Field Trips

**Sept 24 2:30 pm “Fringed Gentians”**

**Aurora Sanctuary**

The last dazzle of the season greets us with an amazing blue open to the

beautiful autumn sun. The unusual

Fringed Gentian and the more common

Bottle Gentian have a good foothold in our sanctuary. Join us to view these and

other fall wildflowers. Meet at the

Bretschneider parking lot on the north

side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred

yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

**Oct 22 2:30 pm “Autumn Leaf Walk”**

**Hach-Otis Sanctuary**

**Nov 12 9:00 am “Wild Turkey Trek”**

**Novak Sanctuary**

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*A Wry Smile*



Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit.

Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

## First Bird Study Merit Badge program set for October 22nd

This fall the ASGC is adding a program to help Boy Scouts earn a Bird Study Merit Badge. Using the unique resources of the Novak Education Center and experienced counselors this three-hour program will cover seven of the eight requirements of the Merit Badge.

Bird Study is one of 12 nature/environment Merit Badges. Scouts learn to identify the many parts of a bird and to observe behavior as an aid in identification. They are taught about binoculars and spotting scopes and how to use a Bird Field Guide. During a one-hour bird walk in the Novak Sanctuary they will learn how to get close to birds, make observations and take field notes for later review. They learn about birds as an indicator of habitat quality and our role in assuring quality habitat for the future.

One of the goals of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA Initiative is to promote public awareness of the



Matt Valencic presents the Birding Merit Badge program to the ASGC Education Committee for review.

Photo: J. DeBroux

ecological value of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA. We accomplish this through media and hands-on educational programs and events held throughout the year, such as the Merit Badge program.

An approved Merit Badge counselor, Matt Valencic will facilitate the program. Please contact Matt at [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org) for more information.

### 2nd Annual Chagrin River Bird Quest Sept 16 - 17

Register today at [birdquest@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:birdquest@clevelandaudubon.org)

DATED MAIL

