



Hach-Otis Sanctuary - The John & Carol Lillich Meadows

Photograph by John Lillich

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



**Annual Report to Members
For the Year 2020**



Overview

The information in this report is based mainly on accomplishments, events, and activities during calendar year 2019. Exceptions to that timeframe, e.g., the listing of trustees and officers for the period June, 2019 – May, 2020, are noted. The individuals listed as chairs and members of the committees are also individuals who served from June, 2019 through May, 2020.

Reports from the following committees are contained in the pages that follow:

- Communications Committee
- Education Committee
- Field Trips Committee
- Finance Committee
- Important Birding Area (IBA) Committee
- Sanctuary Committee

Interested in helping?

Reading through the attached reports will give you a sense of the many activities involved with meeting the mission of our organization (see boxed text to the right for our mission statement). We could use your help.

If you are interested in learning more about how to become involved with The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland please contact Jim Tomko, Board President, at 216/556-5441

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) promotes the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities. ASGC, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, has over 1,400 member households throughout the Greater Cleveland area, owns over 500 acres of protected land, and is one of northeast Ohio's oldest continuously operating environmental organizations.



From the President



Due to the global COVID pandemic, ASGC has been a bit dormant. Due to masking and social distancing mandates, most of our activities have been canceled or postponed. We have continued to have quarterly meetings virtually via the “Zoom” on line platform. Hopefully in-person meetings will resume in the coming months.

We owe our secretary, Carol Lillich, a great debt for keeping us on task and on time. Her minutes accurately reflect our meeting’s deliberations. Her timeliness with needed thank you letters and her attention to protocol and etiquette help to keep us in good favor with our members and donors.

Matt Valencic and his Education committee have definitely not been dormant! The education committee was one of the few committees that persevered successfully through the pandemic under Matt’s leadership. He and his crew determined how to carry on BirdQuest virtually making it a huge success. Matt has arranged an “on-line” speaker series known as the *Third Thursday Night Speakers Series* involving both professionals and members to provide an hour of education and entertainment that was enjoyed by many people. This committee was the main connection providing activities to satisfy our mission statement.

Our editor of the “*House Wren*”, Alison DeBroux, has continued without fail to publish and distribute this newsletter to our membership. I regularly have members comment on how they read it from front to back and greatly look forward to the next issue.

Jim DeBroux is hoping to get his “Documentun Committee” up and running again. He is recruiting members to help him accomplish this. I am pleased that we will have easy access our history.

Stephanie Demyan has continued to pay our bills, monitor our accounts, deal with IRS requirements and keep us out of financial difficulties.

John and Carol Lillich keep careful watch and take special care of our Hach-Otis Sanctuary which is often considered our crown jewel.

Ken Kressina, as always, continues to improve the sanctuaries with an eye toward the needs of wildlife. Ken always considers the native flora and fauna first and human needs a far second. He has the right attitude for wildlife sanctuaries.

Novak Sanctuary caretaker Mark Magree gets the Novak Education center prepared for any event we offer there. He keeps the outside neat and trim. He is our resident handyman to do our minor repairs and carpentry. He also keeps close watch of the Novak property with hardly anything escaping his notice

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Our Vice President, Mark Demyan is in the process of organizing volunteer work crews involving several one-time projects, some perpetual maintenance projects, and a regular work schedule so that the crews can manage tasks that have been on our wish list but never actually get attended to.

The IBA committee contributes in many ways by promoting and participating in bird surveys, educational activities, and bird festivals provided by our chapter or other Audubon chapters and nature organizations. Inspiring protection and preservation of the Chagrin River IBA is accomplished by these and other chapter activities. Hopefully these activities will resume in the near future.

Our chapter continues to be an active member of the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters. My great thanks to Mark Demyan who somehow found time in his busy schedule to accept the position of Chairman to this important statewide organization. He and Matt Valencic have secured us a place to be heard and a way to share ideas and solutions with other Ohio Audubon chapters.

Much appreciation is to be extended to other professionals on our board of trustees and in our membership, who contribute with their expertise in various ways. They will deepen our knowledge and broaden our understanding of what we need to accomplish. My gratitude to all others that are not named in person here. Without their assistance we would be in a struggle to persevere.

Our mission is to promote conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities. We have accomplished these goals with the time, talent, and financial support of some extremely generous people. I deeply appreciate all that they have contributed. I have great confidence that we will meet the goals that we have set in order to achieve our mission.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, President

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



Communications Committee

Alison DeBroux, Chair

Newsletter: *The House Wren*

Editor: Alison DeBroux

Contributing Writers: Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic

Guest Contributors: Carol Lillich, John Lillich

The House Wren is published nine times a year, September through May. It is printed in black-and-white by Minuteman Press, 33528 Aurora Rd, Solon, OH 44139, and is mailed to all members unless requested otherwise. Printing and mailing costs are approximately \$520 per issue. Members' addresses are downloaded from National Audubon's database, with approximately 150 chapter-only addresses added. A low-resolution color version is available on our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org.

The House Wren accepts submissions of articles and photos. All submissions must be the original work of the submitter, or contain the appropriate permissions for publishing. Email submissions to info@clevelandaudubon.org.

Website: www.clevelandaudubon.org

Webmaster: Sharon Swaney

ASGC Liaison: Alison DeBroux

Our website is a dynamic, continually changing source for all things ASGC. If you haven't visited lately, you can find us at www.clevelandaudubon.org. Revolving photos on the home page reflect the changing seasons and are provided by Matt Valencic.

The site features easy-to-navigate pull-down menus to all of our various programs and information about who we are and what we are doing. On the left side is an interactive list of upcoming events that links to the complete calendar of goings-on. On the right side is a variety of buttons that link to information and registration forms for special events. Through the "Contact Us" page, you can request a Backyard Naturalist program, find local birding hotspots, and get answers to bird-related questions.

Email Marketing

Manager/Designer: Alison DeBroux

We use Constant Contact for our email marketing efforts. With this service, we are able to send mass emails with information about what's new with ASGC, including dates, times and details about our field trips and other events. A link to *The House Wren* is included with each monthly email. The cost for this service is based on the number of email contacts. Anyone interested in receiving these emails can contact us at info@clevelandaudubon.org or visit the *contact us* page at www.clevelandaudubon.org. There is always a *safe unsubscribe* link at the bottom of every email.

Facebook

Administrator: Mark Demyan

Contributor: Cathy Green

Submitted By Alison DeBroux, Chair



Education Committee

Matthew Valencic, Chair

Members: Julie Albrecht, Laura Bell-Peters, Kathy Cochran, Kathryn Craig, Alison DeBroux, Joan Demirjian, David English, David Factor, Cathy Green, Joe Kollar, Sarah Mabey, Laundrea Messer, Barb Philbrick, Betsy Siman, Andrea Story.

The Education Committee is committed to the mission of promoting the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through educational activities for adults and children in the Greater Cleveland community. The backgrounds of our members in science and education is varied and impressive, which contributes to the success of the programs and events offered. It is a privilege to work with such a talented group.

The COVID 19 pandemic challenged us this past year to accomplish our mission within the guidelines presented by the CDC and State of Ohio. All things considered we did a very good job.

Chagrin River Bird Quest

Volunteers: Kathy Cochran, Kathryn Craig, Alison DeBroux, Joe Kollar, Laundrea Messer, Mary Salomon, Betsy Siman, Andrea Story, Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic, Mary Ann Wagner (Blackbrook Audubon representative).

This is our largest annual event and presents ASGC to the largest number of members and non-members. In spite of the pandemic the team generated a lot of enthusiasm, and participation far exceeded past years.

Our partners again were Blackbrook Audubon Society (financial support, guided bird walk and sent birding teams to participate) and Geauga Park District (offered an outdoor shelter at no charge to distribute registration materials and sent birding teams to participate). We received significant prize contributions from Wild Birds Unlimited (\$60 in gift certificates) and Centera Coop (\$50 gift card), as well as individual ASGC members making contributions on behalf of vendors unable to contribute this year. 'Thank You' letters were sent to all contributors. Guided bird walks in Lake, Geauga and Portage counties were offered and attended by 32 people, all wearing masks and keeping 'social distance'.

The annual 'New Birders Workshop' was held via Zoom® with 41 participants. The usual handouts were emailed everyone.

A record number of people registered for Bird Quest (167 people in 41 teams) and we allowed birding beyond the Chagrin River Corridor IBA as a way of complying with CDC guidelines to practice 'social distancing'. A record number of species (141) were reported by all teams and the winning team, by species, reported 108. Throughout the day teams were texting or emailing pictures of their teams 'in action' to be used later during the virtual celebration.

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A 'virtual celebration' was held via Zoom® at 7:00pm. Because we did not meet in person, when teams picked up their registration materials, we gave each participant a \$10 Subway® gift card to "HAVE LUNCH ON US". During the Zoom® celebration we showed all the pictures submitted throughout the day, then presented the winners in various categories and drew names from a hat for prizes offered by vendors and contributors. Prizes were mailed to the winners. The virtual celebration was well attended and well received.

Chagrin River Bird Quest 2021 will be 'in-person' on September 10-11 and headquartered at The West Woods Nature Center in Russell Township. Check the ASGC website (www.clevelandaudubon.org) this summer for specifics.

Volunteer Open House – Not held this year because of the pandemic.

Junior Birders Day – Not held this year because of the pandemic.

Science Olympiad Training for Ornithology

Volunteers: David Factor, Kelly Kozlowski, Jim Tomko & Matt Valencic

A Zoom® session was held for the Solon High School team with David, Jim, Kelly and Matt answering questions for about 1.5 hours. Students asked many good questions and appreciated the feedback from the group.

Matt Valencic prepared and presented 5 programs to the Medina Schools Science Olympiad Team (4th & 5th graders) during March and April. Three sessions covered the 95 species they needed to study (Passeriformes, Water Birds of all types, and Raptors, Game Birds and miscellaneous species). Talks were recorded by the coach for teams to review later. Two other sessions (Habitat, Feathers, Feet & Beaks, and Review of 95 Species) were recorded on the ASGC Zoom® account and a link sent to the coach for distribution to the teams. The kids were very excited during the talks, asked lots of questions, and utilized the recordings afterward (based on replay data available on Zoom®).

Speakers Bureau – Backyard Naturalist

Volunteers: John Lillich, Sarah Mabey, Jim Tomko and Matt Valencic

The mission of ASGC is to promote the conservation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities. The Speakers Bureau brings the conservation message to hundreds of Greater Clevelanders each year by presenting programs at schools, libraries, nature, garden and civic clubs and other Audubon chapters. The programs are listed on our website homepage under the [Backyard Naturalist](#) button.

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Because in-person talks were cancelled, the Committee decided to offer one program each month via Zoom® in a *series* called “Third Thursday’s”. Speakers from ASGC (John Lillich, Sarah Mabey, Jim Tomko and Matt Valencic, Dr. Andy Jones & Ami Horowitz) presented talks on a wide variety of topics including Feeding Birds, The Science of Migration, Owls of Ohio, A Birding Trip to Cuba and Lights Out Cleveland. Talks were actively promoted, and participation varied from 50 to 90 people per talk. The series was very well received and will continue during the 2021-2022 season.

Requests for programs were slow in late 2020 but increased into 2021. A total of 15 programs were presented by Sarah Maybe, Jim Tomko and Matt Valencic during this period. Groups were varied including Audubon chapters, libraries, photography clubs and historical societies. Topics were also varied including specific groups of birds, bird photography, the sensory world of birds and introduction to birding. Regardless of the group, our presenters share the message of bird conservation and appreciation of the environment with joy and enthusiasm.

In all, our Speakers Bureau and Third Thursday’s team presented 28 talks during the 2020-2021 period.

Submitted By Matt Valencic, Chair



Field Trip Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

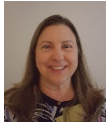
Members: John Lillich, Carol Lillich

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, no field trips were held this year. It was felt that to maintain social distancing and prevent the spread of this virus we would need to curtail all our field trips. We hopefully will return to our regular monthly hikes in the near future.

If anyone has an idea for a field trip or would like to lead one, the request will happily be considered.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



Finance Committee

Stephanie Demyan, Chair

Members: John Weber, Jim Tomko, Steve Zabor, Mark Demyan

2020 was a challenging year for nearly everyone with managing through the CoVID-19 pandemic. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland quickly shifted to an online Zoom Education program, maintained Bird Quest with social distancing, and continued email and Newsletter communications.

We maintained our 501 (c)(3) organization status and completed all Federal and State Annual Reporting on time. The public has access to our complete Federal 990 reports via www.irs.gov. It is wonderful to be part of an all-volunteer board in which all donations go to the mission of preserving natural lands that serve as sanctuaries for wildlife, providing opportunities for the public to view birds, and conducting educational programs for both school children and adults of all ages.

As you can see in the Profit and Loss Comparison for the year 2020 that is attached, 2020 had a decrease in contributions. Supporters of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland have provided Estate Bequests, Memorial Donations, and Matching Funds that have benefitted the Society significantly, providing \$10,948 in 2020. The Annual Appeal together with contributions from National Audubon continues to be our primary source of income providing \$14,045 in 2020. At the bottom of the Profit and Loss statement is the income from investments which increased in value during 2020 by \$58,609.

Education expenses for the year were greatly reduced during 2020 due to not having any in person programs and providing Zoom educational sessions at no cost to the general public. The Bird Quest held in the fall of 2020 with social distancing was our largest educational expenses (\$3000) providing shirts, supplies, and gift card lunches to all participants at no charge.

Sanctuary expenses were similar to previous years except for excavating expenses of \$6200 to clear/repair sanctuary access and for the purchase of a zero-turn lawn mower which cost \$4200 to replace an obsolete and no longer working unit.

Our Newsletter costs for the year were comparable to previous years. Email communications were also comparable to previous year. Web design expenses were slightly higher as the importance of electronic connectivity increased during the pandemic.

Due to good investment returns and prudent spending we ended the year with support of our donors we ended the year with \$464,860 in KeyBank, Vanguard and Merrill Lynch, an increase of \$74,723 compared to December 31, 2019. While we typically budget a draw from our investments of 3.5% of the three-year rolling average, we did not have to use any of the draw last year to fund any of our activities.

Submitted by Stephanie Demyan, Chair

For further information on the financials, please contact the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland at: 216-556-5441.



Important Birding Area

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Matthew Valencic

Almost all our activities support our effort to educate, protect and promote our assigned IBA (The Chagrin River IBA) which we share with Blackbrook Audubon Chapter. We conduct field trips, have speaking engagements, preserve property, and have birding events that inspire others to act in a way to conserve this wonderful river corridor. This year due to the global pandemic of Corona Virus, most of those activities have been curtailed. Our BirdQuest event was held virtually “on line”. We will continue to innovate the study of and educate the public about this important system of natural resources.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair



Sanctuary Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Bob Bartolotta, Matt Bartolotta, Nora Bartolotta, Mark Demyan, Ken Kresina, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Rob Swaney, Steve Zabor

Our Sanctuaries have been a popular respite for many people during the COVID 19 pandemic. This allowed for physical and mental health healing while most entertainment was closed down. As the year of COVID wore on, there were fewer hikers than in the beginning. But it does seem as though our sanctuaries have been discovered.

Mark Demyan is organizing work crews to maintain trails and repair bridges, stairs, and blinds. An observation deck is about to be constructed on the beaver pond at the Novak Sanctuary.



Ken Kresina began mowing and maintaining the fields and trails in the Aurora, Novak and Molnar sanctuaries as soon as the weather allowed. Full field mowing is stopped in mid-April to allow nesting birds and other creatures to carry on undisturbed. Strip mowing will continue throughout the summer in order to control Buckthorn invasion. The strips mowed last year will be allowed to grow to provide proper field habitat for native flora and fauna. The plan is to maintain the fields with a 4 to 5 year strip mowing pattern. The strips that were mown in previous years show very good buckthorn control and good emergence of native herbaceous and woody plants.

Mark Magree has been essential in keeping the Education center and the grounds around the Ed center in excellent condition. He has converted rough trails into smooth easily walkable routes. Invasive species are being attacked by mowing, pulling, trimming and judicious spot spraying with an herbicide that has wetland approval.

This year small patches of trillium bloomed again and Ovenbirds were heard calling in the forest. Once again 2 eaglets are being raised and fledged by their parents in the Novak Sanctuary. We have scheduled a crew from ODNR-DNAP to control the widespread Japanese Barberry at Aurora under the supervision of Adam Wohlever the DNAP supervisor for our area.

First Energy installed power lines along the railroad right of way bordering the north side of the Aurora Sanctuary. The project does not appear to have had any significant impact either physically or aesthetically. For utility poles, they are not obtrusive.

All the sanctuaries are adding to the quality of life for both flora, fauna, and human-kind. We hope to maintain these wild areas for the wildlife both plant and animal as we also restore our own health by visiting these sanctuaries.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair



2021-2022 Officers



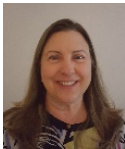
President - Jim Tomko*: *Chair, Sanctuary and Field Trips Committees, Member of IBA and Newsletter Committees; Spring Bird Walk Leader.* BA Zoology, Miami University, MS Environmental Biology, Ohio State University; OD Optometric Doctorate, Ohio State University.



Vice President - Mark Demyan*: *Member, Documentum, Finance and Newsletter Committees.* BS Civil Engineering, Tri State University; Construction Manager and business owner, of MDCC.



Secretary - Carol Lillich*: *Member of the Documentum, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees; Schedule Gates Mills Spring Bird Walks.*



Treasurer - Stephanie Demyan*: *Chair, Finance Committee, Member Newsletter Committee.* BS Chemical Engineer, Tri State University, and works in Solon, Ohio as a chemical engineer.

*Member of Executive Committee

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2021-2022 Trustees



Bob Bartolotta: *Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* I graduated from Case Western Reserve University with a biology degree and then graduated from The Ohio State University with a Masters' degree in Plant Taxonomy or the classification of plants.



Matt Bartolotta: *Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* I hold a BS in Parks and Resource Management from I spent several years employed by the Lake Metroparks, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the National Park Service in a variety of resource management, protection and education positions throughout Ohio and the country.



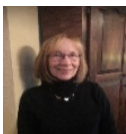
Nora Bartolotta: *Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* I received my Bachelors of Science from Bowling Green State University and have a passion for leadership growth and development.



Alison DeBroux: *Chair, Communications Committee and Member of Education Committee.* I earned a BA in Communications from Colorado State University.



Jim DeBroux: *Chair, Documentum Committee; Member Newsletter Committee.* I have degrees in Math and Chemistry.



Claire Johnson: *Member Newsletter Committee*



John Lillich: *Member Documentum, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees, and Gates Mills Spring Bird Walk Leader.* Systems Analyst, The Lubrizol Corporation (retired).



Sarah Mabey: *Member IBA, Education and Newsletter Committees.* BA Bryn Mawr College, MS University of Maryland, and PhD University of Southern Mississippi; Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Environmental Studies Program at Hiram College.

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2021-2022 Trustees



Mary Salomon: *Member Documentum, Important Birding Area, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* PhD Chemistry, University of Wisconsin; MBA, CWRU; Corporate Technology Portfolio Manager, The Lubrizol Corporation (Retired)



Matt Valencic*: *Chair, Education Committee; Member Important Birding Area, and Newsletter Committees.* AA, Cuyahoga Community College (1973); BS Forest Biology (1975) from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY, including an 8 week summer session at Cranberry Lake Biological Station, Cranberry Lake, NY



John Weber: *Finance Committee and Newsletter Committees:* CPA; MA University of Missouri; BBA Cleveland State; Exec VP and CFO Chardon Rubber Company (retired).



Harvey Webster: *Member Education and Newsletter Committees.* BS Cornell University; Director of Wildlife Resources, Cleveland Museum of Natural History (Retired).



Steve Zabor: *Member Finance, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* PhD Economics, Northwestern, Emeritus Professor of Economics and Environmental Studies, Hiram College. .

Trustee terms are typically 3 years and they are elected on a rotating basis.

*Annual Report Prepared by Carol Lillich, Secretary
Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland*

7/29/2021