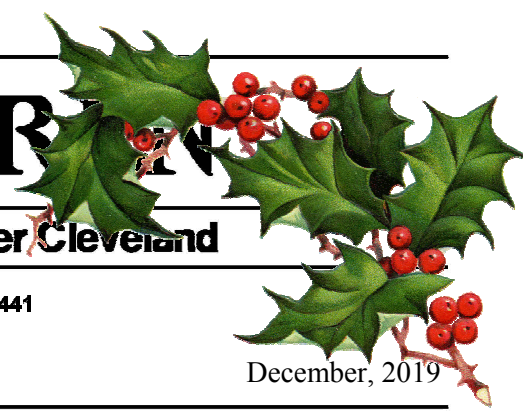




The HOUSE WR

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

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Donations benefit local chapter

Donations allow us to promote conservation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities.

This year we were able to construct an equipment garage at our newly-expanded Hach-Otis Sanctuary. The garage houses our new, recently-donated Kubota tractor, used to maintain the Carol and John Lillich Meadow and trails.

This autumn we engaged with a promising inner-city youth birding group known as "Buster's Bird Nerds," directed by Cleveland Public School teacher, Richard Banish. These students have put their heart and soul into the study and appreciation of birds and their habitat necessities. We have pledged to help support this group in order to provide nature education opportunities that would be next to impossible without our assistance.

Our speaker's bureau remains active, especially with offerings from board member Matt Valencic. These free

presentations are available for groups in our area.

Our 24-hour "Bird Quest" event has expanded in popularity in each of the five years we have offered it.

These and other activities depend on your donations above and beyond a simple membership contribution. Once and only once a year we look to our membership for financial help. Your gift will benefit your local chapter exclusively.

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is an all-volunteer organization with no paid employees, and your entire donation stays here promoting wildlife in our area. Our chapter is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization making your donation tax deductible.

We sincerely thank you for considering us as a recipient of your charitable donations. Rest assured that we will make careful and thoughtful use of your generosity.

—Jim Tomko, ASGC President

ASGC receives early Christmas gift

On October 9th of this year, the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland took delivery of a new Kubota tractor at the Hach-Otis Sanctuary's John and Carol Lillich Meadows. The tractor came equipped with a 60-inch brush hog and a front end loader. The tractor has four-wheel drive with a 25-horsepower diesel engine. Two anonymous donors provided the funds explicitly to purchase this equipment for Hach-Otis.

It is ASGC's desire to maintain this 32-acre old orchard and former farm field as meadow habitat for a variety of field nesting birds here in the Chagrin River Valley. I intend to keep two individual walking trails mowed. We have instituted a rotational mowing program to keep out woody plant species and enhance a grassland meadow. The meadow received no attention for two

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Trustees Mark Demyan and John Lillich oversee delivery of new Kubota tractor in October.

Photo: C. Lillich

Fall waterfowl migration

November and December are peak months for waterfowl migration in our area and the best places to view these birds is along Lake Erie from Cleveland to Perry Township and at the larger inland lakes and reservoirs like LaDue and Bass Lake (Geauga County) and Mosquito Creek Reservoir and Wildlife Area (Trumbull County). Spotting scopes are handy for distance viewing, but a good pair of 8x or 10x binoculars will provide you much enjoyment.

As I write this (November 20th), eBird checklists are reporting large numbers of migrant ducks, geese and gulls across NE Ohio: 5,000 red-breasted mergansers on

(Continued on page 2)

From the Nest...

I am always excited to do my own version of a holiday bird count where I count the species of birds that show up in my mailbox on holiday cards. Give it a try this year and you will be surprised at your species list. Let me know how many you see.

On another track, our chapter is



helping a youth birding group centered in the Collinwood section of Cleveland directed by Cleveland teacher and bird walk leader Richard (Buster) Banish. They are known as the East Clark Bird Nerds and many of us first met them at this year's Bird Quest. These kids are enthusiastic, bright, refreshing, birders studying birds in their

area and beyond. One of their many challenges is getting transportation to where the birds are. We have begun providing some financial help for this. We hope to keep these youngsters interested in birds and wildlife for the rest of their lives.

Please remember our annual appeal request. Thank you for your generosity.

—Jim Tomko, President

Fall fowl

(Continued from page 1)

Lake Erie off Mentor Lagoons Nature Preserve; 600 hooded mergansers at LaDue Reservoir; 300 Canada geese with 5 cackling geese at Headwaters Park in Geauga County; hundreds of tundra swans flying over the area (more than 500 spent the night at Bass Lake on November 15th); and 800 ring-billed gulls at Wendy Park Whiskey Island in downtown Cleveland. These checklists also include loons, grebes and many species of ducks.



Red-breasted mergansers

Photo: M. Valencic

Good numbers of ducks, geese, grebes, loons and gulls will continue throughout December but especially during the first two weeks. Birds will stay until ice closes the inland lakes. Once Lake Erie freezes birds concentrate along the Cuyahoga River (Scranton Flats down to Wendy Park Whiskey Island), at Fairport Harbor in Painesville (the mouth of the Grand River) and in Lorain at the mouth of the Black River.

My favorite part of fall/winter birding is finding the rarity among the 'expected' species. The careful observer may find an eared grebe among the horned & pied-bills, a red-throated or Pacific loon among the commons, and a snow, Ross's or greater white-fronted goose among the Canadas in a cornfield. Glaucous and Iceland gulls will be hidden with the ring-billed and herring, and the best of all is to find a little gull among Bonapartes!

Good Birding!

—Matt Valencic

Critter Corner

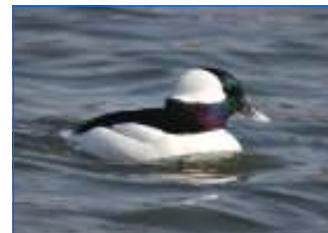


Photo: M. Valencic

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)

Butterballs, as they are sometimes known, are the smallest duck to visit our area at only 13.5 inches in length and a bit under a pound in weight.

They are consummate divers preferring the shallow water (less than 15 feet) of bays, lakes, and estuaries.

Their summertime diet consists of aquatic insects like dragonfly and damselfly nymphs and other fresh water invertebrates with some aquatic plants mixed in. The winter diet switches over to crustaceans, mollusks and snails.

They are very active and fun but frustrating to watch because as soon as you get the binoculars or spotting scope on them, they dive for food and pop up in a different spot from where they dove.

Bufflehead are handsome, mainly white ducks with a large, dark head, and dark back, wings and tail. The drakes have a generous "pie slice" white patch on the sides of their head surrounded by dark plumage which flashes iridescent purple/green if the sun hits it just right. Hens lack the white body and head patch. They instead have a distinct white cheek spot and grayish body feathers.

Bufflehead will stay with us until freeze-up and are among the first to pass through in springtime on their way north to their breeding grounds in north-central and northwestern Canada. They also nest in Alaska.

Bufflehead are among the few ducks that nest in tree cavities. They require an opening to their nest cavity just two and a half inches in diameter. Most of the time it is an abandoned northern flicker hole. They cannot excavate their own hollows.

Bufflehead have been seen all over our area in the last few weeks. I hope you get a chance to see them now or when they reappear in late February as soon as the ice goes out.

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

Bufflehead spend fully half their waking life underwater! Or so it is thought. Researchers have timed their dives which average 12 seconds under water and 12 seconds on the surface before diving again.

--Jim Tomko



Photo: M. Valencic

COAC happenings

(Council of Audubon Chapters)

Spring Gathering Event: April 4th at Columbus Grange Nature Center. Visit www.clevelandaudubon.org for more information.

Great Lakes Audubon welcomes members to call in to their monthly conference calls. Contact Izabela at : igrobelna@audubon.org.

She will add you to the email contact list.

Please return this form and your tax-deductible donation to:
The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland
P.O. Box 391037
Solon, OH 44139

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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Address _____

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Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

In case you missed it

We had a fantastic autumn walk at the Molnar Sanctuary in early November. The weather was great but the birding was quiet. We did get to see some wood ducks and mallards enjoying the lake. A red-tailed hawk did a fly-by after we unintentionally disturbed him from his hunting perch. The beaver have been active readying for winter and the freezing of the lake.

The best highlight was that we had Cheryl, the late Michael Molnar's niece,

join us. It was exquisitely interesting to hear of the work the family did there, the places where they played, the orchard they tended, the blueberry patch they harvested, and the beach they created along with other historical tidbits of the property. Cheryl related wonderful memories from her childhood weekends with Uncle Mike and Aunt Lenore at their weekend refuge now known as the Molnar Sanctuary. Thank you, Cheryl. Please join us again. It was a pleasure.

—Jim Tomko

Early Christmas

(Continued from page 1)

and a half years and we started to see the invasion of multi-flora rose and some autumn olive. A total mowing was completed in October so that we can expect a fresh start next spring.

Audubon Trustee Matt Valencic observed thirty-nine bird species during an hour walk at the meadows this past spring. While mowing I observed many species of migrating warblers. I believe we are enhancing a special location for wildlife and birders.



The freshly mowed John and Carol Lillich Meadows at Hach-Otis Sanctuary. Photo: J. Lillich

We have a large population of resident bluebirds. Ten to fifteen birds can be seen at any given time. I am now looking for volunteers to establish and maintain a bluebird trail. If you have an interest in this project, please contact us at info@clevelandaudubon.org.

—John Lillich

Holiday birding wishlist

No matter which holiday you celebrate this time of year, gift giving and receiving will likely be part of it. Here are some ideas you can share with loved ones that won't 'break the bank' but will make your birding more comfortable or help your birding in some way:

Binocular Harness Strap takes the weight off your neck. Lets you drop your bins without worry as you grab your camera. \$15-\$25.

Rubber Air Blower for blowing dust/debris off your bins or camera lens before cleaning to prevent hairline scratches on lens coatings. \$5-\$15.

Microfiber Cleaning Cloth for cleaning binoculars and camera lens (use with blower and antireflective cleaning solution). \$5-\$10

Balaclava to protect your face while winter birding. \$10-\$20.

Flip-Top Gloves/Mittens keep hands warm but allow quick finger access for phone or camera. Check hunter's websites. \$15-\$50.

Sibley Birds 2nd Edition for your smartphone. 930 North American birds. Songs, calls, maps & more. 710MB. \$20 through your phone app store.

—Matt Valencic

Upcoming Events

Field Trips, Etc.

December 20 7:00pm

"Winter Solstice"

Aurora Sanctuary

Join us for a night hike celebrating the winter solstice (1 day early) marking the longest night of the year. Have you heard the wondrous silence of the winter woods after dark? It is an amazing aura! The quiet is occasionally interrupted by wind in the branches of the pines, the call of an owl, the howl of a coyote, or the scrabbling sound of a flying squirrel darting up a tree trunk. Meet at Brettschneider Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

January 8 7:00pm

"Migrating Waterfowl and Winter Birds of NE Ohio"

North Olmsted Library

Visit www.clevelandaudubon.org for more information.

January 19 2:00pm

"Volunteer Open House"

Novak Education Center

Volunteers current, past and future: please join us for an afternoon of friendly chitchat and snacks. Hear about our ongoing programs that need your help. Meet fellow volunteers, birders and educators. Snacks and beverages provided; bring a dish to share if you wish.

RSVP at info@clevelandaudubon.org and pray for no snow!

February 8 10am-12pm & 1-3pm

"Junior Birder Day"

Novak Education Center

Our Junior Birder Day (formally Scout Day) is for all children K thru 3rd grade. Participants will rotate through stations to learn about bird adaptations, anatomy and habitat in a fun way. Craft and owl pellet dissection included. School groups and Scout troops welcome. \$5 donation per child requested. Sessions fill up quickly so reserve your child's place today!

Contact info@clevelandaudubon.org for reservations.

DATED MAIL

**AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND (S 70)
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 Jim Tomko, President**

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A Wry Smile



Don't accept your dog's admiration as conclusive evidence that you are wonderful.
 —Ann Landers

Join the Christmas Bird Count

THE AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IS FOR EVERYONE! It is the annual winter census of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere, administered by the National Audubon Society. You don't have to be an Audubon member or an expert birder to participate and most 'circles' welcome the extra help.

A 'circle' is an area 15 miles in diameter. A 'compiler' is the person in charge of a circle. They divide the area of their circle into sections for individuals or teams to search throughout the day, reporting their observations to the compiler using a simple form. You can use eBird or paper and pencil to keep track through the day. Birding in teams can be fun but you can also bird alone. Some circles meet for lunch or at the end of the day to review findings and socialize.

To participate contact the compiler and express your interest. They will fill you in on details of when and where you can help. You can join more than one circle during the season if you like.

Here are the circles in our area and



Winter birding can be fun for all.
 Photo: K. Carter-Cohn

the dates of their counts:

- Cuyahoga Falls Circle – December 15
 Marie Morgan
- Cleveland East Circle – December 21
 Julie West
- Lakewood Circle – December 28
 Nancy Howell
- Mentor Circle (Lake Co.) – December 28
 Dan Donaldson
- Burton Circle (Geauga Co.) – January 4
 Linda Gilbert
- Portage County Circle – January 4
 Jennifer Clark

—Matt Valencic
 (For the contact information of the above compilers, please email info@clevelandaudubon.org)