



# 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)

December, 2014

## ASGC launches 2014 Annual Appeal

Once a year, and only once a year, the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland asks you for help. We are a small but dynamic group of people dedicated to our mission of conservation and education in the Cleveland area, and it's an expensive prospect. Thanks to you, our generous members, we are able to continue this important work.



"The Lost Bird Project"—March, 2014

In the past year, we accomplished our goal of collaborating with other conservation organizations to bring high-level programming to our area. Many of you experienced the wonderful film, "The Lost Bird Project," and helped welcome Dr. Michael Hutchins of the American Bird Conservancy. These events were made possible by sharing the costs with Western Cuyahoga Audubon and the Kirtland Bird Club. With your support, we can continue creating this synergy with like-minded

groups.

Our local Backyard Naturalist programs continue at our historic, remodeled Novak Education Center in Aurora, as well as programs for youth including Project ¿QUE?, Scout Day, and our newly developed BIRDday Parties.

We are blessed as an Audubon chapter with extensive land holdings, totaling 525 acres of preserved land. But this is a responsibility as well as a blessing. We are currently engaged in a war against invasive buckthorn, which threatens the habitats of the many birds and other wildlife that call our sanctuaries home. This year alone, we allocated \$5000 to clear buckthorn from approximately ten acres in the Molnar Sanctuary. These projects will require more resources in the future, both



Clearing buckthorn—ongoing



financial and human, and do not include regular expenses for trail and equipment maintenance, brush trimming and bridge repair.

As you know, our educational programs and land maintenance projects are all carried out by volunteers. We have no administrative costs and very little overhead, including only property and liability insurance. Your donation dollars go directly to funding our education and conservation mission.

As another productive year comes to a close, we send you our heartfelt holiday greetings and ask for your financial and personal support. Please return your *tax-deductible* donation with the remittance form on page 2 and be sure to indicate if you'd like to be contacted about volunteering. We invite you to enjoy and participate in your Audubon Society, and we thank you for your continued support.

—ASGC Board of Trustees

## *From the Nest...*

I suppose it is not a coincidence that we launch our Annual Appeal shortly after we set our budget for the coming year. Though we have no administrative costs and very little overhead, we have no problem spending every penny we receive through your generous donations, and then some.

For example, line items on 2015's proposed budget include \$1400 for The Backyard Naturalist series and \$5000 for



a new high school scholarship program, all part of an Education budget exceeding \$11,000.

Proposed sanctuary expenses include \$2900 for equipment rental and repairs (clearing buckthorn is heavy work!) and over \$5000 for labor and materials to repair bridges and other structures on the properties. Then there's \$6000 for printing and mailing this newsletter, and you can begin to understand how our 2015 budget is the largest ever.

Is it worth it?

Treasurer John Weber feels that all budget requests for 2015 were "reasonable" and should be accommodated to the best of our ability. It is you, our members, who allow us not only to maintain and muddle through, but to strive to increase our service to our conservation and education mission.

I hope you will answer "yes" to the above question with a generous, tax-deductible donation. Thank you, and happy holidays!

—Alison DeBroux, Editor



Two barred owl boxes, expertly crafted by ASGC Treasurer John Weber, were recently installed in the Aurora Sanctuary. *Photo: J. Tomko*



At the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve (Dike 14), a golden crowned kinglet was photographed October 17<sup>th</sup> by Laura Gooch.

## What is the Christmas Bird Count?

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans participated in a “side hunt” on Christmas Day, competing for who could shoot the most birds regardless of whether they needed them for food. Most were wasted. In 1900, New York City ornithologist Frank Chapman changed things up with the goal of counting the birds instead of shooting them. This became the Christmas Bird Count.

The count is done by 10 or more people who are responsible for a 15-mile-diameter circle where they divide into small parties to count all the birds they see or hear in their section of the circle within a 24-hour period. Some people are assigned to just watch feeders. Some go out after dark to listen for owls. The count must be performed within two weeks prior to Christmas and up to one week after Christmas. All the data is compiled and submitted to National Audubon and the information is made available to scientists in order to gauge the status of bird population changes. There are a number of Ohio Audubon Chapters that participate and it is a great way to get involved for both beginner and advanced birders alike. I help out the Akron Audubon Society every year and my section is along the Cuyahoga River where it runs from Kent to Stow at Route 91. See if you can find a CBC near you this season.

—Jim Tomko

## Critter Corner



Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

You will likely find this bird on one of your holiday cards. If you tune your ears to outdoor sounds you may hear them flying overhead right now!

These impressive (up to 15 pounds, 52-inch length and 66-inch wingspan) all white birds, with large black feet and a black bill, are currently passing through our area from nesting grounds on the Alaskan and Canadian tundra, heading to wintering grounds on the Chesapeake Bay and points south along the Atlantic coast. Their distinctive calls can be heard for long distances to alert you to their presence both on the water and on the wing. The call is a repeated “Kluu ooo” reminiscent of baying hounds or like the sound of attack in the old western movies. Usually they migrate in family groups which often merge with other families to form quite large flocks.

Tundra swans construct a ground nest consisting of a mass of moss, grasses and sedges near the edge of a pond or marsh. The female incubates two to seven dull white eggs for about 32 days while the male remains a vigilant protector.

The cygnets are ready to parade after their parents within several hours of hatching, already feeding themselves on aquatic plants and invertebrates. They also graze onshore on plants and in migration will take spilled corn from agricultural fields.

The family group remains together until the following spring. What a fantastic day you will have when you see and hear these white beauties against a winter sky with the sun shining against their bright white feathers. Enjoy the sensation!

—Jim Tomko

Please return this form and your tax-deductible donation to:

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

P.O. Box 391037

Solon, OH 44139

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Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

## In Case You Missed It!

*"Leaf Kicking Hike"*  
Aurora Sanctuary 11/08/14

The leaves crunched and we enjoyed the sounds and sensations as we kicked through the fallen leaves on the trail. What a great Saturday morning to be out and about. For a short spell a few very fine ice pellets bounced off our heads and shoulders but that was fun too! "Celebrities" that made an appearance were a bald eagle, a barred owl, and a

pair of bluebirds. We also watched winter feeding flocks of black-capped chickadees, tufted titmouse and white-breasted nuthatch. A couple of winter-plumaged goldfinches were also foraging. By the way, even though we know that they live there, the wild turkeys made no appearance and left no signs that they existed. I suppose they were getting ready for Thanksgiving!

—Jim Tomko

### Local students learn firsthand about climate change

Ten local high school students and their teacher recently traveled to Alaska to study the effects of climate change. Their experience was part of the first "Climate Change Academy," an immersive, comprehensive climate change course offered through the National Park Service.

Applications for the "Climate Change Academy" were solicited from middle and high schools across the nation. After several rounds of review, Mike Sustin, a chemistry and environmental science teacher from West Geauga High School, was selected as a group leader, and 10 students were

selected to participate in the academy.

Back in Ohio, the students are developing a project to share their discoveries with their community.



West Geauga High School students along the Harding Ice Field Trail, Alaska, with interpretive Ranger Luke Rosier.

Photo: M. Sustin

## The Squawk



Dear Colleagues,

In the wake of the election there is a collective effort to get calls into Sen. Brown's and Sen. Portman's office pushing for action on climate change and asking them to support the new EPA carbon rules.

If you are willing/able to make a 2 minute call to each office ... it will be added to thousands of others from across the country to help keep the drumbeat going.

...Exit polling showed that 6 in 10 voters believe climate change is an important issue. It is important to remind our elected leaders that this is an issue that people care about.

Thanks, ... and please let me know if you make the call and if you get any feedback, be sure to tell them who you are and who you represent.

Senator Brown 216-522-7272  
Senator Portman 216-522-7095

Best,

Marnie Urso

[мурso@audubon.org](mailto:мурso@audubon.org)

Send your comments, questions, or complaints to

[auduboncleveand@hotmail.com](mailto:auduboncleveand@hotmail.com)

## Upcoming Events

### The Backyard Naturalist

Join us on February 21<sup>st</sup>, when The Backyard Naturalist returns with featured speaker Stan Searles, founder of Global Conservation Connections. Stan was Curator of Birds and Aquatics at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for 22 years, where he initiated Zoo conservation programs including reintroducing trumpeter swans and brook trout conservation in Ohio. We are looking forward to a great program!



**December 19 7:00pm**

*"Winter Solstice Hike"*

Novak Sanctuary

Have you ever taken a night walk in the winter field and forest celebrating one of the longest nights of the year? The winter woods are quiet and peaceful if the weather is calm. The stars shine brightly through the cool clear atmosphere and we have a chance at hearing an owl or a coyote singing to the moon. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road a little less than a mile north of State Route 82 in Aurora.

**January 17 10:00am**

*"Winter Track Walk"*

Moebius Nature Center

### Field Trips

Join us for a snowy hike (if the weather cooperates) to learn who has used the trail before us. Last year we spotted the wing imprints of an Eastern screech owl capturing a mouse in the snow. A few years ago we saw where a mink and a muskrat met for dinner. Due to the secretive nature of so many creatures, we don't realize they are there until they leave their signs in the snow. Dress for the weather and meet at the Moebius Nature Center on the north side of Mennonite Road, a little less than a mile east of Page Road just east of Sunny Lake in Aurora.

**February 15 9:30am**

*"Great Backyard Bird Count"*

Aurora Sanctuary

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### *A Wry Smile*

When his .38 caliber revolver failed to fire at his intended victim during a hold-up in Long Beach, CA, would-be robber James Elliot did something that can only inspire wonder. He peered down the barrel and tried the trigger again. This time it worked.

—2013 Darwin Award Winner



## What's in *your* attic?

It's time again to crawl into that attic or basement and retrieve the holiday decorations. It seems only yesterday we were packing up the ornaments, but as we unpack them for this new season, some leave us in complete bafflement. Did we even hang that old thing last year? And which box has the hooks, the extension cord, and the spare bulbs?

The attic of the Novak Education Center offered up its share of surprises during an inventory last summer. Education Committee members Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Joe Malmisur and Mike Roberto spent a hot June morning organizing crafts and educational supplies in preparation for our upcoming BIRDday Parties and Scout Day.

As expected (or maybe not), there was a variety of supplies like construction paper, googly eyes, paper plates, three packages of cotton balls and more than 50 bird cut-outs. There were bird mask templates, wooden craft sticks, and two bags of dried green moss.

Less expected, at least for the uninitiated, were the cans of Crisco and cornmeal, and the boxes of Cheerios and raisins (for bird-feeder projects). One



Mike Roberto examines an ancient film strip.

plastic bin held disposable gloves, five plastic tweezers and oodles of sharp dissecting tools—and a package of owl pellets to use them with.

We also found a number of skeletons (bird, rabbit, fish, turtle...), four good stereoscopes and one broken microscope, six pairs of binoculars and at least 20 petri dishes.

Then there were the truly bizarre things like three rattan pumpkins and three sparkly miniature hoola-hoops. Who used these things, and when?

Just like holiday decorations, it would be a shame to throw anything out, even if it's old or useless. Who knows when someone might want 15 records (yes, *vinyl*) of bird songs, deemed old but good?

—Alison DeBroux

DATED MAIL

