



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

May, 2020

ZOOM® saves the day

Or Backyard Naturalist is a big part our Education Committee outreach every year. We present about 25 programs a year to groups as diverse as Audubon Chapters, bird, photography and garden clubs, Rotary, public libraries, and retirement communities. Our programs cover groups of birds, bird study, the history of our sanctuaries, eBird, conservation (Important Bird Areas – IBAs) and the science of migration.

It was very difficult to cancel ten programs for March, April and May because of COVID19. Then I received a call from Canton Audubon (thank you Linda Chen) asking if we might present their program (Warbler Warm-Up) using

Zoom. I had no idea what Zoom was, but in 24 hours I received a real education, on-line of course! Zoom has made ‘staying connected’ possible for families, groups and businesses during this pandemic. ASGC set up an account and we began to practice hosting meetings among ourselves. After a few sessions we were ready to ‘go live’ and see about salvaging some of the cancelled programs.

On April 15 we presented the classroom component (PowerPoint + Q & A) of NEW BIRDERS WORKSHOP to 24 of the original 39 registrants for that program. The evaluations at the end of the program were gratifying – 100%
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eBird: What’s in it for me?

Recently one of our chapter members told me he did not know what he was missing until he attended one of our eBird programs. He was aware of eBird but was happy just watching birds and occasionally ‘chasing’ a rarity. Today he has the eBird app on his smart phone and enters checklists nearly every time he goes birding. He found a community of birders in his county that enter checklists daily and share details when they see something special. He even has eBird send him ‘alerts’ when a bird is seen that he has not seen. In his words, “birding is more joyous for me since I started using eBird!” The people he met through eBird were a big part of that joy.

Would you like to see what you might be missing? I hope so. During May we are offering two opportunities to see the most popular features of eBird using ZOOM, the free video conferencing platform. We start with Getting Started (setting up a free account) then move to Exploring
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Magee closed: Now what?

At this writing (April 21, 2020) Magee Marsh is “Closed until further notice”. So, where do we get our warbler fix? How about your home county?



Black-throated green warbler

Photo: M. Valencic

(35 sp), Cuyahoga (37 sp), Medina (34 sp) and Trumbull (32 sp). Magee and Ottawa certainly attract larger numbers of birds than our inland counties do, but we still have a similar number of species.

eBird data for All Time show that Lucas and Ottawa counties, home to Magee Marsh and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, have produced 38 and 37 species of warblers, respectively. How about NE Ohio counties? Are you sitting down?? Geauga (35 sp), Lake (37 sp), Portage

So, where are they? I again refer to eBird. From eBird’s opening page go to Species Maps. Type in your favorite warbler (I like chestnut-sided). Then for DATE do a custom date range. Type in
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From the Nest...

While we experience the trials, tribulations, and tragedies of the Covid 19 pandemic, we are also learning new ways to stay in touch and carry on our activities and endeavors.

There are some bright spots such as a chance to slow down and enjoy some things that your busy schedule has not



allowed. I’ve noticed more people walking their dogs and riding their bikes. Our sanctuaries have had more hikers which is good but also a concern.

Our sanctuaries are not “parks”. They are nature preserves. The increased foot traffic and an effort to maintain social distancing has overwhelmed Hach-Otis with walkers going off trail to

avoid each other. **We have had to temporarily close this wildlife treasure.**

Other bright spots have been in people willing to go above and beyond to help fulfill our mission. Matt Valencic has been able to put on his excellent programs for the public via a (new to me) electronic meeting platform called ZOOM. He and his speaking partner
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eBird program

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Regions (your ‘backyard’ or around the world), Exploring Species (where can I find Purple Martins?) and how to create Bar Charts (when do vireos arrive in Portage County?). You will learn how to EXPLORE your own data (My eBird) and to Enter Historic Checklists so your Life List is complete. (Did I mention that eBird maintains your Life List for every checklist you enter from around the world?)

When you register you will be emailed the “How To” handout that walks you step-by-step through many of the popular eBird features. That way you can just enjoy the presentation and not worry about taking notes. (You’re
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Yellow-throated vireo at Swine Creek
Photo: M. Valencic

Critter Corner



Photo: M. Valencic

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

(*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

Wow! That is the prettiest, most musical robin song I’ve ever heard. It’s as if that robin had singing lessons or a little too much of an intoxicating beverage! Wait, that isn’t a robin.

I see a stocky, robin-sized bird but with a dark black hood, back, and wings which have white wing bars. It has white underparts and a startling scarlet red breast! It is a rose-breasted grosbeak.

If the female is noted first you may begin to scratch your head and say that is an enormous sparrow the likes of which I have never seen before! She is plumaged in brown and buff streaks with a bold white eyebrow.

The other thing that alerts me to their presence is the loud “squeak” call that reminds me of the sound of a basketball player’s shoes rubbing on the wooden floor of the basketball court.

These birds nest in our area but are denizens of the forest canopy. After full leaf out, we do not see them as much. Their wintering haunts are in Central and South America but these birds spend the summer with us.

They build a rather flimsy nest in the fork of a deciduous tree 6 to 26 feet above the ground. Sometimes it is so flimsy that you can see the eggs through the bottom of the nest.

Rose-breasted grosbeaks prefer second growth forests, orchards, and wooded suburban backyards. They eat insects, berries, and seeds. They especially love sunflower seeds at your feeders. Get ready to be dazzled by them the first few weeks of May!

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

Most birds are very secretive about the location of their nests. A male rose-breasted grosbeak is such a “proud” father that he sings at full volume from the nest while incubating the eggs!

Magee

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May and May for the month then select 2019. For LOCATION, type in the name of your county (Geauga, OH for me). The map you get shows hotspots and personal locations where Chestnut-sided Warblers were reported last year. Do this for a few more species and you will begin to find ‘migrant traps’ – locations that have habitat favorable to attracting a variety of warblers and other species.



Chestnut-sided warbler Photo: M. Valencic

From the Nest

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Kelly Kozlowski’s “Warbler Warm-Up” presentation was well received by 49 participants. We are planning our next board meeting with his help through ZOOM. We greatly appreciate his help and all this during spring migration when he would rather be out there with the birds.

My thanks to all who are pushing for the positive! Stay healthy.

See you on the trails,

—Jim Tomko, President

If you bird your county frequently you may already know where to find migrating birds. Why not share those locations with others you encounter this year? Remember, lots of people were generous enough to complete eBird checklists in the past, the source of the information you are now using. The least we can do is share it with others and encourage them to start using eBird.

We are all in this migration thing together this year! Let’s ‘beef up’ our county data by birding and eBirding more in our home county this season.

Good Birding!

—Matt Valencic

ZOOM

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of respondents found the information useful and 100% said they would like to have more Zoom presentations. There were a couple glitches but nothing devastating.

On April 16 we presented Warbler Warm Up to almost 50 people, thanks to Canton Audubon and Kirtland Bird Club spreading the word among members and friends. Again, the evaluations were 98% positive.

We are now planning to use Zoom for our quarterly Board of Trustees meeting and are scheduling two sessions of “eBird – What’s in it for you” for May (see article in this issue). It’s safe to say that our Speaker’s Bureau is back in business, thanks to technology and people willing to embrace something new. Thanks to everyone who made this possible.

—Matt Valencic

In case you missed it

Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus, we have had to cancel all of our field trips. But I hope you have gotten out on the trail to enjoy the pleasures of our natural world. Spring peeper songs fill the air. We had spotted salamanders and wood frogs depositing eggs in our vernal pool. There have been rusty blackbirds stopping by to rest and refuel. Woodcocks have been strutting their stuff. “Our” bald eagle nest has two flourishing eaglets. The ephemeral spring wild flowers have been spectacular. A walk on the trail is so nourishing, both mentally and physically. As you walk, look and listen—rejuvenation is inevitable!

—Jim Tomko

Rusty blackbird
Photo: J. Tomko



eBird program

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welcome!).

Registration is limited to 100 persons per session: Tuesday May 5th at 7:00pm or Wednesday May 13th at 7:00pm. Registration information will be provided to our email contact list and on our website (www.clevelandaudubon.org) under EVENTS. You must register using the link provided. You will then receive a confirmation email containing a link to the actual meeting.

Questions? Email info@clevelandaudubon.org and we will get back to you.

—Matt Valencic

Board of Trustees and Officer Elections

Since we have had to cancel our Annual Meeting when we traditionally hold our elections, and our by-laws require an election of trustees and officers by the full membership, we have decided to hold the elections via the newsletter. Please vote using the ballot below. Thank you for your participation.

—Jim Tomko

Visit www.clevelandaudubon.org and click on “About us” for more information about the candidates.



Salamanders

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gelatinous sacs on or near the water's surface. Because there are no fish in a vernal pool (the water doesn't stick around long enough for fish to live), the eggs had a chance to hatch without being eaten.

Then Kim's quick eye picked out movement near the surface, and Jim netted a mama salamander. I'm sure she was quite annoyed by it all, but allowed herself to be examined and stared at for a few minutes before being gently released back into her muddy home.

At a third watery stop we found a newt, and our trek back to the parking lot was serenaded by coyotes and barred owls. Quite a night!

—Alison DeBroux

Spotted salamander
Photo: J. Tomko

BALLOT TO ELECT OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES FOR FISCAL YEAR MAY, 2020

Please return the completed ballot before June 1 to:
Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland
PO Box 391037, Solon, OH 44139

Upcoming Events

May 5 7:00pm
Or
May 13 7:00pm
Via **ZOOM®**

“eBird: What’s in it for me?”

This presentation explores eBird, including getting started, exploring regions and species, how to create bar charts, save data and enter checklists. A “how-to” hand-out will be furnished upon registration. Registration for a Zoom program is easy! Visit our website under Events for instructions and a link to the program. Space is limited so don't wait!

OFFICERS		FOR	AGAINST
Term May, 2020 to May, 2021			
President	Jim Tomko		
Vice President	Mark Demyan		
Secretary	Carol Lillich		
Treasurer	Stephanie Demyan		
TRUSTEES			
Term May, 2020 to May, 2023	Mary Salomon		
	Matthew Valencic		
	John Weber		
	Steve Zabor		


DATED MAIL

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND (S 70)
Board of Trustees 2018-2019
Jim Tomko, President

Bob Bartolotta	Carol Lillich
Matt Bartolotta	John Lillich
Kathy Cochran	Sarah Mabey
Alison DeBroux	Penny Orr
Jim DeBroux	Mary Salomon
Mark Demyan	Matt Valencic
Stephanie Demyan	John Weber, CPA
Claire Johnson	Harvey Webster
Nora Kelly	Steve Zabor

To contact an individual trustee, send an email to info@clevelandaudubon.org

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 Please recycle this newsletter

Of mud and salamanders

As a volunteer for Summit Metroparks, I was scheduled to participate in a vernal pool exploration in March to look for salamanders. I even bought new boots so I could get wet and muddy! Then all Metroparks events were canceled. When I mentioned my disappointment to ASGC President Jim Tomko, he invited me on his next excursion to the Aurora Sanctuary's vernal pool, and I enthusiastically accepted.

Five of us headed into the woods on the evening of March 25: Jim Tomko, Kim Pease, Marty Sickinger, Rob Swaney, and me, all wearing waterproof boots and prepared for mud. We made sure to stay a turkey vulture's wingspan (6') apart.



It was a cool 50 degrees, and just five yards from the parking lot, my \$20 boots earned their keep—the mud was ankle deep! And cold! Heaven forbid one of us should lose our balance and go splat. That didn't happen and we splashed carefully into the sanctuary, stopping at Hammond Pond to admire a pair of beaver, who didn't seem at all fazed by the high powered flashlights illuminating them.

Then on to the vernal pool, the mud determined to separate me from my trusty boots with every step. The pool was about 20 feet in diameter and 18 inches deep, surrounded by trees. There were plenty of salamander and wood frog eggs, contained in

Jim Tomko prepares to net a salamander in the Aurora Sanctuary. Photo: A. DeBroux

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A Wry Smile



I was so bored I called Jake from State Farm just to talk to someone. He asked me what I was wearing.