



Chagrin River Valley from Audubon's Hach-Otis Sanctuary

Photograph by Carol K. Lillich

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



Annual Report to Members

For the Year 2014

Annual Meeting

June 6, 2015

Cleveland Metropark's Canal Way Nature Center

4524 East 49th Street

Cuyahoga Heights, OH 44125



Overview

The information in this report is based mainly on accomplishments, events, and activities during calendar year 2014. Exceptions to that timeframe, e.g., the listing of trustees and officers for the period June 2014 - May 2015, are noted. The individuals listed as chairs and members of the committees are also individuals who served from June, 2014 through May, 2015.

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

- Development Committee
- Education Committee
- Field Trips Committee
- Finance Committee
- Important Birding Area (IBA) Committee
- Newsletter 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.

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.

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



Letter from the President



Hello from the desk of the President of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland.

I am writing to you as I travel in the south for business for my Consulting Business, MDCC. This letter is for the Annual Report that our Secretary, Carol Lillich, one of our many hard working trustee's, assembles each year to inform you, the membership, on the events, activities, actions and items of interest that we (ASGC) have done in the past year.

We have accomplished a great many important and exciting things. But I have to say the most important one is educating and sharing information on what is happening in NE Ohio and the United States in regards to conservation and saving land for conservation purposes. We have four major committees: Education, Sanctuary, Development and Finance. The Education and Sanctuary Committees are our learning and working arms of the ASGC. The Development and Finance Committees keep the doors open of our organization. We also have the Executive Committee, which is comprised of the officers and the chairs of the four major committees. They are responsible for keeping our mission and our Constitution alive and well.

Regarding the Constitution of our organization, you will have the opportunity to vote on it at the annual meeting and dinner. You, the active and engaged membership will vote to approve a document that will move our organization forward for the next 20 years. We have an active group of trustee's who will be building a strategic plan for the next 5, 10 maybe 25 years. I am inviting you, the membership, to get involved, take time to participate and, most importantly, to let us know what you want to do to help the organization to be successful and alive in the coming years. I would like to see 300 members email me and give me their thoughts. I promise that we will find a place for you; a place to spread your wings and even build a nest; a place you can call a second home and become ACTIVE.

On a sad note, we said goodbye to Earl Biederman, who passed away in March of this year. Earl was a longtime member and an active trustee for many years. He gave of his time and talents. Every year he would make sure that a map was printed, and paid for, that had our Sanctuary's bold and up front on the map. We will miss Earl and his contributions to our organization.

You will read in this Annual Report what our committees have been doing this year. Please take the time to read, review and understand what we are all about. Many volunteer hours of time, talents, and especially our specialty in the love of nature, shines like a beacon from what has been accomplished in the last 75 years of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC).

Lastly, I would like to share with you a question and a thought. What does ASGC mean to you? To Mark J Demyan, it means over 500 acres to walk in; it means a group of people who financially support the cause. It means members who use their time and talent to help with day to day work of our organization. It means members who want to keep land available to enjoy nature and wildlife. So come out and visit our education and nature center, come to an event that stirs your imagination and helps you to say "YES I want to be a part of that group of people and that organization".

The Board of Trustee's and the "Friends of the Audubon Society" want to THANK YOU first and foremost for your support and welcome you to be a bigger part of us moving forward. *Take care and enjoy the beauty of NATURE*, and take your son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter for a walk, and maybe find a salamander, play in the creek or listen to the birds waking up in the morning or going to bed in the evening. I am sure that you will be encouraging them to "Enjoy the Beauty of NATURE for a Lifetime". Goodbye for now, but I hope to see you on a trail at one of our Sanctuary's.

Mark Demyan, President



Development Committee

Mark Demyan, Chair

Members: Brian Cassidy, John Finkler, Steve Kandra III, Sarah Mabey, Karen Nelson, John Thornton, John Weber, Jerry Wolanin

The Development Committee had a busy year. We are continuing our evaluation of our sustainable organization that engages our members and the “Friends of Audubon.”

We held two work sessions with Sarah Maybe as our moderator. Sarah led us through some exercises on who we are, who we are serving, and what we can do better to serve our membership. We look forward to continuing on the path of success and to continue to improve the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland.

We are continuing our cooperative events that we started last year between the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, the Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society and the Kirtland Bird Club. We had two events this year, in the Fall we had a symposium on wind energy and wildlife. Dr. Michael Hutchin, National Coordinator of Smart Wind Energy Campaign, American Bird Conservancy, and Eric Ritter, Manger - Communications and Strategy of Lake Erie Energy Development Corp. (LEEDCO) were our speakers. We had a very lively conversation with two experts in their fields, and each presenter shared their Ideas and thoughts on wind energy on the Great Lakes.

In the spring we had more perils and pitfalls of birding

Bill Thompson III tells tales of birds, birders, and the amazing things that happen when you're out there watching. As has been his standing policy, if you don't laugh at least once during this talk, Bill will clean the binoculars of everyone present.

Bill Thompson III (or BT3 as he is better known) is a lifelong birder, the co-publisher of *Bird Watcher's Digest (BWD)*, and the author of many books on birds and nature. He's been on the editorial team of *BWD* since May of 1988. We had over 150 members and guests from the 3 organizations attend this event at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Mark Demyan attended 2 meetings with other chapter leaders of Audubon Societies in Ohio, and is looking forward to working with other chapters on having cooperative events. We are working, and helping, with a growing group of energetic Audubon Society Chapters who would like to meet quarterly to share ideas on how to strengthen all of the Audubon Societies and their activities throughout Ohio.

We are also developing a PR and publicity program for our chapter. We are in the beginning phase of this program, and will be expanding it as we take small steps so that our success will grow and bring benefits to our organization.

Submitted by Mark Demyan, Chair



Education Committee

Alison DeBroux, Chair

Kathy Cochran, Co-chair

Members: Laura Bell-Peters, Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Sarah Mabey, Joe Malmisur, Penny Orr, Faith Osborn, Mike Roberto, Betsy Siman, Andrea Storey, and Harvey Webster

2014 saw many changes to the ASGC Education Committee:

- A change of leadership brought Alison DeBroux in as chairperson, with Kathy Cochran taking the role of co-chair.
- Our Saturday Afternoon Backyard Naturalist Series became The Backyard Naturalist.
- We added our new BIRDday Parties and instituted a scholarship for college-bound high school seniors.

The Education Committee remains committed to our mission of promoting the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through educational activities focusing on the greater Cleveland community. During the 2014-15 season, we offered the following programs:

The Backyard Naturalist

Experts in a variety of nature-related fields speak at the Novak Education Center one Saturday per month, six times per year. Our 2014-15 schedule featured programs on herons, insects, mammals, birdwatching, bird songs, climate change, endangered species and forest fragmentation.

Scout Day & Bird Buddy Programs

Project Lead: Kathy Cochran

Volunteers: Kathryn Craig, Alison DeBroux, Sue Graham, Betsy Siman, Andrea Storey, Jim Tomko

Student: Katie Cochran, Sarah Cochran, Madison Proctor, Nicole Ryman, Rachel Smith,

Volunteers: Julia Toth

October 11, 2014 and February 28, 2015: We expanded the publicity for Scout Day and attracted Scouts and their leaders from as far away as Akron, Strongsville, Lakewood and North Olmstead. Girl and Boy Scouts in grades K-3rd learned about various aspects of birds including feet and beak adaptations, bones and wings, and nests. Bird identification with binoculars and dissecting an owl pellet were other popular activities.



Scout Day

The committee wishes to thank Wild Republic (a division of K&M International, Inc), of Twinsburg, OH, for donating 20 plush Audubon “birdsong” birds to assist in bird identification!

The committee is currently working to expand Scout Day into a “Bird Buddy” day for preschool and home schooled children. Our first Bird Buddy Day was April 29, 2015 for 38 children from an Aurora preschool.

BIRDday Parties

Project Leads: Kathryn Craig & Alison DeBroux

Volunteers: Kathy Cochran, Sue Graham, Betsy Siman

In 2014 the ASGC began offering bird-themed children's birthday parties at the Novak Education Center. Volunteers provide activities including a craft, science project, story, games, prizes and a personalized birthday cake at cost. The party tops off with a hayride through the Novak Sanctuary (weather permitting). Contact the ASGC at auduboncleland@outlook.com for more information.

High School Scholarship

Project Lead: Mike Roberto

Volunteers (Selection Committee): Kathy Cochran, Alison DeBroux, Sue Graham, Sarah Mabey, Harvey Webster

Perhaps most exciting, this marks the first year that the ASGC awarded \$1000 scholarships to five college-bound high school seniors. We based our eligibility criteria not on need, GPA or test scores, but on a student's desire to work in the natural sciences. Applications came in from all over our service area, including Brush High School (South Euclid-Lyndhurst), Shaker Heights High School, Solon High School and Martin Luther King Jr High School. We are proud of our 2015 winners, and they are:

- Susan E. (Beachwood HS) *“I want to study environmental sciences because I hope to help in the effort to live in the most sustainable way possible, while minimizing the change to our way of life.”*

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



- Amy L. (Solon HS) *“Maybe I’ll become a professor at a university, or maybe I’ll work from a conservation organization, but I know one thing for sure: wherever my studies bring me, I hope that my work will support conservationism, especially of the birds that I love.”*
- Megan M. (Aurora HS) *“I developed a passion for working with animals and a desire, like every little girl, to become a veterinarian...I plan to gain a biology degree and apply to veterinary school. As of yet, I am undecided on what species I would like to work with (large animals, small animals, wildlife, or zoo animals.)”*
- Andrew M. (Brush HS) *“I plan on carrying out or assisting...with any captive breeding programs for endangered species. Captive breeding...is an integral part in the survival of many species that are on the brink of extinction, and I would like to help save them in any way I can.”*
- Shannon P. (Roosevelt HS) *“Upon receiving my college degree and possibly after graduate school, I plan on pursuing a governmental policy job so I can design and promote legislature to protect the environment.”*

Project Que



July 16th, 2014: The ASGC continued its partnership with John Carroll University to provide an Audubon Day to a group of Latino middle school children from the west side of Cleveland.

Approximately 40 seventh and eighth graders sat spellbound during the always professional presentation by Back to the Wild, a wildlife rehab organization from Castalia, OH. The ASGC will provide a final day in July, 2015, so this year's 20 eighth graders can finish the three-year program. Due to budget constraints, JCU is discontinuing the program after this year.

Program Sub-Committee

Harvey Webster, Chair

“The Lost Bird Project” If you missed the special event on March 9, 2015, held at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, you missed a great experience. Zoo staff welcomed attendees and ushered us to the auditorium, where we were greeted with tasty treats and the principals from each of the organizations who put on this cooperative event: the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, and Kirtland Bird Club.



The highlight of the afternoon was a showing of the film, “The Lost Bird Project,” which highlighted the efforts of sculptor Todd McGrain to create memorials for five extinct species (Labrador Duck, Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet, Great Auk, and Passenger Pigeon), and place them near where the last of their kind was seen. With Todd, we traveled to the coast of Nova Scotia, through Martha's Vineyard and down to the swamps of Florida, ending in central Ohio, where Martha, the last passenger pigeon, died 100 years ago this September. The film was

professionally filmed and was amusing and emotional by turns, as Todd faced a number of challenges in his quest to find the best places to erect his man-sized sculptures.

After a short break, we reconvened with a panel of conservation experts for a discussion of what we as individuals can do to thwart the next wave of extinctions. The panel included Mark Shieldcastle of Black Swamp Bird Observatory, Brett Rodstrom of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and Stan Searles, founder of Global Conservation Connections.

A minor technical snag at the beginning of the film allowed us to experience the significant comedic storytelling skills of emcee Harvey Webster and the snack table was pretty well worked over by the time the event broke up about 4:30. A short survey indicated that everyone had a great time and thought this “cooperative” idea a good one, and we should endeavor to do more such events. Our thanks go out to organizers Tom Romito and Nancy Howell of WCAS, Lukas Padegimas of KBC, and Mark Demyan and Harvey Webster of ASGC.

Program Review by Alison DeBroux

Wind Energy Symposium

A Joint program sponsored by Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, and Kirtland Bird Club

On Sunday October 19, 2014, Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, and Kirtland Bird Club held a symposium featuring Dr. Michael Hutchins of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), Dr. Lorry Wagner from the Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation (LEEDCo), and Jen Miller of the Sierra Club (SC). Each has very high interest in the developing wind energy industry. Dr. Hutchins representing the ABC believes that wind energy may be an alternative to coal fired power plants and fracking but the placement of the turbines is critical because of the incidental bird kills when they are located in migratory pathways. He warned about how little is known about environmental impact of off shore wind turbines and that much more study is needed to insure that



the turbines do not devastate migratory birds and resident water birds. Dr. Wagner represented the LEEDCo organizations plan to place 6 turbines about 7 miles offshore of Cleveland in the central basin of Lake Erie in order to begin testing and research on the environmental impact and the feasibility of placing more turbines off shore in the future to provide clean energy and jobs for the Cleveland area.

He acknowledged that there would be a bird “take” that would need to be documented and depending on the species determined if that would be acceptable. Jen Miller of the SC is in favor of developing wind energy due to the extreme pollution created by coal burning and environmental devastation caused by coal mining and by fracking which uses and contaminates thousands of gallons of limited fresh water. She also had concerns of the impact of the turbines and agrees that more research is needed but that we really need to find alternative sources of energy sooner than later. This was an extremely informative and educational program attended by 80 or 90 interested members in a wonderful hall in the community center of Independence. Following the presentation questions and concerns of the audience were addressed and answered with each panelist given time to contribute. This was the first time these three organizations with sometimes seemingly opposing views were gathered together for a dialogue. Stan Searles did an excellent job as moderator making all feel welcome an equitably treated.

Program Review by Jim Tomko

Submitted by Alison DeBroux, Chair

Field Trips Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: John Lillich



John Lillich at Hach-Otis

The schedule of monthly field trips continued with at least one trip to each of our 4 sanctuaries. Various themes were highlighted according to the season including a leaf color hike at Hach-Otis in October, a winter solstice night hike at Novak in December, a winter bird survey at Aurora in February, and a Cicada/Katydid twilight hike at Molnar. Other hikes took place in other months. Attendance varied from 3 to 17 people.

The Field Trip Committee requested and spent no funds in the past year. The committee has no plans to request any funds in the upcoming year.

As always, your suggestions and assistance are greatly appreciated

Submitted by Jim Tomko, Chair



Finance Committee

John Weber, Chair

Members: Andy Lihani, Mark Demyan, Steve Zabor

2014 was a challenging year for the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. Early in 2013, we learned that our 501 (c)(3) status had been revoked for failure to file annual reports with the IRS. We applied for and received on July 13, 2014 a re-instatement of our status back to the date it was revoked. We are now a valid 501(c)(3) organization again. We suspended our annual appeal due to the loss of status, however we continued our education and sanctuary activities that had been planned for the year. There were no other ramifications to our temporary loss of status.

Education expenses for the year included a new program called BIRDday, Project Que and speaker fees. Sanctuary expenses were similar to previous years except for the rental of a heavy duty mulching machine, which cost a little over \$6,500 used to clear an area in the Molnar Sanctuary. Our newsletter costs for the year were on budget for the year. We budgeted for publicity expenses for the year, but did not spend any money in that category.

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

Submitted by John Weber, Chair



Annual Meeting 2012



Annual Meeting 2014



Project Que – July 16, 2014



Clearing Buckthorn from Molnar Sanctuary



Tinkers Creek Festival in Hudson, Ohio – September 20, 2014



Important Bird Areas (IBA) Sub-committee

Mary Salomon, Chair

Members: John Lillich, Jim Tomko

The 2014 breeding bird surveys continue to provide crucial information about our ASGC sanctuaries. In June 2014, the IBA Sub-committee/Friends completed our 10th annual breeding bird surveys of the Novak (both East and West of Townline Road) and Aurora sanctuaries. These surveys are always done during the first half of June, when the spring migration is over, and the birds are nesting. The surveys start at the crack of dawn, 6 a.m., since the birds sing in the early morning, and bird identification is more easily done by hearing rather than by sight once the trees have leafed out. A standard path is taken, and sightings are broken down by multiple habitat zones in each sanctuary.

We keep a very detailed record of each survey, including the different bird species, the number of individual birds seen or heard, and where they were observed. We also maintain important spreadsheets showing year-to-year comparisons of each sanctuary. Over the years, the number of unique species seen in the different sanctuaries has varied from 35-56. We also have been successful in seeing at least one new species every year. The total numbers of individual birds detected in each sanctuary has varied from 100-270. These surveys give us an admittedly inexact picture of sanctuary health, but they provide very important tools that we utilize to understand both bird diversity and population trends.

This past June Trustee Jim Tomko lead two of the surveys, and Kim Pease led one. Recorders were David Platt (2) and Mary Salomon (1). Other participants included Barb Philbrick, John Senderak, Hannah Curtis, Kenny Kresina, Laurenda Messer, Mark Demyan, Karen Catercone, and several Hiram College students. We definitely welcome other interested participants for future surveys.

In the 2014 Aurora Sanctuary, we detected typical numbers of individual birds and total number of different species. We had the historical highest annual Downy Woodpeckers, Hooded Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Cowbirds. Counts of Crows and Tufted Titmouse were at a historical low.

In the part of the Novak Sanctuary west of Town Line Road, both the number of individual birds and different bird species detected were average vs. prior years. Numbers of Great Blue Herons sadly remained very low, with no evidence of any nests in the former wetland nesting area last used in ~2006. There were historically high counts of Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Towhee, Song Sparrow and Field Sparrow, but no Mourning Doves were seen. In the Novak Sanctuary east of Townline Road, a typical number of individual birds were noted, BUT we had the highest number of unique species in 10 years (49!). Historically high numbers of Barred Owl, Willow Flycatcher, and Red-winged Blackbirds occurred, while low numbers of Wood Thrush were unfortunately noted. We observed two new species: Wild Turkey and Blue-headed Vireo.

Overall, there were no major surprises or areas of new concern. Our sanctuaries are maintaining their good bird habitat. Thanks to all who participated and continue to express interest.

Submitted by Mary Salomon, Chair



Newsletter Committee (*The House Wren*)

Alison DeBroux, Chair

Editor: Alison DeBroux
Contributing Writer: Jim Tomko
Members: All ASGC trustees, members, and friends

The House Wren is published monthly, nine times a year, September through May. It is printed in black-and-white by Excel Printing, 17800 Chillicothe Road, Chagrin Falls, OH, and is mailed to all members unless requested otherwise.

Printing and mailing costs are approximately \$650 per issue.

A low-resolution color version is available on our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org; a copy will be sent via email upon request. If you prefer *not* to receive the newsletter via regular mail, please notify me at auduboncleveland@outlook.com and I will remove you from the mailing list.

Please keep *The House Wren* in mind if you have special photos, anecdotes or announcements you think would be of interest to our members. Email submissions to auduboncleveland@outlook.com or mail to our regular address at P.O. Box 391037, Solon, OH 44139.

Submitted by Alison DeBroux, Chair

Sanctuary Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Mark Demyan, Bill Kennelly, Ken Kresina, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Claudia Orr, Penny Orr, Bud Shaw, and Rob Swaney

Our philosophy continues to be maintaining the sanctuaries as a preserve for wildlife and not as a park for visitors. Visitors are welcome and encouraged but are reminded that they are visitors while the plants and animals are the residents. Aurora and Hach-Otis have a fairly high visitation rate. Novak and Molnar have less traffic.



Molnar Sanctuary

Mowing, pruning, trimming, removing deadfalls from the trails is a perpetual task. Boardwalk maintenance and remarking trails are scheduled for the upcoming year.

Mowing and brush hogging of fields in Aurora, Novak and Molnar were initiated as soon as the weather allowed. 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. Invasive species are being attacked by mowing, pulling, trimming and limited spot spraying with an herbicide that has wetland approval.

Almost 15 acres of invasive European Buckthorn were mowed and mulched to return the fields to a more diversified state at Molnar. Plans are underway for a memorial planting in honor of Lenore Molnar. The beginning of the planting involves buckwheat, oats and some conifers. This is an evolving plan and will be done in stages.

Several Barred Owl Boxes were put up in Aurora and Novak.

The Screech Owl/American Kestrel nest boxes continue to be monitored for activity.

The sanctuaries continue to be appreciated by all who visit them and are a very important part of what makes ASGC such a wonderful organization.

Submitted by James W. Tomko, Chair



2014-2015 Officers



President - **Mark Demyan***: *Chair, Development Committee, Member, Finance and Newsletter Committees.*



Vice President - **Jim Tomko***: *Chair, Sanctuary and Field Trips Committees, Member of IBA and Newsletter Committees; Spring Birdwalk Leader*



Treasurer - **John Weber***: *Chair, Finance Committee, Member Development and Newsletter Committees*



Secretary – **Carol Lillich***: *Member of the Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.*

2014-2015 Trustees

Deceased Earl Biederman: Earl passed away on March 6, 2015. He was a long time member of Audubon and served as a Trustee for 19 years.



Alison DeBroux*: *Chair, Education Committee; Chair, Newsletter Committee; Editor of The House Wren.*



Bill Kennelly: *Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.*



Andy Lihani: *Member Finance and Newsletter Committees.*



Sarah Mabey: *Member of Development, Education and Newsletter Committees.*



Penny Orr: *Member Education, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees*



Bud Shaw: *Co-Chair, Construction Committee, Member Newsletter Committee.*



Harvey Webster: *Chair, Programs Committee, Member Education and Newsletter Committees.*



Stephen Zabor: *Member Finance and Newsletter Committees .*

* Executive Committee member

Trustees are elected at ASGC's annual meeting (usually held in June) by the general membership. Terms are typically 3 years and trustees are elected on a rotating basis.