



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Volume XXXIII, Number 1

Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

January, 2015

Birding in Brazil

In November, I participated in a two week trip searching for birds in the SE coastal mountains area of Brazil, starting in Rio de Janeiro, and ending in the southernmost state of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul. Field Guides of Austin, Texas, organized this trip. Bret Whitney led this trip of five participants. Bret is renowned for his amazing ability to identify birds by ear. Spending significant time in Brazil over the years, he has discovered over 20 new-to-the-world bird species! This area is famous for the large number of endemic bird species found only in Brazil.

One of the highlights of the trip was the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Gardens. Both extensive and beautiful, it hosts a wealth of relatively tame (i.e. easy to photograph) birds such as the channel billed toucan (pictured below).



Photo: M. Salomon

Once the official trip started, the birding got harder, with the birds more secretive amidst the stunning bromeliad-covered tree branches, dark forest floor and dense wetland areas. However, since it is spring in Brazil, the birds were singing and often responsive to recordings of their songs, coming



Plumbeous rail

Photo: M. Salomon

forward to ward off potential competitors. A favorite example was the plumbeous rail, who sauntered out of a
(Continued on page 2)

SEE INSIDE THIS EDITION

The Saga Continues Page 2

Don't drink and fly

Ever seen a wobbly bird flying haphazardly, looking like it's drunk? Well, it probably is. First frosts cause remaining berries and tree fruit to ferment. Hungry birds prepping for winter binge on the boozy buffet. The result? Inebriated birds that can't fly straight.

While first frosts can create fermenting berry traps for birds this time of year, it happens even more often in the spring, when boozy berries and crabapples thaw. Cold temperatures concentrate the sugar in fruit, and then a temperature increase accelerates the speed at which the sugars break down. The alcohol that forms is more potent than what would normally come from fermented berries-- think of it as vodka instead of beer.



If you spot an obviously intoxicated bird, you can let a wildlife rehabber know. It likely just needs a quiet place to sleep off the effects. The bird may experience a hangover after the ordeal, but hopefully nothing worse.

—Susan E. Matthews (excerpted from Audubon Magazine)

From the Nest...

Happy New Year!

A big thank you to everyone who responded to our Annual Appeal last month. It's our generous members who keep us going.

—Alison DeBroux, Editor

President's Post

Thank you to the small group of trustees and volunteers who worked very hard on our Annual Appeal campaign.



In November a group of members and trustees met on a Saturday morning for a 3-hour work session to discuss a sustainable business model and events that will match our mission statement. I would like to THANK them for their hard work and you will see an action plan in the very near future.

I hope that your holidays were enjoyable and fun. May all your New Year's Resolutions be a success. Take care and enjoy NATURE.

—Mark Demyan, President

The saga continues...

Falling down carriage house becomes Ed Center

Bill Novak wanted his farm to remain undeveloped. He searched for an organization to donate it to and with (former President) Dan Melcher's influence, ASGC got it! With this beautiful piece of land came an old carriage house which Novak used as a garage, storage shed and "cat house." He had cut holes in the door to allow cats to come and go as they pleased. A kestrel was nesting in a hollow in the bricks on the east side and you could see through a lot of the joints between the bricks. The building was nearly falling down. But Melcher loved it and foresaw it as a nature center/meeting place. Because of his vision and the work and generous donations of many people, the Novak Education Center (affectionately known as the Ed Center) became the center of operations for the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland.

Melcher and Mary Salomon began raising funds to develop and remodel the building in 2001. They identified approximately 40 foundations & environmentally-focused organizations and their funding requirements. They also contacted a number of local organizations to get letters of support,

Birding in Brazil

(Continued from page 1)

very thick wetland within six feet of the group in response to its call. My favorite bird was the giant snipe, the largest snipe in the world. This nocturnal bird was dramatically caught for a few seconds in a flashlight beam as it flushed out of a dark wetland.

I succeeded in viewing over 300 species of birds, including 180 that I had never seen before. One of our trip members passed the milestone of seeing over 8,800 species of "life birds" over many years of birding, and celebrated with a round of wine! There are approximately 10,500 bird species in the evolving world list so this is an amazing achievement.

—Mary Salomon

which were provided by CMNH, Holden Arboretum, environmentally oriented academics at KSU & CWRU, Audubon Ohio, Portage Park District, and Shaker Lakes Nature Center.

The formal proposal described the \$185,000 capital project and supporting detail such as the chapter's financial information and letters of support. By the end of 2003, \$72K had been raised, including the proceeds from the Portage County

Environmental Dinner, funding from the Frohring, Swetland & Lubrizol Foundations, and individual contributions. A plaque hanging at the Ed Center lists the donors.

Construction began shortly thereafter. The original architect did not take the project seriously and after the initial drawings and subcontracting let it slide. Mark Demyan took over and bailed it out, saving money and doing battle with Portage County in Ravenna. As the Ed Center is not in Aurora but in Mantua, which does not have a Planning and Zoning department, the project had to satisfy Portage County requirements. Mark Horn, a local contractor, did the interior work. After many set-backs, including contractors that did not fulfill their obligations but collected their fees anyway, and other delays in work, it was finally completed.



Long range planning meeting takes place in completed Ed Center, May 2013. Photo: J. Lillich

The original foundry stone is still visible along the south wall. This is where wagon repair and horse shoes were fashioned in the 1800s. Some of the original chestnut timbers, presumably milled on the property, are visible in the upstairs. The second floor is not useable as a fire escape and other structural remediations would have been needed, but it provides a look back at what the building used to be.

The project was a labor of love for Dan and others, with the goal to keep the building as historical as possible without busting the budget. With natural wood paneling, stairs and window moldings,



Ed Center upstairs

Photo: ASGC Archives

and a neatly tuck-pointed brick exterior, the Novak Education Center is a showcase for ASGC's many events held there, and a prime example of what a small but determined group of people can accomplish.

—Alison DeBroux, Jim Tomko & Mary Salomon, with consultation from Mark Demyan & Diann Rucki

It's not too late!

Join Project FeederWatch and help scientists count birds

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

New participants are sent a Research Kit with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. You provide the feeder(s) and seed.

An \$18 fee covers staff time and project kits including a calendar and a bird ID poster. Returning this year will be the BirdSpotter photo contest, this time with TWO weekly winners.

Go to <http://feederwatch.org/> for more info.

The Squawk



The following was in response to Marnie Urso's plea to call Senators Brown and Portman, re climate change and supporting new EPA carbon rules:

"Uh - did you look outside at the snow? Global Warming??? Are you sure?"

—Sally Schwieterman

Send your comments, questions, or complaints to auduboncleland@hotmail.com

Fly like an eagle

Experience the Southwest's most important bird habitats through the eyes of an eagle, thanks to a new digital Audubon project called FlightMap.

Soar like a bird over mountains and through river valleys, learning about critical ecosystems and the threats they face as you go. FlightMap is more than just fun. It's the newest tool in the fight to save some of America's most vulnerable habitats.

You will need the Google Earth plug-in to operate FlightMap. Go to <http://flightmap.audubon.org/fm2/#fly> to try it out!

House sparrow has few fans

If you have true sparrows, they will survive our Ohio winter as they evolved to handle our climate and the species that cannot will migrate south. Our native sparrows do not nest or roost in cavities or bird houses.

If the birds visiting your feeder are house sparrows (not actually sparrows but members of the Weaver finch family), they are a nasty, invasive species introduced from Europe in the early 1900s. They have devastated our native cavity nesters such as bluebirds, house wrens and tree swallows by entering their houses, breaking their

eggs, killing their nestlings, killing adult incubators, and then taking over the nest as their own. These birds are extremely scrappy and hardy and can make it with or without our feeders. True wildlife enthusiasts would agree that we could use a lot less of them to allow our beautiful native birds to thrive.

—Jim Tomko



Upcoming Events

The Backyard Naturalist

Join us on February 21st, when The Backyard Naturalist returns with featured speaker Stan Searles, Curator of Birds and Aquatics at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for 22 years. We are looking forward to a great program!

January 10 12:30pm

"Our Wild Feathered Friends"

Presented by the Akron Public Library

12:30: Greg Miller, "My Big Story"

1:45: Chris Stranahan, "Backyard Bird Feeding"

3:00: Rob Blair, "Avian Photography"

Register for one, two or all three

speakers at 330-643-9075 or

stdiv@akronlibrary.org

The above event is presented as a courtesy. The

ASGC takes no responsibility for the accuracy of this information.

January 17 10:00am

"Winter Track Walk"

Moebius Nature Center

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.

Field Trips

February 15 9:30am

"Great Backyard Bird Count"

Aurora Sanctuary

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a four-day, world-wide event sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada where participants count birds in an area for at least 15 minutes or for as long as they wish and submit it on line to birdcount.org. You may count right out your kitchen window or join us for our winter bird survey where we do a two-mile hike counting every bird we see or hear. The more eyes and ears the better! Meet at the parking lot on the north side of Pioneer trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

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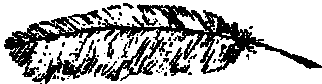


Please recycle this newsletter

A Wry Smile

“If your eyes hurt after you drink coffee, you have to take the spoon out of the cup.”

—Norm Crosby



Finding a safe place for your feeder

Finding the perfect location for a bird feeder is a balancing act between getting the views you want and keeping the birds safe.

Check for known dangers. Ornithologists estimate that millions of birds are killed each year by hitting windows. Reduce window strike mortalities by moving your feeders to within three feet of the window or more than 30 feet away. When feeders are close to a window, a bird leaving the feeder cannot gain enough momentum to do harm if it strikes the window. If feeders are more than 30 feet from a window, the birds are less likely to perceive windows as a pathway to other parts of your yard.

The area around your feeder is full of opportunity for cats and other predators.

Brush piles and evergreen trees and shrubs can provide safe hiding places while consuming seeds gathered at the feeder. Birds often grab a seed and retreat to cover to eat it. A distance of about ten feet from feeder to brush pile or shrub helps keep feeders out of a cat's striking distance.

Diversity of planting levels means more hiding places for more kinds of birds. This is a good rule of thumb for your yard in general, not just around the feeder.

Think about high/ mid/ low-level vegetation to provide spaces for a variety of birds with a variety of preferences.

(Excerpted from <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citsci/take-action/2014/11/dos-and-donts-of-feeder-placement/>)



Place feeders either close to a window or at least 30 feet away to avoid injuries from window strikes.

DATED MAIL

