



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

December, 2015

December is the month for giving...

Your board of trustees and I have some big plans for the upcoming year.



Focus of the IBA project: the Chagrin River Valley as seen from the Hach-Otis Sanctuary in fall.

Photo: J. Lillich

There are fantastic educational opportunities for members and scholarships for deserving students interested in nature study. There is conserving our natural resources in the Chagrin River Corridor involving National Audubon's Important Bird Area (IBA). We also hope to preserve some magnificent forest land adjoining the Hach-Otis Sanctuary.

The IBA project is big! We do need help in planning, counting, tabulating, and encouraging land owners to participate in wise forest management.

But just as important, we need funds to carry out these new programs. We ask that you consider making a special donation to Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland for our Annual Appeal as the year comes to an end.

Because we are an all-volunteer team, one hundred percent of your donation goes to the operation of our chapter. And since we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, your donation is tax deductible.

Thank you in advance for your generous contribution.

—Jim Tomko
ASGC President

ASGC "Small Grant" recipient finishes project

Katie Cochran completed the requirements to earn her Girl Scout Silver Award. It is the highest award she could earn for her level of scouting.

Her project was to create a Birds of Prey kit that could be checked out from any branch of the Portage County District Library. Among the many requirements of the project it had to be sustainable and take at least fifty hours to complete. Her kit included four Audubon Society plush birds that have authentic songs, nine books, a custom-made puzzle and matching game, an ODNR Owl field guide and companion CD, and an owl pellet shadow box.

Special thanks to Harvey Webster for arranging a behind-the-scenes tour of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. She met several of the birds of prey living there and obtained owl pellets for her shadow box. 'Tamarack' the owl is featured on her puzzle and shadow box.



Thanks also to the ASGC Board of Trustees for funding her project via a special grant. It would have been difficult for her to complete her project without the funding. The ASGC logo is featured on both the top of the container holding the kit and on the memory game cards.

—Kathy Cochran

IBA Committee begins work

Our IBA Committee began work with an early morning meeting on November 18th. Present were Joe Malmisur, Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Alison DeBroux, Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic, John Lillich and Carol Lillich.

The objective of our new IBA Initiative is to preserve and protect habitat for birds and other wildlife within the Chagrin River corridor. The National Audubon Society views IBAs, or Important Bird Areas, as "climate strongholds" that will provide habitat for birds into the future. The Chagrin River Valley IBA lies primarily in a north-south orientation and for this reason it is an excellent corridor for migrating birds with ample riparian forest habitat to rest and refuel as they migrate. The watershed drains 267 square miles of land within Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Portage counties. Potential threats to the habitat are nutrient loading from

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Bird Buddies go “On The Road”

The Education Committee recently mailed twenty fliers to area preschools promoting our Bird Buddy program. Hattie’s Preschool in Mantua responded and we made plans to take our program “on the road” for the first time.

Very early on October 15th four members of the Education Committee presented our program to nineteen preschoolers. Sue Graham kept the kids engaged reading *The Best Nest* by P.D. Eastman before they started our activities rotation. They traveled in teams of four to six to our various stations.

Special thanks to Alison DeBroux for walking the kids through the ‘Feet Are Neat’ station, Kathryn Craig for helping them learn how birds eat at the ‘Beaks, Beaks’ station, and Sue Graham for captivating them at the ‘Nests’ station. They also made bird masks, a simple bird feeder, and learned about feathers, bones and wings.

At each station we had something small for them to take home: strings to weave in plastic canvas for nest building, a mini field guide to color, and a bookmark. We ended our program with the ever popular Audubon plush song birds. There’s nothing quite like



Alison DeBroux assists with the “Feet Are Neat” station. Silicon foot models and ink pads are messy but fun!

Photo: K. Cochran

nineteen kids making nineteen stuffed birds sing at the same time.

We deemed the program a success, but decided not to leave our happy home at the Novak Education Center again. Children seem to get more out of visiting us for a program rather than staying in their familiar surroundings. We look forward to teaching more “Bird Buddies” at future programs.

—Kathy Cochran

Editor's note: If you are interested in helping at a Bird Buddy program, write to: education@clevelandaudubon.org.

IBA Committee begins work

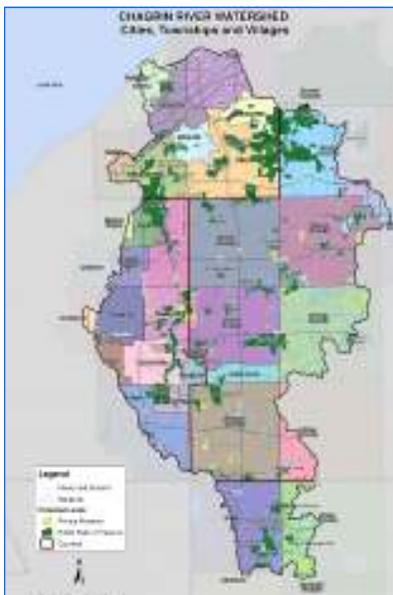
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agriculture and lawn care, septic leaks, waste water treatment plant failures, and sedimentation due to erosion and wetland filling.

Jim Tomko believes that study of this IBA will help provide information to private and public land managers to inform land use along the corridor, and completing this study is the committee's first goal.

Parts of the watershed have been thoroughly studied but there are large areas that have little documentation. We need to fill in those holes with new data, and this task was taken on by volunteer and birder Matt Valencic. We need to know not only about migration stopover ecology but also how the IBA is used by birds throughout the annual cycle.

Then there is the task of collating the data that already exists. A literature review will be conducted by the



committee's Chief Scientist, Sarah Mabey of Hiram College, and her students. Not all information is
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Downy woodpecker down!

I was waiting out a blustery blizzard when I heard a loud thump at my door. I wondered why anyone would be out in weather like this, but when I opened the door all I saw was an undisturbed blanket of snow. The noise must have come from the back instead. My ever-faithful Corgi, Olive, was on high alert as we made our way to the back patio door. There, on my back steps, was a male downy woodpecker, face down and half-buried in the deep snow. Now I knew what made the thumping sound.

The woodpecker remained motionless for a moment or two, but then I saw a wing move. I threw on a coat and boots and made my way to the backyard. He might not survive, but I was going to do my best to help him.

The poor bird wasn't moving when I gently picked him up, but he composed himself a bit in my hand. I stroked his feathers and he blinked rapidly, trying to shake off the cobwebs. He was clearly dazed, but sat in my hand and didn't seem at all concerned.

Cradling the little woodpecker, I made way back around to the front door. Olive was surprisingly quiet as I went through the kitchen. The bird perked up a little, but still wasn't moving much.

I set up a cardboard box for him in the garage, and he seemed content as I put him down. As I paused to consider my next course of action, he shuffled his wings and flew to the garage door window. He landed delicately on the curtain, perhaps having learned his lesson about impenetrable glass.

I walked over and picked him up again. I opened the garage door and trudged through the deep snow, bird in hand, to the feeder that hangs from a maple tree in our front yard. I placed him on the perch of the feeder; he sat still for a moment, as if gathering his thoughts. I lowered my hands and he flew quickly out of sight.

Safe travels, little bird. I wish you well.

—Andrew J. Pegman

Editor's note: Have an anecdote you'd like to share? Send your short, previously unpublished stories and pictures to info@clevelandaudubon.org.



In case you missed it!

"The Leaves Are Down (but our spirits are up!)"

Molnar Sanctuary 11/14/15

We had a fantastic time causing the leaves to make a wonderful sound as we crunched them under foot! The weather was more than ideal for the middle of November with temperatures around 60 degrees and partly cloudy skies.

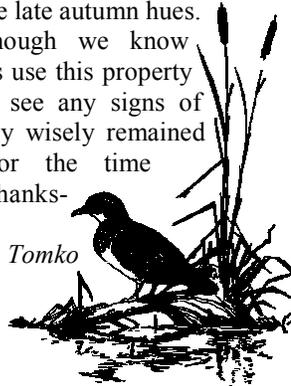
All the fields that Kenny Kressina cleared of invasive buckthorn one year ago are recovering amazingly well with many native grasses reappearing. Yes, some buckthorn re-sprouted but Kenny is keeping after them.

Four or five of a favorite species, the

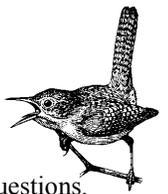
wood duck, were flushed from the picturesque lake. Our huge American Elm is doing well. We saw several interesting fungi growing near the trail adding to the late autumn hues.

Even though we know wild turkeys use this property we did not see any signs of them as they wisely remained secluded for the time before Thanks-giving.

—Jim Tomko



The Squawk



Send your comments, questions,
or complaints to
info@clevelandaudubon.org

IBA Committee

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published or available for public review, so the challenge is great. Resources such as E-Bird will be invaluable.

Our next challenge will be identifying the questions we want to answer. These may include: How are deer affecting the bird community? How should we work with communities who have a deer management plan (or do not have one)? How are invasive species (plants and animals) affecting the bird community? How do we cultivate relationships with landowners? How can we best use ASGC's assets to support this effort?

Our most valuable asset is you, our members and volunteers. You can help by writing a large donation check, or participating in the upcoming Christmas Bird Count (see below).

Did you know?

Most Americans sing the fourth verse of the (very birdy) "Twelve Days of Christmas" as "four calling birds." But in the original lyrics it is actually "four colly birds." Colly is an old British term for 'sooty' as in chimney sweep-sooty. Therefore colly birds translates to blackbirds. The gift the true love gave was four blackbirds! But, in Europe blackbirds are not grackles, cowbirds, or redwings. A European blackbird is actually a thrush and is related to our robin, wood thrush and bluebird. Now, that turns out to be a nice holiday present!

—Jim Tomko

Upcoming Events

The Christmas Bird Count

January 3 All Day
Portage County

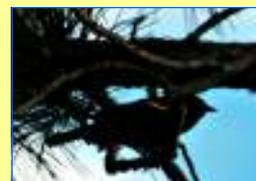
The Christmas Bird Count began in 1900 when ornithologist Frank Chapman suggested counting birds instead of shooting them. Ten or more people divide up a fifteen-mile-diameter circle where they count all the birds they see or hear in their section of the circle within a 24-hour period. Some people just watch feeders and some go out after dark to listen for owls. This will be the second

year for The Portage County Circle. Birders will be assigned an area of the circle as close to their home as possible, and may bird alone or in a group as they prefer. A detailed map and tally sheets will be provided. Afterwards, gather at the Novak Education Center, 382 Townline Road in Aurora, at 5:00 pm to get warm, report findings, tell stories, and have something to eat and drink. Contact info@clevelandaudubon.org if you're interested in participating.

Field Trips

December 18 7:00pm
"Close to Winter Solstice Hike"
Aurora Sanctuary

Keep us company on this winter's night hike to experience the forest after dark during some of the longest nights of the year. If we are lucky enough to have a light coating of snow and a clear sky the waxing first quarter moon should provide all the light we need. The muffled quiet of the winter woods is soothing while excitement is felt as an owl begins its performance or a coyote howls. Meet at the Bretschnieder Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer



Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

Courtesy Post

December 2 7:00pm
"Birds, Buildings, Bridges, Barriers and Baseball"
Westlake Porter Public Library

Harvey Webster, Director of Wildlife at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History (and ASGC trustee), will discuss the "perils and possibilities for birds in an urban environment." Call 440-871-2600 with questions or to register.

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To contact an individual trustee, please leave a message at 216-556-5441
Or send an email to info@clevelandaudubon.org

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Please recycle this newsletter

A Wry Smile



TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

—from an email

Your donation helps support these local programs!

- **IBA Initiative**—a new project focusing conservation efforts on the Chagrin River Corridor;
- **High School Scholarship**—support for graduating seniors interested in the natural sciences;
- **Bird Quest**—an October birding event for beginning and experienced birders. Fun for the whole family!
- **Backyard Naturalist**—ongoing speaker series;
- **Grants**—funds for advanced field research, student projects, school and teacher partnerships;
- **Field Trips**—monthly nature walks with ASGC President Jim Tomko;
- **Bird Buddy & Scout Day**—hands-on activities for our youngest bird lovers;
- **Photo Contest**—new for 2016! Details coming soon.

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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Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

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