



Cathedral Morning – Hach-Otis Sanctuary
Best of Show in the Willoughby Hills Photography Contest

Photograph by John M. Lillich

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



**Annual Report to Members
For the Year 2015**

Annual Meeting

June 4, 2016

***The Nature Center of Shaker Lakes
Shaker Heights, Ohio***



Overview

The information in this report is based mainly on accomplishments, events, and activities during calendar year 2015. Exceptions to that timeframe, e.g., the listing of trustees and officers for the period June, 2015 – May, 2016, are noted. The individuals listed as chairs and members of the committees are also individuals who served from June, 2015 through May, 2016.

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

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

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

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.



From the President



Through an excellent team effort our chapter has experienced another successful year. My thank you goes out to all who contributed in small or large ways. Every one of us keeps it going strong.

Of the many essential projects that we have worked on and continue to develop, 3 appear paramount. All of these we hope will promote our mission, energize our membership and attract new members. The first is modernizing our web-site and making it easier to navigate. Sharon Swaney led the charge with assistance from committee members John and Carol Lillich, Alison De Broux, and yours truly, Jim Tomko. Multiple members can now contribute and update the information at clevelandaudubon.org

Our second opportunity is the chance to expand the Hach-Otis Sanctuary. Adjacent property is on the market. With the help of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, we have applied for grants and funding through several state agencies. We will be responsible for some of the funding if, and only if, we win the grants. These grants will be awarded toward the end of the calendar year.

The third project is an Important Birding Area (IBA) initiative. Recently National Audubon Society (N.A.S.) has strongly supported research into global climate change. N.A.S. is using IBA's as a cog in the gear to create "climate strong-holds" in places where there is good diversity and habitat for birds and other wildlife. Our chapter's area includes most of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA. We have a very hard working committee led by Joe Malmisur that has met regularly for months organizing and planning how to monitor and preserve this valuable resource. We need help from the membership and from other organizations to properly carry out this mission, which we expect to evolve over a number of years.

I want to give sincere and heart-felt thanks to all who have donated funds to ASGC. Without your generosity we could not continue. Unfortunately, for the last several years our Annual Appeal has not been as successful as it has been historically. We are looking for ideas to improve and encourage donations so that we may continue to follow our mission.

A great gratitude needs to be extended to Alison De Broux for all her time and effort in painstakingly putting together our newsletter and for spear-heading our Education Committee. She and her team get to the heart of our mission and carries it out.

Also I want to thank my committee chairs and their committee members for all the things they have accomplished. I am proud to be a part of this organization and what we aim to accomplish. I am fortunate to associate with such a talented band of knowledgeable, caring members. It is through their work that we will continue to grow stronger and celebrate successes.

James W. Tomko, President



Communications Committee

Alison DeBroux, Chair

Newsletter

Editor: Alison DeBroux

Contributing Writer: Jim Tomko

Guest Contributors: Kathy Cochran, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Joe Malmisur, Laurenda Messer, Andrew Pegman, Mary Salomon, Matt Valencic

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, please notify us at info@clevelandaudubon.org to be removed 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 info@clevelandaudubon.org or mail to our regular address at P.O. Box 391037, Solon, OH 44139.

Website

Webmasters: Alison DeBroux, Sharon Swaney

With the help of web guru Sharon Swaney, the ASGC embarked on a month long remake of our website in 2015. The ad-hoc committee charged with designing the new site included Jim Tomko, Carol and John Lillich, and Alison DeBroux. We went “live” in August, 2015. If you haven't visited yet, you can find us at www.clevelandaudubon.org.

The site features easy-to-navigate pull-down menus to all of our various programs and information about who we are and what we are doing. On the left side is an interactive list of upcoming events that links to the complete calendar of goings-on. On the right side is a button that links to “news” items and changing buttons that link to registration forms for upcoming events such as the Annual Dinner, Photo Contest and Bird Quest (registration begins this summer).

Please visit often as things are continually changing to represent all the things your ASGC is up to!



Email Marketing

Manager: Alison DeBroux

As soon as the new website was up and running, we knew we had to communicate with our members in a more 21st century way than text emails. Besides, email servers (including those with most web hosts) do not allow for mass email marketing anymore.

Enter Constant Contact, a service designed specifically for companies to send mass emails for marketing purposes. The cost for this service is based on the number of email contacts. We contracted with them last summer and began marketing our events and other information to our contacts. We have approximately 560 email contacts (as of April 2016) to whom we send one or two monthly emails with information about what's new with ASGC, including dates, times and detailed information about our field trips and other events.

If you are not on our email list and would like to be, contact us at info@clevelandaudubon.org or visit the *contact us* page at www.clevelandaudubon.org. If at any time you no longer wish to receive emails, there is always a *safe unsubscribe* link at the bottom of every email.

Submitted by Alison DeBroux, Chair



Development Committee

Our Development Committee has diligently researched and explored how other chapters have promoted and increased interest and participation in chapter activities. Because our committee chairman (past president, Mark Demyan) has been working out of town, and we have had no volunteers to take over his position, we have not been able to implement the committee's ideas. For now we are placing this committee on hold until we have a member living locally with the passion to pick up and move forward on some of these programs. We thank Mark for all his time and effort to keep things fresh and viable.

Submitted by Jim Tomko, President



Education Committee

Alison DeBroux, Chair

Kathy Cochran, Co-chair

Members: Laura Bell-Peters, KC Carter-Cohn, Jennifer Clark, Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Sarah Mabey, Joe Malmisur, Laurenda Messer, Penny Orr, Barb Philbrick, Mike Roberto, Betsy Siman, Bud Shaw, Janice Slife, Andrea Storey, Matt Valencic, and Harvey Webster.

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.

2015-2016 saw several changes, both good and bad, to the ASGC Education Committee:

- We have several new members!
- As of summer 2015, we have discontinued Project Que.
- As of November 2015, The Backyard Naturalist speaker series is on hiatus.
- We added our new Chagrin River Bird Quest in conjunction with the IBA Initiative.

During the 2015-16 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. We produced four programs in the fall of 2015, held at the Novak Education Center.

What Is Audubon? (Sept 12th)

John Lillich, Harvey Webster and Jim Tomko, ASGC Trustees

Introduction to Birding (Sept 26th)

Dr. Sarah Mabey, Hiram College, and Joe Malmisur, Naturalist for Summit County

A Journeyman Birder's Retrospective (Oct 3rd)

Mike Sustin, National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellow

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail (Nov 7th)

Jeffrey Hall, President, Bartramian Audubon Society

The Backyard Naturalist is currently on hiatus.

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Scout Day & Bird Buddy Programs

Project Lead: Kathy Cochran

Volunteers: Alison DeBroux, Sue Graham, Kathryn Craig, Betsy Siman, Jan Slife, Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic, Nicole Ryman, Sarah Cochran, Katie Cochran and Julia Toth.

In October, 2015 the Education Committee facilitated a Bird Buddy program for 20 children at Hattie's Preschool located at Hattie Larlham in Mantua. It was the first time we took our program "on the road". The children received a workbook and something related to birds at each of the 6 stations. They participated in hands on activities to learn about feet, beaks, nests, feathers, bones and wings. Making a mask and a simple bird feeder were the hits of the day! Although deemed a success, we decided the children would get more out of the program by coming to visit the Novak Education Center.

February brought the 4th Annual Scout Day program to the Novak Education Center. We ran a program in the morning and another in the afternoon to accommodate the 30 K-3rd graders that signed up to participate. This year both Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts attended the 2 hour long program. They filled out pages in a workbook while learning about beaks, feet, nests, bird identification and song, feathers, bones and wings.

April held yet another Bird Buddy program. Last year Hope Preschool in Aurora was so impressed with the program, they asked if they could return with a different group of 4 and 5 year olds this year. The 26 children enjoyed visiting our 6 stations and doing the hands on activities.

High School Scholarship

Project Lead: Mike Roberto

Selection Committee: Kathy Cochran, Sue Graham, Betsy Siman, Bud Shaw & Andrea Storey

2016 is the second 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 Solon, Chagrin Falls, Aurora, Hudson, Richmond Heights and Garfield Heights. We are proud of our 2016 winners, and they are: Maria Ulatowski (Solon), Imogen Hobbs (Solon), Christian Ward (Aurora), Ryan Lurch (Chagrin Falls), and Landon Lemmons (Hudson). Many thanks to all who applied and to our hard-working selection committee.

Project Que

July 15, 2015: The ASGC continued its partnership with John Carroll University to provide an Audubon Day for Project ¿QUÉ?, a multi-faceted JCU initiative to raise the educational aspirations of middle school Hispanic children from Cleveland's west side. Due to budget cuts, this was the program's final year.

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ASGC Trustee Joe Malmisur took on the task of entertaining/educating the 22 eighth-graders with an “everything in nature is connected” concept. The plan was to learn about watersheds at the Novak Education Center, then travel to the Aurora Sanctuary to experiment with nets in the stream. Several inches of rain fell the day before, making the “stream” a river and too dangerous to play in. “Plan B” involved a hike around the sanctuary in ankle-deep mud which the kids did in (mostly) good spirits.

Chagrin River Bird Quest

Project Lead: Alison DeBroux

Volunteers: Kathy Cochran, Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Mike Roberto, Andrea Storey, Sarah Mabey, Joe Malmisur, John Lillich, Steve Zabor, Jenn Clark, Mary Salomon



October, 9-10, 2015: Our newest program is the Chagrin River Bird Quest, a 24-hour team birding event designed as the kick-off to ASGC's new IBA Initiative. Bird Quest is intended to focus attention on the value of the Chagrin River watershed and its myriad habitats and wildlife, and provide an opportunity for families and friends to get out and enjoy the great outdoors together. Cleveland Metroparks partnered with us and provided the spectacular Look About Lodge as our base of operations. We had nine teams participate, including families, groups of friends and two groups of teenagers.

The event was free to all participants. Teams received free t-shirts, maps and other information and a cool Bird Quest bag to carry it all. The ASGC also provided snacks at the Friday evening start and a delicious spread for our awards ceremony on Saturday. Stan Searles emceed. We expect the 2016 Bird Quest to be even bigger and more fun!

Submitted by Alison DeBroux, Chair

Field Trip Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair



Members: John Lillich, Carol Lillich

Monthly field trips were conducted rain or shine over the past year. All 4 of our sanctuaries were used to demonstrate certain types of habitats, flora, fauna and management techniques. Early morning, afternoon, and night hikes were offered. Themes included birds, amphibians, mammal tracks, autumn leaf color, and the winter solstice.

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.

If anyone has an idea for a field trip or would like to lead one, the request will happily be considered.

Submitted by James W. Tomko, Chair



Photos of teachers and students of the Willoughby-Eastlake School System who partnered with Hach-Otis Sanctuary to do boardwalk and trail maintenance at the Hach-Otis Sanctuary. The students are in a program called "Introduction Vocational Course Centered Around Experiential Learning and Training." This is the only course of its kind in Ohio.



Bird Buddy Program – June 24, 2015



Project Que – July, 2015



Project Que – July, 2014



Scout Day - February, 2016



Annual Meeting – June, 2015



Finance Committee

John Weber, Chair

Members: Steve Zabor, Mark Demyan

Profit & Loss - Budget vs. Actual

This report compares the actual income and expenses to the prior year for all items.

Income: Contributions – National Audubon deposited in our account the annual amount.

Annual Appeal – Donations since November 1, 2014 \$ 9,800 vs 2015 amount of \$7,271.

Expenses: Executive Committee expenses – Annual meeting cost – deposit for facility and food \$1,884

Web design \$5,272

Sanctuary expenses were considerably less than last year - \$2,790 vs \$8,797

Property insurance – same as last year

Other income: Investment income for the year \$10,059 loss vs \$31,220 gain last year

Net income: \$19,958 loss vs \$31,220 profit last year primarily because of the loss on investments.

Balance Sheet Previous Year Comparison

Cash and Investments – Compared to a year ago, we had a decrease of \$10,117 which reflects the market decline in our investments. Cash in our operating account at Key Bank declined by \$9,841 to \$38,188 vs \$48,029 last year at December 31.

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

Submitted by John Weber, Chair



Important Birding Area (IBA)

Joe Malmisur, Chair

Members: Jim Tomko, Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Alison DeBroux, Matt Valencic

Beginning in early February, President Jim Tomko reconstituted the Important Birding Area (IBA) committee for the purpose of taking on the Chagrin River Corridor IBA initiative. Jim was contacted by a liaison from National Audubon to see if Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) would be able to provide leadership in doing something within the Chagrin River Corridor. Jim convened an initial meeting with the National Audubon liaison and the committee highlighting the boundaries of the IBA, assets available for committee to utilize, and a general discussion on what other IBA initiatives looked like around the country. It was agreed by all that ASGC was up to the challenge and would begin to craft a proposal.

It was determined that ASGC was not interested in developing a “dog and pony show” highlighting “Hotspots” and showing pictures of the birds recorded in the corridor to take to the local Rotary or Kiwanians organizations. We wanted to do something tangible and substantial that would have a positive impact on birds and bird habitats within the corridor. Our focus would be on the private land owners who could potentially contribute the most in improving bird habitat within the corridor. It was also determined that we would be very methodical in our deliberations and all of our decisions would be based on sound scientific principles and procedures.

After several meetings, the committee crafted a description and goals for the initiative as follows:

The Chagrin River Corridor Important Birding Area (IBA) recognizes the intrinsic and ecological value of the diverse natural habitats found within the Chagrin River watershed. The IBA represents portions of Lake, Geauga, Cuyahoga, and Portage counties. This includes over 71 miles of river/riparian habitat. (Encompassing 1000 acres.) The Chagrin River Corridor represents a nearly unbroken ribbon of forest, old field, and wetlands amid towns, suburbs, and farms. Some of Ohio’s rarest birds call these beautiful places home. Winter Wrens and Dark-eyed Juncos breed in the cool hemlock ravines. Bobolinks can be found singing in the sky above grasslands. Long-distance migrants return year after year to the mature riparian forests – Cerulean Warblers, Louisiana Water Thrush, Scarlet Tanagers, Black-throated Green Warblers to name but a few of these remarkable birds.

The Chagrin River Corridor IBA is a critical piece in a great web of priority conservation sites across the North American Continent that supports both rare and common birds throughout the annual cycle: breeding, migrating, and wintering. As stewards of the environment we share the great responsibility of ensuring that this important safety net will remain intact in the face of the rapid ecological change caused by intensified human development and global climate change. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) is mobilizing a special region-wide initiative to assess the avian diversity and ecological integrity of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.



Our specific goals include:

1. Increase the knowledge base of avian diversity and abundance over time across the annual cycle and representative habitats within the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.
2. Partner with private landowners, public agencies, and conservation organizations to assess, conserve, and improve the ecological integrity of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.
3. Promote public awareness of the ecological value of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.

On May 5, 2016 the committee met with potential partners from Holden Arboretum, Geauga Park District, Lake Metroparks, Cleveland Metroparks, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Blackbrook Audubon, and Portage Park District, as well individuals from National Audubon to review the draft of the Chagrin River Corridor IAB initiative and ask for their assistance in the initiative. The meeting was very positive and initial indications are promising that some partners will assist ASGC and the project seems to be gaining momentum.

Submitted by Joe Malmisur, Chair



Sanctuary Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Mark Demyan, Ken Kresina, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Penny Orr, Bud Shaw, Rob Swaney, Steve Zabor, Mary Salomon

All 4 of our Sanctuaries are healthy and doing well with most of the maintenance provided by Kenny Kresina in the southern sanctuaries and John Lillich in the Hach-Otis Sanctuary. John and Bill Kennelly have enlisted the assistance of some students to help replace worn out sections of board walk and do trail maintenance in Hach-Otis. Our philosophy of minimal disturbance is being followed to allow the natural course of succession to occur. We feel that the Sanctuaries are primarily for wildlife and that humans are to be just on-trail visitors.

Trail maintenance is constant with trimming, mowing, removal of deadfalls, and placement of gravel, stone, or boardwalk in perpetually muddy areas. The trails are maintained to encourage visitors to stay on them so as to minimize disturbance to the resident creatures.



Hach-Otis Sanctuary

This past year with the help of the Aurora Police Department we had to evict a camper, a deer hunter and some anglers. Signs will need to be posted listed prohibited activities.

Mowing and brush hogging of fields in Aurora, Novak and Molnar were initiated as soon as the weather allowed. Full field mowing is stopped in mid-April to allow nesting birds and mammals to carry on undisturbed. 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. The strips that were mown in previous years show very good buckthorn control and good emergence of herbaceous plants and some woody natives.

Invasive species are being attacked by mowing, pulling, trimming and judicious spot spraying with an herbicide that has wetland approval.

The Bald Eagle nest at Novak fledged an eaglet last spring and is raising another one or two in 2016.

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

The Buckthorn fields at Molnar are recovering nicely with only a few spots where the Buckthorn is making a vigorous come-back. These spots will be "spot-sprayed" with a wetland approved herbicide.

Plans to plant an arboretum continue with small plantings done as we are able.

The sanctuaries have more foot traffic than ever before giving evidence that these nature oases are needed by both humans and wildlife alike.

Submitted by James W. Tomko, Chair

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



2016-2017 Officers



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



Vice President – Steve Zabor *: *Member Finance, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees .*



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



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

* Executive Committee member

2016-2017 Trustees



Kathy Cochran: *Co-Chair Education Committee and member of the Newsletter Committee.*



Alison DeBroux: *Chair, Education Committee; Chair, Communications Committee; Editor of The House Wren, and Web Master ,and Member of IBA Committee.*



Mark Demyan: *Member, Finance and Newsletter Committees.*



2016-2017 Trustees



John Lillich: *Member Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees, and Gates Mills Spring Bird Walk Leader.*



Sarah Mabey: *Member IBA, Education and Newsletter Committees and Chagrin River Bird Quest Subcommittee.*



Joe Malmisur: *Chair, Important Birding Area Committee (IBA); member of Education, Newsletter Committees and Ed Center & Rental House Maintenance Subcommittee,*



Penny Orr: *Member Education, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees and Programs Subcommittee.*



Mary Salomon: *Member Important Birding Area, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.*



Bud Shaw: *Member Education, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.*



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

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.