



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

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Rain doesn't deter Questers

In spite of near continuous rain, almost 50 Questers participated in the 2nd Annual Chagrin River Bird Quest on September 16 and 17. Bird Quest is a 24-hour team birding challenge in support of the Chagrin River preservation initiative begun by ASGC in 2015.

This year's event attracted 18 teams of birders, twice last year's registration. Teams wishing to upgrade their skills could attend a Birding Workshop on September 10, held in cooperation with The Holden Arboretum. Five teams registered for the Workshop only, though two of those then decided to try out their new skills and participate in the Quest. Our workshop instructors were Dr. Sarah Mabey and Matt Valencic.

Cleveland Metroparks generously provided the North Chagrin Nature Center, free of charge, for our Team

Check-in on Friday and the Celebration on Saturday. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland provided t-shirts, lapel pins for returning Questers, awards certificates, and refreshments. Judges for this year were Dr. Sarah Mabey and Jenn Clark, both of Hiram College. The Emcee for the Celebration was our own Harvey Webster.

Awards were presented to the top three placements in overall species sighted, as well as most unusual team name, most warbler species sighted, most habitats visited, and largest bird seen. The latter presented a problem, as it was open to interpretation—Heaviest? Tallest? Longest wingspan? Our judges determined Team Maddie Cope won hands-down with the sighting of an emu! (Granted, not an indigenous Ohio bird—more specific rules are in order for next year...) For a list of all our Bird Quest winners, visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org.

Door prizes were offered by Swarovski Optic, Wildlife Garden of Solon, Perennials Preferred, ASGC, and volunteer Betsy Siman.



Jake and Jen Gorny drove from Amherst to participate in the Chagrin River Bird Quest on September 16 & 17. Their team, "Birders Without a Cause," won 3rd place in Most Species Overall, with 46 species sighted.

"We had a great time in spite of the rain and hope to participate again," said Mary Ann Wagner of the Listless Listers team. "We love our t-shirts and thought everything was organized and well planned."

Questers all seemed to have a great, if wet, time enjoying nature together and their participation helped with our efforts to conserve and improve the natural beauty of the Chagrin River.

Birds are an indicator of healthy air, a healthy ecosystem and a healthy planet. The Chagrin River Corridor IBA, or Important Bird Area, is a relatively intact contiguous riparian corridor surrounded by developed residential

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Posing with emcee Harvey Webster is 1st place winner, the "Moebius Mob," with 54 species sighted. Members include Kim Pease, Barb Philbrick, Karen Pivonka, Jim Tomko, Jan Slife and Karen Carter-Cohn.

From the Nest...

WOW! What a fantastic second annual BirdQuest and thank you to all who helped. Many gave their precious time and energy but in particular Alison DeBroux for her dedication and organizing of the event along with her education co-chair Cathy Cochran.

Thanks also to Dr. Sarah Mabey and



Matt Valencic for each teaching an introduction to birding class for the novice birders and a review for us seasoned ole goats! Sarah caught me on an ID which I called as a juvenile little-blue heron but which she corrected as a snowy egret. We can all always learn something!

Matt also led a morning bird walk to help get participants' checklists started.

Harvey Webster performed masterfully at the awards ceremony with fun and interesting banter for young and old alike! We would not have had BirdQuest without all of you.

I hope that this will continue into the future sparking interest in birds, wildlife, and nature conservation. I deem this a resounding success in spite of the wet weather (we all were drenched Saturday

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From the Nest

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morning).

Also, we recently hosted a bird celebrity at LaDue Reservoir. It was a Sabine's Gull which is a very unusual inland migrant. Thank you to Dick Hoopes and Kelly Kozlowski for discovering, identifying and sharing it with the birding community. Sabine's Gulls usually migrate at sea but a good

number do migrate over land. The ones noted in Northeast Ohio are almost always on Lake Erie. Many birders from all over made the pilgrimage to see such a cooperative individual up close and personal under excellent weather conditions. This was a first for me and was added to my life list along with a multitude of other birders.

—Jim Tomko, President

Critter Corner



Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*)

Bird Quest

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area, and includes The Holden Arboretum, Penitentiary Glen, North and South Chagrin Reservations, Chapin Forest, and the Audubon Sanctuaries in Aurora and Willoughby Hills. ASGC is taking a leading role in working to improve bird habitat throughout the entire IBA area, thus improving species diversity and numbers. With partners including the park systems and The Holden Arboretum, we are studying bird populations and environments, educating people about the natural wonders within the IBA and taking action to maintain and improve the entire ecosystem.



Christian and Alysa Gorny, members of "Birders Without a Cause," enjoy some refreshments after a hard, wet day of birding.

Thanks for your support, everyone, and happy Questing next year!

Leave 'em standing!

Our board member Kathy Cochran wants to remind us that we should leave our purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, cup plant and many other seed bearing flowers standing through the winter. They provide a very important food source for our seed eating birds. In fact the gold finches are already partaking of this great abundance. Consider allowing a place for natural food and shelter in your yard to help sustain our feathered friends throughout the harsh and lean times of Northeast Ohio's winter. It may not look neat and trim to you but it is a bounty of beautiful food to them!

—Jim Tomko

National Audubon offers searchable native plants database

Dig into National Audubon's Plants for Birds program with its new native plants database. You can now search by zip code, type of plant, or bird you want to attract and find the best plants for the birds in your area. Growing bird-friendly plants will attract and protect the birds you love while making your space beautiful, easy to care for, and better for the environment. So check out the native plant resources and start planting for birds!



Photo: Will Stuart

the best plants for birds in your area, as well as local resources and links to more information. By entering your email address, you'll receive an emailed list of the native plants you've selected, get additional tips on creating your bird-friendly habitat, and help us keep track of your contributions to our efforts to get one million native plants for birds in the ground.

Find the databases at www.audubon.org/native-plants.

Enter your zip code and view a list of

The Sabine's gull is a distinctive, delicate gull with habits more tern-like than the typical gull. They are rarely spotted in our area but with careful sorting through flocks of gulls on Lake Erie's shore-line in late September or early October one or two of these regularly turn up.

In breeding plumage it is a striking gull with a dark gray hood bordered with a black collar. Its short black bill has a yellow tip. When it flies a large white triangle on each wing is exposed creating an M or W pattern on the upper side. While most gulls have a flat tail tip, this one has a slight fork to it.

These birds are high arctic nesters along Alaska's northern-most shore into Canada and beyond. The nest consists of a shallow cup in the grass on the ground where two to four rich olive-colored eggs with darker green blotches are incubated for about three weeks by both parents. The young are able to walk and leave the nest within a day or two and begin feeding themselves under the watchful eye of the parents. They eat insects, crustaceans, worms, and small fish. You will never find this gull at the dumpster at McDonald's or the local landfill!

Even though they nest at the highest latitudes they are not cold hardy and spend their winter at sea in tropical waters. The usual migration pattern is over the open ocean. The individuals spotted in Ohio are usually juveniles trying to find their way. We were so fortunate to have one spend a week or so at LaDue Reservoir mingling with the usual flock of ring-billed and herring gulls.

Stay vigilant because you never know what may turn up during fall migration as the juveniles figure out their navigation techniques!

—Jim Tomko

In case you missed it!

Owl Prowl

September 16, Aurora Sanctuary

What a great turnout for the kickoff event of BirdQuest. About 15 night hikers joined me to listen for and call in owls at the Aurora Sanctuary.

First we tried the woodland edge for Eastern Screech Owls but had no luck. I always say it is sort of like fishing – sometimes you catch some fish and sometimes you don't.

Then we went deep into the woods where our board member John Lillich had called in Barred Owls on a previous occasion. Just as we were giving up hope a call from the treetops answered mine. I responded and soon we had two

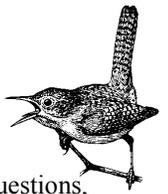
barred owls hiding among the branches and leaves right over our heads engaging us in quite an owl conversation! They soon began shifting positions and gave us all good views of them. We believe there was at least one juvenile with them.

When we left them to carry on their own nightly business we could still hear them calling as we entered the pine woods to try for a great-horned owl. Unfortunately the great horneds were silent on this night.

It was a wonderful hike under the full harvest moon of September!

—Jim Tomko

The Squawk



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

Hiram College presents: Images of a Naturalist's Journey

Session 1: September 25; October 2

Session 2: October 16, 23, 30

Session 3: November 13, 20, 27

Through simple observation, capture the intricacies of natural habitats as you discover their value and the interconnection they share. Join Carol A. Agnew for a short introduction of basic illustration techniques along with hand-lettering. Apply these techniques as we venture outside to capture and define details within a variety of habitats found at the James H. Barrow Field Station. All skill levels are invited for an afternoon (1:30-3:30pm) of creativity and scientific discovery as you complete your artistic nature journal. Supplies provided. At the completion of all three series, enjoy a Winter Reception with fellow participants, friends and family. Fee: \$14 per date, \$42 per session or \$108 for all three sessions. To register: contact Carol Agnew at [216.816.4305](tel:216.816.4305) or canneagnew@hiram.edu.

Fringed Gentian Walk

September 24, Aurora Sanctuary

The Fringed Gentians again put on their spectacular display under a beautiful, sunny, autumnal sky. They were numerous but not in dense patches and seemed to be shorter and smaller specimens than usual. It may have been due to the lack of rain lately as these plants do like to keep their feet a little damp.

There were several spots of healthy appearing Bottle or Closed Gentian. We found a Ladies Tresses (orchid family)

in bloom. And of course many varieties of Aster and Goldenrod colored the trail edge and the fields purple, gold and white. My favorite goldenrod, the Zigzag or Wreath goldenrod, was abundant in the woods. The trail was in excellent dry condition for easy walking. We encountered only one other hiker coming the opposite way so we felt we had the whole place to ourselves giving a peaceful and healing Saturday afternoon.

—Jim Tomko

Upcoming Events

Bird Study Merit Badge Program

Oct 22 9:00 am — noon

Have a Scout? Know a Scout? The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is offering Bird Study Merit Badge at its Novak Education Center in Aurora. It will be led by Matt Valencic, a registered Counselor for Greater Cleveland and Great Trails Councils and a former Scoutmaster. Scouts can complete five to seven of the eight requirements during this 3-hour program which includes two hours of presentation and discussion followed by a one hour field trip in the Novak Sanctuary. A light snack will be served during breaks. For registration or more information, please email info@clevelandaudubon.org.

Oct 22 2:30 pm

"Autumn Leaf Walk"
Hach-Otis Sanctuary

This may be the peak weekend for local fall color depending on moisture and temperature of the season. Hach-Otis offers spectacular panoramic views of the Chagrin River Valley with just the right combination of tree species to give a wonderful palette of color to the forest. Join us for a walk to absorb and appreciate the beauty of the season. Meet at the Hach-Otis Sanctuary parking lot at the end of Skyline Drive off of River Road in Willoughby Hills.

Field Trips

Nov 12 9:00 am

"Wild Turkey Trek"
Novak Sanctuary

Wild Turkeys are among the largest of our local native birds. Help us search for these alert and secretive birds earning their living while hiding in our forests. Once extirpated from Ohio they are now found in every county in the state. It is hard to believe that these 16 pound, 46 inch long creatures with a 64 inch wingspan can blend in so well that we rarely see them. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road almost a mile north of State Route 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

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Please recycle this newsletter

Which is which warbler?



—Photos: M.Valencic (Sept 2016)

It's that time of year in NE Ohio for Confusing Fall Warblers. These two birds – Blackpoll Warbler (left) and Bay-breasted Warbler (right) drive birders bonkers. Their identification is never easy as we have a mix of males, females and first-year birds – all of which can look different.

—Matt Valencic

A Wry Smile



Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

—Oscar Ameringer

BirdQuest: By the numbers

- 18 teams registered
- 11 checklists turned in
- 54 species seen by 1st place team
- 8 warbler species seen
- 33 t-shirts handed out
- 30 “2-year” pins
- 12 Bird Quest tote bags
- 11 kids’ “Field Guide” coloring books

Did you know?

Sabine’s Gulls feed by plucking food items off the top of the water often without landing. When on shore they will forage like shorebirds rapidly sweeping their bill through the mud and emergent plants churning up the sediments for tasty morsels. They even have been known to spin Phalarope style to swirl up hiding invertebrate prey!

DATED MAIL

