



# The HOUSE WREN

## Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

P.O. Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139-8037 Ph: 216 556 5441

Volume XXXV, Number 2

Visit our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)

February, 2017

### Volunteer Open House attracts some new faces

On January 8<sup>th</sup> almost 30 people attended the ASGC Volunteer Open House at the Novak Education Center, sponsored by the Education Committee. There was no particular agenda for this party except to meet and eat. Trustee John Lillich said that was the best part—you didn't have to do anything but enjoy yourself!

ASGC President Jim Tomko gave a short talk thanking current volunteers and welcoming new ones. He explained a few of our present and future volunteer needs, including the need for legal and CPA help. A written list of volunteer opportunities was also available.



ASGC President Jim Tomko talks with Trustees John and Carol Lillich at the Ed Center Jan. 8th.

Please email [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org) if you would like to see this list.

Party-goers enjoyed sandwiches and a variety of snacks and sweets contributed by Education Committee members. Ken Kresina's stuffed mushrooms were one of the biggest hits.

Jim T. and volunteer Matt Valencic led a *very* cold walk through the Novak Sanctuary preceding the party. The birds were pretty much hunkered down—Matt reported seeing just seven species—but they did see a red-tailed hawk on a telephone line along the road.

Several people expressed their appreciation for this get-together (seems like we might be doing it again next year!) including self-described “newbie” Heidi Harris. Heidi will be volunteering at Scout Day on February 11<sup>th</sup>, and watch for her name as a writer and photographer in future issues of this newsletter. Welcome, Heidi, and all our other new volunteers!

—Alison DeBroux



Jim Tomko, Laurenda Messer, Barb Philbrick, and KC Carter-Cohn: “It was cold!”

Photo: M. Valencic

Save the date!  
**ASGC Annual Meeting**  
June 3rd, 2017

**High school seniors!**  
Planning a career in environmental science? Biology, research, advocacy...?  
**We want you!**  
The ASGC has awarded \$10,000 in college scholarships over the last two years. We plan to award another \$5000 this year. Five talented students will receive \$1000 to use toward a college degree in the natural sciences.  
You could be one of them!  
**Download our application at**  
[www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org).

### Headwaters Preserve survey completed

The Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River begins in Portage County about four miles east of Aurora. The water that flows under Chamberlain Road and through Chagrin River Headwaters Preserve (CRHP) is clean and cold enough to support mayfly larvae on its gravel bottom.

CRHP is a 95-acre parcel owned by Portage Parks but not open to the public. It consists of wet, river bottom forest, mixed hardwoods, a twenty-acre wet field with many woody shrubs, and various edge habitats of grasses, Phragmites and buckthorn. Water can be

(Continued on page 2)

### From the Nest...

2017 is already shaping up to be a great year! Not only are we welcoming a wonderful group of new volunteers, but we are working on many programs and projects. Look for the return of our Backyard Naturalist series in the format of a “Speaker’s Bureau.” Instead of regularly scheduled programs at a set



location, we will make available a variety of talks that can be scheduled at the convenience of your group at the location of your choice. Volunteer Matt Valencic is putting the finishing touches on a new program, “Warbler Warm-up,” and hopes to do a dry-run of it this spring. A list of available talks will be posted on our website very soon.

Of course, the Education Committee does much more than plan parties! We are gearing up for Scout Day on February 11th, Merit Badge programs for both Girl and Boy Scouts, and have scheduled our 3rd annual Chagrin River Bird Quest September 22-23 at Geauga Parks’ Westwoods. And don’t forget our college scholarships, available for the 3rd straight year.

(Continued on page 3)

## eBird Tutorial

### Finding places to go birding

Are you going on vacation this winter, or perhaps a business trip, and want to know where to go birding? eBird can help you! Before you start, find the name of the county where you are going (e.g., Phoenix, AZ is in Maricopa County).

Go to [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)

Select EXPLORE DATA then type in MARICOPA, AZ. Hit enter.

Scroll down the page on the right to find TOP HOTSPOTS. Click on one.

At the top where you see ALL MONTHS select the month of your visit. Next to it (ALL YEARS) select LAST TEN YEARS then click SET.

The list you see will be organized by the most recent sightings at the location. Try some of the options on the page to sort your data or print checklists.

*Good Birding!* —Matt Valencic

### NE Ohioans participate in the Christmas Bird Count

Results are in for the Burton Circle CBC (Geauga County) which includes part of the Chagrin River Corridor IBA.

Overall, species totals and numbers of birds were down compared to 2015 which was an all-time high year for both categories (55 species vs 68 in 2015; 8,192 individuals vs 18,100 in 2015).

In 2015 the weather was cool but no snow cover and most lakes were still open. This year was extremely windy, causing many birds to 'hunker down' and made hearing songs and calls difficult. Also, recent cold weather froze most lakes before count day resulting in low numbers for waterfowl.

Still, there were some interesting highlights: 13 eagles, an all-time high count, and a Louisiana waterthrush was found at Headwaters Park near Claridon. Also seen were six sandhill cranes, two Northern mockingbirds and one winter wren. The last winter wren sighting for this CBC was in



Wendy Partridge, Stan Stine and Lisa Rainsong counted birds for the CBC in the Novak Sanctuary, Aurora. This group birded all day and went to the Aurora sanctuary in the afternoon. There was a good dinner of pulled pork, soup, salad and dessert at Moebius Nature Center.

*Photo: KC Carter-Cohn*

2004. A great way to spend the last birding day of 2016.

—Matt Valencic

### Survey

*(Continued from page 1)*

found seeping to the surface throughout the area. ASGC was granted permission to conduct a 12-month bird survey of the preserve in 2016 as part of our IBA Initiative. The survey was completed in December and preliminary results are now available.

During the year twenty-six (26) survey visits were made and 76 hours logged looking and listening for birds. Fourteen (14) surveys were conducted during the important migration and breeding months of April through July and three (3) continued past sunset to listen for American woodcock and owls. Bird sightings were logged into eBird

and included birds seen and heard on the property.

A total of ninety-six (96) species were identified on the property or flying over it. Eight (8) species were confirmed breeding and at least nine (9) as probable breeders. Red-tailed hawk was the first species we confirmed, watching the single eyas in the nest for several weeks before it fledged.

Casual observations were made of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and aquatic organisms which will be detailed in the final report. The property also boasts many spring wildflowers and pictures were taken for later identification.

—Matt Valencic

## Critter Corner

Photo: E.T. Jones



### Brown Creeper (*Certhia Americana*)

What is that high pitched song I was asked? I could not hear it! But I knew by the description it was the call of the brown creeper. It pays to have younger ears with you when those high pitchers are calling!

Brown creepers are detected by sound much earlier than by sight. They are small, five and a quarter-inch long cryptically colored birds with well marbled buffs and browns on their back and white underparts. They look like a piece of bark with legs, defying gravity as they move up the tree. Brown creepers have stiff, spine-tipped tail feathers used for propping themselves on the trunks of trees. The bill is slightly curved down to better access its food supply.

They have the unique feeding behavior of landing at the base of a large tree then working their way spirally upwards, searching cracks and crevices for spiders, insects, grubs, and other invertebrates. After they feed to the desired height, they let go and flutter like a dead leaf to the base of another tree where they again become invisible against the bark. Looking like a piece of bark and a dead leaf fluttering in the wind is a great way to avoid predators. When insects are scarce, they will visit suet feeders.

Brown creepers rarely nest in Ohio. When they do they must like awnings because they'll nest under a loose piece of bark attached at the top to keep out the rain. Building the nest takes as long as a month. The male brings building material and often sings nearby as he watches the female work. The parents take turns incubating five to six creamy white eggs which have reddish-brown pepper-like specking that may form a wreath-like band at one end.

In our area brown creepers can be found at any time of year but are most abundant in late winter and early autumn. Look closely at that falling leaf because it may be a brown creeper!

—Jim Tomko

## In case you missed it!

### “Scouting” Hike

January 21, Molnar Sanctuary

I always do a "scouting" hike a few days or a week ahead of the scheduled hike to look for things of interest that might be missed when guiding a group. I also check for downed trees across the trail, mud holes, swollen creeks or any obstacle.

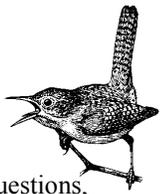
When I meet my group I nonchalantly check their foot gear and adjust my hike based on their level of preparedness for the trail conditions. I also check to see how nimble the group is. Therefore I almost always do a preliminary hike and a few loyal fans often accompany me. This day a great group of fellow nature lovers joined me creating a most pleasant morning hike.

We had fun finding signs of wildlife along the trail at the little used Molnar Sanctuary in Aurora. Squirrel and deer sign were obvious as was evidence of the beaver that live in the lake. We heard and saw a good array of woodland birds including tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and red-bellied woodpecker. Blue jays and crows sounded off as we hiked along.

The cleared fields are allowing natives a chance to re-emerge and are turning into a great place for hunting raptors. Neighbors to the Sanctuary were fortunate enough to watch a great-horned owl raise its young last year. Barred owls have been seen here too.

—Jim Tomko

## The Squawk



Send your comments, questions,  
or complaints to  
[info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

## Did you know?

Brown creepers and nuthatches feed on similar food sources but can “share” a niche. The nuthatch gleans the bark by coming down from the top of the tree inverted and looking down, while the brown creeper comes up from the bottom heads up, thus finding prey that was obscured by the nuthatches’ downward view.

—Jim Tomko

## From the Nest

(Continued from page 1)

Our second Photo Contest is in the final planning stages. Entries open on March 15th. Check our website—information and the entry form will be available soon.

Speaking of planning parties, kudos to John and Carol Lillich for already having plans in place for our Annual Meeting on June 3rd. It will be held this year at the headquarters of the Western

Reserve Land Conservancy on Chagrin River Road.

As if that were not enough, in March we expect to close on a project that will double the size of our Hach-Otis Sanctuary, preserving an additional 80 acres along the Chagrin River. Our partner in this endeavor, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, has spent more than two years doing the legwork and negotiations to make this happen.

On another subject, we hear more

and more from members who are sick of National Audubon’s constant requests for money. While we are a chapter of NAS, and support their mission with our own, we are an *independent* organization and do not participate in these marketing campaigns. We will never, *ever*, ask you for money more than once a year.

Thank you, as always, for the generous support of your local Audubon.

—Alison DeBroux, Editor

# Upcoming Events

## Scout Day

**Feb 11 Two sessions:**  
**10am to noon; 1pm to 3pm**  
Novak Education Center, Aurora

Have a Scout in the family? This is a great opportunity for Scouts age K - 3rd grade to learn a little bit about birds and have a lot of fun in the process. Stations in our Novak Center are filled with information and activities about feathers, nests, beaks and more. Scouts will dissect an owl pellet and make a Bird Mask during this fun-filled 2 hours and there’s lots of stuff to take home!

Troops or individuals, boys and girls, are welcome. A \$5 donation per Scout is requested. Space is filling up quickly, so reserve your child’s slot now!

Contact [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org).

## Field Trips

**Feb 19 8:30 am**  
“Great Backyard Bird Count”  
Aurora Sanctuary

Each year during the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of February, National Audubon holds the Great Backyard Bird Count where each of us can count the birds right out our window for as little as 15 minutes or for as long as you desire. When you are done you submit the count online at [gbbc.org](http://gbbc.org) to be recorded and tabulated and shared with all. Help us participate in this event by joining us on our annual winter bird survey. Meet at the Bretschnieder Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail just a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

**Mar 25 9:30 am**  
“Waterfowl”  
Ladue Reservoir

Fill up your gas tank for this “caravan” style field trip where we travel to some favorite watery spots in southern Geauga County and Northern Portage County. We will be amazed at the fantastic breeding plumage of migrating waterfowl. The drakes can be breathtaking in their spiffy new duds. Bring some lunch money as we will end the trip at a local restaurant to tally our results and share our stories. Meet at the Boat ramp of Ladue Reservoir at the end of East Washington Street just north of 422 in Auburn Corners.

**AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER  
CLEVELAND (S 70)  
Board of Trustees 2016-2017  
Jim Tomko, President**

Kathy Cochran	Penny Orr
Alison DeBroux	Mary Salomon
Mark Demyan	Bud Shaw
Carol Lillich	John Weber, CPA
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
John Lillich	Harvey Webster
Sarah Mabey	Steve Zabor
Joe Malmisur	<i>Vice President</i>

To contact an individual trustee, send an email to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

Like us on Facebook!



Please recycle this newsletter

### *A Wry Smile*

From the headlines:

“Cold Wave Linked to  
Temperatures”



“Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery;  
Hundreds Dead”

**Photo contest coming soon!  
Entries open March 15th.  
[www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)**

## **GBBC—what is it?**

Get ready to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

What? You don't know what this is? In 1998 National Audubon along with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada began one of the largest “citizen science” projects to date. Here is how it works: You record as many birds as you see in at least 15 minutes of observation. Or you may watch as long as you desire. Everyone from new birders to advanced are welcome to join in. These observations can be as simple as looking out your backyard windows, a walk around the neighborhood, or a hike in the forest and field.

The observations must occur sometime between Friday the 10th through Monday the 13<sup>th</sup> of February. You may do it as frequently as you like over that period. Then you go online to [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) and enter the data.

In 2013 it went international. It is great fun to go to the website and watch the map showing when and where the checklists are coming from in real time. This information is reviewed by scientists to give them an idea of what is happening to the world's population of birds. In order to get meaningful conclusions they factor in the fact that everyone from new birders to professionals submit checklists.

Last year there were over 160,000 participants from more than 130 countries with more than half of the known species being recorded! A number of years ago Ohio was one of the top submitters! Let's try to make it there again! To learn more go to [www.audubon.org/content/about-great-backyard-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/content/about-great-backyard-bird-count).

—Jim Tomko



In January, 14 pairs of cardinals showed up under Theresa Doboze's bird feeder in Akron!

Photo: T. Doboze

**DATED MAIL**

