



Hach-Otis Expansion - The Grasslands

Photograph by John M. Lillich

# Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



**Annual Report to Members  
For the Year 2016**

**Annual Meeting**

**June 3, 2017**

***Western Reserve Land Conservancy  
Moreland Hills, Ohio***

***P. O. Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139, 216/556-5441 [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)***



## Overview

The information in this report is based mainly on accomplishments, events, and activities during calendar year 2016. Exceptions to that timeframe, e.g., the listing of trustees and officers for the period June, 2016 – May, 2017, are noted. The individuals listed as chairs and members of the committees are also individuals who served from June, 2016 through May, 2017.

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

- Communications 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



Extra, extra, extra! Read all about it! The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland doubles the size of the Hach-Otis Sanctuary and gains a million dollars' worth of sensational Chagrin River water-front property for only \$300,000! While this in itself is a fantastic feat, the new property has three very important values. It expands the area of the Hach-Otis Sanctuary forever preserving its natural beauty. It protects the water quality of drainage into the spectacular Chagrin River. And it helps to preserve the habitat of the Chagrin River Important Bird Area (IBA). I cannot think of a better way to use our carefully saved funds and create a legacy for future generations years and years beyond us. Thanks to the persistent and diligent work of Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the many donors we have accomplished a lasting tribute for all to enjoy.

We have continued in our pursuit of making the public aware of the value and importance of the Chagrin River IBA through educational programs, speaker's visits to other organizations, a birding competition event, monitoring bird populations and field trips in the IBA.

Thank you to our secretary, Carol Lillich, for keeping us on task and on time. Her attention to detail has prepared us for meetings and allowed us to meet deadlines. Her organization skills keep us in a very professional status.

Thank you to Alison DeBroux for her meticulous assembly of our newsletter and for leading our education committee with the help of Kathy Cochran in their endeavors to inform and educate our constituency.

Thank you to Joe Malmisur in his leadership of the IBA committee. He has been met with very slowly turning wheels frustrating progress but he has held steadfast and is guiding the program toward its goal.

Thank you to John Weber who has graciously agreed to continue as our treasurer until we can find a replacement. I truly admire his loyalty. He desires to retire from his position but does not want to leave us in a desperate situation.

A special Thank you to all of our donors whose generosity and kindness has allowed us to successfully pursue our mission. Without you we could not exist and do all the things that we do.

Our accomplishments this year will be looked back on as some of our best. Great headway was made in all areas. We hope that this momentum continues and allows our organization to grow and flourish. But it is with contributions of time, talent, and funding from all of our members that are the driving force. Please continue your support in any and all ways that you can. If you have not yet considered joining the team, now is the time to do it. We need you all.

*James W. Tomko, President*



**Communications Committee**  
**Alison DeBroux, Chair**

### **Newsletter**

Editor: Alison DeBroux

Contributing Writers: Jim Tomko, Alison DeBroux, Matt Valencic, Heidi Harris

Guest Contributors: Kathy Cochran, Mary Salomon, Barb Philbrick, Joe Malmisur, Michael Brown

*The House Wren* is published 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 \$550 per issue. Members' addresses are downloaded from National Audubon's database, with approximately 150 chapter-only addresses added. A low-resolution color version is available on our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org).

*The House Wren* welcomes submissions of photos, birding anecdotes or announcements of interest to our members. Email submissions to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org) or mail to our regular address at P.O. Box 391037, Solon, OH 44139.

### **Website**

Webmaster: Sharon Swaney

ASGC Liaison: Alison DeBroux

With the help of web guru Sharon Swaney, our new (as of Summer of 2015) website is a dynamic, continually changing source for all things ASGC. If you haven't visited lately, you can find us at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://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 are a variety of buttons that link to information and registration forms for special events such as the Annual Dinner, Photo Contest and the Chagrin River Bird Quest.

Through our site, people from as far away as Great Britain have contacted us to find local birding hotspots, answers to bird-related questions, and information about special events.

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



### **Email Marketing**

Manager/Designer: Alison DeBroux

We have been utilizing Constant Contact for our email marketing efforts for the last two years. With this service, we are able to send mass emails with information about what's new with ASGC, including dates, times, and details about our field trips and other events. The cost for this service is based on the number of email contacts. We have approximately 600 email contacts (as of April 2017), an increase of 7% over last year. We paid \$336 for the upcoming year, which amounts to approximately \$.56 per year per contact. Anyone interested in receiving these emails can contact us at [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org) or visit the *contact us* page at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org). There is always a *safe unsubscribe* link at the bottom of every email.

***Submitted by Alison DeBroux, Chair***



### **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.

During the 2016-2017 season, we offered the following programs:



### **The Backyard Naturalist**

Our speaker series formerly known as the Backyard Naturalist has been remade as a Speaker's Bureau-type program. Instead of scheduling speakers at a regular time and place, we have made available a variety of talks by our own members and experts. Interested groups can look at the offerings on our website ([www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)) and schedule a program at their time and location. The first of these was our new "Warbler Warm-up," produced by Matt Valencic and Kelly Koslowski, and held at Geauga Parks' West Woods Nature Center on April 9<sup>th</sup>. This program was open to the public and attracted over 80 warbler enthusiasts.

### **Scout Day & Bird Buddy programs**

**Project Lead: Kathy Cochran**

February brought the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Scout Day program to the Novak Education Center. We ran a program in the morning and another in the afternoon to accommodate 20 K-3<sup>rd</sup> graders. They filled out pages in a workbook while learning about beaks, feet, nests, binoculars, bird identification and song, feathers, bones and wings. Our wonderful volunteers were: Kathy Cochran, Alison DeBroux, Cholet Barone, Sue Graham, Madison Proctor, Kathryn Craig, Nicole Ryman, Sarah Cochran, Heidi Harris, Michael Phillips, Matt Valencic, Betsy Siman, Olivia Hendershot, Laurenda Messer and Stephen Quick. There were several new faces this year, and we thank them very much!

In April we held our 3<sup>rd</sup> Bird Buddy program for Hope Preschool in Aurora. The 26 children, ages 4 and 5, enjoyed the hands on activities at the Bones 'n Wings, Beaks, Feet, Binoculars and Nests 'n Eggs stations. They also created a Bird Mask and a bagel bird feeder to take home. Many thanks to our volunteers who made themselves available on a Wednesday morning: Kathryn Craig, Steve Zabor, Laurenda Messer, Sue Graham, Kathy Cochran and Alison DeBroux.

### **High School Scholarship**

**Project Lead: Mike Roberto**

2017 Selection Committee: Kathy Cochran, Sue Graham, Bud Shaw, Laurenda Messer and KC Carter-Cohn. 2017 is the third 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. Our 2017 winners are: Ian Ashton (Solon), Alyson Bergomi (Chagrin Falls), Nicole Eastman (Aurora), Abby Jacobson (Aurora), and Madeline Sudnick (Twinsburg).

This program will undergo a three-year review in the summer of 2017.



### **Chagrin River Bird Quest**

**Project Lead: Alison DeBroux**

Volunteers: KC Carter-Cohn, Kathy Cochran, Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Mike Roberto, Andrea Storey, Sarah Mabey, Matt Valencic, Jenn Clark, and Harvey Webster

In its second year, the Chagrin River Bird Quest (September 16-17, 2016) was bigger and even more fun and exciting than the previous year. It is a 24-hour team birding event designed to support ASGC's IBA Initiative. Bird Quest focuses attention on the value of the Chagrin River watershed and its myriad habitats and wildlife, and provides an opportunity for families and friends to get out and enjoy the great outdoors together.

Cleveland Metroparks partnered with us again and provided the beautiful North Chagrin Nature Center as our base of operations. We doubled the number of teams that participated over 2015. Returning teams were presented with 2-year pins, and everyone got a t-shirt and great food. The event was free to all participants. Harvey Webster emceed the Quest Celebration, and Jenn Clark and Sarah Mabey judged the bird checklists. Teams competed for prizes including most bird species seen overall, most warblers seen, and most habitats visited. ASGC and a variety of donors including Swarovski Optic and Wildlife Garden of Solon provided great door prizes that all participants were eligible to win.

The week prior to Bird Quest we held our Beginning Birding class at two locations. Matt Valencic taught the class at Holden Arboretum, and Sarah Mabey taught the class at the Novak Education Center.

We are planning the 2017 Bird Quest to be even bigger and more fun!

### **Volunteer Open House**

The Education Committee hosted a get-together at the Novak Education Center in January to ward off the winter blues. It was a “thank-you” to all our volunteers and a “welcome” to new ones. The committee purchased trays of sandwiches and committee members and others contributed delicious potluck items. ASGC President Jim Tomko spoke briefly about the volunteer opportunities available. We had a great turn-out and it was a fun way to spend a very cold winter afternoon!

***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*



Scout Day, February 11, 2016



Matt Valencic at binocular station



Group Picture



Olivia Hendershott setting up  
Bird Mask craft



Sue Graham teaching about nests and eggs

Photos by Alison DeBroux

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Chagrin River Bird Quest, Fall of 2016



Kim Pease and Harvey Webster



Group Photo

Photos by Alison DeBroux and Steve Zabor



**Audubon Open House, January 8, 2017**



**Christie Gilley and Kathryn Craig**



**Betsy Siman**



**Jim Tomko, John and Carol Lillich**



**Jim Tomko, Laurenda Messer,  
Barb Philbrick and KC Carter-Cohn**



**Kathy Cochran and Barb Philbrick**

**Photos by Alison DeBroux and Matt Valencic**



**Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Hiking the new extension to the Hach-Otis  
Sanctuary and State Nature Preserve  
April 25, 2017**

**Jeff Johnson, ODNR State Nature Preserve Administrator  
Adam Wohlever, ODNR Preserve Officer Northeast District  
Jim Tomko, President – Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland  
John Lillich, Trustee – Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland**



**Adam Wohlever, John Lillich and Jeff Johnson**



**Adam Wohlever and John Lillich**



**Jeff Johnson, John Lillich and Adam Wohlever**

Photos by Jim Tomko



## **Finance Committee**

**John Weber, Chair**

Members: Steve Zabor, Mark Demyan

### **Financial Report**

**For the 12 months ended 12/31/2016**

#### **Income**

The Annual Appeal for the 12 months was \$12,689.  
National Audubon Society deposited \$2,979 in our account.  
House Rental for the year was \$5,859.

#### **Expenses**

Education & programs expenses were #8,470 including scholarships of \$5,000.  
Property insurance was \$4,852, which will increase next year with the acquisition of Hach/Otis property extension.  
Sanctuary expenses were \$13,087 which included \$9,750 for parking lot improvements.  
Newsletter costs were \$6,309 which is comparable to last year.  
Investment Income for the year totaled \$52,517 due to the run up of the market toward the end of the year. Next year will be considerably less as we withdraw fund to pay for the Hach/Otis extension property.

#### **Net Income**

Overall the operations lost \$22,405, but with the investment income our net Income increased \$30,111.

**For further information on the financials, 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: Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic

The committee has decided to re-focus our efforts after the initial year of planning and activity. The basic premises of the committee's efforts are unchanged: Increasing bird diversity and species richness within the IBA, work with private landowners to improve bird habitat on their respective properties, educate the general public on the IBA's efforts, identify specific habitat/areas within the IBA where bird data is lacking and work with private landowners to gather bird data on those locations, and work with partners to achieve our goals.

The committee prioritized the activities for the coming year:

- Continue breeding bird surveys with the addition of the Aurora Golf Course in 2017.
- Identify private landowners along the East Branch of the Chagrin River.
- Try to get permission from landowners along the East Branch to collect bird data in areas where none exists based on previous years eBird data.
- Identify areas within the IBA where threatened species may be located and work with landowners to improve and/or maintain habitat.
- Work with our partners to avoid duplication of efforts, pool resources, and improve communication between groups.
- Work on Our existing property to improve bird habitat, i.e. demonstration sites.

The committee meet with members of Blackbrook Audubon to discuss how we can assist each other in our efforts to improve the IBA. Each group discussed what their focus was and agreed to assist each other to achieve tangible results. Members from Blackbrook will try to do breeding bird surveys in a few northern areas of the IBA this year. Both groups agreed to keep the lines of communication open to prevent any misinformation from being disseminated.

Initial discussions have taken place with Holden Arboretum regarding their RUFA project. This project will provide landowners a score for their woodlots based on several parameters. A score will be generated and from that score ideas to improve forest health and manage invasives will be provided to the landowner. Ultimately, this will lead to improving bird habitat, increasing diversity and richness throughout the IBA.

*Submitted by Joe Malmisur, Chair*



## Sanctuary Committee

**Jim Tomko, Chair**

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

The most impressive highlight involving the Sanctuaries in years is the doubling of the size of the Hach-Otis Sanctuary with the help of grants sought by and awarded to the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Adding these magnificent acres to Hach-Otis will also help to maintain the quality of the Chagrin River Corridor and allow more progress to our goal of improving and studying the Chagrin River IBA.

Penny Orr and Mary Salomon replanted and rejuvenated the native flower beds around the Novak Education Center.

A stewardship plan was produced by a professional forestry company for the Novak Sanctuary with the Aurora Sanctuary to follow by June. Hach-Otis and Molnar sanctuary plans will follow in the autumn.

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 has 2 eaglets vigorously developing.

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.

Planting of trees to form a conifer 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***



## 2017-2018 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; Schedule Gates Mills Spring Bird Walks.*



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

\* Executive Committee member



## 2017-2018 Trustees



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



**Alison DeBroux:** *Chair, Education and Communications Committee.*



**Mark Demyan:** *Member, Finance and Newsletter Committees. BS Civil Engineering, Tri State University; Construction Manager and business owner, of MDCC*



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



**Sarah Mabey:** *Member IBA, Education and Newsletter Committees.*



**Joe Malmisur:** *Chair, Important Birding Area Committee; member of Education, Newsletter Committees and Ed Center & Rental House Maintenance Sub-committee.*



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

# The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



## 2017-2018 Trustees



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



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



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

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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.

*Annual Report Prepared by Carol Lillich, Secretary ASGC*