



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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ASGC education programming evolves

At our post-Bird Quest meeting last month, the Education Committee discussed our upcoming events and programs.

There will be some changes made to Bird Quest next year. Instead of running two Birding Workshops, we will hold only one. This year, the workshop at The Holden Arboretum was well attended with 21 participants; the one at Novak had only four participants. Matt Valencic pointed out that Holden is close to population centers while Novak is out in the boonies and more difficult to get to.

We've held our Quest Celebration! at a different venue each of the previous three years, but hope to make the West Woods Nature Center in Geauga County

our semi-permanent home. The facility is perfect for our event and the staff is excited to work with us again.

At the request of the ASGC Board of Trustees, the Committee has reviewed our High School Scholarship program. IRS non-profit rules and other considerations made the existing program (a traditional, \$1000 award) too difficult to maintain. Instead, we are researching college internships and conservation camps that are more focused on our conservation and education mission.

This month we will host a BIRDday party for two Aurora children who love owls. We designed this fun birthday party idea several years ago but it was

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Skip the fall yard work

A manicured lawn might look nice, but messy is better for birds and bugs. Let someone else keep up with the neighbors this weekend, and follow these tips for a bird-friendly yard.

Save the seeds. The seed heads of coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and other native wildflowers provide a helpful food cache for birds. And letting other dead plants stick around can fill your property with protein-packed bird snacks in the form of insect larvae.

Leave the leaves. You can help birds and other wildlife by skipping the leaf raking. At least consider composting some leaves and letting the rest be. Leaf litter is a pretty happening patch of habitat for a variety of critters such as salamanders, snails, worms, and toads.

Build a brush pile. Blustery fall days tend to knock down tree limbs. Rather than hauling them away, build a brush pile that will shelter birds from lousy weather and predators.

Skip the chemicals. In most cases grass clippings and mulched leaf litter provide plenty of plant nutrition, and using store-bought fertilizers only encourages more non-native plants to grow.

Hit the nursery. Native dogwoods, hawthorns, sumacs, and other flowering shrubs produce small fruits that feed birds during the colder months. Your backyard birds will be glad you did.

—Andy McGlashen

(Excerpted from www.audubon.org)

November waterfowl

Ducks are returning to Lake Erie and larger inland lakes in NE Ohio. More than 20 species spend the fall and winter months in our area and can be divided into two groups – divers and dabblers.

DIVING DUCKS catch fish like gizzard shad, crappies and bluegills and can be seen in both shallow and deep water. An exception would be the scoters (black, white-



Ruddy duck from Wendy Park

Photo: M. Valencic

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From the Nest...

I hope your bird feeders are full. Northern bird visitors are moving through. Most of you will soon be hosting dark-eyed juncos and American tree sparrows beneath your feeders. A variety of sparrows are being seen in our area now such as Lincoln's, LeConte's, white-throated, white-crowned and fox. Some have quite elegant plumage. As you enjoy the ground feeders at your



feeding station study the sparrows and you will be amazed at the different species that partake of your offerings. If you are curious about when and where to see some of these species check out eBird. It is easy to open a free eBird account. You might even get sparked to get out there in person to witness the amazing phenomenon of migration.

—Jim Tomko, President

New education program: *All About Birds*

The Education Committee was pleased to host a NEW program for boys and girls in 6th to 12th grade on August 3rd. The program, *All About Birds*, took flight with a Raptor Encounter program presented by Penitentiary Glen. Naturalists brought a screech owl, red-tailed hawk and barred owl to the Novak Education Center. Those attending learned about wildlife rehabilitation and the particular lifestyle of each bird. The encounter was enjoyed by over 15 Audubon members!



All About Birds participants practice using binoculars with leader Matt Valencic.

The patch program has many requirements which were all met by the end of the 2nd portion of the program. The three young adults that attended were led by Alison DeBroux in an art activity. After giving them a brief art lesson, they were instructed to draw all or part of a bird from an Audubon print.

Next, Matt Valencic taught them about binoculars. He also shared with them some of his many photos of birds and their calls.

It was then time to step outside

before the threatening rain arrived. Matt led the girls on a hike, teaching them about “the edge”, which is where the best birding takes place. They heard several birds and saw a few with their binoculars. Matt showed them how to use the eBird app to maintain their life list and be citizen scientists. All requirements were completed and we gave out three of our new program patches!

—Kathy Cochran

Waterfowl

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winged and surf) that prefer invertebrates and zebra mussels on the floor of Lake Erie.

DABBLING DUCKS go to shallow



Northern shoveler

Photo: M. Valencic

water to feed on aquatic vegetation, invertebrates and mollusks (snails). Watch them “tipping” as their heads go under water and their tail points to the sky! An exception is the northern shoveler that uses its long, spatula-like bill to strain small crustaceans and invertebrates from the surface of the water. They often swim in circles when feeding in groups.

Mixed flocks of divers and dabblers are frequently seen resting offshore, often numbering in the hundreds. Which ducks can you expect to see? Check out this month’s eBird Tutorial to learn how BAR CHARTS can answer that question.

—Matt Valencic

Education

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little publicized.

We are looking forward to 2018. See Upcoming Events for a preview of Matt Valencic's birding talks for adults. February will see our annual Scout Day and in March we will host a group of 5th graders from Lorain for an All About Birds program. And don't forget the Chagrin River Bird Quest, set for September 14-15 at the West Woods

Nature Center.

The Education Committee is charged with supporting the second pillar of ASGC's mission: educational activities focusing on the greater Cleveland community. None of our programs happen without the involvement of many people. If you are a person with ideas and *the energy to see them through*, we need you!

—Alison DeBroux, Education Chair



Southern Flying Squirrel
(*Glaucomys volans*)

I heard it again—some scurrying up in the hickory tree! When I looked up a small shadow rocketed straight to an ash tree 20 feet away! It scampered down the trunk, studied me then leapt over to my peanut bird feeder.

At 8-10 inches long and only 2-3 ounces, the Southern flying squirrel is smaller than our Eastern chipmunk! It is also Ohio’s most common and abundant squirrel but goes undetected because of its strictly nocturnal habit. You may have them in your wooded backyard if there is a standing dead tree or two with small hollowed out cavities. For such small creatures they bravely allow fairly close approach and shoot out of the feeder when I get within four feet or so.

As you know, they really do not fly but glide up to 125 feet if their launch point is high enough. Flying squirrels have a furred membrane that attaches to their wrist and extends to their ankle that, when extended spread-eagle, allows their remarkable gliding ability. When you watch them glide the first few feet you would be convinced that they are under some sort of power! Flying squirrels (like most squirrels) give birth twice a year in the spring and in the fall to 2-7 kits. They have a varied diet including seeds, nuts, fungus, lichens, fruit, buds, insects, bird eggs and occasionally bird hatchlings.

They are active year-round and make their nest in hollow trees and abandoned woodpecker cavities which is a good reason to leave dead trees standing in a safe area of your yard. During frigid weather they will “roost” communally in a chamber to share body heat. It is much easier to see them when the leaves fall so with the next full moon check out your bird feeders after dark and you may discover an unexpected nocturnal visitor!

—Jim Tomko

In case you missed it!

Fall color walk
October 21, Hach-Otis Sanctuary



John Lillich leads hikers along the boardwalk at Hach-Otis.
Photo: J. Tomko

Tree-hugger! Jim Tomko poses with the giant denizens of the Hach-Otis Sanctuary on October 21.
Photo: C. Lillich



eBird Tutorial – Studying Bar Charts

Bar Charts in eBird show us the relative abundance of bird sightings for each month of the year. They can give you an idea of when to expect the first Prothonotary Warblers at Eldon Russell Park or when they typically depart for their winter homes in Central and South America. You can also quickly see which birds are ‘just passing through’ our area in the spring and fall.

Here is how you access Bar Charts in eBird:

- Go to www.ebird.org and select EXPLORE DATA
- Scroll down the page and select BAR CHARTS
- Choose your state (Ohio) then, on the right, the subregion (Hotspots in Ohio)
- Scroll down the page and select CONTINUE
- Now find and select Eldon Russell Park from the long list of Hotspots, then go the bottom of the page and select CONTINUE
- Scroll down the page and find Prothonotary Warbler. You’ll see that the first birds typically arrive at the end of April and are gone by the end of August.

—Matt Valencic

Upcoming Events

Field Trips

Speaker's Bureau

November 12 2:00 pm
“Leaf Cruncher”
Novak Sanctuary

Have you walked the “other side” of the Novak Sanctuary? We frequently explore the west side (Aurora side) of the Novak Sanctuary but rarely go into the east side (Mantua side). There is a flock of Wild Turkey that make this section their home and much of it is a mature forest. There are several large fields to provide grassland habitat encouraging open country wildlife. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary Parking lot on the east side of Townline Road a little less than a mile North of St. Rt. 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

December 15 7:00 pm
“Almost Winter Solstice”
Aurora Sanctuary

Have you experienced the soft quietness of a pine forest on a winter night? If we are lucky enough to enjoy a light snow cover it enhances the feeling of solitude. Celebrate some of the shortest days and longest nights of the year with us for this evening which is the closest we could schedule to the first day of winter. Meet at the Bretschnieder Audubon parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Rd. in Aurora.

February 18 3:30pm
“eBird Workshop”
West Woods Nature Center

April 8 or 15 (time TBD)
“Warbler Warm-up”
West Woods Nature Center

April 7 6:30pm
“Birds of NE Ohio”
Look About Lodge, S. Chagrin Res.

April 18 7:00pm
“Warbler Warm-up”
Happy Days Visitor Center in CVNP

Check future issues of *The House Wren* and our website for details!

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Senate vote opens Arctic Refuge to drilling

The Senate vote to allow drilling in the Arctic Refuge sacrifices America's bird nursery for fantasy oil revenues.

"This plan is bad conservation policy and even worse math. And we're going to fight this plan until common sense prevails," said David Yarnold, National Audubon's president and CEO, after the Senate failed to pass an amendment to remove instructions to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from the 2018 federal budget. The vote failed 48 to 52.

"There is no money to be had in the Arctic Refuge to pay for a tax plan and if we go down this road, we will have forever lost the last true wilderness in America. Drilling the Arctic Refuge just doesn't add up."

The Senate budget calls for \$1 billion in revenues for the federal treasury to be raised by opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing.

Companies already are drilling or are planning to drill in Alaska. Each year land is put out for lease. Between 1999-2016, the average sale drew only

\$50 per acre, which is only 3.7% of the \$1,334 per acre required to hit the Senate's goal.

Furthermore, this flawed budget assumes companies will bid on every one of the 1.5 million acres they plan to open in the Arctic Refuge. Even in the 2016 NPRA lease sale—touted as a banner year—industry leased just 42 percent of the acres offered.

Every year 200 species of birds migrate through six continents and all 50 states to breed in the Refuge. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an iconic American treasure on par with the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite. First protected by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, leaders from both parties have worked together for generations to stop attempts to open the biological heart of the Refuge—it's pristine coastal plain—to oil and gas drilling.

Audubon, including ASGC, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, asks you to contact your members of Congress and urge them to protect the Arctic Refuge from future development.

Excerpted from www.audubon.org.



The Arctic Refuge may soon look like the Prudhoe Bay oilfield. A large network of roads and pipelines crisscrosses the coastal tundra.
Photo: F. Schulz

DATED MAIL

