



# The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



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

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December, 2017

## Trail cleared, thanks to one man

As many of you know, Aurora was hit by a major wind and rain storm on the evening of Sunday November 5th.

Three of our sanctuaries were affected and many trees were damaged. The Aurora Sanctuary was the most heavily damaged in the pine grove on the ridge above the Aurora Branch at the southern property line. Dozens of 60- to 70-year old trees were toppled, twisted, snapped and dropped. It looked like an enormous pick-up sticks game. There was tree on top of tree lying in all directions. Some of the trees were 16 inches in diameter!

After surveying the damage and evaluating the massive task ahead of us, Jim Tomko, our president, gave me a call asking if I had any ideas on how we could possibly open the trail. He wanted a plan to restore the trail. He was even considering moving the trail to skirt around the downed trees.

In the meantime, and without our knowledge, our resident sanctuary volunteer, Kenny Kresina, took it upon himself to bring in a chain saw with plenty of gas and oil, and began cutting at one end of the jumble of downed trees. It took him over eight hours spanning two days of exhausting, back-breaking work to single-handedly complete the task. I estimated that it would take 3-5 men at least 8 to 16 hours to open the trail and clear away the trees. Kenny Kresina did it by himself! An impossible project with no end in sight, and he did it in two days.

Kenny's hard work and stick-to-it attitude rescued the trail.

Kenny is Paul Bunyan *extraordinaire* ... a miracle worker who did the impossible and to be honest I am in awe of his unbelievable work ethic and "GET THE JOB

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Downed trees crisscross the Aurora Sanctuary trail after the November 5th storm.

*Photo: J. Tomko*

**SEE INSIDE THIS EDITION**

**2017 Annual Appeal  
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## Thoughts about our 'Winter Birds'

We talk a lot about our 'summer birds' and 'feeder birds', maybe because we enjoy them in the relative comfort of spring, summer, fall and from inside our homes. But if you are willing to bundle up and go afield, our 'winter birds' are equally interesting and often easier to find with the leaves gone.

Their summer breeding grounds are north of us in Canada, Alaska and the

*(Continued on page 3)*



Snow bunting on Soltis Road.

*Photo: M. Valencic*

## *From the Nest...*

Those that study winter bird movements have declared that this winter could result in an irruption of snowy owls similar or to or even more than in 2013! Already 4 snowy owls have been documented in Northeastern Ohio. Lemmings were abundant on the tundra resulting in many snowy owl eggs. Also due to some conifer cone crop failure there is expected to be an



irruption of crossbills. Keep your eyes and ears tuned to the conifers and you may get an unexpected reward!

This time of year I get great amusement by birding the Christmas Cards that I receive. I keep track of how many species that I can identify on the cards that are mailed to me and you would be surprised at the variety.

The holiday season and the end of the year often have our members looking

for organizations to support. Don't forget that our one and only fund raiser of the year kicks off this month. We will keep your donated funds local and take great care to use them wisely.

I wish you and yours a splendid holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

—Jim Tomko, President

*(Editor's note: please look for our appeal in the mail, or send in your donation with the form on page 2.)*

**Field trip brings work & sun**



Hiram College students help clear a trail at the Hach-Otis Sanctuary on October 3 before enjoying a sunny view of the Chagrin Valley.

*Photos: C. Lillich*



**Storm Damage**

*(Continued from page 1)*

DONE” perseverance under harsh and precarious conditions.

A job WELL DONE and glad he is on our team!

Thank you Kenny!

—Mark J Demyan, ASGC Trustee & Past President



The cleared trail, thanks to Kenny Kresina.

*Photo: J. Tomko*

Please return this form and your tax-deductible donation to:  
 The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland  
 P.O. Box 391037  
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The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

**Critter Corner**

Photo: The Nature Conservancy



Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

In the early morning a few years back while doing a breeding bird survey for the Museum of Natural History, I came upon an abandoned cabin. As I approached I heard a low rumbling that turned into growling and snarling. It did not seem like a large creature but it did sound furious that I would be so bold as to step on her territory. I did not push my luck for a look because I knew I was hearing a bobcat defending her lair. There were two-inch long cat tracks in the sandy soil surrounding the cabin.

Historically bobcats were part of Ohio’s native fauna. By 1850 they had been extirpated from Ohio. By the mid-1900s they began to move back and we now have a small breeding population.

These cats are in the family Felidae just like your pet cat and lions, tigers, leopards, and over 30 other species. Bobcats are primarily nocturnal and stealthy and for that reason rarely detected. They can breed any time of year but usually it is in mid-winter with a gestation period of 63 days which gives them a litter in the early spring. At 20 to 26 pounds and 30 to 34 inches from tip of the nose to the tip of the tail the adults are the size of a medium sized dog.

That tail is a short “bobbed” tail ending in a black tip on top with white underneath. They have indistinct dark spots, stripes or streaks on a brown/gray coat and a noticeable cheek ruff. The backs of their ears are black with a large white spot in the middle.

They are top-of-the-line predators feeding on everything from insects, snakes, and frogs, to birds, mice, rabbits, squirrels and even deer.

ASGC Trustee John Lillich spotted some bobcat tracks in the snow several years ago in the Aurora Sanctuary, and one of our Sanctuary neighbors reported seeing one in her backyard this past spring. Let’s hope they are back to stay!

—Jim Tomko

## Winter Birds

(Continued from page 1)

Arctic. We hear about the 'Pothole Country' of the Upper Midwest and the Canadian Provinces, the lands of thousands of lakes that were created when the last glacier retreated. The 'Boreal Forests' of Canada also have many lakes among the coniferous forests, what we might call 'evergreens'. And in the Arctic, tundra swans, geese and some ducks find patches of highly productive habitat with virtually 24-hour daylight for just a few months each summer.

Winter waterfowl are easy to see on lakes and ponds and often found in large, mixed flocks. Binoculars are needed and a



Horned grebe at LaDue Reservoir.

Photo: M. Valencic

spotting scope really enhances your viewing. Ducks (20+ species), geese, swans, grebes and loons are often seen on the same body of water and remain until the water freezes, returning almost magically again at 'ice-out'. Open fields are winter homes to rough-legged hawks, northern harriers, short-eared owls, snow buntings, horned larks and Lapland longspurs. Tree sparrows, kinglets and juncos prefer thickets and edges. And some years we have pine siskins and redpolls at our backyard thistle seed feeders.

So bundle up, grab a friend and get outside to enjoy our Winter Birds. And

remember to eBird what you find!

—Matt Valencic

## Winter birding indoors

Want to enjoy our winter birds from 'the great indoors'? Then visit the many nature centers found throughout NE Ohio. Large windows allow you to observe the feeders and friendly staff are happy to help you with identification. Some even offer binoculars for you to use. And their indoor displays enhance your learning about wildlife and nature. Go on-line to learn more about hours of operation and programs at these centers:

Lake Metroparks – Penitentiary Glen Nature Center and Clinton Wildlife Center (rehab center)

Cleveland Metroparks – North Chagrin, Rocky River and Brecksville Nature Centers

Geauga Park District – West Woods and Big Creek Park Nature Centers

Summit Metro Parks – Liberty Park Nature Center and Seiberling Nature Realm

—Matt Valencic



Black-capped chickadee

Photo: M. Valencic

# Upcoming Events

## Field Trips

**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 Bretschneider Audubon parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Rd. in Aurora.

**January 13 9:30am**

*"Bobcats!"*

Aurora Sanctuary

According to the State of Ohio, bobcats are making a comeback in our state. A few years ago ASGC Trustee John Lillich came across bobcat tracks in the snow in our Aurora Sanctuary. Recently there have been several reports of a bobcat in a forested area near the Aurora Sanctuary. Let's see if we can find evidence of bobcat presence in our sanctuary to start out our year of field trips. Meet at the Bretschneider Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

**February 18 9:00am**

*"Great Backyard Bird Count"*

Aurora Sanctuary

**March 18 9:00am**

*"Waterfowl Wander"*

LaDue Reservoir

## Speaker's Bureau

**February 18 3:30pm**

*"eBird Workshop"*

West Woods Nature Center

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

**AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER  
CLEVELAND (S 70)  
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To contact an individual trustee, send an email to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

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Please recycle this newsletter

*A Wry Smile*



The scientific name for bobcat is *Lynx rufus*.  
And the team mascot for Ohio University is a Bobcat named Rufus!

—Jim Tomko

## BIRDday party a whole lot of fun!

Several years ago, the ASGC Education Committee designed and began offering children's birthday (or *BIRDday*) parties at our historic Novak Education Center in Aurora. For less than a parent would pay for a Chuck E. Cheese or Cinemark birthday party, we provide a personalized, bird-centric experience.



Stephen Agafonov (8) prepares to dissect an owl pellet at his BIRDday party.

Ever played Bird Bingo? Do you know Ohio's state bird? (the cardinal) How about New Mexico's? (the roadrunner) With games like these, who needs Pin the Tail on the Donkey? Budding birders also dissect an owl pellet, paint a miniature birdhouse (or other craft project) and venture outside for a hay ride or scavenger hunt (weather permitting). The party includes favors, a yummy birthday cake and special gift.

On a recent sunny but chilly Saturday afternoon, our BIRDday

specialists hosted the Agafonov children from Twinsburg, Elizabeth and Stephen, who were celebrating their tenth and eighth birthdays, respectively. Ten children (and almost as many parents) turned the Novak Center into Party Central for two and a half hours. Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time.

Did the party increase the children's knowledge of or interest in birds? We don't know!

But we do know that children (and adults) might learn something in spite of themselves, especially when they're doing something fun!

Please visit our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org) for more information about our BIRDday parties. To schedule a party, send an email to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org).

—Alison DeBroux

**DATED MAIL**

