



# 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)

April, 2018

### Thirteen complete Bird Study Merit Badge

Local Boy Scout Troop 269 hosts a Merit Badge Challenge every year. This challenge gives Scouts the opportunity to complete merit badges in a wide variety of areas over the course of three sessions. This year, over 275 Scouts and 30 counselors participated. The event is held at Harmon Middle School in Aurora.

One of the merit badges is Bird Study, led by Audubon member Barb Philbrick with help from Matt Valencic and Jim Tomko. This year, we had 25 Scouts sign up in two classes. Thirteen of them completed all the requirements to earn the merit badge.

For this merit badge, the Scouts need to learn about different aspects of birding. In the first session, they discuss why we need bird study, using the



Barb Philbrick (far right) poses with the Bird Study class of '18.

history of DDT as an example of how bird study can result in important changes. They also sketch and identify different parts of birds. We use a slide set developed by Matt to emphasize adaptations of birds to their habitats,

*(Continued on page 2)*

**SEE INSIDE THIS EDITION**

**Spring bird walks  
Page 2**

**Save the date!**

**ASGC Annual Meeting and Dinner**

**When:** Saturday, June 2, 2018

**Where:** The West Woods, Geauga Metroparks

**Speaker:** Jim McCormac, Columbus Audubon Society

### April birding in Northeast Ohio

April welcomes back many migrant birds to NE Ohio. Some will stay and breed while others just stop to rest and feed before continuing their journey to Canada and even Alaska. All of them are worth seeing!

In wetlands and around lakes look for great egrets and green herons as well as pectoral, spotted and solitary sandpipers. Virginia rails and Soras will be looking for mates in the dense wetland vegetation while both species of yellowlegs will be resting and feeding before continuing to Canada and Alaska. Osprey return to our lakes and rivers, often nesting atop communication towers or on artificial



Green heron

Photo: M. Valencic

nesting platforms. And all the swallows and chimney swifts arrive during April.

In the forest you can hear the hermit, Swainson's and wood thrush and the veery. Some vireos (blue-headed and warbling) and great-crested flycatchers will also be there. Blue-gray gnatcatchers will be found in the understory while

broad-winged hawks seek the mid-canopy layer. And if you

*(Continued on page 3)*

### *From the Nest...*

Spring migration is on! I hope you are able to get out and experience this amazing phenomenon! As the days lengthen the birds are stimulated to move to their nesting grounds. Some are destined for areas north of us and some nest right here. So from now until June there are more species and more individual birds to be seen in our area. It is now a race against leaf emergence.



When we have full leaf-out the challenge is finding the bird singing and often we have to settle for just appreciating his song.

Please try to join us on one or more of the Annual Spring Bird Walks held at 18 locations throughout Cleveland and Akron. For 85 years this has been occurring and the data collected is housed at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. These walks are

sponsored by Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland Metroparks, Geauga County Park District, Lake Metroparks, and Summit County Metroparks. The walks are led by experienced birders but participants vary from brand new novices to seasoned veterans. It is an excellent way to get started birding and enjoying learning from others with like interests.

Also remember our Annual Meeting

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Spring bird walk schedule

Join us as we watch migratory birds return or travel through our area toward their summer breeding grounds during the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Series of Spring Bird Walks. Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on Sundays, April 15 through May 20, 2018 at 7:30 am at the following locations:

**Aurora Sanctuary** - parking lot east of Page Rd. on E. Pioneer Trail, east of routes 306 and 43, Aurora. 216-337-2202

**Bedford Reservation** - Hemlock Creek Picnic Area parking lot, off Button Rd., Bedford. 330-715-6300

**Big Creek Reservation** - Lake Isaac, Big Creek Parkway, Middleburg Hts. 440-891-1710

**Brecksville Reservation** - Station Road Bridge Trailhead, off Riverview Rd. south of route 82, Brecksville. 330-467-3664

**Geauga Park District** - Various locations. Call 440-286-9516 for details

**Hinckley Reservation** - Bridge at the south end of Hinckley Lake, on State Rd., Hinckley. 330-625-5503

**Hiram College** - James H. Barrow Field Station, 11305 Wheeler Road, Hiram. 330-527-2141

**Holden Arboretum** - Corning Visitor Center parking lot, 9500 Sperry Rd., Kirtland. 440-946-4400

**Huntington Reservation** - Huntington Beach parking lot by water tower, 28649 Lake Rd., Bay Village. 440-808-1970

**Lake Metroparks** - Lake Erie Bluffs, 3301 Lane Rd., Perry Township. 440-256-1404, ext. 2112

**Mentor Marsh** - parking area on Headlands Rd., Mentor. 440-257-0777

**North Chagrin Reservation** - North Chagrin Nature Center parking lot, 401 Buttermilk Falls Parkway, Mayfield Village. 440-473-3370

**Novak Sanctuary** - parking lot north of Rt. 82 on Town Line Rd., Aurora. 330-388-9279

**Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation** - CanalWay Center parking lot, 4524 E. 49<sup>th</sup> St., Cuyahoga Hts. 216-206-1000

**Rocky River Reservation** - Rocky River Nature Center, 24000 Valley Parkway (1/4 mile north of Cedar Point Road), North Olmsted. 216-924-0188

**Shaker Lakes** - Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 2600 South Park Blvd., Shaker Hts. 216-321-5935

**South Chagrin Reservation** - Jackson Field, off Chagrin River Rd. (between Miles Rd. and Chagrin Blvd.), Moreland Hills. 440-473-3370

Don't miss the migration!

Cosponsored by - Cleveland Metroparks, Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, Blackbrook Audubon Society, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, Geauga Park District, Hiram College, Holden Arboretum, Lake Metroparks, Medina County Park District, and the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

### Gates Mills Bird Walks

We will be out rain or shine. Children with adults are welcome. Sundays, 7:30am  
Leaders: John Lillich & Buster Banish

**April 15 Sunnybrook Preserve**  
12474 Heath Rd (off Mayfield)  
Chester Township

**April 22 Orchard Hills Park**  
11340 Caves Road  
Chester Township, (north of Mulberry)

**April 29 Frohring Meadows**  
16780 Savage Road, Bainbridge Township

**May 6 Squire Valleevue Farm**  
CWRU 37125 Fairmount Blvd., Hunting Valley, OH 44022

Use entrance on Fairmount Rd.

**May 13 White North Property**  
3160 Chagrin River Road (Corner of River Road and Shaker Blvd.) Park next to garages on right side of property.

**May 20 Squire Valleevue Farm**  
CWRU 37125 Fairmount Blvd., Hunting Valley, OH 44022  
Use entrance on Fairmount Rd.

### Bird Study

*(Continued from page 1)*

such as why beaks and feet can be very different depending on the habitat.

In the second session, they learn about binoculars. They spend time learning to adjust and focus them and how to properly clean them. They also use field guides to identify birds, their migration paths, and other facts.

In the third session, Jim, Matt and Barb led the boys on hikes through the Aurora school campuses. During the course of the hike, we discussed the habitats (meadow, woods, pond, and edge). We also discussed the purpose of bird song and had the boys listen for and try to identify bird songs. They used their binoculars to spot and identify birds. We had an extremely cooperative red-tailed hawk resting on a light pole who then did several flyovers. We also had a flock of cedar waxwings, an American kestrel, a bald eagle (which the boys were very excited about), turkey vultures, and the usual suspects, such as American robins, cardinals, and black-capped chickadees.

In addition to the classwork, the boys build a bird feeder, bird house, bird bath, or backyard sanctuary. Most of the boys in this Challenge built bird houses.

Overall, they were a receptive group and we hope they carry their interest and enthusiasm to help support birds and habitats in their future endeavors.

—Barb Philbrick

## Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



### Osprey (*Pandionhaliaetus*)

It is so impressive to think about a bird having to dive into water to grab a 2.5 pound, slippery, wriggling, tube of muscle (the fish) while adjusting for the refraction of the image of the fish displacing the fish's actual location. On top of that their feathers get soaked which weighs the bird down. It then has to get airborne again, turn the fish head first (torpedo-style) to reduce wind resistance, shake off excess water just as your dog does, and head back to the nest. The birds spot their prey from above while hovering or cruising and then dive head first toward the intended prey. A split second before impact with the water they thrust their large feet with long sharp talons out in front of their heads to make the catch. The birds average a successful catch 1 in 4 times. For some amazing film of their technique please check out this "YouTube" video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nA3LtXnNito>

These are large raptors with a wing span of up to five feet and a bill-to-tail length of up to 25 inches. They are white on the underside with brown upper wings and back. They have a brown cap and a dark streak through the eye. From below they have a dark wrist patch on the leading edge of the wing and they hold their wings in a distinctive shallow "M" formation which may cause some to mistake them for a large gull at a distance. Ospreys are the only hawks in our area that eat almost exclusively fish.

Another challenge for them is shoreline development and removal of dead trees and snags which they need to support their large stick nests. They will use other structures such as utility poles, duck blinds, channel markers and cell phone towers. ASGC member Matt Valencic has been surveying 12 osprey nests in Geauga County, all of which are on cell phone towers.

—Jim Tomko

## In case you missed it!



Redheads  
Photo: M. Valencic

### Waterfowl Wander

3/18/2018

LaDue Reservoir was bustling with waterfowl activity! We saw Canada goose, wood duck, gadwall, American wigeon, mallard, northern shoveler,

canvasback, redhead, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, bufflehead, hooded merganser, common merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruddy duck, pied-billed grebe, and horned grebe in addition to many ring-billed gull and several herring gulls. Thanks to ASGC member Matt Valencic for doing some scouting ahead of time we were able to spend more time where the ducks were most dense. There were two trumpeter swans in close proximity to a single mute swan allowing detailed comparison to distinguish the two species.

On our tour we passed a harvested

field that had 15 or more wild turkeys gleaned the left-over grain. Twice a bald eagle flew over and a red-tailed hawk passed by.

Most of the other ponds and lakes we passed were covered with a skin of ice which discouraged ducks from loafing and feeding. At one point we were amused by a pair of wood ducks moving away from us walking on thin ice but they kept breaking through and climbing back out onto more thin ice and breaking through again. Good thing they were ducks who are excellent swimmers with duck down vests to keep them warm and buoyant!

—Jim Tomko

### April birding

(Continued from page 1)

have a wooded ravine with a stream that runs all summer, you might find a Louisiana waterthrush singing.

In fields you can find Savannah, field and Vesper sparrows joining the year-round song sparrows. Yellow warblers and common yellowthroats will be looking for small trees to build a nest just a couple feet above the ground. And at the edge of the field you might find a brown thrasher among the thickets.

If you have a favorite 'migrant trap' (habitat that attracts lots of small, migrating birds) look for other early

warblers like the palm, pine, yellow-rumped and black-throated green. Be ready for anything in these habitats as many migrating species will drop in for a meal before moving on.

If you are wondering where to start, check out our lists of birding locations at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org) and click on BIRDING. You can also find locations near you at [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org). Just click on EXPLORE and search HOTSPOTS. You will have more locations than you have time to visit – what a sweet problem! Good Birding!

—Matt Valencic

### From the Nest

(Continued from page 1)

on June 2<sup>nd</sup> where keynote speaker Jim McCormac will deliver a program on the amazing birdlife right here in Ohio! Jim is a dynamic, engaging speaker with his own sensational photographs of our great state! And if you have not had a chance to visit the fabulous West Woods Nature Center, here is your chance. It is a world class facility with excellent exhibits.

—Jim Tomko, President

## Upcoming Events

### Field Trips

**April 7 7:30pm**  
"Timberdoodles!"  
Novak Sanctuary

These shorebirds are a long way from the shore but they seem to love our wet fields for their courtship dance and flight display. In mild winters they start this activity as early as late February and crescendo to a peak in late March/early April. Come on out for a night display of song and dance that is like no other in our area! Please wear water-proof shoes and dress for the weather. Meet at Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Rd a little less than a mile north of St. Rt. 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

### Speaker's Bureau

**April 7 7:30pm**  
"Summer Birds of NE Ohio"  
Cleveland Natural Science Club  
Look About Lodge  
37374 Miles Road, Bentleyville

**April 8 2:00pm**  
"Warbler Warm-up"  
West Woods Nature Center  
9465 Kinsman Rd (Rt 87), Russell

**April 15 1:30pm**  
"Birding ABCs—Getting started bird-watching"  
Register online or by phone for this program: 440-250-5460  
Westlake Porter Public Library  
27333 Center Ridge Rd, Westlake

**April 18 7:00pm**  
"Warbler Warm-up"  
Cuyahoga Valley Photographic Society  
Happy Days Lodge  
500 W. Streetsboro Street (Rt 303),  
Peninsula




Parula warbler Photo: M. Valencic

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Please recycle this newsletter

**Attention Shutterbirds!**

Don't miss our 3rd Annual ASGC Photo Contest. Entries are now being accepted. Categories are: Birds of Ohio, Nature, Fine Art, and Youth. Photos must be submitted through our online form at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org).  
**Entries close at midnight, April 14th.**

**Seventeen participate in re-scheduled Scout Day**

For the first time, our February Scout Day was canceled because of the weather. Icy roads made driving tricky, and Aurora police suggested to organizer Kathy Cochran that if you didn't have to be out, don't be! Feeling it was better to be safe than sorry, we contacted our volunteers and participating troops and canceled our event. Now I know how school superintendents feel when deciding to call a Snow Day!

But you can't keep a good Scout down, and on March 3<sup>rd</sup> we held our re-scheduled Scout Day at the Novak Education Center in Aurora, welcoming 17 Scouts with clear skies and sunshine.

This group of Scouts, both girls and boys age kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, seemed especially attentive as they made their way through our stations. They learned that it's the feathers that make a bird a bird, then saw how birds adapted to various habitats and food sources by having differently-shaped beaks and feet.

They saw, up close and personal,



Making—and wearing—a bird mask is a popular activity.



Volunteer Katie Cochran designed a "physics of sound" experiment for the Bird Song station.

what owls eat for lunch and they learned how an eagle makes its nest bigger and bigger every year. They tried out binoculars and microscopes, made a bird mask and bird feeder, and every Scout went home with a bird sticker book and a miniature field guide.

This is a very volunteer-intensive program, and we'd like to thank our legion of loyal volunteers who made it possible: Kathy Cochran with daughters Katie and Sarah, Kathryn Craig, Sue Graham, Matt Valencic, Barb Philbrick and son Henry, Betsy Siman, Nicole Ryman and Madison Proctor. Many thanks to all!

—Alison DeBroux

**DATED MAIL**

