



# 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)

October, 2018

### Bird Quest!

Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Chagrin River Bird Quest continued the tradition of more teams (20), more prizes and more fun. Around 65 people attended the Quest Celebration! on September 15<sup>th</sup> at the wonderful West Woods Nature Center. Our thanks to Linda Gilbert and to Geauga Parks for helping make this year's Bird Quest another huge success.

Thanks also goes to Mary Ann Wagner and Blackbrook Audubon Society for partnering with ASGC this year. They provided much needed financial assistance and publicity.

Preparations were completed and Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup> arrived. At 4pm, teams began to check in. Competitive teams from Geauga County Park District, Lake County Parks, and Portage County entered the fray—and the gauntlet was thrown down. Who would win the coveted Most Species Seen



The "Bird Brains" took 1st place with 76 species.

award?

Turned out, none of the above. All teams did a fantastic job, but the dark horse team of Sandra Brown and Kari Warner's "Bird Brains" won the day with 76 total species seen!

*(Continued on page 2)*

**SEE INSIDE THIS EDITION**

**Audubon Moment**

**Page 4**

Send **your Audubon Moment** to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

### What the heck is COAC?

COAC stands for the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters, an organization designed to connect Ohio Audubon chapters. It is still in its infancy but we are hoping to have quarterly meetings rotating throughout the state where we will share successes, challenges, and solutions to common difficulties. It will be a forum for mutual aid in the form of manpower and brainpower.

We hosted the first quarterly meeting in March at our Novak Education Center located in Aurora. By next spring the goal is to have officers elected representing all of the chapters that are interested in joining the group. Future meeting locations will be announced and we are hoping that one or more of our members will volunteer to be our representative at some of these meetings. It will be an excellent way to connect to other chapters throughout our state and hopefully rejuvenate interest in bird and wildlife conservation among Ohio's

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Annual Meeting attendees enjoyed perfect weather in June

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland held its annual meeting and dinner on Saturday, June 2, 2018 at the West Woods Nature Center in Geauga County and the weather was perfect.

The day began with a nature walk at 3:00 p.m., followed by a wine and cheese reception. We had a chapter meeting at 5:00 p.m. Our president, Jim Tomko, welcomed all the members attending the meeting and gave a brief overview of our activities during the past

year. There was a short business meeting where we elected officers and trustees. Officers elected were: Jim Tomko, President, Carol Lillich, Secretary and John Weber, Treasurer. The position of vice president is currently open. Trustees elected were: Alison DeBroux, Mark Demyan, Penny Orr, Mary Salomon, Steve Zabor, Joe Malmisur, John Lillich, Kathy Cochran, Sarah Mabey, Harvey Webster and Bob Bartolotta. Trustees

*(Continued on page 3)*

### *From the Nest...*

My thanks to Alison DeBroux and her team for putting on a fabulous Bird Quest! The weather was fantastic, the birding was outstanding, the food was delicious, and the camaraderie was excellent! Due to Matt Valencic's suggestion, we held it a bit earlier this year and caught many more migrants



than we had when held later in September. My compliments to all of you for your efforts leading to a great success. This fun event is catching on. If you missed it this year you may want to get it on your calendar for next September.

We are now well into autumn migration. With the change of season, the shortening daylight, the fluctuations

in weather, and dispersal of youngsters that have confused their orientation we often get unusual avian visitors. Keep your vision and hearing sharp to detect these birds blown off their course and end up in our area. Let me know what special species you find.

Good Birding to you.

—Jim Tomko, President

## Friends of Hach-Otis

It is my goal to start a support group for our Hach-Otis Sanctuary. During the past year, several neighbors have expressed an interest in being part of such a group. Two people who want to volunteer their services at Hach-Otis contacted ASGC via our website. It is my hope that these people will serve as a foundation for a group that I am calling *Friends of Hach-Otis*.

Bill Kennelly, a former ASGC Trustee, opens the gate at Hach-Otis every morning and is our eyes and ears at the north side of the Sanctuary. Bill Smith is interested in trail building and trail maintenance. Caitlin Ormsby wants to help with invasive species control, building blue bird houses and making a blue bird trail. The Biddles are our eyes and ears at the south and east sides of the Sanctuary, and want to help with whatever they can.

We are encouraged by this initial meeting. Now it's up to us to give these volunteers projects to keep them involved. They all want something to do.

—John Lillich



Pictured above are Chris Biddle, Marian Kennelly, Bill Kennelly, Bill Smith, Caitlin's friend Miko, Caitlin Ormsby, and John Lillich. Not pictured are Kate Biddle and Carol Lillich.

Photo: C. Lillich

## Bird Quest

(Continued from page 1)

Columbus Audubon members Linda Benner and Lori Patterson of "Team Twitcher" were a shoe-in to win the Most Distance Traveled award as they drove up from Columbus to participate. The Most Creative Team Name was won by Michael Phillips and Heidi Harris with "Beasts of Birdin'."

Participants were already talking about next year's Bird Quest—our 5<sup>th</sup> annual—so watch your emails and newsletters for details!

—Alison DeBroux

## Bird Survey results

The ASGC breeding bird surveys continue to provide crucial information about our sanctuaries. These surveys are always done during the first half of June, when the spring migration is over and the birds are nesting. The surveys start at 6:00am since the birds sing in the early morning and bird identification is more easily done by hearing rather than by sight once the trees have leafed out. A standard path is taken, and sightings are broken down by multiple habitat zones in each sanctuary.

We keep a very detailed record of each survey, including the bird species, the number of individual birds, and where they were observed. We also maintain spreadsheets showing year-to-year comparisons of each sanctuary. Over the years, the number of unique species seen in the different sanctuaries has varied from 35-56. We have seen at least one new species every year. The total numbers of individual birds detected in each sanctuary has varied from 100-270. These surveys give us an admittedly inexact picture of sanctuary health, but they provide very important tools that we utilize to understand both

(Continued on page 3)

## COAC

(Continued from page 1)

citizens.

Tri-Moraine Audubon Society hosted the fall quarterly workshop at Myeerah Nature Preserve near Bellefontaine on Sunday, September 16. The workshop consisted of two hikes, five presentations, and a business meeting. Over 20 people were in attendance representing nine organizations, including seven Audubon chapters.

The morning hike highlighted the prairie and wetland restoration areas and the afternoon hike was through the old growth forest where we saw numerous mushrooms, a rare orchid, and the geosink, a pond created by a collapsing cave. The presentations covered topics on habitat restoration, how to get the most out of annual appeal letters and programming, and Tri-Moraine's environmental education weekend.

Please contact the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters at [info@counciloac.org](mailto:info@counciloac.org).

—Jim Tomko and Jackie Augustine

## Critter Corner

Yellow-rumped warbler (spring)  
Photo: M. Valencic



## Yellow-rumped Warbler

(*Dendroica coronata*)

This month, for an additional splash of wonderful autumn color, look for our hardiest of warblers - the yellow-rumped warbler. These birds will dazzle you with their four spots of yellow color: The rump patch where the tail feathers meet the body, the crown patch, and each side of the breast. They have a striped blue-gray head and body with a white throat and belly.

Most of the warblers have passed south by now but several species persist and this one is among our latest warbler migrants in the fall and the earliest in the spring. In fact, yellow-rumped (affectionately known as "Butter Butts") have been known to overwinter in Ohio. Two of my birding buddies, Kim Pease and Marty Sickinger, have seen one all winter long several years ago at the Brettschneider Park parking lot in Aurora.

The secret to their survival in the winter is their ability to switch over to a diet of berries when the insects are killed or dormant in cold weather. That is quite a feat as digesting berries is quite different from digesting insects. They will also visit your feeders for suet, peanut butter dough, seeds, and hummingbird nectar! When I learned my birds, many years ago, these were called "Myrtle Warblers" due to their eating of wax myrtle berries and bayberries.

There is a very similar warbler in the western states that used to be known as Audubon's warbler. For the time being both are now called yellow-rumped warblers. As scientists study them they may decide to split them into two distinct species again. Yellow-rumped nest at high altitudes in the mountains or far to our north in the boreal forests where conifers dominate.

These energetic birds can really brighten an autumn day! Check for them on your next outing!

—Jim Tomko

## In case you missed it!

It rained the entire time we were in the woods and field in our quest of the rare fringed gentians. We did see the more common bottle gentian and many species of asters and goldenrod. There were turtlehead in bloom, and beautiful fruit on the buttonbush, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and doll's eye (red baneberry). But, we did not see one single fringed gentian in bloom. It had been hot and dry and we were a week or two earlier than usual.

We did encounter many frogs and toads hopping about the trails. Most of



The elusive fringed gentian.

the birds were hiding from the raindrops. Wood ducks remained on the ponds awaiting their northern cousins to join them next month.

I have returned to the fringed gentian patch since then and right now they are in full bloom. If you can get away on a sunny afternoon in the next week or two you will be delighted by the fringed gentian in beautiful

blue and the ladies tresses in white along the trail.

—Jim Tomko

## Annual Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

are elected for three year terms.

The Seeley Award, which is presented to a member for work done above and beyond the norm, was given to Sue Graham for all that she does for the education committee. The Award of Merit is given to a non-member for their work in conservation and this year was presented to Alec Besinger.

Jim Tomko announced the retirement of Bud Shaw from the board of trustees. Bud was presented with a



Education volunteer Sue Graham accepts the Seeley Award from President Jim Tomko. Photo: C. Lillich

beautiful Dean Chriss photograph to show our appreciation for his many years of service on the board.

We had a lovely dinner catered by A Dab of Class. When dinner was over the winners of ASGC's photo contest were announced by Jim and Alison DeBroux. Our speaker for the evening was Jim McCormac, who took us on a "Romp through Ohio's Flora and Fauna." Jim did not disappoint.

A good time was had by all and we look forward to our meeting next year.

—Carol Lillich

# Upcoming Events

## Field Trips

**Oct 20 9:30am**  
"Fall Colors"  
Aurora Sanctuary

Often our palette of autumn color will give the New England forests a run for title of the best hues! With the mix of species and depending on our weather leading up to the leaf color change we can have spectacular vistas of wonderful beauty. Join us for a walk at peak color change if mother nature agrees with our timing. Meet at the Bretschneider Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora.

**Nov 3 9:30am**

"Turkey Trek"  
Novak Sanctuary

Each year we go on a quest to spot wild turkeys before Thanksgiving. They know how to play the game of Hide and Seek extremely well. These large but wily birds are experts in blending in. Help me find the flock as they roam the sanctuary in search of food. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road a little less than a mile north of State Route 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

**Dec 21 7:30pm**  
"Winter Solstice"  
Novak Sanctuary

Help us celebrate the longest night of the year under the almost (one day early) full moon known as the Cold Moon. If we are lucky enough to have clear skies, we will not even need a flashlight. A night hike this time of year reveals secrets of the forest and field because the leaves are down increasing our viewing while the crisp air allows sounds to travel farther. Hiking after dark seems to heighten the acuity of our senses. Join us to see what the nighttime forest unveils. Meet at the 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.

**DATED MAIL**

**AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND (S 70)**  
**Board of Trustees 2018-2019**  
**Jim Tomko, President**

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

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*An Audubon Moment* (Another Swallow “Tale”)

It was May – just after Mothers Day and I went out on the deck to water my hanging baskets. A bird with a forked tail was swooping in and out of the porch, almost dive-bombing me. Turns out a pair of barn swallows was looking for a place to nest, and when it appeared they might build right over my picnic tables, I got out my broom.

Then they settled on a ledge above a screen door that led out to the steps – NOT a good place – so I swept away the beginnings of a nest there, too, but they persisted and kept rebuilding. I finally put a length of 2 x 4 on the ledge and they abandoned that spot. We battled each other for nearly two weeks when they finally opted for another ledge within view of my dining room window. Since they wouldn’t go away I gave up and they created a deep bowl-shaped nest using mud and grass and twigs.

One of the birds settled in and after a couple weeks, there were four little heads and four big mouths open. Mama and Papa fed the babies nonstop, and they grew bigger and bigger. And they all pooped on the deck.

As they grew, I saw a fifth head in the mix, and these guys were on top of each other, but apparently everyone got fed.

One baby got out of the nest on the ledge; another perched on the edge of the nest and flapped its wings as if to fly away soon, but both went back in. When I went out to water plants, they hunkered down into the nest so far that they were barely visible.

Inside I kept my binoculars and camera handy, hoping to see them fledge. I expected them to leave on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July because of all the activity, but they remained and Mom and Pop continued to feed them. Several mornings later, four of them were gone. The remaining baby got out of the nest and flapped its wings nearly as fast as a hummingbird, but still did not fly off. Mom and Pop were making fly-bys – zooming in and out between the posts and under the nest; the baby had its mouth wide open but the parents weren’t feeding it. This went on for hours, and the chirping was nonstop. (to be continued...)



Barn swallow Photo: M. Valencic

*Wishing you Audubon Moments—Joan Greig*