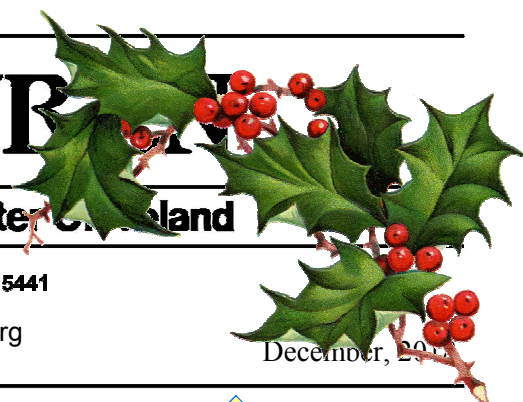




# The HOUSE WR

## Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



P.O. Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139-8037 Ph: 216 556 5441

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

Volume XXXVI, Number 8

December, 2011

### ASGC Annual Appeal kicks off holiday season

To our members:

Without your help we could not continue our mission, which is: *“to promote conservation and the appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and education activities.”*

Our 600 acres of sanctuary property is regularly visited by hikers, exercisers, and educators. All the sanctuaries are in need of trail maintenance, mowing, control of invasive species, tools and a storage facility.

Our education committee is actively instilling respect and love of nature through a variety of innovative programs.

Our speaker’s bureau is quite busy promoting the amazing natural treasures

we have in our own backyards.

All of these activities have expenses and in order to continue we need funding that is more than a simple membership. Once and only once a year we look to our members for the financial help which allows us to accomplish our goals. Our annual appeal involves just this chapter and



A Scout Day participant practices cracking seeds like a cardinal.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**SEE INSIDE THIS EDITION**

**Audubon Moment**

**Page 4**

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

### How are your bird ID skills?

Another challenge: Downy vs. Hairy Woodpeckers



Hairy or downy?

At a glance, downy and hairy woodpeckers are very similar. In both species the breast, belly and flanks are all white, heads are striped black and white, wings are black with white spots, and tails are mostly black with a few white feathers on either side. There is a long, white stripe down the middle of the back. Males of both species have a red mark at the crown of their head which females lack. You will find both at your feeders in Northeast Ohio, usually feeding on suet and sometimes seeds.

Differences start with overall size – downy being about 6.75 inches long and hairy about 9.25 inches long. However, if they are not together overall size can be hard to judge.

*(Continued on page 3)*

### *From the Nest...*

My deepest thanks to all who contribute to our annual appeal. These funds will allow us to fulfill our *raison d’être*. We are hard at work planning for the upcoming year with educational programs putting people back in touch with nature, contacting others through speaking engagements, and improving



our sanctuaries through control of invasive species, enhancing wildlife habitat, maintaining trails, and up-keep on our Novak Education Center. We also are hoping to build a maintenance garage at the Hach-Otis sanctuary to house equipment and tools in order to stage working parties that will make the new section accessible with trails.

### Claire Johnson joins BOT

During an impromptu meeting of the ASGC Board of Trustees in November, Claire Johnson was elected trustee. Claire will make a great addition to our board.

She has been a member of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and Kirtland Bird Club for years. She is an active birder and goes out birding nearly every day. She worked at the Cleveland Clinic for years in medical technology and is a graduate of Miami University in Ohio.

Claire has resided in Rocky River, Great Britain and currently lives in Cleveland Heights. Please welcome Claire to our board!

If you have not already considered an end-of-the-year tax deductible donation, now is the time. I am very excited and appreciative to have wonderful, like-minded supporters like you. I wish you a beautiful and peaceful holiday season.

Seasons Greetings,

—Jim Tomko, President

**Wetland Birds of the Eastern U.S.**

New Backyard Naturalist program now available

Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems that support aquatic AND terrestrial plants and animals. They provide nesting habitat for many species in the summer and resting/feeding habitat for migrating waterfowl and passerines in spring and fall. This presentation showcases iconic wetland species like egrets, herons, ibis and rails along with raptors, waterfowl, warblers and more. There is even a bonus section presenting insects, reptiles, amphibians and mammals that make their homes in wetlands. About 1 hour in length.



This program covers wetlands in Ohio, Illinois, South Carolina and Florida, among others. Photo: M. Valencic

To request a Backyard Naturalist program for your group or event, visit [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org) and click on

the Backyard Naturalist button on the right-hand side of the screen.

Presented by Matt Valencic.

**Annual Appeal**

*(Continued from page 1)*

your gift will benefit your local chapter exclusively.

Please keep in mind that the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is an all-volunteer organization with no paid employees and every penny contributed goes toward achieving our mission. Your entire donation stays here promoting wildlife in our area. Our chapter is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization making your donation tax deductible.

We sincerely thank you for considering us as a recipient of your end-of-year donations. Rest assured that we will make careful and thoughtful use of your generosity.

—ASGC Board of Trustees,  
Jim Tomko, President



A group of home schoolers, aged 3 to 14, studied leaf litter at the Novak Education Center last April.

Please return this form and your tax-deductible donation to:

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland  
P.O. Box 391037  
Solon, OH 44139

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Amt Enc \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

**Critter Corner**

Eastern Bluebird  
Photo: B. Rucki



**Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)**

What a wonderful come-back story for our smallest thrush. By the mid 1900s eastern bluebirds hit an all-time low due to competition from invasive house sparrows and European starlings, and loss of habitat due to changes in farming practices.

Starlings and house sparrows will evict bluebirds from their cavity nests, crack the eggs, decapitate the nestlings, kill the adults, and then build their own nest right on top of the carnage.

Farmers removed hedge-rows and wooden fence posts between fields and started cultivating land to the very edge which left no place for bluebirds to nest.

Bird lovers came to the rescue, putting up bluebird trails with long strings of bluebird houses with entrances too small for starlings. The human landlord weekly evicted the house sparrows. This allowed bluebirds a fighting chance to fledge their young.

Eastern bluebirds are a vibrant ultramarine blue above with a warm tawny orange throat and breast finishing up with a white abdomen. In sunlight, males radiate that dazzling color as if a light was turned on inside of them! The females are just as beautiful in a more demure way.

They feed on insects, spiders, larvae, berries, and occasionally a small amphibian or shrew. Bluebirds will come to feeding stations if suet, peanut butter or meal worms are offered. Their preferred habitat is short- to mid-length grassland, mature orchards, or very open woodlands with abandoned woodpecker holes or bluebird houses to shelter them. There is quite a population of them in the John and Carol Lillich Meadows at the Hach-Otis Sanctuary.

Many eastern bluebirds migrate slightly south for the winter. Some will over-winter with us feasting on crab-apples and other fruit remaining on the trees. The males usually return in late February uttering their soft musical gurgling “chur-wi tru-ly” song on a sunny day.

—Jim Tomko

## In case you missed it!

### “Turkey Trek”

It stopped raining just in time to start our walk and even showed a patch of beautiful blue sky.

We were greeted by the joyous, bubbling sound of eastern bluebirds and they were numerous. At first Marty pointed out one flying overhead and within a few minutes a flock of 18 joined in. They landed in a tree momentarily so we could get an accurate count and then moved on. It was the most bluebirds some of us had ever seen in one place at one time.

The golden-crowned kinglets were also abundant. Marty was hearing them frequently but those older male ears with us had trouble picking up that high-pitched song.

Alas the wild turkeys evaded us yet again. Not a sign of them was to be found.

Last month’s fall leaf walk was very green but on this day the forest was ablaze with color. What a wonderful morning in the woods.

—Jim Tomko

## Did you know?

There is no blue pigment in bird feathers! The blue appearance is due to all the other wavelengths of impinging light being canceled by the internal crystalline structure of the feather, allowing only blue wavelengths to be reflected back to the eye. Next time you are dazzled by blue plumage take a moment to realize it is not really blue!



Photo: M. Valencic

—Jim Tomko

## ID Challenge

(Continued from page 1)



Next look at the bill. According to Cornell University’s Project Feeder Watch, downy bills (left) are “rather short and dainty, about one-third as long as the distance from the base of the bill to the back of the head” while hairy bills (right) are “long and chisel-like, about as long as the distance from the base of the bill to the back of the head”.

If you can get close enough (with binoculars), study the white, outer tail feathers. On hairy woodpeckers those feathers are all white (in the Eastern US)



while downy outer tail feathers (right) have some black barring (aka, Downy Dots!).

Finally, when the hairy woodpecker lets out a “Tweek”, it is very loud and sharp (staccato) while the downy “Tweek” is almost chirp-like – more delicate. As with learning any bird call, it’s helpful to watch the bird while it is singing or calling.

Good Birding! —Matt Valencic

## Upcoming Events

### Field Trips, Etc.

**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 night-time 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.

RSVP: [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

**Jan 20 1:00pm**  
“Volunteer Open House”  
Novak Education Center

Chase away the winter blues with a light lunch and good conversation at the beautiful Novak Education Center! View a slide show of our activities over the last year and hear how our volunteers are helping out. Come early for a hike in the Novak Sanctuary. All volunteers, past, present or future, are welcome. Sandwiches and drinks provided. Bring a dessert or salad to share if you wish.

**Jan 26 9:30am**  
“Winter Hike”  
Molnar Sanctuary

The winter woods divulges secrets that are not noticed in the summer. Without leaves on the trees, the forest floor and topography can be appreciated in finer detail. Snow cover will allow us to see signs of the creatures that use our trails as we do. Often a complete story can be put together from the tracks in the snow. We will gather at the Dog Park parking lot on the east side of Page Road a few hundred yards north of Mennonite Road in Aurora.

**DATED MAIL**

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

Bob Bartolotta	Sarah Mabey
Kathy Cochran	Penny Orr
Alison DeBroux	Mary Salomon
Mark Demyan	John Weber, CPA
Claire Johnson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Carol Lillich	Harvey Webster
John Lillich	Steve Zabor

*Secretary*

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

Like us on Facebook!



Please recycle this newsletter

***Do you have an Audubon Moment to share? Submit your short (200-300 words) nature story to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org). Pictures are appreciated but not required.***

—Editor

***An Audubon Moment***

We were on an all-day bus tour of Denali National Park two summers ago. It is one of the few ways to get to the interior of the park; personal automobiles are not allowed. It is also one of the few ways to appreciate the wildlife of Denali's interior. We saw moose, Dall sheep, caribou including a herd of 50+, arctic ground squirrels and even a wolf crossed in front of the bus at one point.

My favorite, and most amazing, sightings were the grizzly bears. We must have seen close to 15, including three sows with cubs of varying ages. None of them seemed the least concerned with our bus, and we were not allowed off the bus if a bear was in the vicinity.

Shortly after leaving the Eeilson Visitor Center, approximately halfway along the 90-mile trip, we saw a mama and one cub foraging down the hill on the right side of the bus, while a second cub was busy playing with something on the other side. Suddenly he realized he'd become lost and with a shriek tore across the road in front of the bus (we were stopped, watching all of this) and down the hill in search of Mama. She stood up on her hind legs so he'd see her, then gave both cubs a much needed drink to comfort her wayward baby. Everyone on the bus heaved a collective "Awww."

What was there to see after that?

*Wishing you Audubon Moments*

—Alison DeBroux



Photo: J. DeBroux

**You're invited!**  
**Volunteer Open House**

January 20, 2019 — 1 to 3pm — Novak Education Center