



Wood Duck & Friend

Photograph by Matt Valencic

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



Annual Report to Members For the Year 2022



Overview

The information in this report is based mainly on accomplishments, events, and activities during calendar year 2022. Exceptions to that timeframe, e.g., the listing of trustees and officers for the period June, 2023 – May, 2024, are noted. The individuals listed as chairs and members of the committees are also individuals who served from June, 2022 through May, 2023.

Reports from the following committees are contained in the pages that follow:

- Communications Committee
- Documentum Committee
- Education Committee
- Field Trips Committee
- Finance Committee
- Important Birding Area (IBA) Committee
- Sanctuary Committee

Interested in helping?

Reading through the attached reports will give you a sense of the many activities involved with meeting the mission of our organization (see boxed text to the right for our mission statement). We could use your help.

If you are interested in learning more about how to become involved with The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland please contact Jim Tomko, Board President, at 216/556-5441

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) promotes the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities. ASGC, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, has over 1,400 member households throughout the Greater Cleveland area, owns over 500 acres of protected land, and is one of northeast Ohio's oldest continuously operating environmental organizations.



From the President



ASGC has had an active year continuing to evolve and develop. Each quarterly meeting has been productive in planning and achieving our goals. Each committee has contributed in innumerable ways to our accomplishments.

Our secretary, Carol Lillich, has guided us in many instances to our successes. Thanks to her timely and accurate records we have been able to refer back to our meeting minutes to clarify which way and how to progress according to the board of trustee's decisions. She has spent countless hours with her record keeping and attention to proper etiquette and protocol to keep us on task and on track with deadlines, details and processes. In addition, she has singlehandedly planned our 100th anniversary annual meeting. We would be lost and floundering without her.

Our Vice President, Mark Demyan helped organize and prioritize a crew of trail workers to improve and maintain our facilities and sanctuaries. He also serves as our representative to the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters and holds the position of chairman in that collaborative organization. We thank him for his commitments on behalf of ASGC.

Matt Valencic and his Education committee have made us one of the premier nature education organizations in the Cleveland area. From "zoom" programs to school visits and Boy Scout merit badge sessions he has helped us maintain an active outreach arm to the public. Matt and Sarah Mabey enabled us to be invited on a wonderful spring waterfowl viewing field trip to closed Western Reserve Land Conservancy property. Everything the education committee does helps us satisfy our mission statement. Please read the education committee report to be amazed at all the people those programs have touched.

We are turning the tide in our battle against invasive species with Matt Valencic as the chief warrior. He has gathered a loyal platoon to do battle with invasive plant species that have overtaken sections of the sanctuaries. Their passion in restoring fields and forest from being overwhelmed by European Buckthorn, Japanese Barberry, Reed Canary Grass and other invasive plants is quite astounding. Many people would have been overwhelmed by the daunting task, but they have caused a major improvement and steadfastly continue in their work. When you visit the sanctuaries, you will see a fantastic improvement.

Ban Twaddell continues to lead our dedicated trail crew in a calm and considerate way. Those trails have had a remarkable change for the good. If you have not already experienced it, you will see at your next visit to the Aurora Sanctuary that the crew's impact on the trails is just as amazing as they had on the Novak Sanctuary last year. Passage is easier, safer and more fun than ever before. Ban is always thinking and planning ahead for the next evolution of trail improvement.

Our excellent newsletter the "*House Wren*" edited by, Alison Debroux, has kept us informed on all the happenings of ASGC. This newsletter is eagerly awaited by many of our members as it offers a bit of education, information and entertainment. Also, on-line communiques of Constant Contact emails and Face Book provide other forms of contact with our membership. Cathy Green kindly volunteers to monitor our Face Book account. Sharon Swaney, our Webmaster has kept our website easy to navigate and up to date. Alison and her committee have done an excellent job of getting our membership informed.

The Documentum committee headed up by, Jim DeBroux, has been busy organizing, categorizing and uploading our written history to an electronic format so that historical information about ASGC is accessible to all and easily searched for desired items. It is a tedious job and one that requires patience and time. Thank you also to Mary Salomon for all the time she has spent scanning documents to enter in the system. I am pleased that our interested members will be able to study who we are and where we came from and discover some special treasures of our long history.



Our treasurer, Stephanie Demyan, has meticulously maintained accurate records of our finances. Because of her conscientious and thoughtful care, we are financially sound and are able to move forward with our projects and programs. I am amazed at the clarity and ease of explanation that her reports convey. We all are thankful for her doing her job so well which makes our jobs so very much easier.

John and Carol Lillich have carefully and thoughtfully maintained and improved our Hach Otis Sanctuary as their own. Due to their love of this special treasure, they are always willing to put in time and effort above and beyond the required energy to keep Hach Otis such a special place of respite. John has developed an extremely productive Bluebird trail pumping out numerous new Bluebirds annually! We thank them for putting their hearts and love into Hach Otis.

Ken Kressina correctly treats our sanctuaries as a preserve for wildlife. He is always thinking about how to enhance habitat for wildlife as the number one goal. From removing invasives to clearing trails of fallen trees which he arranges into stacks of logs for animal shelter. It is always about the wildlife habitat with his contributions.

As in the past several years, we have financially helped support Cleveland City School's East Clark elementary's bird club the "Bird Nerds". Under Buster Banish's supervision and coaching these children are having their interest in nature awakened with study, field trips and interaction with birds and birding. Without Buster's passion and direction along with outside financial support, these children would not have any opportunity to receive these real world, hands-on experiences with nature.

Jane Ellison has volunteered to head up a pilot program called Nature in Your Backyard. This program will allow landowners to contact ASGC to get on-site advice on how to restore their backyards to wildlife enhancing greenspace. In consultation with Harvey Webster, Matt Valencic and others, she is refining and developing her plan. We thank her for taking on this interesting and needed program.

Mark Magree, our caretaker of the Novak Sanctuary has continued his careful care of the building and grounds at the Novak Sanctuary. He is always ready with suggestions on how to improve all the different aspects of our education center.

Mary Salomon has put in the time and energy to maintain a beautiful native wild flower garden with sequential blooming throughout the season. We thank them for their continued care.

Almost all of our activities aid in the education and preservation of the Chagrin River IBA. The Chagrin River Valley is among the highest quality water sheds in northeast Ohio and we hope that our activities help to maintain it in that condition.

I give my deep appreciation to all our board members and others who offered their expertise, professional opinions, and experienced advice. Without their assistance we would be in a struggle to accomplish our goals. I am proud to serve our organization with these outstanding people.

Thank you to all those who have generously contributed time, talent and funds. With their assistance we have met our mission of education and conservation of our natural resources. Having volunteers such as we have, we are assured of having another successful year.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, President



Communications Committee

Alison DeBroux, Chair

The Communications Committee encompasses five aspects of ASGC's efforts to communicate with members, the public, and the Board of Trustees. These are: the monthly newsletter *The House Wren*; the website www.clevelandaudubon.org; mass email campaigns via Constant Contact; Facebook; and the U.S. Post Office.

The House Wren

Editor: Alison DeBroux

Contributing writers: Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic

Photographer: Matt Valencic

Many thanks to the following for their submissions during the 2022/2023 season: Ban Twaddell, Jim DeBroux, Carol Lillich, Kathryn Craig

This year marks the first time the newsletter was published eight times per year instead of the nine as it has been traditionally. The December and January issues were combined into a single issue. This change accomplished two things: 1) reduced the yearly printing cost; 2) simplified production during the busy holiday season.

The printed version is produced by Minuteman Press, 33528 Aurora Rd., Solon, OH 44139. Phone: (440) 543-5547. Our contact is Sheila Boros, sheilab@minutemanpress.com.

Our mailing list comes partly from National Audubon and partly from a list of local members who are not NAS members. We averaged 1195 mailings during 2022-2023 (excluding May), and the monthly printing and mailing costs averaged \$750 per month. The average cost per recipient was \$.63, a 30% increase over the previous year.

www.clevelandaudubon.org

Webmaster: Sharon Swaney

ASGC Liaison: Alison DeBroux

The website is the “face” of ASGC, often the first introduction someone has to our organization. Audubon members and the general public can find out about upcoming events, issues concerning birds and wildlife, and read a web-version (low resolution) of *The House Wren*. Through the connected email address (info@clevelandaudubon.org) they can request specific information, sign up to receive our email newsletter (see below), volunteer, or register for various programs.



Set-up of new web pages, changes to existing ones, or addition of registration forms and photographs are done by the *webmaster*. The *Liaison* adds new events that cycle automatically through the calendar.

info@clevelandaudubon.org

Email monitor/designer: Alison DeBroux

Our email address is not only our members' and the public's primary contact with the organization, it is also the portal through which we connect with them via Constant Contact (CC), a mass email distributor. Their fee is based on the number of email contacts we have. Once a month or as often as we wish, CC will send out our email "campaign" that may include upcoming events, a link to the web-version newsletter, general information about birds and wildlife, and progress on various ASGC projects like the Trail Crew. These campaigns act as supplements to *The House Wren*. They are designed and edited similarly to the newsletter. Contributions are welcome.

Facebook

Monitor: Cathy Green

ASGC has had a Facebook page since 2011. Content is currently handled by member Cathy Green.

U.S. Post Office

Donations and communiques still require "snail mail" capability. ASGC currently has a post office box at the Solon, OH, Post Office. Our mailing address is: P.O. Box 391037, Solon, OH, 44139. There are two extant keys to this box, currently held by Alison DeBroux and Mark Demyan. Incoming mail is forwarded to the appropriate Board member or distributed at our quarterly meetings.

Submitted By Alison DeBroux, Chair



Documentum Committee

Jim DeBroux, Chair

Members: Mark Demyan, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Mary Salomon

Much has been accomplished by the Documentum Committee in the past twelve months.

As of January, 2022, a computer was been installed in the Novak Education Center for the use of Documentum Committee, and the storing of digitized information. This was a process, but the computer was finally operational in May 2022. This computer will eventually be turned over to Audubon as a general-purpose computer for searching our digitized archives. Audubon committee members have full access to all digitized document, guests have access to look at the digitized documents, but they may create documents and use the scanner.

The Ed Center has received many book donations over the past 12 months. Most of the books remain in boxes and need to be cataloged. We have several hundred books now that should be of value for the education and use of people wanting to use the Ed Center as a resource. John and Carol Lillich made special trips to Amish country to plan and have built a set of book cases for the Ed Center to house and display as many of our books as possible. The new shelves are now in the Ed Center and will be a welcome addition and home for our books.

Mary Salomon spent many hours scanning documents from our archive. Now, all of the legal, sanctuary and historical documents located at the Ed Center. All of the documents have been scanned and saved in PDF form. There are also back-up copies in a multitude of locations. In addition, she also scanned some House Wrens, BOD meeting minutes, annual meeting and their minutes, awards, bird walks. Our next step is the extraction of relevant information into text files for sorting and searching. All of these documents are digitized, and backed up, but still need to be sorted. All of the original documents have been sorted and await filing in file cabinets in the attic of the Ed Center.

Submitted by Jim DeBroux, Chair



Education Committee

Matthew Valencic, Chair

Members: Julie Albrecht, Laura Bell-Peters, Kathryn Craig, Alison DeBroux, Joan Demirjian, Jane Ellison, David Factor, Cathy Green, Sarah Mabey, Barb Philbrick, Betsy Siman, Andrea Story, Jim Tomko.

The Education Committee is committed to the mission of promoting the conservation and appreciation of plants, birds and other wildlife through educational activities for adults and children in the Greater Cleveland community. The backgrounds of our members in science and education are varied and impressive, which contributes to the success of the programs and events offered. It is a privilege to work with such a talented group.

During calendar 2022 the Committee presented 36 programs and events that reached 1,197 adults and children.

25 Backyard Naturalist Speaker's Bureau talks, via Zoom and in-person. 642 people participating. Groups include CWRU Ornithology class, East Clark School bird club, Kirtland Bird Club of NE Ohio, other Audubon Chapters, libraries, Park District Programs, garden clubs, Boy Scout Bird Study Merit Badge group and retirement communities.

Programs prepared and presented by:

- John Lillich
- Sarah Mabey
- Jim Tomko
- Matt Valencic

9 'Third Thursday' programs via Zoom – at least 453 people participating via Zoom (often more than one person viewing the program in their homes)

- 7 presenters including, Bob Bartolotta (ASGC), Linda Gilbert (Geauga Park District), Lisa Rainsong (Cleveland Institute of Music), Dan Best (retired Chief Naturalist, Geauga Park District), Harvey Webster (Emeritus Chief Wildlife Officer, CMNH), Matt Valencic (ASGC) and Kelly Stanek (Birder).



Chagrin River Bird Quest (CRBQ) in September – 102 people participated in the 24-hour event.

- New Birders Workshop & Field Trip August 27 @ Novak Education Center.
- CRBQ Teams are made up of families, friends, park naturalists from Lake and Geauga County, and recreational birders.
- 116 species of bird identified by 17 teams. eBird checklists contribute to the Chagrin River Corridor IBA initiative.
- 50 participants joined the celebration and awards ceremony at West Woods Nature Center.
- Prizes donated by various businesses and anonymous individuals.
- 20 volunteers from ASGC, Blackbrook Audubon, and Geauga Park District made the event possible.

Education Committee Volunteer Development

Sarah Mabey led a Natural History Ramble through Novak Sanctuary on October 16, 2022. Ten (10) committee members and their friends participated, with everyone contributing from their own knowledge and experiences with nature. It was both enjoyable and educational. A second event was planned for February 2023.

DISCUSSION

As this report is being prepared in April, the Committee is off to a strong start in 2023 with many Speaker's Bureau talks both in-person and via Zoom. We look forward to more Volunteer Development events and to Chagrin River Bird Quest in September. We welcome new members to bring their energy and ideas to this Committee.

Submitted By Matt Valencic, Chair



The photographs on these 3 pages are of our Audubon volunteers who have spent over 630 hours wrapping tree trunks with wire mesh to prevent beaver damage in the Molnar Sanctuary, creating small boardwalks to bridge muddy trail areas in the west Novak Sanctuary, adding a new bench to the new observation deck at the Novak Sanctuary, repairing windfall damage to a stairway in the Aurora Sanctuary, and building the landscape stairs in the Aurora Sanctuary.

We were able to add the landscape stairs in the Aurora Sanctuary because of a generous grant from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club.

Photographs were taken and provided by Bancroft Twaddell.



Wrapping trees to prevent beaver damage in Molnar Sanctuary.



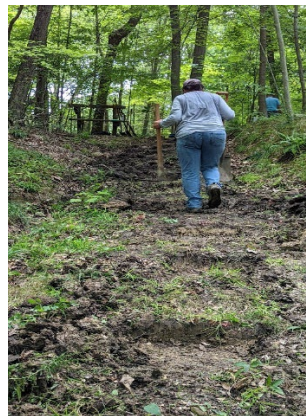
Creating small boardwalks to bridge muddy trail areas in the west Novak Sanctuary



Adding a new bench to the new observation deck at Novak Sanctuary



Repairing windfall damage to a stairway in the Aurora Sanctuary



Prep work for building the new landscape stairs in the Aurora Sanctuary



Building the new landscape stairs in the Aurora Sanctuary



Field Trip Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

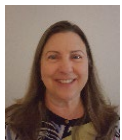
Members: John Lillich, Carol Lillich

We offer a field trip in one of our wildlife Sanctuaries once a month. The field trips usually have a seasonal theme. We have identified winter tracks, done a winter bird survey, watched Woodcock courtship dance, listened to spring frogs, marveled at fall wildflowers and the autumn leaf change, searched for signs of Wild Turkey, and celebrated the winter solstice with a night hike. Attendance was from 1 – 18 and all who attended seemed to enjoy the beauty of nature.

Upon invitation from Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Sarah Mabey and Matt Valencic were able to organize a limited number of spots to a closed WRLC property with an astonishing array of waterfowl during the spring migration.

If anyone has an idea for a field trip or would like to lead one, the request will happily be considered.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair



Finance Committee

Stephanie Demyan, Chair

Members: Jim Tomko, Mark Demyan, John Weber, Steve Zabor

Financial Report Highlights - Year Ended December 31, 2022

Income Statement

Income Items

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland has been supported through donations in form of estate bequests, memorials, and the generous gifts received through the Annual Appeal.

\$28,569 – Annual Appeal, Matching Funds, Memorials, Estate Bequests

\$6,514 – Rental income has been steady during 2022



Expense Items

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland focused on improvements in the Sanctuary's during 2022. Building steps, wildlife management, trails, and utilizing a matching grant focused on invasive species management.

Sanctuary Equipment, Materials & Tools - \$21,018

Education Center Expenses - \$9076

Education Program Expenses \$2109 were low due to utilizing Zoom and all expense was put toward the Annual Bird Quest which was well attended.

Newsletter - \$5987

Operations - \$2620 includes postage, annual appeal & appreciation dinner

Insurance - \$7660 for all properties and equipment

Other Income & Expense

Total Investment Income lost -\$93,323 due to market changes

Overall, for the year 2022, the funds were reduced in 2022 by -\$104,168

Balance Sheet as of 12/31/2022

Cash at year end decreased to \$30,632 primarily due to funds spent on sanctuary maintenance and reduction in income. Investments in 2022 reduced significantly due to market uncertainties.

All of our board is volunteer and you can locate detailed information regarding our Non-profit status and Annual IRS 990 filings online.

Please reach out if you have any questions or would be willing to consider helping on the finance committee.

For further information on the financials, please contact the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland at: 216-556-5441.

Submitted by Stephanie Demyan, Chair



Important Birding Area

Jim Tomko, Acting Chair

Members: Jane Ellison, Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Matt Valenic

Almost all our activities support our effort to educate, protect and promote our assigned IBA (The Chagrin River IBA) which we share with Blackbrook Audubon Chapter. We conduct field trips, have speaking engagements, preserve property, and have birding events that inspire others to act in a way to conserve this wonderful river corridor.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair



Sanctuary Committee

Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Mark Demyan, Ken Kressina, Carol Lillich, John Lillich, Rob Swaney, Matt Valenic

All 4 of our wonderful wildlife sanctuaries are doing well and receiving care and nurturing. The goal is to continually improve them so that native plants thrive and wildlife flourishes.

Ban Twaddell and his crew, with input from Mark Demyan have transformed a dangerous slippery slope in the Aurora Sanctuary into a safe, picturesque, winding, terrace stairway. This was funded by a grant from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club and constructed by volunteers from our chapter and Jim Tolin's students from Hiram College. The logistics of the project were daunting because material had to be hauled to the farthest extreme of our property. Fortunately, we were granted permission to drive vehicles down First Energy's right of way to deliver lumber, stone, tools and workers to make the trek somewhat more manageable. It is a professionally done job extraordinaire!

Matt Valenic and his crew have been hard at work in the Novak Sanctuary suppressing invasive species. The enormous job of cutting, daubing, and spraying are overwhelming for such a small crew. Some of this work was funded by a grant from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club. Very early this spring we rented a Skid Steer with a forest grinder attachment to mow through the four fields that were overrun with a dense, almost monoculture of invasive European Buckthorn. Kenny Kresina spent 90 hours cramped into its tiny cab



through rain, wind, snow, and mud steadfastly pushing through. The fields are now at a state where we will plan regular monitoring and maintenance to attack the Buckthorn before it has a chance to take over again. We are excited to see what native plants and animals emerge this spring and summer now that they do not have to compete with the Buckthorn.

Mark Magree has kept the Novak education center in fine condition. He is always ready to help with maintenance, cleaning, and mowing. Mark helps greatly in trail maintenance. Thanks to Mary Salomon's service in maintaining the native plant wild flower gardens on the grounds, the education center looks fantastic.

Kenny Kresina continues to maintain the Molnar Sanctuary and clear trails of deadfalls in all the Aurora Sanctuaries while doing regular field mowing at the Novak Sanctuary.

Under the care of John and Carol Lillich the Hach-Otis sanctuary, our "crown jewel", remains a wonderful place of respite for humans and wildlife alike. Part of the "new section" at this time is being reserved for wildlife undisturbed by paths and people. The other part has become an extremely successful and productive Bluebird "factory" producing many fledging Bluebirds each year.

The First Energy Powerline right of way along the northern border of the Aurora Sanctuary has been discovered by ATV and motorcycle riders who occasionally trespass on ASGC property. Signs are posted and more will be erected to discourage these vehicles from damaging our trails and disturbing the wildlife. These incursions have become less frequent recently. The City of Aurora has planned a bike and hike trail along the First Energy Powerline right of way. Hopefully this city path will allow easier patrolling and monitoring in the far area of the Aurora Sanctuary. Work on the hike and bike trail will begin in 2024.

Our sanctuaries are constantly being enriched so that native plants and wildlife will have a safe and natural place to grow and develop. We are always seeking ways to improve the habitat. The philosophy is preserving wildlife first but also maintain passable trails so that the public will have a place of respite to reconnect and recover from the stresses of everyday life. Our sanctuaries do that for me and I hope they do this for all who visit them.

Submitted By Jim Tomko, Chair



2023-2024 Officers



President - Jim Tomko*: *Chair, Sanctuary and Field Trips Committees, Member of IBA and Newsletter Committees; Spring Bird Walk Leader. BA Zoology, Miami University, MS Environmental Biology, Ohio State University; OD Optometric Doctorate, Ohio State University.*

Vice President* – Position Open



Secretary - Carol Lillich*: *Chair, Membership, Member of the Documentum, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees; Schedule Gates Mills Spring Bird Walks. Assistant to the Chairman, President and CEO of The Lubrizol Corporation (Retired in 2012 after 40 years).*



Treasurer - Stephanie Demyan*: *Chair, Finance Committee, Member Newsletter Committee. BS Chemical Engineer, Tri State University, and works in Solon, Ohio as a chemical engineer. I am past Treasurer CLE ASQ, Past President CLE ASQ, International 6 Sigma Lean Manufacturing Judge, and Quality Manager VWR. I enjoy sailing, canoeing, backpacking, camping, hiking, and birding. I am a native of Ohio and recently returned to the area after living in Florida for the past 5 years. I enjoy the diversity of the birds in Northern Ohio and the abundant knowledge in birding that is present in the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. I am married to Mark Demyan, who was Vice President of ASGC, and we have four adult children and one grandson.*

*Member of Executive Committee

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland



Alison DeBroux: *Chair, Communications Committee and Member of Education Committee.* I earned a BA in Communications from Colorado State University. After 25 years working in computer graphics for TV and film, I earned an MS in Secondary Education from the University of Akron.



Jim DeBroux: *Chair, Documentum Committee; Member Newsletter Committee.* I have degrees in Math and Chemistry and retired from BASF in 2016 after 37 years of being a chemist, the last 10 years as a lab manager.



Jane Ellison: *Member, Education, IBA, and Newsletter Committees.* BS in Environmental Education from Cornell University School of Agriculture. I am a life-long outdoors person and a gardener.



John Lillich: *Member Documentum, Membership, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees, and Gates Mills Spring Bird Walk Leader.* Lubrizol Systems Analyst (retired after 38 years).



Sarah Mabey: *Member IBA, Education, Membership and Newsletter Committees.* BA Bryn Mawr College, MS University of Maryland, and PhD University of Southern Mississippi; Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Environmental Studies Program at Hiram College.



2023-2024 Trustees



Mary Salomon: *Member Documentum, Important Birding Area, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* PhD Chemistry, University of Wisconsin; MBA, CWRU; Corporate Technology Portfolio Manager, The Lubrizol Corporation (Retired).



Matt Valencic*: *Chair, Education Committee; Member Important Birding Area, Membership, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* AA, Cuyahoga Community College; BS Forest Biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY. Retired after a 40-year career in technical and medical sales.



Harvey Webster: *Member Education and Newsletter Committees.* BS Cornell University; former Director of Wildlife Resources, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

*Member of Executive Committee

Trustee terms are typically 3 years and they are elected on a rotating basis.