



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

Dec, 2022 — Jan, 2023

Annual Appeal underway

Due to your generosity, we have accomplished many conservation and educational projects this year.

The perpetual battle against invasive species continues because it allows the native plants and animals to thrive. Our trail crew has been busy improving safety and ease of passage on the trails. Our Education Committee has been very active with our 3rd Thursday Zoom presentations, the annual Bird Quest contest, interpretive field trips and responding to questions and concerns about wildlife in our area.

We are lucky to have the Novak Education Center for indoor gatherings and presentations. This 1881 structure needs a new roof and other maintenance to keep it in good repair so that it will

last another century. The shed where we house our field maintenance equipment is also in need of a new roof and repairs. We plan on continuing and expanding, where possible, all the current educational programs, invasive species control, and trail work.

All this can only be done with your kind financial support. Membership dues are not adequate to continue our mission of conservation and nature education. Just once a year we hold an appeal for funds that will remain *here* and benefit the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland chapter exclusively.

We extend a heartfelt thank you for remembering us in your end-of-the-year donation plans.

—Jim Tomko

FYI

Due to holiday schedules at the printer and post office, and our volunteers' preference to not spend the holidays writing or editing a newsletter, please note that the December and January issues of *The House Wren* are combined. It is not physically larger (sorry) but includes an extended events page.

—Editor

Aurora stairway project: Phase 2 completed

Despite a lack of strong-backed students from Hiram College for the second phase of the project – grading and filling each of the landscape stairs with stone – the ASGC crew managed to move more than four tons of stone through the woods and down the stairs to fill each of the 42 steps in one day!



Using five -gallon buckets, one team filled pails and loaded them

onto the utility vehicle; one team unloaded the UTV and carried them

(Continued on page 3)

Winter gulling



Glaucous gull
Photo: M. Valencic

Gulls dominate Lake Erie from November through March. Tens of thousands are both an awe-inspiring sight and a frustration as we search for a little

gull or black-legged kittiwake among the Bonaparte's, an immature glaucous or Iceland among the hordes of ring-billed and herring; or a lesser black-backed gull (LBBG) among the great black-backed gulls (GBBG).

Immature glaucous are a bit larger than a herring gull (24") with a sharply bicolored bill (pink with black tip), while immature Iceland are a bit smaller than a herring with a darker bill, but some dark pink at the base. Adults can be trickier. The wing tips of adult glaucous are always white while some adult

(Continued on page 2)

From the Nest...



As this year ends and the new year is approaching, we find ourselves reflecting on the past, giving thanks for blessings, sharing love with friends and family, and making resolutions for the time ahead.

I am thankful for having such a dedicated and passionate board of trustees, officers, and volunteers to keep our

chapter active and continuously moving to accomplish our mission of nature education and preservation. We have achieved many goals this year and it would not have been possible without these people.

Also, I am grateful for all of you. I appreciate your ideas and sharing your inspirations. In a few days, you will be receiving our annual appeal letter. I want

to thank you for remembering us in your end-of-the-year donations. Those donations above and beyond a simple membership fee are the funds that allow our chapter to continue to persevere.

I wish you happy and memorable holidays. See you on the trails,

—Jim Tomko, President

Gulls

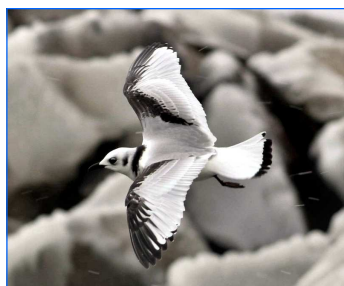
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Iceland can have black markings on the primaries.

The immatures of both little gull and black-legged kittiwake have a pronounced “M” pattern across the top of the wing. The kittiwake also has a dark neck collar but NOT the little gull.

L B B G s are smaller than GBBGs

(22” vs 29”) and have yellow legs compared to pink on GBBG. But they are often on the water and not standing on the ice, so look for a lighter mantle



Immature black-legged kittiwake



Lesser black-backed gull

(back and wings), smaller bill, and streaking on the head and neck. Count yourself lucky if they are standing close to one another!

If you are new to gulls, good hotspots near Cleveland are (from west to east): Lorain Harbor, Miller Road Park Pier (Avon Lake Powerplant), Edgewater Park, Wendy Park Whiskey Island, Scranton Flats (Cuyahoga River, best when the lake is covered with ice), Sims Park Pier, Fairport Harbor and Lake Erie Bluffs. Other hotspots can be found between these locations by looking at eBird Hotspots.

You will also find plenty of ducks at all these locations so review the diving ducks before leaving the car!

—Text & photos by Matt Valencic

Critter Corner

Photos: M. Valencic



Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*)

Please take a closer look at that “goldfinch”! If it is exceedingly streaky while showing some yellow in the spread wings and tail, and is a bit smaller than the American goldfinch perched right next to it, you likely have pine siskins joining your feeder flock.

You may notice the call, consisting of a loud, rapidly ascending “ZZZZZZZZZZrree,” even before you realize their presence. Every two or three years these northern finches undergo a migration irruption where they show up in much greater numbers than expected.

They live a nomadic life-style in winter moving from food source to food source. A horde of siskins can quickly empty your feeder. They seem especially attracted to small seeds like millet, thistle, and nyger.

Usually, they nest in the boreal forests far to our north but in the breeding season following an irruption year some will stay and nest in our area. The tree of choice is a conifer where they select a horizontal branch midway up with another branch above concealing the intricately woven nest of grass, bark-strips, twigs and moss. The cup of the nest is well insulated with fur, feathers and thistledown so that incubation may occur even in the harsh weather of a northern spring.

There they lay three to five greenish-blue eggs heavily spotted at the large end with brown and purple splotches. The males will feed the females on the nest as she continuously incubates so that she does not have to leave the eggs exposed and unguarded.

Pine siskins are most often seen in our area in November, December and January. I hope you get a chance to see this interesting species this year.

—Jim Tomko



Where'd that letter come from?

Energized with pizza, ASGC's Board of Trustees stuffed envelopes November 22. From left: John and Carol Lillich, Harvey Webster, Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic, Mark Demyan and Mary Salomon. Not pictured: Sarah Mabey and Jim DeBroux. If you do not receive our Annual Appeal letter, the form below is included for your convenience.

Did you know?

Pine siskins are among my mighty mites!

In their northern realm these tiny birds can withstand temperatures as low as 70 degrees below zero by accelerating their metabolic rate five times normal. This is fueled by packing on the fat much more efficiently than their common redpoll and American goldfinch cousins can do, allowing survival of those long cold winter nights.

—Jim Tomko

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.

In case you missed it

“Wild Turkey Trek” November 5th

We had a fantastic, leaf crunching, forest excursion on this warm autumn day. Our quarry was wild turkey but as usual, those skittish, wily birds kept themselves well hidden. We did not even find a feather or a footprint.

We did enjoy an easy hike where the birds that were flitting and calling were quite visible as most of the leaf drop had already occurred. We saw a number of species of interesting textured and colored fungi. Some ferns were still showing green along with some soft moss that would have been perfect for a fairy garden.

We debated on the species of a leafless tree that a pileated woodpecker had been working on with no final decision. But then Keith Kohnke pulled up an app on his mobile phone and asked it what species the tree was, using a photo of its trunk bark. It identified it as a basswood after which I found some basswood leaves on the ground under the tree.

There are amazing tools available for help in identifying and finding our way in the field and forest. We had an excellent time sharing and learning from each other.

—Jim Tomko



The search for turkeys...

Photo: J. Tomko

Stairway project

(Continued from page 1)

down the steps; and one team prepared and graded the stone fill. All were quite worn out by the day's end, but everyone felt a great sense of accomplishment and pride in the work so far.

We'll return to the stairs next summer once things have settled and finish the stone fill with a second, finer layer of crushed limestone to provide a more stable finish layer. A bonus for the day was the repair of the bench at the top of the hill to provide a spot for walkers to rest and appreciate the serenity of the woods.

We'll be watching the trails and doing spot maintenance this winter - clearing deadfall and repairing damage from the weather. If you're interested in joining the crew contact Ban Twaddell at trailcrew@clevelandaudubon.org.

—Ban Twaddell

Upcoming Events

Third Thursday

Dec 17 7:00pm

“Of Mast and Men”

Via Zoom®

The life, times and demise of the passenger pigeon, presented by Harvey Webster.

Jan 19 7:00pm

“eBird 101”

Via Zoom®

Getting started in the New Year: We answer the questions “What’s in it for me?” and “What’s in it for bird conservation?” Presented by Matt Valencic.

Register for the above programs at
www.clevelandaudubon.org/Events

Feb 5 2:00 to 3:30pm

“What a Plant Knows”

Novak Education Center

Short, cold days don't have to interfere with your study of natural history! The ASGC Education Committee invites you to join us in reading *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses* (2017) by Daniel Chamovitz this winter. We'll gather over coffee and tea in the warmth of the Novak Education Center to discuss the natural history of plants as revealed in this exciting little book.

RSVP for this event :

info@clevelandaudubon.org

Field Trips

Dec 16 7:30pm

“Winter Solstice Hike”

Novak Sanctuary

Help us celebrate the longest night of the year a few days early so as not to conflict with holiday celebrations. If we are lucky enough to have clear skies, the stars will light our way. 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 non-visual senses. 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.

Jan 14 9:30pm

“Winter Track Walk”

Novak Sanctuary

Last fall a bobcat was seen in the area! I wonder if it uses our Novak Sanctuary for food or shelter. Winter is a great time to discover what other creatures use our trails as we search for tracks and other signs of their presence. This is a two-mile walk so dress for the weather with proper footwear. We will hope for a fresh light snowfall to show the details of the tracks registering in the snow. Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road almost a mile north of State Route 82 on the Mantua/Aurora border.

eBird 101...why?

Some programs are worth repeating and a ‘live’ walk through eBird is one of them (see Events, left).

Using Zoom, we will go ‘live’ on eBird and show you how to start your own account, create and submit checklists, and how to use several of the more popular features like EXPLORE Hotspots, Regions and Bar Charts. Sit back and enjoy the presentation because we already took notes for you! A free, step-by-step handout is available on our website under Docs/Info.

“What’s in it for me?” you may ask. To start with it keeps your life list of every sighting you submit, no matter where or when you submit it. Using eBird Mobile (the FREE app for smart phones) you can submit checklists anywhere in the world. If you are traveling to a new location, you can explore the best hotspots and see the latest checklists from fellow birders. You can submit pictures or audio files with your checklists, or review pictures and audio from other eBirders. And by clicking SCIENCE on the website, you can see how your data are being used for bird conservation.

Citizen Science has become a powerful research tool in the 21st century. Start using eBird now and contribute to bird conservation for the future.

—Matt Valencic

DATED MAIL

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

Like us on Facebook! 



Please recycle this newsletter

A Wry Smile

I've got to stop saying, "How stupid can you be?"



Too many people are taking it as a challenge.

An Audubon Moment

Bird emergency!

I was plenty busy servicing the mowers and rearranging the barn to accept the tractor with its plow attachment for the winter. Snow was coming tonight, and it could be several inches.

But then came the text message – there was a juvenile dark phase snow goose at LaDue Reservoir, and I still needed snow goose for my 2022 Geauga County eBird list. This is what my wife calls A BIRD EMERGENCY! Drop everything and run before the bird leaves.

So, I head to the house for my camera, bins, and scope, then slide out of my slippers and back into my barn shoes. Somehow in the process of putting on shoe #2, I put my foot back into slipper #1. No thought about what I was doing, just thinking about county bird #217 for the year, a new record.

Thirty minutes later I had the bird, thanked my friends for texting me, and it was then that I noticed a funny feeling on my feet. I looked down to see I was wearing one slipper and one shoe! It begs the questions, "Am I taking this birding thing too seriously?" or, "Do I need therapy?" I decided "NO" to both questions and just asked Dave [English] to take a picture. This was too comical not to share with others!

In a BIRD EMERGENCY you don't stop to think, you just rely on your training to get to the bird!! I think Mr. Audubon would have been proud of me.

—Matt Valencic

