



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

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Volunteer development

“So much to know ... so little time!” As volunteers with Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC), each of us brings certain knowledge and skills about nature which we can share with



Praying mantis egg case.

Photo: M. Valencic

others. The backgrounds of our many volunteers are truly amazing, yet each of us wants to know more so we can better understand ‘the bigger picture’ about how things come together in nature and to share more effectively that information with others. To that end, the Education Committee is embarking on a series of hikes and workshops during which we can gain new knowledge from experts and from each other.

Our first hike, “An Autumn Natural History Ramble”, was led by Dr. Sarah Mabey in the Novak Sanctuary on October 16th. Sarah is an Education Committee member and Assistant Professor and

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Homegrown national park

All life on earth is inextricably tied together! One of the main causes for the reduction in numbers and diversity of



Native wildflowers in a suburban yard.

Photo: A. DeBroux

birds, pollinators, and other wildlife is loss of their native habitat. This happens through alteration, fragmentation, or outright destruction – think of it as untying the knots that tie things to-

gether. Some of the causes are way too big for most of us to address, but there is something that ALL OF US can do. We can start building or increasing habitat in our own yards by adding native trees, shrubs and perennials to the landscape, removing non-native invasive plants, making water available for birds and pollinators, and reducing or eliminating lawn.

Homegrown National Park (www.homegrownnationalpark.org) is a grassroots effort that tells WHY these actions are important and provides resources for HOW to make it happen. It can be as simple as making a container

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ASGC Trustee carves winning pieces in two art shows

The City of Mentor’s Wildwood Cultural Center hosted the “Unveiled” Art Show at the Mentor Municipal Center. The artwork was on display from September 16 to October 7, 2022, and consisted of various medias.

John Lillich, current trustee and former president of ASGC, entered his latest hand-carved piece of a half-scale great horned owl that is sitting on a branch of a burned tree



after a forest fire, titled “Can You See What I See.” His inspiration for this piece was the forest fires out west and the loss of habitat for all the wildlife.

“Can you see what I see?” Great horned owl carved by John Lillich.

Photo: C. Lillich

The wood he used was a combination of black walnut and cherry. The combination of these two woods, along with the burning of the tree trunk and branch, made for a very striking piece. This is a juried art show and John was awarded “Best of Show” for his piece. As the Best of Show winner, John receives an exclusive solo exhibition of his work at the Mentor Municipal Center,

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From the Nest...

Are your bird feeders getting busy? It is time to make sure they are cleaned and filled so that you may enjoy some of our feathered friends up close and personal.

Red-breasted nuthatches have arrived! In the forests, kinglets, white-throated sparrows and yellow-rumped warblers seem to be every-



where. Among my favorites are the waterfowl which should soon be passing through our area on their southward migration.

This is an excellent time to be out birding because the mosquitoes, deer flies and ticks are going into dormancy and the poison ivy is dying back. The leaves have fallen and you can actually see the bird you heard

instead of it being obscured by all the green foliage of summer.

Also, you can marvel at the trail improvements that have been made by our diligent, hard-working trail crew. Please extend some gratitude to them if you see them out there.

See you on the trails,

—Jim Tomko, President

Volunteers

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Co-Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Hiram College.

For two hours we explored the fields and forest east of Townline Road, making observations, asking questions, sharing knowledge, and learning from each other. At times Sarah would answer our questions directly, but other times she would turn the tables and ask us questions like “what do you notice about the trees on either side of this trail?”, or “what is different about the land on either side of this trail?”, causing us to think more deeply.

When asked what new information people learned during the hike, here are some of the replies: the symmetry of red

osier dogwood; the art of asking questions; learning what plants benefit wildlife; bring a notebook on hikes; remember to look up and look down; tree canopies support each other; woodpecker tongues are amazing; the incredible diversity of plants in the sanctuary; learned to identify red osier dogwood, spicebush, tulip tree, black tupelo, maples, shagbark hickory, hickory nuts, wild cherry bark, American beech, oaks, buckthorn, praying mantis egg case, goldenrod gall, wild grape, poison ivy vine, European hornets.

If you would like to be notified about the next Volunteer Development activity, please send your contact information to info@clevelandaudubon.org and it will be forwarded to me.

—Matt Valencic

Artwork

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which will start the first of February and go through mid-March, 2023.

The Burton Library hosts the Burton Art Show every year and the artwork was on display from October 3 to October 9, 2022. John entered a piece in this show as well and won second place for his carving of two full-size Atlantic puffins. The title of the piece is “She Says Yes.” The Burton Art Show is also a juried show. The wood that he used for



Atlantic puffins carved by John Lillich.
Photo: C. Lillich

this carving was black walnut for the puffins and splatted ash for the rocks they're standing on. A red fungus growing in the dead ash tree made for very colorful and dramatic “rocks.” His inspiration for this piece was my love of Atlantic puffins. When I asked him to carve one for me I got two instead of one. The male is proposing to the female with a flower in his mouth and “She Says Yes”!

John is a very talented artist and I am so very proud of him and his work.

—Carol Lillich

Tundras heading southeast

On November 18, 2021, I received a text message: “there are a couple thousand tundra swans on LaDue Reservoir (Geauga County) near the dam.” My long-suffering wife refers to this as ‘a bird emergency!’ I made sure camera, scope and bins were in the car as I dashed off to LaDue. The accompanying picture shows just part of the flock. They were spread out across the face of the dam, a distance of about 3,000 feet. Needless to say, birders from all over came quickly, knowing that once they are rested, these birds leave to continue their journey to the Chesapeake Bay for the winter.

On November 6, 2017, I spent two hours at the LaDue Boathouse counting tundra flyovers and those landing on the lake to rest. My count finished at 954



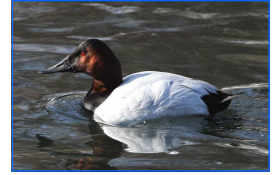
birds! There were more birds throughout the day as I reviewed other birder eBird checklists.

Tundra swans are special even in small numbers, but to witness large numbers during migration is very special. Anytime you are outdoors in November ‘keep an ear open’ for the sound of tundras flying high toward the southeast. They fly in formations like Canada geese, but sound different and appear ivory colored at a distance. And visit

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Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



Canvasback (*Aythya valisneria*)

This diving duck is aptly named as its back and body are the color of the white canvas sails on old sailing ships. It is said that it has a regal profile holding high its angular head with a long sloping forehead and a long dark bill that matches the slope of the forehead.

Drakes have a rich chestnut-brown head and neck with vibrant red eyes. The breast and tail are dark black. The color and profile are very distinctive allowing easy identification from a great distance even in less-than-optimal viewing conditions.

These ducks breed and raise young on small lakes and deep-water marshes in the northern prairie pothole region of the United States extending up into western Canada and Alaska. Canvasback rarely leave the water and are very awkward on dry land. They prefer to swim, dive or fly.

The female weaves a large, bulky nest of reeds, rushes, sedges, and cattails next to or floating on the water. She often conceals the nest with a canopy to block viewing from above. She will lay up to a dozen drab-green eggs which are incubated for 24 to 29 days.

Being omnivores, they eat the rhizomes, roots and tubers of many aquatic plants adding aquatic insects, mussels, and crustaceans during nesting season.

Low numbers of this species in the 1980s put them on the “special concerns” list. But numbers have increased and they are now of low concern.

They should be arriving in our area at the end of this month increasing into December. I hope you get a chance to see these beauties this year.

—Jim Tomko

ASGC's

100th Birthday & Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, June 3, 2023
Where: Cleveland Museum of Natural History
Keynote: Al Batt

In case you missed it

Fall Leaf Colors October 22

We could not have planned a better weather day! The air was clear, the sun was shining, temperatures were in the high 60s and the trail was dry. Over 30 people must have had the same idea that afternoon and joined us on a fabulous natural history walk led by our own incomparable John Lillich.

John explained about the geology, watershed, forest succession, and the



Photo: C. Lillich

changes in wildlife over time. The view of the Chagrin River gorge and the panoramic view to the east was jaw dropping!

Unfortunately, I selected a weekend that was just past peak color therefore it was a dazzling array of yellows and yellow-oranges. The cool, rainy, windy, weather earlier in the week had knocked down many of the red and maroon leaves. But even at that stage the beauty was astonishing!

We thank John and Carol Lillich for hosting and leading this wonderful woods walk.

—Jim Tomko

Trail Crew finishes Phase I of Aurora stairway

On Friday, October 21st, ASGC trail crew volunteers finished Phase One of the stairway project at the Aurora Sanctuary. Forty-two landscape steps have been installed in place of the old pallet stairway. To date, twelve volunteers have contributed over 295 hours of work in 18 outings to the project site! Though much use was made of our new utility vehicle, a lot of the work was simply hard labor – managing heavy 6x6 treated timbers, digging in hard clay soil, driving long screws and pounding rebar deep into the ground. Of special note has been the contribution of Jim Tolan and his students from Hiram College who have brought the energy and enthusiasm of youth to the project. Ahead lies backfilling the steps with earth and stone to provide a secure and drainable platform for each landing. Lastly, the terrain surrounding the stairway will be modified slightly to facilitate drainage away from the stairway to minimize the likelihood of erosion.

Not all our projects are as physically demanding, however. Simply helping us monitor and map our sanctuary trails is just as important. If you're interested in joining our efforts to maintain and improve the trails and beauty of our sanctuaries, contact the trail crew organizer at trailcrew@clevelandaudubon.org.

—Ban Twaddell



Jim Tolan, Neil Robertson, Aiden Stephens and Collin Himes from Hiram College position timbers.

Photo: B. Twaddell

Homegrown park

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garden of keystone native plants for your patio, or as grand as, well, you decide how much you can handle. The website gets you started, points you toward helpful resources and rewards you with the knowledge that you are contributing to the solution to the biodiversity problems in the world.

You can also help by spreading the word of this important work. Get others excited and help build the momentum toward rebuilding native habitat for the sake of all life on earth!

—Matt Valencic

Swans

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your favorite waterfowl reservoirs frequently as they have the habit of just showing up! Finally, when you see any size group, share it with the birding community using eBird, social media or the Ohio Birds Listserv. Everyone wants to see them but not everyone has the time to bird-at-will like us retired folks.

—Matt Valencic

Upcoming Events

Third Thursday

Nov 17 7:00pm

"Migrating Waterfowl & Winter Birds"

Via Zoom®

November is all about waterfowl in NE Ohio. Ducks, geese, swans, grebes, loons and gulls will be on Lake Erie throughout the winter, and on many inland lakes until they freeze. Learn who the migratory waterfowl are, how to identify them, and some interesting facts about each. Registration is required for this free program. Presented by Matt Valencic.

Register for this program at
www.clevelandaudubon.org/Events

Nov 5 9:30am

"Turkey Trek"

Novak Sanctuary

Will we be successful in our 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 on the less traveled Mantua side of the sanctuary. 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.

Field Trips

Dec 16 7:30pm

"Winter Solstice"

Novak Sanctuary

Help us celebrate the longest night of the year a few days early. 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 also heightens the acuity of our non-visual senses. 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)
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Please recycle this newsletter

An Audubon Moment **A new species?**

When I began my interest in waterfowl, I often visited the duck observation blind at Walden Pond in Blendon Woods Metropark, Columbus, Ohio. It was a very nice wooden shelter complete with benches and observation openings at heights so that all ages and sizes could comfortably observe the ducks, geese, and grebes that stopped by there during migration. In addition, they had laminated poster sized photographs of all the expected species including some unexpected wanderers. It was a popular birding spot for Columbus birders of all levels of experience.

One late autumn day I found about a dozen other observers already in place. Some one said something about a “fresh-water bubbler” and that triggered curiosity and excitement in one of the women on the bench. She exclaimed that she had never seen or heard of a freshwater bubbler before and could someone show her where it was.

At first no one had the heart to tell her. Then one kind person explained that in order to keep the pond ice-free all winter there was an underwater device that emitted bubbles to stir the water and prevent freeze up. That device was known as the fresh-water bubbler!

I hope she was not too embarrassed. There should be no shame in learning something new to you that others around you find very familiar. Never be shy about asking for help!

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

Gadwall can be sneaky thieves. Gadwalls are dabbling ducks (primarily surface and shallow water feeders) that have a taste for submerged aquatic plant rhizomes and tubers especially *Vallisneria americana* (American Water Celery) that grows well below the surface. Dabbling ducks have trouble diving deep. Gadwalls will watch canvasbacks (which are diving ducks) dive for the bottom to pluck the plants and as the canvasbacks surface with a bill-full of the succulent salad, the gadwall will snatch it away!

—Jim Tomko

Gadwall
 Photo: M. Valencic

