



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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Nature in my Backyard, the new collaboration between the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland and the Shaker Lakes Garden Club, got off to a great start Sunday, July 16, with a Garden Walk showcasing four different examples of native plant gardens. These gardens, which were viewed by over 100 gardeners and future gardeners, demonstrate their owners' commitment to biodiversity and to habitats that nurture birds and other wildlife.

Our new program provides a blueprint to help you get started or to continue in the same direction. Visit www.clevelandaudubon.org and click on the Nature in My Backyard logo on the

right-hand side for steps anyone with a yard, a patio or a balcony can take. When you complete the steps, your hard work will be rewarded with a beautiful sign to recognize your accomplishment and to encourage your neighbors to join you in our effort.

If you're not sure where to start or what to do, our program is unique in offering Volunteer Gardeners who will come to your yard, patio or balcony to help you create your vision for a diverse, sustainable and beautiful garden.

Did you miss the Garden Walk in July? You will have another chance **October 7!** The Master Gardeners of Cuyahoga County have invited Audubon members to join them for their 2023 Fall Seminar, "Flowers, Trees, Backyards and Bees."

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Conservation easements: What are they?

For sometime now, I have been fielding questions about conservation easements. I have come to realize that almost every person asking has a great many misunderstandings about conservation easements.

Conservation easements are a great tool for protecting your land. They go with your property in perpetuity, and if needed, are legally defensible. Each conservation easement is negotiated and tailored to the landowner's needs. The following is a partial re-print, with

Western Reserve Land Conservancy's (WRLC) permission, of an article that appeared in their publication "LANDLINE" 2023. This article assumes that WRLC is the holder of your conservation easement. There are other entities that are capable of holding conservation easements.

General Reserved Rights are typically not property specific.

Although you have granted a CE, you still own and manage your land, including selling or leasing the property

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Update on invasives

As reported in the April newsletter, Kenny Kresina spent two weeks in March using a forestry grinder to cut down dense growths of buckthorn in the Novak Sanctuary. We knew it would resprout aggressively, so the plan was to treat it with herbicide starting in September. However, by early July the regrowth was five feet tall in some places, especially where it was most dense.

Targeted spraying of herbicide started July 19th and will continue through the fall until everything is treated. Results so far are very encouraging. This is the 'industry standard' way for treating dense stands of this species. If you see large patches of brown shrubs, interpret that as progress!

The Trail Crew will be cutting and stacking buckthorn this fall in the Aurora Sanctuary. We could use your help. If you would like to participate, please send an email to trail-crew@clevelandaudubon.org. All you need is work gloves and loppers if you have them. We will be cutting with power tools to minimize back-breaking cutting by hand.

—Matt Valencic

Buckthorn 1 week after treatment. Photo: M. Valencic



From the Nest...



For many our colorful autumn is a favorite time of year. With mild weather and migration underway it is difficult to stay cooped up indoors.

Taking advantage of fall migration, Matt Valencic and his education committee crew held another fantastic, annual Chagrin River Bird Quest. This friendly competition continues to grow

each year. If you missed it, plan to join us next September.

Most of us have filled our bird feeders, awaiting our usual customers and hoping that an unusual vagrant makes a showing. Should we take down our hummingbird feeders yet?

By this time of year, wanderers from the west may show up. Autumn often

adds some unexpected species to your list. It is a great time to join a field trip to take in this beautiful season.

I hope to see you on the trails.

—Jim Tomko
President, ASGC

2023 Annual Meeting awards and recognition

The Seeley Award is presented to a chapter member that has gone above and beyond the expectations to enhance our chapter. This award for 2023 was presented to Audubon member, Ban Twaddell. Ban has been very generous in donating his time and talent. He coordinates all of our volunteers, has done many projects, but the one project that stands out the most is the astounding construction of a terraced stairway in the Aurora Sanctuary. We are so lucky to have Ban as a member and as one of our outstanding volunteers.



Ban Twaddell

Photo: C. Lillich

The Award of Merit is given to a person or organization outside of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland chapter that has done something special

for birds, conservation and/or the environment.

This award for 2023 was presented to Richard "Buster" Banish. Buster received this award for the many lives he touches and especially for what he has done to enrich the lives of his "Bird-Nerds." Buster retired from teaching in June, 2023, but will remain involved with his "Bird-Nerds."

Harvey Webster gave recognition to our president, Jim Tomko, who is an unsung hero. Jim was recognized for all the hours he puts in, his talents, his leadership and his accomplishments that make ASGC what it is today.



Photo: C. Lillich

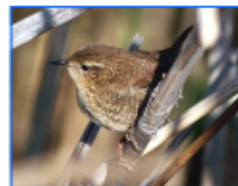
—Carol Lillich

Richard "Buster" Banish
Photo: J. Lillich



Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*)

If you are lucky enough to hear this fabulous mighty mite's song in migration, it will stop you in your tracks and fill you with joy and wonder. How could such a small bird emit such a long, bubbly, cheerful, rich concerto. You will remember it forever! Ounce for ounce the Winter Wren's song is more powerful than a rooster's crow!

At four inches long with a five-and-a-half-inch wingspan and weighing in at one third of an ounce, this bird unfailingly brightens the day. Their plumage is a full palette of tans and browns with a pale buff eyebrow, and distinct barring on their sides.

Their small size, their very short stiff tail held upright, and their furtive habit of skulking through dense tangles help to identify them as well as to conceal them. One time I saw what I thought was a large mouse scurrying along a log on the bank of a creek but after closer study it tuned into a winter wren!

Most nest north of our area but the deep, cool hemlock gorges of Lake County and Mohican State Park do host a number of breeding pairs. Their favorite nesting sites are in the upright root tangle of a large blown down tree.

They eat a variety of insects, spiders, worms and other invertebrates in combination with juniper berries and other fruit.

The peak times to see them in our area are October and April. I hope you get to see one this month.

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

There is only one species of wren in Eurasia. But there are 80 species of wrens in North, Central and South America! The Americas are for the wrens.

WRLC at communications@wrlandconservancy.org or visit www.wrlandconservancy.org.

—John Lillich

Nature in My Backyard Seminar

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The keynote speaker is Harvey Webster—formerly of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and current trustee of ASGC—who will present "Save the World: Nature in My Backyard."

Location: Pama-Snow Library. Breakfast and lunch will be available and be sure to check out the raffle items. Register for this event on our website.

The day before the program, October 6, there will be garden tours around the Cleveland area. ASGC and SLGC members who are not able to attend the whole two day seminar are invited to register just for the free garden tours by emailing natureinmybackyard@clevelandaudubon.org.

—Kathryn Craig

Conservation easements

(Continued from page 1)

in accordance with your CE. Fertilizers and herbicides [may be used], but must meet government regulations. And [they] may not have an adverse impact on [the] conservation values of the land. Tree planting—any native or non-invasive plant can be planted on your property. Tree removal—dead, extremely diseased, significantly damaged and imminently dangerous trees can be removed.

Major Reserved Rights are specific to each property. Most CEs require you to notify and/or receive approval to exercise a Major Reserved Right.

The terms of this section are negotiated with the land owner and may include any combination of the following examples:

Agricultural uses—typical agricultural uses such as row crops, livestock, and orchards are included. Maple sugaring. Reservation of forestry management.

Reserved building area. Limited management or habitat restoration area. Oil and natural gas well activities. Wind turbine or other renewable energy infrastructure with a small, localized impact.

Overall, every CE is different and you should refer to your CE to determine the General and Major Reserved Rights specific to your property.

ASGC's Hach-Otis Sanctuary is protected in two different ways. The original 81 acres is a dedicated Nature Preserve and protected by the State of Ohio's Natural Areas Act. In 2017 an additional 80+ acres were added to Hach-Otis. Fifty of these new acres also receive Natural Areas protection, and all of those 80+ acres are protected by a Conservation easement, held by Western Reserve Land Conservancy. WRLC land stewards visit each conservation easement on an annual basis.

I hope this overview is helpful to your understanding of conservation easements. For questions please email

In case you missed it!

"Fringed Gentian and its Entourage"

It was a picture perfect first day of autumn for 15 of us to search for our rare and unusual quarry—the fringed gentian. The delicate beauty and spectacular color of these violet blooms had us all ignoring the small mud and mosquitoes. Those flowers responded to the sun and were open wide to the sky showing their fine petal fringing.

We also discovered bottle or closed gentian along the trail. There was one example of nodding ladies tresses (in the orchid family) surrounded by a large patch of silverrod. The goldenrod and New England aster nicely complimented each other. Many beautiful calico aster and blue-stemmed goldenrod were



Fringed gentian
Photo: J. Tomko

blooming along the trail where the forest opened a bit.

We were fortunate to have several accomplished botanists from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club and former Hiram College Field Station manager, David Factor all helping us identify and enjoy autumn's bounty. We couldn't have asked for a better outing.

—Jim Tomko

Steve Zabor

I am extending deep gratitude on behalf of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland to Steve Zabor for his decades of service on the board of trustees where he provided excellent leadership, sound advice, and physical work for our chapter. Steve rescued us from non-profit catastrophe and stepped in as treasurer after the unexpected passing of Tom Whitehouse. He took the lead in modernizing and updating our chapter's constitution, mission statement, and by-laws. If we ever needed help, he would figure out how he could assist and make the task smooth and easy.



Steve recently resigned from the board and his presence will be missed. He is a professor emeritus of economics and environmental studies at Hiram College, served on the board of education for Mantua and also served as district governor for Rotary. He has moved out of the area to be closer to his daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren. We wish him wonderful times and give him heartfelt thanks because if not for him, our chapter would not enjoy the excellent condition that we are in today. Thank you, Steve, for everything!

—Jim Tomko

Bluebird Trail Roundup 2023

The bluebird nesting season has come to an end for 2023. The trail at Hach-Otis is made up of thirteen Peterson style, modified with sky lights, nesting boxes. Two of our boxes were unused this season. I intend to re-locate these two for next year. The Hach-Otis trail has finished its third very successful season, with Carol and I doing the monitoring. Three pairs of bluebirds fledged two families this season. Last winter we received reports from people seeing bluebirds for the first time, up and down the river valley, more than a mile away. We noticed two new bluebird trails established in a neighboring community this year. ASGC's trail has made a noticeable impact on bluebird population in this part of the Chagrin River Valley. Bluebirds fledged this year were twenty-five with no losses. Tree swallows fledged thirty-five with only one loss.

The bluebird trail at Blanch-Katherine Novak Sanctuary was re-established this year after several years of over-growth and no monitoring. Thanks to Matt Valencic, Kenny Kresina and Matt's crew for taking back these fields from the invasive buckthorn, making them bluebird habitat again.



Photo: M. Valencic

The trail at Novak has twenty-three standard bluebird boxes. They were monitored this year by Jim Tomko, Bill Rucki, Keith & Wendy Kohnke, Barb Philbrick and Steve Kuerbitz. These folks rotated the weekly monitoring. They had to battle the house sparrows and ended up producing sixteen bluebird fledglings, thirteen tree swallows, and ten house wrens. This is a good start for the first year.

—John Lillich

Upcoming Events

Programs

October 6

Self-guided Garden Walk

October 7

"Flowers, Trees, Backyards and Bees"

Parma-Snow Library

Keynote speaker: Harvey Webster

Email natureinmybackyard

@clevelandaudubon.org for more information.

"Migrating Waterfowl & Winter Birds of NE Ohio"

10/17 7pm Parma Heights Library

10/21 2pm Gates Mills Library

10/23 7pm Brecksville Library

10/28 10am North Olmstead Library

Field Trips

October 21 1:30pm

"Fall Color Walk"

Hach-Otis Sanctuary

If you have not had the opportunity to see the fall colors from the Hach-Otis Sanctuary, here is your chance. There is a spectacular view to the east overlooking the Chagrin River Valley with trees showing off their unique colors. We have the right mix of species to rival the leaf color change anywhere in the world! Join us to take in the beauty of the changing of the seasons. Meet at the Hach-Otis parking lot at the east end of Skyline drive (off River Road) in Wiloughby Hills.



DATED MAIL

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to info@clevelandaudubon.org

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Bird Quest hits home run!

Thanks to the 26 teams and 100 “Questers” who participated in this year’s Chagrin River Bird Quest. While enjoying perfect weather, you found a record 140 species of birds within the Chagrin River Corridor IBA. The previous record was 133 set in 2021. And there was record attendance of 72 Questers at the Saturday celebration, enjoying food, fellowship, and fun at West Woods Nature Center. Your participation is what makes Bird Quest a success.

Families were out in force enjoying the delightful weather and guided walks at the Novak Sanctuary in Aurora, The Rookery in Chesterland, and Chagrin River Park in Eastlake. It’s fun for us to watch your children growing up and spotting birds on their own. They are becoming birders! Yay!

This year’s raffle included another of John Lillich’s beautiful hand carved birds—an American Woodcock—along with two stunning prints (a Great Blue Heron and a Barred Owl) by photographer Steve Cagan of Kirtland Bird Club. A special ‘thanks’ to both of you for

your generosity. All raffle proceeds support the conservation and education work of ASGC in our sanctuaries and throughout Greater Cleveland. Winners were hard to find this year, but the ‘Hangry Birders’ team located 15 species at Chagrin River Park to win them 1st Place for total number of species found (92). The ‘GPD Nat Catcher’s’ and ‘Where’s the CONW?’ tied for 2nd place with 89 species, and ‘Just Winging It’ took 3rd with 80 species. A special thanks to all those who used eBird to keep track of your birding during the 24-hour challenge. It’s a wonderful snapshot of the fall birds in the IBA.

A special ‘Thank You’ to the volunteers, partners, and vendors who worked hard to make the 9th Annual CRBQ happen. You know who you are, and we appreciate each one of you.

SAVE THE DATE: September 6 & 7, 2024, will be the 10th anniversary of CRBQ. Please plan to join us to enjoy nature and celebrate the beauty, wonder and awe of our native birds.

—Matt Valencic



Emcee Jim Tomko (and helper) award 1st place to the “Hangry Birders” who found a record 92 species.