



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

September, 2023

It's time for Bird Quest!

4pm Friday, September 8th to 4pm Saturday, September 9th

Join the 9th Annual Chagrin River Bird Quest in celebration of the Chagrin River Valley Important Bird Area!



Get your team together (family or friends or people you meet on the street) and search for as many

birds as possible within the Chagrin River watershed from 4pm Friday until 4pm Saturday, then come back to the West Woods Nature Center for food, fellowship and prizes. This is a family friendly event for new and experienced birders alike.

Bird Quest starts at the West Woods Nature Center at 4pm Friday with Check-in. Come pick up your free t-shirts,

maps and assorted other information. We have scheduled bird walks beginning with our traditional Owl Prowl, led by Jim Tomko, at 7:45pm in the Novak Sanctuary. Live in Lake or Geauga County? Join Matt Valencic at The Rookery or Mary Ann Wagner from our partner, Blackbrook Audubon, at Chagrin River Park, both on Saturday. Full information at Check-in.

Not much of a birder? Great! Stop and smell the wildflowers, try out those new binoculars, or simply come out and enjoy nature. There's lots of prizes even if you don't see a single bird!

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100th Anniversary celebrated at Annual Meeting

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland celebrated its 100th Birthday at its annual meeting, which was held on Saturday, June 3, 2023. Our meeting was held at Lake Farmpark in Kirtland in the newly refurbished Machinery Barn, which now has a lovely new shelter and patio outside of the barn that was also reserved for our use. Our afternoon started with a nature walk around the park, led by Jim Tomko and Matt Valencic. This was followed by a wine and appetizer reception.

We had a short chapter meeting at 5:00 p.m. and our president, Jim Tomko, thanked everyone for attending this momentous occasion, and went through some of the things that happened 100

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Trail Crew summer update

The trail crew has been busy with several projects this summer. The most ambitious has been the cleaning, reorganization and installation of electrical outlets and lights in the Novak Education Center upper story and barn.

Volunteer Hal Goodwin has been the principal architect and worker on this project which spanned several weeks and involved many additional volunteers. To begin, much thought and labor went into planning, then sorting and removing unused and unneeded equipment and materials stored in the barn.

Livestock troughs in the floor were filled and shelving with an additional workbench was installed. Finally, new circuits to provide outlets and LED lighting were installed.

In the upper story of the Ed



Hal Goodwin makes final connections.

Photo: B. Twaddell

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Take a hike with SEEK!

I invite you to download SEEK (by iNaturalist) to your smartphone, then gather up your family and friends and head over to the Novak Sanctuary. As I write this, there are at least 30 species of woody or herbaceous plants that are identifiable to SEEK because of their flowers or berries, PLUS butterflies, moths, and many more 'living things.'

And that is just in the fields on either side of Townline Road. If you walk through the woods to the beaver pond or cattail marsh (west side of Townline

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From the Nest...



I hope you have had as fabulous a summer as I have. It started with our excellent annual meeting where we had the internationally known keynote speaker Al Batt entertain and educate us in a world class manner. If you were not able to attend, then I am sorry you missed the wonderful celebration of our 100th anniversary. Many thanks go to

Carol Lillich and her meager crew. Please accept our compliments on a job well done!

We have an exciting upcoming year with the ever-popular Bird Quest this month, followed by monthly field trips, a winter bird survey, summer breeding bird surveys, and opportunities to volunteer with trail improvement, wildlife habitat enhancement, continued control

of invasive species and maintenance of our buildings.

If you have some time, talent, or expertise from any discipline that you are willing to share, please contact us and we will graciously accept. As you can see, there are many ways for you to get involved with this great organization.

See you on the trails,

—Jim Tomko

100th Anniversary

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years ago. Jim DeBroux, Chair of our Documentum Committee, gave an overview of how the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland came into being.

Our president presented the names of the officers and trustees who were standing for re-election. Mary Salomon and Matt Valencic were re-elected for another 3-year term as trustees. The following were re-elected to serve another term as officers: Jim Tomko, President; Carol Lillich, Secretary; and Stephanie Demyan, Treasurer.

We enjoyed a wonderful buffet dinner, with scrumptious desserts, that was catered by Food for Thought.

Trail Crew

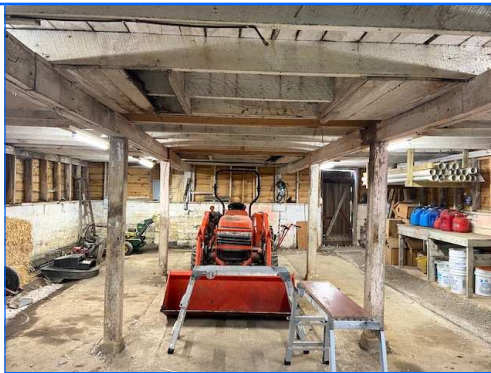
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Center work actually began last year with the installation of several new, sturdy shelves to hold many articles and items that had filled the first-floor space. Then an additional circuit was installed with LED lights mounted high above the floor to ensure illumination across the full expanse of the space. Again, the project spanned several days of work and many volunteer hands to accomplish. As it happened, a new volunteer, Bill Rucki, who is a journeyman electrician, PE, certified safety engineer and an electrical engineer with over 45 years of controls and power engineering experience, reviewed and approved of the work with only one minor modification.

Other projects have focused on controlling beaver activity, repairing a bro-

ken stairway, and replacing a deteriorated roof on a bird blind in our sanctuaries. More details will appear in future issues.

—Carol Lillich



The Ed Center barn restored with new lighting and electrical outlets.

Photo: B. Twaddell

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—Ban Twaddell

SEEK

(Continued from page 1)

Road), there will be even more species to see.

Just open the app, aim the camera at ANY living thing and learn what it is. Flowers, tree leaves, birds, mammals, all kinds of insects, amphibians, reptiles, mollusks, lichens, mushrooms ... SEEK does it all.



Field milkwort in the Novak Sanctuary. Photo: M. Valencic

Because some things are similar to others, SEEK may simply show you the group it belongs to, like “goldenrods” or “moths.”

But the majority of the time it will identify down to species.

Here is a partial list of flowers and trees I identified using SEEK while walking the mowed paths at Novak: goldenrod, gray and silky dogwood, dogbane, ironweed, fireweed, vervain, jewelweed, Queen Ann’s lace, flat-topped white aster, bindweed, Virginia and narrowleaf mountain mint, Allegheny monkey flower, steeplebush, field milkwort, white meadowsweet (spirea), common and swamp milkweed, boneset, cattail, blackberry, burdock, chicory, common St. Johnswort, and yellow hawkweed.

Let us know how many species you can find. Send your list to info@clevelandaudubon.org.

—Matt Valencic

Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

This feathered friend needs no introduction. Most people can identify this bird by its “caw caw caw” call alone.

The crow is our largest songbird! It is a member of the scientific order Passeriformes which includes all our songbirds. It is also one of the few songbirds that has a legal hunting season.

Crows belong to the family Corvidae and are arguably among the most intelligent birds on earth. New Caledonia crows make and use tools such as modified twigs to extract insect larvae from cracks and crevices! Corvidae includes crows, jays, magpies and Clark’s nutcracker. If you observe your local blue jay’s interactions and behaviors, you will see the similarity and say to yourself “yes, jays are like mini crows but dressed in blue.”

American crows are all black from bill to tip of the tail including their legs and eyes. In bright light they have an iridescent violet/blue sheen to their plumage. Adults weigh about a pound and have a length of 17 inches with a wing span of about three feet.

Both adults, often with the assistance from young of previous broods, cooperate in building a stick and twig nest about two feet in diameter and nine inches deep, where they lay three to nine heavily brown, splotched grayish-green eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs for about 18 days.

Crows are highly sociable and a family clan of several broods will defend a home territory. In the autumn communal roosts of enormous numbers may occur. There is one near the campus of The Ohio State University which hosts thousands of crows.

Most of “our” crows are not migratory. We do have northern birds join them during the winter.

Next time you see a crow, which will likely be today or tomorrow, give a thought as to how amazing these birds actually are.

—Jim Tomko

New Birders Workshop



Observation deck at beaver pond.
Photo: M. Valencic

An enthusiastic group of newer birders met at the Novak Education Center on August 19th to learn about bird identification, habitats, binoculars, and field guides. After an hour of classroom work, they headed into the Novak Sanctuary to look and listen for birds, and to enjoy the beauty of high summer wildflowers. In just 90 minutes we saw or heard 23

species, representing 16 bird families, as we walked through the fields and woods to reach the beaver pond and cattail marsh.

The most bird activity was near the Education Center

where several habitats come together. Open fields, hedgerows, a small pond, the edge of two woodlots, and large trees around the house across the street provide varied habitats for several species of birds. We also noticed increased bird activity wherever two habitats came together (aka, Glorious Edge!).

Everyone loved the new observation deck at the beaver pond. A great blue heron flew away as we approached, and later a belted kingfisher flew around the area, offering great views for everyone. It was so peaceful - we had to pull ourselves away!

This is a great time of year to visit all our ASGC Sanctuaries. Flowers are abundant and fall migrant birds are already starting to arrive. All four sanctuaries are within the Chagrin River watershed and open for birding during Bird Quest, Sept. 8 – 9, 2023. Get your team together and register today for our annual 24-hour birding challenge!

—Matt Valencic

In case you missed it

We had three field trips this summer with the most recent one at the Novak Sanctuary in August.

We were astounded by the summer wildflowers that were coming back after the early spring European buckthorn control. Several stunning large patches of vervain, two species of mountain mint in several locations, Allegheny monkey flower sprinkled all over and both pink and white varieties of meadowsweet (spiraea) are making an appearance in numerous places.

Once the non-native invasive buckthorn was removed, the natives responded with gusto! And this occurred only a few months after the fields were treated.

We look forward to enjoying and studying these fields as they continue to recover over the years. Thank you to Kenny Kresina and Matt Valencic along with Matt's invasive species control crew!

—Jim Tomko

More summer activities...

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland is a happenin' group! So much so, in fact, that one newsletter is not enough to share all the news of what we're up to. That is a good problem to have! But unfortunately, I have to postpone some of our great accomplishments and news to the next issue of *The House Wren*. Please watch for these and other stories in the October issue:

Annual Meeting Awards and Recognition

Our Annual Meeting and 100th Anniversary celebration was not just about good food and great entertainment. It was also our opportunity to recognize those people who have made a very special contribution in time and talent to the chapter. Watch for Carol Lillich's report...

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...

Kathryn Craig explains more in October.

What are Conservation Easements?

John Lillich answers that question and explains how conservation easements help us preserve our sanctuaries for the next generation.

Update on Invasives

Matt Valencic gives a bird's-eye view of our chapter's work on invasive species, especially the ongoing control of European buckthorn.



Before: buckthorn regrowth.
Watch for the "After" picture next month!
Photo: M. Valencic

Upcoming Events

Chagrin River **BIRD QUEST**

Field Trips

September 23 1:30pm
"Fringed Gentian and Its Entourage"
Aurora Sanctuary

Would you like to be dazzled by our treasured fringed gentian patch? Fringed gentian is an uncommon native plant with an astounding color of blue in their delicately toothed petals. It is one of the last flowers to bloom in our area. We will also see the more common closed or bottle gentian. If conditions are right, ladies tresses will also be in bloom. Pray for sunshine and you will have an unforgettable display! Meet at the Bretschneider/Audubon parking lot on the north side of Pioneer Trail a few hundred yards east of Page Rd. in Aurora.

4pm Friday, September 8th to 4pm Saturday, September 9th

The West Woods Nature Center and Chagrin River Valley

Get your team together and see how many birds you can find in 24 hours! Then return to the West Woods Nature Center for food and prizes.

Check-in starts at 4pm Friday and goes to 6pm. Get your free t-shirts, maps and suggestions for where to bird.

Register for the above event at
www.clevelandaudubon.org


DATED MAIL

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND (S 70)
Board of Trustees 2022-2023
Jim Tomko, President

Alison DeBroux	John Lillich
Jim DeBroux	Sarah Mabey
Stephanie Demyan	Mary Salomon
Jane Ellison	Matt Valencic
Carol Lillich	Harvey Webster

To contact an individual trustee, send an email to info@clevelandaudubon.org

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 Please recycle this newsletter

A Wry Smile

So a burglar broke into the house. I put the red dot on his chest and the cat did the rest.



Bird Quest raffle items worth the wait

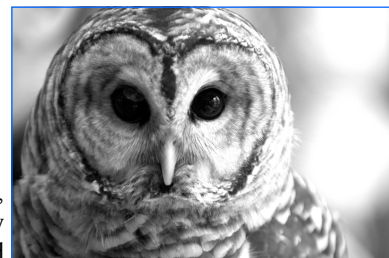
This year we are pleased to announce not one outstanding, exclusive raffle item, but three!

Join us for our 9th annual Chagrin River Bird Quest (4pm Friday, September 8th to 4pm Saturday, September 9th). Not only will you enjoy a great day of birding followed by great food and fellowship, but you'll have a chance to win one (or more) of three beautiful pieces of art.



First is the American Woodcock, carved exclusively for Bird Quest by award-winning wood-carver and conservationist, our own John Lillich. John is the sanctuary manager at Hach-Otis, and has generously donated yet another one-of-a-kind bird carving to Bird Quest.

Next we have two photo prints by photographer Steve Cagan, whose bird photos are a by-product of a long-standing love of nature and birding. See more of Mr. Cagan's work at stevecagan.com. Both the barred owl and great blue heron are approximately 9x14 inches, and will be matted and framed in 16x20 inch frames.



Raffle winners will be announced at the Bird Quest Celebration on September 9th at approximately 6pm. You

must be present and a registered participant in Bird Quest to win.
Good luck!