



The HOUSE WREN

Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Volume XLII, Number 3

Visit our website at www.clevelandaudubon.org

April, 2024

H2Ohio Action Project

On March 18th, ASGC welcomed 37 Aurora High School Environmental Science students and their teacher, Mrs. Laura Bell, to the Novak Sanctuary to get first-hand experience removing invasive species from around a wetland. This was their H2Ohio Action Project – helping to remediate a local wetland.

They learned about H2Ohio last October from Emily Rugg, an ODNR naturalist with the program. She explained Governor Dewine’s comprehensive plan for improving Ohio water quality by controlling runoff from agriculture and septic systems and remediating and expanding wetlands throughout the state.

Removing invasives from a wetland would allow native plant species to thrive and help restore the natural functioning of the wetland. The beaver pond at Novak was local, just 10 minutes from the school, and it had lots of invasive buckthorn that needed removal. It was a good match.



Photo: M. Valencic

It was snowing and cold, and the trail leading to the beaver pond was wet and sloppy. Those without waterproof footwear put plastic bags over their socks then slipped back into their sneakers in an attempt to keep their feet dry. One group walked directly back to the beaver pond and started cutting buckthorn while the other two groups hiked around the fields with volunteers to learn the ways ASGC was managing buckthorn and other invasives on the property. After about an hour the groups would switch.

Conditions were miserable! It snowed constantly and was 30 degrees, (Continued on page 3)

ASGC Annual Meeting New location, great speaker!

Date: Sunday, June 2

Location: Veterans Legacy Woods
14085 Ravenna Rd
Newbury Township, OH

Schedule of events:

Nature Walk.....2:00pm
Social Hour.....3:00pm
Business Meeting & Awards.....4:30pm
Dinner.....6:00pm
Guest Speaker.....7:00pm

Julie Zickefoose, Author “Bird Watchers Digest,” artist and naturalist at home in the Appalachian foothills of Ohio.

Caterer: “Dab of Class”

Cost: \$40.00 per person
(We are keeping the cost the same as last year even though prices have increased.)

Make check out to: Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland and mail to:
ASGC Annual Dinner

P.O.Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139

Reservations must be in and paid for by Friday, May 24, 2024.

Nature in My Backyard: Non-native, invasive honeysuckles—’tis the season!

It is a great pleasure to go for an early spring walk and see the emerging foliage on trees and shrubs—“spring green” is a happy phrase, signaling renewal, regrowth, and longer and sunnier days. Unfortunately, one of the earliest of these pretty sights is the soft green leaf of a bush honeysuckle.

This invasive shrub leafs out very early and holds onto its thick foliage late into the fall, blocking sunlight to native plants trying to grow beneath them. Furthermore, their root systems are thick and extensive, outcompeting other plants for ground water and nutrients. To top it off, there is evidence that they are allelopathic: that is, their roots release chemi-

cals that deter the growth of other plants within their range. They spread aggressively and form large, impenetrable thickets in only a few years.

This honeysuckle (Loniceras) spreads through three common means. First, even though they are listed on many states’ lists of noxious or inva-

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From the Nest...

April is an amazing time of year due to the re-awakening of dormant flora and fauna. If that is combined with the excitement of bird migration, you may jump at the numerous opportunities of getting out and enjoying mother nature.

The 91st annual series of spring bird walks begins April 14th in many metroparks, wildlife sanctuaries, and



preserves. You can already see spring ephemeral wildflowers like spring beauty, spring cress, and hepatica providing nectar and pollen for bees. Frogs and toads are singing.

Our trail improvement crew and invasive species platoon are busy improving our sanctuaries.

We would love to have you join us on any of our hikes, programs or work

outings. Spring is fleeting in our area. Now is a great chance to get immersed in nature.

I hope to see you on the trails.



Spring cress.

Photo: J. Tomko

—Jim Tomko, President, ASGC

Honeysuckle

(Continued from page 1)

sive plants, you can find them for sale at many garden centers. If they are native shrub honeysuckles, they will belong to the genus *Diervilla* and should be clearly marked that way. The state of Ohio does not allow sale of any bush *Lonicera* species (the native *Lonicera* is a vine) but you will find them for sale here anyway. It's illegal to buy them or plant them.

The second means of spread is by root expansion. If you dig up a bush honeysuckle and leave any roots in place, it might regrow from those bits of root.

Finally, the bright, jelly-like red berries are delightful in appearance—though lacking any major nutritional value—and birds and deer eat them, spreading seeds everywhere.

So...how can you tell if you have these plants in your garden already? There are four varieties to look for. See the complete descriptions on our website (www.clevelandaudubon.org) under Nature in My Backyard.



Lonicera maackii (bush honeysuckle)

Photo: P. Dziuk

begin to regrow you can see them easily and dig them out again.

If your bush honeysuckles are too large to dig out, this year you will have two jobs. First, after they have bloomed (why not enjoy the spring color?), cut off the branches before the berries form. Ta-da! No berries means no spreading by birds and animals! Mark the plant's location so you know what to target later. Then in fall, prepare to poison. Cut and paint is definitely the most effective way to remove invasive honeysuckles. Look online (including the ASGC website) for details.

Now it is time to consider some of the alternative lovely native shrubs you could plant in your garden!

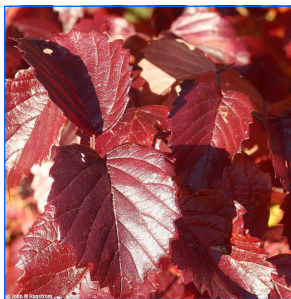
—Robin Schachat for
Nature in My Backyard

Native plants to replace invasive honeysuckles

First of all I am going to make an assumption. Most of us whose gardens have been invaded by bush honeysuckles have not set out intentionally to include them, so the vast majority are invaders into existing mixed hedges, woodland edges, and odd spots. That leaves the possibility that we have inherited or accidentally planted either full hedges of these plants or else featured specimens.

To replace a bush honeysuckle hedge, the most wildlife-friendly option would be to plant a mixed hedge, one that does not rely upon a single genus of plants. You can plant for bloom and fruit over a wide variety of seasons, ensuring that birds and pollinators will want to

visit and/or nest in your hedge throughout the seasons. Such a hedge might use, as a repeated anchor plant, one of the native *v i b u r n u m s* such as *Viburnum dentatum* (arrow wood) or *Viburnum acerifolium* (maple-leaf viburnum). These bear colorful berries that have the added advantage of being very nutritious for migratory or over-



Arrow wood viburnum in the fall. Photo: J. Hagstrom

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Spring Bird Walk Series 2024

The Spring Bird Walks is a celebration of migratory birds and is one of the oldest community science partnerships between Northeast Ohio park systems, Audubon chapters, and other organizations now in its 91st year. Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on Sundays, April 14, 21, and 28, and May 5, 12, and 19 at 7:30am unless otherwise noted. Visit www.clevelandaudubon.org for a complete list of locations.



Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



American Wigeon (*Maraca Americana*)

I learned this stunning duck as the "Baldpate," so called because of the drake's white crown and forehead. He has a beautiful broad green band that begins at the eye and sweeps back to cover the neck. He has a black stern bordered in the front by white. His body, back, and breast are a speckled cinnamon. There is a broad white wing patch with a green speculum.

Female wigeon have speckled gray heads with over-done dark eye shadow making her look like she has sunken-in eyes. Both male and female have blue-gray bills with a black tip. The bill's shape will remind you of a mini goose bill. It is short and thicker at the base, giving it excellent strength for grazing as geese do.

In fact, wigeon have a higher vegetarian diet than any of our other dabbling ducks. Wigeon have an appetite for succulent submerged plants. Since they are weak divers, they will watch a diving duck or a coot dive to the bottom of the pond to bring up those plants and tubers of their desire. The instant the diver surfaces, the wigeon will snatch the treat right out of the diver's bill!

Wigeon are good walkers and can regularly be found in fields grazing with geese. When a flying flock of geese contains ducks, it is usually wigeon.

Most of the wigeon we see are migrating to the north and will rarely nest in the western Lake Erie marshes. They conceal a ground nest in grass, weeds, or scrub often quite a ways from the water.

The female incubates 6-12 cream-colored eggs for about 25 days. The ducklings begin their march to the water within hours of hatching.

Late March and early April are great times to see these beauties on their northward migration. I hope you will see some of these striking ducks this spring.

—Jim Tomko

Did you know?

American Wigeon nest farther north than most of the other dabbling ducks.

In case you missed it!

"Waterfowl Wander"

What a great array of waterfowl species we had! There were 15, including pied-billed grebe, horned grebe and coots. The most numerous were over 300 red-breasted mergansers. The most colorful were the wood ducks. The largest were the trumpeter swans. The smallest ducks were the bufflehead. The most annoyingly miss-named were the ring-necked ducks (the ring on its neck is extremely subtle while the ring on its bill is boldly obvious).

We even had a raft of this month's Critter Corner bird, the American wigeon. We also had a few of the ever-popular common loon.

Native plants

(Continued from page 2)

wintering birds. Mixed among the hedge you might consider native hollies like winterberry. They will do best in damp to wet locations. In well-drained soil, consider adding the lovely mountain laurel. Another woodland-edge evergreen that mixes well in a hedge is inkberry. The chokeberry species will do brilliantly in sunnier spots. Spicebush and summersweet are great additions in shade or semishade.

On to specimens! Who doesn't love to see a magnificent specimen plant as a

We also had a record 10-car-long caravan! It was nice to have such great attendance with such pleasant birders. The tour was capped off with a delicious lunch at Freddie's in Streetsboro where we exchanged birding adventures and other stories.

Thank you to Matt Valencic who helped by scouting ahead, thereby saving us time and allowing us to visit more places and making identification much easier.

—Jim Tomko

focal point in the garden? As a single or perhaps as one of a small, odd-numbered group, a specimen shrub provides a special, particular place for the viewer's eye to rest. Some possibilities: beautyberry; late to leaf out in the spring is Carolina allspice; in wet soil, try swamp azalea; and finally, consider Thomas Jefferson's favorite, the genus Amelanchier.

—Robin Schachat
(Editor's note: visit

www.clevelandaudubon.org for a complete list of potential native plants for the garden.)

H2Ohio Project

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How big can YOU lop?

Photo: M. Valencic

but the students kept their spirits up by encouraging each other. They removed a sizable amount of buckthorn on both sides of the trail leading to the observation deck, and created two large wildlife piles with the cut trees. Some of the boys enjoyed seeing how large a tree they could cut with the loppers. We were impressed!

When the work was done everyone returned to the Novak Education Center to defrost and have lunch in the warm building before returning to school. The activity was a success!

Thanks go to Emily, Jamie and Jeff with ODNR for their expertise, and ASGC volunteers Lee & Rick Deininger, Wendy and Keith Kohnke, John Senderak and Ban Twaddell for helping direct the students at the worksite. Mrs. Bell worked alongside the students and should get an award for organizing such an ambitious project. We look forward to partnering with the high school on future projects.

—Matt Valencic

Upcoming Events

Field Trips

April 13 7:30pm
"Woodcock Watch"

Novak Sanctuary

Consider joining us for a sunset performance that you will remember forever! Meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road about a mile north of State Route 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border (451 Townline Road). Mud boots are a must!

April 20 8:00pm

"Frog Fugue"

Aurora Sanctuary

Several species of frogs and toads are likely to entertain us with an eons-old musical composition. Join us at the Bretschneider Park parking lot on the north side of Pioneer trail a few hundred yards east of Page Road in Aurora. Mud boots are an absolute must!

April 7 2:00pm

"Warbler Warm-up"

West Woods Nature Center

Some of the prettiest birds on the planet will be arriving in NE Ohio in April and May, and this program will get you ready to identify all of them. Matt Valencic and Kelly Stanek will show you how to ID more than 30 species and tell you where to look for them. About 1 ½ hour

Public welcome, no RSVP necessary.

April 21 1:00pm

"Nature Journaling Workshop"

Novak Education Center

Guest artist and nature interpreter Carol Agnew will guide this afternoon of discovery and creativity. Participants will experiment with different ap-

Programs

proaches to observing nature's details, field sketching and illustration, and creating a personalized nature journal. All skill levels are welcome.

Registration is required with a \$ 25 / participant fee. Space is limited to the first 15 registrants.

To register for this event, please email info@clevelandaudubon.org. Make checks payable to Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, and mail to ASGC, 1567 Bell Road, Chagrin Falls, OH 44022.



DATED MAIL

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Please recycle this newsletter

A Wry Smile

Some call it multi-tasking. I call it doing something else while I try to remember what I was doing in the first place.



Students discovering nature

It's a great day when you can share nature with children, especially about birds.

In March I was invited back (my third visit) to partner with Dr. Kari Sweeney at Leighton Elementary School in Aurora for the annual 5th grade Owl Pellet Science Lab. Together we helped 76 students through the 'inquiry' process of examining and dissecting owl pellets. Many of us have done this but Dr. Sweeney's students approach it like real scientists!

It began with a 10-minute presentation about some of the owls we find in Aurora, along with vocalizations. I explained what happens when the owls' prey enters its two-part stomach, the process of digestion, and ultimately pellet formation and regurgitation. Then we moved to the science lab where the students received 'inquiry sheets' to document measurements and observations. They were introduced to 'Materials and Methods' (tools and directions for dissecting the pellets and collecting contents) and then were free to explore their owl pellet with a partner.

A few students were initially 'creeped-out' but got excited as bones, feathers and even seeds were discovered, collected and placed on 3 x 5

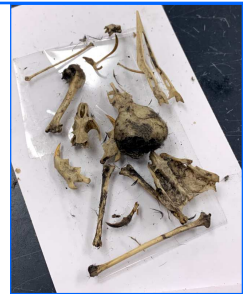


Photo: M. Valencic

cards with tape. Each class had at least one pellet produce something unexpected, like the bones of a bird, the intact tail vertebrae of a small mammal, and the leathery remains of a 'larger' mammal that was not fully digested.

They also had a chance to hold the foot of a great horned owl and see how its sharp talons make it an effective predator. Two binocular microscopes were set up for viewing the edges of barred owl and turkey feathers, to learn how owls fly almost silently.

I hope to return next year when my daughter (Jen Nagy) will be teaching science along with her usual math classes.

—Matt Valencic