



Yellow Warbler

Photograph by Matt Valencic

**Audubon
Society
of Greater
Cleveland**



**Annual Report to Members
For the Year 2024**

P. O. Box 391037, Solon, Ohio 44139 www.clevelandaudubon.org

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We're always looking for enthusiastic volunteers with an interest in the environment, birds, and ecology! If you have experience in environmental science, land management, finance, public relations, social media, or none of the above, let us know!

Want to get involved?

Contact us at info@clevelandaudubon.org.



The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) promotes the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities.

ASGC, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, has over 1,400 member households throughout the Greater Cleveland area, owns over 500 acres of protected land, and is one of northeast Ohio's oldest continuously operating environmental organizations.

**President's Report
June 14, 2025**



President Jim Tomko with Sharon Swaney at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

“To promote the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through habitat preservation and educational activities.” This is the mission statement of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. And we have definitely been very busy accomplishing that goal. Please take a look at what our team has done.

First of all, we are all feeling the heartbreaking loss of our secretary **Carol Lillich**. She was a hard worker insistent on proper etiquette and timeliness. She was a force that kept our operations moving, offering ideas and suggestions to improve the workings for us all. We were so very fortunate to have her in our Audubon family. I am also very grateful to **Alison DeBroux** for not hesitating a moment to serve as interim secretary. Alison’s generosity with her time and talent can never be re-paid. Thank you, Alison.



Carol Lillich
1943-2024

Matt Valencic and his Education Committee always astound us with what they do and how they do it. Just read the Education Committee report to see how many people we have touched with such a variety of interesting and engaging programs. Thank you, Matt, for all your time and energy planning and then executing the programs helping us meet the goals of our mission statement.

Matt Valencic also is the mover and shaker on the Sanctuary Committee eradicating alien invasive species that are trying to overtake the sanctuaries. There is no place they can hide. Matt and his crew will hunt them down and remove them allowing the beautiful and valuable native species to thrive. My thanks to all on this passionate warpath.

Ban Twaddell has successfully facilitated some extraordinary projects of immense proportions preserving and improving and making our trails safer and more easily passable. When his ideas are introduced, they are well accepted. Then I think, “how in the world can that be accomplished?” Then before I know it the project is completed. Thank you Ban for all you do.

Alison DeBroux’s regular position is the editor of our acclaimed *House Wren* newsletter. Whenever our members gather or when I cross paths with them, they always say they read our newsletter cover to cover. Alison continues to do a fantastic job keeping us up to date with news, events, accomplishments and educational articles. **Cathy Green** does an excellent job monitoring our Facebook account posting seasonally apropos pictures, stories, and events. **Sharon Swaney** serves as our Webmaster. Sharon is always at the ready to “fix” our website if it fails and regularly offer ideas making our website quite easy to navigate and up to date.

Jim DeBroux chairs our Documentum committee doing herculean work with the assistance of **Mary Salomon** sorting, evaluating, scanning, and uploading the collection of over 100 years of the history of our chapter. It is tedious and often puzzling therefore some sleuthing of the

documents is necessary. Thanks to Jim and Mary, soon the data will be available in an organized and indexed electronic format.

Stephanie Demyan, our treasurer, carefully and accurately maintains records of our finances. Stephanie's reports are clearly designed helping us to plan accordingly. She is exquisitely aware of proper procedure and IRS requirements. Her reporting is professional and regularly gives us financial advice and what we need to consider. Thank you, Stephanie, for your help and expertise.

John Lillich devotes immeasurable time, expertise and talent in so many ways. His experience in both sanctuary management and navigation through city and state bureaucracy have saved us from going down the wrong path saving us time, energy and money. Thank you, John, for sharing your indomitable passion for nature overall but especially as it has to do with our Hach-Otis sanctuary.

If there is heavy lifting work in the sanctuaries, we can always count on **Kenny Kresina** to be there. He has a unique and steadfast goal putting wildlife enhancement first. His desire to encourage native wildlife has added immensely to enriching our sanctuaries for native species providing shelter, food, water, and protection.

Newly retired Cleveland City Schools teacher, **Buster Banish**, continues his teaching and coaching of the East Clark elementary schools' Bird Nerds after-school club. His supervision and teaching of these children about nature and wildlife emphasizing birds piques their interest with birds and birding. Buster provides an opportunity for these children that they would not otherwise have. We are pleased to offer financial support to keep this important program going. He has recently been attempting to expand this program to other schools.

Thanks to **Jane Ellison's** *Nature in My Backyard* program, our chapter has interacted with many homeowners seeking much desired advice on converting their backyards to bird friendly sanctuaries. Jane and her crew in collaboration with master gardeners and Shaker Lakes Nature Center personally visit properties offering alternative plants and landscape design. The program is so highly accepted that the crew is busy all growing season. Thank you, Jane, for bringing this amazing program to fruition.

Mark Magree provides almost all of the building and ground maintenance, repair and mowing at the Novak Education Center. When it comes to repair, he is always ready to jump in and help. **Mary Salomon's** work has provided a beautiful native wildflower garden with sequential blooming throughout the season. We thank them for their continued care.

At Board of Trustee meetings, I always look forward to hearing **Sarah Mabey's** comments and views. She has a clear and higher level of understanding of all kinds of situations providing guidance in our policies and decisions. Thank you, Sarah, for keeping us steering toward our goals.

One of our more recent board members, **Tracy Engle** has become more and more involved, working our need for his expertise and energy into his full-time work schedule. He seems to pop up at almost all our events and programs kindly offering to help in any way that he can. Thank you, Tracy, we have become reliant on your input and assistance.

Long-time board member, **Harvey Webster**, offers wise and sound advice on all our endeavors. Without Harvey we would not be nearly as professional and confident that we are on the proper path. We are very fortunate that he recently retired from Cleveland Museum of Natural History so that we can benefit from his professional knowledge and his skill with dealing

with people and organizations. Thank you, Harvey, you will never know how much we value your input.

I am always proud to claim you all as friends and colleagues on our Board of Trustees. It always amazes me at the variety of knowledge, expertise, experience, wisdom and talent that you have contributed and will continue to contribute. Considering this assembly of people, we will stay on the correct path toward accomplishing the goals set by our mission statement.

Also, thank you to all those who have generously contributed time, talent and funds. With your assistance we have met our mission of education and conservation of our natural resources.

I am proud to serve with you and I look forward to our next accomplishments. Thank you to all of you.

Respectfully submitted by
Jim Tomko, President

Mary Salomon

It is with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that we note the recent passing of Mary Salomon. Mary was a stalwart supporter of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland with her time, talent and sage advice. We always looked forward to hearing about her adventures traveling to the world's distant places in search of exotic birds. In her friendly, quiet way and well-thought-out recommendations, Mary was a powerful influence in guiding ASGC to the amazing organization it is today. Mary was truly one of our shining stars. We thank her for the many, many ways she contributed to ASGC. She will be deeply missed and never forgotten.



Mary Salomon tabulating bird lists at Bird Quest 2017.

These are only a few of the ways that Mary helped build ASGC:

- Served on the Board of Trustees for many years
- Served as Vice President when Penny Orr was President
- Spent hours sorting, organizing, interpreting and scanning historical ASGC documents for our Documentum Committee in partnership with chairman Jim DeBroux
- Designed, implemented and participated in our annual Breeding Bird Survey
- Assisted in the renovation of our Novak Education Center with thoughts and advice
- Collaborated with her husband, Bob, in design of our website
- Loyal participant of our Annual Appeal envelope-stuffing sessions
- Designed, installed and maintained, with the assistance of Penny Orr, our fabulous native plant gardens at the Novak Education Center
- Served on the Important Bird Area (IBA) committee

– Jim Tomko

Communications Committee
Alison DeBroux, Chair

The Communications Committee encompasses five aspects of ASGC's efforts to communicate with members, the public, and the Board of Trustees. These are: the monthly newsletter *The House Wren*; the website www.clevelandaudubon.org; mass email campaigns via Constant Contact; Facebook; and the U.S. Post Office.

The House Wren

Editor: Alison DeBroux

Contributing writers: Jim Tomko, Matt Valencic

Photographer: Matt Valencic

Many thanks to the following for their submissions during the 2024/2025 season: Ban Twaddell, Bill Rucki, Kathryn Craig, Keith Kohnke, Robin Schachat, Mary Salomon, P. Dziuk, J. Hagstrom, Sarah Mabey, David Factor, Ruth Twaddell, Laurenda Messer, Stephanie Demyan, John Lillich, Sean Cleery

The House Wren is published eight times per year with a combined issue for December and January.

The printed version is produced by Minuteman Press, 33528 Aurora Rd., Solon, OH 44139. Phone: (440) 543-5547. Our contact is Sheila Boros, sheilab@minutemanpress.com.

Our mailing list comes partly from National Audubon and partly from a list of local members who are not NAS members. We averaged 1230 mailings per month between September, 2024, and May, 2025. The monthly printing and mailing costs averaged \$834 per month.

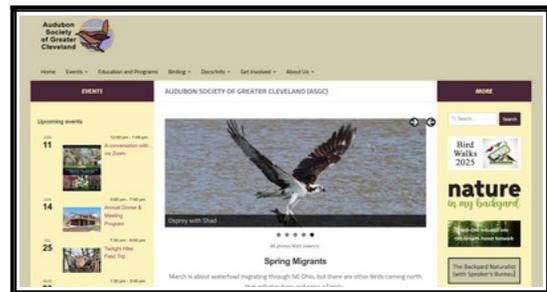


www.clevelandaudubon.org

Webmaster: Sharon Swaney

ASGC Liaison: Alison DeBroux

The website is the “face” of ASGC, often the first introduction someone has to our organization. Audubon members and the general public can find out about upcoming events, issues concerning birds and wildlife, and read a web-version (low resolution) of *The House Wren*. Through the connected email address (info@clevelandaudubon.org) they can request specific information, sign up to receive our email newsletter (see below), volunteer, or register for various programs.



New this year: the website of *Nature in My Backyard* is now an independent sub-domain of the primary ASGC website. It can be reached at <https://natureinmybackyard.clevelandaudubon.org/> or by clicking on the link on the right column of www.clevelandaudubon.org.

Forthcoming for 2025/26: we are planning to introduce online donations! Please check our website often as this is a major change and we're not sure when it will be operational.

info@clevelandaudubon.org

Email monitor/designer: Alison DeBroux

Our email address is not only our members' and the public's primary contact with the organization, it is also the portal through which we connect with them via Constant Contact (CC), a mass email distributor. Their fee is based on the number of email contacts we have. As of May, 2025, ASGC had 1016 email contacts. Once a month or as often as we wish, CC will send out our email “campaign” that may include upcoming events, a link to the web-version newsletter, general information about birds and wildlife, and progress on various ASGC projects like the Trail Crew. These campaigns act as supplements to *The House Wren*. They are designed and edited similarly to the newsletter. Contributions are welcome.

Facebook

Monitor: Cathy Green

ASGC has had a Facebook page since 2011. Content is currently handled by member Cathy Green.

U.S. Post Office

Donations and communiques still require “snail mail” capability. Some of our members do not use email and send us notes written by hand. ASGC currently has a post office box at the Solon, OH, Post Office. Our mailing address is: P.O. Box 391037, Solon, OH, 44139. Pick-up is regularly done by Trustee Mark Demyan. Incoming mail is forwarded to the appropriate Board member or distributed at our quarterly meetings.

Report submitted by Alison DeBroux
May, 2025

Documentum Committee

Jim DeBroux, Chair

The purpose of the Documentum Committee is to catalog, preserve and retain records of the history of ASGC as well as provide resources for individuals wishing to research and study ASGC itself, birds and ornithology and ecology and, conservation and the environment.

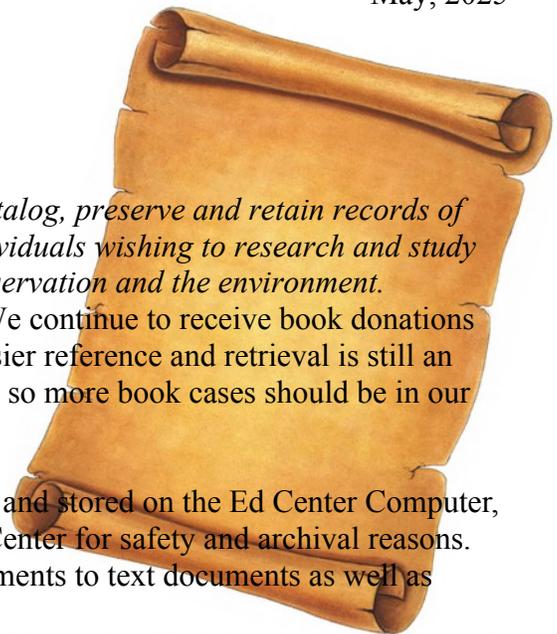
There was not a lot of committee activity in 2024. We continue to receive book donations for our library at the Ed Center. Sorting the books, for easier reference and retrieval is still an ongoing task. We will be running out of shelf space soon, so more book cases should be in our future.

The current static status of Documentum is:

90% of our historical documents have been scanned and stored on the Ed Center Computer, as well as backed up to two locations away from the Ed Center for safety and archival reasons. The remaining tasks are to convert, where possible, documents to text documents as well as image documents to make sorting and searching possible.

The scanned documents are in the EdCenter attic, waiting to be filed, but they are protected from the atmosphere to some extent.

We have a lot of photographs that need to be scanned, but, unfortunately there is minimal documentation, information or identification for the vast majority of images.



The current dynamic status of Documentum is:

The process of converting the appropriate scanned documents has started. Due to the nature of some of the documents the scans can be difficult to read, or OCR'ed. OCR is a tool used to convert images of text files to actual text files. Clear, type-written pages go smoothly and need little more than spell checking. Old, faded and otherwise unclear documents need a LOT of interaction, interpretation, or direct copying (sometimes with a bit of extrapolation or interpolation) to a text file. The documents need to be OCR'ed and entered into the database for easy searching and retrieval. This will be a continuing process.

The priority of “textifying” documents is:

1. Legal
2. History
3. Sanctuaries
4. News articles
5. Trustee/Board Meetings
6. Other

(This order is subject to change)

There are a few more documents that need to be scanned, and they are in the possession of the committee chair. These documents consist mainly of documents concerning historical bird counts and miscellaneous information.

The bird count documents will need several different types of scanning and text conversion ... first scanning the documents ... second converting them to text documents ... and lastly converting the text documents into usable data for research. These documents are of interest due to the nature, not of the bird counts themselves, but because of the written descriptions.

If any of this activity appeals to any member, the Documentum Committee is always willing to accept new volunteers.

Report submitted by Jim De Broux
June, 2025

Education Committee Matthew Valencic, Chair

The role of the Education Committee is to “... promote the conservation and appreciation of birds and other wildlife through ... educational activities, focusing on the Greater Cleveland Community”. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and activities that involve both committee members and others from within and outside the organization.

Nature in my Backyard (NMB) blossomed in 2024 (pun intended) under the leadership of Jane Ellison, Robin Schachat, Kathryn Craig, Harvey Webster and Wendy Donkin. Together with about 16 Cuyahoga County Master Gardener Volunteers, NMB teams are invited by homeowners to visit their landscapes to evaluate their status and offer suggestions to help homeowners meet their goals. They identify non-native



Matt Valencic leads an Environmental Science class in the Novak Sanctuary.

invasive plants and offer options for their removal. Based on the client's personal interest (e.g., attracting more birds or pollinators, having flowers blooming all summer, or converting some lawn to natural areas) they suggest native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses to accomplish those goals. In the end, NMB members are helping to reduce the spread of invasive species while beautifying the landscape and improving biodiversity, one yard at a time around Greater Cleveland. They visited over 100 homes during 2024, educating over 200 homeowners!



Denise Ellsworth and Master Gardener Volunteers

NMB's educational outreach also includes monthly Zoom® programs – Brown Bagging it in My Backyard – covering a wide range of topics related to native plants, gardening and biodiversity. There were eight programs in 2024 that reached over 300 people. They brought table-top displays to five gardening events around Greater Cleveland, making the public aware of both the service we offer and the online resources available to everyone. There were training sessions for the Master Gardener Volunteers regarding invasives and native plants, as well as ways to share options with homeowners. Harvey Webster presented NMB programs to four garden organizations across the state, impacting over 150 individuals and receiving some generous donations to ASGC.

Nature in my Backyard has its own subdomain on the ASGC website which we encourage everyone to visit (natureinmybackyard.clevelandaudubon.org). You can request a visit using the website or utilize the many free resources available.

The Backyard Naturalist Speakers Bureau includes Jim Tomko, Sarah Mabey, John Lillich, Harvey Webster and Matt Valencic. Together they presented 34 in-person or virtual talks (via Zoom®) in 2024, reaching 1,100 individuals across NE Ohio and beyond. These talks covered a variety of subjects related to birds, amphibians, biodiversity and history. **Third Thursdays** is our monthly Zoom® series which we began when the pandemic shut down our in-person talks. We offered three programs late in 2024 that reached another 200+ people.

We are grateful for our relationships with **Area Schools and Teachers**. In February we partnered with Hiram College Field Station to attend the Kenston STEAM night (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) for 3rd – 5th graders at Kenston High School. Over 350 students and parents viewed our displays and met Barry the barred owl and Mystery, the pigeon, ambassador birds from the Hiram Field Station. In March and November, we hosted 50 Biology and Environmental Science students from Aurora High School at the Novak Sanctuary to learn about invasive plants, then help remove buckthorn from around the beaver pond. Their teacher, Mrs. Laura Bell, made the ½ mile walk to the work area a nature discovery event of its own.



Leighton Elementary School again invited us to participate in their annual Owl Pellet Labs for 5th graders, and in May we participated in their version of STEAM night for 3rd graders, sharing information about birds with approximately 130 families. My thanks to the following volunteers for making these events possible: Richard (Buster) Banish, Laura Bell-Peters, Cathy Cochran, Kathryn Craig, Alison DeBroux, Joan Demirjian, Jane Ellison, David Factor, Cathy Green, Sarah

Mabey, Barb Philbrick, Andrea Story, Jim Tomko, and Harvey Webster. Also, Wendy and Keith Kohnke, Lee and Rick Deininger, Ban Twaddell and John Senderak from our Trail Crew for assistance at Novak.

In September we celebrated 10 years of **Chagrin River Bird Quest**, our 24-hour birding challenge. There were 121 participants, and they recorded a record (for CRBQ) 153 species of birds, despite the rainy conditions. A record 83 individuals attended the celebration and awards ceremony at The Rookery with food provided by The Hungry Bee (Chagrin Falls, OH). We are grateful to John Lillich and Steve Cagan for their generous raffle donations of a hand carved Northern Shoveler, and two matted and framed bird photographs, and to the many Education Committee volunteers who helped make this event possible.

Our programs and activities reached approximately 2,700 individuals during 2024. We are grateful for the opportunities to ‘share nature’ with the people of Greater Cleveland. Watch our website (clevelandaudubon.org) for programs and activities throughout the year.



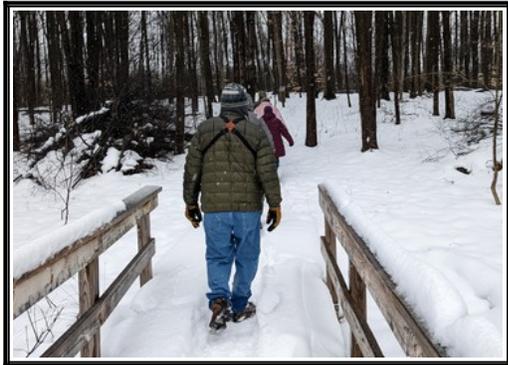
Jim Tomko (rt) was the lucky winner of John Lillich's Northern Shoveler.

Submitted by Matt Valencic
May, 2025

Field Trip Committee Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: John Lillich and Jim Tomko (chairman).

Monthly field trips continue to be offered in our four wildlife sanctuaries highlighting themes of seasonal interest from tracks in the snow to autumn leaf color. Attendance varied from 1-30 with age ranges from teenage years to twilight years.



A winter track walk, as photographed by Beth Ulrick.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy, once again, generously offered access to some “behind the fence” waterfowl watching on one of their closed properties under the expert supervision of Sarah Mabey and Matt Valencic. This was an amazing opportunity to be astounded by the resplendent plumage of the brief springtime waterfowl migration.

We welcome any suggestions for a field trip possibility and we invite anyone who would like to lead a field trip to submit a description of the outing. These ideas will be gratefully considered.

Submitted by Jim Tomko
May, 2025

Finance Committee
Stephanie Demyan, Chair

Financial Report Highlights
Year Ended December 31, 2024

Income Statement

Income Items

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland has been supported through donations in the form of estate bequests, memorials, and the generous gifts received through the Annual Appeal. In 2024 the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland had a decrease in donations to the Annual Appeal. Once again, several memorials where the family of the deceased requested donations to the society in lieu of flowers were received. We are especially grateful to those families and their generosity. Finally, our Speakers Bureau added income to the society for 2024.



\$32,925 – Annual Appeal, Matching Funds, Memorials, Estate Bequests
\$9,116 – Rental income has been steady during 2024
\$3,900 – Speakers and Program income
Total Income - \$45,941

Expense Items

The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland continued to provide the Bird Quest to northern Ohio with no cost to attendees. This program is a mainstay in the society's mission to educate and foster an appreciation for birds. In addition, improvements in the Sanctuaries during 2024 continued with invasive species management, sanctuary water management, facility repairs and improvements to trails. Finally, the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland teamed with the Shaker Lakes Garden Club and the Master Gardeners of Northern Ohio to fund the "Nature In My Backyard" (NIMB).

Sanctuary Equipment, Materials & Tools - \$9,549

Education Center Expenses - \$2,359

Education Program Expenses \$6,787 were higher than last year due to costs of NIMB and the wonderful annual Bird Quest which was well attended again this year.

Newsletter - \$5,702

Operations - \$8,383 includes postage, annual appeal & 100 year celebration/annual dinner.

Insurance - \$9,479 for all properties, buildings, and equipment.

Total Expense - \$42,259

Overall, for the year 2024, the overall society funds were increased by \$3,683 exclusive of investment value.

Balance Sheet as of 12/31/2023

Cash at year end was \$68,363

All of our board is volunteer and you can locate detailed information regarding our Non-profit status and Annual IRS 990 filings online.

Please reach out if you have any questions or would be willing to consider helping on the finance committee.

Submitted by Stephanie M. Demyan
June, 2025

Important Birding Area Jim Tomko, Acting Chair

Members: Jane Ellison, Sarah Mabey, Mary Salomon, Jim Tomko (Chairman), Matt Valencic

Many chapters of National Audubon Society are responsible for studying an Important Bird Area (IBA). For quite a few years we have been responsible for the Chagrin River IBA which we share with the Blackbrook chapter. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland heavily promotes education and conservation of birds and wildlife habitat. Almost all of our events and projects directly affect education about and conservation of the Chagrin River IBA. We have breeding and winter bird surveys, an annual birdathon, educational presentations, field trips, invasive species eradication and property visitations to give advice on native plant alternatives to the usual plant choices through our “*Nature In My Backyard*” program. All these events allow us to learn about, monitor, educate property owners and improve the Chagrin River IBA. Thank you to the IBA committee.



Submitted by Jim Tomko
May, 2025

Sanctuary Committee Jim Tomko, Chair

Members: Mark Demyan, Hal Goodwin, Keith Kohnke, Ken Kresina, John Lillich, Rob Swaney, Jim Tomko (chairman), Ban Twaddell, Matt Valencic, Don Voorhees

Due to the persistent attention and labor in all our wildlife sanctuaries, we are providing richer resources for their denizens of field and forest resulting in great joy to those who saunter along the paths. The amazing, ongoing eradication of invasive species (European Buckthorn, Reed Canary Grass, Japanese Barberry, and Multiflora Rose) and trail maintenance has changed the quality and ease of access to these preserves.

Aurora Sanctuary: Ban Twaddell and his trail crew assisted in reinforcing the foundation and stabilizing the bank supporting the “Case Bridge” crossing Kinky Creek, preventing its foundation from eroding into the creek which would cause the bridge to collapse. They used natural materials mostly found in the vicinity of the bridge and large cobble and stones brought into the work area with approval of ODNR’s Department of Natural Areas and Preserves, the Ohio EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers.



Bank stabilization at Case Bridge and volunteer Don Vorhees.

The “White Trail” has been rerouted and re-blazed due to excessive windfall of ancient trees.

Materials have been moved to a staging area along the northern border of the sanctuary to revamp the small bridge over a drainage ditch between the borrow pit reservoir and Fulton Pond.

Matt Valencic and his invasive species warriors have continued clearing large sections of Buckthorn, Japanese Barberry, and Reed Canary Grass, allowing natives a chance to reclaim ground.

The ongoing clearing of deadfalls across the walking trails have been completed.

The city of Aurora has almost finished the rails to trails all-purpose asphalt path along the First Energy right of way at the northern border of our property. The grand opening of this multipurpose trail will be prior to the 4th of July.

Novak Sanctuary: Matt Valencic and his crew, with the help of Aurora High School students and Nestle employees, continued the battle against invasive species to clear large areas of Buckthorn from the four fields and the shoreline of the beaver pond by mowing, lopping and daubing, and chain sawing this resistant invasive. Gradually they are turning the tide of invasive species take-over.



Nestle employees spent Earth Day battling invasive species at the Novak Sanctuary.

Kenny Kresina and Mark Magree also provide mowing and trimming to keep the fields in good condition and the trails easy walking. The 21 bird nesting box bluebird trail is again providing nesting places for Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens. The diligent crew walks the trail once a week evicting non-native House Sparrows and monitoring the native cavity nesters.

Molnar Sanctuary: Kenny Kresina battles invasive species, plants native species, helps keep the trail clear, and continues to keep the lake’s spillway free of blockage caused by Beavers. Kenny can be found there rain or shine whenever his service is needed, carrying equipment, tools and materials in by hand! He also takes his life in his hands driving our Kubota from the Novak sanctuary barn all the way to the Molnar Sanctuary on public roads.

Ban Twaddell, Keith Kohnke and their crew are engineering a repair for the beaver deceiver which failed due to winter weather, flooding, and beaver initiated damage.

Hach-Otis Sanctuary: John Lillich maintains the paths, fields and forest in fine condition with an eye to protect the native wildlife and plants. Because of his keen concern for the property it remains the “emerald gem” of our sanctuaries. At this time there are no trails planned for the new section allowing it to be an area free of human disturbance for the wildlife that lives there. The John and Carol Lillich Meadows are periodically mowed to enhance the area’s Bluebird habitat. The Bluebird Trail is on track to fledge a record number of Bluebirds each year. Several deadfalls across the trails have been cleared. ODNr cleared a particularly large one for us.



Hach-Otis in October.



Demonstration gardens at the Novak Education Center.

Mary Salomon continues to provide advice on the native plant wildflower gardens that she and Penny Orr installed many years ago on the grounds around the Education Center, keeping it looking wonderful.

Jane Ellison’s native plant demonstration gardens were again expanded this year. Visitors are able to see how native wildflowers could create a dazzling view in their own backyards. She is constantly encouraging native alternatives one backyard at a time to help sustain our Earth.

It is always a pleasure to be in our sanctuaries relieving stress and resetting our emotional state. Even if it is just to walk while we see, hear, smell and touch the beauty of Mother Nature. It will without a doubt be a healing experience for one and

all. I hope you are able to visit one or all our sanctuaries soon to aid in healing the “injuries” we accumulate in everyday life.

Submitted by James W. Tomko
May, 2025

2024-2025 Officers and Board of Trustees



President - Jim Tomko*: *Chair, Sanctuary and Field Trips Committees, Member of IBA and Newsletter Committees; Spring Bird Walk Leader.* BA Zoology, Miami University, MS Environmental Biology, Ohio State University; OD Optometric Doctorate, Ohio State University; Operate my own optometry business Served 3 years active duty as an officer in the U.S. Navy and as an Optometrist at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. President of Aurora Conservation Council's Moebius Nature Center; Member of Aurora's Tree Commission; Kiwanis, Aurora Chamber of Commerce, and Treasurer of my church, The Religious Society of Friends. I am a participating doctor in MedWorks which provides free health care for the working poor. I am always ready for any nature adventure, and my first scientific study of natural history was herpetology (frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, snakes, and lizards).



Secretary - Carol Lillich* (deceased): *Chair, Chapter Only Membership; Member of the Documentum, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees; Scheduled Gates Mills Spring Bird Walks.* Assistant to the Chairman, President and CEO of The Lubrizol Corporation (Retired in 2012 after 40 years); Trustee, Willoughby Hills Historical Society.



Acting Secretary (as of July, 2024)– Alison DeBroux* : *Chair, Communications Committee and Member Education Committee.* I earned a BA in Communications from Colorado State University. After 25 years working in computer graphics for TV and film, I earned an MS in Secondary Education from the University of Akron, after which I became a tutor specializing in Language Arts and ACT/SAT preparation. I am active in ASGC's Communications and Education Committees including editing *The House Wren*, among other duties. I spend most of my time training and showing my dogs, Quincy, Blake and Jessie. I am owned by one cat, Nyx, and am married to Jim.



Treasurer - Stephanie Demyan*: *Chair, Finance Committee, Member Newsletter Committee.* BS Chemical Engineer, Tri State University, and works in Solon, Ohio as a chemical engineer. I am past Treasurer CLE ASQ, Past President CLE ASQ, International 6 Sigma Lean Manufacturing Judge, and Quality Manager VWR. I enjoy sailing, canoeing, backpacking, camping, hiking, and birding. I am a native of Ohio and recently returned to the area after living in Florida for the past 5 years. I enjoy the diversity of the birds in Northern Ohio and the abundant knowledge in birding that is present in the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland. I am married to Mark Demyan, who was Vice President of ASGC, and we have four adult children and one grandson.



Jim DeBroux: *Chair, Documentum Committee; Member Newsletter Committee.* I have degrees in Math and Chemistry and retired from BASF in 2016 after 37 years of being a chemist, the last 10 years as a lab manager. Under my direction our lab implemented ISO9001 using a system that I designed and was highly computerized. I am skilled at programming, database design and maintenance. I still do math stuff and am a member of SABR (if you want to know about SABR, just ask me.) I am a bit of an information junkie.



Jane Ellison: *Member Education, IBA, and Newsletter Committees.* BS in Environmental Education from Cornell University School of Agriculture. I am a life-long outdoors person and a gardener.



Tracy Engle: *Member Sanctuary, Education, and Newsletter Committees.* I hold the following degrees: AAS Recreation and Wildlife Management, Hocking Technical College; BS Natural Resource Management, The Ohio State University; MS Biology, John Carroll University. I am a Vice President and Regional Practice Leader for TRC Environmental Corporation where I manage offices from Wisconsin to the Carolina's. I reside in Auburn Township in Geauga County where I currently serve on the Board of Supervisors for the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District. In the past I have served on the Auburn Township Zoning Commission, the Geauga County Planning Commission, and the Downtown Cleveland Historic Warehouse District. I am a very active birder in Geauga and anywhere my travels take me; in 2023 I birded in 16 states and also enjoyed birding in Costa Rica while on a trip with my wife. I spend much of my free time and weekends outdoors, enjoying the beauty of nature.



John Lillich: *Member Documentum, Membership, Sanctuary, Field Trips, and Newsletter Committees, and Gates Mills Spring Bird Walk Leader.* Lubrizol Systems Analyst (retired), Vice Chair, Willoughby Hills Planning & Zoning Commission and Architectural Board of Review; and Trustee, Willoughby Hills Historical Society. I was married to the late Carol Lillich, Secretary and Trustee of ASGC. I have a lifelong fascination with the outdoors, which has led to my hobbies of wood carving and wood turning. I love the look, feel, and smell of individual wood species. This began about the age of eight when I was given my first pocket knife. The pieces I turn and carve are done to best display the grain of the wood and enhance the carved subject.



Sarah Mabey: *Member IBA, Education, Membership and Newsletter Committees.* BA Bryn Mawr College, MS University of Maryland, and PhD University of Southern Mississippi; Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Environmental Studies Program at Hiram College.



Mary Salomon: *Member Documentum, Important Birding Area, Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* PhD Chemistry, University of Wisconsin; MBA, CWRU; Corporate Technology Portfolio Manager, The Lubrizol Corporation (Retired).



Ban Twaddell: *Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* BA at Clark University, a BSN and MSN at Case Western Reserve University, and Certification in Nurse Anesthesia at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. He practiced as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist for 36 years with the Cleveland Clinic and Mt. Sinai Hospital systems and retired in 2018. While practicing at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center, he served as a clinical and academic instructor for nurse anesthesia students. He has served the Bahá'í Faith community in several administrative capacities, has volunteered with the Boy Scouts as an assistant scoutmaster, the Geauga Park System as a canoe & kayak guide and served on the Board of Trustees as secretary and treasurer of the Western Reserve Chorale. In addition to helping with trail maintenance in the ASGC sanctuaries he volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. Ban and his wife, Ruth, have 3 sons and 5 grandsons and live in Chagrin Falls.



Matt Valencic: *Chair, Education Committee which includes Nature in my Backyard (led by Jane Ellison). Member Sanctuary and Newsletter Committees.* B.S. in Forest Biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (1975). I had a 40-year career in professional sales, specializing the last 25 years in medical devices. Twenty years of volunteering with Boy Scouting as a Scout Master and Assistant Scout Master, with emphasis on camping, backpacking and nature studies. Retired in 2015 and joined ASGC where I used my love of birding and bird photography to create and present programs for our Backyard Naturalist Speakers Bureau. Became a Master Gardener Volunteer in 2017 and became passionate about removing non-native invasive plants in the ASGC sanctuaries. Patti and I have been married for 53 years and live on an 8-acre hobby farm with 2 horses and a large vegetable and flower garden. We have 3 adult children and 9 grandchildren.



Harvey Webster: *Member Education and Newsletter Committees.* BS Cornell University; former Director of Wildlife Resources, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

*Member of Executive Committee

Trustee terms are typically 3 years and they are elected on a rotating basis.

*2024 Annual Report prepared by Alison DeBroux, Acting Secretary
Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, June 2025*