



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

Beauty: More Than Feather Deep

Recently, I was enjoying a cup of serious coffee in the Café Du Monde, just off Jackson Square in New Orleans. The sidewalk café has been around since before the war among the States. It's my kind of place. The entire menu (nine items, including a couple variations) fits on a single side of an old fashioned metal napkin holder — with room for advertising.

Understandably, there are no windows in the Café Du Monde because there are no walls. Now this can make for some interesting entertainment. Birds, primarily rock doves and house sparrows, with an occasional cameo appearance by a European starling, come and go as they please.

The birds are meticulous at finding the most minute crumbs jammed in the multitude of cracks in the floor.

I asked the waitress if they ever had to sweep the place. She said, never. The café is open 24 hours and what the birds miss, mice working the night shift pick up.

For me, an integral part of the entertainment was the reaction of humans to aerial and foraging antics of birds. After the initial shock of having a pigeon flap past your table, ruffling powdered sugar from your bignets, or, if you're lucky, having a bird perch for close-up study on the napkin holder, it gets to be fun.

I have to admit, not everyone thought it was cool.

There was a woman who shrieked as an over-zealous pigeon pecked at her sandaled toes. And there was a couple that acted as if Godzilla, rather than a few pigeons, was strutting about. The comment that bothered me most was the woman who referred to the birds as, "rats with wings."

Defending the pigeons crossed my mind but I thought better of it. It's an education thing. You can't use reason to change a person's attitude when it was not reason that got them there in the first place.

Opportunists, like pigeons, gulls and turkey vultures fill an important niche — cleaning up after us. Critters living in this niche lose some luster when

compared with warblers and other, more glamorous, species. It's interesting how we apply this same thought process (it's not logic) to our own species.

Election Time

It's time for chapter elections. Voting will take place at the June 26 meeting. The elective offices are president, vice president, treasurer and secretary. If you would like to run for office, or would like to place the name of someone in nomination (please clear it with that person before you submit the name), please make your interest known to nomination committee chairperson Clyde Witt, or any of the current officers. The nominees for next year are, Mark Purdy, president; Bill Tucker, vice president; Susan Dooley, treasurer, and Michele Tucker, secretary.

So what, as birders, can we do? How do we generate more interest in the less-than-glamorous species? Maybe the starting point is to not think of them as "less glamorous."

Meeting time

As for the June 26th picnic, we have a special treat this year. Our picnic will be held at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC), located at 3675 Oak Hill Road, a bit south of Penin-

sula. From Akron, go north on River Road until you reach Everett Road. Turn left on Everett to Oak Hill Road. The CVEEC entrance is the first drive on the right. CVEEC is an award-winning environmental learning facility located in the heart of national park. CVEEC offers innovative school programs, scout programs, summer camps, teacher workshops, conference facilities and family events throughout the year. Following our picnic dinner we will have a tour of this outstanding facility. Bring your binoculars because there will be plenty of birding opportunities before, during and after dinner.

We'll start with a covered dish picnic about 6:30 p.m. The chapter will provide beverages, chips, plates, napkins and flatware.

The executive committee is soliciting ideas for next year's programs so if you would like to be a presenter, or have an idea for a program, please let us know. We're open to all suggestions. We already have a couple programs signed up that will take you to places you've never been. See Mark or any member of the executive committee.

Summer Bird Count

Time is running out to sign up for the annual Summer Bird Count. This is the event where you don't freeze your tail feathers or beak. You also have the luxury of going back tomorrow if the weather is not to your liking today. Here are the details:

The count begins June 15 and runs (or walks, if you prefer) through June 24, covering two weekends. The object of the exercise is to get a count of breeding birds in our area. We count every bird of every species. The procedure is similar to the Christmas Count except that you don't wear gloves. You're assigned a territory (we cover the entire Summit County domain) and search out the birds. It's a great way to spend a cool morning or warm summer evening.

If you missed the sign-up sheet at the last chapter meeting, you can still participate by contacting Doug Vogus at 330-922-5613 (e-mail vogeye@cs.com) or Ann Chaser, 330-467-3664 (e-mail ak450@acorn.net). Those who participated last year should have already been contacted. If not, contact either Doug or Ann. If you attended last November's chapter meeting and heard the great presentation by Dwight Chaser, you know the value of gathering this data.

Ann currently has 24 years of bird census information and has offered to provide a summary of this data to anyone who asks. Maintaining and collating this data is a monumental job. Doug, Ann and Dwight are to be commended for their efforts. Without volunteer activ-

ists like this, a great deal of scientific work would be greatly diminished. The Summer and Christmas Bird Counts are your chance to participate in citizen science at its best.

Fall Audubon Ohio Meeting

You'll read more about this in the fall newsletters, but it's never too early to plan your next vacation. October 19-20, Audubon Ohio will hold the 2001 Audubon Autumn Adventure. The event will be held at the Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm in Dayton. Along with workshops in bird conservation, education and chapter development, there will be field trips and guest speakers, including Kenn Kaufman, author of the new Focus Guide to North American Birds. Conference fee is \$80. Watch this space for more information on housing and meals. If you just can't wait, contact Audubon Ohio at 614-224-3303 or e-mail to ohio@audubon.org.

Ohio Avian Ecology

If you're interested in birds and where the critters are headed in the new century, here's an event you should not miss. The Ohio Avian Ecology and Conservation Conference will be held August 3 at Ohio State University, Fawcett Center for Tomorrow.

This one-day event will feature presentations by Ohio's preeminent authorities on bird ecology and conservation. In addition, two nationally known ornithologists will provide keynote speeches. The event promises more than just great information about birds. There will be food, drinks and fabulous door prizes.

Among the presenters will be Akron's own, Dwight Chaser, presenting information on trends he and Ann have deduced from studying more than 23 years of data collected in this area. Your efforts on the Summer and Christmas Bird Counts do make a difference!

Also will be presentations on several successful reintroduction programs in Ohio and elsewhere (How about those Osprey that have returned to the lakes area this year!), and much more.

The keynote speakers are Scott Yaich, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and Bruce Peterjohn, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Yaich will speak about the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Peterjohn, author of the recently revised Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas, will discuss whether trends of the last century can predict what will happen in this century.

For additional information on the conference, visit the Web site, www.dnr.state.oh.us/odnr/wildlife/diversity, or e-mail ohioavianconference@yahoo.com.

Birds of Ohio

One of the more popular books on the shelves of many chapter members is the original version of Bruce Peterjohn's *The Birds of Ohio*, published in 1988. Considered the bible of Buckeye birders, this handy reference work has been revised and updated, including breeding bird atlas maps.

The 688-page paperback book documents species that nest in, migrate through and sometimes mysteriously appear in the state. Remember the mountain bluebird in Holmes County or the Atlantic puffin in Toledo? More than 400 species are chronicled. In this treasure you'll also find details on distribution and abundance, migration and nesting dates, and, for the first time, maps to help you locate all of the above.

Peterjohn now works at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center where he coordinated the North American Breeding Bird Survey and is currently coordinator of the center's operational monitoring programs. Cost of the book is \$21.95 plus shipping. For more information, call 330-262-1688, or 800-982-6651.

Believe it or Not

Your voice is needed to protest another example of what some people call fun. The wild wolves in Denali National Park need your help. Some humans in Alaska need help — period. Protecting and preserving the environment is about more than birds and habitat conservation.

Last March, an eBay (the on-line auction site) member posted an auction to sell a "Guided Alaskan Wolf Hunt," planning to donate the auction proceeds to former rock-star Ted Nugent's California-based hunter-training "Kamp for Kids."

For a number of reasons, the wolves in Denali need protection. In March, during an attempt by park researchers to radio-collar the wolves, the pack's alpha male and female were both killed. Plus, a national park service employee (read trapper), whose wife spends summers selling wolf trinkets to tourists, last year wiped out about half of the park's wolf sanctuary pack and is believed to have killed four pups this year. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game abets this trapper by allowing him to use road kill to bait wolf traps just outside the park's boundaries.

As wildlife photographer Dorothy Keeler has documented, the wolves have become very tolerant of humans (Won't those critters ever learn?) and her pictures make the wolves look more like Lassie and Rin Tin Tin. Keeler is leading a protest to this so-called wild wolf hunt.

The fellow who donated the "wild wolf hunt" for auction on eBay is (What a surprise!) chairman of the local Fish and Game Advisory Committee, a group that advises the Alaska Board of Game. This "hunt" has all the excitement and challenge of going out to your garage and shooting your car. If you're angered by this kind of abuse of wildlife, go to the Web site, thePetitionSite.com, and sign up. In the first week, about 9,000 people signed the petition admonishing eBay for selling this kind of thing. You can see the images of these wild wolves on Keeler's Web site, awimages.com/WolfClose.htm.

Create a Healthy Lawn

National Audubon has produced a new guide for homeowners. Everyone can create healthy lawn habitats by making kinder choices. To find out how to use more native plants, less lawn, and less pesticides, download Audubon's Guide, which features "10 Commandments for a Healthy Yard." This new guide has been adopted from Joel Bourne's original guide featured in Audubon Magazine (See "The Killer in Your Yard"). We will be receiving copies and will pass them out at chapter meetings.

Back to Business for CRC

Our first good environmental news of the year! Due in large part to comments, complaints and general backlash from lawmakers, the birding community, conservationists and scientists — and specifically your Audubon Society — the Smithsonian reversed its decision to close down its Conservation and Research Center (CRC). This means the CRC — one of the nation's most celebrated research centers devoted to the preservation and restoration of endangered species — will keep its doors and its cutting-edge research going. Many thanks to those who wrote their lawmakers on the issue - your efforts truly helped!

Neo-Tropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

Last year, the U.S. Congress passed, and President Clinton signed into law the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The new law established a five-year fund to support partnership programs that will conserve and enhance the wintering habitat of Neotropical migratory birds, such as the Kirtland's warbler, hermit thrush, black-capped vireo and Kentucky warbler. Approximately 5 billion birds of 500 species, including many endangered species, migrate to North America from wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean annually. Over the last decade, they have experienced a noticeable decline, and this law was passed to give these species a chance to recover. And while President Bush's budget did not include funding for this species-saving law, word from Capitol Hill says there are a good number of lawmakers who support it and will work to ensure it receives its full funding for Fiscal Year 2002. Stay tuned - much more information to follow!