



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

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Witt's End

Write it Down or it Didn't Happen

The pleasure of birding is derived from seeing the birds — or being in the woods. Writing down what you see is important because — well, because it is. Some people say listing is a waste of time. Listing becomes obsessive behavior, as I've heard people (non-listers) say. That is, unless you're the person making the list. Then it makes all the sense in the world.

As Susan will attest, when flying in daylight, I prefer the window seat on the journey so that I can record the first bird I see on the ground. Of course, these birds most often turn out to be something exotic like an American crow, European starling or English house sparrow. Rock doves are big at airports, according to my list.

Sometimes you get lucky. Over the years there have been rough-legged hawks, snowy owls and crested caracaras added to the first-bird-on-the-ground list. I've thought about starting other lists, only I foresee problems with crossovers. Currently, I choose not to recognize any conflict that might arise, let's say, with my first-bird-on-the-ground list and the trip-list. But what happens when the first bird on the ground is also the first sighting of the season? Hmmm, which list? Recently we were invited to a dinner party where Cornish game hen was to be the main course. I suggested the host wait until I arrived before killing the birds so that I might add the bird to my life list. Always quick with a quip, Bill Tucker noted that the Cornish

game hen (already dead) could go on a Lifeless Life list!

What a great idea! I'd then have a place to list all those road-kill birds I see but am reluctant to add to any regular list. Susan Dooley's suggestion was that I start a life list of birds I've eaten. I'm glad that some of my friends see the seriousness of this hobby.

How 'bout a list of all the birds I've thought of during the winter but did not see? It's been a long winter and I, for one, am glad to see spring.

— Clyde Witt

Meetings, We've Got Some Great Ones!

On May 28, we'll host Bill Rich of the University of Akron. Bill is a landscape and wildlife photographer. Come and see the world as you've never seen it. This program is not to be missed!

Our programs are held at the Seiberling Naturealm on Smith Road. Except for December, the meetings are the fourth Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 7 PM and the meeting starts promptly at 7:30 PM. Meetings are free. We serve light refreshments and ask only that you bring your own cup. Bringing a friend would be nice, too.

The June meeting is, traditionally, one of the two when we stray from our traditional meeting grounds. This year we're again doing something a bit different. The meeting will be held Tuesday, June 25 at Wolf Creek Winery on Cleveland-Massillon Road, about two miles north of Wadsworth Road (state route 261),

Elections

June is also election time for chapter offices. The election will be held at the June meeting, June 25 at Wolf Creek Winery. If you would like to run for one of the four elective offices, please see Clyde Witt, nomination committee chairman, at the May meeting, May 28 at the Naturealm. If you would like to put the name of someone into nomination, please make sure they agree to running for the office, then contact the nomination committee.

Currently we have the following slate of candidates: For president, Mark Purdy; vice president, Bill Tucker; treasurer, Susan Dooley; and secretary, Michele Tucker.

starting at 6:30 PM. Since the object of the exercise is for you to try (and buy!) the various wines of Wolf Creek, no beverages are permitted. You should bring your own picnic meal to enjoy, although Wolf Creek does offer a limited carry-out menu. It's called carry-out, but actually it's carry-in. You telephone a selected list of restaurants and they'll deliver to the winery. We'll not have a formal program, just the sharing of bird stories — real and imagined.

If you have any program suggestions for next year, please pass the ideas on to any member of the executive committee. As of now we have a clean slate and we're open to all suggestions.

Field Trips

Organized field trips for the rest of this year are limited to three, all at the Bath Nature Preserve (BNP). We've opted to do it this way because the chapter is strengthening its bonds with BNP and the battery of researchers who will be studying this special spot. It gives us an opportunity to participate in citizen science at its best. The executive committee hopes to expand the role of the chapter to the point where we might generate bird checklists, provide educational material about the preserve and even do some trail maintaining. The roles of all participants at this ecological gem have yet to be defined. It's an opportunity many Audubon chapters seek to channel their energies, but few find. Adopting the BNP can be the focus for our environmental efforts and it's right in our own backyard. The list of birds for this area is long and growing. It's one of the few places left in the area where we consistently see bobolinks and Eastern meadowlarks. And there must be some special sparrows hiding in the long grass ...

Your next opportunity to visit the BNP will be Saturday, April 27, then Sunday, May 5. We'll return on Saturday, May 11. All walks start at 8 AM. Dress appropriate for the weather and no whining!

Mark has spearheaded our participation at BNP and will lead the walks on the 27th and the 5th. Wolfgang Pelz will head up the group on the 11th. We have planned the visits for the near-peak (whenever that is!) of migration to assess the birds passing through this mixed woodland habitat.

The entrance to BNP is on the south side of Ira Road, about one mile west of Cleveland-Massillon Road.

Help Wanted

If it seems that our Help Wanted sign has been permanently affixed to the side of the building, it's because we're in perpetual need of volunteers for the many jobs that keep our chapter running. Members of the current executive committee (and a solid cadre of

volunteers) have been doing double (in some cases triple) duty, so we're looking for a few good folks to help share the burden. For next year we have two big jobs to fill — and several small ones.

We need a person to take over the duties of Conservation Chair. This is a big and important job. Michele Tucker has done an outstanding job over the past couple years. As she and husband Bill will soon be expanding their jobs as parents, she has reluctantly requested we find someone to do the work of Conservation.

The job entails monitoring the environmental and conservation comings and goings of the politicians — local and national. We are establishing a network of people to be alerted when immediate action — be it letter writing, phone calls, whatever — is needed. The prime example of this is the battle to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. You'll need a computer to keep up with the notifications flowing from the National and Ohio Audubon offices, and for contacting people willing to take action. You should be prepared to make a monthly report to the members at the chapter meetings. You'll have an important place on the executive committee to help plan our monthly programs, field trips and chapter activities.

The other major job (also handled by Michele in the past) is that of Hospitality Chair. This job requires you set up the coffee and tea water at the chapter meetings, and provide the cookies — for which you are reimbursed.

Local Conservation News

If you've not taken time to bird the are known as Dike 14 in Cleveland, you're missing a rare experience. Now this little-known birding spot is drawing the attention of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR).

The ODNR seeks public comments about the future use of Dike 14. This site is a Confined Dredge Disposal Facility that was once owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, and is now destined to become Cleveland's newest State Park. It was known in the past as Gordon Park impoundment.

The 88-acre landmass is located along the Lake Erie shoreline and adjacent to Gordon Park, part of the Cleveland Lakefront State Park system. Dike 14 is an important stopover destination for a great diversity of migratory birds, and represents a classic "migrant trap" situated along the lakefront. Since 1979, birders and field ornithologists from both Kirtland Bird Club and Audubon have recorded at least 278 species of birds at Dike 14.

Personally, Sean Zadar has observed 220 species during a two-year period, including such species as: least bittern, northern goshawk, long-eared owl, short-

eared owl, northern saw-whet owl, upland sandpiper, olive-sided flycatcher, marsh wren, sedge wren, Connecticut warbler, yellow-breasted chat, Le Conte's sparrow, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, white-winged crossbill and evening grosbeak. The question is: What should become of Dike 14? The state is looking for comments from experienced birders or anyone concerned.

Please send written comments to Sean T. Zadar, 11177 Stoneham Road, Parma Heights, Ohio 44130, email: Szadar@juno.com. Or, Genevieve Ray, Goals for Dike 14, 2828 Edgehill Dr. Cleveland Hts., OH 44118, email: Dike14Study@aol.com

Ohio Conservation News

Audubon Ohio has hired Emily Byram, who works in Audubon's policy office in Washington, DC. As the grassroots coordinator for Ohio, she wants to make sure that you are kept abreast of Audubon's conservation agenda for Congress and where our Ohio Congressional delegation stands on those issues. Emily will be asking to meet with chapters to discuss legislative issues, your specific lawmakers, and what you can do to help ensure they support conservation legislation. You may already know that Audubon has been focused on protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling, but we are also working to see that legislation is passed to protect over-fished ocean species, restore the Upper Mississippi River, fully fund programs aimed at protecting endangered species and migratory birds, and protect wintering bird habitats overseas from population pressure by supporting funding for international family planning programs.

Audubon Ohio has designated three more sites as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Ohio. The Important Bird Area program aims to identify and conserve areas of critical importance to bird populations that live in or migrate through Ohio. The new IBAs are Cowan Lake with Cowan Creek Road riparian corridor in Clinton County, Crown City Wildlife Area in Lawrence and Gallia counties, and Springville Marsh State Nature Preserve in Seneca County.

For more information on Ohio's Important Bird Area program, including a complete list of IBAs, please contact John Ritzenthaler, director, Habitat Conservation at jritzenthaler@audubon.org.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife posts eagle nesting updates on its Web site. The most recent update on March 15 reports that Ohio now has 79 bald eagle nests, including nests from five new pairs!

For the most up-to-date information, visit: www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/resources/eagle.

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has imposed a record fine for destruction of wetlands. Two

development companies agreed to pay a \$1 million civil penalty for chopping down trees, which damaged wetlands in Northeast Ohio. The fine is the largest imposed by the OEPA in a wetlands case. About \$500,000 of the fine will be placed into an escrow account to help the Geauga County Park District buy and preserve Bass Lake and surrounding wetlands. The remaining \$500,000 will be split between the state for reimbursement for its costs in the case and the OEPA for the Ohio Environmental Education Fund and surface water programs. The companies also were ordered to buy and preserve about 30 acres of wetlands and forested area, as well as construct five acres of high-quality wetlands near the site where the trees were cut down.

National Conservation News

The U.S. Senate passed its version of the farm bill - sweeping legislation that affects over 1 billion acres of land - more than half of the contiguous United States. Senator Hutchinson (R-AR) planned to offer an amendment to exempt the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) from all Migratory Bird Treaty Act laws and all National Environmental Policy Act laws. APHIS, formerly known as Animal Damage Control, harasses and kills birds and wildlife that are considered by some to be pests. Thanks to Audubon advocates and lobbying staff, the senate chose not to bring up the amendment, thus it is not a part of the farm bill.

Included in the Senate-passed farm bill are significant increases in funding for various conservation programs. This gives us a chance to protect birds, wildlife and their habitat on private lands. These programs include the Wetlands Reserve Program, conservation Reserve Program, the Farmland Protection Program (FPP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and the newly proposed Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP).

The GRP will protect vanishing habitat for grassland songbirds and other wildlife; the Senate bill has also expanded protection from one million to two million acres. The GRP has been a high priority for Audubon as this program will preserve or restore habitat for several species of migratory birds and grassland songbirds including the bobolink, lark bunting, and grasshopper sparrow that have seen steep population declines due to loss of habitat. As the Senate-passed version differs from the version passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last year, select members from each chamber will meet in conference committee to hammer out the differences between the two bills. As the House-version does not include sufficient increases in funding for conservation programs and has problematic language limiting the effectiveness of other programs.