



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

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My Witt's End – by *Clyde Witt, editor*

Welcome to the 21st Century

This past holiday season, with a blinding-bolt of the obvious, I recognized how deep we are into the 21st century. For a multitude of reasons, like not wishing to enjoy the festivities in a blinding snowstorm on I-90 in Buffalo (last year's experience) or sleeping on the floor of some airport (an experience of a couple years past), we opted to do the gift unwrapping with our grandkids via Skype.

For the uninitiated, Skype is a VOIP (voice over internet protocol) technology that allows you to make telephone-like calls through your computer. You can see the other party, thus, clothing is suggested, as well as brushed hair and acceptable manners.



To make a short story long, all went well until our four-year-old granddaughter decided it would be cool to put the video camera at her end of the conversation into her mouth. I'll spare you the sidesplitting antics of the others.

What's this have to do with birding? It brought to mind how much the simple joy of our favorite pastime is now impacted by computer technology. Those who don't get with the program, could end up as road kill somewhere along the information super highway.

For example(s): I just received (ironically hand-written) a note from the editor of the Clark County Audubon Society telling me it has advanced to an all-electronic newsletter, something currently on the discussion table of our chapter. Two of the better newsletters I receive, electronically, are eNature (www.eNature.com) and Birdwatching.com's Newsletter (www.birdwatching.com). Both publications (and we'll have to work out a new definition for that word) are packed

with interesting, helpful, entertaining information. No trees are harmed in the process. I also get a lot of electronic mail from Cornell Lab of Ornithology and many others, national and local. Even the venerable Old Farmer's Almanac, founded in 1792, has a great Web page (www.almanac.com) providing local and national information for people who venture out of doors.



So what? The fact is, there is a huge amount of information available to us to make us, if not more intelligent, better birders and better citizens of planet Earth—the third rock from the sun. I learned that from my astronomy newsletter.

Program Schedule Change



Pay Attention! Because of a scheduling mix-up, our January (only) meeting will take place at West Room of Goodyear Metro Park, 2077 Newton Street. A map is available at the park's Web site, www.summitmetroparks.org. The West Room has ceiling fans, indoor restrooms, kitchen facilities and a gas-burning fireplace.

Otherwise, the chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Audubon Christmas Count. June is our annual picnic, so the meeting place is most often Bath Nature Preserve. There are no meetings in July and August. Meetings are held at Mingo Shelter in Sand Run MetroPark in the Merriman Valley. The entrance is off Sand Run Parkway, east of the ford and east of the Shady Hollow Pavilion. Check MetroPark's Web site, www.summitmetroparks.org, for a map of Sand Run Park. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The meeting starts promptly at 7:00 p.m. We usually begin with a short, informative, business session. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend.

Programs to Brighten the Winter Blues

January 25: Dan Kramer of Ohio Department of Natural Resources will present "Bobcat Surveys and Management." Dan is the wildlife management supervisor for District 3 of the ODNR's Division of Wildlife. Bobcats, as well as Black Bears and probably other creatures are all around us, we just aren't aware until surveys like the one Dan will show us, are completed. You'll learn what those strange tracks in the snow might mean.

February 22: "Birds, and More, of Cuba." Susan Jones and Clyde Witt will present a rare look at birds and life behind the mysterious curtain surrounding Cuba. They visited this island nation last March, participating in a bird conservation program, along with chapter members Ann and Dwight Chasar. Come see birding's next frontier before it gets crowded.

March 22: If you want to protect and preserve the birds, you have to protect the habitat—great and small. The message is as simple as it is complicated. This month we'll have an outstanding opportunity to learn from Eddie Dengg, vice president of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, about what's being done and what we can do.

Details on the final three programs of the year will be in the next newsletter, scheduled for mid April. As a preview, we'll learn first hand, about the impact of the Gulf oil spill, how skunks are really our friends, and a special program at the Bath Nature Preserve.

Nature News Close to Home

Here are some heads-up stories, snipped (and edited) from the Web site of the MetroParks Serving Summit County, now in its 90th year (www.summitmetroparks.org). Visit the Web site for details.

Liberty Park In 2008 the resource management, naturalist and planning departments began preliminary planning for a proposed nature center at Liberty Park [Route 82 near Twinsburg], along with a hiking trail that will provide views of the scenic sandstone ledges and marshland. Trail construction was completed in 2009 with help from a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The parking lot will be constructed in 2011. Planning for the nature center will also begin in 2011.

Munroe Falls Metro Park Improvements are underway for the newest addition to Munroe Falls Metro Park: The Tallmadge Meadows Area. Summit County transferred the 287-acre former County Home property, off SR 91, to Metro Parks in 2007. The area will open with hiking trails, restrooms and an information kiosk, soon. A picnic shelter could be built 2011 or 2012.

Springfield Bog Metro Park Plans for the yet-to-open park, off Portage Line Road in Springfield Township, have taken shape. A parking lot will allow visitors to watch the park grow. Soybeans were farmed this year; next year prairie plants will be installed. The prairie will attract butterflies, bobolinks, meadowlarks and rails—all grassland nesting species.

Improved Birding Info

Whether you're a member, the Ohio Ornithological Society's Web site (www.ohiobirds.com) is a wealth of information available to all. Now, that Web site is linked with Birdzilla (www.birdzilla.com), a network of Web sites for birders. A single click takes you to a world of information from feeding backyard birds to material about birding events and species worldwide.

For example, I was particularly interested in providing food for birds from things in our kitchen. Sure enough, a great article called "From Your Kitchen to the Bird Feeder," taught me this: Like me, sparrows, nuthatches, wrens and

woodpeckers really go for peanut butter and jelly. Check the 'dollar' stores or discount chains for the super large jar to get the best price. Mix in a little corn meal and you're good to go. Spread on the side of a tree or a branch and sit back to enjoy the birds. Chipping Sparrows, juncos, White-throated Sparrows and several species of woodpeckers regularly visit my peanut butter offerings. Don't worry, the peanut butter will not stick to the roof of their mouths.

Some birds have a sweet tooth. Mockingbirds and woodpeckers will feed on grape jelly. Orioles really like grape jelly. If you live in an area with orioles, try feeding grape jelly in a dish. You might go through a jar or two before they show up, but if you are lucky they will start looking for their jelly fix each day. Several species of birds like fruit. Orange and grapefruit halves will attract orioles and woodpeckers.



Baby, it's Cold Outside

If you get the shivers going out for the morning paper, or standing around at Killdeer Plains, bundled in high-tech fabrics, waiting for Short-eared Owls to begin flying, think about how those birds must feel with little more than a layer of feathers. A great article from eNature.com explains how the birds survive. Here's an edited version. Go to the Web site, www.enature.com, for the full story written by George Harrison.

Where do the birds go for protection during severe weather such as blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes? Birds have an amazing ability to find refuge from storms, and they do it in a variety of ways, depending on the species and the bird's natural habitat. Bluebirds, for example, often winter as far north as New England. They find protection against the cold and storms by communal roosting, often in a birdhouse. There are photographs of 13 male eastern bluebirds, all crowded into one bluebird house. This behavior shares warmth, and keeps the birds out of the wind, rain and snow.

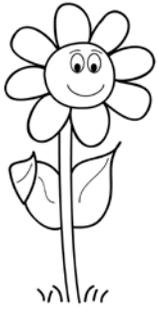
Other cavity nesters, such as chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers, also seek out old nesting sites in dead trees or bird houses in which to roost or find protection during a storm. Nuthatches, which sometimes nest behind a loose piece of tree bark, may seek the same kind of shelter against the cold. Flocks of rosy finches often roost in an outcropping of rock where they can get out of the cold wind. Bobwhite make a circle of the covey, huddled side-by-side, with head facing out. This allows them to share body heat, while being ready to escape in all directions, should they be attacked. Ruffed grouse take a different tactic. They dive into a snow bank,

may stay there for several days until the storm passes. Many other birds retreat to dense, evergreen thickets where they are protected from the elements for the duration of the storm.

Burning Calories

Another story of interest along the lines of keeping warm in winter comes from Birdwatching.com. Here's an edited version. For the complete story, visit www.birdwatching.com. This one, written by Diane Porter, involves acrobatic nuthatches, common feeder birds for those of us in northeastern Ohio.

Nuthatches don't retreat to the tropics each year in the manner of swallows, warblers, and other small birds that depend on insect food all year. When cold forces insects to go dormant or even to retreat underground, nuthatches can stay on their home ground and skip the dangers of migration. They change their diet to mostly nuts and seeds, along with the offerings of backyard bird watchers, and devote themselves almost exclusively to food. It's food that enables them to generate heat as fast as the weather sucks it away. Feathered in stone-cold black, grey, and white, the nuthatch is a ball of metabolic fire. Its heart beats over 400 times a minute when it's resting, perhaps three times that fast in flight.



Think Spring

Now that the gift-giving season has come and gone, the buy-me-now catalogs have been replaced by equally hopeful spring-garden catalogs. Even though we live in a condo, folks who cut down trees to send the catalogs don't seem to care that we have little or no garden space. The catalogs, however, are fun to page through on wintery days, for daydreaming if nothing else.

Here are some gleanings that will help the birds, and in turn help us. While planting the right kinds of bushes and trees for flowers to attract insects and birds, it's important to keep in mind that seeds and fruits at the end of the process are equally important to birds. According to Diane Porter at Birdwatching.com, daisies of all kinds form generous, nutritious seeds. And leave those seeds for the birds! Don't deadhead all the blossoms when blooming is over. The dried seed heads will bring you finches, sparrows, cardinals and towhees.

Birds also love zinnias for their seeds. It's one of the easier flowers to grow. Selection of colors and forms is enormous. As a bonus, zinnias will entice many species of butterflies into your garden.

In fact, the zinnia patch in your own garden is a great place to get close-up views and photos of butterflies. For a stunning experience of beauty, walk through your zinnia patch on a summer day with a close-up binocular and see individual scales of color on the wings of a butterfly!

You can easily bring hummingbirds into your garden

with the judicious choice of flowers. Hummingbirds are especially drawn to red. They check out every speck of red in the landscape, including stop signs and the scarf around your neck. So pull them into your garden with red flowers. And then deliver the goods by selecting flowers of any color, so long as they that give nectar.

Many hybrid flowers have been bred for size or color, at the expense of nectar. So look for seeds of heirloom flowers that still have the power to attract hummingbirds. Some of the best flowers for hummers include old-fashioned fuchsias, coral bells, bee balm, hibiscus, and petunias.

With their long bills, hummingbirds are built for probing into trumpet-shaped throats (corollas) of flowers. Hummingbirds will investigate everything in your garden, and if it gives nectar, they'll return.

For more attracting hummingbirds to the garden, see Diane Linsley's informative essay, Flowers for Hummingbirds, www.dianeseeds.com/flowers/hummingbirds.

State Forests Meet Stringent Standards

This news from the folks at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Ohio's 21 state forests have met stringent environmental and social standards required for certification under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program.

"This is a milestone achievement for the Ohio Division of Forestry," said Dr. David Lytle, state forester and chief, ODNR Division of Forestry. "Certification reflects the Division's dedication to sustainable management of Ohio's 200,000 acres of state forest land."

In order to achieve certification under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program, the Division demonstrated to independent, third-party auditors that its forest management met standards related to the protection of biodiversity and water quality, public involvement and transparency, and sustainable timber harvesting. The Division of Forestry will also undergo annual compliance audits in order to demonstrate its continued commitment to sustainable management.

With increasing consumer demand for "green" products, certification will also benefit Ohio's \$15 billion forest products industry. "Consumers purchasing products made from wood grown in Ohio's state forests can be assured they are making a 'green' choice," said Lytle. "Since almost all of the timber harvested from state forests is purchased by Ohio companies, certification will help Ohio's forest product industry expand their businesses into new markets."

For more information about certification, please visit the Division of Forestry's Web site at www.ohiodnr.com/forestry. For information about the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®, visit www.sfipprogram.org, and for information about the Forest Stewardship Council, visit www.fscus.org.

Ohio grows more acres of trees than corn and soybeans combined. The ODNR Division of Forestry works to promote the wise use and sustainable management of Ohio's public and private woodlands.