



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

Volume XXXVI

Number 4

March / April 2011

My Witt's End – by Clyde Witt, editor

Help Wanted

Reading through stories in this newsletter I realized there is a theme, a constant, a similar idea that keeps occurring. Programs about volunteers far from home making life better for animals, volunteers in our backyard helping birds, volunteers eradicating invasive species of plants, volunteers filling the role of citizen scientists; people helping people and animals.

This is a positive side of news we see too little of. When people ask, “What can I do?” in these troubled times, they need look no further than their back porch, maybe a bit further to their local park, or beyond Akron’s horizon to some mess they had no part in creating.

We have no chapter meetings in July and August because that’s when the executive committee takes a deep breath, meets to plan the coming year’s events, and start making phone calls, looking for those volunteers who would like to tell their tales. We need ideas. We need people to help find and call on others who might make entertaining and energetic speakers. We need people to fill openings on the executive board. We need some help.

It’s spring and time for spring training. Only now it’s not about “training,” it’s about playing the game. Now’s the time to step up and take your turn at bat.

Come to the next meeting with your ideas. Talk with Mark or drop him an eMail at Mark.Purdy@goodrich.com, to explain your idea or to say, put me in, coach.

Final Programs of the Year

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we participate in 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 Get You Out and About

For the most up-to-the-minute information on meetings, bird walks or other events in our area, check the chapter’s Web site, www.akronaudubon.

April 26 Chapter members Fred Groeger and his daughter, Jane Allen, were Gulf oil spill volunteers less than a year ago. They deployed to the Gulf and spent two exhausting, but rewarding, weeks down there. This father and daughter team travelled from the tip of Louisiana deep into Mississippi, spotting wildlife (oiled and otherwise), walking the shoreline

looking for oil and conducting interviews. They made several trips into the Gulf with US fish and Wildlife, Coast Guard, and the Sea Turtle Recovery Team. You don’t want to miss the timely, pictorially outstanding program from people who were there.

May 24 We’ve never been told that any of our monthly programs were stinkers. Well, in May, we might break that run of success. Skunk Haven, an animal rehab center specializing in skunks, has agreed to tell us about the marvelous work of this little-know organization. The presentation will include at least two live skunks so you’ll want to get here early for a front-row seat.

June 28 It’s time to get out and enjoy the beauties of Bath Nature Preserve—and to get some fine food and entertainment in the process. The Annual GAAS Picnic at the Bath Nature Preserve Biology Field Station will top off our meeting schedule for the year with bird walks and a special presentation by Dr. Todd Blackledge, Biology Department, The University of Akron. People still talk about Todd’s presentation of spiders in March, 2008. He’s keeping this



year's topic a secret. Once again, the chapter will provide the necessary soft drink beverages. We ask that you bring a potluck dish to share, along with your own plates and flatware. If time permits we'll organize some quick walks around the property looking for Bobolinks, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Eastern Meadowlarks. If you prefer, show up early and walk the grounds on your own.

Profile on Purple Martins

Last year was a good one for the Portage Lakes Purple Martin Association. It set a record for number of Martins fledged—481—the forecast had been for 500. Because of banding and monitoring efforts of the association's members, it was noted that five second-year males nested in 2010, a small percentage of the 30 hoped for. On the positive side, there was a total of 120 nesting pairs.

Nearby, Paul Troyer, in Riceland, south of the Portage Lakes area, expanded his number of nesting sites, which had an impact on the migrating birds. Troyer had more than 140 nesting pairs and fledged more than 600 babies.

Banding program results are: all 481 fledglings banded, plus 51 Tree Swallows.

If you missed the Buckeye Martinfest last summer, plan to attend this year's event, Saturday, June 25th. The association is partnering with ODNR—Division of Parks and Recreation, ODNR—Division of Wildlife and Metro Parks Serving Summit County. Other events you'll find of interest are: April 10th 2:00 p.m. at the new State Park (Manchester Road) Butterfly Trail where 10 Tree Swallow houses will be installed, and June 18th, 2:00 p.m. at State Mill Launch Ramp when Boy Scouts will help with banding.

International Migratory Bird Day May 14

You don't have to migrate far to enjoy the wonders of International Migratory Bird Day. The chapter will be hosting a bird walk, in association with the University of Akron, at the Bath Nature Preserve. Starting time is 8 a.m. Bring your binoculars, water and sun screen. Meeting will be at the main trailhead parking lot.

Think Spring

It's time to get down and not-so dirty Saturday, April 16, at the Bath Nature Preserve. It's that fun-time spring event, our Annual Garlic Mustard Day. Join Dr. Randy Mitchell, University of Akron, and other chapter members in this fun project, pulling nasty aliens out of the earth. Sunday, April 24, is the backup date if the weather is inhospitable. We'll start at 1p.m., meeting at the main trailhead parking lot. A bonus for working on this project is spotting early migrants such as towhees, thrushes and thrashers, ground-hugging birds that won't give you an early case of that dreaded Warbler-Neck affliction.

Old News is Still News

The results of our Annual Bird seed sale reached the editor's cluttered desk too late for the winter newsletter, so here they are. The good news is that we made a net profit of \$1,412.51. This was a decrease in net profit from the previous year of \$460. Put another way, that loss is about what it costs to produce one issue of this newsletter.

Breeding Bird Census Needs Volunteers

Time to sharpen your pencils and your eyes. (Ouch!) The dates are set for the GAAS breeding bird census, Friday, June 10th through Sunday, June 19th. This broad time period covers two weekends, when most people have time for full-day efforts in the field, and to hedge a bit against the weather. This census project is quite easy and, since you'll most likely be in the field during the period anyway, why not just make careful notes on what you see?

It's said that we want to keep the common birds common, however, to do that, we need to count the birds to be able to say what is common. Volunteers count birds both seen and heard in an assigned area of Summit County. Everybody is looking for data these days so the census results are dispersed in a number of ways. Check out some past results at www.akronaudubon.org. If you can't join us, but you hear woodcocks, nighthawks or owls during those dates, we'd love to know about it.

Contact Doug Vogus, (330) 865-6706 (eMail vogeye@yahoo.com) or Ann Chasar, (330) 467-3664 (eMail ascdwc43@yahoo.com) for more information. If you are new to birding you are welcome to join us and work on your birding skills.

Getting Out and About

Here, from our friends at the Metro Parks Serving Summit County, are some interesting and challenging events:

Saturday, April 16, 2 p.m. **EARTH WEEK HIKE**. Join Naturalist Meghan Doran to hike Spring Hollow Trail in celebration of Earth Day. Look for signs of spring and listen for early migratory birds. Hampton Hills Park, main entrance.

Friday, April 22, 7:30 a.m. **MAP AND COMPASS BASICS**. What are the squiggly lines on a contour map and which direction is south? Find out during this easy-to-follow class with outdoor recreation volunteers and Naturalist Dave Gates. Then, test your new skills with a simple compass course on park grounds. Program is great for scouts and leaders. Nature Realm visitors center.

FRIDAY FIRESTONE FEATHERS & FRIENDS

New and experienced birdwatchers join Naturalist Pat Rydquist every Friday morning through May 20 for spring bird walks along the Tuscarawas River migratory flyway. This is an excellent opportunity to see avian travelers on their way to summer breeding areas. Binoculars are recommended.

All participants will receive a checklist and final tally of birds seen this season. Firestone/Tuscarawas Meadows. Fridays, beginning April 15, 7:30 a.m.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

Bring items to be recycled and receive a free green giveaway, limited to the first 100 individuals. Acceptable items include cardboard, phone books, newspapers, magazines, books and e-waste (e.g., batteries, cell phones, computers, VCRs and radios). TVs will not be accepted. Residential drop-offs only, please. Firestone/Coventry Oaks. Saturday, April 23, 8 p.m.

BIG BIRD NIGHT: WOODCOCKS & OWLS

Join Naturalist Mike Greene to discover the amazing woodcock and witness the male bird's spectacular courtship flight over nearby fields. When the woodcocks quit at dark, enjoy a short night hike in search of owls in the forest. Bring binoculars and flashlights. Silver Creek/Pheasant Run. Sunday, April 24, 8:30 a.m.

BIRDING IN CLINTON

Join Naturalist Meghan Doran for this fourth annual series of bird walks along the Towpath Trail. We'll follow the spring migration over the next few weeks, discovering which species pass through or stay to nest. Towpath/Clinton. Saturday, April 30, 1 p.m.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Most spring wildflowers bloom only for a short time—some only a day or two. Don't miss out on this exploration of the 1.6-mile Spring Hollow Trail with Naturalist Mike Greene, discovering past and present uses for flowering plants. Hampton Hills/Main Entrance.

To see the full list of events offered by the Metro Parks system, visit its Web site at: <http://www.summitmetroparks.org/>

Enjoy Migration Via Computer

The fascinating Web site, eNature.com, has a plethora of great stories and ideas of how to enjoy the out of doors. It also comes up with some great indoor activities for adults and kids.

One of its current gems is the ability to follow spring migration on your computer. This will be especially helpful for those planning their "sick days" when the only known antidote for your illness is a trip to Magee Marsh.

Here's how it works: For each species there is a specific, optimal time when the birds need to arrive in their breeding areas. The strongest males arrive first and stake out the prime territories, often in the same location where they nested the previous year. When females arrive, they select the males that occupy the best habitats for raising young. There are maps that accompany this feature to illustrate the timing of migration, showing the average arrival dates for 50 species

of birds as they return to North America in spring. The dates are based on the observations of professional and amateur birders who monitored these arrivals over many years. You click on a region to learn which of 50 species is, or should be, in the area where you plan to bird. A pull-down menu lets you select a more specific date for birds that will arrive before that date. For example, if you select April 30, you find that among other species, Scarlet Tanagers typically start arriving in this area on April 16.

Birding Classes Available at Magee Marsh

If you want the best education, you go to the best source. Simple. So if you want to learn about birds, what better place to study than Magee Marsh? This season the Bird Center at Magee Marsh is offering basic birding classes on April 13 and 20, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. All you have to do to register is call Mary Warren, (419) 898-0960, or send her an eMail at, mary.warren@dnr.state.oh.us.

Not So-Light Reading



This just in from our friends at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In two centuries of American ornithology, The Birds of North America (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/>) is only the fourth comprehensive reference covering the life histories of North America's breeding birds. This source provides a quantum leap in information beyond what historic figures were able to assemble. The print version of BNA was completed in 2002—18 volumes, 18,000 pages—a joint 10 year project of the American Ornithologists' Union, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Now as an online project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BNA is becoming a living resource. Account contents are updated frequently, with contributions from researchers, citizen scientists, and designated reviewers and editors. In addition, BNA Online contains image and video galleries showing plumages, behaviors, habitat, nests and eggs, and more. And most online BNA accounts now feature recordings of the songs and calls of their species, recordings selected from the extensive collection of Cornell's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds. Future work will enhance BNA's audio and video contributions, speed revisions via efforts coordinated online, and provide a significant boost to the number of photos available to subscribers. Stay tuned!