



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

Volume XXXVII

Number 2

October / November 2011

My Witt's End – by Clyde Witt, editor

One Strike and You Could Be Out

Typically, people tell me where to go rather than the other way 'round. I'll make an exception this month, however, and tell you where to go, or where to be: October 25, 6:30 p.m., Mingo Shelter.

This month's meeting promises to be one of the more significant events on our outstanding calendar this year, not to say any of our meetings should be missed. We're fortunate to host Dr. Richard Dolbeer, an internationally known scientist, formerly with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who specializes in research projects to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife.

Dr. Dolbeer's list of accomplishments could fill this newsletter. Suffice it to say, when this man speaks, people, especially those in the aviation industry, listen.

Whether you travel by plane, car or bicycle, close encounters with our feathered or furred friends happen. News of airplane-versus-goose competitions only make it into the news when a heads-up pilot is able to land the plane in the Hudson River—or disaster results. Yet, bird strikes happen more often than we realize.

This program, "Sharing the skies: Advancing the Science of Ornithology and Aviation Safety," is not meant to scare you, but it probably will. Dr. Dolbeer will tell us what's being done to prevent, or at least avoid, disaster in situations where only one of the offending parties has control.

Program Schedule

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and chili supper. June is our annual picnic, so the meeting place will most likely be 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 maps at www.summitmetroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The meeting begins promptly at 7:00 p.m., usually with a short, informative, business session. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend.

Another Great Program Line Up

At press time the full schedule of programs had not been confirmed. Those we do have, however, are outstanding—as usual. This year the executive committee spanned the globe for a mix of programs to serve all interests. The schedule leans heavily toward the avian side of nature, with some interesting twists. Bird programs will be balanced with informative presentations featuring other natural and man-made phenomena.

OCTOBER 25 Fasten your seatbelts and be sure your tray-table is in the full and upright position. This is a program every frequent (or not-so-frequent flyer) will enjoy. Ripped from the front pages of the news, Dr. Richard Dolbeer, Science Advisor, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, Bird Strike Committee USA, will tell us about bird strikes and aircraft. The full program title is: "Sharing the skies: Advancing the Science of Ornithology and Aviation Safety."

NOVEMBER 22 Again, tapping into our vast pool of local talent, Pat Rydquist and Megan Doran, from Metro Parks, Serving Summit County, will present a program that will enhance your bird identification skills multifold. They'll explain classifying bird song by sonograms, those jagged little pictures starting to show up in field guides. Don't be spooked by the technology aspects of this program. Think of it as another tool to help identify those pesky birds that would rather sing than show their faces in the forest.

Editor's Note: Until we figure out how to implant magnets into paper so you can easily hang this Newsletter in its appropriate spot, keep this one pinned on your fridge by any means possible. The chapter executive committee has opted to print only four Newsletters again this season, which means you won't see another until January. Inside there's important information about programs and your final opportunity to order from the Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale. For an up-to-the-minute schedule attend the meetings, stay tuned—and keep your eye on the chapter's Web site, www.akronaudubon.org.

DECEMBER 18 Annual Christmas Bird Count. For the umpteenth time, chapter members and friends will take to the woods, along with thousands of others around the world for the Audubon Christmas Count. As has been our custom, we will also have a chili supper at the Mingo Shelter following the count. Details to follow at the chapter meetings and on the Web site.

And when the new year starts, we'll have programs on emotionally and politically charged issues, such as genetically modified food, the science of climate influences on natural phenomena such as bird migration, and acoustic communication among birds—just to name a few. All of these, and their program dates, will be described in future newsletters.

Never Too Early

We say this every year, but doesn't it seem retailers are rushing the holiday season? When it comes to purchasing 2012 calendars, it's never too early since there are so many choices. From the Audubon Newswire comes this: The 2012 Audubon Calendars are in stores now. National Parks, Birds of America, Green World, 365 Songbirds, 365 Butterflies, Nature, Wildflowers, Songbirds Daily Muse (Weekly Calendar), Birds Gallery Calendar (Page-A-Day) and the Engagement Calendar. You can search for them online or at your local Barnes and Noble bookseller.

Audubon Licensing is proud to welcome Exhart to the Audubon family of licensed partners. This whimsical AUDUBON branded line features six iconic birds (American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Bluebird and Baltimore Oriole) as wind chimes, garden stakes and statues with a motion activated sound chip. The garden stakes brighten any potted plant, indoor or outdoor. To find your nearest retailer 800-775-5503.

Smart Phones Make You Smart(er)

I don't actually kneel at the alter of New Technology, however, there are some things that amaze, often leaving me to say, "OMG." Top of the list is the iPhone and its clones. Unless you're out birding with the kind of person who knows virtually everything about everything (You know who you are, stay in your seats.), field guides are a must. You could, however, fill a backpack with books, until now. Enter, the Smart Phone.

I've tried several birding guide apps and chose iBird Explorer Pro, pricey (there are some free versions) but worth it. When it comes to trees and plants, however, I've been at a loss, at least until now. Here are a couple freebies you should know about. Both still have some bugs, but then, nothing's perfect, especially in cyberspace.

First is Leafsnap. Ever wonder about the trees you pass on your hikes? Thanks to a new smartphone app by the Smithsonian, nature lovers can learn more about many local trees.

With Leafsnap, you simply take a picture of a leaf and get a response in seconds (hmmmm) that matches the image against a growing database of trees, identifies the likely species, and provides high-resolution photos and additional information. Developers released Leafsnap in May with information on a variety of East Coast trees. The company plans to expand their database to include all tree species in the Northeast and, eventually, all the trees of North America.

Leafsnap is the first in a series of electronic field guides being developed by researchers from Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and the Smithsonian Institution. This free mobile app uses visual recognition software to help identify tree species from photographs of their leaves. Leafsnap contains a field guide of beautiful high-resolution images of leaves, flowers, fruit, petiole, seeds and bark, which you can check if you know the name of the tree. Two aspects of this app bothered me. First, you have to "snap" the leaf against a white background; not always easy when you're in the woods. The second challenge is that it takes a loooooong time for the results to come in. Sort of like watching election returns in Chicago.

The other botanical problem solver is TreeBook, less sophisticated, however, equally useful. TreeBook is a guide, or key, to 100 most common trees in North America, produced by Forester Steve Nix. The application is easy to use, has an intuitive interface that provides an easy way to determine the type of tree you're looking at. It has images, a search function, synonyms for trees, layman terms (!), and for the more scientifically minded among us, detailed terminology. The images are hand drawn, along with photos, range maps and a thorough description of each tree. I found it as easy to use as a printed field guide, minus the weight and expense.

Even More Free Stuff

If your bookcases at home are beginning to sag and groan from the weight of field guides you seldom use, yet you think someday you might need that book on spiders, etc., here's another electronic assist.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has a great Web site for species identification. Currently covered are birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians, butterflies and skip-pers, spiders, insects and invertebrates. Visit www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/species_a_to_z/SpeciesGuideIndex/tabid/6491/Default.aspx, and you'll find attractive icons leading you to the main categories. That's the good news. The less-than-good news is once you're there, you'll have to know the name of the critter to find it among the listed species. There's no way to "key out" the butterfly or snake you have in hand. The Web site is great as a reference source since it provides a lot more information than a regular field. Its obvious limitation is that you can't get to that information unless you have a name. Nonetheless, it's a great effort by ODNR to get more information into our heads, and it's free.

Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale

We've confirmed the date with Copley Feed for our Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale, November 5, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Plan your purchases, however, be prepared for sticker shock. According to Mark Roesner of Copley Feed, and the folks at Oliger Seed (our generous partners in this venture), pricing of sunflower products has gone crazy this season for a couple reasons: The huge jump in sunflower cost forced by a drought in Russia, coupled with excessive rain in the Midwest of this country. Actually, that's a single reason—the weather.

We'll have the usual menu of avian attractions, plus peanuts (shelled, 25-lb bags) a favorite of Blue Jays and those fat fuzzy brown birds with big fluffy tails.

As has been our tradition, this year's wild bird seed sale is possible through the generous cooperation of Copley Feed & Supply store on Copley Circle, 1468 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road.

Our seed is fresh and prices are competitive with retail offerings in the area. This is the chapter's only fund raising effort. Profits support our educational programs and newsletters.

A special thanks go to Nancy and Mark Roesner of Copley Feed for their usual outstanding generosity. And let's give an additional shout-out to Joyce and Wolfgang Pelz, and the good folks at Naturalawn of America, for their efforts in coordinating this project.

Order Deadline is October 31. Pick up is November 5 at Copley Feed

Please mail your check, payable to Greater Akron Audubon Society, and completed order form ASAP to:

JoyWolf Enterprises
PO Box 26278
Akron, OH 44319

All order forms must be in by October 31 to accurately place the order with Copley Feed.

		How many?	Total \$
Oil Sunflower, 50 pounds	\$40.00	_____	_____
Niger seed, 10 pounds	\$13.00	_____	_____
Wild bird mix:			
20 pounds	\$11.00	_____	_____
50 pounds	\$22.00	_____	_____
Bird Banquet, 35 pounds	\$25.00	_____	_____
Songbird Choice, 40 pounds	\$33.00	_____	_____
Peanuts, 25 pounds	\$32.00	_____	_____
I would like to donate to the Chapter general fund			_____
		TOTAL	_____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____ **(In case we must call.)**

*Pick-up will be Saturday, November 5 from 9AM to 1PM, at Copley Feed.
All seed not picked up by 1PM is donated to the Seiberling Nature Realm.*