



GREATER AKRON

# AUDUBON *Matters*

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## September Meeting

The first meeting of the 1998-99 Greater Akron Audubon season will be held on September 22nd. "The Last Great Wilderness" is a superb slide presentation about the last great American frontier, The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. The



program will be presented by Lenny Kohm, nationally known photographer and conservationist who has volunteered his time, money, and expertise to get the word out to the public on the current threats by the petroleum industry that would despoil this vast pristine wilderness for monetary benefit. Come out to the first of our entertaining and informative programs, and kick off the new season right!

The October 27th meeting will feature Dr. Randall Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell is an Assistant Professor of Biology at The University of Akron. He is in charge of the project to convert a portion of the former Firestone property in Bath Township into a science and nature center for educational use by the University and for recreational use by the citizens of Bath. Dr. Mitchell will share with us the University's plans for the property and explain why this is land worth preserving.

As we have in the past, the GAAS meets at the Seiberling Naturealm in Akron; the meeting begins at 7:30 PM.

## Witt's End

### *Who Are We?*

I stood at the near-center of the Pawnee National Grasslands in Colorado. A Western meadowlark, singing like no one was listening, perched on an eight-inch prickly-pear cactus 10 meters to my left. On my right, 28 Auduboners from 11 states and three foreign countries discussed the stark beauty of this vast critical habitat. It stretches 65 miles east-to-west

and 30 miles north-to-south. Conversation was frequently interrupted by male McCowen's longspurs showing off their display flights. Buzzings from lark buntings, upset by the presence of humans on their nesting grounds, turned our heads. Burrowing owls displayed the same curiosity about us as we did toward them. Except they did not require binoculars.

The Audubon mission is the protection and preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife. I thought about that frequently during the National Convention in July. I asked myself what we at Greater Akron Audubon Society do to support that mission. The answer was quick and easy: We do virtually nothing. Sure, we pay our dues, put out some bird seed and attend an occasional chapter meeting. Audubon is much more than monthly entertainment. This year, the executive committee is working on a schedule of programs focused on the Audubon mission. Most programs will be on subjects you've not heard or seen before. It's exciting because it's not the same old stuff. The committee's task is to make programs educational as well as entertaining. We want to bring some understanding of how we humans fit into this world of birds and other wildlife. Talking with other chapter leaders and Audubon officers makes me realize how our chapter lacks a point of focus. We don't have a nature center, National Refuge or critical habitat location to work with. We do have schools filled with young people who need to hear the Audubon message and that is a good place to start. Plus, we are fortunate to have an exceptional system of parks, anchored by the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area.

If you think there is nothing you can do, remember, we all have three things to offer: our heads, hearts or pocketbooks. We need your ideas and your help. If you can't be here physically, your money goes to education and advocacy of the Audubon mission.

—Clyde Witt, President

## Short Takes

### Solid Waste Disposal

Who amongst us doesn't harbor some hazardous material that we don't really need? So here's the scoop on how to get rid of it in an ecologically responsible way:

### Summit Center

Accepts: Household hazardous wastes including paints, solvents, stains, shellacs, sealers and coatings, pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers, household cleaners, automotive fluids, aerosol cans, scrap tires, and cardboard.

Where: 1201 Graham Road in Stow, behind the Carter Lumber Co.

Hours: 1-4 pm on Tuesdays, and 6:30-10 pm on Wednesdays, running through October 30.

Cost: Free, except for a \$1 fee for every scrap tire.

### **Think Global**

On September 23rd Ellen Marshall, Program Officer for Population and Women of the United Nations Foundation, will be speaking in Cleveland. Her topic is "International Cooperation in the 21st century: The Growing Role of the Non-governmental Sector." Tickets are \$15 (\$12 for students). If you think you'd like to attend this important lecture, contact the Cleveland Council on World Affairs at (216) 781-3730.

### **Bath Preserve**

Since the Bath Nature Preserve is not currently open to the public, it can only be visited on occasional guided tours. Luckily, there is one scheduled for Saturday October 10. Contact the Bath Parks Department at 330-666-4007 for a tour reservation and further information.

## **The Art of Pishing**

The keynote speaker for the 1998 Lake Erie Wing Watch program was Pete Dunne, Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory in New Jersey and author of several birding books. Dunne gave a most informative and entertaining talk on "The Art of Pishing". "Pishing", practiced by many birders, is the act of making sounds with the intended result of inducing shy birds to make themselves visible. During Dunne's talk, he speculated that St. Francis of Assisi may have been the original pisher. He also noted that pishing works best in the New World—many European birds are unimpressed by pishing and typically don't respond.

He then proceeded to give the audience a lesson on how to become capable pishers. First, location is everything. For example, even the best pisher will get nowhere pishing in a parking lot. Instead, you should be

next to or amongst the area of shrubbery or brambles where birds are hiding. Dunne described five levels of pishing. (While difficult to describe verbally, pishing sounds are even more difficult to describe in print; so I'll not attempt.)

1. Basic pish: This is believed to mimic a bird distress call. Other birds then come to identify the problem.
2. Basic pish + stutter step: A slightly more advanced pish. Designed to attract birds who are unimpressed by the basic pish.
3. Squeal pish: Mimics a bird in severe trouble (in a raptor's talons, for example). Just like humans, birds come to \*rubber-neck\* and observe the scene of the accident.
4. Owl pish: An imitation of a Screech, Saw-Whet, or Barred Owl. This attracts bird \*show-offs\*, who come to see the threat first-hand, show their bravery, and mock the predator.
5. Chip note: Used for sparrows, as they tend to not respond to pishes 1-4.

Dunne had the entire audience attempting to pish. As you might imagine, this was not a pretty sight to see or hear. However, it is safe to say that all learned something that may help them on their next field trip. Finally, Dunne stressed the importance of responsible pishing:

1. Don't pish in extremely cold weather (under 20 degrees Fahrenheit). This can cause birds to waste valuable energy and jeopardize their winter survival chances.
2. Don't pish in a situation where raptors are prevalent. You might distract a bird and allow it to become easy prey for a raptor.
3. Don't pish if it might disturb other birders or hikers. Let's face it—pishing can be annoying to others.

In summary, skillful pishing, if used appropriately, can greatly enhance your ability to spot and identify birds in the wild. So, if you don't already pish, give it a try!

[\* Lake Erie Wing Watch is collection of organizations devoted to promoting birding in Erie, Lorain, and Ottawa counties. For more information, including an excellent guide to birding sites in the Wing Watch territory, call 1-800-255-ERIE.]

—Mark Purdy

## 1998 Summer Bird Count Results

Most notable birds: Laughing Gull, new to our count, seen and heard while circling a small lake near the Hardy Rd. landfill in north Akron. One Common Loon was on Springfield Lake, the other on Indigo Lake in the Cuyahoga valley; both were immature birds. Brown Creepers were seen by several parties, the Hermit Thrushes and Canada Warblers were in the Happy Days area of CVNRA, Winter Wren also in CVNRA. The Mourning Warbler was seen in Bath. It was a great year for Yellow-billed Cuckoos and hawks of all species. Many of you commented about the unusual number of fledglings - many species nested a couple of weeks earlier than usual following our very warm spring. Thanks to all our dedicated birders.

2 Common Loon	8 Black-billed Cuckoo	8 Brown Creeper	2 Canada Warbler
2 Pied-billed Grebe	42 Yellow-billed Cuckoo	94 Carolina Wren	4 Yellow-breasted Chat
12 Double-cr. Cormorant	4 Eastern Screech Owl	311 House Wren	122 Scarlet Tanager
228 Great Blue Heron	4 Great Horned Owl	1 Winter Wren	903 Northern Cardinal
38 Green Heron	10 Barred Owl	13 Marsh Wren	115 Rose-br. Grosbeak
5 Mute Swan	16 Common Nighthawk	70 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	267 Indigo Bunting
1109 Canada Goose	545 Chimney Swift	94 Eastern Bluebird	105 Rufous-sided Towhee
158 Wood Duck	64 Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	59 Veery	333 Chipping Sparrow
583 Mallard	58 Belted Kingfisher	3 Hermit Thrush	205 Field Sparrow
1 Am. Widgeon	193 Red-bellied Woodpkr.	194 Wood Thrush	28 Savannah Sparrow
1 Ring-necked Duck	278 Downy Woodpecker	1823 American Robin	4 Grasshopper Sparrow
1 Ruddy Duck	66 Hairy Woodpecker	522 Gray Catbird	810 Song Sparrow
112 Turkey Vulture	101 Northern Flicker	1 Mockingbird	110 Swamp Sparrow
6 Sharp-shinned Hawk	26 Pileated Woodpecker	21 Brown Thrasher	51 Bobolink
26 Cooper's Hawk	165 Eastern Wood Pewee	300 Cedar Waxwing	1217 Red-winged Blackbird
19 Red-shouldered Hawk	124 Acadian Flycatcher	2081 European Starling	38 Eastern Meadowlark
9 Broad-winged Hawk	5 Alder Flycatcher	11 White-eyed Vireo	1369 Common Grackle
71 Red-tailed Hawk	117 Willow Flycatcher	12 Blue-headed Vireo	277 Brown Headed Cowbird
15 American Kestrel	3 Least Flycatcher	48 Yellow-throated Vireo	14 Orchard Oriole
3 Peregrine Falcon	72 Eastern Phoebe	105 Warbling Vireo	193 Baltimore Oriole
1 Ring-necked Pheasant	79 Great Crested Flycatcher	385 Red-eyed Vireo	17 Purple Finch
14 Wild Turkey	60 Eastern Kingbird	70 Blue-winged Warbler	517 House Finch
1 Virginia Rail	8 Horned Lark	351 Yellow Warbler	979 American Goldfinch
1 Sora	19 Purple Martin	4 Chestnut-sided Warbler	1495 House Sparrow
2 American Coot	189 Tree Swallow	30 Black-thr. Green Warb.	
187 Killdeer	150 N. Rough-winged Sw.	57 Cerulean Warbler	
13 Spotted Sandpiper	683 Bank Swallow	1 Black & White Warbler	26280 Total Birds
3 American Woodcock	282 Barn Swallow	44 American Redstart	123 Total Species
131 Ringbilled Gull	638 Blue Jay	52 Ovenbird	
4 Herring Gull	702 American Crow	8 Louisiana Waterthrush	297.5 Party Hours
1 Laughing Gull	586 Black-cap. Chickadee	1 Mourning Warbler	49 Participants in
263 Rock Dove	470 E. Tufted Titmouse	325 Common Yellowthroat	24 parties
852 Mourning Dove	234 White-breasted Nuthatch	131 Hooded Warbler	

Thanks to the following volunteers:

Virginia Baumgardner, Dave Brumfield, Jenny Brumfield, Garnet Byrne, Bob Capanna, Dwight & Ann Chasar, George & Sandy Cull, Phyllis Devlin, Allan & Susan Dooley, Lois Eckart, Paul Ellsworth, Mary Ann Faruque, Bob Furst, Craig Griffin, Pat Haddad, Rob Harlan, Diane Johnson, Wayne Kraus, Gloria Markuten, Marie Morgan, Hope Orr, Joyce & Wolfgang Pelz, Ed Pierce, Mark & Claire Purdy, Mary Reinthal, Jim Reyda, Larry Rosche, Pat Rydquist, Olivia Siegel, Susan Sprengnether, Woody Stover, Erica Stux, Bert Szabo, Bill & Michele Tucker, Carol & Jim Tveekrem, Doug Vogus, James Vogus, Sandy Wagner, Clyde Witt, Howard & Marian Zehnder

Carol Tveekrem