



WETLAND *matters*

Published bi-monthly for the Friends and Members of Oxbow, Inc.

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No Doubt About It, Birdathon 2004 Was Lots of Fun

Birdathon 2004 made beguiling history. A new team won the contest - and The Golden Starling- severing the seven year championship run of *Fire & Brimstone Birders* and two *Geriatric Gents* decided on retirement. Well, one...maybe.

Plus this was the first time in 17 years that neither the Stenger team nor the Styer team finished Numero Uno.

What's more history-making, the weather cooperated: no rain and the delayed arrival of the cicadas, which of itself the latter is another 17 year phenomenon.

Cincinnati Nature Center Team #3, *The Dawn to Duck Patrol*, consisting of Jon Seymour, Dave Brinkman, Don Morse and Bob Foppe, found 149 species defeating *Fire & Brimstone Birders* Jay and Jack Stenger, Joe Bens and Paul Wharton by two species. (Sound like Birdsong and Smarty Jones?) This leaves Oxbow Inc. President Jon Seymour's face a bit pink-tinged but many years ago before he became affiliated with Oxbow Inc. he birdathoned for the Nature Center and, always faithful like the U.S. Marines, continued in this fashion. Still Jon managed over the years to secure very substantial pledges from his friends at P&G for Oxbow Inc. This year, in another history-making decision, in lieu of pledges, Jon sought Oxbow Inc. memberships. To date, they total 17-- that magic number.

Geriatric Gents' Karl Maslowski, 91, informed us that he and George Laycock, 83, who have never missed having a team in the Birdathon, are turning the reins over to Randy Lakes and Jerry Meyer. Karl says he has enjoyed every year but he can no longer hear higher frequency bird sounds "and that's 90% of the birds and that bothers the bejeebers out of me." George, however, says "We may be back." Just like the cicadas.

Team Standings

Final scores were :

The Dawn to Duck Patrol -- 149 species

Fire & Brimstone Birders, Team # 2-- 147 species

Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers, Team #3, Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger and Erich Baumgardner-- 134 species

Geriatric Gents & Juniors, Team #1, Karl Maslowski,

George Laycock, Jerry Meyer, Bob Schrimper, Jay Lehman and Randy Lakes -- 115 species

No-See'ums West, Team #6, Jane and Dave Styer -- 105 species.

The Tri-Colored Harem, Team #5, the sole women's team, Sr. Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller and Sarah Krailler -- 96 species

No-See'ums Mid-West, Team #4, Steve Pelikan, Mike Busam, Bob Lacker and Charlie Saunders -- 71 species

Most Thrilling Sightings

Wetland Matters asked each of the seven teams what was their most thrilling sighting, biggest disappointment if any
Continued on the next page.....



The newest Oxbow Inc. team in competition, and the only women's team, is The Tri-Colored Harem. L to r: Sr. Marty Dermody, S.C., Katherine Miller and Sarah Krailler.

and other than the sighting, what else was especially exciting.

Jon Seymour reports three thrilling sightings. "Our first bird in the scope at 5:00 p.m. on Friday was a Brown Pelican. This bird showed up in the Spring Valley area at the beginning of May and is the sixth state record for a Brown Pelican. Bob Poppe and I both scouted the area in advance and 20 minutes prior to the start of the Birdathon, Bob found the bird in the Roxanne Road gravel pits and we kept it in sight until the five o'clock start. Next we saw a strange looking Great Blue Heron land in Spring Valley and getting the scopes out we found it was a not-so-strange Sandhill Crane.

"At Gilmore Ponds we watched a Great Egret take flight followed closely by another white egret which seemed awfully small. The binoculars revealed the small size and the brown-topped head of a Cattle Egret. These three rarities-- the Brown Pelican, Sandhill Crane and Cattle Egret -- are seldom seen (in the case of the Brown Pelican, never) during Birdathon."

Karl Maslowski's team chalked up a spectacular sighting on a farm in Adams County behind their favorite bakery: a Scarlet Tanager and a Summer Tanager in an almost bare tree caught together in the lens of their binoculars. They also loved hearing their Chuck-will's-widow whistling call.

Fire & Brimstone Birders were delighted to see a Little Blue Heron, a white immature, at Oxbow Lake and not much later two more Little Blues flying along the Great Miami. *The Tri-Colored Harem* was charmed by a Gray-cheeked Thrush at Miami Whitewater.

The most thrilling sighting for Jerry Lippert was "a male Black-throated Blue Warbler in full, impeccable plumage." Jerry says, "Matt Stenger heard this bird as we walked a road at Shawnee Lookout Park. Within a short time we had found him feeding at nearly eye level, and at close range, in the trees downslope from the road. Come to think of it, every time I've seen this bird it's been fairly low to the ground compared to other warblers. The Black-throated Blue is noted for being fairly tame, which could explain the close looks it often gives. This one remained in plain view for a minute or more, a long look in the world of warbler watching." Jerry added a species to his life list this Birdathon: a Marsh Wren seen near Summit Lake in Indiana.

The only news from the California couple, Jane and Dave Styer, *No-See'ums West*, is their total count. They intended to go south for the Birdathon. Could they be lost in the rain forest of Costa Rica? No worry, that's a birder's paradise.

Charlie Saunders of *No-See'ums Mid-West* has a confession: they cheated, they broke the rules. Instead of staying within Birdathon boundaries, they decided to explore Red River Gorge in Kentucky, especially to find breeding Swainson's Warblers, birds that cannot be found in Ohio. "As we spent five hours hoping to see the Swainson's Warblers in rhododendron thickets--thick, impenetrable vegetation where it is nearly impossible to see birds -- we did hear six Swainson's Warblers sing," Charlie gleefully remembers. "Then Steve and Bob got decent looks at a single bird but Mike and I did not." Mike rated finding a Bobolink before they ever reached the Gorge "a powdered doughnut bird" and treated himself to a doughnut. Seeing and hearing the Swainson's was a lifer for Steve Pelikan, the high point of this Birdathon. Even without a doughnut.

Most teams were hungry for more and more birds in their binoculars. The biggest disappointment for the *Fortune Seekers* was not breaking 140 species. One hard blow was seeing Forster's Terns at Summit Lake before the opening hour of Birdathon but since they never returned at the proper time they could not be counted.

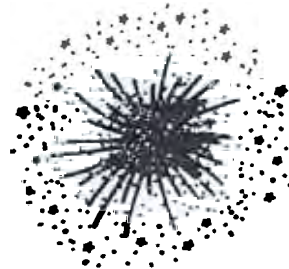
Sr. Marty's *Harem* thought the weather was so beautiful that a few dozen species got together and moved out while the going was good. Jay Stenger likes a little rain, "not much, but a little seems to bring out waves of migrants," he believes. "The more miserable we are, the better the birding." His team is never disappointed with Birdathon. "We enjoy it so much. You could say we're disappointed when the event, and it is an event, ends and we have to wait another full year."

Steve Pelikan says, "Disappointments? NONE. It is never disappointing to get into the field with good friends." Even though Steve's team count was low this year because of the hours spent in those rhododendron thickets, some of their sponsors increased their pledges. "As one person put it", according to Steve, " 'Oxbow Inc. should suffer for your incompetence...' "

Steve's teammate, Charlie Saunders, found it interesting that they missed seeing Pigeons, Mallards and especially Cowbirds. "Since Cowbirds lay their eggs in other birds' nests, they have contributed to the population decline of many songbirds," he explains. "Cowbirds have spread from the Great Plains to the eastern U.S. as settlers cleared the forests. In the absence of Cowbirds, Red River Gorge seems like a factory for production of Hooded Warblers. We expected a low count because of our lack of habitat diversity but were dumbfounded both by the difficulty of seeing birds and the difficulty of finding migrants of any sort. After a dawn Whip-poor-will, I did not actually see a bird for two hours! As for migrants, we only saw two individual birds and we only heard one. Given that there were more migrants in my back yard the day before and the day after the Birdathon, I can only conclude that migrants bypass the Red River Gorge, for reasons I do not know."

Geriatric Gents & Juniors hated not seeing a single Kestrel.

According to Jon Seymour, *The Dawn to Duck Patrol's* biggest disappointment was not coming in second as they had hoped so as not to beat the perennial champions. Believe that and Jon will sell you an Oxbow Culvert. He's not into bridges yet.



Exciting Happenings

As for unusual exciting happenings, teams seem to have relished every Birdathon minute. *The Dawn to Duck Patrol* will never forget two Great Horned Owls. "First as we tried to sleep in the parking area adjacent to the marsh at Miami-Whitewater Park," Jon Seymour states, "Two Great Horned Owls had a loud

*Great
Horned
Owl*



hour-long conversation that kept us awake. Second and more memorable, as darkness descended on us in the middle of Gilmore Ponds, suddenly the large silhouette of a Great Horned Owl could be seen flying determinedly and silently across the marsh directly at us. Along the shoreline 40 feet in front of us, it swooped in and struck an American Coot swimming along the shore. The four of us were so startled and calling excitedly to each other to point out the strike, we scared the owl and the coot escaped. The owl flew to a nearby tree and watched us for nearly five minutes, probably with complete disgust.”

That Amish bakery in Adams County always rates high with the Maslowski-Laycock group. They can't get enough of those raspberry turnovers and it's fun to bring back home some souvenir Amish cheese.

Sr. Marty and company won tickets to a Cincinnati Reds' game at the Nature Center tally. “We had a great time,” she reports, “and look forward to another year of counting birds for the Oxbow.”

For the *Fortune Seekers*, to see Caspian Terns was awesome. Large, impressive flyers compared to the other more slender terns, the team found them agile as well. Another unexpected bonus was finding the uncommon Blue Grosbeak in locations 90 miles apart, at Hueston Woods and near Muscatatuck in Indiana. Jerry reports that “A first year male hammed it up for us by singing clearly from the top of a tree near Muscatatuck.”

“We really enjoyed scouting new areas in Indiana prior to Birdathon, areas we'd never visited such as near Muscatatuck, Summit Lake and even as far out as Hoosier National Forest,” Jerry relates. “Many of the areas we could not officially visit on Birdathon but it sure is fun discovering new places and without Birdathon to stir us on, so many of these areas, and so many birds, would go undiscovered by us. Birdathon 2004 really brought it home to me how we see so much on this 24-hour competition that we'd never see in the course of a normal day or two of birding.”

Jay Stenger's team found a Bald Eagle sitting on a mud flat at the Brookville, Indiana, reservoir.

The *No-See'ums Mid-West* arrived at the Red River Gorge at twilight and checked into the lodge. Charlie Saunders

says, “There were bird feeders outside our room and we watched flying squirrels glide from trees to the bird feeder and back. I had not seen flying squirrels before. They are common but nocturnal. I was surprised that they glided horizontally, not losing any altitude from tree to feeder.”

A creative moment (notice we didn't say *cheating* moment: think “Birdathon enhancer”) for Charlie's gang centered around a discussion. “We went on an owl walk. With discovery of Canada Goose fecal material, there was controversy over whether we could count the goose that had left the prize. The argument centered on the issue of freshness relative to Birdathon starting time, and, I thought, was not conclusively resolved. When I spotted the silhouette of a live Canada Goose, I was surprised at my teammates' lack of excitement over this new addition to our list, as they had apparently accepted the previous evidence.”

Birdathon Background

Competition was always strong for the honor and glory of finding the highest number of avian species on the Birdathon and bringing home the prized Golden Starling statue for the year. Oxbow Inc. initiated the Birdathon in 1988 as a fund raiser and set a few rules: teams or individual birders could count a species seen or heard within a 50-mile radius of the Oxbow during a specified 24-hour period. At the 5:00 p.m. closing tally, restaurants would provide snacks and participants could purchase t-shirts with Birdathon prints by prominent local artists.

Later other environmental groups were invited to participate for their own causes. Today, the Cincinnati Nature Center chairs the overall event and Oxbow Inc. no longer offers those tees, now fabulous collectibles.

Coming Soon to a Newsletter You Know

Birdathon 2004 is now history. Good fellowship reigned, fun was had by all and Oxbow Inc. benefits from the funds raised. In the next issue of *Wetland Matters*, you will find the total list of species found on this Birdathon as well as names of all those who contributed a few pennies for their favorite team's efforts and, of course, the total dollars collected. It's not too late to back any one of these teams and get in on this outdoor gala. Just send a few greenbacks (we're not particular how many) to:

Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio 45243-0391 .. *Thanks!*





Field Notes

by



Mercer

It is time to sit down and put my Oxbow field notes together for the newsletter. This has been a most beautiful May day. We have a bright day and everything is a bright green outside.

I'm in Centerville with my daughter Marilyn, granddaughter Sarah, and son-in-law Jim Simpson. I'll have trouble moving back home as I'm treated like royalty. This is the Memorial Day week. At my age I have a flood of memories. I lost Frances almost a year ago. I know I'll never recover from losing her. This year they are opening the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. I think of my kid brother and so many boyhood friends. And there were my Marine Corp buddies. There were six of us that shared a tent from Guadalcanal in the South Pacific to Zamboanga in the Philippines. A few weeks ago I received a call from one guy's wife. She told me Mike Conway had died, so that leaves me the last one still alive.

I haven't been to the Oxbow as much as I have in years gone by. I don't remember so many May days in the 80's. We also had lots of wet days. The roads were muddy. My son, David, and his wife, Vicky, came up and stayed a while and we made several trips to the Oxbow. We saw the Cliff Swallows had moved in under Lost Bridge. On one trip around the Oxbow we saw an Osprey sitting in one of the tall trees. The Osprey seemed to be enjoying his fish lunch. It was nice to hear the cry of the Osprey over the Oxbow. We saw a few ducks, several coots, many Double-crested Cormorants, and Great Blue Herons. We had another little surprise. We saw a ground hog near the Oxbow parking lot. The surprise was not the ground hog, but Vicky who grew up in south Louisiana had never seen a ground hog.

We left and moved over to Shawnee. Was my first time this spring to hear the Wood Thrush. Sounds so good. There was the evening serenade of the Robin. We saw several deer. The vultures seemed to be enjoying the air currents above the cooling tower at C.G.&E.

Throughout May was the warmest May I can remember. Many days with temperatures in the 80's. Seems the trees were so pretty. The redbud, the dogwood, then came the locust. The woods were so white it looked as if we had had a snow storm. I remember Frances and I would take a ride along the river. What beautiful evenings we enjoyed. The beautiful smell was wonderful.

I'm sure the Bald Eagle that hung around the Oxbow was beautiful to see. I didn't get to see it, but I saw the Bald Eagles every year for lots of years there at the Oxbow. I saw four eagles at one time there, but that was several years ago. I'm looking forward to spending more time around the Oxbow as summer comes along.

Oxbow Inc. Activities Schedule

Two Speakers You Don't Want to Miss
Bring the Family, Bring Friends

Programs

Tuesday, July 13, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College

John Klein, Land Manager for the Hamilton County Park District, will speak about the results of the Park District's deer culling program so far, as well as rationale for the program and its many benefits.

To get to EarthConnection in Delhi, go south on Neeb Road past the Delhi Road traffic light, turn up the second drive on the left.

Tuesday, August 10, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Trina Stitak, a naturalist active in the Greater Cincinnati area, will probably bring lots of garbage, trash, refuse, and rubbish to share with us tonight. Don't worry, we're not insulting her: tonight's program will focus on what's in our trash, what can be recycled, and what cannot be recycled. Trina will give practical tips on how to effectively recycle in your area without taking a bite out of your free time.

The Lawrenceburg Library is downtown at 123 High St. Turn left going west off US 50 onto Walnut St., then right on High St.

Field Trips

Sunday, July 25, 2004, 5:00 p.m.

Meet Jerry Lippert at the Oxbow Inc. entrance parking lot. Jerry is an Oxbow Board member and local naturalist. He will lead us in search of migrating shorebirds and other wildlife in the Oxbow. Dress appropriately for weedy areas -- wear long pants and hiking boots. If you have a spotting scope, please bring it along as well as binoculars. (513-522-6567)

Sunday, August 15, 2004, 3:00 p.m.

Meet Dr. Denis Conover at the new Oxbow Inc. entrance parking lot. Denis is from the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Cincinnati, and will lead us on a field trip entitled "Plants of the Oxbow Area." We'll walk down to the mouth of the Great Miami River - more than 2 miles, round trip. Dress appropriately for weedy areas -- long pants and hiking boots. Bring plenty of drinking water. (513-641-3651)

To get to the new parking lot, turn south from Rt. 50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the cement plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left and you're there.

Mr. Oxbow Wins Earth Day Award

Morris Mercer, *Mr. Oxbow*, was awarded the 2004 Earth Day Conservation Educator Award, April 17, at Sawyer Park. Oxbow President Jon Seymour had nominated Morris for the award and accepted it, a crystal tree, on his behalf. At the time, Morris was convalescing at his daughter's home in Dayton.

The application for the award told of Morris Mercer's work from the beginning, 1985, to the present to save the Oxbow floodplain, "a major stop for thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl and the summer home to the Cincinnati area's largest concentration of wading birds." It pointed out Morris's interest in teaching children. "If the young do not learn to embrace the challenge of stewardship for the environment all other actions we take are useless....Those that are talented at it, like Morris, generate a sense of awe, wonder, curiosity, inquisitiveness and pride in preserving nature."

Morris has spoken to hundreds of local organizations and led dozens of hikes through the Oxbow for school groups. His column, "Field Notes", in *Wetland Matters* is everyone's favorite and reaches 900 subscribers including government officials in Ohio and Indiana.



Morris Mercer unwraps the Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition Conservation Educator 2004 Award.



by Jon Seymour

Sometimes my job is just a thrill. On April 17, I participated in The Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition's Earth Day at Sawyer Point. Kani Meyer and I set up the traveling Oxbow Inc. booth at Sawyer Point and spent a wonderful sunny and WIIIIINDY spring day greeting people and telling them about the Oxbow. It even resulted in some new memberships.

That was fun enough, but the thrill was in accepting the award for the Conservation Educator 2004 Award for Morris Mercer. It was presented on the P&G Pavilion stage in front of the Earth Day audience. I gratefully accepted the award for Morris who could not be present due to his need to recuperate from his recent illness. I wish he could have been there to receive it in person.

An even bigger thrill came a few days later when I traveled to see Morris and hand him the award, a green beveled glass conifer suncatcher engraved with the words *Conservation Educator 2004*. Anyone who has ever listened to one of Morris's loving presentations on the Oxbow and knows of his dedication to educating young and old, knows he deserves this award. Oxbow Inc. joins the Cincinnati Earth Coalition in honoring Morris and adds that we would not be the organization we are without his efforts. **Congratulations, Morris!!!**



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usings

by Dave Styer

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird

In the summer of 1999, I visited the Oxbow many times and especially enjoyed the hummingbird "fall" migration in late August. On a couple of mid-day trips, I saw approximately 20 hummingbirds. These were visiting the morning glory flowers in the corn on the edge of the Oxbow Lake. In the early morning and in the late afternoon and evening, I never saw that many hummingbirds at the Oxbow. My experiences bring to mind a couple of issues, one historical and one biological. Upon reflection, I don't believe I appreciated, until recently, some of the biological aspects of what I was seeing.

In the 1800's Ruby-throated Hummingbirds may have been much more common. How common a bird was back then is often very hard to tell. Statements like "This beautiful little bird is very numerous" (Rufus Haymond, 1869), or a "common summer resident" (Frank Langdon, 1879; Amos W. Butler, 1886; and Raymond Smith, 1891) just don't give a picture of how common they were. On occasion we find a statement that gives a vivid picture, and Amos W. Butler makes such a remark in his 1897 *Birds of Indiana*. "One sand bar I know, near Brookville, covered with Bouncing Betty, is a favorite place. They gather there by the hundreds in August and early September." Wow! I've never seen that many Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the Greater Cincinnati area. When you study older accounts you soon realize that the people back then didn't travel the way we do. Butler didn't travel all over Indiana to find this one location, Brookville, with a great hummingbird concentration. Butler lived in Brookville. That was where he did most of his birding.

The biological part that my Oxbow experience reflects comes from a fact that we all know. Hummingbirds are small, very, very small. This is about power and energy. This, in turn, brings to mind the beautiful poem, "The Frustrated Engineer", by Joel Peters:

Darting, hovering helicopter
Fueling at a flower,
Tell me how your engine-heart
Generates such power!

Judging from *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds weigh, on average, 3.2 grams. That's a little more than half the weight of Golden-crowned Kinglets (6 grams). Aside from the hummingbird these kinglets and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are our smallest birds. You can bet that these hummingbirds have fewer feathers than Golden-crowned Kinglets, and you would be absolutely right. But there might be a surprise. According to *The Handbook of Birds of the World*, hummingbirds have about 4 - 7 times fewer contour feathers than passerines [perching birds] of similar size. This is considered to be an adaptation to high heat production during flight. Heat dissipation is much easier to regulate with less feather insulation."

Normally, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrate by day, visiting flowers as they go. As high-powered flying machines,

they use their fuel quickly. If they run out of fuel they wouldn't even be able to stop and maintain their body heat because they are poorly insulated. Hummingbirds can drop their temperature and go into a torpid state to save fuel but this is not likely a good option half way through the night in a strange place when they are out of fuel. Recall that night air is generally calmer than day air, and there are fewer predators at night, so that many birds migrate by night. For hummingbirds the advantage of diurnal migration must outweigh the advantages of nocturnal migration. The authors of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird article in *The Birds of North America*, T. R. Robinson, R. R. Sargent, and M. B. Sargent, suggest that these birds concentrate on feeding in the early morning and the late afternoon and migrate in mid-day. What I likely experienced at the Oxbow in 1999 was waves of migrant hummingbirds.

In view of this migratory behavior of hummingbirds, it seems totally remarkable that when they reach the Deep South, say northern Alabama, many of them will have nearly doubled their weight. Then, between 4 and 5:30 p.m. they will fly higher and higher until out of sight, and presumably fly south across the Gulf of Mexico (T. R. Robinson). All of a sudden, this seems a total change in migratory behavior. It amazes me that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds seem to have this inborn knowledge to switch to nocturnal migration! If hummingbirds could reciprocate and study humans, do you think that they would be amazed that we have no inborn knowledge that the Gulf of Mexico is there? Would they marvel that we create maps and distribute them so that we know a straight shot south from Alabama would take us to the Yucatan Peninsula?

Here are some hummingbird facts. The hummingbirds form a strictly new world family of over 300 species of birds, with their center of distribution on the equator. However, my May 8 issue of *Science News* reports that 30 million year old hummingbird fossils have recently been found in Germany. This fossil find raises many questions. Why would hummingbirds have gone extinct in the old world, while they have spread and diversified in the new world? Was there just one species in the old world? Was it too specialized to change with changing climates?

Among other things, hummingbirds are noted for their remarkable iridescence. The colors are not formed by pigments, but by refraction of light. This is a very common phenomenon in birds. For example, all of our birds that we perceive as blue or green have no blue or green pigment. Hummingbirds simply carry this to an extreme with multiple layers of refractive cells in the feather barbules. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and most others, do not have iridescent flight feathers. An explanation for this may be found in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*:

"The lack of iridescent colours in primaries and secondaries is obviously an adaptation for flight," since iridescent feathers lack hooklets between the barbules, and that reduces "the mechanical strength of the feather vane."



Mark Passes the Black Ink

After ten years of dedicated service as treasurer of Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Mark Westrich resigned and Jim Poehlmann volunteered for the position. Both will serve as members of the board of directors.

Jim is a printing press operator at Xavier University, his alma mater. He and his wife, Meg, have two sons, Ben, 10, and Evan, 15. "I grew up around Lawrenceburg," Jim told us, "and often played and fished in the Oxbow area so you might call it a lifelong interest in the area. My family and I like to hike the Oxbow and identify birds. Also my younger son and I are among those nasty model rocketeers who launch in VOA park where we recently observed what we believe to be a Gyrfalcon and a Peregrine on the same day. I assure you we never aim at birds and there seems to be enough real estate there for everyone to peacefully coexist."

Mark has made himself available to train Jim in keeping the corporation books and financial records, making deposits and paying bills, insurance fees and taxes as well as producing current treasurer's reports for each monthly board meeting.



Mark Westrich, left, wishes new treasurer Jim Poehlmann well.

Hunters Need to Apply

by President Jon Seymour

Members of Oxbow who are also hunters may apply to John Getzendanner, our Indiana Agent, for 2004-2005 hunting season permits. Send John a self addressed stamped envelope along with your request for a hunting permit by September 1, 2004. John will return to you a memorandum of understanding of Oxbow's hunting rules for you to sign and submit.

Upon acceptance of your application John will issue you a hunting permit for Oxbow land. The only Oxbow land open for hunting lies entirely east of I-275 and west of the Great Miami River, and entirely in the State of Indiana. All Indiana hunting regulations apply.

The good news this year is that the purchase of land belonging to the CSX railroad during 2004 has nearly doubled the acreage of Oxbow land open for hunting.

Send your request to: John Getzendanner

21007 Crestview Court
Lawrenceburg, IN. 47025

If you have questions call John at: 812-537-5728.



Oxbow Inc. Memorials

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Tribute

Anne Janszen

Cheryl Devine,
Oak Crest Animal Hospital

Oxbow Inc. has established Memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each Memorial established in the name of a friend or relative will be enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Each contribution to a Memorial will be acknowledged to the family or to those selected by the donor.

Tributes are also enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Some tributes are birthday remembrances, holiday greetings or friendship/gratitude acknowledgements. If so desired, "Happy Birthday" or the like can be inscribed in the Tribute notice.

Contributions should be sent to Oxbow Inc., P.O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those to receive the acknowledgement.



It's Looking Better for the Trumpeter

One of the rarest birds and the largest water fowl in North America was the topic of Mary Maj's talk and slide show the evening of May 11 at EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College, for Oxbow Inc. members. That subject: the Trumpeter Swan.

According to Mary, wildlife biologist for the National Forest Service and National Park Service for 25 years, the Trumpeter weighs in at 25 to 28 pounds while our other native swan, the Tundra or Whistling Swan, averages about 19 pounds. From a fluffy white puff to a gray cygnet with an almost black head, the Trumpeter becomes one of the most lovely white creatures on earth. It gets its deep call from an extra loop in its trachea.

By the early 1800's, these birds were all gone from their eastern range (including Ohio). By 1932, all that remained in their western range were in the Greater Yellowstone area (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming) where thermal waters offered protection. The good news is that after a reintroduction into the Lake Erie region of Ohio in 1996, the year 2003 registered 13 active nests with 35 young fledged.

For her graduate degree at the University of Montana, Missoula, Mary lived in the remote southeastern section of Yellowstone National Park and studied up close the Trumpeter Swan. She lived in a picturesque Goldilocks cabin in a Goldilocks setting complete with rather husky grizzlies. She said she never feared the wild animals. What she didn't like was the sound of a strange car driving up to the door.

She and fellow workers netted the swans at 1:00 a.m., collared (numbered) them for later identification, boxed them and took them no further than 100 miles distant but to a lower elevation and a warmer climate where ice did not block the waterways. Mary and her friends would return with ice covered faces from the cold. They transferred over 300 birds (many full family groups which was good) who had lost their ability to migrate.

These swans prefer nutrient-filled, fast-moving waters. Geese have learned to hang about down stream for vegetation the swans have dug up but lost to the swift flow.

Fog Chases Birders to Shawnee

A dozen birders enjoyed the Oxbow Inc. field trip on April 24, which started out in dense fog but which ended up with beautiful weather. Between dense fog and some serious mud, we spent very little time at the Oxbow. We were able to see about 40 Double-crested Cormorants as vague shapes in the fog, and we could make out Tree, Barn and Bank Swallows as they passed overhead. Other birds there included Warbling Vireo, Gray Catbird and Baltimore Oriole, but not much else.

We left there and headed for Shawnee Lookout. On the way, we could make out, still in fog, Greater Yellowlegs by the roadside, and Cliff Swallows at the bridge. The lower parking lot at Shawnee still had some fog, and plenty of mud, but we could make out two Solitary Sandpipers. On the way back up the hill, we saw Baltimore Oriole, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Prothonotary Warbler.

From there, we went on the Miami Fort trail, where we heard - and eventually got good looks at - Wood Thrush, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler. We heard Swainson's Thrush and Nashville Warbler, but couldn't find them.

A few of us ended up walking the Blue Jacket trail, where we were able to see Nashville Warbler, along with Black-throated Green Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and White-eyed Vireo. None of these birds were rarities, but it was good to get good looks at some of the returning spring migrants.

..... by Ned Keller

Oxbow Inc. and The Nature Sampler

Something new is taking place September 25 and 26 and Oxbow Inc. will be a part of it. The Nature Sampler Weekend will be open to everyone interested in the outdoors and conservation. Oxbow Inc. will offer guidance walks both days through the Oxbow at 9:00 a.m. and is donating 20 prizes for the citywide event: copies of Dave Styer's book, *Birds of the Oxbow*.

Jon Talks Oxbow

Oxbow Inc. President Jon Seymour explained Oxbow Inc. and its purposes to a group of Proctor & Gamble scientists June 23 at the Winton Hill Business Center.

Raptors Win Hearts

To the delight of everyone present, Dave Tennant brought with him to the June 8 membership meeting at the Lawrenceburg library a Red-tailed Hawk, Screech Owl and Great Horned Owl. All local species, the birds had been injured too badly to return to the wild and have become "educational raptors."

Dave, Education Director for Raptor, Inc., with 21 years of experience in the field of environmental education, got an assist from Raptor, Inc., volunteer Cindy Alverson. Dave told us the birds did not have names because "They are not pets you would curl up on the sofa with. They will bite you." However, that petite screecher got ah's from the audience and when Dave gave an unbelievably perfect whistle/garble call of the Screech Owl, this little camouflaged creature looked at Dave as if to say, "You don't fool me. I know that's you."

Dave pointed out that the Red-tailed Hawk and the Great Horned Owl seem to be susceptible to the West Nile Virus. The Red-tailed Hawk, the largest daytime raptor in this area, has the eyesight of an 8-power binoculars. The particular 10-year-old Great Horned visitor, a female, with its swivel-like head and "ear" tufts that aren't ears, who can take a squirrel or a skunk, weighed in at two and a half pounds.

Raptor, Inc., takes in about 100 injured raptors per year and half of these, after good care and medicines, make it back to their natural habitats.



Red-tailed Hawk

Rain Has Its Day --But Not for Long

Our Saturday (May 1) started out to be very unpromising. While I don't let rain stop me from birding, I draw the line at thunderstorms. The storms died out and the rain slowed to a drizzle before I reached the Oxbow nearly an hour before meeting time to scout out the terrain and birds. The area was really muddy but I thought we might navigate with 4 wheel vehicles. As it happened only one other participant showed up so we tried to drive in my Jeep but I chickened out after a short drive. We did see some birds and heard more. We backed out of there and headed for Shawnee Lookout to view the area from above. There were good numbers of migrating song birds including 12 species of warblers, 3 vireos, thrushes and a silent flycatcher. The rain held off for us and all in all we had a good day.

...by *Darlana Graham*

Cicada Facts Fascinate

On April 13, when Dr. Gene Kritsky of the College of Mount St. Joseph spoke to us about the upcoming emergence of periodical cicada, Brood X, we had not yet been inundated with stories in the mass media whipping cicadaphobes into hysteria. Clearly, however, there is something about cicadas that provokes an irrational response in some humans. Dr. Kritsky opened his talk with seventeenth century accounts from the Plymouth Colony in which periodical cicadas are described with much the same fear, loathing, and over-the-top rhetoric we have seen in 2004.

Dr. Kritsky went on to explicate the system of brood numbering and show a map of the various broods across the eastern United States. There are three species of 17-year cicadas -- *Magicicada septendecim*, *M. cassini* and *M. septendecula* -- which emerge concurrently. The males of each species gather into chorusing centers, where they sing to attract compliant females of the right species. We learned about the ensuing courtship, mating, and egg-laying, and cicada nymphs' lengthy adolescence underground. We even learned about sexually transmitted disease

in cicadas: the fungus seen on the abdomens of some cicadas late in the emergence is spread while mating. Dr. Kritsky hypothesizes that species of the 13-year periodical cicada, which are uncannily similar to the 17-year, are in fact 17-year cicadas that are evolving to avoid this fungus, which has a 17-year life cycle.

As we go to press the emergence is winding down. We won't see most of the offspring until 2021 -- except for the lucky ones who emerge in 2017.

...by *Anita Buck*

A Thunderstorm Field Trip

On May 19, the Bright Elementary School Outdoor Club, led by their teacher Cathy Mund, visited the Oxbow for an evening walk. Oxbow members Jon Seymour, Velda Miller and Rick Pope were there to greet them and accompany them into the bottoms.

It had rained recently so there were lots of opportunities for Outdoor Club members to experience puddles and what some (perhaps gleefully?) called the stickiest mud in the world.

Within 15 minutes of the start of our walk a large thunderstorm arrived and everyone retreated to their cars after agreeing to try the trip again sometime in the fall.

...by *Steve Pelikan*

A Bountiful Day in June

When I was asked to lead a June Oxbow Inc. field trip, I thought early June might give us a shot at late shorebirds or a few late migrant warblers, and in that sense, this trip was a failure. But on Saturday, June 5, 12 of us had a very productive day even if high water prevented us from some potentially great shorebird habitat, and we had zero migrant warblers. So how did the day turn out so well?

A loud, colorful Prothonotary Warbler is always a good way to start the day. When we ran into high water blocking us from walking out to Mercer Pond, we were pleasantly surprised to see an adult Bald Eagle perched in the row of dead trees next to the pond. This was certainly the same bird seen several times in May. If only we had seen a second eaglemaybe next year a pair will find our Oxbow to their liking. Later we saw the same bird fly slowly over us and soar on the nearby thermals, where we were able to compare it's flight patterns with nearby soaring Turkey and Black Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk.

As we continued on, we had very nice scope looks at Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Red-tailed Hawks, Great Crested Flycatchers, Cedar Waxwings, and Warbling Vireos which along with Prothonotary Warblers, seemed to follow us around. For as surprised as I was by the presence of the adult Bald Eagle at this time of the year, I was equally surprised by not seeing a Wood Duck. I know many are in the area, but the high water gave them too much cover for us to see them.

Since we had so much luck seeing good birds, I took the opportunity to lecture my captive audience on the evils of Cowbirds, the benefits of poison-ivy and hackberry trees, and of course, the wonderful work of Oxbow Inc. present and past to preserve this great area. We are all very fortunate for the foresight of the Oxbow founders.

...by *Paul Wharton*

Oxbow, Inc.

A nonprofit organization formed by conservation groups and concerned citizens of Ohio and Indiana for the purpose of preserving and protecting a wetlands ecosystem known locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from industrial development and to preserve the floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This agricultural area is rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland ecosystem. Make your state a richer place in which to live by helping us preserve this precious resource. Membership in Oxbow, Inc. is encouraged and solicited.

Individual	\$10	Family	\$15
Contributing	\$25	Supporting	\$50
Patron	\$100	Cornerstone	\$250
Sponsor	\$500	Benefactor	\$1000
Organization/Club	\$25		

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Wetland Matters, the newsletter for members of Oxbow, Inc., is published bimonthly.



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Dues Renewal Date: Feb 05

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