



WETLAND *matters*

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

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A Success Story! Birdathon 2004 Results: In Species, Donors, Dollars

Former Librarian Persis Long Generously Remembered Oxbow, Inc.

Persis Long, life-long environmentalist, lover of the Oxbow and all outdoors, has bequeathed the sum of \$31,646.00 to Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana. Miss Long died of acute leukemia at age 92, April 23, 2003.

A native Cincinnati, graduate of Withrow High School and Wellesley College with a Master's Degree in Geology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Miss Long for many years was head of the Science and Technology Department of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, according to a long-time friend, Ruth Epstein.

"Persis was a reserved, modest person, a good birder, a great hiker," said Ruth, "who loved Oxbow, Inc. because it was an all-volunteer organization with no paid staff. She enjoyed Morris Mercer's columns in *Wetland Matters* and missed reading Karl Maslowski's columns in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. She enjoyed bird walks with Bill Bocklage and Art and Ginny Wiseman. She was never stumped on plant life and the only thing that I knew Persis to get indignant about was the Lesser Celandine." Miss Long served many years as secretary of the Cincinnati Wildflower Society. The Lesser Celandine is a prolific, alien member of the buttercup family that crowds out native wildflowers.

Doris Kuszler of The American Walkers, a hiking club, used these adjectives in the group's newsletter to describe Miss Long: "dear, gracious and modest." Three weeks before her death, she was out hiking.

Having never married, Miss Long was very close to her sister's children, all of whom live out-of-town. Coincidentally, like Jon Seymour, Oxbow, Inc. President, her father had been a chemist at P&G.

Oxbow, Inc. gratefully acknowledges this very generous gift of Persis Long.

Birdathon 2004 is a success story on three levels. Five teams of birders identified a combined total of 176 bird species and brought home a total of \$3,402.99, pledge gifts from 70 donors.

The Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers led the contest with most pledges raised: \$879.89. Congratulations to the team members: Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger and Erich Baumgardner.

Jon Seymour asked his supporters to convert their usual Birdathon support to memberships and this resulted in 18 new members and \$805.00 new dollars to Oxbow, Inc.

President Jon Seymour thanks all the teams for raising significant amounts of money: "Birdathon 2004 was a great money raising success. A big thanks to all the participants and donors!"

Generous Donors

Following are the names of the contributors.

Dorothy Bauer	Mr. & Mrs. Whitney Wharton
Marie Holscher	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Floyd
Dr. Aaron Perlman	Jon & Jackie Seymour
Joan Walson	Robert & Eveline Branan
Dr. Therese Bocklage	Max & Sally Baumgardner
Jeanne Bocklage	David & Karen Cody
Susan Edwards	Ron & Barbara Denamur
Lawrence Lippert	James & Gretchen Hill
Jeffrey Knee	Miriam & Julie Patton
Brian Waltz	Catherine & Randy Oppenheimer
Dr. Wayne Wauligman	Maureen & E.G. Suchanek
Christopher Kelling	Becky Reece & John Morrett
Ruth Epstein	Peter & Cam Starrett
Philip F. Brode, III	Michael & Paula Steenken
Sr. Marty Dermody, S.C.	Matt & Amy Stenger
Bernice Pollack	Roger & Michelle Tucker
Peter & Linda Maslowski	John & Helen Hunter
David & Margaret O'Connor	Ed & Faith Pelikan
Charles & Mary Saunders	Joan & James Clapp
James & Elizabeth Durrell	James & Sara Krailler
Frank & Rosemary Miller	David & Margaret Yelton
Nicholas & Ruthanne Palmer	

Continued on next page.....

more.... Birdathon 2004 Success Story

Dollars and Team Standings

Following are the teams and the monies they collected.

<i>Fortune Seekers</i> , Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger, Erich Baumgardner, 134 species.....	\$879.89
<i>Fire & Brimstone</i> , Jay and Jack Stenger, Joe Bens, Paul Wharton, 147 species.....	\$838.50
<i>No-See'ums Mid-West</i> , Steve Pelikan, Mike Busam, Bob Lacker, Charlie Saunders, 71 species.....	\$365.00
<i>Tri-colored Harem</i> , Sr. Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller, Sarah Krailler, 96 species.....	\$349.60
<i>Geriatric Gents & Juniors</i> , Karl Maslowski, George Laycock, Jerry Meyer, Bob Schrimper, Jay Lehman, Randy Lakes, 115 species.....	\$165.00
Jon Seymour's conversion to 18 memberships.....	\$805.00

Species Seen and/or Heard

During the 24-hour period set aside May 7 & 8, five teams saw and/or heard a total of 176 species of birds within a 100 mile radius of the Oxbow. Not counted are the results of two teams who did their scouting outside the legal boundaries. Steve Pelikan's group desperately wanted to find a Swainson's Warbler and they traveled to Red River Gorge, Kentucky. Dave and Jane Styer of No-See'ums West who live in California did half the Birdathon there and half in Puerto Rico.

How many of these species the five teams found do you think you would find? And isn't it exciting that all these birds are in our neighborhood?

Common Loon	<i>Ducks, Geese</i>
Pied-billed Grebe	Mute Swan
Double-crested Cormorant	Canada Goose
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Ruddy Duck
Northern Bobwhite	Ring-necked Duck
Belted Kingfisher	Black Duck
Wild Turkey	Wood Duck
<i>Hérons</i>	Snow Goose
American Bittern	Green-winged Teal
Least Bittern	Blue-winged Teal
Great Blue Heron	Mallard
Little Blue Heron	Northern Shoveller
Green Heron	Gadwall
Great Egret	American Widgeon
Cattle Egret	Lesser Scaup
Black-crowned Night Heron	Hooded Merganser
<i>Hawks, Falcons</i>	Red-breasted Merganser
Black Vulture	<i>Rails, Coots</i>
Turkey Vulture	Virginia Rail
Osprey	Sora Rail
Bald Eagle	Common Moorhen
Cooper's Hawk	American Coot
Red-shouldered Hawk	Sandhill Crane
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Owls</i>
American Kestrel	Great Horned
Peregrine Falcon	Barred
<i>Plovers, Sandpipers</i>	Eastern Screech
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Doves</i>
Killdeer	Rock Dove
Greater Yellowlegs	

Lesser Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Spotted Sandpiper
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Pectoral
Common Snipe
American Woodcock
Ring-billed Gull
Forster's Tern
Swifts, Hummingbirds
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Passerines

Eastern Wood-pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Eastern Kingbird
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Carolina Wren
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Veery
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Wood Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Loggerhead Shrike
European Starling
Yellow-throated Vireo
White-eyed Vireo
Solitary (Blue-headed) Vireo
Bell's Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
House Sparrow
American Redstart
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Brown Pelican
Rufous-sided Towhee
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Northern Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Indigo Bunting
Northern Cardinal
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager

Mourning Dove
Woodpeckers
Red-headed
Red-bellied
Downy
Hairy
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Goatsuckers
Common Nighthawk
Whip-poor-will
Chuck-will's-widow

Acadian Flycatcher
Alder Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Great-crested Flycatcher
Blue Jay
American Crow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
Cedar Waxwing
Warblers
Nashville
Northern Parula
Blue-winged
Golden-winged
Tennessee
Yellow
Chestnut-sided
Magnolia
Cape May
Black-throated Blue
Yellow-rumped
Black-throated Green
Yellow-throated
Blackburnian
Pine
Prairie
Palm
Bay-breasted
Blackpoll
Cerulean
Black-and-White
Prothonotary
Kentucky
Hooded
Wilson's

Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Common
Blue Grosbeak	Yellowthroat
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Bobolink	
	<i>Sparrows</i>
Chipping	Field
Vesper	Savannah
Grasshopper	Henslow's
Song	Swamp
White-throated	White-crowned

A P.S. to our success story. Dave Styer in going to Puerto Rico added 20 new species to his life list, including the Puerto Rican Lizard-cuckoo. Jane added 40. They both found the Puerto Rican Tody, "a great little bird." In all, they counted 110 species on this Birdathon.

Spreading the Message

President Jon Seymour was busy in August spreading the news about Oxbow, Inc. He spoke August 5 at Immanuel United Methodist Church, Lakeside Park, Kentucky; August 12 to the Cincinnati Zoo Volunteers; August 16 at the Westchester Public Library and August 30 at the Greendale Garden Club. He also told our story at the Indiana Natural Resources booth at the Indiana State Fair August 18 and passed out pamphlets about the Indiana Land Protection Association which include mention of Oxbow, Inc.

Recently the Board of Directors authorized the purchase of equipment to help in these presentations. Included were a laptop, digital projector and a remote screen changer.

The islands in Osprey Lake appeal to Canada Geese for nesting.



Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

Donor

Pat Shanklin
Charles & Barbara
Moore
Robert & Wendy
Fuersich

In Memory of

Sherman Betscher
Doris Keiter
Tucker Arehart, a Pet

Tributes

Dorothy Bauer	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i> Rev. & Mrs. George Brown
Grant & Melissa Cowan	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i> David & Suzanne Skidmore
Bi & Kristin Skidmore	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i> David & Suzanne Skidmore
Suki Skidmore & Tim Kane	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i> David & Suzanne Skidmore

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.



*Remember the environment
when you go to the polls.*

Correction: In the May-June 2004 issue of *Wetland Matters*, Dr. Mike Miller was incorrectly identified with Mt. St. Joseph College. Dr. Miller teaches limnology at the University of Cincinnati.



Field Notes

by



Mercer

Summer has come to the Oxbow. I don't have as many field notes as in years gone by. There are several reasons. One reason is that I don't get there as much as I used to. As I went around the garage, I saw the canoe and thought of all the great times I enjoyed there on the Great Miami River. The friends and loved ones that have shared the canoe with me. The beautiful summer nights under a summer moon. I could write a book about those float trips and all those that went with me. The wildlife we saw near the Oxbow. I'm sorry those days are over, but so thankful for all those years and the wonderful memories.

My trips to the Oxbow are made by car and I do enjoy that. This summer seems the roadsides are extra pretty. The cornflowers have been so pretty. What is more beautiful than cornflower blue? Bob Kaser has taken me on some of the trips I've made to the Oxbow. On one of the trips we saw so many Gold Finch in the field over looking Jackpot Pond. On another trip there were so many Indigo Buntings in the same field. We saw Great Blue Herons, a few Great Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons. The large numbers of the tall wading birds will be moving in as summer ends.

On another evening I went on an evening trip to the Oxbow with Jim Simpson. We were able to drive back to Mercer Pond. I was looking across the very short bean field. I saw two deer down toward Wood Duck Slough. The deer were such a beautiful reddish brown in the light of the evening sun. There wasn't much on Mercer Pond. A few Double-crested Cormorants in the dead trees. As we were leaving Jim saw a fine looking bird. Just above the tree tops was the Peregrine Falcon. I still haven't gotten used to seeing the Peregrine around the Oxbow. For years I never saw one. I do love to watch them fly.

We did see a Green Heron on the way out. Jon Seymour told me he saw a Bald Eagle at Mercer Pond. I can't remember seeing an eagle at this time of year, but sure glad to hear about one being there. And so glad we have a good Board of Directors for Oxbow, Inc. It was good to see the work being done around the Oxbow. So good to see now that my time is about over. Sure has been fun.

I've always loved driving along the Miami and around Shawnee. I enjoy seeing the deer, and the last few years, I've enjoyed seeing the wild turkeys. Down around the C.G.&E. Tower many evenings the sky is crowded with vultures, both the Turkey and Blacks and the Peregrine Falcon shows up at times.

Here in the cool of evening I love to hear the song of the Wood Thrush. As twilight comes it is a beautiful time here along the river. And in June and July the lightning bugs light up the field and the wooded hillside.

For me the trail home is always a treat. I turn away from the Miami on Dugan Gap. Then on to Cliff Road. Here overlooking the Ohio River, a most beautiful drive around the great north bend of the Ohio. This summer we had two full moons in July and I missed both of them. A blue moon in July.

Hope to make it to the Oxbow soon and see you there.

Oxbow Inc. Activities Schedule

Programs

Tuesday, September 14, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
EarthConnection, College of Mount St. Joseph

George Farnsworth, Assistant Professor of Biology at Xavier University, will share findings from his research on the nesting success of the Wood Thrush in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

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

Tuesday, October 12, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Meet a representative from the Dearborn County Solid Waste Management District, who will present an informative session on how to do composting at home. She will provide bins and instructions.

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

Field Trips

Saturday and Sunday, September 25 & 26, 2004
9:00 a.m. Both Mornings

As part of the Great Outdoors Week -End, Oxbow, Inc. will offer a one-hour guided hike around the Oxbow. Meet at the parking lot. Meet the wildlife! Bring the whole family!

Saturday, October 9, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

Meet Ned Keller at the new Oxbow Inc. entrance parking lot. This hike with focus on migrant waterfowl as well as search for other birds. (513-941-6497)

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

Great Outdoors Week-End September 25, 26

Approximately 50 groups from the Greater Cincinnati area will take part in the Great Outdoors Week-End, originally called The Nature Sampler, September 25 & 26. This is the first event of its kind here. It is 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 event: copies of Dave Styer's book, *Birds of the Oxbow*.

Conservation Corner



by Jon Seymour

Sometimes I am amazed at all that it takes to run Oxbow, Inc. There are people who volunteer to do all of the following tasks.

- Pick up the mail from the Post Office.
- Sort the mail and send it to various officers.
- Receive memberships, donations, gifts, honorariums, and memorials.
- List on a spread sheet all of the above.
- Send the information on the spread sheet as needed to the newsletter editor, the writer of thank-you letters, the writer of tax donation letters (\$250 or more), the treasurer, and membership tracker.
- Write thank-you letters for memorials and honorariums.
- Write special thank-you letters to large grant donors.
- Prepare *Wetland Matters* and deliver it to the printer.
- Write articles and take pictures for *Wetland Matters*.
- Update all the membership lists.
- Prepare labels for membership renewal letters.
- Prepare labels for mailing *Wetland Matters*.
- Fold, label and sort the newsletter.
- Take *Wetland Matters* to the bulk mail center in downtown Cincinnati.
- Make deposits of all monies coming to Oxbow, Inc.
- Keep the books of both corporations (Oxbow Inc. & Oxbow of Indiana) and make monthly reports to the board.
- Write all checks and payments.
- Negotiate with the insurance companies.

- Plan our monthly Oxbow field trips.
- Plan our monthly Oxbow educational programs.
- Attend monthly board meetings.
- Keep track of our research efforts and look for other research collaborations.
- Present programs to outside organizations.
- Provide special guided tours on request.
- Maintain the roads.
- Develop a prairie and control noxious invasive plants.
- Negotiate farm leases.
- Keep track of the political situation in two states, two counties, two cities, one conservancy district, and one country.
- Manage hunting permits.
- Keep track of security reports and payments.
- Pick up trash.
- Trim trees and bushes.
- Create parking areas and mudflats.
- Negotiate with contractors.

And this is by no means an exhaustive list but I have just run out of space.

Right now I am looking for individuals who might be interested in developing and/or presenting a program on environmental stewardship suitable for elementary and middle school children, grades 4-8, using the Oxbow as the example. I am also looking for someone who would like to take charge of advertising and planning our once a year Oxbow members clean-up. This is a great event that would benefit from broader advertising than we have had in the past. Also anyone interested in helping with membership communications would be welcome. There are tasks where a few hours every other month would be very useful. If you are interested in helping with these tasks or any other that interest you, call me at 513-851-9835 and we can talk about your interest.



Photo by Jon Seymour

What a lovely view from the newly installed overlook at Oxbow Lake!



by Dave Styer

The Brown-headed Cowbird

The Brown-headed Cowbird is our only bird that cannot raise its own young – that must lay its eggs in the nests of other birds and let other birds incubate the eggs and raise the chicks. Biologists say that the cowbird is an "obligate brood parasite." There are other obligate brood parasites among birds. In the new world there are several cowbird species, most of them south of the United States. However, Bronzed Cowbirds live in the southwest and Shiny Cowbirds have moved into Florida from the West Indies. The old world cuckoos are the most famous in literature and folklore. Our two cuckoo species, the Black-billed and the Yellow-billed, usually build their own nests and raise their own young. The Honeyguides of Africa and southern Asia are brood parasites. The Honeyguides are more famous for the fact that several species lead people to sources of honey. The Honeyguides then eat the disturbed bees and their grubs. Some relatives of the House Sparrow and even one duck species are obligate brood parasites.

Many brood parasites specialize in which species they parasitize, i.e., their hosts. For example, the Screaming Cowbird of South America has only two known hosts. In contrast, the Brown-headed Cowbird is the world's greatest generalist. Frank B. Gill's *Ornithology* mentions 216 known host species. With such catholic tastes, no wonder the Brown-headed Cowbird is so common all across America.

If you wish to see cowbirds, just keep your eyes open. They are all over the Cincinnati area. The most impressive flocks I've seen were around the Oxbow. In March, while looking for ducks in the Oxbow area, I have seen flocks of cowbirds. They would come in and settle for a little while, and then move on. It's amazing how well cowbirds flock together when you consider that the young may have been raised by a Song Sparrow or a Wood Thrush. If Whooping Cranes are raised by people or by Sandhill Cranes they never learn to be Whooping Cranes. This imprinting on other species happens with many birds. I once tried to record a House Finch in Mitchell Memorial Forest that thought it was a Cardinal! Cowbirds show that imprinting is not a universal trait of birds. Young cowbirds never pick up their hosts ways, and leave their hosts to join the cowbird flock as soon as they are able.

While preparing this article, my August issue of *Birding* arrived. The fascinating issue is on "Trash Birds" and contains an article on the Brown-headed Cowbird by Stephen I. Rothstein: "Brown-headed Cowbird: Villain or Scapegoat?" The government spends a million dollars a year trapping and killing cowbirds that live where endangered songbird species live. Kirtland's Warblers, Black-capped Vireos, and so forth are protected. A parasitized nest is likely to fledge one cowbird and no other bird. Seventy percent of Kirtland's Warblers' nests were parasitized prior to trapping in 1972. Only 6% were parasitized after that. The warblers may have

become extinct without the cowbird trapping program. However, an interesting thing happened: The number of breeding pairs of Kirtland's Warblers, about 200, didn't increase until 1986. Why? Because Kirtland's Warblers nest "only in jack pine forests 6-24 years after fires." There had been a disastrous wild fire in 1980, and new habitat became available in 1986 throughout the burned area. By 2002, there were 1050 pairs of Kirtland's Warblers. Rothstein doesn't want us to be so involved with trapping that we lose sight of the primary issue: loss of habitat. In fact, Rothstein writes, "Control of brood parasitism became the most immediate remedy because habitat loss is a much tougher and more expensive issue to address."

Brown-headed Cowbirds were widely distributed over North America in the geological past, several thousand years ago, although their range was much more restricted when Europeans arrived. This is central to Rothstein's case. Also, he says that birds subject to cowbirds in the past retain the ability to defend against being parasitized, at least to the level of maintaining their population. Yes, brood parasitism suppresses population growth, but so do chipmunks and snakes and hawks and owls and diseases, etc. Birds reproduce enough to fill available habitat, but the breeding population doesn't get bigger than habitat allows for. However, populations have their ups and downs, and a tiny population can easily crash to nothing.

My wife, Jane, and I have recently traveled to two island groups, Puerto Rico, in the West Indies, and Hawaii, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. All birders who go to Hawaii become acutely aware of the extinctions that have taken place, even in my lifetime. In Kauai, Hawaii, all native songbirds live only in the mountains, above the mosquito-borne diseases, but that leaves little area for the birds to live in. Some have not survived the hurricanes that have hit the island. The situation in Puerto Rico comes closer to this article. Jane and I enjoyed watching a few Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds in the southwest edge of the island. These Puerto Rican endemics had not encountered brood parasitism until Shiny Cowbirds arrived on the island in 1955. Frank Gill wraps up the situation in his ornithology book. "Now endangered, the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird breeds successfully only on tiny nearby islets where there are no Shiny Cowbirds."

Even though mainland birds have evolved facing many more threats than island birds, once their habitat shrinks to the size of a small island they are likely in trouble. I'm thankful for the many organizations such as Oxbow, Inc. that work hard to preserve habitats that birds need.

If the U.S. government would use volunteers, such as the members of Oxbow, Inc., I believe it could trap a sufficient number of Brown-headed Cowbirds for far less than a million dollars per year and could put the rest of the money into habitat restoration to the long-term benefit of many species.



The Brown-headed Cowbird

Of Bits and Peeps



Stopping the Deer Explosion

They are so pretty and seem to represent all that's wild and free in our world that sometimes we forget that deer can be a threat to the very wilderness we cherish. When deer overpopulate, they are a danger to their environment by devouring much of the vegetation in an area. They destroy the habitat of small animals and threaten their own health as well.

On July 13, John Klein, Land Manager for the Hamilton County Park District, spoke of this problem at the Oxbow Inc. membership meeting at EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College. John came prepared with graphs and charts to demonstrate the culling of some local deer herds and the results achieved.

Getting a handle on the number of deer is accomplished by the use of a helicopter and infra-red equipment and by flying over snow covered ground in winter to spot dark deer against a white background. Many methods of culling were considered and discarded either because they were too expensive or too inefficient. The best way of culling: sharpshooters mounted on platforms on trucks at night. Shooters try for the does to achieve population reduction. Since deer have no natural predators at this time, their population can increase by 50% in one year. The ideal deer population is 20 deer per square mile. In some of our county parks, the population reaches ten times that number.

John explained that the meat from the culled deer is given to relief kitchens. Last winter's program resulted in 21,791 pounds of venison being donated to six local food banks, an estimated 87,164 meals. He said the culling program is ongoing. If we don't take steps now there won't be any parks left for our grandchildren.

... by Carol Molleran

A Great Many Great Egrets

It will be a cold day in July before... seven people join Jerry Lippert for a hike in the Oxbow. Seven people did just that on Sunday, July 25, a cool, gloomy day with rain threatening the hike but never spoiling it, thankfully. Who minds a break from the typical July heat, though? The birds surely didn't mind the overcast conditions. A little girl named Ruth, three years old, surely didn't mind either as she happily hiked the path with us, occasionally being lifted by her father to the spotting scope's eyepiece to get a look at some of the Oxbow's fine feathered friends.

Walking on the east side of the Oxbow Lake, we viewed 10 Double-crested Cormorants perched in snags above Mercer Pond, as well as two Great Egrets. A lone Black Vulture swooped and circled above us while Eastern Kingbirds caught insects from the trees along Oxbow Lake. Barn and Tree Swallows performed insect control in the crop fields around us.

Coming along the west shore of the lake, the alert group found two Red-tailed Hawks, one athletically perched on an electrical tower with what looked like a Norway Rat in its talons. At the new parking area on the west shore of the lake, we had a wonderful view of nearly the entire lake, which was studded with the stately, pure white figures of fifteen or more Great Egrets. Also a passel of Great Blue Herons stood in the water, along with seven or eight Green-backed Herons. Five Black-crowned Night Herons graced the woody edges of the Oxbow Lake, taking advantage of the darker conditions to start their "day" early. Wood Ducks and Mallards actively swam around.

A few Least Sandpipers fed, along with Killdeer, at the mudflats at the southern end of the lake. A Fox Squirrel ran for safety as we passed by. At Jackpot Pond, we again hit the Jackpot with another 15 Great Egrets, more herons and Least Sandpipers. There was plenty of mud along the shores to harbor droves of shorebirds, but we only found Killdeer and the Least Sandpipers. A huge flock of Red-winged Blackbirds stretched out along a grand bird highway in the sky, starting their travels before we got there and continuing after we left. We saw an estimated 700 in a short time.

The group did a good job of finding activity and humor on a gloomy day, weatherwise. It will probably be a cold day in July before any of us sees that many Great Egrets--35 was the total count -- in one place again! ...by Jerry Lippert

Romance in the Oxbow

When you think of romance in the Oxbow, you probably think of critters with four legs or feathers. However, this story involves the human species.

As a boy, my husband, Jim, frequently wandered the Oxbow. During high school, Jim and I met and dated for several years. Unbeknownst to me, the day came when Jim decided it was time to become engaged. So on a beautiful day in May, we spent the day hiking, having a picnic, and seeing a movie. Near dusk, Jim suggested we go to Fernbank Park to watch the river. After arriving at the park, Jim was gathering firewood as a police officer approached and said we would have to leave the park. Although Jim tried to get the officer out of earshot, the officer insisted that we leave. Now what to do?

Luckily, Jim remembered his childhood haunt. We soon arrived at the Oxbow and after a bit of conversation, Jim popped the question. Now, since I referred to him as my husband, you already know I said yes. What you don't know is that until that day, the Oxbow held no special place in my heart. Many years later, when I had the chance to work with the people who are preserving the area where the happiest years of my life began, I said yes again.

.....by Meg Poehlmann



For special views of things with feathers or fur....

TRY KAYAKING ...by Tom Uhlman

As I paddle along weaving through flooded trees, patches of white catch my eye. I pick up my pace and try to find a clearing to get a better look. Big white birds this time of year have to be something unusual. Finally I find a small clearing and see three White Pelicans sitting on the edge of a flooded field. They seem rather content, so I try not to disturb them.

I sneak past the break in the trees and continue on my way. Great Blue Herons, ducks, and Cormorants are everywhere. It's not long before I look up and see a Bald Eagle fly out of a tree almost above me. I'm not sure how I missed him but he doesn't land far away, so as I float along I get a good, long look. A little further down, in the middle of a stand of flooded trees a family of beavers nap on their lodge in the afternoon sun.

This may sound like some exotic location, but it was a warm, early spring day at the Oxbow. After lots of rain the Ohio River rises and floods the fields and forest around the Oxbow area. What once was a shallow vegetation filled pond becomes a large lake.

Kayaking through the Oxbow is a great way to see sections of the area normally only viewed from the interstate. Birding from a kayak has advantages, too. Birds don't seem to understand people in small boats and they are a lot less jumpy. Unless I paddle out in the open, most ducks and Cormorants will just swim in the opposite direction instead of flying.

I usually pull down to where water meets road, behind the concrete plant or over the levee from the casino, drop the

boat in the water and start paddling. Most of the time I follow the old farm roads along the trees lines. They're clear of branches and debris, making it easy to cruise along at a pretty good pace. Paddling through the forest can be adventurous, with lots of logs and submerged stumps. Another good "put-in" is at the boat landing at Shawnee Lookout park.

BOAT BUYING TIPS

Kayaks come in all shapes, sizes, prices and materials. Shorter, wider boats, with lengths from around 9.5 to 12 or so feet are more maneuverable and stable, but slower moving through the water. These types of boats are often referred to as recreational kayaks. Longer, more slender kayaks, with lengths from 12 to 18 feet are much faster traveling through the water but often they feel "tippy", or less stable, and are harder to turn. These longer boats are often referred to as sea kayaks. Recreational boats are usually cheaper, ranging in price from \$250 to \$500, and are usually made from plastic. Sea kayaks are a little more expensive with prices ranging from \$700 for a plastic boat to \$1500 or more for boats made from fiberglass or Kevlar (which are a few pounds lighter).

Other gear you'll need includes a paddle, life preserver (or PFD - personal flotation device) and a kayak skirt. You wear a kayak skirt around your waist and stretch it over the cockpit where you sit, keeping water from waves and drips from the



Photo by Jon Seymour

Author Tom Uhlman and his kayak on a flooded Oxbow road, a good "put-in."



Photo by Tom Uhlman

Oxbow's natural construction engineers discuss the flood situation at the beaver dam at the mouth of Oxbow Lake. The kayak allows a close approach to wildlife without frightening it away.

paddle out of the boat. Dry bags and water-tight boxes are good for keeping snacks and optics dry. And of course you'll need some way of transporting your boat. A roof rack, for those of us who don't own pick-up trucks, works great. Paddles range in price from \$50 to several hundred dollars. Spending a few extra bucks on a good paddle can make a big difference after several hours of kayaking. A cheaper, heavier paddle (more expensive ones are made from fiberglass) in a head-wind can tire the arms quickly. I've found that painting my paddle blades black (most are made white) seems to scare birds and other animals the least. Birds key in on the movement of white paddle blades and take off a lot sooner.

TRY IT FOR SIZE

Buying a kayak can seem overwhelming. One of the first things to do when shopping for a kayak is just sit in it and make sure the seat and leg room are comfortable. Several hours in a hard seat with cramped legs can be really unpleasant. Then ask the dealer questions about the boat and let him/her know what kind of paddling you intend on doing. There are several good locations to buy kayaks that have helpful staffs to get you started. The White Water Warehouse in Dayton, Ohio, (937-222-7020) and Nature Outfitters in Milford (513-248-9868) both have a great selection of boats, gear and everything you'll need.

In times of low water, the Oxbow is a hard place to kayak. Besides being shallow and filled with smartweed, it wouldn't take long to get from one end to the other. The Ohio and Little Miami Rivers offer many places to put in and take out. Many of my favorite places to paddle and bird are the many Army Corps lakes in the area, like East Fork Lake and Caesar Creek Lake. I also enjoy going a little further away to Lake

Erie and the South Bass Island area. There are also extensive areas to boat in the marshes around Toledo and Sandusky.

Kayaking is a great way to see birds and as an added benefit, you'll burn off a few calories. For more info feel free to visit my web site, www.tomuphoto.com, and send me an e-mail.

Mark Westrich Retires from the Oxbow Board

by President Jon Seymour

After many years of service on the Oxbow Board of Directors, most of them serving as Treasurer of Oxbow, Inc., Mark Westrich has announced his retirement from the Board. Mark has taken a new position in Boise, Idaho, working for the Albertson's Grocery Chain. Mark was sad not to be able to have the time to wish all his friends at Oxbow, Inc. a fond farewell, but he had to start his job in Idaho immediately.

While Treasurer of Oxbow, Inc., Mark established our accounting system using computer spread sheets and financial computer programs. He also led us through two audits of our financial records passing with flying colors. We will all miss Mark's counsel and work ethic on the Board. His many friends at Oxbow, Inc. wish him well in his new endeavors. While Mark intends to remain a member of Oxbow, Inc. we will miss his active participation greatly. We all wish him great success in his new job and know that in the future he will be working to help Idaho preserve its environment also. Best Wishes, Mark!

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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