



WETLAND *matters*

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

Have you visited our website?...www.oxbowinc.org

Birdathon Time! May 6 & 7, 2005

Which Team Are You Backing?

Fledgling Birders Also Invited

...by Meg Poehlmann

Birdathon 2005 is coming up soon! We're hoping for sunny weather and numerous birds. As *Wetland Matters* goes to press, six teams will take to the fields and wetlands from May 6, Friday, 5:00 p.m. to May 7, Saturday, 5:00 p.m. with backers putting their money on the line for each species heard and/or sighted. As Oxbow Inc.'s only annual fundraiser, it is very important for us to have a good turnout, as well as a great time! Join us and enjoy the game of picking the winning team. The 2004 Oxbow Inc. winners were Fire & Brimstone Birders with 147 species. This year's sponsors are the Cincinnati Nature Center and the Hamilton County Parks.

Again this year, Fledgling Birders 14 years of age and younger are invited to take part, to pick any 24-hour period that's convenient for them between May 1 and May 15 and canvas their backyard, a nearby park or the Oxbow with a "Senior" birder. Perhaps they can get their school class or Scout troop to pledge a few nickels on their behalf. We promise to print the names of all who take part in *Wetland Matters* and a photo of our young bird watchers. New teams, Fledgling or Adult, need to register with Jon Seymour (513-851-9835 or e mail jlsjks@hotmail.com) by April 10, and include team name, members' names and contact phone number.

The official teams competing to find the highest number of bird species are:

#1- Junior Gents: Jerry Meyer, Bob Schrimper, Jay Lehman and

Randy Lakes. (This is part of the Karl Maslowski-George Laycock team. Karl and George may decline this year for health reasons....but we definitely hope they can make it!)

#2- Fire & Brimstone Birders: Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger, Joe Bens and Paul Wharton.

#3- Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers: Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger and Erich Baumgardner.

#4- No See'ums Mid-West: Steve Pelikan, Mike Busam, Bob Lacker and Charlie Saunders.

#5- Tri-Colored Harem: Sr. Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller and Sarah Krailler.

#6- No See'ums West: Jane & Dave Styer. (The Styers live in California and take themselves out of the competition because of the rule limiting the area to a 100-mile radius from the Oxbow but welcome all pledges notwithstanding.)

You're invited to a Birthday Party!

Oxbow Inc. is twenty years old this year and it's time to celebrate. Plans are in the making for a late summer cruise on the Ohio and possibly an early fall family picnic.

Stay tuned!

Current Officers Reelected

All seven current officers of Oxbow Inc. were reelected to a one-year term at the January 11 members' meeting at Winton Woods Park. They are: Jon Seymour, President; Kani Meyer, Vice President; Dwight Poffenberger, Recording Secretary; Jim Poehlmann, Treasurer; Dennis Mason, Corresponding Secretary; John Getzendanner, Indiana Agent and Dwight Poffenberger, Ohio Agent.

Five Members of the Board of Directors also were reelected to serve a three-year term: Jeanne Bocklage, John Getzendanner, Mike Kluesener, Steve Pelikan and Dwight Poffenberger.

Coordinators Needed for Bird Atlas

...by Wayne Wauligman

County coordinators are needed for the 2005-2010 Indiana Breeding Bird Atlas, according to John Castrale of the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Mr. Castrale informs us: "It has been 20 years since field work began on the first Atlas (published in 1998). One of the values of redoing this effort is to see how the distribution of birds has changed, and to get an idea of how some avian species have increased or declined in the intervening years.

" We will be relying on the internet more heavily to distribute information, forms, and maps, and to allow the direct entry of data. Again, the basic sampling blocks will be the west-central 1/6th of the standard 7.5' USGS topographic map. Each county has anywhere from 4-12 atlas blocks.

" A county coordinator would help identify and recruit local birders to atlas blocks, atlas blocks themselves, review atlas records, and be a local source of information about atlas procedures and materials."

Anyone interested in serving as a county coordinator, should e-mail John Castrale at jcastrale@DNR.IN.gov. Include your address and phone number and the county you would like to coordinate. If you are interested in atlasing, but not coordinating a county, contact Mr. Castrale at the same address.

If anyone in Indiana is interested in being a Dearborn County coordinator, or if anyone in any state is interested in atlasing only for this breeding bird survey, contact Oxbow Inc. President Jon Seymour at jlsjks@hotmail.com. Jon encourages Oxbow Inc. members to take this opportunity to be involved in an enjoyable as well as helpful survey.



Gay and Jerry Hon

The Hons Are Newest Board Members

President Jon Seymour recently appointed Gatha and Jerry Hon to fill vacancies on the Oxbow Inc. Board of Directors. Gatha, who goes by "Gay", is a native of Lawrenceburg and has long been interested in the Oxbow. "When our family moved closer to the Oxbow to Hidden Valley, Indiana, about a year ago, I decided to see what I could do to help preserve the Oxbow for all animals." That decision led to Oxbow Inc.

Gay is married to Jerry Hon, UC Graduate, Director of Decision Support, Finance Department, St. Elizabeth Medical Center, Edgewood, Kentucky. Jerry was born in Cincinnati and reared in North Bend. He and Gay have one son Michael and daughter-in-law Vicki. Jerry, too, having grown up in the Oxbow area "definitely wants to see it preserved."

Both Gay and Jerry are hikers and golfers. Other than her job as a Medicare biller, Gay also enjoys sewing, photography and geocaching, a kind of satellite game. (The Gays hope to install the works needed to play at the Oxbow sometime in the future but need to find high dry land.) Jerry says, "Think the global positioning satellite systems in new high-end cars and you have an idea of what geocaching is."

Jerry fills an unexpired term of the Board of Directors Class of 2007 and Gay of the Class of 2006. They will stand for election in those years.



Oxbow Inc. Memorials

<i>Donor</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Jeanne Bocklage	Bill Bocklage
Mildred Hellmann	Nancy Getzendanner
Morris Mercer	Nancy Getzendanner
Mitchell & Laurie Serber	Nancy Getzendanner
Jon & Jackie Seymour	Nancy Getzendanner
Bob & Tina Schlegel	Margo Sanzenbacker
Clifford & Patsy Budke	Hester & Bernice Stephenson
Doug & Debra Williams	June Williams

Tributes

Jean Sponsler	<i>Happy Birthday!</i> Jim Marshall
L. Patton Davis	<i>Happy Birthday!</i> Aaron Perlman
Deborah Grove	Engrid Vaughan

Special Thanks

To Charles Noe for his Most Generous Gift

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 or anniversary remembrances, holiday greetings or gratitude acknowledgments. 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 acknowledgment.

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The Generous Annual Grant
from

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The Third Protestant Memorial Church
=====

Oxbow Inc. Activities Schedule

Programs

Tuesday, March 8, 2005, 7:30 p.m.
EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College

Rick Pope, prominent farmer of local lands including the Oxbow, will speak on the interesting events that occur when farming at the Oxbow, such as turning diversity into opportunities and promoting the peaceful coexistence of man and nature. Have your questions ready!

To get to Earth Connection go S on Neeb Road past the Delhi traffic light, turn up the first drive on the left to upper parking lot.

Tuesday, April 12, 2005, 7:30 p.m.
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Dan Boone, field botanist and historian, and also great-great-grandson of Kentucky's favorite son Daniel Boone, will bring alive the natural history of the Oxbow and relate this to human history. Dan also will show slides of some rare plants at the Oxbow.

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, March 5, 2005, 9:00 a.m.

Meet Jay Stenger at the Oxbow Inc. parking lot and he will lead you on a search for migrating waterfowl during the peak of their migration. Early migrant songbirds will also be sought on this outing to help break your cabin fever. Jay will continue the search until noon, but feel free to leave at any time earlier. Bring binoculars if you have them. (513-522-4245 or e-mail to jaystenger@cinci.rr.com)

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

Saturday, April 9, 2005, 8:00 a.m.

Meet Ned Keller at the Oxbow Inc. parking lot. Ned will help you search for early spring migrants and whatever else can be found on this early spring morning. (513-941-6497 or e-mail to keller@one.net.)

Directions to the parking lot under Jay Stenger field trip.





usings

by Dave Styer

The Ring-billed Gull: Another Look

I was on the sidewalk the other day when I heard a sharp crack behind me. I turned around to see if it was just another California street gang, [I'm joking] and I saw a Ring-billed Gull descending to the pavement to eat the contents of the shell it had dropped and broken open. Back at the Oxbow, the gulls eat dead and dying fish, but out here on the coast, they eat fresh seafood.

Actually, Ring-billed Gulls, like humans, will eat almost anything. Oh, yuk! Among birders, the gull enthusiasts go to the garbage dumps to see gulls. I've done it with them; what a treat. John P. Ryder's article on the Ring-billed Gull in *The Birds of North America* states that the main food taken by these birds is "fish, insects, earthworms, rodents [and] grain."

On an ordinary day in the Oxbow area you might see four or five Ring-billed Gulls. If Rick Pope is out there plowing his field, you might see one or two-dozen gulls following the tractor, scooping up the goodies exposed. The time you can really see a large number of gulls is after the fields have flooded and the water has subsided. Then a lot of fish get trapped in the puddles and hundreds of gulls may be there to eat the fish.

When I wrote *Birds of the Oxbow* I asked where the gulls came from and what was their method of communication. A partial answer to the questions appears to be related to the birds' wonderful visual adaptations. I used to think that bird vision was much like ours, only keener. What I am learning now is that "the richness of avian color perception is probably beyond that of human experience" (Frank B. Gill, *Ornithology*). For one thing, birds see colors in a broader spectrum than we do. Birds see into the ultraviolet, "light" frequencies that are simply not "light" to us. The color receptors in the eyes of reptiles, birds and mammals are the cones. Many diurnal reptiles and birds have colored oil droplets in their cones. The droplets come, one per cone, in different colors – "typically red, orange, yellow, and green" (Welty and Baptista, *The Life of Birds*). It is thought that these oil droplets intensify color perception.

According to Gill, "We speculate that primitive mammals, including the ancestors of primates, were night creatures that lost the retinal oil droplets associated with sensitive color vision. Once lost, these droplets did not evolve again in placental mammals. Instead, the color vision of humans and other primates evolved on a different basis, without pigmented oil droplets."

Since we lack the colored oil droplets, it is hard to have a feeling about what they do. However, yellow glasses darken a blue background so that objects against the sky stand out more. Similarly, red glasses make objects stand out against a green background. This must be significant because, again quoting Gill's *Ornithology*, "The yellow oil droplets are concentrated in the central and lower retina, where distant images such as those in the sky usually fall. Red oil droplets are concentrated in cones of the peripheral and upper retina, where nearby images such as those on land usually fall."

I never thought much about this oil droplet stuff, and I certainly never associated it with the flocks of Ring-billed Gulls at the Oxbow. Then I read a paragraph in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* that put these together. "Overall, adult gulls exhibit the general pattern of seabirds that feed on underwater prey from above the surface. The white ventral coloration presumably functions as camouflage against the pale sky. Moreover, white adult gulls gathering over food are more visible to distant conspecifics, and this is believed to function in social attraction to favorable feeding areas. Like terns, gulls also have a relatively high percentage of orange and red oil droplets in their eyes, which allows them to see long distances through the atmospheric haze that often occurs over estuaries and over the ocean. They can therefore see the white of active gulls from a long way off, and can join foraging groups following ships or feeding over schools of fish."

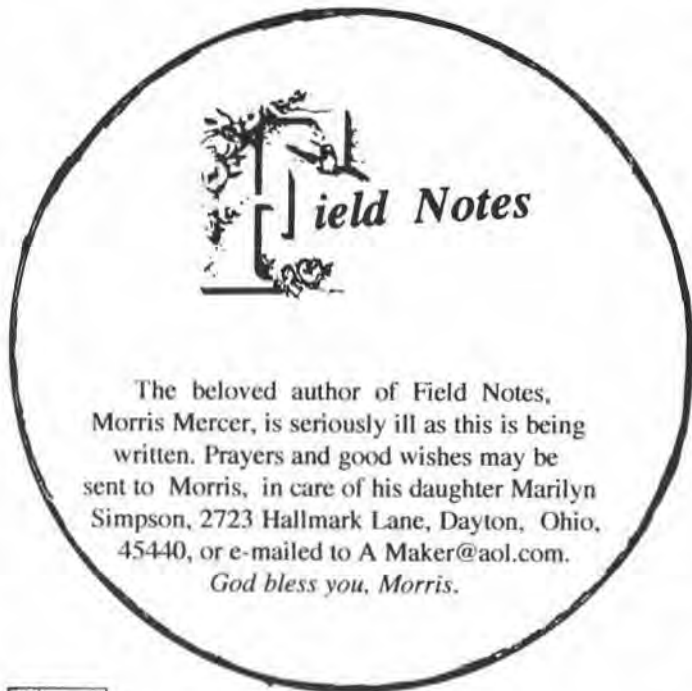
The Ring-billed Gulls can also join foraging groups wheeling around over the Oxbow area to feed on dead and dying fish caught in the sky pools. I don't think the camouflage part is very important here, but the special visual and behavioral adaptations are likely significant.



Oxbow Inc. Web Site Is Busy, Busy ...by Kani Meyer

Our Oxbow Inc. web site (www.oxbowinc.org) was visited 2632 times from June of 2004 through January of 2005. That averages to 329 visits a month. Surprisingly enough December was the month with the highest number of visits...or maybe that's not surprising since people are generally not outdoors that much and certainly not in the Oxbow area as it has been under water so much of the time!

If you haven't checked out the web site lately, we have added an area of the site for photos of the Oxbow. Photographs of animals including birds and general scenic views are now available and we would be happy to add any digital photos you may have that you think would be of interest to general viewers. Just send them to kaniau@yahoo.com. Any comments for web site improvements would be most welcomed!



Sunday, September 24 and 25. We will conduct bird walks at 9:00 A.M. both days. Tell everyone you know to be there.

As part of the publicity for this GOW, I was talked into volunteering to sit in a tree for an hour on Friday, September 9. Several notable leaders in local conservation organizations such as the County Parks and the Cincinnati Zoo have also volunteered. We will be going out on a limb for conservation.

In another recent action, Oxbow, Inc. has joined the Land Trust Alliance. The LTA is a loose federation of conservation minded land trusts that is active from coast to coast. The LTA provides nationally coordinated and tested guidelines for the operation of conservation organizations that own land and conservation easements. They provide training to boards of directors and standard ethical guidelines for conducting operations. They also provide group discounts for insurance which we hope will save us some money on the insurance we must purchase each year.

Recently the federal government has been examining tax deductions that have been claimed as a result of land donations to some conservation organizations. Although we buy most of our land, the management systems and ethical concerns are similar. Self regulation of Land Trusts by adopting ethical operational standards is a way of preventing an organization from becoming involved in controversy and protecting the investment of the members.

There is planned construction this year around the Argosy entrance to the Oxbow as the Lawrenceburg Conservation District, with the permission of CSX Railroad, will construct a new flood gate at the railroad's cut through the levee near Argosy. This will involve building a narrower flood gate and reducing the number of tracks running through the levee from the current two to one. If you are planning a trip to the Oxbow, be aware of the potential that the Argosy entrance road may be closed from time to time and may be clogged with construction equipment. Oxbow Inc. will be monitoring these activities to minimize the impact on the Oxbow area.



Conservation Corner

by Jon Seymour

Last year it was an immature Bald Eagle that showed up to give the participants in the Great Outdoor Weekend (GOW) a great Oxbow thrill. If you want to know what will happen this year you will have to bring your friends and neighbors and come out to the Oxbow and see for yourself. Oxbow, Inc. will once again participate in the GOW which will take place Saturday and

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Of Bits and Peeps

the little guy's, a Barred Owl did answer. That was it -- one owl-- but nevertheless it was fun hiking in the dark.

"Busy as a one-armed man with the nettle-rash pasting on wallpaper."

....O. Henry

A Grand Trip with "John Coulter"

They experienced unspeakable difficulties as they moved into an unknowable land but they continued through and over and around those difficulties as they pushed ever westward opening a land and recording events to tell a monumental story.

On December 14, 2004, at the Oxbow Inc. meeting in Lawrenceburg, we relived a few of the adventures experienced by Lewis and Clark on their famous expedition. Merriweather Lewis probably passed through the Oxbow area in 1803 on his trip down the Ohio River before he met with Captain William Clark as they began to assemble their party for the expedition.

Our speaker, John Cimarosti, participates in reenactments of the expedition and plays the role of John Coulter, a member of the group. John came dressed in a uniform of the Kentucky Militia (circa 1803). A special trip up the Missouri River was a revelation to John who had developed an interest in this history-making event and he graciously shared his experiences with us.

Displaying pelts of red fox, white tailed deer, coyote, black bear and elk, he gave us a feel for the kind of life that was lived then on the Missouri. He showed us the working of a real flint-lock gun and some of the tools used in the wilderness. John showed slides of his trip and told of meeting native Americans from the same tribes which Lewis and Clark encountered.

Through John we experienced a diversity of weather conditions from cold and very windy to warm with remorseless sunshine. We tasted life on a keel-boat and learned about nature along the Missouri from the ever-present cottonwood trees marching along the banks (used to make dugout canoes) to the plentiful bison and deer (food for the party).

The courage of Lewis and Clark was matched only by their scientific integrity and their detailed accounts and so we remember them with gratitude. We are also thankful to John Cimarosti for taking us along on his adventuresome journey.

... *Carol Molleran*

Whoooo Would Have Guessed-- Just One?

It wasn't Friday, the thirteenth, but it could have been. Even the owls didn't cooperate.

Nine night hikers made it to Shawnee Lookout with their flashlights Friday, January 7, some by very circuitous routes because of high water. Jon Seymour and Jerry Lippert subbed for leaders Morris Mercer who wasn't feeling up to a hike and John Klein who was nursing a sprained ankle. The troopers all got wet when more rain fell. One small boy kept calling the owls (they don't seem to call in the rain) and to everyone's joy, especially

That's our Jon Seymour on the lecture circuit -- and he loves it! As *Wetland Matters* goes to press, Jon is scheduled to tell the Oxbow Inc. story to four different groups. They are:

Sierra Club, March 7

Cincinnati Nature Center Volunteers, March 21

Lindeman Elementary School, Erlanger, Kentucky, April 15

Westwood Women's Club, April 27.

Jon will follow The Cincinnati Nature Center talk with a hike through the Oxbow for the club members on March 28 .

February was another busy month for Oxbow Inc.'s president. He made two appearances:

Hidden Valley Garden Club, Indiana, February 10

Wyoming Garden Club, February 14.



Scott Peak dressed in his Longhunter garb.

Many Enjoy the Longhunter Program at Winton Woods

On Tuesday evening, January 11, a visitor from times past stepped into the present to give Oxbow Inc. members a program on the life, times and practical equipment of the Longhunter. Scott Peak came to Winton Centre in full period dress as a Longhunter to enlighten a good-sized crowd who turned out to hear about the daily life of these pioneers who were so crucial to early American history, one of whom was Simon Kenton.

Longhunters were important figures in 18th Century America. They were skilled in the use of long rifles for protection and for hunting. They supplied many communities and military forts with meat in the form of wild game at a time when Indian attack and other hazards could make meat a hard item to come by. Thus, many communities relied heavily on Longhunters for protein.

Also, Longhunters often explored lands that were "virgin" or little known to Europeans, and discovered important trails and features of the terrain. Scott showed us authentic replicas of all of the equipment and necessities Longhunters utilized and carried with them, and why and how they used these items. Scott brought so many items to show that he quickly had to shed most of them, as he was working up quite a sweat under all that gear!

He also brought alive the daily life of the Longhunter, and discussed many of the important historic sites in the Oxbow area. Scott fielded many questions from the audience, several of whom also shared knowledge of historic spots within the Oxbow.

The audience had such a high interest in Scott's program and topic, that if we hadn't ended the program, the audience would have continued to ask Scott questions long into the night. What this means is that we will have to ask Scott to return to an Oxbow meeting in the future, to bring alive yet more of Longhunters' era, whose events and historic personages continue to fascinate us today.

... Jerry Lippert

Improve Your Health! Visit the Oxbow!

If science/health writer Beth Baker is correct, (see *National Wildlife*, Feb./Mar. '05) a walk through the Oxbow is good for your health.

Ms. Baker reports that scientists of various disciplines have found in their research that bird-watching, walking alongside a lake or just sitting and enjoying any of nature's beautiful vistas may have therapeutic benefits. She writes, as a result, hospitals are laying out "healing gardens" in their designs, nursing homes are installing aviaries and work places, rooftop green areas.

E. O. Wilson of Harvard outlined his theory of *biophilia* in 1984 which holds that *Homo sapiens* has a "hardwired affinity for plants, animals and scenic landscapes", according to this article, and a study by Deakin University and Parks Victoria in Australia found that parks can help fight blood pressure, cholesterol and stress-related diseases.

So get on down to the Oxbow -- and get healthier!

Steve Tells All About His Fly Study

If you want to have your attitude toward flies challenged, a good way to go about it is to talk to Steve Pelikan -- or rather, listen to him. To Steve, flies are not just pesky critters to swat, they are an important part of the ecosystem.

At the February 8 membership meeting at the Lawrenceburg library, Steve gave a well-planned presentation of his study of "The Flies of the Oxbow". He was interested in finding out how many and what kind of flies inhabit the Oxbow and if any alien flies have invaded the area and pose a threat to the natural wildlife. The fact that most flies spend part of their life cycle in water, would seem to make the Oxbow a natural habitat for them.

How does one take a survey of the flies in an area? Well, Steve went about in his usual systematic way, choosing six collecting sites at various points around the Oxbow. He deployed traps for specific amounts of time at each site using such traps as the Malaise Trap which is an open sided tent-like structure that takes advantage of the fact that flies, when they encounter an obstacle, will fly up (unlike moths which fly down). The collecting trap is therefore located at the top of the structure. Other methods of collecting were water traps and hand-held butterfly type nets.

There are no field guides for flies, Steve explained. A biologist must rely on descriptions made by others dating as far back as the 1880s. Some of the descriptions seem to prove that there is a long way to go in standardizing identification.

What has been learned from this survey? 1. There are a lot of flies in the Oxbow. 2. They are very diverse. 3. They serve in a number of capacities such as pollination of plants, waste removal, population control and food for birds and other animals. The next time you see a migrating sandpiper digging in the mud for a tasty morsel, be thankful for flies and their larvae.

We definitely are thankful to Steve Pelikan who made the effort to do this study and took the time to tell us all about it.

... Carol Molleran

Don't Be Insulted, Birdbrain!

Scientists recently changed their beliefs about all bird behavior being based on instinct. It is now believed that the bird's cerebrum resembles the mammal's and the bird is capable of complex behavior, like tool use. It has long been known that crows and parrots have shown behavior as intelligent as that of chimpanzees. All this from the journal, *Nature Neuroscience Reviews*, so we're happy to report that "birdbrain" no longer is a derogatory term.



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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