



# WETLAND *matters*

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

Have you visited our website?...[www.oxbowinc.org](http://www.oxbowinc.org)

## Come to the Great Outdoor Weekend September 24-25, 2005

The Great Outdoor Weekend will be held again this year and Oxbow, Inc. is once again participating. We will have tours of the Oxbow at 9:00 a.m. both Saturday and Sunday mornings. This is a great time to come and invite friends to join you. Nearly 50 other outdoor oriented organizations are holding special events during this weekend. All are free. It is the equivalent of the Fine Arts Sampler but for outdoor activities. Look for schedules in the city and county park offices, libraries, the Cincinnati Nature Center and other locations around town. Local papers should carry schedules and you can get event information at [greatoutdoorweekend.org](http://greatoutdoorweekend.org).

Our President, Jon Seymour, will go out on a limb for conservation on Friday, September 9, 2005. Literally! The heads of several local conservation oriented organizations will climb a tree at Sharon Woods County Park and spend an hour in the tree to advertise the Great Outdoor Weekend. This event should generate a lot of media coverage ( hopefully not because anyone falls out of the tree). We have been assured that Jon will have ropes and safety equipment to keep him safe.

## Birdathon 2005 Final numbers are in .....by Meg Poehlmann

The birds were counted, and now the pledges have been counted as well. Total funds raised for Oxbow, Inc. in the 2005 Birdathon was \$2,953.25. President Jon Seymour would like to thank each and every person who participated and made a contribution. A new record was set this year with Jerry Lippert, Eric Baumgardner, and Wayne Wauligman raising over \$1600 for the team. This is a new team record and we are really excited for The Fabulous Finneytown Flying Fortune Seekers team. This year they sought and found a small fortune for Oxbow, Inc. and we are really thrilled with their effort. Individuals Teams ranked as follows for pledges:

- The Oxbow, Inc. team of Jerry Lippert, Eric Baumgardner, and Wayne Wauligman saw 141 species and raised \$1642.00.

- The Oxbow, Inc. team of Jay Stenger, Paul Wharton and Jack Stenger, reclaimed first place and the Golden Starling Award, sighting 159 species. However, they came in second on the pledge side of things with \$767.25
- The Midwest No-seeums, Mike Busam, Bob Lacker, Steve Pelikan, and Charlie Saunders raised \$344.00.
- The Backyard Birders, Karl Maslowski and George Laycock, raised \$200.00. Thanks Karl and George for your continued dedication.

Great job by all the teams! Again, a big thanks to all involved.

### Correction from the editor:

In the last issue of *Wetland Matters*, it was reported that the Backyard Birders saw 40 species during the recent Birdathon—just in their backyard. In fact, George Laycock and Karl Maslowski went well beyond their backyards, traveling to Turpin Hills, Anderson Township and Rocky Fork Lake. Sorry for the oversight!

### Birdathon Donors

- |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Trip Artrip                   | Dorothy Bauer               |
| Max & Sally Baumgardner       | Jeanne Bocklage             |
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| Joan Walson                   | Brian Waltz                 |
| Wayne Wauligman               | Mr. & Mrs. Whitney Wharton  |
| Sarah Wigser                  |                             |

## Clean Sweep of the Great Miami More than Successful

Our July 23<sup>rd</sup> participation with the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami was great fun for all involved. It was hot, it was humid, there was poison ivy, and even a few mosquitoes. Surprisingly the clean-up, held in the morning hours, was not too hot, or too humid. Everyone seemed to avoid the poison ivy and the mosquitoes were not even that bad. We had four members show up with trucks to haul trash and that fact alone probably made it our most successful clean-up. Volunteers were able to remove an estimated four tons of trash in 3 hours.

The heavy rains the week before the clean-up did mean that we were not able to send clean-up crews to the edge of the river. However the participants divided into four groups and tackled four different projects. Some participants cleaned the area around the entrance parking lot and down through the fishing areas around Juno Pond. One crew went to the Mercer Pond area and another went to the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District along the Argosy entrance road. A fourth and final group went after special projects, one of which was the removal of a refrigerator lodged 15 feet up in a tree.

We had the usual bottles and tires but this year a hot water heater, 2 large gas tanks, bed springs, and 5 refrigerators led the list of odd stuff. Oxbow, Inc. wishes to thank all the volunteers who came out to help. You did a super job!



*The Lawrenceburg Conservancy District crew (L to R) Steve Pelikan, Dave Meyer, Kani Meyer, Ryan Kolde, Ron Kolde, Paul Wharton, and Krista Wharton, pose beside some of the mountain of trash they removed from the Conservancy District area. (photo by Cammie Seymour)*

### Clean Sweep Volunteer List

Dave Meyer	Jon Seymour
Kani Meyer	Jackie Seymour
Jim Poehlmann	Cammie Seymour
Ben Poehlmann	Bob Schlegel
Rickii Moore	Don Himburg
Lea Moore	Jerry Hon
Luna Smith	Paul Wharton
Daniel Schneider	Krista Wharton
Janet Schneider	Denis Conover
Ron Kolde	Tim Mara
Ryan Kolde	Steve Pelikan



*The Causeway and Mercer Pond crew (Jim & Ben Poehlmann, Rickii Moore, Jackie Seymour, Luna Smith and Lea Moore) unload a truck full of trash, with a little help from Jon Seymour, into the Dumpster donated by Rumpke, Inc. (photo by Cammie Seymour)*

**THANK YOU!**



## Bill Corning, Friend of Oxbow, Inc., Dies at 84

Bill Corning was present at the start of Oxbow, Inc. and was one of the first people to join the organization. Bill's family was descended from the Hayes family, who were original land grant owners in the Great Miami River bottoms. He was intensely proud that the land he owned in the Oxbow was still in the family. It was with great pride that Bill became one of the first to establish a conservation easement with Oxbow, Inc. About 30 acres of land under the Corning easement is adjacent to the south end of Oxbow Lake and sits abeast I-275. Many years ago a large portion of this easement was planted in trees and shrubs and today is one of the few places in the Oxbow where Bald Cypress are found growing.

Bill was known as a doer and a man who got things done. Not only was he involved with Oxbow, Inc. but even more recently he was currently serving on the Board of Directors for SWCD and also was serving on the Board of Directors of Historic Hoosier Hills. In other matters of conservation Bill was very active with the Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge. Bill is survived by his wife of 50 years, Barbara, and two brothers, Daniel Newhouse of New Orleans and Alan Newhouse of Urbana. Our thoughts go out to the family and their loss is also a loss for Oxbow, Inc.

## Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

### Donor

Helen C. Black  
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Oak Crest Animal Hospital  
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Jerry & Maureen Johnson

### In Memory of

Morris Mercer  
Sandy Lynn Hafer  
Dempsey  
Junior  
Morris Mercer  
Morris Mercer

*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 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, OH 45243-0391. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those who are to receive the acknowledgement.*

**Reminder to all hunters!  
September 1 deadline for hunting permit application is approaching. Send applications to:**

**John Getzendanner  
21007 Crestview Court  
Lawrenceburg IN 47025**

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## Of Bits and Peeps...

so that others can assist in controlling invasive plants.  
... Kani Meyer



## University of Cincinnati Class Studies Business Park Rain Run Off

.....by Jon Seymour

Dr. Xinhao Wang's Environmental Resource Analysis class of Spring 2005 was commissioned by Oxbow, Inc., with the permission of the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, to study the increase in rain water run off from the Greendale Business Park. The purpose of the study was to predict how future development of the Greendale Business Park would increase the rate of rain water run off into the Oxbow.



*Dr. Xinhao Wang's Environmental Resource Analysis Class of 2005, of the University of Cincinnati, College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, presents the findings of their study on rain water run off from the Greendale Business Park and how it affects the Oxbow to the assembled Board of Directors of Oxbow, Inc. (photo by Jon Seymour)*

For those unfamiliar with how the water flows in the Business Park, which is on the other side of the levee and Highway 50, it flows south toward the Lawrenceburg fairgrounds and is then channeled into ditches and pumped across the levee and Highway 50 into the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District (LCD). The LCD occupies the corner of the bottoms nearest Argosy Casino. Oxbow travelers know this place by the name Jackpot Pond. Once in the LCD the water is supposed to flow through the canals to the Ohio River. Two years ago beaver blocked the culvert flowing to the Ohio River and the water from the Business Park backed up and flowed into Oxbow Lake. It was almost a year before we could get the beaver dam removed from the opening to the culvert. This problem alerted us to the need to better understand the water situation in the Greendale Business Park and the importance of having the LCD drainage system perform correctly.

The study conducted by Dr. Wang's class concluded that the current future development plans for the Greendale Business Park would increase the rate of water flow out of the business park into the LCD by a minimum of 50% over the

current level. We know the current level can lead to unacceptable conditions for Oxbow Lake, and an increase of 50% would be much worse. Oxbow, Inc. is working with the LCD to create a plan to keep the culvert draining the LCD to the Ohio River open. The data from Dr. Wang's class project adds urgency to finding a permanent solution to the drainage issue.



*The new culvert between the cement plant pond and Juno Pond. (photo by Jon Seymour)*

## Culvert Installation

Those of you traveling the Oxbow roads during the last year have undoubtedly noted the large culvert pipe sitting at the bottom of the entrance road. After months of waiting, the conditions were finally right to install the new culvert. The old culvert under the causeway between the cement plant pond and Juno Pond had cross bracing on the inside. This worked fine for years but with the return of the beaver to the area, the cross bracing was just too handy for them not to try to use it to block the flow of water. Being beaver, they were successful. Being



*It takes some large equipment to install culverts (photo by Jon Seymour)*

humans, we were not successful in stopping them. The result was the washout of a large section of the causeway that often made access to the Mercer Pond portion of the Oxbow impossible. Board member Rick Pope led the project and made the arrangements for the purchase and installation of the culvert. At the same time we used the equipment on site to install a new culvert between Oxbow Lake and Osprey Lake. This was necessary since water flowing in and out of the newly created Osprey Lake during floods was washing out the road along the edge of Oxbow Lake and making it impassible.

These two improvements of the road and drainage system should go a long way to keeping the area accessible to members a maximum number of days during the year.



*Rick Pope directs a dumptruck that is carrying dirt to cover the new culvert on Osprey Lake. (photo by Jon Seymour)*



### Energy, Flushing and Migratory Birds

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reminds birders and others to be aware of the negative impact disturbance has on wildlife. During migration periods resting and ample foraging periods are critical to maintaining the birds proper body condition. Flushing ducks expend up to 12 times the energy used at rest. It has been estimated for every ten minutes birds spend flying they must forage for about two hours to replenish energy reserves. We must ensure that our activities do not cause the birds to flush in in a migratory status.

## Oxbow, Inc. Activities Schedule

### PROGRAMS

**Tuesday, September 13th, 2005, 7:30 p.m.**  
**EarthConnection, College of Mount St. Joseph**

Dr. Gene Kritsky, biology professor, editor of the journal *American Entomologist*, and cicada researcher, will give us an update on what was learned from the massive emergence of the Brood X Periodical Cicadas in 2004. Dr. Kritsky has been studying Brood X and other cicadas for many years. At each emergence, much more is learned about the life histories of these fascinating insects. To get to EarthConnection in Delhi, go south on Neeb Rd past the Delhi Rd traffic light, turn up the second drive on the left.

**Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 7:30 PM**  
**Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana**

Jay Stenger, local birder and past president of the Cincinnati Bird Club, will share with us the many sightings over the years of unusual birds in the Oxbow, including his most recent sightings. Don't miss Jay's enthusiasm and knowledge about the wonderful feathered creatures we all enjoy seeing in 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

**Please note meeting place**—the upper Oxbow parking lot (new) near the cement plant. 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 there it is on your right.

**Saturday and Sunday**  
**September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 9:00 AM**

**As part of the Great Outdoor Weekend**, Oxbow, Inc., will be offering tours of the Oxbow from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. Various hike leaders will guide you through the Oxbow to give you a great taste of what it's all about. Meet at the new Oxbow parking lot near the cement plant.

**Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 8:30 AM**

**Meet Jay Stenger**, a member of the winning Oxbow team in the 2005 Birdathon competition, at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. Jay will lead you on a search for all the birds that are arriving early, arriving late, leaving early, leaving late, and even those that are right on time. October is a "tweener" month, in between the beginnings and ends of various bird migrations. So it will be a mixed bag of birding as you never know what you will find in October. Jay promises to lead us where we can go to find all these "tweeners".



## usings

by Dave Styer

### Lincoln's Sparrow: American Roots

In October I liked to go to the prairie plantings in the Oxbow area to look for Lincoln's Sparrows on their southward migration. These are close relatives of Song Sparrows. The Song Sparrow is a common resident all year long, but Lincoln's Sparrow is an uncommon spring and fall migrant seen much more in the fall than in the spring. Lincoln's Sparrows look like trim Song Sparrows with distinctly grayer faces and finely striped breasts with a buff-colored background.

John James Audubon (JJA) named Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*) for Thomas Lincoln, one of five young assistants he took with him on his trip to Labrador in the summer of 1833. For a fuller account about the naming of this sparrow, I quote from Mary Durant and Michael Harwood's *On the Road with John James Audubon*:

"That's the only new species JJA and his party discovered in Labrador. At the American harbor west of Natashquan, hunting through a small valley out of the wind, Audubon heard an unfamiliar song and shouted for the young men; they chased the bird, it proved very shy, but at last Tom Lincoln shot it. "I named it Tom's Finch," says JJA, "Three cheers were given him, when, proud of the prize, I returned to the vessel to draw it."

Now that we know why it's called Lincoln's Sparrow, we should ask why it's called a "sparrow." Luckily, we know why! It is a sparrow, just like the Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Goodness, in *Birds of the Oxbow*, I mention at least fifteen real sparrow species. Europeans struggled for millennia trying to find real sparrows, but they didn't succeed until after Columbus discovered America. Here are some tidbits I have found in *The Dictionary of American Bird Names* by Ernest A. Choate: "Sparrow" comes from the Anglo-Saxon *sperwa*, "sparrow," literally "flutter," applied to any small bird. The word has an Indo-European base, *spar*, "flutter, quiver," and hence figuratively "to struggle, kick or jerk." Choate continues with Latin and Greek roots with much the same meaning. Those of us fortunate enough to live in North America immediately recognize that the "struggle" was that of humans trying to find the real sparrows.

Moving on to sparrow relationships to other birds, I grew up with considerable misunderstanding about this. Ornithologists were struggling to learn what these birds were related to. The problem has been that there are so many birds that look like sparrows even though they may not be closely related. Lincoln's Sparrows were once treated as more closely related to House Finches than to Prothonotary Warblers. The truth appears to be the other way around. DNA studies repeatedly show

this. One of the wonderful things about the long strings of DNA that determine what we are is that two organisms that look similar but are not closely related will not have confusingly close DNA.

To get a perspective, the largest order of birds, *Passeriformes*, the "passerines" or "perching birds," is often divided in two groups: the "oscine passerines, i.e., the "song birds," and the rest, called "suboscine" passerines, perhaps for want of a better term. Some places, especially South America, are well endowed with suboscine passerines, but north of Mexico we have only the Tyrant Flycatchers (the flycatchers, kingbirds, and phoebes). The vast assemblage of "song birds" contains many birds with fine songs, for example, wrens, thrushes, many sparrows, cardinals, orioles, etc. It also includes many birds with weak or course voices, such as crows and Cedar Waxwings; they are put in the oscine passerines because they are all related.

To focus a little closer, Lincoln's Sparrows belong to a group of birds called "New World nine primary oscines." Recall that the primaries are the outer flight feathers, and most songbirds have ten primaries per wing. My last article pointed out that vireos have ten primaries while our warblers have nine, and that the vireos and warblers are not so closely related as they were once considered. There are several families of birds in the New World nine primary oscines. Besides our warblers, ones familiar to us are the tanager family, the blackbirds and orioles (including grackles, meadowlarks, cowbirds, and the Bobolink), the cardinal family (Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, etc.), and *Emberizidae*, the family that includes our sparrows, Juncos, and towhees. Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings are also in *Emberizidae*. This bothered me because these birds nest in the Polar Regions across Europe and Asia, as well as North America. Besides these two species there are several buntings that live strictly in the Old World. I found a reasonable explanation on the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology website: "Sparrows and buntings are thought to have evolved in the New World and crossed into the Old World via the Bering Strait." Not all New World nine primary oscines live in the New World.

I have found nothing in the textbooks about the "obscene" passerines. Presumably, these are birds such as the House Sparrow that people have spread all over the world. Not only do they tend to displace native birds, but also English-speaking Europeans refer to them as "true sparrows." No wonder there was an American Revolution.

### Editor's Call for Help

If you attend Oxbow, Inc. programs or field trips and would be interested in writing 2 to 3 paragraphs about what you heard, please email or call Meg Poehlmann. Contact information is on the back of the newsletter. Thanks!

# Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

...by Jon Seymour

June 8, 2005: I am looking out on the newly planted soybeans and corn on the northeast side of Oxbow Lake between the Lake and Mercer Pond. This extensive field has always seemed to be huge, sometimes even daunting when I think about walking out to Mercer Pond following the roads. Today it is too muddy to drive but walking is not a problem. As I emerge from the shelter of the causeway I send a small flock of shorebirds flying away from me. They follow the edge of the mudflats along the cement plant pond, turn abruptly, nearly in unison, and fly back toward me. Once again they turn and settle in on the shoreline 100 yards away. My immediate goal is to scan the remaining cottonwoods along Mercer Pond and I am not disappointed as I see 3 Great Egrets in the trees. Soon it will be hard to find Great Egrets since they seem to disappear from the Oxbow for most of June and July before we start to see them again in large numbers in late July.

I start walking down the road on the northeast shore of Oxbow Lake. About 150 yards ahead of me, in the area we are restoring as a mudflat, a large white-tailed deer explodes into the air, the white flash of the tail flag letting me know that I had just insulted his/her peace and quiet – and probably breakfast. I watch the deer moving away and am struck by the fact that it is not slowing down. Most Midwest white-tails run for a short distance and if not pursued, stop and look back. The deer is now 300 yards away and still running hard. 400 yards.....500 yards.....still going and now due to the curve of the land all I can see is the top of the bound and the flying white flag. Finally the deer reaches the Corning Easement and disappears into the trees over a half mile from where it started. My memory flies back to the last time I saw a deer startle and run that far for that long a time. It was in a National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota more than 30 years ago. My wife Jackie and I had pulled our car along the refuge road and startled two white-tailed deer in the prairie grass. They bolted with flags flying high and we watched them run over the prairie for nearly a mile until they disappeared into a roll in the landscape of the plain. I can still see those North Dakota deer running over the prairie and I can still see that Oxbow deer running across the corn field. There is a certain wildness in running to escape the intrusion of man.

August 1, 2005: I am taking a survey of the number of Great Egrets and other herons using the Oxbow. I typically start these surveys at Mercer Pond, drive back along the southwest side of Oxbow Lake to the overlook area, and then drive down alongside the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District to Jackpot Pond. By doing this, I can minimize counting any bird more than once. The transit usually takes about 1 hour for me to complete. Mercer Pond has 31 Great Egrets hanging out around the shores. The sight of this many Great Egrets in one spot on the Great Miami River is always overwhelming. Add the scattering of Double-crested Cormorants and Great Blue Heron and the view across Mercer Pond, this time of the summer, always transports me to Florida. I continue the transit and by the time I pull away from Jackpot Pond I have logged 39 Great Egrets, 44 Great Blue Heron and 1 Black-crowned Night

Heron. Although my mission is to count wading birds, the memory I have of the day is much different. Along the RR track road there is a deep tire rut, the kind I hate, from a truck that had left a nearly permanent deep impression in the mud earlier in the year. The weather has been hot and dry for weeks and this deep rut was filled with water. In the water bathing and drinking at the same time are a male American Goldfinch, a male Indigo Bunting and a male Common Yellowthroat. All this color and delicacy in a muddy old tire rut! It is another Oxbow moment for me.



by Jon Seymour

Oxbow, Inc. continues to interact with other conservation groups in the area. A recent example was our participation in the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami 2005. The slogan for this year's Clean Sweep was "Indian Lake to the Ohio River". It was our participation and involvement that inspired the slogan since this was the first time the Clean Sweep focused on the entire length of the river including Oxbow's portion of the mouth of the river. Other groups were active in the area with Clean Sweep crews being based at Shawnee Lookout and at Green Acres Canoe Livery. From the source to the mouth an estimated 400 tons of trash was removed from the river. The press release indicates that this is the weight of 3 Boeing 747s. Impressive!

In Indianapolis the Indiana Land Protection Association (ILPA) is forming as a charitable organization of its own that will serve as a supportive expert base and coordinated voice of Land Trusts and other groups conserving land in Indiana. Look for ILPA in the Indiana DNR building at the Indiana State Fair. Stop by and learn more about land trusts and how they function in Indiana.



Happy Halloween!

**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 know 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
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