



March - April 2007

No. 124

WETLAND *matters*

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

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

Birdathon Time Again.

The Duck Stops Here.

The Buck Should Stop Here Too!

.....by Jon Seymour

After last years tremendous success of raising nearly \$6000 for habitat improvement we have a goal for 2007 of raising even more. Yes, that means Birdathon 2007 is coming. Oxbow, Inc. started the Cincinnati Area Birdathon to foster interest in birds, competition among birders, and to raise money for Oxbow, Inc. This is our biggest fund raiser and keeping it growing still remains our goal.

Jay Stenger will once again lead our effort to organize a bigger and better Birdathon in 2007. The Birdathon is an opportunity for Oxbow, Inc. to stay at the top of every birder's list. Donations to the Birdathon will be earmarked for projects involving bird habitat improvement and increased viewing access. This will be ongoing so donations can be used for small projects or build to fund larger projects. As in the past, we will ask other organizations to sponsor teams and solicit donations. We have adopted the practice of splitting donations raised by sister organizations 50/50 between the sister organization and Oxbow, Inc.

We need ALL Oxbow members to get behind the Birdathon and pledge money on a per species basis or make a fixed donation to support our teams and raise money for habitat restoration and access improvement. Many members have found it easier just to send a check in a fixed amount to support a favorite team or simply the winning team. Participate in whatever way is easiest for you but participate if you can. A pledge form to fill out and send in is on page 3. Pledge your support of the 2007 Birdathon. You can pledge a lot or you can pledge a little. All money pledged to Oxbow teams goes to Oxbow, Inc.

Register Your Birdathon Team for 2007

Please consider participating in the 2007 Oxbow Birdathon. To participate you do not have to be a birding expert, you do not have to spend all 24 hours in the field, and you do not have to go any farther than your kitchen window. You can count bird species. Take personal pledges. All participants are invited to come on down to the pizza party at the end of the count period and tell us what you saw. You will find a registration form on page 3. If you do not want to count

species yourself, choose to support one of Oxbow's teams with your pledges. Fill in the pledge form on Page 3 and return it to the listed address. Help us improve the oxbow floodplain. Those interested in participating or volunteering to be part of this birding celebration call Jay Stenger at 513-522-8147 or Jon Seymour at 513-851-9835 or contact us by email to Jay at jaystenger@cinci.rr.com or to Jon at jlsjks@hotmail.com.

Internal Revenue Service Rule May Save Oxbow, Inc. Donors Money

At least through 2007 the IRS has made it easier to donate to non-profit organizations like Oxbow, Inc. A provision in recent law allows an IRA owner over the age of 70 ½ to make a direct transfer of funds from their IRA to Oxbow, Inc. without having to declare it as income. Therefore it is a tax free donation and is valid regardless of whether you itemize your deductions. There are some qualifications: the amount may not exceed \$100,000 and cannot be from an employer sponsored retirement plan. Check with your tax advisor if you are considering making this type of donation. The law expires at the end of 2007 and may or may not be renewed by Congress.

Announcement of Elections

Board members and officers of Oxbow, Inc. were elected at our January members meeting. The following Board members were elected:

- Jerry Lippert
- Aaron Perlman
- Jim Poehlmann
- Jon Seymour
- Mike Miller

The following officers were elected:

- President – Jon Seymour
- Vice-president – Kani Meyer
- Recording Secretary – Dwight Poffenberger
- Corresponding – Dennis Mason
- Treasurer – Jim Poehlmann
- Ohio Agent – Dwight Poffenberger
- Indiana Agent – John Getzendanner

Oxbow Programs in Review – You should have been there!

December 12, 2006

Just because it is a grassland does not mean it will stay that way!

Mike Busam, resident bird expert and conservation activist, reviewed the fate of grasslands in Ohio and Indiana and, as a result, the fate of the birds dependent on grasslands. Grasslands are one of the most fragile and rarest habitats to find near the Cincinnati area or anywhere in the US. We are fortunate to have a productive but artificial grassland in Butler County at the site of the former Voice of America (VOA). While this grassland supports Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows, Meadowlarks, Horned Larks, and an occasional Upland Sandpiper, it is under constant attack. The VOA is now owned by various local groups who have varied designs on the "development" of the area. Where we look and see rare bird habitat, others look and see a strip mall or soccer fields – all equally deadly to grassland birds. Even the portion of the park in the hands of the Butler County Park System is threatened because of their building of "recreational" facilities. There is also still the question of whether the Butler County system has the expertise and the incentive to maintain a valuable grassland for native birds.

January 9, 2007

Watch out for those rocks – they move around!

Stan Hedeem, professor emeritus from Xavier University, gave an inspired presentation based on his recent book "Natural History of the Cincinnati Region". Dr. Hedeem focused his review on the Oxbow area as a tip of his hat to our organization. Starting with the glaciers influences on the rock, rivers and vegetation of the area, Stan weaves a story that explains why the rivers flow where they do, why some plants grow better in certain areas and not so well in others, and why the landscape of hills, ravines, plains and valleys looks the way it does. Adding humans to the picture, Dr. Hedeem is able to demonstrate the changes that have occurred in the area as a result of human habitation. Do not assume this means just the last 200 years. Humans have been helping to shape the landscape for the past 8000 years. The problem is that in the last 200 years the level of impact on the land has been nearly catastrophic. There are flashes of hope such as the Hamilton County Park System, Hillside Trust, Land Conservancy of Hamilton County, Western Wildlife Corridor and of course Oxbow, Inc. whose missions are to preserve as much as possible of the natural landscape.

Eco-Weekend—First weekend in May Sponsored by Columbus Audubon

Offering a variety of fun fact-filled nature programs that include animals, arts, astronomy, nature walks and more! This weekend encounter in nature is for anyone who wants to learn more about nature's fascinating eco-structures while relaxing in an engaging and picturesque setting. To receive the Eco-Weekend brochure and registration, email information@columbusaudubon.org

For more information contact the Columbus Audubon Eco-Weekend Committee at (740-549-0333)

OR

online at columbusaudubon.org.

Look for the link to Eco-Weekend under Activities.

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

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Special thanks for generous donations to
Oxbow go to:

William P. Anderson Foundation
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Joanne Jeffrey
Charles Noe
Bonnie Pence

Third Protestant Memorial Church Fund
Marcia & Edward Wilz
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Withrow

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.

**Birdathon Pledge Form for Birdathon 2007
(May 11-12, 2007)**

Name _____

Address _____

My Pledge for Birdathon 2007 is:

Fixed Amount: \$ _____

() Check Enclosed

() Bill me after the Birdathon

Per Species Pledge (Circle One, you will be billed after the Birdathon):

\$ 5.00	\$4.00	\$3.00	\$2.00
\$1.00	75¢	50¢	25¢

Other \$ _____

My Pledge is to Support the following Oxbow, Inc. Team

_____ Highest Scoring Team

_____ Team #1 – Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger, and Joe Bens

_____ Team #2 – Jerry Lippert, Erich Baumgardner, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger

_____ Team #3 – Sister Marty Dermody and a team to be named later

_____ Team #4 – Dave and Jane Styer (West Coast Big Day)

Make checks payable to Oxbow, Inc. All donations to the Birdathon are tax deductible.

Mail To: Jon Seymour
854 Ligorio Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45218

2007 Birdathon Registration Form

Oxbow, Inc. wants to have lots of birdwatchers participate in the Birdathon. There are many ways to compete or participate as a competing or non-competing individual or team. You do not even have to leave your own house. However, if you choose to participate we would like you to enter (covers the cost of the party) and join the pizza party at 5 pm on Saturday, May 12 at Winton Centre in Winton Woods. Here are some of the categories of competition:

- Most Species by a Team (most overall species by a group)
- Most Species by an Individual (most overall species by an individual)
- Most Species in a Back Yard (most species observed from one yard)
- Most Species One State (most species by state, either Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky)
- Most Species One County (most species in any one county, e.g., Hamilton)
- Most Species In One Location (recorded in one defined area, e.g., The Oxbow)
- Most Species Non-Fossil Fuel (recorded without using any gasoline)
- Most Species Big Sit (recorded from one fixed 30 x 30 foot spot)
- Most Species Family (most species by a family, parent/guardian and at least one child)
- Most Species Under Age 20 (most species seen by a group 19 & under, 1 adult allowed)
- Most Funds Raised by a Team
- Most Funds Raised by an Individual
- Most Funds raised by Persons Under 20 Years Old

Remember the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise money for improving Oxbow habitat and Oxbow accessibility projects.
The way to do it is to have fun birding!

I want to enter a team (or as an individual) in the Oxbow Birdathon. Please send an entry form to:

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

**Mail to: Oxbow, Inc
9761 Winton Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45231**



usings

by Dave Styer

The Eastern Phoebe

Not long after I became an avid bird watcher, I discovered that Eastern Phoebes nested under an open water tank behind our barn. I always enjoyed the almost spoken *fee-bee* song, described by Peterson as "a well-enunciated *phoe-be*, or *fi-bree*." Somewhere, I believe, I have heard the phoebe's song referred to as "plaintive," but since the Eastern Phoebe was one of the first "spring" arrivals, I found the song cheering.

Robert Frost may not have found their song cheerful. In his poem "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things," he wrote of a pair of phoebes that took up residence near a burned out and deserted farm house. The poem's last stanza is:

*For them there was really nothing sad,
But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
One had to be versed in country things
Not to believe the phoebes wept.*

Phoebes once nested in culverts at Shawnee Lookout, although they weren't nesting there in the 1980s and early 1990s, when *Birds of the Oxbow* was being prepared. The Eastern Phoebe is generally considered common in its range. Once they were not nearly as common. Bruce Peterjohn wrote in *The Birds of Ohio* "before Ohio was settled, Eastern Phoebes were very locally distributed summer residents restricted to wooded stream valleys bordered by rocky cliffs." That must have been true not just in Ohio, but also through most of their range.

I remember a story about Audubon traveling with a companion down a streamside route. Audubon's friend knew the route, but Audubon had never before been there. The companion challenged Audubon to tell him just before they were coming to a roaring waterfall. This person knew that you couldn't hear the falls from upstream. Just before they arrived at the falls Audubon announced that they were there, and his friend said that Audubon must have been lying about never having been there. It turned out that Audubon had seen an Eastern Phoebe and inferred that there must be a cliff, and thus a waterfall, nearby. You can bet that Audubon's friend didn't respond "OK, Sherlock."

The classic *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States* by Edward Howe Forbush gives several accounts of how well Eastern Phoebes have adapted to nesting around human activity. He doesn't just mention ordinary places like barns, railroad trestles, mine shafts, and rifle ranges. Here's a really good one:

Mr. Aretas A. Saunders of Fairfield, Connecticut, tells me of a Phoebe's nest in a quarry where blasting was going on about fifteen feet away. Blasting was continued daily after the middle of April, 1922, yet the bird brought out her first brood safely, relined the nest and on June 27 was sitting on five eggs. When the men fired a blast they placed a board in front of the nest to protect it.

Aretas Saunders later became famous in the birding world for his publications on bird song. However, I don't think he ever checked those phoebes for hearing loss.

In a footnote, Forbush mentions a phoebe that nested on a ferry "that ran between Middletown and Portland, Connecticut." Think of the possibilities. When I was writing *Birds of the Oxbow* and couldn't find an Eastern Phoebe nesting in the area, perhaps I was looking in the wrong place. Instead of looking under bridges and culverts, maybe I should have been watching the Delta Queen or the barges to catch sight of a nesting phoebe as it was going by.

If phoebes would take up nesting on the Delta Queen, I can imagine even larger consequences. Many states do breeding bird atlas projects. Often the entire state is broken up into "blocks" about 3 miles by 3 miles in size. Birders go into a block during the nesting season, and try to find all bird species nesting within that block. These projects often run for five years. Then some brave soul in the Department of Natural Resources compiles it all and publishes a book with a statewide map for each species. The map shows each block in which the bird was found breeding. Since we hardly ever know fully what birds are breeding in a block there are levels of confidence included. For example, if you only see a singing male after migration in the block, you would call that a *possible* breeding species. If you saw a pair for a couple of weeks, you would say it was *probable* that this species was breeding, but if you found an active nest with young, then you would have *confirmed* that the species was breeding in your block.

Now imagine yourself relaxing in a deck chair on the Delta Queen, sipping your Diet Coke, and watching an active Eastern Phoebe nest as you cruise down the Ohio River. Since the Ohio River is in Kentucky, suppose also that you are participating in a Kentucky Breeding Bird Atlas project. By the time you were done you would have confirmed the Eastern Phoebe in every block in Kentucky downstream from Cincinnati. What an achievement! As they say, "it's hard work, but somebody has to do it."

Gravel Mining and Floodplains

.....by Tim Mara

Gravel, by its nature, is found only along rivers, usually within the floodplain. We all know of examples of gravel mining companies who mined their properties without regard to the effect on the adjacent river, the aquifer, or the community. The landscape is still burdened by abandoned gravel pits which also pose a safety hazard to adventurous children and other trespassers. All too often, development in and near Tri-State floodplains has degraded water quality in streams, reduced the quantity and quality of wildlife habitat, increased the frequency and severity of flooding, and spoiled treasured scenic vistas.

There are those who would like to ban gravel mining in the Great Miami floodplain, but, is it realistic? Gravel is an essential ingredient in concrete and asphalt paving. Also, without gravel there would be no concrete for foundations and other building components. The Great Miami Valley is one of the largest repositories of gravel in the United States. The best option seems to be to control operations to limit damage and establish a means of recovery to a seemingly natural state.

Over time, state laws have evolved to control many of the negative effects of gravel mining. Today, gravel mining operations are regulated by the states which require annual license applications, detailed reclamation plans, and the posting of performance bonds, as well as by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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Probably Prayer

A Short Story by Marcia Eckstein

I call him 'my bird' although, of course, he is not mine and I have no idea if he's even a he. He is tall for a bird, with skinny legs and a long neck. He stands in the water and waits, the very picture of patience, for just the right tidbit to swim by. The ducks and geese know he's there on the periphery of their world. They don't bother him but neither do they invite him in. All of this is fine, but not the reason I love him.

It is the Z across the clouds. Neck kinked, legs straight as arrows behind him and his oval body somewhere in between, he looks like the letter zee in flight. No other bird makes this silhouette. The first time I saw him, I pulled the car to the side of the road and held my breath till he passed out of sight. Even then, I was reluctant to turn the key in the ignition and get moving again. Stunned. Maybe that's the word. I sat stunned. To my limited logic, that zee formation flight constituted a small miracle.

One day I took a friend on a drive through what was recently country, where the land clung jealously to the fields and woods that, so far, had survived the developers' bulldozers. There he sat, my bird, in a favorite spot at the edge of a lake. Behind the too-perfectly landscaped lake stood a Japanese manufacturing company. Glass and steel reflected lily pads, ducks, geese, and my bird.

He is grey really, but they call him a blue heron. (Although years ago we startled each other when my hike took me out of the woods and too close to a backyard lake. After my heart rate resumed normal rhythm I had to admit he had been blue. And big, very big to someone from the suburbs accustomed to sparrows, robins and blue jays.)

"Isn't he amazing?" I said to Anne, more a statement than a question.

"What's amazing is that you're idling in the middle of the road and no one has come by to cuss you out."

I smiled. "That's my bird. When I see him it means good luck, good fortune."

"That is so cool. How did you know where to find him?"

"He was just there one day. So now every time I pass the lake, I look for him. If I see him, it will be a magical day."

"What if you don't?"

"It will be a day, not bad, but a day."

My family learned about him. My husband fell into line and began referring to him as "your bird". "I saw your bird the other day," he would say.

My brother called all excited one wet April morning. "Put your boots on," he said, "You gotta see this."

"What?"

"Just put your boots on. And a hood or hat or something. It's wet out there."

I knew that. It had been pouring for hours.

He drove me to Morrow along the Little Miami River and parked in a muddy field next to a "No Trespassing" sign.

"It says 'No Trespassing'," I told him.

"Come on," he replied, boots hitting the sodden earth with loud slaps.

I ran a little to catch up with his long legs.

"Are you sure we're allowed to be here?" I worried.

"Shhhh." He put his finger to his lips.

We walked toward the river and, when there was only a thin layer of brush and tree between the water and us, he stopped.

"Okay," he said, "look up."

I did but my eyes saw too much to make any sense of it. Branches, leaves, bark, sky - everything was grey and wet. Joe bent his head to my level and cupped his hand around my face pointing my gaze a little to the right and up.

"See the black blobs in the high branches?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"Focus on one of them and stay with it."

"What is it?"

"A nest."

He waited.

I stared at the dark tangle of sticks and river debris and tried to get a clearer view but the rain prevented that. One head, then two. Smaller than my bird, with the classic slender lines and scrawny feathered necks only a mother bird could love. They bobbed, trying to hold up their heads on spindly, uncoordinated supports. They looked to be begging for breakfast but, with the pounding of the rain we could not hear much. Suddenly, mom or dad - who knows, swooped in and dropped some morsel into the gaping mouths.

I gasp—shrieked, "My bird!"

Joe coughed, his usual air rifle blast of a laugh. He was enjoying himself.

"There are more," he said. "Turn your head slowly and look around."

Tree after tree, brown blob after brown blob, nest after nest, each jumble of sticks held little heads on wobbling necks waiting for breakfast. Up and down the river it was feeding time. My bird looked huge. And there were (what seemed like) scores of him, maybe hundreds of him, working the river to feed the family. I had never seen more than one at a time.

I don't remember what I said then. I know all I have to do now is think about it and my heart wells up with laughter, or tears, and maybe a little fear, but lots of wonder.

We stood for several minutes and watched, voyeurs into a life not ours. The rain came in a steady shower. My feet were soaked and water rolled in a stream off the bill of Joe's cap. The longer we stood, the more we blended in with that world of mud.

We shook the water from our coats, a fruitless effort as it was immediately replaced by more, and made feeble attempts to knock Ohio clay off our boots. Both of us can be talkers so we vied for air space all the way home, but Joe had the bully pulpit and he knew it. He explained how he had found the place while fishing.

"You were fishing on posted land?" I asked him.

"Would you shut up and listen?"

After that Sunday morning, every time I witnessed the zee slice across the sky I would think to myself: "I know where you live." I did not return to the aerie along the river, though, because if you try to force a miracle, it loses its mystery. The chance meetings, the surprise sightings gave me hope, nourished my soul and made me giggle like my nephew the first time his chubby legs managed to carry him across the grass while holding a ball.

Several days after my first chemotherapy treatment, I was testing the waters, trying to learn how long I could go without needing a nap. On the first test drive, I went to the beauty salon because it was a short trip over back roads. My head swam with brand new medical concepts, jargon and questions. How long before your hair falls out? How does it feel to be bald? Exactly what are those chemicals killing inside of me?

(see pictures on page 3)

Continued on Page 10



Great Blue Heron. (Photos by Greg Rust)



The small island in the Cement Plant Pond seems to form multiple arcs as branches cross and recross. (Photo by Jon Seymour)



Joe Bens and Jon Seymour were participating in the Christmas Bird Count - Ohio River Sector which contains the Oxbow. Joe took this photo of a cooperative Cooper's Hawk that would fly ahead of the car and alight near the road and wait for us to catch up. This happened about 4 times generating several chances for a good photo. (Photo by Joe Bens)



A burst of sunlight through the delicate ice glazed branches of a grove of bald cypress trees, located in the Corning Easement, gives a chandelier effect of the light as it reflects and deflects through the ice. *(Photo by Jon Seymour)*



A sudden snow squall seems to bend the ice laden branches of the trees along the northwest edge of Oxbow Lake. The Valentines Day ice storm that stuck the Tri-state gives an added dimension to the Oxbow. *(Photo by Jon Seymour)*

Happy Easter

Ice and floods and beaver have probably all helped create this tangle of fallen branches and trees behind Mercer Pond. This low lying swampy woodland is excellent habitat for a variety of sparrows, including song, swamp, and white-throated. *(Photo by Jon Seymour)*



A shaft of sunlight catches the trees lining the shoreline along Oxbow Lake. A field of unpicked corn (claimed by flood waters) stands between the camera and the highlighted frozen tops as they bend toward the water. Earlier in the day, a flock of 500 Mallard and 100 Gadwall ducks flew out of the corn and circled overhead before some returned to the cornfield and most headed for the open water of the Great Miami or Ohio Rivers. *(Photo by Jon Seymour)*

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

January 25, 2007 by Jon Seymour

Our friends Ken and Kay are visiting from Wisconsin and while Kay is interviewing someone about their use of Caterpillar Tractors for a corporate magazine, Ken and I head for the Oxbow. It is cold and it has been cold for several days. The days have been above freezing but the nights have been well below freezing. I am guessing that the water is frozen but I am pleasantly surprised to see that it is mostly open.

The river is up and the backside of the Oxbow is cut off. The wind has kicked up and it is really making a difference as I try to show Ken a little bit of the Oxbow. There are several ducks (no scope so they will just be ducks), a few coots, Canada Geese, and a Pied-billed Grebe. Along the causeway Carolina Chickadees and Yellow-rumped Warblers are very active and busy playing hide and seek with us as we walk along. I take a look to the southeast toward the bend of Oxbow Lake and see a Great Blue Heron hunting the shore. Almost immediately I am rewarded with the sight of two river otter diving and surfacing in the lake just in front of the heron. Ken can see them in the distance and is quite thrilled with the sighting. We start to walk down the south bank of Oxbow Lake but now we are out in the open and the wind is coming out of the southeast - straight across the harvested fields with nothing to break its force except us. Ken is from Wisconsin and is used to the cold, but since he is heading for a vacation in Texas he has brought only minimal clothing for trekking outside in the Oxbow. The wind proves just too much and we turn back. Today we will have to be satisfied with the sightings of a few winter birds and some distant river otter. It seems quite enough.

February 3, 2007 by Jon Seymour

John Klein is leading the Owl hike tonight and we gather at the club house/ museum at Shawnee Lookout. (I know the heights above the Oxbow are not technically the "bottoms" but I am asking for a little poetic license.) Tonight is cold. It is heading for 7°F tonight and is already 15°F. There is also a bit of a wind that will keep us moving. In fact only five hardy individuals have shown up tonight. It is a little secret of cold weather hiking that with the proper clothing you do not get cold at all. Children notice it even less if they are properly clothed since they are so active. I wish there were children on this hike but only 5 men show up. We strike out for the point overlook on top of the Old Fort. John picked the night of the full moon for this hike and wondrously the cloudy sky disappeared about 4 pm and now at 7:30 pm the sky is clear. Orion's Belt and the Big Dipper are easily seen and John passes around the night scope so we can see many more stars. I am carrying a flash light but it is not needed. The ½ inch of flurries from the night before has blanketed the trail and it stands out from the forest like a ribbon winding its way over the hillside. It is so bright that the path of the trail can easily be distinguished 50 yards ahead. We walk the nearly mile loop of the trail and do not feel the cold. However the coverings keeping our ears warm are also the best known materials for blocking and absorbing the low frequency hoots of distant owls. We hear no owls, we see no owls, but we do speak about them. We speak about owls and much more as we discuss the archaeology, fauna, and beauty of the trail. The overlook of the northern

section of the oxbow is spectacular even at night. John says that as a young employee of the Park District he helped build this overlook and cleared the vegetation. We thank him for his past efforts. The view is inspiring. At the point we look down on the Oxbow property east of I-275. The portion of the property west of I-275 is hidden by the Interstate rise itself. Through the night scope we can see Flannery Island, the CSX railroad bridge and the frigid Great Miami River flowing under the bridge to meet the Ohio River. It is a great night to be outside. It is a great night for a hike. After all what is 15 °F when you're having fun.

Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

To those that know the speech of the hills and rivers, straightening a stream is like shipping vagrants - a very successful method of passing trouble from one place to the next. It solves nothing in any collective sense. Aldo Leopold, 1935

Wetlands are almost by definition a place where the water slows down, lingers awhile, and enjoys its surroundings. Wetlands like the Great Miami floodplain fill with water during flood and then let it out again as flood waters recede. Some of the water remains behind in shallow areas and waits for the next time it will become part of the surge of the nearby rivers. Down in New Orleans they learned that straightening the river and controlling its flow can result in major disaster when the wetlands that would normally form from the ebb and flow of the river are eliminated by channelization, dikes, and filling in for development.

This Spring Oxbow, Inc. will start two projects designed to stabilize and increase the wetlands in the floodplain. One will provide an improved edge to the southwest shore of Oxbow Lake and the other will increase duck and shorebird habitat during the post harvest and pre-planting season. We are already looking past these projects to plan for the future for further habitat improvement projects. This year we will have some "honeysuckle" or maybe some "garlic mustard" parties to remove these noxious exotics from areas of the Oxbow. These projects will replace some of our trash pick-ups and we will probably continue to mix these two types of volunteer projects into the near future.

On January 23, 2007, Oxbow, Inc. participated in the annual Conservation Day at the Indiana State House. Both Senator Nugent and Representative Bischoff stopped by the Oxbow, Inc. display for extended conversation about the importance of conservation in SE Indiana. Officials from other conservation organizations and state agencies such as the IDNR also stopped to learn more about Oxbow, Inc. and our mission.

I have noticed an upsurge in talk and concern for wetland conservation in the past few months. This seems to be a combination of the learning from the Katrina disaster in New Orleans and a renewed interest in the belief that stewardship of nature is an important function of the human condition. We had hoped to continue to increase our visibility during a well publicized lecture by Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Wild". The lecture sponsored by the local group, No Child Left Inside, was scheduled for February 6, 2007. The 7-8 inches of snow that fell that day caused the postponement of the lecture as all children and the adults were left inside that evening. We will announce the rescheduled lecture when the date is set.

Travels with Maggie

(With No Apologies to Charlie or John)

A Moving Story by an Octogenarian (conclusion)

.....by Jeanne K. Bocklage

317 Miles (we think) - AAD Arrive-in-Albuquerque Day

We picked up I-40 at Santa Rosa now famous for my purchase of a Route 66 souvenir spoon for my collection to remember this historic trip west by and for the first meal we could partake of inside a restaurant.

After lunch I got out my tourist book about Albuquerque. It is New Mexico's largest city. It is the highest metropolitan city on the U.S. mainland sitting at more than 5000 feet above sea level. The High Desert reaches 6500. The city covers more than 100 square miles and is home to 700,000 residents. The sun is said to shine at least 300 days every year. According to the latest Census Bureau statistics (1994) only four large cities have fewer days of rain: Reno 50, El Paso 49, Phoenix 36 and L.A. 35. Cincinnati is listed as having 130 days a year of at least a .01 inch of rain; Honolulu 99.

I ask Paula how much she remembers about that '57 western trip our family undertook. She was six years old. I remembered wanting her and Cam, 8, to keep a scrapbook of postcards from all the places we visited but they only selected postcards of kittens, puppies and bunnies. We traveled without expressways, without seat belts, without air conditioning and entered the Duke's City via Route 66, a haven of individually designed motels. Route 66 is right beside I-40 today and some of those same motels, mightily run-down, are still in business. We stayed at one of them in '57 and had dinner at a then famous restaurant in Old Town where a chef in a wire cage made sopapillas and the waiter served tiny dishes of icy lemon sherbet between courses to cleanse the palate mostly of the chilies. Paula remembered summer snow in those giant mountains--the Rockies, Indians performing dances at the Grand Canyon, doves at Capistrano sitting on her lap and the sun shining on the Kansas wheat fields. She always leaned toward the poetic.

Today I'm behind the wheel as we take the first exit into Albuquerque, Tramway Boulevard. Before I forget, I must tell that in all the excitement we didn't write down our mileage of this day and therefore do not have an accurate mileage count for the entire trip. (About 1905.) We did give it a diligent try. Within ten minutes we are approaching the back of the house at 12916 Sand Cherry Place and I recognize it from months of looking at blueprints and photos. I stop in the middle of the street for a longer look. I love it. Paula loves it. And this is only the rear view.

Home at Last

The front is awesome with its adobe wall and arched entrance gate and second floor ramada. Therese and Cam greet us at the front door with its peekaboo window. So far I love everything.

The two story round foyer has a skylight way up there and a yellow mosaic-like travertine floor with a semi-circular stairway with a fancy wrought iron banister to the upstairs "away room", as Tee calls it. My suite with built-in book shelves and a china cabinet for my tea cup collection is to the left and to the right is the violet powder room as well as Tee's study done in a trading post style with Navajo rugs on brown walls and a iron stove in the corner. My study has a doggie door for Maggie and a fountain on its patio. Birds, take notice. So far I love everything.

Down the hall is the library, great room with a stone fireplace and beamed ceiling, a grand kitchen, dining room with an intricate wood ceiling and the inside courtyard with its fireplace and a tree. More landscaping will follow. So far I love everything.

Tee's deep blue heaven master suite is complete with a separated section for her exercise machine. On the floor sits a large hand-woven picture of a woodcut by Gustav Bauman waiting to be hung entitled *Aspens*. A fine work of art. The upstairs consists of one yellow/green room with an immaculate white clay fireplace and bath. The hot tub for the ramada has not been delivered as yet. The view from up here is priceless--the scrubby Sandia Mountains on the east side and Albuquerque snug in its Rio Grande valley on the west side. Tee says the city twinkles at night and the Sandias glow a rosy hue when the sun is setting. How can I not love everything?

The views complement the beauty of the architecture. The mountains seem to wrap around the house all along the one side and the back. In the back is a large covered patio that allows you to drink in the views. The house has many places that invite you to rest and relax a while. Therese did a superb job on decorating. She borrowed bold colors from butterflies for all the rooms. The southwest look is authentic but not overdone. Maggie loves Therese and wants her pets and undivided attention. She, too, seems to know she is home. Across the road is a dog walk alongside an arroyo. What more does she need?

I am overwhelmed with all the beauty around us. I thank God for Therese, Cam, Paula, Michael, Peter, my grandchildren and, yes, Maggie. What more can I say?

A P.S. One Month Later - Monday, November 21, 2005

Therese and I are getting settled and ready to celebrate our first holiday in our new home-- Thanksgiving--with a turkey feast and all the accessories. Even bought a pecan pie at a French bakery in Santa Fe. We were not ready for Halloween. Maggie is ready for anything, especially roast turkey. She is very happy.

The cardboard carpet made of the boxes used in our moving and put down in the hall by the movers to spare the travertine floor from any damage is up and discarded and all the boxes of Tee's and my belongings piled in all the rooms are unpacked except for boxes still stacked in the garage. Somehow I did not notice the boxes and the cardboard floor covering in the excitement of our arrival in October. My desk is now built into one corner of my study. Here is my computer on which I am typing out these notes on my western sojourn with Mags. My desk is so big and impressive, I must be the President of the United States. I want to convene a cabinet meeting. Cam is my Secretary of State. Paula is my Secretary of the Interior. Therese is my Secretary of Health and Welfare. She had a choice between that and Surgeon General. Falla --formerly Maggie-- is lying at my feet under the desk. The Western White House isn't white but there are no secret service men about and the atmosphere is informal so that when you visit you can relax and enjoy all the beauties of The Land of Enchantment (which it really is).

OXBOW, INC. PROGRAMS

Tuesday, March 13th, 2007, 7:30 PM
North Central Branch of the Public Library
Hamilton Avenue
History of the Oxbow

Penny Borgman, Naturalist for the Hamilton County Park District, will speak tonight on the varied history of the Oxbow region, with an emphasis on Native American history and pre-history. *Please note the different location of this program and directions below...*

To get to the North Central Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, take the Hamilton Avenue exit from I-275 and go south for approximately ¼ mile. The Library will be on your right. Or, take Hamilton Avenue north past Mt. Healthy, and past Springdale Rd; keep going, and when you pass Waycross Road on your right, look for the library entrance on your left.

Tuesday, April 10th, 2007, 7:30 PM
Lawrenceburg Public Library
Lawrenceburg, Indiana

A Birder's Eye View of Israel and Jordan

Allan Beach, photographer, birder, GE retiree, and an avid "Craniac" (he can tell you more about that!), will present a slide program about an American Birding Association trip to Israel and Jordan. The trip covers Israel from the snow-capped Mt. Hermon in the north, to the city of Eilat in the south on the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba. The program will take you to a zoo, two bird-banding stations, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea. Millions of migrant birds that don't migrate over water will funnel through Israel during migration. In Jordan, you will visit a Roman ruin, the ancient city of Petra, and venture east towards Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

The Lawrenceburg Public Library is downtown at 123 High Street. Going west on US 50, turn left onto Walnut St, then right onto High St. The Library is on your right.

OXBOW INC. FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 17th, 2007, 8:00 AM
Migrant Waterfowl

Meet **Ned Keller** at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. Ned will search for migrating waterfowl which should be at or near peak numbers in the Oxbow. For more information call Ned at 941-6497 or email to keller@one.net.

Saturday, April 21st, 2007, 8:00 AM
Waterfowl and Returning Songbirds

Meet **Paul Wharton**, expert birder and member of the winning Birdathon team from 2006, for this search for waterfowl and returning spring migrant songbirds. Meet at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. For more information, call Paul at 353-3403, before 8:30 PM.

Probably Prayer (continued from page 5)

Where could I get a hat that wouldn't make me look goofy? One thing was certain: wigs were out. The thought of someone else's hair on my body did not set right somehow.

It is funny what we choose to worry about. My mind glossed over big stuff like possible heart damage induced by chemo, and skipped like a broken record right back to the easily remedied issues such as hair. My dogs play a game of 'If I can't see her, she can't see me, therefore I am not in trouble'. If I don't think about it, it's not there.

That was a Saturday in August, sunny but not too hot, or at least the heat felt good to me for once. I turned the corner and there he stood, in my neighbor's lake, green muck up to his knees.

Sure enough, it proved to be a good day. The haircut worked, the sun stayed mild, and I didn't have to reach for the anti-nausea pills until the next day.

I've seen him, or I should say them, because it's unlikely it's the same one each time, a few times since then. My favorite is still in flight, the dark zee across the sky pulling a banner of slender legs behind him. Sometimes an air current will lift him up and his legs will ruffle like crepe paper in the wind.

I found something with this bird, it is that simple. Something about him makes me feel good. My life did not change a lot due to him. What is interesting is that my life changes despite him and he remains the same. I don't cry when months pass and I haven't seen him because he always returns. When he does, it is always a surprise.

Some people have talismans or charms. Some use rosaries. My sister-in-law will often light a candle in church.

I have a bird.



NATURE'S BLOG

**A Log of Natural Events, Natural History
& Nature-based Philosophy**

by **Robert Folzenlogen**

www.naturesblog.blogspot.com

Gravel Mining and Floodplains (continued from page 4)

Once a pit has been exhausted, the mining company must return the site to a suitable condition to comply with the reclamation plan which it submitted to the state. Often, used gravel pits are recontoured to provide fishing lakes and other recreation opportunities. The Lake Isabella Hamilton County Park was formerly a gravel pit and Indian hill has constructed a recreation area in the Old Fort Dennison gravel pit. Oxbow, Inc owns four former gravel (borrow) pits – Mercer Pond, Osprey Lake, Juno Pond, and the cement plant pond

Balancing protection of the environment with the needs and desires of an expanding metropolitan population is difficult and imperfect. Since 1985, the members and generous contributors to Oxbow, Inc. have fought and sacrificed to preserve and improve a thousand acres of the Great Miami wetlands and floodplain.

Along the way we've done our best to reach an accommodation with proposed development, always advancing in some way Oxbow's preservation goals. Witness the creative agreements with Argosy Casino, which resulted in a permanent conservation easement over 58 acres of land, where mudflats and other water features were created at no expense to Oxbow, and the Greendale levee project, which resulted in Oxbow's acquisition of 22 acres of wetlands habitat and 23 acres being converted to prairie. In the future, as the active gravel mining operations end along the northern border of the oxbow area near its confluence with the Whitewater River, we will examine what role Oxbow, Inc. should play in reclaiming those areas for wildlife.

Tim Mara has been Oxbow's attorney since 1993, and has also served a gravel company with mining operations in Colerain Township.

Hunting Permit Applications due July 1, 2007

Oxbow, Inc. members who wish to apply for permits to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. land must submit their application by July 1, 2007 to: Oxbow, Inc., C/o John Getzendanner, 21007 Crestview Ct., Lawrenceburg, IN 47025

Your application must include a copy of your valid Indiana hunting license and a completed memorandum of understanding printed below. Cut out the memorandum. Complete the form and mail it with a copy of your license and a self addressed stamped envelop to John. Once accepted you will receive a permission slip to hunt on Oxbow land designated for hunting, east of I-275. Members must have dues paid current to the time of application. Any violation of the memorandum of understanding will result in immediate revocation of hunting privileges.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

(A hunting permission slip with a confirmatory stamp and authorized signature will be returned to you upon acceptance of your application.)

Application and Memorandum of Understanding

I am a member in good standing of Oxbow, Inc. and request permission to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. property east of I-275 as will be shown on the map affixed to the permission slip that must be carried while hunting on Oxbow property.

I agree: to hunt subject to the following Oxbow, Inc. rules:

- I will practice good hunting ethics at all times.
- Others may rightfully visit the area and my activity has no priority over that of others.
- During my use of Oxbow, Inc. property I will not litter, remove or damage Oxbow, Inc. property, or cause any habitat destruction.
- I will not leave any structures on the property (ie. hunting stands, duck blinds, etc.).
- I will carry a valid permission slip at all times while hunting on Oxbow, Inc. land.
- I will obey all applicable laws

I understand that hunting privilege will be revoked if any of the above regulations are violated. I understand that I enter Oxbow, Inc. property entirely at my own risk and hold Oxbow, Inc. free of liability for any hazards, known or unknown to it. I HAVE INCLUDED A COPY OF MY VALID INDIANA HUNTING PERMIT.

Your Signature: _____ Date _____

Return Mail Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc., c/o John Getzendanner, 21007 Crestview Ct., Lawrenceburg, IN 47025, Phone: 812-537-5728
(Hunting permission is granted for one year (July 1 to June 30 of the following year) only and must be reapplied for yearly.)

HUNTING PERMISSION REQUESTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY JULY 1, 2006

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.**

Prothonotary Warbler	\$ 15	Wood Duck	\$ 25
Great Blue Heron	\$ 50	Green-winged Teal	\$100
Great Egret	\$250	Osprey	\$500
Bald Eagle	\$1000		
Charm of Goldfinches (Group Level)	\$25		

Mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**
P. O. Box 43391
Cincinnati OH 45243-0391
513-851-9835

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



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