



WETLAND *matters*

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

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

Need a speaker? Call 513-851-9835

Birdathon Results – The Real Money

In our July-August issue (#126) we had the results of the Birdathon by the bird species. This issue, with the pledges and donations completed, we now know how much money we raised. **Congratulations to all the donors**, you have done it again. You beat last year's amount and contributed \$6,408.55. All the money collected from Birdathon pledges goes directly to support habitat improvement or access improvement projects. Currently we are working on two Birdathon supported projects. One to impound flood waters on a seasonal basis, and another to fill in normally soft areas of the roads with gravel to make them drivable more days of the year. You may have noticed the effects of both of these projects already with better roads and the start of a dike road at the mouth of the proposed impoundment. Many thanks are due to Rick Pope who donated his time and the use (and repair) of his equipment to both projects. Many thanks are also due to Argosy Casino who donated the hauling and the fill for the dike road.

With the Nature Center not fielding a team this year you all rose to the challenge and more than made up for the funding that would have been expected through the sharing arrangement we have with the Nature Center. Next year, if everything works alright, the Nature Center will be sponsoring a team again. Thanks go to Bill Hopple, Director of the Cincinnati Nature Center, for figuring out a way to make this happen in 2008.

The Team results are listed below. Jerry Lippert's team, consisting of Jerry, Erich Baumgardner and Wayne Wauligman, raised over \$3000 to set a new team record. Congratulations to Jerry, Erich, and Wayne, they did a fantastic job of personal contribution and getting friends, family, and co-workers to sponsor their efforts. Amounts raised by each team are listed below. Whether the team was at the top of the list or at the bottom every dollar raised is an important contribution to improvement of the Oxbow area. A list of all the donors can be found on page 3.

1. Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, and Erich Baumgardner:
\$3,038.80
2. Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger, and Joe Bens:
\$1,825.00
3. Dave Brinkman, Bob Foppe, Don Morse, and Bill Hull
\$ 565.00

4. Sister Marty Dermody and Katherine Miller
\$ 389.75
5. Steve Pelikan, Charlie Saunders, and Mike Busam
\$ 350.00
6. Dave and Jane Styer
\$ 55.00
7. John and Barb Eckles and Dave and Vicki Tozier
\$ 40.00
- Team Entry Fees
\$ 135.00

It's GREAT Outdoors

Reserve the weekend of September 29-30

IT'S BACK—the Great Outdoor Weekend, with over 50 participants offering free outdoor activities all over the Tristate, will take place on Saturday and Sunday, September 29-30. Oxbow, Inc will be offering introductory tours of the Oxbow area from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on both days of the weekend. These tours are always special with some birding, some botanizing, and discussion of history, archaeology and geology. In the past we have had an eagle, an osprey and a family of otters join us for this special occasion. Come spend the early morning with us and then sample many of the other fantastic outdoor experiences being offered. More information can be found at cincygreatoutdoor-weekend.org. Look for the program guides in local libraries.

Oxbow's website has changed to:

www.oxbowinc.info

Indiana House Bill No. 1101 – Floodway Protection

.....A Review by Tim Mara, Esq.

With the passage of HB No. 1101, the Indiana General Assembly has updated state controls over development in floodways. Effective July 1, 2007, the bill directs the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to prepare a statewide flood risk and flood damage assessment that, among other things, would quantify annual flood damage in the state, identify properties that are most at risk from flood damage, and assess environmental conditions along Indiana floodways. This could become a valuable tool for those who advocate keeping the State's floodways free from development which restricts the capacity of the floodways or results in unreasonably detrimental effects on fish, wildlife, or botanical resources.

The new legislation is intended to strengthen existing flood prevention laws in light of flooding in various parts of the state in recent years, resulting in substantial property damage and damage to the environment. It would place a limit on the maximum amount of fill material that may be placed in a floodway, and would also specifically prohibit the placement in the floodway as fill or for bank stabilization a number of listed materials, including solid waste, concrete, asphalt, automobiles or auto bodies or parts, and tires.

Costly flooding has increased public awareness in the importance of not obstructing floodways. When the capacity of floodways is reduced, water that formerly flowed harmlessly downstream spills out of river banks and inundates development, damaging buildings and contents, threatening lives, and damaging the environment. The public pays through higher taxes, higher insurance premiums, and loss of environmental quality.

The new legislation is potentially important to Oxbow and its members. Wetlands are important resources that provide storage area for floodwaters and filter out contaminants, but wetlands are under continuing pressure in rapidly growing areas such as Dearborn County. Through purchases of land outright and of conservation easements, since 1985 Oxbow has successfully preserved almost 1000 acres of wetlands. The new legislation could be important in any future efforts by Oxbow to stop development in adjacent flood prone areas which are functionally a part of the Oxbow wetlands, though not yet under the protective stewardship of Oxbow, Inc.

Corrections and Apologies:

Issue #126, July and August 2007, contained two errors that were brought to our attention and need to be corrected. We misspelled the name of Erich Baumgardner on page 1 in the article on the Birdathon and again on page 6 in the caption below Erich's photo. Our apologies to Erich.

Issue #125, May and June 2007, contained an error on the credit for the photo on page 7 of the White-marked Tussock Moth caterpillar. It should have been credited to Mary Jo White.

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials & Honorariums

Donor
Scott & Louise McClure
Bob & Tina Schelgel
Wayne Wauligman

In Memory of
Barbara Jo Lukas
Isaiah Judd
Franklin Zesch

Thanks for a generous contribution to Oxbow, Inc.
go to
Vosmer Memorial Fund

Charley Harper Passes On All Art is in Nature and Nature is an Art

.....by Jon Seymour

We lost Charley but, fortunately for us, Charley left us his art. A force of nature was removed from our membership roles the other day with the passing of Charlie Harper. His love of nature and the curious way he had of simplifying the most complex subject into triangles, circles and rectangles is a fixture in my home and the homes of countless other members of Oxbow, Inc.

Charlie was well known nationally and his works have appeared all over the world. However, everyone that knew him considered him a neighbor. I will always regret that he was never able to find the time with all the demands for his services to work on the Oxbow, Inc. poster that he promised Morris Mercer. Now maybe they will both find the time to finish it as they share a celestial sunset. We will miss him and the gentle joke he shared with Mother Nature.

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 Donations Listing 2007

Bill & Amy Anastasia
 Wanda Apgar
 Robyn & Pat Aungst
 Doug & Rebecca Barker
 Dorothy Bauer
 Erich & Ann Baumgardner
 Jack & Elaine Berninger
 Helen C. Black
 Ruth Bockensette & Victoria Forde
 Jeanne Bocklage
 Therese Bocklage
 Judy Bohn
 Tim & Amanda Boland
 Robert & Eveline Branan
 Philip F. Brode III
 Mike Busam & Nancy Schaffer
 Chris & Suzanne Clingman
 Denis Conover
 Thomas & Jean Cook
 Bill & Marion Cooley
 Kathleen Corneil
 James & Marjorie Decker
 Carolyn DeJager
 Barbara Denamur
 Sister Marty Dermody
 Robert & Nancy Detrick
 Tim & Laura Dornan
 Connie & Charles Duersch
 John & Barb Eckles
 Doc & Fran Eckstein
 Eric & Amy Elfner
 Bob Foppe
 Joan Franchi
 Eric Franke

Jamie Good
 Jeffrey Grothaus
 Matthew & Julie Harp
 Nancy & Richard Haynes
 Jeff Hays
 Bret & Kris Henninger
 James & Gretchen Hill
 Mary Agnes Hogue
 Marie Holscher
 Bill Hull
 Lola Irvin
 Ned Keller & Kathy McDonald
 John & Paige Klein
 Jeff Knee
 Helen Kropf
 Barbara Lenhardt
 John & Sarah Leon
 Thomas & Adele Lippert
 Lawrence Lippert
 Jerry & Pam Lippert
 Dave & Kani Meyer
 Caroline B. Miller
 Ken Miller & Bethia Margoshes
 Christine Moran
 Regeana & Al Morgan
 Janet Morgan
 Bobby Joe & Sharon Morris
 Jon & Marylou Nicodemus
 David & Margaret O'Conner
 Catherine & Randy Oppenheimer
 Dr. Aaron Perlman
 Tim & Diana Peters
 Kelly & Rick Riccetti
 Dave & Ginny Rice

Kent & Barbara Ross
 Prickett C. Saunders
 Charles & Mary Saunders
 Wesley & Mary Jane Schafer
 Kendra Schroer
 Jim Scott & Donna Hartman
 Seapine Software
 Jon & Jackie Seymour
 Yan Shapochnik
 John K. Sherman
 Chip & Liz Shumaker
 Candy Slough
 Gloria Southwind & R. Vagnieres
 Tim/Catherine Sparer/Shuck
 Cam Starrett
 Paula Steenken
 Jay & Paula Stenger
 Eugène & Mary Ruth Stevens
 Kevin & Teresa Stewart
 James & Louise Stinchcomb
 Michael Tackett
 Dave & Vicki Tozier
 Jerry & Barb Varland
 Joan C. Walson
 Brian Waltz
 Richard & Jane Wauligman
 Wayne Wauligman
 Alan & Missy Webb
 Mr. & Mrs. H. Whitney Wharton
 Dorinda Whitsett
 Wesley Paul Wiemann
 Sarah Wigser
 Jim & Judy Wilgenbusch

Hooping, Hanging, Hauling, and Hopping Herps

Herpetology is the study of reptiles and amphibians. A herpetologist is someone who studies reptiles and amphibians. Wayne Wauligman calls himself a dentist but his (not so) secret identity is a herpetologist. Wayne started his lecture by hauling his 5 foot long pet Black Rat Snake out of a carry bag and introducing him to the audience. One lucky child got to keep a shed snake skin left behind by Wayne's pet as it grew bigger. The Black Rat Snake hooped and looped its way around Wayne's wrist and spent the rest of the entire lecture hanging there and seemingly trying to leisurely find a way inside Wayne's shirt.

Wayne showed a series of slides, some side by side with other slides, to illustrate subtle and major differences between many species, old and young of turtles, salamanders, and snakes found in and near the Oxbow area. We ran out of time before we got to the frogs and toads but we all agreed that we would save that for another lecture.

A Birder's Eye View of Israel and Jordan

Member Allan Beach took us along on his American Birders Association (ABA) sponsored tour of Israel and Jordan. One Billion (yes that is a "B") birds migrate through the area each year using their ancient travel routes between Africa and Europe and Asia. Many of these birds stop at sanctuaries and reserves and can be viewed by the avid birder. Allan had some great slides of migrating species. Even more astounding was the fact that this "birding" trip actually made time for some historic exploration with the birders spending time wandering the streets of Jerusalem and entering the ancient trading capital of Petra (this is the ancient city, actually carved out of the mountains, and is a wonder to behold). From the Golan Heights to the Gulf of Aqaba and into Jordan as far as Azraq it was a tour of birding and history rolled into an exciting symphony. Thanks, Allan, for taking us along.

Saving the Environment

Why do we do it?

.....by Ben Miller

Life is an interesting thing. Most people would never expect an honors economics major from Purdue University to wind up spending his summer volunteering at the Oxbow. Shouldn't an economist be somewhere other than stomping around in the mud of a wetlands reserve? I certainly didn't expect it myself. I'd never been to the Oxbow; I wasn't even aware of the Oxbow's existence until late April when I found out about it through my father as I brainstormed ideas for summer jobs. Although my father previously worked with Jon Seymour and had supported the Oxbow for years, he'd never been to the Oxbow either. The idea of working there reminded me of the weeklong summer conservation camps of my childhood, and of the ideals they had placed in me such as "Respect, Reverence, and Responsibility" for the environment. Thus the option remained open. As the summer drew closer, all the pieces slowly fell into place for me to wind up spending roughly three days a week as a volunteer in the Oxbow this summer.

The first time I went to the Oxbow was Saturday, May 19th to help move a truckload of tires to a recycling plant. A few days later I wrote of my first impression of Oxbow:

"The Oxbow was not what I expected: it's not a park like I'm used to—I think I was expecting a visitor center, maybe signs marking the way. Nope, none of that. The facilities they have (gravel roads, that's it) are rundown and overgrown. That said, I still like it. It's different because it's not about tourists coming and viewing it—nobody comes but a few fishermen, a few birders, and maybe the people next door who also live next to the cement plant. What it is about is the animals—birds mostly."

At the time I was told my job would be to remove bush honeysuckle and garlic mustard, two invasive species that grew all over the entrance area. I was excited, but bothered by something. That Monday, I went in and diligently began tearing up garlic mustard and chopping down bush honeysuckle. After about an hour and a half I was so off in my own mind that I had begun talking to a patch of bush honeysuckle while I attacked it with rather large clippers. Thus I was quite startled when I heard a commanding voice ask "What are you doing?" I was even more startled when I looked and saw the sheriff picking his way through the brush towards me. After I was able to babble out an answer to his question, everything was quickly sorted out and we each proceeded with our jobs—he to patrolling the area and I to engaging my arch-nemesis in a one-sided verbal battle. Still, I was shaken. The philosophy minor within me arose and began asking profound questions to which I was unable to provide acceptable answers. "Good and bad being human constructs depending on our goals," I thought to myself, "what makes an invasive species bad? What is this goal which makes it so? Why is it that being originally from somewhere else makes a species bad? And what is originally? Everything had to come from somewhere, so why draw a line in time on which one side lays natural species and the other invasive?" The economist within me took a laissez-fair view, stating "Wouldn't it be best to let it all alone and let the species best suited to live in the environment win instead of intervening?" All these questions were small pieces of a larger one, which I've found too few people understand the answer, and too many just assume one. "Why do we conserve?"

I wasn't trying to be against saving the environment and certainly wasn't coming from that angle. I was combining a teen-

ager's skepticism with the two-year-old's annoying (and yet praiseworthy) habit of asking "why?" all the time. Finding the answers to these questions proved much harder than asking them. And I found that constantly seeking explanations for simple things I'd always assumed had a reason resulted in either annoying my listener, or finding they didn't understand it either. Over the summer months I talked with many people on the subject, and pondered on my own while slowly becoming more and more attached to the Oxbow with every visit. Working at the Oxbow proved to be a very enjoyable experience indeed. I found myself clearing the main parking lot, removing invasive species, collecting wood for the osprey towers, and also working on my self-assigned project of a photographic species count (photographing a total of 106 different species at Oxbow). I brought family and friends down to see the wetlands and to help me in my tasks. And probably as enjoyable as anything else was just getting to explore and find all the hidden beautiful places that the Oxbow offers. I found open forests, dense underbrush, lots of poison ivy, creeks and streams, fields, ponds, and eutrophic lakes. I came to understand that the animals here are truly wild—far different from anything one sees in a backyard or in a zoo. I watched the Great Blue Herons and practiced walking up to animals more quietly. I found that raccoons can climb much higher up trees than I had previously suspected. I learned to watch where I put my feet to avoid stepping on snakes. And I enjoyed luckily discovering that a beaver just might pop up just a dozen yards away from where you stand on the bank of a lake.

And while I did all this I was also surprised to find my answer to the question "Why do we conserve?" went right back to my field of economics. My thought process over the months of summer went something along this path: although I felt conservation to be a good thing, I looked for why anyone would choose to not use a resource, because according to economic theory people seek out actions which give them the most benefit. Why leave an area alone when you could use the area for something else, such as the power plant located across from the Oxbow? But conversely, what gives us more right to use resources than other species? It only takes one beautiful sunset or watching one mother deer and fawn stop at a lake to realize an emotional benefit is received from protecting the environment—perhaps from a desire to preserve things as they are (which I personally referred to as "the conserve in conservation"), maybe an instinctive desire to fit in with nature because we are part of it ourselves, or perhaps the realization that the world is something we need to share. Not just between humans, but with every species that lives on the planet. Perhaps those ideals alone should be enough to make everyone conserve, but I wondered if emotional benefits were enough to counteract the material benefits of consuming a resource.

Yet there also seemed to be a material benefit to be gained from protecting species. We protect species because some day a leaf from a tree in some conserved area may help cure cancer. A biting insect on that leaf may show us how to make better needles; science may even devise a way to use bugs to transmit vaccines instead of diseases. Every species has specific qualities, of which we may not even yet be aware, which teach us new things and can be used to benefit us in new ways. So now it seemed clear that protecting species created progress, and not a waste of resources.

Yet protecting everything from human use leaves us no way to thrive in the present. We cannot conserve everything and continue to live as we do now. So along with *why*, we must ask ourselves *what* to conserve. I had finally found the reasoning

(continued page 5)

(Saving the Environment by Ben Miller—continued from page 4)

behind why there is the need for a balance between humans and their environment, but what I still wanted to understand was how we made this decision of what to protect. Since anything from the gnat to the sequoia can teach us new things, how do we decide what to conserve?

Sometimes the explanations for things come from unexpected areas. In this case instead of the answer coming from the Oxbow or from talking with a professor on the subject, it came from something as simple as being out mowing my lawn. While mowing and wondering why I had to chop all the grass down instead of "conserving" it for all the bugs which seemed to unhappily rise from what I saw as my path of destruction, I found I had unknowingly had a rather unfortunate run-in with a young bunny. While this upset me, it also found me again thinking. If protecting the environment is so important, why doesn't protecting bunnies receive just as much fuss as protecting polar bears? Simple: we don't have bunny sanctuaries because the little garden-eating critters are everywhere. Polar bears, however, are getting harder and harder to find. The answer was fairly obvious, yet important. Every species can offer something, but we can't protect everything. Because every species can offer us scientific insights and progress, the most benefit is received from retaining the most species. A friend of mine once said in reference to one of my photographs of geese, "The prettiness of Canadian Geese is inversely proportional to the number of Canadian Geese in view." Funny and correct. Because Canadian Geese are commonplace, the ecological value of one goose is pretty small. Why do we get excited and marvel at that rare bird? Because we don't see them very often. And because of that, learning about them and what they have to offer is much harder. Losing one bunny may be sad, but there are millions more. Losing one animal when there are only 200 of its kind left is a major blow not only to the species but to us as well. The best way to retain the highest benefit for humanity is to retain the highest number of species. To protect biodiversity, we focus on preventing extinction—saving the species we are about to lose. If the species still exists, we can learn much more from them.

The saying "saving the environment" is a lot more accurate than people often realize. Conservation can be equated to an investment in the future—that at some point in the future, knowledge or some new resource which we may gain from protected species and places will be more valuable than their current worth if we consume them. In almost any situation, saving some of the species is more valuable than any form of consumption. In that way conservation can be seen as saving in the form of investment, which is often a wise choice. The reason we save at all is because we believe that the value we will receive from something in the future is more than we will receive from consuming it in the present. We choose to save both our rare and non-renewable resources, not necessarily because they offer us the most benefit (any species may improve our lives), but because using them gives us the greatest cost (the cost of never being able to use them again).

So what I found in the end is that an economics major volunteering at a wetlands reserve isn't such an odd idea after all. Conservation is something everyone must understand and help achieve. So as I move back in to Purdue on August 8th, I look particularly forward to one honors class in particular, entitled "Toward Sustainability with Economic Tools: You Can Help Change the World", where we'll discuss carbon footprints and how to find that balance between conservation and consumption. With me I'll take all that I've learned from working here.

Seapine Software and Erich Baumgardner

....by Jon Seymour

Erich Baumgardner, Jerry Lippert and Wayne Wauligman call their Birdathon team "The Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers" and how right they are. Their team set a record for donations in 2007 and a great deal of that record is due to Erich and the company he works for, Seapine Software, Inc.

For the last few years Erich has been asking his co-workers at Seapine Software, Inc. of Mason, OH (a worldwide provider of software that is used by professionals to correct mistakes in software programs, provide uniformity for the creation of programs, and test for software malfunctions) and the owners of the company Rick and Kelly Riccetti to support his Birdathon efforts. Each of the last several years they have generously supported him and donated money to the Birdathon. This year Erich's co-workers and Seapine Software, Inc. exceeded themselves and set a new standard. Rick and Kelly Riccetti not only made a generous personal donation but committed Seapine Software, Inc. to matching all the employee funds raised by Erich. Erich raised \$765 from his co-workers and Seapine Software, Inc. matched those contributions for a total contribution of \$1530!

In a press release Seapine Software, Inc. says, "Seapine is taking an active role in promoting conservation efforts among businesses in the area. To help bring awareness of fragile ecosystems and the importance of protecting and preserving wildlife areas, Seapine supported a team of conservations participating in the 2007 Oxbow, Inc. Birdathon."

Seapine co-owner Kelly Riccetti says she first visited the Oxbow area shortly after Oxbow, Inc. was founded. She is a birder and wildlife artist (and husband Rick takes photo of birds) and was delighted to discover that Erich was also a birder. From Erich she learned about the Birdathon and thought that it was a worthwhile project to support because of its importance to bird life in the Cincinnati area. "We love birds and we have always loved the Oxbow."

Kelly says, "We want Seapine to be a model for other companies. If other companies would just protect a little bit of land here and there, we would all be better off".

Erich's supporters at Seapine Software, Inc. included Matthew Harp, Tim Boland, Sarah Wigser, Kevin Stewart, Kelly and Rick Riccetti, Yan Shapochnik, Jeff Knee, Bill and Amy Anastasia, and Michael Tackett.

Oxbow, Inc. encourages everyone to back the Birdathon and follow the example of Erich and Seapine Software, Inc. We cannot wait for an even bigger and better Birdathon 2008.



American White Pelican flying over Mercer Pond on July 2, 2007. This first ever summer sighting of an American White Pelican in the Oxbow was discovered by Jon Seymour, Ben Miller and Nathan Miller. The Pelican stayed in the Oxbow area for several weeks. *(photo by Ben Miller)*



Monarda and Prairie Coneflower color the Osprey Lake Prairie, both pleasing the eye and attracting a wide variety of animals to the newly established prairie. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



These Jack-o-Lantern Mushrooms were found during the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami event. While looking for and finding trash is the goal, one should always take time to photograph the mushrooms (the fungal equivalent of "smell the flowers"). *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



Some Clean Sweep of the Great Miami participants gather near the dumpster to finish the collection that resulted in removing a ton and a half of trash from the Oxbow along with 270 tires. Rumpke donated the dumpster and picked up all the tires for recycle free of charge to the Oxbow. The good news is that less trash is coming back and there are fewer and fewer tires remaining. We are making great progress! (photo by Rick Pope)



Swamp Milkweed provides a variety of needs for butterflies and grows in the more moist areas of the Oxbow (photo by Jon Seymour)



Nathan Miller (left) helps his older brother Ben Miller (right) doing volunteer clean-up work in the Oxbow. Ben volunteered to work as often as he could during the summer break and often involved his family. Here the brothers stand at the junction of the I-275 drainage with the Oxbow Lake drainage to the Great Miami. Excursions to the hinterlands of the Oxbow were an integral part of Ben's volunteer effort while compiling a photo library of over 100 species of animals that he has willingly shared with Oxbow, Inc. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Kani & Dave Meyer pick up trash along the Ohio River with other volunteers. The effects of the rapidly moving water of the Ohio can be seen in the extremely unusual tree roots that have become twisted branches supporting the huge tree many feet above the beach sand. (photo by Cammie Seymour)



A clump of purple coneflower blooms in the Osprey Lake Prairie. Not as common as the Prairie Coneflower, it adds spectacular color to the prairie (photo by Jon Seymour)



Part of the crew that participated in the Ohio River Sweep pose with load of trash they collected off the banks of the Ohio. (Photo by Steve Pelikan)



usings

by Dave Styer

Red-winged Blackbird: The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

The beautiful, aggressive, and rapacious Red-winged Blackbird has been the most abundant bird in the Oxbow area. In *Birds of the Oxbow* (1993), I mention the correlation between blackbird flocks and the corn crop. To get a better, and more recent perspective on the blackbird-corn problem, I asked Rick Pope, long-time Oxbow, Inc. board member and Oxbow area farmer, to fill me in on the facts. Even though he was in the middle of moving, he took the time to write the following letter:

"Back in the 1950's, we started having trouble with birds eating our corn. While Red Winged Blackbirds got the blame for damage, in reality it was mixed flocks of Red Wings, Grackles, and European Starlings.

They would strip back the husks at roasting ear stage, peck the top kernels to get to the juice inside, and when the work got too hard, move to the next plant. This left the ears open to the elements, and the rain would enter, causing mold and rot, which can amount to much greater loss than the amount of corn actually consumed.

My Dad and uncles tried all manner of things to keep the hungry birds away, from balloons and banners to cannons operated by propane or calcium carbide and water (makes acetylene gas). We also put platforms in our trucks so we could have a person ride up on top, shooting guns into the cornfields to scare the birds away. We would even organize bird shooting parties to shoot into the flocks with shotguns as they returned to roost. This was less to kill birds than to educate them to fear the sounds of the propane cannons. We would get up at 5:00 a.m. every day to go start the cannons, looking for any flocks which might be about to enter the fields. If we saw any, we would shoot .22 rifles into the corn under the flocks to scare them into going on to the neighbors. Of course, the neighbors were doing the same thing, so we hoped we might frustrate the birds into leaving entirely.

All these things had a very limited effect, but the damage was such that it was worth it.

By the way, the main roosting areas were Flannery Island, and the area just upstream from the Shawnee boat ramp where the Hamilton County Park District had a huge area of Giant Ragweed, preferred nesting habitat of the flocks.

We made attempts to work with Ohio DNR, with limited success. They came out, saw the damage, did studies, and concluded that we were fighting a losing battle. I still have some of the correspondence from Dad to ODNR.

Then, in 1983, the USDA came out with a one-year program to pay us not to raise corn, so we could work through our burdensome over-supply. There was no corn planted in the Big Bottoms (defined by the boundaries of the Great Miami River and US 50, from Lawrenceburg to Elizabethtown), just soybeans. The great flocks left town that year, and we had very little damage for several years.

But gradually, the flocks have been growing, eating and damaging more corn every year. Some varieties of corn seem to resist the birds' pecking better than others, but mostly it comes down to which fields are at a maturity level to attract the flocks at any given time. I sure hope I don't have to dig those old propane cannons out of the barn and get up at 5:00 a.m. to go chase birds every morning again....." Rick Pope

The sheer drama of 100,000 or more Red-winged Blackbirds makes a mere 1,000 European Starlings or Common Grackles pale by comparison. The damage done before the huge migrant flocks arrive must be considerable. Day after day there might be 500 Starlings, 200 Grackles, and a couple thousand Red-winged Blackbirds eating corn. If a thousand people went into the field each day and took an ear or two of corn for their personal pleasure, **everyone** would recognize the damage. We cannot view this the same way: for people this would be stealing, and for birds it is utilizing an available food source.

The use of propane cannons (Nothing shoots out, but they make a heck of a racket when the propane ignites) reminds me of the orchards where I grew up. As soon as the cherries began to ripen, we had to put out our Zon propane cannons to keep the birds from wrecking the crop. The good news was that the cherry crop was there and gone so fast that the birds didn't have time to adjust to the scare of the cannons before the crop was picked. The bad news was that the cherry orchard was within hearing distance of neighbors. You can imagine how popular that was!

Red-winged Blackbirds have not always been so common. Rufus Haymond wrote from Brookville, Indiana in 1869: "These blackbirds are common about marshy grounds, but, from the scarcity of swamps in the county, they are few in comparison to the vast numbers found in the northern part of the State. A few make their nests here. In 1989 Bruce Peterjohn wrote in *The Birds of Ohio*: "At one time, nesting Red-wingeds were confined to cattail marshes and shrubby swamps.... They are now as likely to occupy weedy old fields, clover hayfields, and highway rights-of-way as marshes. Red-wingeds are abundant summer residents, ranking among our most numerous breeding birds."

For most marsh birds you must go to the marsh to see them. Where else would you find a rail, a bittern, or a Marsh Wren? You could wait to find one out of place during migration, but don't expect to see them. What has enabled the Red-winged Blackbird to spread out so thoroughly? I learned a fascinating explanation maybe thirty years ago. [I don't remember, but a speaker at a Cincinnati Bird Club meeting may have told us.] Although Yellow-headed Blackbirds are rarely seen in the Greater Cincinnati area, they are widespread in North America and have co-existed with Red-winged Blackbirds. Both species were marsh birds. However, the Yellow-headed Blackbird was always the dominant bird. It chose its nests in the deepest, best parts of the marsh, and always pushed the Red-winged Blackbirds to the periphery. With the events of land clearing and marsh draining the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were stuck to an ever-shrinking habitat. Meanwhile, the Red-winged Blackbirds, always pushed to the edge, found infinitely more habitat. They became the most abundant native North American bird. The Biblical observation that "the meek shall inherit the earth" seems also a pretty good biological principle. Have I missed something that says, "Once the meek have inherited the Earth they shall become aggressive and rapacious?"



Climb Every Mountain – At Least ONE!!!

Bill Hopple, Director of the Cincinnati Nature Center, had a problem. He calls it a mid-life crisis. He wanted to do something really interesting and challenging just to show himself and the rest of us that it is never too late to accomplish a dream or goal you set your mind on. Bill came up with the crazy idea of climbing Mt. Denali in Alaska, the highest peak in North America, exceeding 20,000 feet. Now that is my idea of creating a crisis. Bill shared this "crisis" with everyone in the Cincinnati area, inviting people to help him train as he set a goal of climbing all Cincinnati's fabled hills as a training device. Many friends and admirers accompanied him on one or more of these climbs. Finally Bill was ready and tackled the Alaskan peak, formerly called Mt. McKinley, with enthusiasm. Bill recounted this experience much to our delight including his wish that he had thought of this 20 years ago when his body would have enjoyed it more. Body or not, Bill enjoyed it mentally and spiritually and so did we.



Beaver Trapping

The Board of Oxbow, Inc. has approved a one year special permit for a team of trappers to try their luck at trapping beaver and muskrat in the Oxbow. Trappers must be members of Oxbow, Inc. and conform to all Indiana laws that apply. Initially only one team will be permitted in the area. The team will provide the Board a report at the end of the season on the success of their catch by tracking the numbers taken. The numerous beaver in the area have taken a significant toll on the young growing trees. Muskrats clear areas of vegetation reducing the habitat niches for other species. More trees are being removed then can regenerate themselves and the population of beaver is out of balance with the food supply. The Board is hoping that trapping beaver and muskrat will bring them back into a balance with the available habitat.



Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for). The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, water, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land." Aldo Leopold, 1948.

So how do we incorporate the land into our personal community? The members of Oxbow, Inc. are already doing it. We feel the connection to Aldo Leopold's "land". The connection bears with it love, caring, and responsibility. We often refer to this connection as stewardship.

Oxbow, Inc. has been doing several things lately in the name of stewardship, some are simple and some are complex. All have the effect of creating a stronger more viable land that by the nature of the land ethic also makes us also stronger and more satisfied with life. We are making a stronger community for all of us – people, plants, animals, water and soil. The Land!

Simple things like removing hundreds of tires, and thousands of pounds of trash over the last 5 years, have improved the habitat and the esthetics of the Oxbow area. More complex things like planting, mowing and burning a prairie area allow the butterflies to sip nectar from Monarda and Prairie Cone Flower to calm the soul of the passing hiker. Some of these complex things are not always pleasing and pretty when they are being created.

A few weeks ago, Rick Pope and I met with Michael McGrew of Argosy Casino to discuss how the Argosy expansion could be of use to the Oxbow area. Within hours Michael had trucks hauling tons of dirt from an excavation site on the Ohio River shore to a point near the Oxbow Lake overlook where we want to build a road/dike that will impound floodwater to create the Seasonal Flooding Project. Michael's crew hauled dirt for two days and piled it in and near the road bank area. Rick Pope then took the piles of dirt and shaped it into a roadbed/dike nearly two feet higher than the original road. What a way to start! It will take a lot more trucks, a lot more dirt, and a lot more of Rick's time to build up the road bed another 6 feet but we got started and we are working together for the improvement of the land. The areas where the dirt was piled does not look pretty but it will recover. The improvement of the land will increase its usage by animals and plants. Because we are a part of the land and the land is part of us, according to our ethic, we will be better also.



OXBOW INC. FIELD TRIPS

To reach the upper Oxbow Inc. parking lot 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. The lot is on your right.

Saturday, September 8th, 2007, 8:00 a.m.
September Birds

Meet Jay Stenger at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. Jay will lead a search for the interesting mix of birds which September provides, including migrant shorebirds, migrant songbirds like warblers and vireos, several types of herons, resident birds, and more! Meet Jay at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. For more information, call Jay at 522-4245 or email to jaystenger@cinci.rr.com.

Saturday, October 20th, 2007, 8:30 a.m.
October Birds

Meet Ned Keller for this search for birds in the Oxbow, including some early ducks and other migrants. Meet Ned at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. For more information call Ned at 941-6497 or email to keller@onc.net.



Happy Halloween!

OXBOW, INC. PROGRAMS

Tuesday, September 11th, 2007, 7:30 p.m.
Earth Connection, College of Mount St. Joseph
Bird Without Borders

Dr. Jill Russell, Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of Mt. St. Joseph, and by training a Neuroendocrinologist, will speak about the work of the Avian Research and Education Institute, of which she is executive director. She will share about one of their education programs called Birds Without Borders, a workshop that is a joint class between students from Miami University and the University of Tamaulipas, in Mexico. The workshop involves mist-netting and banding of birds at Hueston Woods State Park and the Miami University Bird Observatory, as well as at the El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, a cloud forest in the Sierra Madre Occidentalis mountains of Mexico. A fourth banding station will be started this year at the College of Mt. St. Joseph!

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

Tuesday, October 9th, 2007, 7:30 p.m.
Lawrenceburg Public Library
Emerald Ash Borer In Indiana

Eric Bittner, Southeast Nursery Inspector with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology, will enlighten us about the Emerald Ash Borer, answering the "W" questions: What is it? Where did it come from? Where is it in N. America? What does it do to ash trees? What is Indiana doing about it? And...what should I be doing about it? With the Emerald Ash Borer moving into our area, and because it has the potential to dramatically change our local forests, this is timely information you won't want to miss. For more information, call Eric at 812-284-0693.

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

Tuesday, November 13th, 2007, 7:30 p.m.
Earth Connection, College of Mount St. Joseph
Honey Bee Colony Collapse Disorder

Dr. Gene Kritsky, chair of the Biology Department at the College of Mount St. Joseph, will speak about Colony Collapse Disorder in Honey Bee colonies that is threatening pollenized fruits and vegetables. Dr. Kritsky will also elaborate on his research into the history of beehive design in order to determine if there's anything we've forgotten from the past that may assist our efforts at reducing honeybee decline.

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

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

by Jon Seymour

Monday, July 2, 2007

I have my list in hand. It is like a grocery list but instead it is a photo list.

- Overlook benches
- Prairie flowers
- Ohio River shore
- Great Miami River shore
- Dike area of the Seasonal Flooding Project

I need photos for the *Wetland Matters*. These photo themes match article themes that I want to write in the next few issues. At 11:30 a.m. I pull into the entrance to the Oxbow and immediately notice two young men in the parking lot pulling weeds out of the gravel. Now this is great. One of them I immediately recognize as Ben Miller, the young Purdue student from Cincinnati, who has volunteered to work in the Oxbow this summer on whatever projects we needed done. Because I was laid up recovering from surgery, Kani Meyer has been busy introducing Ben to garlic mustard and amur honeysuckle and some more specific projects involving making the area look better, removing teasel from the prairie area, and removing the tires that had spent the winter in the entrance parking area.

Ben has help today and has persuaded (or tricked) his younger brother Nathan into helping him. Ben's pattern is to work a while and then take some time to tour the Oxbow and take photographs. I stop to say hello and ask the fellows if they have ever been to the back side of the Oxbow area. They say no, so I rearrange the junk in my car and we all get in and head for Mercer Pond. I am interested in the road condition to Mercer Pond since our Clean Sweep of the Great Miami will need to use this road. The road is great. The farmer of this area, Paul Roell, has smoothed the rutted areas so it is a great drive. We pass two Great Blue Heron hunting in the middle of a field of soybean and flush 5 Horned Larks from the edge of the road as we approach Mercer Pond. There are several large white birds on the opposite side of the pond and I tell Ben and Nathan that we need to check each one to make certain it is a Great Egret. I haul out my birding scope and set it up on the edge of the pond. I first scan with my binoculars and see 9 Great Egrets but the last bird on the left of the scan is something different and I start to get excited. The fellows are wondering what kind of strange person they are with. I pull the scope around to the bird and bring it into focus and step back and ask the fellows to come look. As they look at the bird I tell them they are looking at an American White Pelican, the first one ever seen in July or for that matter in summer in the Oxbow. They are unusual even during the migration season.

As we watch, the pelican leaps skyward and starts to fly straight at us and then begins to circle. Ben has his camera ready and as the bird passes overhead he is able to take several photos (see page 6). We drive on to the Corning easement but there is no way to top the Pelican for excitement. On the edge of the Corning easement we find the road blocked by field debris. Since our truck will have to get through this space for the clean up we spend several minutes cleaning enough debris off the road to allow a truck to pass. We leave the car and walk down to the end of the Corning easement where the drainage ditch along I-275 flows into the

Oxbow Lake outlet and then flows under the Interstate Bridge to meet the Great Miami. It is a nice hike and we enjoy the sights along the way.

We return to the parking area and I drop the boys off and head for the Osprey Lake prairie to take my "flower" pictures. As I drive down to the lake I reflect that I came to take the photos on my list, but the pictures I will prize are the ones that Ben took of the Pelican. Like so many other visits to the Oxbow, it did not go as planned – it was better.

SPECIAL THANKS!

What a wonderful job the Ohio River Sweep volunteers did. They collected 270 tires and a dumpster of assorted trash including a soggy sofa and the back seat of a van, all of which were removed from the Oxbow. It was hot sweaty work on a warm summer's day. It's good to see that the environmental ethic is still very much alive and active. A very special "thanks" must go to Ron Ison without whose truck we could not have taken out all that stuff. Ron's good humor and hard work was most certainly appreciated. Also Don Himburg and his truck were invaluable in wrangling the sofa and car seat out of Mercer Pond. The Pond thanks you, Don!

GREAT JOB!

Wild or Not Too Wild, Is that a domestic?

Al Winstel, recently retired naturalist for the Hamilton County Park System, presented information on domestication of several species we commonly refer to as pets or farm animals. Domestication was very important to the evolution of human society. Domestication of dogs came first according to the fossil record and that gave humans an early warning system as well as a pack animal. Cows and horses came next, giving us food and transportation as well as horse or ox power for hauling and machinery. The domestic cat slips in about the same time as agriculture begin to take off in human society, giving us a way to protect our harvested grain from mice and rats. Early domestication served human society but more recent domesticated animals such as goldfish, hamster, and parakeet are more as decorative pets than for serving a useful purpose in society. Ancient domestication is discovered and confirmed through fossil and archaeological evidence while more recent domestications can be read about in journals and historic records. Even when we know it is domestic, we may not be all that certain. Witness the domestic house cat. Just how wild is it? Some would say, cats think they domesticated us.

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

Corporation Officers

President, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Vice President, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Recording Secretary, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Corresponding Secretary, Dennis Mason	(513) 385-3607
Treasurer, Jim Poehlmann	(513) 931-4072
Ohio Agent, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Indiana Agent, John Getzendanner	(812) 537-5728

Committee Chairpersons

Conservation, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Easement Inspection, Mike Kluesener	(812) 623-7800
Land Management, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Programs, Jerry Lippert	(513) 522-6567
Research, Dr. Steve Pelikan	(513) 681-2574
Speakers Bureau, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Newsletter Editor, Meg Poehlmann	(513) 931-4072
Newsletter Email: meggster@fuse.net	

Member Communications: Joanne Earls, Kathleen Corneil, Lynda Mason, Velda Miller, Pat Shanklin, Sarah Shell, Suzanne Skidmore, Barb Varland, Jim Wilgenbusch

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

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cincinnati, Ohio
Permit No. 7271

513-851-9835

Need a Speaker?
Give Us a Call!

www.oxbowinc.org

P.O. BOX 43391
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243

PROTECTING WETLANDS
OXBOW, Inc.
Founded 1985

