

November — December 2007

No. 128

WETLAND *matters*

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

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It Was a Long Hot Summer

.....by Jon Seymour

I had more than one call this summer. They all started about the same way. "Have you seen the level of the lake and all the dead fish?" The answer, of course, was yes. Then I would try to explain why these things are normal and not to worry about the Oxbow.

We need to go back a few years to 1847 when Oxbow Lake was the river bed of the Great Miami River. A bustling little town of Hardinsburg nestled on a high bluff at the edge of the river. City fathers had high hopes of the town becoming a more important city than Lawrenceburg which was down stream from Hardinsburg and more susceptible to flooding. Dreams of becoming an important river port were dashed in 1847 when a raging flood on the Great Miami River changed the course of the river to its present river bed 1½ miles away in a different state. Hardinsburg was high and dry. The town gradually disappeared and became the combination of cement operations, trailer park, and auto salvage yard that constitute the current north entrance to the Oxbow area.

The long curving lake formed when a river cuts a new channel is called an oxbow from the similarity in shape between the lake and the harness placed on an ox. Over the years multiple floods gradually silted in the old river bed and probably each year the lake would form in the winter and spring and dry up during the dry summer. Why would the lake dry each year? The water table under the flood plain is connected to the Ohio River by an underground layer of gravel. As the water level drops in the Ohio the level of Oxbow Lake also drops. Prior to 1938 the Ohio River would drop to a pool level of 12-14 feet Cincinnati in the summer and in some very dry years would nearly dry up too. This was unacceptable to barge traffic and was also a function of poor dam structure that could not control large floods in the Ohio Valley. Aerial photos from 1937 show the entire Oxbow Lake as a corn field except for the southwest edge (the high bank) which contained a narrow strip of trees.

To control floods and assure year round barge traffic a series of dams was built along the Ohio River. These dams raised the pool level of the Ohio to 26 feet at Cincinnati. With the construction of I-275 the natural outlet of Oxbow Lake was "adjusted" to flow under the new Highway. Oxbow Lake surface is probably about 30 feet Cincinnati and in normal summers the amount of rain in the floodplain just about balances the flow of water out the bottom of the lake through the gravel beds. This year there was no where near enough rain and the water table kept dropping toward the 26 feet of the Ohio River.

Morris Mercer always told me that the Oxbow began to flood at 30 feet Cincinnati. I know he was right. The fact that the lake can dry up was known. I had many folks tell me that this same thing happened about 20 years ago. The lake will recover. The first flood will recharge the water levels and bring in new fish to populate the lake. Given the number of dead carp that may not be such a bad thing! Juno Pond will connect again with Oxbow Lake and all the fish waiting in Juno Pond will be free to roam. For that matter Mercer Pond connects to cement plant pond which will connect to Juno Pond as the water rises. The heron, egrets, and even a stray pelican have benefited as the low levels concentrating the fish in Oxbow Lake and making for easy feeding. The Vultures were ecstatic. Part of the beauty of the Oxbow is the variety of habitats available. Cormorants and herons moved over to Osprey Lake and Mercer Pond. Egrets congregated in the ponds of the Conservancy District. If one place was not to their liking they just looked around and found another. In all cases the Great Miami River and the Ohio River were only short flights from the Oxbow. The beauty of nature is that it is a powerful force that can take care of itself if we human beings do not get in the way.

Oxbow's website has changed to:

www.oxbowinc.info

Election Time Again

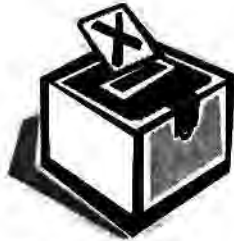
At our January Members Meeting, Tuesday, January 8, 2008 we will hold our annual elections. We hope as many members as possible will attend the meeting to conduct this important part of the annual business of Oxbow, Inc.

Standing for Officer Positions:

- President - Jon Seymour
- Vice-President - John Getzendanner
- Secretary - Dwight Poffenberger
- Treasurer - Jim Poehlman
- Indiana Agent - John Getzendanner
- Ohio Agent - Dwight Poffenberger

Standing for election to a three year term on the Board ending in February 2011:

- John Getzendanner
- Mike Kluesener
- Steve Pelikan
- Dwight Poffenburger
- Jay Stenger



Did you know??

The last two individuals of once abundant bird species spent many years at the Cincinnati Zoo: the Passenger Pigeon and the Carolina Parakeet.

As for the Passenger Pigeon, the very last one, Martha, is believed to never have flown free and lived to an old age, 29 or 30 years, in one of the seven stone pagoda-like aviaries called The Bird Run at the zoo. She died September 1, 1914.

Martha's remains were frozen in an ice block, including feathers, and shipped to the Smithsonian where they are to this day.



There are 675 species of birds in North America. Of these, 440 live on land, 190 at seashore and 45 far out on the oceans. Ornithologists believe about 300 of these species migrate every year.

.....from *The Big Year* by Mark Obmascik

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials & Honorariums

Donor

Barbara Corning
John and Jodi Ferner
Connie McNamee & Greg Mendell
Bob and Tina Schlegel
David & Kristin Skidmore
David and Kristin Skidmore
Deborah Wissman

In Memory of

Sally Polk
Ann Stuebing
Jinny Witte (Wiseman)
Joe Adams
Mrs. Zada Adams
Mr Arden Swope
Larry Wissman

Donor

Engrid Emerson Vaughan
Don and Shirley Wittekiend

In Honor of

Jerry Johnson
Pat Beckman's birthday

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.

The grand show is eternal, it is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising, eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming

....John Muir

BIG BIRD FUN IN FLORIDA

.....by Jack Berninger

The joy of viewing big birds in big numbers can be found in southern Florida at the beginning of the year. My wife, Elaine, and I spent the first nine weeks of 2007 in the Naples area. We were delighted by the large number and size of the wintering birds.

Highway 41 east toward Miami is the path into bird territory. Just driving along the road for about one hour will usually produce views of Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets along with Great Blue Herons, Glossy and White Ibis. The Roseate Spoonbill will delight the viewer with its pink pastels and the primitive-looking Wood Stork will soar like a Pterodactyl through the sky. White Pelicans were especially numerous along with their diving Brown Pelican cousins. The Cormorants, Black and Turkey Vultures will line the wires and poles along the road. The Red Shouldered Hawk and Osprey will give their welcoming call to you. The Coopers Hawk and King Fisher are usually seen perching in the trees that frame the roadway. Be on the lookout for both the White and Dark forms of the Short Tailed Hawk and even an Eagle can usually be found. The small ducks and shore birds such as Yellowlegs, Dowitcher, Dunlin, Gallinule, Coots, Grebes and others can easily be located. The Robins and Yellow Rumps are ubiquitous. Twenty-five birds could easily be identified without getting out of your car. If you pull off the side of the road to view the wetlands be careful as the traffic is fast.

A little walking-Florida is flat-will produce even greater delights. The one arcane journey we enjoy is down a nice wide path into the Ten Thousand Islands. The trail has no sign but does have a paved pull-off to park your car. It is called Oil Pad Rd., but no sign, for trail or road, and is located on the right heading east 2.7 miles past the entrance to Collier Seminole State Park. Walk past the gate and enjoy the views and birds. Other wildlife such as alligators, and butterflies can be seen in quantity. One time we even saw a black bear in the distance. If you don't want to walk the mile trail, bring a lawn chair and sit at one of the observation sites and let the birds come to you.

If you wish a birding challenge stop at Tiger Tail Beach on Marco Island and walk the wetlands, to the right, as you enter the beach area. The winter plumaged Plovers, Sand Pipers, Red Knots, Dowitchers and Dunlins will test your observation skills. You will have a good chance to see the White Morph of the Reddish Egret, Oystercatchers, Godwits, Whimbrel and maybe even the White Heron will make an appearance. Soaring high overhead will be the Frigate Bird and lower over the water a Peregrine Falcon disrupts the flocks. If you walk the ocean side of the beach on a clear day look for the Northern Gannet far offshore. A gratifying day of birding can be had at Tiger Tail. A guided tour is given each day at 8:30 a.m.

As you travel along Hwy. 41 east take the turn on to Hwy. 29 over to Everglades City and visit the National Park. This is a good area to spot the Short Tailed Hawk. Drive to the end of the road and visit historic Smallwoods Store. Many quaint places to eat can be found on these islands. A visit to the Fakahatchee State Park Preserve-the only tropical area in the contiguous U.S.- is found just north of Hwy. 41 along the same Hwy. 29. Turn left at the sign for "Jane's Scenic Drive" and follow the road. Stop at the small visitors center for information. If the door is closed knock hard as there is usually someone around. An information kiosk will have maps. The road is sometimes potholed so drive slowly and enjoy the birds. If you have time, drive Jane's down to gate 12 "east main" park and walk the trail. Watch for Limpkins and Warblers in addition to the larger birds. Rare tropical plants can be found along the path under the sway of the stately Royal Palms. Walk to the old cabin (takes about 45 minutes) and stroll the planks behind the place to see, on a warm day, the playground pond for alligators. The cabin is a good place to turn around and stop for lunch. If you look closely along the path some orchids can be found. Watch for running otters and panther tracks in the soft mud. For a real adventure, sign up for a swamp walk at the visitors center or online.

Farther east along 41 on the left is the well-marked Big Cypress Board Walk, a good place to find the warblers. Take your time, they are there in variety. Big Cypress Trees, the only ones remaining in the area, will be towering sentinels along the walk.

Continue along 41 and on the right, well marked, is the Kirby Storter Board Walk. Good for Woodpeckers, Warblers and other small birds.

Heading east again we reach the Big Cypress Visitors Center. Guided trail hikes and impressive free programs are available. If you love wildflowers, the Gator Hook Trail, especially in February, will enchant the senses.

The terminus of our Hwy. 41 journey is the true sawgrass Everglades Shark Valley Park on the right. It is well-marked and a photographer's birding spectacle. This is the number one destination we take our visitors to enjoy. Look for the Snail Kite sitting in the trees on the left along 41 just before the park entrance and ask at the Visitors Center about recent sightings.

Another trip to Audubon Corkscrew Swamp off I-75 just north of Naples is a must, especially in late February, to see the Painted Bunting, Brown Headed Nuthatch and the Swallow Tailed Kite along the beautiful boardwalk.

Obviously to do it all would take several days. All places are within a reasonable 1 to 1-1/2 hours of downtown Naples.

Hope you can spend some time wintering in the area and ENJOY.

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

..., by Jon Seymour

This issue's diary consists of three entries. The first entry written by Jay Stenger consists of a description of the regularly scheduled Oxbow tour on Saturday, September 8, 2007. The second entry in the diary, also written by Jay, is a description of what he and Joe Bens observed the next day on a personal trip to the Oxbow. The final entry by Jon Seymour is a few days later on Wednesday, September 12, 2007. The three entries illustrate three different ways of enjoying the Oxbow, taking an intensive tour, wandering around on your own, and just sitting in one spot. No matter how you choose to experience the Oxbow it always puts on a great show. You just never know who the cast of characters will be and what the title of the production is. It changes each day.

Merlins Are Way Cool! (starring the falcon cousins)

Date: Saturday, September 8, 2007

Location: The Oxbow Area

Reporter: Jay Stenger

Other Birders: Ten field trip participants

The hoped for, no make that the expected, waves of migrant warblers and songbirds failed to materialize for the ten of us who participated on the Oxbow Inc. field trip this morning. But there's always something to see in the Oxbow area. We met in the Oxbow at 8:00 a.m. and were at Shawnee Lookout by 9:00. We birded the boat ramp and a ¾ mile stretch of the park road until about 10:30 a.m. We checked Lost Bridge and then returned to bird the Oxbow until 2:00 p.m. We did manage to find 11 species of shorebirds although in low numbers. Our highlight was a MERLIN seen harassing a Peregrine Falcon. Some of the birds we found today included:

At Shawnee Lookout: Eastern Wood-Pewee 3, White-eyed Vireo 2, Warbling Vireo 3, Gray Catbird 2, Magnolia Warbler 1, Black-throated Green Warbler 1, Common Yellowthroat 1, and a few Indigo Buntings.

At Lost Bridge: Double-crested Cormorant 4, Great Blue Heron 7, Semipalmated Plover 2, Spotted Sandpiper 3, Lesser Yellowlegs 1, Semipalmated Sandpiper 4, Short-billed Dowitcher 1, COMMON TERN 1 (working the river, good look), N. Rough-winged and Barn Swallows, a fairly late Cliff Swallow and a large mixed flock of Red-winged Blackbirds 400, Common Grackles 100 and Brown-headed Cowbirds 100 at 7:45 a.m.

At the Oxbow: We were apparently the first people there at 8:15 a.m. and witnessed a very large gathering of herons and egrets, which were spread out in the very shallow Oxbow Lake from the mid-way overlook down to the south end. Wood Duck 30+, Blue-winged Teal 3, Pied-billed Grebe 2, Double-crested Cormorant 120+, Great Blue Heron 140, Great Egret 110+, Black Vulture 65, Turkey Vulture 20, Cooper's Hawk 1, Peregrine Falcon 1, MERLIN 1, Killdeer 50+, Spotted Sandpiper 5, Solitary Sandpiper 2, Greater Yel-

lowlegs 1, Lesser Yellowlegs 14, Least Sandpiper 5, Pectoral Sandpiper 2, Stilt Sandpiper 1, Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1, a fairly late Willow Flycatcher 1, Palm Warbler 1, and a fairly early Swamp Sparrow.

From the mid-way overlook around 1:30 p.m., we were watching a Peregrine patrolling over the Oxbow Lake, when out of nowhere a Merlin came blazing in and starts mobbing and diving on the Peregrine. This went on for a couple of minutes until the Peregrine finally remembered who was really in charge (and 4 times heavier), regrouped, turned the tables and gave aggressive chase to the Merlin. The Merlin, who apparently enjoyed this game, decided it had had enough and went streaking off to the north, leaving the Peregrine to go on about its business. Merlin's are way cool.

Bald Eagles Are Misunderstood (starring a Bald Eagle, a flock of Wood Ducks, and a murder of crows)

Date: Sunday, September 9, 2007

Location: The Oxbow

Reporter: Jay Stenger

Other Birders: Joe Bens

Joe and I had a few hours free this late afternoon and early evening and decided to visit the Oxbow. It always amazes me how productive good spots like this can change on a daily (or even hourly) basis. Having been there just yesterday, we had a few different species and numbers. Our highlights were 2 WHITE-RUMPED and 5 BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS, Bald Eagle, staging Barn Swallows and migrating nighthawks. We also had what I believe is an Oxbow high record and probably the second highest regional number of Great Blue Herons. We counted 226 and felt that was a conservative number. We didn't even check Mercer Pond, and now I wish we had, as there are always many Great Blues there. The water level in Oxbow Lake is as low now as I have seen it since about 20 years ago when we experienced another late summer drought.

Some of the species we found this evening in the Oxbow included: Wood Duck 75, Mallard 35, Blue-winged Teal 65, Green-winged Teal 10, Double-crested Cormorant 20~ (must have all been on Mercer Pond), Great Blue Heron 226, Great Egret 50+, Black Vulture 30, Turkey Vulture 10, Bald Eagle 1 (1st or 2nd year bird), Cooper's Hawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 2, Killdeer 40+, Semipalmated Plover 4, Solitary Sandpiper 2, Greater Yellowlegs 3, Lesser Yellowlegs 20, Semipalmated Sandpiper 3, Least Sandpiper 12, White-rumped Sandpiper 2, Baird's Sandpiper 5, Stilt Sandpiper 3, Short-billed Dowitcher 1, Common Nighthawk 75+ and Belted Kingfisher 2. We saw at least 20 Indigo Buntings and Barn Swallows were staging all over the agricultural fields in the Oxbow and the best we came up with was 250 (the second highest total recorded in the Oxbow), but I'm sure a more thorough check would have produced many more. We only looked at the Great Miami at Lost Bridge from the car

(Horseshoe Diary by Stenger & Seymour—continued from page 4)

and didn't see much, but at least 2 Cliff Swallows were still present and we saw a Savannah Sparrow near the bridge.

We saw almost all the shorebirds on the mudflats at the north or south end of Oxbow Lake. The 2 White-rumped Sandpipers and 3 of the Baird's were seen on the north mudflat and 2 other Baird's were on the south mudflat. We were able to see the shorebirds on the north mudflat from very close range. Between yesterday and today there were 13 species of shorebirds seen on Oxbow Lake. Nothing terribly rare yet, but the Oxbow should be checked often over the next several weeks. We only saw Killdeer on Osprey Lake but a decent mudflat is beginning to form there. On two occasions while we were there, about an hour apart, the immature eagle made passes over the lake and scattered many of the birds. One of those times we saw a flock of Wood Ducks panic and take flight. As they flew away from the lake, a juvenile hit a power line and was killed for its panic. As we were leaving we saw a flock of crows making life miserable for the perched eagle.

Suddenly There Was a Pelican (starring the American White)

Date: Wednesday, September 12, 2007

Location: Oxbow, Lawrenceburg, IN

Reporter: Jon Seymour

Other Birders: None

Dropped by the Oxbow today for a leisurely peek. I had decided going in that I would basically do a big sit for a couple of hours at the Oxbow Lake overlook. From 10:30 to 12:30 I observed the Oxbow Lake from the overlook. Three other birders dropped by during that period. I am always happy to see other folks out enjoying the Oxbow. After reading Jay Stenger's exciting accounts of the Oxbow on Saturday and Sunday, I wondered what my day would be like. It was very different. There were only 41 Great Blue Heron on the Oxbow Lake (+21 in other areas along the road going in and out), no great egret, (I only found 7 in the Conservancy District as I left). There were the following 350 Wood Duck, 150 Mallard, 8 Green-winged Teal, and 1 Northern Shoveler.

The south end was a mass of ducks and there were Wood Duck everywhere. Nothing exciting seemed to be around so I started to try to pick out the shorebirds. 9 Greater Yellowlegs, 15 Lesser Yellowlegs, 30 Killdeer, 7 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 2 Pectoral Sandpiper, 2 Baird's Sandpipers. When I turned around there was a single American White Pelican feeding near the center of the lake. Overhead 400-500 Rough-winged Swallow were staging. I saw a couple of Chimney Swift in the mix and a single Bank Swallow. There were 2 Belted Kingfisher working the lake. While I sat on the bench 3 Carolina Chickadee came by and a pair of Carolina Wrens. The best part was a beautiful female American Redstart that slipped along the trees and since I was sitting on the

high bank she was at eye level and up close. 4 Double-crested Cormorant, 9 American Crow, 2 Red-tailed Hawk, 1 Cooper's Hawk, 2 Northern Cardinal, 3 Indigo Bunting, 2 Song Sparrow, 3 Mourning Dove, 15 Turkey Vulture, and 3 Black Vulture. Not bad for just sitting and letting the wildlife come to you. Real Relaxing! ♦



It's the Story and the Picture

Ron Austing graced us with his presence and fine collection of photographs on the recovery of the Kirtland's Warbler. Bird enthusiasts have followed the recovery of the Kirtland's Warbler from the brink of extinction. Fortunately for us and the species, early ecologists discovered the link between the nesting requirement for young Jack Pine forests for the warbler and a program of maintaining a perpetual forest of trees with the proper nesting requirements was executed. The success of the program was recently rewarded with the discovery of nesting Kirtland's Warblers outside their intensively managed breeding ground in central Michigan. Nesting has been documented recently in Wisconsin and in Canada. When watching a presentation by Ron of his wonderful photographs the wonder of the photos is increased by the story behind each photo. That's where the fun is!



The small but enthusiastic group on Saturday morning was the first ever group to take the "Shell to Slot" tour during the Great Outdoor Weekend. In all previous years it has been too wet to make the drive. (photo by Steve Pelikan)



The combine, driven by Rick Pope, finishes a pass in a cloud of dust. Due to the extremely dry weather the amount of dust kicked up by the harvesting operation was greater than normal. Fortunately the cab of the combine is enclosed so the driver is protected from the cloud. Farmers in the Oxbow leave a portion of their crop unharvested for the use of wildlife. This makes the Oxbow an extremely attractive stopping point for migratory waterfowl. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Many more folks turned out for the Sunday morning tour with all ages being represented. This group caravanned the "Shell to Slot" tour and were treated to a full out of water view of a River Otter in Osprey Lake. (photo by Steve Pelikan)



Corn is pumped from the grain buggy into the waiting semi truck trailers for shipment to the grain buyers. (photo by Jon Seymour)



The grain buggy pulls along side the combine ready to receive corn from the combine. In this fashion the combine does not have to stop and can continuously harvest until the field is picked. (photo by Jon Seymour)



This summer's extreme drought really dried up Oxbow Lake leaving fish and mussels looking for water and egrets and herons collecting the fish. This view of the north end of Oxbow Lake from the overlook shows some water still up at that end. By early October even most of this water had evaporated or drained away. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



One of the consequences of no water where a lake used to be is dead fish. In this case carp bones litter the edge of Oxbow Lake. This was not a very pretty sight to many observers but the Black and Turkey Vultures considered it the most beautiful sight they ever saw. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



The shore line has dropped and withdrawn many feet from the normal water level. Fresh water mussels died and were eaten. Shorebirds of more than a dozen species plied the exposed mud flats for sustenance to continue their fall migration south. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



The Ohio River is part of the Oxbow area that many people do not reach but it is a spectacular area for scenery and understanding the dynamics of a great river. Large logs pile up on the north shore of the Ohio River as it makes its sharp bend to the south. The soil here is different than the rest of the Oxbow. Yes, we have our own sandy beaches. We also have sand dune cliffs held in place by a tangle of tree and bush roots. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



The waves generated by boats, barges, wind, and currents wash along the beaches carrying a little bit more of the sand downstream with every wave. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



With the I-275 Bridge over the Ohio River in the background the shore remains wild and unspoiled by the civilization rushing by. *(photo by Jon Seymour)*



usings

by Dave Styer

The Pied-billed Grebe: Please Pass the Feathers

Pied-billed Grebes can usually be found in the Oxbow area from October through March. My memories about these birds go back to long before I ever saw one. What really caught my attention were vivid descriptions of their ability to dive between the flash of a gun and the arrival of the shot ("Faster than a speeding bullet." Yes, I listened to Superman on the radio.) Forbush eloquently describes Pied-billed Grebe diving behavior in *Birds of Massachusetts*:

"If undisturbed and at ease, they ride almost as lightly and buoyantly upon the water as an Indian canoe or an autumn leaf wafted along the surface. When apprehensive they sink slowly down, swimming with only the head or the head and neck above water; but when really alarmed they go under so quickly that one can hardly see how they vanish."

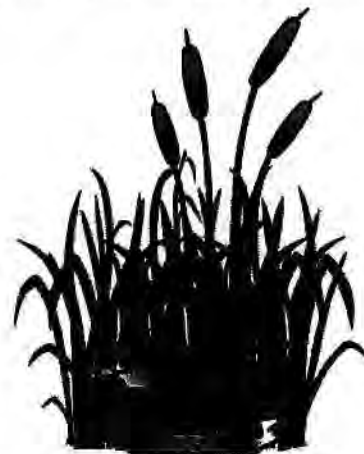
Grebes eat about any aquatic animal life within a reasonable size range. Thus, they eat vertebrates such as fish and tadpoles, and invertebrates such as crustaceans, insects, and leeches. Some of what they eat must be indigestible, and they cast, i.e., regurgitate, pellets, much as owls do. Although I'm not aware of coming upon grebe pellets, I certainly find owl pellets. The ones I find are fairly neat. They appear to be formed and held together by fur, and to contain skeletal parts. When I come upon owl pellets I usually think about how much people who study pellets can learn. Not only can they tell much about what the owl eats, but also they consequently learn about the available food in the neighborhood.

For grebes there are no mammals available to eat. A grebe's pellets are not held together by fur. What is available? Feathers! This brings us to an interesting aspect of the biology of grebes. All grebes, Pied-billed Grebes included, eat feathers. Most of what I have learned about this is in the Pied-billed Grebe article by Martin J. Muller and Robert W. Storer in *The Birds of North America*. Here are some of the facts. Birds typically molt a couple of times a year. Molting is an expensive process, and generally a bird doesn't molt more often than necessary to keep its feathers in good shape.

However, the flank feathers of grebes remain in a nearly continuous state of molt. This provides a continuous supply of feather to be eaten. Not only do adult grebes eat their own feathers, but also they feed their chicks feathers. "Feathers are sometimes the first item that newly hatched young ingest, as observed in other species of grebes." The chicks may have a serious need for those feathers. "Captive-raised young that ate fishes but refused feathers did not cast pellets, and died of apparent starvation 12-13 hours after stopping eating, their stomachs crammed with undigested fish bones."

The Birds of North America article does not discuss the flavor of the feathers. That must be a topic for future research. In order to help things along I have a wonderful idea that should be beneficial to the millions of people out there with pet grebes. With just a little effort genetic engineers should be able to produce strawberry-flavored flank feathers. The idea, of course, is to have the chicks begging for the feathers. Surely that'll work much better than this business of "eat those feathers, they're good for you." Ok, I'll admit, I chose strawberry-flavored feathers for personal reasons. If the grebe chicks would really be out there begging for cod liver oil-flavored feathers, I'm willing to just let the genetic engineers work their wonders.

Another feature about all grebe feathers is that the contour feathers absorb water in such a way that they form a seal against water getting in any deeper. It is suggested that surface tension forms the equivalent of a layer of skin on the outer feather, so that the bird stays dry and warm in the down coat underneath this surface. If you think, like I do, of a feather as barely more water-resistant than a sieve, this is a pretty remarkable feature.



Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

"The ordinary citizen today assumes that science knows what makes the community clock tick; the scientist is equally certain that he does not. He knows that the biotic mechanism is so complex that its workings may never be fully understood." Aldo Leopold, 1948.

Great Outdoors

We participated in the Great Outdoor Weekend (GOW) for the fourth straight year and had an excellent turnout. We had only 6 people come on Saturday, but we had 20 come on Sunday for the introductory tours. Kani Meyer, Steve Pelikan and I served as guides on both days. These tours are designed to be an introduction to Oxbow, Inc. so we cover the history of the organization, the history and geology of the area, our completed and current projects, and hopes for the future. Throw in a little bird watching, plant identification and butterfly watching and you have a busy 90 minutes.

This was the first year since we started doing the GOW that we were actually able to drive in the Oxbow. All other years were too wet to drive. This allowed us to make a complete transit of the Oxbow Lake road. On Saturday two of the guests, who came from the far east side of Cincinnati, wanted to go out to the Great Miami River. I volunteered to take them after the regular tour was over, so we set out along the railroad track road. We reached the Great Miami River at the railroad bridge crossing. We agreed to take a walk under the bridge and down to the Ohio. The trail passed through a forest of giant ragweed some reaching 15 feet tall. We reached the bank of the Ohio River and walked over the ridge onto the sand beach. They seemed to really enjoy the extra excursion and I always enjoy walking anywhere in the Oxbow.

On Sunday a large group arrived ranging in age from 4 months on up. I love to see kids and teens out in the Oxbow. We again journeyed the length of Oxbow Lake and out the Argosy entrance. I think we should name this route the "Shell to Slot Tour". As we were all observing Osprey Lake and talking about it being a corn field only 6 years ago, one of the guests said that there was something swimming out there. I fixed my binoculars on it and knew we had the head of an aquatic mammal. The only question in my mind was, "beaver or otter?". Unfortunately this is not always easy from just a swimming head. While I watched I saw it dive twice with the rolling, arching back and called out an otter. It continued to swim toward one of the islands in the middle of Osprey Lake and we began to tell the story of the return of the otters to the area. While we were giving our story, the otter hauled himself out on the bank of island and everyone got a full body view of the otter. I have never seen one out

of the water in the Oxbow so I was really pleased with the view.

Each year the GOW proves to be a great time to be in the Oxbow. I really feel that if someone comes and sees what we are doing they will want to join.



Wildlife Foods

With our new contracts that began this year for our leased farm areas we have more built in means of leaving wildlife food unharvested in the Oxbow and available for wildlife over the winter. Late fall visitors to the oxbow will notice standing rows of corn and soybean along field edges or sometime in low areas that are likely to be flooded. They may not notice rows of corn knocked down to the ground in some areas so that it is more available to wildlife. The association of sustaining wildlife over the winter and available farm crop has been long established. The Oxbow is a prime example of the symbiotic relationship between modified farming practices and wildlife preservation. We are very proud of our collaboration with farmers to make the Oxbow a better place for wildlife.

LTA November Meeting

The Midwest Regional Office of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) has responded to suggestions that the land trusts located along the Ohio River may have a lot in common and should meet to exchange ideas and discuss mutual issues. This is not exactly easy for the Midwest Office to pull off since their jurisdiction does not include Kentucky. That is the very reason that there is a special need to do something different for those Land Trusts, like Oxbow, Inc., which are strongly influenced by the unique character and issues that surround the Ohio River valley and the watersheds that feed it. The Midwest Regional Office is sponsoring a Conference of the Ohio Valley Land Trusts to be held November 9-10, 2007 at the Mill Race Lodge in Winton Woods, in Cincinnati, OH. We are very excited about this and hope to benefit by learning how other land trusts in the valley are solving their problems and whether the issues that face Oxbow, Inc. have been faced and addressed by our sister land trusts. We expect to learn from the other land trusts and we fully expect that other land trusts will learn from us. In the end we hope that this first meeting will lead to a long term association and exchange of information up and down this great river that links us all together.

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, November 17, 2007, 9:00 a.m.
Hike Around The Lake

Join Wayne Wauligman, local naturalist, for a brisk hike around the Oxbow Lake, weather and water level permitting. Attention will be given to wildlife such as ducks, geese and hawks, all migrating at this time of year. Meet Wayne at 9:00 a.m. at the Oxbow parking lot near the sign and the cement plant. We'll walk for about three hours. For more information, call Wayne at 922-4430, or email to wrwpgw@aol.com.



OXBOW, INC. PROGRAMS

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 pollinated 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.



Tuesday, January 8th, 2008, 7:30 p.m.
Sharon Centre in Sharon Woods
The Ever Changing Dynamics of Bird Habitats in the Tri-State Region

Jay Stenger, an Oxbow, Inc. founder, and member of numerous winning Oxbow Birdathon teams including the past two years, will speak tonight on the status and distribution of avian habitat in the Tri-State region, how it is changing, and what can be done to improve it. Through a slide presentation Jay will discuss the historical, current and future status of our regional habitats and how these changes affect individual species and overall bird populations. For more information, call Jay at 522-8147. To reach Sharon Centre, go north on Reading Road/Route 42, proceed through downtown Sharonville, bear right onto Route 42/Lebanon Road, and watch for the entrance to Sharon Woods on your right hand side. Or, from I-275, take exit #46, the Sharonville/Route 42 exit, go south on Route 42/Lebanon Road, stay on Route 42 past Kemper Road, and look for the entrance to Sharon Woods on your left hand side. Once inside the park, pass the entrance booth, pass over the creek on the bridge, then take the first left into the large parking lot. Sharon Centre is the large building at the end of the parking lot.



**There are no field trips in
December.
See you in 2008!**

**No December Meeting—
See you on January 8th
at Sharon Centre in Sharon
Woods**

Saturday, February 23rd, 2008, 8:00 a.m.
Early Spring Waterfowl Trip

Meet Paul Wharton, expert birder and member of the winning Birdathon teams from 2006 and 2007, for this search for returning waterfowl. Meet at the Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. For more information, call Paul at 353-3403, before 8:30 p.m.

Beware of Hitchhiking Beetles - Keep Your Firewood at Home

Eric Bitner came to speak to us from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, where his day job is the Southeast Nursery Inspector (trees not babies). His other job is to help educate folks on how to recognize and slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Bore. This native of China and Mongolia does not seem to be so destructive to native Asian ash trees that have evolved over the millennia side by side with the beetle. However our native American ash trees had not evolved any defenses. The beetle is believed to have arrived in America hiding in crates and pallets (some cut so rough that the bark was still intact) in the Detroit Michigan area in the mid 1990's. It was first identified in dying ash trees in Detroit in 2002. Since then the beetle has spread to parts of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, as well as southern Ontario. Efforts continue to prevent spreading by controlling shipment of logs cut for firewood in the hope that it will gain scientists enough time to develop a remedy for the situation. Ash trees are estimated to make up 6% of the forest in Indiana so the loss would be noticeable as well as lamented. If you think you have an Emerald Ash Bore infestation call your local conservation officer for directions on what to do.



Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863

It has seemed to me fit and proper that the gifts of God should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged with one heart and one voice by the American people.

I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens...to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father Who dwelleth in the heavens.

.....Abraham Lincoln

If Birds Do Not Recognize Borders, Why Should We?

Dr. Jill Russell recently shifted her allegiance from Miami University in Oxford, OH to her alma mater The College of Mount St. Joseph. She brought with her the Avian Research and Education Institute of which she is the Executive Director. One of its programs called "Birds Without Borders" addresses one of the acute issues of avian research in today's world. Recent observation and population research has identified massive declines in a number of migrating species. Dr. Russell formed a partnership with the University of Tamaulipes in Mexico. The program takes Ohio students south of the border to study migrating species on their wintering grounds. Besides the exciting research the equally important goal is for the students to form relationships with the Mexican students that hopefully might blossom to exciting collaborative research opportunities in the future. Then they repeat the process and bring the Mexican students to Ohio in the spring so they can see their wintering birds on their migration north and for some of them on their breeding grounds. Since birds are not at all impressed by those little lines on the map that imply borders and cultural differences, international cooperation is critical in maintaining the health of many migratory populations.



Happy Holidays!

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

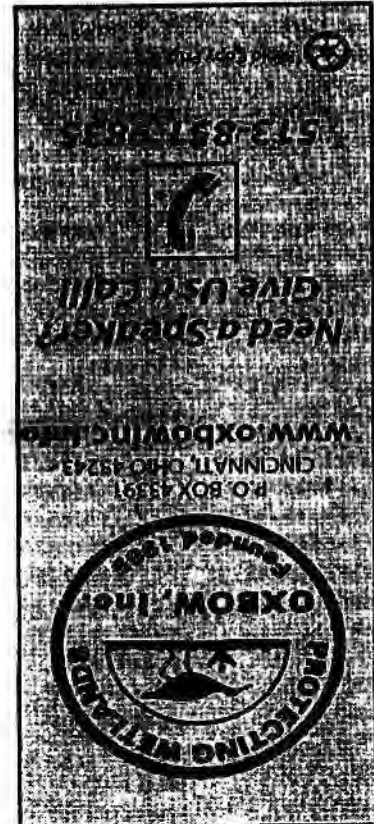
President, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Vice President, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Recording Secretary, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Corresponding Secretary, Dennis Mason	(513) 385-3607
Treasurer, Jim Poehlmann	(513) 931-4072
Ohio Agent, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Indiana Agent, John Getzendanner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

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