

March—April 2009

No. 136

WETLAND *matters*

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

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

Need a speaker? Call 513-851-9835



Birdathon 2009 Welcomes all Participants and Donors

.....by Jon Seymour

BIRDATHON 2009 IS COMING!!! So mark your calendars for May 8-9, polish the lens on your binoculars, find the bird field guide, and warm up your checkbooks and start those pens. Due to some late donations (actual really late donations – “sorry we forgot” type) Birdathon 2008 was our best Birdathon since Oxbow reclaimed the sponsorship in 2006. We raised \$6,859.43 and continued our record of gradually increasing the donations from Birdathon since it came back under the guidance of Oxbow, Inc. We are targeting to raise even more money this year but have no illusions that it will be difficult given the current economic climate. We will need your generous help. All money raised by the Birdathon supports habitat improvement and access improvement. Anyone driving in the Oxbow in 2008 saw the results of Birdathon dollars in improved roads that eliminated many of the wet weather ruts and kept access to viewing areas of the Oxbow open more days in the year. Oxbow, Inc. started the Cincinnati Area Birdathon in 1989 to foster interest in birds, to provide friendly and fun competition among birders, and to raise money for Oxbow, Inc. This is our biggest fundraiser and keeping it growing still remains our goal.

Last year the participation of 17 teams led to the identification of 197 species of birds in the Cincinnati Birdathon area. These are outstanding totals for both participation and for species identification. A majority of the teams provided a sighting of at least one species that no other team saw. This is a wonderful indication of how even small team and individual efforts can add to the overall species list. This year we hope to get enough teams to participate so that maybe we can break that 200 species mark.

Under the leadership of Board member, Jay Stenger, we hope to inspire birders from all over the Tristate area to get out and join in the fun. We have

many different ways to be part of the Birdathon from the 24 hour all out birding quest to leisurely backyard birding from your favorite deck chair, with your favorite beverage in hand, and many other ways in between. Again this year, Jon Seymour will lead a group of first timers who are either new to birding or simply new to the Birdathon. The level of activity will be tailored to that desired by the participants. So if you always wanted to try out the Birdathon and see what it is like this is your chance. Last year the group of first timers identified 122 species and had a great time doing it. Contact Jon at 513-851-9835 for more details.

Each participant is asked to raise money for Oxbow, Inc. by obtaining donations from family and friends to support their efforts. All money collected by Oxbow, Inc. will be reserved for projects involving bird habitat improvement and increased viewing access. As in the past we will ask other organizations to sponsor teams and solicit donations. We have adopted the practice of splitting donations raised by sister organizations 50/50 between the sister organization and Oxbow, Inc.

Birdathon Pledge Form—page 9
Birdathon Participation Form—Page 11

Oxbow 25th Anniversary Photo Contest

As part of the 25th Anniversary of Oxbow, Inc. in 2010 we are sponsoring a photo contest that will highlight the nature found in the Great Miami River and Whitewater River valleys of Hamilton and Dearborn Counties. See the contest rules on Page 2 and start snapping those photographs to get just the perfect picture and send it in to the competition.

OXBOW PHOTOGRAPHIC 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CONTEST RULES

TERM – Midnight 01 March, 2009 through 31 December, 2009 (EST).

AREA – Watershed of the Great Miami and Whitewater Rivers in Hamilton and Dearborn Counties

WHO MAY ENTER - Contest is open everyone except the Principles (organizers) of Ohio Valley Camera Club, the Judges of the Contest, and the board members of Oxbow, Inc. and their immediate family members.

HOW TO ENTER – Entries will be accepted by U.S. Mail and must be post marked no later than 31 December, 2009. Entry forms may be obtained by contacting Oxbow, Inc. or by downloading from the contest information site at (<http://oxbow-celebration.smugmug.com/>) or by contacting an organizer of Ohio Valley Camera Club.

Entries may be submitted to: (Make checks and money orders payable to "Oxbow, Inc.")

Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio 45243

Each submission shall include the following:

One digital copy of submission.
One completed submission form with name of submission.
Entry fee.
Any releases applicable to the entry
Complete EXIF Data as well as location photograph was taken (GPS Allowed).

See (<http://oxbow-celebration.smugmug.com/>) for sizing and additional entry requirements, categories and prizes.

Entry Fees: (Each entrant may enter one photo only per category.)

Student/Youth – \$10.00/photo
Over 18 years old - \$20.00/photo

Prize Subject Categories:

Landscapes
Plant Life
Bird life
Mammals
Insects, Fish and Aquatic Life
Reptiles and Amphibians
Human Interaction - Pictures showing humans connecting with / impacting natural surroundings within the watershed areas
Nature's Power – Extreme weather or its impacts (hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, lightning, floods, etc.) and signs of global warming

Cash Prizes for winning entries.

Entries will be judged by professional photographers. Winning Entries will be displayed by local conservation oriented organizations during a traveling tour.

Entrant Classes:

Student/Youth - In high school or up to age 18.
Adult- Over age 18.

Additional information can be acquired by accessing the message board at Ohio Valley Camera Club or contacting one of the below websites or email addresses.

Ohio Valley Camera Club – <http://photo.meetup.com/9/>

Oxbow, Inc. - <http://www.oxbowinc.org/> or <http://www.oxbowinc.info/>

Photo Contest Info Site - <http://oxbow-celebration.smugmug.com>

Photo Contest Info email - oxbow.photographic.celebration@gmail.com

Contact Information: Photo Club (513) 271-5979, Oxbow, Inc. (513) 851-9835

Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS

To reach the Oxbow, Inc. Office take Highway US 50 south from the #16 exit of I-275. Pass the Argosy exit and turn left at the second stop light onto Walnut St. 301 Walnut is on the right side at the second stop light where Walnut changes from two way to one way. Free parking is available on Walnut St., Center St., and in the parking lot behind the building.

Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg
The Oxbow, Inc. Office

One of the major headaches of any land manager is the control of exotic invasive plants. Tom Borgman, of the Hamilton County Park District's Land Management Department, is no exception. He has become a local expert in the management of species such as bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, Canada thistle and teasel, species that we also battle on our Oxbow properties. Tonight he will discuss these and other species that threaten our natives and describe what you can do to help on your own property.

Tuesday, April 14, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg
The Oxbow, Inc. Office

Dr. Gene Kritsky popular speaker on everything from honeybees to cicadas is also a noted authority on Charles Darwin. For Oxbow, Inc., he will present **The Darwin Bootlegs**, a talk that explores the top ten things about Darwin and his work that are not normally covered in the typical biography. Celebrate the bicentennial of Darwin's birth by getting to know him up close and personal.



Nature under your feet

John Tallmadge, noted local nature writer, talked to us about the lessons he has learned about nature in his years of teaching nature writing, going on a life-long journey from a lover of Wilderness to a lover of Wildness. John has detailed this philosophical journey in his recent book "The Cincinnati Arch". One of John's main points was that we seldom look at the natural world that lies essential under our feet or in our backyards. Our backyards are not Yellowstone or Grand Teton National Parks but the same struggle to survive and perpetuate goes on in the soil, grasses, flowers and trees of our backyards, local parks, and urban/suburban nature preserves. We need to only open our eyes, ears, and minds to the richness of wildness that is all around us. We owe it to ourselves to reach a full appreciation of this wildness and to make the efforts we need to make to protect, preserve and enhance the wildness close about us.

Oxbow Inc. FIELD TRIPS

For both the March and April Field Trips, meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance just beyond the cement plant

Saturday, March 21 2009, 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Ned Keller, (513) 941-6497, keller@one.net

The Oxbow is well known for attracting waterfowl and the month of March represents the peak of their spring migration. Given this set of facts, this particular field trip should be a very good one. Good numbers of other species will also be around on this early spring morning as well. Ned will most likely find a variety of other waterbirds, eagles and other raptors and songbirds. Even a few early shorebirds might be present. Given the wet nature of the month of March, the Oxbow may or may not be flooded, but I'm pretty certain it will be muddy so plan accordingly. Regardless of the water conditions, Ned will use his vast experience to find birds in the area. Signs of spring should abound so why not shake off your "cabin fever" and see what shows up on this morning visit to the Oxbow. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact Ned.

Saturday, April 18 2009, 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Darlena Graham, (859) 341-4893,
darlena@fuse.net

Spring will be well advanced by this date and a great diversity of birds should be seen on this trip. April is smack dab in the middle of spring migration (March thru May) and numerous species either continue or begin their movements during this month. Waterfowl, herons and egrets, gulls and terns, shorebirds and returning songbirds (including a few warblers) are all likely and should be expected. Darlena's knowledge of birds and the Oxbow will insure a good morning afield. Come on out and join Darlena for what should be a very pleasant spring morning walk. Feel free to contact Darlena if you have any questions.

Help Clean Up the Oxbow

Great Miami Sweep

May 16, 2009

9a.m. - noon

Ohio River Sweep

June 20, 2009

9a.m. - noon

Every year the rivers bring in trash that litters the Oxbow area with everything from refrigerators to tires. Please come on out this year to help us keep the Oxbow clean. **We especially need people with trucks!** We will provide gloves, bags, bug spray and water. Please let Kani Meyer know that you can help out by calling 513-948-8630 or emailing her at kaniiau@yahoo.com.

Conservation Corner

Generations

.....by Jon Seymour

I have always been interested in animals. The interest in animals was fueled by growing up in the 50s by reading books, reading magazines such as National Geographic, watching movies on the lives of animals in the theaters at 35 cents for a double feature, and watching the new Disney television show that had documentaries on the lives of animals. My parents took trips with my brother and I in tow and we visited national parks. I remember moose, elk, and bear in Yellowstone. This was in the days when bears stopped traffic, called bear jams, and people got out of their cars to take pictures. We are smarter now, fortunately, but the close contact and views of what were, in those days even less common animals than they are now, helped fuel a fascination with wildlife.

While the interest was there it lay dormant, wanting in action. While in college my interest in wildlife led me to sign up for a course called Wildlife Ecology. It was interesting and fun but took on an even higher significance when we went on a field trip to a glacial prairie pond 15 miles north of where I lived. On the way we found a flock of several hundred Whistling Swans (now called Tundra Swans) resting in a farm field. I was 20 years old and I had not known that Swans were to be found anywhere near my home. It was the revelation moment that many naturalists have. That one moment that sets them on the course of a life long interest in nature! In my case I was asking myself the question, "What else did I not know about nature around my own home?"

The course was taught by a white-haired gentleman by the name of Dr. Joseph Hickey (Joe). His method of teaching was to ignore the book for the course, except for background, and sit down on the table in the front of the classroom and tell stories. He told stories that illustrated every point the book made and let you know the importance of each major learning from nature. The 50 minutes of class passed in a flash and you just wanted to listen the rest of the day. The end of each class was a small disappointment leaving you anxious for the next class to start. There were no slides or fancy projections and PowerPoint was not even a dream. Just talk that made the visions so vivid you were actually there – on the Kaibab, the Canadian north woods, the short prairie grasslands. You could see and hear the deer, the snowshoe hare, and the prairie chicken.

A younger Joe Hickey had come to the University of Wisconsin as a 34 year old ornithologist and writer in 1941 to study for a doctorate under Aldo Leopold, the inventor of the multi-disciplined new science called ecology. Leopold had funding for only a soil scientist so Joe became a soil scientist thus crossing from one science to another the way a ecologist must in order to understand the wide picture

of how the parts of nature interact with each other to form the web of life. Joe returned to the University of Wisconsin after the end of World War II to help teach new ecologists under Leopold. He was there in 1948 when Leopold died of an apparent heart attack while battling a wildfire on his farm.

When Aldo Leopold died he was working on a book of stories and essays he called "Great Possessions". It was nearly finished. Joe Hickey had been a writer and knew the publishing business. He started making phone calls and organized the family and friends to finish the book. It was published posthumously in 1949 but with a change in name. It reached the public as "A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There". With the publication of the book, Aldo Leopold's reputation was made for all the world and future generations.

Joe Hickey and Bob McCabe, another former student of Leopold's, ran the Wildlife Ecology Department for the next several decades, carrying on Leopold's teaching and spirit. It is in 1967 that my life connected with Dr. Hickey and his course changed my life. I was able to continue to take courses in the Wildlife Ecology Department for the next several years (even during graduate school) and eventually had courses from Bob McCabe also. I also had courses from John Emlen, whose most famous student, George Schaller, had just published on the behavior of wild gorillas, setting off a avalanche of behavioral field studies that still fire the imagination of the world.

It was during my student days taking Wildlife Ecology courses that Joe Hickey told us about a study he was doing that he thought would be very important. I was reminded of this study when I recently picked up the Autumn 2008 Birdscope, a publication of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There was Dr. Hickey's name and a brief description of his experiment in the lead paragraphs of the front page article. Back in the mid to late 60's Dr. Hickey's grad student, Dan Anderson, had toured museum collections all over the United States and Canada. From that tour and studies then in the field, Hickey and Anderson determined that the egg shells of raptors collected prior to 1947 were thicker than eggshells collected after that date. It was an important finding providing the first real life link to the crash of raptor populations such as Bald Eagles, Ospreys and Peregrine Falcon's. PCBs had been introduced into general widespread usage in the United States in 1946. It was simple, elegant, inexpensive and changed wildlife biology.

It seems to me that we all carry the power of those that have gone before. I doubt that had I not taken a course from Joe Hickey 40 years ago that I would be as involved in Oxbow, Inc. as I am today. Joe Hickey was motivated by Aldo Leopold to teach and learn about nature. It is the challenge of each generation to pass on what has come before. Yes the knowledge is important but the real trick is to pass on the passion. Let's hope we are successful.

2009 Election Results

At our January Members Meeting the following officers and Board members were elected

Elected for a one year term as officers of Oxbow, Inc.:

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

Elected for a three year term on the Board ending in February 2012:

- Denis Conover
- Dennis Mason
- Kani Meyer
- Meg Poehlmann
- Richard Pope
- David Styer

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials & Honorariums

Donor	In Memory of
Jon & Marylou Nicodemus	Mrs. Robert Henne
Charlie & Mary Saunders	Dave O'Conner



Donor	In Honor of
Grant & Melissa Cowan	Suzanne Skidmore
Matthew & Fiona Green	Charles Green and Constance Lighthall
Kemp Jaycox	Phyllis Kadle
James & Virginia Van Rensselaer IV	Charles Green and Constance Lighthall

Oxbow, Inc. would like to thank:

The William P. Anderson Foundation
Fay K. Boeh
Indiana Michigan Power—AEP
Rev. Andrew MacAoidh Jergens
Charles Noe
Kelly M. Riccetti
Whit & Bon Wharton

for their generous gifts

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.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE MYSTERY PHOTO ON PAGE 7. SEND IN YOUR GUESS AS TO WHAT THE MYSTERY PHOTO IS TO JON SEYMOUR AT THE ADDRESS LISTED IN THE CAPTION OF THE PHOTO.



A new sign looks out over the Oxbow from its location atop the levee along US Highway 50. The sign is on the edge of the bike path/trail on top of the levee and is designed to give the traveler a short course in the history and value of the Oxbow. Funded by a grant from American Electric Power/ Indiana and Michigan Power and installed for us by the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District, the sign features photos from the Oxbow and an interchangeable map that shows Oxbow features but can be revised if our land holdings increase. Designed by member Bill Zimmerman the sign has bright colors, dramatic photos, and is made of materials designed to last for years. (Photo by Jon Seymour)



Robert Sexton, Oxbow member currently located in California, uses binoculars from his kayak to get up close and personal with Oxbow wildlife during a flood period. Robert's father Bob brings up the rear having guide their kayaks successfully along and through the wooded areas of the floodplain. (Photo by Tom Uhlman)



Jim Mundy (at lectern) and Karen King present the first Stewart Walsh award to Oxbow member Paul Wharton. Morris Mercer, Art Wiseman and Jinny Wiseman Witte, all founders of Oxbow, Inc., were also presented with the award posthumously. The award, given by the Hamilton County Park District, recognizes stewardship efforts outside the HCPD by volunteers dedicated to improving the environment. (photo by Rick Lisi)



Winter floods are common in the Oxbow. While they limit human access they increase bird usage of the area. Many birds like these Great Blue Herons count on the periodic floods to increase the areas of open water and break up ice formed on lakes. Receding floods leave fish trapped in shallow ponds creating breakfast buffets for herons. These enriched food supplies allow many Great Blue Herons to winter over, like these four hardy herons, in the Cincinnati area. (Photo by Tom Uhlman)

Mystery Photo contest time again! Last year we had a lot of fun guessing what was the photo, taken in the oxbow. This year we decided to repeat the challenge with a photo again supplied by photographer Tom Uhlman. Tom has great success exploring the Oxbow in the middle of winter. Usually when everyone else is staying away, Tom is out there with his camera. This time he has captured another natural phenomenon. If you can guess what this photo is all about you may win a small prize. Send your guesses to Oxbow, Inc, P.O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, OH 45243 to the attention of Jon Seymour. The winner will be selected at random from among the entries that can correctly describe the phenomenon.



A flock of Canada Geese fly in tight formation through the Oxbow. Now days many people consider Canada Geese to be a bit of a nuisance. This is especially true of the non-migratory Greater Canada Geese that inhabit local ponds and business parks. In the Oxbow the geese are wild and for the most part migratory. We do have a flock of about 25 birds that breed in the Oxbow. Many forget that 75 years ago Canada Geese had declined to a point where biologist like Aldo Leopold lamented the potential loss forever of "goose music" that signaled the coming and passing of spring and fall migration. Leopold's generation saw the loss of the great flocks of Passenger Pigeons and the great flocks of Canada Geese appeared to be heading for a similar fate. We survived that scare -recent evidence shows we have survived the threat of the loss of the Bald Eagle and the Peregrine Falcon, both fairly common sightings in the Oxbow. This survival did not happen without the intense intervention of humans who caused the declines in the first place. We hope we continue to get smarter as civilization progresses. (Photo by Tom Uhlman)



Eagles have been making a strong comeback in the Great Miami and Whitewater Valleys. A new nest has been discovered along the Great Miami in Butler county and more recently a nest has been discovered by Paul Ice along the Whitewater just upstream from Lost Bridge. This is the first nest in Hamilton County in recent memory (at least in Ron Austing's memory). We would be interested in any documentation of the last nest in Hamilton County. While two adult eagles are nesting near the Oxbow there are frequent sightings of immature Bald Eagles all over the Oxbow area. This immature (4th year) Bald Eagle spent a lot of time hanging out in the Oxbow during the winter. Photo of this soaring eagle near Lost Bridge by Bruce Leonhardt.



usings

by Dave Styer

The Eastern Towhee

When I lived in Cincinnati, Shawnee Lookout Park was one of the best spots, year round, to see Eastern Towhees, and I expect that is still true. It's hard to tell if those breeding at Shawnee Lookout hunker down for the winter, or if the breeding towhees move south and northern ones come in for the winter. A year-round bird-banding project would likely answer that question.

When I was young the Eastern Towhee was known as the Red-eyed Towhee (at least the birds north of Georgia), or the Chewink, or simply the Towhee. This was considered a separate species from the Spotted Towhee of western North America. Then some hybridization was found in a small area where the breeding ranges of the two overlapped. Around 1960 the American Ornithologists' Union decided that the (Eastern) Towhee and the Spotted Towhee were two races of the same species, which they called the Rufous-sided Towhee. No doubt some ornithologists were bent out of shape over this decision. Careful subsequent study in the hybrid zone indicated that the degree of hybridization was not enough to swamp the differences. In 1995, the American Ornithologists' Union decided that the Rufous-sided Towhee actually is two separate species. These they named the Eastern Towhee and the Spotted Towhee. No doubt some ornithologists were bent out of shape over this decision.

With most bird species we encounter there is no problem about what they are. Robins aren't Wood Thrushes. But what about birds whose population became split several thousand years ago by the Great Plains? DNA does not get passed on perfectly from generation to generation. If there is no reproductive mixing, then there is going to be drifting apart. After a while there will clearly be two separate species. In the meantime there will be periods of years, perhaps thousands, when it is not clear if the birds have diverged enough to be called separate species. Perhaps, the Eastern and Spotted Towhees are at the cusp of speciation, say, at the right stage to infuriate the maximum number of ornithologists. The really important thing is that change happens. We need bumper stickers that proclaim CHANGE HAPPENS.

An interesting feature about the nesting of Eastern Towhees is stated in Peterjohn's *The Birds of Ohio* (1989):

These towhees normally raise two broods annually. Their first nests are placed on the ground, with construction beginning during the last half

of April in southern Ohio and early in May in the northern counties. These broods usually fledge in late May or June. Their second nests are mostly placed in low dense shrubs and tangles but have been reported as high as twelve feet in red cedars.

I have seen similar, if less emphatic, statements about nesting towhees. Nowhere have I seen any explanation of why towhees would nest first on the ground and then above the ground. I suppose that any such reason given would be pure speculation and inappropriate in the scientific literature. So, let's speculate. During the winter Eastern Towhees feed mostly on the ground, eating seeds and insects. Thus, they place their nests on the ground. Towhees forage much more for animal matter as they raise their young. Many bird species do this because the growing young need more protein than adults. Since the nests are underneath tangles or shrubbery the towhees start to forage above the ground. By the time the towhees switch to a heavier animal diet it is easy to find the animal food (caterpillars, spiders, etc.) in the vegetation. When the towhees build their second nest they find it more convenient to place the nest above ground, just where they are finding food for their nestlings. That sounds good! There might even be some truth to it.



Hunting Permit Applications Due July 1, 2008

Oxbow, Inc. members who wish to apply for permits to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. land must submit their application by July 1, 2009 to:

Oxbow, Inc.
C/o John Getzendanner
21007 Crestview Ct.
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025

Your application must include a copy of your valid Indiana hunting license and a completed memorandum of understanding printed below. Cut out the memorandum (on page 11). Complete the form and mail it with a copy of your license and a self addressed stamped envelope to John. Once accepted you will receive a permission slip to hunt on Oxbow land designated for hunting, east of I-275. Members must have dues paid current to the time of application. Any violation of the memorandum of understanding will result in immediate revocation of hunting privileges.

Stewart Welsh Award

...by Jim Mundy

This summer we lost good friend and former colleague Stewart Welsh. Stu, as he was known to us, had a significant career with the Hamilton County Park District. He was what you might say, "at the right place at the right time". During his career, he held several positions from Naturalist, Assistant Director, Co-Director and then Deputy Director where he was instrumental in three successful levy campaigns and was relentless in his efforts to see that they passed.

As Deputy Director he led the charge for the Land Management Policy, which was adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners in 1975. It states that 80% of all the property owned by the Hamilton County Park District must remain in a natural state and that those natural areas are to be managed to promote biodiversity. He was the leading individual for the creation of the Stewardship Program, which encompassed the Land Management and Resource Quality Departments. During his tenure, the Hamilton County Park District grew from 3 parks to 16, with a total increase of 9243.1 acres preserved.

Because of Stu's accomplishments we felt the best way to honor his memory was to create a Stewardship Award in his name and use it to recognize others outside the Park District that have made a significant improvement to our environment.

After much discussion we came up with the following simple statement to represent the criteria used when picking a recipient.

Recipients will have demonstrated leadership or dedication to a specific project or body of work resulting in a marked improvement to the environment in our region.

On December 13, 2008 at our annual Winter Bird Count we announced the creation of this award and presented it to four individuals, three of whom received the award posthumously. These three were Art Wiseman, Jinny Wiseman Witte, and Morris Mercer. These three people, by helping form Oxbow Inc. which became a major player and landowner in the region, helped stop the port facility development and went on to protect hundreds of acres of key parcels to keep this area a vital wildlife habitat.

We also presented an individual plaque to Paul Wharton for demonstrating leadership in Stewardship by constructing, installing, and monitoring the productivity of nest boxes for American Kestrels. The American Kestrel is a species that is in major decline all across the country, but in the specific areas where Paul installed nest boxes, no decline was noticed. This fundamental effort has shown us that the decline of this species at least in our area is from a lack of nesting boxes rather than habitat.

A plaque engraved with each recipient's name is displayed in the front lobby of the Winton Centre.

Birdathon Pledge Form for Birdathon 2009 (May 8-9, 2009)

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

Name _____

Address _____

My Pledge for Birdathon 2009 is:

Fixed Amount: \$ _____ () Check Enclosed
() Bill me after the Birdathon

If you elect a fixed pledge please remember to specify below which team the pledge is for.

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

\$ 5.00 \$4.00 \$3.00 \$2.00 \$1.00 \$0.75 \$0.50
\$0.25 Other \$ _____

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

- _____ Highest Scoring Team
- _____ Team #1 – Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger and Joe Bens
- _____ Team #2 – Jerry Lippert, Erich Baumgardner and Wayne Wauligman
- _____ Team #3 – Sister Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller and Sarah Krailler
- _____ Team #4 – Dave and Jane Styer (West Coast Big Day)
- _____ Team #5 – Jon Seymour and the First Timers
- _____ Team #6 – Young Ohio Birders – Greater Cincinnati Chapter
- _____ Team #7 – Steve Pelikan, Mike Busam and Charlie Saunders

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

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

December 30, 2008

If at first you do not see, Look harder
.....by Jon Seymour

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) graph on my computer showed the Ohio River Level to be 36 feet and subsiding slowly. That shot my plans to try to walk to the northwest side of Oxbow Lake. I had been hoping to get close enough to the flooded fields on that side to identify some ducks. At 36 feet Cincinnati access to the fields surrounding Mercer Pond required something that floated. Now I would be limited to long distance looks at the far fields from the Oxbow Lake overlook. The thirty minute drive to the Oxbow was pleasant for the end of December. At 50°F and bright sun my window was open all the way.

On arriving at the Hardintown entrance I encounter a car pulling away from the parking area with 3 kayaks strapped to the top in kind of a lopsided – I hope they don't fall off while making a turn – fashion. I pull up along side the driver and greet Tom Uhlman, Oxbow member, professional photographer, and frequent contributor to Wetland Matters. Within moments another car pulls alongside and drops off Robert Sexton, Oxbow member and full time resident of California. Robert was back for a visit and was spending part of his vacation kayaking in the Oxbow. Lately Robert has been sea kayaking with the Sea Otters off the coast in California but states that he was always glad to get back to the Oxbow to kayak. Unfortunately Tom and Robert had not run across any River Otters for comparison on this trip. Robert relates he had one Sea Otter try to crack open a shell on his kayak, seemingly mistaking the kayak for a large convenient floating rock.

Tom and Robert go on their way and I head for the Oxbow Lake overlook. As I drive to the overlook I see only one Great Blue Heron and a pair of Mallards on Oxbow Lake, and three Ring-billed Gulls circling Osprey Lake. The road is good and the gravel layer we put on the road is holding up fairly well. It is beginning to sink into the silt and we will have to put a thin layer on next year to maintain stability. But it is drivable in my Saturn and that would not normally be possible given the recent rains and previous flood level.

At the overlook two other bird watchers have just arrived and are settling onto the benches to see what might fly by. As I pull up, a quick look around leads to the conclusion that nothing is about to fly by. Oxbow Lake is clear of any bird life as far as I can determine. I expand my look around with binoculars and I am rewarded with the sight of a few ducks in the flooded fields

near I-275 nearly a 1/4 mile away. Getting out my scope I am amazed to find that the few ducks in the binoculars translates to 1000 ducks in the spotting scope. Numerous Northern Pintails, Black Duck, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, and Mallard reveal themselves through the eyepiece of the scope. I share the scope with the couple who are bird watching and they too share the amazement of the large numbers of ducks that we almost missed seeing. As a bonus the scope reveals a Red-tailed Hawk on the shoreline near I-275 casually feeding on what appears to be a Canada Goose carcass. The examination of the distant shore is broken by a flight of nine passing Common Mergansers overhead. Now where did they come from! I can hear Mallards calling from behind me down in the Seasonal Flooding Project area. I need to go on to do some work at the Oxbow office but vow to return about sundown to catch the sunset if I can.

I drive into the Oxbow at 5:30 and the sun is already down and the sky is a golden glow. Driving all the way to the Oxbow Lake overlook I leave my car and continue walking down the road until I reach the edge of the drop down to lake level and the future dike area for the seasonal impoundment. Approaching slowly with the trees and grasses as my shield, I hear many ducks calling to each other from the flooded field. Raising my binoculars I count 250 Canada Geese along the edge of the water in the field grazing on soybean plants. Nearly 500 ducks are outlined against the reflection in the water of the golden sky and flight after flight of small groups of ducks are circling the impoundment area and dropping in for an evening's rest. The world is a peace and everything is beautiful. I wish it could be the same for everyone, everywhere. I hope that everyone has a Happy New Year.



A Switch but a Pleasant One

Our January members meeting was a packed house to hear Tom Strohfeldt, former curator of the Ohio Historical Society. At the last moment Tom switched the subject of his presentation. It did not matter, since what he switched to held the audience in rapt attention. Tom read excerpts from a journal written by an early inhabitant of the Ohio country. The man was a soldier in the French Indian War and was later captured by local Indian tribe and made a member of the tribe that captured him. These personal notes, reminiscences, and philosophies, written by a single white man living with Indians in the yet to be a state called Ohio, are filled with quotes and thoughts concerning the everyday existence and philosophy of the tribes beyond the mighty Ohio, when there were few other Europeans present. We will bring Tom back some other time to give the originally scheduled talk on early pioneers around the Cincinnati area.

Call for Birdathon Participation

Oxbow, Inc. wants to have as many birdwatchers as possible participate in the Birdathon. While there is a competition for the most species seen in the Birdathon area during the 24 hours of the contest, there are many ways to participate. You don't even have to leave your own house! You don't have to compete at all, just come to the tally party and report your findings. There are also many ways to compete besides most species for the total Birdathon. Here are some possible categories of competition:

- Most Species by a Team. (most overall species by a group)
- Most Species by an Individual (most overall species by an individual)
- Most Species in a Back Yard (most species observed from one yard)
- Most Species One State (most species by state, either Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky)
- Most Species One County (most species in any one county, ex: Hamilton)
- Most Species In One Location (recorded in one defined area, ex: The Oxbow)
- Most Species Non-Fossil Fuel (recorded without using any gasoline)
- Most Species Big Sit (recorded from one fixed 30 x 30 foot spot)
- Most Species Family (most species by a family, parent/guardian and at least one child)
- Most Species Under Age 20 (most species seen by a group 19 & under, 1 adult allowed)
- Most Funds Raised by a Team
- Most Funds Raised by an Individual
- Most Funds raised by Persons Under 20 Years Old
- Make up your own category. If it has anything to do with counting bird species in the Birdathon's 24 hour time window we will probably accept it.

Remember the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise money for improving Oxbow habitat and Oxbow accessibility projects. **The way to do it is to have fun birding!** If you want to enter a team (or as an individual) in the Oxbow Birdathon, **please call Jay Stenger @ 513-522-4245 or Jon Seymour @ 513-851-9835.** We like to know how many are going to be participating on the Birdathon so that we can get the pizza order right for the grand tally party at the finish of the Birdathon.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

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

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

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

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

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

Your Signature: _____ Date _____

Return Mail Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc., c/o John Getzendanner, 21007 Crestview Ct., Lawrenceburg, IN 47025, Phone: 812-537-5728

(Hunting permission is granted for one year (July 1 to June 30 of the following year) only and must be reapplied for yearly.) HUNTING PERMISSION REQUESTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY JULY 1, 2009

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
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513-851-9835

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