



September—October 2010

No. 145

# WETLAND *matters*

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

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

Need a speaker? Call 513-851-9835

## The Role of Education

.....by Jon Seymour

Oxbow is about nature, saving habitat and enhancing biodiversity, but it is also about education. The Oxbow area serves as a large classroom for many learners of all ages. Many of you are familiar with our monthly educational meetings with a wide variety of speakers and with our monthly hikes for birding, plants, and nature (yes, these are educational - not just for exercise). Our other educational activities may be less well known. Elsewhere in this newsletter, Velda Miller, head of our educational grant committee, is announcing our grant application process to fund local educational projects that have to do with nature, biodiversity, and sustainability. Also you will find an article by Jill Russell, one of the early recipients of our educational grants. I think you will find these interesting. We look forward to having a significant and positive local impact on nature education in the Tristate area. This has been made possible by the generous gift of Ginny (Wiseman) Witte and the wise stewardship of the Board of Directors of Oxbow, Inc. We are always happy to accept other donations to the education fund to advance the nature education of local young people.

But there's more. Groups of local photographers gather to learn nature photography, students from Ivy Tech come to enjoy a biology 101 lesson, students from The College of Mount St. Joseph learn bird identification and natural history of birds, boy and girl scout groups learn basic ecology, organized groups of home schooled children have elementary biology lessons, the Master's class from the Environmental Institute of Miami University learns about success of grass roots environmental groups. That is only the beginning with garden clubs, retirement centers, business groups, volunteer groups from other nature centers and more coming to the Oxbow to learn about the unique ecology, geology and hydrology of the area. Add a few more "-ologists" such as archaeology and limnology and you still haven't covered all the areas of learning and education that the Oxbow makes available to the Tristate area residents.

The Oxbow's role as an educator is one of the roles we are most proud of. This role continues to expand as we seek more ways to bring the message of conservation of nature to the residents of the Tristate.

## Great Outdoor Weekend 2010

.....by Jon Seymour

**Clear your calendar for the weekend of September 25-26** and plan to fill it with Great Outdoor Weekend activities. That won't be difficult as there are 72 programs held at 46 locations all over the Tristate Area. And this does not even count the programs that are repeated so you have a second or third chance to attend the program.

This is the first year that the Great Outdoor Weekend is being presented as an initiative of Green Umbrella. Green Umbrella is a local non-profit organization that promotes and facilitates the preservation, restoration, awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment of the Greater Cincinnati area. Members of Green Umbrella represent nearly every group in Greater Cincinnati with an interest in nature. Oxbow, Inc. is a member and so is the Zoo, the Nature Center, the Museum Center, the Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society and several dozen more.

Oxbow, Inc will present two programs on the importance of wetlands - one on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 p.m. It will go until sunset or about 8 p.m. The next morning the program is repeated from 9 -11 a.m. For each program we will meet in the Hardintown entrance parking area. While the program repeats the cast of characters (animals and plants) does not, so the programs will not be the same.

I hope that Oxbow, Inc. members who have not been to the Oxbow for a while will stop and see all the changes we are making. Tell your friends and bring them along. Then plan to make other stops for other exciting programs throughout the weekend.

Brochures will be available in the public libraries and several nature based organizations and stores in the area.

More information on individual programs is available as well as directions to each event at [www.CincyGreatOutdoorWeekend.org](http://www.CincyGreatOutdoorWeekend.org)

## Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS

To get to the Oxbow, Inc. office take Highway US 50 south from the #16 exit off I-275. Pass the Hollywood Casino exit and turn left at the second stop light onto Walnut St. 301 Walnut is on the right side at the second stoplight at the corner of Walnut and Center Streets. Free parking is available on Walnut St., Center St., and in the parking lot behind the building.)

**Tuesday, September 14, 2010, 7:30 p.m.**  
**301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg**  
**The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

Jack Berninger will present a talk titled, "COMETS, ASTEROIDS and EXTINCTIONS at the OXBOW". The Oxbow will become extinct. The area has had many past extinctions which the program will present along with possible causes of these events. Jack will concentrate on the theories concerning meteors, asteroids and comets as playing a major role in these extinctions.

**Note Different Venue!**  
**Birding from the Trenches**  
**Tuesday, October 12, 2010, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Sharon Woods Centre**

To reach Sharon Woods Centre take I-275 to Sharonville (Route 42) exit; south on Route 42/Lebanon Road to park entrance on left. Enter the park then take the first left after crossing the creek to enter the Sharon Woods Centre parking lot.

While deployed to Iraq in 2008 and 2009, MAJ Randel Rogers enjoyed a unique opportunity to study the wildlife and birds of this region and observe the impact of both the regime of Saddam Hussein and the war on Iraq's environment. Through photos and videos taken in Iraq, this story will come to life, giving a new appreciation for Iraq's natural diversity and some thoughts on the future of Iraq's wildlife resources.

MAJ Rogers holds a B.S. degree in Recreation and Wildlife from Ohio University and has been a member of the United States military for 24 years. He lives in Columbus, Ohio, where he works full time for the Ohio Army National Guard, and he has observed birds and wildlife

in all 50 states and 17 countries.



## 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.

**Date & Time:** Sunday, September 12, 2010, 8:00 a.m.  
**Where:** Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.  
**Leader:** Ned Keller, (513) 941-6497  
 keller@one.net

Fall migration is well under way during September and that will be the focus of this month's field trip. Warbler (as well as other songbirds) migration peaks during September and shorebirds continue to move south throughout the month. Raptors are also on the move at this season. The Oxbow area is a great place to see this avian diversity so we hope you come out and join us for what should be a great morning afield. Our trip leader, Ned Keller, is a skilled veteran birder who has birded the Oxbow for many years. Ned's plan for the morning is to visit a couple of different habitats in the Oxbow area to give us the best shot at finding a diverse number of species. Feel free to contact Ned if you have any questions.

**Date & Time:** Saturday, October 2, 2010, 8:00 a.m.  
**Where:** Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.  
**Leader:** Paul Wharton, (513)5353-3403  
 pwharton@fuse.net

Signs of autumn will abound and the fall color season should just be beginning by the date of this early October field trip. Fall migration will be in full swing; some species winding down while others are just getting started. The various habitats of the Oxbow and the lower Great Miami River valley are a great place to see this diversity. Our trip leader Paul Wharton is a skilled birder and doesn't miss much in the field so we can expect to see a great variety of birds and other wildlife. Come out and join Paul on what should be a beautiful and crisp early autumn visit to the Oxbow. Feel free to contact Paul if you have any questions.

## Where Birding Begins

Did you know that when you step outside, you are more likely to see a bird than any other animal (mosquitoes not included)? So, if we see more birds than anything else, why don't we know more about them and value them? People will take care of the things they value, right? Well, the **Queen City Bird Festival (QCBF)**, held in southwestern Ohio each May, promotes conservation by inspiring people to care and value nature. Designed as a FREE family event, the **QCBF** focuses on the beginning birder and uses birding as one example of how we can protect wild-



life. By presenting everything from: basic birding skills to international conservation collaboratives; the **QCBF** hopes to foster an interest in birds for the beginning birder that will result in a change in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors toward conservation. Thanks to support from Audubon Miami Valley, the Avian Research and Education Institute and Oxbow, Inc., the **QCBF** has grown into an annual event that has been internationally recognized by *Education for the Americas* as a model for community bird festivals.

After two years of rainy weather, our day began with beautiful sunny skies that continued throughout the day! Everyone who stopped by the Registration Table was banded and their band number was put into a box for the raffle drawings (held every 30 minutes). Children also had their wings measured



Sr Lois Wetzel, Sam Williams, Jorge Lassus and Mickey Simonds sell Festival Tshirts and band visitors to QCBF.

(arms), just like we do when measuring birds, to demonstrate some of the science behind bird banding. The kids loved it and enjoyed learning about the different lengths of wings and how they affect migration.

Thanks to a generous grant from Oxbow, Inc., we were able to continue the "Badge" activity this year, and gave each child a booklet of worksheets from the *Beginning Birdwatcher's Book* at registration. As they completed activities scattered throughout the **QCBF** grounds, they received stickers for the booklet, and once they had received 5 of the 6 stickers available and returned to the registration table, they received a "Jr Birder Badge" to sew onto their clothing or backpack. This was the most popular activity of the day!

With live music performed by Dan Spencer and *Flight of Stares* (Ben Mattox & Jeff Yuva) the festival was rockin' well into the late afternoon! Along with all of the children's activities, several workshops we conducted including: **Basic Birding**: Bill Heck, *Columbus Avid Birders*; **Birds in the Classroom**: Karen Glum, Jennifer Licata and several sixth grade students from the *Seven Hills School*; **Birding in SW Ohio**: Sr. Marty Dermody, *Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, OH*; **Birding By Ear**: Casey Tucker, *American Avian Conservation Association*; **The Antarctic Peninsula**: Rick Lee, *Miami University*; **Photographing Birds**: Jim Chagares, *Chagares Photography*; **How Birding Helps Birds**: Jill Russell, *Avian Research and Education Institute*; and Keynote Presentation **Hope for Animals**: by Thane Maynard, *Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens*.

So, if you're looking for a free, fun family activity next spring, head out to Hueston Woods State Park for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual **Queen City Bird Festival**. You're sure to have a great time!

Jill Russell, PhD  
 Founder, Queen City Bird Festival  
 Chair, QCBF Organizing Committee  
[jrussell@avianinstitute.com](mailto:jrussell@avianinstitute.com)



Master Bander, Tim Tolford, along with banders Eric Burgess and Sherry Beers conducted bird banding demonstrations all day.



Teachers Karen Glum & Jennifer Licata pose with students from the Seven Hills School following their presentation.

# Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

A Wild Walk with Wayne

*Saturday, June 26, 2010 (by Wayne Wauligman)*

There were twelve attendees on this beautiful, warm summer morning at the Oxbow herp hike. Frogs calling were the usual Bull Frogs, Green Frogs and Cricket Frogs. The deep voiced "jug-a-rum" of the Bull Frog, the banjo plucked call of the Green Frog and the two part cricket frog clicking filled the air with the sounds of summer. The Prothonotary Warblers were also calling from every corner. Recently laid turtle eggs were dug up and eaten by predators such as Raccoons. The ping pong ball sized eggs of the Snapping Turtles and the oblong ones of the Red-ear Sliders were evident in at least 45 nests. With binoculars we saw their heads watching us from the water. No snakes were evident. The Oxbow flood plain has few of these, unless they are large enough to escape the spear point of the Great Blue Herons, and they can migrate away to hibernate on high ground. An eighty inch Black Rat Snake was once found by Jerry Lippert here. Other finds were a huge crayfish, numerous Glass Shrimp, Killifish, Dragonfly larvae and adults, a Cloudless Sulfur, and an adult Black Bullhead catfish and fry. In a large skypool Great Blue Herons were feasting on carp and sunfish fry. These fish will soon be in trouble as the pond dries. Other birds seen were a family of Horned Larks, two Great Egrets and a Wood Duck. Mercer Pond also had Cormorants, a Kingbird and Cliff Swallows. As the morning came to a hot and humid end, we looked at the cool waters as possible relief! However, as evidenced from all those dug up Snapping Turtle nests, the Oxbow waters are loaded with these large creatures and their sharp beaks. No swimming please at the Oxbow!

**New Property**

*Friday, July 2, 2010 (by Jon Seymour)*

I am waiting for Brian Bohl, stream specialist for the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and former President of the Friends of the Great Miami. Brian had asked to go out to the Jansen purchase to examine the portion of Double Lick Creek that empties into the Great Miami on our latest purchase. I had emailed him to say that I would be available and the weather looked conducive. Weather is important for visiting the Jansen property. It lies past the end of a 1 1/2 mile dirt road that snakes through Ohio and Indiana, between corn and soybean fields and crosses Double Lick Creek on a farm bridge built by the land owners to allow farm equipment to pass conveniently between fields.

Brian has never been to the Oxbow office before so I provide the nickel tour. With only two rooms we do not have a quarter tour. The remodeled downtown of Lawrenceburg is also new to him so we swing through the downtown as we leave the office. We choose to drive the length of the Oxbow from Hollywood Casino to Hardintown to check out the road condition and talk about Oxbow's projects in this area. Coming out the Hardintown entrance my mind pops back with a smile to the previous Monday. For the first time we had a Greyhound size bus tour, 40 passengers, from Maple Knoll. We could only go as far as the Oxbow Lake overlook, turn

around and come back. It seemed to be a well received tour and everyone had a good time. When the bus emerged from the Hardintown entrance one of the local residents nearly drove off the road with the amazement of seeing a full size bus emerge from the Oxbow.

We head up U.S. 50 past the State Line and make a hard right onto a gravel road that immediately dips under the RR track and pops out in the ag fields of the Oxbow area. This is the State of Ohio and these fields are under conservation easements to the Hamilton County Park District. We head south with the tree line on our right defining the path of Double Lick Creek crossing these fields headed for its final destination on the bank of the Great Miami River.

While Brian is mostly interested in the stream and the potential for stabilizing the bank of the Great Miami, I am also interested in checking the health of the trees that were planted in December on one acre of the property. I suspect some of the trees may not have survived the winter and the floods. I am hoping that many of them did. As we make the final turn I see the surveyor's state line marker dead ahead. The road turns right here and leads out through the fields away from the river - we have to go on foot the rest of the way. From the maps I know that the corner of the Jansen property is a few feet south of the state line marker. From there it takes on a pie shape following the curve of the river on the west side of the river. It is at this point that Double Lick Creek comes out of Ohio and back into Indiana. The mouth of the creek is on our property.

This is the area that Brian has come to see. I park my car next to the state line marker and Brian and I strike out south and soon turn left and beat our way through low brush to the edge of Double Lick Creek. It is a deep narrow stream cut maybe 25-30 feet across but 15 feet nearly straight down. There is a low flow of water and the water is very silted. The stream has been cut deep and narrow and Brian is speculating on the physical causes of why the stream should be shaped this way. He thinks that part of the explanation could be the dam at Hidden Valley Lake. This stream is the outlet and the dam may vary the water flow in the stream. At this point the stream bank has several trees that are along its edge that are maybe 50-60 years old. We see a lot of silver maple and some box elder. Since my knowledge of trees is limited this is all I can attest to. Brian is thinking about what it would take to restore the stream to a natural flow and depth. As we look up and down the stream exposed tree roots form the main top layer of our view.

We move to the edge of the cornfield and follow it to the southwest where I immediately see several of the trees planted in December. A tall swamp oak looks good but the bald cypress nearest me is scraggly, with bare spots scattered along the leaved branches. I have to stare hard to see some of the trees through stands of native ragweed 10-15 feet tall. I am glad it is not the end of July as the ragweed would be in bloom and walking through it would turn us yellow from the clouds of pollen released by the flower heads. Of all the planted trees I see only one that is dead and has fallen over. I suspect flood damage, thinking that flood debris may have knocked it over.

The walking is fairly easy along the end of the cornfield but to get to the mouth of Double Lick Creek and to the bank of the Great Miami is going to be a different matter. Between us and the water are large stands of giant ragweed (we can work with that), but it is interlaced with foot grabbing, leg-

*(Continued on page. 9)*

### Wish List for volunteers:

- A volunteer to write the specifications and application to present to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to impound 14 acres of flood water during the winter. There is guidance on the internet for how to fill out the documents.
- A volunteer interested in history to organize historical documents and create a living history of Oxbow, Inc.
- A volunteer interested in interviewing other volunteers and writing up short stories, on the efforts of each volunteer, to be published in our newsletter.

*If you are interested or think you might be interested call Jon Seymour at 513-851-9835 to talk about it. Oxbow, Inc. runs solely on the basis of volunteer effort and all that we accomplish is due to our volunteers.*

### Oxbow, Inc. Memorials & Honorariums

**CORRECTION:** Please excuse the fumble-fingers this editor had last issue.

We would like to thank Dennis and Bobbie Murphy for their gift made in memory of Marie Seitz.

We would like to thank Maureen Bosken for her gift made in memory of Marie Seitz.



*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.*

Oxbow Inc. would like to thank the following donors for their generous gifts.

Rev. Andrew MacAoidh Jergens

Lawrence Lippert

Edward & Faith Pelikan

Mr. and Mrs. Whitney Wharton



Fall in the Oxbow as show by Liz Nofsinger the second place winner in Landscape



An Eastern Pond Hawk landed on the hat of Christina Berninger during Wayne's scheduled Oxbow hike. I have no words for this photo, the picture says it all. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)



Gabriel Berninger holds a large crayfish while his sister Isabella (left) and cousin David Berninger look on. Notice that the salamander on Gabriel's shirt seems to be licking the crayfish. (Photo by Wayne Wauligman)



Summer Sparrow (a Song Sparrow) by Bob Schlake is our first place winner in the Birds category.



Rick Hartman (left) of the Ohio Valley Camera Club (Co-sponsors) and Jon Seymour present Liz Nofsinger (center) with the second place prize for landscape in the Oxbow, Inc. 25th Anniversary Photo Contest. Due to numerous vacations and tight schedules the other prize winners were unable to attend and received their prizes by mail. We thank the prize winners and all the participants for their excellent photography and dedication to Oxbow, Inc.



Rick Hartman (left) of the Ohio Valley Camera Club (Co-sponsors) and Jon Seymour present Bob Schlake (center) with the grand prize in the Oxbow, Inc. 25th Anniversary Photo Contest. Bob's winning photo was published in Wetland Matters Issue #144. Did you notice the Bald Eagle perched on a bare branch on the extreme left of the photo. Prize money for the contest was donated by Kelly Riccetti and Seapine Software.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic Great Success

Fifty members attended our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic held in Agner Hall at the Lawrenceburg Fairgrounds. The air-conditioned half of Agner Hall kept the attendees cool as they viewed displays and educational materials used by Oxbow, Inc. in their teaching programs. The caterers served up burgers, brats, hot dogs and metts along with beans, potato salad, pasta salad and all the trimmings. Cans of soda and bottled water disappeared from the cooler as the participants cooled off during and after eating.

Steve Pelikan led tours into the Oxbow at 1:00 pm and at 3:00 pm that were well attended. At 2:00 pm founding member and Board Director, Dave Styer, on leave from his home in California, gave a personal account of the early formation of the Oxbow relating the sequence of events leading to the formation of first the "Save the Oxbow Society" and subsequently to the formation of Oxbow, Inc. He included many tales of the characters met along the way and some of the crucial roles played by several individuals, without whom the organization would never have gotten off the ground.

Each family, as they entered Agner Hall to register, was given a copy of a recently discovered letter written and signed by Dave Styer and Art Wiseman, dated October 1984, that was issued by the two of them as a call to arms to save the Oxbow area. This is the earliest formal call we have found to organize to save the Oxbow area. If anyone would like a copy – send a self addressed, stamped envelop to Oxbow, Inc. P.O. Box 4172, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025.



David Styer speaks to several of the attendees of the 25th Anniversary Picnic on the early origins of the Save the Oxbow Society and of Oxbow, Inc. (photo by Jon Seymour)

## Oxbow Offers Grant Money for Education

.....by Velda Miller

For many years Oxbow, Inc. has been interested not only in procuring and preserving the wetlands we've come to know as the Oxbow, but have strived to inform and educate our members and the general public about the wetlands, its diverse plant and animal communities, and its cultural importance throughout history.

For almost as long as Oxbow, Inc. has existed, informative monthly meetings have helped increase attendees' knowledge and appreciation of the cultural and natural history topics covered.

Along with the meetings there have been monthly hikes into the Oxbow, open to all ages, that give everyone a chance to see the many systems that work together to make Oxbow what it is and help us to understand how the decisions we make can affect the Oxbow and other special areas.

Thanks to the generosity of Jinny (Witte) Wiseman, Oxbow is now going one step further and will be offering grants up to \$1000.00, twice a year, to local educators, K-12 and college level, to encourage nature study and help insure that future generations will continue to understand and appreciate the beauty and life sustaining services provided by places such as the Oxbow.

The first grant application deadline is Jan. 15, 2011 and those receiving grants will be notified on or by March 1. The deadline for the second grant period will be Aug. 15, 2011 with notification by Oct. 1. The Oxbow grant program supports projects that encourage the study, understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural history of the area in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. Special consideration will be given to numbers of children and adults impacted by the grant and to tangible impact of the grant beyond those immediately affected.

Grant applications will soon be available on our web site at [www.oxbowinc.info](http://www.oxbowinc.info).





## Birdathon 2010 Fund Raising Results

The grand total so far for the money raised in the 2010 Birdathon is \$4,962.65 with some donations still anticipated. This puts us very close to last year's total with a good chance of finishing the collection ahead of last year. As in the past many of the teams collected or contributed money and this year 71 individuals or groups made supporting contributions (a list of the contributors is on page 11). We cannot thank you enough for your support. With economic pressure as it has been throughout the area your generosity is truly wonderful. Money raised from the Birdathon is dedicated to habitat improvement and access improvement.

**Our Leading Team for raising money was the team of Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger and Joe Bens. They raised \$1511.00 for Oxbow, Inc.** The 18 fundraising teams are as follows:

Wharton, Bens and Stenger	\$1511.00
Charlie Saunders, Mike Busam & Steve Pelikan	\$1031.00
Dave Brinkman, Don Morse, Jr. & Jon Seymour	\$ 450.00
Sister Marty Dermody & Katherine Miller	\$ 324.00
Wayne Wauligman & Erich Baumgardner	\$ 300.00
Madeline & Jerry Lippert	\$ 268.00
Miami Valley Christian Academy (2 Teams)	\$ 150.00
Dave & Jane Styer	\$ 143.75
Gary Stegner & Jeff Rowe	\$ 130.00
Jerry Lippert	\$ 115.00
Bob Foppe and Mark Gilsdorf	\$ 111.90
George Farnsworth and Xavier Students	\$ 100.00
Bogosian Family	\$ 80.00
Kathy McDonald and the Young Ohio Birders	\$ 50.00
Jim Upson	\$ 25.00
Chris and Suzanne Clingman	\$ 20.00
Paul Krusling, Joe Kappa, & Robyn Lung	\$ 10.00

(Continued from page 4)

snagging, person-tripping, wild grapevine. The latter is a lot harder to work with. Brian leads the way and I am glad to let someone 30 years my junior break the trail. I warn Brian that the Great Miami River bank is a sheer 15-foot drop to the water and is only a few feet away. We can only see the ground a couple of feet away from us in any direction. I have just finished reading *Follow the River* by James Alexander Thom. It is the story of Mary Ingles, captured by the Shawnee in 1755 from a Kentucky settlement and taken to the Shawnee town in Ohio. She escapes with a fellow captive Dutch woman named Gretchen on a salt gathering trip to Big Bone Lick and walks ~1000 miles along the Ohio and Red Rivers and their tributaries back to her home. As we plow the 200 feet along this edge, I marvel at her accomplishment and fortitude. Brian is cautious and we soon reach the Great Miami bank without falling in.

The scenery is spectacular. The Great Miami is flowing out of Ohio and around a sweeping bend into Indiana. It is wide and with the recent rains is flowing fast. The near bank on which we stand is being cut away as the river forces its meander to the west while on the opposite shore there is a gentle slope to the water with a sand/rock beach populated as the vegetation moves away from the bank by at least 4 visible stages of succession: grasses, shrubs, willows, and other deciduous trees, each stage looking like the steps of a stairway climbing up to the top of the distant trees.

Brian is taking note of the erosion on the near bank and we look at the number and spacing of large trees on the west bank. It is not a good picture. There are too few trees in too few locations to slow the relentless pressure of the river to move west. We speculate on the ability to plant more trees in the area. We have had good luck working with Friends of the Great Miami planting trees along the river. However our efforts have often been stymied by the inaccessibility of the river bank and by the tremendous growth of the giant ragweed shading the newly planted trees and crowding them out.

From our current position, continuing to the mouth of Double Lick Creek is fairly easy. The mouth shows the tremendous effects of erosion as the north side of the creek mouth is nearly a peninsula held together by a few larger trees. It doesn't look long for this world. If it collapses we agree the south bank we are standing on will be exposed to the main force of the water and will be washed away very rapidly. Brian is considering what can be done to help restore the stream but Oxbow, Inc. only owns a few hundred feet of the creek. I am skeptical that anything we do will make a difference if the upstream bank (which we do not own) is not protected.

Brian has taken photos of Double Lick Creek from numerous vantage points. Retreating from the edge of Double Lick Creek we find the edge of the cornfield and follow it back to my car. We still have a mile and a half of dirt road to transverse to return to civilization. We can see trucks moving along I-275 in the distance but for the most part we cannot hear the sounds of civilization. We are 15 miles from downtown Cincinnati and I am thankful for the quiet. Someday we may be able to weave his knowledge into a plan to better protect our land and the mouth of the creek. Unlimited time, funds, and energy are not available but like all the issues that face the floodplain we gather our knowledge and try to determine what is the most important action step to take to live up to our mission – *To protect and improve the floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio Rivers.*



usings

by Dave Styer

### The Song Sparrow

The Song Sparrow lives in brushy areas, usually not far from water. Thus, this is one of the common birds of the Oxbow area. In fact, it is a common year-round resident of much of the northeastern U.S. and western U.S., north to the southern edge of Alaska. Its breeding range extends north through the southern half of Canada. If you live in Ohio or the greater Cincinnati area, the chances are you hardly have to leave home to see Song Sparrows. When the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas was done (1982-1987) the Song Sparrow came only second to the American Robin as the most widespread, confirmed breeding bird. Yes, it beat out the Starling!

It should not be a surprise that the Song Sparrow is one of the most studied birds in North America. All ornithologists know about Margaret Morse Nice's *Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow*. Her work revolutionized field studies by color-banding hundreds of the sparrows, so that each individual could be identified in the field. She wrote two book-length studies on all sorts of information gained about behavior, survivorship, migration, etc. (1937-1943). All the studies were done near her home in Columbus, Ohio. Do you think that if she had lived in Cincinnati, she would have studied Northern Cardinals instead of Song Sparrows?

Now we can answer Song Sparrow questions we have wanted to know as well as ones we never thought to ask. Do both sexes incubate the eggs? No, the female does this. When the chicks hatch do both sexes feed the young? Yes, it 's a 50-50 proposition while the young are on the nest. Do the parents still feed the young after they fledge, i.e., leave the nest? Yes, the young leave the nest when they are around 10 days old, even before they can fly, but they don't become independent until they are 28 to 30 days old. Why? Because Margaret Morse Nice says so!

Here is a more recent tidbit of information that I have gleaned out of Welty and Baptista, *The Life of Birds*. In several species of birds, including Song Sparrows, "The brood is divided, the father feeding part of the young, the mother the remainder." Also, "individual differences in the begging calls of fledgling Song Sparrows, *Melospiza melodia*, enable the parents to recognize the young divided between them." OK, Bill, Judy, I'm here with food. No, John, don't be greedy; mother will be here in a moment with your food.

Here's something else. For a *Wetland Matters* article I wrote four months ago, I tried, in vain, to find the

average weight of Killdeer eggs and Common Grackle eggs. I wanted information like the following, written by Nice in Arthur Cleveland Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*: "As to weight, 44 fresh eggs varied from 1.8 to 2.85 grams, the average being 2.28, the median 2.33." Nice found that most of the time a full set of eggs consisted of 3, 4, or 5 eggs, and that the average size was 4.1 eggs. Typical of many songbirds, the eggs are laid daily (1 per day) early in the morning. Nice found that "the weight of a set was approximately half the weight of the bird that laid it." That may be ordinary for sparrow-sized songbirds, but still it seems like a remarkable rate of egg production.

We know that sex hormones can affect behavior. Did you know that another Song Sparrow's behavior might affect hormone production? Again, from *The Life of Birds*:

*Free-living female Song Sparrows were treated with estradiol [an estrogen, a female sex hormone] in June and July. Males mated to these females maintained elevated levels of plasma testosterone and defended territories well into autumn, whereas males mated to untreated (control) females ceased breeding activities and underwent molting.*

During the breeding season in Ohio a mated pair of Song Sparrows generally stay together. The male usually maintains the territory, keeping out intruders. The female builds the nest, and incubates the eggs. After the breeding season the male is likely to stay on territory, although he may become social, and not chase away other Song Sparrows. The female is more likely to migrate. When she comes back the next year, the male she mates with for the new year seems fairly random. No hard feelings—a mate is a mate is a mate. Even though many birds are active by day, and perceive the world much as we do, mainly visually and vocally, it just doesn't work to insert some of our values into birds.

For pair formation, a male sets up his territory and chases away all Song Sparrow intruders. A female apparently chooses a male by refusing to be chased off. According to Nice the male flies at her and "pounces" upon her, "Sometimes colliding with her, sometimes only swooping over her, then flies away with a loud song; she stands still and either gives her copulation note or a threat note. Copulation, however, never occurs in connection with pouncing." I have thought that maybe we should try courting that way. Unfortunately, we are so inept at flying that any attempt would likely result in broken bones. I guess that it just won't work to impose Song Sparrow values upon humans.

### Birdathon Contributors 2010

Oxbow, Inc. wishes to extend their sincere appreciation to all the folks listed below that contributed to the 2010 Cincinnati Area Birdathon. Your support for habitat and access improvement is truly wonderful. We at Oxbow, Inc. and all the teams that worked so hard (read - had a marvelously fun time) on the Birdathon are thrilled that you chose to back our efforts.

- Harris Abramson
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- Dorinda & Jeffrey Whitsett
- Wesley Paul Wiemann
- Jim & Judy Wilgenbusch

### Art and the Science of Nature

Usually art is art and science is science and rarely the twain do meet. During our July program, Dr. Meg Reistenberg related to us an exception to this belief. Meg, a geologist and botanist and Dr. Loyola Walter, head of the Fine Arts Department at the college of Mt. St. Joseph co-teach two courses: Naturalist as Artist: Artist as Naturalist and Art of the Nature Journal. During these two courses students are taken to places such as the Oxbow, Fernbank Park, Whitewater Forest and The Edge of Appalachia to experience nature and to capture their observations whether visual, auditory or by smell and record them through annotated sketches. During one of the courses they actually make their journals themselves. They experience the dissection of plant materials to learn parts and their functions, observe behaviors of all sorts of animals including insects, and see organisms which they may never have seen before such as frolicking baby minks. Keen observation is common to both art and science and through these courses artists learn to observe beyond simple form and scientists learn the subtleties artists see in color and form.



### Oxbow is on Facebook!!!

Just go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) (or use Google to find Facebook) and search for "Friends of Oxbow" (we come up as the first in the list) and become a Friend to keep current with Oxbow current happenings



## 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		

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