



November—December 2010

No. 146

WETLAND *matters*

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

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Great Outdoor Weekend is Great!!!

.....by Jon Seymour

We had a good turnout on Saturday and not quite as good on Sunday but both the tours were very exciting. On Saturday the highlights were volunteer naturalist Steve Pelikan pulling shrimp and mosquito larvae out of Juno Pond with a strainer net for the kids to see. Also a congregation of Great Egrets, at the far south end of Oxbow Lake, with 48 egrets in about a 100 foot stretch of beach, a mass of white in the spotting scope for all to see. On Sunday for the smaller group it got even better with the sightings of 2 immature Bald Eagles circling close by over Oxbow Lake and the sighting of a relatively rare Avocet, a normally western species, feeding with its distinctive upward curved bill.

While Great Outdoor Weekend (GOW) was outstanding in the Oxbow, the entire weekend kicked off with a joint proclamation from the Governor of Ohio and the Mayors of Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, and Toledo introducing the Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This project, led by the Leave No Child Inside movement, was perfectly suited for the GOW to be the kickoff event in the Cincinnati area. Great Outdoor Weekend, an initiative of Green Umbrella, was represented at the Kickoff Event, held at James Berry International Park, by GOW coordinator Kimberly Whitton. The event led to the unveiling of the Bill of Rights which is reproduced below. Oxbow, Inc. is in full agreement with the Bill of Rights and of course feel that the word "Ohio" should be joined in the future by the names of other states as well. We hope that this initiative will help inspire more parents to help their children get outside and play in nature.

Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

As the future citizens and leaders of Ohio, a state uniquely rich in natural resources, our children are entitled to:

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What Goes Out Must Come In

.....by Jon Seymour

Driving down in the Hardintown entrance you quickly come to a "Y" in the road. The left fork leads across the causeway to the back side of Oxbow Lake, while the right leads toward the Oxbow Lake Overlook and finally to the Hollywood Casino exit. Whichever way you go you will soon encounter new construction designed to help stabilize the Oxbow road system. In both cases the roads were in jeopardy from the repeated in- and outflow of the floods in the bottoms. Both roads have washed out in recent years. The road across the causeway washed out because of the way the old culvert was constructed. The old culvert was a recycled railroad tanker with both ends cut off and cross bracing in the interior to add strength to bear the weight of farm equipment. This worked fine until the beaver showed up. They gave thanks for the cross bracing and immediately stuffed the culvert full of tree branches intricately laced into the braces. Our solution was to give up (they are better at constructing than volunteers are at deconstructing) and build another culvert with no cross bracing.

On that culvert we have placed a chain gate to limit traffic to the back side of Oxbow Lake. Without the cross braces, the beaver have not been able to block this new culvert. They seem to be a bit confused by the fact that the water flows both ways. However, the flow of water over the culvert was gradually eating away the soil on the edges. Those edges were stabilized this summer by the placement of concrete blocks and poured cement to protect the culvert ends.

On the road to Oxbow Lake the road passes between Oxbow Lake and Osprey Lake along a narrow causeway between the two. Osprey Lake is a new lake developed from a borrow pit. With the creation of the Osprey Lake in 2000 we realized that we needed to place a culvert under the road to prevent the road from washing away. We did this and it worked for a few years but the culvert ruptured in 2008 and really blew the road out. The repaired road did not fare any better in 2009 so this year a major new culvert was installed along with a new concrete spillway to allow water to flow over the road without destroying it.

We have this special problem where water flows in both directions, it can go up as well as down, and can stay on top of whatever is there for days. Not your usual water problems but we hope these new improvements will help us keep the roads passable for more days of each year and allow more days for people to enjoy the Oxbow.

2010 Land Trust Alliance Rally
James W. Poehlmann, EA
Treasurer

1. **Be physically active and play outside every day to grow up healthy.**
2. **Have access to safe, natural green spaces in their community.**
3. **Connect with nature, with free time to explore the outdoors.**
4. **Explore the diversity of Ohio's natural habitats.**
5. **Understand the patterns and cycles of nature.**
6. **Experience the joys of splashing, playing and swimming in safe, clean lakes and streams.**
7. **Be fully immersed in nature by camping overnight, FREE of the distraction of electronics.**
8. **Learn how to give back to nature.**

Now these are some goals worth pursuing. I hope all parents, teachers, caregivers, grandparents and other responsible adults will work to see that the children in their lives get to experience their Outdoor Rights.



This year it was my privilege to attend the Land Trust Alliance Rally held in Hartford, CT October 2 through 4. As Treasurer I was enrolled in two sessions pertaining to my duties with Oxbow, Inc., but as valuable as the education sessions were, the networking opportunities were just as valuable. I met people from land trusts of all shapes and sizes from all over the country. The land trusts represented by the people I met ranged from a fledgling organization in Nebraska that has yet to acquire any land to one that holds in excess of 20,000 acres of the Mojave Desert. In my three days at the conference I was able to talk to many people representing land trusts with missions that sounded drastically different than ours on the surface, but after talking to them for a short while you would realize that we all have the same purpose. Some land trusts seek to preserve standing timber, others desert and still others wetlands, but we are all playing on the same team. It was so good to meet others engaged in what we are striving to accomplish.

The first session I attended was an all-day session on tax issues concerning land trusts. The session was taught by Stephen J. Small of Newton, Massachusetts, an attorney specializing in representation of land trusts along the eastern seaboard. Mr. Small presented many cases where land trusts had run afoul of the Internal Revenue Service in accepting donations of land or conservation easements. While it may not seem that accepting a gift could put an organization at odds with the law, a land trust must exercise caution in accepting any gift as the gift yields a tax deduction for the donor. If the land trust accepts a gift at an inflated value, the land trust can be held liable. Mr. Small also pointed out that the IRS is winning cases based on administrative points, i.e. not handling the paperwork related to the donation correctly.

The second session I attended was a half-day session entitled Financial Management of Land Trusts. This session was taught by Eric Rowley, CPA, of Concord, New Hampshire, an accountant of over twenty-five years experience whose practice is primarily focused on auditing land trusts. His presentation dealt with budgeting and financial reporting for land trusts and the administration of endowments. Oxbow is currently in a situation where we are making the transition from a grassroots organization to an ongoing business concern, our business being to preserve the wetlands at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio Rivers. As such, we need to make changes in some of our methods of accounting to bring them more in line with accepted financial reporting standards for organizations like ours. To that end, I will be implementing some changes of my own and possibly seeking some professional expertise in the future. We need to adhere to accepted financial reporting standards if we are ever to seek grants from the government or other organizations or financing to make a large land purchase in the future.

My attendance at the Land Trust Alliance Rally proved extremely informative as in the past, I felt like I was operating "in a bubble," not having contact with others engaged in the same pursuit. It wasn't even that costly to our organization as I won a scholarship from the Land Trust Alliance which paid for half the cost of attendance. I would recommend the Rally to anyone engaged in a leadership role of a land trust, and I am most grateful for the opportunity to attend.

A Cincinnati kid Working at a Utah Bird Refuge in 1938

.....by Thomas J. Mara

There were no jobs for a seventeen year old in Depression-ravaged Cincinnati in the spring of 1938, so I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). I was initially sent to Ft. Knox, Kentucky along with another kid from Cincinnati's West End.

We left from the old Ohio National Guard Amory. The Armory was located on Freeman Avenue not far from Union Terminal where we boarded the train for Fort Knox. At Fort Knox we were quartered in tents, and were issued Army clothes, blankets, mess kits, etc.

Just before leaving Fort Knox a few days later, the youths in our group were assigned to various CCC camps. I don't recall any being assigned to camps east of or south of Ohio. My friend and I were assigned to Brigham City, Utah.

The group traveled by train across the country to Brigham City and arrived in Utah on April 23, 1938. The next day the War Department handed us over to the Bio Survey Department. Members of our company were assigned to work on the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, created by a special act of Congress in 1929. It was one of the first waterfowl refuges in the country to be established by a federal statute. It is located on the delta of the Bear River where it empties into the Great Salt Lake in northern Utah.

The refuge headquarters is located 15 miles west of Brigham City. The elevation is 4,200 feet; The Promontory Mountains on the west and the Wasatch Range on the east rise abruptly from the valley floor and extend upward to nearly 10,000 feet at the highest peaks. The camp for our company was located close to the center of Brigham City.

The refuge serves as a resting and feeding area for the hordes of waterfowl that nest in Alaska and Canada and pass through Utah in migration to and from their wintering grounds. According to official publications, among the most notable visitors and residents of the refuge are a half million ducks, more than 5000 breeding pairs of avocets, bald eagles, and 15,000 to 30,000 whistling swans. The Bear River Refuge was also widely known as an arena of research, especially on avian botulism.

When our group arrived at the Bear River Refuge, we were lined up in military formation, and the drill sergeant in charge said "everyone who knows how to drive step forward." As with any teenager eager to get behind the wheel, I and several others stepped forward. The drill sergeant then said "okay, all of you who know how to drive grab a wheelbarrow and follow me."

The refuge was a marshy place, frequented by ducks and other waterfowl. Before we arrived, other workers had dredged mud from the bottom of the marshy area to create a grid of roadways which were just a few feet above the water. My recollection was that the parallel roads were about one mile apart. The resulting squares of water were then drained, dead fish were removed, and ducks which did not fly away were gathered up. We applied a sulphur compound to the ducks' posteriors to kill the botulism which was causing the ducks to be sick, and chemicals were spread across the drained squares to kill the botulism.

We also spread gravel and planted vegetation along the road embankments to stabilize them. I returned to Cincinnati in September 1938. In 1978, my wife Rose and I, along with our son Tim, visited the Bear River Refuge. The visit brought back great memories. The place looked great. I'd like to think my work and that of other young men escaping the deprivations of the Depression way back in 1938 continues to provide habitat for migratory birds and waterfowl which live in or visit the refuge each year, and will continue to do so long after most of us are gone.

Thomas J. Mara is the father of Oxbow's attorney Tim Mara



Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

.....by Karl Maslowski

"... the foundation stone of optimum wildlife numbers is habitat."

Karl Maslowski, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 8, 1970

There is a new "must have/must read" book for all fans of nature in the greater Cincinnati area. The Cincinnati Museum Center has just published a book made up of selected columns written for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* by Karl Maslowski, one of the co-founders of Oxbow, Inc. The book is called "A Naturalist Afield, Reflections on Cincinnati Nature from 1937-1984", printed by McNaughton & Gunn, 2010.

For some or all of six decades Karl Maslowski faithfully wrote over 2000 of his "A Naturalist Afield" columns for publication in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* Sunday edition. As editor, Stan Hedeem, professor emeritus Xavier University, has painstakingly selected pivotal columns for publication that illustrate particularly interesting observations or reports on the happenings in nature around Cincinnati stretched across that nearly fifty year time span. The book sells for \$20 at the Museum Store and a few other outlets. It can be ordered by writing to Deb Quilligan, Cincinnati Museum Center, 1301 Western Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45203 Attn. A Naturalist Afield (if you need further information call Deb at 513-287-7093) for a cost of \$22 which includes return shipping to your door. All proceeds from the book go to benefit the Cincinnati Museum Center.

With permission of the Cincinnati Museum Center and the Maslowski Family, *Wetland Matters* is pleased to reproduce "A Naturalist Afield" column from September 3, 1939 (found on pages 63-65 of the book). We are fairly certain this is the original *Horseshoe Bottoms Diary*.

Birdland Fairyland (September 3, 1939)

by Karl Maslowski

Our last day afield on the Great Miami River was a most memorable one. We spent this day in the confines of one of our portable photographic blinds which we had erected on the shores of the backwater pond not far from the rivers mouth.

When we arrived at the pond in midmorning, it was well nigh deserted of bird life except for three killdeers and two spotted sandpipers. Soon after we became settled in our hiding place, however, birds of many kinds started to drop in at the pond and by sundown the whole area seemed to be populated with feathered creatures.

First to arrive at the pond was a mixed flock of about 25 shorebirds. These long-legged fowl were first somewhat shy of our blind, from the front of which protruded a big shiny camera lens. Gradually they lost their

fears and by noontime many of them were parading within 20 feet of our place of concealment. Included in this flock were pectoral, spotted, least, and solitary sandpipers, and semipalmated plovers. Shortly after noon, six larger birds dropped in with this flock. From their excited cries alone we judged the newcomers to be lesser yellowlegs.

Not long after their arrival, these six birds waded into a position which afforded us a good opportunity to photograph them. On bringing them into focus with an eleven-inch telephoto movie lens, we were happy to discover that two of these birds were stilt sandpipers – the first Miami Valley record for this species. Their smaller size and proportionately longer and heavier bills than the yellowlegs were most obvious, as were their greenish legs and the conspicuous white stripes over their eyes.

Three o'clock in the afternoon marked the beginning of the greatest influx of birds to the pond. First to arrive at this time were three little blue herons and one American egret. Both species were very bold and spent a good part of the afternoon within less than 40 feet of our blind. The pond seems fairly well populated with fish, but if these four birds continue their feeding for many days at this spot, we are afraid the supply will soon be exhausted. Time and again we watched these four herons strike out with the great rapier-like bills and snap up small fish from one to four inches in length. The feeding habits of the two species were markedly different. The American egret moved about slowly and frequently stood statue-still for long moments at a time. It seemed to play a waiting game. The little blue on the other hand, were extremely active. They moved about rapidly, evidently frightening the fish out from the muddy bottom. When a fish darted away the blue herons would stretch out their wings and race away after their prey. Many times we observed this latter species stirring the mud with its feet in order to dislodge fish that had taken refuge in the muddy bottom. When one of the birds was so engaged, it recalled to mind certain steps of the once popular Charleston dance.

The egret, when it captured a fish, usually held the squirming creature crosswise in its great yellow bill for a moment. Then dexterously twisting the finny morsel about, the egret would swallow it headfirst. As soon as the fish had vanished, the egret would plunge its beak into the water as though cleaning it of fish slime or taking a sip of water. The little blue herons showed a marked apathy to the egret's method of eating fish. They, instead, swallowed their prey as soon as it was captured – so fast indeed that we were unable to tell if it went down head or tail first.

The egret and the little blue herons were soon joined at their fishing by a single great blue heron and a green heron. These two, fishing not far from each other,

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Member Communications Committee:

Jennifer Borneman
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Velda Miller
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Barb Varland
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Oxbow is on Facebook!!!

Just go to 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. 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.

Moving your nest?

Make sure *WETLAND MATTERS* goes with you!

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Old Address:

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City/State/Zip _____

New Address:

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

MAIL TO:

Oxbow Inc.

P.O. Box 43391

Cincinnati, OH 45243

Please mail right away - *Wetland Matters* is third class mail and is not forwarded!



Tom Croce's photo of milkweed seeds about to venture out of the pods won 1st Place in the flower division of our 25th Anniversary photo contest.



Participants on the Sunday morning Great Outdoor Weekend walk were treated to the site of an American Avocet. This species normally found west of the Mississippi was lonely in the Oxbow and hung around for about a week giving a lot of folks a chance to see it, before it probably took off in a southerly (and maybe little west) direction. (photo by Allan Claybon)



Participants from Evergreen view Oxbow Lake on their bus tour. Evergreen had two indoor lectures this year. The first during the winter focused on the Oxbow, another in Spring focused on bird migration, with the two lectures leading up to the bus tour this fall. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Dr. Bob Genheimer, Cincinnati Museum Center, points to the next stop on the Heritage Tour that took these participants to the top of Shawnee Lookout for a view across the Oxbow's north end and a tie into the thousands of years of occupation of the land by the early Indians long before the Europeans showed up to claim it for themselves. Dr. Meg Reistenberger of the College of Mount St. Joseph, who also lectured the participants on the local geology of the area, is center foreground just to the right of Bob. (photo by Jon Seymour)



An Amberwing Dragonfly rests on a twig in the Oxbow. Most folks are looking at the birds and mammals, but keeping your eye open for the little things can be as rewarding. (photo by Caveman Etris)



Black-crowned Night Herons are common in the Oxbow in the late summer and fall. This majestic bird was captured in flight by Bruce Leonhardt.



Oxbow volunteer naturalist, John Berninger (in the straw hat), explains the plant ecology of the new prairie surrounding Osprey Lake to the participants in the Oxbow Area Cincinnati Museum Center Heritage Tour. The tour was just one of three bus group tours we conducted in August and September. The new gravel roads make these trips possible and increases the numbers of people exposed to the wonders of the Oxbow. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Participants in the Saturday Great Outdoor Weekend tour examine mosquito larvae and tiny transparent shrimp that volunteer naturalist Steve Pelikan has scooped out of Juno Pond. (photo by Jon Seymour)

Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

Being in a small often overlooked corner of Indiana I am often amazed at just how much we have to share with other organizations like ourselves. Last year I was asked to speak to the Indiana Land Protection Alliance about how we allow and manage multiple uses of the Oxbow property. It seems that most conservation land holders do not allow any use or at most limited use of the property by the public. These same organizations are beginning to realize that keeping the public away from natural areas may actually be detrimental to the long term protection of the property.

Certainly we do not want people to destroy the natural areas by overuse, but we also do not want them to lose interest and fail to protect these natural areas by not knowing of their existence and value. Oxbow Inc. has been focused since its beginnings in 1985 on controlled multiple public use of the land. This is not easy and has been a struggle for us as well, striving to find the right balance for hunting, fishing, bird watching, kayaking and hiking to name a few. But saying that, we have been doing it successfully for 25 years and now others are very interested in how we do it.

In this same vein of sharing knowledge about managing conservation properties I was recently asked to participate in a panel at the combined meeting of the OKI Regional Planning Meeting and the Indiana Land Use Consortium Communities at the Crossroads XIII. The conference was sponsored by the Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana Chapters of the American Planning Association (a group made up of city, county and regional planners). The panel topic was Funding Land Conservation in the Midwest. The other member of the panel was Andy Tuck, the state and regional fundraising specialist for The Nature Conservancy. While Andy spoke on the state referendums and county sales tax initiatives, I spoke from the Land Trust perspective of using a variety of resources to fund conservation. My topics included farmland conservation and lease income, Crop Reduction Program income, partnering with others (Hamilton County Park District) to achieve common goals, using conservation easements to protect land instead of outright purchase to stretch dollars, and reducing taxes by putting land in state conservation programs to name a few. Together we covered getting large grants down to the level of making the most out of the money that you have available to you.

The program was well received and I was greatly encouraged by the number of young planners in attendance hearing about subjects like ours.

Some of the other program titles were "Safe walking routes to school", "Water quality challenges and solutions", "New ideas for bicycle friendly communities", and "Partnerships and policies to achieve healthy communities". The luncheon speaker was Mark Fenton, host of PBS TV's "America's Walking" series. A dynamic and entertaining speaker who really drove home the need to make communities walkable in design and the wide range of benefits derived by the community from having a walkable design. One of the key reasons to walk is to take advantage of open space and environmentally designed spaces. This improves health, safety, and

sense of community to name a few of the benefits. And did I mention it actually costs less than urban sprawl and increases the values of property connected to these design areas. Wow! It actually makes sense but of course sometimes that is the hardest thing to see. Anytime we ask people to change their long held beliefs and perspective on development, we run into the "we have always done it this way" attitude. I guess the answer for most of these folks is to ask them to really look around themselves and really see the sprawl and lack of community feel. Then ask them if doing it the same way as we always have has really gotten us to where we want to be.

(Maslowski, Continued from page 4)

looked like the Mutt and Jeff of the heron tribe. The great blue heron seemed to tower at least a yard over his lesser cousin.

Our observations on the herons were cut short by the rush of wings and splashing of bird bodies on the pond's surface to our right. Peeking out of a slit from our blind, we saw a flock of some 17 ducks that had alighted on the lower end of the pond some 75 yards away. One bird, which had dropped in a little closer to our hiding place, was a blue-winged teal, and for some time we suppose the rest to be the same.

We gave the ducks little more thought for the next half hour – instead we turned our attention to an adult and an immature black-crowned night heron that had waded to a position nearby. This species, like the egret, was a "still" fisherman.

Turning our attention to the ducks again, we swung our eyes and camera to the right. We were startled to find that the whole flock of 17 birds had worked their way up to within 30 feet of the blind. Our surprise was even greater when we realized that only six were teal; the other eleven birds were wood ducks. True, none of them were in the bright colorful feathers with which one usually mentally cloaks a wood duck. They were, instead, dressed in either juvenile or eclipse plumage. As we watched this flock of ducks, two others waddled out of the weeds not five feet away. Both were wood ducks and both were without their primary feathers. Here before us then was fairly conclusive evidence that wood ducks had nested somewhere along the Great Miami River, for a duck usually goes through its molt on or near its breeding territory.

The scene before our blind was like a birdland fairyland, and it was not until dusk that we finally emerged from our blind to disturb the accumulated waterfowl and send them squawking and flying of in all directions.

[Due to the threat of an Ohio River barge port being built at the location, Maslowski joined with others in 1985 to found Oxbow Inc., a conservation organization that acquires and manages backwater pond and flood plain lands near the mouth of the Great Miami River – Ed.]

Commentary by Jon Seymour – 70 years later the scene has not changed. Karl could set up his blind again today and have the exact same experience and maybe even more exciting. I think we are doing something right.

Board of Directors Election at the January Meeting

Our January Members Meeting will be held Tuesday, January 11, 2011 at the office at 301 Walnut St. in Lawrenceburg. We will hold our annual elections at the meeting and we hope as many members as possible will attend to conduct this important part of the annual business of Oxbow, Inc. As always the program will be fascinating and stimulating so there is no reason to miss this meeting. See you there.

Standing for election to a three year term on the Board of Oxbow, Inc. ending in February 2014:

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

Standing for election to a three year term on the Board of Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. ending in February 2014:

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



Oxbow's Christmas Wish List 2011

It is the Christmas Season so like many others we have prepared our Wish List for Santa. In the past Santa has filled several of our wishes so we must have been on the good list. We hope that if members know about items and talents that we need, they might realize ways they might be able to help, and may want to play the part of Santa.

- We need a volunteer interested in interviewing other volunteers and writing up short stories, on the efforts of other volunteers, for publication in the Wetland Matters.
- We need a volunteer to write the specifications and applications to present to the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources to obtain permission to impound 14 acres of flood water during the winter. There is guidance on the internet for how to fill out the documents. Members of the Board would be available as resources to the volunteer.
- We need someone to donate a pickup truck in good working order so that we can have greater flexibility hauling trash out of the Oxbow.
- We need someone to donate the year round use of a dumpster in the Oxbow area so that we can take the trash we have on a daily basis there for dumping. (We will still ask Rumpke to donate a dumpster on site for large projects.)
- If you have a passion for destroying invasive plants we need someone to build an invasive plant control program for the Oxbow.

If you can help with any of these needs or think you know someone who can, please call Jon Seymour at **513-851-9835**.



Musings

by Dave Styer

In a Fog

Before the reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons following their DDT induced die-off, these birds were as scarce as hen's teeth in the Oxbow area. The first one I saw there was in the spring of 1983, and that was a "lifer" for me; that is, it was the first Peregrine Falcon I had ever seen. The next day, on an Audubon Society Field trip (presumably) the same falcon was seen flying over the Ohio River by the I-275 Bridge. We guessed that it might have been trying to catch one of the Rock Pigeons that roosted on the bridge.

About the same time period I had another exciting Peregrine Falcon sighting at the Oxbow, but I have lost track of the date. The bird was perched very much in the open in a big pile of dead trees or limbs heaped up by the Oxbow. There was just one catch. The fog was so thick you could almost slice it, and the falcon was at the limit of visibility. Slowly, carefully, I walked toward the bird, so as to see some of the details of its plumage, and a remarkable thing happened: the bird changed into the much smaller American Kestrel!

In all seriousness, the falcon that I at first thought was the size of a Peregrine actually was an American Kestrel. Like most birds of prey, the females are larger than the males. I would like to save face by claiming that this was a *really* large female, but that just wasn't the case. I wouldn't write about this, except that I believe it is a common illusion formed by being in a fog. Because of the fog the falcon I saw was at the limit of my vision. Besides that, there wasn't much I could see to for a good concept of size and distance. My brain registered the falcon on the brush pile as about twice as far away as it actually was. After all, it was at the limit of my vision. Because of perspective, our brain tells us the bird is approximately twice as long as it actually is. A bird twice as big in all three dimensions is $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ times as big in volume. Checking measurements given in *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, the American Kestrel is 9 inches long, and the Peregrine Falcon is 16 inches long. *The Sibley Guide* says that American Kestrels weigh 4.1 ounces. Expanded to the 16 to 9 proportion the bird would weigh 23 ounces. Sibley says Peregrine Falcons weigh 22 ounces. That is really close.

When I actually walked up on that brush pile with the falcon, disappointment set in fairly fast. The brush pile was closer than I had thought. Not only was the bird smaller, the brush pile was smaller. I didn't

really need to see the bird's pattern to know I had been fooled. Is that otherwise known as "being in a fog?"



The following example may be appropriate for the Guinness Book of World Records. One foggy morning, while leading a bird trip to Gilmore Ponds, I spotted through my scope some Black-crowned Night-Herons standing on the edge of the roof of a building. That was really strange behavior for Night-Herons. A couple of people looked appreciatively through the scope. Then, I believe it was Harry Connor who took a look and said "aren't they Starlings?" Yes, they were Starlings. Until that moment I never thought I would confuse Starlings with much of anything, much less Black-crowned Night-Herons. I then realized that there is a similarity in the profiles of perched Starlings and Night-Herons. Of course, the fog helped.

Now that I live near the Monterey Bay, we have fog several months of the year. Have I told you about the great birds we see here?

Correction: In Jon Seymour's Horseshoe Bottoms Diary he referred to Mary Ingles as having followed the Red River home. As John Getzendanner called to point out it was not the Red but the Kanawha and New Rivers that were followed from the Ohio to her home. Jon says that he blames midnight brain freeze for this error. Thanks to John for catching the error but he was the only one. That means that more people need to read *Follow the River* by James Alexander Thom.

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, November 9, 2010
301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg
The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

Bill Reichling has been tracking animals of all sorts since he was a boy. Deer (believe it or not), beaver, coyotes, badgers, bobcats and black bear are among the once rare animals that are making a comeback. More controversial are sightings of cougar, a species currently officially considered extirpated from this area. Bill has been tracking this elusive wildcat since 1988 and will bring us up to date on his opinion of its status in western Hamilton County.

**No December program due to the Holidays
Happy Holidays!**

**Tuesday, January 11, 2011, 7:30 p.m.
301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg
The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

Tom Strofeldt, former curator of the Ohio Historical Society, is a student of frontier history. He will speak about the legendary chief Tecumseh who rose to such power as a unifier and commander of the indigenous peoples that William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Northwest Territories insisted he come to Grouseland, his mansion house at Vincennes for a summit conference.

Our introduction to Tecumseh is the journal of Stephen Ruddell - captured in Kentucky at the age of eight, he was his boyhood friend and companion in battle. Harrison emerges as a Tidewater aristocrat, model officer, and primary instrument of young America in their occupation of Ohio and the Northwest Territory. The meeting of Harrison and Tecumseh at Grouseland is the summation of the ensuing conflict.

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 20, 2010, 8:30 a.m.

Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow

Darlana Graham, (859) 341-4893, darlena@fuse.net

Late autumn is a wonderful time to visit the Oxbow. Wildlife in general seems to be preparing for the coming winter. Many species of birds are migrating south at this time and use the Oxbow as a resting or "staging" area. Other birds are returning to spend the winter here.

Fall duck migration peaks this month and the Oxbow offers a great refuge for them. Our trip leader is skilled birder Darlana Graham. Darlana knows the Oxbow well and her enthusiasm for nature is catching. Besides waterfowl Darlana expects that we will see a diversity of birds and other wildlife. Migrant and winter songbirds should be abundant as well as several species of sparrows. Hawks will be seen and Bald Eagles are almost a given. There is even a good chance to see Sandhill Cranes on this date.

Join Darlana on this autumnal morning visit to the Oxbow. Remember, the Oxbow can be muddy this time of year and November weather can be cold & wet, so prepare accordingly. Feel free to contact Darlana if you have any questions.

2010 Ohio River Christmas Bird Count.

Sponsored By The National Audubon Society

Saturday, December 18, 2010, 7:45 am

Meet at the Shawnee Lookout Park upper boat ramp parking lot.

Paul Wharton, (513) 353-3403, pwharton@fuse.net

Join count compiler Paul Wharton on this annual holiday bird count (known locally as the Oxbow Christmas Bird Count) which censuses winter bird populations in a 15-mile diameter circle, which includes the Oxbow, Shawnee Lookout Park and most of Dearborn County, Indiana. Everyone is invited to participate regardless of skill level. There is a \$5.00 participation fee. You can participate all day, for a couple of hours or by staying home and counting the birds at your feeders (no charge for feeder watchers). If you're interested please contact Paul for more information.

You may also be interested in these other local National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts. If interested contact count compilers Jay and Ned for more information.

Western Hamilton County Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 19, 2010

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

Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 26, 2010

Jay Stenger— (513) 522-8147, jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

For more information on Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts visit the following website:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>

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.**
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PROTECTING WETLANDS
OXBOW, Inc.
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