

# WETLAND *matters*

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

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## What's Taking Flight

.....by Jon Seymour

Our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year has come to a close and it seems like it had two years worth of activities crowded into one.

We conducted 3 bus tours of the Oxbow, completed the graveling of the Oxbow Lake Road (Shell to Slot) with many more loads of gravel, added 3 new bird species to Oxbow's ever growing list, hosted thousands of visitors, conducted the Cincinnati Area Birdathon, held our anniversary celebration photography contest, conducted dozens of educational programs, and built two roadway stabilization projects to name a few of the accomplishments of our all volunteer organization. Each year when I write this column my mouth drops with amazement at all that the volunteers who love the Oxbow accomplish.

On July 18, 2010 we had our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Members Picnic (we had only one other previous members picnic for our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) which was well attended. Displays of Oxbow activities were set up around the air conditioned Agner Hall. A table was set aside for entertainment activities for children. Tours of the Oxbow were provided by Steve Pelikan and John Getzendanner. Our featured speaker was Board Member and Founding Director, David Styer, all the way from his home in California to tell us about the behind the scenes story of the formation of the Save the Oxbow Society and Oxbow, Inc. A summer picnic buffet of brats, metts, and burgers with sides and trimmings completed the occasion. In our 25 years of existence we have acquired title to about 940 acres of land and purchased conservation easements on an additional 230 acres. All the members and supporters of Oxbow, Inc. can be extremely proud of this accomplishment.

As part of the anniversary celebration we sponsored a photo contest open to all local photographers in a variety of nature categories. Cash prizes were provided by Seapine Software, a business software company, and by Kelly Riccitti, cofounder of Seapine Software.

Contest winners were selected by a panel of professional nature photographers, Steve Maslowski, Ron Austing, and Ed Hatch. A great time was had by all the participants in the contest and Oxbow, Inc. greatly appreciated being the recipient of all the excellent submissions. Winning photos in the various categories are being published in Wetland Matters in the last half of 2010 and into 2011.

A highlight of 2010 was the acquisition of another 30 acres for Oxbow, Inc. Well, we did and did not actually gain property. The acquisition was a gift of the 30 acre Corning Property by long term supporter, Barbara Corning, to Oxbow, Inc. Oxbow, Inc. already held the conservation easement on this property so it was already protected, but ownership gives us additional control over the future use of the land. As many of you know, the Corning Property was taken out of agricultural production nearly 20 years ago and planted in White Oak, Ash, and Bald Cypress. Many of the Bald Cypress on the property now stand 20 feet high with 6" diameter trunks. The property came with an extra benefit. It was in the USDA Crop Reduction Program (CRP) and a yearly payment is made to Oxbow, Inc. to keep the land out of production. The Board voted to put this payment into the education fund established to provide grant money to local educators to conduct nature related education programs.

Roads and access have been an issue in the Oxbow probably since before the arrival of the Europeans to the area. This year we spread more gravel on the Oxbow Lake Rd. (the Shell to Slot road) making it passable even after a hard rain. Oops, we did not get any of those after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July! But it was passable, as demonstrated this fall when the rains finally returned. In the past two winters there have been washouts on the Oxbow Lake Road that in spite of our best efforts, actually caused accidents when the road was driven too fast to see the approaching washout. The washouts were caused by high floods flowing over the road between Oxbow Lake and the recently created Osprey Lake. A new culvert and a new spillway to take pressure off the soft areas of the road

*(continued on page 2)*

(What's Taking Flight—Continued from page 1)

have been created and hopefully will eliminate this concern and again keep the road open more days out of the year. Remember if you are driving in the Oxbow that no matter how good the road is you should not try to drive it if it is UNDER water.

Bus tours have returned to the Oxbow, made possible by the improved roads. Buses from Evergreen, Maple Knoll, and the Cincinnati Museum Center all made successful visits to the Oxbow. Buses are a wonderful way for persons with limited mobility to get around the Oxbow and see some of the wildlife and plants. The Museum Center Tour was actually part of the 2010 Heritage Tour Program. This was an all day emersion into all things Oxbow, from the geology, to the archaeology, to the natural history and wildlife. Lectures were given by a college professor, a Museum Center staff researcher, and by Oxbow volunteer naturalists. Throw in lunch at the River Watch on the Ohio River and a perfect day was had by all.

Oxbow, Inc. commissioned Dr. Denis Conover, an Oxbow Board Member, to do a plant survey as a follow-up to the one he did in 2000. In 2000 he found 422 species of vascular plants growing in the Oxbow area. The new survey found 472 species of plants, four of them considered rare in Ohio or Indiana. The four plants are Deam's Mercury (*Acalypha deamii*), Erect Primrose-willow (*Ludwigia decurrens*), Virginia Buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*), and Smooth Buttonweed (*Spermacoce glabra*). Denis predicts that River Broomrape (*Orobanche riparia*) will be the next rare plant. Specimens were found just up river in 2010. River Broomrape is parasite on giant ragweed and the lower Oxbow area has tons of Giant Ragweed to serve as host. In a paper co-authored with Dr. Steve Pelikan, Oxbow, Inc. Board member, Dr. Conover reported that his survey findings for Miami Whitewater (2005-2008) and the Oxbow (2010) showed that many plants were blooming earlier than they were in a similar surveys conducted 10 years earlier. This important paper is being widely quoted as it is one of the first to demonstrate early blooming correlating to increased average temperatures during the surveys in native plants in a native (non garden/cultivated) habitat. We are very proud of Denis and Steve for producing this important scientific work and even more proud of the role that the Oxbow played in producing the data.

In 2010 alone we presented a wide variety of programs and tours over the course of the year. Besides the speakers at the 11 members meetings and the 11 guided nature walks we advertise in the Wetland Matters we made presentations for the following:

- Western Wildlife Corridor Wildflower Festival
- The Environmental Class at Seven Hills High School
- Mt. Sinai United Methodist Church
- The Queen City Bird Festival
- Hollywood Casino Green Team
- Cheviot-Westwood Kiwanis
- Bright Library
- Lawrenceburg Library
- Evergreen (2)
- Paddlefest Kid's Outdoor Adventure Expo
- Paddlefest
- Captured Light Photography
- Miami University Environmental Science Institute
- Monfort Heights – White Oak Community Assn.
- Great Outdoor Weekend (2)
- Twin Towers
- Cincinnati Recreation Commission
- University of Cincinnati
- College of Mt. St. Joseph
- Westside Cub Scout Pack and families
- Numerous small group tours

Our sponsorship of the Cincinnati Area Birdathon once again raised nearly \$6000 to improve access and habitat in the Oxbow. More birders participated this year than we have seen for several years past. Even more importantly 13 of the 55 participants were under the age of 19. Not only is the Birdathon bringing area birders together for a great time and an opportunity to raise some money for a good cause, but it is bringing young birders out for an introduction to the fun of being out in nature and learning a few of the never ending stories that nature can teach us.

I keep thinking of more things like the prairie we tried to burn but it would not ignite, the trash pick-ups, the invasive plant control, the Miami University study of point pollution sources (still underway) that would take up even more space in this essay. Did I mention at the start of this that we are an all volunteer organization? I am in awe of our volunteers. Thank you all, nearly 100 individuals, who played some role in these accomplishments.

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### **January Annual Members Meeting A Special Kick-off to the Year 2011**

Again we are delighted to have Tom Strohfeldt, former curator of the Ohio Historical Society, as our speaker for our Tuesday, January 11, 2011 Annual Members Meeting. We have the business of electing directors and officers and the treat of hearing Tom tell us the story of the historical and the personal relationship between two great commanders of the Indiana frontier, Tecumseh and William Henry Harrison. Come, participate in the election, and enjoy hearing how our local history became the national history.

## Butterfly Transect Through the Oxbow

Kathy McDonald, Steve Pelikan and Wayne Wauligman are in the process of setting up a butterfly transect of the Oxbow for the purpose of enumerating the butterfly population during the summer months. With the recent addition of the prairie area we are seeing more and more butterflies. Kathy thought it would be a good idea, fun and scientifically rewarding to do a survey. Wayne and Steve volunteered to help map out the transect and help with the survey. Kathy is looking for any other volunteers that would be interested in helping. Please contact Kathy at [whocooksforyou@gmail.com](mailto:whocooksforyou@gmail.com) to let her know you would like to help out.



## Wild Bird Center Fundraiser

Mary and Patrick Huttlinger of the Wild Bird Center of Mason called Oxbow, Inc. and asked if we would be the recipient of their 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary fundraiser. Their fundraiser included many raffle prizes and door prizes for the customers. Originally scheduled for "Black Friday", Mary decided to extend it over the weekend. Oxbow supplied literature and several door prizes consisting of hats and Dave Styer's book. They raised \$900 in donations for the raffle. The Wild Bird Center matched that amount with another \$900 and Seapine Software matched the total again for a grand total of \$2700. Oxbow is greatly appreciative of Mary and Patrick Huttlinger, and of Kelly Riccetti, Seapine Software for their hard work and generous donation.



## Correction:

In our Nov-Dec issue of Wetland Matters we printed a list of the Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. In the process of transposing we dropped one of the rights out. Here is the complete Bill of Rights:

### *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:**

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. Discover the wonders of plants and animals, large and small, using all five senses.
5. Explore the diversity of Ohio's natural habitats.
6. Understand the patterns and cycles of nature.
7. Experience the joys of splashing, playing and swimming in safe, clean lakes and streams.
8. Be fully immersed in nature by camping overnight, FREE of the distraction of electronics.
9. Learn how to give back to nature.

## 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



# Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

December 9, 2010

Ice Everywhere

by Jon Seymour

I am supposed to meet Kelly Riccetti of Seapine Software and Mary Huttlinger of the Wild Bird Center of Mason for a tour but Kelly is ill and is definitely not feeling up to a day in the Oxbow. It is probably a good thing since the early winter freeze has solidified 99% of the Oxbow area water except for the rivers. I have come to the Oxbow anyway with the idea for a quick drive through and then to spend time in the office going through the old paper records that we have been left from the early days of the Oxbow. Kathy McDonald has volunteered to put together a history of the formation of the Oxbow that we can publish in the Wetland Matters. But first I have to sort through the loose collection of notes, cards, folded papers, letters, and scraps of paper with names and phone numbers written at odd angles to each other. At least I hope to give her folders that make some sense.

My first question of the morning is answered immediately. Will the recent 3 inch snow fall have covered the main road? Answer: NO! The main gravel road is completely clear even though the fields and woods to either side have snow on the ground. I drive down to the causeway gate to look the length of Oxbow Lake. Solid ice! The only water is right under the culvert at the gate where the water moving through the culvert as the water level has risen and lowered has kept ice from forming. I notice the yellow tape on the north side of the causeway road is blowing in the wind. One of our helpful security guards put up a lot of "crime scene" tape in a futile effort to prevent a few ATV users from further damaging the wetlands in the area. The drought had made for easy pathways for ATVs to get around the road blocks we have set up to try to prevent them from abusing the area. Now that the water was up there was no further need for the tape and it had already been cut to allow passage of either people or vehicles. It was now in danger of becoming trash blowing around the Oxbow. I pull out my trusty Swiss army knife and I soon have a large bag of scrap tape to take home and dispose of properly.

I do not hear any birds, but with the lakes frozen and me wearing a hood, I do not expect to hear or see much. I do hear a crash immediately behind me and turn to see another phenomenon of the Oxbow in action. The water had been higher yesterday and there is a sheet of ice suspended in the grasses and shrubs in the shallows of the cement plant pond. It sits two feet above the level of the current ice shelf. A large section has just crashed down onto the lower ice shelf. I watch this area for a while and I am rewarded with another section crashing down to the lower shelf. Timing is everything in the Oxbow but keeping your mind open to new experiences does not hurt in any way. Now I hear a crow call in the distance. (Bird 1) I pack the bag of tape into the trunk of my little Saturn and head for

Oxbow Lake Road. Two birds fly across the road from the shore of Juno Pond toward the standing corn. They are only recognizable as LBJs (little brown jobs) from the moving car. My best guess is Song or Field Sparrow. (Bird species 2, undetermined)

As I approach Osprey Lake a Red-tailed Hawk takes off from the Osprey nesting platform and heads for a safer perch on the electric tower across Osprey Lake. (Bird 3) The lake is frozen solid. I stop to take some pictures of the new spillway with the recently added rip-rap (large rocks) at its edges to reduce erosion around the spillway. I am hoping that this will finally do the trick and along with the new culvert finally solve the washout problem. Time and nature will give us the verdict.

I get back in the car and head for Oxbow Lake Overlook. I decide that there is no real point in stopping since the lake is frozen solid. However I look up and see in the tree line just beyond the overlook a large up-right bird sitting at the top of a tree 70 feet off the edge of the road. It is twice the size of the Red-tailed I just saw. I know right away I am looking at an immature Bald Eagle. I was planning on working in the office today so the only binoculars I have are my "less than great", "I don't care if they freeze or bake" pair that I always leave in my car. I grab those to be certain since a quick look will eliminate the very unlikely Golden Eagle. I focus in and staring back at me is a first year Bald Eagle. I am in my car 70 feet from the base of the tree and it is in the top of the tree. It could care less if I were a corn husk. It showed no signs of nervousness and stayed put until long after I left. (Bird 4) I can see it in my rearview mirror still sitting there as I drive away.

As I crest the edge of the hill and drop toward the low spot in the road a single Great Blue Heron jumps from the corn stubble and flies low and slow to the unplanted area in the old river bed near the Conservancy District. (Bird 5). Blue Herons are not supposed to survive on ice but the proximity of the rivers allows them to move to the Great Miami or to the Ohio in times like this. Typically we have 10-12 Great Blues winter over and the ability to move between the water bodies is what allows them to accomplish this trick even in hard winters.

Bird 6 is a lonely Mourning Dove perched on a wire along the railroad track. As I leave the Oxbow behind Hollywood Casino's parking area, another wire bird comes to my attention. A small American Kestrel is intently watching the grass on the levee for a potential lunch. (Bird 7).

There is the drive through diary! One half hour later, 7 birds (total) and cold extremities are all I have to show for the drive. I have seen the largest and smallest avian predators, both fairly uncommon. Also, the most common avian predator, the Red-tailed Hawk and a bird that should be in the south but finds it convenient to tough it out in the Oxbow. Only 7 birds but what a great drive! Come to think of it, with Hollywood Casino right there maybe 7 is my lucky number!



**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. Honorariums**

<b>Donor</b>	<b>In Honor of</b>
Jayne Trapnell	Kelly Riccetti

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

- Joanne Jeffery
- Walter and Susan McBeath
- George and Jean Perbix
- Kelly Riccetti

*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!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**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!**



Taking first place in the Insects, Fish and Aquatic Life category of our 25th Anniversary Photo Contest is this photo entitled "Web of Dew" by Bob Schlake. The spider carefully tends the web encumbered with multiple beads of early morning dew. Its first guest will shatter the quite sublime of the miniature crystals suspended precariously from the fine threads.



Board member Dr. Denis Conover conducted an extended plant survey of Oxbow property in 2010 and found 472 species of vascular plants in our small area. But unusual plants also bring some unusual occupants. This Clearwing Hummingbird Moth caterpillar was found on the rare Virginia Buttonweed. An unusual but thrilling combination. (Photo by Denis Conover)





The signature flower of the Oxbow floodplain could arguably be Miami Mist. This fine clump was found by Dr. Denis Conover on Flannery Island. The isolated nature, the lack of recent agriculture and the periodic submersion of the island make it a tough but unique habitat for a wide variety of unusual plants. (Photo by Denis Conover)



Kelly Riccetti of Seapine Software and Mary Huttlinger of the Wild Bird Center of Mason stand in front of a display of many of the raffle prizes that we awarded on the Thanksgiving Day weekend fundraiser for Oxbow, Inc. Oxbow supplied some hats and books to add to the door prizes that Mary was giving away. Money raised by the Raffle all went to Oxbow, Inc. and was matched by the Wild Bird Center and again matched by Seapine Software. What a wonderful Thanksgiving for Oxbow, Inc. It also was a great weekend for all the raffle and doorprize winners.



This beautiful Red Admiral butterfly is an example of one of the many butterflies found in the Oxbow every year. With the maturation of the prairie areas and more land being returned to native vegetation the number and variety of butterflies seems to be increasing. Kathy McDonald is establishing a butterfly transect with the help of several board members and is looking for people to volunteer to count butterflies. There is no finer way to spend a summer day so if you have the inclination and just a little bit of time give Kathy a call (see article Page 3) and see if you can help out. (Photo by Caveman Etris)



This young Green Frog is one of the many frogs found in the Oxbow and recently we have noticed several frogs inhabiting the old deep truck ruts found in some of the more isolated roads of the oxbow. (Photo by Caveman Etris)

The spillway between Osprey Lake and Oxbow Lake was completed and rimmed with large rocks (rip-rap) to prevent the road being washed out. With the addition of a new culvert to help handle the water we hope the road will no longer wash away as it has done the past two Springs. (photo by Jon Seymour)



# Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

## Founding Member Receives State Teaching Award

Founding member and active supporter, Bonnie Fancher, receive the Outstanding Indiana Small and Rural School Teacher State Award for 2010 at a presentation in Indianapolis on September 27. She then attended the NREA, National Rural Education Association, 102nd annual conference in Branson, Missouri, October 14-17th. Bonnie has been teaching AP Environmental Science, chemistry and physics at Switzerland County High School for 31 years. *(Below is the description of Bonnie and her students' activities, in her own words, that led, in part, to the award. It is an amazing story of dedication to education through years of teaching. Congratulations Bonnie, we wish we could clone you for all the kids in the State.)*

"Dear Oxbow,

I would like to share the information that the Indian Creek Watershed Project (ICWP), of Switzerland County, Indiana, received the Indiana Governor's Award, on October 19, for Excellence in Environmental Leadership in the Outreach and Education Division. The Indian Creek Watershed encompasses 44,000 acres of Switzerland County, including Indian Creek and a number of major tributaries such as Long Run, Pendleton Run, Hall's Branch, Abe's Branch and Tumblebug Creek. In 2001, my AP Environmental Science students investigated E.coli bacteria in the watershed. High levels of E.coli caused the concern needed to begin a community watershed task force involving community resource persons, citizens, and students. A 319 Nonpoint Source grant was submitted to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, IDEM/USEPA, and resulted in the receipt of a 319 Watershed Management Plan Grant that began in 2004. The Project is sponsored by Historic Hoosier Hills RC & D, with Mr. Terry Stephenson, Coordinator. I currently serve as the ICWP Steering Committee Chair. We are now involved in a second grant, a 319 Implementation Grant for Best Management Conservation Practices (BMP's), in the watershed, to positively impact water quality. Our ICWP Coordinator, Mr. Cary Louderback, works with a 60%-40% Project-Stakeholder Cost-Share Program with farmers and landowners to implement BMP's such as reseeding pastures, fencing cattle out of creeks, providing alternate water supplies for livestock, and riparian plantings.

My Advanced Placement Environmental Science students are the volunteer watershed monitors, working quarterly on twelve sites in the Indian Creek Watershed and monthly on the Ohio River to monitor chemical, physical, and biological parameters, to analyze and assess data, and to report the data to IDEM/USEPA and ORSANCO. The students and I volunteered over 600 hours of time in 2009-2010, with an estimated In-kind value of over \$50,000.

Our work is guided by an IDEM approved Quality Assurance Project Plan.

We recently submitted a 319 Grant Application to IDEM/USEPA for an additional three years of BMP implementation. The other 88,000 acres of Switzerland County including eleven additional small watershed's have recently been the subject of an additional 319 Grant Application to IDEM/USEPA for a first phase Watershed Management Plan study consideration. It is very satisfying to work with students in the field, at watershed workshops, at project steering committee meetings, and at watershed cleanups. We have been supported by many generous partners such as ORSANCO, Dow Corning of Carrollton, Kentucky, our NRCS, SWCD, Purdue Extension Office, Health Department, and, of course, IDEM/USEPA.

Additionally, there are a number of other excellent watershed projects in Southeastern Indiana: the Tanner's Creek Watershed Project, the South Laughery Watershed Project, the Central Muscatatuck Watershed Project, and two newly forming projects, the Southeastern Indiana Watershed Project and the Indian-Kentuck Project. These are all projects sponsored by Historic Hoosier Hills RC&D of Southeastern Indiana. With concern over eutrophication and hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, USEPA wisely has distributed funding to states for watershed projects. If we wish to positively impact the health of the Gulf of Mexico, we must correct conditions in the Mississippi River, and therefore the Ohio River, beginning in our own watersheds.

I have also served the last six years as a volunteer coordinator in the Indiana Breeding Bird Atlas Project. I call myself the "lone birder" of Ohio and Switzerland Counties in Indiana for the project. Next year is the seventh and last year of the project. I would greatly welcome additional help for the final year. There is wonderful birding habitat, and there are scenic roads to drive. I was part of the founding membership of Oxbow, Inc., in 1986. I had the wonderful opportunity to know the Oxbow legendary founders and birders, as a younger and humble member. I have been hard at work on environmental projects in Southeastern Indiana, since my son was born in 1991. I know that the Oxbow is in excellent hands. I find myself enormously busy with environmental projects in my "own backyard," but regret that I seldom see the wonderful folks of the Oxbow.

**If there are interested birders for next April-July for Ohio and Switzerland Counties in Indiana, I can be contacted at:**

**[bfancher@switzerland.k12.in.us](mailto:bfancher@switzerland.k12.in.us)  
[bfancher@comcast.net](mailto:bfancher@comcast.net)**

Best regards,  
Bonnie Fancher

*(If you would have some time available to help Bonnie with her breeding bird survey please contact her directly to discuss how you can help.)*



## Western Wildlife Corridor Spring Events

Spring is coming (yes, really) and Western Wildlife Corridor is already planning its big spring events. Here are the details.

**Friday, April 1, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Fifth Annual Wildflower Festival  
Delhi Senior Center**

This family event will feature nature games and activities, a wildflower plant and seed sale, a painting class, wildflower educational material, food, presentations by local environmental organizations and educational games for children. Contact Rebecca at 859.512.1983 or [rsisson654@insightbb.com](mailto:rsisson654@insightbb.com) to learn more about this enjoyable event or to inquire about participating.



**Saturday, April 30, all day  
Seventh Annual Flower-a-thon Fundraiser**

In this exciting event, participants compete to identify the wildflowers of the region and learn more about them. Each participant solicits pledges from friends, relatives, neighbors, businesses or corporations for each species found during that day.

The day begins at 8 a.m. with a breakfast around the fire at Embshoff Woods Park. Teams will then set off to explore the Ohio River valley, to search for and identify wildflowers. Flower-a-thon participants will also receive a gift and an awards dinner with a prize raffle to cap off the day. The team identifying the most wildflowers will receive the event's coveted Golden Trillium Award. To register, (fee of \$10 per person required), contact Tim at 513.922.2104 or [tsisson@fuse.net](mailto:tsisson@fuse.net).

## 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 on how to fill out the documents. Board Members would be available as resources to the volunteer.
- We need a volunteer coordinator to make phone calls and send email messages to the many volunteers who participate in our activities through the course of the year.
- 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**.



## usings

by Dave Styer

### Ross's Goose

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January last year (2010) Joe Kappa saw 2 Ross's Geese and a Snow Goose near Lost Bridge. This southwestern Ohio record is a first for the Oxbow area. If recent trends continue it will not long be the last.

The Ross's Goose looks much like a white Snow Goose. Both have white feathers, except for black wing tips. The Ross's Goose is smaller than almost all Snow Geese, and its bill is much stubbier. My first sighting of a Ross's Goose was somehow disappointing. My first wife and I were in the Phoenix area in the 1983-84 winter, and we were told about a Ross's Goose that was hanging around. We essentially drove right up to it, and watched it to our hearts content. There was no doubt that it was a Ross's Goose. To me the stubby bill gives the Ross's Goose a "cuter" look than the Snow Goose. The disappointment came from the bird's behavior. Even though it was a wild bird, it was almost too easy to watch; it was almost like a domestic goose, or one of the now semi-domestic Canada Geese.

The addition of Ross's Goose to the Oxbow area list could be viewed as part of a much larger success story. To fully appreciate this let's go back in time and look at a much broader area. Ross's Goose was known in the 1800s, but little was known about it. I grew up with the National Geographic Society's *The book of Birds*, published in the late 1930s. Here is the text of their account:

The breeding grounds of this tiny goose still remain a mystery. The "warty-nosed wavey," as it is known in the fur countries, arrives at Lake Athabaska from the north in the first week in September, the earliest of the geese. From this general region the flocks all pass through the mountains west of Great Falls, Montana, and fly southward to the west of the Rocky Mountains. They winter entirely in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys of California, where they are known to gunners by the name of "China geese" and now enjoy absolute protection under the game laws.

It is no wonder that the second edition of Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* (1947) doesn't mention Ross's Goose. Similarly, Mengel's classic *The Birds of*

*Kentucky* (1965) doesn't include Ross's Goose. The breeding grounds of Ross' Geese were found in a small area of central Canadian Arctic. In the early 1900s, during fall migration and on their California wintering grounds, these geese were hunted, along with much more common geese. By the early 1950s the world population of Ross's Geese was thought to be no more than 3,000 individuals, and there was concern that they might be going extinct. Even though it had become illegal to hunt Ross's Geese, it is difficult to separate them from the Snow Geese. Ross's Geese continued to be shot accidentally. According to the article by John P. Ryder and Ray T. Alisauskas, in *The Birds of North America* (1995) in the 1960s and 1970s the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan took advantage of the fact, mentioned above, that Ross's Geese are early migrants. They passed laws delaying **all** white goose hunting until after most of the Ross's Geese have left. Since that time there has been a truly impressive increase in the world population of Ross's Geese.

By 1988, there were more than 188,000 recorded nesting in the Queen Maud Gulf Migratory Bird Sanctuary," the original nesting area (Ryder & Alisauskas). By 1995, when the Ryder and Alisauskas article was published, Ross's Geese were also nesting along Hudson Bay and on Baffin Island. A count of Ross's Geese at the McConnell River Migratory Bird Sanctuary, on the western edge of Hudson Bay found 81,408 of these geese in 2007

With such a population explosion it is no wonder that Ross's Geese have dramatically spread their winter range, and thus there are several migration routes rather than just the one historic route to California. When Bruce Peterjohn first wrote *The Birds of Ohio* (1985) there was only 1 acceptable record of Ross's Goose, one seen at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in 1982. Now several are seen in Ohio each year. Ross's Geese started showing up in Kentucky in 1986. I personally saw my first Ross's Goose in the Greater Cincinnati area at the Ben-D Farm in Kenton County, Kentucky on November 15, 1998. The eBird map on the Internet appears to show records in all states (except Hawaii).

If you are out at the Oxbow, or near a farm pond, be on the outlook for white geese. There may be a Ross's Goose, a relatively rare bird. Even at the rate its population is increasing, it will still be some years before the Ross's Goose becomes a golf course nuisance.



## 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, 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.*

**Tuesday, February 9, 2011**  
**301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg**  
**The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

**Dr. Meg Reistenberg**, professor of chemistry at Mt. St. Joseph, actually received her doctorate in geology. She will describe to us the nature of the geology of the Oxbow that makes it essential to the well being of the wildlife of the TriState area. Oxbow lies in the floodplain of the Great Miami River. This plain, with its underlying river deposits, are part of the great aquifer that delivers groundwater into SW Ohio and SE Indiana thus making it an important resource to us all.

## 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.

**Friday, January 21, 2011, 7:00 pm.**

**A Moonlit Evening Winter Walk**

**Meet at the Shawnee Lookout Golf Course Clubhouse**  
**Leader: John Klein, (513) 941-4877**

Oxbow's beloved Morris Mercer loved the night winter woods, especially if there was snow on the ground. He and John Klein started doing this trip together many years ago and it has become an Oxbow Inc. annual January tradition. Morris is no longer with us, but his good friend John loves the tradition and has kept it alive. John has his own tradition on this walk and will pass out M & M's in remembrance of Morris, a tradition of which Morris would have approved.

There will be a near full moon on this date and John will take us on a walk through the Park and see what nature has to offer. There is a good chance that owls and deer will be seen or heard and John will talk about the history of the area and have a scope available for stargazing. John, who recently retired as Land Manager for the Hamilton County Park District, will meet us in the Parking Lot of the Shawnee Lookout Golf Course Clubhouse at 7:00 pm. The walk should only take about an hour and a half. John is like Morris in that he would like a little snow on the ground. However, severe weather will cancel this trip. If you have any doubts as to whether the trip is cancelled or not, call John at (513) 941-4877. Join John for this unique experience, it's highly recommended. Dress warmly.

**Saturday, February 26, 2011, 8:00 am.**

**Early Spring Waterfowl Migration**

**Meet: Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance just beyond the cement plant**

**Leader: Paul Wharton, (513) 353-3403,**  
**[pwharton@fuse.net](mailto:pwharton@fuse.net)**

If you like waterfowl, consider joining Paul for this morning trip into the Oxbow. Early spring waterfowl migration should be in full swing and they will be the primary focus of this trip. Bald Eagle numbers are increasing and this is also a great time of year to find Bald Eagles in the Oxbow. A diverse number of other seasonal and migrant birds and wildlife will also be seen.

Paul is an expert birder and has great bird finding abilities so expectations are high. Paul will move around to several spots in the Oxbow area depending on accessibility and water conditions. Aside from seeing waterfowl and other birds, mud is also guaranteed, so dress appropriately. Feel free to contact Paul if you have any questions regarding the trip.



## 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 4172  
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025  
513-851-9835

## Corporation Officers

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Vice President, John Getzendanner	(812) 537-5728
Recording Secretary, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Corresponding Secretary, Dennis Mason	(513) 385-3607
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