

# wetland matters



## OXBOW, INC. NEWSLETTER

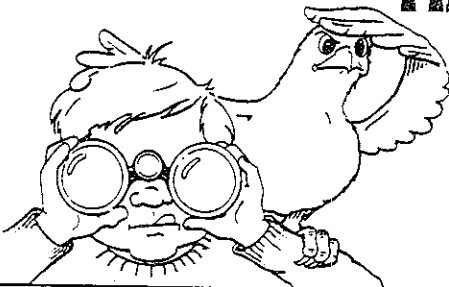
2073 HARRISON AVENUE  
CINCINNATI OHIO 45214

No. 23 MAY - JUNE, 1990

### THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE SEASON

#### BIRDATHON '90 HEATING UP!

Art Wiseman.



## BIRDATHON **'90**

The excitement of the "chase" is building. Teams have formed and their Birdathon activities are taking shape. "The Geriatric Gents", Oxbow, Inc.'s No. 1 team, were the first to register and they are now polishing their field glasses and telescopes. Last year's itinerary is being digested to see where additional species may be added to their list. Meantime, Oxbow's No. 2 team, Joe Bens and Paul Wharton, who were the winners last year, are planning to repeat so they can keep the "Golden Starling Trophy" for another year. (See Joe Bens' Special Issue Report on last year's action. Ed.)

At the same time, the U.C. team, winners of the first Birdathon in 1988, are planning to "bring the trophy back home" for another term. Everyone is holding their cards close to their vests so that others can't steal their secrets. Teams from the Zoo, Natural History Museum, Nature Center, Bird Club, RAPTOR, and others, are quietly laying their plans to overtake and beat all comers.

To show their allegiance, team supporters are signing their pledges and we thank all who have pledged thus far. Just in case you intended to, but have slipped up on executing the pledge, we have included a pledge card. Your pledge goes for a good cause in support of Oxbow, Inc.'s land fund. THANKS AGAIN TO ALL THE SUPPORTERS! GOOD LUCK TO ALL OF THE BIRDERS! MAY THE BEST TEAM WIN!

#### BIRDATHON-90

#### OXBOW, INC. TEAM PLEDGE CARD.

Please mail to: Oxbow, Inc., 2073 Harrison Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45214  
Our team should record between 100 and 135 species of birds.

YES, I am willing to pledge per species: \_\_\_\$3 \_\_\_\$2 \_\_\_\$1  
\_\_\_75¢ \_\_\_50¢ \_\_\_25¢ \_\_\_10¢ other\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

My pledge is for the "GERIATRIC GENTS & A JUNIOR"  
 My pledge is for Oxbow, Inc.'s team with the highest score.

A BIRDATHON-90 report will be mailed to you after the contest. It will include highlights of the competition, the number of species recorded, and the pledge amount you owe. Need more details? Want to form a team? Want to be on a team? Call 513-481-4302. Detach and mail your pledge card right now!

**TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.**

**DID YOU DO IT?**

## A HISTORY OF THE OXBOW AREA.

Don Bogosian



### THE OXBOW MOUND BUILDERS.

Over 2000 years ago, the Adena people were in the Ohio Valley, and they represented the first of the mound building people in the area. Around the Oxbow, the Adena have been overshadowed by the Hopewell people, a later group of Mound Builders who constructed the earthworks at Shawnee Lookout Park. But actually, there are numerous Adena mounds and habitation sites on the hills and terraces around the Oxbow. There are seven sites along Brower Road near Shawnee Lookout, six sites on Mt. Nebo Road, some of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, there are four sites around Greendale, Indiana, and 12 sites around Elizabethtown, Ohio, some of which are also on the National Register.

The Adena people were a small population of hunter-gatherers who focused on the river valley environments for subsistence. They took fish and reptiles from the water and gathered weed seeds from plants that grew on floodplains and riverbanks. They were similar to the previous culture of Archaic people, but they differed from the Archaic people in that they built large burial mounds and filled them with elaborate artifacts to honor their dead.

Most Mound Builder sites in southeastern Indiana and northern Kentucky represent late Adena culture and not Hopewell, who replaced the Adena in most of southern Ohio. Oddly enough, the Indiana state line is often used to represent the western limit of the Ohio Hopewell, even though, of course, this line was established many years later.

The Hopewell represent the highest cultural development of people indigenous to the Cincinnati area. They lived here around 2000 years ago and built large mounds and earthworks which probably delineated sacred ground for their burial ceremonies. Miami Fort is a large and well-preserved Hopewell earthwork in Shawnee Lookout Park and it also is on the National Register. It has long been known to local residents. William Henry Harrison, a resident of North Bend, Ohio, once wrote that he thought that it was an excellent fortification, from his military point of view. Overlooking the Oxbow, Miami Fort is situated on a hilltop that rises above the rest of the surrounding hills. This hilltop was probably selected by the Hopewell because of unique factors such as proximity to the Oxbow, the rise in the hill, etc.

Miami Fort consists of irregular twelve to fifteen foot high earth walls enclosing 12 acres of land. There are many mounds and habitation sites inside and outside the walls. Recent excavations have dated the site at 270 AD and also found many food remains which indicate how the Hopewell lived. Deer, beaver, racoon, dog, bobcat, rabbit, fox, squirrel, swan, turkey, sucker-fish bones, hickory nuts, walnuts, paw-paw and even corn kernels all point to hunter-gatherer and early agriculture subsistence at Miami Fort. Furthermore, there is implied close association with the rich bottomland around the Oxbow,

Several large Hopewell village sites are also located across the Great Miami River on the terrace behind Elizabethtown and in Dearborn County, Indiana, on the hills above Hardintown, there is a small hilltop circular enclosure called the Ancient Fort. Several mounds running north-east and northwest outside the enclosure may have astronomical alignments associated with them.

All of these major sites show that both the Adena and the Hopewell people had strong ties with the Oxbow.

Next, Late Woodland and Fort Ancient People.



Oxbow, Inc. has established Memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each Memorial, established in the name of a friend or loved one, 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 and should be sent to Oxbow, Inc. 2073 Harrison Avenue, Cincinnati, OH. 45214. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of the donor and those to receive an acknowledgement.

The following Memorials have been established with Oxbow, Inc. :

## Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

	1990	
In Memory Of:		Donor
Milton Osswald		Mr. & Mrs. Fred Gatch
Elmer D. Scherrer		Mr. & Mrs. Charles Taylor
Ella Stegeman		Aunt Gertrude, Lou, and Bert
A. Richard Taylor		Mr. & Mrs. William W. Pulley
Lily Mae Ulmer		Nancy Sue Ulmer
Marge Vornberger		Bob and Tina Schlegel

We regret the recent passing of a great friend of the conservation movement, Bill Moring. Although Bill's first love was birds of prey, as evidenced by his enormous involvement with RAPTOR, Inc., he was always willing to lend a hand when we at Oxbow, Inc. needed help. His enthusiasm his expertise, and his unfailing good humor will all be sorely missed. More than the loss of those qualities, though, we will miss Bill himself.

The family has asked that memorials be sent to RAPTOR, Inc., 2073 Harrison Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45214.

### A SPECIAL FIELD TRIP! Morris Mercer.



On Friday morning, March 23rd, I waited for a school bus to show up at the Oxbow.

Jean Durbin was to bring 35 students and a number of their parents from Lloyd Mann School for a field trip at the Oxbow.

Jean's third grade class recycled aluminum cans and pooled their allowances to make a donation to help save the Oxbow.

I was hopeful we would find large numbers of ducks for them to see. On our walk along the Oxbow lake we found mallards, blacks, Northern shoveler, blue and green-winged teal, and some ring-billed gulls. Some of us even found some mud - and we did get to stand on our own Oxbow land.

We traveled to Shawnee Lookout Park for a sack lunch. Our time ran out before we could take the trail up the hill to overlook the Oxbow area. I would enjoy taking that walk along the Miami Fort Trail with Jean Durbin and her class next year.

Sharing time with these young students gave me hope for our earth, and its wetlands, for the tomorrows to come.

The following article was submitted in response to our request for additional Texas Safari birding stories. What games people play!

Ed.

## BEWARE OF BUTCHERBIRDS IN DARK ALLEYS.

by Peter W. Thayer

"Name a bird with red in its name."

Our group from the Cincinnati Nature Center was half asleep after a hard day of birding at Falcon Dam. We had been unable to locate the Ferruginous pygmy-owl and now our after-dark owl hunt had wiped out. A sleeping red-tailed hawk, a siamese cat, and what my muddled mind heard as "three-tailed bat" were our major finds. Bill Creasey, our leader, roused us back to consciousness with his challenge.

"Name a bird with red in its name."

"Red-headed woodpecker" ... "Red-winged blackbird" ... "Red-eyed vireo" ... "Cardinal" ...

"No, it has to have the word 'red' in its name."

We quickly went through the van, each person naming a new bird. Responses slowed as we began our third go-round.

"Red-throated loon."

Groans of "That was going to be my bird" became more common. Thirty seconds with no response put you out of the game. The field of participants narrowed. After twenty-eight birds, ending with "Painted redstart, Bill won.

"Now let's do black."

As the week wore on, people would suddenly shout out things like "Red-cockaded woodpecker", a bird we had forgotten two days earlier. We started to look forward to the long drives between Texas hot-spots so we could play the game, interrupting the action only now and then when cries of "Caracara at three o'clock", or "Harris' hawk on the pole" were heard.

According to the National Geographic Field Guide there are 38 birds with red in their names, 58 with black, 29 with white, 22 with yellow, 15 with blue, and 2 with ivory.

The real fun comes when you get really slaphappy after fourteen hours of birding and begin to make up more interesting categories. It started out innocently enough.

"Let's do SHADES OF RED."

"Rose-throated becard", (the highlight of my trip) ... "Scarlet ibis" ... "Ruddy duck" ... "Cinnamon teal" ... "Pink-footed shearwater" ... "Flammulated owl" ...

"No way."

"Look it up, birdbrain."

Then we started to get more imaginative.

"Name a ONE-WORD BIRD."

"Limpkin" ... "Willet" ... "Robin" ...

"No. It's American robin - watch out for "American" and "Common" in a bird's name", warned Bill.

Later we tried BIRDS NAMED AFTER PEOPLE. Astonishingly, there are 78 listed in the field guide. (Note: Thayer's gull is the most important of these). We got through two rounds without leaving the warblers and gulls.

One of our favorite categories was BIRDS NAMED AFTER NATURAL PHENOMENA.

"Snowy plover" ... "Canyon wren" ... "Seaside sparrow" ... "Pine warbler" ... "Storm petrel" ... "Sun bittern" ...

"No, stick to North American birds so we can tell if you are bluffing."

Continued, next page.

To start an argument try a category called INAPPROPRIATELY NAMED BIRDS. Common blackhawks aren't. Orange-crowned warblers in Texas sure weren't when we were there. Mountain plover - call me if you find one up there.

For advanced birders, try categories like SPECIFIC LOCATIONS - no "Eastern" or "Western" though, that's too easy!

"Baltimore oriole" ... "Tennessee warbler" ... "Arctic tern" ... "Colima warbler" ... "Hudsonian godwit" (even after fourteen hours of birding we were all impressed when Bill came up with that one).

If things get dull, try PARTS OF THE BODY.

"White-eyed vireo" ... "Black-throated blue warbler" ... "Wagtail" ... "Golden-crowned kinglet" ... "Blue-footed booby".

For a challenge, try FURNITURE AND APPLIANCES\* We got two and ran out. Most interesting are the ACTION BIRDS.

"Sooty shearwater" ... "Willow flycatcher" ... "Wandering tattler" ... "White-collared seedeater" ... "Ruddy turnstone" ... "Duck" (Bill began to sense that things were getting a little out of control).

"Goose" ... (Now Bill was sure things were totally out of control). Things were deteriorating rapidly when I suggested BIRDS YOU WOULD NOT WANT TO MEET IN AN ALLEY ON A DARK NIGHT.

"Curved-billed thrasher"

"Robin" (Get it? Robbin')

"Rhinoceros auklet"

"Hoary redpoll" ... (Speak for yourself).

"Blue-winged teal"... ('tick 'em up) (Steal ... stick 'em up).

"Oh."

"I know a bird I wouldn't want to meet", said the eighty year old great-grandmother.

"What?"

"A Butcherbird!"

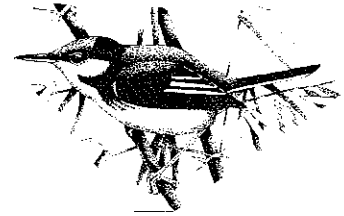
\* Ovenbird, Couch's kingbird.



*With this issue WETLAND MATTERS has gone to recycled paper. Conservation of the Earth's resources is an issue strongly supported by Oxbow, Inc.—Ed*



# FIELD NOTES



Morris Mercer.

Winter. What a strange season! Before it officially arrived, cold, winter weather blew in. We recorded the coldest December, ever. Then came January and February, in which a day of winter was hard to come by. These months, however, did bring a good number of ducks and geese. The Oxbow was flooded and partially ice-covered. I saw 1,000 ducks and geese and could hardly wait for the March migration to come through. But the large numbers expected just didn't show up. There was a nice variety of birds but not the numbers we have enjoyed in the past. Could it have been the weather, the river level, a reduced migration, or a combination of all of these?

Late winter brought several days of record-breaking high temperatures. The willows greened up and growing things seemed weeks early. On our first spring field trip, nine of us met Dave Styer for a walk along the Oxbow. Snow came softly down from a gray sky, adding to the four or five inches already on the ground. It crunched under our boots as we walked. Looking across the open water to the snow-covered fields was a beautiful sight.

Ducks were working among the willows in the shallow water along the edge of the fields. There were Canada geese, black ducks, mallards, Gadwall, blue and green-winged teal, American wigeon, Northern shoveler, redhead, ring-necked ducks, lesser scaup, red-breasted merganser, coot, and pied-billed grebe. We also saw killdeer, a yellow-rumped warbler, and our first pectoral sandpiper of the season.

A check of nearby water holes added the common loon, snipe, wood duck, golden-eye, bufflehead, and ring-billed gulls to our count.

The coming months will be a great time to be afield. You really should plan to make a trip to the Oxbow with us.



## LAND FUND GROWS.

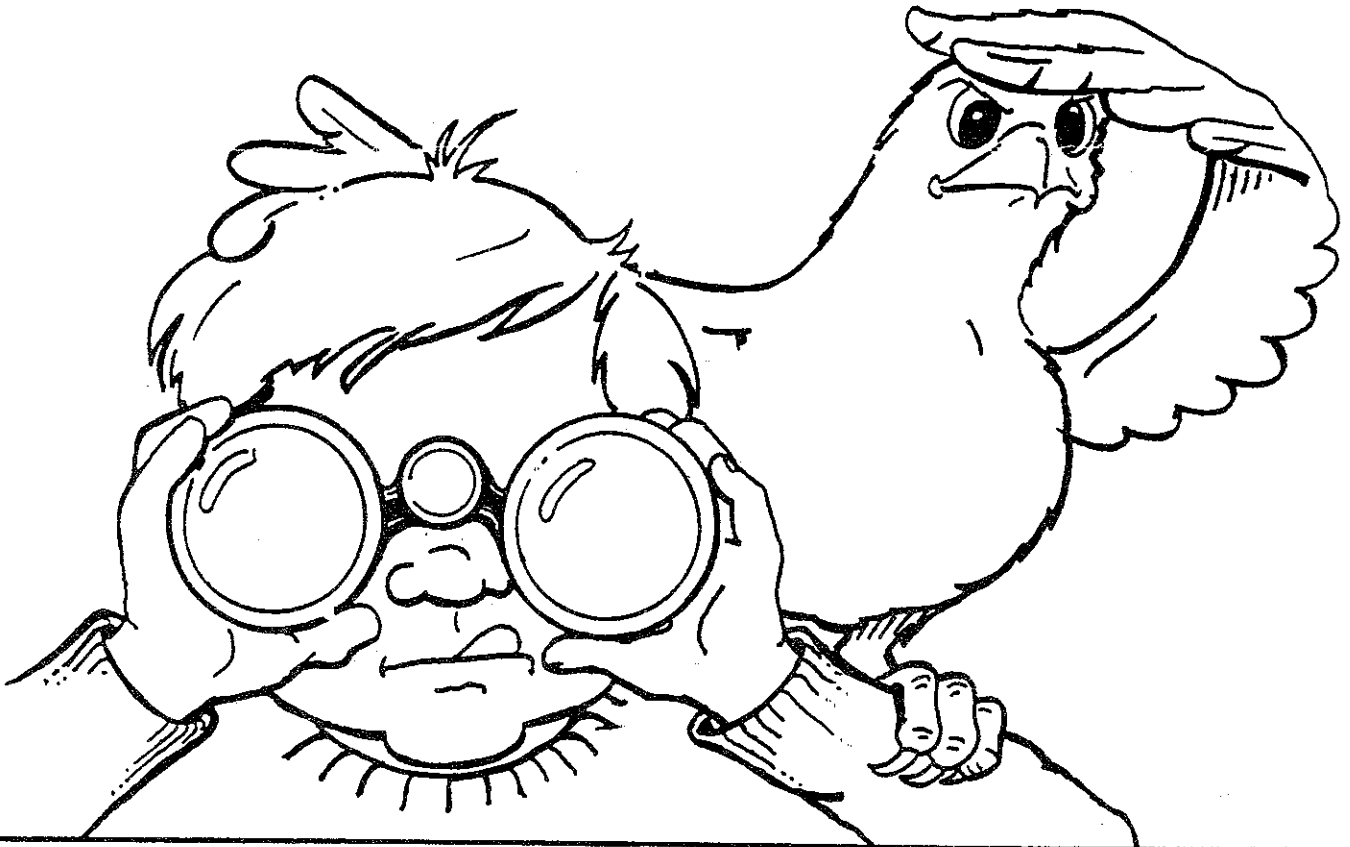
Last year's successful fund raising campaign has generated another generous grant for Oxbow, Inc.

In March, The Crosset Family Fund of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation awarded a \$10,000 check to Oxbow, Inc. and wished us continued success in our program to save the Oxbow.

The Board of Trustees wishes to thank Mr. Richard B. Crosset, Sr. for his personal interest in the Oxbow area and for his efforts in securing the financial assistance of The Crosset Family Fund.

A HUMOROUS REPORT BY JOE BENS  
OF THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS  
HE AND PAUL WHARTON SUFFERED ON  
THE ROAD TO "THE GOLDEN STARLING  
TROPHY" DURING BIRDATHON '89 !

**SPECIAL  
ISSUE !**



**BIRDATHON**



BIRDATHON '90 LOGO DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY  
FRITZ HAAS. THANKS FRITZ !

It's one minute until 5:00 PM Friday, May 12. It's 55 degrees Fahrenheit. The skies are partly cloudy. A light wind is coming out of the southwest. Paul Wharton and myself (Joe Bens) are standing in the gazebo on Richart Lake, Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, IN. We have chosen this spot carefully. Only from this vantage can the entire surface of the lake be seen. We want to be sure nothing is missed. Teeming with wildlife, this refuge is one of the best places to see wild animals in the area. There is a Raccoon feeling his way along the muddy edge of the lake. Deer are foraging in the high grasses across the lake. Fox Squirrels tail-chase each other through the trees. And just a little while ago, a Red Fox crossed a nearby road. This is what a wildlife refuge is all about, but we have come to see a specific type of animal - birds. I have my spotting scope trained on a large dead tree standing in the water. A Red-headed Woodpecker is in the middle of the viewing field. I like Red-headed Woodpeckers a lot. They have rich red heads contrasting with bold black-and white bodies. However, I don't usually stand around watching them. In this case, I am determined that this will be the first bird I see at 5:00. It is sort of a good omen. A minute goes by. Paul counts off the last few seconds. It is now officially 5:00. Red-headed Woodpecker (yes, I still have it in the scope), Osprey, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, Canada Goose, Mallard, Prairie Warbler, Field Sparrow, Northern Flicker, Tree Swallow, and Red-tailed Hawk are all identified and written down.

### The 1989 Birdathon Has Begun.

A birdathon is a contest. Teams of two to five people compete to see who can find and identify the most species of birds in a 24-hour period. Teams represent companies, museums, or other organizations. Last year, the University of Cincinnati's team won with an impressive list of 134 species of birds; all seen in the Cincinnati area in 24 hours. Sponsors are found to donate anywhere from a few cents to a few dollars per bird species seen. In this way, money is raised to preserve the ever-shrinking wilderness wetlands which are the most life-giving areas around. Last year, 8,000 dollars were raised. With a little luck, up to 15,000 dollars can be received this year. The winners of the Birdathon can claim the bragging rights as the best birdwatchers of the year (even if they were only flagrantly lucky) and the right to hold the coveted (kind of) Golden Starling Award (with real Starling feet!). A simplified version of the rules follows:

1. All birds must be identified by sight or sound. Scent doesn't count.
2. All members of a team must stay within speaking distance at all times. Even if one has to yell. In any case, 95% of the species must be seen by all members of the team.
3. All birds counted must be wild and free-flying. Chickens don't count, no matter how free-flying they are.
4. Planes, helicopters, and pogo sticks are not legal modes of transport.
5. All teams must stay within the count area, which consists of all counties within 50 miles of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana junction. This area approaches Dayton, Portsmouth, Lexington, Louisville, and Indianapolis.
6. All birds must be seen in the 24-hour period starting 5:00 Friday afternoon and ending 5:00 Saturday afternoon. The species list must be turned in at a prearranged site on time or one species is deleted from the list for each minute of tardiness. DON'T be late.



That covers the rules. As I have previously mentioned, there are two people in my group. We have a tentative schedule designed to cover the least-tamed natural areas as well as the greatest diversity of habitats possible. The only problem we have is the weather. It has rained nearly every day for the past week and it is forecasted to rain even more in the following days. Dirt roads might be impassable. Shorebirds will be scattered in a myriad of small puddles and not concentrated in the prime shorebird locations. If it rains during the Birdathon, it will be a long, slow, wet 24 hours. And I hate being wet.

Back to the gazebo on Richart Lake, Muscatatuck NWR, IN.

- 5:02 Barn Swallow. A Northern Bobwhite calls in the distance.
- 5:03 A White-eyed Vireo sings. Only an hour earlier, a pair of very rare Greater White-fronted Geese were happily swimming along on this lake. White-fronted Geese are creatures of the wide-open spaces. Rarely, do they ever leave their treeless homes to come this far east. We debate whether we should wait to see if the birds show up. We decide to leave. We can always check for them on the way out of the refuge.
- 5:13 The walk back to the car - Rufous-sided Towhee, Common Yellowthroat. A Great Blue Heron flies over a woodlot in the distance.
- 5:14 On a knoll overlooking a shallow pond - Blue-winged Teal, Belted Kingfisher, and a Wood Duck. A Black Tern snatches an insect off the surface of the pond. An American Goldfinch flies over.
- 5:15 Almost back to the car now - a Brown Thrasher flushes out of a thicket.
- 5:20 Driving past the lake - Paul yells, "Common Moorhen." This elusive marsh bird is always difficult to find, and it only took 20 minutes to get.
- 5:21 A screeching halt by the side of the road. A large stick-like object far off in a tree is large enough to be an eagle or a large hawk. After careful study and consulting all the guides, it turns out to be just a stick. Oh well, back in the car.
- 5:22 Along the road - American Robin, American Redstart.
- 5:23 Visitor Center - The trail here crosses a brushy field, a hardwood swamp, and a small pine stand. It is usually a good place to find all kinds of migrating thrushes, warblers, and vireos. It is eerily quiet, however. Even the Eastern Phoebe that nests under the eaves can't be found. We still, somehow, manage to find Blue-winged Warbler, European Starling (Terrible, it took a whole 23 minutes to find a Starling. We must not be doing that well.), Blue Jay, House Wren, and Northern Cardinal.
- 5:25 Hardwood swamp - Red-eyed Vireo and Wood Thrush.
- 5:27 Cerulean Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. An Indigo Bunting starts singing far away in the brushy field.
- 5:30 Back to the visitor center - the Eastern Phoebe is back. This would turn out to be the only one we would see. So, to the Eastern Phoebe that came back to her nest at 5:30 on May 12 at the Visitor Center in Muscatatuck NWR - "Thank You," wherever you are.
- 5:35 A walk down the road - White-crowned Sparrow. Paul sees a White-throated Sparrow. I miss it. It would be terrible if I were to miss this easy-to-find species.
- 5:40 On the road again - Red-winged Blackbird.
- 5:48 A closer search of the shallow pond mentioned earlier produces an American Wigeon. It's a hard duck to find this late in the season. We are lucky.
- 5:50 While Paul is busy finding shorebirds in the spotting scope, my

- attention is focused on a quit duck. I yell out, "Black Duck," and Paul lifts his head long enough to make sure I'm right. This duck is even later than the last. I doubt any other group will record this species. A Green-backed Heron is across the way.
- 5:52 My turn to look through the scope - Spotted, Semipalmated, and Pectoral sandpipers, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, and Semipalmated Plover. We find a White-breasted Nuthatch at a nest and a Warbling Vireo.
- 6:05 A different brushy field - Eastern Bluebird. In this field, Henslow's Sparrows often nest. If we don't find them here, it will be nearly impossible to get to their other breeding areas far to the east. Bad luck: no Henslow's Sparrow. It's a bird we are destined to miss.
- 6:07 Driving slowly on gravel roads - Eastern Meadowlark flies across the road followed by Brown-headed Cowbird and Turkey Vulture.
- 6:08 Grassy marsh - the book in the visitor center says that Sedge Wrens are here.
- 6:16 There are no Sedge Wrens here. The more paranoid among us thinks some other Birdathon team has deliberately scribbled in Sedge Wrens to send us out in this god-forsaken field on a wild goose chase, but we know they wouldn't do that - or would they?
- 6:17 Still in the grassy marsh - we don't go away empty-handed. A Sora and some American Coots flush out. We also score Pied-billed Grebe.
- 6:20 Another small pond - Great Egret. A good find.
- 6:23 And yet another small pond - an exceptional find. An American Bittern is slowly walking in the grass. We stop the car; the bird freezes. While it's making like a stick, a Prothonotary Warbler starts singing.
- 6:24 I hazard a look backward as we drive away, and the bittern resumes walking around.
- 6:25 American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, and Chimney Swift.
- 6:30 Stanfield Lake - Eastern Kingbird. The book in the visitor center says Red-breasted Mergansers are here, but, again, we have no luck in finding birds that the book says are here.
- 6:41 Moss Lake area - earlier in the day, we were talking to a Refuge employee who mentioned all the birds in the restricted Moss Lake area. While this area is closed to the public year-round, the employee mentioned that we might be able to get access if we were part of an official group (we were, sort of) and if we asked the Refuge Manager. So, we asked him. The Refuge Manager, to our great surprise, said someone had already called and that he had given permission for them to go into the area (probably the same people that put Sedge Wren and Red-breasted Merganser in the Visitor Center book). He couldn't remember who he talked to; could we be them? Well, we couldn't exactly lie about it as we weren't the ones. However, we did quickly volunteer that we were part of the same group (sort of), and that we are kind of like their cousins. Well, as long as we are part of the Birdathon, we can have access to the Moss Lake area, provided we fill out the proper forms, tell them what birds we see since their Birdathon is tomorrow (what a coincidence), and to not tell the KGB the super-secret combination to the lock. So, we fill out the proper forms, assure them that we will be sure to stop and tell them what we see, and promise that we won't consort with the Russian Secret Service anymore. Back to 6:41.
- 6:41 Enter the Moss Lake area (insert wicked snicker here) - Cattle Egret (a fairly good find), White-throated Sparrow (this one I don't miss), and Black-throated Green Warbler.

- 6:50 Along the road - Red-bellied Woodpecker.
- 6:55 There's a great series of mudflats, but, for some reason, no shorebirds.
- 6:57 Far end of the lake - Palm Warbler, Great Crested Flycatcher, Mourning Dove, Northern Parula, and Common Grackle.
- 7:05 Finally, some shorebirds - Least and Solitary sandpipers. Also, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Cedar Waxwing.
- 7:06 Careful study of a peep we try to make into the rare Western Sandpiper, but, it's not. That's the problem with Questars - they are just too accurate.
- 7:10 On the road back out - A small egret is sitting in a dead tree. Thinking it's the Cattle Egret we saw earlier, I turn and look elsewhere. While I'm looking at a stick or gum wrapper or something, Paul yells "Little Blue Heron." By the time I turn around, the egret (or should I say "heron") is flying directly away and into a woodlot. Since I could not identify it, I technically can't count it. Oh, well. It turned out to be one of four birds we counted under the 95 percent rule.
- 7:20 Leave Moss Lake.
- 7:25 Stanfield Lake Again - Double-crested Cormorant.
- 7:35 Richart Lake - Still no White-fronted Geese.
- 7:40 Stop in the Ranger Station and report on the birds we saw.
- 7:45 Leave Muscatatuck NWR. We are a little depressed about not being able to count the incredibly-rare White-fronted Geese. We are also now late. While the stop at Moss Lake was productive (we found three species we would not see later), we are a precious forty-five minutes behind schedule. We won't be able to make it to the Oxbow with enough light left, but, there is no sense in not trying. In other words, be sure the Escort is on.
- 7:46 House Sparrow - whoop-ee.
- 7:50 American Kestrel.
- 7:52 North Vernon, IN - possible House Finch?
- 8:03 Northern Mockingbird (the last of the Mimics is found).
- 8:35 Fourteen miles short of the Oxbow area - Purple Martin.
- 9:05 Oxbow area at last - it's so dark, we can barely see. We still add Herring and Ring-billed gulls, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Killdeer.
- 9:45 No Barred Owls in a favorite Barred Owl spot.
- 9:50 Direct quote of Paul Wharton, "Ain't no Nighthawks in Aurora."
- 10:30 La Nier Manor, Madison, IN - Earlier in the week, Paul called an Indiana Conservation Officer and asked about a pair of the rare Barn Owls rumored to nest in the belltower of a small town. The Officer said that those owls were now elsewhere and that he would appreciate it if we did not disturb them. However, he did know of another pair nesting in a dead tree in a preserved historical site. In fact, people occasionally ate a picnic dinner and watched the owls fly in and out. Great! That's just what we wanted to hear: a pair of Barn Owls that were easy to find and would not be disturbed by our presence. So, after circling Madison for twenty minutes, we find the La Nier Manor. It's an old manor house with tiled walkways, a manicured lawn, and many giant trees. We walk around for a while not really knowing which of the many trees contains the nest. Suddenly, a Barn Owl flies overhead and another screeches a hideously-loud hiss. While we fall back to the ground, a Barn Owl leaves a hole in a huge dead tree. We retreat 75 feet and sit under a big Sycamore. Within two minutes, the female Barn Owl returns and enters the nest. Ten minutes later, the male circles by on huge, silent, white wings. Check off Barn Owl.

- 10:50 We count the species seen so far. We come up with 88, which isn't too bad. At this rate, we will see three-hundred ninety-six species by 5:00 P.M. Saturday.
- 10:55 It starts to rain.
- 10:59 A stop in the middle of nowhere to find Nighthawks, Whip-poor-wills, and three different kinds of owls. We find nothing.
- 11:04 A mile down the road - not a thing.
- 11:09 Another mile down the road - not a thing.
- 11:15 Ditto.
- 11:18 Ditto.
- 11:26 Ditto. In fact, I soon lose track of the stops we make. All I know is that we made a lot of them. We didn't hear (or see) a thing. We even went down Whip-poor-will Lane only to find a bunch of cows. Of course, there were no Whip-poor-wills. There wasn't a woodlot there to house a Whip or a Will. Somewhere along the way between exhaustion and depression we go to Spring Valley Wildlife Management Area, OH and await the dawn. A solid eight hours goes by without our adding a new species to the list.
- 6:15 Spring Valley - A decision has to be made. It is raining as hard as ever. Thanks to good luck at Mascatatuck, there are only two species here that we can't expect to find elsewhere. Both are secretive marsh-dwellers. They won't be calling in the rain. Paul wants to tromp around in the marsh for them. I don't, only because when I'm wet and cold I get very grumpy. I don't enjoy myself then. We decide to go to nearby Caesar Creek Lake State Park, OH. Maybe there will be birds on the beach, and maybe it will stop raining.
- 6:30 Caesar Creek Lake State Park, OH - It's still raining. There is nothing new on the beach. The wind coming off the lake is very cold. I am wet and cold and decidedly grumpy.
- 7:00 Back at Spring Valley - There is no way to talk Paul out of tromping through the marsh. I get handed a pair of knee-high waterproof boots, for which, I am thankful. It's a-tromping we will go.
- 7:11 The walk to the cattails - Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, and Northern Oriole.
- 7:23 In the cattails - Actually, we don't have to walk very far into the cattails to scare up the desired species. Walking some 40 feet into the marsh scares up a Least Bittern, and then a Virginia Rail starts to call. There are the two species we needed. Still in the marsh, I step into an underwater hole and a boot fills with water. Luckily, the boot is completely waterproof so, there is no way for the water to escape. On my next step, the water in my boot shoots up my pants leg. I take that back about being grumpy when I'm wet and cold: I'm downright mean when I'm wet and cold. Step, splush, step, splush.
- 7:37 The quarter-mile walk to the car - Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Yellow-rumped and Blackburnian warblers. I'm almost too wet and mean to pay attention. I'm busying myself with stomping on dandelions instead. Stomp, splush, stomp, splush.
- 7:44 Back to the car. With a change of clothing, I feel tremendously better.
- 8:05 Heading toward Caesar Creek again - Gutter Falcon (Rock Dove).
- 8:25 The bridge over Caesar Creek Lake - we spy the University of Cincinnati's Birdathon Team watching something off in the distance. This capable team won the contest last year, so we can expect some stiff competition from them. So, we jump out of the car to steal whatever it is that they see. Actually, it is an obvious place to stop and we had

thought about doing it anyway. In our rush to get to the bridge, both of us forget to bring a scope. While Paul goes back to get one, I watch a long-bodied waterbird dive in the distance. By the time Paul gets back, the U.C. team has had a good look at whatever it is and left. As soon as the scope is set and focused on the bird, the rain increases so much that nothing but a gray screen can be seen. Well, is it a loon? It has the shape of a loon. It dives like a loon. I really can't be sure of what kind of loon it is, but I decide that it must be a loon. Since only one species of loon is not accidental in the area, we decide to mark it down as a Common Loon. A Bank Swallow flies by and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet is heard, "ja-dit."

- 9:30 Spring Grove Cemetery - This old cemetery acts as a beacon for all types of migrating birds. The tall trees, scattered pools, and native woodlots are often covered with migrating thrushes, warblers, and vireos.
- 9:35 Tall, broken-top sycamore - The baby owls that were here two weeks ago have fledged. The only owl species we have seen so far is the rare Barn Owl.
- 9:45 Eleven hours of solid rain comes to an end.
- 9:46 We arrive at the best part of Spring Grove. To our great surprise and happiness, a deafening chorus of warblers, tanagers, orioles, and vireos greets us. The rain last night must have precipitated a huge fallout of migrating birds. It is definitely the peak of migration this year. We quickly add Tennessee, Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Bay-breasted, and Black-and-white warblers, Summer and Scarlet tanagers, Orchard Oriole, Least and Acadian Flycatchers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Chipping and Song sparrows.
- 9:53 Paul points to a small tree and asks what I think of the warbler there. I take a look. It's a Magnolia Warbler. Paul disagrees. I look again. It's a Solitary Vireo. Paul disagrees again. I look again. It's an Orange-crowned Warbler. A second later, all three are sitting in the same binocular field. We check them all off on the list.
- 10:01 Gray-cheeked Thrush.
- 10:02 The crow in the woodlot starts cawing like crazy. We both know what that means: that they have found an owl roosting in the woods and that they are attempting to chase it out. Crows hate owls and vice-versa. We move toward the disturbance. Suddenly, a Red Fox comes charging straight at us. It has a pack of crows on its heels. With only about 25 feet to go before crashing into us, it looks up and decides to change course a little. It is gone in a flash. It seems that there wasn't an owl there after all.
- 10:10 Swainson's Thrush.
- 10:14 Veery (a thrush); only one more thrush to go.
- 10:16 Ovenbird.
- 10:17 I spot a small bird in the upper reaches of a tall tree. After a short study there is no mistake; it's a Philadelphia Vireo. I try to point it out to Paul. The commentary goes something like this: "Do you see the big willow? Not the right one, the left one. Follow the main trunk up about 25 feet. Do you see the branch that goes up about ten feet, makes a big right turn, and dead ends? Well, ignore it and follow the other side up until you see a whole bunch of twiggy sticks. Then, go up three feet and over about two and a half. Wait a second; it just flew. Eventually, the bird came out into the open and Paul saw it.
- 10:25 Once again, the crows start making a tremendous din. This time it's

- accompanied by the large shape of a Great Horned Owl flying through the woods. See, it does work out that way sometimes.
- 10:30 We both hate to leave since there is so much here, but on we go.
- 10:50 Driving on I-74 - The Red-Shouldered Hawk that has been seen along here for the past two weeks isn't present, but, a Cooper's Hawk is.
- 11:10 Mitchell Memorial Forest Hamilton Co. Park - Black-billed Cuckoo, Hooded Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush. We search for the Pine Warblers that are normally here with no success.
- 11:17 Paul knows another spot where Pine Warblers may be. Should we check it? We are starting to run low on time, but decide to check it anyway.
- 11:36 A back area in the park - Yellow-breasted Chat and, lo and behold, Pine Warbler.
- 12:05 On the road to Shawnee Lookout Hamilton Co. Park, Paul knows another Red-shouldered Hawk spot that is right on the way. We check it out only to find a Broad-winged Hawk.
- 12:27 Dry Fork Meadows, a.k.a. Senior Citizen Center - The Cincinnati Nature Center's Birdathon team is already here and way in front of us. We hope they haven't scared away everything.
- 12:30 Savannah Sparrow. I hear a Horned Lark which Paul misses, so we scan the nearby freshly-plowed field. Instead of finding larks, we see six Water Pipits and, a few minutes later, several Horned Larks. Pipits are extremely rare this late in the season. They are a good find.
- 12:32 Dickcissels on the fence row, Grasshopper and Savannah sparrows singing in the field, and Bobolinks flutter by. This stop worked like clockwork. We add six species and, in six minutes, are back on the road.
- 12:50 Mt. Nebo Gravel Pits - These deserted gravel pits often house unusual birds. We are looking especially for the Blue Grosbeaks seen here. Paul knows exactly where to look.
- 12:53 Yep, we have male and female Blue Grosbeaks in the Questar at less than 100 feet. The male is a magnificent shade of blue. It is a life bird for me. I would like to stay longer, but we have to go.
- 1:01 The gravel hill overlooking the Great Miami River - Lots of water but, nothing new.
- 1:12 Shawnee Lookout Hamilton Co. Park boat ramp - Nothing much here except a little ol' Mourning Warbler! I can hear it singing in the bushes beside the parking lot. Paul is not familiar with the song. We wait to see this elusive and handsome warbler. After about five minutes it comes out into a dead bush and sings in the open. Check off another species.
- 1:25 Inside the main park area - Yellow-throated Vireo at last. We have now seen all of the vireos.
- 1:40 Crossing the Whitewater River on U.S. Route 50 - Yellow-billed Cuckoo. It is normally and easy bird to find. I don't know why it took us so long to see one. It is the only one we would see.
- 2:15 Oxbow Area Cemetery entrance - because we came to this area too late last night to see anything, we have to stop now. We find Black-bellied Plover, Short-billed Dowitcher. My attention is drawn immediately to a large, immature gull. After very careful study, we determine that it is a Great Black-backed Gull. If accepted by the rules committee, it will be one of only a handful ever seen here. Details of this bird will be published elsewhere.
- 2:20 We decide to drop by Mt. Airy City Park in hopes of finding the common Yellow-throated Warbler, which we have somehow missed.
- 2:45 I-74 near Harrison Ave. exit - The Red-shouldered Hawk is now where it

should be.

- 3:00 Mt. Airy Forest and not a trace of Yellow-throated Warbler.
- 3:50 Gilmore Ponds - Paul hears a Willow Flycatcher, which I miss. A female Ruddy Duck is sleeping on a pond. A Bonaparte's Gull touches down on the water for only a second and is quickly gone. Another minute later and we would have missed it. A Cliff Swallow flies overhead. That is the last of the swallows we need. A Northern Shoveler is on the far lake.
- 4:10 Almost back to the car - a Birdathon team in front of us says, "Is that a Wilson's Warbler?" Sure enough, it is. Unfortunately, Paul misses it. A Willow Flycatcher calls again. This time I hear it.
- 4:15 There is no time to go elsewhere. We don our official Birdathon shirts and head for Farbach-Werner.
- 4:40 Corner of Colrain and Pippin - Paul spots two birds dogfighting over the Colrain complex of shopping malls. They turn out to be Common Night-hawks. With less than a quarter-mile to go, we find our last bird of the Birdathon.
- 4:45 Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve - end of the line.

5:00 and beyond - The barn-like building of Farbach-Werner is filled with people. Supper and refreshments are being served. This may be the best time of the Birdathon. It is time to eat, swap stories, and relax after a long 24 hours in the field. Lots of money has been raised to help save critically endangered habitats. Everyone is feeling satisfied. After everything is said and done, our team comes in first with 156 species. Luckily, no one is there to take our picture because we look a mess. Who knows what it will take to win next year's Birdathon. We certainly missed a number of easy-to-find species, and 11 hours of rain didn't help. Maybe next year some team will walk in with 165 species. In any case, I can always think of the fun I had this year when I look at my glossy gold trophy of - what is that? A Starling?

# Meetings

TUESDAY, MAY 8TH, 1990 7:30 P.M. Cincinnati Zoo Education Building.  
Enter through the Exit gate on Erkenbrecher Avenue.

Zoo Entomologist Eric Eaton projects a view of insect life through his slide presentation, "Secrets of a Small World." Live exotics and a preserved collection will be on display.

TUESDAY, JUNE 12TH, 1990 7:30 P.M. Lawrenceburg Public Library. Turn left off of U.S. 50 onto Walnut Street. Turn right onto High Street. The library is on the right side of High Street.

"VALDEZ - AFTER THE SPILL" An interesting an

"VALDEZ - AFTER THE SPILL". An update on an interesting and informative program. Bea Orendorff, Cincinnati Zoo Wildlife Rescue Program Coordinator, presents a slide program and speaks about the rescue effort to save indigenous wildlife affected by the disasterous oil spill. DO NOT MISS THIS PROGRAM! Come early and get a good seat.

**DON'T FORGET - BIRDATHON '90 MAY 11TH AND 12TH ! ! !**

# Field Trips

MONDAY, MAY 14TH, 6 P.M.

A week-day evening stroll along the Oxbow with "Questar-eye" Jay Stenger. Meet in the Fiftie's Root Beer parking lot, U.S. 50 and I-275 Lawrenceburg-Greendale Exit. Jay, 513-522-4245. Hear first-hand about Jay's exploits on this year's BIRDATHON '90.



SATURDAY, JUNE 23RD, 9 A.M.

A week-end morning field trip. Meet at Shawnee Lookout Park upper boat ramp parking lot. Steve Wagner will lead this walk to see what can be found in the area. Steve, 513-831-7606.



# MOVING?

Make sure your WEILAND MATTERS newsletter goes with you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Old Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
New Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Effective Date

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc. 2073 Harrison Ave Cinti, OH 45214

★ Please notify us immediately so we can update our records. The post office does not forward third class mail.



**Corporation Officers**

President, Norma Flannery	513-471-8001
Vice President, Rick Bramstedt	812-438-2129
Secretary, Earl Thirey	513-528-3371
Treasurer, Art Wiseman	513-481-4302
Agent, Dave Styer	513-772-4395

**Committee Chairpersons**

Conservation, Bonnie Fancher	812-438-3641
Fund Raising, Greg Mendell	812-926-1966
Preservation, Ned Keller	513-941-6497
Programs:	
Ohio, Morris Mercer	513-941-2534
Indiana, Bonnie Fancher	812-438-3641
Research, Kaniaulono Meyer	513-948-8630
Speakers' Bureau, Kaniaulono Meyer	513-948-8630

**Editor**

Norma Flannery	513-471-8001
----------------	--------------

**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 area known locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from future industrial development and to preserve the existing agricultural floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This is an agricultural area rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland. You can 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.

Individual	\$10	Organization/Club	\$25	Cornerstone	\$250
Family	\$15	Supporting	\$50	Sponsor	\$500
Contributing	\$25	Patron	\$100	Benefactor	\$1000

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc., 2073 Harrison Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45214

Printed on Recycled Paper by  
Rapid Copy Printing 513-365-0888



## Need a Speaker? Give Us a Call!



2073 HARRISON AVENUE  
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45214

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U. S. POSTAGE <b>PAID</b> CINCINNATI, OH PERMIT NO. 7271
---