

wetland matters



OXBOW, INC. NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 43391
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45244

Number 65 May-June 1997

Billboard litigation

The suits by Whiteco-Metrocomm against the Dearborn County board of zoning appeals have been settled out of court. The agreement includes a revision of the zoning ordinances for the county that will limit the total number of billboards in the county and the total of billboards that will ever be allowed in the Oxbow area.

Whiteco-Metrocomm will construct 6 billboards along I-275, but no additional billboards will be allowed in the Oxbow area. If someone wants to put up a billboard in the future they will be required to arrange to have another billboard removed. Power will reach these billboards by above-ground wires that will be strung from fairly short poles so that they don't interfere with the view of the flood plain from the interstate.

Envelopes for Dues

At the suggestion of several members, Oxbow will begin sending out self-addressed envelopes with membership-renewal reminders. These reminders are sent to members with the issue of Wetland Matters that is published just before their membership expires.

The board is grateful to the members who suggested the self-addressed envelopes, and actively solicits additional suggestions that will make Oxbow membership easier or more rewarding. Send your suggestions to the P.O. Box at any time — or include them with your next membership renewal!

Recuperating

Two Oxbows board members, Morris Mercer and Ed Thayer, had by-pass surgery recently. Both Morris and Ed are now recovering at home. We all look forward to seeing them again soon at Oxbow meetings — or perhaps out visiting the Oxbow itself.

Waterfest

Waterfest was held on Tuesday, March 25, at the University of Cincinnati. This water festival was created by Kathy Lordo, of the Hamilton County General Health District, and Holly Utrata-Halcomb, with the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District. This event was designed to educate children about the importance of water resources, and Oxbow, Inc., was proud to be involved with this project.

Approximately 25 schools participated, with more than 50 presenters and exhibitors. Several Hamilton County businesses gave financial support to make Waterfest possible. Because of the large number of children at this event, not everyone was fortunate enough to be scheduled for our Oxbow presentation. (However, there was never a shortage of educational activities for the 4-6 grade students). Children from Norwood Baptist, St. Gertrude, Sellman, and two groups from New Burlington schools were transformed into migrating ducks.

The years really flew by as these high-energy "quackers" had to migrate from summer breeding wetlands to wintering wetlands and back again. And that isn't easy when wetlands get taken away because of development and pollution. But all of my bright ducks left in flocks, with a better understanding of the need to protect wetland habitats. And Oxbow Inc. looks forward to the next Waterfest season, when we can migrate back to UC and have so much fun again!

— Connie McNamee

Thanks

Oxbow is grateful for a grant from the Allan and Dorothy Campbell Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. The funds are to support Oxbow's conservation activities.

Calendar

Field Trips

3 May (Saturday) 8:00 A.M. Gilmore Ponds field trip

Organized by Gilmore Ponds Conservancy, Inc., this trip in search of songbirds will leave from the Gilmore Road parking area. You'll need a MetroParks (Butler County) sticker. Call Darlene at (513)-868-9009 for more information.

18 May (Sunday) 9:00 A.M. Oxbow field trip

Meet Steve Wagner at the upper parking lot by the boat ramp at Shawnee Lookout Park. (You'll need a Hamilton County Parks automobile sticker). Call Steve Wagner for more information (513) 831-7606.

31 May (Saturday) 9:00 A.M. Oxbow field trip

Meet Dave Styer at the Gardens Alive! parking lot for this adventure into the Oxbow. You never know what you'll find when you go to the Oxbow with Dave! Dave Styer (513) 772-1287.

21 June (Saturday) 9:00 A.M. Oxbow field trip

Meet Connie McNamee and Greg Mendell at Gardens Alive! They'll be looking for birds and generally enjoying the beauty of the area. Call Connie and Greg (812) 926-2522.

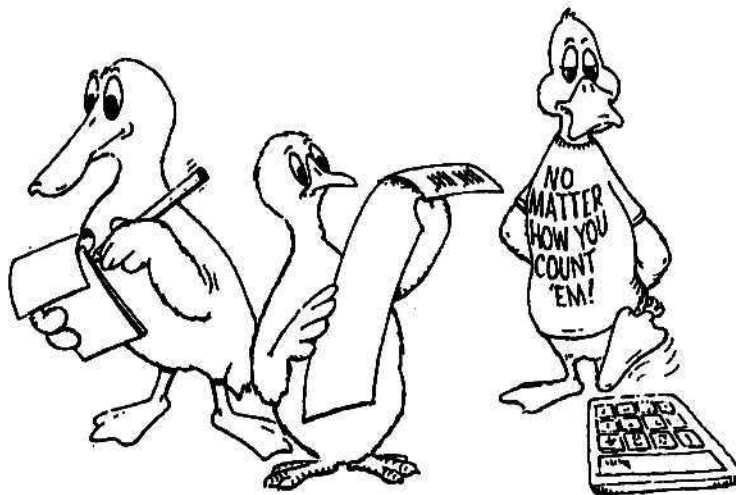
Programs

May 13 (Tuesday) 7:30 P.M. Oxbow program at the Cincinnati Zoo's Education Building. (Enter through the employees' entrance off Erkenbrecker Ave. The gate attendant can direct you to the education building.)

Dr. Michael Miller from the Biology Department at the University of Cincinnati will be this evening's speaker. Dr. Miller's work concentrates on the ecology of aquatic systems. While much of his recent research has been done in Alaska, he will be able to give us insights into the working of the Oxbow's ecosystem as well.

June 10 (Tuesday) 7:30 P.M. Oxbow meeting at the Lawrenceburg Public Library. (From Cincinnati, turn left off U.S. 50 onto Walnut Street. Turn right onto High Street. The library is on the right side of High Street.)

This evening's program will be given by Oxbow board member Sandy Schnur. She will present "The Birds of Yellowstone". This is a video that her business — Impact Video — produced. A copy of the video will be awarded as a door prize; after you've seen this fine program, you'll wish you'd brought more of the family to improve your chances of winning a copy!



Pledge Now for Oxbow's Birdathon Teams

Oxbow will enter three teams in the Birdathon. You are invited to pledge your support for any or all of Oxbow's teams. Pledge for your favorite or for the highest scoring team. Some people pledge a fixed amount while others pledge some amount per species found. Whatever you choose, you can make your pledge by sending in the form below.

After Birdathon is over you will receive a letter telling you how Oxbow's teams did, where they went and what good birds they saw, along with a memo advising you of your pledge total. All pledges to these teams go directly to Oxbow, Inc.

Oxbow's effectiveness at protecting wetland habitat is attributable to its members' generosity. Thank you in advance for your pledge supporting Oxbow's Birdathon '97 teams.

Oxbow's Birdathon Teams

Oxbow Team #1 Karl Maslowski will reassemble his team of experts, "The Geriatric Gents and a Junior." These gentlemen, distinguished members of the Tristate's community of naturalists, generously use their influence and well-deserved reputations to help Oxbow raise pledges. Last year they found 109 species of birds.

Oxbow Team #2 "The Fire and Brimstone Birders Guild" — Joe Bens and Paul Wharton — won last year's competition for the Golden Starling award. Joe hinted that they might be adding a third member to their team in '97.

Oxbow Team #3 "The No See Ums" — David Styer, Charlie Saunders and Steve Pelikan — will be reassembled again after David's sabbatical year in California. Last year Charlie and Steve found 146 species in the Birdathon area while David found about 150 on a personal Birdathon in California. David hinted that the team may add a new member in '97.

BIRDATHON '97

Oxbow Team Pledge Form

YES! I want to pledge per species: ___\$2 ___\$1 ___75¢ ___50¢ ___25¢ ___10¢ other ___

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

- My pledge is for Oxbow team #1, "Geriatric Gents..."
- My pledge is for Oxbow team #2, "Fire and Brimstone..."
- My pledge is for Oxbow team #3, "No See Ums"
- My pledge is for the highest scoring Oxbow team.

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio 45243

Field Notes

Morris Mercer

Late winter and early spring is my favorite time around the Oxbow. This seems to work out with the northern migration of the waterfowl. I've always held a special place in my heart for the ducks and geese. It was on a late winter stop at the Oxbow that gave thought to a wish. My wish was that every person with an interest in the Oxbow could see it as I saw the area that evening.

The sun had almost completed its trip across the sky as I walked out the road leading around the Oxbow. The panorama before me was filled with ducks and geese. There were some 600 Canada Geese and as many ducks. Over toward Beaver Pond was a ridge of high ground with several rows of standing corn. The shallow water at the edge of the corn was frozen and the ice ran on out into the deeper open water.

The Canada Geese that were feeding in the standing corn looked regal as they raised their heads for a glance across the water. Others looked more like clowns as they slipped and slid while walking on the ice. And there were geese that opted for a nap as they sat on the ice with their breasts toward the setting sun.

Then came that magical time of day when everything seems to turn to gold. The willow, the corn, the brush all with that golden glow. King Solomon's treasury was never filled with such beauty as this. The open water reflected the blue of the sky. This blanket of blue was covered with gems: the emeralds, glossy green heads of the tipping mallards; the topaz, white foreheads of the Baldpate; and amethyst, the wing patch of the American Black Duck.

There too were the beautiful Pintail, Gadwall, and Redhead. On around the bend was a group of Canvas-back. Also napping were several Common Merganser. Swimming among the flooded willows were several Coot, nodding their heads in the affirmative as they swam. And to add some real class, a pair of Hooded Mergansers. I also saw Scaup, Bufflehead, and a sizable flock of Ring-necked Duck.

The light was fading and there was a chill in the air. Once again I heard the call of the wild and looked up to see eleven more geese coming in over the willows. I watched as they set their wings, lowered their landing gear, and used their large webbed feet to ski into the water. I took their cry to be a farewell and

turned toward home, having added yet another page to my book of memories.

Saturday, March 1, 1997 I met Jim Simpson and a group from Dayton Audubon for a field trip to the Oxbow. The rain overnight had stopped, but the clouds were still low and dark and it looked as if the rain might begin again any time. The river was at 31.5 feet and on the rise. One of the first birds we saw was a mature Bald Eagle. It was perched on an old snag at the edge of the Oxbow lake. The ducks were in the shallow water across the willows. There was some water in the big field. The divers had moved in: Scaup, Redhead, Bufflehead, and Ring-necked Ducks.

We checked the area, stopped by to see the Great Horned Owl on her nest. We saw 17 species of ducks that day, and the rain didn't start until we were on our way home.

Sunday, March 2, Frances and I came home from church. It was later in the afternoon when I noticed the river. We agreed we'd never seen the Ohio come up so fast. I knew at once that I needed to visit the Oxbow. The river had come up almost 20 feet since I'd been there the previous morning, and the Flood of '97 was well under way.

My interest was to cross Lost Bridge but I was too late because the river was over the road before I arrived. I saw a flight of ducks drop into the flooded corn fields below the bridge. When I checked the field with my 'scope I could hardly believe my eyes. There were almost as many duck heads as corn stalks. Ducks were still arriving as I headed for home.

St. Patrick's Day (March 17th) was appointed for my annual Oxbow trip with Karl Maslowski and Sandy Cooper. This year, Jim Simpson had time to join us as well. We were looking for *GREEN*-winged Teal.

It was cloudy and a cold west wind was there to greet us. Some years ago Karl had brought a box of Lorna Doone cookies, and that had set the rules for our expedition: there would be no cookies until we saw a *green*-winged teal. The search was on, and Jim soon found our first teal. With the pressure off, Karl passed out the Lorna Doones.

The diving ducks had moved into the large flooded field, but a larger number of ducks were across the Oxbow in the field that Rick Pope farms. They were as close as ants on a piece of candy and it looked as if they had to take turns in the swimmin' hole.

Our next stop was the flood plain near Lost Bridge. Several Shovelers had moved into the water left by the flood. There were other ducks and the gulls had found the field to their liking. There were many Ring-billed and a several Bonaparte's as well as a few Herring Gulls. Our next stop was to take a look at the Great Horned Owl on her nest.

It had been a good day and Karl gave me the Lorna Doones that were left over. He'd brought a couple boxes of girl scout cookies too. Even without the cookies it would have been a great day spent with good company visiting the Oxbow after the flood of '97.

I always wonder where the birds we see will spend the summer? I look forward to seeing them again when they stop to rest and feed at the Oxbow. Perhaps I'll meet you there too!



Moving?

Please send you change of
address information to:

Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio 45243-0391

The postal sevice will not forward
your *Wetland Matters*.

Birdathon 1997 Pledge for Oxbow's Birdathon teams.

What is Birdathon? Birdathon is Oxbow's annual fund raising event. Participants solicit pledges of money for each species of bird they identify. Then they spend 24 hours finding as many species as possible in the count area (roughly a circle with radius 50 miles centered at the Oxbow). This year Birdathon will be held from 5 P.M. Friday May 9 to 5 P.M. Saturday May 10. Participants compete in several categories. The team finding the most birds in the entire Birdathon area is awarded the Golden Starling trophy for the coming year; the individual finding the most birds takes home the Solitary Vireo prize. There's special categories for younger birders, and others for birders interested in limiting their driving by concentrating on finding birds in a single county. A special trophy — the Keep-it-in-the-Ground — is awarded to the team that finds the most birds without using fossil fuels. Perhaps most important of all is the award given to the individual who raises the largest amount of money (in pledges per species) for the Birdathon. There's a similar award for birders high school age and under.

Other natural history and conservation organizations sponsor teams in the event, and split the pledges they raise with Oxbow. The Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati Nature Center, Northern Kentucky Bird Club, Raptor, Inc. and Hamilton County Parks will all have teams participating in Birdathon this year.

In addition, Oxbow will enter three teams in the contest and all money pledged for these teams goes directly to Oxbow. You can use the form in this newsletter to pledge for one of Oxbow's teams. After Birdathon, you'll receive an account of the adventures of Oxbow's teams, a report on where they went and what birds they found, as well as a memo telling you what your pledge comes to.

Oxbow Inc.
1996 Treasurer's Report

Oxbow, Inc. gained about \$57,000 in 1996, and continues to save for an opportunity to buy threatened wetlands. However, land prices in our area of interest, the Great Miami/Ohio river flood plain, are very high due to speculation.

Indeed, proposals abound for the development of the flood plain. Oxbow, Inc. examines these and represents the interest of the wetland before various public and private authorities as necessary. The expense for this, mostly legal expenses, was more than \$9,000 in 1996.

Oxbow invested more than \$4,000 in research and education in 1996 (most of the Miscellaneous expense caption below). Administration and fundraising expense was about \$2,000 (mostly printing and postage), or about 2.5% of revenue.

Of course, Oxbow, Inc. is a 100% volunteer organization — there are no salaries, expense accounts, etc. — and is beholden to public support for its success.

Mark M. Westrich
Treasurer, Oxbow, Inc.

Revenue		Expense	
Dues	24,683.05	Postage and phone	1,303.39
Donations	19,444.96	Office supplies	144.90
Memorial	1,439.00	Newsletter	1,886.12
Land acquisition	1,130.00	Taxes and insurance	1,929.30
Interest	6,836.27	Legal	9,325.00
Fund raising	0.00	Fund raising	623.09
Birdathon	9,918.81	Book cost	20.85
Crop Income	15,159.50	Video cost	80.00
Book sales	64.80	Shirt cost	313.71
Video sales	141.00	Cap cost	85.90
Shirt sales	405.00	Miscellaneous	6,920.82
Cap sales	107.00	Expenses:	22,633.08
Miscellaneous	224.29		
Revenue:	79,553.68		

Capital and Assets	
Cash	176,784.59
Land	175,551.60
Easements owned	231,963.28
Equipment	1,132.75
Book stock	84.15
Video stock	880.00
Shirt stock	1,594.77
Cap stock	94.49
Assets	588,085.63
Debt	0.00
Equity	588,085.63
Total	588,085.63
Net Gain in 1996	56,920.60

Oxbow Memorials

In memory of

Elvin Blasdel
Sharkey Budd
Stanley C. Fair
Julie Godsey
Gregory Kepley
Helen Maria Kling
Phoebe Reed
Geneva Scott
Irma Rae Seitz
Gemma Wise-Wissman

Donor

Oxbow, Inc.
Cheryl Winslow-Devine D.V.M.
Virginia L. Fair
Norma L. Flannery
David and Suzanne Skidmore
Rosemary and Bill Farrell
Barbara and Charles Moore
Fred and Peggy Gatch
Mike and Marti Capizzi
Cheryl Winslow-Devine D.V.M.

The flood of '97

We made a visit to the Oxbow area at the height of the flood of '97. Route 50 was closed to the east of the Lawrenceburg exit ramp from I-275. The road was under water less than 50 yards from the intersection. Water covered the fireworks retail buildings to the rafters and the adjacent site, recently proposed as the location for a strip-mall development, was under many feet of water.

Even with the terrible news reports of lives and property lost up and down the Ohio Valley at the back of our minds, it was fun and exciting to see all that water in the Oxbow. In part, this was because there were no losses or tragedies reported from the bottom lands that Oxbow has protected from development. This land, maintained as an agricultural flood plain by Oxbow, Inc, and the Hamilton County Park District in cooperation with many of the farmers and land owners in the area, benefited slightly from the flood as rich alluvial sediments were deposited on the fields.

As we toured the Lawrenceburg area we were impressed by the frequency with which we saw old buildings standing dry atop little knolls or higher on the flood plain's edge while newer nearby construction was inundated. Certainly it is the press of an ever increasing population and of progressive

suburbanization that has led to the development of sub-optimal, low lying land. But these more recent, flooded, buildings are also the consequence of an increasingly complex economy in which some, called "developers", can reap a profit and disappear leaving others to suffer the consequences of building too near the water. In the past, as a family put up their own farmhouse and barn, they had much stronger incentive to place them out of the flood's way since they and their children would occupy the buildings for several lifetimes.

This is not to say that developers are at fault for the tragedies of the flood of '97. Developers — the good ones at least — obey all the laws and regulations that the public has put in place. To prevent future tragedies we need to educate people about the importance of preserving flood plains and about the consequences of developing in them. We need to motivate them to see that the laws and regulations concerning flood plain development are improved and enforced.

In the aftermath of the flooding Oxbow members can all feel some consolation that the land we've protected was unharmed by the flood and that Oxbow has been such a strong advocate for the protection and intelligent use of the Miami River flood plain.

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

mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391
513-471-8001

Corporation Officers

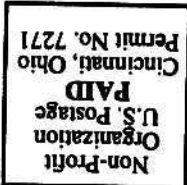
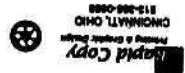
President, Norma L. Flannery (513) 471-8001
Vice President, Morris Mercer (513) 941-2534
Recording Secretary,
Dennis Mason (513) 385-3607
Corresponding Secretary,
Suzanne Skidmore (513) 561-5718
Treasurer, Mark Westrich (812) 637-2175
Agent, Dave Styer (513) 772-1287

Committee Chairpersons

Conservation, Bill Bocklage (513) 922-2445
Easement Inspection,
Michael Kluesener (513) 574-1220
Richard Pope (513) 637-1365
Fund Raising, Greg Mendell (812) 926-2522
Marketing, Connie McNamee (812) 926-2522
Land Management, Dave Styer (513) 772-1287
Preservation, Norma L. Flannery (513) 471-8001
Programs, Morris Mercer (513) 941-2534
Research, Meg Riestenberg (513) 921-3986
Speakers Bureau, Morris Mercer (513) 941-2534

Newsletter Steve Pelikan (513) 681-2574

Wetland Matters, the newsletter for members of Oxbow, Inc., is published bimonthly.



Need a Speaker? Give Us a Call!

