



WETLAND *matters*

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

Oxbow Activities Schedule

Programs

Tuesday, July 11 2000, 7:30 p.m. at the Cincinnati Zoo in the Education Building. Steve Maslowski will show us the video, "Season of the Salmon." While working on this video, Steve had a good look at some of Alaska's grizzly bears.

Tuesday, August 8, 7:30 p.m. at Lawrenceburg Public Library. John Klein will talk about "The White Tail Deer." He will cover the problems with the ever increasing numbers of deer both in the parks and the neighborhood and possible solutions to the problem.

Field Trips

Saturday, July 22, 2000, 9:00 a.m. Meet Steve Pelikan (681-2554) at Gardens Alive! for a trip into the Oxbow area. Steve is good at finding butterflies and birds. And you might see other things as well.

Wednesday, August 30, 6:30 p.m. Meet Darlina Graham (581-2227) at Gardens Alive! for an evening walk around the Oxbow. The shore birds should be coming through as well as the long-legged wading birds. Darlina will help you find them.

Oxbow Region Nominated As "Important Bird Area" Designation Would Lead to Greater Protection for Birds

The National Audubon Society has joined with other organizations such as the American Bird Conservancy to identify "Important Bird Areas" throughout the nation, and the Oxbow is being considered as one.

The basic idea is to protect the places where birds breed, over-winter, or stop on migration. To qualify as an IBA, a site must meet at least one of the several rigorous criteria; that is, it must stand out from other areas because it has large concentrations of birds, has species of high conservation priority or birds associated with a unique habitat.

Once "Important Bird Areas" are identified, cooperative steps are taken to ensure their continued value as "safe havens" for birds. Local conservation groups, birdwatchers, public officials, and the private land owners or public land managers come together to plan the best possible management strategy for the area.

Already New York State has modeled its bird conservation law after the IBA Program, using it as a springboard for managing state-owned lands for the benefit of bird populations.

Dave Styer is representing Oxbow, Inc., on Audubon Ohio's IBA committee. The Oxbow region should well qualify for the listing since so many water fowl utilize it in their migrations and over 270 species of birds have been identified in the area at one time or another.

The IBA Program is one component of a many-faceted effort involving hundreds of non-profit groups and government agencies as well as corporations, known as "Partners in Flight."

Field Notes

by Morris Mercer

I have my notes from some of our field trips here beside me, but it will be difficult to write. I'm out on our deck looking across the Ohio at the green hills of Kentucky. It's a beautiful cool morning here in mid May. Chimney swifts are darting across the blue sky. Robins are busy in the yard. I can hear the Carolina wren singing in a tree across the street. Mourning doves are calling softly. The goldfinches and house finches are busy at the feeder, and the cardinal adds to the color. High above the river, a turkey vulture glides in the morning breeze. What a day!

If I wrote all that I've enjoyed about the spring in the year 2000, it would be more like a book than field notes. One morning that stands out in my mind was a morning Jim Simpson and I made a visit to the Oxbow. Our first stop was Jack Pot Pond where we saw many ducks working in the flooded weeds. Most of the birds were blue and green-winged teal, and they were so pretty in the morning sun. We didn't disturb them.

We moved on back to the big bend of the Oxbow. We saw 17 black vultures in the tree line leading away from the big bend of the Oxbow. On up at the high bank we stopped to look around. Across the water hole from us was a most tranquil scene. A pair of shovelers had their bills back between their wings as they enjoyed a nap. The male's side was toward us showing off his color. The hen's breast was toward us, and both birds rocked gently on the small ripples.

On along the willow-lined lake a group of about a dozen ring-necked ducks floated lazily in the morning sun. We saw several ducks working in the edge of the willows near Wood Duck Slough. We moved closer as Jim was hoping to get some pictures. An earlier flood had carried a large drift of corn stalks and dropped them on the bank of the Oxbow. Jim took his camera and began his crawl toward the water's edge.

He could stay low enough not to be seen, but the corn stalks were a little too dry for him to be quiet. And ducks do hear very well.

I had a great place to watch the whole scene unfold. What beauty was there before me. The trees at the Oxbow edge had small new leaves with dangling green lace. At the base of the trees the new green grass was about an ankle high. The grass was decorated with beautiful long stemmed violets. Overhead slow wing beats carried a long-legged great blue heron past a tall cottonwood.

A pair of wood ducks swam out into the open water. The male in the lead was all dressed in spring plumage. And I can't think of anything more beautiful than a wood duck in spring plumage. Just behind him was the hen. The white circle around her eye seemed extra bright. The woodies left a silver wake caught by the morning sun. Other wood ducks swam out in the open water. I don't think the ducks could see Jim, but I'm sure they heard him. The first pair took to the wing and flew low over the water toward Wood Duck Slough. I heard the cry of the wood ducks as they flew. It isn't a musical sound, but a sound I love to hear.

Jim was backing out as he didn't want to get them all up. I had counted 18 wood ducks, and had enjoyed a most memorable trip to the Oxbow.

Dave and Vicky, the Texas Mercers, came up for a spring visit. We had to check out the Oxbow and Shawnee Lookout. We enjoyed spring along the Great Miami and the wooded hillsides of Shawnee. One afternoon we saw more than a dozen deer. The deer were just lying in the woods and seemed to be enjoying a spring evening. On each of the several trips we made, we saw one or more wild turkeys.

One spring morning I received a phone call from Marsha Lane at Hidden Valley. She said she could see two common loons on the lake from her window. As we talked, she said, "Now there are four." That sure called for a trip to HV. We counted 9 loons all in spring plumage. Each time I see loons, I always wonder what northern lake will echo their haunting call in the summer.

Once again I would say this has been a most beautiful spring. The wild flowers have been so nice; I don't remember seeing the "Miami Mist" so pretty. The first evening we

heard the wood thrush was like hearing from an old friend. And there was the stop at Lost Bridge. We were happy to see the colony of cliff swallows had returned.

With Dave Styer's column, "Birds of the Oxbow," and Denis Conover's "Plants of the Oxbow," we hope to keep everyone up to date with what's happening around the Oxbow (the place we all love). What will the summer bring? We will need to keep our eyes open. See you at the Oxbow.



Plants of the Oxbow

Amur Honeysuckle

This exotic plant, introduced in the United States in 1896 and planted in southwest Ohio in 1960, has spread explosively and, if not curtailed, according to Denis Conover, threatens to alter the future structure and composition of forests. Some parts of the floodplain forest of the Oxbow area are starting to be overrun by the Amur honeysuckle, which crowds out native plants.

In association with Donald Geiger, Conover has developed a program to control Amur honeysuckle and replace it with native shrubs. Basically, the program consists of careful spraying of glyphosate at various times in the growth of the shrub. It also involves in some circumstances, cutting the trunk several centimeters above the ground and applying a 20 percent solution of glyphosate to the cut surface of the top of the stump. Conover found that many native herbaceous and woody plants appeared after the honeysuckles were killed.

Conover and Geiger developed their plan for eradication of the rogue honeysuckle at the Mt. St. John-Bergamo Nature Preserve in Beavercreek, Ohio.

Bassett Family Grant Received

Oxbow, Inc., gratefully acknowledges a \$500 grant from the Bassett Family Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation.

Birds of the Oxbow

The Cliff Swallow

On the first of June, Ray Sperger, Natural Resource Specialist at South Platte Park, Littleton, CO., and I went down to Lost Bridge to watch cliff swallows. Last year Morris Mercer and Jim Simpson discovered a cliff swallow colony on Lost Bridge, and that was the first breeding record we had in the Oxbow area for these swallows. They are back this year and have around 75 nests.

The nests are wonderful domed structures made of mud. Ray and I watched the swallows gather mud for their nests from the mud flats along the Great Miami River right at Lost Bridge. He says that along the South Platte River in Colorado, where cliff swallows are much more common, the swallows don't gather nesting mud so near-by. Perhaps good mud is a scarce commodity out there. Mud that sticks well when dry is essential because the nests are attached to vertical surfaces.

In Colorado, the bridge colonies are often much larger, taking all available space. Since the birds don't want to use their old nests, and since it takes two years for the weather to destroy the nests, many colonies will be active every other year. Here at Lost Bridge the colony wasn't so big last year, or perhaps the nests didn't survive one winter. At any rate, the swallows are back for a second year in a row. How well the nests persist we could check over winter.

Well protected or not, the location of the nests looks pretty precarious. I guess that some nests fall even before the nesting season is over. We have all heard the sensible advice: don't put all your eggs in one basket. According to Charles and Mary Brown in *The Birds of North America*, the cliff swallows have taken this advice. The females practice what is called brood parasitism; they lay eggs in other nests as well as their own. With this strategy, even if one female's nest falls, she won't likely lose all of her offspring.

We also looked for something else mentioned by the Browns: that this is the only North American swallow that customarily slants its wings downward when gliding. Ray and I saw this in the cliff swallows, but didn't at the time see other swallow species, so we couldn't compare gliding styles. *Dave Styer*

1999 Treasury Report

Oxbow* acquired about 40 acres in 1999, including an 8 acre pond connected to the Oxbow lake, for about \$87 thousand. Land prices remain high due to speculative interest in the area. Still, there is much yet to be acquired from willing sellers, and Oxbow continues to save for further opportunities to buy wetland in the Great Miami/Ohio river flood plain.

Oxbow gained about \$195 thousand in 1999. This large increase in savings includes a capital gain generated from the late Wm. R. Chase's gift of \$834 thousand made late in 1998. His gift also accounted for \$20 thousand in additional interest and dividends in 1999.

Projects continue to exist for the commercial development of the flood plain. Oxbow evaluates these, and represents the interests of the wetland before various public and private agencies as necessary. This expense, largely legal, amounted to about \$7 thousand in 1999. Most of the balance of the legal expense caption below was spent on land surveys, title insurance, and closing costs.

Administration and fundraising expense were about \$1,600, or a half per cent of revenue.

Oxbow is a 100% volunteer organization – there are no salaries, expense accounts, or offices – and is beholden to the generous support of the membership and public.

Mark M. Westrich, Treasurer

Income		Assets	
Dues	\$21,057.00	Cash & Investment	\$1,343,140.96
Donations	\$9,382.93	Land	\$514,785.03
Memorials	\$2,220.00	Easements Owned	\$231,963.28
Land Acquisition	\$1,354.00	Equipment	\$1,132.75
Interest	\$26,967.17	Book Stock	\$104.13
Dividend	\$10,890.00	Video Stock	\$930.00
Bird-A-Thon	\$8,077.33	Shirt Stock	\$3,177.91
Crop Income	\$21,325.50	Cap Stock	<u>\$122.21</u>
Book Sales	\$162.65	Assets	\$2,095,356.27
Video Sales	\$153.00	Debt	\$0.00
Shirt Sales	\$50.00	Equity	<u>\$2,095,356.27</u>
Cap Sales	\$36.00	Total	\$2,095,356.27
Stock + or - & Misc	<u>\$172,816.12</u>		
Revenue	\$274,491.70		
Postage&Phone	\$1,143.65		
Office Supplies	\$299.64		
Newsletter	\$2,120.57		
Taxes & Ins	\$2,428.74		
Legal	\$18,292.98		
Fund Raising	\$144.00		
Book Cost	\$97.50		
Video Cost	\$90.00		
Shirt Cost	\$30.63		
Cap Cost	\$17.96		
Misc	<u>\$54,453.32</u>		
Expenses	\$79,118.99		

* Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.

Book Review

The Mouth of the Great Miami
Along History's Path

by
Marjorie Byrnside Burress

This well researched work tells the story of the famous, the infamous, and the not so well known who had parts in the development of the area round the mouth of the Great Miami River.

Much of what was happening on a larger scale in the history of the nation is reflected in events that occurred in the region Ms. Burress writes about. She begins with the mound builders and then covers French explorers and then the English and the beginnings of the tide of settlers moving westward. There is reference to the impact of the American Revolution, the continuing problems with Shawnee Indians, the influence of William Henry Harrison, the attempt to make North Bend the major city in the area as river traffic increased, the coming of the railroads, and the reactions against slavery.

Ms. Burress tells her story with the use of interesting anecdotes gleaned from documents, letters, and newspaper articles.

She also covers the foundation of various communities in the area and the means such as ferries across the river whereby they were connected. She provides a complete description of the four bridges built on the same site each of which became known as "Lost Bridge."

It is obvious that the persons who came to this area were a hardy lot and were not frightened off by the Indian threat. Instead of bungalows they built blockhouses to repel attacks. They found an extraordinarily rich country with fertile soil and a great abundance of animals and fish. Reference is made to a herd of 300 buffalo in the area.

This is a book that belongs in every library in Ohio and Indiana and certainly should have a place in the collection of anyone who wants to know more about where he or she lives.

The book has a heavy paper cover and an attractive binding. Consisting of 160 pages, it costs \$16 including postage and handling. It is sold by mail order only from the author at 3289 Triplecrown Dr., North Bend, OH 45052.

Bill Bocklage

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Cincinnati Nature Center
Keeps Birdathon Going

Formerly sponsored by Oxbow, Inc., the annual Birdathon this year held May 12 and 13 under auspices of the Cincinnati Nature Center had eight teams in competition.

Three teams represented Oxbow, Inc. The "Fire and Brimstone Birders," consisting of Joe Bens, Paul Wharton and Jay Stenger identified 132 species while the "No see-ums", Dave Styer, Steve Pelikan, and Charlie Saunders, found 126. The "Geriatric Gents and Two Juniors" who consisted of Karl Maslowski, George Laycock, Jerry Meyer and Bob Schrimper had a list of 86 species.

Laycock, author of several books and a regular contributor to *Audubon Magazine*, had this comment: "We find that the length of our bird list is inversely proportional to the age of the observers. Trotting along the trails and through the briars, we peered into every promising tree and bush, sandbar and wet area, large and small. The high points were a Prothonotary Warbler and an Apple Turnover." The Gents meet at an Amish bakery in Adams County.

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 known 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.

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

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