



WETLAND *matters*

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

BIRDATHON SCHEDULED FOR MAY 11 & 12

Activities Schedule

Programs

Tuesday, March 13, 2001, 7:30 p.m., Cincinnati Zoo Educational Building. Dr. Chuck Cornett, an analytic chemist at the College of Mt. St. Joseph, will give us a report on the research he has made in the Oxbow area. Chuck also will show some of the beauty of the Oxbow as caught by the digital camera.

Tuesday, April 10, 2001, 7:30 p.m., Lawrenceburg Public Library. John Klein will tell us about some of the restoration and other work going on in the Hamilton County parks. He will show a video entitled "As Wild as Can Be."

Field Trips

Sunday, March 11, 2001, 8:30 a.m. Meet Jay Stenger at Gardens Alive for a look at the wildlife around the Oxbow. This should be the heart of the waterfowl northern migration. (522-8147)

Saturday, April 14, 2001, 8:00 a.m. Meet Darlena Graham at Gardens Alive. Here is a chance to check the Oxbow area in early spring. Darlena will help you find the wildlife. (859-581-2227)

The Cincinnati Nature Center Center will sponsor the annual Birdathon from 5:00 p.m. May 11 to 5:00 p.m. May 12.

Representing Oxbow, Inc. will be three teams: the "No See 'Ums" (Dave Styer, Steve Pelikan and Charlie Saunders), the "Fire and Brimstone Birders' Guild" (Paul Wharton, Joe Bens and Jay Stenger) and the Geritric Gents and a Jr. (Carl Maslowski, George Laycock and Jerry Meyer). Others may participate either as teams or individuals.

A pledge form may be found on page 5 of this issue of *Wetland Matters*.

This will be the thirteenth year the Birdathon has been held. In the previous twelve years, nearly \$100,000 has been raised by its participants. Nearly 200 species have been identified in one year.

Bill Creasy, Cincinnati Nature Center's Chief Environmental Educator, is chairman of this event. Additional information will appear in the next issue of *Wetland Matters*.

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Field Notes

By Morris Mercer

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Winter came to the Oxbow in November and we had a record number of days below freezing for November and December. Then came the snow and we had a White Christmas. Once again I thought of how my brother and our gang used to rejoice when the snow came. People would tell us that we wouldn't like snow when we were older. I'm much, much older and still like winter with its beautiful snow.

The Oxbow, Beaver Pond, Cemetery Lake and the smaller water holes all froze early. The Great Miami River, the large gravel pit next to Lost Bridge and Hidden Valley Lake still had some open water and were some good places to see waterfowl. Jim Simpson and I made several trips into the area at Christmas time. We drove by Harrison's Tomb, up Cliff Road to Rittenhouse, on to Mt. Nebo. How beautiful was the big valley of the Ohio and the snow covered hills!

As we drove down Mt. Nebo we saw two redtailed hawks in the air, and another sitting on a bare branch. At the corner where Mt. Nebo joins Lawrenceburg Road, we saw 11 black vultures. Some one had killed some deer and dumped the carcasses in the old gravel pit where the vultures found them.

We drove out on Lost Bridge and saw a few ducks and geese in the Miami back in the still spots and out of the way of the floating ice. Across the bridge we saw a large gang of geese in the air. There were a couple of hundred Canada geese coming down fast on fixed wings. They were on their way to join a couple of hundred Canadas already on the ground in the field of snow-covered corn stubble. In with the geese in the air was a lone swan. The sounds of the wild geese as they glided into the snow-covered field was a scene and a sound to remember.

North of the road was the large gravel pit and it was about 90% ice-covered and it was white as it was frozen when the snow came. The open water looked black and was full of ducks and geese enjoying a swim. Many others seemed to enjoy sitting on the ice. The large number of ducks were mallards and blacks, but there were a few red bills to be seen, the male common merganser, a few ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, a couple of red-breasted mergansers. Then there were those wide-shaped heads of the canvasbacks with their backs so white. What a handsome bird! Some of the ducks busied themselves in the water. Some ducked their heads under and threw ice water over their backs and

splashed with joy. A mallard would give out with a noisy quack, as if to say, "All is right with the world."

We left this peaceful scene as we wanted to check Hidden Valley Lake. Here again 90% of the water was ice-covered. But the water was alive with ducks and geese. Again many birds were in the water and many just resting on the ice. There was a nice group of bufflehead, a hundred or more coots and many of the same species we had just seen at the gravel pit. We soon turned back toward Lost Bridge. When we were about half way between E'town and Lost Bridge, we saw a flock of horned larks in the air.

The horned larks were working the fields on both sides of the road. On a closer look we saw we had visitors from the far north. There among the horned larks were Lapland longspurs. It is like magic--sometimes with the snow comes the Lapland longspur, and when the snow goes so does the longspur. I've seen snow and no longspurs, but I've never seen longspurs with no snow. Just one more reason to enjoy the snow.

In late afternoon we were driving along the road at the Cleves end of Lost Bridge. In the field that has been made by filling in the old gravel pit, we saw eight wild turkeys and seven deer. We then saw many deer in the snow-covered hills of Shawnee Lookout. One was a fine looking buck with a nice rack.

Early 2001 found Frances and me in the south. We were to spend some time with Vicky and Dave, the Texas Mercers, and with Noel and Katie Mercer, our grandchildren. While in Sugar Land we made a trip to the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. We didn't see any of the prairie chickens, a species they are trying to keep from going belly-up, but we did see a lot of wildlife: several large flocks of snow geese with many white-fronted geese feeding with them. This year we saw a field full of Canada geese.

Attwater NWR has some nice water holes. Pintail Marsh was loaded with waterfowl. Lots of pintail, mallard, blue- and green-winged teal, shovelers, and lots of ruddy ducks. We saw a white pelican, great blue heron, white-faced ibis, white ibis, red-tailed hawk, white-tailed hawk, crested caracara, and there seemed to be from one to four marsh hawks in the air at all times. Sure enjoyed seeing them.

There was one thing new for me. Vicky took us out to Attwater in her new SUV with sunroof. There I was leaning back looking straight up at the snow geese overhead, and I saw a white-tailed hawk through the sunroof. (I need one of those!) Oh yes, we did see a gator for Frances, but not through the sun roof.

What a great season is coming up at the Oxbow. Late winter and early spring. This is the best time to see migrating water fowl. It could be, as the kids say, "awesome." If you missed the snows, don't miss this.

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Birds of the Oxbow

Lapland Longspurs

By David Styer

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It's Groundhog Day 2001; it's bright and cold. The groundhog will certainly see its shadow if it wishes to brave the cold. Six more weeks of winter! I'm making plans for mid-March and these plans are centered on Lapland longspurs.

Lapland longspurs breed in the arctic tundra around the world and they like the wide-open spaces. In winter they go south and we usually see them with flocks of horned larks and, perhaps, some snow buntings.

In reading about Lapland longspurs I am reminded of how short the arctic summers are. When one bird starts to nest, all start to nest. There is no time to spare. In Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*, Francis L. Williamson points out that "The same general and striking synchrony of activities in any single locality is apparent over the entire range of the species." I wonder whether this predisposes them to migrate together.

We don't see longspurs in the Greater Cincinnati area every year, but severe winter weather seems to bring them. Around here, it is always a treat to see Lapland longspurs; even on winters when they are seen, they may only be around for a few days. Whenever we see wintering flocks of horned larks we listen for the rattle call that tells you a longspur is among them. We scan the lark flocks for sparrow-like birds traveling with them because these would likely be Lapland longspurs or snow buntings.

To gain a little more geographic perspective on our longspur records I checked various books. In *Birds of Massachusetts*, Forbush states that "The Lapland longspur is seen rarely in the interior of New England and is uncommon generally on the coast."

Bruce Peterjohn in his excellent book, *The Birds of Ohio*, writes that "Since 1960, the largest winter flocks are generally composed of 50- 100 individuals. Concentrations of 400 laplands in Marion County on January 8, 1984, and 1176 on the 1961 Tiffin Christmas Bird Count are exceptional for recent years."

Moving slightly farther west, Mumford and Keller (*The Birds of Indiana*) write that "During early

spring, in the extensive grassland and cultivated fields of western Indiana, it is sometimes possible to see single flocks of Lapland longspurs that contain a thousand birds." There is a clear trend: there are more longspurs as we go west.

Finally, I checked half a dozen Christmas Bird Counts. The maximum numbers seen on any count were always seen in Kansas. There, several counts would record a thousand Lapland longspurs. On New Year's Day, 1992, the hardy birders in Liberal, Kansas, counted 66,910 Lapland longspurs!

However, west of the plains the wintering population of Lapland longspurs is very small.

Back home, the 1998-99 winter was extraordinary. A severe storm hit us in early January and Lapland longspurs showed up all over. Around the tenth, they seemed to be in every field. A few days later, they were hard to find: the usual condition. Maybe they continued south. Perhaps they just dispersed widely over open fields. I don't know. But in mid-March an interesting thing happened. Flocks of longspurs showed up in and near the Oxbow area. Unlike the plain-colored Lapland longspurs we nearly always see here, many of the males were in breeding plumage with striking black, white and chestnut colored heads with bright yellow bills.

On 13 March, 1999, Paul Wharton led a field trip for the Indiana Audubon Society. I quote the comments he put on Ned Keller's web page: "There were 2 flocks of horned larks and Lapland longspurs. The first flock was of approx. 1000 birds along Kilby Rd., mile N of Rt. 50. It was about 70% horned larks. The second flock was just behind the Miller Cemetery (Oxbow area) and was very close to our group. It consisted of approx. 600 birds --400+/- Lapland longspurs, 200 horned larks and 10 snow buntings. Many of the longspurs were in their breeding plumage or very close to it. These birds were definitely the highlights of the day."

The winter of 1998-99 is the second most extraordinary in Cincinnati area history with respect to Lapland longspurs. This winter has witnessed the biggest flocks of longspurs ever seen here. On 16 December, 2000, the Ohio River Christmas Bird Count tallied 254 Lapland longspurs. This count includes the Oxbow area. Only one longspur had been seen during the count in previous years. On 23 December, the Western Hamilton County Christmas Bird counters found an unheard-of 3034 Lapland longspurs. This far exceeds any previous record for the Greater Cincinnati area.

If, two years ago, the birds were returning on their northbound journey in mid-March, maybe they'll do the same this year. At any rate, as spring approaches I plan to be out there looking.

**Church Council
Names Oxbow, Inc.
Beneficiary**

The congregation of the Third Protestant Memorial Church which closed its doors last year, through their Church Council, chose Oxbow, Inc. and 12 others to benefit from their Endowment Fund with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. It was their wish that the church's assets benefit non-profit organizations that are doing good work in the local community.

Beginning in 2002, the Endowment Fund will issue an annual grant to the selected organizations. Oxbow's name was submitted to the congregation by Ken and Shirley Durbin who were members of the church.

Oxbow wishes to thank Mr. and Mrs. Durbin for their confidence in, and support of, the work Oxbow is doing to preserve a unique wetland ecosystem.

ADDRESS CORRECTION?

Once a year Oxbow's membership committee and the U. S. Postal Service ask you to inspect the mailing label on your *WETLAND MATTERS*. Your zip code should include the four-digit residence location number.

If your listing is correct, great! If not, please mail corrections and/or additions to:

Oxbow, Inc.
4137 Jamestown Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45205-2007

Correction

In the last issue of *Wetland Matters*, the wrong names were listed for election to three-year terms on Oxbow, Inc., Board of Trustees. The list should have read: Morris Mercer, Patti Niehoff, Dr. Aaron Perlman and Mark Westrich. Apologies to all concerned.

**Results of
January Oxbow, Inc.
Elections**

At the January, 2001, board meeting, Oxbow, Inc., trustees elected the following officers to a one-year term:

President	Norma L. Flannery
Vice President	Morris Mercer
Recording Secy.	Patti Niehoff
Treasurer	Mark Westrich
Corresponding Secy.	Suzanne Skidmore
Ohio Agent	David Styer
Indiana Agent	John Getzendanner

Four incumbents were re-elected to three-year terms on the Board of Trustees:

Morrie Mercer
Patti Niehoff
Dr. Aaron Perlman
Mark Westrich

Two new board members elected were:

Jerry Lippert
Jon Seymour

Also, Dwight Poffenberger has joined the Oxbow, Inc., board as a new member. The Trustees welcome him aboard and, as Norma says, "We promise to waste no time in utilizing his talents."

Sierra Club Opposes Little Miami Bridge

Cincinnati's Little Miami River, a National Wild and Scenic River since 1980, may have a new highway bridge across it if a \$77 million highway project goes through. The Sierra Club asks Oxbow members to write Governor Robert Taft before April 15 to halt the project, suggesting instead alternatives such as light rail or expanded bus service. Taft's address:

GOV. BOB TAFT
C/O Michael Cull

Transportation Review Advisory Council
Ohio Department of Transportation
1980 West Broad St., Columbus, OH 43223

Sierra Club outings of interest to all include:

Sat., Mar. 17, Hiking, birding, paddling	(513) 922-2104
Sun., Apr. 8, four mile wildflower hike	(513) 542-3331
Wed., Apr. 11, After work bike ride	(513) 761-0701

All Outings Revolve 'Round Little Miami River

MEMORIALS

Donor

Margaret M. Cooke
 Peggy Macneale
 Homer and Ginny McCune
 Norma L. Flannery
 Oak Crest Animal Hospital
 Cheryl L. Devine, D.V.M.
 Pat Shanklin

In Memory of

Mary E. Hultgren
 Mary E. Hultgren
 Mary E. Hultgren
 Mark R. Schibi
 Boomer Terhar

Alberta Wilson

Donor

Stan and Debbie Boehmer
 "Happy Holidays" for
 Kathy, Dave and Jason LaDow
 "In Honor of Their Wedding"

Tributes

Norma Flannery

Russ and Jinny
 Witte

Special thanks to the Oak Crest Animal Hospital for its continuing support. It is much appreciated!

Oxbow, Inc. Expresses Deep Thanks for the Following Grants:

V. Anderson Coombe for a grant from The Lorika
 Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation

E. Marshall Tucker Fund

Helen G., Henry F. and Louise Tuechter Dornette
 Foundation

Tree Packet /Groundcover Program

March 16 is the deadline to place your order for the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's tree packet and groundcover program. A variety of trees, shrubs and groundcover is available at very low cost. You may phone the District office at (513) 772-7645 for further information or request a free brochure.

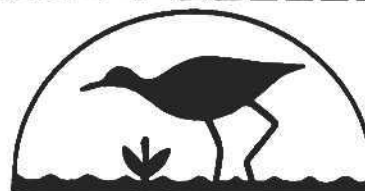
Pick-up date is April 7 from either of two locations: Diamond Oaks Career Center (west side) or Triangle Office Park (northeast).

14th Annual Winton Woods Cleanup

Oxbow, Inc., members are invited to help out the 14th Annual Winton Woods Cleanup Saturday, April 21 from 9 a.m. to noon, rain or shine. All volunteers are asked to meet at Kestrel Point Picnic Shelter located beside Winton Center off Winton Road at 8:45 a.m. to register.

This event, sponsored by the Forest Park Environmental Awareness Program and the Hamilton County Park District, last year saw 300 volunteers pick up 6 tons of litter in less than three hours. Bags and a limited number of gloves are furnished. After the cleanup, there will be free raffle prizes and a cookout for the workers.

BIRDATHON '01 Pledge Form



Name: _____

Address: _____

Mail to:

Oxbow, Inc.
 PO Box 43391
 Cincinnati, OH 45243

My pledge is per species found:

___ \$1 ___ 50¢ ___ 25¢ ___ 20¢ ___ 10¢ other: _____
 or for this amount: _____

My pledge is for:

___ Oxbow Team #1 (Geriatric Gents)
 ___ Oxbow Team #2 (Fire and Brimstone)
 ___ Oxbow Team #3 (No See 'Ums)
 ___ Highest Scoring Oxbow Team

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		

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, Patti Niehoff	(513) 321-0510
Corresponding Secretary, Suzanne Skidmore	(513) 561-5718
Treasurer, Mark Westrich	(812) 637-2175
Ohio Agent, Dave Styer	(513) 772-1287
Indiana Agent, John Getzendanner	(812) 537-5728

Committee Chairpersons

Conservation, Bill Bocklage	(513) 922-2445
Easement Inspection, Richard Pope	(812) 637-1365
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
Jon Seymour	(513) 634-2748
Newsletter Bill Bocklage	(513) 922-2445

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

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**Need a Speaker?
Give Us a Call!**

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