



WETLAND *matters*

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

Calendar

Field Trips

Saturday May 19 9:00 A.M. Oxbow field trip. Meet Steve Wagner at the upper boat ramp parking lot of Shawnee Lookout Park. Nesting birds should already have arrived in the park.

Saturday June 23 10:00 A.M. Oxbow field trip.

Meet David Styer and Steve Pelikan at the Gardens Alive! parking lot for this trip into the Oxbow area concentrating on butterflies and other insects.

Meetings

Tuesday May 8 7:30 PM Oxbow meeting at the Cincinnati Zoo's Education Building. Dr. John Ferner from the Biology Department of Thomas Moore College will present this evening's program, sharing with us some of what he saw on a trip to Australia.

Tuesday June 12 7:30 PM. Oxbow meeting at the Lawrenceburg Public Library. Steve Pelikan and David Styer will give us a program on "Watching Butterflies and Other Bugs" to get us ready for the June field trip.

Bill Bocklage

Bill Bocklage died March 13th. He served for many years on Oxbow's board as Conservation Chairman and as editor of Wetland Matters. He also was active with the local chapter of the Audubon Society. As Conservation Chair, Bill used his writing skills to present Oxbow's concerns and opinions to legislators. He also served as Oxbow's liaison to many other conservation organizations.



An avid birder, Bill participated in Oxbow's Birdathons. He probably went afield at one time or another with just about everyone from the tri-state who was interested in birds, usually playing the role of patient teacher and charming companion.

In the early 1950's Bill served on the board of the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee, a group dedicated to improving race relations in Cincinnati.

For over half a century Bill was concerned with and worked to solve problems of environmental protection and social justice — problems that are still very much with us today. If we can't have Bill any more, then we at least need a lot more people like him.

Field Notes

Morris Mercer

Today was a delightful spring day and it seemed fitting to use the evening to review my late winter field notes. There were a few scenes that I only heard about: sightings of Bald Eagles. Paul Wharton found an Eagle on the Beaver Pond, and John Klein told me about one he'd seen. An Eagle was reported catching fish out of the flooded parking lot next to the Shawnee Lookout Boat Ramp. I wish I'd been there to see that.

On Tuesday, January 30th, Oxbow held its winter walk at Shawnee Lookout Park. For the first time in many years we had a night more like spring than winter. About the only thing cold was the rain. Not too surprising, but the turn-out was light. Our leader, John Klein, took the gang on a walk in the rain. We will hope for lots of snow next year.

On February 24th I met Jim Simpson and a group from Dayton Audubon at Gardens Alive! We were able to fit everyone into two vans for a trip into the Oxbow. The river had been to 40 feet earlier in the week — enough to flood the inside field at the Oxbow. The river fell to 32, leaving puddles in the fields and lots of mud. The conditions were perfect for ducks.

Jim led the group out for a look at the ducks while I waited reluctantly in the van. When they returned we moved down toward the big bend. Across the flooded willows we saw a gang of wood ducks working in a wooded water hole. The group went with Jim down to where they could see all the ducks on the big bend. When they returned we drove around to look at Jack-Pot Pond. Here we found some early Shovelers, a flock of Pintail, Ring-necked Ducks, and the beautiful Green-winged Teal. Trip done, we drove back to Gardens Alive and went our separate ways. Jim and I went to Skyline for lunch.

After lunch we went back to the Oxbow to see if we could get close enough for me to see all the ducks. The big bend was alive with them. There were Blacks, Mallards, Pintail, Gadwall, Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Redhead and about any species you'd care to mention. The Mallards seemed to be talking politics with their loud quacking, but there were the softer, more musical voices of Baldpate to be heard as well. There were so many gulls in the air it seemed as if we were at the sea shore.

Just when I said to myself "It doesn't get any better than this," IT DID. The air was filled with the cries of the ole wild geese. Canada Geese seemed to be coming from everywhere. They were dropping in where ever there was room to set down. I estimate that there were between 400 and 500 of them. "They'll have to take turns to find a place to swim," I thought...

I wish everyone could see the Oxbow as it was that afternoon.

Karl Maslowski, George Laycock and I met for our annual St Patrick's Day search for Green-winged Teal. The morning was cloudy, cool and we had a little bit of light rain at times. It had rained for several days before, so there was plenty of mud. But there wasn't any standing water in the fields, which is strange for this time of year. We didn't see any large flocks of ducks, but did encounter several species that Karl and George hadn't seen yet this year. Shoveler, Gadwall, Red-breasted Merganser, and Bufflehead.

The mud kept us out of some places where the teal hang out, and we hadn't seen a Green-winged Teal when Karl, who'd brought the Lorna Doone cookies, announced that because it was near noon, we didn't have to see a teal to earn the cookies — any bird that began with a 'G' would do. Thinking "Gadwall" he opened the cookies. They were good.

This was the first year we haven't found Green-winged Teal. I'd seen some earlier in the year, and have seen them since, but not on St. Pat's Day. We all agreed to another teal search next St Patrick's Day. Karl will bring the cookies.

On Tuesday, March 13th, I lost a friend and Oxbow lost its Conservation Chairman and the editor of its newsletter. I've known Bill Bocklage for years. We've enjoyed field trips together and shared time on the Great Miami in a canoe. Bill, Meg, and I car-pooled to Oxbow board meetings and found we agreed about so many things that we felt very close. While Bill was the editor of Wetland Matters, I would sometimes drop by his house to give him my field notes and then enjoy a visit with him and Jean. I will miss him.



BIRDATHON '01

Oxbow's annual fund raising event is a birdathon. Participants solicit pledges of money for each species of bird they identify and then spend a 24 hour period in early May searching for birds. This year the birding part of the event will be held from 5:00 P.M. Friday May 11th to 5:00 P.M. Saturday May 12th.

Birdathon participants compete in self selected categories, such as "Most birds found in a single county" and "Most birds found without using fossil fuels". But the real goal is to raise funds for conservation.

In the past teams have entered from The Cincinnati Nature Center, RAPTOR, Gilmore Ponds, Cincinnati Zoo, Northern Kentucky Bird Club and the Cincinnati Bird Club.

Oxbow will enter 3 teams in the contest this year.

Oxbow's Birdathon Teams.

You are invited to pledge your support for any and all of the teams (or for the highest scoring team).

Oxbow Team #1 Geriatric Gent's and a Junior (Karl Maslowski will assemble a team of his associates and friends.)

Oxbow Team #2 The Fire and Brimstone Birders Guild (Joe Bens, Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger)

Oxbow Team #3 The No See 'Ums (David Styer, Charlie Saunders, Lauren Saunders and Steve Pelikan)

You'll find a pledge coupon on page 7 of this Wetland Matters. Please send it in with your pledge. After birdathon is over you'll receive a memo of what your pledge comes to as well as an account of the adventures of Oxbow's teams. As you can imagine, it is impossible to spend 24 hours outdoors without have several adventures worth recounting to your sponsors!



American Pipits: a Case of Mistaken Identity

David Styer

Last December large flocks of Lapland longspurs moved through this area. To get some idea if they were going south or just wandering, I decided to spend a fair amount of time in March in their wide open field habitat. If they had gone south, then I might see them again as they migrated north. I have now spent a fair amount of time in the open fields, but I haven't seen a trace of a longspur. As a consequence of being in the fields I have seen many more northward bound American pipits than I usually do.

American pipits nest in arctic or alpine tundra, and most of them spend the winter in the southern United States. Pipits migrate through the Oxbow area in spring and fall, although I have a tale to relate about pipits in California. The story is related to the fact that many 'birds of a feather flock together.' We learn that many birds spread out during the breeding season to defend a nesting territory. It makes sense for a pair to have a territory large enough to feed themselves and their growing young. But then why bother to form a flock at all? Why don't birds set up and defend feeding territories all year round? To find answers to these questions I turned to *Ornithology*, by Frank B. Gill. He writes that "the answers lie in the inescapable daily concerns of foraging efficiency and predation risk." In other words, a flock of birds is better than a single bird at finding food and at avoiding predators.

My friend Jenny Purcell is an ardent conservationist and a beginning birder. She also frequently takes her mountain bike on the Ft. Ord grassland trails (in Monterey County, California). When I went to California in February Jenny reported flocks of around thirty American pipits she had been seeing while on her bike trips. Pipits are winter residents in coastal California, but I hadn't seen them at Ft. Ord [where I inventory birds for the Bureau of Land Management] before this winter, since I'm usually there in summer.

We agreed to go together to the grasslands so that she could show me the pipits. We drove to the top of Skyline Road, but no flock was evident. We drove part way down Oil Well Road with no luck. We stopped, and Jenny saw a flock fly across the road we had just descended. I looked, not quite in time, but they were too far away for me. We started walking up the road, and some flew up. I said that they looked like western meadowlarks, and distant pipits would look more like horned larks.

We approached closer and concluded that the flock was meadowlarks. Jenny then realized that what she had thought were American pipits were actually western meadowlarks, a beginner's mistake. After all, the field guides make it pretty clear that Ft. Ord is in the winter range of the pipits, and that they travel in flocks in grasslands in winter. Jenny knew western meadowlarks from the summer, when the bright birds were spread over breeding territories. What she didn't realize was that the meadowlarks were duller colored, and changed to flock behavior in winter. Perhaps she never got very close in winter; we certainly didn't that day.

As we drove back up toward Skyline Road to leave I saw a flock of birds walking around in the grass on a knoll. A quick stop and inspection with binoculars showed that they were American pipits! They flew up and around us, and back down. I counted thirty-nine. This was Jenny's introduction to American pipits. In one way Jenny was right all along: if pipits are a "fairly common" winter resident of Monterey County grasslands, then a flock should have been at Ft. Ord in winter, and, by golly, it was.

Flannery To Be Honored

Oxbow's President, Norma L. Flannery, has been chosen the winner in the Volunteer Leadership category of the 2001 National Wetlands Award. The NWA program is co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration's National Marine Service. Each year awards are presented to individuals who exemplify excellence and innovation in wetlands protection, restoration, and education.

Norma remarked that Oxbow's accomplishments should be attributed to its members, not its president. But everyone who knows how completely dedicated she is to pursuing Oxbow's objectives is gratified by this well deserved national recognition of her efforts.

To learn more about the NWA program, visit the WEB page www.eli.org/nwa/nwaprogram.htm

2000 Treasury Report

Oxbow* continues to save for further opportunities to buy wetland in the Great Miami/Ohio River flood plain. There is yet much land to be acquired from willing sellers, but prices are high due to continuing commercial interest in the area.

Oxbow earned about \$122 thousand in 2000. This large increase resulted from \$78 thousand in interest, \$23 thousand for crop land rental, and \$39 thousand from member support.

Projects continue to exist for commercial development of the flood plain. Oxbow evaluates these, and represents the interests of the wetland before various private and public agencies as necessary. This expense, largely legal, was about \$4 thousand in 2000. Water quality and plant inventory research projects amounted to about \$6 thousand. Insurance expense increased with greater protection of our holdings.

Administrative and fundraising expenses were about \$1500, or a half percent of revenue

A financial audit was performed and our records were found in order.

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 the public.

Mark M. Westrich, Treasurer

Net Income	
Dues	\$22,557.00
Donations	\$8,891.43
Memorials	\$2,820.00
Land Acquisition	\$1,717.00
Interest	\$77,773.78
Bird-A-Thon	\$3,959.12
Crop Income	\$22,781.50
Book/Video	\$51.00
Misc	(\$124.90)
Revenue	\$140,425.93
Postage&Phone	\$1,172.52
Office Supplies	\$352.20
Newsletter	\$1,500.35
Taxes & Ins	\$4,256.28
Legal	\$3,609.17
Book/Video	\$27.50
Misc	\$7,237.75
Expenses	\$18,155.77
Net Income	\$122,270.16

Assets	
Cash & Investment	\$1,463,438.62
Land	\$516,785.03
Easements Owned	\$231,963.28
Equipment	\$1,132.75
Book Stock	\$96.63
Video Stock	\$910.00
Shirt Stock	\$3,177.91
Cap Stock	<u>\$122.21</u>
Assets	\$2,217,626.43
Debt	\$0.00
Equity	<u>\$2,217,626.43</u>
Total	\$2,217,626.43

*Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.

Oxbow Memorials

Donor

Linda White and Terry Thompson
Frances Wittrock
Normal L. Flannery
Jim, Carol and Amy Bitsenhofer
The Kuhlman Family
Clifforn and Patsy Budke

Michael J. Nolan

In memory of

Bill Bocklage
Bill Bocklage
Julie Godsey
Gertrude Schaefer
Mark R. Schibi
Hester and Bernice
Stephenson
Jack Torbeck

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. Contributions should be sent to Oxbow, Inc., P.O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391. Be sure to include the names and address of those to receive the acknowledgement.



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

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Recording Secretary, Patti Niehoff	(513) 321-0510
Corresponding Secretary, Suzanne Skidmore	(513) 561-5718
Treasurer, Mark Westrich	(812) 637-2175
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Protecting Wetlands
Founded 1983