



# WETLAND *matters*

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

Have you visited our website?...[www.oxbowinc.org](http://www.oxbowinc.org)

## **“A River Runs Through It” 56.2 Acres Purchased**

### **Completing the Dream** *by Jon Seymour*

In 1985 about 20 individuals sat in a room and decided to try to save the Oxbow flood plain from industrial development. I was not there but many of the great names in conservation in the Cincinnati/Lawrenceburg area were.

They passed a hat and collected enough money to incorporate as Oxbow, Inc. In 18 years through the generosity of the people in the tri-state area and beyond we were able to purchase over 700 acres and purchase conservation easements on nearly 300 more acres. We have been enormously successful.

However we are not done! Actually our greatest challenge may still lie before us. We still have nearly 600 acres of bottom land left to protect and one parcel of that land belonging to a single owner is about 450 acres in size. We have never purchased so much property from a single owner. In the last 4 years we have done very well purchasing several small properties and with the aid of several large donations, small grants, farm income, memberships, and memorials, we have managed to stay financial healthy.

Purchasing a 450 acre parcel from a single owner will undoubtedly exceed our bank balance and we will need to raise funds to make the purchase. While we can be creative in the terms we make to reach a deal of this magnitude we would still be likely to be many dollars short. We have raised large sums of money before but in this age of cut backs many charities have had to turn to public appeals; the prospects of competition for the charitable dollar are daunting to say the least.

That is where we have our ace-in-the-hole. We have the Oxbow, Inc. organization and its owner

As of November 14, 2003, Oxbow, Inc. is the new owner of 56.2 acres, seven of which are on the east bank of the Great Miami River. President Jon Seymour announced, “This is our first property on that side of the river and we can now say that the Great Miami River runs right through our property.”

Jon , Treasurer Mark Westrich, Attorney Tim Mara and Oxbow Inc.’s Indiana Attorney Bill Ewan completed the purchase which the late Board Member Mark Esposito diligently had researched for months. The land was property of CSX, the railroad previously called the Chessie System.

*(For more details, see page 2.)*

## **Helen Wing Estate Benefits Oxbow, Inc.**

A long-time member of Oxbow, Inc. has remembered Oxbow, Inc. in her will. Cincinnati Helen Wing has given \$17,943.66 to help preserve our wetlands. She, without fanfare, cared about conservation matters and wanted “to make a difference.” Other nature groups also benefitted from her estate. Oxbow, Inc. is most grateful to Helen Wing.

members. This may be one of the most fantastic groups of volunteers that has ever come together. All the members are owners of Oxbow, Inc. and they act like it.

I will be keeping you informed of our attempts to continue to expand our ownership of the land within the Oxbow flood plain. While the task ahead of us may be daunting, the people of Oxbow, Inc. are the ones that I believe can rise to this challenge and complete the dream.

# CSX Property -- 56.2 Acres -- Now in Oxbow, Inc. Hands

*by President Jon Seymour*

On Friday, November 14, 2003, Mark Westrich, Tim Mara, and I met in Bill Ewan's office in Lawrenceburg to finalize the purchase of property north and south of the CSX railroad trestle crossing the Great Miami River. This was an exciting moment for me since this is the first purchase I have presided over since becoming President of this organization. The purchase amounted to 56.2 acres.

The property consists of about 25 acres south of the CSX railroad trestle and about 32 acres north of the trestle. CSX insisted on maintaining ownership of a very wide right of way of 200 feet on either side of the center of the trestle. Normally this would be a 60 foot right of way but the complexities of constructing another trestle when the current one needs to be replaced dictate a need for lots of room.

This purchase is significant in several ways. It nearly doubles the acreage east of I-275 that will be

available for next year's hunting season. This will continue our concept of allowing hunting along the edge of the preserve while maintaining a large center core safe area, free from hunting. This model is successful with many of the National Wildlife Refuges in the United States and is consistent with our policy of recognizing the hunter's role in conservation. The purchase also gives Oxbow, Inc. its first land on the east bank of the Great Miami River. This came as a surprise to us and is the result of the constantly shifting flow of the Great Miami. We can say for the first time that the Great Miami runs through Oxbow, Inc. property.

This purchase also completes our ownership of the island at the mouth of the Great Miami River.

(Please visit our website at [oxbowinc.org](http://oxbowinc.org) and to view and print the complete map of Oxbow, Inc. property.)



*The Great Miami River runs through Oxbow, Inc. land recently purchased from CSX.*

*On the other side of the RR track is the additional section of the purchase.*

## Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

<i>Donor</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Sue Anderson	Robert C. Anderson
Donald Pollack, D.D.S.	James Arner
Oak Crest Animal Hospital	Midas Conway
Ronald & Jean Noll	Dale Durbin
Joanna Chappell	Mark Esposito
John & Nancy Getzendanner	Mark Esposito
Jason Kaffenberger	Mark Esposito
Larry & Karen Kinnett	Mark Esposito
Rebekah Kinnett	Mark Esposito
Jim & Cynthia Swango	Mark Esposito
John & Judith Wade	Mark Esposito
Cathy Cole	Norma Flannery
Eugene Knapp	Norma Flannery
Nancy Haynes	Frances Mercer
Eugene Knapp	Frances Mercer
George & Jean Perbix	Frances Mercer
Cynthia Starr	Frances Mercer
Oak Crest Animal Hospital	Max Tomlinson

### *Tribute*

Steve Pelikan & Anita Buck to Mary Uhlenbrock who sewed the nets for Steve's insect traps.

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 enclose the names and addresses of those to receive the acknowledgement.



## Oxbow Inc. Activities Schedule

### Programs

Tuesday, January 13, 2004, 7:30 p.m.  
EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College

**Presented by CREW**, the Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife located at the Cincinnati Zoo. A special speaker will present the concept and research programs of this fascinating facility. CREW conducts reproductive research in a wide variety of animals and plants focused on preserving threatened species. **ALSO ELECTIONS.**

Tuesday, February 10, 2004, 7:30 p.m.  
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

**Our President Jon Seymour** will talk on "The Wildlife of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Texas." This will be a photo tour from car and boat, including shots of the scarce whooping crane.

The Lawrenceburg Library is downtown at 123 High Street. Take a left off US 50 onto Walnut Street and then right on High Street.

### Field Trip

Saturday, February 12, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

**Meet Darlena Graham** at the Oxbow parking lot for an early morning stroll. With luck, ducks will be passing through the Oxbow on spring migration.

To get to the new parking lot, turn south from Rt.50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the cement plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left and that's it.

**Please Note: No January walk.** The traditional owl walk at Shawnee Lookout Park is postponed because of deer culling in the Hamilton County Parks.

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### Board Elections January 13

Five members of the Oxbow, Inc. Board of Directors are up for re-election to a three year term at the January 13 general membership meeting at EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College. They are: Jerry Lippert, Morris Mercer, Aaron Perlman, Jon Seymour and Mark Westrich.

The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. Members in good standing are eligible to vote. To get to EarthConnection, drive south at the intersection of Delhi Pike and Neeb Road in Delhi, turn immediately left into a parking lot and immediately right to the upper parking lot.





## Field Notes

by



Mercer

I am back in Centerville with my daughter and her family and my field notes are rather limited. My field notes for this issue could only be what is seen from a doctor's office or hospital room. I do want to thank everyone for their prayers, cards, flowers, visits, phone calls and good wishes.

2003 has been a very wet year around the Oxbow and a year that I wish I could forget some of, but a year Oxbow has come a long way. I hope to be back in the Oxbow soon.

Thanks to everyone.

What's

Taking

Flight



by Jon Seymour, Oxbow, Inc. President

My goodness, what a year!

In 2003, we conducted a controlled burn, planted a prairie, built two parking areas, constructed two culvert overpasses, and held our first members clean-up. Increased random patrols by the Dearborn County Sheriff's Department have resulted in ATV operators and campers being asked to leave the area, and illegal hunters arrested and fined. These improvements will make the Oxbow area safer, better for the wildlife, and easier for members and visitors to enjoy.

We have had our sad moments too with the deaths of two board members, Norma Flannery and Mark Esposito. We also lost Frances Mercer, the wife of board member Morris Mercer. All three were active in their support of Oxbow, Inc. right to the end and we have all become better people for knowing them.

However, care for the flood plain needs to continue even while we are in mourning. Forty-nine volunteers showed up to remove an astounding 4.3 tons of accumulated trash from the Oxbow in just 3 hours of intensive labor. This does not include the hundreds of tires that were collected and will need to be disposed of separately. We were fortunate to have Rumpke, Inc. donate the use of the dumpster and the Port-o-let we had on-site for the clean-up. Hardintown Salvage, our next door neighbor, donated the two culverts we used on the Oxbow Lake road, and the Hamilton County Parks system sold us the native prairie seed for a discount price. Where would we be without help from our friends?

Oh, we still have problems. Anyone who has tried to drive out to Mercer Pond this summer has almost undoubtedly been disappointed as the road has been impassible most of the summer. Also, the drainage from the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District has been flowing directly into Oxbow Lake all summer rather than into the Ohio River as designed. Both of these problems have the same name – BEAVER.

It is kind of frustrating to be stymied by our own wildlife. Still we would have been able to clear the offending culvert dams had there ever been a dry spell this year. With the constant heavy rains of this summer the beaver dams in the culverts were too far under water to clear. Finally at the start of November Kani Meyer and I were able to clear the culvert under the road to Mercer Pond. We are still working on the blocked culvert in the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District.

The newest parking area we constructed is particularly significant to me since it is accessible to members and visitors of limited mobility that are confined to automobiles or are limited to only short distance travel from their automobiles. This new area south of Osprey Lake overlooks the middle of Oxbow Lake and most of the lake can be seen from this vantage point. We still need to put up posts to make certain we do not lose any vehicles over the edge and several branches and bushes will need to be trimmed to open up the view. However we will keep the trees that are currently on the bank so the view will be partially obstructed. This will allow viewing but still provide a screen for the wildlife to feel safe and undisturbed.



## usings

by Dave Styer

### *A Celebration of New Bird Species in the Oxbow Area*

Several birds have been added to the Oxbow area list in the ten years since *Birds of the Oxbow* was published. On the rainy morning of October 14, 1995, Steve Pelikan went to the Oxbow to lead a field trip. Not surprisingly no one showed up, but Steve was there and appropriately dressed, so he slogged on out. That turned out to be a great choice of action: Steve saw a yellow rail and a sedge wren, both new to the Oxbow area list!

When I got back from California in August of 1997, Ned Keller called and told me there was a swallow-tailed kite out at Tanner's Creek, on the west side of Lawrenceburg. I called Steve Pelikan and we went out and saw it. Although we could see the kite from the Oxbow area, I was not sure that it was ever really in the area. Any sighting of one of the world's most graceful birds is worthy of mention. Let's add the mouth of Tanner's Creek to the Oxbow area – that would nicely take care of the problem of whether or not we should add the swallow-tailed kite to the Oxbow area list.

On December 18, 1999, Steve Pelican and I were participating in a Christmas Bird Count when Steve saw a common redpoll in the "old fairgrounds" field just across the levy from the Argosy parking garage. That redpoll nicely topped off the day's bird list, and made a fine addition to the Oxbow area bird list.

This past fall, on October 5, Charlie Saunders and Steve Pelikan found a clay-colored sparrow at the Oxbow, near Argosy. Steve wrote, "It was funny because Jon Dunn had just described to Charlie what Dunn had to say about clay-colored sparrows. So Charlie's ID was based on up-to-date field craft, I, on the other hand, had just spent a trip to Spring Grove looking at about a dozen transient chipping sparrows and ID'd the bird by saying, 'That ISN'T a chipping sparrow.' "

That's five new species in ten years. Not bad! Four of them were honestly in the Oxbow area and the other was too good to leave out. The four were reasonable birds to add to the Oxbow list. Let's review the expectations for each of these species. The yellow rail must be a migrant through the Cincinnati area. I have always suspected that it visits the Oxbow area every fall but that we don't normally see it. I have never seen one. They sneak through thick vegetation rather than fly

out, migrating only during darkness. A banding effort with appropriately placed mist nests might shed some light on yellow rail frequency at the Oxbow. Even with mist nets, the yellow rail may be too scarce to find.

The sedge wren is another migrant that passes through the Oxbow area. Patti Niehoff and I saw one on September 25, 1999; Steve and Charlie saw one the day they saw the clay-colored sparrow. The vicinity of the prairie habitat near Jackpot Pond is excellent for fall migrants.

The common redpoll is a northern bird that comes south to the Cincinnati area every few years. Why shouldn't it visit the Oxbow area once in a while? Redpolls could pause and feed along with sparrows, goldfinches, and other finches.

The clay-colored sparrow should be expected as a migrant. Perhaps, it will become more common; its breeding range has expanded over the past century. Frank M. Chapman's *Handbook of Birds*, 6th ed., 1901, says it "breeds from northern Nebraska, central Iowa, and northern Illinois northward." Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, 2nd ed., 1947, claims it "breeds in brushy country from Great Slave Lakes s. to n. Nebraska, nw. Illinois, and n.-cent. Michigan." Peterson's 4th ed., 1980, shows the breeding range extending across Ontario all the way to the east end of Lake Ontario. By now, the range of the clay-colored sparrow has spread so that it breeds in Quebec province and central New York state. Now that clay-colored sparrows nest north of us, all the way from northwest to northeast, we can expect migrants to pass through the Cincinnati area. Times do change things: Kemsies and Randle do not even mention the clay-colored sparrow in *The Birds of Southwestern Ohio* (1953). Duncan Evered saw the first Hamilton County record in Burnett Woods in 1986. By now at least a dozen have been seen in the Cincinnati area. The prospect is good for more in the Oxbow area.

The swallow-tailed kite is a stray from the south. The many people who did see that bird should count themselves lucky. As Bruce Peterjohn wrote in *The Birds of Ohio*, "It is difficult to imagine that these elegant raptors once resided in Ohio." That was nearly 200 years ago, and kite nesting habitat may not even exist in the north any more.

There have been other changes to the bird life in the area in the decade since *Birds of the Oxbow* was written. In the next issue I will comment on some of these, and I will tell you the next five species that will get added to the Oxbow bird list.

Sedge  
Wren





### *Raptors Save the Day*

The November 1 Oxbow field trip started out under threatening skies, but the rain held off, and interesting birds rewarded the dozen intrepid birders who showed up in spite of the threat of rain. We started out with a rather late immature Black-crowned Night Heron, standing motionless several feet back into the brush at the upper end of the Oxbow. I'm not sure whether we would have ever seen him, if I hadn't put a scope on a Great Blue standing out in the open nearby.

The weather had been too warm for waterfowl migration to get well under way, and the only ducks that joined the expected Mallards and Wood Ducks were a few Northern Shovelers. Raptors saved the day, though. An immature Cooper's Hawk was so richly colored that we spent a while trying to turn it into something more exotic. The day was too cloudy for vultures to be soaring, but we found several Black Vultures in a tree on our way out of the Oxbow past Jackpot Pond.

The star of the trip was an adult Peregrine. We first saw it from quite a ways off, perched at the top of one of the power pylons. When it didn't move, we decided to try to get closer. It finally let us drive to within about 50 yards and set up the scope for good, close, long looks. It finally took off after a group of Mourning Doves about half a mile away. It separated one from the flock, but the dove escaped with nothing more than a good scare. We lost the falcon as it flew off towards Kentucky, no doubt still looking for breakfast.

...Ned Keller

### *How to Control Invasive Plants*

Tom Borgman of the Hamilton County Park District's Management Team presented a very informative and entertaining program December 9 at the Lawrenceburg Library replete with tests and give-aways. Speaking on the theme of *Controlling Invasive Plants*, Tom emphasized that these plants severely reduce diversity costing homeowners and governmental groups millions of dollars every year in their control and eradication. Invasive plants are the greatest threat to plants and animals already endangered by habitat loss.

Among the invasives common to our area are purple loostrike, lesser celandine, Canada thistle, teasel, autumn olive, garlic mustard, the bush honeysuckles, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed and Johnson grass. These plants are sometimes introduced on purpose through horticultural or wildlife plantings as well as roadside plantings to control erosion.

Every one of us can help in our own yards by eliminating these species. Methods for control include mechanically pulling or cutting, burning (only if you really know what you are doing!), biological controls and chemical controls (herbicides.) The latter method is probably the one most frequently used and there are now chemicals out there that harm the environment less than others. As responsible stewards of the environment, we all need to learn about these plants that threaten our native wild areas and do our part in spreading this knowledge

## *Of Bits and Peeps...*



so that others can assist in controlling invasive plants.

... Kani Meyer

### *Visiting Nantucket: A Joy on a Rainy Night in Delhi*

Once again, an exiting evening was in store for those attending an Oxbow meeting. On November 11, 2003, Dr. John Ferner of the Thomas More College biology department, presented his view of Nantucket, an island off Massachusetts roughly shaped like a crescent measuring about 15 miles long and 4 miles wide. Normally, it has a population of less than 6000 people but this swells to 100,000 during the summer tourist season. Access to the island is by ferry. This means the islanders are interdependent and self-contained as are most island people because of their isolation.

The islanders come from a whaling tradition including one prominent family: the Starbucks. In fact, Herman Melville took the name for the first-mate aboard the *Pequod*, the whaling ship in *Moby Dick*. Later, the name *Starbucks* became perhaps even more famous with the naming of a brand of coffee.

Another prominent citizen of Nantucket was Maria Mitchell. She was the first woman astronomer and was very interested in conservation which together with preservation are important goals on the island today. About eight organizations are currently working to procure land for habitat for wildlife. It is interesting to note that over half of the island is preserved in this manner.

A look at the exotic plant list demonstrates that the problem of invasive botanical species is not unique to the mainland. Studies of amphibian and reptile populations were explored and provoked discussion and questions.

We also learned about some issues which confront the Nantucket community: the number of automobiles in the tourist season, the presence of wind farms, cobblestone streets and the absence of the cod. This gave us an up-to-date flavor of island life. Our virtual visit to Nantucket was a joy and a pleasure on a rainy night in Delhi.

....Carol Molleran

### *Great Slides of Birds in Flight*

Tuesday, October 14, was our Oxbow meeting and program in Lawrenceburg. If you remember, it was a wild weather day in our area with heavy rain and lots of wind. There were 15 of us who braved the elements and really enjoyed seeing Ralph Scott's slides of birds in flight.

We have all seen birds in flight but their movements are so fast you don't see what Ralph caught on film. Maybe having been a pilot in WWII, he knows what causes lift and which feathers to keep an eye on so as to be ready at the precise moment to click the shutter. Ralph's slides covered many of the birds that visit the Oxbow and also birds of Florida. If you get a chance to see his slides, don't miss it. It was a very good program.

.....Morris Mercer





### ***Two Donated Culverts Much Needed for Drainage***

Oxbow, Inc. member Junior Clark of Hardintown Salvage donated two culverts that Oxbow, Inc. members Rick Pope, Bob Schlegel, and Jon Seymour installed in two areas of road along the southwest shore of Oxbow Lake. These culverts, pictured above and below, will allow water draining from the upland fields to flow back into Oxbow Lake without flowing over the top of the farm road. This flow makes the road impassable when it occurs and the installation of the culverts should allow members use of the road more days during the year. Thanks, Junior Clark, for your needed assistance. Thanks, too, to the three men who rolled up their sleeves and went to work.



## **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.**  
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## **Corporation Officers**

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