Conservation Corner

by Jon Seymour

I am in the Oxbow at 9:00 a.m. on a Thursday morning and I have 5 pounds of mud on each boot and they are in danger of being separated from my feet. I have just spotted an American White Pelican but I am not here to birdwatch.

So what is going on?

It all started with a casual remark to Dr. Mike Miller of Mt. St. Joseph College and to Bruce Koehler, the Environmental Planner for OKI. I was telling them about the improvements we were planning for the Oxbow area and in particular about reestablishing about 100 yards of mudflats on the northeast side of Oxbow Lake. In order to do this we were planning on ripping up about 100 yards of silver maple saplings that were currently filling in the lakeshore. Both Dr. Miller and Bruce became very interested and wanted to know more about this since they needed young trees to fill in bare spots to hold soil in several wetland and river bank restoration projects they were involved in. Since we were getting rid of them, and they needed them, we quickly struck a deal.

So now I am “supervising” Bruce and his team of helpers, Brian Bohl, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Stream Specialist, and Jack Frick and Jon Frogge, both interns at OKI. Dressed in hip waders and knee boots, they are literally pulling up saplings by their roots from the edge of Oxbow Lake. In all they collected 300 saplings and took them immediately to be replanted. One hundred of the saplings went to a West Fork of the Mill Creek restoration project in Colerain Township near Blanchetka Drive. The other two hundred saplings went to a 5-acre wetland/floodplain restoration project in West Chester Township behind the Biggs Store just east of State Highway 747.

Bruce said, “We are happy to get these plants and it is especially good that Oxbow can provide a native species already acclimated to wetlands.” For me it was exciting in showing another way that preserving the Oxbow impacts conservation in the entire area. Essentially Oxbow was the nursery for these plants that will now help to stabilize other wetlands and stream banks.
Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

Donor

Patricia Schultz, Friends &
Coworkers of Mary Carol
Knapp
Clifford & Patsy Budke
Joseph & Lila Bartoszek
Louise Snyder
John Spitler
Hugh (III) & Nancy Trimble
Tim & Debbie Richman
Dale & Ruth Nowlin
Tim & Debbie Richman
Helen Kovach
Clifford & Patsy Budke
Cheryl & Patrick Devine

In Memory of

Katherine Knapp
Audrey McAfoose
Frances Mercer
Frances Mercer
Frances Mercer
Frances Mercer
Frances Mercer
Carolyn Poehlmann
Deborah Mercer
Richman
Roger Schanzle
Hester & Bernice
Stephenson
Bodee Janszen

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. Heartily Thanks

The Allan & Dorothy Campbell Fund
of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation

and also
The Third Protestant Memorial
Church Endowment Fund

for their
Generous Annual Grants

As we go to press...Wetland Matters has learned that the March 18 transfer of over 100 silver maple saplings by workers from OKI (Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Regional Governments) from our Oxbow Inc. land to Colerain Township sites had an extra double benefit: the value of the saplings and the labor that OKI donated enabled Colerain Township to complete the $37,000 local matching commitment it had made to the Clean Ohio Fund, which then provided an additional $43,800 for the West Fork Mill Creek Restoration Project. The saplings were removed from a grown over area that Oxbow Inc. is trying to reestablish as a mud flat for migratory shorebirds. See "Conservation Corner", page 1. Sharing fills the air!

Oxbow Inc.
Activities Schedule

Two Speakers You Don’t Want to Miss
Bring the Family, Bring Friends

Programs

Tuesday, May 11, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
EarthConnection, Mt. St. Joseph College

Mary Maj, wildlife biologist in the Greater Yellowstone region for the National Forest Service and National Park Service for 25 years, will speak on “The History and Current Status of Trumpeter Swans—looking from the Ohio Valley to the Greater Yellowstone Region.” Mary will tell us about her research on the trumpeters, her living amid them as well as treat us to her slides.

To get to EarthConnection in Delhi, go south on Neeb road past the Delhi Road traffic light, turn up the second drive on the left.

Tuesday, June 8, 2004, 7:30 p.m.
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Ind.

Dave Tennant, C.H.I. Education Director for Raptor, Incorporated, is a Certified Heritage Interpreter through the National Association of Interpretation and has worked for 21 years in the field of environmental education. Dave's program, "Raptors Of Our Area," will focus on our native birds of prey. Dave will show several live birds of prey and answer your questions.

The Lawrenceburg library is downtown at 123 High Street. Turn left going west off US 50 onto Walnut Street, then right on High Street.

Field Trips

Saturday, May 1, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

Meet Darlena Graham at the new Oxbow Inc. entrance parking lot. She will lead us on a search for migrating songbirds, warblers being the top priority. We will drive through the Oxbow making periodic stops or if it's too muddy to drive, we will take a comfortable walk of one mile. (859-581-2227)

Saturday, June 5, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

Paul Wharton will explore the Oxbow with us searching for its birds but keeping a lookout for other creatures in the area as well. Meet at the new parking lot. (513-353-3403)

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, than left and there it is.
Birdathon Time! May 7 & 8
Which Team Are You Backing?
Fledgling Birders Also Invited

After last year’s rain, Birdathon 2004 just may be tantalizingly sunny. That’s Wetland Matter’s prediction. Six teams will take to the fields and wetlands from May 7, Friday, 5:00 p.m. to May 8, Saturday, 5:00 p.m. with backers putting their money on the line for each species heard and/or sighted. This is Oxbow Inc.’s one annual fund raiser. Do take part and enjoy the game of picking the winning team. Winner last year was Fire & Brimstone Birders with 149 species.

This year Fledgling Birders 14 years of age and younger are invited to take part, to pick any 24-hour period that’s convenient for them between May 2 and May 16 and canvas their backyard, a nearby park or the Oxbow with a “Senior” birder, then tabulate the species found and send the list to the address on the pledge form. Perhaps they can get their school class or Scout troop to pledge a few nickels on their behalf. We promise to print the names of all who take part in Wetland Matters and a photo, of course, of our young bird watchers. All information due by May 25: team name, members, species found, pledges and a contact phone number.

The official teams competing to find the highest number of bird species are:
#1- Geriatric Gents & Juniors: Karl Maslowski, George Laycock, Jerry Meyer, Bob Schrimper, Jay Lehman and Randy Lakes.
#2- Fire & Brimstone Birders: Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger, Joe Bens and Paul Wharton.
#3- Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers: Jerry Lippert, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger and Erich Baumgardner.
#4- No See’ums Mid-West: Steve Pelikan, Mike Busam and Charlie Saunders.
#5- Tri-Colored Harem: Sr. Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller and Sarah Krailer.
#6- No See’ums West: Jane & Dave Styer are taking themselves out of the competition because of the rule limiting the area to a 100-mile radius from the Oxbow. The Styers live in California but their hearts belong to Oxbow Inc. and they welcome all pledges notwithstanding.

Other adult birders are invited to make up a team. Just phone Jon Seymour (513-851-9835) to register.

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**Of Bits and Peeps...**

**John Muir and John Tallmadge**

On March 9, 2004, Dr. John Tallmadge gave Oxbow Inc. members a taste of “John Muir’s High Sierra”. He began with a look at the man, John Muir -- a Scottish-born farm boy from Wisconsin who was a scholar, engineer-inventor and adventurer. He was also a naturalist, poet, environmentalist and activist-author.

An incident that left Muir blind for two weeks when he was a young man convinced him to try to see as much of the world as he could with those precious eyes.

His curiosity and enthusiasm led him through travels and discoveries which anyone would envy. As early as 1892, he started the Sierra Club and has been responsible for much of the forest and nature preservation which marks the western scene today. He left his imprint on our National Park System in general and Yosemite Park in particular.

We are indebted to John Muir for many things, not the least of which is the trail that bears his name, a trail that stretches from Mt. Whitney to Yosemite. It is this trail which was the focus of the slide show presented by our speaker. John Tallmadge and a friend spent five weeks about 20 years ago hiking the trail and John did a good job of making us feel we were there too. We could almost feel the wind and smell the scents as we followed John up rocky peaks and across high meadows and beside active glaciers. We saw gorgeous sunsets and gem-like lakes, observed awesome waterfalls and granite structures which dwarfed human beings, but not the human soul for it seemed that the spirit of John Muir was with us as we traveled his “Mountains of Light”.

*.... Carol Molleran*
Here it was the 16th of March with winter coming to an end and St. Pat's Day just a day away. Jim Simpson had agreed to take the Over-the-Hill Gang, George Laycock, Karl Masloski, and me, on our St. Pat's Day field trip to the Oxbow.

I found myself still with the Simpsons in Centerville and not feeling all that good. We got up on the 16th and looked out at about six inches of new snow. Sarah was very happy because she had a snow day from school. Jim and I had a trip to Cincinnati planned for evening to give us a better start for our field trip.

Marilyn and I got to watch the birds come to the bird feeder. The gold finch are really changing color. We saw a robin come up on the patio. The wet snow was stuck to his legs up to the feathers, and it sure looked like the robin was wearing white boots.

Jim and I had a smooth trip to Cincinnati and found the snow lighter as we traveled south. We spent the night at home. We were up early and stopped at the Golden Arches for breakfast, then headed for the Oxbow. Our first bird of record was at CG&E, the peregrine falcon. So we were off to a good start. We drove up by the boat ramp at Shawnee. Saw a few mallards in the flooded woods along the Great Miami. I was watching for the large stick nest in the big sycamore near the park entrance.

I told Jim I could see a head above the nest. Jim stopped and got out the scope. There was a nice red-tailed hawk on her nest. We moved on over Lost Bridge, made a stop at State Line Pond. There were several shovelers, more male than female. They were so pretty. We moved on to Hidden Valley. There wasn't a large number of ducks, but we saw ring-necked, bufflehead, scap, and Jim came up with one we hadn't seen for a while, the white-winged scoter. While we were standing there a fine looking kingfisher was busy chattering around us. I did have to get out of the car for a look at the scoter. It was time to move on to the Oxbow.

We soon pulled in at the parking lot at the Oxbow. Then George and Karl pulled in, so we had all gotten together again. We could see ducks from the parking lot. Jim got out the scope and soon came back to report a nice group of green-winged teal. I didn't feel good but had to get out and have a look at the green-winged teal on St. Pat's Day. I went back to the car. Everything from here was either mud or water or both. I did see song sparrows, several grackles, robins, cardinals, crows, and crows. Jim said he and George saw wood duck, widgeon, gadwall, ring-billed gull and tree swallows.

When Jim and George got back to the car, Karl was ready. He came up with the box of Lorna Doone cookies. We hadn't been there more than thirty minutes. We had seen the green-winged teal and we had our Lorna Doones. I believe this was the quickest we had all seen the green-winged teal. St. Pat's Day was off to a good start. We checked the entrance down near Jack Pot Pond. Again we found the mud stopped us. Drove just far enough to see down the water way toward Jack Pot Pond. There was a pair of wood ducks sitting on a log. But we turned around and went back to the Oxbow.

We drove up for a look at Cemetery Lake, and here we saw three common loons in spring plumage. We moved on around for another look at Hidden Valley so George and Karl could get a look at the white-winged scoter. We saw the scoter, several bufflehead, scap, ring-necked ducks, hooded merganser and pied-billed grebe. We thought we would go get something to eat but we had to make another stop for a look at a gang of wild turkeys. There were 15 or 20 near the road. A big gobbler looked good standing up on a log.

Our lunch stop was at Big Boy in Lawrenceburg. We had a nice chat. Once again we had made it to the Oxbow on St. Pat's Day. We agreed we would meet again next year if Jim would come back to take the Over-the-Hill Gang on another trip.

The Oxbow is a nice wildlife stop over and with the work going on, will even be better. Sure one of my favorite places. Hope I can get to where I can visit again.

**Did You Know?**

This beautiful educational display is located in the visitor center (golf center) of Shawnee Lookout Park. It gives the history of the Oxbow area and why the area is important. It mentions the contributions of the Hamilton County Park System and of private citizen groups (us!) in saving this important area.
Bird Banding at Shawnee Lookout

Much of what we know today about bird life has been learned from bird banding, that is, putting metal identification bands on birds' legs just above their feet. The Bird Banding Laboratory of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center oversees all banding in the United States. This lies within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Bird Banding Laboratory has an excellent web site, and I recommend it to anyone who wants further information. For example, they ask and answer the same question I have: "Why band birds?" Their answer is "Bird banding data are useful in both research and management projects. Individual identification of birds makes possible studies of dispersal and migration, behavior and social structure, life-span and survival rate, reproductive success and population growth."

Systematic bird banding (called "ringing" in Europe) started in 1899 when a Danish schoolteacher placed aluminum bands on many birds. The Bird Banding Laboratory web site mentions several earlier examples of bird banding. Although the examples shed light on what might be learned, they didn't lead to systematic bird banding. "The first record of a metal band attached to a bird's leg was about 1595 when one of Henry IV's banded Peregrine Falcons was lost..." It showed up 24 hours later in Malta, about 1350 miles away... "Duke Ferdinand placed a silver band on a grey heron about 1669: the bird was recovered by his grandson about 1728, indicating the heron lived at least 60 years."

Closer to home "The first records of banding in North America are those of John James Audubon... In 1803 he tied silver cords to the legs of a brood of phoebes near Philadelphia and was able to identify two of the nestlings when they returned to the neighborhood the following year." These early examples show the potential for a bird to travel a long distance in a short time, to live for many years, and to faithfully return to a nest site after a winter away.

The classic book, A Guide To Bird Watching, by Joseph J. Hickey, devotes a chapter to "The Romance of Bird Banding." There you can read about "the famous migration station of Rossitten in Germany" where they started banding in 1903. "Not long after, when a Bulgarian shot a spotted eagle, banded with the number 1285, the local press carried a report of a bird over 600 years old."

In the early nineteen hundreds several organizations were banding thousands of birds, and coordination had become difficult. Around 1920, the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey and the Canadian Wildlife Service agreed to oversee all banding operations. In the U.S., Frederick Lincoln was assigned the task. There were some "growing pains." Joseph Hickey writes of an incident related by Lincoln. Initially, Lincoln's office was unable to get any aluminum bands made in the U.S.A. so they ordered them from England. "When the rings reached America, a typographical error had resulted in a startling legend. Instead of "Biol. Surv., Wash., D.C." the finder was advised, in effect, to "Wash, Boil, and Surv.""

Bird banding practice developed over the past century. At first, mostly fledglings (or birds nearly ready to fledge) were banded. Great numbers could be banded, especially in water-bird colonies. Somewhat later live traps became popular. With traps, people could band all year, and in many more convenient locations. In the 1950s, mist nets were introduced. Birds don't see these large, fine nets, and fly into them and get entangled. Mist nets enable the person to band more birds with much less work than the older traps.

This brings us to Lester Peyton's banding project at Shawnee Lookout where he has used mist nets to capture and band migrant birds. Lester got his training at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory, starting in 1994. He obtained a banding sub-permit in May, 1998, and started banding at Shawnee Lookout in the spring of 1999. Lester and I have had phone conversations about his experiences and he has filled in some detail via e-mail.

The first thing that comes to Lester's mind is the remarkable difference between spring and fall. In spring, hardly any birds fly into the mist nets; in fall, many do. In three springs, he banded a total of 4 Tennessee warblers; in fall he never banded fewer than 34. One fall day there were 50 of these warblers in his nets at one time, with others flying around! Lester banded 2 or 3 Magnolia warblers and ovenbirds in the spring and between 10 and 20 in the fall. Thrushes showed a similar spring versus fall capture rate.

Why is there such a huge difference between spring and fall? Certainly many birds migrate through Shawnee Lookout in both seasons. Is the vegetation that different? Do the birds forage high in the spring and low in the fall? I believe that the birds actually can see the mist nets, because many learn to avoid them after they get stuck once. Maybe it's all those young birds flying south that haven't matured enough to avoid mist nets. Lester notes that 37 of 42 Swainson's and wood thrushes banded in the fall of 2000 were young of the year.

Another thing that caught Lester's attention was weight gained by these migrants when recaptured. For example, an ovenbird weighed 20.2 grams when first banded, and weighed 23.2 grams when recaptured a week later. A white-eyed vireo weighed 12.9 grams when first banded, and weighed 14.4 grams 5 days later. If a 150-pound person were to gain weight at this rate, he would weigh 174 pounds a week later - not a happy thought. For migrating birds this is natural and good! Fat is the fuel they use in migration. For these birds, Shawnee Lookout has been a successful refueling station.

Here is a potpourri of trivia: A gray catbird is the only bird they have captured that had been banded elsewhere. Bob Thosabon had banded it two years earlier at Spring Valley Wildlife Area. Philadelphia vireos and Wilson's warblers have been captured in Russian olives and wingstems under the power line cuts, but not in the woods edge. A wood thrush banded on May 5, 1999, was recaptured in the fall of 2003. One day a wild turkey flew clean through one of the mist nets. What a surprise to all involved! Or how about this? Monarch butterflies migrate through Shawnee Lookout, too. One morning Lester counted 32 of these big orange butterflies. Keep up the good work, Lester.

P.S. Karl Maslowski writes that ever since he saw great-tailed grackles in Nebraska about 10 years ago, he has been waiting for them to show up at the Oxbow. Why not? Just take the Mississippi River and turn right when you come to the Ohio.


2003 Treasurer’s Report

by Mark Westrich, Oxbow, Inc. Treasurer

Oxbow* acquired more than 84 acres of land in 2003 including most of the island at the mouth of the Great Miami River! More than 28 acres of this area was donated to Oxbow by CINERGY.

Oxbow’s Net Savings grew by over $190,000 in 2003. This is $146,000 more than the 2002 growth in Net Savings, and includes $192,000 gifted by CINERGY (land value), the Norma Flannery estate and the Helen Wing estate. Aside from these extraordinary gifts, reported revenue declined by about $20,000 from last year for the following reasons. Interest income fell $9,000 due to declining market rates. And member gifts were reported at $12,000 lower, but this resulted from the timing of our bank deposits, and is not cause for concern. That is, dues for 2002 were reported about $6,000 higher and dues for 2003 about $6,000 lower, due to the differential timing of bank deposits in December and January. In fact the 2 year average for dues matches prior years on about the same number of members.

Expenses were $26,000 higher in 2003 for the following reasons. Legal expenses were up $9,000 for the two land negotiations and subsequent acquisition, and for zoning issues. Taxes and insurance were up $2,000 because we own more land, and insurance rates increased. Other** expenses include $8,000 for prairie seed, $5,500 for a water drainage study, and $2,000 to build the parking areas and place culvert under the road.

Administrative expenses were about $1,800, or under 1% of revenue, excluding the aforementioned extraordinary gifts.

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. The IRS Forms 990 for Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. may be inspected on www.guidestar.org.

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*Oxbow, Inc & Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.

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Audit of Financial Accounts for 2000-2002 Completed

In mid 2003, the Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana Inc. Board of Directors contracted with PKG Financial Services, Inc., for an audit of the corporation books for the years 2000 to 2002. PKG Financial Services, Inc., has completed the audit for the years 2000 to 2002 of...”the assets and net assets, cash basis and statement of cash flows” of Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana Inc. and found “in our opinion, the financial statements referred to present fairly, in all material respects, the assets, liabilities and net assets of Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana Inc. as of December 31, 2002.”

Jon Seymour, President
Spring Cleaning

by Jon Seymour
Photos by Cammie Seymour

Our Spring Clean-up was held Saturday, March 27, and again was VERY SUCCESSFUL. Twenty-eight people came down to assist in our first Spring Clean-up. We did not have to deal with mosquitoes or ticks, with blistering heat and humidity, or with foliage hiding the trash.

This year we split the crew with several members of the land use committee down on the railroad track road at the Argosy entrance. We had Rick Pope operating his front end loader along the railroad track road along with Vic Grieve from the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District (LCD) operating a LCD truck. We only assigned a few experienced people in that tight space where heavy equipment was being operated. Up at the main entrance several members scoured the road sides and fields retrieving tires, auto parts, styrofoam, cans, bottles, baby toys and other amazing flotsam.

Besides Oxbow Inc. members from Indiana and Ohio we had the help of one of the fishing families, Cub Scouts from Pack 692 (Lawrenceburg) and the Venture Crew from Pack 371 (Bridgetown).

All in all we collected a little less trash than last year which is good since we are making progress. However, in the fall we were able to reach some of the outlying areas that we could not reach this spring. I can see with my binoculars a large kitchen sink on the far side of one of the flooded fields. Oh well, we will get that a little later. Additional good news is that the Dearborn County Solid Waste District is opening a new facility in Aurora and we should now be able to slowly remove the collected tire pile at the entrance. That will thrill many a member including myself.

Thanks to all who participated. It is a great experience and I know I always feel so good when it is done and the area is looking so much better.

Our Great Volunteer Workers
Board Members: Dwight Poffenberger, Rick Pope, Jon Seymour, Kani Meyer.
Fishing Group: Steven, Hostavon, Charles, Marcus and James Hankins.
Cub Scouts, Pack 692 of Lawrenceburg: Tony, Nick, Nathan and Sam Hubert.
Venture Crew, Pack 371 of Cincinnati: Mary & Chris Uhlenbruck, Sara Sweeney, Alex Villar.
LCD Employee: Vic Grieve.
Other Helpers: Suki Jeffrey, Steve Costa.

*Roll out the tires, we've got the blues on the run...*Clockwise from oval: Dwight Poffenberger, Joanne Jeffrey, Steve Costa, Alex Villar and Jim Wilgenbusch.
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.

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Mail to: Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391
513-851-9835

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Recording Secretary,
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Corresponding Secretary,
Suzanne Skidmore (513) 561-5718
Treasurer, Mark Westrich (812) 637-2175
Ohio Agent, Dwight Poffenberger (513) 241-2324
Indiana Agent, John Getzendanner (812) 537-5728

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Easement Inspection,
Richard Pope (812) 637-1365
Land Management, Kani Meyer (513) 948-8630
Programs, Jerry Lippert (513) 522-6567
Research, Dr. Steve Pelikan (513) 681-2574
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