



September — October 2012

No. 157

WETLAND *matters*

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

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Meet Me Outdoors (the new outdoor adventure slogan of Green Umbrella)

The 2012 Great Outdoor Weekend

Meet Me Outdoors at the Oxbow!

Saturday and Sunday, September 22-23

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. both evenings

Green Umbrella is again organizing the Great Outdoor Weekend and Oxbow, Inc. will participate in this wonderful and growing Cincinnati Region Institution. We are one of the few places in the country where this type of outdoor extravaganza can be found. It is a smorgasbord of outdoor experiences and fun opportunities for the whole family. Go to www.greenumbrella.org or www.cincygreatoutdoorweekend.org and follow the links to Great Outdoor Weekend. You will find a listing of all the programs and directions. Mark your calendar!

Oxbow, Inc. will again participate, offering two night time (dusk) walks in the Oxbow from 6 pm to 8 pm on both Saturday and Sunday evenings. This is a wonderful time of day in the Oxbow. Many of the visitors to the Oxbow visit only in the morning looking for birds in the early hours of the day. But dusk has its own set of birds, as well as amphibians and mammals. We hope to see and hear many such denizens of the Oxbow. While the time of day is the same both Saturday and Sunday, the cast of characters and the play of nature that unfolds can be very different. We never know who the star of the show will be. Past stars have been a Bald Eagle, a River Otter, and an American Avocet (a bird usually not found east of the Mississippi River). Since outdoor walks often turn into mystical adventures, we may witness a murder of crows, view a siege of herons or egrets, admire a romp of otter, attend a wake of vultures, and empathize with a piteousness of doves.

This is a great time to bring friends, family, and neighbors out to the Oxbow to introduce them to the area.

Don't forget about the other Great Outdoor Weekend events. With Oxbow being late in the day, you and your family have time to "hit" 3 or more of the other 125 programs happening that weekend.

The Most Birds Seen In One Year By A 6'3" Red Head While On A Vision Quest?

Part 3 By: Matt Stenger

After a full day of birding at sea, I had added 12 new species to my year list, bringing my year total to 627, but more importantly I was looking forward to having a semi-real bed on this overnight pelagic trip. When I climbed into my bunk and I quickly realized couldn't sit up due to the bunks being stacked so closely together. This made removing my boots difficult, so difficult in fact that I managed to get the left one off but fell asleep while fighting to wrestle the other one from my right foot. Not long after day break I was jarred from a deep sleep by the excited alarm call of a birder shouting, "BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS, 6 O'CLOCK!" As I fell out of the top bunk in a barely controlled tumble I realized I had been the only one still in bed. Still delirious and bleary-eyed with sleep, I tried to figure out why I was so "uneven". I blindly grabbed for my binoculars and instead found my left boot. I slipped it on, grabbed my "bins" and raced up the steps onto deck. There I stood; frantically turning the focus wheel but the bird remained somewhat blurry. As my sleepy brain pondered this dilemma the boat hit a wave and I went down hard. I didn't bother to get up I just got the bird back in my bins while the tour leaders stood over me lecturing me with reminders about making sure to always keep one hand on the rail. A close flyover settled the I.D. and as I rubbed the sleep from my eyes it dawned on me that I had forgotten to put my glasses on. A number of people were looking at me wide eyed, some of them chuckling along with me but one guy laughed arrogantly, the same guy, in fact, that just yesterday had asked, "when are you going to do a real big year?" with a smug unrelenting glare in his eye. We've all met the "type". The haughty know-it-all hot shot birder. I admit it must have been quite a show but for my effort I landed list bird number 628 for the year and a lifer at that! As it would turn out, I could have kept sleeping for as long as I wanted. The albatross followed

(continued on page 2)

(The Most Birds Seen In One Year—continued from page 1)

our chum trail all day. After a second long day on deck the bunk was sweet relief. At one point during the middle of the night I found myself stumbling across the deck on my way to the head when I heard the telltale signs of seasickness being launched over the rail. Arrogant laughing guy turned towards me with the most pitiful, pleading look in his eye. I nodded a friendly hello then strolled off to the head whistling my favorite sea shanty without saying a word. Karma?

I awoke in Elko Nevada on August 29th. I had a raging fever but even so there were birds to chase so I trudged up Island Lake Trail in the Ruby Mountains hoping to find a Himalayan Snow Cock. I was too slow in my ascent and by the time I got up there the birds were already back up on the cliffs. The following day, feeling somewhat better, I hiked up again. Again I arrived in the glacial cirque too late. Just as I began my trek down the mountain and with nearly 2 miles to go I caught my pinky toe on a rock with dull thud that left no doubt something serious had happened. I didn't look (that makes it hurt more) instead I set off at jog. I remembered from my running days that adrenaline is a great pain killer and seeing as how it was just my pinky toe... The pain was furious at first but pretty soon it subsided as I ran down the mountain. With only a quarter mile to go I couldn't take anymore. I hobbled and shuffled back to my car. When I finally did look down I discovered my poor little toe sticking out at a sickeningly odd angle. With no health insurance to fall back on I quickly began to panic. I hobbled to the nearby creek and plunged my foot into the icy water and began to think. My plan was this, back in Elko, still feeling a bit run down from being sick and now with a broken toe I got a hotel room. I sat down on the bed, feeling like I was going vomit as I firmly grasped the side of my foot. I could pay a doctor \$700 or I could... The explicit four letter words poured from my mouth like I was a drunken sailor, the toe cracked and crunched beneath my fingers, tears streamed down my face and, surprisingly, I began laughing so hard my sides hurt. To anyone in a nearby room it must have sounded like I had lost my mind. Indeed it was quite the opposite. I was over 1,800 miles from home; I was sick, had a broken toe and had been alone for over 6 weeks. I had every reason to lose my mind but indeed something about my situation struck me as intensely funny. I called a friend and told her of my terrible physical state. She didn't laugh with me. She made me promise I'd go the grocery store and buy some vegetables and dietary supplements and take a day off. I buddy taped my toe and walked across the street to the grocery (that seemed like a less painful option than sitting in my car). The next day I drove around looking for Gray Partridge (the next best thing to a day off).

The last 33 birds of the year came slowly. In fact there were only two days from September through December that I saw more than one new species in a day and very many days when I saw none at all. Often there would be hundreds or thousands of miles of driving with no results. Motivation was waning along with the birds. Towards the end of October a birder

in Mason City Iowa had contacted me and offered help in finding a Gray Partridge. After two days of searching we turned one up in corn field not far from where she lived. I looked for that bird in 8 different states and drove an estimated 700 miles of back roads trying to find one and finally I had my nemesis.

On Thanksgiving Day I was standing in the wind on the shore of Lake Erie trying to pick out one single Black-tailed Gull from among the hundreds of Ring-billed gulls. I had just dipped on an Emperor Goose in Montreal and a Pink Footed Goose in New York, I NEEDED this bird, plus it was a holiday, surely luck would be on my side. All day long the wind came from the south and all day long the gulls stood facing into the wind offering no field marks what so ever. The following day, late in the afternoon, I had decided to head back to Cincinnati before returning to Florida when this maniac driver going down the wrong side of a little back street in Conneaut Ohio pulled up beside me waving her arms wildly and shouting. I could barely understand her but I made out the words Black-tailed Gull and Follow me. It took hours but finally something stirred the flock and as they took to the air I saw that one of them was a darker shade of gray and had a black tail band.

In early December I seriously considered quitting. I was tired in every way imaginable and, after all, I didn't really care if I saw a few more birds and it seemed I had learned everything about myself that I was going to learn. But then I received an email about a Brown Jay in South Texas. If there was any bird in North America that could re-motivate my tired body it would be a Corvid I had never met. I left the house in Ohio barely able to walk due to my pain racked knees and went south, that trip scored me a bonus Golden-crowned Warbler as well.

On December 31st, as the sun was setting, I stood on a beach in Rhode Island. Black-headed Gull was the target. My friend Kathy and I had been searching all day with no luck. Just as the light was dimming a flock of gulls flew past and landed in the water, among them was number 681. Within 5 minutes it was too dark to discern the Black-headed Gull from the surrounding Bonaparte's Gulls.

When I set out on my journey I couldn't have imagined the places I would discover, both geographically and emotionally. I left the heart ache of my divorce at Golden Gate Park, I discovered my spirit on the Kaibab Plateau and I redefined who I was and who I wanted to become in Alaska. Now there was this girl standing next to me, what to do? It's a familiar story you may have heard before, "an over the top birder from Ohio falls for a girl from New England" but this is not the Hollywood version (sorry to disappoint you, read the book). On that beach in Rhode Island as the sun set on my great adventure I stood next to Kathy somewhat disappointed but smiling in my heart, I didn't get the girl but I had found true love just the same, from within.

Oh yeah, and I lived happily ever after.

THE END

Oxbow Butterfly Walk:

Join Bob Nuhn at 10:00 am on Saturday, September 8 for a Butterfly walk. Bob is a retired naturalist with the Hamilton County Park District, and he is also a local butterfly expert. This is a great trip for beginners, and you may find that you'll want to join Bob on some butterfly counts in 2013!. Feel free to stay as long or as little as you like.

Bring water and sturdy walking shoes. For more information, contact Kathy McDonald at 513-748-0281.



Member Communications Committee:

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Oxbow Inc. would like to thank the following donors for their generous gifts.

Robert & Patricia Lacker

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Oxbow, Inc. Honorariums & Memorials

Donor	In Memory of
Jon & Jackie Seymour	Rose Mara

Oxbow, Inc. has established Memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each Memorial established in the name of a friend or relative 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.

Tributes are also enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Some tributes are birthday or anniversary remembrances, holiday greetings or gratitude acknowledgements. If so desired, "Happy Birthday!" or the like can be inscribed in the tribute notice.

Contributions should be sent to: Oxbow, Inc., P. O. Box 4172, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those who are to receive the acknowledgement.

Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS



To reach the Oxbow, Inc. office take Highway US 50 south from the #16 exit off I-275. Pass the Hollywood Casino exit and turn left at the second stop light onto Walnut St. 301 Walnut is on the right side at the second stoplight at the corner of Walnut and Center Streets. Free parking is available on Walnut St., Center St., and in the parking lot behind the building.)

Tuesday, October 9, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg

The Oxbow, Inc. Office

Ron Canterbury (Associate Academic Director, Biological Sciences, UC) will speak on: The Golden-winged Warbler and edge species ecology: An imperiled migrant songbird in critical conservation trouble. Ron will discuss the current status of the Golden-winged Warbler, the species potential listing under the Endangered Species Act, current conservation measures, and highlight an on-going 25-year study of the species in the Appalachians of southern WV. Hybridization and competition with the Blue-winged Warbler will be discussed, as well as critical habitat necessary for the species.

Tuesday, November 13, 2012

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg

The Oxbow, Inc. Office

Jack Berninger, Oxbow member and popular program presenter will speak about: Paleo Plants – A trip through geological history and the evolution of plants that can be found at the Oxbow and your own backyard. It will give you a new enjoyment and perspective of our wonderful plant ecosystems. Some fossils specimens will be shown.

**Due to the Holidays there is no December Program
Happy Holidays to One and All!**

Oxbow Inc. FIELD TRIPS

To reach the upper Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the waste collection plant, turn south from Rt. 50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the waste collection plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left. The lot is on your right.

Date & Time: Saturday, October 20, 2012, 8:00 a.m.

Where: Meet: In the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

Leader: Darlena Graham, (859) 341-4893, darlena@fuse.net

October is a beautiful time of the year and fall color should be near peak by mid-month. October is also an interesting season from a birding perspective as fall migration will be in full swing. Waterfowl migration is just getting started while shorebird migration is beginning to wind down. Some summering and migrant songbirds are still lingering and at the same time many of our winter residents are returning in force. Raptors (hawks & eagles) are on the move throughout the month.

The various habitats of the Oxbow and the lower Great Miami River valley are a great place to see this diversity. Our trip leader Darlena knows the birds and the Oxbow as well as anyone so come out and join her as she leads us on what should be a crisp autumn morning walk through the Oxbow looking for this "mixed bag" of migrants and residents. Feel free to contact Darlena if you have any questions.



Date & Time: Saturday, November 10, 2012

Where: Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

Leader: Steve Pelikan, (513) 681-2574, pelican@math.uc.edu

Some people may think of November as a cold and dreary month but I would disagree. I think late autumn is a beautiful time of the year and the subtle hues of the landscape interspersed with brilliant fall colors offer up a stark beauty. It will be against this backdrop that our trip leader Steve Pelikan will lead this morning visit to the Oxbow. Steve is an exceptional naturalist and skilled birder as well as a long-time board member of Oxbow Inc. But at this season the focus of this trip will be waterfowl and other late migrants.

When birders and naturalists think of the Oxbow during November the first thing that usually comes to mind is waterfowl. The peak of fall waterfowl migration occurs in our region during November, and as one of Oxbow Inc.'s catch phrases states, "The duck stops here".

In addition to ducks the changing season will also have other species on the move. Gulls, grebes, a few shorebirds, raptors, including Bald Eagles, and late migrant and wintering songbirds are all likely and the weedy fields will abound with sparrows of many species. Even Sandhill Cranes are possible. So come out and join Steve for what should be a pleasant autumnal visit to the Oxbow. Remember, the Oxbow can be muddy in places at this time of year (heck, anytime) and November weather can be cold & wet, so prepare accordingly. Feel free to contact Steve if you have any questions.

Due to the Holidays there is no December Field Trip—Happy Holidays to One and All!

OXBOW

by Carol Molleran (May 1987)

The Oxbow is a sometime place.

The Oxbow, never static,
shows a shifting, changing face.

In Spring it is a watery way,
where flooded fields form channeled pools,
that sometimes join the river's restless play.

In Spring the ducks are gathered,
where divers dare,
are Ringneck, Scaup and Canvasback.
Puddlers too are tipping in the shallows there,
Mallards, Pintails, Teal abound,
and geese make their raucous honking sound.
As the floods recede, the stranded fish are squeezed
in ever smaller pools,
and bid good eating to the waiting gulls
and other hungry hunters on the wing.
In Spring the Eagle climbing high
seems like a speck in eye or sky,
and then is gone!
leaving fish to tempt an Osprey passing by.

In Summer,
fields, once targets for the tippeling ducks,
become a farmers place, where corn and soybeans
dwell
and sparrows search amid the growing space.
And in the waning water, Great Blue Herons keep
their silent watch and snatch a frog or two.
Or sometimes fly
like ancient pterodactyls
sketched against the evening sky.
The Oxbow is a Muskrat haven.
Brown furred heads move purposefully,
and long flat tails steer those silent ships,
to ports among the Water Lily hips.
And swallows sweep the insect-burdened air,
while teeming, unseen multitudes
lurk beneath the water's surface film.

As Summer ends the shore birds come,
Plovers, Sandpipers, Yellowlegs and peeps,
busily probing and pacing on the water –covered feet.

And at the deepening dusk,
Black-crowned Night Herons sit
on tree-stump benches,
like old men, with heads down,
pondering the problems of the World.
Or looking for fish!
At the Harvest time the land is dryer still.
Bold grasshoppers and their predators
Make the daytime sing.
Gray Harriers patrol for mice
and other scurrying things.
While, at night, the owls hold sway,
and watch for fugitives of the drying day.
And now the Red-winged Blackbirds flock,
preparing for their southward trek.
Too soon the swallows will be gone,
with Phoebes and some other friends.
For they are summer residents,
and Winter's scanty fare is not for them.

In Winter, stiff grass bends before the chilling wind,
and ice shelves line the limits of the frozen shore,
where bare tree limbs cast
their silhouettes on the pewter clouds.
Refugeeing deep down underground
Or within the empty standing trees, are other crea-
tures
seeking safety from the coming, killing cold.

And the Oxbow, never silent, never dead,
but barren-seeming all the same,
awaits another Spring,
another flood,
another inning of the game.





Steve Kolbe initially reported Oxbow's first ever Neotropic Cormorant on July 30, 2012. The Neotropic Cormorant on the left is clearly smaller and darker than the two larger Double-crested Cormorants on the right. This species brings Oxbow's total to 287 species of birds in the modern era. (Photo by Steve Kolbe)

2012 OXBOW, INC. SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Hannah Mohr flanked by her father Clark and her mother Tracey of South Dearborn High School will be attending Northern Kentucky University studying Biology. (photo by Velda Miller)



Bryant Dold of Lawrenceburg High School will be attending Ivy Tech Community College as a Business major. (senior class photo)



Naomi Maddox of South Dearborn High School, with her father Curtis, will attend Ivy Tech Community College and transfer to Purdue to pursue her DVM degree. (photo by Jon Seymour)

Kyle Macke of William Henry Harrison High School, with his father Joe and mother Libbey Macke of Cleves, is planning on attending the Florida Institute of Technology to study Aquaculture. (photo by Kani Meyer)



Alec McCoy is flanked by his father Sandy and mother Kim. Alec from Taylor High School, will attend Capital University to major in Chemistry. (photo by to Ed Gemperle)



Birdathon Raises \$3829 for Oxbow

This year's Birdathon raised \$3829 for Oxbow to be used for land purchase, habitat improvement or access improvement. This result is lower than in any of the past few years but there is still some hope for a few late donations to be made. While disappointing in that respect it is still more money for supporting the slice of nature contained within the Oxbow floodplain. There were fewer large donors and also few donors in total than in past years. We will have to work extra hard next year to bring that total up and back to our average of about \$6000 each of the last few years. Even so we all still had a great time. Oxbow wishes to express their deep appreciation for all the participants and donors. Your efforts continue to make the Oxbow a better place for nature.

The Money Raising Results are as follows:

- Jon Seymour: The First Timers - \$766
- Sister Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller, Chris Moran & Lois Shadix: The Lady Hawks - \$724
- Dave Helm, Bill Creasey & Steve Bobonick : Close-N-Counters – Cincinnati Nature Center - \$461
- Charlie Saunders & Mike Busam: \$435
- Wayne Wauligman, Erich Baumgardner & Mark Minium: Finneytown's Fabulous Flying Fortune Seekers - \$310
- Joe Bens, Jack Stenger, Jay Stenger & Paul Wharton: The Beasts of Birdin' - \$300
- Jerry & Madeline Lippert: The Cardinal and the Merfairly - \$170
- Brendan & Don Begosian: Passerine Dream - \$156
- George Farnsworth, Molly McCallick, Veronica Massey, Sean Kirby & Tyler: X-pert Birders (not) – Xavier University - \$122
- Gary Stegner: The Fernald Preserve Team - \$100
- Jonathon & Samantha Frodge & John Marvin: \$15
- Chris & Suzanne-Clingman: The Clermont County Parks Team - \$10

An additional \$260 was collected as Birdathon participation fees and used to defray the cost of the Tally Party following the Birdathon.

Oxbow Inc. Increases Scholarship Awards to Local High School Students

In 2011 the Board of Directors of Oxbow, Inc. established its' first ever Scholarship program for continuing education for deserving high school seniors entering college level study in the area of natural sciences. In 2011 three scholarships were awarded. In 2012 the Board of Directors authorized an expansion of the program to 5 scholarships covering the five high schools surrounding the Oxbow area at the mouth of the Great Miami River. The scholarship winners are picked by the Guidance and Science staff at the various High Schools based on a list of criteria that is provided by Oxbow, Inc. In May of 2012 an array of presenters representing Oxbow fanned out to 5 local school districts and presented \$500 continuing education scholarships to each of five area college bound, high school seniors.

The 2012 Winners are:

- ♦ Taylor High School: **Alec McCoy**, son of Sandy and Kim McCoy of Cleves, OH plans to study Chemistry at Capital University.
- ♦ South Dearborn High School: **Hannah Mohr** daughter of Clark and Tracey Mohr of Aurora, IN plans to study Biology (Wildlife Management) at Northern Kentucky University
- ♦ William Henry Harrison High School: **Kyle Macke**, son of Joe and Libbey Macke of Cleves, OH, plans to study Aquaculture at Florida Institute of Technology
- ♦ East Central High School: **Naomi Maddox**, daughter of Curtis and Wanda Maddox of West Harrison, IN plans on becoming a veterinarian. She will be studying Biological Sciences at Ivy Tech Community College and then transfer then to Purdue University to pursue her DVM.
- ♦ Lawrenceburg High School: **Bryant Dold**, son of Bryant and Theresa Dold, Hidden Valley Lake, Lawrenceburg, IN will study business (he already has a growing landscaping business) at Ivy Tech Community College

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

By Jon Seymour
Friday, July 13, 2012

My wife, Jackie, and I have just left the Walnut St. Theater in downtown Lawrenceburg and this evenings' performance of "An Encounter with Mark Twain" a one man show by local actor Gary Caplinger. We have a wonderful time listening again to the wisdom of Samuel Clemens. The evening is still fairly bright, with sunset not due for many minutes, so we decide to drive through the Oxbow to look for the signs of nature at dusk in the Oxbow. It has been murderously hot for nearly two weeks with constant 90s+ and recently occasional forays into the 100s that make us wish for January. As we drive by Osprey Lake, Jackie is the first to notice the hundreds of fish dead and dying on the shores of the mudflats. I am the first to notice that there are dead fish are also floating in the water with their scales reflecting the setting sun. It is a mass die off probably due to heat or lack of oxygen in the water. The Lake probably just got too hot. (Within a week all traces of the kill would be gone as scavengers had a field day on the free buffet the kill offered.)

Taking note of the kill and vowing to contact Board Member, Dr. Michael Miller, to ask him why such a kill might have taken place, we drove on toward the Hardintown exit. On the way we noticed some fishermen setting up for night fishing on Juno Pond. They had brought lights to attract fish and were powering them from batteries. The problem is they also have a bonfire. We circle around and call the sheriff's office to report the fire. It is against Oxbow rules to have a fire but even more importantly Dearborn County has declared a county wide ban on open fires due to the extreme drought conditions. Only 80 feet away from the fire was a 45 acre dry corn field. We wait until an officer arrives and then we head for home.

Thursday, August 2, 2012

I am closing up my notebook at the end of a Green Umbrella Board Meeting. Stan Hedeon, sitting next to me, leans in and says, "Congratulations on the Neotropic Cormorant. I say, "What?" Stan explains to me that there is a Neotropic Cormorant reported in the Oxbow. I say, "No one told me! I didn't know! Stan says, "It is the rarest bird you have ever had there."

I head for home with the notion that I need to check this out. In front of my computer I bring up Ned Keller's Cincinnati Birding site, and there it is. In fact there are three days of postings that are practically about nothing but Oxbow. I chide myself for picking the wrong time to be so busy as to not check the site for a week. Usually I get a personal note from someone on my email or a phone call if something is happening but I had not gotten any notice of this event. As I read through the sightings it suddenly strikes me as funny. While the Neotropic Cormorant is getting all the attention there are reports of two other species of unusual bird in the Oxbow that are practically being ignored. Along with the Cormorant there are several Little Blue Herons and two Snowy Egret also present. In past years the presence of either one of these species would have been enough to generate some excitement and now they are both present together and are basically being ignored in favor of a diminutive cormorant. This cormorant is tiny, being not much larger than a Mallard. It is an observation that I made a couple of years ago when I walked up to 15 feet of a Neotropic Cormorant and a Mallard sitting side by side on the shore line of a pond in Arizona. Did I mention that Sibley's lists the Neotropic Cormorant as "unwary". I get on the Cornell University website and look for other sightings in the Midwest. They are not common and I only locate two within the last few years in our area (Indianapolis, and Lake Erie). It is an unusual bird outside of the southwest.

Friday, August 3, 2012

The Silver Heirs have arrived. They are a senior's social learning group from the Evangelical Community Church in Colerain. This special guided tour has been arranged by Dr. Bill Gerhardt, a staunch supporter of Oxbow who has arranged speaking engagements and special tours for several groups of which he is a member. We start at the office with a short lecture on the organization to the 20 participants. I mention that there are three rare bird species that are reported to be in the Oxbow and that I hope to be able to find at least one of them. Finished with the introduction we divide up and form a carpool caravan into the Oxbow.

There are six planned stops on the route with a different topic to be discussed at each stop. At stop number 2 I find a Little Blue Heron keeping company with a couple of Great Egrets on Jackpot Pond. I think everyone is able to see the heron

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Horseshoe Bottoms (continued from page 9)

through my spotting scope plus we have some close looks at some nearby Great Egrets. Stop number 3 yields are first chance to see some cormorants and at trying to find the Neotropic Cormorant. Looking south on Oxbow Lake from the overlook area I find several cormorants sitting on branches just above the water line. After careful examination with the scope, I reach the conclusion that none of the cormorants is the elusive Neotropic.

As the caravan pulls away from our fourth stop at Osprey Lake, I meet Brian Wulker driving in to look for the Neotropic. We talk briefly out our car windows but I need to lead the caravan on and Brian is anxious to see what he can find for the day. As we pull away from stop number 5, Juno Pond, I get a phone call from Brian and he thinks he has the Neotropic Cormorant in sight. I ask him where he is seeing it and he describes location number 3, the overlook we were just at a few minutes ago, and he describes an area that I knew had no cormorants when we left. I tell him sadly that I cannot turn the caravan around but wish him well searching for any of the other birds.

The final stop for the Caravan is the entrance parking area and the new vernal pools. As usual I have my back to the "attraction" while I am talking about it and one of the birders in the group spots a Prothonotary Warbler hunting for lunch on the edge of the pool. The bird stays for a little while and most get to see this golden warbler with blue wings. I think I am going to like these pools very much!

I get on the phone again and confirm the groups lunch reservations at the Riverwatch, the floating restaurant beyond the levee on the Ohio River at the foot of Walnut Street in Lawrenceburg. They are ready for our party of 21 so we head for our number 7 stop and a great lunch.



2012 Birdathon Contributors

- Robyn and Pat Aungst
- Srs. V.M. Bockenstette and R. Forde
- Don Bogosian
- Barbara Bogosian and Margaret Mary Delaney
- Judy Bohn
- Bob and Eveline Branan
- Philip Brode III
- Cincinnati Nature Center
- Chris and Suzanne Clingman
- Barbara DeNamur
- Tim and Laura Dornan
- Doc and Fran Eckstein
- Eric Elfner
- George Farnsworth
- Jon and Samantha Frodge
- Jeff Grothaus
- Debra Hausrath
- Andrew MacAoidh Jergens
- Robert and Patricia Lacker
- Jennifer Loggie
- Robert and Sallie Parker Lotz
- Brandon McKelley
- David and Kani Meyer
- Ken Miller and Bethia Margoshes
- Chris Moran
- Regeana and Al Morgan
- Bobby and Sharon Morris
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- Charlie and Mary Saunders
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- Carl and Lois Shadix
- Tim Sparer
- Gary and Sally Stegner
- James and Louise Stinchcomb
- William and Kathleen Stiver
- Jan Streicher-Scott
- Patrick and Katherine Tracy
- Joan Carlson Walson
- Wayne and Paula Wauligman

Thank You



by Dave Styer

News Flash: Neotropic Cormorant Seen at the Oxbow

On the afternoon of Monday, July 30, 2012 Steve Kolbe saw a Neotropic Cormorant with a couple of Double-crested Cormorants at the Oxbow. This was not only a first record for the Oxbow area, and the Greater Cincinnati area, but, as far as I can tell, there is no other record of Neotropic Cormorant closer than one seen this past May northwest of Indianapolis.

Perhaps something is happening. In the 1980s and early 1990s, when the large handsome state bird books with Bill Zimmerman paintings were published for Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky there is no mention of the Neotropic Cormorant in any of them. The typical place to see these cormorants is southern Texas and south through South America. This bird used to be called the Olivaceous Cormorant, but it is not olive-green and it is largely neotropical in its habitat, so Neotropic Cormorant is a good name for the bird.

As *The Sibley Guide to Birds* indicates, there have been stray records north and west of Texas, but none in the eastern U.S. Now, rather suddenly, that has changed. I am depending on the Internet resource *ebird* for the following information. A Neotropic Cormorant was seen in western Kentucky in 1998, perhaps a state first. By the last couple of years these cormorants have shown up in western Kentucky, Illinois, and Indiana right up to Lake Michigan area. There are three different places that Neotropic Cormorants have been seen in the Lake Erie area. Curiously, the Lake Erie birds have been seen in Ontario, and I'm not sure that there is an Ohio record.

Is this the beginning of a population explosion of Neotropic Cormorants, or is this a once-in-a-lifetime event? Only time will tell. I can't help but compare this with the Double-crested Cormorant experience at the Oxbow. I had been going to the Oxbow all during the 1970s and I had never seen a Double-crested Cormorant there. Then, on June 5, 1977 Bill and David Moring saw an immature Double-crested Cormorant there. Naturally, I rushed to

the Oxbow, so that I, too, could see a Double-crested Cormorant there. The truth is that I went to the Oxbow on June 7 to see the 2 Hudsonian Godwits that Bill and David saw on the 5th. Little did I know how common Double-crested Cormorants were about to become. Now, 35 years later, they are a-dime-a-dozen, so to speak.

Thinking back to 1977 and the sighting of a Double-crested Cormorant and 2 Hudsonian Godwits, did the Morings get on their cell phone and immediately get the word out? Of course not; we didn't have cell phones back then. Did they go home and get on the Internet to spread the word? Of course not; was the Internet even a rumor back in 1977? Besides that, hardly anyone had a home computer back then. When I went to the Oxbow two days later, how many had already gone there to see the godwits? I have no way to tell, but let me guess. We had a phone hot-line, and several birders likely knew about the Moring's sightings, so several people may have gone there the next day. Now I can look on Ned Keller's wonderful WEB page, or even on Cornell's *ebird*, and I see that others had come to see the Neotropical Cormorant on the same day that Steve Kolbe found it, and see that numerous others have followed-up shortly afterwards. Thanks to an email message from Jon Seymour, I have learned about this, even while it is happening. On Ned's Cincinnati Birds Web Site, observers have posted where you can go to see their definitive digital photos of the Neotropic Cormorant. Splendid! In 1977, did I take along my digital camera to photograph the Hudsonian Godwits? Of course not; there were no digital cameras. I had a nice film camera, but they are so much harder to use that few pictures were taken back then, compared to now. In this age we photograph nearly everything. Wow! I didn't realize how ancient we were back in 1977.

Let's get back to the question at hand. What's going on with these Neotropic Cormorants suddenly showing up? Is this related to global warming? Does the weather feel extra hot and humid? Welcome to the Neotropics.

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