



# WETLAND matters

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

## New Residents In the Offing Soon For the Oxbow?

### CAN TRUMPETER . . . . ?

Although nineteenth century conservationists feared for the survival of Trumpeter Swans, their status has greatly improved, and today they are no longer considered endangered. Prior to a restoration project that was undertaken in 1982, there were no reports of wild swans in Ontario, Canada. As of September, 1997, 143 free-flying trumpeters are now estimated to be in southern Ontario. Past restoration programs have been successful in establishing wild breeding populations of more than 1,400 free-flying swans that live east of the Rockies in the northern range of the Mississippi Flyway, i.e., South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and Iowa.

In an attempt to restore trumpeters to their entire previous North American range, an Interior Population Management Plan seeks to bring the birds to a specific wintering ground within the southern Mississippi Flyway at a latitude south of 40 degrees

### Field Trips

**September 19, 1998 (Saturday), 8:30 a.m., Oxbow field trip.** Meet Ned Keller (513-941-6497) at Gardens Alive! parking lot.

**October 4, 1998 (Sunday), 8:00 a.m., Oxbow field trip.** Meet Paul Wharton (513-353-3403) at Gardens Alive! parking lot.

north. Because the captive-raised birds do not have parents to lead them, flying surrogates in the form of ultra-lite aircraft will be used to induce migration to accomplish this objective. Approximately 2,000 hatched cygnets have already been conditioned to fly with the ultra-lite aircraft.

### CAN TRUMPETER SWANS BE . . . . ?

In the fall of this year the Trumpeter Swan Society of Aurora, Ontario, will carry out an experimental induced migration, leading nine yearling birds to a suitable wintering area. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, sees the Oxbow as an area of probability. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, supports the Oxbow area for the Society's migration study. A letter from Harry Lumsden, Director of the Trumpeter Swan Society, to Oxbow, Inc., President Norman Flannery, asked if Oxbow would welcome some wintering swans. Empiric information about trumpeter swans in the Oxbow area is limited. In Dr. David Styer's book, *Birds of the Oxbow*, he reports the swan as being a rare visitor and adds, "There is one recent record of a trumpeter swan in the Oxbow area. This bird showed up in the Ohio fields just down river from Lost Bridge in January, 1982. When sighted, it was assumed to be a Tundra Swan and would have gone into the record as a Tundra had it not been shot on, or just prior to, February 27. The skin, sternum, etc., reside in the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History. This swan likely came from the Great Lakes area where swans are now being raised."

A reply to Mr. Lumsden cited Oxbow's Board of Trustees' concern for the safety of the birds and their ability to winter over successfully.

A recent field trip to the Oxbow by IDNR Fish and Wildlife personnel to assess the area's ability to support the wintering swans raised some concerns about an adequate aquatic food supply and potential power line hazards. IDNR recommended further evaluation of the site by biologists from the Trumpeter Swan Society.

### CAN TRUMPETER SWANS BE COMING TO . . . . ?

Should the final determination be that the Oxbow is an adequate wintering site, approval must be

granted the Society from the states of Ohio and Michigan, the Mississippi Flyway Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. If all the necessary permits are secured, the flight is scheduled for October, 1998. The Society's Restoration Program reads:

"Preparations for the flight will be carried out this summer by a ground party that will cover the route seeking landing sites, usually on private property with landowner permission. Two ultra-lite aircraft will be used, one an amphibian and one on floats. There will be three ground crew volunteers and three pilots.

"The distance from the anticipated starting point at Millgrove, Ontario, to the Oxbow area is about 420 miles (675 km). Each leg of the flight for the swans will be 30 to 53 miles (58-95 km). At stopping points the swans will be placed in a collapsible pen carried for the purpose and will be fed and rested.

"Wind speeds over 10 miles per hour (16 km) create difficulties for the ultra-lites, so weather will dictate the duration of the flight. It is hoped a period of Indian Summer will allow the flight to be made in 17 hours flying time. It is anticipated this will take about six flying days.

"On arrival at the Oxbow the swans will be held in the pen for a few days and fed their usual ration. At intervals they will be taken for orientation flights around the release area. After flights they will be allowed to feed on natural food and will be weaned gradually off their artificial ration until they become completely independent. All the trumpeters will be marked with yellow patagial wing tags with a black three digit number to enable staff and the public to keep track of movements and survival.

"The swans will be left to see if they will return on their own to the Millgrove area in Ontario. Should one or all remain in the Oxbow area, no attempt will be made to recapture them and return them to Ontario."

#### **CAN TRUMPETER SWANS BE COMING TO THE OX BOW . . . ?**

**IF** and **WHEN** they do, what a wonderful glow of pride and accomplishment should warm all of our Oxbow members! It's only because of the unfailing support you have given over the past 12 years that the Oxbow even exists to now be considered as the terminus for nine experimental swans brave enough to migrate behind odd-looking parents into a wintering site promising them nothing but the unknown.

Mr. Lumsden concluded his letter to me with a thought we must all hold--"This project is experimental; we are all inexperienced and learning as we go."

**IF** and **WHEN** the swans come, all will rest on them. We can only hope for their safety and wish them well!  
Norma Flannery, President

## **OXBOW MEMORIALS**

### **In Memory of**

Gordon E. Acomb

John C Neupauer

Leonard A. Weakley

Rita Wellbrock

Art Wiseman

### **Tributes**

Fiftieth Anniversary of  
Bernadine and Eugene  
Gemperline

Contributions for Memorials should be sent to Oxbow, Inc., PO Box 43391, Cincinnati, Ohio 45243-0391. Be sure to enclose names and addresses of those to receive the acknowledgement.

### **Donors**

Jane Acomb Leake  
and  
Lowell Leake

Cincinnati Bird Club

Mr. and Mrs. Donald R.  
Gurney

Carol and Harold Foltz

Jean A. Durbin

### **Donors**

Dick and Clare  
Schuermann

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## **P&G Group Sets Record In Birdathon Support**

Here is a portion of the text of a letter Jon Seymour recently sent to Oxbow, Inc., Treasurer Mark Westrich:

"I have finally been able to gather all the donations from my 60 Procter & Gamble donors and the total has set a new RECORD for our group. This year was amazing since I had about a 25% increase in the amount of money donated. Nearly 15% of my donors OVERPAID their pledges. At the time of the Birdathon, I had reported that I had received pledges of \$7.70 per species plus \$150.00 in straight cash pledges. This totaled \$1089.40 for my personal bird species total of 122. Between overpayments and late pledges received after completion of the Birdathon, the final total for this year is \$1265.00 (effectively about \$10.36/species).

"This brings our ten year donation total for my P&G group to nearly \$7,500. This level of contribution is a credit to my loyal supporters. Some of them have supported me for all ten years. Some of them have retired and have asked me to keep them on my supporter list."

Let's hear it for Jon Seymour and P&G!

Up Close and Personal

## The Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus Buccinator*

**T**he adult trumpeter swan has snowy all-white plumage while the more subdued coloring of the immatures is a dull mouse-gray. Trumpeters have remarkably long necks--as long as their bodies--held out-thrust during flight-- but proudly erect when swimming attentively and in a graceful semi-curve the rest of the time. They are usually in small flocks of three to five, but during fall and winter may come together in loose aggregations of 25 to 50.

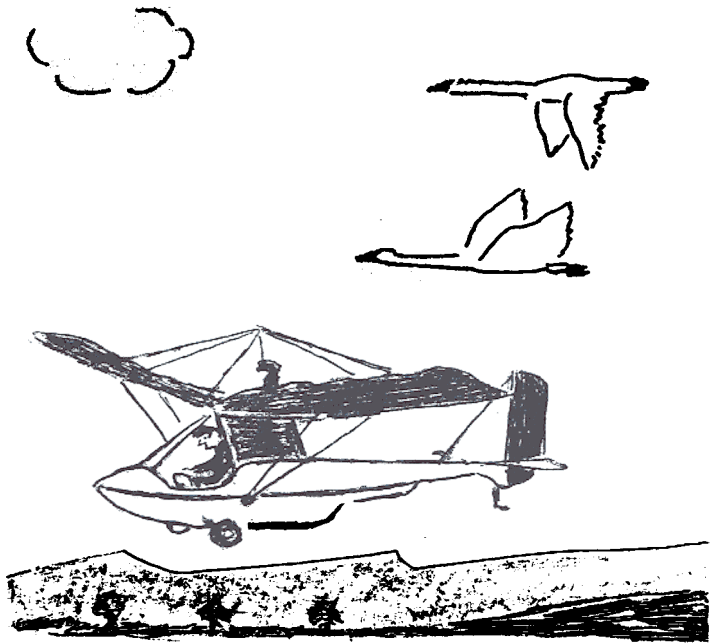
The adult male will average 59 inches in length with a wing span of 98 inches and will weigh 27.9 pounds. While in molt, between June 26 and August 17, they become flightless. Swans usually mate for life, but if one of the pair is lost, the remaining spouse may subsequently remate. Territorial behavior is strikingly evident. A mated pair will vigorously defend the mating, nesting, and cygnet feeding grounds.

The diet of trumpeter swans consists of a variety of marsh and aquatic plants and, where they occur, tubers of duck potato and sago pondweed. Stems and leaves of white water buttercup, water milfoil, muskgrass, waterweed and duckweed are taken in quantity. Every day, each bird will consume nearly 20 pounds of moist leafy aquatic vegetation. Corn, pelleted duck food and bread will readily be accepted when offered.

The trumpeter's call has been likened to the sonorous notes of a French horn and is more vociferous than the high-pitched, quavering call of the Whistling Swan. The white head and upper neck is often stained a rusty color from contact with ferrous minerals in the bottom soils during their search for food. It is in this manner also, that lead pellets from spent shotgun shells are ingested. The cause of many swan fatalities is lead poisoning.

Trumpeters have lived to be 29 years old in captivity, but in the wild, accidents and predators eliminate most birds long before old age is reached. In spite of being legally protected throughout the year, trumpeter swans are killed by thoughtless shooters. There is a maximum penalty of \$5,000 and loss of hunting privileges for three years for maliciously killing one of the birds. Violators are arrested and prosecuted.

Norma Flannery



## Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Projects Elsewhere in the U.S.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife's Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Plan calls for the release of about 150 swans into selected Ohio wetlands, with the goal of establishing a breeding population of at least 15 pairs through the year 2006.

Michael J. Budzik, Chief, ODNR Division  
of Wildlife

"Defenders of Wildlife," in collaboration with Environmental Studies at Airlie, has taken the first step in the Migratory Bird Project to restore trumpeter swans to the East. In December, 1997, an ultra-lite led three swans on a 103-mile migration from their birthplace near Warrenton, Virginia, to Maryland's Eastern shore. Biologists hoped the three would return home in the spring. All three set out to do so.

The first made good progress but was captured by a well-meaning resident and then injured by a dog. It was trucked the rest of the way. The second began migrating but turned back half-way and also finished by truck. The third flew home without incident. The species has been missing from the East for nearly 200 years. Biologists next hope to lead a longer migration from New York to the Eastern shore.

Maria Cecil, *Defenders*, Summer, 1998

# FIELD NOTES

by Morris Mercer

When I found out I was to lead a field trip June 2, I thought I should go down and check it out the day before we were to go. When I made it home, Frances asked what I had seen. I said if tomorrow is anything like this evening it will be a pretty dull field trip.

We were to meet at 5:30 p.m. in the parking lot at Gardens Alive. The sun was still fairly high, and it was hot. The two purple martin houses seemed to be full, and the martins were noisy there at Gardens Alive.

Fifteen folks were ready to make the trip. We loaded into three cars and headed for the Oxbow. We drove down by the Gamblers' river boat, turned up over the levee, and stopped at Jack-Pot Pond. There a few semipalmated sandpipers and a couple of semipalmated plovers worked along the bank. The sounds of tractors could be heard as the farmers were busy planting the fields.

On over near the Oxbow, the crisp, clear call of the prothonotary warbler could be heard. We parked the car and walked back toward Beaver Pond. The water was high in the Oxbow. About the only mud flats were in and around the old corn stubbles. There were more semipalmated plovers and sandpipers in the shallow water and the mud. While we were looking at them a nice flock of cedar waxwings flew over.

The walk across the field would have been a muddy mess a few days before, but this evening it was like a soft carpet. We saw some men with bows and their arrows were on strings with a reel on the bow. They were shooting carp.

There were great blue herons and double-crested cormorants in the air as well as several other birds. As we walked up to the edge of Beaver Pond the water seemed to be boiling just off the bank. I hadn't seen anything just like it, and as we watched we were guessing what might be causing it. Our questions were soon answered as a large snapping turtle came to the surface.

We walked to where we could get a look at the small sky pond out in the big field. There were a dozen great blue herons and a few mallards in the water hole. The fish had been trapped when the flood water went down. The great blues were having a field day. One heron picked up a carp that weighed a pound or so. The heron flipped the fish around so that it was going down head first. I saw what seemed to be a magical act, as the carp disappeared down that long skinny neck of the

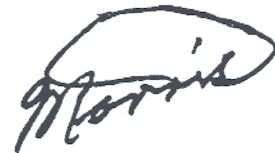
heron.

We also saw a few great egrets. The large white birds were beautiful resting in the green willows. And there was the musical song of the horned lark. As we walked back toward Beaver Bond, I saw a crow flying with a red-winged blackbird in hot pursuit. And as we approached Beaver Pond, it was easy to see where the water hole got its name. A beaver was swimming across the pond, leaving a long silver wake. The beaver disappeared in the heavy willows along the south bank.

Twilight was closing in and we welcomed the cool of evening. There was the cry of the wild geese. Looking up, I saw the string of geese and a fine crescent moon. We were making our way across the field. We saw the bow hunters and they were carrying the turtle we had seen earlier. (I think they had turtle soup on their mind.) Near the next water hole, we heard the alarm call of a wood duck as she took to the wing. Along the road the willow flycatcher was very vocal.

I had started the trip hoping it would not be too dull. Everyone talked as if they had enjoyed the trip. I had enjoyed it very much, and also enjoyed the trip home. As I passed one large field it seemed someone had it ready for Christmas. The field was full of minilights. The lightning bugs seemed to be everywhere. Most seemed to be from the ground to about waist high. It was a beautiful thing to see.

But now with July gone, I look around and see hints of autumn. This spring the locust trees were so beautiful and white when they were in bloom. Now the leaves of the locust are rusty and brown. Once again we have a new season to look forward to--"Autumn at the Oxbow." Hope we can share some time there.



## WILLIAM ROWELL CHASE, R.I.P.

With great sadness, Oxbow, Inc., notes the death of William Rowell Chase. Mr. Chase, a retired Vice President of Procter & Gamble, died March 15 at the age of 94. For many years he was a staunch supporter of the Oxbow. When the Board wished to thank him publicly for his generosity, he told them he wanted no fanfare. The Board of Trustees now feels that his great contribution should be acknowledged at last. We mourn the passing of this special gentleman who cared about saving the Oxbow and did no much to help.



# Oxbow, Inc., 1997 Treasury Report

Oxbow Inc. gained about \$84 thousand in 1997, and continues to save for an opportunity to buy wetland in the Great Miami/Ohio river flood plain. Last year Oxbow purchased 60 acres (30 acres dry) at the mouth of the Great Miami.

Proposals abound for commercial development of the flood plain. Oxbow Inc. examines these and represents the interests of the wetland before various public and private authorities as necessary. This expense, mostly legal, was more than \$6 thousand in 1997.

Oxbow Inc. invested more than \$5 thousand for research and education in 1997 [the Newsletter and most of the Miscellaneous expense caption in the statement below]. Taxes and insurance were \$2,600. Administration and fundraising expense was under \$1,500 (mostly printing and postage), or 1.4% of revenue. Assets of Oxbow Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana Inc. together amounted to almost \$900 thousand, including about \$327 thousand in bank and money market accounts.

Of course, Oxbow Inc. is a 100% volunteer organization - there are no salaries, expense accounts, etc. - and is beholden to public support for its success.

Mark M. Westrich  
Treasurer, Oxbow Inc.

**OXBOW INC.**  
**PO BOX 43391**  
**CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243**

Revenue & Expense	
1997	
Dues	\$24,035.00
Donations	\$23,662.89
Memorials	\$1,650.00
Land Acquisition	\$4,042.04
Interest	\$10,345.54
Fund Raising	\$0.00
Bird-A-Thon	\$12,881.24
Crop Income	\$22,263.50
Book Sales	\$25.90
Video Sales	\$18.00
Shirt Sales	\$39.00
Cap Sales	\$0.00
Miscellaneous	<u>\$25.00</u>
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$98,988.11</b>
Postage&Phone	\$1,218.64
Office Supplies	\$89.83
Newsletter	\$1,968.39
Taxes & Ins	\$2,634.71
Legal	\$5,873.15
Fund Raising	\$43.92
Book Cost	\$8.34
Video Cost	\$10.00
Shirt Cost	\$30.45
Cap Cost	\$0.00
Miscellaneous	<u>\$3,089.23</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$14,966.66</b>

Capital & Assets	
1997	
Cash	\$260,221.63
Land	\$175,551.60
Easements Owned	\$231,963.28
Equipment	\$1,132.75
Book Stock	\$75.81
Video Stock	\$870.00
Shirt Stock	\$2,197.52
Cap Stock	<u>\$94.49</u>
<b>Assets</b>	<b>\$672,107.08</b>
Debt	\$0.00
<b>Equity</b>	<b><u>\$672,107.08</u></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$672,107.08</b>

**Net Gain** **\$84,021.45**

## 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		

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513-471-8001

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