

audubon



December 2005
Volume 31, Issue 3

the quarterly newsletter of Audubon Miami Valley, in Ohio's Butler and Preble Counties

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Audubon: 100 years for conservation

The National Audubon Society (NAS) is celebrating its centennial year.

Begun first by people who were outraged about the wholesale slaughter of wild birds for decorating fashionable hats, the organization has grown tremendously. NAS now includes nature centers and more than 500 chapters.

Scientific, educational and advocacy programs engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Formerly known as the Oxford Audubon Society, Audubon Miami Valley is over 30 years old. We share with NAS a principal mission: to conserve and restore natural eco-

systems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Our strategy to accomplish this mission is by increasing awareness about birds, wildlife and habitat through public speakers, regional outings, Citizen Science, education programs, and conservation projects.

All of these include interactive opportunities for people of all ages whether as a volunteer or participant.

Our Christmas Bird Count, part of Citizen Science, involves a mix of hard-core birders and novices, newcomers and seasoned counters, young and old. It is a great way to

enjoy the out-of-doors, meet others in the Audubon community and continue the great tradition of the count, one of the oldest Citizen Science efforts in the nation.

Larry Sherman, our Oxford count organizer, has been a member of our chapter from the beginning. Having served as president and treasurer for many years, he is a veteran of the count. His humor and organization keep us coming back every year.

You can participate December 17 in the field or from your own backyard as one of Larry's counters.

Details about this year's count are on page 3. I hope you can join in the fun for science's sake.

– Liz Woedt

Neotropical birds: transglobal wonders

Jim McCormac, author of the new book *The Birds of Ohio*, will discuss some of our state's avian commuters with the Audubon Miami Valley Chapter on Dec. 12

Some of Ohio's most spectacular birds are not truly ours; they are transglobal wanderers that nest or migrate in Ohio but winter in the tropics of Central and South America. This group includes colorful species like the Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, and Hooded Warbler.

About 180 species regularly nest in Ohio, and more than one-third of them are neotropical. Furthermore, of the roughly 300 species seen each year in Ohio – migrants and nesters – about 100 are neotropical.

Conservation of neotropical birds is vital to protecting

DEC. 12, 7:30 P.M.

COMMUNITY ROOM

LEBANON CITIZENS NATIONAL BANK

30 W. PARK PLACE, OXFORD

Ohio's diverse bird life. In this presentation by McCormac, an avian education specialist for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, we'll look at some of these fascinating birds, where they are when in Ohio, where they go in winter, and what needs to be done to protect them.

Audubon Miami Valley has 50 copies of *The Birds of Ohio* for sale. Call 513.523.8305 for details. Jim will sign books sold before or at the Dec. 12 program.

SIGHTINGS

Woodcocks in 20 minutes

After seeing a report of the flushing of a Woodcock on Miami land last February, I decided to take a look at my favorite Woodcock site off Bonham Road on Miami preserved land. I arrived about 6:15 p.m. and saw or heard nothing for about 15 minutes, although I did see a weasel cross the trail three times.

I moved to the far end of the brushy area and stood very still. At exactly 6:35 p.m. I heard a Woodcock calling in the brush about 20 feet to my left. It kept coming toward me, although I couldn't see it in the weeds.

It got to within about 10 feet and took flight. It landed on the trail about 30 feet ahead of me. At that point, a second Woodcock flew over the first and disappeared. The first one called about 10 times then took flight and landed about 50 feet from me. It made several calls, took off and landed about 20 feet in front of me.


After calling for the third time, it took off and finally did its circling flight, getting higher and higher until I could hardly see it. Then it did its tumbling drop to the trail about 30 feet ahead of me. At exactly 6:55 p.m. it was all over.

– Dick Munson

**Audubon Miami Valley newsletter
is published four times a year,
as the seasons change.**

Deadline for the spring issue is Jan. 15, 2006.
Send contributions to
Newsletter@AudubonMiamiValley.org or to
Newsletter, P.O. Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056

- Debra Bowles, chapter communications chair, is newsletter publisher.
- Judi Hetrick is editor.
- Celia Ellison is proofreader.
- John Blocher is mailing manager.
- Caitlin Stone designed the Meadowlark logo.

 The newsletter is printed by Letterman Printing in Oxford on 30 percent recycled paper.

Visit us online at www.audubonmiamivalley.org.

Visitors find Robin Court

Early summer of 2002 brought three new visitors to Robin Court in Oxford. They weren't Robins as one would expect. The three were Red-tailed Hawks. They arrived in mid-June and left a month later. It seems that the squirrel, rabbit and mole population was the big



attraction. During the month they were here, the latter population was reduced significantly.

Our previous exposure to hawks was very limited. We had only seen them from a distance. During this visit, however, we became most familiar with their cries and got to see firsthand their eating and hunting habits.

Although we never saw them actually catch a mole, we did see them enjoy the fruits of their labor as they ate their catch while resting on a tree branch. There was no mistake – it was a mole. Very quickly, the squirrel and rabbit population became aware of the presence of the hawks. They seldom ventured from their nests, and were quick about it when they did.

We were also surprised at how tame the hawks appeared. They would eat their prey on a near-by tree branch. Even more surprising, they enjoyed our two bird baths. While they didn't actually bathe, they would stand in the water for several minutes at a time. We could sit near by and they seemed entirely unconcerned. One of our bird baths is very small and somewhat shaky, but that didn't deter them. They would also walk around our yard expressing obvious ownership.

They left us in mid-July, but we still could hear them not far away. They left behind fewer squirrels, rabbits and moles. We miss their joyful presence and hope for a future visit.

– Story and photo by Bev and Woody Anderson



2005 CENSUS IS DEC. 17

Annual Christmas event hits 106 ... and counting



862



13



203



4



26

All illustrations by Steven D'Amato
All numbers taken from the 2004
Oxford Christmas Bird Count.

Audubon Miami Valley's 106th Annual Christmas Bird Count takes place Saturday, Dec. 17, 2005, according to Larry Sherman, coordinator of the Oxford count.

Beginning 7:30 a.m. at Miami University's Ecology Research Center on Somerville Road, this dawn-to-dusk census of bird species covers 176 square miles around Oxford and is conducted according to rules of the National Audubon Society.

The count, originally held on Christmas day in 1900, now incorporates more than 1,600 organized efforts and over 50,000 participants throughout continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. territories, Canada, Bermuda, parts of

Mexico, the Caribbean and Pacific islands.

Data collected are sent to National Audubon Society and published annually in a special "Christmas Bird Count" issue of *American Birds*.

Regardless of experience, new participants are welcome to join groups led by experts covering portions of the count area. First-time counters do not pay the \$6 fee for data processing, publication fees and potluck lunch at noon.

Count areas include Springwood, Four Mile Creek, Bachelor Wildlife Preserve, Indian Creek Valley, Rush Run, Hueston Woods State Park-Acton Lake, and the Miami University Airport.

Phone in reports

At any time on the day of the count, reports from birdwatchers at home can be phoned to Larry Sherman at 513.523.2458.

Results will be online

Want to find out what we found out? Results will be available at www.AudubonMiamiValley.org.

Coordinator contact

Contact count coordinator Larry Sherman at 513.523.2458 or at shermalw@muohio.edu.

Out of town Dec. 17?

Counts take place nationwide Dec. 14 through Jan. 5.

Find dates and contact information for other counts at the Christmas Bird Count Web site, <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>. Click on the "Get Involved" link to find a count near you.

For information about Canadian counts, click on the "Bird Studies Canada" link.



AUDUBON MIAMI VALLEY AT WORK

More Earth Clubs at schools this year

After-school environmental science clubs are increasing in popularity at local schools, thanks to the efforts of local environmental educator Sharon Edwards, teacher sponsors, and volunteers.

Kramer and Marshall Elementary Schools are in their third year offering Earth Clubs; new this year is a club at Talawanda Middle School.

Each month a nature topic or environmental issue is addressed through fun learning activities. "Indian Creek Rubies" is a TMS bird club led by AMV's Debra Bowles. This year's focus is Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

AMV is proud to support these programs. Earth Clubs at three more schools in area districts are in the planning stages. If you would like to help support this exciting educational opportunity with a donation, please contact Liz Woedl, MemDev@audubonmiamivalley.org.

– Gail Reynolds,
AMV Education Chair



Hog
Island

It's Rosie Bloom Scholarship time

Thinking about an idyllic summer visit to a beautiful natural setting? Are you a local educator interested in teaching students about nature and environmental science?

Apply for our annual AMV scholarship to an Audubon camp!

Current offerings in Hog Island, Maine, are Field Ornithology, Natural History of Coastal Maine, and Workshop for Educators. The Audubon Center of the North Woods in Minnesota offers sessions on Boundary Water Ecology, Biomes, and Natural History and Culture of the Lakotas.

For more information, contact
Gail Reynolds: Education@-
audubonmiamivalley.org

Bird Seed Sale raises \$1,200

Audubon Miami Valley thanks Bird Seed Sale patrons for all their orders.

The sale netted \$1,200 for local environmental education.

A special thanks to the Whistle Stop crew and John Jones for being such wonderful hosts. I hope all AMV members buy their bird seed and pet needs from this locally owned store. We could not have this sale without them.

Thanks to all AMV members who helped lift the seed and load cars: Herb Gesell, Jim Reid, Ron Pfohl, Alex Hickey, Ken Grabach, Jeffrey Kimball, Larry Sherman, Rick Mo-meyer, and Nick Stanley.

We had a beautiful Friday and Saturday for the sale.

Watch for Audubon Miami Valley's annual spring Native Plant Sale fundraiser with food, facts, and fun in Shademaker's Barn.

– Marlene Hoffman,
Special Projects Chair

SAVE THESE DATES

- Dec. 12: Neotropical birds. See page 1 for details.
- Dec. 17: Oxford Christmas Bird Count. See pages 1 and 3 for details.
- January: No AMV meeting
- Feb. 13 (tentative): Audubon's River DeVere Burt, wildlife artist and former director of the Cincinnati Science Center. Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West, Oxford, 7:30 p.m.
- Feb. 17-20: Ninth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count. See <http://www.audubon.org/gbbc/index.shtml>.

March 6 (tentative): There and Back Again: Audubon At Home Connecting Communities across the Continent, by Casey Tucker, education specialists. Location to be announced

A non-Audubon event of interest

April 6: David Sibley, author and artist of *Sibley's Guide to Birds*, will speak in the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens Barrows Conservation Lecture Series at the Xavier University Cintas Center at 7:30 p.m. Ticket information will be posted in 2006 at www.cincinnati-zoo.org.

Check www.audubonmiamivalley.org for program details and updates.



**YOUR GIFT TO
AUDUBON
MIAMI VALLEY
SUPPORTS
OUR MISSION,
PROGRAMS &
ACTIVITIES**

- Student membership \$20
- Basic membership \$30
- Supporting membership \$60
- Centennial membership \$100
- AMV Partner \$250
- Other gift \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Check payable to:
Audubon Miami Valley.
Send it and
this completed form to:
Membership and Development
P.O. Box 556
Oxford, Ohio 45056

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR GENEROUS
SUPPORT!**



The Who Cooks for You-All? potluck offered information as well as good company and good food.

Boy Scouts visit annual potluck

Who Cooks for You-All? The Barred Owl mnemonic provides the name for Audubon Miami Valley's June potluck. At the Hueston Woods State Park gathering, end-of-year AMV committee information, new officers, and food from good cooks were shared!

This past June, Ryan Rutherford and Kyle Haskins presented their Boy Scout Eagle projects, which Audubon Miami Valley supported.

We enjoy doing something special at this event.

What would you like to do next June?



Boy Scout Ryan Rutherford hands AMV Treasurer John Blocher a check for the excess funds from his Boy Scout Eagle Project: the Raptor Rehab Cage in which they are standing.



A 'wild' yard is not a native yard

Q Why is it socially acceptable to poison your neighbors' air with hydrocarbons and pesticides, poison your grandchildren's groundwater with fertilizer and pesticides, speed global warming, create hours of noise pollution and wake your neighbors early on weekend mornings in order to have a monoculture lawn, yet it is unacceptable in most neighborhoods and illegal in some places to have diverse species flowering at different heights and times, feeding birds and butterflies?

A I won't comment on the social aspects of the various points, but I will address the issue of what is "acceptable" in native plant landscaping and "natural" landscaping. I get questions about this a lot, particularly from people who have let their yards go "wild" (i.e. not mowing it and letting everything grow).

What we have to understand is that the yards and landscaping around our homes are not, and never will be, natural habitats. Letting our yards go "wild" will never restore lost habitats. Many people assume that letting their yards grow wild is native plant landscaping. It's not. Because this process doesn't use pesticides, fertilizers, or fuel for mowing we might consider this "natural," but in reality, your wild yard may actually be filled with non-native and cultivated plants. So it is environmentally friendly to a point. But your yard

then becomes a source for non-native and cultivated plants that then invade your neighbors' yards. They, in turn, work that much harder to rid their yards of those plants. This means they're mowing more frequently and may be using more herbicides and insecticides to maintain their yards, which off-sets the chemicals you may not be using.

Try native plants and landscaping principles

A better approach is to use native plants and landscape your homes using traditional landscaping principles. The principles include doing things like creating borders and edges, creating focal points, and using "decorations" like benches, bird baths, and bird feeders. Landscaping around our homes can serve two purposes, if done correctly. The first purpose is aesthetic: it makes our homes' exteriors more attractive and accentuates features of a house. The second purpose is functional. For example, planting trees may help shade your home and reduce your summer cooling costs.

By using native plants you'll be able to reduce or eliminate your use of fertilizers, extra watering regimes, and pesticides because native plants are better adapted to the soil types, seasons, and pests of Ohio than many non-native ornamental plants.

Another thing to think about is that grass-covered lawns, though not natural, are better than the alternatives of no cover or pavement. Grass

lawns receive a lot of negative press, but they also do a lot of good, too. Very few native ground covers are good in full-sun exposure, common in many urban/suburban settings, and are safe for kids and pets to play on (assuming the lawn is not sprayed with pesticides). Additionally, though lawn root systems are typically pretty short, they do hold soil in place and prevent erosion. They're also more porous than concrete and allow rain to soak in as opposed to running off.

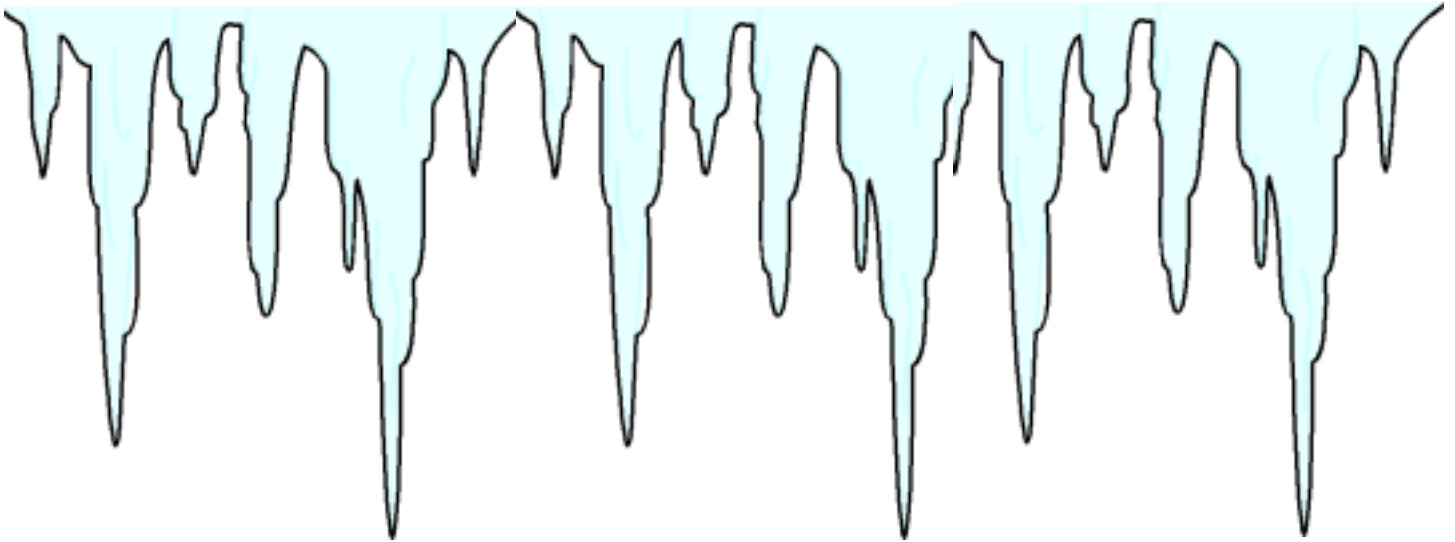
'Stepables' may work as a ground cover

If you want a ground cover alternative you may try searching for plants collectively known as "Stepables" (<http://www.stepables.com/index.htm>) and then cross-referencing these plants at the USDA Plant Database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>) to determine if your selection is a native plant or not.

You're much more likely to receive social acceptance from your neighbors if you use native plants with traditional landscaping techniques. You might even convince them to switch to native plants as well, especially once they see how beautiful your home is and how much time and money you're saving by not spraying extra pesticides, fertilizers, and water.

Casey Tucker is education specialist for Ohio's Audubon at Home program.





Almost February Moonlight

Hung my gloves on a tree limb and

Pondered their full-moon shadow on the ground.

Evening's ribbons of deep blue and pink

Wrapped me close and secure

For a short while.

Soft owl hoo-hoots floated across the valley...

I remembered tulips poked through their winter blanket.

I'm concerned about those tulips in January

And weather issues like global warming;

And the head of our Army who was an Enron executive-

Showing phony profits;

And Women's Rights being limited;

And Even CONSIDERING

the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

For drilling.

Etc...etc...etc.

Gloves back on.

Sounds of moonlight engraved.

I'll do my best.

– Debra Bowles

Bluebirds in winter

So, what's to keep the Bluebirds in your winter yard?

You'd do anything, you say, to tempt them?

Try offering Bluebird boxes for shelter (entrance facing east for morning sun to warm them and with other crevices plugged), moving water, suet, plumped raisins (soak in hot water for a few minutes then drain), peanut butter, mealworms (oh, yeah!).

Nothing like a Bluebird in winter!

Twinkle, twinkle

Twinkly lights are even twinklier when hung near windows and mirrors. Use fewer lights and less electricity with same fun.

Gift wrap that keeps on giving

Don't forget to use stored packaging and bags for wrapping paper. Funny papers, old atlases, holiday catalogs from LAST year – any other ideas? Now's the time to get out last year's cards and make some unique hang tags!

Party on!

Provide and mark clearly all recycling containers when you host a gathering. Specifically point them out to guests.

When thoughts turn to spring

Empty frozen-juice cans and those plastic dippers in laundry detergents make great seed-starting pots.





Snowy Owl by Steven D'Amato

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 55
Oxford OH**

**the newsletter of
Audubon Miami Valley**
Volume 32, Winter 2005 issue
P.O. Box 556, Oxford OH 45056

Audubon Miami Valley is
an incorporated,
non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization in
Butler and Preble Counties of Ohio

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**AUDUBON MIAMI VALLEY
2005-2006 OFFICERS**

President, Liz Woedl
President@audubonmiamivalley.org
513.523.1782

Vice President, Gail Reynolds
VP@audubonmiamivalley.org

Treasurer, John Blocher
Treasurer@audubonmiamivalley.org

Secretary, Tim Tolford
Secretary@audubonmiamivalley.org

Member-at-large, Paul Anderson
MAL1@audubonmiamivalley.org

Member-at-large, Linda Williams
MAL2@audubonmiamivalley.org

**2005-2006 APPOINTED
COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Citizen Science, Larry Sherman
CitizenScience@audubonmiamivalley.org

Communications, Debra Bowles
Communications@audubonmiamivalley.org

Conservation, Bill Heck
Conservation@audubonmiamivalley.org

Education, Gail Reynolds
Education@audubonmiamivalley.org

Field Trips, OPEN

Finance, John Blocher
Finance@audubonmiamivalley.org

Hospitality, Barbara Eshbaugh
Hospitality@audubonmiamivalley.org

Leadership & Nomination, OPEN

Membership & Development
Liz Woedl
President@audubonmiamivalley.org

Newsletter, Debra Bowles,
Judi Hetrick, Celia Ellison
Newsletter@audubonmiamivalley.org

Programs, Hardy Eshbaugh
Programs@audubonmiamivalley.org

Student Liaison, Alex Hickey
StudentLiaison@audubonmiamivalley.org

Special Projects, Marlene Hoffman
SpecialProjects@audubonmiamivalley.org

Website, Tim Tolford
Webmaster@audubonmiamivalley.org