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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN CALENDAR, PAGE 4

HOG ISLAND  
SOJOURN BENEFITS  
LOCAL STUDENTS,  
PAGE 6



Winter 2008-09  
Volume 34

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

**THE NATIONAL SCENE**

# Vote brings new era of hope

Voters in November's historic election cast their ballots not only for change, but for a new era of hope for our environment, and the people, birds and other wildlife that depend on it.

Washington has been ignoring critical environmental issues for too long. President-elect Barack Obama and a more environmentally aware Congress offer the promise of leadership and fundamental change that could usher in new protections for America's great natural heritage, and a new lease on life for species in decline.

Despite real reason for optimism, we cannot take conservation gains for granted. Audubon is committed to helping the new administration and Congress to live up to their great promise; and to make conservation, clean energy and green jobs part of the path to a brighter tomorrow.

Through our chapters, state offices and national grassroots efforts, Audubon will join with others in the environmental community to ensure



**President-elect Barack Obama and a more environmentally aware Congress offer the promise of . . . fundamental change that could usher in new protections for America's great natural heritage, and a new lease on life for species in decline.**

– Audubon president and CEO John Flicker

that our newly elected leaders lead the way on issues vital to our environment, our economy and diversity of life on Earth.

Issues demanding prompt attention include:

**Presidential Appointments:**

Obama should start by appointing to key environmental positions within his administration qualified leaders who will defend our clean air and water, protect habitat and endangered species, aggressively address global warming, and steward

our natural heritage for the future.

**Scientific Integrity:**

The Department of the Interior should systematically review and reverse decisions made by the past administration under the Endangered Species Act that were influenced by political considerations and not based on sound science.

Obama should send a clear signal to everyone in his administration to restore and respect scientific integrity in all environmental decisions.

(continued on page 3)

## **CLOSE TO HOME**

### **Help the Birds – Volunteer!**

The birds need your help and so does Audubon Miami Valley. Currently several critical positions are vacant and we need volunteers to fill the positions of 1) Communications (Publicity) chair, 2) Conservation (Advocacy) chair, and 3) Leadership & and Nomination chair. This is an opportunity to become more involved in Audubon Miami Valley and fill a much needed leadership role. If you have any interest in pursuing a passion for birds and conservation contact the president at ([president@audubonmiamivalley.org](mailto:president@audubonmiamivalley.org)) or call 513-523-8305 and ask for Hardy. Don't be shy! We can train you and give you all the tools necessary to succeed.

– Hardy Eshbaugh

### **Close-in connector plan endangers Miami Natural Areas**

Now that the Butler County engineer has removed a “wide” connector between U.S. 27 and Indiana 73 from the transportation map, concern has shifted to the possible impact of a “close-in” connector closer to the city of Oxford.

In October, Douglas Taylor, chair of the Miami University committee that oversees its natural areas, urged

University President David Hodge to oppose any route through the Western Woods and the Beck Preserve.

“This sort of encroaching development was precisely the reason that former President Pearson and the Miami Board of Trustees established the University Natural Areas system. The stated goal was to provide ‘in perpetuity’ a natural green space around the University (and Oxford) that would provide an opportunity for Miami University students, faculty, personnel, and citizens from the community to enjoy the beauties and joys of nature,” he wrote.

### **FeederWatch guide is free**

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology recently released a revised “Homeschooler’s Guide to Project FeederWatch.”

For more than 20 years, Project FeederWatch has been an easy, fun way for children to learn about birds and strengthen their skills, including observation, identification, research, computation, writing and creativity.

You can download the guide at [www.FeederWatch.org](http://www.FeederWatch.org).

### **Page 1 art credits**

The drawings of the birds atop page 1 are by Steven D’Amato. The photo of Barack Obama is from <http://www.barackobama.com/photos/>.



#### **OUR VISION**

We envision a world where humankind accepts the obligations of being part of nature, especially the obligation of stewardship. We seek to shape a culture in which the violation of nature is socially, politically, and morally unacceptable. In short, we seek a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.

#### **OUR MISSION**

Audubon Miami Valley works to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

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

Deadline for the spring 2009 issue is Feb. 15. Send contributions to [Newsletter@audubonmiamivalley.org](mailto:Newsletter@audubonmiamivalley.org) or to Newsletter, P.O. Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056

- Judi Hetrick is editor.
- Celia Ellison and John Blocher are proofreaders.
- Caitlin Stone designed the Meadowlark logo.



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Visit us online at [www.audubonmiamivalley.org](http://www.audubonmiamivalley.org).



# AMV well represented at October assembly

Audubon Miami Valley was well represented at the Oct. 18-19 biennial Audubon Ohio State Assembly in Bellville by Hardy and Barbara Eshbaugh, Larry Frimmerman, Gail Reynolds, Dave and Jill Russell, Tim Tolford and Liz Woedl, as well as former chapter member Bill Heck.

The meetings included nine diverse workshops:

- 1) Birds, Migration, and IBAs with Dave Russell,
- 2) Ohio's Young Birders Club with Kim Kaufman,
- 3) Rain Gardens with Stephanie Suter,
- 4) IBAs and Volunteerism with Tom Romito,
- 5) Blogging: The New Nature Journal with Sharon Stiteler,
- 6) Protecting Water, Our Liquid Gold with Heather Brutz and Bridget McDaniel
- 7) Working with Land Conservan-

cies featuring Larry Frimmerman, Hardy Eshbaugh, and Kevin Joyce,

- 8) Everyone Can Fight Global Warming with Heather Brutz
- 9) Large Impacts with Small Scale Restoration with Nicole Cavender and Guy Denny.

The two keynotes were Ted Eubank's perceptive talk on "Sustainable Recreation and its Connection to Conservation" and Dr. Lonnie Thompson's shattering presentation on "Global Climate Change: A Paleoclimate Perspective from the World's Highest Mountains."

Tim Tolford's bird banding display highlighted one of the important continuing education and science activities supported by Audubon Miami Valley.

Sunday morning the Eshbaughs, the Russells, Gail and Liz joined Ken Kaufman's birding trip to the Ohio Bird Sanctuary in freezing weather.



Photo by Hardy Eshbaugh

## **Eight current AMV members attended Ohio State Assembly**

Highlights of the trip included a Merlin perched in full sunlight at the top of a tree, a Common Snipe feeding at the marsh edge, and a Red-shouldered Hawk in full sunlight.

The Ohio Bird sanctuary is a raptor rehabilitation center established by Gail Laux, who introduced the group to the facility's diverse activities and projects.

– Hardy Eshbaugh

# Flicker outlines environmental agenda of hope

(continued from page 1)

## **Global Warming and Renewable Energy:**

Obama has said: "We cannot afford more of the same timid politics when the future of our planet is at stake." He's right. We welcome the opportunity to help him deliver his promised \$150 billion plan for clean energy technologies to protect our environment and stimulate the economy, creating up to 5 million green jobs.

## **Endangered Species Conservation:**

We'll work with the administration to secure reversal of the Bush administration's weakening of the Endangered Species Act.

Congress should pass new tax incentives to encourage private landowners to work toward recovery of endangered species.

## **Bird and Habitat Conservation:**

The administration and the Congress should reinvest in the National Wildlife Refuge System and address the unacceptable \$3.5 billion maintenance backlog crippling this critical tool for conservation.

Congress should pass legislation to conserve neotropical migratory birds and address the steep declines in America's common birds that are disappearing from parks, farms and backyards across the country.

## **Ecosystem Restoration:**

The administration and Congress should fund significant new restoration projects to improve America's great natural ecosystems: The Mississippi River, the Everglades, Long Island Sound, and the Great Lakes.

– Audubon President and CEO John Flicker



# CALENDAR

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 6**

## **Brookville Lake Bird Walk**

**with Dave Russell**

**D**ave Russell will take us for a Christmas Bird Count warm-up.

Last year 51 species were seen on the early December trip.

Meet in the new Wal-Mart's southwest parking lot on U.S. 27 North at 7:30 a.m. to carpool.



**SATURDAY DECEMBER 20**

## **Christmas Bird Count**

**M**eeet at 7 a.m. at Miami University's Ecology Research Center on Somerville Road for the 109th Annual Christmas Bird Count. 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.

Everyone is welcome, regardless of experience. New participants can join groups led by experts covering portions of the count area.

First-time counters do not pay the \$6 fee that covers data processing and publication, and a hot lunch served at noon. Participants under age 18 do not pay the fee either. All participants are encouraged to bring food to share and their own table service.

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. At any time on the day of the count, reports from birdwatchers at home can be phoned to Liz Woedl at 513.523.1782.

Soon after the count, results will be available at Audubon Miami Valley's Web site: <http://www.audubonmiamivalley.org>. Data collected are sent to National Audubon Society and published annually in a special issue of "American Birds."

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**MONDAY DECEMBER 8** AMV public program

## **Re-cognize Your Environment:**

**Conservation through Photography and**

**Education Emphasizing Beauty in the Ordinary**

**Molly Barger Steinwald,**

**Department of Zoology, Miami University**

7:30 p.m., Lebanon Citizens National Bank,  
2nd floor Community Room, 30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

**E**nvironmental outreach focused on species extinction and the destruction of distant exotic ecosystems often confuses children and connects negatively with the public at large. In contrast, education that creates an awareness of the value of one's local surroundings can lead to the development of an authentic, lasting environmental ethic.

Interweaving personal experiences as a child, student, teacher, researcher, photographer and mother, Steinwald argues that integrating the seemingly disparate spheres of art, education and research is necessary for the ultimate success of the conservation movement.

Steinwald earned her M.S. in ecology at Purdue University and is a Ph.D. candidate in Zoology at Miami University. She has research experience with plants, birds and mammals in coastal, desert and woodland habitats around the United States.

A self-taught photographer, Steinwald's accomplishments include an international scholarship from the North American Nature Photography Association and an exhibit at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival in Utah. She is Miami's 2008 Charley Harper scholarship recipient.

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**SATURDAY JANUARY 24**

## **Conservatory Tour,**

**Miami University Hamilton**

**D**r. Richard Munson, manager of the conservatory, will give us a tour of this beautiful building with its large collection of exotic plants and its surrounding gardens of native Ohio plants. A tall grass prairie also includes a nature trail. Munson spoke at Audubon Miami Valley's October meeting about his trip to Manchuria.

To carpool or caravan, meet at the old Oxford Wal-Mart parking lot at 9:30 a.m., or meet at the Conservatory at 10 a.m.



MONDAY FEBRUARY 9 AMV public program

## **Reproductive Behavior of Manakins in Eastern Ecuador**

**Dr. Wendy Tori, Department of Biology,  
Earlham College**

7:30 p.m., Lebanon Citizens National Bank,  
2nd floor Community Room, 30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

Manakins are small, stubby, generally short-tailed birds that are abundant in American tropical forests. During the breeding season, males gather and display at “arenas” that lack any apparent economic benefit (e.g. food, nest sites) to the females. Males do not provide parental care, and females carry out all reproductive activities including nest building and rearing of the offspring.



Despite this, females show a strong preference for certain males. So, the immediate question is: What makes certain males so attractive to females?

Dr. Tori’s presentation will discuss her research in reproductive behavior of Manakins, focusing on female nesting behavior and factors underlying male reproductive success.

Tori was born in Texas but grew up in Peru. She got her undergraduate degree in ecology from the Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina. She earned her master’s and doctorate in biology with an emphasis in ecology, evolution and systematics from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

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**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21**

## **Wolf Creek Habitat and Rescue**

Come see and learn about these fiercely loyal, intelligent, playful and cooperative animals. Wolf Creek started about 10 years ago and only opened to the public the past few years. Adults may go in an enclosure to interact and take pictures with the wolves. For more information about Wolf Creek their web site is [www.nighthawks7.com](http://www.nighthawks7.com). On the way home we will stop at the Dairy Bar in Brookville for something hot to drink and lunch. Meet at 9:30 a.m. on the west side of the old Oxford Wal-Mart parking lot to carpool.

There is no charge except to enter the enclosure containing the wolves.



MONDAY MARCH 16 AMV public program

## **Roger Tory Peterson’s 100-Year Legacy and How His Work is Carried On**

**Jim Berry, President, Roger Tory  
Peterson Institute of Natural History**

7:30 p.m., Lebanon Citizens National Bank,  
2nd floor Community Room, 30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

Roger Tory Peterson was born in Jamestown, New York, Aug. 28, 1908, and went on to become America’s best known 20th century naturalist. It’s hard to imagine anyone interested in nature who hasn’t carried a “Peterson Field Guide” at one time or another as they ventured into the outdoors in search of birds, wildflowers, insects or any other subject for that matter.



Jim will talk about RTP’s place in the history of field ornithology through an illustrated lecture and video. Please bring to share with Jim your correspondence, photographs and other personal memorabilia connected with Peterson, as well as anecdotes or

well-worn field guides that would do RTP proud!

Jim Berry, president of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, started his career as a naturalist at Hueston Woods State Park Nature Center in 1972.

Berry and his wife, Mary, were founding members of the Oxford Audubon Society (now Audubon Miami Valley) and still call southwestern Ohio “home.”

Berry received his B.S. in interpretive work (natural history education) in 1972 from The Ohio State University. He is past executive director of Cincinnati Nature Center and manager of Malabar Farm State Park.

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## **Save these dates**

### **Details in Spring newsletter**

- **March 21:** Brookville Lake Geology Trip
- **April 11:** Hike the Spring Valley Wildlife Area
- **April 13:** Public program: “Spring is here! Let’s Cheer for the Birds,” with Dave Russell
- **April 25:** Warbler Walk
- **April 26:** Silvoor Wildflower Walk
- **May 11:** Public Program: “Bird Banding: Research... ‘For The Birds’” with Tim Tolford
- **May 16:** Salt Creek Nature Sanctuary field trip
- **June 20:** Highfield Discovery Garden tour, for families young and old



## EDUCATION



All eyes turn one way when a rare bird is spotted. (left)

Among Hog Island's favorite sightings are puffins. (below)

Photos courtesy of Bob George



# Hog Island inspires Bob George, teacher

I would like to offer my deepest and my most sincere thanks to Miami Valley Audubon for providing me with one of the most rewarding weeks of all my summers.

My June 2007 Hog Island visit as the Rosie Bloom scholarship winner was exciting, fulfilling and memorable. It is hard to capture in words the exhilaration one feels in sharing the passion of birding with a group of like-minded people from dawn to dusk for a week.

Each day began with a 5 a.m. bird walk that highlighted a particular habitat of the island and would end with an evening program featuring an impressive speaker. My most vivid recollection of our pre-dawn morning excursions was a visit to a mosquito-infested wooded wetland at the heart of the island. We discovered a nest of Blackburnian warblers that made the relentless attacks of a host of mosquitoes worth enduring.

My thoughts about day's end activities are still impacted by the wisdom and experience shared by Dr. Stephen Kress. He played a key role in the restoration of puffins and terns to Maine and his on-going research at Easter Egg Rock continues to provide valuable insight into bird behaviors and activities. Kress' story with its trials, hardships and triumphs was compelling. As an aside, the all-day trip aboard the Puffin IV was my favorite experience

while at Hog Island. Cruising Muscongus Bay and visiting several islands to hike and bird-watch was a thrill. I was able to add Eiders, Guillemots, Gannets, Shearwaters, Storm-petrels and Ibises to my life list.

The balance of my time was spent on field trips, in workshops, reading, researching and socializing. The food was fantastic. Every meal, culminating in a lobster feast at week's end, was a gourmet's delight. Chef Janii LaBerge was a magician in the kitchen and an incredible character.

The beauty of Maine with its intricate estuaries, countless inlets and bays, lobster pots and boats was a distant second place to the people who so influenced me during my stay at Hog Island. My fellow teachers and colleagues, my new-found crusty, old Maine friend George, Seth Benz (camp director), Greg Bundy (Cornell man with cool equipment), Kim and Kenn Kaufman (remarkable naturalists), Sara Morris (gifted biologist and instructor), Scott Weidensaul (a true wordsmith and well-traveled author and naturalist) formed the richest network of relationships one could possibly embrace in a week's time. Hog Island and its joys and rewards was most about the remarkable people that inhabit the place.

(continued on page 7)



## RESEARCH

# Band of birders catch & release for science

For 10 years, bird banders have operated a research station at Butler County Metroparks Gilmore Ponds Interpretive Preserve. Tim Tolford started the project to monitor spring migration. Since 2006, Sharon Pawlowski has been the site's field manager.

We capture birds in mist nets and attach numbered U.S. Geological Survey aluminum bands to their legs. They are then released unharmed, and we are hope to capture them again later or to have them captured by somebody else along their migration paths. In this way, ornithologists can learn a great deal about bird biology.

In the past year we had two interesting banded bird recoveries.

First, an Indigo Bunting that Sharon banded at the station on Sept. 22, 2007, was captured by someone in Cuba on Oct. 16, a little over three weeks later. The distance the bird flew in that time was 1,160 miles. This is normal behavior for these small migratory birds. They spend their summer throughout the eastern half of the United States and are common breeding birds at Gilmore Ponds.

In early fall they fly south to their wintering grounds, which include Cuba, the rest of the Caribbean islands and Central America.

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**Volunteers or visitors to the banding station are welcome. For more information contact Sharon Pawlowski at [pawlowsa@att.net](mailto:pawlowsa@att.net) or Eric Burgess at [eric@lemicroscope.com](mailto:eric@lemicroscope.com).**

**For more information about other banding projects in the area, visit <http://www.hbrcn.org/> on the Web.**

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Secondly, in May 2008 we recaptured a male Yellow Breasted Chat that Tim originally banded in May 2000. At that time, it was an adult, which now makes it at least 9 years old.

Yellow Breasted Chats are small songbirds in the wood warbler family. This chat tied an all-time record for the oldest living member of its species. We hope to recapture it again next year, when it is at least 10 years old, and set a record. Yellow Breasted Chats spend the summer throughout the continental United States. They can be found breeding at Gilmore Ponds but are much rarer than indigo buntings. They also spend the winter throughout Central America. It is quite likely that this bird has flown somewhere between 30,000 to 35,000 miles in its lifetime.

– By Eric Burgess

## Scholarship trip translates directly to instruction



**Bob George named this nester 'my nextdoor neighbor'**

(continued from page 6)

Since my return, I have had the opportunity to lead bird hikes and labs at both Glen Helen with sixth-graders and at Hueston Woods with eighth-graders. The knowledge and insight that I acquired at Hog Island directly enhanced these endeavors. I have become more adept at recognizing bird calls and more sensitive to the habitats that influence the presence of particular species

It is a pure joy to pass on my enthusiasm for birding to the next generation of birders. My hope is that all of my students appreciate nature a little more and realize the precious and delicate gift that it is. My students and I applaud the Miami Valley Audubon and thank you for your support.

– Bob George, Talawanda Middle School



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

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

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**"H**opes are Shy Birds flying  
at a great distance seldom  
reached by the best of Guns."

-- John James Audubon

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