



Spring 2006  
Volume 31

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

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

# Earth Club expands to five schools

Thanks to the generosity of donors to Audubon Miami Valley's Education Fund and customers of our bird seed sale, students in five schools can now join Earth Club.

Created three years ago through a coalition of AMV's education committee and the Environmental Mobile Unit (EMU), Earth Club gives science-oriented students a chance

to learn about our environment and how to care for it.

Although details vary from

school to school to accommodate teachers' different schedules, most clubs meet for 90 minutes after classes, once a month for seven months.

This year Earth Club is open to fifth graders at Kramer School; two sessions of third, fourth, and fifth graders at Marshall School; sixth graders at Talawanda Middle School; fourth graders at New Miami Elementary; and third through sixth graders at Grant Elementary. The clubs had 80 members even before sign-ups ended.

Activities, depending upon our getting further grants, may include:

- using map and compass;
- collecting rocks; exploring creeks;
- observing birds; investigating bats;
- re-assembling skeletons;
- inventorying insects;
- monitoring water pollution;
- planting butterfly gardens;
- improving nature areas' habitat;
- constructing birdhouses or feeders.

Kramer members already have made "Birdy Banks" to collect money to help pay for paint to preserve their school's bird blind.

Marshall members have assessed their Nature Area to determine what native wildlife might live there. The results: Good habitat is available even for predators such as coyotes, fox and mink IF surrounding land and corridors are not lost to further development.

Of course Earth Club couldn't happen without the time and talents of teachers at every school. Thanks to Beth Reagh, Laura Haskins, Joanne Williamson, Maria Lindley, Carolyn Hughes, Maria Sparks, Donna White and Cindy Kettlewell for

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

## Indian Creek Palette builds momentum

The Indian Creek Palette program is building momentum at Talawanda Middle School. Bird Clubs of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders meet monthly to study/write newsletters/create art/make birdhouses etc. for different colored birds.

Last year's Blues Bird Club built, erected and monitored two Bluebird boxes on TMS grounds with one successful brood of fledglings.

This year's Rubies Bird Club is making a Ruby-throated hummingbird mobile, a Ruby News newsletter, and feeders.

An end-of-schoolyear field trip "into the wilds" (a local creek) with a bird count will wrap up the program.

Fall 2006 will be the Yellows Bird Club at TMS with warbler study, migration watch and Prothonotary Warbler box building.

Watch for a full account of the Indian Creek Palette program in summer newsletter.

– **Debra Bowles, Communications**  
**@AudubonMiamiValley.org**

## **AMV AT WORK**

### **Plant sale set for May 20**

The Tenth Annual Native Plant sale is set for Saturday May 20. The sale brochure will be in the mail in April.

Pre-orders are necessary to assure plants.

Pick up day is Saturday May 20 at Shademakers Nursery and Landscape, 7525 Fairfield Road, west of Oxford. We'll have refreshments, info books and plant professionals to answer your questions. Door prize: autographed book *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac.

Let us start looking toward warmer days and spring. Call 523.3074 or e-mail [mhoffman@netscape.com](mailto:mhoffman@netscape.com) for questions or comments.

– **Marlene Hoffman**

### **Bald Eagle recovery**

It's a delight to see the recovery the magnificent Bald Eagle has made since the 1970's when DDT drastically affected them and other species such as Osprey.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources recently released results of the 2004 Eagle Survey. The totals that included more than 100 nests counted were an indication of the success of the eagles in Ohio.

You can see a report at <http://www.ohiodnr.com/wild-life/Resources/Eagle/milestoneeagles0704.htm>

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

Deadline for the summer issue is April 15, 2006.

Send contributions to

[Newsletter@AudubonMiamiValley.org](mailto:Newsletter@AudubonMiamiValley.org) or to  
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- 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.



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

### **Birds of Ohio still available**

If you missed your opportunity to get a copy of Jim McCormac's *Birds of Ohio* at our October meeting, it's not too late. We still have available. If you are interested, contact Hardy Eshbaugh ([eshbauwh@muohio.edu](mailto:eshbauwh@muohio.edu)) or call 523.8305. The cost is \$20, of which \$8 goes to the chapter as a tax deductible contribution to AMV. You will get a great book while at the same time you support your chapter.



– **Hardy Eshbaugh**

### **Meeting hospitality needed**

Each AMV public program ends with a hosted hospitality gathering. In the name of conservation, AMV Hospitality urges you to bring an old cup to leave at the LCNB kitchen.

If you have an interest in hosting an after-meeting hospitality event, contact Barbara Eshbaugh ([hospitality@audubonmiamivalley.org](mailto:hospitality@audubonmiamivalley.org)).

We are now scheduling the 2006/2007 year on the second Monday of September through December and February through May.

### **Program ideas welcomed**

Planning for the 2006/2007 Program has begun. If you have any suggested speakers for our program please forward those to Hardy Eshbaugh ([Programs@audubonmiamivalley.org](mailto:Programs@audubonmiamivalley.org)) as soon as possible.

### **Bowles appointed, honored**

Debra Bowles, Audubon Miami Valley Communications Chair, has been appointed to the Audubon Ohio Communications Committee.

In part because of her work with Audubon, Bowles was named a "citizen of the year" by The Oxford Press and Oxford Kiwanis in early January. "Art and nature inspire Debra to contribute to her community in many significant ways. . . Debra lends her seemingly endless energy and creativity to activities that really make a difference to the quality of life in the Oxford area," said a nomination letter quoted by the newspaper.



## AMV PUBLIC PROGRAMS

# From Ohio backyards to Florida Bay

## MARCH 6

### **There and Back Again: Audubon At Home**

*Casey Tucker, Audubon Ohio, Audubon at Home Educator*

**7:30 p.m., First Presbyterian Church,  
2910 Central Avenue, Middletown, Ohio**

Audubon At Home in Ohio is designed to help individuals become more conscientious of the conservation consequences of their everyday actions. By helping people become aware of how simple actions can help protect bird populations and the environment, we are enabling everyone to bring conservation home. Whether you live in a small urban apartment, a tree-lined suburban neighborhood or agricultural community, you can do many things to make your home and community better habitats for wildlife and more environmentally friendly for yourself and your loved ones.

This AMV Public Program is Hosted by Bull's Run Nature Center and Arboretum. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Bring food to share. Carpool from Oxford: 513.523.1782.

## APRIL 6

### **David Sibley**

*This event is not sponsored by Audubon Miami Valley*

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 Xavier University's Cintas Center at 7:30 p.m. Tickets required. See [www.cincinnati-zoo.org](http://www.cincinnati-zoo.org) for details.

## APRIL 10

### **Florida Bay – Conservation in Action – Roseate Spoonbills**

*Dr. Jerry Lorenz, Director, Tavernier Science Center, FL*

**7:30 p.m., 112 Pearson Hall, Miami University,  
Oxford (Parking at Cook Field)**

At the turn of the century, the plume-hunting industry in Florida nearly extirpated the huge populations of wading birds associated with the Everglades. Among the casualties was one of Florida's most identifiable and beloved species: the Roseate Spoonbill. By 1935, it was believed that the spoonbill breeding population had

been reduced to only five nests, from which they began a slow recovery. In his presentation, Dr. Lorenz pulls together Audubon's 70-year record on spoonbill nesting patterns with his personal experience in studying the fish on which spoonbills feed, thereby constructing a story of how the human population explosion in southern Florida has had a multilevel effect on spoonbills. Like the canary in a coal mine, Roseate Spoonbills are letting us know there is something drastically wrong with Florida Bay. Interwoven with the scientific endeavor, Dr. Lorenz chronicles the colorful history of Audubon science in Florida while also explaining how the indomitable appeal of the flame birds won the heart of a man who made a career of studying fish.

Co-sponsored by the Department of Zoology.

## MAY 8

### **Bird Migration**

*Alicia Craig, Director, Bird Conservation Alliance,  
American Bird Conservancy*

**7:30 p.m., Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West, Oxford**

This program will explore the wonder of bird migration via video and map simulation, giving us a better understanding how birds get from their winter ranges to their breeding territories and back again.

Included will be the dramatic story of ornithologists following a migrating Gray-cheeked Thrush through thunderstorms and other challenges -- for the humans. The thrush landed at dawn after flying 650 kilometers on a firm compass bearing all night -- without refueling.

The two 2005 Rosie Bloom Scholarship Recipients, Alex Hickey and Jo Anne Williamson, will make short presentations on their summer experiences at the National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp.

## JUNE 12

### **"Who Cooks for You All"**

*Annual AMV public potluck*

**6 p.m., near Hueston Woods State Park Office**

Dedicate a bird blind, use it for a count, see an optics demo and eat with fascinating folks. Bring food to share.



## 2005 CHRISTMAS COUNT

# Oxford crew documents 67 species

More than 30 birders counted 67 species of birds during the annual Oxford Christmas Bird Count on Saturday Dec. 17 under sunny, clear skies in below-freezing temperatures. Total individual birds tallied was 7,008, considerably above our 16-year average of 5,810.

The top four included 1,475 European Starlings (top as usual!), followed by a new leader, 703 Horned Larks, 585 Mourning Doves, and 564 Canada Geese.

Of special note were 76 Sandhill Cranes, counted only once before in 2003, 1 Eastern Phoebe and a Killdeer. These birds have usually migrated south by now. Their presence could be due to mild fall temperatures or global warming.

Duck populations have been in steady decline since Acton Lake was opened to duck hunting!

More than 30 veterans and three first-time birders participated in this annual Oxford Christmas Bird Count.

Totals were recorded at noon at Miami University's Ecology Research Center while sharing a hot "potluck" lunch. Count monitor Larry Sherman organized and compiled the results and will make them available in the near future at [www.AudubonMiamiValley.org](http://www.AudubonMiamiValley.org). Data were submitted via the Internet to National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Center. People interested in seeing the total results for North America are advised to go to the web site at <http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/>



At left, Oxford count monitor Larry Sherman prepares

Below, fresh air and hot soup makes for flushed-cheek birders

Photos by AMV members



## Elsewhere in the region, Bald Eagles and Blue Jays

**Hamilton-Fairfield** totaled (a probable record) 83 species. The waterfowl numbers were rather sparse, with a number of species showing up as lone birds or in single digits. Among the more notable finds:

- Greater White-fronted goose 8 (flock along Great Miami in Hamilton. Very rare for this count.)
- Snow Goose 3 (Trenton gravel pit, 1 blue, 2 white.)
- Wood Duck 1 (A nice surprise.)
- Common Merganser 2 (A nice surprise.)
- Wild Turkey 5 (two parties reported.)
- Double-crested Cormorant 3 (On the Great Miami River, and not an easy bird for this count.)
- Bald Eagle 1 (A sub-adult [second-year] in downtown Hamilton. Second record for this count, I think.)
- Lapland Longspur 5 (multiple sites, including Union



**Hamilton found one lonely Cedar Waxwing**

Center Blvd., a fly-over bird at Gilmore Ponds, and 2 at Miller Brewery. An excellent year for this species on our count.)

**Richmond, Ind.**, saw a total of 68 species and 21,039 individuals, and reported these highlights:

The one adult Bald Eagle at Middlefork harassing the geese was the first Bald Eagle for the Richmond count in its 50+ year history.

Of the three Sharp-shinned Hawks sighted, James Sterrett and his friend Diane were observing a nearby Golden-crowned Kinglet at Cope Environmental Center when it was snatched from view by a Sharpie.



**A Richmond first was a Merlin on Airport Road**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**



# Let's help natural wonders shape our children

Considering my own nose-in-a-book tendencies and my brother's ability to take apart almost anything, my mother probably made us go outside for more than just a breath of fresh air.

We grew up in a large tract of suburban housing loaded with scores of children to play with, yet our best times were spent in the nearby vacant lots and hillsides looking for adventure in the form of critters.

We learned to know the right places to look for spiders, rabbits, snakes, lizards, birds, pollywogs and fish. Eventually we learned the names of all of these animals and

many of the plants and trees.

We ended up with wealth of knowledge of the land that outlasted the habitat, as it was later bulldozed to accommodate more housing.

Steve and I are still incredulous over the loss of those places and have sought out wilder realms ever since.

It is likely that our early love of the outdoor world steered my brother toward his love of hiking and fishing and me to birds, wild plants and history.

Our lives have been shaped by our familiar awareness of nature's world.

The Audubon Miami Valley had its roots in a small group of nature

lovers with children in tow.

At its planning retreat in August, the AMV Board reaffirmed its commitment to programming that gives quality nature study and experiences of people of all ages.

We plan to expand our Earth Clubs at area schools and will continue to welcome children and youth to our meetings and outings.

Don't hesitate to bring along children and grandchildren to AMV events.

Shoot, they always seem to know which are the best rocks to look under or woods to explore.

– **Liz Woeldl**

## Counts elsewhere

### **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

European Starlings totaled 15,000 in the Weiss Road.

**Whitewater Valley, Ind.**, counted 81 species and 6,798 individuals, including.

- Bald Eagle 3
- Wilson's Snipe 5 (4 on mudflats at the mouth of Silver Creek, 1 in ditch off Contreras Pike)
- Pileated Woodpecker 18
- Yellow-rumped Warbler 48 (high number, especially near cedars in Sagamore area)
- Savannah Sparrow 6 (high number for this rarely found species)

**Preble County Plus** saw 31 species of birds and had a wonderful walk along the Twin Creek, with especially nice looks at Golden-crowned Kinglets dancing in the low trees no more than 10 feet away.

Bird illustrations by Kirsten Munson (Waxwing), Steve D'Amato (Merlin), Christine's Clipart at <http://birding.about.com/library/blclip-direct.htm> (Jay)



**Blue Jay numbers were up in both Indiana counts**

## Earth Clubs expand

### **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

making room in their busy schedules and already crowded rooms to accommodate Earth Club.

Several Miami University students – many from the PWEPP program – Francesca Lindley, and Alex Hickey also volunteer.

Earth Club's motto is "Start Where You Are." That sums up our philosophy that because everything is connected to everything else, each of us can start wherever we are – whatever location, age, education, talents, and economic or other capabilities – to make a positive impact on our environment. Thank you, Audubon Miami Valley, for helping more kids have these opportunities to learn and to become environmentally active.

And if YOU want to start where YOU are, tax-deductible donation can make a big difference to helping us meet Earth Club expenses. Make donations to Audubon Miami Valley, earmarked "Earth Club," and send to John Blocher, Treasurer, AMV, P.O. Box 556, Oxford Ohio.

– **Sharon Edwards, AMV member and EMU Naturalist**



## SIGHTINGS

# Epiphany with the Wing-banded Antbird

It has been a long and not especially productive day of birding along the Pipeline Road in Panama's rainforest.

We are returning to the Canopy Tow and it is still and hot. We are standing in the back of the truck when Barbara says she has seen something back in the woods.

Somewhat doubtfully I say, "Are you sure?" She is sure and although I am tired and have seen nothing, Barb convinces me to tap on the roof of the cab and the truck stops.

I am still doubtful, but our guide Marshall sees something too.

There, some 20 feet off the road, is a Wing-banded Antbird, actually three, a male, female, and juvenile. Victor Emanuel birding groups have never before seen these birds on a tour.

We are all mesmerized, gazing at the two adults tossing and picking over leaves, collecting insects, and then feeding their baby.

This is a very special moment. For 20 minutes or more we gaze into the life of this little-known denizen of the neotropical rainforest. This is a life bird for all of us but much more important, it is a true wildlife moment that we have all shared.

Many years ago Richard Feynman, the Nobel laureate, told a story that captures the essence of our group's experience.

One day while walking in the Catskill Mountains a boy said to Richard, "See that bird? What kind of bird was that?"



I said, "I haven't the slightest idea what kind of bird it is."

He says, "It's a brown-throated thrush. Your father doesn't teach you anything."

But it was the opposite. He had already taught me: "See that bird?" He says. "It's a Spencer's warbler." (I knew he didn't know the real name.) "Well, in Italian, it's a Chutto Lapitida. In Portuguese, it's a Bom da Peida. In Chinese, it's a Chung-longtah, am! in Japanese, it's a Katano Tekeda.

"You can know the name of that bird in all the languages of the world, but when you're finished you'll know absolutely nothing whatever about the bird. You'll only know about humans in different places and what they call the bird. So let's look at the bird and see what its doing – that's what counts" (James Gleick, 1992. *Genius: On the life of Richard Feynman* pp. 28-29).



This was the essence of our shared experience. Not only did we know the name Wing-banded Antbird, we knew a lot about the bird and its behavior, more than can be found in the species description in the *Birds of Panama*. That is what true birding is all about.

– Hardy Eshbaugh

Above:

- The birders rest amid the lush Panamanian rain forest.
- Jim Michael prepares to take a closer look.

Photos courtesy of Jim Michael and Hardy Eshbaugh





## Welcome Spring with a Silvoor walk

From mid-March through mid-May, emerging wildflowers cloak Silvoor Ravine in a blaze of color.

You are invited to join John Blocher, Curator of the Silvoor Biological Sanctuary, and other local wildflower enthusiasts who will lead guided walks through the Ravine.

The walks on April 9, 16, 23, 30, & May 7 start at 2 p.m. from Peffer Park shelter house, on the south edge of Oxford off U.S. 27.



Spring border by Rosemary Gilbert Bell

# Bluebird Trail at the Knolls features 31 nesting boxes

Yes, Virginia, there are 31 nesting boxes on the Knolls Bluebird Trail (now only 29 until two are re-mounted). However, only a few can be called bluebird houses, as most are commandeered by other species. Bluebirds need all the help they can get.

This year was better than last. In discouraging house sparrow propagation, I tossed 182 eggs in 2004, but only 97 in 2005. In 2004, we fledged only two sets (5 each) of bluebird chicks. In 2005, two sets of four each from different boxes, and another set of three from another nest were fledged. If it hadn't been for an adventurous raccoon, we would have fledged four more mature chicks.

Predation has been more of a problem this year, with the four bluebird nestlings and 15 house wren nestlings lost to predators. Four bluebird eggs and six chickadee eggs went the same route. In cooperation with Audubon Miami Valley we are installing predator guards on our support posts. Anyone wanting to contribute to that effort is invited to call 524-7490.

To round out our 2005 successes, we fledged groups of 3, 4, and 5 house wrens and 3 and 4 tree swallows, the latter from the highly visible box just west of the Fairfield Road entrance.

For next year's prospects, stay tuned!

– John Blocher

## AUDUBON AT HOME IN OHIO: ASK CASEY TUCKER

# Feeders should be near or far

**Q** Is it true that bird feeders should be placed closer than 5 feet or farther than 15 feet from windows? **A** Yes that's correct. In fact, it's probably safer to be less than 3 feet from a window, or greater than 15.

The idea behind this is that the closer a feeder is to a window the less time that a startled bird will have to build up enough momentum to really hurt itself seriously if it collides with the glass. The farther away the feeders are the less likely a bird will head towards the window and collide with it, if it's startled.

An added benefit of bringing a feeder closer to a window is that it allows for really



Art by Steve D'Amato

closer observation of the birds visiting a feeder, especially for younger children.

If a collision problem persists, an easy solution is to purchase fruit-tree netting, like that used to keep birds away from economically important agricultural fruit trees. The fruit-tree netting can be tacked up to the outside of a window frame. Allow for a couple of inches between the netting and the window surface. Pull the netting relatively taught so that birds bounce off. You can find fruit-tree netting at most garden and hardware stores. One producer of affordable netting is the Master Gardner Company ([www.mastergardner.com/Netting\\_Frame.htm](http://www.mastergardner.com/Netting_Frame.htm))





Hummingbird by Kirsten Munson  
Track their return: <http://www.hummingbirds.net>

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

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