



Spring 2007
Volume 32

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

AMV PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Meet kids, hone skills, 'travel' this spring

The spring 2007 Audubon Miami Valley public programs, organized by Hardy Eshbaugh, will allow those who attend to learn more about a local educational program, to refresh their birding skills and to vicariously travel to the Amazon and to Africa.

MONDAY MARCH 12

KIDSPEAK: Love Birds or Adore Nature? or just Wanna Have Good Fun with Great People?

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

Organizer: Debra Bowles, Audubon Miami Valley

Indian Creek Palette Bird Clubs and Earth Club members from Talawanda Middle School and beyond will talk about these AMV-sponsored programs and the opportunities they offer: to be outside and learn about birds, neat-o membership cards and social activities, eat pizza and know what they're eating, recycle and care for the earth. This will be enlightening! Share funny and tender experiences with kids who are interested and concerned about the environment in which we all live. Nature Snacks will be served during the program.

MONDAY APRIL 2

SPRING IS ABOUT TO SPRING: Refresh Your Birding Skills

as the Migrant Avalanche Arrives

7:30 p.m., 218 Pearson Hall, Miami University
David Russell, Miami U. Visiting Assistant Professor

This is an opportunity to spend an evening honing your birding skills as a wave of neo-tropical migrants is

We have lots to do!

In addition to the programs that are detailed starting here, look on page 3 for details about

- Our 11th annual native plant sale
- Silvoor nature walks and work sessions
- The Warbler Walk
- Heron rookery

A calendar compiling all our activities in chronological order is on pages 5 and 6.

just about to arrive. We all get rusty over the long winter. What do those Wood Warblers look like? Do you remember their calls? Wood Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Hermit Thrush – how do you tell them apart? And what about those flycatchers? Dave offers hints that will make it easier to tease apart the confusion.

MONDAY APRIL 9

ARMY ANTS AND OBLIGATE ANT-FOLLOWING BIRDS: A Model System for Studies of Ecology, Behavior and Maintenance of Biodiversity in Amazonian Peru

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

**Susan K. Willson, Visiting Assistant Professor of
Biology, Earlham College**

Continued on Page 4

AMV AT WORK

Bob George wins Rosie Bloom

Congratulations to Robert George, this year's recipient of the AMV Rosie Bloom scholarship, awarded annually to a teacher who exemplifies the philosophy of the Audubon Society.

Bob, who has been teaching middle-school science for over 30 years, is now at Talawanda Middle School. In his application he states that his hands-on approach to instruction promotes good stewardship of the planet. Since 1975, Bob has taken 6th graders to the Outdoor Education Center at Glen Helen (Antioch University), enhancing their appreciation and respect for nature.

Bob will attend a week-long session of Field Ornithology at the Maine Audubon camp on Hog Island with renowned birders/authors such as Steve Kress and Kenn Kaufman. He will share his knowledge with us and with his students upon his return.

Hog Island Audubon Center, on a beautiful island off the coast of Maine in Muscongus Bay, offers several residential sessions including Nature Writing Workshop, Family Camp and several teen workshops. For more information, please visit www.maineaudubon.org.

Again, congratulations, Bob, and enjoy!

– Gail Reynolds, AMV Education Committee

Society honors Hardy Eshbaugh

W. Hardy Eshbaugh has been named the 2007 Distinguished Economic Botanist, the highest honor given to professionals by the Society for Economic Botany (SEB).

“In addition to his work on the origin and evolution of peppers (*Capsicum* spp.), Hardy has distinguished himself as a tireless advocate for biodiversity conservation, and he has greatly contributed to the next generation of botanists through his inspirational teaching of undergraduate and graduate students at Miami University,” said Mary Eubanks, an SEB council member.

Eshbaugh has also contributed as a leader in professional service to the field of botany, holding the office of president of numerous organizations including the SEB, the Botanical Society of America, the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Audubon Society.

He played a key role in shaping the future of botany as worldwide chair of the Systematics Agenda 2000 – Charting the Biosphere Initiative.

Eshbaugh, Miami University emeritus professor of botany, is currently AMV programs chair.

Congratulations, Hardy!



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 summer issue is May 15, 2007.

Send contributions to Newsletter@AudubonMiamiValley.org or to Newsletter, P.O. Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056

- Judi Hetrick is editor.
- Celia Ellison is proofreader.
- Caitlin Stone designed the Meadowlark logo.



The newsletter is printed by Letterman Printing in Oxford on 100 percent recycled paper.

Visit us online at www.audubonmiamivalley.org.



PLACES TO GO, BIRDS TO SEE

Native plant sale set for March

The 11th Annual Audubon Miami Valley Native Plant Sale is now being organized.

We will be selling native plants that feed and host birds and butterflies. These plants are drought resistant, hardy and pleasing to the eye. We will offer native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. Look up Prairie Dock, as it maybe one of the plants offered this year. Look for your Native Plant sale brochure in March and pick up your pre-ordered Native Plants May 18 and 19 at the Shademakers Nursery and Landscaping.

– Marlene Hoffman, Special Projects Chair

Alien invasion battled at Silvoor

The Silvoor Committee is scheduling Vinca removal work sessions March 17 at 10 a.m., April 15 following the wildflower walk, and May 5 at 10 a.m. We will also be pulling garlic mustard on May 19 and May 26.

Gloves would be a good idea. Occasional bird watching allowed. Meet near the picnic shelter at Pepper Park, just south of Oxford off U.S. 27.

Where do blue herons nest?

QI am interested in learning more about area migration habits/patterns of herons. I'm aware of a summer nesting, rookery area on private property that friends and I are interested in watching, but I would like to be better informed.

– Mark Perin, Liberty Twp.

Orie Loucks has led an annual monitoring of the Great Blue Heron rookery on Four Mile Creek in western Butler County for about 10 years. He had this response:

AThe blue heron doesn't go much farther south in winter than it has to, although populations in southern Kentucky may go further than populations in Ohio. They just need some open water along a stream, and so the Oxford area regularly records one or two herons

nearly every year during the Christmas Bird Count. Even these would leave during extreme cold.

We see herons starting to come back in some numbers during March, and they are building new nests (or adding to old ones) in their rookery by early April. The rookery we've been monitoring may be the largest in Ohio, with some 140 nests, used and unused. The number of occupied nests when we count them (the third week of April -- the 18th this year) fluctuates, and has been as low

Silvoor nature walks set

Audubon Miami Valley and the Miami University Silvoor Committee will co-host four walks at the Silvoor Biological Sanctuary on April 15, 22, 29 and May 6, all Sundays at 2 p.m. In the 2.5 acres, more than 60 wildflower species are on display each spring.

The walks will be led by knowledgeable guides and are suitable for people of all ages. Meet near the picnic shelter at Pepper Park, just south of Oxford off U.S. 27.

Warbler Walk is May 5

Did you know that Southwestern Ohio and Southeastern Indiana are in the thick of the Warbler Migration Belt?

We'll look for neo-tropical jewels during the Warbler Walk at the Hunter/Huffmeier family farm on the west side of Brookville Lake in Indiana.

We will carpool from Oxford at 8:30 a.m., returning around noon. Pack a lunch. Pre-register by calling 523.1782.



Nesting Heron
by Steven D'Amato

as 38 to 40, and as high as 90 to 95. (We don't go closer than 200 yards, and use spotting scopes to make the count during spring nesting).

If each nest represents a breeding pair, then our Four Mile Creek rookery may be home to as many as 180 herons, after a "good" year. Of course, rookeries have to start over quite small (when humans disturb an old rookery), and may decline naturally over a few decades.

That's what we are trying to answer with our rookery monitoring. One only expects about one rookery in an area of three to five townships, depending on the water available. The location is usually not far from good aquatic habitat (ponds or large streams), and always in the tallest and most remote forest available.

For more information, call or leave a message at 513.523.0105.



SIGHTINGS

CBC totals considerably above average

More than 34 birders counted 71 different species during the annual Oxford Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 16 on a sunny, clear and unseasonably warm day.

The total of individual birds tallied was 9,317, considerably above our 18-year average of 5,941. The top four species included 3,853 European Starlings (top as usual!), followed by a new leader, 1,435 American Robins, 564 Canada Geese and 514 House Sparrows.

Of special note was one Green-winged Teal duck, which we have not had on our count before. Duck populations have been in steady decline since Acton Lake was opened to duck hunting.

More than 28 veterans and six first-time birders participated. First-timers were Margarette Beckwith, Kathleen Carels, Janel Duncan, and Alfred and Dorthy Joseph and Jill Russell.

A special note of thanks to "trip leaders:" Sharon Edwards, Hardy Eshbaugh, Ann Geddes, Bill Heck,, Dave



Green-winged Teal by
Steven D'Amato

Hamilton-Fairfield finds Nuthatch

The Hamilton-Fairfield CBC, also Dec. 16, spotted 66 species. Waterfowl numbers and variety were very low: six species of ducks and geese for the day. Seven Winter Wrens were high for our count. Given how few have been reported in the region this winter, a lone Red-breasted Nuthatch visiting a backyard feeder was a highlight.

—Mike Busam

Osborn, Laura Poppendeck, Bill Pratt, Jim Reid, Dave Russell and Leslye Sherman.

Totals were recorded at noon at Miami University's Ecology Research Center while birders shared lunch.

- Count monitor, Larry Sherman, organized and compiled the results. Numbers for all species spotted are available at www.AudubonMiamiValley.org

- Data were submitted via the Internet to National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Center. People interested in seeing results for North America are advised to go to www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/index.html

Spring programs range from ants to Africa

Continued from Page 1

Obligate army-ant following birds are one of the most specialized groups of birds in the world, occurring only in the New World tropics. Most of the rare obligate ant-following species are restricted to extensive tracts of intact lowland rainforest.

Susan will discuss her long-term, ongoing research on the ecology and behavior of five species of obligate army-ant following birds in the south-western Amazon. A key question she examines is how species diversity is maintained through dynamic population and community processes. Both the ants and the

birds are "indicator species:" their absence in otherwise appropriate habitat is an early warning sign of local biodiversity loss.

MONDAY MAY 14

A BIRDER'S VIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA

7:30 p.m., Community Room,
Lebanon Citizens National Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford
**Thomas K. Wilson, Professor
Emeritus, Miami University**

In November 2005, Tom and Nancy Wilson birded South Africa with Tropical Birding, an environmentally sensitive tour operator. Tom will give you impressions of

the amazing birds, scenery, and perceptions of this unique country.

They explored the Cape Peninsula; West Coast, Kruger and Karoo National Parks; the South Coast; the high grassveldt southeast of Johannesburg; the East Coast of KwaZulu-Natal: St. Lucia, Eshowe, Highover Nature Reserve; and the Drakensburg Mountains. in Lesotho.

Tom taught in the Botany Department at Miami University for many years. He and Hardy Eshbaugh initiated a course on the Tropical Flora of the Bahamas that continues today. His research focused on comparative anatomy and morphology of primitive flowering plants.





MARCH



**WATCH FOR
YOUR BROCHURE AND
ORDER FORM FOR THE
AMV NATIVE PLANT SALE**
See page 2 for details.

SATURDAY MARCH 3
Full worm moon

SATURDAY MARCH 10
Bird Banding
Caesar Creek State Park,
Waynesville, Ohio, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Demonstrations by the Ohio
Bird Banding Association.

MONDAY MARCH 12
AMV public program
KIDSPEAK
7:30 p.m., Community Room,
Lebanon Citizens National
Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford
See page 1 for details.

THURSDAY MARCH 15
Buzzards Return to Hinckley
Details online at
[http://cleveland.about.com/od/
clevelandareaparks/p/buzzards.
htm](http://cleveland.about.com/od/clevelandareaparks/p/buzzards.htm)

SATURDAY MARCH 17
SILVOOR VINCA REMOVAL
See page 3 for details.

MONDAY MARCH 19
**Swallows Return to
Capistrano** Details online at
[http://www.sanjuancapistrano.
net/swallows/](http://www.sanjuancapistrano.net/swallows/)

TUESDAY MARCH 20
Vernal equinox
Date for the equinox is from [http://www.
almanac.com/astronomy/moon/index.
php](http://www.almanac.com/astronomy/moon/index.php)



APRIL



MONDAY APRIL 2
AMV public program
SPRING IS ABOUT TO SPRING
7:30 p.m., 218 Pearson Hall, Miami University
See page 1 for details.

Full pink moon

MONDAY APRIL 9
AMV public program
**ARMY ANTS AND OBLIGATE ANT-FOLLOWING
BIRDS**
7:30 p.m., Community Room,
Lebanon Citizens National Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford
See page 1 for details.

SUNDAY APRIL 15
**SILVOOR NATURE WALK,
VINCA REMOVAL FOLLOWS**
See page 3 for details.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 18
GREAT BLUE HERON ROOKERY COUNT
See page 3 for details.

SUNDAY APRIL 22 (EARTH DAY)
SILVOOR NATURE WALK
See page 3 for details.

SUNDAY APRIL 29
SILVOOR NATURE WALK
See page 3 for details.

Moon names are from <http://www.farmersalmanac.com/astronomy/fullmoons.html>





MAY



WEDNESDAY MAY 2

Full flower moon

SATURDAY MAY 5

AMV Field Trip WARBLER WALK

See page 3 for details.

SILVOOR VINCA AND GARLIC MUSTARD PULL

See page 3 for details.

SUNDAY MAY 6

SILVOOR NATURE WALK

See page 3 for details.

MONDAY MAY 14

A BIRDER'S VIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA

7:30 p.m., Community Room,
Lebanon Citizens National Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford
See details page 4.

FRIDAY MAY 18 AND SATURDAY MAY 19 **PLANT SALE PICKUP**

Shademakers
See page 3 for details.

THURSDAY MAY 31

Full blue moon

Trip north to Crane Creek may yield glimpse of magnificent Golden-winged Warbler

Have you ever seen a Golden-winged Warbler?

This is one of the rarer warblers in Ohio, and if you have seen it you were probably visiting Crane Creek during spring migration.

The latest issue of "Bird Conservation," the periodic magazine of the American Bird Conservancy contains some alarming data that should give us all pause to think.

"Breeding Bird Surveys (a good argument for data collection) in the Appalachian region between 1996 and 2005 have shown marked annual declines: 35 percent per year in West Virginia, 26 percent in Pennsylvania, and 22 percent in New

York. Even in Minnesota, the heart of the species range where they are still relatively abundant, the population has fallen by 9 percent over the past decade."

Why has this happened?

"The threats to the Golden-winged Warbler on its breeding grounds are varied and complex and very poorly understood but the loss of wetland habitats seems to be important in the decline of this species."

This spring it may be well worth your while to visit Crane Creek to seek out this little known magnificent Ohio species.

— Hardy Eshbaugh



Golden-Winged Warbler by Steven D'Amato

Learn more about birding at Crane Creek State Park, which is east of Toledo on Lake Erie, at:
<http://ohiodnr.com/parks/parks/cranecrk.htm>
<http://www.birdingamerica.com/Ohio/cranecreek.htm>



Confessions of a Titmouse tamer

By Ann Geddes

How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

Well, not exactly a moonbeam, but just as fleeting and as magical! Have you guessed the species I'm holding? (Note that I'm not smiling – not smiling on the outside, that is – because I didn't want this darling to see me staring with big predator teeth exposed!) Yes, it's a Tufted Titmouse, one of a half dozen that I tamed last summer.

It all started with a back problem that left me in pain much of the time, so I amused myself by sitting on the deck and watching birds. I had been feeding titmice all winter, and they eagerly came to the deck.

Then in spring, sitting quietly in the fine sunshine (actually I was meditating), I heard the flurry of wings and the prick of tiny claws on the top of my head! A few moments later and then she (as I presume from her nesting actions) proceeded to pull out strands of my hair from the roots! Obviously this titmouse had lost fear of humans (or thought I was a dead animal – quiet I was, but not gone yet!). It was then I decided to see if she would feed from my hand.

I put out roasted waxworms (Bird Grub that I had fed in winter) next to my hand resting on a deck table, and she came next to me to snatch one, but would not land on my hand filled with the treats. I then decided to lie down by the back door where the whole flock had been used to come all winter – with waxworms in my hand – and yes, one by one, they would arrive, hop onto my hand, take one and fly off.

Once they had gotten over their fear of the soft feel of my hand under their claws, I moved myself day by day into a position where I could sit more comfortably in a chair and hold my hand out, propped up by a coffee can. All during this time, they had free access to suet and black oil seed, so their decision to hand feed was, I think, more about inquisitiveness and food novelty than outright hunger.

Although other tamers suggest wearing the same clothes and keeping a strict schedule while hand taming, for titmice it did not seem to matter what I wore or when I appeared. They seemed to come to the hand



when food showed up at the right location – perhaps a result of their natural caching instinct?

It took substantial training of myself not to startle while a little gray bullet of a bird appeared from out of the blue and gripped my outstretched hand. Once while in a half-dozing state, I did startle and dropped my hand with the perched bird and lost a few weeks gaining their confidence again.

Especially interesting was watching their behaviors up close. I could confidently identify four individuals – out of a resident flock of a dozen – by a combination of markings, weight or behavior. My favorite (the one that landed on my head) was very heavy. One had unusual facial markings like a harlequin face, who I called Mr. Stripy. Mr. Stripy was dominant and once when another titmouse was in my hand did a dive-bomb on the other and they tussled from my hand tumbling on the deck. I wanted to send him to the principal's office!

As spring progressed my hope was that the adults would train the fledglings to get comfortable with landing on my hand, but that didn't happen. The adults would take a treat while the fledges perched nearby. So I had to start over with the new generation.

All in all, it seemed that for titmice, they were always more concerned about threats from other titmice than from me.

So why not give it a try yourself?



SIGHTINGS ELSEWHERE



At left, Green-violet Ear
Below, Emeralds Toucanet

LIR Class Birds Hot Spots of Costa Rica

Story by Sarah Michael
Photos by James Reid

Seventeen members of Miami University's Institute for Learning In Retirement class, under the leadership of Hardy Eshbaugh, toured five distinct areas of Costa Rica from January 12 to 23.

The participants, including both experienced and new birders, enjoyed good accommodations, fine food, great camaraderie and the pleasure of finding many life birds.

Sites visited included: Chalet Tirol in the Cloud Forest of the province Heredia 11 miles north of the capital of San Jose; Selva Verde Lodge and Rain Forest Reserve near La Selva Biological Station in the North-Central Lowlands of Sarapiquí; Cano Negro Wild Life Refuge in the tropical Rio Frio basin in the Alajuela province; La Ensenada Lodge and National Wildlife Refuge on the Pacific Coast in the province of Puntarenas; the Hotel Villa Lapas close to the Carara Biological Reserve in the Pacific lowlands; and the Savegre Mountain Lodge in the highland region of Cerro de la Muerte (7,200 ft).

The variety of locations and habitats allowed participants to maximize the number of birds seen – a total of more than 300 species for the group.

Our local guide, Fito (Adolpho Downs) humorously and patiently helped us find the birds with his keen sight and trained ear. At La Selva, sightings of a Sun Bittern, Emerald Toucanets, the Broad-billed Motmot and Golden-hooded Tanagers stand out. In Cano Negro, the Gray-necked Crakes, Slaty-tailed Trogon and Limpkins were impressive. Around La Ensenada, the Violaceous Trogon, Black-headed Trogon and Spot-breasted Orioles

were spectacular, as were a Mangrove Black Hawk dining on a fish, and a Turquoise-browed Motmot eating a snake. We also heard but did not see the Three-wattled Bellbird.

On a morning walk in the Carara Biological Reserve we watched a pair of nesting Scarlet Macaws and saw Squirrel Cuckoos.

During a late afternoon boat ride on the Rio Tarcoles we saw several pairs of Macaws fly over.

Later, in the highlands of the Cerro de la Muerte we saw male and female Resplendent Quetzals, once at very close range. We also saw Baird's Trogon, Violaceous Trogon, Black-throated Trogon, Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Royal Flycatcher and Silky Flycatcher, not to mention many varieties of hummingbirds.

What a joy and not a little confusion to see so many birds in such a short time! And what a great learning opportunity of all of us in welcoming, sunny Costa Rica.

See Some of Jim Reid's pictures from Costa Rica in color at online at www.audubonmiamivalley.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Key missions expand, thanks to donors

Many Audubon Miami Valley's supporters have contributed to our annual gift program, allowing our leadership to expand activities in two key areas: Education and Conservation. So far more than \$5,000.00 has been raised, contributed by more than 50 members and friends in Butler and Preble Counties.

We continue to be challenged by requests to increase the number of schools participating in our after-school conservation program for elementary through high school students. Your growing support will help make that happen. Volunteers working in partnership with Sharon Edwards of the Environmental Mo-

bile Unit have given students memorable experiences in nature. Students from these programs will be at our March 12 public meeting to share a wide variety of nature awareness.

We have just funded a bird investigation project at Gilmore Ponds in Hamilton. The ponds, part of the parks system in Butler County, are recognized as an Audubon Ohio Important Bird Area. On going census work at IBAs will broaden our understanding of these habitats and will help shape future conservation efforts. Other nearby IBAs at Hueston Woods, the Voice of America Metropark, and Germantown Metropark are places we could help

to expand study projects. Other nearby habitats, in including Miami Whitewater Park, could use similar study and exploration.

Some of you may still have your annual gift request nearby and will send in your donations as soon as you are able. As these later contributions funnel in, we will dedicate further energy to raise awareness about birds and other wildlife and work to increase the understanding and support of their habitats in our interest area.

Thank you so much for the part you play in growing Audubon's outreach.

– Liz Woedl

Support AMV's mission

Supporting Audubon Miami Valley shows that you are committed to the mission of Audubon Miami Valley and are willing to give generously to support our programs and activities. Please give at one of the following levels (check your choice):

- Student \$20
- Basic \$35
- Supporting \$60
- Centennial \$100
- Partner \$250
- Other \$ _____

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Make your check payable to Audubon Miami Valley and send it, along with this form, to:

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the newsletter of
Audubon Miami Valley
Volume 32, Autumn 2006 issue
P.O. Box 556, Oxford OH 45056

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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



Flying birds
Kirsten Munson

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