

November-December 2005

No. 116



WETLAND *matters*

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

Have you visited our website?...www.oxbowinc.org

The Birthday Party was a Picnic

.....by Jon Seymour

Our first ever members picnic, and not coincidentally our 20th Birthday Party, was a great success. About 90 members attended the festivities held in Agner Hall at the Lawrenceburg Fairgrounds. Jack's Catering prepared a sumptuous spread and the Lawrenceburg Kroger donated the soda pop and water. The "Indoor Picnic" concept worked very well, as the outside temperatures of near 90 degrees meant that we all ate comfortably in the air conditioning of Agner Hall. Jim Williams portrayed one of his ancestors, an early settler of the Ohio Valley, and gave a great program on the history of the American settlement of this area. John Cimarosti lectured and discussed his participation in the Lewis and Clark reenactment as it proceeds to the Pacific Coast. John portrays John Colter, the first American to see the park we currently call Yellowstone National Park. Both gentlemen were well received by an appreciative audience.

In addition to the stimulating conversation with other members over brats and burgers, including founding members George Laycock and Karl Maslowski, everyone had a chance to examine documents and photos demonstrating current projects that Oxbow is involved in. Plans for the proposed 2006 mitigation of the southwest border of Oxbow Lake, the CSX railroad changes, the new Argosy Casino, and the electrical substation inside the current levee were on display. Also on view was our current design for a trail sign on the levee explaining the history, purpose and unique quality of the Oxbow area to users of the levee walk way. Several members sat and viewed our 4-8th grade school presentation on the relation of animals to their habitats, using the Oxbow as the teaching tool. If that was not enough entertainment, about half

of the attendees took advantage of the two tours of the Oxbow we offered. These tours were led by Rick Pope and Denis Conover.

I have heard nothing but great comments about the celebration. It was our first attempt to bring the membership together and enjoy our success to date. Hopefully we will be able to do it again in the near future.



Happy Holidays!

Look inside for a surprise addition to the newsletter. Let us know what you think!



Attendees at the Oxbow Birthday Picnic sit in air conditioned Agner Hall to chow down on great picnic fare. By picnic's end 88 members came to eat and even more came for just the tours and displays.



Founding members Karl Maslowski and George Laycock discuss old times and old friends at the Oxbow Birthday Picnic.



Man and woman of the Yagua tribe in the Amazon (Photo by Dave Imbrogno) The November members meeting will be held at Sharon Centre and feature a talk on **"The Peruvian Amazon"**. See full details on page 4



Miami University Masters Program students in the Environmental Studies Department take their first class in the Oxbow. Dr. Mark Boardman (kneeling and holding the big camera) is Department Chairman and leader of this diverse group. President Jon Seymour lectured while class was held at the Oxbow Lake. Students watched Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Double-crested Cormorants, and Wood Ducks flying up and down the lake while Jon talked. Quite a lesson in Grass Roots Conservation!

What do you think about the addition of a little color to the newsletter? Mail this completed slip to:

Oxbow, Inc., P. O. Box 43391, Cincinnati OH 45243-0391

I like it. Comments? _____

I don't like it. Comments? _____



Conservation Corner

by Jon Seymour

Oxbow is working locally with other conservation organizations to raise awareness of the role of Land Trusts in land conservation. Several local Land Trust Organizations have agreed to support a grant application by the Western Wildlife Corridor (WWC) for money to raise awareness of the role of Land Trusts in the Tri-state area. WWC used their association as the front organization for this group to obtain a \$25,000 grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Other companion grant applications are pending and there is hope that another \$25,000 will be forthcoming that will complete the goal of having \$50,000 to support the project. With this money the WWC will create a public awareness program showing the benefits that Land Trusts have for the residents of the Tri-state and the impact we have on conservation and the quality of life.

Representatives of some of the area Land Trusts, myself included, recently met with Kathleen Steele of the national Land Trust Association (LTA). Kathleen works in the Midwest office based in Michigan. The WWC grant was discussed with Kathleen and she offered several examples of promotional materials developed by other Midwest Land Trusts as examples to base our work on. Also these groups provide us with contact names to call and discuss what materials are effective and what materials are not.

This type of backing by our national organization is another way that we benefit from being members of the LTA. While we are different in that we own most of the land we protect, we are not different in our goals for the perpetual protection of the land for conservation. This is always a difficult thing since any organization is only as strong as the effort its members are willing to give in support of the organization. Fortunately we have had many Oxbow members step up to the plate when they were needed and Oxbow continues as a strong, active organization. However, for the long term health of the organization and its mission, we must continue to plan how to keep Oxbow's mission, to preserve and improve the floodplain at the mouth of the Great Miami River, to stay on course for generations to come.

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

Donor

In Memory of

Cecilia Falk
Edward and Joan Walter

Bill Corning
Laura Walter Selby

Tributes

Nancy Whitaker

Happy 50th Anniversary
to Polly & Bill Miller

Oxbow, Inc. has established Memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each Memorial established in the name of a friend or relative will be enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Each contribution to a Memorial will be acknowledged to the family or to those selected by the donor.

Tributes are also enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Some tributes are birthday or anniversary remembrances, holiday greetings or gratitude acknowledgements. If so desired, "Happy Birthday!" or the like can be inscribed in the tribute notice.

Contributions should be sent to: Oxbow, Inc., P. O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, OH 45243-0391. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those who are to receive the acknowledgement.

Moving your nest?

Make sure WETLAND MATTERS goes with you!

Name _____

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MAIL TO:

Oxbow Inc.

P.O. Box 43391

Cincinnati, OH 45243

**Please mail right away -
third class mail is not forwarded!**



Raptors Save the Day

Of Bits and Peeps...

so that others can assist in controlling invasive plants.

... Kani Meyer



Thank you, Thank you!

1. A big thank you to Rumpke, Inc. who let us have a dumpster for almost a year as we accumulated trash. During the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami, we were able to finish filling the dumpster and have Rumpke take it away. It contained six thousand pounds of trash that was removed from the Oxbow.
2. Thank you to those folks that have reported license numbers of people leaving trash or damaging roads with their vehicles or otherwise not adhering to safe practices. It really helps protect the Oxbow. Just write the license number of the offender on a piece of paper and a description of what the offense was. Mail it to our post office box address
Oxbow, Inc.
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, OH 45243
If appropriate, we will share the license number with the Dearborn County Sheriff's Department and they will be able to keep a special look-out for the individual so they do not repeat their offense.
3. Thanks to all those who renew early when they see their membership dates coming up for renewal on the front of the Wetland Matters mailing label. It saves us a lot of stamp money, paper, envelopes and time, and leaves more money for accomplishing the Oxbow mission goals.

Oxbow, Inc. Activities Schedule

PROGRAMS

Tuesday, November 8, 2005, 7:30 P.M.
Sharon Centre, Sharon Woods Park
(Note Different Location)

Kani Meyer, Land Management Chair for Oxbow, Inc., will speak about "The Peruvian Amazon". In February 2005 Kani had the good fortune to visit the Amazon River in Peru. She will give an illustrated talk about the river, the people, the rain-forest and some of its animals, the canopy walkway at the Amazon Center for Environmental Research, and ecotourism. To get to Sharon Centre from I-275, take Exit #46 and go south on Route 42, pass Kemper Road, continue on Route 42 until the Sharon Woods entrance on your left. Pass the park booth, go over the creek bridge, then take the first left into the long parking lot for Sharon Centre. From the south, go north on Route 42/Reading Road, pass through downtown Sharonville, bear right at the fork onto Route 42/Lebanon Road, then turn right into Sharon Woods.

Tuesday, December 13, 2005, 7:30 P.M.
Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Heather Mayfield, Program Coordinator of the ORSANCO River Education Center, will present, "At the Confluence of Learning and Exploring". The ORSANCO River Education Center is a sternwheel paddleboat that has been converted into a floating classroom and laboratory for students in the Greater Cincinnati area. The center allows students to experience the River through a hands-on curriculum focusing on water quality, land use, biological monitoring, and navigation. The curriculum culminates in a day-long interactive voyage on the ORSANCO River Education center where students will spend the day solving a simulated pollutant discharge into the Ohio River. The Lawrenceburg Library is downtown at 123 High Street. Turn left onto Walnut Street off US 50 West, then right on High Street.

FIELD TRIPS

Please note meeting place—the upper Oxbow parking lot near the cement plant. Turn south from Rt. 50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the cement plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left and the lot is on your right.

Saturday, November 19, 2005
9 A.M. – 12 Noon.

Meet Dr. Wayne Wauligman, birder and natural history enthusiast, at the new Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. What do birds eat for Thanksgiving? Dr. Wauligman will lead an Oxbow hike exploring this theme. Leave as early or stay as late as you like. Be prepared for inclement weather, as the hike will go on rain or shine! Wear boots that can get muddy or repel the mud (Oxbow mud is sticky when wet!). No restrooms available. For more information, call 922-4430.

Oxbow Wish List

This new feature is to let our members know about items and talents we need. Let us know if you are able to help.

1. Oxbow is looking for secure donated office/storage space in the immediate Oxbow area. We are running out of room to store our materials, records and supplies in the various homes that currently house portions of our scattered materials. It is becoming more important that our historical records and donated collections be available in one location.
2. Oxbow is looking for an individual or small group who like to write thank you letters for our memorial and honorarium donations. Peggy Gatch, who currently does this for Oxbow, has let us know that she cannot guarantee her health forever. We all wish Peggy could but the reality says she needs to be teaching someone else how to carry on.

If you can help with either of these needs or if you know someone who can, please call Jon Seymour at 513-851-9835.

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

...by Jon Seymour

August 22, 2005: Tim Hayes from CINERGY asked me to meet him at Shawnee Lookout boat ramp and go out to Flannery Island. Over a year ago we had discussed placing an identification sign on Flannery Island so that those passing the island in their boats would see the name of the island posted there. Tim had called to tell me that the sign was finally done and I should help him select a location. That was great for me since I had never set foot on the island. Now I am waiting for him in the ramp parking lot and am amazed to see Tim drive up towing a Florida swamp airboat behind him, six foot propeller and all. We quickly discover that the water level on the outlet from the boat ramp is too low for even the airboat and we decide to use a nearly abandoned ramp on the Fort Hill Plant property. After a few exciting moments trying to keep truck and boat on the narrow, crumbling ramp, we board the boat and head for Flannery Island.

My first thought is that movies lie. I remember many nature movies with scenes of these swamp boats speeding across the Everglades. They were all muted or silent!!! These boats are really, really noisy!!! In fact both Tim and I are wearing ear protection mufflers. The sensation is unique as we skip along the surface of the water probably drawing only 2 inches of water. Tim skillfully guides the boat in a slow circumnavigation of Flannery Island and at last we see a great site on a bank facing the Great Miami's major mouth and near the Ohio River. It is protected on the sides by several large trees but the late summer foliage is low and only a few inches high. This should mean that the sign will stay visible all year. With our task complete we look at each other and head up the Great Miami. The river is beautiful and cutting along the water in the shadow of Shawnee Lookout it is easy to see that this should be a National and State scenic river. We pass the Shawnee Lookout boat ramp opening and round the bend. A flock of 25 Great Egrets explodes from the banks of the river and 3 Caspian Terns join them in a great loop around their noisy intruder. We pass a kayaker working her way down the west bank of the river. I can only imagine that she put her kayak in the water this morning looking for the peace and quite of a journey on this beautiful river. I tried not to imagine what she was thinking about us and our noise pollution machine. An equally disgusted Osprey breaks from an overhanging tree branch and heads up river but we are going as fast as it is and finally it banks away from the river. Tim is skimming across rocky shoals only 4 inches deep. I can see each stone clearly as we zip by. This is truly "Roche a Cri" as the French explores called it – the river of rocks. Under Lost Bridge we encounter rapids as the low water is forced into a narrow channel. A little further on we reach our goal, the mouth of the Whitewater River. We turn back here but it is a journey that is abandoned reluctantly. The freedom of the airboat almost gives one the feeling of the birds, being able to fly along these natural corridors and travel to parts unknown.

September 25, 2005: It is the Great Outdoor Weekend (GOW) and we are expecting several first time visitors to the Oxbow and many are not members. Yesterday we had ten guests on the introductory tour. Steve Pelikan had led half of the group onto the levee for a view since the area was muddy from midweek rains. Darleena Graham led the other half, who said they could handle mud, down the road into the Oxbow. Everyone had a great time.

Today it is drier and I arrive early and drive all the way to the Oxbow Overlook in my little Saturn. I figure if I can make it anyone probably can. It is not too bad but there are two soft spots. As I pull into the overlook I slow the car down and try to edge out into the overlook as slowly as possible. It is not slow enough. I am awestruck by what I see. All over the Oxbow Lake are Great Blue Heron and Great Egrets standing in the water of the lake from one end to the other. The car startles the nearest group and they rise into the air. It is like a chain reaction of white and blue-gray ping pong balls. A wave of Egrets and Herons take to the air. One group startles the next and they jump into the air. There are so many taking off and heading for safety at the far end of the lake that between the spread of the wings and the late morning fog, they almost seem to obscure the opposite bank of the lake. Like usual I just watch open mouthed, my camera sitting useless on the seat beside me. Another Oxbow moment is imprinted in my brain. Reality calls and I back out the car and return to the entrance where I meet Steve Pelikan who has volunteered again to lead a group today. Steve and I wait at the parking area for the first arrivals and Steve is casually birding the area. He find a Black-billed Cuckoo right over our heads and I find it just in time to see the long dark tail as it flies away. He knows this is unusual but we pocket our discussion as the first of our guests start to roll in. Later we will find that Dave Styer's book "Birds of the Oxbow" lists only 7 sightings in the Oxbow all between April and August and all at Shawnee Lookout. We are both elated. As the guests for the Great Outdoor Weekend roll in we start to run out of parking room. 23 guests have come and most are not members of Oxbow and have never been here before. We ask around but not enough want to take their cars out so we decide to walk. The group is varied, men and women, boys and girls. The youngest less than one year and the two oldest admit to 86. Our walk takes us out along the road to Osprey Lake and we make it there with the entire group intact. Along the way we have seen the Double-crested Cormorants fly over and have views of a few Great Blue Heron and Great Egrets. The group that has to go back and be on their way to other GOW events goes back with Steve but 2/3 of the group wants to continue a little further to the Oxbow Lake overlook. Most of the group passes the tree bank where the road bends away from the lake when the tail end of the parade spots a Black-crowned Night Heron perched on a tree branch 50 feet from the road bed. Everyone gathers and I set up the scope for an "up close and personal" look. The bird just poses for us (I will have to double his wages, I suppose). We all make it to the overlook with only a little extra mud on the shoes. At the overlook we are all treated to a view of a large congregation of Herons and Egrets at the south end of the lake. It is always a thrill to set up the scope and let people look through the eyepiece and a world of birds unfolds for them. Back at the start everyone is telling us how much they enjoyed what they saw. My two 86 year old ladies are very happy but confide they are going to go home and take a nap. I hope I am doing that well at 86.



usings

by Dave Styer

The Northern Cardinal

I'll put my foot in my mouth by mentioning Northern Cardinals and European Starlings in the first sentence. Yes, I know I've committed a sin, but both species are abundant in the Cincinnati area, and that makes them wonderful candidates for study. I wrote about Starlings in this regard [*Wetland Matters*, Nov/Dec 2002], but Cardinals have special Cincinnati connections. According to Ron Austing's website, on 26 different years the Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count (CBC) has counted more Cardinals than any other CBC in the nation. Also, from very careful banding work in the Cincinnati area by Art and Jinny Wiseman, Art published a couple of heavy-duty articles on feather growth in Cardinals.

Since I no longer live in the Cincinnati area, and concerns are expressed about West Nile Virus and declines of our birds, I called Ned Keller to find out how Cincinnati Cardinals are doing. I'm pleased to learn that Cardinals are still coming to feeders and adding cheer to homes in the area. Nobody seems to be asking after the health of Starlings. For one thing, they likely brought immunity to West Nile Virus with them from the Old World. For another thing, few people here likely care.

I'll report on the first of the two articles Art wrote. To set the stage we note that all birds have feathers. Maybe there were dinosaurs with feathers, but while humans have been on Earth only birds grow feathers. Feathers are wonderful things. They provide superior insulation, and the majority of birds can fly because of their feathers. No bird can fly without feathers. Feathers come in wonderful colors and patterns. These features often aid courtship or camouflage. We immediately think of Cardinals, Scarlet Tanagers, Baltimore Orioles, warblers, and hummingbirds. We might also think of ptarmigans with plumage that looks like snow in the winter and brush in the summer.

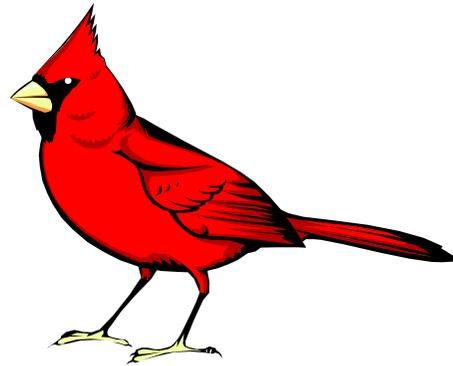
Feathers are both light and strong, but they take a beating and wear out. Not only do birds depend on their feathers, but so do feather lice. That seems to be a one-way thing; I've never heard that feather lice help the birds. The bird's solution is to molt once or twice a year. That is, they grow new feathers that push out the old ones. The new feathers are unbeaten, uneaten, and unworn. With a little luck, many of the feather lice will be discarded along with the old feathers.

Art's first article on Cardinals, published in *Bird Banding* in the summer of 1977, is titled "Interrelation of Variables in Postjuvenile Molt of Cardinals." The article deals with molt in Cardinal during their first calendar year of life. Their first plumage is their 'natal down.' They then

molt into what is called 'juvenile plumage;' the molt is called 'postnatal molt.' Certainly 'juvenile' is a technical term that means something more specific than 'juvenile.' This is the first plumage that Cardinals use to fly. In late summer and fall they molt again, their 'postjuvenile' molt. In this molt they grow their first basic adult feathers. Things get tricky here. Cardinals that hatch early in spring complete a leisurely postjuvenile molt by the end of October. Cardinals hatched a bit later rush their molt. Ones hatched even later will terminate their molt without completing it. This will happen some time in November.

Here are a couple of highlights of the investigation. The birds always completed their postjuvenile molt on their body feathers. This suggests that superior insulation provided by the new feathers is important for winter survival, and that it is more important than acquiring new flight feathers. This information can help bird banders determine when a young Cardinal hatched. A bird captured in, say, December or January, with several juvenile flight feathers would have hatched late in the year. A bird with just one or two juvenile flight feathers (per wing) would have hatched earlier. A bird with no juvenile feathers would have to be told from older birds in some other way.

The Northern Cardinal provides a fine example of the idea that if you want to study a bird you would do well to pick a common one where you live. I have mentioned the special Cincinnati connection to this story. Prior to becoming banders, Art and Jinny did their most intensive birding near the mouth of the Great Miami River. As I have written before, they were working to preserve the Oxbow area even before Oxbow, Inc. formed. All together, the Cardinal is most suitable for a *Wetland Matters* article this holiday season.



Trustees up for Election

Six members of the Oxbow, Inc. Board of Directors are up for re-election to a three year term at the January 2007 meeting. The names of the directors up for reelection are:

- Denis Conover
- Gay Hon
- Dennis Mason
- Kani Meyer
- Richard Pope
- David Styer

The slate of officers remains unchanged.

**Great Outdoor Weekend
September 24-25, 2005**



Darleena Graham (second from right) leads a Saturday morning Great Outdoor Weekend group of intrepid mud-ders, while Steve Pelikan (not pictured) led another group on a less muddy walk to levee vantage points.



The Sunday morning Great Outdoor Weekend tour group led by Jon Seymour and Steve Pelikan and ranging in age from a few months to 86 years. See “Horseshoe Bottom Diary” for more details of the Great Outdoor Weekend experience.



Tim Hayes of CINERGY positions an airboat to pick up President Jon Seymour for a trip to Flannery Island to select a location for the Flannery Island sign being donated by CINERGY.



Tim Hayes of CINERGY, wearing ear protection equipment guides the airboat toward the mouth to the slough draining Oxbow Lake to the Great Miami River. The right hand bank is Oxbow property acquired from the CSX railroad.



The CINERGY airboat leaves the Shawnee Lookout boat entrance slough behind as it skims along down the Great Miami River.

Oxbow, Inc.

A nonprofit organization formed by conservation groups and concerned citizens of Ohio and Indiana for the purpose of preserving and protecting a wetlands ecosystem know locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from industrial development and to preserve the floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This agricultural area is rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland ecosystem. Make your state a richer place in which to live by helping us preserve this precious resource. **Membership in Oxbow, Inc. is encouraged and solicited.**

Individual	\$10	Family	\$15
Contributing	\$25	Supporting	\$50
Patron	\$100	Cornerstone	\$250
Sponsor	\$500	Benefactor	\$1000
Organization/Club	\$25		

Mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**
P. O. Box 43391
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Wetland Matters, the newsletter for members of Oxbow, Inc., is published bimonthly.

Rapid Copy Print 

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