



July— August 2012

No. 156

# WETLAND

*matters*

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## **Dancing with the Birds 2012 – the Results Show**

Tally Party! Boxes of pizza! Mountains of Double Stuff Oreos, veggies with dip, water and soft drinks for all! Did I say I love birding?

Although the Tally Party at the end of the Birdathon is great and the camaraderie is wonderful, the real fun is looking for birds and sharing the stories of our encounters. For starters the turnout was fantastic. There were 36 adult birders and 14 birders under the age of 19. This kind of participation by youth just gets the blood to stirring and we all were excited by their enthusiasm. Bill McGill, adult leader for one of the Under 19 teams, shared the story of how three of the Under 19 teams met up in the Oxbow as the Birdathon came to a close with one of the three teams with a total of 98 species (two short of the coveted century mark for a day of birding). At that point the kids from all three teams decided to work together in a frantic last minute effort to find two more species for that team. They were successful and the "Birds of Prey – Tiger Shrikes" came in first in the Under 19 competition with 100 species. Way to go KIDS!!!

This was the 25<sup>th</sup> year for the Greater Cincinnati Birdathon. It was started by Oxbow, Inc. in 1988 and run by Oxbow through 1999. The then Board of Oxbow, Inc. decided it was unable to continue hosting the program. The Cincinnati Nature Center (led by Bill Creasey) jumped in and took over the Birdathon and with some co-sponsorship help from Clermont County Parks (Chris and Suzanne Clingman) kept it going until 2005 when the Nature Center decided they could no longer afford to organize it. The new Board of Oxbow, Inc. then stepped back into the picture and resumed leadership for the Birdathon. At the Tally Party we recognized four individuals present who had participated in every one of the 25 Birdathons. Jay Stenger, Paul Wharton, Dave Helm and Sr. Marty Dermody were congratulated by the assembled birders.

This year was a little harder than some others as the early Spring had really thrown off the migration schedules of many birds and the completely leafed out forests made watching warblers nearly impossible, causing birders to rely on hearing the songs of birds. Even so the assembled 20 teams (the 3 teams photographing species were not counted in this composite since the photos did not necessarily represent all the birds they saw or heard) logged in 187 species (including 34 species of warblers) combined for the 24 hour period. Fifteen species of birds were seen by only one team. This proves the importance of having lots of teams in the field and every team knowing that they can contribute a sighting that no one else found.

(continued on page 2)

## **The Road Less Traveled (Part 2)**

*by: Matt Stenger*

"Take the road less traveled." There is a certain sense of romance in that phrase. In its purest form the idea is quite enticing but that all changes if you are unwillingly forced down that path as I was. As young children we seek nurturing and acceptance, little of which can be found in the cold dark corners of "the road less traveled." Instead, for me, there were mountains of abuse and neglect that needed climbing, and hunger to deal with, all the while looking back over my shoulder, just in case, hoping, maybe someone would help guide me along. The road less traveled is full of bumps and bruises and frankly, it is simply not the place for a small child to be wandering about alone. That being said it wasn't all bad. For instance by the time I got out of kindergarten I could make a mean peanut butter and jelly sandwich and being out there alone did give me the freedom to explore the world around me and through those explorations I discovered birds.

I have spent most of my life since then trying to retrace my steps. As is often the case when traveling without a map the harder I tried to find my way the more lost I became until I was much like a frantic caged animal desperately trying to escape. Perhaps I was looking to start over or simply to find my way back to a more worn path - either way it took the blunt force of a divorce to stop me in my tracks and force me to look deep into my own psyche for the first time. I was expecting all kinds of terrible things to turn up but what I saw was astounding. There was a young child, a younger version of myself still waiting around for someone to accept him. Interesting that after all those years of fighting my way through life it never occurred to me that I should be the one to take his hand and tell him, "come on, it's this way", that all the while I knew the path I needed to be on I was just too afraid to take it. Little did I know that by simply accepting that my life was what it was, by accepting all of the good and the bad as the things that constructed me, By refusing to argue with my ego and instead having some compassion for myself I would wind up finding my way back to the beginning.

I had been lost for so long that, in many ways, I had forgotten who I was so I asked the child. What makes you happy? He smiled the biggest smile and said, "BIRDS!" I had a vivid memory of the first Northern Flicker I ever saw, it was so

(continued on page 2)

(Dancing with the Birds 2012—continued from page 1)

### Winners Listing

#### Under 19 Teams (Adult leader allowed)

- 100 species—Birds of Pray, Tiger Shrikes\* – Tyler Ficker, Cassidy Ficker, Megan Williams, Xander Miller & Cooper Scanlon
- 90 species—Birds of Pray, Zebra Finches\* – Bill & Rene' McGill, Lauren Goodman, Sidney Switzer & Katie Nice
- 73 species—Birds of Pray, Holstein Cowbirds\* – Mathew Hildeman, Alex Byrd, Sam Byrd, Lucas Surgeon & Daniel Wellington
- 67 species—The Cardinal & the Merfairly – Madeleine Lippert & Jerry Lippert

\*Representing Miami Valley Christian Academy

#### Photography

- 68 species - Tyler Ficker
- 41 species – Cassidy Ficker
- 39 species – Rene' McGill

#### Solitary Vireo (Running Solo)

- 124 species – The (0) First Timers – Jon Seymour
- 110 species – Kirk Westendorf
- 107 species – The Fernald Preserve Team – Gary Stegner. Also won the fossil fuel use competition (none used) and the "Most Species from a Single Location" award (all sightings at the Fernald Preserve). We could also award Gary the "Most species seen while helping other birders find species not already seen".
- 103 species – Wings Like Eagles – Jerry Lippert
- 75 species – Mark Gilsdorf – also a single area of the Oxbow – or "Most species seen in 4 hours while having to get ready to attend a wedding".

#### Most Species Seen in the Birdathon Area

- 150 species – Beasts of Birdin' – Joe Bens, Jack Stenger, Jay Stenger & Paul Wharton
- 140 species – Blue Ash Trash – Brian & Gale Wulker
- 130 species – Two in a Bush – John & Evan Leon
- 128 species – Finneytown's Fabulous Flying Fortune-Seekers – Wayne Wauligman, Erich Baumgardner & Mike Minium
- 122 species – Xpert Birders (not) (Xavier University Team) – George Farnsworth, Molly McCallick, Veronica Massey, Sean Kirby & Tyler
- 120 species – Close-N-Counters (Cincinnati Nature Center Team) – Dave Helm, Bill Creasey & Steve Bobonick
- 117 species – Clermont County Parks Team – Chris & Suzanne Clingman
- 112 species – Jonathon & Samantha Frodge and John Marvin
- 108 species – The Lady Hawks – Katherine Miller, Chris Moran, Lois Shadix & Sr. Marty Dermody. Also "Most species seen by an all woman's team".
- 78 species – Passerine Dream – Brendan & Don Bogosian

#### California Dreaming Branch

- 135 species – California Representatives – Dave and Jane Styer



(The Road Less Traveled—continued from page 1)

every one of those birds. I relished the memories for a moment as an old dream began to smolder and was quickly burst into flames. "That can't be done, I have a job, I have responsibilities" I thought. For days I mulled it over until it dawned on me that what I thought were responsibilities were nothing more than invented obligations to keep me from feeling. The real obligation was to put a stop to this cycle of fear and hurt I had created in my life. The next day I quit my job, took the child's hand and leapt over the edge to soar with my dreams.

By the end of January I had logged 229 birds. By the end of April I had nearly doubled that. Regardless of what the naysayers

were saying about I was having a blast, I was living a dream. At the same time I had reached the point that the excitement different from the House Sparrows and Cardinals I was used to. "We should go look for LOTS of birds" said the young boy." Memories of sitting in my room, pouring over old National Geographic books and a Peterson field guide dreaming of the day I might get to see each and began to be tempered by reality. In late April I arrived back in Key West after 3 days in Dry Tortugas National Park. No sooner did I get from the dock to my car did I get a call about a Garganey duck near Cincinnati. I would not be able to chase it, I reasoned, because there were quite a few birds in Florida and its keys that I needed to find and I couldn't afford the time or money to go back down there before my pelagics off the east coast. I chalked it up as a loss, hit the Key West airport to chase Antillean Nighthawk and then headed for Sugarloaf key to try for Mangrove Cuckoo. I spent the next three days bouncing back and forth from key to key before landing in Key Largo where I figured I had one last chance at the cuckoo. The following morning those excited words I heard over the phone "GARGANY DUCK AT FERNALD PRESERVE!" were burning in my ears. I couldn't stand it any longer, I dropped what I was doing, took a loss on the Cuckoo and hit the road. I stopped at Everglades National Park for one last quick look but after being accosted by hordes of hungry flesh eating insects and losing, in my estimation, at least 2 quarts of blood to the mosquitoes; I gave up and high tailed it back to the safety of my car.



I left Everglades around noon and short of a quick 4-hour nap of interrupted sleep in the driver's seat I drove the 22 hours straight through. By the time I arrived at Fernald Preserve I was sick, I was delirious and to make matters worse the duck was gone. To make a long story short my friend Karen helped me find the duck 2 days later when it reappeared. Feeling vindicated I was able to relax and enjoy participating in the local Birdathon that weekend before heading east to Cape Hatteras.

As the year progressed so did my aches and pains. By the time June 7<sup>th</sup> rolled around I was glad to be on a plane to Alaska. On the other end of the long flight there was a hotel room with a real bed waiting for me. For the next 3 and a half weeks I rested my bones and recovered all the while being inspired by some of the most beautiful scenery I have ever encountered. Truly, it was Alaska with her indefinable power and grace that finally beat the truth out of me. Well... perhaps it was Alaska and the fact that I was suddenly so exhausted that I couldn't even find the energy to keep lying to myself. I returned from there a new man, with a new outlook, a new sense of compassion, a new set of moral rules and the most awesome beard I have grown to date. But it didn't come without a price. What I gained in physical rest I more than made up for in emotional exhaustion. It seems that coming to terms with the fact that most of the things you do are not good for yourself or those around you takes a heavy toll.

Birds carry with them on their wings and in the air they move though a message of hope, a message that one must be seeking with pure intention in order to hear. My love for birds as a kid was not tainted by anything, it was pure and whole. Somewhere along the line I forgot about that part. Somehow I forgot about a lot of things. I forgot about fun, love, passion and dreams. I forgot about me. Exhaustion alone would not have delivered me to the other side of my mountain, neither would birds alone have been able to bare the weight of my past but the combination of my first true love, the bone grinding, soul crushing reality of the schedule that I kept and my stubborn commitment to go to ends of the earth to get it right this time got me through it. From my new vantage point I see that my old mountain, the one I was so afraid of facing, may well be the most beautiful mountain of all.

## New Denizen's of the Oxbow

.....by Wayne Wauligman

John Klein and I, with assistance from Vicki Shepherd, transferred pond invertebrates and amphibian larvae from Vicki's home area near the Oxbow to the Oxbow's newly created vernal ponds. Twenty Spotted Salamander larvae, 6 Spring Peeper larvae and 28 Tree Frog larvae were released into the two new vernal pools on June 10. The Spotted Salamander larvae were readily identified by their bushy gills, long body and four legs. They are normally small yet at this time of year. Jefferson Salamander larvae, for example, have already transformed and left the their vernal ponds. The larger larvae were Spring Peepers as distinguished by the X that was becoming visible on their backs, their triangular shaped heads and the fact that they are normally transforming this time of year. The small species of larvae were Tree Frog as evidenced by the squarish appearance of the body and copper colored intestinal coils (not visible in the photo on page 7).

While leaving the two new ponds John and I heard a Tree Frog calling. I have not heard one calling from Oxbow's property in the past twenty-four years! Build vernal ponds and somehow they appear!



## Birdathon California Style

.....by David Styer

(David Styer, co-founder and former Board Member of Oxbow Inc., currently lives with his wife Jane in sunny California and participates in spirit from there.)

We (Jane and I) counted from 1 pm Friday, 4 May, to 1 pm the next day. Actually, it got windy Friday afternoon and we quit at 4 pm. In that respect it was a take-it-easy birdathon. We did get up early, and got the Poorwills on Ft. Ord. Then we drove south into the mountains, and got the Mountain Quails at dawn at Botcher's Gap. The highlight Friday was a Black Skimmer at Elkhorn Slough. I was told that even the Monterey County Birdathon, done a week earlier, has never gotten a Black Skimmer. We ended with a total of 132 species, not bad for a relaxed count. Another highlight included a Cackling Goose, not at all sure to be found in May. We have usually missed the Golden-crowned Sparrows, but we came upon a small flock that hadn't yet left Andrew Molera State Park. Some other birds of a Western nature that we saw were Black Oystercatcher, Western Gull, White-throated Swift, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Bushtit, Pacific Wren, Wrentit, California Thrasher, Lazuli Bunting, Great-tailed Grackle, and Tricolored Blackbird.

Above, I mentioned the Monterey County Birdathon. In this count teams spread over the county to find as many species as possible in 24 hours. Jane and I were assigned to Ft. Ord, not because the birds are better there, but because I'm the only birder with permission, and keys, to go nearly everywhere. Of all sightings from both counts none sticks in my mind more than one on the Monterey Count. We were standing at the corner of Eucalyptus and Barloy Canyon Roads, looking for Acorn Woodpeckers, when I noticed a large bird standing at the cliff edge on top of a mesa. With Golden Eagle in mind, I put up my binoculars, and discovered a Canada Goose! They are as common here as they are in Cincinnati, but I have never even imagined one standing as sentinel at a cliff top.

**Oxbow Inc. would like to thank the following donors for their generous gifts.**

Larry & Jane Austing  
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Mr. and Mrs. Walter McBeath  
E. W. Marshall Tucker



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 4172, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those who are to receive the acknowledgement.

## Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS



To reach the Oxbow, Inc. office take Highway US 50 south from the #16 exit off I-275. Pass the Hollywood Casino exit and turn left at the second stop light onto Walnut St. 301 Walnut is on the right side at the second stoplight at the corner of Walnut and Center Streets. Free parking is available on Walnut St., Center St., and in the parking lot behind the building.)

**Tuesday, July 10, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

**301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg—The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

Emerald ash borer -- update & myth-busting. EAB has killed 10s of millions of ash trees since first detected in 2002. Unchecked, it will bring about the functional extinction of all 16 native ash species in North America. Across native ranges, ash are abundant both in natural and planted communities. The genus represents 10-40% of the canopy cover in many areas, with some running as high as 90%. The jury is still out on effectiveness of regional tools to protect forest lands, but excellent tools exist for mitigating the impact of tree loss in managed areas. The Asian longhorn beetle, another invasive insect pest that attacks trees, has also been found in this region. A brief update on impact and management will be presented. **J. Bradford Bonham**, is an ISA-certified arborist with particular interest in municipal management of EAB. She is a co-signor of what is generally referred to as the "consensus document."

**Tuesday, August 14, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

**301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg—The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

Internationally known wildlife photographer, author and Oxbow member Ron Austing will present his amazing photography in a program entitled, "Pictures Through the Window". Ron was the official photographer for the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens for many years and has traveled extensively pursuing the great picture. Come and be inspired.

**Tuesday, September 11, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

**301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg—The Oxbow, Inc. Office**

**John Agnew**, noted wildlife artist and avid birder, will recount his sighting of a male Ivory-Billed Woodpecker on January 12, 2008, near the Choc-tawhatchee River and a review of the Cincinnati Ivory-Bill hunters' efforts in the Florida Panhandle.

## Oxbow Inc. FIELD TRIPS

To reach the upper Oxbow, Inc. 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. The lot is on your right.

**Date & Time:** Sunday, July 15, 2012, 8:00 a.m.

**Where:** Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

**Leader:** Charlie Saunders, (513) 829-6981

Join skilled naturalist Charlie Saunders for a very interesting summer morning visit into the Oxbow. Charlie has a great knowledge of birds, plants, butterflies, insects and other wildlife and is the perfect guide for a general nature trip. Please bring sunscreen, insect repellent and water to make your visit more comfortable. Charlie likes birds and butterflies equally and expects to see quite a few species. Many breeding birds will still be around but less conspicuous in the late summer. July also marks the beginning of shorebird migration in the Oxbow. Every year around this date I think of Dave Styer's old (tongue in cheek) adage, that the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday weekend signals the beginning of the fall shorebird (plover and sandpipers) migration in the Oxbow. Shorebirds won't be near peak but some show by then and Dave would more often than not turn up a few shorebirds in early July. Hopefully Charlie will keep that tradition alive on this visit. Feel free to contact Charlie with any questions.



**Date & Time:** Saturday, August 18, 2012, 8:00 a.m.

**Where:** Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

**Leader:** Paul Wharton, (513) 353-3403, [pwharton@fuse.net](mailto:pwharton@fuse.net)

The southward shorebird migration should be near peak in the Oxbow on this date and will be the focus of this trip. Shorebirds (i.e. plovers and sandpipers, and the logo for Oxbow Inc.) depend on shallow water for feeding and at this season several species can usually be found along the exposed shorelines and mudflats in the Oxbow or on sandbars in the Great Miami River. The post breeding dispersal and southward migration of several species of herons and egrets also occurs at this time of the year. Large numbers of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets and lesser numbers of Black-crowned Night-Herons and Green Herons are likely to be seen. Even rare species such as Little Blue Heron and Snowy and Cattle Egrets are possible this time of the year. A wide variety of other birds and wildlife should also be seen and the sharp eyes, ears and knowledge of trip leader Paul Wharton will give us the advantage. Come out and join Paul on what should be an interesting morning in the Oxbow. Contact Paul with any questions.

**Date & Time:** Sunday, September 16, 2012, 8:00 a.m.

**Where:** Meet in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

**Leader:** Jay Stenger, (513) 522-8147, [jaystenger@cinci.rr.com](mailto:jaystenger@cinci.rr.com)

Fall migration for many bird species is well under way during September and will be the focus of this month's field trip. Warbler (as well as other songbirds) migration peaks during September and shorebirds continue to move south throughout the month. Raptors are also on the move at this season. The Oxbow area is a great place to see all of this avian diversity so come out and join us for what should be a great morning afield. Our trip leader, Jay Stenger, is a skilled veteran birder and has birded the Oxbow area for many years. We will begin in the Oxbow but will likely move to the Shawnee Lookout side of the Great Miami River for the best shot at finding a diverse number of species for the day. We will probably go at least until noon, or even later if the birds are cooperative. Bring sunscreen, insect repellent and water to make your visit more comfortable. Contact Jay with any questions.

8	CCDD Sora	3	CDE Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
19	DDDD Common Moorhen	19	AAAA Downy Woodpecker
	BCCCC American Coot	13	B8BBB Hairy Woodpecker
	EEE Sandhill Crane	18	AAAA Northern Flicker
	DDCC Black-bellied Plover	19	B8BBB Pileated Woodpecker
9	EEE American Golden-Plover	1	DDD Olive-sided Flycatcher
20	DDCC Semipalmated Plover	19	DCAAA Eastern Wood-Pewee
	AAAA Killdeer	1	EEE Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
	EE American Avocet	18	ECBBA Acadian Flycatcher
17	B8BBB Spotted Sandpiper	2	EE Alder Flycatcher
17	B8CCE Solitary Sandpiper	13	DDCCB Willow Flycatcher
13	BCCDD Greater Yellowlegs	2	CBBCD Least Flycatcher
	EEE Willet	14	BCCCE Eastern Phoebe
17	BCCDD Lesser Yellowlegs	18	BAAAA Great Crested Flycatcher
	EEEEE Upland Sandpiper	19	B8BBB Eastern Kingbird
	EEE Ruddy Turnstone		EEEEE Loggerhead Shrike
	DCCB Semipalmated Sandpiper	15	B8BBB White-eyed Vireo
19	DCCCD Least Sandpiper	6	EEE Bell's Vireo
12	DDD White-rumped Sandpiper	16	B8BBB Yellow-throated Vireo
	CCDD Pectoral Sandpiper	4	B8CDE Blue-headed Vireo
	DDDD Dunlin	18	B8BBB Warbling Vireo
1	EDDD Stilt Sandpiper	3	DDCCD Philadelphia Vireo
4	DDDDD Short-billed Dowitcher	18	BAAAA Red-eyed Vireo
	E Long-billed Dowitcher	20	AAAAA Blue Jay
2	CDD Wilson's Snipe	19	AAAAA American Crow
9	CCDD American Woodcock	8	CCCC Horned Lark
	EEEE Wilson's Phalarope	16	CCBBB Purple Martin
	DDDE Bonaparte's Gull	18	B8BBB Tree Swallow
7	CCCC Ring-billed Gull	18	B8BBB Northern Rough-winged Swallow
2	DDDDD Herring Gull	12	CCCCB Bank Swallow
	DDDEE Caspian Tern	12	DDDDD Cliff Swallow
	DDDD Black Tern	20	B8BBB Barn Swallow
	DDDEE Common Tern	20	AAAAA Carolina Chickadee
	DDDD Forster's Tern	14	AAAAA Tufted Titmouse
19	AAAAA Rock Pigeon	DDDE	Red-breasted Nuthatch
20	AAAAA Mourning Dove	17	B8BBB White-breasted Nuthatch
9	DCBBB Yellow-billed Cuckoo	DD	Brown Creeper
2	DDDEE Black-billed Cuckoo	20	AAAAA Carolina Wren
1	EEEEE Barn Owl	EEEE	Bewick's Wren
5	CCCCC Eastern Screech-Owl	19	AAAAA House Wren
16	CCCCC Great Horned Owl	EE	Winter Wren
12	CCCCC Barred Owl	EEEE	Sedge Wren
13	EDCCC Common Nighthawk	1	DDDDD Marsh Wren
	EEEEE Chuck-will's-widow	DD	Golden-crowned Kinglet
19	DDDEE Whip-poor-will	ABCD	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
15	AAAAA Chimney Swift	B8BBB	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
14	DCCBB Ruby-throated Hummingbird	15	B8BBB Eastern Bluebird
3	B8BBB Belted Kingfisher	3	ECCE Veery
19	CCCCC Red-headed Woodpecker	DDCCE	Gray-cheeked Thrush
	AAAAA Red-bellied Woodpecker	B8AAB	Swainson's Thrush



Tim Lewis, John Klein, Dan Leisgang with his two sons, Chris Powell with his two daughters, and Dave Mey help out during the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River



Some portions of the Oxbow are seldom seen by most of the folks visiting Oxbow. This long tunnel, under I-275, Exit #16 road, connects the channels of water behind Mercer Pond to the lake north of the exit #16 road. At high water the flooding Ohio and Great Miami River waters flow through this tunnel to flood the area north of the exit. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)

John Klein is enjoying "yaking the bow" and getting close up and personal with wildlife along the water's edge. It is an excellent way to experience the Oxbow area and is especially rewarding during flooding of the Oxbow when large portions of the Oxbow area are accessible to the kayak or canoe. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)

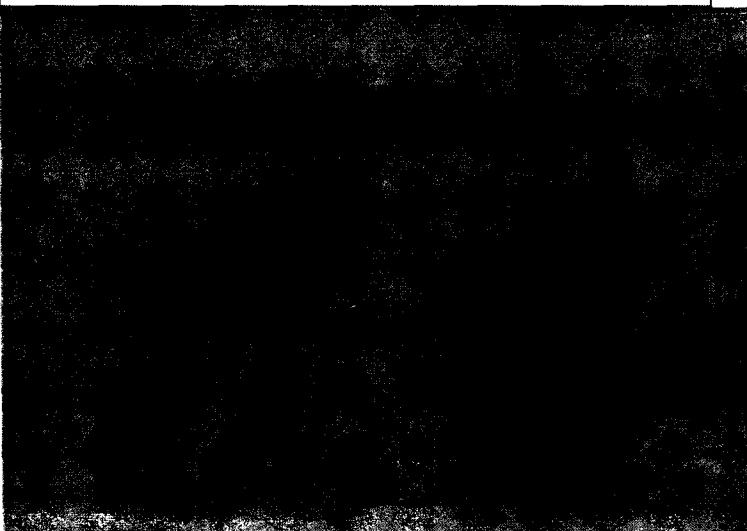


Jon Seymour discovered the perfect Birdathon Mobile while participating in this year's Birdathon. No hands are required so binoculars can be used at all times while road birding and no driving is necessary so naps can be taken between birding locations. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Wayne Wauligman chased through stinging nettle to capture a fleeting photo of a breeding Redstart in the Corning Tract of the Oxbow. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)

The three larval forms pictured in the transfer bucket are the spotted salamander larva (external gills), the Spring Peeper larval form (the large frog larva) and the Tree Frog Larva (small tadpole form). John Klein and Wayne Wauligman transferred the larva harvested from a nearby pond to the two new vernal pools built near the Oxbow entrance. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)



# Birdathon Reflections

.....by Jon Seymour

Maybe it's a GOOD thing!

Each year I ask for Birdathon first timers to contact me and I will guide them through their first Birdathon. This is a lot of fun for both me and I hope the first timers. The fly in the ointment is that someone interested in being a first timer must contact me. I had one bite early this year but they did not follow through, so I did what I have done in the past, I competed as a "Solitary Vireo".

It was a tough Birdathon by some standards. The early Spring sent the ducks back north early. Flowering trees and bushes had warblers coming through the area in trickles not in fallouts. High temperatures and lower rain falls had the shorebird watchers confused. On day they would be found at one flooded field, the next day they would be gone. Somewhere else they would appear in a different field for a day.

But the weather could not have been better. Sunny and cool (not cold) just what you would order for a Birdathon. It was so nice that it was hard to believe it was the Birdathon. I was a bit sad that no one had taken advantage of the first timer offer but I also enjoy the freedom that birding alone offers. I do miss birding with experts at times since most of the better birders in town have much better ears than I do. Especially when it comes to picking out individual songs from the cacophony that one hears in the woods in the early morning. Actually the scarcity of warblers this year played a bit to my advantage allowing me to hear a few more individual calls than I might have in other years.

With a good start at Brookville on Friday evening, I decided that most of remaining part of the evening would be spent at Fernald to see what I could find there. I ran into Gary Stegner, who was spending most of his Birdathon time showing others where to find birds and into the team of Gayle and Brian Wulker, one of my first timer groups from several years ago, and now a competitive force in the Birdathon. (Brian has one of those sets of ears that I admire.)

We birded together for a while (a minor rules violation, but we are not sticklers about the rules) until about 9 pm when I had to leave to pursue the remainder of my birding plan for the evening. As I went to start my car nothing worked. I found the Fernald security guard and had him jump me. We tried to start the car 3 times. The car would start, but would not run for more than 30 seconds before stalling out again. We gave up! It was fortunate that my 15 year old car failed me in a parking lot with a security guard and locked gates at night. Considering where I had been birding earlier in the day, there were a lot worse places for this to happen. I knew I had to leave the car, get a ride home, and deal with it in the morning. The Wulkers showed up in the parking lot right about that time and I had my ride home as they were headed to Winton Woods to do some owl. Good fortune prevailed. At about this moment it

occurred to me that had I had a first timer with me they would also be stranded and wondering why they ever wanted to do a Birdathon.

Due to the kindness of the Wulkers, I was able to get home. I resumed birding early in the morning at Miami-Whitewater County Park. After completing my effort at MWW Park it was time to deal with the car situation. Cell phone in hand and armed with the necessary phone numbers. I called AAA and the Saturn service and arranged for pick-up and delivery. I then drove to Fernald and easily beat the AAA driver. When he arrived he was able to load up my car on a flatbed truck and strap it down for transport. It was at this time that I suddenly realized, without intending to, that I had created the perfect birding vehicle. (photo page 7) Under the right circumstances I could bird from my car without the burden of actually driving it. Thus being able to give all my attention to road birding and the sounds drifting in the window as the truck driver drove the car around. Particularly valuable for overnight birding by ear! As Jay Stenger later pointed out it also had the advantage of not consuming any fossil fuel – at least the car.

However it was not to be. I followed the truck to the location of the garage near Tri-county mall. There, while waiting for the paperwork to be completed, I found a freshly dead Tennessee Warbler that had run into the building and broken it's neck. I decided to save it for "show and tell" at the Tally Party. The second plus from this series of unfortunate events occurred when I swung by my house to check out my own feeders on the off chance that the Pine Siskins, that had been regular morning visitors to my feeder all Spring, might be there. They were and I register them on my card. They were the only Pine Siskins reported during the Birdathon.

Stops at Shawnee Lookout County Park and then down into the Oxbow finished my day as I pulled out of the field early (4 pm) to help get ready for the Tally Party. As I did it again it occurred to me that it was a good thing that I did not have a party of First Timers with me. Ahh, but they would have had a good story to tell.

## Member Communications Committee:

Jennifer Borneman  
Joanne Earls  
Lynda Mason  
Velda Miller  
Jackie Seymour  
Pat Shanklin  
Suzanne Skidmore  
Barb Varland



**Oxbow, Inc. 2011  
Treasurer's Report**

2011 saw little change in the overall picture for Oxbow. All figures look good, with an 11% increase in gross profit over 2010 while expenses decreased 4%. Our total net worth saw a 2% increase, indicating slow, steady growth which, while not as dramatic as a sudden increase, is more sustainable. All of these figures are encouraging given the state of the economy.


While no new properties were obtained in 2011, we continued to maintain and improve the land we protect. Oxbow currently owns over 1,000 acres.

It was with great sorrow that I resigned my position as Treasurer of Oxbow effective this July. While it has been a privilege serving the organization for the past eight years, I felt it best to move on. The position of Treasurer will pass to the capable hands of Ed Gemperle, and we will work together to make the transition as seamless as possible.

In the coming year, more roads will be improved while we continue to pursue additional property to purchase. None of this can take place without the continuing support of our members. Oxbow, Inc. is a 100% volunteer organization—no salaries or expense accounts are paid for by the organization. We are beholden to the generous support of the membership and the public. The IRS tax returns Forms 990 for Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. may be inspected at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).

Sincerely,

James W. Poehlmann, EA  
Treasurer



Category Per Report	Profit and Loss		
	Oxbow, Inc.	Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.	Combined Figures
Contributed Support	\$17,632.43	\$0.00	\$17,632.43
Legacies & Bequests	\$61,718.50	\$0.00	\$61,718.50
Earned Revenues (1)	\$50,453.48	\$34,688.08	\$85,141.56
Special Events	\$0.00	\$6,710.00	\$6,710.00
Restricted Funds Activity	\$3,021.52	\$0.00	\$3,021.52
<u>Cost of Goods Sold</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>\$132,825.93</u>	<u>\$41,398.08</u>	<u>\$174,224.01</u>
Less: Cost of Goods Sold	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Gross Profit	\$132,825.93	\$41,398.08	\$174,224.01
Grant & Contract	\$5,314.50	\$0.00	
Program Expenses-Ed.	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Legal & Accounting	\$16,409.44	\$2,031.25	\$18,440.69
Non-Personnel Expenses (2)	\$0.00	\$18,752.08	\$18,752.08
Occupancy Expenses (3)	\$0.00	\$13,797.61	\$13,797.61
Conference & Meeting	\$210.00	\$0.00	\$210.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,484.00	\$2,040.93	\$3,524.93
<u>Business Expenses</u>	<u>\$198.00</u>	<u>\$195.00</u>	<u>\$393.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$23,615.94	\$36,816.87	\$60,432.81
<u>Net Income</u>	<u>\$109,209.99</u>	<u>\$4,581.21</u>	<u>\$113,791.20</u>

Category Per Report	Balance Sheet as of 12/31/2011		
	Oxbow, Inc.	Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.	Combined Figures
Checking/Savings	\$1,499,293.48	\$61,660.41	\$1,560,953.89
Other Current Assets	<u>\$990.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$990.00</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$1,500,283.48</b>	<b>\$61,660.41</b>	<b>\$1,561,943.89</b>
Land	\$245,551.60	\$1,383,982.86	\$1,629,534.46
Easements Owned	\$231,963.28	\$0.00	\$231,963.28
Land Improvements	\$6,734.10	\$5,131.60	\$11,865.70
Office Furniture & Equipment	\$3,783.00	\$0.00	\$3,783.00
Other Assets	\$0.00	\$500.00	
(Less) Accumulated Amortization-Land Improvements	<u>(\$1,990.00)</u>	<u>(\$257.00)</u>	<u>(\$2,247.00)</u>
(Less) Accumulated Depreciation-Office Furniture & Equipment	<u>(\$3,416.00)</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>(\$3,416.00)</u>
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$482,625.98</b>	<b>\$1,389,357.46</b>	<b>\$1,871,983.44</b>
<b>Net Worth</b>	<b><u>\$1,982,909.46</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,451,017.87</u></b>	<b><u>\$3,433,927.33</u></b>

(1) Earned Revenues consist primarily of Dues, Interest and Cropland Rental

(2) Non-Personnel Expenses consist primarily of Office, Fundraising, Special Event, Postage and Printing Expenses.

(3) Occupancy Expenses consist of expenses related to renting our office and maintaining our land. They include property taxes paid by the Indiana corporation.



by Dave Styer

### The Yellowlegs, Lesser and Greater

The Lesser Yellowlegs is one of the common migrants in the Oxbow area. Although this shorebird is strictly a migrant, it can be seen in the Oxbow area around a month in the spring and about four months in the "fall." For the Lesser Yellowlegs the migration south following nesting in Canada or Alaska, i.e., the fall migration, generally takes place from July through October. Although these, and many other shorebirds, may be "just passing through" the area, they spend more time here than several locally breeding birds. For example, you would be lucky to see Yellow-throated Warblers for a full three months in a given year, even though they breed at Shawnee Lookout.

The Greater Yellowlegs is a fairly common migrant in the Oxbow area. On average it arrives earlier in spring and moves through later in fall than the more common Lesser Yellowlegs.

The Lesser Yellowlegs is a medium-sized shorebird with yellow legs (surprise) and a medium-length straight bill. In the Oxbow area it is most commonly compared with the Greater Yellowlegs. When you see the two yellowlegs alongside each other, it is obvious that the Greater Yellowlegs is, indeed, larger than the Lesser Yellowlegs. According to *The Sibley Guide* the Greater weighs roughly twice the Lesser, 160 g. vs. 80 g. Size is a lot harder to tell in isolated birds, and other features need to be used. For example, the bill of the Greater Yellowlegs is not just bigger; it is relatively bigger, and looks slightly upturned. Also, the voice of the Greater Yellowlegs is more strident than that of the Lesser Yellowlegs. Back about 1813 Alexander Wilson wrote that both yellowlegs species were: *well known to our Duck gunners along the sea-coast and marshes, by whom they are detested, and stigmatized with the names Greater and Lesser Tell-Tale, for their faithful vigilance in alarming the Ducks with their loud and shrill whistle, on the first glimpse of the gunners approach.*

Both yellowlegs species winter in coastal and southern United States, through the Caribbean, much (or all) of Mexico, all of Central America and even throughout South America. What an immense winter range, and what great distances some of these birds travel! I don't know why they spread out over such a vast area, but it does seem like a good strategy for species survival. Perhaps they were simply "born the next of kin, the next of kin to the wayward wind."

When we compare the two yellowlegs species with respect to their breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska, and their migration in the lower 48 states, we see something curious. The Greater Yellowlegs breeds in a band across central Canada, from the Atlantic Ocean to western Canada, but not to the coast, and it has a disjunct western coastal breeding range. In contrast, much of the breeding range of the Lesser

Yellowlegs is throughout northwestern Canada and the Alaska interior. It nests east to Hudson Bay, but not nearly to the Atlantic. Reviewing these breeding ranges, the Lesser Yellowlegs might be almost thought of as a western bird, while the Greater Yellowlegs seems more uniformly distributed from east to west, with the east holding a slight edge. If the yellowlegs migrations were strictly north and south to the extent possible, then the Oxbow would only get the dregs of the Lesser Yellowlegs migrants, but California would be overwhelmed by them. In reality, it's almost the other way around. Although I often see hundreds of shorebirds at a time in the Monterey area, the Lesser Yellowlegs is an uncommon migrant, and I have seen many more at the Oxbow any year I was there. I have probably seen more Lesser Yellowlegs at the Oxbow at a single time than I have seen all season in the Monterey area. Apparently, these birds fly northwest in the spring and southeast in the fall. In the Monterey area the Greater Yellowlegs is much more common than the Lesser Yellowlegs. These two species of yellowlegs cannot share the same migratory preferences.

My wife, Jane, asked me how these two yellowlegs are related. To answer that question, I looked into the scientific names and naming of these two species. After all, the scientific name is supposed to reflect relationship. There turned out to be some complexity, but it does shed light on the question. In 1789 the Greater Yellowlegs was given the scientific name *Scolopax melanolenca*, the Lesser Yellowlegs, *Scolopax flavipes*. A larger shorebird, without yellow legs comes into the picture: the Willet was simultaneously named *Scolopax semipalmata*. This was OK, except that *Scolopax Rusticola* was the name Linnaeus gave to the Eurasian Woodcock, back in 1758. Yellowlegs are not sufficiently like Woodcocks to be in the same genus. I find that by 1872 the Willet and the yellowlegs were put in another genus, *Tetanus*.

The Willet doesn't really look that much like a yellowlegs, and for the most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was given the scientific name *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*. Perhaps it was with DNA studies that it was found that the Greater Yellowlegs is more closely related to some Eurasian sandpipers in the genus *Tringa* (a scientific name of long standing) than to the Lesser Yellowlegs. In order to reflect relationships correctly, both yellowlegs were switched to the genus *Tringa*. Finally, it has recently been found that the Lesser Yellowlegs is more closely related to the Willet than to the Greater Yellowlegs. Then it doesn't make sense to put them in the same genus, *Tringa*, and the Willet in another genus, *Catoptrophorus*. If the two yellowlegs are to remain in the same genus, then the Willet must be put there, too. Currently, the Willet is placed in the genus *Tringa*. So now the scientific names of the Greater Yellowlegs, the Lesser Yellowlegs, and the Willet are, respectively, *Tringa melanoleuca*, *Tringa flavipes*, and *Tringa semipalmata*. That resolves the issue without conflict. Why would two not-so-closely-related species look so much alike? Who knows? Maybe, as with Monarch and Viceroy butterflies, there is some biological advantage.

## Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River May 19, 2012

An unusually non-threatening, sunny day greeted the 19 volunteers who came out to help clean up the Oxbow. This group included five good people from DuPont across the Great Miami from us (Chris & Carrie Larkins, Mattan Rejstaczer, Michael Gross and Kimberly Hall). Chris Powell and his two daughters, Allie and Raleigh, once again took charge of tires. Dan Leisgang, who recently excavated our new vernal pools, showed up to help with his two boys, Will and Luke. Tim Lewis, Jon & Jackie Seymour, John Klein, and Dave Meyer are among the staunch "regulars" whose help I always appreciate.

The early spring resulted in a lush growth of vegetation which, I suspect, concealed a good bit of trash resulting in a very low yield this year. One whole apparently abandoned camp was dismantled, tent, sleeping bags, cots and frying pan. A bike was pulled out of the brush in pretty sad shape. There was also a large truck hood bearing the image of a thunderbird. And the tire count was also low with only 11 car tires and one truck retread. The rest consisted of the usual bottles, cans, and bits and pieces of wood and metal which somehow find their way into the Oxbow.

In addition to all these good people who come out to show their appreciation of the outdoors, I would like to especially thank Rumpke who has donated a large dumpster to our efforts every year as well as the Dearborn County Solid Waste Recycling District which allows us to drop off tires with no fee.

### Breeding Birds and Breeding Birds?

.....by Wayne Wauligman

On Saturday June 9 from 7:30 am to 11:30 am and one evening hour on Sunday June 10, I surveyed Oxbow Inc property for territorial Prothonotary Warblers. A project at Hoover Reservoir in Columbus has expanded the Prothonotary population there by providing nest boxes. Could we do the same? How many breeders do we have currently? Seventeen males were calling including two, and probably more undetected, from Flannery Island. Seven were calling from the Oxbow Lake area. Another three called from the willows of Mercer Pond. Even the trench along the I-275 entrance ramp had several Prothonotary Warblers calling above the road noise! Several more were by the Ohio River. How do they nest when floods could inundate their nests? How could we provide boxes if they fill with mud from flood waters? Hoover Reservoir doesn't have the degree of floods we experience at Oxbow. These are questions we need to ask and answer if we are to start a nest box program in the Oxbow. If anyone knows or a local program that deals with flooded areas like at Shawnee Lookout, let me know? If anyone has time to try and find more localities for calling males, mark the location on an Oxbow map and let me know.

As I surveyed for breeding Prothonotary Warbler, it was another warbler calling from the Bald Cypress area that really caught my attention. Above the din of the I-275 traffic

there was the unmistakable call of an American Redstart. Wading through chest high Stinging Nettle in bloom, I tried to take a photo of the constantly moving sprite below the canopy (photo page 7). He would not pose in the morning sunlight. However, as I moved through the mixed forest, there was another male calling, and then still more. Could they be overflow from the colony over at Shawnee Lookout Park? I saw one feed a fledgling. Photos from the deep shade in the early morning did not turn out well. The stump tailed fledgling near what appeared to be a nest did not appear to be a Cowbird. But I couldn't be sure. Seven calling Redstarts in a colony on Oxbow property is another great reason to support the preservation of this land. Not only does the duck stop here, the Redstart breeds here!

On Sunday evening John Klein and I enjoyed the awakening of the Black-crowned Night Herons at dusk. The beaver came out too and one slapped his tail right in front of our kayaks on Oxbow Lake. About seven adult Night Herons crisscrossed the lake in front us, but no streaky brown fledglings or juveniles appeared. If you sit on the bench overlooking Oxbow Lake, check out the show they put on at dusk, and look for any evidence of breeding in the Oxbow.

### 'Yaking the Bow

.....by John Klein

Most people enjoy the Oxbow by parking at the entrance and hiking or by driving from place to place. My favorite way is on the water. I've only owned a kayak for a few years. Before that I used a canoe. Kayaks are easier to transport and are much more maneuverable on the water. Kayaking is actually one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation. It's good exercise, a great way to "get away from it all" and it's the perfect way to view wildlife.

When the area is flooded, nearly all of the Oxbow is accessible. This time of year you can travel the entire length of the Oxbow Lake, Juno Pond and Mercer Pond without a portage. As the weather heats up and the water recedes you may have to drag or carry your kayak from one to the other.

I used this quiet way to approach wildlife in the Oxbow three times during the first week of June, introducing someone new to the Oxbow each time! People are always amazed at the variety of wildlife that can be seen from a kayak. During that first week of June we saw (up close) cormorants, egrets, green, blue and black crowned night herons, nesting king birds, tree swallows, downy woodpeckers and Prothonotary warblers, several species of turtles, a common water snake, a newborn fawn (and its mother) and many other birds and fish.

Fellow Oxbow Board Member Dr. Denis Conover introduced me to kayaking at the Oxbow. Before that, it was canoe trips with good old Morris Mercer. Although I have seen Randy Peak, Steve Maslowski and others kayaking at the Oxbow, it is a relatively underused activity there.

If you get the chance to "yak the bow" I highly recommend it. I advise going during early morning or evening while the wind is calm and the water like glass. Follow boating safety rules and please show respect by giving anglers a wide berth around their fishing lines. Remember that the Oxbow is enjoyed by a variety of outdoor enthusiasts. It's a great way to view wildlife without the poison ivy, chiggers and ticks that can accompany a hike.

## **Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, 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 known 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.**

Prothonotary Warbler	\$ 15	Wood Duck	\$ 25
Great Blue Heron	\$ 50	Green-winged Teal	\$100
Great Egret	\$250	Osprey	\$500
Bald Eagle	\$1000		
Charm of Goldfinches (Group Level)	\$25		

Mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**  
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Founded 1985  
**PROTECTING WETLANDS**

