



November — December 2012

No. 158

# WETLAND *matters*

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

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## **Great Outdoor Weekend Blooms**

*.....by Jon Seymour*

Great Outdoor Weekend was a great success for Oxbow, Inc. We had many folks who were in the Oxbow for the first time, a large percentage of the attendees were children, and we broke two records.

So what happened?

I need to go back a few years to explain the pathway that led to GOW 2012. When Great Outdoor Weekend (GOW) was first conceived nearly 10 years ago it had the backing of many of the larger outdoor recreational institutions in the area. During the first few years, people from the Zoo, the Hamilton County Park District, and the Cincinnati Nature Center were assigned by their organizations to work on making GOW a success. Their energy and dedication got GOW off the ground and started it rolling. Right from the start there were two major factors that drove GOW forward. First, Kevin Pease, of Serendipity Design donated his time and considerable skill to graphic design, layout, and website building as well as the passion for the branding of GOW. In addition a generous anonymous donor provided significant funding yearly for the operations and advertising. All along the effort was guided by an ad hoc committee of interested parties, consisting of the representatives of organizations participating in GOW.

Thousands of area residents came out to enjoy the multiple outdoor activities offered by GOW, but the budget did not grow and the turnout did not grow and even took a turn for the worse when Hurricane Ivan blew through closing many outdoor nature facilities and trails and causing GOW to cancel many programs. While still believing in the good of GOW the tightening economic situation caused the major organizations to begin to withdraw some of

the management of the event fell back on the ad hoc leadership committee. After a lot of discussion, the leadership committee decided to continue GOW as best they could with reduced leadership from the larger organizations. Imago stepped up to guide the leadership team followed by a volunteer from the Hamilton County Park District. The constants through this retrenching time were the dedication of the leadership team, the support of the anonymous donor and the efforts of Kevin Pease.

Each year we would come together following the GOW as the ad hoc leadership team and decide if we were going to do it again the next year. At the same time another event was taking place that would soon dovetail with GOW. That event was the re-branding of Green Umbrella (GU) as a regional

*(continued on page 2)*

## **Birdathon Revisted**

*.....by Jon Seymour*

**It turns out that the substitute NFL referees were calling the final results of the 2012 Birdathon. Careful review of the results, after a flurry of last minute donations, has rearranged the leader board. I was bumped out of the leader position by a large donation to the Highest Scoring Team (Bens, Stenger, Stenger and Wharton (sounds like a law firm) - The Beasts of Birdin'). I have never been so happy to lose my leadership position. Two additional donations to Jerry and Madeline Lippert's team (The Cardinal and the Merfairry) catapulted them into fourth place in the donation raising race. This moved the final figure for Birdathon 2012 to \$4649 and much closer to the levels collected in previous years. Oxbow, Inc. wishes to thank Jerry and Pamela Lippert, Lawrence Lippert, and Kelly Ricetti for their donations to Birdathon.**

*(Great Outdoor Weekend Blooms —continued from page 1)*

sustainability organization. GU had been formed years earlier as a support group for nature organizations in the 8-county region around and including Hamilton County, Ohio. It had evolved into a support organization for member organizations owning land for preserving nature and open to outdoor activities. Under the leadership of Bob Temple and Bill Hopple the organization was radically reinventing itself to become the regional sustainability master committee for the Cincinnati region. This was not going to happen fast but the first event the GU Board decided to handle was GOW. The GOW was looking for a permanent home and the GU was on the way.

The Ad hoc Committee set up some conditions for the transfer that GU agreed to and the first step for GU was to hire a coordinator to bring the whole thing together. GU Board members, Tim Sisson and myself, acted as the liaison for GOW and the coordinator reported to me. This went on for two years with no increase in budget for advertising and with no change in participation or attendance. The GU Board knew that we were in a holding action but the intent was to keep GOW alive and healthy until we could increase the effort behind it and start it growing. Again this would not have been possible without the persistence of Kevin Pease and our fabulous anonymous donor.

In 2012 we were finally able to turn GOW over to the growing and competent staff forming at GU under Brewster Rhoads. Both Kevin and I had a lot of input but we stepped back to let the new crew start the building process. More sponsors were located, more professional management was given and this year, behind a greater advertising push, we had the largest turnout at many of the sites that we ever had. I think we have turned the corner and what has been a 5-year holding action has now become a platform on which to build the future growth of the event.

Back in the Oxbow on Saturday night we broke our previous record of 20 for a GOW turnout with a group of 26. Steve Pelikan, Velda Miller and I were dispersed among the group with a hike from the entrance parking area to the Oxbow Lake overlook. We all had a great time, and at the turn around point of the hike we were able to look out on a gathering of about 50 Great Blue Herons and 50 Great Egrets lined along the south end of Oxbow Lake. When observing such a gathering I often recall that

we are only 16 miles from downtown Cincinnati as a way of reminding myself what a special place we have in the Oxbow.

On Sunday night we shattered our previous night's record turnout with a group of 66 people. The same crew was there as on Saturday, but we were overwhelmed. I led the hike. Steve stayed in the middle and Velda brought up the rear. That way there was a guide fairly close to everyone. Even with that we were at one point spread out over 100 yards from front to rear. Steve and I had scouted the Oxbow Lake before the hike and there were only a few herons and egrets present. When I arrived at Oxbow Lake overlook at the head of the column there were, much to my relief, several Great Blue Herons and about 20 Great Egrets. While the group was watching, two separate flights of about 15 Great Egrets each came soaring into the air space above Oxbow Lake and landed at the south end joining the Egrets on the ground. A flight of Great Egrets with the white against the blue sky and then the white descending into the green of the treeline is always a spectacle to behold. It was wonderful.

## Green Umbrella ENERGY CHALLENGE



Green Umbrella and the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance, a local non-profit working to increase energy efficiency, are partnering up to improve your home's comfort and save you money on your energy bills through the **Green Umbrella Energy Challenge**. Now is the perfect time to be thinking about making your home more energy efficient and comfortable. The Alliance offers discounted home energy audits, up to 50% off home energy upgrades, a low-interest loan and a network of quality assured contractors. This offer applies to households in Hamilton County, OH and Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties, KY. To learn more go to [www.greatercea.org/energychallenge](http://www.greatercea.org/energychallenge).





## The Golden-winged Warbler

.....by Kani Meyer

During October's members' meeting, Ron Canterbury presented information of a study he has conducted over 25 years on the Golden-winged Warbler (GWA) in West Virginia. This bird is an edge species with very specific and restricted ecological needs that is being crowded out by a sister "species", the Blue-winged Warbler (BWW).

Genetic studies have shown that a large percentage of the WV populations of the GWA have shared mitochondrial DNA indicating a high degree of interbreeding with the BWW. In actuality, they probably are the same species but different ecotypes and Canterbury is working to protect the dwindling Golden-winged Warbler populations.

## Oberting-Glenn Archaeological Site Article

The article on the Oberting-Glenn Archaeology Site by Josh McConaughy on Pages 4 and 5 is reprinted with the permission of The Archaeological Conservancy and originally appeared in the summer 2012 issue of their magazine "American Archaeology". The Archaeological Conservancy is the only national nonprofit organization that identifies, acquires, and preserves the most significant archaeological sites in the United States. Since its beginning in 1980, the Conservancy has preserved more than 440 sites across the nation, ranging in age from the earliest habitation sites in North America to a 19th-century frontier army post. It is building a national system of archaeological preserves to ensure the survival of our irreplaceable cultural heritage. Oxbow, Inc. would like to thank Michael Bawaya, Editor of American Archaeology, for granting permission to reprint the article in *Wetland Matters*.

### Member Communications Committee:

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

*Thank You*

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

Lawrence Lippert  
Chris Moran  
Kelly Riccetti

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.



# Saving an Earthwork from Development

*The Oberting-Glenn site could have been destroyed by residential development, but the landowners chose to preserve Indiana's lone hilltop earthwork enclosure.*



JOSH MCCONAUGHY

*Located west of Cincinnati, Ohio, the Oberting-Glenn site overlooks the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers.*

**T**he Great Miami River Valley snakes through southwestern Ohio and eastern Indiana and boasts a large number of important archaeological sites. Some of the best-known sites in this area are associated with the Middle Woodland period from about 100 B.C. to A.D. 500, the time of the Hopewell Culture. Huge geometric earthworks, conical burial mounds, and earth and stone hilltop enclosures were constructed during this period and are still visible today as reminders of the people that once lived here. After A.D. 500 it seems that the Hopewell stopped building and using these ceremonial sites.

The Oberting-Glenn hilltop enclosure is situated high on a ridge top in southeast Indiana overlooking the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio Rivers. This is the only

known hilltop earthwork enclosure in Indiana. The earthwork, which has been disturbed by erosion and agriculture, consists of earth and stone walls that are four-feet high in places. These walls enclose a central mound that is five-feet tall and has a diameter of 60 feet. A spur of three mounds that extends to the northeast and one other mound to the northwest are also components of this site, which offers breathtaking views of the Great Miami River and the Ohio River valleys.

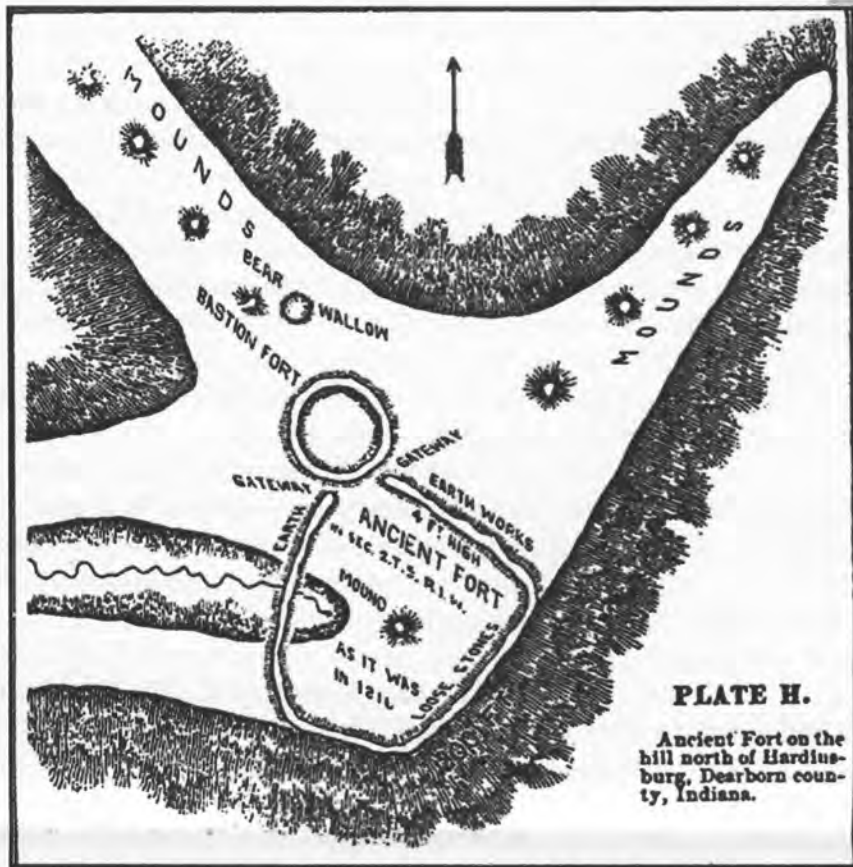
One of the earliest recorded accounts of this earthwork was produced by a Samuel Morrison, along with a sketch of the site, in 1885: "When I first visited the ancient fort north of Hardinsburgh, was in 1816, I was then a school boy attending school in an old round log schoolhouse on the hillside

about fifty feet above the overflowed bottom land, about 350 yards from and below the fort. At this period, not a tree on the hillside nor on top of it, which was occupied by the fort, had been disturbed; they stood in all the primitive greatness. The outlines of the embankment or parapet of the fort were easily defined, being on an average of four feet in height, and were constructed only of earth, except on the southeast brow of the hill; the wall for 100 yards was composed of loose stones, some of them quite large .... In the midst of the fort there was a mound at least six feet high. The west parapet... was at least eight feet high.... I found in the fort several beautiful stone axes, made of a hard, green speckle stone, highly polished."

Glenn Black of Indiana University at Bloomington also visited the site in 1934 as part of his archaeological survey of the region. Informed by Morrison's description and sketch, Black reported the condition and dimensions of the site. But little scientific research was done until this century. Jeannine Kreinbrink directed a cultural resource survey of the property in 2006 while with N&E Environmental Solutions. The survey was conducted because a local developer was considering converting the area into a subdivision. During this study, Kreinbrink conducted intensive shovel testing and remote sensing to map the entire earthwork. "Our most important task was to determine the site's boundaries," she said. Her research has clearly defined the site's dimensions.

The Glenn and Collins families have owned this important site for many years. (The first part of the site's name, Oberting, comes from the road the property is on.) It was primarily taken care of by the late George Glenn, and he took pride in owning such an important archaeological site. Michael Glenn and Barbara Collins, George's children, have continued to care for the site since his death. There was a chance that the earthwork could have been destroyed by building the subdivision,

american archaeology



Samuel Morrison's sketch of the earthwork as it appeared in 1885.

but the owners wanted to preserve it, and they have been working with the Conservancy for many years toward that end.

A 30-acre parcel that includes the earth and stone embankments and the spur of mounds to the northeast will be purchased by the Conservancy for

\$300,000, ensuring that this irreplaceable hilltop enclosure will be preserved indefinitely. The Collins and Glenn families have also generously agreed to donate an additional 10 acres to the Conservancy as a buffer to make sure the site is well protected.

—Josh McConaughy

## CONSERVANCY Plan of Action

**SITE:** Oberting-Glenn

**CULTURE AND TIME PERIOD:** Hopewell  
(100 B.C. — A.D. 500)

**STATUS:** Threatened by development

**ACQUISITION:** The Conservancy needs to raise \$300,000 to purchase the 30-acre parcel. Ten additional acres are being donated.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Please send contributions to The Archaeological Conservancy, Attn: Oberting-Glenn, 5301 Central Ave. NE # 902, Albuquerque, NM 87108-1530.





## Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS—submitted by Kani Meyer



To reach the Oxbow, Inc. office take Highway US 50 west 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. **All meetings are at The Oxbow, Inc. Office, 301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg unless otherwise noted**

### **Tuesday, November 13, 2012**

Jack Berninger, Oxbow member and popular program presenter will present *Paleo Plants – A trip through geological history and the evolution of plants that can be found at the Oxbow and your own backyard*. It will give you a new enjoyment and perspective of our wonderful plant ecosystems. Some fossil specimens will be shown.

### **NO PROGRAM IN DECEMBER—Happy Holidays!!**

### **Tuesday, January 8, 2013—7:30 p.m.**

The Captivity of Daniel Boone - the best-known name on the old frontier is captured at the Blue Licks along with 26 of his men, carried into captivity in an Ohio winter, & adopted into the Shawnee nation. Historian **Tom Stofeldt** will relate how Boone's charm, cunning, and ingenuity enable him to survive his ordeal & escape to warn the Kentuckians of an impending attack.

### **Tuesday, February 12, 2013-7:30 p.m.**

Naturalist and raconteur **Jim Williams** will talk about our American Bald Eagle and it's life on the river. We will follow the eagle as it goes about it daily life of - hunting, raising their family and how it almost did not become our national bird.

### **Tuesday, March 12, 2013- 7:30 p.m.**

Xavier University professor emeritus **Stan Hedeon** will present a comprehensive narrative of Big Bone Lick from its geological formation forward explaining why the site attracted animals, regional tribal people, European explorers, and scientists, and eventually American pioneers and presidents.

### **What makes the Oxbow so special?**

....by Meg Poehlmann

My mom, a lifelong Dearborn County resident, knew little about the Oxbow until my husband and I joined the organization. She had never seen the Oxbow. I decided to surprise Mom with a private tour of the Oxbow this past summer. So one Saturday, before our trek to the grocery store, Mom and I headed out.

As we passed through Hardintown and entered the Oxbow proper, we saw great blue heron, egrets, and even a groundhog that scurried off the road to clear the way for our car. Finch and other small songbirds flitted among the flowers and plants growing along the road's edge as we continued toward Oxbow Lake.

Mom and I decided to stop at the Oxbow Lake Overlook and enjoy the view from the bench there. We watched the heron, egret and other waterfowl perch and scope out the lake in hopes of a meal. We enjoyed the quiet ambience of Oxbow Lake and the summer song of birds and the buzz of insects. When we returned to the car and continued our drive, my Mom was excited and amazed by the wildlife we had seen and the idea that this beautiful area was there, so close to home.

Mom now works near the Oxbow and will call to tell me about flocks of geese, ducks and other birds she sees as they migrate in and out of the Oxbow. She has shared what she learned about the Oxbow with her co-workers and neighbors. It makes the time invested in Oxbow Inc. even more worthwhile when I think of the treasure we have preserved for my Mom and others to enjoy for years to come. If you live or work in Lawrenceburg or Greendale, and have never been to the Oxbow, consider spending your next lunch hour at the Overlook. I promise the experience will be worth the trip.



**Oxbow Inc. FIELD TRIPS—submitted by Jay Stenger**

*To reach the upper Oxbow, Inc. parking lot near the waste collection plant, turn south from Rt. 50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the waste collection plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left. The lot is on your right.*



**Saturday, November 10, 2012**

**Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.**

**Leader: Steve Pelikan, (513) 681-2574, [pelikan@math.uc.edu](mailto:pelikan@math.uc.edu)**

November may seem a cold and dreary month. However, I think late autumn is a beautiful time of year offering subtle hues of the landscape interspersed with brilliant fall colors, offering up a stark beauty. This will serve as a backdrop for our trip leader Steve Pelikan to lead this morning visit to the Oxbow. Steve is an exceptional naturalist and skilled birder as well as a long-time board member of Oxbow Inc. This season the focus of this trip will be waterfowl and other late migrants. When birders and naturalists think of the Oxbow during November the first thing that comes to mind is waterfowl. The peak of fall waterfowl migration occurs in our region during November, and as one of Oxbow Inc.'s catch phrases states, "The duck stops here".

In addition to ducks the changing season will also have other species on the move. Gulls, grebes, a few shorebirds, raptors, including Bald Eagles, and late migrant and wintering songbirds are all likely and the weedy fields will abound with sparrows of many species. Even Sandhill Cranes are possible. So come out and join Steve for what should be a pleasant autumnal visit to the Oxbow. Remember, the Oxbow can be muddy in places this time of year (heck, anytime) and November weather can be cold & wet, so prepare accordingly. Feel free to contact Steve if you have questions.

**No December Field Trip—Happy Holidays to One and All!  
How about a Christmas Bird Count?:**

**26<sup>th</sup> Annual Ohio River "Oxbow" Christmas Bird Count (Sponsored By The National Audubon Society)  
Sunday, December 16, 2012, 7:45 am.**

**Meet at the Shawnee Lookout Park upper boat ramp parking lot.**

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

**There is no participation fee.**

Join Paul Wharton on this annual holiday bird count (known locally as the Oxbow Christmas Bird Count) which censuses winter bird populations in a 15-mile diameter circle, which includes the Oxbow, Shawnee Lookout Park and most of Dearborn County Indiana. Everyone can participate regardless of skill level. You can participate all day, for a few hours or by staying home and counting birds at your feeders if you live in the count area. Contact Paul for more information.

**You may be interested in other local National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts. Contact the count compilers for more information.**

- Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count (66<sup>th</sup> Annual), Sunday, December 30, 2012,  
Compiler Jay Stenger, (513) 522-8147, [jaystenger@cinci.rr.com](mailto:jaystenger@cinci.rr.com)
- Western Hamilton County Christmas Bird Count (47<sup>th</sup> Annual), Sunday, December 23, 2012,  
Compiler Ned Keller, (513) 941-6497, [keller@one.net](mailto:keller@one.net)
- East Fork Christmas Bird Count (30<sup>th</sup> Annual), Saturday, January 5, 2013,  
Compiler Joe Bens, (513) 353-4229, [joebens@live.com](mailto:joebens@live.com)
- Hamilton-Fairfield Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 15, 2012,  
Compiler Mike Busam, (513) 755-0057, [mbusam@gmail.com](mailto:mbusam@gmail.com)
- For more information on Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts visit the following website:  
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>



## Why Barge Ports?

.....by Jon Seymour

There it was on the front page of the Sunday *Enquirer*. OPPORTUNITY AHEAD! And what does that mean? Filling half the front page and two more full pages of the A section was a story on how the Panama Canal remodeling was going to affect the Ohio River Valley. It also detailed what I expect to be a constant headache for Oxbow members and supporters for many years to come, until all the frenzy settles down.

Frenzy is not new to us on economic fronts. Remember gas stations on every corner, now mostly abandoned or torn down. They have been replaced by the latest fad of a Pharmacy on every corner. That fad is waiting for the collapse of the market after the baby boom generation passes on. They have a few years left and then they will also be empty and bulldozed. This new fad is that of a Barge Port in every town. Everyone wants to get rich as a result of the deepening and widening of the Panama Canal. The remodeled canal will be able to handle the large container ships now plying the trade routes between China and the West Coast of North America. No longer will the ships' contents have to be unloaded and shipped across the country by rail. Now they will be able to sail directly to the East Coast of North America. There is already a push to expand the Port of Cincinnati to include the entire 200-mile riverfront from Madison, Indiana to Portsmouth, Ohio, making the size of the port fall in the top ten in the country. This could be a big problem for the Oxbow.

There are many factors that argue for an economic boom to come from the ability of Asian markets to ship directly to the East Coast of North America. The Asian market provides many of the hard goods consumed in the North American market (just try to go a year without buying something made in China, Taiwan, Indonesia, or India – honestly, they are writing books about it). Being able to reduce shipment time, time spent handling, and reduction of the high cost of shipping long distances to market are all considered extremely beneficial to improving global commerce and keeping the cost of goods low. Believe me this has \$\$\$\$ signs attached to it for a lot of businesses. That's good, right???

Well maybe not, and definitely not so good as some would like to paint. While the Port of Cincinnati would like to expand, all the other ports around the East Coast of North America and along the Mississippi and Ohio River systems are thinking the same thing. We currently rank 44<sup>th</sup> in size and the expansion requested would bump us into the top ten.

That bump up is against the current size of the Ports on the East Coast and they all have plans to increase in size. Therefore we really won't be gaining anything in size or competitiveness. Also the article in the *Enquirer* correctly points out that we have some problems with the volume of river traffic we already have and a large increase in traffic will only strain the aging river commerce system even further.

The locks and dams along the Ohio are old and in need of repair. That is a lot of tax money! The locks would have to be expanded to accommodate more and larger barge tows. That is a lot more tax money! As we know from this year's drought, the level of the Mississippi dropped too low to allow barge traffic to pass for several days this summer. Fixing that will take either dredging the river (it will fill back up again – it is not called the Muddy Mississippi for nothing) or building dams that will give barge traffic a higher pool level. That is even a lot more tax money! And where is most of the current tax money spent to improve this vital system going? It is going to build a replacement dam that was authorized in 1988 and was expected to be completed in 2000 at the cost of \$775 million and now in 2012 is less than half done and is estimated to cost \$3 billion when complete. This does not give me a lot of confidence that the port of Cincinnati (expanded) can really benefit from the Panama Canal expansion like they would like us to think they can.

And what does it mean to you the taxpayer who is paying for all this? Well, can we say higher taxes, maybe a lot higher taxes! And what would the taxpayer be apt to receive for these tax payments? Your Chinese-made TV would arrive in your store a day earlier, or be delivered to your doorstep a day earlier? Wait, these products come from a warehouse where they keep a stock of the products on hand. They would get the TVs a day earlier but you would not see any difference in the time of delivery of your order from the warehouse to your home. And guess who gets the savings of all this speed and convenience? You got it, the company and the warehouse. You will just have to take it on faith that they will pass all those savings on to you in the price that is low enough to payback your tax investment. Good luck with that.

I guess you can say that I am very skeptical about the frenzy that leads with the headline OPPORTUNITY AHEAD. Yes, there is a role for shipping goods by barge directly from Asian markets to Ohio River ports and current port sites should be expanded and redesigned to handle the shipping container barges, but it is unlikely that there is a need to create new

(continued on page 11)





Oxbow President Jon Seymour leads a group of adventurers on the Great Outdoor Weekend hike. Participant Lori Smith captured this moment at Oxbow Lake Overlook, the end of the trail. Jon's telescope (in the background) stays focused on a flock of Great Egrets on Oxbow Lake until everyone gets a chance to see.



Oxbow Board Member, Dr. Steve Pelikan, has a rapt audience as he explains the finer points of plant physiology to some of the younger travelers on the Great Outdoor Weekend hike. (photo by Lori Smith)



At the trail's end at Oxbow Lake Overlook on Sunday evening of the Great Outdoor weekend, the setting sun nestles down behind the bluffs supporting the city of Greendale. Lori Smith captured this wonderful sunset, proving once again that not only the animals and plants in the Oxbow are amazing but the scenery is too.



by Dave Styer

### The American Goldfinch

The American Goldfinch is one of our most common birds. Not only is it seen year round in numbers in the Oxbow area, but it comes throughout its range to bird feeders that offer small seeds. As I write, I look out at our "thistle feeders" and see Goldfinches and House Finches busily devouring our offerings. The "thistle seed" they love is now more frequently called "nyjer seed." This seems more appropriate: from pictures I find on the Internet, the plant doesn't look at all thistle-like, but rather like an ordinary, non-prickly sunflower. Although the plant comes from Africa, none of our birds is the least bit bothered that they are utilizing a non-native food source.

We recognize the common American Goldfinch as distinctly uncommon in its breeding biology. In July, when the warblers and most other songbirds are finishing their breeding season, the Goldfinches (of northeastern North America) are just getting started. Goldfinches wait until thistles (real thistles) have gone to seed, and then construct their nests of woven grass and mosses lined with thistledown. The Goldfinch nests are said to be one of the most carefully made of all our bird nests. This sounds really soft and cozy. Can there be too much of a good thing? I quote Welty and Baptista, *The Life of Birds*: So finely are Goldfinch nests put together that at times they hold water and drown the young.

For successful breeding, songbirds can't raise too many of the brood parasitic Brown-headed Cowbirds, rather than their own young. I used to think that the late nesting of the Goldfinch was a good way to avoid being parasitized. After all, the Cowbirds are most actively laying their eggs in other birds nest earlier in the season, especially at the peak of the breeding season. There is another factor that I hadn't considered. For this we look into the nutritional biology of breeding songbirds.

To raise young, songbirds need a high protein diet. Seed eaters with their heavy bills, and nectar feeders with slender bills, switch to a diet of insects, spiders, and other high protein items during the breeding process. This is the general rule, but, apparently, Goldfinches didn't read the rule-book. We quote the American Goldfinch article by Alex Middleton, in *The Birds of North America*:

The American Goldfinch is almost exclusively granivorous. It consumes little insect matter, even when feeding nestlings, suggesting that this species is well adapted to obtaining its protein requirements from a seed diet. This diet may explain why the Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) fails to survive in goldfinch nests. Even though cowbirds hatch successfully, their growth is retarded and almost all die before they can leave the nest.

This brings a couple of questions to my mind. First, the Pine Siskin is a very close relative to the Goldfinch. It comes to "thistle feeders," much like the Goldfinches. Also, Brown-headed Cowbirds usually fail to fledge from Siskin nests. Is this because Siskins, too, didn't read the rule-book, and stick to a seed diet while breeding? The answer is no! Unlike Goldfinches, Siskins frequently forage for insects and spiders. According to William Dawson's Pine Siskin article in *The Birds of North America* the adult Siskins stop feeding the hatchling Cowbirds after a (short) time. For some reason the stimulus to feed them must not be there. Unfortunately, the Siskins don't succeed well to raise their own young in parasitized nests.

My second question is this: if the young Goldfinches can grow satisfactorily on a low protein diet, unlike other local birds, do they pay for it in some way? I don't know for sure, but I believe so. I think it takes Goldfinches longer to fledge (greater time between hatching and leaving the nest) than it does similar birds on a high protein diet. Also, I think the birds are somewhat safer after they fledge, so that getting quickly out of the nest is advantageous. There are any number of mammals, birds, and reptiles that would love to eat a helpless bird on the nest. Here are some examples of time to fledge for seed-eating birds of similar size to the Goldfinch. These are taken from *The Birder's Handbook* by Paul Ehrlich, David Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye. The American Goldfinch fledges in 11 – 17 days. The Chipping Sparrow fledges in 10 (8 – 12) days. The Field Sparrow: 7 – 8 days. Henslow's Sparrow: 9 – 10 days. The Song Sparrow, a 50% larger bird, fledges in 9 – 12 days. These are all birds that we might call similar to the Goldfinch in their nesting and feeding habits, and their size. Hole-nesting birds take longer to fledge, but their nests are safer.

We should not write an article on the American Goldfinch without remembering one of the "shakers and movers" in understanding Goldfinch biology. There is an oft-cited article by A. J. Wiseman; that is our own Art Wiseman, one of the founders of Oxbow, Inc. Those of us who were there at the beginning remember many Oxbow board meetings in the home of Art and Jinny Wiseman.



*Why Barge Ports (continued from page 8)*

barge ports. The transportation patterns around the old sites will need to be enlarged and improved but there should not be any need for new roads or rail routes.

The Oxbow area has been looked at for the reason that rail, water and Interstate highways all come together in the Oxbow. But it is a terrible place for a barge port. Even if you do not consider the loss of valuable and unique wild-life habitat, the disruption to flood retention, dredging of the rivers (they fill back up fast in the Great Miami system also), the threat to drinking water sources for 15,000 people and the fact that Aurora would disappear under the next major flood are enough reasons to not even consider the Oxbow floodplain.

While we are currently unaware that any of the plans we were approached about last summer have moved forward, we have also not been assured that they are dead. We need to remain vigilant because the issue is not likely to go

***Important Notice — Important Notice — Important Notice***

**Ballot for the Election of Directors**

At our last members meeting we modified our corporation regulations to call for the election of the Boards of Directors by ballot with the deadline for receipt of that ballot to be January 1, 2013. The Directors serve a 3-year term and about one-third of the directors are elected each year.

Here are the candidates for election to the **Board of Oxbow, Inc.** Vote for 6 candidates:

\_\_\_\_\_ Jim Poehlmann  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Jon Seymour  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Miller  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Wayne Wauligman  
 \_\_\_\_\_ John Klein  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Ed Gemperle  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Write in \_\_\_\_\_

Here are the candidates for election to the **Board of Oxbow of Indiana, Inc.** Vote for 6 candidates:

\_\_\_\_\_ Jim Poehlmann  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Jon Seymour  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Miller  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Wayne Wauligman  
 \_\_\_\_\_ John Klein  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Ed Gemperle  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Write in \_\_\_\_\_

After voting for both Boards, cut the ballot out, put in an envelope with postage and send it to:

**Oxbow, Inc.  
 P.O. Box 4172  
 Lawrenceburg, Indiana 47025**

**Must be postmarked on or before January 1, 2013**

## **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 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.**

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.**  
P.O. Box 4172  
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025  
513-851-9835

## **Corporation Officers**

President, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Vice President, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Recording Secretary, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Corresponding Secretary, Dennis Mason	(513) 385-3607
Treasurer, Ed Gemperle	(812) 539-3666
Ohio Agent, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Indiana Agent, Mike Kluesener	(812) 623-7800

## **Committee Chairpersons**

Conservation, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Easement Inspection, Mike Kluesener	(812) 623-7800
Education, Velda Miller	(812) 584-0187
Field Trips, Jay Stenger	(513) 522-4245
Land Management, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
John Klein	(513) 941-4877
Programs, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Research, Dr. Steve Pelikan	(513) 681-2574
Speakers Bureau, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
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*Wetland Matters, the newsletter for members of Oxbow, Inc., is published bimonthly.*

Printed on recycled paper by  
Recycled Paper Printing - 513-851-9835

**513-851-9835**



**Need a Speaker?**  
**Give Us a Call!**

**www.oxbowinc.info**  
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P.O. BOX 4172

  
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