

wetland matters



OXBOW, INC. NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 43391
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243

Number 43, September-October 1993

Birdathon Report

All the pledges aren't in yet, but Birdathon '93 can already be declared a success. Over \$14,700 in pledges has been collected. This money will be put to good use protecting the seasonal wetlands in the Oxbow.

The success of Birdathon means good news for other organizations in our area. Gilmore Ponds Conservancy, the Cincinnati Nature Center, Raptor, Inc. and the Tri-State Wildlife Center all sponsored teams and split the pledges they raised with Oxbow.

Land Purchase Offer

This summer Oxbow made an offer to purchase the Harrell property. The offer is open until September 15th. This property is 121.53 acres that lies primarily on the "inside" of the Oxbow lake.

Oxbow's offer was intentionally flexible to allow the seller to minimize the tax consequences of the transaction. Part of the offer included Oxbow's willingness to continue the owner's current arrangement with the farmer who has been renting the property.

The land in the Oxbow area was rated for acquisition in terms of environmental priorities by the report "*The Oxbow, An Environmental Protection and Management Plan*," prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1989. This report classified the Harrell property as "most sensitive." Biologist Dr. Joo, whose research in the Oxbow area was supported by a grant from Oxbow, Inc. also indicated that protecting low lying land (which remains wet longer after floods, and serves as mud flats on which migrating shore birds can feed and rest) was very important and should be one of Oxbow's highest priorities.

Birds of the Oxbow

David Styer's book about bird life in the Oxbow is available from Oxbow, Inc. at each of the meetings. You can also buy the book from the Cincinnati Nature Center, Hamilton County Parks (Farbach-Werner and Miami Whitewater shops), Wild About Birds in Montgomery, or call (513) 471-8001 and a copy will be mailed to you.

Advice for Birdfeeders

Bea Orendorff of the Tri-State Wildlife Center has the following suggestions for people interested in feeding birds this winter:

1) Now is the time to start feeding birds with seed. It is in early fall that many birds establish their winter feeding territories. By November or December it will be too late to attract some of these birds to your feeder.

2) Many commercial mixes contain a filler seed that birds don't eat. You'll do better to make your own mix. Pick or mix sunflower seed, millet, cracked corn, and peanut hearts. Freezing seed will kill any insect pests it might contain. Refrigerating it will keep it fresher.

3) Goldfinch love thistle seed. If finches aren't eating your thistle, you should replace it since it is probably stale. Much of the thistle seed sold early in the fall is old seed.

4) Once you start feeding birds, you should continue through the winter months. Birds may come to depend on you for their food. If you stop feeding them, they could move on and be difficult to attract again.

5) Suet is great for woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches. But don't start putting it out until the weather is cold. Warm weather makes for rancid fat. Similarly, stop feeding suet when the weather warms in the spring.

6) Bits of apple and raisins softened in water are good food for mockingbirds and robins.

7) In cold weather you can feed birds peanut butter by smearing it in cavities and crevices of trees. You can also make peanut butter sandwiches (use rich, whole grain bread), cut them into small pieces, and share them with the birds.

For more information on feeding birds or for help with injured or orphaned wildlife, call the Tri-State Wildlife Center at (513)-761-6605.

Calendar Meetings

14 September (Tuesday) at 7:30 Oxbow meeting at the Cincinnati Zoo Education Building. (Enter through the exit gate on Erkenbrecher Avenue.)

This evening's program will be a presentation about the Tri-State Wildlife Center. We'll learn what the center does, how they do it, and some of the insights they've gained into animal (and human) nature.

12 October (Tuesday) at 7:30. Oxbow meeting at the Lawrenceburg Public Library. (From Cincinnati, turn left off U.S. 50 onto Walnut Street. Turn right on High Street. The Library is on the right side of High Street.)

With the help of slides and maps Steve Pelikan will share with us what he's learned about natural history during several visits to Central and South America.

Field Trips

18 September (Saturday) 9:00 A.M.

Meet trip leader Steve Pelikan at 50's Root Beer for an early fall excursion into the Oxbow area. Depending on the weather, there could be interesting migrant birds in the area. There'll certainly be a wide variety of plants and animals to learn about. For more information phone Steve at (513)-681-2574.

9 October (Saturday) 9:00 A.M.

Meet Steve Wagner at the boat ramp at Shawnee Lookout Park for a trip in search of fall migrants. You'll need a Hamilton County Parks sticker (or 1 day pass) to visit Shawnee Lookout Park. (513) 831-7606.

Volunteer

8,9,10 October. Oxbow booth.

You can help staff the Oxbow booth at the Toys for Adults Show to be held at the Cincinnati Convention Center. Tell people about Oxbow, Inc. and the importance of preserving wetlands. Meet lots of people with many different interests. Volunteers work (approximately) 3 hour shifts at the booth. They also get into the show for free.

Wetlands and Flooding

A high pressure nozzle on a hose may be good for blasting mud off your car's fenders but when you want to water the lawn you're better off using a sprinkler. It applies the water with less force, and spreads it over a wider area.

The recent flooding on the Mississippi River and its western tributaries reminds us that we've neglected to apply this simple garden hose principle to our rivers and wetlands.

The seasonal wetlands and floodplains along our rivers help reduce the force of flood waters and the height of floods. They act like giant sponges, soaking up excess water and releasing it slowly as the flood subsides. The amount of water a wetland can store is amazing. When it is flooded only 1 foot deep the Oxbow area floodplain holds more than 800,000,000 gallons of water. This water storage capacity helps reduce flooding by the Ohio downstream.

Levees and dams have the opposite effect. They confine the water to a narrow channel, raising the height and force of the flood.

We've lost lots of wetlands to development in floodplains. The loss of wetland is accompanied by an increased reliance on manmade structures for protection from floods. The combined effect is to make the situation ripe for tragedy. Everyone knows that a 100 year flood will happen — it's only a question of when.

Editorials in many major newspapers have suggested that we should adopt a more sustainable approach by reducing our dependence on manmade structures, allowing rivers to follow their natural courses unimpeded, and moving our towns to safer, higher ground. When we think about the many benefits provided by wetlands and riparian habitat, it is difficult to understand how we could have adopted any other policy in the first place.

If we value our lands only for the profits they provide upon exploitation or development, we are ignoring the many benefits (such as flood control) that wetlands provide. The many billions of dollars in damage caused by the flooding of the Mississippi indicates the magnitude of the benefits our wetlands provide us. If we persist in ignoring their true value, we shouldn't be surprised that there is sometimes a very high price to be paid.

Oxbow Memorials

IN MEMORY

Eddie Bezold
Lawrence Bollman
Jane Brinkmeyer
Andrea Christie
Julie Godsey
Elizabeth Goodpaster
Elaine Prosser

DONOR

Peggy Gatch
Rosemary Farrell
Ray and Audrey Boehringer
Peggy and Fred Gatch
CMSGT James and Billie Godsey
Rosemary and Bill Farrell
Ray and Audrey Boehringer

Field Notes

Morris Mercer

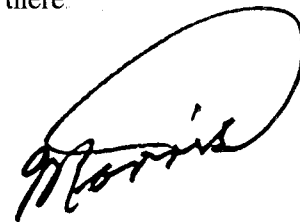
One very hot July morning I stopped to pick some blackberries. Time was running out for me as the berry season was nearly past. With sweat running in my eyes I worked my way through the briar patch, pushing the poison ivy to one side in search of those large, dark berries. I remember reaching as far as I could for one, only to find that the long hook of a briar held the skin on the back of my hand. I could have dropped the berry, but what's a little pain and blood at a time like this? A vision came to me of a bowl with a large square of blackberry cobbler in it, still steaming from the oven. I watch as heavy, cold cream is poured over the cobbler. It makes purple swirls as I reach for a spoon...

Much of my time in the Oxbow this summer has been spent in a canoe on the Great Miami River. Each time I push off and hop into the canoe I know I'm in for a treat. There are always Great Blue Herons fishing in the shallow water and Song Sparrows singing from high branches of scrub growing along the bank. From a tree top a Kingbird flies out and then returns to the same perch. There are Killdeer and Kingfishers along the river. The stuttered wing beat of a little Spotted Sandpiper carries it just above the water to a sandbar. There it begins its teetering search for food in the shallow mud.

I've enjoyed seeing mammals along the river too — 'possum, raccoons, and deer. But my favorite has been the Red Fox den. It's been fun to watch the young fox grow up, and even more fun to see the face of my grand daughter as she watched the fox playing. As she viewed them through her binoculars, Sarah laughed as she said "Oh! they're playing chasers."

Twilight advances as we turn down the river towards home. Everything is seen as a silhouette. The Great Blue flies across the evening sky, and a Wood Duck's call gives it away even though it can't be seen. The chorus of crickets and noisy katydids add to the many sounds of the summer night. Twilight is a special time for me, as the cool breeze of evening replaces the heat of the summer day. A calm settles over the river and for a while all seems at peace with the world. Flocks of blackbirds fly into the corn fields, and martins and swallows gather to hold flight school. I stand in awe as I watch the young birds on uncertain wings, knowing that before we feel Autumn's breeze, their wings will carry them to South America.

And the signs of autumn are already here. The willows are still green, but locusts have changed their green for a rusty brown and many yellow leaves quake among the green ones on the cottonwoods. Autumn is a wonderful time to be in the Oxbow too ... I hope to see you there.



Moving?

Please send your change of address information to
Oxbow, Inc.
PO Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio 45243

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 area known locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from future industrial development and to preserve the existing agricultural floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This is an agricultural area rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland. You can 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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Volunteer Coordinator,

John Getzendanner (812)-537-5728

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Need a Speaker? Give Us a Call!



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