

wetland matters



OXBOW, INC. NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 43391
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243

Number 49, September-October 1994

Calendar

Meetings

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

This evening's speaker will be Oxbow member John Homer. John, who works for FERMCO (Fernald Environmental Restoration Management Corporation), will describe the Fernald site, give a brief history of production activities there, and then describe current restoration efforts. He's very knowledgeable about the habitats on the site and the wildlife that lives there.

11 October 7:30 PM. 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.)

This evening John Kline will talk about Monarch butterflies. John has traveled to Mexico to observe wintering Monarchs and has tagged Monarch butterflies in the Cincinnati area. This is your chance to get the lowdown on all those orange butterflies you've recently seen drifting past.

Field Trips

25 September (Sunday) 9:00 AM. Oxbow fieldtrip
Meet Steve Wagner at the Shawnee Boat Ramp for an early fall hike in the Oxbow area. You'll want a Hamilton County Parks vehicle permit to park at the boat ramp. For more information, call Steve at (513)-831-7606.

23 October (Sunday) 9:00 AM. Oxbow fieldtrip
Ned Keller will lead this trip into the Oxbow looking for migrant ducks, shorebirds and sparrows. Meet Ned at 50's Root Beer to carpool into the Oxbow area. For more details, call Ned at (513)-941-6497.

AccuPhoto

There's a display of photographs of the Oxbow area in the gallery space at AccuPhoto on Ludlow Avenue in Clifton. Dave Evans (who runs AccuPhoto) donated not only the wall space for the display but the printing and mounting of the photographs. He's also distributing Oxbow membership materials to interested customers. The photos were first shown at the Zoning Workshop that Oxbow sponsored in Bright, Indiana. With maps and captions added, the photographs make an attractive display that Oxbow will lend to area libraries and schools.

Thank you, Dave!

accuPhoto

366 Ludlow Ave. • Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 • (513) 281-3466

Personal Birdathon

In the past, Jon Seymour has always been able to participate in Birdathon as a member of a Cincinnati Nature Center team. He usually holds the record for the largest amount of pledges raised. This year, because of other commitments, he missed Birdathon. Jon's co-workers at P&G pledged money anyway and with the help of his wife Jackie, he held a personal "mini-Birdathon", finding 81 species of birds. The result was that even though he missed Birdathon, Jon handed in \$640 in pledges. Way to go, Jon!

Field Notes

From a Summer Evening
Morris Mercer

After more than a week of hot sticky weather came a most welcome cool front. The front was preceded by an equally welcome rain. The evening that followed was a nearly perfect summer evening. At sunset a cool breeze stirred the willows around the Oxbow. Once again I found myself standing in Indiana looking across the Great Miami into Ohio, then across the Ohio River at the green hills of Kentucky.

I took a deep breath of cool clean air as I started my trip out toward the Beaver Pond. As I moved beyond the line of willows I could see many duck heads above the weeds in the shallow water. Most of the ducks were Mallards, but there were a few Wood Ducks too. After I passed by, the heads went back down and the ducks resumed feeding.

A Black-crowned Night-heron stood on a stump in the middle of the Oxbow lake. A closer study of the brush along the high bank revealed many more night-herons; a few were juveniles, but most were adults. I could see many Great Blue Herons standing in the fields near Wood Duck Slough. In sharp contrast to these were the Great Egrets: large all-white birds against the green willows.

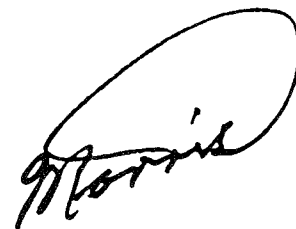
Several Horned Larks flew up from the dirt road as I approached. One lark found a perch on an old piece of corn stubble in the bean field. I did enjoy the sound of the larks in the air. On reaching the bank of the Beaver Pond several night-herons flew from the line of cottonwoods along the west bank, and a couple of Wood Ducks took to the wing. I could have stayed until dark, but there were other things and other places I wanted to see.

Now the road took me along the Great Miami where an occasional deer or a cottontail rabbit appeared and then disappeared into the brush as I passed. The leaves of the locust trees have turned brown and with the cool breeze I thought of autumn. The words of a song came to mind "Oh come ye back when summer's in the meadow or when the valley is white and hushed with snow..." I enjoy the different seasons, but wish they wouldn't pass so swiftly. The beauty of a snow-covered valley was in my mind as I moved on toward the den of the Red Fox.

The young foxes were out playing when I arrived. Our grand daughter called it "playing chasers." One young fox came past with another in hot pursuit. The teeth of the chaser were just inches from the bushy tail of the chasee. Another pair of foxes stood on their hind legs and boxed with their forepaws. I turned the scope toward the Buzzard Tower and saw more than 30 Turkey Vultures perched on the tower while others still rode the wind.

From the wooded hillside came the musical song of a Wood Thrush. Lightning bugs added their sparkle to the darkening woods. As I turned away from the Great Miami I looked back at the western sky: a dusky rose that faded into a pale blue. To my left was a soybean field that ended at the woods. I could see deer in the field. They were a pretty golden brown in the after-glow of the setting sun. Through the scope I could see there were four handsome bucks with nice velvet racks. I'm sure the scene was more beautiful to me than to the man whose beans the deer were eating.

As twilight gave way to night I turned the scope toward Jupiter which was next to the crescent moon. I wondered how Jupiter would be affected by the pieces of comet. I could see four of the moons of Jupiter. I'm thankful the comet is hitting Jupiter and not our planet. This was a great evening to be afield in the land of the Oxbow.



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Riverboat Casinos —An Update

Norma L Flannery
Executive Director

As the date draws nearer for the Indiana Gaming Commission to award a license for Dearborn, Switzerland, and Ohio counties, pressure continues to mount on Oxbow, Inc. to "come aboard" and endorse one company's development proposal over other companies in competition for a spot on Lawrenceburg's river-front.

In the past, one company, Empire Casino (Schilling Corp.) has released reports to the media to give the impression that Oxbow, Inc. endorses their proposal. (See "River Boat Gambling and the Oxbow" May-June, 1994 WETLAND MATTERS.) This proposal originally included a river-front aquarium. The Indianapolis Zoo, who viewed this as competition to their own aquarium development plans, expressed their concerns. Empire then dropped the aquarium, replacing it with a state-of-the-art "Environmental Center." This prompted one Indianapolis Star reporter to observe "Destroy a wetland and then turn around and educate the public about what you ruined? Sounds loaded with irony. But that's exactly what one Lawrenceburg riverboat company proposes." The facility is to be located on Lawrenceburg Conservancy District property that abuts property owned and purchased by you, our members, to protect the Oxbow from commercial development.

Empire arranged for the future management of the center with the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden. They also offered \$6.85 million to the Indianapolis Zoo to assist them in meeting their financial commitment for future development. All proposals and arrangements hinge upon Empire being selected by the Indiana Gaming Commission as the licensed casino operator.

Empire holds an option to purchase over 400 acres east of the I-275 Lawrenceburg-Greendale exit ramp. They propose to use this as mitigation for any wetlands destroyed by development, as is required by Federal legislation. An offer to turn this acreage over to Oxbow, Inc. was presented to the Board of Trustees. Tempting? Yes—but not to the point of risking a unique and irreplaceable endangered ecosystem.

An attempt was made to bring Oxbow, Inc. and the Regional U. S. Fish & Wildlife Agency to a coalition meeting with the Indianapolis Zoo, the Cincinnati Zoo, the Museum and Empire Casino. Both U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Oxbow, Inc. felt, in all good conscience, attendance at this meeting would give the appearance of an endorsement of Empire's mitigation proposal and would, in all likelihood, find its way to the media. When Fish & Wildlife and Oxbow, Inc. declined to attend, the meeting was canceled. Since then, Oxbow, Inc. has fallen under criticism from the Museum and the Zoo for not aligning itself with the coalition. It is difficult to understand the criticism. DeVere Burt, president of the Museum, and Edward Maruska, executive director of the Zoo are both on the Advisory Council of Oxbow, Inc. In Oxbow's brochure, under "What Leading Conservationists Say About The Oxbow", Mr. Maruska states,

"Right in our own back yard we have a chance to save an area rich in wildlife. By protecting the Oxbow, a unique local wetland, we can show that we really care about the natural world."

Dr. Robert S. Kennedy, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology for the Museum states,

"The Oxbow's greatest potential has yet to be realized. Once the land is safe from development, and cooperative management programs are initiated with area farmers and state wildlife agencies, this may well become *the most* important wildlife sanctuary in the tri-state area."

Oxbow, Inc. has, from the beginning, had a policy of no commercial development in the Great Miami River floodplain. That is still our policy—we have neither wavered nor compromised. With the cooperation of the Indiana and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources, the Hamilton County Park District, and our own members, over 1,500 of the 2,500 Oxbow acres have been protected. Improper planning and management at this time by casino operators could spell the end of the Oxbow. The report of the environmental assessment survey done for Oxbow, Inc. concludes that

"...development would undoubtedly bring about irreversible changes in the Oxbow

ecosystem; it is not possible to predict what effects changes in the hydrology would have on the area; wildlife will only tolerate a certain level of encroachment into their habitats and further encroachment will be overwhelmingly threatening to many species; alternative development sites should be thoroughly evaluated; limiting development need not mean economic hardship to Lawrenceburg.

Properly managed, the environs of the Oxbow can enhance the area's economy and become an asset. Few communities can boast of such a biologically rich green space that contains significant cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities in close proximity to the downtown area."

In reaction to news coverage and media releases, many Oxbow members have asked how they can help protect what we have worked so hard to preserve.

The following things must happen before development proceeds:

- a judge must rule that the referendum vote was constitutional;
- the Indiana Gaming Commission must award a license;
- the permitting process must begin;
- the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Louisville District, must hold public hearings.

The public hearings are the proper time and forum for members, concerned citizens, conservation organizations, bird clubs, church groups, garden clubs, wildflower clubs, and any and all, to become involved. Attend the hearings, and if unable to attend, write letters to the Corp of Engineers voicing your concerns. WETLAND MATTERS will keep you advised so that efforts can be coordinated for the greatest impact. Be reminded that it was a successful letter writing campaign that killed state legislation designed to allow industrial development in the floodplain and enabled us to begin our mission to save the Oxbow.

The following letter has been sent by Oxbow, Inc. president John Getzendanner to the

Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens clarifying our position on any development on Conservancy District property. It is printed in its entirety so all of the members of Oxbow, Inc., and those state and local agencies reached by WETLAND MATTERS can fully understand and appreciate the stand the Board has taken to do the best we can for the Oxbow.

Dear:

The Board of Oxbow, Inc. wishes to clarify our position on the prospective gaming development in the area of Lawrenceburg, Indiana to the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and to the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden.

Oxbow, Inc. was formed in 1985 for the express purpose of protecting from commercial development the 2,500 acres of floodplain known as the Oxbow. To date we have accomplished this through land purchase and conservation easements. Oxbow, Inc. has a total of 605 acres protected on the Indiana side of the floodplain at a cost of over \$600,000. Additionally, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources has purchased another 7 acres. Because of our efforts, the Hamilton County Park District has acquired conservation easements that protect nearly all the floodplain on the Ohio side of the Great Miami River.

Oxbow, Inc. does not want to see **any** development in the floodplain. As you well know, wetland ecosystems, and the plants and animals that depend upon them, are rapidly becoming one of the most endangered habitats in the U.S. Oxbow, Inc. must position itself so that we can preserve as much of this area as possible. However, we recognize that the southeastern corner of Indiana is in need of economic development. The people of Dearborn County are our neighbors and their lasting goodwill is essential to accomplishing our mission. Thus, we have not mounted an environmental outcry against the gaming interests. We have met with most of the companies vying for a license, have received many tempting offers, but have not, and do not intend to endorse or work with any one company until that company has been approved by the Indiana Gaming Commission.

The potential for degradation of the environmental quality in the Oxbow is serious. This includes water pollution from runoff and pumping efforts, noise pollution from the sheer mass of cars and people, light pollution from the parking and hotel areas, and air pollution from the

Oxbow Memorials

In Memory of

Mary Cecil
Mary Cecil

Mary Cecil
Beulah A Clark
Edith H. Erhardt

Julie Godsey Remember
Thomas D. Holdorf
Harold Houk
Harley Hubbard
Martha Kempf
Betty Thompson Abbott-Poe
Balki Stevie

Bob & Betty Myers
 50th Wedding Anniversary
Bob & Betty Myers
 50th Wedding Anniversary
Bob & Betty Myers
 50th Wedding Anniversary
Thank you Aunt Norma

Donor

Steve & Jan Creed
CG&E Mutual Benefit Association and
 Materials Management Department
Co-workers at CSSD
Fred & Peggy Gatch
Barbara & Charles Moore and Dorothy
 Keating
Norma L. Flannery
Fred & Peggy Gatch
John Bezold & Family
Sybilla Hubbard
Beth Fennell
Peggy Gatch
Cheryl Winslow, D.V.M.

Oxbow Tributes

Glenn & Ida Mae Butler

David and Mary Alice Jean Crouch

Bill & Bonnie Fancher
Zoe Farrell

increased traffic in the area. More importantly, any change in the hydrology of the Oxbow ecosystem would seriously affect the fragile web of existence. The potential impact would be difficult to predict, even by highly technical engineering planning. Because of the potential problems posed by the gaming development, Oxbow, Inc. commissioned an environmental assessment of the area by Environmental Assessment Services. The results of this study are being made available to any and all of the companies interested in developing the area. We also hope to work closely with the gaming company that is selected to help guide and mitigate the impact on the environment.

As institutions interested in environmental conservation and preservation of species, we hope

that the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and the Cincinnati Zoo will appreciate our position. If you would like someone from the Oxbow board to make a short presentation at one of your board meetings, we would be happy to do so. I may be reached at (812)-537-5728 in the evening, or you may call Oxbow, Inc. at (513)-471-8001 during the day.

Sincerely,

John Getzendanner
President, Oxbow, Inc.

Oxbow, Inc.

A nonprofit organization formed by conservation groups and concerned citizens of Ohio and Indiana for the purpose of preserving and protecting a wetlands ecosystem 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 is rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

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

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

Mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**
P.O. Box 43391
Cincinnati, Ohio, 45243-0391
513-471-8001

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