

May— June 2012

No. 155

WETLAND

matters

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

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

Need a speaker? Call 513-851-9835



Birdathon 2012, May 11-12

.....by Jon Seymour

Get out your best binoculars and birdlists, warm up your checkbook and pen, and let's all get ready to participate and support the fund raising efforts of the Birdathon teams. If you have participated before you know how much fun it is, if you have contributed before you know how satisfying it is to encourage your favorite team.

The Greater Cincinnati Birdathon will be held May 11-12, 2012. The Birdathon is the only fundraiser we sponsor and the money raised goes to habitat improvement and access improvement.

Habitat changes we have made in the last ten years have led to increases in the biodiversity of the area. Plant species numbers increased over 10% in our most recent survey. We have added 8 new species of birds to our extensive bird list in the last 10 years.

This year we will continue our butterfly surveys and hopefully start a dragon fly/damsel fly survey. Adding these additional surveys is an indication of the enhanced biodiversity that corresponds to enhanced micro environments within the Oxbow.

For a listing of the Oxbow teams see page 9. For the contribution form for your favorite team see page 9.

If you have never participated before and would like to give it a try, **contact Jay Stenger (513-522-4245) to enter a team.** If you are not sure about a team and still would like to **try the experience, contact Jon Seymour (513-851-9835).** Jon will take out any first timers that wish to try their first Birdathon.

In Search Of Birds And The Meaning Of Life

Part 1

by: Matt Stenger

"Birding huh? That seems kinda strange." The judgmental police officer looked to his partner as if to say, "That was a good one huh?" as they chuckled in a way I can only describe as unsettling. It was April 7th; I had just come off a great visit home where I celebrated my 34th birthday with my most cherished friends. I was coming to realize, perhaps for the first time in my life, how very important the people I care about are. Life was good today, I was happy, feeling lucky to have been able to surround myself with such great people. I was driving South on U.S. Route 51 through a small town in Tennessee on my way to the Lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. I noticed the black SUV tailgating me. He whipped around me, pulled up on my left, and gave me a smug look before dropping back in behind me and turning on his lights. His back up pulled up shortly after. The officers told me I got pulled over because my tags came back "unlisted". I figured handing them my license and registration would make quick work of the mix up and I'd be on my way. Instead it sparked an interrogation that resulted in them making fun of me for liking birds, "just like the bullies in elementary school" I thought. When they found out I was on my way to South Texas they did everything short of jump for joy. It must have been obvious to them at that point that they had bagged themselves a real live Mexican drug lord (I'm 6'3" with pasty white skin and red hair. I look as Mexican as a chickadee looks like an eagle) so they made up a hasty lie about being a "Drug Task-force." In a small town with 3 police officers? HA! "Well... what on earth can we get this Yankee for now?" I imagined this must have been the collective reasoning of these two idiots. They asked to search my car which, I should have refused but I had birds to chase and on top of that, these morons were putting a stink in my good mood. I figured if I played their game I'd get to go sooner so after being patted down like some kind of criminal and having my car ransacked, I watched the collective brain power of the two of them strain for something else to hold me for before they

(continued on page 2)

finally gave up. As they walked back to their cruisers, the look of disappointment in their body language suggested that I would forever be known to them as “the Yankee that got away”. I learned many lessons from this encounter: For the rest of the year, I never told another police officer what I was doing. I stuck to phrases like, “I’m traveling” or “I’m on vacation”. I learned that in the eyes of the uninspired, if you look like a derelict, you must be a derelict. It seems, in the mind of those guys, there was zero possibility that I could, perhaps, be telling the truth, that maybe some people do actually drive 2,000 miles to be inspired by the splendid beauty of Mother Nature. They could not see the courage it took for me to stand up once again after hitting rock bottom so hard it literally knocked the life out of me, or at least the love of life. They did not see the mental fortitude required for me to turn my back on every comfort I had previously known, actual or perceived, or the strength required to forge a new, more pure path for my heart to follow. They could not see 33 years’ worth of my life’s demons and my closet’s skeletons marching in battalions, working tirelessly to destroy the little bit of my soul I had managed to keep together. They could only mock me as I soared on the wings of a life-long dream in search of some peace to rest my soul in. The searing pain of being wrongfully judged left a mark on me that I will never forget. Not because I hold a grudge but because, in an effort to protect my fragile heart, I have no doubt wrongfully judged people.

When I began my Big Year On January 1st of 2011 I set out with one goal in mind, to open my heart, pour the pieces of my broken soul out into the universe, try to quiet my troubled mind and hope beyond hope that this would be enough to reawaken the innocent love for nature of the young boy inside of me. Perhaps I could even convince him to share some of his wisdom, after all, what little wisdom I had left, I had just tossed to the wind in what felt to me like a daring bet where I had wagered my soul against the odds that looking at birds might somehow heal me. Was this crazy? I thought so, but I had nothing left to lose and “plus”, I reasoned, “what perfectly mediocre, sane, and rational person had ever changed the world by sitting back and watching life pass them by?”

I had quit trusting people’s intentions many years ago; after all I had spent enough time in the darkest depths of my psyche studying in detail all of the hurts caused by those that supposedly loved me that I had learned a relationship leading to pain was a matter of when, not if. Frankly it was quite shocking to me then, that in the wee hours of the morning on January 10th, I received an email from a birder I had never met in the Rio Grande Valley offering me a place to stay. Get your butt down here NOW! She said. There are a lot of rarities that you need to see. At 3:00am I was on the road, the thrill of my first big chase keeping me awake. I arrived at an old church, remodeled into a home and was warmly welcomed in by Claire and Scott. After a shower and some food I had hoped to get a bit of rest as I had only gotten about 4 hours of sleep in the past 2 days. Instead we headed straight for Bentson Rio Grande Valley State Park hoping to see a Black-Vented Oriole. A what? Now is as good a time as any to tell you that on January 1st I added

Greater White-Fronted Goose to my life list as number 285. On that first day in the Rio Grande Valley a rather famous lister told me that number was nothing to be proud of. “Don’t tell anyone about that, just keep it to yourself” he said. Short of telling me I was a shameful example of a birder he made it pretty clear that he was not impressed with me one bit. “People with numbers like that don’t do big years.” “I don’t care about numbers so much” I said, “I want to get to know the birds.” I wanted to reconnect with my love of birding in the biggest way possible and a Big Year was VERY BIG. “There will be time for that later. Now, what’s your next move?” I didn’t have a “next move” heck I didn’t even have a current move. I woke up on January 1st and went birding for the pure love of it. I would be reminded throughout the year by him and a few others that my big year was not “a real” big year, though I beg to differ. In the end I got to see the Black-Vented Oriole and many other “Valley” specialties. The birding was great but after each long day in the field Claire and I would return to the old church and I’d begin to feel something nagging at me. It seemed that so far I had managed to open up only on the surface, deep down I was just waiting for something to go wrong, for someone to hurt me. So when Scott approached me as I was packing my car to leave and expressed his wish for me to thank him and his wife publicly on my blog, my old shields went up and my mind began to race. My ninja-like mental reflexes threw up an impenetrable stone fortress around my fragile ego in the blink of an eye. “Going to be mean to me now huh? I knew it! Well... you can’t tell me how to run my blog.” And just like that I had begun the process of mentally driving Claire and Scott away before they could hurt me. As I drove away it occurred to me how juvenile those thoughts were. It kind of reminds me of my encounter with the police. The difference is, in my open state of mind I was able to recognize the issue and see that over the course of my life I had developed a fool proof system for avoiding being hurt by others, simply cut them out of your life at the slightest sign that they might, maybe, possibly hurt your feelings. Thankfully in this case I kept my cool and didn’t destroy what would turn out to be a wonderful friendship. And so the healing began.

Over the next 12 months I would travel tens of thousands of miles crisscrossing the country. I would meet an eclectic array of different people and be inspired by some of North America’s most majestic landscapes. As the true meaning of this journey started to take shape it became more and more like running a marathon, I would hit the proverbial wall over and over again both emotionally and physically. I believe that it is well to test yourself once in a while. How else can you truly know how much you can endure? I found my limits and pushed them time and time again. I stood on my own two feet and dared my demons to come and face ME! I lost many of those battles; I broke down in tears on mountaintops, freeways and deserts. Was I really strong enough to do this on my own? Succeed or fail there was just one way to answer that question and my quest, at any cost, was to find that answer. *(This is part one of a three part series that Matt will be sharing about his big year.)*

What's Up Under Your Trees?

Native Shrub Workshop

June 16, 2012—9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Earth Connection \$8.00 (includes lunch)

RSVP Kathy McDonald at

Kathy@cincinnatiabirds.com or call 513.941.6497

Please join us to learn more about native plants that grow under the canopy of large trees in Eastern Forests. Plants in the understory layer consist of a mixture of seedlings and saplings of canopy trees together with understory shrubs and herbs. This is a vital layer when recreating natural habitats in landscapes. You will learn what shrubs work well in your yard or restoration project, and what to plant to provide food for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

Learn the best way to eradicate invasive species and what plants best replace them. We'll also talk about conservation, local efforts to monitor our state nature preserves, and how you can help! Speakers: Chris McCullough, Christine Hadley, Debi Wolterman, and more. Some shrubs will be for sale. Hikes to see native shrubs and understory trees in native wooded habitats will be led by Tim Sisson. Presented by Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society, CCCV (Connecting Community Conservation Volunteers), Greater Cincinnati Wild Ones, Midwest Native Plant Society and Western Wildlife Corridor. Native shrubs will be available for purchase from Keystone Flora.

Directions: Earth Connection, 370 Need Rd, Cincinnati, OH (across from Mt. St. Joseph College in Delhi). About 15 minutes from downtown Cincinnati. Go West on Route 50 River Road (the 6th street viaduct). Stay on River Road until a traffic light at Fairbanks. Turn right and go just over 4 miles to Neeb Road. (Fairbanks becomes Delhi Ave.) Turn left on Neeb, and left into the very first driveway. Go up the hill and turn right. Earth Connection is the leftmost building across the parking lot. If you get lost, call Kathy at 513.748.0281.

REMINDER! SAFETY! REMINDER!

Hunting Season in Indiana lasts well into Spring. While only small portions of Oxbow Land are open to hunting, it is still wise to be aware of the potential for encountering hunters. Also the small portions of land still in private hands in the Oxbow may also have legal hunters. It is a good idea to wear bright colored clothing while wandering Oxbow trails during hunting season.

Oxbow, Inc. Honorariums & Memorials

Donor

In Memory of

Bill and Do Kuhlman

Norma Flannery



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

Polly Bassett

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.)

May 8, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg

The Oxbow, Inc. Office

Bob Genheimer George Rieveschl, Curator of Archaeology, Cincinnati Museum Center will speak about "Archaeology in the Shadow of the Oxbow". The lower portion of the Great Miami River Valley contains a large number of prehistoric sites including villages, encampments, mounds, and earthworks. Throughout prehistory, Native Americans were attracted to the broad level flood plains and terraces, as well as the spectacular overlooks afforded to all three sides of the confluence of the Great Miami with the Ohio. Many of these sites have been the scene of systematic excavations over the last five decades. See www.oxbowinc.org for more details.

June 12, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg

The Oxbow, Inc. Office

We live in an increasingly urbanized world where green space is becoming less common and more valued. Landscapes provide an extension of the livable environment where people interact with their world and each other. However, most landscapes are not sustainable, with poor plant choices, inadequate design, and poor use of precious resources. A variety of problems arise making these landscapes unhealthy for humans as well as the plants and animals that use them. **Mark Deacon**, Chair of Landscape Horticultural Technologies at Cincinnati State will address these issues and point us toward good landscaping.

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.



Friday & Saturday, May 11th & 12th, 2012

Oxbow Birdathon

See information elsewhere in this newsletter

Saturday, June 9, 2012, 8:30 a.m.

General Nature Walk

Meet: In the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance just beyond the cement plant

Leader: Ned Keller & Kathy McDonald, (513) 941-6497, nedkeller49@gmail.com

Join husband and wife team Ned & Kathy on what should be a pleasant, almost summer, morning walk in the Oxbow. Ned is an expert birder so he and Kathy will certainly be in tune with the many species of summer residents that abound in the Oxbow. But both Ned & Kathy have a broad interest in nature and because of that interest, this walk will also focus on butterflies, plants and any other wildlife we happen to encounter during our walk.

This trip will consist of fairly easy, flat walking for a few hours during the morning. Mud is always possible in the Oxbow depending on recent rains. I don't predict the weather but it is June, so sun screen and insect repellent might make some visitors more comfortable. Feel free to contact Ned or Kathy if you have any questions regarding this trip.

The Widow Skimmer Dragonfly

.....by *Caveman Etris*

The Widow Skimmer Dragonfly (*Libellula luc-tuosa*) is a large common insect seen from Spring to Autumn around ponds, lakes, creeks, marshes and water-sheds. They may wander far from water to hunt and can be seen in yards and meadows. It is in a group of dragonflies known as King Skimmers. They are very commonly found all across the United States. However, they are not normally found in the higher areas of the Rocky Mountains in the United States and Canada or in southern Quebec and southern Ontario regions within Canada. Also, they are not found in the great Basin region of the United States. They only reached northern California in 1990. The species spread farther north than formerly known due to habitat alterations caused by humans.

The abdomens of mature male Widow Skimmers tend to be a steely blue color with dark areas that go to the base of the wings. Also, the abdomen on males will become lighter as the dragonfly ages. They have dark brown bands on the wings bordered by a distinctive outer band of white and then clear on the last 3rd of the wing. Females and immature males have brown abdomens with a yellow stripe running down each side. They have the brown bands on the wings but lack the outer white band. Females often have brown wing tips. The wingspan of Widow Skimmers is anywhere from 1 1/8 to 3 1/2 inches. The medium sized body is from 1 5/8 to 2 inches in length.

The male Widow Skimmers defend an area of approximately 250 square yards and may defend their favored perch. This dragonfly got its name because the male of this species leaves the female after the eggs have been laid. The male of most other dragonfly species stays near the female after she lays her eggs. The eggs are typically laid in ponds, wetlands or lakes. Nymphs are very light brown which makes them look similar to the leaves and sediment in the water. This helps to camouflage them from predators but also is helpful when waiting for tiny creatures to feed on. The Widow Skimmer nymphs of these dragonflies have large eyes that help them to spot potential prey. The larvae, or nymphs, live in the water where they molt and grow until they are ready to emerge and then molt once more to reveal their wings. Most of a dragonfly's life is spent in the larvae stage. Larger dragonfly species will live longer and may exist as nymphs for up to 4 years or more. The weather decides the life span but adult dragonflies typically live from 2 to 6 months.

Like other dragonflies, Widow Skimmers have excellent eyesight. Their compound eyes have up to 30,000 facets. Each of these is a separate light-sensing organ or ommatidium, which is arranged to give nearly a 360 degree field of vision. Dragonflies are also some of

the fastest insects in the world. They are capable of reaching speeds of 19 to 38 mph. A study showed that dragonflies can travel as much as 85 miles in a day. Since they travel far and may be seen a distance from water then people often see them in their yards. I have seen Widow Skimmers and other dragonflies in my yard and in fields when hiking. Sometimes they are seen around bird baths and water gardens as well. However, they are harmless to humans. They do not sting or bite. Like spiders and other predators, dragonflies are beneficial. They help to maintain control of the insect population. They eat mosquitoes, ants, flies, wasps and other insects.

If you watch Widow Skimmers or other dragonflies then it is obvious that they are skilled flyers and sometimes entertaining to observe, especially for children. The males will spar and joust with each other while zipping through the air. This is when you can hear their wings clash. I watch this while in wetland areas every year. People don't think about how long dragonflies have been around. Ancestors of present day dragonflies go back to carboniferous times. This means that the insects were flying around more than 300 million years ago. This time period predates dinosaurs and birds. Next time you see a dragonfly, whether it is a Widow Skimmer or another species, think about how ancient, beneficial, interesting, colorful and wondrous these amazing insects are. (*Caveman Etris gave the educational presentation at the Oxbow Office in February.*)



Hunting Permit Applications Due July 1, 2012

Oxbow, Inc. members who wish to apply for permits to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. land must submit their application by July 1, 2012 to:

**Oxbow, Inc.
c/o Denny Mason
10210 Scull Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45252**

Your application must include a copy of your valid Indiana hunting license and a completed memorandum of understanding printed on page 11. Cut out the memorandum. Complete the form and mail it with a copy of your license and a self addressed stamped envelop to Denny. Once accepted you will receive a permission slip to hunt on Oxbow land designated for hunting, east of I-275. Members must have dues paid current to the time of application. Any violation of the memorandum of understanding will result in immediate revocation of hunting privileges.



The new fix to our erosion problem at the spillway between Oxbow Lake and Osprey Lake is now in place. Floods had moved large rocks 10-20 feet down the side of the spillway (never underestimate the force of moving water) leaving the west edge exposed to erosion. We re-engineered our plan and laid in more rock and poured a flowing concrete around the rock and tied the concrete to the old spillway by iron rods. This gives us concrete right down to the water level and should protect us from future erosion. (Photo by Jon Seymour)



The adult male Widow Skimmer is easier to find and identify in the Oxbow so keep your eyes open and maybe one will fly by and land on a favorite territorial perch.



The female and the immature Widow Skimmers are hard to distinguish. During the summer of 2012 Oxbow will be conducting species surveys of the dragonflies and damselflies in the Oxbow. (photo by Caveman Etris)



For contrast the Oxbow lake side of the spillway remains the same as originally constructed. (Photo by Jon Seymour)



New vernal pool constructed near the entrance parking area. This pool nearest the road seems like a simple open mud hole but is really a highly technical synthetic pool. First the area the pool is built in is highly permeable and will not normally hold water. To change this the area was first dug out deeper than the finished pool and lined with a high tech synthetic liner that will not crack or be easily penetrated. This allows the pond to hold water. Next the liner is covered with sand and then with dirt and clay to make a bottom for the pond. (photo by Jon Seymour)



From left to right: Tim, Lewis, John Klein, Tracy Smith, and Dave Meyer working on the new vernal pools in the rain. (photo by Kaniaulono Meyer)

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

.....by Jon Seymour

Friday, April 6, 2012

It is early April, sunny, warm, and for the first time that I can remember the farm road, to the recently acquired former Jansen property, where the Great Miami re-enters Indiana, is DRY at this time of year. I can drive it in my Saturn. We had just had the survey line of the property re-staked to make it visible to the farmers who had previously farmed the property. Over the winter the Board had made the decision to allow the entire Jansen property to "go back to nature". It would mean that it should, by natural succession, return to water tolerant forest (sycamore, maple, box elder, etc.). The need for this is clear when you observe the current river bank. Agricultural practices involving farming right to the edge of the river bank have led to an acceleration of the natural rate of erosion of the west bank of the river at this point in its flow. Allowing the river bank to grow up in trees will not stop the erosion but it should slow it down toward the more natural rate one would expect in a flood plain. This takes time for the trees to become large enough to have deeper roots so they can hold the soil. Hopefully we are not too late with this decision.

Today's plan is to inspect the survey, take photos, walk the entire property on the west bank of the river (there is some on the east bank but I have no way of getting there), and to inspect the health of the 15 trees we planted on the property as part of the purchase contract in December of 2010. The drive out is as dusty as a mid-August drive and the cloud that raises up behind my Saturn is Ohio soil that is blowing across the border to become Indiana soil in the 35 mph gusts that are the main weather feature for the day. Enroute I meet Glen Pope, a local farmer, who had previously farmed the Jansen property and he told me that the survey stakes were visible and they had used them to cultivate up to the border of the property. I thanked him for his diligence and proceeded on to the river. Parking my car at the state line survey point I walk back to the start of Oxbow's property and spot the survey stakes laid out before me. While walking the survey line I get a call from Oxbow Board member Rick Pope (Glen's cousin) and we discuss a possible meeting for lunch. I am skeptical that I have time for lunch since it is

already about 11:00 am and I am just getting started here and I have a 1:00 pm appointment at the office. Rick is planting soybeans in the Oxbow as we speak and I think back to last year when some of the planting in the Oxbow was done after June 1st. What a difference a year makes!

Moving south I locate the final corner stake on the property and then cross back east to meet the river and examine the 15 foot vertical drop to the river level from the west bank where I stand. Taking photos of the stakes and the river bank helps to document the property and its current condition when we look back at the photos from some future date. Now to retrace my steps back toward the car and the area where we planted those 15 mature trees 2 years ago. I find that only 7 of the original 15 remain. Most seem to have been crushed by drift during the river floods. Three of the remaining 7, were 3 of the 4 trees that Mark Jansen had constructed braces for. The other braced tree had been snapped in two right at the top of the brace, probably by a large log floating by in a flood.

What I do notice on inspection is that the braces are now at the point where they are constricting the trunks of the trees. I have to make a decision. Do I remove the braces or leave them in place? The braces are 2x4s with multiple blocks around the trunk, screwed together with long screws, and held together by a steel band. ---- I have always found it amazing what you can do with a pocket knife! After a lot of work (I did not say it was easy to do things with a pocket knife) I was able to break down the braces but in only one of the three braces was I able to remove the steel band. Now my next step is clear. Wait for the road to dry again and return to the trees with a metal cutter and remove the steel band before it can choke the tree. Can we say next project!

Member Communications Committee:

Jennifer Borneman

Joanne Earls

Lynda Mason

Velda Miller

Jackie Seymour

Pat Shanklin

Suzanne Skidmore

Barb Varland

Jim Wilgenbusch

Birdathon 2012 Pledge Form
(May 11-12, 2012)

Name _____

Address _____

My Pledge for Birdathon 2012 is: Fixed Amount: \$ _____ () Check Enclosed () Bill me after the Birdathon
(Be sure to pick a team to support with your check. It means a lot to the birders.)

Per Species Pledge: (Circle One, you will be billed after the Birdathon):

\$ 5.00 \$ 4.00 \$ 3.00 \$ 2.00 \$ 1.00 \$ 0.75 \$ 0.50 \$ 0.25 Other \$ _____

My Pledge is to Support the following Oxbow, Inc. Team

_____ Highest Scoring Team

_____ Team #1 – Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger, & Joe Bens

_____ Team #2 – Wayne Wauligman, Erich Baumgardner, & Jerry Lippert

_____ Team #3 – Sister Marty Dermody, Lois Shadix, & Chris Moran

_____ Team #4 – Steve Pelikan, Bob Lacker, & Charlie Saunders

_____ Team #5 – Jon Seymour & the First Timers

_____ Team #6 – Dave & Jane Styer (West Coast Big Day)

<p>Mail To: Oxbow of Indiana, Inc P.O. Box 4172 Lawrenceburg, IN 47025 Attn: Birdathon</p>
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Birdathon Participation

Oxbow, Inc. wants to have as many birdwatchers as possible participate in the Birdathon. While there is a basic competition for the most species seen in the Birdathon area during 24 hours, there are many ways to compete besides most species for the total Birdathon area. To get your mind working, here are some possible categories of competition:

- *if not the entire Birdathon area then a portion-*
- Most Species seen: in one state, in one county or a river watershed
-maybe it is a small area-
- Most Species In One Location: like the Oxbow, back yard, or a big sit
-maybe the type of team-
- Most Species seen: by a family, a group under the age of 20, a school class
-maybe it can be a special category-
- Most money raised: by a team, an individual, a class
-or-
- Most birds seen without using fossil fuel, while building a deck, taking the kids for a hike
-or-
- Most birds photographed

If you want to enter a team (or as an individual) in the Oxbow Birdathon, **please call Jay Stenger @ 513-522-4245 or Jon Seymour @ 513-851-9835**. We like to know how many are going to be participating on the Birdathon so that we can get the Pizza order right for the Grand Tally Party at the finish of the Birdathon.

You can even make up your own category. If it has anything to do with counting bird species in the Birdathon's 24 hour time window we will probably accept it.

Remember the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise money for improving Oxbow habitat and Oxbow accessibility projects. **The way to do it is to have fun birding! Then celebrate all the fun at the Grand Tally Party**



usings

by Dave Styer

Warbling Vireo and Another Vireo

The Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) is a common summer resident around the Oxbow. Its warbling song stands out from all other breeding birds in the area, so that it is easy to know it's there. Otherwise, the Warbling Vireo is a rather drab bird that spends a lot of time high up in tall trees.

You might think that, compared to American Robins and Northern Mockingbirds, the Warbling Vireo would be hard to study. This is likely so. I looked in three ornithology books, and found but one reference to this bird, and that reference was to a photo of a Warbling Vireo standing on its hanging, cup-shaped nest. That was it!

In looking through twentieth-century bird books I was surprised to see them quoting the nineteenth-century Elliott Coues (pronounced "cows"). Back, probably, when I was in junior high I bought a copy of his *Key to North American Birds*, a book that had been published in 1872. Hey, it was **old** when I bought it. I thought this big, old volume interesting, even if it seemed very dry. How about pages of woodcuts of bird's bills as seen from the side, and as seen from above? I took the *Key* off my shelf, and was scanning down page 120, looking for Warbling Vireo, and first saw black-whiskered Vireo. OK, I've seen that one in Florida.

Next, I saw the Brotherly-love Vireo. The *what?* Oh, I get it; that's the Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*), named for Philadelphia, the "city of brotherly-love." You bet! This reminds me of a small fund-raiser Charlie Harper and I were doing slightly before Oxbow, Inc. days. Although it wasn't competitive, like Oxbow's Birdathon, I believe that people had pledged to donate according to the number of birds we saw. I was the fanatic birder, and Charlie was the famous personality. Charlie was not only a great bird artist, but it was always fun to be with him. We were birding in Mt. Airy Forest, and I said "there's a Philadelphia Vireo." Charlie said, "you've got to be kidding! There is no such bird." I pulled out the field guide, and showed him

that, yes; there *really is* a Philadelphia Vireo. Charlie got to see a Philadelphia Vireo, and we both got a good laugh. On later occasions, when we were together, and perhaps the subject of vireos would come up, he would recall the Philadelphia Vireo incident, and we would again get a good laugh out of it. Now, over 25 years later, although I know generally what we saw, I don't recall, specifically, a single other bird we saw that day.

The Philadelphia Vireo, a rather plain bird of the tree tops, looks most like a Warbling Vireo. It has more yellow on the breast and a blackish line between the bill and the eye. Its song is totally unlike that of a Warbling Vireo, and it is a very uncommon migrant, rather than a breeding bird. The following quotations from Coues *Key* about the Philadelphia Vireo are typical: "a small, plainly colored species, almost indistinguishable from *gilvus* except by absence of spurious quill; not very common." "Above dull olive-green, brightening on the rump, fading insensibly into ashy on the crown, which is not bordered with blackish..."

Finally, at the bottom of page 120 in the *Key* we come to Coues account of the Warbling Vireo;

Eastern North America, an abundant little bird and an exquisite songster. Its voice is not strong, and many birds excel it in brilliancy of execution; but not one of them all can rival the tenderness and softness of the liquid strains of this modest vocalist. Not born to 'waste its sweetness on the desert air,' the warbling vireo forsakes the depths of the woodland for the park and orchard and shady street, where it slides through the foliage of the tallest trees, unseen messenger of rest and peace to the busy, dusty haunts of men.

This is **so** unlike the rest of the *Key* that I believe Coues had a special fondness for the Warbling Vireo. If you enjoy hearing the Warbling Vireos when you are at the Oxbow, you may also appreciate that generations of people have enjoyed the same thing.

New Vernal Pools in the Oxbow

.....by Kani Meyer

The day dawned with a heavy, threatening sky that did not deter us as we headed for the Oxbow. The pattering of rain as we arrived did not deter us. John Klein, Tracy Smith and Tim Lewis were already there when Dave and I arrived and we all set to work. John had overseen the digging out of two vernal pools near the entrance parking lot a couple of days earlier. He had laid in the heavy liners and tossed sand onto them and now it was time to put on a covering of dirt. The smaller pool was quickly covered under a steady drizzle of rain. The larger pool took longer and our boots became heavy with caked mud but that one was also covered just as the rain started in earnest with lightning and thunder to top it off. We'll have to check on them later to see how much washes down from the sides. Mother Nature had the right idea, she just didn't coordinate the timing with us very well!

So what are vernal pools? Like our prairie, vernal pools are not something "natural" to a floodplain. But, like our prairie, we want to diversify the habitats we have in the Oxbow area as much as possible. Amphibians are a group of animals that we don't have a lot of in the Oxbow, especially salamanders. They need shallow pools in early spring in which to breed and the porous soils in the Oxbow don't hold water in the higher areas which flood infrequently. The pools need to be on higher ground so that fish don't get in them to eat the eggs. The idea is that fall, winter and spring rains fill the pools and that the pools hold water long enough for salamanders and frogs to breed in them. With time leaves will build up and tree limbs will fall in to create better habitat. By mid to late summer they will have dried up but that's OK. Once the biota is balanced, mosquitoes should not be a problem. We may have to introduce some "starter" salamanders but most amphibians will find their own way there. These pools will become a wonderful place for our visitors to visit in early spring to hear frogs and glimpse occasional salamanders and their egg masses.

Add on by John Klein— I plan to add a little wetland muck, some creek rock and some logs to improve the habitat. Dan Leisgang said that he would help with that if needed.

I just came from inspecting them and happy to report that both pools are about 25% filled! Kani and I were there with other volunteers when the first raindrops entered the pools on Saturday morning.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

(A hunting permission slip with confirmatory stamp and authorized signature will be returned on acceptance of your application.)

Application and Memorandum of Understanding

I am a member in good standing of Oxbow, Inc. and request permission to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. property east of I-275 as will be shown on the map affixed to the permission slip that must be carried while hunting on Oxbow property.

I agree: to hunt subject to the following Oxbow, Inc. rules:

- I will practice good hunting ethics at all times.
- Others may rightfully visit the area and my activity has no priority over that of others.
- During my use of Oxbow, Inc. property I will not litter, remove or damage Oxbow, Inc. property, or cause any habitat destruction.
- I will not leave any structures on the property (ie. hunting stands, duck blinds, etc.).
- I will carry a valid permission slip at all times while hunting on Oxbow, Inc. land.
- I will obey all applicable laws

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Phone: 513-385-3607

I understand that hunting privileges will be revoked if any of the above regulations are violated. I understand that I enter Oxbow, Inc. property entirely at my own risk and hold Oxbow, Inc. free of liability for any hazards, known or unknown to it. I HAVE INCLUDED A COPY OF MY VALID INDIANA HUNTING PERMIT and A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

Your Signature: _____ Date _____

Return Mail Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

HUNTING PERMISSION REQUESTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY JULY 1, 2012

(Hunting permission is granted for one year (July 1 to June 30 of the following year) only and must be reapplied for yearly.)

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		

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