

November—December 2011

No. 152

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



When the Water Comes It Has to Go Somewhere!

.....by Jon Seymour

Lately we have had a flurry of activity around the exit #16 and U.S. Highway 50 interchange. This area was once the city of Hardinburg (now Hardintown) and is in the jurisdiction of Dearborn County. A few years ago the Hardintown Cement Plant vacated the streets and alleys within their property. This action made us aware of the situation within our own property and we followed suit and had the streets and alleys within the Oxbow property vacated, gaining about 4 acres for Oxbow. Just recently a property owner within Hardintown, who has a home and garage, asked that the street and alley immediately adjacent to his property be vacated (actually the garage was built on the alley). This takes an action of the County Commissioners and is predicated on approval from the County Planning Commission. I attended the meeting as the Oxbow representative and spoke to the property owner. Oxbow did not offer objection to his plea for vacation of the plotted streets and alleys but I asked if he was interested in putting a Conservation Easement on the property. It was a cordial meeting and he agreed to consider the proposal. We will follow up in the next few weeks to see if there is any willingness to accept our proposal.

A few months ago we received word that the northeast corner of the intersection was also slated for fill in preparation for development. Here we are also seeking a conservation easement on the mitigated tree planting that is scheduled to occur and we are making certain that the flow of the flood water in and out of the basin on the north side of the Exit #16 ramp is not impeded.

(Continued on page 2)

Review and Revisions to Oxbow's Regulations

Periodically, the Board of Directors of Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. appoints a committee to review the Regulations of these two organizations. The Regulations govern the structure and operating procedures of each organization. This review was completed recently and, in accordance with the Regulations, a summary of significant changes is being reported herein to our members. Most of the changes made were to clarify language and update procedures by allowing for "new" technologies, such as email use for time-sensitive decisions among the Board of Directors. However one significant change needs to be reported. In the past, Board members were elected at the annual members' meeting normally held each January. Members attending this meeting voted on a slate of names presented and those persons voted in became members of the Board of Directors. Since these members represent only a small fraction of our total membership, it is now felt to be more reasonable to list the nominees in Wetland Matters and have members mail in their votes. The new procedure as stated in the revised regulations is: "Each year, Directors elected two years prior shall serve as a nominating committee and the President shall appoint one of them as chair. A ballot of nominees, containing a provision for one write-in candidate, shall be included in the November-December newsletter with votes accepted until January 1. Ballots shall be opened and counted by a committee and the results reported at the annual members' meeting."

The complete revised Regulations of Oxbow, Inc. and Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. are available on our website at www.oxbowinc.org. A vote on these changes will be held at our Members' meeting on January 10, 2012.

When the Water Comes ... (continued from Page 1)

And more recently we received word that Best Way Recycling has purchased 5 acres from the Cement Plant amounting to approximately one half the area of the current cement plant and occupying the 5 acres at the north end of the site. The Cement Plant will continue to function. Best Way Recycling appears to be looking at the site as a location to compact smaller truckloads of solid waste into large truck loads for long distance transport. This operation is planned to be indoors but we are concerned about containment of the waste and any washes or spills occurring on the property. There is also a significant water flowage area within the 5 acres that we are working to make sure is protected. All in all, this level of activity is distracting and keeping the Board and our lawyer, Mr. Mara, busy making contacts in Dearborn County.

It is disturbing to have to react to so many peripheral threats to the Oxbow which consume our energy and time. However, it is important to remain ever vigilant to even minor intrusions on our borders. We are not particularly happy to see so much activity in potential development of the area around the Exit #16 interchange on the east side of U.S. Highway 50. We had hoped it would go the other way and not be developed. With the business park on the west side of a U.S. Highway 50 being designated for businesses, we had hoped that is where the development would have taken place.

Member Communications Committee:

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

**The Art and Jinny Witte Wiseman
 Education Award – Fall 2011**

.....by Velda Miller

Oxbow Education Committee Chairperson.

In the spring and fall of each year, Oxbow, Inc. takes applications from local educators for grants to enable more children to be informed of and come closer to nature. This fall the Miami Valley Christian Academy Bird Club will receive \$890 from the Art and Jinny Witte Wiseman Education Fund. The grant will be used to purchase a variety of butterfly attracting plants, a Holly tree for winter birds, stepping stones, fencing, Screech owl and Blue Bird boxes. The school is also establishing a native prairie garden with the help of the Boy Scouts and a small grant from ODNR. The teacher submitting the application is Rene McGill, who teaches 4th grade at Miami Valley Christian Academy and is also the Bird Club Leader. Board member, Dr. Steve Pelikan, liaison from the Board to the Education Committee, says that the MVCA Bird Club has participated in Oxbow's Birdathon during the last two years putting as many as 10-12 elementary age birders in the field for the 24-hour search for bird species. It sounds like a great opportunity to help encourage budding naturalists by helping to providing an area where native flora and wildlife can be observed and studied in both a structured and unstructured manner.

Nancy Lillie, teacher at Sunman-Dearborn Intermediate School and recipient of one of the Spring 2011 Education Grants earlier this year, contacted Oxbow to share the news that their wildlife area, that the grant helped to build, has received certification as a School Yard Habitat. The certification was officially presented at the school on October 18th. If you have the opportunity, stop by the school to view the project and read the interpretive signs.

(The Education Committee consists of Velda Miller, Chair, Heather Mayfield, ORSANCO, Linda Ford, High School teacher at Seven Hills High School, and Cathy Mund, retired Dearborn County elementary school teacher. The next set of applications is due to Oxbow, Inc. P.O. Box 4172, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025, post marked by January 15, 2012.

Oxbow Inc. PROGRAMS



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

Tuesday, November 8, 2011, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg (The Oxbow, Inc. Office)

Fakahatchee Fever is what grips the people that visit and explore the only neo-tropical area of continental U.S. It is the rare plant capitol having more ferns, orchids, bromeliads and endemic plants. We will explore this magical place with **Jack Berninger** as research continues to discover new organisms.

No December meeting due to the Holidays — Happy Holidays to you all!

Tuesday, January 10, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

301 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg (The Oxbow, Inc. Office)

There will be a special vote taken at our annual Member's Meeting regarding acceptance of the revised Regulations. Following the business meeting, **Tom Strofeldt**, noted historian and popular Oxbow presenter will speak on the courtship of David Crockett. Crockett tells his own tale of rejection, heartbreak, and eventual success in his attempt to "hunt up a wife" told in his own inimitable vernacular. His charismatic personality shines through it all as he tells us, "I found I generally had a much better opinion of myself than others had of me... and with my five dollars in my pocket I rode along thinking there were but few greater men in the world than me."

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.



Sunday, November 20 2011, 8:00 A.M.

Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow.

Leader: Mark Gilsdorf, (513) 253-6062, markg74@gmail.com

One of my favorite places this time of year is the Oxbow. The fall harvest is in the air and the subtle hues of the landscape, interspersed with brilliant colors, offer up a stark beauty. The winter's approach is in the wind, but not quite here.

We should find a number of species of ducks and other water birds. Bald Eagles are more than likely and other hawks will be seen. There is even a good chance we will see migrating Sandhill Cranes. Late migrant and winter songbirds should also be abundant and the weedy fields will abound with sparrows of many species. Come join our trip leader Mark Gilsdorf for what should be a beautiful autumnal visit to the Oxbow. Remember, the Oxbow can be muddy in places at this time of year and November weather can be cold & wet, so prepare accordingly. Feel free to call Mark with any questions.

2011 Ohio River Christmas Bird Count (25th Annual) - Sponsored By The National Audubon Society

Saturday, December 17th, 2011, 7:45 am.

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

Compiler Paul Wharton, (513) 353-3403, pwharton@fuse.net

Join count compiler 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 is invited to participate regardless of skill level. There is a \$5.00 participation fee. You can participate all day, for just a couple of hours or just by staying home and counting the birds at your feeders (no charge for feeder watchers). If you're interested please contact Paul for more information.

Other local National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts – contact the count compilers for more information. More information on Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts visit the following website: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>

Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count (65th Annual)

Monday, December 26th, 2011

Compiler Jay Stenger, (513) 522-8147, jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

East Fork Christmas Bird Count (29th Annual)

Monday, January 2nd, 2012

Compiler Joe Bens, (513) 353-4229, joebens@live.com

Western Hamilton County Christmas Bird Count (46th Annual)

Sunday, December 18th, 2011

Compiler Ned Keller, (513) 941-6497, keller@one.net

Hamilton-Fairfield Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 17th, 2011

Compiler Mike Busam, (513) 755-0057, mbusam@gmail.com

Conservation Corner

.....by Jon Seymour

By the time you read this article there is a good chance that you will have heard of **Green Umbrella** through a series of TV, radio, or billboard advertisements. Green Umbrella has been around Cincinnati since the mid 1990's as an organization promoting green space and conservation. More recently it had become a sort of clearinghouse for coordination of activities designed to support environmentally oriented groups such as parks, land trusts (like Oxbow, Inc.), educators, and governmental green space leaders. For the last two years its most visible activity was to obtain funding and coordinate the Great Outdoor Weekend.

About 2 years ago several leaders of conservation in the Greater Cincinnati Community realized the need for an umbrella organization to link together a wide variety of groups all interested in promoting sustainable living in the tri-state area surrounding Cincinnati. That realization turned the spotlight on Green Umbrella, a registered non-profit 501(c)3 organization, already working on conservation and the sustainability of green space in the Greater Cincinnati area. Would Green Umbrella, with the name seemingly perfect for a more extended organization, be willing to expand its Board and identity to encompass a broader field of groups interested in sustainable living? After a short period of consideration the Board agreed and over the last year the new Green Umbrella has emerged.

Initial funding has been obtained from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and Mr. Brewster Rhoads, a local legend in the environmental community, has been hired to serve as interim executive director to help get the organization off the ground and moving. Mr. Bill Hopple, the Executive Director of the Cincinnati Nature Center, is the new President of Green Umbrella and the man to lead the organization into its new role. The new mission statement for Green Umbrella is:

"Green Umbrella exists to propel and improve the economic vitality and quality of life in the tri-state region around Cincinnati by integrating the energy of individuals and organizations focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability in order to maximize their collective impact."

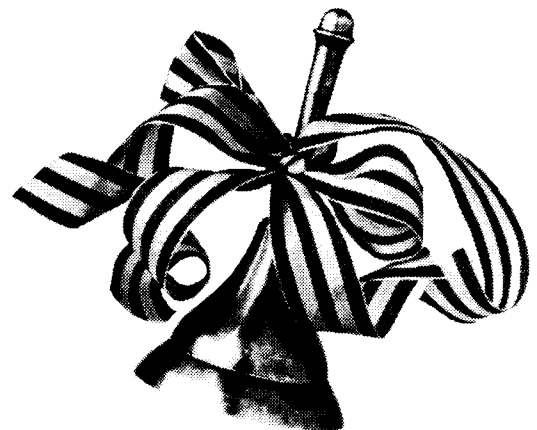
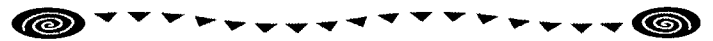
The initial kick-off meeting was held on Friday, September 30, 2011 at the new Red Cross headquarters on Dana Ave. Over 170 people attended representing over 100 different organizations, businesses, governmental entities and educational institutions. Dr. Len Sauer, Vice-President of Global Sustainability for Procter & Gamble was the keynote speaker, covering P&G's

approach and commitment to sustainability. Seven initial panels of the Umbrella were formed (and one was generated at the meeting). The eight teams (panels) are:

1. Land Team (most of the functions and members as the old Green Umbrella organization)
2. Outdoor Recreation and Nature Education Team (many of the functions and members of the old Green Umbrella but capable of linking many more groups)
3. Local Food (growing, distributing and utilizing local crops)
4. Energy Conservation
5. Renewable Energy
6. Transportation
7. Waste Reduction
8. Watershed Management & Water Quality (initially included in the Land Team but split out as a result of the kick-off meeting to form a new team)

Underlying all these areas is a subagenda to help create green jobs and enhanced economic impact.

Oxbow, Inc. will endeavor to have representation on panels 1, 2, & 8 as part of our effort to make this vision of green sustainable living for the tri-state area surrounding Cincinnati a reality. ***Any Oxbow, Inc. members that would be interested in participating and representing Oxbow, Inc. on any of these panels should contact me, at 513-851-9835 or ilsjks@hotmail.com to discuss the possibilities.***



HAPPIEST OF HOLIDAYS!

ANNOUNCEMENT

John McFaul Art Show to Benefit Oxbow

Friday November 11, 2011 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM EST

We would like to invite you to a Private Viewing and Open House featuring Internationally-known Wildlife & Nature Artist AND Cincinnati Native, **John McFaul**.

Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres

~

*Raffle of Autographed Print to Benefit
Oxbow Wetlands Nature Preserve*

~

*Open House Only Store Special: 30% off your
entire purchase of store merchandise*

Join Us for an evening of fun, food & fellowship!

Wild Bird Center of Mason
5859 Deerfield Blvd.
Deerfield Towne Center
Mason, OH 45040
oh.birdnerds@gmail.com
513-234-0789

Please RSVP to ensure adequate food & beverages!

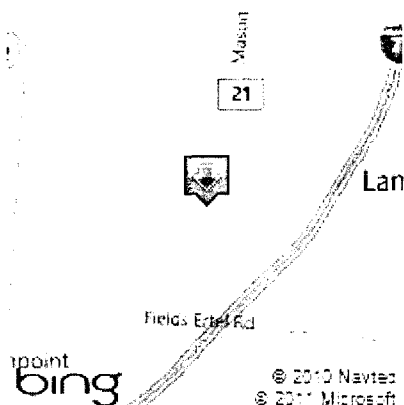
As an artist whose focus is on the natural world, John's been fortunate to spend many days afield researching his subject matter. He has traveled to numerous wilderness areas throughout the continental US, Alaska, Canada and East Africa.

John has shown at many of the Nation's most prestigious juried wildlife art exhibitions, including the International Exhibition on Animals in Art, Baton Rouge, L.A., National Wildlife Art Show, Kansas City, MO, and National Wildlife and Western Show, Minneapolis, MN.

John has had over 75 solo exhibitions at many of the retail galleries and shops that distribute his work throughout the U.S. His original works hang in both private and corporate collections throughout the United States and Europe.

Driving Directions:

Google: **5859 Deerfield Blvd., Deerfield Towne Center, Mason, OH, 45040, US**
(The store is set off in the middle of the parking area)



ANNOUNCEMENT

**"What's Your Green Umbrella?" Campaign
Register today at GreenUmbrella.org**

Dear Green Umbrella Member: (Oxbow is a Member)

Green Umbrella is continuing to develop as the Regional Sustainability Alliance!

We are very pleased to announce the launch of the "What's Your Green Umbrella?" campaign on GreenUmbrella.org, in partnership with the City of Cincinnati's Office of Environmental Quality (OEQ). The OEQ chose Green Umbrella—with our regional sustainability mission—as its strategic partner to mount a tri-state marketing and outreach campaign to promote the goals of The Green Cincinnati Plan. Through an interactive website that calculates what you save with each 'green' action you register—OEQ and Green Umbrella will work together to engage more people to do more things that will help the environment.

This week, you will begin hearing "What's Your Green Umbrella?" on radio, and see it on billboards around town. Next week, 5-second TV ads will start appearing. And in the coming weeks, rewards and incentives will be added to encourage more to register, and to keeping up their recorded actions on the site.

Prior to the public launch, we want to see how many people we can register—so when the news media begin following our efforts, the site will have real data from a significant number of 'charter' members.

Here's what all Green Umbrella members can do:

- Announce the "What's Your Green Umbrella?" campaign to your organization's members and contacts.
- Invite them to register on the "What's Your Green Umbrella?" website, and calculate the impact of their actions.

o Note: the site is starting with a small number of sustainable actions – more will be added with time

o Its okay to take credit for actions you are already doing – e.g. if you already own a hybrid car click on that action step

- Encourage those who register to invite their friends—it's easy! You can invite your friends with one click, directly from "My Page" on the site. Also encourage them to select your organization as the one that referred them to the website. **(Oxbow has started its own group.)** You will get "credit" for their registration!

Together, Green Umbrella members can boost the impact every individual who is passionate about environmental sustainability can have! Be sure to register now at <http://www.GreenUmbrella.org>



An oxbow otter looks out over Oxbow Lake (photo by Ken Geiger)



A Red-winged Blackbird is one of the thousands that gather in the Oxbow to feed on corn and other seeds as they mass for a flight to the South where they can stay warm all winter. (Photo by Paul Ice)



L to R: Derek Courtney, Duane Courtney (Scout Master), Nathan Kneeven, and Austin Snelling from troop #606 who were among the several scouts that spent time removing trees growing in the prairie areas of the Oxbow. (photo by Ed Gemperle)

An Oxbow White-tailed Deer gazes through the soybeans to see who is disturbing its fall slumber. The ripened crops left behind as wildlife food make for a reliable source of energy for a variety of wildlife during the coming winter months. (photo by Paul Ice)



Board members Rick Pope and Jon Seymour put in some sweat equity by installing traffic signs along the Oxbow Lake road directing drivers either to the Hardintown exit or to the Lawrenceburg exit. A few more signs need to go in but that will complete the directions. (photo by Wayne Wauligman)



Photo showing the area purchased by Best Way Recycling for their new transfer operation. The area encompasses about 5 acres and is approximately 1/2 of the cement plant land area. (Google image)

Punctuation Flitting Around the Oxbow

.....by Kathy McDonald

On September 17, a group of us signed up to attend a butterfly workshop including some time in the field with Bob Nuhn. Bob, a retired naturalist with the Hamilton County Park District, has been a compiler for the North American Butterfly Counts in SW Ohio, and his passion for butterflies is contagious. All seemed well until Saturday morning, when we woke to a fine drizzle, with cool temps and cloudy skies. This was not the best weather for observing butterflies. Bob and I talked by phone, and decided to reschedule. We drove to the Oxbow to meet those that we couldn't reach by phone and planned to do some birding there. When we arrived, we had a pleasant surprise. The clouds gave way to sunshine with rising temps. It was turning out to be a pleasant day. As luck would have it, Wayne Wauligman was there to help guide us in the field. Wayne is a local legend in the field of herpetology, and he is a great all-around naturalist who happens to be very good at butterflies too.

Six of us set out to walk the Oxbow, and we didn't get too far when we noticed many Common Checkered-Skippers. One cooperative mating pair allowed for close observation and some great photos. We ended the morning with 11 species. Some butterflies observed were one Viceroy, one Comma (it wasn't easy to tell this one apart from the four Question Marks), an Orange Sulphur, a few Cloudless Sulphurs, and two Wild Indigo Duskywings. Buckeyes were plentiful and always beautiful to watch. We were lucky to witness many Monarchs flying high with the wind to reach their winter home. Stay tuned for more butterfly activities in the Oxbow and around town. If you are interested in learning more about upcoming field trips, workshops or helping with the Oxbow butterfly census next year, contact me at 513.748.0281 or by email at kmc@one.net.

Our Post Office Box In Madeira is CLOSED

Please be certain to change the address on any legacy gifts, memorials, or standing donation directives to:

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

Great Outdoor Weekend

.....by Jon Seymour

We had another great Outdoor Weekend experience. We had ten individuals come for the presentations. Nine were new to the Oxbow which is fantastic. Guides Kani Meyer, Steve Pelikan, Wayne Wauligman, and Velda Miller showed up to help the attendees become acquainted with the Oxbow. One group benefitted from Wayne's experience as he waded into the Cement Plant pond and retrieved glass shrimp, mosquito fish and insect larvae. Both groups saw several Great Egrets that gather at this time of year in the Oxbow before beginning their migration south to the Gulf States. The Saturday night group had a wonderful look at the gathering rookery of Great Egrets as nearly 50 gathered in the branches of the trees on the east side of Oxbow Lake directly across from the Osprey Lake spillway. The Sunday morning crew was treated to the finding of a several Southern Dogface butterflies in the mowed portion of the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District prairie. Our resident expert on butterflies for that trip, Steve Pelikan, reckoned he had not seen one in 15 years.

Another weekend in the Oxbow and there is always something special to remember.

Elections 2012

Standing for re-election to the Board of Oxbow, Inc. are:

- Denis Conover
- Dennis Mason
- Kani Meyer
- Meg Poehlmann
- Rick Pope

Standing for re-election to the Board of Oxbow of Indiana, Inc. are:

- Denis Conover
- Dennis Mason
- Kani Meyer
- Meg Poehlmann
- Rick Pope

All Directors are being elected for a 3 year term beginning February 1, 2012 and ending February 1, 2015. The election of the Directors will be one of the orders of business of the **2012 Members meeting called for January 10, 2012 for 7:30 pm at the Oxbow office at 301 Walnut St. in Lawrenceburg, IN.** All members are encouraged to attend and participate in the election. The annual members meeting will be followed by the members meeting educational program. All attendees are encouraged to stay and attend the educational program.

Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

.....by Jon Seymour

Friday, October 7, 2011—All in a day's work

Up at 7:00 a.m. It would be nice to live closer to the Oxbow and early morning appointments remind me that the 30 mile trip takes getting out of bed early if I am going to make it. Of course I must always be early enough so that I am in the office before the visitor arrives. In the winter it means getting there early enough to turn on the heat or in mid-summer the air conditioner. Today it won't require adjustment to be comfortable. The recent mild weather is perfect for not having to use either the AC or the heat.

It is a smooth drive to the Oxbow, sun at my back, blue sky, except in the Great Miami Valley where the entire valley has disappeared on the usual fall fog bank. The fog stays with me most of the way from the east I-74/I-275 interchange to Lawrenceburg, but the heavy fog is over the river and the bottoms.

Once settled I start to unload the files that I brought from home to resort into the cabinets at the office. Just before 9 a.m. the sleigh bells on the door jangle and I know my first appointment for the day has arrived. Mr. Dan Heing is a student at Harvard University's Extension School studying environmental management. Dan's current assignment is to pick a natural area, learn about it, and write a paper on its current management practices and challenges and suggest ways that the management might be improved. I agreed to meet Dan and answer any questions I could. Dan interviewed me for about an hour and then we hopped into my car to view the areas and management practices we talked about. On the drive from Lawrenceburg to Hardintown we first viewed the drainage slough in the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District (LCD) and its function to move water from the business park to the Ohio River. We then viewed the LCD mitigation area and the wetlands, prairie and wooded edges of the mitigation area and discussed the value of habitat edges and the meeting of multiple edges that increase the potential for biodiversity in the Oxbow.

Driving through the corn fields we discussed our management policy of leasing farmland that yields wide open space habitat punctuated by wildlife food crop which is ideal for wintering ducks. Climbing out of the fields to the Oxbow Lake overlook, I park the car and discuss our management of balancing land use for fishing, hunting, kayaking, and bird watching. This partial list of possible outdoor Oxbow activities illustrates most of the management issues we face in opening the property to multiple means of enjoying nature. I go over our farming, hunting, and fishing rules that govern a lot of the interaction of visitors. I also mention our use of off-duty deputy sheriffs as a deterrent to ignoring the rules.

At Osprey Lake I talk about our road access program and the difficulties of maintaining our farm roads in a condition that allows travel most days of the year. I also tell him about our cooperative effort with the City of Greendale to purchase the farm that is currently Osprey Lake after the City had used the property as a borrow pit to build the levee along U.S. Highway 50. The irregularly shaped lake with islands in the middle and varying in depth provides a variety of habitats within the lake. All features being a product of negotiation between Oxbow, Inc. and Greendale. Coupled with the prairie planted around the lake, it provides an excellent facsimile of a prairie pothole. These multiple micro environments again contribute to enhanced biodiversity in the area.

At Juno Pond we talk about the need to keep most of the traffic along one edge of the Oxbow area thus maintaining the major part of the area as a safe area for animals. This strategy is similar to use planning by the National Wildlife Refuge system for controlling human disturbance in the refuges. We have also adopted the National Wildlife Refuge system for designing the area in which hunting is allowed.

Returning to the Oxbow office, I let Dan know that he can call with questions and I will be glad to try to help him out if I can and I wish him well on his project.

Dan leaves and I sit down to work through a listing of our deeds and conservation easements to make sure we have a copy of the deeds or easement agreements for every one of our purchases or land gifts. The originals exist in the Dearborn County Courthouse (One in Hamilton County), our lawyer has a copy in his set of records, and the corporation maintains a copy in the office and a duplicate in our safety deposit box. This duplication of locations is designed to make certain we always have the ownership documents close at hand but protected by copies existing in multiple diverse locations. (Think Joplin, MO Tornado)

Precisely at 11:30 am the sleigh bells chime again, as my next appointment is right on time. Sally McWilliams of the Dearborn County Visitor and Tourism Bureau had arrived. Sally had contacted me to talk about how to set up tours of the Oxbow for visiting groups that might have an interest. She was focusing on the older mobile age group maybe 45-65 years of age, folks that wanted to experience new things and were willing to put in some effort to those activities. We talked about our experience with bus loads and walking tours with large groups and felt that given enough lead time we could probably set up guided tours for occasional groups of visitors. Sally was planning on putting together a short description of a possible tour and present it at a meeting on the marketing of adventure side-trips. I did not quiz her closely on the nature of this type of meeting but got the impression that trip ideas were floated to see if trip planners liked them thought they could be incorporated into the plans for visiting groups.

(continued on page 11)



usings

by Dave Styer

The Carolina Chickadee

This may be the bird we know and like, but pay little attention to it beyond that. In the index of Frank Gill's *Ornithology* the Black-capped Chickadee is listed for seven different places in the text, but the Carolina Chickadee is not listed at all. In *The Life of Birds*, by Welty and Baptista, the Black-capped Chickadee is cited under fifteen different topics, and the Carolina Chickadee under just one topic, feathers:

Many birds carry more feathers in winter than in summer. A Carolina Chickadee, Parus carolinensis, taken on February 19, had 1704 contour feathers, while one taken on June 4 had only 1140.

In 1766 Linnaeus gave the Black-capped Chickadee the scientific name, *Parus atricapillus*. Two-thirds of a century later, in 1834, Audubon recognized the Carolina Chickadee as a separate species and gave it the scientific name *Parus carolinensis*. Audubon did this at a time when he had been visiting friends in Charleston, South Carolina, thus the name *carolinensis*. Actually, Audubon painted the Carolina Chickadee some twelve years earlier, when he was in Louisiana or Mississippi.

There seems to be some confusion here, so let confusion reign! I read in *The Original Water-color Paintings by John James Audubon for The Birds of America* (1966) that Audubon wrote that he painted the Carolina Chickadee in 1820, near New Orleans. However, his original watercolor was dated May 3, 1822, when he was in Natchez, Mississippi. Oh well, it's hard to tell the difference between Louisiana and Mississippi. I have a book of Audubon prints, published in 1962, that presents the same painting as the Black-capped Chickadee. In a way, both the 1962 and the 1966 books are correct! To understand this we must realize that Audubon published, almost simultaneously, two different works on the birds of America. First was the "elephant folio" of large, engraved prints of birds, his *Birds of America*. To tell about the birds in his paintings, he published his five volume *Ornithological Biography*. In 1833 Audubon's "elephant folio" print of the Black-capped Chickadee was produced, based on the painting from the south. Almost simultaneously, Audubon had spent time in South Carolina, followed by a trip to New England and Canada. He realized then that the "Black-capped" Chickadee he had been seeing in the south was an entirely different beast from the northern bird. When Volume 2 of his *Ornithological Biography* came out in 1834, Audubon presented

to science the Carolina Chickadee. This meant that the print presented a year earlier as a Black-capped Chickadee was actually a print of a Carolina Chickadee.

Confusion over species and their relationships to other species must happen all the time. The scientific names of chickadees and their relatives is a case in point. In 1766 Linnaeus named the Black-capped Chickadee and the Tufted Titmouse *Parus atricapillus* and *Parus bicolor*, respectively. Linnaeus recognized these two birds as closely related, and, thus, put them in the same genus, *Parus*. When I look in *The Book of Birds*, published by the National Geographic Society in the 1930s, I find different scientific names: Black-capped Chickadee, *Penthestes atricapillus*; Carolina Chickadee, *Penthestes carolinensis*; and Tufted Titmouse, *Baeolophus bicolor*. In the 1947 Peterson *Field Guide* these birds all have their original scientific names. Here's the problem; back in 1758 Linnaeus named the Great Tit of Europe, *Parus major*. Any other bird put in the genus *Parus* should be very closely related. This going back and forth is an indication of uncertainty or confusion about how closely these species are related.

Back in the 1950s and earlier people looked at anatomy, physiology, behavior, and maybe even parasites to determine relationships of birds. But a new tool was soon to come along: DNA analysis. The long strings of DNA in a species pretty much identify the species. At times anatomy or behavior might trick you, but DNA provides a completely independent way to look at relationships. It is no surprise that closely related species have very similar DNA strings, and less closely related species have less similar DNA strings. I, personally, can't imagine looking at a DNA string and visualizing anatomy or behavior; all I see is a DNA string. That's what makes DNA analysis independent of earlier work.

Since ornithologists have applied DNA analyses to our chickadees and titmice, and to Old World relatives, what have they found? All North American chickadees have very similar DNA. Their DNA is very like a bunch of Old World species, but the DNA of the Great Tit stands apart. There are a lot of Old World species that have DNA very like that of the Great Tit. Since these birds fall into two distinct groups, they are now put into separate genera. The Great Tit and its closest relatives remain in the genus *Parus*, and the Carolina Chickadee is put in a genus I haven't mentioned, *Poecile*, along with its closest relatives. The name *Poecile* was actually applied to one of these species back in 1829, but it may not have been widely used. The DNA of the Tufted Titmouse and its New World relatives were found to fall in their own cluster, and they are put in the genus *Baeolophus*, a name that we mentioned as used in the 1930s.

Look in a modern field guide, such as the *Sibley Guide to Birds*, and you will find that the Carolina Chickadee has the scientific name *Poecile carolinensis*. Does that end confusion? Oh no, there is always room for confusion.

Horseshoe Bottoms—continued from page 9)

Once we agreed that it was possible to conduct such tours, I asked if Sally had ever been on the other side of the levee. She had not! I was not really surprised as I believe most local residents and certainly almost all more distant residents have never been to the Oxbow. This time I drove up to the Hardintown entrance to simulate the route a bus would take into the Oxbow. Stopping in the Juno Pond area I point out this is our first usual tour stop where we try to point out the features of the pond and the area as well as often observe our four species of resident heron. Sometimes we scoop a bit of the pond life out in pans and buckets for a close look at some of the residents of the pond.

Our next stop is Osprey Lake where we hope to be able to show more heron, and sometimes ducks, geese and shorebirds. We discuss the restoration of the Lake from the borrow pit for the levee and the meeting of the edges of water, prairie, and woods. Tour groups here are often shown the wide variety of butterflies that inhabit this area during the summer months. Moving on to the Oxbow Lake overlook we tell tour groups the history of the lake and look for herons, egrets, ducks and cormorants in and around the edges of the lake. Occasionally we have been known to see the Bald Eagle perched in the trees near the lake or lazily hunting the length of the lake. The overlook has benches where hikers can rest before continuing their walk or if it is a bus they can sit and repose and watch for wildlife to move in and across the lake.

It is at this time that one of those events occurs that always brings me back to the Oxbow looking for the next fond memory. Sally and I are just getting back into my car to leave when I glance over the steering wheel and directly in front of me I see the heads of two otters bob up out of the water. My rear only brushes the seat before I am pulling myself back out of the car and hollering, "Otter!!!". I am sure Sally thought I had gone loco. Let's face it. I saw my last otter in the Oxbow over two years ago. Sure, others had seen them infrequently in those last two years, but I was not among them.

I quickly explain to Sally what is bobbing around in the water and hand her the binoculars for a better look. I tell her that while otter are not rare in the Oxbow, it is unusual to actually see them. These little guys are actually looking like they are "bouncing". In fact they are raising their heads up out of the water to get a better look at US! While we are watching these two otter about 60 feet out from the shoreline, the barking starts. A high staccato bark like someone is repeatedly stepping on the tail of a Jack Russell terrier. It does not appear to be coming from the two we are watching. Suddenly the source of the barking appears from our right side gliding along the shoreline not 60 feet away from us. This third otter swims directly in front of the benches and climbs

completely out of the water on the branch of a fallen tree to continue the barking. Once satisfied that it has barked at us enough it slides into the water and all three otters disappear from view. Another Oxbow moment has passed. I hastily add an explanation to Sally that I cannot schedule such events for tour groups but I am not sure she believes me.

After exiting through the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District we arrive back at the office where Sally and I plan the next steps in keeping in contact and seeing where this venture leads. I get ready to head for a meeting with the leaders of four other local land trusts but my day is complete. I was barked at by an otter!

ANNOUNCEMENT

"Big Year Birder" Greg Miller
Mt. St. Joe College Theatre
November 30, 2011—7 p.m.

5701 Delhi Road, Cincinnati

College Theatre is on Delhi, with adjacent parking.

Driving directions are available at www.msj.edu.

"The Big Year", a birding movie starring Steve Martin, Owen Wilson and Jack Black has just hit theaters. Jack Black's character is, in real life, Greg Miller, Ohioan and birder extraordinaire. Greg served as birding expert on the movie production and appears briefly in the film. Greg Miller is coming to Cincinnati on November 30, 2011 and will speak about birding, his Big Year and the movie at 7 p.m. at Mt. St. Joseph College's College Theatre. Greg's talk is being sponsored by Mt. St. Joe and the Audubon Society of Ohio and is free and open to the public.

In 1998, Greg and two other birding "fanatics" completed a big year to record the maximum number of bird species in North America seen or heard in a calendar year. Unlike the other two birders, Greg's Big Year was accomplished while he worked full time as a computer programmer with limited funds (and maxed out his credit cards, he says.) Journalist and author, Mark Obmascik's 2004 best-seller, "The Big Year" recounted their efforts and exploits. The film, "The Big Year" is based on the book.

Greg is an engaging speaker with great stories about birding, his Big Year and his experiences with the making of "The Big Year" film. Please come and invite your friends!

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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