



Join Your Local Chapter

The Chat is the newsletter of the Audubon Society of Ohio, which is the Cincinnati chapter of the National Audubon Society. All members of National Audubon are assigned to local chapters by zip code, unless they selected a particular local chapter when they signed up.

We encourage you to join the local chapter, ASO, as well as National Audubon. Joining us will help support our local activities, such as field trips, programs, and publication of this newsletter. But you are welcome to attend our events even if you are not a member of ASO. You can join by filling out the membership form which is in this issue of the Chat.

We also encourage you to sign up for email distribution of the Chat, whether you wish to join ASO or not. Print publications have become in-

creasingly expensive, and you can help us to save money by getting the Chat online. You will receive email notifications when new issues are published, and also a monthly notification of the coming month's events. You can join our email list by clicking on the button on the home page of our website, at cincinnati.audubon.org. Or you can just email us, at mail@cincinnati.audubon.org, and ask to be placed on the list. Every email that you receive from us will include an easy

opt-out link, which will let you leave the list at any time. Your email address will never be shared with any other organization.



Birding Boone County Cliffs, Kentucky, June 2014

2014 Audubon Society Birding Course

Hone your birding and identification skills by registering for the 28th annual Audubon Birding Course. Our local Cincinnati Audubon Society Chapter (ASO) has been sponsoring this class since 1987. The three-week course will be held on three consecutive

Sunday mornings: September 28th, October 5th and October 12th. Father-son team Jay Stenger and Jack Stenger will be this year's instructors. Both Jay and Jack are well-known and exceptionally knowledgeable birders. Jay has been an instructor for this course

since its inception in 1987.

The course is held at the Audubon House which is located in Groesbeck at 3398 W. Galbraith Road, just a couple of minutes from the Cross County Highway.

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Upcoming ASO events:

- **15 Sept...** *A Wilderness Icon, America's Red Rocks Wilderness*, presented by Clayton Daughenbaugh
- **18 Oct...** *ASO picnic, 10 A.M. to dusk*
- **20 Oct...** *Journey Through Time; America's Tale of the Natural History, People and Transportation from Early 1700s to Late 1800s*, presented by Jim Williams

2014 Audubon Society Birding Course (Continued from Page 1)

Each class begins at 8 A.M. with a casual classroom session. A continental breakfast (muffins, bagels, donuts, fruit juices, coffee, tea, etc.) and handouts are provided during every morning session. Each classroom session is followed by a field trip to a local hotspot which ends around 1 P.M. Past field locations have included Shawnee Lookout, the Oxbow, Miami Whitewater, Fernald Preserve, Mt. Airy Forest, Winton Woods and other sites. This year's locations will be determined by current conditions at the time and participant interest. Fall migration will be well under way and we will find a great diversity of species including raptors, shorebirds, waders, waterfowl, and many songbirds including those confusing fall warblers.

Through discussions, visual & audio presentations and field observations, the course will particularly focus on sharpening identification skills. But the course will offer much more than that. When, where and how to find birds in our area is also prioritized. Other course topics will include migration, bird abundance and distribution, habitat, conservation, local hotspots, and birding equipment and resources. The setting is informal and questions are encouraged. Jay and Jack also infuse a lot of fun, levity and enthusiasm throughout.

This course is geared towards all birding levels. While mid-level birders will likely gain the most from this course, most birders, beginners and experienced alike, will

find that this course will help hone their ID skills and add to their knowledge of local birds. Over 350 area birders have taken this course over the years and have found it entertaining and informative. The course is open to everyone, including older kids if accompanied by an adult. Binoculars are required, and a field guide will be useful to refer to in class and in the field. If you do not have a pair of binoculars the ASO can lend you a pair during the course.

Advance registration is required. Course fees are \$10 for ASO members and \$25 for non-members. The course will be limited to a minimum of 8 participants and a maximum of 25. Please register by September 20th to assist us in planning and preparation. To be registered, please send your check, payable to ASO and mail to: ASO Bird Course, Audubon House, 3398 W. Galbraith Road, Cincinnati Ohio 45239. If you have any questions call the Audubon House at 741-SWAN or email Jay Stenger at jaystenger@cinci.rr.com.

About The Instructors:

Jay Stenger: Jay's involvement in the local and state birding community spans almost 5 decades. Over those years Jay has served many terms as a board member of the Audubon Society of Ohio, the Cincinnati Bird Club, Oxbow Inc. (founding member), and the Ohio Bird Records Committee. He is the compiler of the Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count,

a regional coordinator for the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas, an instructor for an annual UC/Osher LLI Bird Course and was a volunteer for the USGS Breeding Bird Survey. Over a 30-year span Jay has led over 350 field trips. Jay's casual style, enthusiasm, and hands-on knowledge makes the time fly-by.

Jack Stenger: Filling the big shoes of co-instructor Paul Wharton, who has relocated to Florida as a State Wildlife Technician, is Jack Stenger. At age 8, Jack was a proud graduate of the ASO Birding Course, class of 1997, and has aided the course instructors many times since. In the years since, he has developed his birding skills with thousands of hours in the field. For the past 8 years Jack has held various ornithological field jobs for Intermountain Bird Observatory, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Ohio State University and University of Illinois. Jack graduated with a degree in zoology from Ohio Wesleyan University in 2010 and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences at the University of Cincinnati, where he just finished teaching Ornithology for UC's summer session. Jack will bring his scientific expertise to the classroom and his exceptional identification skills to the field trips.

Programs (Contributed by Allan Beach)

Audubon programs are held at Winton Center at 7:30 P.M. on the third Monday of each month from September to November and January through June. You are invited to our free programs at 7 PM to enjoy 30 minutes of fellowship and light refreshments before the meeting. Winton Center is on the west side of Winton Road just off of Valleyview Rd.

No meeting in July or August.

Monday, September 15, 2014, *A Wilderness Icon, America's Red Rocks Wilderness*, is the presentation by Clayton Daughenbaugh, Midwest representative of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA). This wonderful area of southern Utah is in jeopardy. Clayton, who lives in the Chicago area, is also the chair of the Sierra Club's National Wildlands Committee.

Monday, October 20, 2014, *Journey Thru Time, America's Tale of the Natural History, People and Transportation from Early 1700s to Late 1800s*, with emphasis on the mammals, birds and trees along the Ohio River, by storyteller Jim Williams, a former naturalist at Hamilton County Parks and initiator of their VIP Program. He also makes presentations on the Delta Queen and other river boats.

July/August Field Trips (Contributed by Jay Stenger)

Grassland Birds

Location: Fernald Nature Preserve

Date: Saturday, July 12, 2014

Meet: 8 A.M. Fernald Visitor Center Parking Lot

Leader: Brian Wulker
(513) 405-8373
bdwulker@gmail.com

Fernald Preserve has a variety of habitats that include grasslands, marshes, ponds, savannah, woodland, pine plantings and riparian corridor. But the focus of this trip will be the grasslands and successional areas and the specialized bird species that use those habitats.

Our leader, Brian Wulker, is a skilled young birder who is very familiar with Fernald Preserve and holds an internship there. Brian has the benefits of youth: enthusiasm, sharp eyes and great ears, so we can be sure we won't miss much. Brian plans to spend most of the morning covering a number of sections of the preserve, so this trip will consist of a good amount of walking roadsides and trails, but the terrain is relatively flat and even. This trip will end by noon.

Due to the grassland and open habitats a number of species of birds found here in decent numbers are scarce or absent from many other areas of the tri-state. Some of the species we will focus on include Dickcissels, Grasshopper & Savannah Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks, Eastern Kingbirds, Willow Flycatchers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Orchard Orioles and maybe Bobolinks. As I said before, Fernald offers a diversity of other habitats and Brian won't ignore the species we find in those spots as we move about the area.

Restrooms and water are available at the Visitor Center but sunscreen, insect repellent and carrying your own water will make for a more comfortable trip. If you expect to see birds you will need binoculars. Feel free to contact Brian if you have any questions.

Directions: Fernald Preserve is located in Northwestern Hamilton County. The entrance is located on Wiley Road about ¼ of a mile west of State Route 128. Follow the entrance road to where it ends at the Visitor Center.

Use this [link](#) for further directions. Visit the Fernald Preserve website [here](#).

Attracting Moths at Night

Location: Mockingbird Hill Farm
3491 Bootjack Corner Rd
Williamsburg, OH
(See directions below)

Date: Saturday, July 26, 2014

Meet: 9 P.M. at Mockingbird Hill Farm

Hosts: Bill and Tammie Stanley, owners of Mockingbird Hill Farm

Co-Leader: Mary Jo White
(513) 405-0786
wingedmary@yahoo.com

Co-Leader: Mary Ann Barnett
(513) 519-9691
marvann.barnett@gmail.com

And now for something completely different (and every bit as entertaining as Monty Python), here is a field trip as novel as they get and one that I highly recommend. Note that the time of this field trip is 9 PM (AT NIGHT) and ends at midnight. Too late for you, you say. Well, if you want to see a wide array of moths (and other night insects) you have to wait until it gets dark. And if you come, you will see moths. Lots of moths! Our co-leaders, Mary Jo White and Mary Ann Barnett, are considered the leading moth experts in our area. They have graciously agreed to conduct this mothing event for us and it takes quite a bit of effort to set something like this up. Sparing the details (you will find out later), they plan to attract a wide array of moths by rigging up a few contraptions involving bright lights directed against large white backdrops of sheets that have proven to generally attract hundreds of moths, and their friends, from the surrounding countryside.

The location for this nighttime fun is in Clermont County at Mockingbird Hill Farm, the home and business of long time Audubon members Bill and Tammie Stanley who have graciously opened up their property for this event.

The date of this event happens to coincide with the last Saturday of National Moth Week. Why this location you might ask? To get the best moth attendance and

the greatest diversity of them, a number of criteria have to be met and Mockingbird Hill Farm fills all the requirements. It is an open space surrounded by woods and fields, it's a dark sky site (no ambient city lights), and has a riparian corridor. It has electric, no light competition and Bill will have a tent canopy set up. And there is ample parking. And of course our friends the Stanley's own the place (which is a flower farm by the way). Mary Jo and Mary Ann will be on hand to identify the moths for us, fill us in on their ecology, answer all of our questions and generally conduct the proceedings.

Plan to get there at 9 P.M. to see the set up and get acclimated, but the real action will begin closer to 10 P.M. when it is completely dark. Festivities will continue until 12 midnight. So be sure to bring your cameras and get some close up looks at some of the most interesting and spectacularly decorated creatures imaginable. And who cares how late it is? It's Saturday night, so let the kids stay up late. And most of us don't have to work in the morning anyway.

Thanks and great appreciation go to Bill and Tammie for their hospitality and to Mary Jo and Mary Ann for their enthusiasm and organizing what is sure to be a great time. If you have any questions feel free to contact Mary Jo or Mary Ann.

Remember there is ample parking and all are welcome.

Directions to Mockingbird Hill Farm, 3491 Bootjack Corner Rd. Williamsburg, OH:

Take Rt. 32 east from Mt Carmel. Take the Dela Palma exit to the right and follow it until it dead ends into Rt. 133. Turn left and follow Rt. 133 up the hill and past the gas station. Rt. 133 will turn to the right. Turn right on Rt. 133 and go about 3 miles or so and you will see Bootjack Rd angle off to the left. Turn left onto Bootjack and follow it until you come to some sharp curves to the left and Muskgrove Rd goes to the right. Bear left and when you get out of the curves watch for a long blacktop driveway to the right. Turn right onto that drive and continue down the hill past several houses until the drive turns into gravel. When you hit the gravel you are at the house. The house is a yellow 2 story with a big yellow barn next to it.

Here is a link to a [Google map](#).

July/August Field Trips (Continued from Page 3)

Prairie and Wetland Plants

Location: The Shaker Trace Grassland and Wetlands at Miami Whitewater Forest

Date: Sunday, August 3, 2014

Meet: 10 A.M. in the Parking Lot on Baughman Road (See directions below)

Leader: Dr. Denis Conover
(513) 641-3651

conovedg@hotmail.com

The focus of this trip will be prairie wildflowers and wetland plants. In 1992, the Hamilton County Park District began a native prairie and wetland restoration project of several hundred acres at Miami Whitewater Forest. Late summer is a great time to see these prairie plants in bloom in a stunning array of colors. Identifying all of these plants can be a challenge even for the experienced amateur botanist but our ace in the hole is our leader: UC professor, and skilled botanist and naturalist Dr. Denis Conover.

Denis has been involved in various types of botanical research since 1981 and is a professor in the department of Biological Sciences at the University of Cincinnati. At UC Denis teaches Classification of Flowering Plants, Intro Biology, Field Botany, and Anatomy and Physiology Labs. He is also a long time environmental advocate. Denis has interests in other aspects of natural history as well and he will be sure to point out any birds, butterflies and other fauna we might run across. Denis has led numerous field trips for Audubon and other groups and in a nutshell, Denis knows his plants.

Come out and join Denis for what should be a leisurely walk through this fantastic wetland/grassland complex. Walking will be slow and level but we will be on our feet for 3 to 4 hours. Some places are likely to be damp as we will at times walk along a marsh and Howards Creek. For a more enjoyable trip be sure to bring water, sunscreen and insect repellent. Restrooms are available in other areas of the park but there are none at Shaker Trace. This trip should run about four hours and end around 2 P.M. Of course you don't have to stay for the duration. Feel free to contact Denis if you have any questions.

Directions: Take I-74 west to the Dry Fork Road exit #3. Turn right onto Dry Fork Road (north) and go 2.2 miles to New Haven Road. Bear right (east) onto New Haven Road and go 0.8 mile to Oxford Road. Turn left onto Oxford Road and then immediately left again onto Baughman Road. Go 0.7 mile and look for the gravel parking lot on the right side (north) of the road just after passing the Bike/Hike Trail crosswalk.

A Hamilton County Park Motor Vehicle Permit is required (\$3 daily, \$10 annual).

For a Park map and other information visit the Miami Whitewater Forest [website](#).

Shorebirds and Other Early Fall Migrants

Location: The Lower Great Miami River Valley Environs

Date: Sunday, August 24, 2014

Meet: 8 A.M. at the Park & Ride Lot located at the I-275 Miamitown/Route 128 exit #7.

Leader: Jay Stenger
(513) 522-8147
jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

August and September represent the "fall" peak of migrant shorebirds through our part of the country. Even though the temperature and the calendar still say its summer on this date, the fall southbound migration of shorebirds (sandpipers and plovers) is well under way. As the term "shorebird" implies these species need shallow water, sandbars, mudflats and the edges of shoreline in which to feed and rest. It is difficult to predict which local spots will have the best shorebird conditions each season due to varying climate conditions (rainfall & drought) and water levels in our region year to year. Because of this we have decided to "wait and see" where the best spots develop and make our decision about where to go on the morning of the field trip

Jay Stenger, the leader for this trip, is an expert birder and very familiar with all of our local birding sites. Jay will use current reports and information nearer the date of this field trip to decide where to visit and maximize our birding success. If good conditions are widespread we

may be able to visit several spots during the morning. The focus of our attention will be in the Lower Great Miami River Valley and some likely spots that we might visit would include the Oxbow, Lost Bridge, Fernald Preserve and the Miami Whitewater Wetlands; all locations that are not too far from our meeting place. If another hotspot develops that isn't too far away, Jay will consider giving it a shot. In addition to shorebirds, herons, egrets, terns, raptors and songbirds are all likely to be seen as well.

If the birds cooperate, this trip will run a bit past noon. You might want to bring water, sunscreen and insect repellent for a more enjoyable morning. Driving isn't expected to be terribly excessive but we will likely visit a number of places so make sure you have enough gas. Walking should be easy to moderate. Although not required, if you have a scope bring it. Remember that if we visit a Hamilton County Park a Motor Vehicle Permit is required (\$3 daily, \$10 annual). Rest stops will be made during our travels. Feel free to contact Jay if you have any questions.

Directions: The Park & Ride is located right at the I-275 Miamitown/Route 128 exit #7.



Monarch Butterfly (See Page 6)
Courtesy Lois Settlemeier

July 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

July Community Calendar

- **08 July...** Program: Taking Root campaign, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- **12 July...** Field trip: Grassland birds, [ASO](#)
- **12 July...** Field trip: Bird walk, [Cincinnati Nature Center](#)
- **12 July...** Program/Field Trip: Butterfly workshop, [Midwest Native Plant Society](#)
- **13 July...** Field trip: Breeding birds, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- **26 July...** Field trip: Attracting moths at night, [ASO](#)
- **26 July...** Field trip: Bird walk, [Cincinnati Nature Center](#)

August 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

August Community Calendar

- **03 August...** Field trip: Prairie and wetland plants, [ASO](#)
- **09 August...** Field trip: Bird walk, [Cincinnati Nature Center](#)
- **12 August...** Program: Alaska, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- **15 August...** Field trip: Early fall migrants, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- **16 August...** Field trip: Butterfly count, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- **23 August...** Field trip: Bird walk, [Cincinnati Nature Center](#)
- **24 August...** Field trip: Shorebirds and early fall migrants, [ASO](#)
- **24 August...** Field trip: Insect sounds, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)

Ron Austing (1931-2014) by Richard Wagner

Internationally renowned wildlife photographer Ron Austing died peacefully yesterday at the age of 82, with his daughters, son and close friends at his bedside, after a hard-fought battle with lymphoma.



Ron Austing, 1987.
Courtesy Richard Wagner

Ron Austing was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1931. His interest in wildlife began as a child, after his family moved to a suburb of Cincinnati called North College Hill. At the time, much of that small village was an undeveloped woodland, surrounded by small farms. This gave Ron the opportunity to observe nature relatively undisturbed. By the age of twelve he had become intimately associated with birds of prey: the hawks and owls, which initiated a life-long passion with these birds. His other passion was baseball, and he spent several years working in the dugout of the Cincinnati Reds. He remained an avid Reds fan throughout his life.

Ron's desire to remain close to nature led to his career as a Park Ranger with the Hamilton County Park District in Ohio; essentially, the parks in and surrounding Cincinnati. In his thirty years with the

Park District he saw the parks grow from some three thousand acres in 1953 to over sixteen thousand when he retired as a Park Ranger in 1983. After twenty-four years as a Park Ranger, with the rank of Captain, he became disenchanted with law enforcement and resigned, but he was immediately appointed to be the Park District's first Wildlife Manager, a post he retained until he ultimately retired. In 1982, Ron was awarded the Ohio Conservation Achievement Award by the State of Ohio and the Department of Natural Resources.

Beginning at a relatively young age, Ron combined his knowledge of wildlife with his skill as a photographer, and he became an internationally recognized wildlife photographer while in his teens. He published his first illustrated article while he was still in high school. Since then, his photos have appeared in literally thousands of publications, including National Geographic, Sports Illustrated, Audubon, National Wildlife, Ranger Rick, Birder's World, Bird Watcher's Digest, as well as countless other U.S and European publications.

In addition to the many articles, books and field guides featuring his photography of birds, Ron authored several books of his own. He wrote his first book, *I Went to the Woods: The Autobiography of a Bird Photographer*, while he was still in his twenties. He followed with *The World of the Red-tailed Hawk* and *The World of the Great Horned Owl*.

Birds were always Ron's primary subject, especially birds of prey, Kirtland's Warbler, neotropical migrants in general, as well as the nesting activities of a tremendous number of bird species. The more than fifty thousand transparencies, terabytes of digital files and hundreds of hours of video footage in his collection also include insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees, and flowers.

The majority of subjects are representative of eastern and midwestern regions of the U.S., with some western species and a limited number from the Canadian arctic, Ecuador and the Galapagos, Mexico, Africa and India. As the official photographer of the Cincinnati Zoo for many years, Ron's photo collection includes controlled conditions or studio images of many internationally rare and endangered species.

I met Ron 31 years ago in the Education Department of the Cincinnati Zoo. We spent many wonderful years together working on wildlife photography projects in the U.S. and Canada. Ron was my Best Man at my wedding, and I was at his bedside when he died. A small sample of Ron's work can be viewed on our website [here](#) and is available for licensing. I plan to provide a much larger selection of Ron's work in the near future, and I will assist his family in keeping his photographic legacy alive. You can view more of Ron's work on the website that he used for photographic print sales: www.RonAusting.com.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the following organizations that Ron supported:

Audubon Society of Ohio
3398 W Galbraith Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45239

Cincinnati Bird Club
2928 Saddleback Dr
Cincinnati, OH 45244

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

RAPTOR, Inc.
961 Barg Salt Run Rd
Milford, OH 45015

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd
Ithaca, NY 14850

Monarch Butterflies Need Our Help

East of the Rocky Mountains, the up to 1 billion monarchs that migrated to Mexico during the 1990s have declined to their lowest numbers in 2 decades. During the same period, western monarchs have

decreased by 90 percent. The primary culprit is habitat loss, particularly the elimination of nectar plants and milkweeds across millions of acres of agricultural land in the U.S. Midwest. [Link](#).

- Plant native milkweeds
- Cultivate native nectar-producing plants
- Avoid pesticides on monarch host and nectar plants

Ron Austing (1931-2014) by Jeffrey L. Hays

When I first moved to Cincinnati in 1989 I lived in College Hill. I would often see lone big beech trees in yards and small parks as I walked or drove around the area. These were only a few of the hundreds of smooth grey giants that made up the "Beechwoods," which Ron would often describe in stories from his youth in the late 1940s. To quote a great line from his book *I Went to the Woods*: "At that tender age it was a bold venture to cross the field which bordered our backyard to peer with wonder into that forbidden grey woodland of towering beeches."

I had the great pleasure of tagging along with Ron on many photography and bird banding trips. I met up with Ron numerous times on his annual fall trips to Point Pelee in Ontario, Canada, and Cape May, New Jersey. I was also invited by Ron to go to Mio, Michigan, one spring.

Ron had been making trips to Mio since the late 1960s to photograph and later shoot video of the rare Kirtland's Warbler. Ron collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on many projects regarding the habitat requirements and recovery of this rare warbler. On the first day out in the field I was amazed to find out that Ron had actually put my name on the federal permit to accompany and assist him in photographing Kirtland's Warbler nests and to go out with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service team mist netting and banding breeding adult Kirtland's Warblers. This was an amazing experience I will never forget.

Next spring, as I have for the last 20 years, I will visit and band the chicks in

the same Great Horned Owl territories that Ron originally found, visited, banded, photographed and wrote books about more than six decades ago. This time, however, something will be missing and there will be a void. At the end of the day I will not be able to call Ron and tell him which territories I visited that day, how many chicks were in each nest, and what prey items were left over from the previous night's dinner. But, I will always have the lessons he taught me and the stories he shared with me about birds and about life. He will be missed.

Jeffrey L. Hays is a long time board member of Raptor, Inc., a Cincinnati-based bird of prey rehabilitation and education center. He is a raptor specialist and researcher.

Return of the Wild Turkey by Allan Beach

By 1920 wild turkeys were extinct in 18 mid west and northeastern states including Ohio. In many of the New England states they went extinct in the 1800's. Turkeys are birds of the forest and when farms replaced forests they lost their habitat. Big male "Toms" at 15-24 lbs are easy targets for hunters and wonderful eating and over hunting occurred. Even the smaller hens at 8-13 lbs make a great meal. Hunters shot turkeys for the market in the 1800's. The great drought of the late 1920's and early '30's plus the depression of the 30's resulted in a lot of farm land going fallow. Gradually the forests returned and the turkeys began coming back in the 1950's and 1960's.

Turkeys like open forests with adjacent open areas. They like to feed early in the morning and again late in the day before flying to the trees to roost at night. They love acorns, beech nuts, pecans, hackberry, and the fruit of black cherry, wild grape, and spice bush. Seeds are very important in their diet, particularly ash, ironwood, witch hazel, hawthorn, pine, and flowering dogwood. They also eat grass and sedge seeds and stalks and in winter they take evergreens, ferns, bark and winter buds. As omnivores. salamanders, grasshoppers, insects, caterpillars,

snails, frogs, toad, lizards and snakes are in their diet plus an occasional pebble to aid in digestion.

Actually there are six subspecies of turkeys. In Ohio we share the Eastern subspecies with most of the states east of the Rocky Mts. The Florida subspecies is only found in the southern half of Florida. Merriam turkeys are found in the Rocky Mt states with the Rio Grande turkey found in south central plains and into Mexico. Gould's turkey is found in NW Mexico, and southern New Mexico and Arizona. The sixth subspecies from southern Mexico is now extinct but is the source of all of our domestic turkeys.

In the wild wintering turkeys gather in big flocks with a dominant Tom. By Feb in this area the Toms start strutting, fluffing their feathers, spreading a fan of tail feathers and gobbling to court the hens. The flocks are quite territorial at this time. Tom gobbling can be heard up to a mile. As the females become pregnant they go off by themselves to scratch out a nest site on the ground usually in cover near

the edge of the forest. She will lay anywhere from 4 to 17 eggs in the nest, usually 11-12. After the last egg is laid she will start incubation. Near the end of the 26-28 day incubation she will "kuk, kuk, kuk", to the eggs to bond to the poults. Turkeys have synchronous hatching of all eggs on one day usually about mid May. Poults are precocial, born with feathers,

eyes open and able to walk and feed themselves.

By 1990 wild turkeys were found in all 48 contiguous states and Hawaii (introduced) with an estimated population of 3.5 million. By 2010 the population had risen to about 7 million. Hunting, usually in fall and spring, by over 3

million hunters in all 49 states, takes about 700,000 every year. Hunting licenses and the tax on hunting equipment have paid for a lot of the reintroductions as well as creating new refuges. I've even had wild turkeys in my neighborhood in south eastern Finneytown. Wild turkeys are a real reintroduction and conservation success story.



Wild Turkey Flock
Courtesy Allan Beach



AUDUBON SOCIETY OF OHIO

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Become a Friend of the Audubon Society of Ohio

Membership form for the Cincinnati Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Enclose a check or money order payable to "ASO."

Membership: _____ 1 year - \$15 _____ Family - \$25

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (home): _____ (cell): _____

Email: _____

Mail to: ASO

3398 W Galbraith Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45239