THE ARTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Chris Moran

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), in the North Slope region of north-eastern Alaska, has been a safe haven for wildlife since 1960. ANWR is home to nearly 200 migratory and resident birds, herds of free-roaming caribou, polar bear, grizzly bear, wolves, Arctic foxes, wolverine and musk-oxen. On its coastal plain, its biological heart, migratory birds nest, the Porcupine caribou herd gives birth to calves and polar bears den. Birds connect the Arctic Refuge with the world. It is a national treasure and a stop for birds that migrate through all 50 states. The Northern Pintail nests in the Arctic Refuge.

However, the Arctic Refuge is involved in controversy over drilling for oil. Legislation has been introduced (S.820 and H.R.1889) to protect ANWR by designating the coastal plain as Wilderness, permanently protecting this land. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Coastal Plain as if it was a wilderness but it lacks official protection. The formal designation requires an act of Congress. The President’s budget calls for opening the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling. Legislation has been introduced to open the Refuge to oil and gas leasing but led to a filibuster. Not having 60 votes to override a filibuster, a budget reconciliation process requiring 50 votes could be used to open the Refuge to drilling.

Oil drilling construction and operation including roads, pipelines and drilling rigs in the Coastal Plain would result in irreversible damage to this vital bird habitat. As evidenced at Prudhoe Bay, oil spills occur, and oil fields attract predators that prey on birds and nesting waterfowl.

Thank Senator S. Brown, who is a cosponsor of the National Wilderness Preservation System (S.820). Urge Senator R. Portman to support S.820 and your Congressional Representatives to support H.R. 1889 to permanently protect the Refuge. Urge Ohio U.S. Senators and Congressmen to oppose any effort to open the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling particularly in the budget process.

For Senator Sherrod Brown: www.brown.senate.gov

For Senator Rob Portman: www.portman.senate.gov

For your U.S. House Representative: www.house.gov
Butterfly Workshop
by Ned Keller

We will hold a one-day workshop devoted to butterflies at Audubon House on Saturday, July 15. The workshop will include indoor presentations on butterfly identification and attracting butterflies to your yard in the morning. After lunch (bring your own), we’ll spend a couple of hours looking for butterflies at a nearby park.

The cost of the workshop will be $20 for A.S.O. members, or $35 for non-members (which will include a membership for the rest of 2017). Participation will be limited to 30 people. To sign up, send your check to Audubon Society of Ohio, 3398 West Galbraith Road, Cincinnati, OH 45239. Please include your email address and a telephone number, so that we can contact you with details about the event.

Programs

There will be no Audubon Society meetings in the month of July and August. Our regular Monthly Meetings will resume in September.

around the valley . . .

**Oxbow, Inc.**

**Field trip**
Saturday, July 15th, 10 a.m.
Leader: Denis Conover, (513) 641-3651, conovedg@hotmail.com
Meet: In the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow

**Field trip**
Friday, August 25th, 6 p.m.
*note this is an evening trip
Trip Leaders: Jack Stenger, (513) 503-3389, jackstenger@gmail.com, Jay Stenger, (513) 522-8147, jaystenger@cinci.rr.com
Meet: In the upper Oxbow parking lot at the main entrance to the Oxbow

**Cincinnati Nature Center Bird Walk**
Saturday, July 8th & 22nd, Aug. 12th & 26th
Meet in the Rowe Woods parking lot at 8 a.m
**Field Trips** (contributed by Jay Stenger)

**Saturday July 1st, 9 a.m.**

**Theme:** Prairie Plants in Bloom  
**Location:** Miami Whitewater Forest, Shaker Trace  
**Leader:** Jim Mundy,  
(513) 748-9003, jmmundy5@gmail.com  
**Meet:** in the Baughman Road Parking Lot. (see directions below)

The focus of this trip will be blooming prairie wildflowers. In 1992, Great Parks of Hamilton County began a native prairie and wetland restoration project of several hundred acres at Miami Whitewater Forest. The project has been a great success and today over 500 acres of a native grassland and wetland community is preserved. Often referred to as the Miami Whitewater wetlands, the entire complex is officially named Shaker Trace and represents the largest wetland/grassland complex in Hamilton County. 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. But our trip leader, Jim Mundy, is more than qualified in that regard. In fact Jim has probably planted a large percentage of these plants. Jim is recently retired from the Hamilton County Park District where he worked for almost 30 years in the Stewardship Department. Many of those years were spent working on the Shaker Trace project. Jim is a skilled botanist and overall naturalist and is also a board member of our Audubon Society Chapter and heads up our Preserves Committee.

Jims plan is to take a leisurely morning walk exploring the Shaker Trace complex with lots of stops to look at and identify plants, especially the prairie blooms. This is also a great time of year for butterflies and breeding birds will be at peak and Jim will make a point to...
Field Trips (continued from p. 3)

identify these and any other wildlife we encounter.

This trip will end around noon. We will be on foot for the duration of the trip but the walking will be slow and level. Some places are likely to be damp as we will at times walk along a marsh. We can expect July 1st to be hot, so to make your trip more comfortable we suggest bringing water, sun screen, insect repellant and wearing a hat. Bring your binoculars if you have any.

Restrooms are available in other areas of the park but there are none at Shaker Trace. A Hamilton County Park Motor Vehicle Permit is required ($3 daily, $10 annual). Feel free to contact Jim 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.

For a Park map and other information visit the Miami Whitewater Forest website at:

http://www.greatparks.org/parks/miami-whitewater-forest

Saturday, August 19th, 8 a.m.

Theme: Grassland Birds & Early Fall Migration
Location: Highland Stone Quarry & Rocky Fork State Park
Leader: Bill Stanley, (513) 324-2796, tyrannus58@gmail.com
Meet: at the Marathon Gas & Food Mart in Fayetteville Ohio, located on the northwest corner of the U.S. 50 & S.R. 68 intersections in Fayetteville. (see directions below)

We first scheduled this unique field trip last August and it proved quite popular and successful. So why not do it again. If you have never been to these locations you are in for a surprise. Rocky Fork Lake and State Park is probably the least visited of our regions State Parks and large reservoirs by local birders. Brookville, Hueston Woods, Caesar Creek and East Fork all get more birding attention. But as a birding destination the Rocky Fork region is every bit as productive and diverse as any of these other hotspots. Certainly located on what we consider the periphery of our Greater Cincinnati birding area, it is only about 43 miles east of Milford and no more distant than some of the previously mentioned locations (depending on your starting point).

Before you get to Rocky Fork, there are several old quarries and gravel pits (Highland Stone) located about 30 miles east of Milford and just south of U.S. 50. These pits are filled with water, creating a large lake which is surrounded by grassy fields and brushy edges, plunked right down in the middle of farm country. The adjacent gravel roads are quiet and seldom used and make access to the area easy. The bird life here is outstanding and is a great example of how little known unprotected areas such as gravel pits can be magnets for wildlife.

Both, Highland Stone Pits and Rocky Fork S.P., provide excellent birding at any season. Since this trip is scheduled for late summer we don’t expect to find too much on the water at either location. But early fall migration is just underway by this date and migrant herons and egrets, shorebirds, terns, ospreys, large numbers of swallows and several species of songbirds will be on the move and some will quite likely be seen. It’s also a good time of year to find a rarity or two. Nesting Bald Eagles are a daily site at Rocky Fork.

But the focus of this trip will be on grassland species. The many grassy, weedy fields found at Highland Stone and Rocky Fork Lake is great for a number of grassland species that are otherwise scarce to absent over much of our region. Some open country species we found on last year’s trip, and expect to find again this year, include: Northern Bobwhite, Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Lark Sparrow, Henslow’s Sparrows (large numbers at Rocky
Fork), Grasshopper Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows and Bobolink among others.

Our trip leader, Bill Stanley, is a very skilled and veteran birder who knows these areas well. We will meet Bill at the Fayetteville Marathon Station (see directions below) and caravan from there. Bill will lead us to the Highland Stone Pits from there, about a 14 minute drive, where we will spend some time birding along the quiet roads. From there, Bill will lead us to Rocky Fork Lake S.P., about a 20 minute drive. Rocky Fork Lake and its environs are quite large, so Bill will lead us to several spots around the lake to maximize our birding. Expect a bit of driving interspersed with several short walks. Bill figures this trip will run a bit past noon, or even longer if the birding is good. After the trip is “over”, Bill might make another stop or two on the way home. Remember that it is perfectly fine to leave a field trip any time you like. Walking will be on level ground and at a moderate pace. It can be very hot in late August so you may want to bring water, sun screen, insect repellent and a hat to make your trip more comfortable. There won’t be an “official” lunch break but there will be ample time for you to eat, so you may want to bring food and drinks along. Bill will plan restroom stops along the way. There is a restroom at our meeting location and several at Rocky Fork. There are no restrooms at Highland Stone.

Feel Free to contact Bill if you have any questions.

**Directions:** to Marathon Gas & Food Mart in Fayetteville, Ohio:

From I–275 at the Milford Parkway/U.S. 50 Exit # 59, take U.S. 50 east for about 20 miles to the intersection of U.S. 68 in Fayetteville, Ohio. The Marathon Station is located on the northwest corner. Meet in the Parking Lot but park away from the front doors if possible.

Rocky Fork State Park Website: http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/rockyfork

Rocky Fork State Park Map: http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/Portals/parks/PDFs/parks/Maps/Rocky_Fork/rockyforkparkmap.pdf

Dickcissel. © Photo by Lana Hays
A rare visitor to the Cincinnati area, this group of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks (more commonly seen in Texas) was first spotted by Marianne Gorman at Gilmore Ponds Preserve in late May.

Having stuck around for several days, hundreds of local birders got the chance to see these gorgeous birds. Gilmore Ponds, once slated for “development” and the bulldozer, was saved by the efforts of local birders and wilderness defenders through the Gilmore Ponds Conservancy. One more reason our efforts are so important.

–Mark Gilsdorf
Hone your birding and identification skills by registering for the 31st 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. This year’s dates are; October 8th, October 15th and October 22nd. Father-son team Jay Stenger and Jack Stenger will again 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.

Each class will begin at 8 a.m. with a casual classroom session that includes a continental breakfast. The classroom sessions will be followed by a field trip to a local hot spot, usually wrapping up about 1 p.m. The field trip locations will be determined by current birding conditions and the interests of the participants.

Through discussions, visual and 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 450 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 $15 for ASO members and $30 for non-members which include a year’s membership in ASO. The course will be limited to a maximum of 25 participants. To register, please make your check payable to ASO and mail to:

ASO Bird Course
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.
Our mission is to promote the conservation and appreciation of nature for environmental sustainability with a focus on birds, through habitat protection and education.

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) _________ Additional Contribution

Name: __________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________

City:_________________________ State:___________ Zip:__________

Phone (home) ______________________ (cell): _________________________

E-mail: __________________________________________________________

Mail to:
ASO
3398 W. Galbraith Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45239

Your information will not be shared with any other group