



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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March 2004

March Program

*The Important Bird Area (IBA) Program
as a Conservation Tool*

*John Ritzenhaller, Director of Habitat
Conservation, Audubon Ohio*

Thursday, March 18 7:00 p.m.
at the Sharon Woods Visitor Center

The Important Bird Area program is a worldwide effort. In Ohio, we established an Ohio IBA Technical Committee and went through a site nomination process. Based on a set of scientific criteria, the IBA program identified critical bird conservation areas in Ohio. We have since conducted bird monitoring workshops and enlisted monitors to survey IBAs. Following site identification and monitoring, conservation planning for IBAs is the next phase. We intend to focus attention on selected IBAs to develop and implement bird conservation plans.

About the Speaker: John has been with Audubon since 1985. He was an Environmental Educator at Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm in Dayton, Ohio for 14 years. Since late 1999 he has served as Director of Habitat Conservation for Audubon Ohio, the state office of the National Audubon Society. John graduated with a B.S. from Hobart College, Geneva, New York and has done graduate work at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York and Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. He has been an Adjunct Instructor of Ornithology at Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio, since 1995.



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March Field Trips

East Fork State Park Saturday, March 20

Hank Armstrong will lead us on a tour of several locations around the East Fork State Park and Harsha Reservoir. Waterfowl migration should be near peak and we should see a variety of waterfowl, loons, grebes and gulls. We expect to see a variety of other species including late winter and early spring migrants. We are starting early to beat the boating, which usually increases later in the day. It is possible that we will make a side trip to the Camp Dennison gravel pits, to end our day. This trip should end in the early afternoon, so plan accordingly. We will meet at 7:30 am at the new Visitors Center which is located on the south section of the park. From Route 125 follow signs to the park entrance, then follow signs to the new center. For further info contact Hank by phone at (513)474-3867 or by email at hlabird@aol.com.

Summit Lake State Park Saturday, March 27

Jay Stenger will lead this trip to one of our area's best waterfowl spots. Waterfowl, waterbirds and early spring migrants will be expected in good numbers on the trip to this Indiana State Park. On our way back home we will visit a few locations at Brookville Reservoir. We will meet at 7:30 am at the Park & Ride on SR128, located at the I-275/ Miamitown exit. This trip will break up in late afternoon, so pack a lunch. Call Jay with any questions at (513)522-8147 or email him at jaystenger@cinci.rr.com.

Birding Alaska

contributed by Don Kinsman

For years we had read that sooner or later every birder must go to Alaska, so after several years of thinking about it and considerable planning, last May my friend Chuck, his wife Rosemarie, their son Justin and I went.

We started early Sunday morning with a professional tour in Anchorage. The tour visited a variety of small lakes, the waterfront, parks, and Potter's Marsh on the road to Seward. Potter's Marsh was alive with Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls were everywhere we went. One park area produced a Hudsonian Godwit and another a Pacific Loon and a Black-billed Magpie. Potter's Marsh also produced a Red-necked Grebe, but failed to yield the Red-necked Phalarope which had been reported as being there.

Our leader also had access to a salmon hatchery with a lot of "keep out" signs where we saw a pair of American Dippers, remarkable birds who can walk underneath swiftly flowing water. Nearby on a small pond was a female Barrow's Goldeneye, a lifer for all of us.

At a park right near the airport and our hotel our guide showed us a nesting place for a pair of Three-toed Woodpeckers. We did not see them, but marked the spot, returned later in the day by ourselves and found them. Another park we went to by ourselves gave us singing Alder Flycatchers.

The next day we drove to Seward. Along the way a stop at a rest area yielded a Boreal Chickadee. Seward itself easily gave us Northwestern Crows, Black-billed Magpies, a substantial number of Bald Eagles, and a dozen or so Harlequin Ducks in summer plumage.

The following day we took a 9 ½ hour boat trip to Northwestern Glacier. A whole article could be devoted to the many wonderful mammals and whales we saw, but I'll stick to

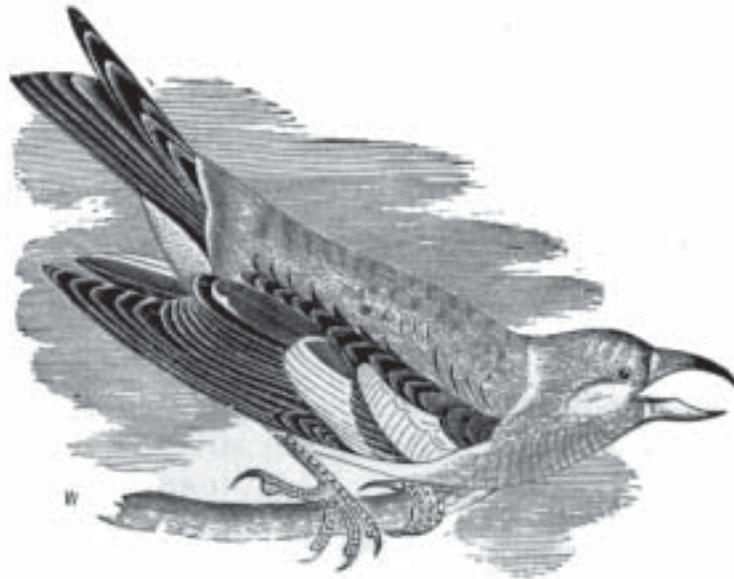
birds. Our guide book to Alaska birding (the "Lane series") said to ask the captain to look for birds and announce them if possible. We did and he was really good at spotting and identifying. From where he was he had an unobstructed view and when he would announce things like "a pair of Pigeon Guillemots on the left" we would scurry over from wherever we were. The Guillemots were swimming and diving right next to boat and were a great sight. That day we also spotted Common Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes by the hundreds; numerous Glaucous-winged Gulls; many Horned and Tufted Puffins; a Marbled Murrelet; both Pelagic and Red-faced Cormorants in good numbers as well as Double-crested Cormorants; and, as we sat with engines off watching and listening to the Northwestern Glacier, a Kittlitz's Murrelet.

After Seward we traveled north to the Trapper Creek area. A morning at Byer's Lake produced Boreal Chickadees, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Common Redpolls all in the same tree. Down by the lake we got to within 50 feet of a couple of Surf Scoters, lifers for my friends, and up on the hillside we were treated to a good 15 minutes of up close views of another Three-toed Woodpecker. We did not record the mosquitoes though I think they were bird-sized.

An afternoon trip down Petersville Road gave us a pair of Varied Thrushes and some Sandhill Cranes.

Our final birding push was crossing the Denali Highway west to east. Almost immediately on entering the highway we saw the light colored northern variant of a Great Horned Owl sitting on a telephone pole. Then we quickly kicked up a Willow Ptarmigan. We were set for easy pickings, but found after this initial success we had to work hard for birds. There were millions of pines and every one had a "knob" at the top which looked like a perched bird. That drove us crazy, but at a pond we did easily find two Red-throated Loons who were calling. Later, joining with an interesting couple from California, we managed to track down an Arctic Warbler. It almost "got away," but near the highway's eastern end we also managed to spot a lone Red-necked Phalarope at the edge of another pond making up for the big miss at Potter's Marsh. Our last bird of the day was a repeat of my personal favorite: an American Dipper walking around in a swiftly flowing stream under a bridge.

We barely touched Alaska and were not there all that long, but saw many wonderful birds, scenery, mammals and met some interesting and colorful people. Do go if you can.



The New Oxbow

contributed by Jon Seymour, President, Oxbow, Inc.

It still floods, the roads can be a quagmire, there is trash all around, and I get lost not knowing where I can and can not go. What is new about that?????????

What is new is that some things are changing. First, the obvious things that do not change, it is a flood plain and it will flood. The roads can be treacherous. They are composed of river silt and when they get wet they are slippery and bottomless. But there are some new things going on!

If you have not been over to the Oxbow area in the last two years you will notice that there is a new lake that was not there before. You will also find that it is really easy to know if you are on Oxbow land or whether you are on private property. You will find a parking lot at the entrance and a parking area overlook of Oxbow Lake that allows viewing access to people with limited mobility. These are all things that are new in the last two years.

Our member volunteers picked up 4.3 tons of trash in our September clean-up and we are having another clean-up in March. The river brings in a lot of stuff, but we really made a dent in the trash around the entrance road.

The Lawrenceburg Conservancy District area has a wonderful grassland restoration around Jackpot Pond that is showing all sorts of grassland birds. Native forbes and grasses have been seeded around Osprey Lake and burning and cutting programs have been instituted to try to establish native prairie grasses. In the past year we have had visitors as diverse as thousands of migrating ducks, sandhill cranes, osprey, shorebirds, bald eagles, roosting black vultures, roosting black crowned night herons, a rookery of 75 great egrets, white pelicans, and cormorants.

The area is also the home of many mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Butterflies and native wildflowers also call the Oxbow their home. We are expectantly waiting for the first sighting of a northbound Whooping Crane migrating to Wisconsin from Florida.

So come and see us. A map that shows the main features of the Oxbow is attached for your convenient use.



April Events

Mark your calendar now, and watch for the April newsletter for details. We may also add another field trip.

Program:

Thursday, April 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Audrey Mayer, Communication Towers and Bird Migration in Southwest Ohio and Throughout the United States

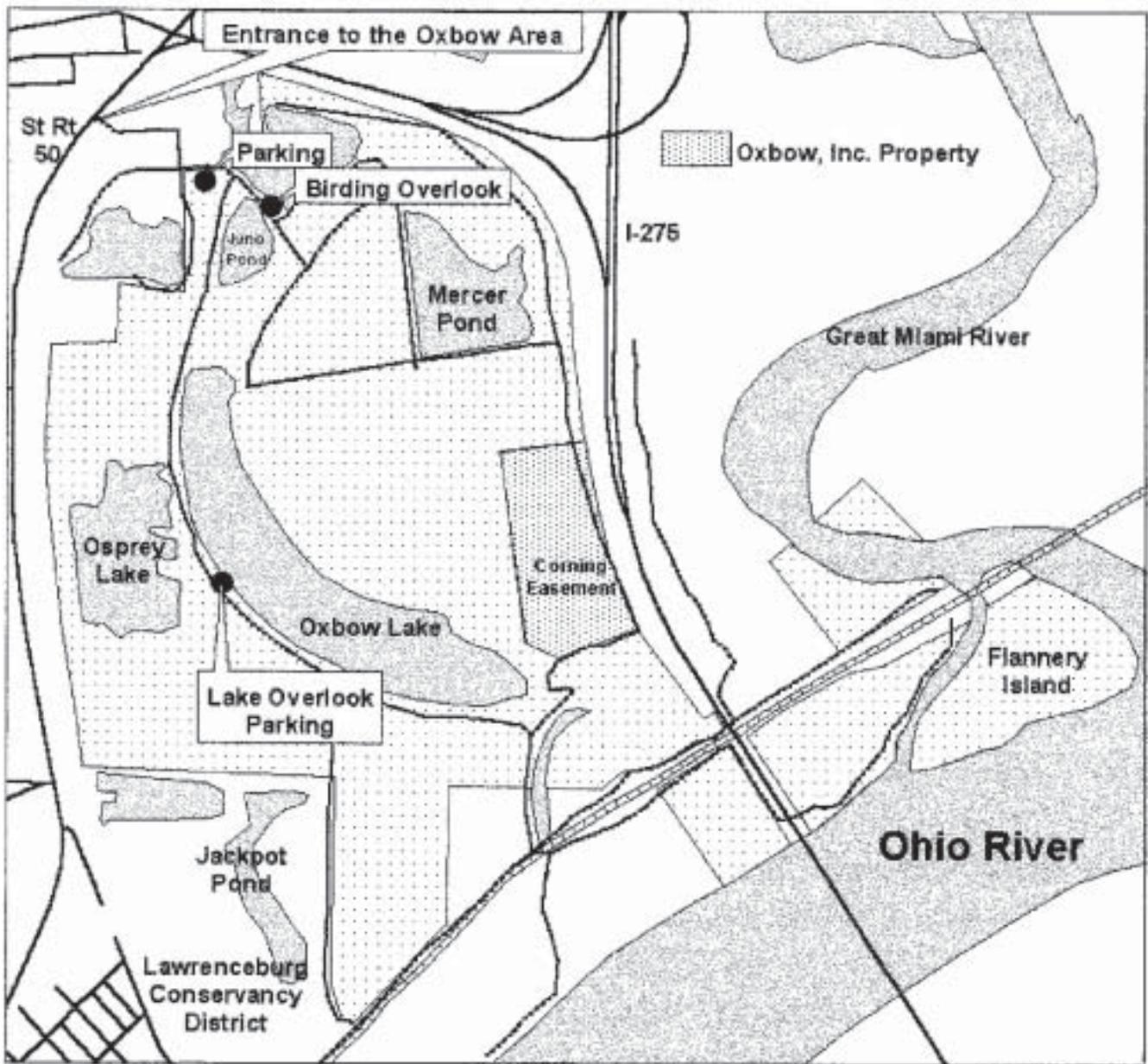
Field Trip:

Saturday, April 10 at 8:00 a.m.

Miami Whitewater Forest and Wetlands

Map of The Oxbow Area

2004



<http://cincinnatibirds.com/goodbird/sighting.php>

Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:
Jay Stenger
522-4245

President:
Paul Wharton
353-3403

Treasurer:
Peggy Gatch
831-3378

Programs:
Jay Lehman
527-4701

Newsletter:
Ned Keller
941-6497

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