



The Passenger Pigeon

The Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

May 2009 Vol 45 No. 5

Indiana's Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge presented by Joe Robb

7:00 pm on Thursday, May 21st at Sharon Woods

Many Cincinnati area birders regularly visit Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Located about 60 miles west of the Oxbow along US 50, Muscatatuck's 7,800 acres teem with birds and other wildlife. Muscatatuck is indeed a special place. Yet there is another larger NWR considerably closer to the Cincinnati area. Just 28 miles west of the Oxbow as the crow flies (46 road miles to the entrance), also on US 50, is the vast 50,000-acre Big Oaks NWR.

Big Oaks NWR is a relatively new wildlife refuge. It was originally the US Army Jefferson Proving Grounds (JPG), which was established by the Army in 1940 as an ordnance testing installation, and closed in 1995. Beginning in 1996, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed the wildlife resources of JPG. Big Oaks NWR was established in June 2000. Because of the possibility of unexploded ordnance left over from the army days, large parts of the refuge are restricted. But several thousand acres are open and well worth the visit.

The refuge is unique in that it contains one of the largest contiguous forest blocks and grassland complexes in southeast Indiana, as

well as several thousand acres of wetlands and shrublands all of which provide habitat for a diverse number of birds. Most notable is one of the world's largest populations of Henslow's Sparrows. From 600 to more than 800 pairs of Henslow's Sparrows are estimated to breed in the large grasslands on the refuge. Several other regionally uncommon to rare species are also common at Big Oaks including Red-headed Woodpeckers, Blue Grosbeaks, and Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers.

Who better to tell us about this fascinating place than our May speaker, Joe Robb, of Big Oaks NWR. Joe has been at JPG/Big Oaks since 1998 and the Refuge Manager since 2002. Joe received his undergraduate degree from Purdue University with a B.S. in Forestry with a Wildlife Management option. He then earned a MS and PhD at The Ohio State University in Zoology (avian/wetland ecology). Since then Joe has published about 10 referred papers. While at Big Oaks NWR Joe has researched Henslow's Sparrows, Cerulean Warblers and is currently studying crawfish frogs.

Joe's program will focus on the diverse bird life and habitats at Big Oaks NWR (i.e.,

Henslow's Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Red-headed Woodpecker, Worm-eating and Cerulean Warblers etc.). Joe will also discuss the natural history of the area and give us a few tips about visiting the refuge.

I have had the pleasure to meet and hear Joe speak on a couple of occasions. His laid back speaking approach and knowledge of Big Oaks and its birds will prove to be an interesting and entertaining program.

Jay Stenger, CBC Program Coordinator



Queen City Birding Festival

Saturday, May 16th: 9 am to 6 pm

Sunday, May 17th: 9am to Noon

Hueston Woods State Park: Nature Center

Sponsored by: Avian Research and Education Institute (AREI)

Hourly bird walks, raptor show, bird banding demonstrations, reptile show, canoe trip, numerous activities for children, as well as seminars on the Ohio Young Birder's Club, Basic Birding, Audubon's Important Bird Areas (IBA's) and Landscaping for Birds. See the schedule of events: <http://www.avianinstitute.com/>

May Field Trip

6:30 am Saturday, May 23

Indiana's Big Oaks NWR

Register in advance: limited space

In conjunction with our May program, the CBC will conduct a field trip to Big Oaks. Refuge Manager Joe Robb (or possibly another staff member) will give us a behind the scenes tour through the restricted portions of this amazing refuge.

The CBC was given a similar tour on May 21, 2006. On that trip our group tallied **103** total species during our 7:30 am-2:00 pm visit. Our trip list included **22** species of warblers (including Mourning, numerous Henslow's Sparrows and Blue Grosbeaks.

Spring migration, while a week past peak, will still be underway and we should find many migrants as well as breeding birds.

It will be necessary to pre-register for this trip. We can take about 15 people. **Reservations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis.** To register, contact Jay Stenger, at jaystenger@cinci.rr.com or at (513-522-8147). If you get a machine, leave a message. **We will meet on Saturday, May 23 at 6:30 am at a pre-designated local site and will caravan to Big Oaks together.** The meeting place and other details will be given to you when you register.

Jay Stenger, CBC Program Coordinator

Birding by Ear Workshop at the Wilds



Weekend of
May 29-31
Cumberland,
Ohio

The Fifth Annual “Birding by Ear” workshop returns to the Wilds the last weekend in May. The event has classes and programs for beginners, intermediate, and advanced birders. The cost is \$175 and covers programs, accommodation in yurts, and four catered meals. Speakers include Jim McCormac and Al Parker. For more information:

http://www.thewilds.org/events/bird_by_ear.asp

The Wilds is located in Cumberland, Ohio southeast of Zanesville. The 10,000 acres of grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and lakes are a restoration ecology success story. Nearly 90 % of the Wilds was previously surfaced mined for bituminous coal. The reclaimed grasslands are now an Audubon Important Bird Area.

Midwest Native Plant Conference



Weekend of July
24-26

Hope Hotel in
Dayton, Ohio

Cincinnati Wild Ones, Midwest Native Plant Society, and Flora-Quest have joined efforts to present the Midwest Native Plant Conference. Proceeds benefit Dayton’s Beavercreek Wetlands Association and Marianist Environmental Education Center (MEEC). Keynote speakers include Judy Burris and Wayne Richards on butterfly gardening and *Go Native!* author Carolyn Harstad.

Topics include landscaping for birds, native horticultural landscapes, rain gardens, and fen restoration. Breakout tracks include wildlife, prairies, and wetlands. Field trip sites include Cedar Bog, Glen Helen Nature Preserve, Huffman Prairie, Clifton Gorge, Gallagher Fen, and Possum Creek and Cox Arboretum MetroPark. For information: <http://www.cincinnatibirds.com/mwnp/>

Midwest Birding Symposium at Lakeside, Ohio September 17-20th



Save the date for MSB presented by *Bird Watcher’s Digest* and the Ohio Ornithological Society. Speakers include Julie Zickefoose, Kenn Kaufman, Scott Weidensaul, Lang Elliott, Bill Thompson III and more. Workshops include birding, blogging, bird photography, and eBird. Special events include a screening of the movie “Opposable Chums: Guts and Glory at the World Series of Birding”. Registration online: <http://www.midwestbirding.org> or call 888-896-6927.

2009 Oxbow Birdathon Information

As in past years, Birdathon will be held on the second weekend in May over a 24-hour two-day period during the peak of spring migration. Birdathon begins at 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 8th and ends at 5:00 p.m. Saturday, May 9th. It will culminate in a grand tally and pizza party at the Winton Woods Visitor Centre in Winton Woods.

Birdathon 2008 was a great success, rivaling the glory years when the event began in 1988. In 2008, 17 teams took part and helped raise over \$6,800.00 for Oxbow Inc. Proceeds will be used towards projects to support wetland habitat improvement and accessibility. During last years' outstanding effort, teams identified a combined group total of 197 species of birds.

There is a \$5.00 per person registration fee. This is your only cost. Most of that goes to defray the cost of pizza, snacks, drinks and other goodies at the Grand Tally.

If you would like to register as a team or as an individual participant in the Oxbow Birdathon please use the Registration Form in this newsletter. Or email jaystenger@cinci.rr.com or call me at (513) 522-8147 and I will send you a registration form. **Please send your completed registration back to ASAP.**

Oxbow Inc. will be happy to sponsor your team, but we encourage teams made up of other conservation and education organizations. If you would like to have your team sponsored by another group, we ask that you split any funds you raise 50/50 with Oxbow Inc.

We do of course encourage solicitation of pledges per species and/or donations, but how much or how little are up to you. There is no

standard, no one asks for any money during the event: if you do collect money, we ask that you mail it to us after Birdathon is over. Remember *all* Oxbow Inc. contributions are tax deductible as is the *mileage driven for the event*.

Anyone can participate on any skill level. There are several competitive categories one can chose from, or you are welcome to participate as a non-competitor. If you want to compete competitively in the Birdathon, you will have to follow the Birdathon Rules. If you do not want to compete competitively, you pretty much can do whatever you want: our only advice is to have a lot of fun.

There is no official starting point. You can begin at 5:00 p.m. sharp anywhere in the Birdathon area you like. But be sure to arrive at the Winton Centre no later than 5:00 p.m. Saturday, May 9th. Competitive teams will be penalized one species per minute late.

I encourage you to come out and celebrate birds and conservation with our birding community. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at the above listed numbers. You can find more information on the Oxbow Inc, website. <http://www.oxbowinc.info/>

Jay Stenger, Oxbow Inc.

Birdathon Committee

9761 Winton Rd.

Cincinnati, Ohio 45231

jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

(513)522-8147

Birdathon 2009

(Sponsored by Oxbow, Inc.)

Participant Registration Form

Choose one or more of the following categories:

- Most Species by a Team (most overall species by a group)
- Most Species by an Individual (most overall species by an individual)
- Most Species in a Back Yard (most species observed from one yard)
- Most Species One State (most species by state, either Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky)
- Most Species One County (most species in any one county, ex: Hamilton)
- Most Species In One Location (recorded in one defined area, ex: The Oxbow)
- Most Species Non-Fossil Fuel (recorded without using any gasoline)
- Most Species Big Sit (recorded from one fixed 30 x 30 foot spot)
- Most Species Family (most species by a family, parent/guardian and at least one child)
- Most Species Under Age 20 (most species seen by a group 19 & under, 1 adult allowed)
- Most Funds Raised by a Team
- Most Funds Raised by an Individual
- Most Funds raised by Persons Under 20 Years Old
- Other: Name your own: _____

Remember the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise money for improving Oxbow habitat and Oxbow accessibility projects.

I want to enter a team (or as an individual) in the Oxbow Birdathon.

Organization Represented (IF Any) _____

Team Captain _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Address _____

**Mail to: Oxbow, Inc
9761 Winton Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45231**

Names of Team Members:

Name of Team: _____ Number
of Team Members (or single individual) _____ X \$5.00 = \$ _____

Include a check made out to Oxbow, Inc. covering the team fee with this application.



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2008-2009 Dues:

If you haven't sent in your dues yet for the September 2008 - May 2009 birding year, please fill out the form below and mail it in along with your membership fees.

VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub/index.php

Bird Club Membership

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Email (Save trees and \$: we'll send the newsletter to your inbox!) _____

_____ Individual \$12.00 _____ Family \$15.00 _____ Student \$5.00

Make your check payable to **Cincinnati Bird Club**, and mail to our Treasurer:
Lois Shadix, 2928 Saddleback Dr, Cincinnati, OH 45244

