



Columbus Audubon Song Sparrow

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President's message

Support your local Birdathon

By Dave Horn

It's that time of year again, when birds are heading north and birdwatchers are heading outdoors to enjoy the spectacle of spring migration. It's also time for the annual Audubon Birdathon, our fun-filled fund-raiser. In this issue of the *Song Sparrow* you'll find an article on Birdathon teams and details of sponsorship. Please give some serious thought to participating, if not as part of a team, at least as a supporter.

Why is your support so important?

This year, your Columbus Audubon Board has decided that 100 percent of our Birdathon proceeds will go toward the Columbus Audubon Center being developed in the Whittier Peninsula area. Your Board has also decided to *match* the 2005 Birdathon proceeds with a contribution up to \$15,000. (Yes, we have the money thanks to the generosity of many people over the years, and the Internal Revenue Service prefers non-profit organizations to invest in worthy causes rather than hoarding funds).

That means if the Birdathon nets a total of \$15,000 in contributions, the Audubon Center project will receive \$ 30,000. Is that possible? Well, Columbus Audubon has raised \$10,000 to \$12,000 in recent Birdathons and is consistently among the top 20 chapters *nationally* in Birdathon contributions. Fifteen thousand is do-able!

Why the Columbus Audubon Center?

We believe that this is not only a wonderful opportunity but a crucial outreach to a non-traditional audience in the urban environment. There are thousands of young people out there who have never seen a hawk up close; don't know that there are different kinds of sparrows (or mice or cockroaches); and don't know a star from a planet or a butterfly from a moth; because they've never been exposed to these things. Through the Audubon Center we can bring our message of appreciation of birds and conservation of the environment to people of all ages, and maybe change some lives. I have a bit of personal experience in this: As a budding birder in 1952 I moved from suburban Georgia to the inner-city of Cambridge, Mass. (Cambridge has some nice neighborhoods but our home was closer to the grimy, aging industrial core.) How refreshing it was to take the subway (cars built in 1912) to the wooden streetcar (yes, *wooden*, on the MTA "E" line) to the Boston Children's Museum where Massachusetts Audubon volunteer Miss Dickey led 15-20 kids on bird-walks through local neighborhoods and along the Fenway. If it hadn't been for that program I might not be writing this today. If you're interested in the possibilities of an Audubon center, look over the programs offered at Aullwood Audubon Center in Dayton, <http://www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/aullwood/>. For more on the Columbus Audubon project, go to <http://www.audubon.org/chapter/oh/oh/> and click on "Nature Centers."

I invite you to get on board! No experience necessary! You can form your own Birdathon team. It's fun, it's easy; you can bird at any pace and style, from the 24-hour turbo birding of the "Quick 3 Beards" to the leisurely wine-and-cheese one-bird-per-year of the "Deck Birds." Or simply support the team of your choice. We're so often concerned, and frustrated, about the quality of the environment. Here's something we can do to make a positive impact on our future.



By Dorenda Watson

Northern Flicker.

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May 7-15, 2005

Columbus Audubon Birdathon begins its second decade

By Julie Davis

In 1994, the CA Birdathon was expanded to make it accessible to more members. Since then, participation has greatly increased. We now have 3 time categories to fit any birder's schedule.

The 24-hour category is for all those avid birders striving to identify every warbler, shorebird and raptor in their path.

The 10-hour category is for serious, but well rested birders, who are happy to discern between a magnolia and a blackburnian warbler.

For those who think a hike or a picnic in the park is the best way to see birds, we have the 5-hour category. As you can see we have something for every member.

The CA Birdathon is great fun for everyone, whether you are part of a team or a team sponsor.

If you would like to form your own team, start with your favorite birding buddies, choose a fun team name and call Katryn Renard (614) 261-7171 to register.

Hit up all your friends and co-workers to sponsor you and then go birding!

Count all the birds that you can identify in your chosen category on any day between **May 7-15**. Remember, you don't have to stay in Ohio; anywhere your group wants to travel to do their birding is fine.

All of our teams and sponsors are invited to celebrate their success on Friday, May 27, at the shelter house in Antrim Park.



There will be some evening birding, door prizes, 2 grand prize drawings and dessert. The grand prizes this year include a Denali 60mm spotting scope generously donated by Eagle Optics and a free nights stay at the Indian Bear Lodge. More details on the celebration will be published in the May newsletter and will be included in the information packets all teams will receive by mid-April.

Another important way to participate in the Birdathon is to sponsor a team. Just fill out the form in this newsletter, pick the team you wish to sponsor and send it in. You do not need to send your money until you receive a notice from the team you sponsored.

The big news this year is where your sponsorship dollars will go. All of the profits from the Birdathon this year will go to Audubon Ohio to support the Whittier Peninsula project, which is located in an Important Bird Area. This will be the state's first urban Audubon Nature Center. Audubon Ohio envisions this as an opportunity to bring urban programs and education to children and families in the city. Columbus Audubon feels very strongly about this project. As such, **CA will match every dollar up to \$15,000** that is donated during the Birdathon. We hope this commitment will encourage new and larger donations towards this great cause.

Please see page 3 for a list of teams already registered and the number of species they expect to find. To sponsor a team, just fill out the form below the team list. To add your team to the list, please contact Katryn Renard at (614)-261-7171.

Two grand prizes to choose from

All participants who get their money in by Friday, May 27 will be eligible to win one of these 2 grand prizes. In addition to great birding and raising money for the Whittier project, these prizes should encourage you to form your own team.

Indian Bear Lodge

Indian Bear Lodge has donated a one night's stay at their old west style lodge in Walhonding, Ohio. Poised on a hill over looking 100 acres of nature, Indian Bear Lodge offers hospitality at it's finest. The lodge is located close to Amish Country, Longaberger, Roscoe Village and much more!

Indian Bear Lodge is the perfect place to relax because nothing surrounds it but nature itself. Hike the nature trails, ride bikes, relax in one of our hot tubs or just enjoy your luxury lodge room.

Once you're here you'll feel like you're a million miles away!

Denali 60mm spotting scope

Our other grand prize, a Denali 60mm spotting scope, was generously donated by **Eagle Optics**. The scope has premium optical performance in a light weight 60mm package. The Denali 60mm spotting scope will be a pleasure to take anywhere because of its robust field worthiness and optical quality. BaK-4 prisms and fully multi-coated lenses ensure bright sharp images. This scope comes with a 15-45x zoom eyepiece which will give you all the range you need. The rugged waterproof nitrogen purged housing make this scope very field worthy in any viewing situation. The scope package includes table-top tripod, photo adapter and view-thru case.

About the Columbus Audubon Center

Audubon Ohio is developing the state's first urban Audubon Nature Center at the Whittier Peninsula site, which has been designated an Important Bird Area of critical habitat. An impressive 212 bird species have been recorded at the Greenlawn Dam Important Bird Area, of which the Whittier Peninsula is part. The most exciting element in the Audubon Center project is the opportunity to build within the downtown community. We will empower urban youth to enjoy and protect the nature in their own backyard instead of busing children to nature somewhere in the suburbs or country. Audubon Ohio, the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, and the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District are collaborating on

this major "green" project to develop the Whittier Peninsula of the Scioto River into an urban greenspace anchored by an Audubon Center. When the redevelopment of the Whittier Peninsula is completed, the site will showcase the resilience of nature and the power of intelligent, conservation-minded development and design. It will demonstrate the possibility of revisiting and mitigating the effects of past development decisions made under different priorities. It will serve as a model of what cooperation and civic determination can do to revitalize a community and restore habitat.

-From the Audubon Ohio Website

Birdathon teams

Backyard Experience

Chick-a-dees - 45

Gerry Brevoort
Joan Frederick
Nina Hawranick
Cyndi Henderson
Lynn Singleton
Lisa Zider

Chestnut Ridge Chachalacas - 90

Scott Felker
Eleanor Nunley
Bill & Eric Reiner

Coo Coo Birds - 40

Deborah & Ken Buckley

Deck Birds - 1

Cheri Brown
Pat Barron
Bev May
Pete Precario

Even Tempered Longspurs - 50

Mary Ann Hrabley
Liz Melick
Julia & Pat Wolfrom

Gone With the Wrens - 50

Mary Counter
Christine Eitel

Lady Birds who Lunch - 50

Tamara James
Kristan Leedy

Marsh Madness - 115

Bill & Deb Marsh

Metro Parks Stellar Jays - 95

Jim Davidson

Jack McDowell

Joe Meara
John O'Meara
Joel Wachtel

Neat Nests - 35

Scott & Whitney Jaeb
Fred Lancia
Del, Jordan, & Myranda Parrott

No Egrets - 75

Becky Cummings
Elaine & Larry Smith
Roger Stout
Laura Thomas

Pelicans - 40

Mark & Lauren Richards
Benjamin & Riley Richards

Quick Three Beards - 175

Dave Horn
Dan Sanders
Troy Shively
Bill Whan

Roadrunners - 100

Chris Frantz
Dan Shepherd

Scarlet & Gray Tanagers - 75

Joe & Susanne Gatesman
Barb & Stephen Revard
Mark Setterlin
Susan Setterlin

Slate (Run) Colored Juncos - 101

Linda Benner
Doug & Kristen Everman
Andrea Haslage
Jen Myers

Susan Moore

Lori Patterson
Randy Rogers
Brad Sparks
Lynn Taylor

Swans and Coots - 70

Alan Cohen
Clyde Gosnell
Paul Knoop
Katryn Renard
Marlene Woolun
Louise Warner

Two Footed Boobies - 85

Marcia Brehmer
Marion Farber
Melanie Shuter
Mary Kay Wood

Two Good Eggs - 100

Sue Kramp
Jane Kleber

Two in a Bush - 65

Patty DeMaria
Elaine Fujimora
Biani Moran

Westerville Waxwings - 130

Julie & Ken Davis
Jen Sauter
Darlene Sillick

Wild Birds Unlimited

Riverside - 160

Michael Flynn
Joe Hammond
Steve Landes
Tom Sheley

Sponsorship form

Sign me up! I would like to sponsor one of the teams above by pledging a specified amount of money for each species they see during the Birdathon. (For example, 100 species at 15 cents per bird would add up to a donation of \$15.) The money will be paid in cash or check to Columbus Audubon when I am informed of the results of my team's foray.

Team Name _____ Pledge _____

My Name _____ Phone# _____

Street, City, State, Zip Code _____

Mail to: "Birdathon," c/o Columbus Audubon, P.O. Box 141350, Columbus, Ohio 43214

Coming Up

Columbus Audubon activities are for nature enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. We invite you to join us for a field trip or program to learn more about birds and their central Ohio habitats, as well as other natural history topics. Our activities are free and open to the public and there is no need to register unless otherwise noted.

Field trips

Spring along the Scioto

Saturday April 9, 8 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill level: All

Spring will be starting to erupt as we look for waterfowl, hawks, and early landbird migrants along the lower Scioto. The first waves of landbird migrants should be overlapping the last waves of migrant waterfowl as we journey along Columbus' main migrant corridor, so shake off those winter cobwebs and dust off those field guides. We'll hike around the Whittier Peninsula, then journey to several nearby parks and ponds to look for hidden migrants. Meet at the parking area in the South Scioto boat launch. *Contact Rob Thorn at (614) 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.*

Ohio Wildlife Center Bird Count

Sunday April 10, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All

Meet Darlene Sillick at the Ohio Wildlife Center's Cook Road facility in Delaware County where we will continue to compile a list of birds we see on this property, adjacent to the Twin Lakes Nature Preserve. **Directions:** Take state Route 315 to Powell Road. Turn left. Follow Powell Road until it dead ends into state Route 257. Turn left and immediately turn right onto the O'Shaughnessy Dam. Drive over the dam and turn right at the traffic light onto state Route 745. Follow 745 about 4 miles. Look for the OWC sign and turn left. The facility is at 6131 Cook Road. *Contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Valhalla Acres Fiber Farm walk

Saturday April 16, 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All

Join Robert and Jane Evans on a charming and wandering stroll around their farm in Muskingum County. Valhalla Acres Fiber Farm is located on 57 acres of ridgetop fields and wooded ravines in Hopewell Township. Bob is a consulting geologist and historian. Jane operates the fiber farm and produces many types of hand-spun wool and woolen products from a mixed-breed flock of longwool sheep, llamas, and angora rabbits. Plans are for a 2-hour stroll

around the farm to examine its various habitats for April migrants and residents. Bob will no doubt expound on the local geology as well as the birds. After leaving the farm we will have lunch at Clark's then stop at Dawes Arboretum. Meet at the Meijer on Brice Road. We will car-pool from there. **Directions:** Take I-70 East get off at Exit 110A (Brice Rd. south). It is a short distance from I-70 on the right. *Contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Glacier Ridge Wetlands

Sunday April 17, 1 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

Skill level: All

Come discover one of the Columbus Metro Parks' significant new acquisitions. On this introductory trip, we will view the wetlands from the observation tower at the Honda Wetlands Education Center. Then we will explore the wetlands up close and observe Spring migrants from the boardwalk trail. Meet at the McDonald's on state Route 161 between Old Dublin and I-270. *Contact Mike Flynn, at (614) 882-9493.*

Calamus Swamp

Saturday April 23, 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Dave Horn

Skill level: All

Head south of town and join Dave Horn for a ramble among the brambles at Calamus Swamp, Columbus Audubon's wetland preserve in Pickaway County. Virginia and sora rails are likely, as are green herons and wood ducks. A least bittern or king rail is possible, and who knows what else? (A yellow rail spent 2 days at Calamus in April 2000.) If the weather cooperates, we may see some interesting butterflies. **Directions:** Calamus Swamp is on state Route 104 about 3/4 mile south of the U.S. 22 intersection, west of Circleville. There is a gravel parking area on the east side of 104 but no sign indicating the property. (Look for a green Subaru Outback, license # "MOTHMAN") Be prepared for wet feet. *Contact Darlene Sillick at (614) 761-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.*

Monthly Walk at the Columbus Zoo

Saturday April 23, 9 a.m.

Leader: Barbara Revard

Skill level: All

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101 class schedule

Columbus Audubon's 101 classes are free and open to the public and there is no need to register unless otherwise stated in the class description.

Astronomy 101 Series

Wednesdays, April 6, 13 and 20 from 7-10 p.m.

Leader: Jay Young

Jay has done a terrific job of teaching and motivating amateur astronomers the many aspects of observing the night skies. Each session will involve classroom and outdoor viewing time. Classes are designed for beginners and are guaranteed to leave you inspired and motivated to learn more of the wonders overhead. Classes will be held at Ohio Wildlife Center's Cook Road site. You will receive a syllabus through email or snail mail

before the class begins.

You must register for the series, which has space for 25 participants, by contacting Jay Young at (614) 251-4565 or young2@ohiodominican.edu.

Birding 101 series

Thursday April 7, Early Migrants held at 7p.m. at Highbanks Metro Park Nature Center.

Thursday April 21, Warblers 101 held at 7p.m. at Highbanks Metro Park Nature Center.

The nature of Valhalla Acres Fiber Farm

By Robert Evans

In summer of 2000 my wife Jane and I purchased 57 acres of hilltop fields and wooded ravines in western Muskingum County. Each of us was following a dream. For Jane, the handspinner and fiber artist, it was space to raise wool-bearing animals larger than the cavies and Angora rabbits that had occupied the basement of our campus area home for many years. For me, the field scientist, it was room to explore, discover, and watch birds.

I had lived in the city all my life. I grew up in the Columbus suburb of Whitehall. Then for 23 years I lived in the neighborhoods south and north of The Ohio State University.

Despite my city roots, I always spent as much time as practical outside. My professional life has given me plenty of opportunities to explore and discover things about the natural world. I have spent months at sea, climbed high mountains, visited foreign countries, and even discovered sunken treasure. But, few things in life give me more personal satisfaction than a day in the field, geologizing and watching birds. It may all date back to time I spent as a boy. When friends were not available for play and companionship I spent time in my parents' woodlot, digging holes, climbing trees and birdwatching.

Jane found our farm in the classified section of the *Columbus Dispatch*. "22 acres, farmhouse and barns." She called the realtor and we agreed to meet at an intersection along U.S. Route 40 near the municipal sign for Hopewell Township. It was Memorial Day weekend, 2000.

When we first saw the place there were a few features that stood out. The house was much smaller than our urban home in Columbus, but there were adequate barns, important for the planned animal housing. Jane noted that the fields were planted in soybeans, not very good-looking soybeans. This didn't matter much. We wouldn't be farming row crops, since we would be converting the fields to pasture. The place would need fences, but all in all it looked very much like what we were seeking. However, one thing in particular caught my eye. There were three bluebirds perched on the utility wires out front. One was singing. This was my introduction to the birds of Valhalla. The realtor had no idea how important those bluebirds were.

Following our tradition of calling the animal operation after our favorite Wagnerian setting (formerly we had Valhalla Caviary and Valhalla Rabbitry) we decided that this piece of Appalachian Ohio would become Valhalla Acres Fiber Farm. The main farm product would be wool.

It turned out that the originally advertised 22 acres was part of an original 100-acre farm that had been in the Fink family for the better part of a century. The developer had cut all but the

parcel with the house into what are known as "5-lots": 5 acres or more, which don't require the seller to provide any well or utilities. Flint Ridge Road bisects the original farm. On the side of the road with the house were 5 lots that made up 57 acres, when combined with the 22-acre homesite. We decided to acquire all 57.

Local Mennonites purchased the 43 acres across the road, eventually building their new church and school, and a cabin back in the woods. The setting leaves us visually but not physically isolated from all our neighbors. Flint Ridge Road is well-paved and we are only a mile from the village of Mt. Sterling (Hopewell P.O.) and Route 40. Zanesville and shopping are only 20 minutes away to the east. Importantly, the Columbus airport ticket counter is only about an hour away. For my consulting business I can still be anywhere in the country by noon on any given day, if I get up at 4:30 a.m. – not too difficult for a birder.

The farmer who had leased the property for his 2000 soybean crop harvested his final crop that autumn, just as Jane was acquiring her first few sheep and llamas. Ever since we have been progressively fencing in parts of the hilltop fields for pastures. The herd now numbers 25 llamas and 22 sheep. We plan to leave the most distant portion of the field in weeds, brush and saplings, managing it as a successional field.

Generally speaking, farm work occupies much of my "spare" time when I am at home, but I still try to walk the property every other day or so, every day during spring. I have "improved" the deer trails, pruning back the multi-flora roses and other obstructions to create pathways large enough for a llama to pass, since we also like to walk our llamas in the woods.

The place has a few notable geographical and geological features. A spring is located just 50 feet in elevation below the house. In our experience this has never run completely dry, even during the drought year of 2002. Thus, our well never runs dry either. Friends of ours who live on other southeastern Ohio hilltops have to haul water during dry times. I'm glad we don't have that problem. There are three forested ravines on the property, with a total of 150 feet of relief from the top of the hill down to "Valhalla Falls," along the far eastern boundary.

Valhalla Falls is our own grandiose term for a small cascade that tumbles over the ledge created by the outcrop of the Lower Mercer Limestone. The Lower Mercer Limestone is an important stratigraphic benchmark for these parts, since it is widespread and persistent, something that cannot be said for most of the strata. Valhalla Falls is not spectacular, only a five-foot cascade, but it is a favorite destination during my walks.

Before we purchased the place I was delighted to find that the

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CA April Nature Program: An Introduction to Bird Song

Tuesday, April 26, 2005, 7:00 p.m. social time, 7:30 p.m. presentation, Inniswood Metro Gardens

Birds have a variety of calls and songs in their repertoires, each with different functions. The vocal organ and the mechanics of sound production in birds differ from those of humans, and birds have the ability to sing two different tones at once. At the same time, similarities exist between birds and humans in how our vocal abilities develop early in life. Special brain circuitry underlies vocal learning and production in songbirds. Although each species is predisposed to learn certain song types, learning occurs by a process of memorization and auditory feedback during a sensitive period early in life. This presentation will provide an overview of these fascinating aspects of bird song.

Jill Soha holds a research staff position in the Department of Evolution, Ecology & Organismal Biology at The Ohio State University.

As curator of the Borror Laboratory of Bioacoustics, she oversees maintenance of the labs archive of animal sounds. She obtained her Ph.D in Animal Behavior at the University of California in Davis in 1999, and came to OSU in 2000 as a post-doctoral researcher. Her interests are in animal communication and vocal development, and her research focuses on song learning in sparrows. To learn more about the Borror Laboratory of Bioacoustics, visit: <http://blb.biosci.ohio-state.edu>.

Conservation corner

House Bill 218: One down, many to go

By Dave Horn

We are pleased to report that House Bill 218 died a well-deserved death when the Ohio Senate recessed without considering the bill.

H. B. 218 would have restricted public access to the Lake Erie shoreline, essentially removing a public right that has been in place since the Ohio was part of the Northwest Territories. The testimony of several environmental experts (including Audubon Ohio's own Jerry Tinianow) was critical in getting the Ohio Senate to pay close attention to all sides of the issue and back-off a hasty decision.

For now, we continue to have the same right of access to Lake Erie as J. J. Audubon did in 1787. (Well, okay, Audubon was in Haiti at the time, and was

only 2-years-old, but he *could* have toddled onto the beach at Cedar Point without fear of arrest.)

Meanwhile, at the national level, the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation is proposing major cuts in tax benefits for conservation donations. This could have major negative consequences for efforts to preserve the natural environment through outright donations of property as well as conservation easements. Areas around Columbus such as the Big Darby watershed and the Hocking Hills region are on the verge of a development boom and habitat preservation will soon be at a premium. Our own Calamus Swamp was obtained through a generous conservation donation.

Your Conservation Committee is gathering information on this issue; meanwhile, pertinent information can be found on the

website of the Land Trust Alliance, <http://lta.org/>.

Other issues under study by your Committee include water quality (see <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/fishadvisory/limitmeals.html>, <http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf>, and www.epa.gov/msbasin/ohiowh.mtm) and whether wind-driven power generation poses a significant hazard to birds and bats.

The Conservation Committee tries to focus on issues of direct impact to central Ohio, although we will look at other issues that we feel are important to Columbus Audubon members (like the Lake Erie shoreline). You're welcome to join the Committee if you'd like. Let me know at 614-262-0312 or horn.1@osu.edu.

We try to meet the first Tuesday of each month.

Song Sparrow award winners announced

Rob Thorn and John Wilson were recognized at the February 15 annual meeting for their outstanding volunteer service. Here are accounts of the winners' involvement in their own words.

Rob Thorn

I have been a member of Columbus Audubon since moving to central Ohio 10 years ago, and for a part of that time have been one of a stable of field trip leaders. It has been said that the best volunteer is one who is already doing what they enjoy most. I'm a biologist by training, so Audubon has been a good match for my interests and curiosity. I was practically born into Audubon, joining as an elementary student in Miami and moving into leading field trips by the ripe old age of 14. I've always felt that Audubon field trips are one of the best outreach devices that the society runs, and have always viewed them as both an educational tool and a fun excuse to go outside to see nature firsthand.

For the past 4 years I've compiled the Columbus Christmas Bird Count, trying vainly to fill the giant shoes left by Jim Fry, Jim McCormac, and CeCe Johnston. It's given me a great excuse to visit almost every scrap of wild land left around Columbus, so I've had a crash course in habitat diversity and conservation problems here. It's also appealed to my scientist side by giving our birding a more serious goal, so much so that I now have running censuses at many of the sites that I've scouted. To this end, I've also become the Audubon representative on the Columbus Nature Preserve Advisory Council, where I try to help put Audubon concerns into the process of habitat management.

With interests stretching beyond just birds, I've also tried to project an Audubon sensibility as a Board Member-at-Large for the Ohio Lepidopterists, as well as a Central Ohio member of the Ohio Frog Survey.

In parallel with my 'field life' for Audubon, I've also become one of the writers for the newsletter. Kristan Leedy, Song Sparrow editor (at the time), realized that I could tap out reasonable features, so she devised the Creature Feature to let me stand on an educational soapbox, as well as spin a few stories. That has been one of my most rewarding CA experiences, since it's allowed me to explore a diversity of nature-related topics. As with field trips, I enjoy writing about nature, so it's more fun than task. It

seems almost unbelievable that I can be mentioned in the same breath as John Wilson and past Song Sparrow award nominees, since it's never felt like work. I would wish this kind of dilemma on every member: find what you like best about nature, and offer to help make that concept shine for Columbus Audubon. Not only do you get the benefits of volunteering, but you get to have fun in the process.

John Wilson

I have been involved with Columbus Audubon for around five years and have been Treasurer for most of that time. As treasurer and a C.P.A., I began by organizing the financial reporting process around a descriptive chart of accounts by "departments" using generally accepted accounting principles.

This is important for consistency and for filing the annual Form 990, a fairly rigorous undertaking. I like to think my work forms the organization and foundation for making good Board decisions and running CA in a business-like manner.

I spent three years on the Eco-weekend planning committee after going one year and being so impressed with the program that I felt that I had to be a part of it! It is an A-plus program. As a member of the committee I helped plan the year's activities and establish a budget to keep the program on a profitable basis. (I believe that it should contribute to CA rather than be subsidized because of all the volunteer hours that go into it.)

I provided the early morning birder's breakfast each year and always enjoyed showing what could be provided at minimal cost given a little thought. I led the Friday night owl walk and then participated myself in as many bird walks as I could squeeze in!

As an officer, I have had the opportunity to lead the monthly programs and fill in wherever needed. I believe strongly in the goals and fun of CA and that is why I support it. I enjoy making people feel good and comfortable by being friendly and organizing for efficiency. I *always* get way more out of it than I put in through great relationships, satisfaction of supporting an organization that I believe in, and learning new skills.

Everyone should volunteer for something considering the payback that they will get, and everyone should be recognized for their contributions. It feels good to be recognized!

Your Bird Reports: John Arnfield

Feeder watch: Kristan Leedy counted record numbers of American Goldfinches at her feeding station in late January, with every perch occupied and additional birds on the waiting list for an available place. The abundant finches keep Kristan's (indoor) cats entertained and a local Cooper's Hawk well fed. Two Fox Sparrows joined a flock of White-throated, Song and American Tree Sparrows (plus Northern Cardinals, House Finches and Dark-eyed Juncos) feasting on seed sprinkled on the snow at Olentangy Village in Clintonville the first week of February, and Ruth Massey saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the Fishinger and Kenny Road area in late January and early February. Both the Fox Sparrow and the kinglet are unusual for this time of the year. Doreene Linzell reported on the ohio-birds list on Feb. 20 a Purple Finch was visiting the feeders at her home adjacent to Blendon Woods Metro Park. The feeders at the Ohio Wildlife Center continue to attract Red-breasted Nuthatches and a pair of Cooper's Hawks, Darlene Sillick tells us, and Brown Creepers and Barred Owls frequent other areas of the Center.

Water birds: On Jan. 29, Kristan Leedy saw two male and two female Hooded Mergansers in a scenic snowfall on a swollen Alum Creek in Westerville, while Tim Keller observed a flock of 30 Ring-necked Ducks at Sharon Woods Metro Park on Feb. 18 (along with a pair of pair of Northern Flickers). The Scioto River below O'Shaughnessy Dam hosted six Tundra Swans on Feb. 2, noted by Don Roberts, and Karen Mears saw a Great Blue Heron at the Fishinger Road bridge on Feb. 3.

Raptors: On Feb. 19, Julie Davis reported a Great Horned Owl's nest in Westerville. It is on Cleveland Ave, just north of Schrock Road and occupies an old Red-tailed Hawk nest in a large tree near the road. To see this nest, pull into the north end of the Mount Carmel St. Ann's parking lot and the tree is just to the north. The female is usually sitting up high enough to make at least her head clearly visible. An unusual number of sightings of Bald Eagles in central Ohio reflects the recovery of this magnificent creature. On Jan. 29, Darlene Sillick and John Wilson spot-

ted an adult eagle on a sycamore branch over the west bank of the Olentangy River along state Route 315, just south of Antrim Park. It was being mobbed by three very vocal and animated American Crows perched on limbs within four-feet of the eagle which, however, seemed highly confident of its position and was having none of their threats. The bird was seen again later in the week on the east side of the Olentangy, again on a sycamore limb, overlooking the river south of Antrim Park where the river bends around Antrim Lake.

Susan Setterlin tells us that a pair of mature eagles have been seen frequently just south of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium on Riverside Drive since late January. Susan reports that they can often be seen perching high in the sycamores around a large modern home just north of Stratford Drive on the river side or low near the river. She also cautions that this is a busy road and that a safe place to observe the eagles is a small pull-off area just south of this house. No nest has been spotted to date. A pair of mature plumage Bald Eagles was also observed on Feb. 1 by Don Roberts below O'Shaughnessy Dam.

If you want to see a Cooper's Hawk, John Wilson suggests the corner of U.S. Route 33 and Fishinger Road in Upper Arlington. John has seen the hawks on several occasions this year and last at this location. He says that each sighting has been either in the trees in the southwest quadrant of the intersection or on the light poles in the McDonald's parking lot in the southeast quadrant and adds that the pigeons on the wires over the river are likely an attraction for the hawk. As you will no doubt have noticed, many of our resident birds are on territory and are singing to attract mates and declare ownership. Spring is imminent and with its arrivals will come welcome additions to the avifauna of central Ohio.

Send your reports to bird_reports@columbusaudubon.org or phone them in to the Columbus Audubon phone line at (740)549-0333. Please give your name and the date and location of your sighting. Good birding!

Take note:

Ohio Wildlife Center news:

♦ *OWC Annual Golf Outing* is Thursday, May 26 at the Riviera Golf Club, 8205 Avery Rd., Dublin, Ohio. In addition to an outstanding and unique golf experience at one of the area's best private golf courses, the golf package will include lunch, dinner and all beverages. The luncheon starts at noon and the first tee time will be at 1 p.m. For more information, contact David at (614)734-9453 to register your team.

♦ *2005 Enchanted Evening* is Saturday July 23 at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium's newly constructed Water's Edge, on the Scioto River. This casual-dress event features a stroll through the Zoo, live music, the Zoo's Wings of Flight show, silent and live auctions, animal visits and photo ops with Zoo animals, a buffet dinner and dancing.

♦ *New OWC Volunteer Orientation Sessions* held at the Dublin OWC, 2661 Billingsley Road, April 12 or May 11 from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. For more information on any of these events, visit www.ohiowildlifecenter.org or call (614) 734-WILD.

Delaware Bird Club news:

♦ *April meeting at OWU science building* is Monday, April 25. Speaker will be Tom Sheley of Wild Birds Unlimited.

♦ *Field Trips for Ornithology* are May 6 at 4 p.m. (Magee Marsh) and May 7 at 6 p.m. (Crane Creek). For details, call Jed Burt at (740) 368-3886.

Lake Erie Wing Watch Weekend is April 8-10. Visit <http://www.lakeeriewingwatch.com/> for a complete schedule of events and field trips.

Mohican Wildlife Weekend is April 22-24. Visit <http://www.mohicanwildlifeweekend.com> for a complete schedule of events and field trips.

The Columbus Zoo's International Migratory Bird Days are May 6-7 on the zoo grounds. Hours are from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, May 6 and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 7. Regular Zoo admission rates apply. This two-day event is filled with activities, including bird related games and exhibits. Go to <http://www.colszoo.org> for more information.

Ohio Ornithological Society Inaugural Conference

The Inaugural Conference of the Ohio Ornithological Society will be held Friday, April 29 through Sunday, May 1 at Shawnee Resort and Conference Center in Shawnee State Park. For more information and to register, go to www.ohiobirds.org.

Audubon at Home update

Dempsey Middle School Wetlands

On April 15, in celebration of National Youth Service Day, we plan to have a clean up of the wetlands.

If you would like to volunteer or want more information, give me a call at (740) 833-1800 ext 2808 or email at teachk9@bright.net.

For this update, I thought I would insert some of my students' thoughts about the wetlands.

– *Beth Maclehose*

“I like the wetlands because it is peaceful there.”

– *Keith*

“I like the field guides because I like to look up flowers. I enjoy seeing them in the wetlands.”

– *Michael*

“I like using the flower guide. My favorite purple flower is the Virginia Bluebells. We did find a rare flower (skunk cabbage bloom) that blooms in the early spring.”

– *Kelsey*

“The field guides are helpful because we should know what we are looking at and if they are rare or poisonous”

– *Jordan*

“In the wetlands I took pictures of the flowers. When we got inside we printed the pictures off the computer. Then we all picked a picture of a flower. Then we got on the computer and looked it up and typed our facts about our flower.”

– *Jessica*

The nature of Valhalla Acres Fiber Farm

Continued from page 5

Ohio Geological Survey had a measured section on file for our farm, sort of a layer-by-layer account of the rocks.

In 1914 Wilber Stout, later the State Geologist, walked this ravine and measured the strata from Valhalla Falls to the top of the hill. Stout is somewhat of a legendary figure in Ohio geology. He believed that to understand the geology one had to actually walk over it, and so he walked nearly every road and many ravines in the course of a forty-year career. So, I have an exceptionally good reference for all of my personal geological observations.

The farm sits in the midst of the coal-bearing regions of Ohio, but none of the coal beds are of sufficient thickness to warrant mining, either now or in the past. This is one reason why the place is so well-watered: no blasting or other disturbance of the rock layers or the water table within a mile or so.

The habitats on the farm include the buildings (house and barns,) pastures, weedy fields, successional field, plenty of edges between field and forest, and forest in various stages of maturity. There is no pond or true wetlands, but there are several seeps and springs, with small patches of wet ground around them.

We moved to the farm in July of 2000, a little too late to assess the nesting bird species for that season. In subsequent years I have found eight nesting warbler species, some reliable, others less so: blue-winged (every year,) yellow (every year,) common yellowthroat (every year and downright common,) yellow-breasted chat (2002, 2003, 2004,) hooded (every year,) Kentucky (2001, 2002, 2003,) Louisiana waterthrush (every year,) ovenbird (every year,) cerulean (2001, 2003.)

Other warbler species come through on their way north, an additional 14 species for a total of 22, although I wouldn't exactly call the place a migrant trap. My favorite of these was my life mourning warbler in 2003.

Wood thrushes grace the ravines with their beautiful music in season. Rose-breasted grosbeaks and scarlet tanagers sing from the canopy, occasionally coming down to allow a fortunate look. Acadian flycatchers nest near the falls, twittering around the branches and punctuating the sounds of the forest with their exclamatory calls. There are plenty of standing snags, and so there are abundant woodpeckers: downy, hairy, red-bellied, pileated, and northern flicker. Once, a red-headed woodpecker visited our suet feeder. Occasionally I find a yellow-bellied sapsucker or two in a section of the forest dominated by maples.

Other species that use the woodpecker holes are plentiful. White-breasted nuthatches had great nesting success last year, judging by the numbers visiting the feeders this winter. Last year I finally put out some “bluebird” boxes, which were promptly claimed by tree swallows, one within an hour. A pair of bluebirds made a nest in a nearby downy woodpecker hole. I guess they didn't like the newfangled designs.

All told, in four and a half years I have found 108 species here, and the discoveries keep happening. Winter wren and rusty blackbird joined the list in the last four months. Who knows what may be next?

KidsCAN! Conservation Action Network at the OWC

The Ohio Wildlife Center has a large group of dedicated youth who work proactively as volunteers at OWC and in their communities as good stewards of the environment.

This year our youth will be gathering monthly as the “Critters CAN Club” at the Cook Road facility. Membership requires a pledge to commit and document a recycling or other conservation project, read at least one wildlife or environmental publication or book and prepare a poster presentation for display in the community which will also appear at the OWC Fall Festival and then archived at OWC. Youth are encouraged

to collect and recycle aluminum cans, the proceeds of which go toward the rehabilitation of injured Ohio wildlife.

Our young volunteers are also an integral part of the success of Wildlife Encounters Day Camp for 4- to-12-year-olds which runs from June 13-August 19, where they mentor and lead campers through a variety of conservation activities that they themselves are already experienced in doing.

If you are interested in becoming part of the KidsCAN! network and/or the Critters CAN Club call (614) 734-WILD or e-mail brayowc@earthlink.net.

Baby birds in the Spring

Spring is here and with the first warm days comes the whispering chirps of new life in the trees. I do love the adorable ugliness of a newly hatched bird! They quite often show up in my paintings just for the fact that they are so homely and yet eye-catching. When you see one, you just want to somehow hold it and help it...and heaven help us once they get a covering of soft, downy fuzz...irresistible! And herein lies the problem. Every year, well-meaning people find a hapless fledgling and immediately feel the need to rescue it from unknown danger...I did it myself many times when I was younger, before learning that the young birds parents were probably nearby wondering why I had carted off their offspring! I had a good record of raising the baby into adulthood and somewhat crippling it for life, as they sought out humans for their food providers, much to the dismay of nearby neighbors! The best thing you can do when you see a fledgling flopping about on the ground is to leave it alone...as hard as that seems. Now, I will



admit that I have deterred a few stray cats from honing in on an unguarded bird-waif, or placing the intended pray in a place where mom can find him, but kitty can't. This doesn't seem to be a problem for baby or parents...they'll still feed him if they can find him. Very young hatchlings are another story. Obviously, they can't get back into their nests being blind and without feathers. I have had great success with slipping on a glove and placing baby back in it's nest if I could find it. But bear in mind, once the baby falls, he may sustain severe injury that you can do nothing about and in that case, may be shoved from the nest once again...that's nature's way. Call the Ohio Wildlife Center at (614) 734-WILD...they can put you in touch with someone that can tell you what needs to be done. Bottom line...raising a baby bird is strictly "for the birds" and should be left up to the experts; its parents or someone authorized and trained to do so.

-Dorenda Watson is a local wildlife artist and teacher.

Coming up

Continued from page 4

The Columbus Zoo will host a monthly bird/nature walk around the fringe areas of the zoo's property to note bird species in an area rich with several habitats. Join Barbara Revard at the Shipping and Receiving gate area (second gate east on Powell Rd). Wear proper footwear as we will be roaming off-trail. *Contact Barbara Revard, Assistant Director, Conservation Education at (614) 645-3448 or barbara.revard@columbuszoo.org.*

Green Lawn Cemetery

Sunday April 24, 2:00 p.m.

Leader: Steve Landes

Skill level: All

Get a head start on the migration season as we check this local hotspot for the newest arrivals. Many early migrant birds will still be around, while later migrants should just be showing up. Meet at the office, just inside the entrance to the Cemetery. To get there, take Greenlawn Ave. west from I-71 south of downtown. *Contact Steve Landis at Katbird103@aol.com.*

Mohican State Park and Killbuck Marsh

Sunday April 24, 7 a.m.

Leader: Darlene Sillick

Skill level: All

We'll head north to the Mohican Wildlife weekend and first go for a Pontoon Boat Ride on Pleasant Hill Lake while bird watching. After we leave the Mohican area we will head to Killbuck Marsh with Su Snyder and Don Plant as our guides. Meet Darlene Sillick at the Worthington Square Mall Parking lot to car-pool. Pack a lunch and snack and we are off for a fun day of birding. *Contact Darlene at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com or (614) 761-3696.*

The Creeks and Pickerington Ponds

Saturday, April 30, 8 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

Skill Level: All

Spring migration will be ebbing for many waterbirds, but just starting to rev-up for many landbirds as we hit these south

Columbus hotspots. The Creeks, with its many small ponds and riparian corridors, is a natural migrant funnel and we'll start here looking for the last of the temperate migrant sparrows and finches, and the first of the migrant neotropicals. Afterwards, we'll journey to the nearby wetlands of Pickerington Ponds to search for waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors. With the overlap of different migrants, this should be a good trip for a great diversity of birds. Meet at the Heron Pond parking area (off Williams Road about 1.3 miles west of Hamilton Rd.) *Contact Rob Thorn at 471-3051 or robthorn@earthlink.net.*

Magee Marsh and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, May 7, 6:00 a.m.

Leader: Brad Sparks

Skill Level: All

Join Columbus Avid Birder Brad Sparks on a trip to one of the top birding areas in North America. We will spend the morning searching for warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other neotropical migrants along the boardwalk at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. We will then spend the remainder of the day at nearby Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge looking for waders, waterfowl, and shorebirds. A good day in this area can yield well over 100 species! Meet at the Worthington Square Mall parking lot, located at the intersection of High Street and Wilson Bridge Road. Bring a sack lunch and plenty to drink. *Contact Brad Sparks at (614) 751-6622 or birdmansparks@yahoo.com.*

Green Lawn Cemetery – Spring Migrants

Saturday, May 7, 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Jim McCormac

Skill Level: All

The first week of May is a fabulous time to be at one of central Ohio's premier birding locales, Green Lawn Cemetery. Join Jim McCormac on a tour of this 360-acre oasis which attracts droves of migrant songbirds. Scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, and many warblers, vireos, and thrushes are to be expected, and hopefully in good numbers. Plus, one never knows what might be found here – many rarities have turned up at Green Lawn over the years. The cemetery is very supportive of the birding community, and puts on an annual "Birder's Breakfast", which will be held this day. So, not only will there be

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Coming up

Work trips

Continued from page 4

good birding, there'll also be coffee and donuts!

While Green Lawn Cemetery is renowned among birders, it is also a fascinating place in other aspects. The human history is intriguing, with many Columbus-area luminaries interred here. Examples include Eddie Rickenbacker, James Thurber, Governor James Rhodes, and the current president's great grandfather, Samuel Prescott Bush. The cemetery is also an arboretum, and features some of the most spectacular trees in Ohio, including many several hundred year old oaks. This trip is sponsored by Columbus Audubon and the Ohio Ornithological Society. Meet at the office, just inside the entrance to the Cemetery. **Directions:** Take Greenlawn Ave. west from I-71 south of downtown. *Contact Jim McCormac at Jim.McCormac@dnr.state.oh.us.*

Pickerington Ponds Wetlands

Sunday May 8, 1 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

Skill level: All

Join Mike Flynn to look at the original portion of this important migratory wildlife refuge. We will then explore the new wetland habitat. Meet at the Bob Evans on U.S. Route 33 or at the Bowen Road parking lot at 1:15 p.m. **Directions:** I-270 South, exit at state Route 674 S (Gender Road). *Contact Mike Flynn at (614) 882-9493.*

Avid Birders Field trips

Go to <http://www.columbusaudubon.org/avids/avids.html> for more information.

Work trips provide an opportunity for members to learn a new skill while communing with nature. These trips provide opportunities to see areas in the state's nature preserves that the public does not often see. Participants get to go off trail to tour and learn about the area they will be helping to preserve with the preserve manager, who is often the trip leader on these outings. Tools and transportation are provided to adults at no cost. If a member chooses to bring their children, they must provide their own transportation. For the trip listed below meet at building E at Ohio Department Natural Resources Complex, 1889 Fountain Square (off Morse Road). *For more information, call Sharon Treaster at (614) 292-1395.*

Trail building in Lake Katharine State Nature Preserve

Saturday & Sunday April 16 & 17, 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Marty Hall

Join Marty Hall, DNA&P southeast district manager, at beautiful Lake Katharine to restore the creek trail damaged by erosion and flooding. Volunteers will re-route the trail and install water bars that will divert future rivulets. Wander among the resplendent glory of diverse spring wildflowers, towering state endangered bigleaf and umbrella magnolias while providing preventive trail maintenance.

The group will camp near the work site. Facilities and running water are available nearby. There are some indoor sleeping accommodations available as well. Bring Saturday's lunch, cup or water bottle for drinking, and money for remaining group meals. Call Roger Barber (614) 265-6467 by noon April 11 to sign up, reserve space for transportation and determine tool requirements.

Columbus Audubon

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