



# Song Sparrow



A joint newsletter of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center and Columbus Audubon

November-December 2008  
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Send editorial submissions to  
Stefanie Hauck, editor, at  
stefanie.hauck@gmail.com

## Columbus Audubon

# Columbus CBC soars out on Dec. 14

By Rob Thorn

Help us monitor central Ohio's winter birdlife in one of the longest-running volunteer censuses in the region. On Dec. 14, we'll have teams of birdwatchers scouring the neighborhoods, parks, and wildlands of greater Columbus, looking for rarities and common birds alike. Christmas Bird Counts, or CBCs, have a few rules: you need to count within a 15-mile-diameter circle and you need to count on a single day within the count period (Dec 14-Jan 6). The Columbus count circle is centered just north of Bexley, so that it stretches from Upper Arlington on the west to Blacklick in the east, and from Minerva Park in the north to Groveport in the south. Key parks and preserves within this circle include Whetstone and the Olentangy Greenway, Griggs Dam, Greenlawn Cemetery, Scioto Audubon Metro Park, Blendon Woods, the Alum Creek Greenway, Blacklick Woods, the Blacklick Creek Greenway, and Three Creeks Park. Even with all these parks, much of the count area is decidedly urban and suburban, although it was much less so when the count started back in the 1960s. Our CBC has literally documented the winter bird population changes as Columbus has grown from a small city into a major metropolitan area.

What can we hope to find on a cold December day? You'd be pleasantly surprised at the number of birds that call Columbus a winter home. Over the past five years, we've averaged 72 species and over 20,000 individuals, and this is only from about 10-12 teams of birders out censusing. The numbers that each team sees varies with the habitats and the amount of time they spend outside, but a list of 40-45 species for each team is quite typical. Of course, many of the birds we find are the ubiquitous urban birds one might expect: Ring-billed Gulls, Starlings, Crows, Cardinals, House Sparrows. But there are also a variety of wilder species that always are lurking in our city.

Many of these 'wilder' birds have been adapting to our urban and suburban areas; these include Mourning Doves, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadees, American Robins, Carolina wrens, Dark-eyed juncos, and American Goldfinches. Many of these birds are prospering due to the huge concentration of feeders in Columbus, while others take

## Central Ohio Christmas Bird Count circles

### COLUMBUS

DATE: Dec. 14  
Compiler: Rob Thorn  
Phone: (614) 471-3051  
E-mail: robthorn@earthlink.net

### DELAWARE

DATE: Dec. 14  
Compiler: Jed Burt  
Phone: (740) 368-3886 (d)  
E-mail: ehburt@owu.edu

### HOOVER RESERVOIR

DATE: Dec. 20  
Compiler: Charles Bombaci  
Phone: (614) 891-5706  
E-mail: charlesbombaci@aol.com

### O'SHAUGHNESSY RESERVOIR

DATE: Jan. 3, 2009  
Compiler: Darlene Sillick  
Phone: (614) 761-3696  
E-mail: azuretrails@columbus.rr.com

### KINGSTON

(Chillicothe/Circleville)

DATE: Jan. 1, 2009  
Compiler: Brad Sparks  
Phone: (614) 751-6622  
E-mail: birdmansparks@yahoo.com

advantage of our extensive plantings of fruiting ornamental trees like hawthorns and Bradford pears. Unless the weather becomes very cold, all teams should find large numbers of most of these species in every area of Columbus. In fact, many of these species are much more common in suburban areas of Columbus than in more remote rural areas.

With all of these wintering birds come the inevitable predators. Cooper's Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks have become almost regular in most areas of Columbus in winter. In fact we often have one of the highest densities of wintering Cooper's Hawks in the State. We also host smaller numbers of Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Kestrels, and

See Columbus, page 5

# Grange Insurance Audubon Center

## GIAC building construction update

The construction of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center is underway. Our contractors have successfully completed all 68 of the auger cast pilings for our foundation system.

By the time this article is printed grade beam footings, sanitary lines, water lines, the concrete slab, structural steel, wood roof decking, and geothermal well field should all be complete.

We will have temporary enclosure by the end of December.

If you would like a tour of the construction site, please contact Heather Starck at [hstarck@audubon.org](mailto:hstarck@audubon.org).



Courtesy of Audubon Ohio

**Work progresses at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center site in the Scioto-Audubon Metro Park near downtown.**

## Grange Insurance Audubon Center Director's Journal

Dear Members,

I want to take this opportunity to welcome all our new members to the Grange Insurance Audubon Center/Columbus Audubon membership. I am truly humbled by the history of amazing people and programs that have formed Columbus Audubon through the years. I have only been a member since 2004. In that time I have witnessed what incredible things a group of dedicated volunteers can accomplish. Columbus Audubon is the best chapter in our entire National Audubon Society system, I am sure of that! For those of you that have joined to be a member of the Center, you will soon see how a great partnership with our local chapter will add tremendously to the benefits you receive for your membership. We are in the process of creating membership



**Heather Starck**

cards which all members will receive. These cards are important when the Center opens as you will need to show them for discounts on programs and at the nature store. You can use them now to receive free admission to over 140 nature centers around the country!

I also want to take a minute to thank everyone that has donated to the Center through Columbus Audubon Birdathon, Art for Audubon, and other events. These donations show up in our system as coming from Columbus Audubon but I realize that there are many individuals and families that have made those donations possible. Thank you for your support.

Construction is underway and the Center is staffing up in preparation for our opening next year. Please check our website [www.grangeinsuranceaudubon-center.org](http://www.grangeinsuranceaudubon-center.org) for the most recent updates.

Thank you for your support,

**Heather Starck**

## GIAC wish list

If you have a donation for the Center, please call Ellen Armstrong at 614-224-3303.

- Clipboards
- Field Guides in good shape
- GPS Receivers: Recreation Grade, Consumer Grade
- Reference Books: Bird Migration, Bird Identification, Tree Identification, and Ecology and History of Ohio and/or Columbus
- Increment Borer
- D-Tapes
- Office Desks and Chairs
- Spotting Scope
- Telescope
- Laminator
- Garden gloves
- Garden tools
- Color printer
- Kayaks
- Hip waders
- Fishing tackle and boxes
- Art supplies
- Rain ponchos or jackets for children
- Computer speakers
- Digital camera

## 2008 highlights from Hoover Nature Preserve

By Charlie Bombaci

2008 provided yet another great year at The Hoover Nature Preserve. On April 26 I hosted the Black Swamp Bird Observatory Chapter (Oak Harbor) of The Ohio Young Birders Club. The Prothonotary Warblers arrived in force the night before and the kids tallied 43 male Prothonotary Warblers in two hours at Areas M and N. This was in spite of the fact that the kids didn't arrive until 1 p.m. in the afternoon. The Prothonotaries were coming so close the kids were taking pictures of them with their cell phones. They observed many other species that wonderful afternoon. Then on May 24 I hosted the Delaware County Preservation Parks Chapter of The Ohio Young Birders Club and the CA Kids together. We outdid the earlier walk as we saw so many Prothonotary Warblers we stopped counting them. The kids were then distracted by owls—two Great Horned and two Barred—we located in Area N. But the biggest reaction was to the two White-tailed Deer fawns we found. Each was only a day or so old and they stole the show.

About the time I thought the Prothonotary Warblers had reached the saturation point at Hoover Reservoir, they found a new approach to nesting locations. They began using old woodpecker holes over 150 yards from the water. The 2008 numbers as I worked on fall maintenance and cleaning of the nest boxes stood at 83 pairs in my nest boxes and 102 pairs in natural cavities. As I clean the nest boxes I'm always surprised at how close some of the pairs have nested to each other. My theory is that the lack of suitable habitat in



By Charlie Bombaci

**A Prothonotary Warbler peeks out of a tree at Hoover Nature Preserve.**

Ohio has resulted in the birds adapting to nesting in closer proximity than usual. Then there are the extra surprises waiting in the nest boxes. Like Deer Mice that leap out to escape when I open a nest box to remove the old nest. I've had them soar past me and even bounce off me as they made good their escape. I also often find Little Brown Bats roosting in the boxes, hanging onto the sides. If I notice them I remove the old nest carefully and leave them in peace. But occasionally I don't see one and I accidentally pull it out with the old nest. Bats don't look very happy when they are dropped into the mud. When that happens I use a stick for the bat to grab and I replace it in the box with my apologies.

There was a downside to the year. The heavy rains in June raised the water levels

at Hoover Reservoir and some Prothonotary Warbler pairs that had nested in low cavities in snags over the water were flooded out.

The preserve has served up many surprises so far in 2008. There were Hooded Merganser hens with their ducklings on Big Walnut Creek and at Mudhen Marsh; the Osprey were again successful in raising a brood at the platform off Area M; both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks nested near the Little Walnut Creek; 11 pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers nested within the preserve; Cliff Swallows which are scarce in many parts of Ohio were abundant with over 350 nests under six bridges; Yellow-billed Cuckoos were very abundant in Areas M and N; Black-billed Cuckoos could be found at Hoover Meadows and along the east shore; and the Brown Creepers nested in Area N for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Warblers nesting in the preserve included: Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Yellow, Yellow-throated, a pair of Black-and-white Warblers (the first I have found during the nesting season), Prothonotary, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded and Yellow-breasted Chat. In all there was evidence of 100 species nesting within the preserve.

The shorebird season started late as June's record rains prevented the mudflats from emerging until August. September finally produced better numbers of both species and individuals, but it would still have to be considered a poor year by Hoover's usual standard. September did however provide five American White Pelicans that stayed together and provided an unusual viewing opportunity for local birders.

### 2009 Entertainment Books for sale

We are again selling Entertainment Books which will be available for \$25 each from the bird feeding supply stores listed below Sept.1 through December. Proceeds from the sale will support Columbus Audubon's educational activities and the Grange Insurance Audubon Center.

Accent on Nature	1390 Grandview Ave., Grandview	486-7333
Better Earth	59 Spruce St., Columbus (North Market)	224-6196
Backyard Experience	3515 North High St., Columbus	261-0355
Wild Bird Supplies & Gifts	738 E. Lincoln Ave., Worthington	431-2473
Wild Birds Unlimited	21 Cherry Park Sq., Westerville	899-9453
Wild Birds Unlimited	5400 Riverside Dr. Columbus	766-2103
Wild Birds Unlimited	6839 E. Broad St., Columbus (Blacklick Shopping Ctr.)	860-1133
Columbus Audubon	Dave Horn (If you want an out-of-town Book, contact Dave directly and he'll make it easy)	262-0312

## 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.

**Note:** Field trip times, dates and locations are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If you plan on going on a trip, please contact the trip leader 24 hours ahead of time to make sure the trip has not been changed, postponed or cancelled. Also, check the Columbus Audubon Web site at [www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org) for any changes or additions to the field trip listings. If you have suggestions for field trip locations or want to lead a field trip please contact field trip chair, Earl Harrison at [eharrison@ehe.osu.edu](mailto:eharrison@ehe.osu.edu).

### Field trips

#### Wednesday walks at Whittier

Wednesdays, November 5 and December 3, 7:30 a.m.  
Leaders: Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond

Note: Walks are always held the first Wednesday of the month. Join Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond for a short walk around Whittier Peninsula to view wildlife as well as to watch the latest developments of the park and nature center. Meet at Lower Scioto Park in the boat ramp parking lot (west of Front Street and south of Whittier Street) Please contact Paul Gledhill at (614) 848-7666; [gledhillpaul@yahoo.com](mailto:gledhillpaul@yahoo.com), or Heather Raymond at (614) 785-0342; [heather\\_columbus\\_audubon@yahoo.com](mailto:heather_columbus_audubon@yahoo.com) for more information.

#### Wild canines: Coyotes and foxes of Glacier Ridge

Saturday, November 8, 5 p.m.  
Leader: Glacier Ridge naturalist

Meet at Glacier Ridge Metro Park, Honda Wetlands, Education Area. Coyotes and foxes command a strong sense of mystery and intrigue to us. Tonight we will explore the fascinating world of these cunning creatures and anticipate the opportunity of hearing and/or seeing them. Program in conjunction with Metro Parks. For directions to the park, go to [www.metroparks.net](http://www.metroparks.net). For more information, call the Glacier Ridge Naturalist at 873-2660.

#### Beginners/Newcomers Bird Hike at Blendon Woods

Sunday, November 9, 2 p.m.  
Leader: Mike Flynn

This trip is for all those who have not been a part of any of Columbus Audubon's outstanding birding experiences because you feel you may not have enough experience - or anyone new to our trips. This one is perfect for you. We will take a leisurely hike to Thoreau Lake looking and listening for any of our feathered friends. Meet in front of the Nature Center at Blendon Woods Metro Park. Directions: Log on to [www.metroparks.net](http://www.metroparks.net). For more information, contact Mike Flynn at [mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com](mailto:mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com) or (614) 769-1681.

#### Pickerington Ponds and the Blacklick Greenbelt

Saturday, November 15, 8:30 a.m.  
Leader: Rob Thorn

While this part of the late Fall has bird activity slowing elsewhere, the areas south of Columbus start gathering late migrants and neat winter birds at this time. We'll start at Pickerington Ponds to visit their fields and wetland areas. This man-made mix

#### CA Program: Tuesday, November 25, 7 p.m., at Inniswood Birding beyond binoculars: Conservation research in North America from Alaska to Costa Rica and beyond

Birders across North America are learning that populations of many bird species are declining. What they may not know is that ornithologists throughout the continent are conducting innovative research to explain why these trends are occurring and how we can begin to reverse them. I have spent the last four years working as a freelance field biologist for several NGOs and governmental agencies researching avian conservation ecology throughout the continent. Using rich collections of original photos and personal anecdotes from my involvement in these projects, I hope to share both the incredible life stories of birds and the scientific processes required to accurately document the state of avian populations.



By Ian Ausprey

#### Royal Flycatcher.

We will travel to northern Alaska and discuss the impacts of oil development on breeding shorebirds. Then we will learn how the USGS is attempting to reintroduce endemic honeycreepers on Mauna Kea. And we will investigate research programs in Oregon and Costa Rica that are currently monitoring migratory birds. We will conclude with a discussion of my current graduate research regarding the urban ecology of birds breeding in Columbus Metro Parks and ways that Audubon members of all ages can become involved in bird conservation research, whether here in Columbus or in more exotic parts of the world.

Ian Ausprey is completing a Master's of Science degree in Wildlife Ecology at the OSU School of Environment and Natural Resources. He grew up in eastern Maine and graduated from Middlebury College (VT) in 2004.

of marshes and pools harbors a good variety of waterfowl, and the fields and field-edge habitats offer up good migrant sparrows and raptors. We'll meet at the Wood Duck parking area off Bowen Rd at 8:30 a.m.. After visiting Pick Ponds, we'll check out some of the deeper ponds and forest patches along the Blacklick Creek Greenbelt to look for diving waterfowl and other birds that we missed. Dress for unpredictable November weather. For more information, contact Rob Thorn, 614-471-3051 or [robthorn@earthlink.net](mailto:robthorn@earthlink.net).

See Coming up, page 11

## December 2008 tour to Guatemala with FLOW

By Heather Raymond

Columbus Audubon is partnering with the Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) on a sister watershed project in Guatemala, and we'd like to invite you to participate! Members of both groups will travel together to Guatemala this December to learn about conservation issues in several ecoregions, collaborate on shared avian and watershed conservation goals, and have the opportunity to observe a variety of unique endemic bird species and neotropical migrants.

The 10 day study tour will include visits to the Queztlal Biosphere reserve (cloud forest habitat), the Parque Nacional Laguna Lachua (tropical rainforest habitat), a tropical orchid garden, and the highland pine forests near Antigua, home of the rare and endemic pink-headed warbler. The trip will also include Mayan home stays in the Village of Copa AA, where participants will learn about local conservation efforts including shade-grown coffee and cardamom. Each participant will receive a briefing book that includes information on the country, conservation projects, avian ecology (including information on neotropical migrants that spend part of their lives in Guatemala and part in Ohio) and watershed issues. We will also share conservation information with the local villages and nonprofit groups and attempt to have participants observe a local bird banding project.

Heather Dean, the watershed coordinator for FLOW, has lived in Guatemala, is fluent in Spanish, and will make all the in-country travel arrangements. This is a unique opportunity to travel like a native and immerse yourself in the culture and amazing biodiversity of Guatemala. This will not be a "birding-only" trip, but you will have the opportunity to bird every day (even the shade-grown coffee plantations are excellent birding locations!). If there is interest, an optional 2-3 day extension to Tikal for birding and a visit to the amazing Mayan ruins will be offered.

The tentative study tour dates are December 12-21 (plus possible Tikal extension). Cost for all lodging, in-country transportation (van), meals, guides, park entry fees, and a donation to local organizations is anticipated to be approximately \$1200/person plus international airfare. A minimum of eight participants is needed for the trip to occur, with a maximum of sixteen participants. Costs may be reduced if more than eight people participate (due to economies of scale). One of the reasons the trip is reason-



By Heather Raymond

Pink Headed Warbler.

### If you go

**Where:** Quetzal Biosphere reserve, Parque Nacional Laguna Lachua, Mayan home stays in the Village of Copa AA and an optional 2-3 day extension to Tikal.

**When:** December 12-21 or 24

**Cost:** \$1200 plus air fare

**Contact:** Heather Raymond at (614) 202-8773 or heather\_columbus\_audubon@yahoo.com ASAP.

ably priced is the accommodations will be clean and safe, but not luxurious. If you are accustomed to Four Star pampering this is not the trip for you, but if you have a sense of adventure and enjoy experiencing new cultures and places consider joining us!

Heather Raymond can send you a more detailed itinerary and answer any questions about the trip. If at least eight people have not expressed interest in participating by November 9, the trip may be postponed until March 2009.

## Columbus Christmas Bird Count soars out on Dec. 14

Continued from page 4

have even had an occasional Bald Eagle in recent winters. More secretive raptors, like Screech Owls and Red-shouldered Hawks, have also been found in Columbus with increasing frequency on recent counts, as we've learned where to look for them.

Not all birds are so adaptable. Open country birds, like meadowlarks, black-birds, harriers, and many kinds of sparrows, have definitely declined as most of the open fields of past years have been

turned into subdivisions. Some deep forest birds, like Red-shouldered Hawks, Barred Owls, and Pileated Woodpeckers, have slowly become rare as their habitats have become fragmented. Other birds have slowly disappeared for no obvious reasons. Red-headed Woodpeckers were formerly regular in the circle, but are now rare. Eastern Towhees have declined to the point where they now hang on only in a few park areas. Hopefully these trends can be stabilized or reversed, and continued counts are the most direct way to monitor this change.

What other changes could be forecast for our wintering birds? Increasingly, we're finding hardy strays and wintering birds that were formerly rare or unknown from here during December. Our list of wintering waterfowl has steadily grown as small numbers of dabbling and diving ducks have started to stick around in different ice-free ponds or creeks. Unusual raptors, like Bald Eagles, Merlins, and Peregrines, are now almost expected in the winter here. Sapsuckers and Flickers

See Christmas, page 10

## Finding a 'Green' Christmas Tree

*A real tree can be more than a beautiful emblem of nature in your home. After the holidays are over, it can serve as a gift to wildlife year-round. An excerpt of Gretel H. Schueller's, 365 days of Christmas originally printed in Audubon 11/2005*

Long before the plastic, pre-lit, silver-spritzed \$39.99 special took the holidays by storm, people were decorating natural trees for celebrations. Egyptians gathered palm branches for fertility; Romans trimmed evergreens to honor their sun god; Druids hung apples and candles on oak trees to mark the winter solstice. Then, about 500 years ago in Latvia, the first Christmas trees were born. The quaint foreign custom took a while to catch on in the United States. It wasn't until 1851 that Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds loaded with trees from the Catskill Mountains to the streets of New York City and opened the country's first Christmas tree lot. But, oh,

have we come a long way since then. In the United States today about half a million acres of land are used by 22,000 Christmas tree growers, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and each year more than 32 million trees are sold for the holidays. Is cutting down a tree really being a good friend of nature, though? Well, yes. If you follow some tried-and-true advice both before and after you buy it, you can have your tree and save it, too. Long after the lights and tinsel are packed away for the season, a real tree can be a gift to wildlife. The best addition to your holiday household is a live tree with the root-ball still attached, since it can be replanted following your festivities. A few handy tips will greatly increase its odds of surviving once it's outdoors again. First make sure you've selected a species compatible—and preferably native—with your local environment,

such as white pine in Maine or Douglas fir in Washington. The larger the tree, the more likely it will suffer from transplant shock, so pick a smaller one (no larger than five feet). Place the tree away from heaters or direct sunlight to prevent it from drying out. If your tree is not potted, put the root-ball in a bucket; a live tree may need as much as a gallon of water every day. Before you rush out to look for the perfect pine, there is something else to consider: Not all Christmas trees are as green as they appear. In order to create the storybook shape, tree farmers often resort to a liberal dose of chemicals. More than 20 insect pests and 6 plant diseases afflict Scotch pine—one of the most popular Christmas tree species in the country—alone. In natural forests, which have a diversity of tree species, these enemies are kept in check; the practice of growing Christmas trees in monocultures, much like corn, exacerbates the problem.

## Thank you for your support

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See Thank you, page 7

# Grange Insurance Audubon Center

## City of Columbus GreenSpot program a success

Mayor Michael B. Coleman along with area businesses have unveiled the new GreenSpot program designed to inspire, educate and recognize those in our community who are taking steps to get green. The first City of Columbus GreenSpot was given to Elizabeth Lessner and Carmen Owens Co-owners of the Surly Girl Saloon. The new GreenSpot program is an innovative approach to learning what people can do each day to protect the environment and it's a way for Columbus residents, businesses and com-

munity groups to be recognized for the work they are doing to promote a sustainable future which means that we are using our resources in a responsible way that will conserve and protect them for future generations. "We are thrilled to be the first GreenSpot in Columbus," said Elizabeth Lessner, Proprietor of the Surly Girl Saloon. "GreenSpot is something everyone can do—small or large businesses. It just requires some focused effort on things like recycling, buying green products and paying attention to how much

waste you are producing." Households, businesses, organizations and community groups can apply for a GreenSpot. A new Web site has been launched at [www.columbusgreenspot.org](http://www.columbusgreenspot.org). Groups and individuals alike can receive valuable program information and begin the application process. Those that qualify will receive a GreenSpot decal that can be displayed in their home or business and GreenSpot businesses will be listed on the web site and can use the logo in their advertising.

## Thank you for your support

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Taylor Financial Management Inc.  
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Van Farowe, Jim and Lori  
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Van Fossen, Sue  
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Walsh, Jane  
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Wiley, Lara  
Williamson Insurance LLC  
Wilson, Beth  
Wilson, Donya  
Wilson, John  
Wilson, Kurt  
Youse, Barry

### In-kind Gifts

Berggren, Ronald  
City of Columbus, Recreation & Parks  
Grosso, Derek  
Horn, Dave  
Metro Parks  
NBBJ

## Backyards for Wildlife

### Create a 'Hummer Haven' in your backyard

By Toni Stahl

**W**e have the best luck bringing new bird species to visit our yard by practicing sustainable gardening (eliminating invasive plants, adding native plants, eliminating chemicals) and by researching their particular needs.

When you go bird watching, notice where you see the species you'd like to attract (woodlands, fields, etc.). By creating a similar environment in your yard and neighborhood, you might be surprised by who drops in!

One of our favorites is the hummingbird. If you plan now and start working in early spring, you may have time to attract them to your yard in 2009. We discovered them in the woods, so we added new trees. Their tiny feet perch well in the small branches of our **Wild Black Cherry** tree (*Prunus serotina*) and other trees listed later.

Brightly colored flowers (scarlet to orange or purple) are hummingbird favorites. In addition to eating nectar from plants, they also eat tiny insects. I've watched them skim down a leaf on the tree and lick up whatever insects were on it. They also feed insects to their babies.

Hummers use unique sources of water as they drink on the fly. We have a **Cup Plant** (*Silphium perfoliatum*) that provides a natural water option. It collects dew and rainwater. Cup Plants can be tall and spread quickly, so keep an eye on them, but they makes a dramatic backdrop to our flowerbed.

We also plant **Cinnamon Fern** (*Fernosmunda*) so hummingbirds can use the soft, fuzzy red tops in their nest.

We hang annuals (not native, non-invasive) in a basket where we can see the hummers up close, such as Impatiens (*Impatiens wallerana*) or **Fuschia**- (*fuschia hybrid*).

Migrating Hummers - We grow a late bloomer from seed for migrating hummers called **Mexican Sunflower** (*Tithonia rotundifolia*). Migrators also like our native **Hibiscus** called **Swamp rose mallow** (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) and **Common evening primrose** (*Oenothera Biennis*).

For more tips, email marc-a@columbus.rr.com to join the monthly 'Nature Scoop' email or see our website at <http://home.columbus.rr.com/nwfbackyardohio/>.

#### Other Hummer magnets

##### **Perennial Wildflowers:**

**Cardinal Flower** (*Lobelia cardinalis*) July-Aug, red, tubular shaped flowers

**Great Blue Lobelia** (*Lobelia siphilitica*) Aug-Sept, blue flower spikes, well-drained soils, hardier than cardinalis

##### **Vines/Groundcover:**

**Scarlet (or Coral) Honeysuckle vine** (*Lonicera sempervirens*)



By Marc Apfelstadt, 2008

**Ruby-Throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) on Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*).**

### Upcoming event

Sunday, Nov. 9, 1-5 p.m., Read to Your Baby Festival, Old Worthington Library, High St, Worthington.

trumpet-like red flowers - Hummers don't visit our yard until the Scarlet Honeysuckle blooms. It is slow growing and not aggressive like the Trumpet Honeysuckle Vine can be. If you trim the blossoms, the plant continues to bloom throughout the summer.

##### **Small Trees/Shrubs (15'-49'):**

**Downy Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier arborea*) tolerates sun or shade and wet soils; red berry, white flower

**Eastern Redbud** (*Cercis canadensis*) full sun or light shade, pink spring flower

##### **Tall Trees (50'-100'+):**

**Tuliptree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) fast grower; requires fertile soil, yellow-orange spring flower

**Wild Black Cherry** (*Prunus serotina*) grows in a variety of soils, white spring flower

## Columbus Audubon KIDS!

The fall newsletter has hit the streets and the winter issue is not far away! Contact Nadya Bennett, CA Kids Committee Chair to get your child's issue mailed to them and to sign up for our CA Kids monthly programs. You can contact Nadya at [nadya2003@msn.com](mailto:nadya2003@msn.com) or (614) 306-8215.



## Invasive species: Round Goby

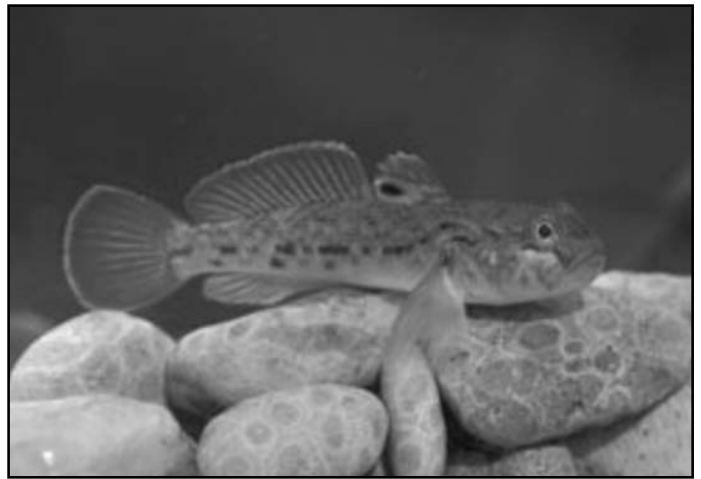
By Dave Horn

Each summer I spend a week teaching an intensive course in entomology at Ohio State's Stone Lab on Gibraltar Island. Sometimes I have an evening free for fishing, and last week I cast worm after worm among rocks where I'd caught a few white bass in years past. I kept getting nibbles from fish, either small or wily, and they continued to nibble my worms off the hook. In semi-desperation I shifted to an artificial spinner and in no time I had hooked a 4-inch monster round goby.

The Round Goby is a big-headed, bug-eyed bottom feeder, subsisting on insects, worms, fish eggs and fry, and other aquatic animals. Adults average 4 to 8 inches long, and closely resemble native sculpins (with which they may compete).

The Round Goby is another in a growing list of exotic species (like Zebra Mussels) that have invaded the Great Lakes since the St. Lawrence Seaway opened fifty years ago. They apparently arrived in ships' ballast, water that is pumped into a freighter's hold to provide stability. Ocean-going ships that sail with freshwater ballast from Eurasia are required to flush their tanks with seawater while crossing the ocean. Most captains comply, but all it takes is one infested ship to start an invasion. Round Gobies were first discovered near Detroit in 1990 and now inhabit all the Great Lakes. They have made their way down the Illinois River nearly to the Mississippi and have been found in a few inland locations in northern Ohio.

What is the problem, aside from the potential competition with native fish? The Round Goby is so prolific that it has become the dominant small bottom-feeding fish in Lake Erie. The ecology of the Lake will change but we don't know how, just yet. As bottom feeders, gobies will concentrate chemicals in their diet, and we may see another increase in levels of PCBs and other toxins in predators.



**The Round Goby is a big-headed, bug-eyed bottom feeder, subsisting on insects, worms, fish eggs and fry, and other aquatic animals.**

Gobies comprise much of the diet of cormorants, and 90% of the diet of the endangered Lake Erie Water Snake.

Meanwhile, the take home message for now is: do not transport live fish from one body of water to another.

My own goby was hooked pretty well so I cast him/her/it further out into the lake as bait in hopes of a larger fish. This has worked for me in Vermont but I had no such luck in Lake Erie. So I set my goby free and hoped that a white bass or a water snake would find a meal. For more information, visit:

<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.asp?speciesID=713>  
<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/goby.shtml>

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## Conservation corner: 'State of the Worlds Birds' is out

By Dave Horn

Your conservation chair was forced (briefly) to conserve physical activity due to hip replacement surgery, and no sooner was I back on-line than the remnants of Hurricane Ike forced me to conserve electricity, because there wasn't any in our neighborhood. Having no electrical service for a week (so far) was another reminder of how dependent we think we are on energy but that we can get by without much of it. Not that I advocate shutting down the electrical grid but we really did thrive very well with a gas stove top and water heater, as long as the water ran (which it did) and someone had ice in stock (which they did). It helped that the days stayed cool. Anyway, it is something to think about: Did you lose anything during the electrical outage that you really didn't miss?

Conservation of birds is at the forefront

of Audubon's mission, and there is continuing evidence that even common birds are in decline across the world, providing evidence of deterioration in the global environment that is affecting all life on earth – including humanity. All the world's governments have committed themselves to slowing or halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, but reluctance to commit what are often trivial sums in national budgets means that this target is almost certain to be missed. This is the stark message from the "State of the Worlds Birds," a new publication and website ([birdlife.org/sowb](http://birdlife.org/sowb)) launched recently at BirdLife International's World Conference in Buenos Aires. National Audubon is fully supportive of the findings and calls upon chapters and members to spread the word and get involved. In Ohio the five "common birds in decline" of greatest concern are: Green Heron, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-breasted Chat, Red-headed

Woodpecker and Northern Flicker. There's more to be found on Audubon Ohio's website: <http://oh.audubon.org/> and at <http://audubon.org/news/press-room/CBID/>

Meanwhile, ongoing conservation issues abound in central Ohio, and each presents opportunities to become involved. Besides activities overseen directly by the Conservation Committee (e.g. Calamus Swamp management), several individuals have stepped forward to initiate activities in watershed awareness, Chimney Swift habitat preservation, Important Bird Area monitoring, and other needed programs. Visit our website, or contact me (614-262-0312, [horn.1@osu.edu](mailto:horn.1@osu.edu)). Better yet, come to a meeting of the Conservation Committee, normally the second Tuesday of each month, at my house.

- Dave Horn (with input from BirdLife International)

# Grange Insurance Audubon Center

## Audubon at Home: Got habitat?

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center is not only moving forward with its building construction but also the restoration of the surrounding habitat. In tandem with Metro Parks resource management staff we are using valuable bird data to inform the removal and replacement of invasive exotics in the forest along the Scioto River.

At the same time, we are getting ready to design and plant native plant gardens on our building's site that demonstrate how to turn your backyard into a 'healthy' yard.

What is a healthy yard? A healthy yard is not really a "yard" at all. It's a habitat, a sanctuary for wildlife and for you and your family. A healthy habitat provides a natural haven beneficial to birds, other creatures, and people, and is an extension of your home and part of a larger ecoregion.

We know that many of our members are already doing this and could teach us a thing or two. If you have a healthy yard and would like to get involved in this project, stay tuned for more information about

entering our Audubon at Home contest for the opportunity to show off your wildlife friendly green thumb. You can also get started by conducting a habitat inventory of your backyard by using the worksheet on the Audubon At Home website: [http://www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/HealthyYard\\_Create.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/HealthyYard_Create.html)

If you have questions about completing this inventory or would like to learn more about the contest, contact Doreen Whitley at [dwhitley@audubon.org](mailto:dwhitley@audubon.org).

## Columbus Audubon

### Eco Weekend needs You on May 1-3, 2009!

The Eco Weekend Committee is searching for new Program Leaders for next year's Eco Weekend, to be held on May 1 - 3, 2009. First of all, to answer your questions:

#### What is Eco Weekend?

Eco Weekend is an outdoor nature camp experience that is a recreational and educational event for adults and families held annually on the first weekend in May. During the weekend, programs of varying length are presented by volunteer leaders, and youth ages 4 ½ through 8<sup>th</sup> grade enjoy their own special programs on Saturday. The event lasts from Friday evening through lunch on Sunday.

#### What is a Program Leader?

Program Leaders are people knowledgeable in their field who are willing to share that knowledge with others in an outdoor camp setting. Besides the expected variety of birdwatching experiences, programs range from focused nature walks to checking out moss under a microscope. Program Leaders are provided free room and board at the camp in exchange for offering a program.

#### Where is this held?

Eco Weekend is held at Camp Oty'Okwa, located near Old Man's Cave and Conkle's Hollow in the Hocking Hills. For more information, check out the Eco Weekend link on our Web site, [www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org).

#### How can I help?

We are looking for Program Leaders to offer their knowledge at Eco Weekend next May. Please contact us if you yourself or anyone you know might be a potential Program Leader. Have you attended any Audubon or other nature-oriented programs whose leader you can recommend to us? There is a wide variety of topics addressed at Eco Weekend, so anything goes! If you're not sure about a topic or person's availability, contact us and we'll help you sort it out. Help us make Eco Weekend even better next year!

**Contact:** Roz Horn at (614) 262-0312 or [rozhorn@columbus.rr.com](mailto:rozhorn@columbus.rr.com). Thank you!

*The Eco Weekend Committee of Columbus Audubon*

## Christmas Bird Count in Columbus soars out on Dec. 14

Continued from page 4

are now wintering in fair numbers in our ravines and parks. Cedar waxwings and hermit thrushes have become quite regular in recent years ('05 had record numbers of the latter), probably due to many planted fruit trees. Surprisingly, even some tough insect-eaters, like Orange-crowned Warbler, Pine Warblers, and Eastern Phoebes, have turned up in the Count Period. And you never know what jaw-dropping rarity will show up, like a Rufous Hummingbird at a Blendon Woods feeder

('03), a Grasshopper Sparrow lurking in an OSU field ('05), or a Western Tanager flitting around a Grandview neighborhood ('06). That's what makes a CBC so fun.

Teams of birdwatchers will comb parts of the city inside the circle on Dec. 14, looking for common birds and unusual rarities alike. Most of the major parks and wildlands in the circle - Blendon Woods, Blacklick Woods, Three Creeks, Whetstone, The Ohio State University Farms, Scioto Audubon, and Greenlawn - should have teams of birders, as will many of the suburbs, and we'd love to have you

join one of the teams or even just monitor your neighborhood. Hardly any area within our circle lacks for interesting parks and greenspace. We need as many birders as we can recruit, since more eyes means fewer birds missed.

So please plan to come out for the morning, or the whole day, or just keep an eye on your birdfeeders. Call Columbus Audubon (451-4591) for more details or e-mail me at [robthorn@earthlink.net](mailto:robthorn@earthlink.net).

*Rob Thorn is the Columbus CBC compiler.*

## Coming up

Continued from page 4

### **Birds of Kildeer Plains**

Sunday, November 23, 12:30 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

A trip to this north central Ohio wildlife area is an annual tradition for those who are captivated by birds of prey, waterfowl, and many other species of birds. It is one of the best birding areas in all of Ohio at this time of year. There will be minimal walking. Meet at 12:30 p.m. at the southeast corner of Worthington Square parking lot at I-270/Rte 23 (High Street). Go south to the first light (Wilson Bridge Rd). Parking lot is on the right. For more information, contact Mike Flynn at [mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com](mailto:mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com) or (614) 769-1681.

### **Deer Creek Lake**

Sunday, November 23, 2:30 p.m.

Leader: Dave Horn

In some years a flock of Sandhill Cranes stays in the Deer Creek area from about Nov. 10 until the 25th, and it is a thrilling sight to see them coming to roost at sunset. Last year we were treated to five of them. Even without the cranes, Deer Creek Lake in November is good for migrating waterfowl. Meet at Deer Creek Marina, off state route 207 south of Pancoastburg. Directions: From Columbus, take I-71 toward Cincinnati, exit at State route 57 into Mt. Sterling and pick up 207 there. Look for a green Subaru Outback, license plate # MOTHMAN. For more information, contact Dave Horn, (614) 262-0312, [horn.1@osu.edu](mailto:horn.1@osu.edu).

### **Post-Thanksgiving bird walk at Glacier Ridge**

Saturday, November 29, 8:30 a.m.

Leaders: Darlene Sillick and Nadya Bennett

Meet at the Honda Wetlands Education Area in Glacier Ridge Metro Park. We'll bird the wetlands and hopefully we will have time to bird the northern entrance area of the park. We will also check out the O'Shaughnessey Dam area for waterfowl and any late migrants. For directions to the park, go to [www.metrotparks.net](http://www.metrotparks.net).

### **Birding the Urban Scioto**

Sunday, December 7, 9 a.m.

Leader: Rob Thorn

We don't usually think of the Scioto River as a winter birding destination, but maybe this trip will change your thinking. We'll start at the Whittier Park, looking for unusual waterbirds and lingering landbirds. Then we'll work our way up the river, looking at the series of dams, pools, quarries, and parks up past downtown and through Grandview and Marble Cliff out to Griggs Dam. The variety of habitats along this stretch of urban river is surprising, and attracts an equally surprising mix of birds. Perhaps we'll see the Bald Eagle that has started to patrol this area in recent winters, or maybe we'll find some of the elusive wintering Night Herons. Meet at the Scioto Park Whittier Ave boat launch at 9 a.m., and dress for unpredictable weather. The trip should be over by noon. For more information, contact Rob Thorn, 614-471-3051 or [robthorn@earthlink.net](mailto:robthorn@earthlink.net).

### **Mohican State Forest**

Sunday, December 7, 12:30 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

This is one of the most naturally rich areas in Ohio dominated by

large tracts of mature forest. Join us as we travel to this great place to see the birds, trees, water, and geology here. Meet at 12:30 p.m. at the southeast corner of Worthington Square parking lot at I-270/Rte 23 (High St). Go south to first light (Wilson Bridge Rd). Parking lot is on the right. For more information, contact Mike Flynn at [mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com](mailto:mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com) or (614) 769-1681.

### **Hike and Christmas Lights at Glen Helen/Clifton Mill**

Sunday, December 14, 1 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

Everyone is welcome - Kids too! This is a frenzied time of year - so much to do. How about stopping, taking a moment to quietly grab a piece of serenity amidst the rush. That's exactly what this trip is intended to do. We will take a quiet walk through the woods at Glen Helen Nature Preserve, then eat, then head to Clifton Mill for their spectacular Legendary Christmas Lights display - the lights come on at 6:00 p.m. Over 3.5 million lights adorn the grounds for this festive, seasonal special event. See Clifton Mill Web site for details. Nominal entry fee of \$7.00 for those over 7 years old. Six and under are FREE. Meet at the Bob Evans parking lot on Hilliard Rome Rd. Take 270 to 70 W Exit Hilliard Rome Rd. Go south to Bob Evans. Or meet us at the parking lot at Glen Helen at approximately 2:00 p.m. For more information, contact Mike Flynn at [mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com](mailto:mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com) or (614) 769-1681.

### **New Year's Day Hike at Blackhand Gorge**

Thursday, January 1, 2009, 11 a.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

Start the New Year with a leisurely hike into this unique natural area. It contains diverse habitats that support a variety of birds and other wildlife. It is a special place to spend an afternoon outdoors and contemplate your resolutions. Meet at 11 a.m. at the southeast corner of Worthington Square parking lot at I-270/Rte 23 (High St). Go south to first light (Wilson Bridge Rd) Parking lot is on the right. For more information, contact Mike Flynn at [mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com](mailto:mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com) or (614) 769-1681.

## Service in the Preserves

### **Prairie Road Fen**

Saturday, November 22, 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Leader: Katryn Renard

Prairie Road Fen is the largest and finest prairie fen in Ohio. It is an alkaline wetland that is home to specialized plants & animals that can thrive in harsh conditions. As we work on the site, we will get a chance to see some of the rare plants up close. The existing boardwalk has sunk in many places and we will use our engineering skills, of long ago civilizations, to again raise the walk to its original height. Depending on temperature, the site will be wet and knee boots or goretex will be needed.

All skill levels are welcome. Please call Katryn Renard by Wednesday, November 19 at (614) 261-7171 to sign up, reserve space for transportation, and to help us determine tool requirements. Bring your lunch, water, work gloves, and appropriate foot gear. Meet at 7:45 a.m. in the parking lot inside the gate house at the Ohio Department Natural Resources Complex, 2045 Morse Road, Columbus. Please complete the Dept. of Natural Area's volunteer form to participate in this activity (contact [treaster.1@osu.edu](mailto:treaster.1@osu.edu) for forms or fill one out on the morning of the trip). We will return to ODNR by 5 p.m.

**Grange Insurance Audubon Center**  
www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org

**Staff:** Center Director: Heather Starck, 224-3303  
School Programs Coordinator: Doreen Whitley, 224-3303

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**Trustees:** Julie Davis, Mike Flynn, Rob Lowry, Joe Meara, Heather Raymond, Katryn Renard, Barbara Revard, Andrea Cook, Tom Sheley, Michael Packer, Bill Heck and Jackie Bain.

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Conservation: Dave Horn, 262-0312  
Service in the Preserves: Katryn Renard, 261-7171  
Education: Susan Setterlin, 457-8130  
Programs: Mike Flynn, 769-1681  
Field Trips: Earl Harrison, eharrison@ehe.osu.edu  
CA Web site: Bill Heck, bill.heck@gmail.com  
CA KIDS: Nadya Bennett, 306-8215  
Ohio Young Birders: Jackie Bain, 361-4610, Darlene Sillick, 761-3696  
Eco Weekend: Roz Horn, 262-0312; Lois Day, (740) 549-0333  
Membership: Joe Meara, 781-9602  
Scioto-Whittier IBA Committee: Heather Raymond, 785-0342  
Birdathon: Julie Davis, 523-2180 or Katryn Renard, 261-7171  
CA Phone Line: Lois and John Day, (740) 549-0333  
Avid Birders: http://www.columbusaudubon.org/

**Joint GIAC and Columbus Audubon memberships**

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center has teamed up with Columbus Audubon, our Audubon chapter, to provide a joint membership to BOTH organizations.

The Individual rate is \$30 and the Family rate is \$45. When you join the Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC) and Columbus Audubon (CA) you become a 12 month member of the National Audubon Society as well. Joint membership benefits are:

Subscription to Audubon magazine  
10% discount at GIAC nature store  
Discount on GIAC program fees  
Free CA field trips and programs  
Volunteer opportunities  
Invitations to special events at GIAC  
Building rental opportunities at GIAC  
Bi-monthly Song Sparrow newsletter  
CA annual meeting and program  
Discounts at partnering affiliates  
Voice in CA/GIAC conservation initiatives

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