

Farewell letter from GIAC Director, Heather Starck

Center director leaving for position in North Carolina

In 2004, I was offered the challenge of becoming the first Director of the new Audubon Center in Columbus. At the time, the Whittier Peninsula was still an eyesore full of abandoned buildings and forgotten trails, but full of hope. I am so proud to have led an amazing team of people to accomplish such a great dream. I feel so fortunate to have been part of giving such a wonderful gift to the children of Columbus.

There is so much more for the Center to do. We have only begun providing the opportunities for people of all ages to connect with nature and make a difference in their lives and community. The children of Columbus need a place like the Grange Insurance Audubon Center to grow, thrive,

and learn how to protect their world. It is critical now more than ever.

Contrary to popular belief, this is not "my" Center. The Grange Insurance Audubon Center belongs to our incredibly dedicated, hard-working staff, board, and volunteers. Their jobs are not easy. They all give everything they have to make the Center a great place for the community. I am humbled every day by our staff and have so much respect for their



Heather Starck

unselfish dedication to our mission that I see every day here. It's tough, too, when funds are low and they're not able to help as many children as they'd like. And that's where you, our supporters and partners, come in. This organization also belongs to you. Without your generosity, the Grange Insurance Audubon Center could have never existed in the first place. I know that sounds like a "pitch," but it's also the truth.

The purpose of this letter is to tell you that I will be leaving Ohio as I have received and taken an internal promotion as Vice President and State Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina, and I assure you that I do so with mixed emotions.

See Center, page 6

Creature Feature

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

The Tree Swallow is one of our earliest, hardiest insect-eating migrants. Their scientific name means 'swift-moving two-colored' in reference to their quick acrobatic flight and their dark iridescent backs contrasting with their white bellies. These beautiful blue-green swallows winter in areas around the Gulf of Mexico and start heading north in late March to early April. Their liquid song and chattering around tree snags is one of the heralds of Spring in the Midwest.

Field Marks. As their name implies, Tree swallows are 'two-toned': greenish above and white below. The back color can vary: adult males have an iridescent blue-green, while the females are a bit grayer. First-year juveniles don't have this color, and stay a dull brownish until their first Spring; some females will stay brownish even into their second year. As a result, the adults are fairly easy to pick out from any swallow swarm in eastern North America; they're the only swallows with the "green above, white below" color combination. Identifying juveniles takes practice, as they look a lot like Rough-winged Swallows, but

have a clearer throat and different behaviors. Tree Swallow flight is also different from other swallows, with fewer wingbeats and more gliding, especially over water.

Close Relatives. Tree swallows belong to a widespread, successful family, the Hirundinidae, which includes swallows and martins. These aerial insectivores have reached nearly all habitats and continents, and are conspicuous diurnal migrants. The Tree Swallow genus, *Tachycineta*, includes some neat relatives, including Violet-green Swallows (*T. thalassia*), Bahama Swallows (*T. cyanoviridis*), and Mangrove Swallows (*T. albilineata*). All share the same general coloration – greenish above, white below – and all nest in tree cavities that have been abandoned by other birds. For Violet-green swallows in western North America, this has meant nesting in forest snags in the foothills and mountains, and commuting to feed on the wetlands and grasslands of nearby tree-less valleys and plains. Mangrove swallows of Mexico and central America specialize in coastal marsh/swamp areas, favoring mangrove snags or other trees killed by coastal flooding.



Kirt Beiling

Tree Swallow at nestbox.

Range: Tree Swallows nest over a broad swath of North America, basically nesting up to treeline in Alaska and Canada. All

See Creature Feature, page 7

Song Sparrow

March-April 2011

Vol. 43 No. 4

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org

Staff: Center Director: Heather Starck

Assistant Center Director: Doreen Whitley

Director of Development: Jeff Redfield

Facilities Operations Manager: Josh Cherubini

Finance and Office Manager: Kristen Clark

Educators: Allison Roush, Tori Strickland, Joe Jennings

Program Coordinator: Amy Boyd

Nature Store Manager: Patty Hecht

Office Phone: 614-545-5475

Center Hours: Standard Hours - * Tuesday-Friday 10am-

6pm, Saturday 9-3, Sunday 11-5pm

Winter Hours - Tuesday - Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 9-3,

Sunday 11-5pm * **GIAC weekday hours return to 10-6pm**

on March 12 (Daylight Savings time)

Directions to the GIAC

From High Street (going south) turn right on Whittier (which runs along south end of German Village and Brewery District). From Front Street (going north) turn left onto Whittier. Follow Whittier, making no turns, across the bridge spanning the tracks, past the other side streets until you drive into the parking lot in front of the center.

GIAC Stewardship Board:

Sandra Nessing (Chair)

Greg Cunningham (Vice Chair)

Alan McKnight

John O'Meara

Christie Vargo

Beth Crane

Julie Davis

Ovell Harrison

Barry Hunlock

Chester Jourdan

Tom Katzenmeyer

Dr. Bernie Master

Mark Real

Jan Rodenfels

Ellen Tripp

Jeff Chaddock

Columbus Audubon

Founded 1913

614-545-5475

www.columbusaudubon.org

Twitter: @ColumbusAudubon

Facebook: Columbus-Audubon

Officers: President: Julie Davis, 523-2180

Vice President: Bill Heck, 895-1940

Newsletter/Web Editor: Stefanie Hauck, (740) 972-1680

Treasurer: Warren Grody

Recording Secretary: Suzan Jervey

Trustees: Julie Davis, Mike Flynn, Joe Meara, Heather Raymond, Katryn Renard, Barbara Revard, Andrea Cook, Tom Sheley, Darlene Sillick, Suzan Jervey, Gerry Brevoort, Warren Grody, Bill Heck and Jackie Bain.

Additional chapter leaders:

Conservation: Dave Horn, 262-0312

Service in the Preserves: Katryn Renard, 261-7171

Education: Susan Setterlin, 457-8130

Programs: Mike Flynn, mflynn.wildandfree@gmail.com

Field Trips: Earl Harrison, eharrison@ehe.osu.edu

CA Web site: Bill Heck, bill.heck@gmail.com

Ohio Young Birders: Gerry Brevoort,

jbrevoor@columbus.rr.com

Eco Weekend: Roz Horn, 262-0312; Lois Day, (740) 549-0333

Membership: Joe Meara, 430-9127

IBA Committee: Heather Raymond, 785-0342

Birdathon: Julie Davis, 523-2180 or

Katryn Renard, 261-7171

Avid Birders: www.columbusaudubon.org/avids/avids.html

March-April activities

GIAC programs

Become a member today to receive special discounts on classes, special events and programs

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center provides school programs through our Conservation Classroom program throughout the year as well as other out of school program opportunities.

For more information on how to get your student, their school or your organization involved please contact Amy Boyd, (614) 545-5486.

Audubon Afternoons

1-3 p.m. every other Saturday & Sunday starting March 5 - Bring family and friends to the Grange Insurance Audubon Center for a fun-filled afternoon of nature exploration. Hike with an educator throughout the Scioto-Audubon Metro Park, participate in activities inside and outside the center and just have fun! No registration required. For more information, call (614) 545-5486.

Spring Break Camp - 'School's Out' Weeklong Camp

9 a.m.-3 p.m. April 18-25 (Before and after care available)

School's out for Spring Break but parents still have to go to work! Have your child join us for a fun-filled day or week of camp to keep their minds

See GIAC activities, page 12

Columbus Audubon programs

Note: Field trip times, dates and locations are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please contact the trip leader 24 hours ahead to make sure the trip has not been changed, postponed or cancelled. Also, go to www.columbusaudubon.org for longer descriptions of each trip and follow us on Facebook for short-notice trips and changes.

Field trips

Waterfowl and other birds of Hoover Reservoir

Sunday, March 6, 2 p.m.

Waterfowl migrate much earlier than most other birds. We will drive to several destinations along the reservoir, looking for ducks, geese, swans and other related waterbirds such as mergansers and grebes. Meet at the main parking lot, at the dam. Call Mike Flynn at 614-769-1681.

Bird walk at Blendon Woods

Sunday, March 6, 8 a.m.

Take a short bird walk at Blendon Woods Metro Park. Meet at the nature center.

Bird walk at Green Lawn Cemetery

Saturdays, March 12 and April 16, 8 a.m.

Over 200 species of birds of birds have been recorded at Green Lawn and an early spring wander around the pit usually brings a few surprises. Join Darlene Sillick and Warren Grody at one of the oldest cemeteries in central Ohio. Meet at the office parking lot inside the iron gate. Call Darlene at (cell) 614-288-3696 or azuretrails@columbus.rr.com.

OYBC March field trip: Service project at Glacier Ridge

Saturday, March 19, 9 a.m.

The Central Ohio OYBC chapter will be putting up nestboxes for Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows at Glacier Ridge Metro Park. OYBC members

See CA programs, page 11

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

GIAC welcomes new finance and office manager

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center welcomed Kristen Clark as its new Finance and Office Manager, on Feb. 11.

Since moving to Columbus in 2003, she has enjoyed providing administrative support for organizations that promote education and sustainable living.

Kristen comes to Audubon most recently from COSI, where she has worked in a number of roles first dating back to 2003. In 2006-2007, she worked for the Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland Council for a year as Product Sale Manager and then Administrative Coordinator for Fund Development (where she was responsible for the annual cookie sale). She returned in 2007 to COSI and worked there until recently joining the GIAC.

Some of her positions at COSI included Box Office Coordinator, Membership Database Supervisor, and General Ledger Accountant. As is common with most nonprofit positions, Kristen was involved with a number of projects and developed a wide variety of skills, including customer relations and computer programs, technology, and accounting software – many of which directly relate to her new role at the GIAC.

In her new role, Kristen will have a number of responsibilities as the primary “administrator” for the center to include tracking paid event and Summer Adventure Camp registrations, GIAC rental contracts, memberships and donor information as well as general accounting of center finan-



Kristen Clark

cial records and human resources. She will also coordinate with National Audubon, Columbus Audubon, and will handle other tasks that will keep the center working smoothly. Jeff Redfield, director of development said “We’re really pleased to have Kristen join the GIAC staff. From a tremendous number of applicants she rose to the top because she is talented and skilled in the position’s tasks. She’s also both familiar with nonprofits and the Columbus community. For many, she will often be their first contact with the Center. Because she’s welcoming, caring, helpful and friendly, she is a great addition to our team.”

Kristen has a degree in History from Salem State College and was a Women’s Studies major at The Ohio State University.

She and her husband Chuck live in the Beechwood area near Clintonville and have one son, Malcolm.

About working for Audubon and the GIAC, Kristen said, “I admire the unique and exciting role The Grange Insurance Audubon Center plays in making Columbus a wonderful place to live and learn, and I am thrilled to be part of the GIAC’s mission.”

Local Artists Show Work at GIAC

Come in and see the beautiful and colorful photography exhibit featured at Grange Insurance Audubon Center!

“Photos and Haikus”, by Laurel Talabare, was created especially for the center. It includes beautiful backyard birds, winter scenes, and colorful leaves, conifers and berries.

Framed along with each pod of photos, is a lovely Haiku that is relative to the theme. This exhibit is hung on the white wall down the hallway between the River Classroom and the Forest Classroom.

Any of Laurels images can be copied to whatever size you wish, and she would be happy to sell them to you for a reasonable price.

The Nature Store carries boxed note cards as well as individual cards of Laurel’s photos of local flora, fauna, and landscape photos. We are also happy to announce that Laurel has produced our first GIAC postcards, four different cards that feature photos of our building and grounds with a winter theme. Each season we will have a selection of GIAC postcards!

GIAC is also honored to have the artwork of Joy Pratt on display, on the outside wall of the Nature Store. Joy’s mixed media paintings are filled with glorious color, and have the power to transport the viewer to wherever their mind’s eye and heart may take them. Joy also has some artwork displayed in the Nature Store. Joy volunteers at the front desk, and is an invaluable support to us. Come in and say hello to her, and take a look at her beautiful artwork!

Thank you for Support

Donations from Dec. 1, 2010 to Jan. 25, 2011

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Columbus Young Professionals Club	H. Regina Lach	Tri Moraine Audubon Society
Beth Crane and Richard McKee	Donna Laidlaw	Martha C. Trout
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Clyde W. Gosnell and Louise O. Warner	James L. and Karen Mears	Bostwick F. Wyman and Linda C. Wyman
	Richard L. and Carol Meyer	

Annual CAPotluck

Tuesday, March 22
6:30 p.m., Dinner
7 p.m. Meeting & Program

Grange Insurance Audubon Center 505 W. Whittier Street, Columbus 43215



Tom Stalf, Senior Vice-President of Operations at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

Please join us at our annual meeting and potluck! Our distinguished speaker this year will be Tom Stalf, Senior Vice-President of Operations at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

We welcome all Columbus Audubon members and encourage you to bring your family and friends! There will be informational displays, GIAC staff and CA trustees to meet, raffle prizes and a few animal surprises from the zoo! Dinner starts promptly at 6:30 p.m. so come early to find a seat, visit with friends and set out your dish before the line forms.

After dinner, the evening will include a short business meeting, a presentation by our newly formed Ohio Young Birders group followed by our speaker.

Each individual or family is asked to bring a substantial dish large enough to share with 12 other people. You may bring a casserole, salad, dessert or bread of some kind. Bring your own utensils, plates, cups and beverage other than coffee, which will be provided.

Learn about the #1 zoo in the country

The guest speaker for the annual potluck will be Tom Stalf, Senior Vice-President of Operations at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

Tom joined the staff of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in the summer of 2010.

Tom started his zoo career as an animal keeper following completion of his undergraduate degree in biology at Western

Illinois University. He worked for over 19 years at the Niabi Zoo near Moline, Illinois where his career ranged from being a zookeeper, a curator, and then, he became the youngest zoo director in the nation. Through his 16 years as zoo director, Tom became friends with Jack Hanna and began to join Jack for national television shows as well as theater presentations.

Tom, along with animal guests, will share with us an inside look at working with animals, inspiring guests towards conservation action while still having fun, and the myriad unexpected details of running the #1 zoo in the country!

Eco Weekend 2011

Get out your calendars and save these Spring dates for Eco Weekend: April 29 to May 1. There is still time to register!! Registration deadline: April 8.

The 2011 Eco Weekend brochure and registration information was mailed directly to all Song Sparrow subscribers in early February! If you did not receive the green brochure, please contact Roz Horn at 614/262-0312 or email

ecoweekend@columbusaudubon.org. You may also contact us or download the brochure information through our website, www.ecoweekend.org.

Eco Weekend is an opportunity to have an affordable and enjoyable weekend experiencing nature's beauty and learning about nature from experienced program leaders. Eco Weekend is held at Camp Oty'Okwa (near Conkles Hollow) in the

Hocking Hills. There are five nature-oriented activity sessions for adults and families from Friday evening through noon on Sunday. You design your own weekend by selecting programs from among the many choices available for each session. Youth from age 4 through Grade 8 have their own

See Eco-Weekend, page 9

Ohio Young Birders brave the elements

On a frigid day in late January, the Central Ohio Chapter of Ohio Young Birders Club (OYBC) defied extreme temperatures and plunged into the great outdoors!

The location was Prairie Rose Farm in North Lewisburg, Ohio and the focus of the field trip was Winter Wildlife Tracking.

Mime Migliore, nature education coordinator for the city of Dublin, spent the afternoon with 13 OYBC enthusiasts.

She shared her extensive knowledge of tracking out in the fields and trails of the farm.

After one-and-a-half hours out in the elements, the group reconvened in a barn to create some bird-feeding crafts, led by Donna Daniel of Wild Ohio TV.

Some of the heartiest of the group then continued on to Mad River Mountain for snow tubing on the wintry hills.



Mime shows how coyotes place their hind paw into their front paw track.

New OYBC member Nick Baltutis was one of the hearty bunch on hand that day. He described his experiences at his first OYBC event:

"I had fun at the Birders Club. I learned a lot from it. I learned how to track and classify an animal just by its tracks. I saw lots of tracks, including coyote, mouse, and

even bird tracks. Since it was snowy out, it was really easy to find tracks. What was really cool was when I saw wing tracks



Photos courtesy of the central Ohio chapter of the OYBC
Wind chill of 2 degrees? No problem! Central Ohio OYBC: it's not for wimps!

after

a bird took off flying! Animals and humans alike have left and right foot dominance, sort of like if you are left or right handed, but just with feet. I learned that I'm left foot dominant. For humans, 20% of people are left foot dominant and the other 80% are right. With animals, it's 50/50. The people there were friendly and fun. We all made seed girls at the end and it was very fun to make them. Even though it was a 2 degree wind chill, I felt great exploring, learning, and having fun."

** To see the photo gallery for this OYBC event, go to www.columbus.audubon.org...then click on "Groups"...then click on "Ohio Young Birders."

- Gerry Brevoort

Ohio Young Birders chapter plans a busy Spring

2011 promises to be a very busy year for the Central Ohio Chapter of OYBC. This group of 12-18 year olds has a love of nature, birds and conservation. They also seem to love to get out and do things...LOTS of things!

In January, OYBC enjoyed some Winter Wildlife Tracking and also made natural creations, which served as yummy treats for critters. The month of February took the young birders to Killdeer Plains for the annual Winter Blues Blowout with other teens from around the state. There the search was on for shrikes and owls, but the group also enjoyed socializing over lunch at the Sportsmen's Center.

Springtime will offer several fantastic opportunities for OYBC members to get outside, learn, hone their skills, and give back to their community. Each field trip and community service project is described in detail on pages 2 and 11 of this newsletter and on the Chapter's website (Go to www.audubon.org. Then click on "Groups"...then click on "Ohio Young

Birders"). But just to tempt all young birders, here are some more highlights of what's coming up in March & April:

On March 19, Central Ohio OYBC will install nest boxes for Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows at Glacier Ridge Metro Park.

Chrissy Pheifer-Hoff is the park naturalist who has asked for some boxes to be set up for school group and park visitor programs. We are very excited that Dick Tuttle, a retired middle school teacher, will be assisting with this project. Dick is known as Mr. Bluebirder of Delaware County and he is a leader in the nest box conservation movement in North America.

On April 23, the Central Ohio Chapter of OYBC will host young birders from all around Ohio for an annual "Spring Fling" in Central Ohio. OYBC members will meet at Green Lawn Cemetery to search for early migrants. From there they'll continue on to Grange Insurance Audubon Center for more birding and an early lunch together. Then to Hoover Nature Preserve

for a bird walk with Charlie Bombaci who does incredible work with Prothonotary Warblers. The last stop will be Alum Creek, where Dick Tuttle will point out the Osprey platforms and share the efforts being made on behalf of these magnificent birds.

The fun of OYBC will continue into May & June, of course. We won't spill all the beans yet, but May will bring a trip up north to Magee Marsh for warbler magic! Our OYBC chapter will also be forming a team for Columbus Audubon's annual Birdathon.

And then in June will bring a really great adventure: birding by kayak! What can we say: you're gonna wanna be there!

To join OYBC, just go to the chapter's website at www.columbusaudubon.org. Then click on "Groups" and then on "Ohio Young Birders." You can join online right now! An annual student membership is only \$10, so why wait? Contact OYBC Advisor Gerry Brevoort at jbrevoor@columbus.rr.com.

Backyards for Wildlife: Easily create your dream yard

My dream yard supports the entire ecosystem – native birds with their plants all the way down to the tiniest creatures that support our habitat.

What is your dream yard?

It's time to start planning what is needed to create it. If you want to support birds, landscape thoughts are the same – styles (English garden, etc), tidiness and tools (trowels, shovels, gloves, etc). Keep plants out of the way of overhead lines and utility boxes, plant wet-footed plants in low areas, and place your garden in view where you can enjoy it

What can you do to support native birds?

1. *Garden Pest control* – Stop or reduce chemical use that will reverse what you're trying to do (the predatory bugs naturally attracted will do the work for you).

2. *Lawn maintenance* - Apply corn gluten April to mid-May and mid-August to mid-September as broad-leaf weed control and natural fertilizer. Some organic insecticides are toxic to bees. See them in the table on page 2 at www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/xerces-organic-approved-pesticides-factsheet.pdf. Notice that corn gluten is in the green!

3. *Add plants native to the region to provide natural bird food*, including insects ("bugs"), nuts, berries, etc. Everyone seems to have a different explanation about what is native. To simplify, I buy the non-invasive plants found in nearby natural areas with similar soil conditions.

4. *Avoid plants invasive to the area* by checking the bottom of www.oipc.info/specieslist.html.

5. *Follow the tips* on the "Environmentally Friendly Lawn and Garden Care" flier on the "How Do I Do This" tab at www.backyardhabitat.info.



By Marc Apfelstadt

Royal Catchfly gets nabbed by a hummingbird.

What are the best plants?

Native caterpillars and insects ("bugs") are important food for native birds. They are high in energy and fat (protein) and live symbiotically with the plant. They eat holes in the leaves, but not enough to look bad from a distance. Birds find caterpillars by looking for holes, so caterpillars need to be discreet.

The top plants bugs need, according to Doug Tallamy's entomology research results, in the book *Bringing Nature Home* are those that support the most amount of caterpillar species: Red or White Oak (*Quercus*) supports 534 (He started his by planting an acorn), Cherry/Plum (*Prunus*) supports 456, Willow (*Salix*) also supports 456, and Birch (*Betula*) supports 413.

I also want flowers, so I choose the plants on which native butterflies and moths lay their eggs. For starters, see "Attract Butterflies to your Ohio Yard" at www.backyardhabitat.info on the "How Do I Do This" tab.

When planting herbs and things for me to eat, I plant extra for the caterpillars and insects. If you have room for tall Prairie plants (around 8 feet), Compass Plant/Prairie-Dock/Cup Plant (*Silphium*) support a high number of insect species

(Tooker/Hanks 04).

After gradually cutting back for three years, I stopped watering the garden because native plants grow deep tap roots. Most native plants placed in the right location go dormant rather than dying from a drought.

Design your garden in an easily manageable size. For curb appeal to the general public, place lower, flowering plants in full view.

Email marc-a@columbus.rr.com with questions or to receive the monthly 'Nature Scoop' email or go to www.backyardhabitat.info.

Earth Hour

Light a candle and turn off your lights from 8:30 to 9:30 pm on Saturday, March 26, to join over 120 countries and millions of people in an inspirational event to support our planet. More information is at www.earthhour.org. Close the pop-up window and scroll down to the "Earth Hour 2011 Official video" in the second section on the right-hand side.

Manage Grackle Flocks

If you feed birds, switching from Sunflower to Safflower seed in March will help control the flocks of Grackles from eating all your bird food. Most other birds that like Sunflower will eat Safflower (unfortunately including the European Starling). Once Grackles break up into their own territories, you can switch back to Sunflower.

Conserve Migratory Birds

Reminder: Turn your outdoor lights down or off between 11:30pm and 5am from mid-March to mid-June. To learn more, click on "Urban Threats to Birds", then "Light Attraction" at www.flap.org/flap_home.htm.

Center director leaving for position in North Carolina

Continued from page 1

But I feel confident leaving this organization in the extremely capable hands of our staff, volunteers and dedicated board. Soon you will welcome a new Center Director and I am certain with new leadership GIAC will attain even bigger and better goals.

I'm going to cherish the memories, both of the struggles as well as the achievements.

And I certainly will miss all those people who have touched my life. I want to thank everyone involved with the Grange Insurance Audubon Center for lifting me up and allowing me to help create a Center that will change the lives of thousands of people for generations to come. Thank you especially our loyal supporters, for your trust and confidence. I've been struggling for days over this letter. Saying "goodbye" is

something I don't do well. Don't like it. Especially where there's so much love and emotion involved.

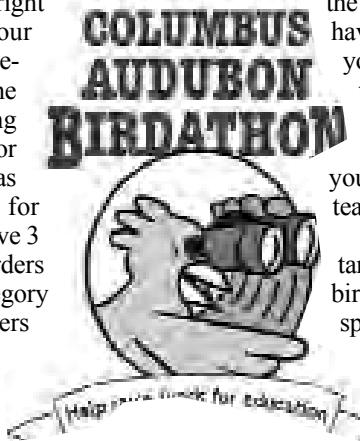
So if you'll please forgive me.....I think I must move on to my next adventure and challenge, I hope to see you in North Carolina sometime!

Love,
Heather

Columbus Audubon

It's almost Birdathon time again!

The 2011 Birdathon is right around the corner and our teams are making their strategic plans. This event is the kickoff of the spring birding season and the high point for many of our teams, as well as the main fund raiser for Columbus Audubon. We have 3 time categories to fit any birders 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.

Our sponsors are as important to the birdathon as our birders. If you would like to sponsor a team look for the team roster in the next newsletter, pick the team you wish to sponsor, fill out the form and send it in. You do not need to

send your money until you receive a notice from the team you sponsored.

If you have ever thought about joining in

the birding fun, this is the year. Start with your favorite birding buddies, choose a fun team name and call Katryn Renard (614-261-7171) to register.

Then, ask all your friends and co-workers to sponsor you and go birding!

Count all the birds your team identifies in your chosen category on any day between May 1 and May 22. You don't even have to stay in Ohio. Be creative, bird anywhere in the world or your own backyard.

We want everyone to get involved this year so remember, the rules and dates are just guidelines.

Having fun and raising funds are the most important things!

This year's teams are striving to raise even more dollars than ever before.

-Julie Davis

Creature Feature: Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

Continued from page 1

they really need are snags with holes (or nest boxes) and a steady supply of insects. Their winter range is even more impressive, covering most of the Caribbean and coastal Gulf of Mexico, but even stretching up into the Carolinas. This is much further north than most other swallows, and is mostly due to some neat Tree Swallow behaviors. In cold weather, they'll often forage for aquatic insects, slowly flying over the surface of ponds and lakes to pick off surface bugs. Apparently a lot of aquatic larvae time their emergence to miss the hordes of summer insectivores.....but they can't avoid hardy Tree Swallows. These swallows also have a unique ability to switch to some fruits when insects are in short supply. I've seen large flocks of Tree Swallows descending on myrtle bushes in Florida and the Carolinas; they'll land or hover next to the bushes, picking off berries.

Nesting: We know a lot about Tree Swallow nesting because they're one of the cavity nesters that will readily accept nest boxes. Males arrive very early in Spring, sometimes in February, to compete for nest cavities with other birds and swallows. This competition has selected for aggressive, fearless birds, and Tree Swallows will often attack birds, mammals, and even humans that approach their nest cavities too closely. Oddly enough, Tree Swallows won't repeatedly attack bluebirds, and some bluebird box managers have used this trait to their

advantage. They put pairs of boxes close together. One of the pair gets colonized by Tree Swallows, who will invariably drive off any House Sparrows, Starlings or other birds that try to use the other box....except bluebirds. The Tree Swallows wind up being unwitting guardians of the Bluebird nest.

Once established at a cavity, the male will perch there and sing a liquid cascade of notes, an unusually beautiful song for a swallow. This is an advertisement to lure a female, who will carefully inspect the cavity before giving the male a thumbs-up or thumbs-down (if they had thumbs!). Once the pair is established, she'll lay 4-6 eggs in the cavity, usually in early - mid April. It takes 14-16 days for the eggs to hatch, and a further 16-24 days for the nestlings to fledge, depending on food supplies. Egg laying is asynchronous, which means first laid, first hatched.

This means that there is a spectrum of sizes in a swallow brood, and if food becomes restricted, the smaller birds will be out-competed for food and likely perish. Activity around Tree Swallow nests can be frantic in May and early June, as both parents rush in to feed youngsters and out to forage for insects for their hungry brood. If a nest is destroyed or attacked, the pair can nest again, but usually they can only raise one brood in a season.

Locally, Tree Swallows are widespread, if not abundant, in open fields and wetlands of central Ohio. Hardly any large local park

doesn't have a few nest boxes for them, and box arrays at most of the Metro Parks almost guarantee some there.

Parks with sizeable wetlands, like Glacier Ridge, Battelle-Darby, 3-Creeks, and Pickerington Ponds, are especially good places to see them. You can also find them around most of the large reservoirs near Columbus.

Hoover Reservoir is especially blessed, since its shallow north end has a large number of dead snags, and the birds can be easily seen around Galena (Area M and N) and Oxbow Island.

One of the neat spectacles of late Summer is the gathering of adult and juvenile Tree Swallows into large flocks, usually in late July and August. These flocks often contain other species, and usually form in areas where food is abundant, often at managed wetlands that don't dry out in late summer. Locally, Big Island Wildlife Area and the Hebron Fish hatchery (near Newark) can have flocks in the hundreds or even thousands.

These flocks will migrate as a unit and even merge with other groups to form huge flocks on the wintering grounds along the Gulf coast. Our residents leave by the end of August, but there is often a pulse of migrating Canadian birds that comes through in mid September-early October. After that, we just have to do without these beautiful birds until next March.

-By Rob Thorn

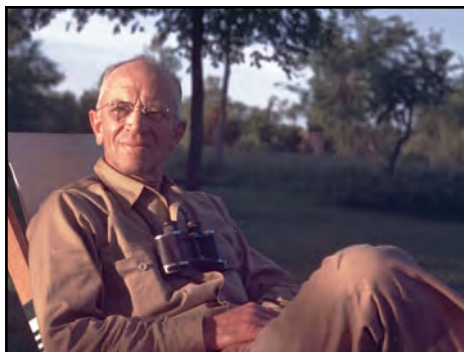
GIAC and Columbus Audubon

'Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and A Land Ethic for Our Time'

Documentary to be shown at GIAC March 24

Aldo Leopold, considered by most conservationists to be the "father of wildlife management" has had a lasting impact on the history of the conservation movement. While he wrote many technical papers during his tenure as a professor of wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin, it was his breakthrough book *A Sand County Almanac* that brought his principles of man's connection to the land and a land ethic to the general public's eye. His lyrical writing style continues to attract people from all walks of life and plant the seed that we are all connected to the land and how we treat it will have profound effects in our lives and in the generations to come.

Three years in the making, *Green Fire* is not just a documentary about the tremendous contributions that Aldo made in the realm of wildlife management and forestry, it also focuses on how relevant his principles are to current environmental challenges and how they are being carried forward by conservationists, communities and individuals today. The title of the documentary "*Green Fire*" is named for an



"Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and A Land Ethic for Our Time," will be shown at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center on March 24 starting at 6:30 p.m.

essay that Aldo wrote about his experiences with deer management in the Southwest early in his career. At that time the thought was that if the wolf population was limited, then the deer population would prosper which would make hunters quite happy. As Aldo experienced seeing "the green fire" leave the eyes of a dying wolf, he realized that he would make a great change in his thinking about wildlife,

land and its connection to man.

You will see interviews with conservationists from all over the country and how their work today is based in part by Leopold's thoughts and principles. Early on in the development phase, the film crew traveled here to Columbus Ohio to capture the eighth grade students in the New Albany school system as they read excerpts from *A Sand County Almanac* as part of a year long event "Listening to the Land" in 2007-2008. Did this reading make the final cut? We shall see.....

The production of this timely documentary is a joint project of the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Center for Humans and Nature and the U.S. Forest Service.

Join us on March 24, 2011 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM as GIAC premieres the long awaited documentary *Green Fire*. In addition to the screening, there will be a question/answer time, displays about Aldo Leopold as well as how his writings are utilized in today's classrooms through the Leopold Education Project.

-Susan Setterlin

Birding for A Better Columbus: Volunteers needed of all sizes!

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center will begin banding the week of April 18. Volunteers are needed to assist as part of Birding for a Better Columbus. This program is made up of two research studies to measure avian response to habitat restoration within the Scioto Audubon Metro Park. The first study is being completed through bird banding within the park during Spring and Fall migration. Doreen Whitley, GIAC Director of Conservation is monitoring the number, diversity, and fat and weight of migratory songbirds while tracking them through bird banding to understand the average length of stay of these birds and benefits received while stopping at the park during migration.

The second study is measuring avian response to habitat restoration year round by surveying birds on specified points within the Scioto Audubon Metro Park, Kiwanis Park in Dublin, and Slate Run Metro Park.

People of all sizes, age, and birding level of experience are invited to join this group! Training is provided through GIAC and Columbus Audubon birding trips. We will even match you with an experienced birder for training. Volunteers interested in banding will be trained for specific roles at the station run by Doreen..

Incentives for volunteer hours, rewards, and socials are provided based on group input. If you would like to join the fun and help us make Columbus a better place through birding contact Doreen Whitley at dwhitley@audubon.org. You can also receive updates on events by joining the group page "Birding for A Better Columbus" on Facebook.

-Doreen Whitley



Photo by GIAC staff

Spring banding sessions will begin the week of April 18 at the GIAC. Volunteers of all ages are welcome to help out! Contact Doreen Whitley if interested.

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Trade in your non-native plant for a new native one!

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center is once again providing native plants to homeowners that are removing Amur Honeysuckle from their backyards.

Amur Honeysuckle is a non-native invasive plant from Asia that threatens the biodiversity of wildlife in Ohio and the Midwest. We are working very hard at the center through research, mapping, and our programs to remove this plant and replace it with new native plants within the Scioto Audubon Metro Park.

Additionally, we are committed to reducing threats to biodiversity throughout Columbus by assisting homeowners in honeysuckle removal and will provide a native plant in return.

We are targeting residents within a 3-mile radius of the center, but the program is open to all Franklin County residents.

If you would like to participate contact Doreen Whitley, GIAC Director of Conservation at dwhitley@audubon.org.



Columbus Audubon

Conservation corner: Conservation of dead bugs

This may seem like an odd topic but I have a story to share: A few years ago I was contacted by a woman who was settling the estate of an elderly man.

In cleaning out his stuff she had found an old insect collection and wondered if it might have value.

When I investigated I was aghast to discover that the wooden boxes contained a forest of pins, all neatly labeled, and a sea of what appeared to be bumblebee fragments amid thousands of cast skins from larvae of carpet beetles which had eaten the specimens.

The beetles had beaten me to the bees! The labels were mostly from Alaska, in the 1930s. Bumblebees are closely associated with flowers, of course, and indirectly with climate.

What great documentation that would have been for comparing environmental conditions of Alaska in the 1930s with those of the present day. Nothing of value remained except the pins.

I commenced my entomological career

in the 1950s with a small collection of common insects from my backyard, vacant lots, and any open space within a reasonable hike of the Boston MTA subway and trolley system. I still have both my bugs and my notes, and am in the process of finding them permanent homes in appropriate institutional collections (mostly in Ohio and New England).

Two of the more common insects I encountered were the Yellowbanded Bumblebee and the Nine-spotted Lady Beetle, which was the second-commonest lady beetle in my urban backyard. In the past half century the numbers of Yellowbanded Bumblebees have declined precipitously and as far as I know it is gone from eastern Massachusetts.

The 9-spotted Lady Beetle is near the point of extinction globally, not only in New England.

We don't know the reasons for these declines. Are they part of normal environmental changes? Diseases? Parasites? Are they linked to some factor(s) over

which humans have control? Often we have a very incomplete picture of population declines: when and where were an insect (or anything) last seen? Such documentation is necessary just to get a species listed as threatened or endangered, and for many animals and plants we just do not know.

Thus the importance of conserving dead stuff: old natural history specimens, whether they be bugs on pins, stuffed birds, shells, whatever they are, as long as there is accompanying information on when and where collected.

Such collections may be valuable documentation. If you have such a resource, or if you know of someone who has specimens, or administers a small educational collection, or oversees school or camp bug-collecting activities, you can help by seeing that the material is evaluated and properly cared for.

For more information, contact me at davehorn43@columbus.rr.com.

-Dave Horn

Eco-Weekend is April 29 - May 1, 2011

Continued from page 4

special programs on Saturday. Come and learn from professionals who volunteer their time to share their knowledge with you about the natural world. Are you aware that you can give the gift of Eco Weekend? It's very simple: you provide the payment to cover the cost of registration, lodging and meals for someone you care about. You may send in the payment at the time of their registration, or you

may send in the payment ahead of time. The total weekend cost for an adult is only \$110; the cost for a child (age 4 through Grade 8) is only \$65. Send payments to the Eco Weekend registrar: Maura Moran, 540 Coonpath Rd NW, Lancaster, OH 43130, specifying the name of the recipient(s). Everyone is welcome! Participants have so far included families with children ranging from age 4 – 17, single adults, grandparents with grandkids, senior citizens, college graduate students, and small groups of friends enjoying the weekend together. - Roz Horn

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Celebrate Spring at GIAC with several special events

"Your Natural Connection" Breakfast – Thursday, April 14

Connections – they help make the GIAC great. Some people connect to the mission of the Center and Audubon while others connect the great location of the Center. Others connect personally to our education efforts and still others connect to having a nature center in downtown Columbus. Connections are what motivate us to get more involved or lend our support.

While the building wouldn't even be here without the community's previous generosity, the facility was only the first step. Now is the time to make a natural connection for generations to come.

We need help to invest in the future – of the Center, of our community and especially in the future of children!

On Thursday, April 14, from 7:30 to 9 a.m. the GIAC Staff and Stewardship Board will host our first annual pledge breakfast entitled "Your Natural Connection." This event is to raise annual and multiple year pledges that will be the foundation for growing the Center and its programs.

Why is a pledge important? While each gift is important, a multiple-year pledge allows for the planning and growth needed. Consider the sayings... "you've sold me" and "you don't have to ask twice."

For those who already believe in the Center and its mission, a pledge shares that they truly are connected and committed. Instead of spending time asking for support, we'll be able to spend that time on keeping supporters informed and up to date. It also tells us we *"don't have to ask twice"* and allows us to focus more efforts on connecting new people and growing our Audubon and GIAC family.

The breakfast will be a short one-hour event. Guests will hear about the GIAC's vision, learn more about some of our programs, and discover their natural connection. At the end of the program guests will all be asked to make a pledge or gift to support the Center.

Space is limited to 200, so sign-up early and ahead of time is needed. Please contact a Table Captain, a Stewardship Board member or staff (listed in the newsletter) to reserve your spot today. All reservations are required by March 23 or as space allows.

Oh, and regarding the "you don't have to ask twice" – supporters with an annual pledge won't receive all the various mailings and donation requests from the GIAC throughout the year.

If requested, the first portion of an annual pledge can be immediately applied towards an individual or family membership.

And, pledges at certain amounts and/or lengths of time not only won't be asked twice, they will automatically receive tickets to GIAC fundraising events for that year.

With an annual budget of over \$900,000, donations and support are extremely important if we want the Center to be a natural connection for Columbus and future generations. If unable to attend and willing to make an annual multiple-year pledge, if you have questions about the event or pledging, or you want to sign up to attend, please contact Jeff Redfield, Director of Development at (614) 545-5479 or jredfield@audubon.org.

Celebrate Earth Day at the GIAC!

Join the Grange Insurance Audubon Center staff and volun-



2010 Earth Day festivities at the Scioto Audubon Metro Park which surrounds the Grange Insurance Audubon Center.

teers as we celebrate Earth Day on Saturday April 16, 2011.

All year round we are working hard to effectively steward our part of the Earth, the Scioto River-Greenlawn Important Bird Area by reducing threats to the habitat within the Scioto Audubon Metro Park.

Earth Day is a time to get down and dirty and join in the fun by assisting in picking up trash at the river's edge, removing invasive plants, and planting new native plants.

All volunteers receive a t-shirt and refreshments and the center will provide family fun activities all day long.

We are also partnering with Green Columbus as a worksite for a citywide Earth Day celebration, which includes a celebration on April 23. If you would like to volunteer on this day please contact Amy Boyd at aboyn@audubon.org.

Wine and Warblers –

Date Changed to Wednesday, May 18

Mark your calendars now for an exciting, new and fun event at the GIAC/ The 2011 "Wine and Warblers" event will be held on Wednesday, May 18 (*) from 5:30 – 9 p.m. Tickets are \$40 each or \$75 for two. The event will consist of a 20-30 minute warbler walk on the peninsula lead by GIAC staff or Columbus Audubon representatives.

A wine tasting including a series of wines from locations along the warblers migratory path, and hors d'oeuvres will be inside the Center and on the decks.

A silent auction of very unique and themed items will also be available – including a "wine tree" with over 40 bottles of various wines for the winning bid.

Throughout the event, guests will be able to go "on flights" throughout the surrounding areas as staff and experienced volunteers lead walks to see the warblers on the peninsula. There will also be an evening bird-banding demonstration (weather permitting). Look for more information and updates on the GIAC website throughout the time leading up to the event!

** Note – this is a date change from what was previously printed in the Jan-Feb "Song Sparrow" newsletter.*

-Jeff Redfield

Columbus Audubon

CA programs

Continued from page 2

will paint the raccoon baffles and then erect the completed nest boxes on poles at pre-approved sites at the north end of the park. Meet at the ranger station just inside the north end of the park and west of the roundabout. To r.s.v.p. contact Darlene Sillick at azure-trails@columbus.rr.com or 614-288-3696. The chapter is open for all students ages 12-18.

Hoover & Alum Creek Reservoirs

Sunday, March 13, 8 a.m.

March is when Spring starts to gain the upper hand against winter. We'll try to enjoy some early first landbird migrants by combining these two good Delaware County birding locales. Meet at the Westerville Community Center. Contact Rob Thorn, 614-551-0643 or robthorn2@gmail.com.

First day of Spring - Birds of Big Island Wildlife Area

Sunday, March 20, 2 p.m.

This wildlife area located just west of Marion consists of wetlands and ponds, open space and small woodlots. It is especially attractive to waterfowl during spring migration. Meet at the Worthington Square parking lot (southeast corner). Call Mike Flynn at 614-769-1681.

Bird walk at Blendon Woods

Sunday, April 3, 9 a.m.

Take a short bird walk at Blendon Woods Metro Park. Meet at the nature center.

Early birds in Dublin

Saturday, April 9, 8 a.m.

In April, the pace of Spring really picks up, and the first waves of temperate migrants start to arrive from the south. Join us for a peek at Dublin hotspots as we try to find these early migrant sapsuckers, blackbirds, kinglets, sparrows, and warblers. We'll start at Kiwanis Park on Riverside Drive then work our way up the Scioto Gorge to O'Shaughnessy Reservoir. Contact Rob Thorn, 614-551-0643 or robthorn2@gmail.com.

Beginning birders - Early Spring migrants at Highbanks

Sunday, April 10, 2 p.m.

It's early spring and some of the early spring migrants are moving north as spring works its way to the land. We will begin in the nature center and spend some time looking at the feeders then hit the trail to look and listen for the new arrivals. Call Mike Flynn at 614-769-1681.

Dublin early wildflower & migrant walk

Sunday, April 17, 2 p.m.

Join Jim Davidson and Darlene Sillick for a spring wildflower and bird migrant walk starting at Kiwanis Wetland Park south of 161 on Dublin Rd/Rt 33. Bring your field guides. Jim and Darlene will show you some of their favorite places in Dublin to see a variety of wildflowers. Call Darlene at (cell) 614-288-3696 or azure-trails@columbus.rr.com.

OYBC April Field Trip: Spring Fling in Central Ohio

Saturday, April 23, 8 a.m.

Meet at Green Lawn Cemetery's main office by 8 a.m. for a full

CA April Program: April 26, 2011
7 p.m., social time, 7:30 p.m., presentation
at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center
505 W. Whittier Street, Columbus 43215

Forest songbirds & habitat disturbance

Kelly Williams-Sieg, a Ph.D. candidate at The Ohio State University will speak about her research for the past three years on the behavioral responses of forest songbirds to disturbance in Tar Hollow State Forest. She found plasticity in foraging and other behaviors. In 2010, she began to examine the effects of plasticity and disturbance on reproductive success and survival. Her work has provided a glimpse of how disturbance affects these songbirds beyond more traditional abundance based estimates of population health and community integrity. The range of conditions within which birds can adapt their behavior, the behavioral plasticity a species can exhibit, and the fitness associated with both, are necessary to our understanding of ecological and management implications.

Williams-Sieg also coordinates the fall migration study of Northern Saw-whet Owls in Chillicothe and will provide information on how you can get involved with that project.

day of bird watching, along with the Black Swamp Bird Observatory chapter of OYBC. We'll start at Green Lawn at 8 a.m., then on to GIAC for birding & lunch, then to Hoover Nature Preserve for prothonotary warblers, and ending at Alum Creek with the osprey platforms. Please bring a drink, water, snacks and a lunch. To r.s.v.p. for this event, contact OYBC advisor Darlene Sillick at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com or 614-288-3696. The chapter is open for all students ages 12-18.

Service in the Preserves

Clifton Gorge SNP

Saturday, March 5, 7:45 a.m.

Clifton Gorge is one of the most spectacular dolomite and limestone gorges in Ohio and home to a wide variety of spring wildflowers. The trail system in the preserve protects these plants and their associated insects from the footsteps of the myriad of visitors. We will be doing some trail maintenance and also replacing boards on various steps and structures. It's a bit early for the wildflowers, but a few of them will be poking their heads up for us to see.

Lake Katharine SNP

Saturday, April 9-10, 7:45 a.m.

Ask anyone who's been to Lake Katharine to describe it and you'll no doubt hear superlatives about wildflowers, big leaf and umbrella magnolia trees, and impressive rock formations. It is indeed a beautiful site. Even with just one visit, it quickly becomes a favorite spot. The trails need some attention so we will be rebuilding sections that are slipping, cleaning up some others, and painting some signs.

For both trips, meet at 7:45 a.m. in the parking lot inside the gate house at the Ohio Department Natural Resources Complex to travel in the ODNR van to the site.

Please call Katelyn Renard by Wednesday, March 2 for the March 5 trip and Wednesday, April 5 for the April 9-10 trip at (614) 261-7171 to sign up.

RETURN IN FIVE DAYS TO

Columbus Audubon/GIAC
505 W. Whittier St.
Columbus, OH 43215
DBA - National Audubon Society

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Thank You to our New E-Subscribers

In the last issue, we extended a call to GIAC/Columbus Audubon members to help reduce costs and resources by signing up to receive the newsletter in electronic format.

Thank you to the many who wrote and signed up to become our newest E-Subscribers! There's still time. You can always switch to this option. Send an email (from the email or emails you wish to receive an e-version), to either the GAIC to jred-field@audubon.org or Columbus Audubon at membership@columbusaudubon.org and indicate "electronic version only" As each issue comes out, we'll send you an electronic (.pdf) version to the

email you provide. Anyone who contacts us 3 weeks before the next issue will switch to the electronic format (for example, for the May-June issue, please contact us by April 11).

Please note... The GIAC and Columbus Audubon want to make sure that all those who are eligible to receive our newsletter, and who want a printed copy, continue to receive one in the mail. We appreciate that for many of our supporters, it allows them to read and peruse the copy at their leisure. It's a service we plan to continue! Also, we do run a few extra copies to place in public areas in the community to raise additional awareness.

Bike Path Closed between Main and Audubon

The City of Columbus and Metro Parks announced that Scioto Trail (bike path) closed January 31 and will remain closed through late spring due to final construction phases associated with the Scioto Mile project. The closure includes 600' of the trail from Main Street. Signs will be posted in both directions and will include Trail detour information to Front Street. This close means that riders and walkers won't be able to enter or exit the park using the trail. With decent work weather the project should be done in 4 months and projected re-open date of May 15.

GIAC activities

Continued from page 2

and bodies moving.

Our conservation and environmental focused day camp will introduce your child to the wonderful world of Spring Migration that happen throughout our Scioto- Audubon Greenlawn IBA, everyday! Before and Extended care will be provided for additional costs. Pre-registration required.

For more information on the events listed above, check our website: grange.audubon.org or call (614) 545-5486.

Special Scout Days

Brownies Overnight at the GIAC – Friday, March 11, 7 p.m. – Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m. \$30/Scout - This program will offer a variety of activities geared toward key Brownie Try-Its including Eco-Explorers, Outdoor Adventurer and Watching Wildlife. Other activities include games, a night-time hike and a late-night movie. Evening snack and light morning breakfast included. Please register through the Girl Scouts at www.gsohios-heartland.org.

Bear and Wolf Cubs Overnight at the GIAC – Friday, April 15, 7 p.m. - Saturday, April 16, 10 a.m. \$30/Scout – This program will offer a variety of activities geared toward earning the Wildlife Conservation Belt Loop and Pin all in one. Other activities include games, a night-time hike and a late-night movie. Evening snack and light morning breakfast included. Please register with Allison at GIAC, 543-5482.

Birthday Parties

Call Allison at 543-5482 or take a look at our website for more information on Birthday parties offered at the center. Check out past issues of the *Song Sparrow* for party themes and descriptions.

-GIAC education staff