

## Focusing on Winter Ecology and Families in Nature

As winter begins to take hold from the pleasant, pretty days of fall, families are taking their winter coats out of storage, adding extra blankets to their beds and getting their furnaces/cars checked, in preparation for days of snow and cold.

While we get ready, our feathered friends are getting ready too. Some species of birds migrate away from Ohio, some to Ohio from points north and some stay year-round adapting to the changing environment. This issue focuses on those adaptations as well as what you and your family can do to enjoy this season of change from hot busy humid days to the quiet and calm cold of winter.

Popular winter migrants to watch out for are Saw-whet Owls, Short-eared Owls, Pine Siskins, Dark-eyed Juncos and Snow Buntings. Some bird species like the American Goldfinch molt their bright summer colors in favor of winter's subdued hues. Families can take part in many winter activities and help scientists too by participating in a local Christmas Bird Count (December 14 - January 2,) FeederWatch (all winter) or the Great Backyard Bird Count (February). The key is to get out there and have fun!

### Look for features inside

Christmas  
Bird Count

Creature  
Feature:  
Horned Lark

Snow tracks

Natural holi-  
day decorat-  
ing



Look for the  
snowflake icon for  
our special Winter  
Ecology/Families in  
Nature features

### Stock up for the season by buying bird seed from CA

Fall migration is upon us and time is drawing near to think about stocking up for the bird feeding season.

The Columbus Audubon Bird Seed Sale is a perfect way to stock up on quality seeds and seed blends and lend a helping hand to both birds and Columbus Audubon.

Online ordering via [www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org) will begin in early November for pick-up in December. You can place orders online until December 15.

There is also an abbreviated form included on page six of this newsletter for those of you who wish to mail your order in via snail mail.

As in past years, the seed you order can be picked up December 1-24 at Wild Birds Unlimited, 5400 Riverside Drive in Columbus. All proceeds from the 2011 Bird Seed Sale will go to Columbus Audubon.



#### SEED MIXES

**SUNFLOWER:** The sunflower is black, oil seed. If you use sunflower you might also give safflower a try. It also has a high oil content and is a good alternative feed.

**WBU DELUXE BLEND:** Black oil sunflower 50%, white millet 35%, striped sunflower 10%, safflower 5%.

**WBU CHOICE BLEND:** Oil sunflower 55%, striped sunflower 15%, safflower 10%, sunflower chips 10%, peanut pieces 10%.

**OHIO NO-MESS BLEND:** No shell mess with this mix of seed meats, nuts and corn, sunflower chips 50%, cracked corn 25%, white millet 15%, peanut pieces 10%.

### Letter from GIAC center director Christie Vargo

Dear Friends!

As I write this, it has been four months since I joined Audubon as the Center Director for the Grange Insurance Audubon Center. It is not cliché when I say I am thrilled to be here.

Some of you may know that I began my career path in the field of environmental education. I also played key roles in building three outdoor/nature education facilities. This includes the Grange Insurance Audubon Center where I worked with community leaders to raise the money to build and help operate the Center.

Although my motivation is creating environments where kids get introduced to nature, this is the very first time I have had the privilege to work in a facility I helped create. What a gift!

Since arriving, I have watched an incredibly committed and talented staff at work and thought I would share some recent accomplishments and benchmarks.

#### Recent Accomplishments and Short-Term Plans:

- Audubon Adventure Camp served 98 campers over the course of nine sessions held June-August 2011. Each session was larger than the next, culminating in 20 campers for the last session. This speaks to both the quality of the program and the value of word-of-mouth advertising.

- Eight youth-serving organizations participated in the Center's summer Partnership Camp programs, greatly expanding our reach, and enabling 1,275 campers to experience conservation education at the Center.

See giac page 15

# Song Sparrow

November-December 2011

Vol. 44 No. 2

**Grange Insurance Audubon Center**  
[www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org](http://www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org)

**614-545-5475**

**Staff:** Center Director: Christie Vargo  
Director of Development: Jeff Redfield  
Facilities Operations Manager: Josh Cherubini  
Finance and Office Manager: Kristen Clark  
Program Coordinator: Amy Boyd  
Educators: Allison Roush, Tori Strickland, Joe Jennings and Mindy Tehan  
Nature Store Manager: Patty Hecht  
Facility Attendants: Ian Dowden, Monica Johnson and Abby King  
Volunteer Coordinator: Nancy Hartman  
Office Phone: 614-545-5475  
**Center Hours:** Winter Hours – Tuesday – Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Sundays Noon – 5 p.m.

**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.

Sandra Nessing (Chair)	Chester Jourdan
Greg Cunningham (Vice Chair)	Alan McKnight
Frances Beasley	John O'Meara
Beth Crane	Jan Rodenfels
Jeff Chaddock	Milt Schott
Julie Davis	
Carol Drake	
Bill Heck	

## Columbus Audubon

**Founded 1913**

**614-545-5475**

[www.columbusaudubon.org](http://www.columbusaudubon.org)

**Twitter: @ColumbusAudubon**

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**Officers:** President: Bill Heck, 895-1940  
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### Additional chapter leaders:

Conservation: Dave Horn, 262-0312  
Service in the Preserves: Katryn Renard, 261-7171  
Education: Jackie Bain, [jjbain@insight.rr.com](mailto:jjbain@insight.rr.com)  
Programs: Darlene Sillick, [azuretrails@columbus.rr.com](mailto:azuretrails@columbus.rr.com)  
Field Trips: Earl Harrison, [eharrison@ehe.osu.edu](mailto:eharrison@ehe.osu.edu)  
CA Web site: Bill Heck, [bill.heck@gmail.com](mailto:bill.heck@gmail.com)  
Ohio Young Birders: Gerry Brevoort, [jbrevoor@columbus.rr.com](mailto: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

## Welcome new and renewed members!

Linda Allen & Dick Cunningham  
Kathy Beany  
Kirt Beling  
Philip Beltz  
Roger & Phyllis Bower  
Geraldine Brevoort  
Melissa Brubaker  
Karen Cantlon  
Beth Carnate  
Deborah Cox  
Barbara & Terry Davis  
Andrea Denning  
Connie L. Emerson  
Cindy Foley  
Dennis & Janet Forrest  
Robert L. Fox  
Amy Freeland & Kate Harrison  
Constance B. Freundlich  
Don & Gayle Griffith  
Tom & Linda Hallinan  
Paul Hildreth  
Judy & John Hoberg  
Mary Louise Hutson  
Nancy & Tad Jeffrey  
Julia F. Johnson  
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Karen & Peter Linn  
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Andrea Lowman  
Bishop Robert Lybbert  
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Susan Meiling  
Valerie Mitrione & Mary Vance  
John Morcos  
Robin & Dick Mullet  
Jen Rankin  
Caroline Rayner & Bernadette Vankeerbergen  
Rachel Renkes  
Andre Robinson  
Michelle Rogers  
Don & Kris Ross  
Ginny Salamy  
Joshua Sarver  
Pat Smith & Bonnie Halchin-Smith  
Karla & Saul Strieb  
Gail Thomas  
Mike & Tawana Thorn  
Jim Tilling  
Sean Tominey & Ashlee Clark  
Ramon C. Wilson  
Muriel J Yeoman  
Andrea S.B. Yough  
Jane B. Young  
*Current through 9/30/11*

## Thank you recent GIAC donors

Jim Kernen  
Donna & Thomas Sheley  
Wanda & Arnold Coldiron  
Gary & Morna Smith  
Jeffrey Miller  
Alexander Durrugh  
Paul Bingle  
W. Scott Haynes  
Johann Cozart  
Frances Beasley  
Charles & Jan Rodenfels

Gregory Cunningham  
Lisa A. Purvis-Hinson  
Robert H. Jeffrey  
Timothy & Laura Dornan  
James A. & Adelyn K. Nowjack  
Linda H. & Delmar G. Nida  
"Ward L. Cornett, III and Becky Sutherland Cornett"  
Sara and Gregory Klein  
Guy Carpenter  
*Current through 9/30/11*

## GIAC Wish List

The GIAC's need for donated items continues to change.

Some new "needs" have come up and we're happy to say that other needs have been met.

Our current major need continues to be mud boots, rain parkas and gloves for children ages 8 to 12.

Many of the children attending our school program do not have suitable boots and clothing to complete the field study portion of the curriculum on cold, rainy, muddy days.

Your donation of any of the above mentioned items would be greatly appreciated by both our students and the GIAC staff.

If you have donations (or questions) for the Center, please call us at

614/545-5475.

### Items Needed:

Cords of firewood (local only)  
Wheel barrow  
Rakes  
Snow blower  
Power washer  
Magnifying glasses  
Children's scissors  
Recycled copy paper  
Spotting scope  
Telescope  
Laminator  
Sharpies and dry-erase markers (any colors)

See Wish List page 15

# Horned Lark

The Delaware Christmas Bird Count Circle focuses on this wintering bird

"Look. There goes another!"  
"No way. How did you see that?"  
"Look for the movement."  
"I certainly can't see them when they land."

These were snatches of a conversation I was part of as we traveled through the farmlands of Wisconsin in early Spring, running between ponds looking for waterfowl. The subject? That field will-o'-the-wisp, the Horned Lark.

We'd see their ghostly forms flitting out into the fields everywhere, but it was a challenge to keep track of them, especially once they landed. This is one of the quintessential open country birds of the Midwest, a bird that livens up even the dullest open farmfields.

Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) are members of a large family of larks, but you'd never know it if you were only focused on American birds. Larks are an Old World family that has the vast bulk of species in Eurasia and Africa, with only Horned Larks as a representative in North America. The family includes the Skylarks (*genus Alauda*), the Calandra Larks (*genus Melanocorypha*), and the Desert larks (*Ammomanes*), among others. Horned Larks are known as Shore Larks in much of Eurasia, and are one of the few larks to breed in the tundra of Europe and Siberia.

This trait apparently allowed them to invade our continent, probably over the Bering Land Bridge around the same time that humans migrated to North America.

They are still common breeders in the arctic tundra, as well as above tree-line in most western mountain ranges; most of our winter Larks are birds from the Canadian arctic.

Horned Larks' invasion of North America has been very successful. They now inhabit virtually the entire continent, nesting in virtually every state except Florida. (My own memories of Larks from growing up in Florida were that they were rare, prized vagrants to beaches during winter.)

This success is almost certainly the result of human transformation of the landscape. Larks love the wide open fields created by human agriculture.

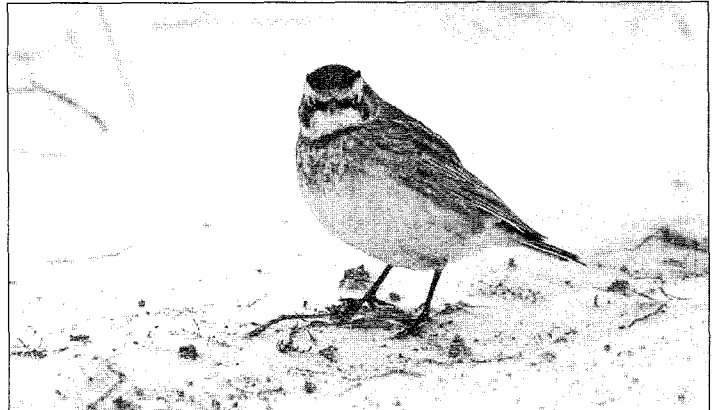
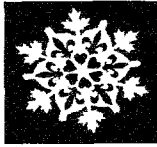
They forage in the fields and nest in grassy borders to these same fields. This is reflected in the fact that they were not original natives of primeval Ohio.

Records show that Horned Larks were strictly migrants and winter visitors to the state before the 1880s, and their colonization of the state after that time correlates with the expansion of large-scale corn farming and industrial agriculture into the state.

The small farm plots of pre-industrial-revolution Ohio would not have held much attraction to Horned Larks; in a very real sense, their colonization was enabled by John Deere and International Harvester.

With their ability to nest and feed in tundra-like conditions, Horned larks are able to breed very early in the year, often setting up territories by March.

Their subtle coloration, which offers excellent camouflage in open fields, does not make for much of a visual display. Instead, adult male Larks advertise their presence by 'skylarking' – flying up into the air and singing on the wing during a spiraling descent. Their song is a beautiful series of tinkling notes and is not easy to localize.



By Terri Sohl

**Horned Larks are found in farm fields and open areas in the winter months in Ohio.**

It's very different from the thin short 'see....tui' call notes that they use to keep a flock together. Later, as their territories and mates are settled, they will sing more from the ground. The female lays 3-5 eggs in a grass- and feather-lined scrape in the ground, and incubates for 11-12 days.

The nestlings, though born altricial, grow and develop quickly to fledging. Multiple broods are common, helping to explain the seemingly endless supply of Horned Larks on Ohio's fields.

For inhabitants of open fields, Horned Larks are surprisingly hardy, often being one of our last birds to migrate in the Fall and one of the first ones to migrate in the Spring.

They seem immune to the cold, and will even forage roadside edges for windblown seeds if the snow covers their fields.

In Fall, large flocks of Horned Larks are often still migrating into December, and many birds only move south when the snow becomes too thick for effective foraging.

The Lark numbers on central Ohio Christmas Bird Counts vary wildly, depending on weather and snowfall, and the Delaware CBC even offers a tongue-in-cheek Horned Lark award each year to the participant who can guess closest to the correct number of Larks found on the count.

As temperatures moderate in late winter, flocks of Larks start heading back north, usually starting in February. At that time, you can hear calling larks flying north overhead on almost any clear day, one of the first real signs that winter is on the wane.

Where can you see them in central Ohio? Basically, get out of town. Any large flat open field will have a few; the more open the area, the better your chances of finding them.

Airports are great spots to find larks, and Port Columbus International Airport, Rickenbacker Airport, Bolton Field, Don Scott Field, and the Pickaway County Airfield all have a few.

Other nearby open areas that usually have some are along Miller Paul Rd (east of Hoover Reservoir), Beatty Rd (south of Grove City), Darby Creek Drive, and the far western sections of Hayden Run & Rings Roads west of Hilliard and Dublin.

A few birds remain to breed in all of these locations, but they are harder to see in late Spring and Summer except when they are singing. There's really no time when you can't find Horned larks somewhere locally.

-By Rob Thorn

# Let nature be your inspiration

Natural Holiday decorating can be more meaningful for the whole family

Even though the temperatures are dropping, you can bring outside in this holiday season and let nature inspire you!

Set out on a fresh, crisp autumn day with a light breeze or a cold winter day with a gentle snowfall to collect some of nature's most beautiful treasures.

Seeing the beauty of the great outdoors incorporated into your holiday decorating will surely warm your heart, home and maybe even your spirit from Thanksgiving through the New Year!

Think of all of the decorations you have sitting in boxes in your basement or attic. You'll just have to drag those out, unpack them, dust them off, enjoy them for awhile and then pack them away once again.

Only pull out those items that hold the most meaning to you and then get creative! Gather leaves, fallen twigs and branches, dried grasses, colorful berries, evergreens and even those last steadfast flowers clinging to hold on to warmer days and turn them into wreaths, centerpieces, napkin rings, even candle-holders...the possibilities are endless for decorating with nature!

After the holidays are over, reflect on your gratitude for your natural surroundings and the gifts nature provided you through the season. Gather up the items you enjoyed during the holidays and return them back to nature!

Throw them in your compost pile, help create a habitat for your outdoor friends to take shelter in for the duration of winter, or provide a new home for nesting animals to move into in spring!

All that's left to do now is exactly what the old song says "Deck the halls with boughs of holly!" It's our hope that this holiday season you'll be inspired by nature — get outside and bring some back in with you!

-By Allison Roush



## Other 'ways to go green for the holidays

- Buy a live holiday tree you can later plant in your yard for cover for birds.
- Send holiday cards electronically or use recycled paper.
- Use paper from old grocery bags or use old newspaper as wrapping paper instead of buying wrapping paper.
- Use local and sustainable produce, flowers, beverages, decor and rentals for holiday parties and meals.
- Make sure you have a recycling plan in place. Make recycling easy by having well-marked recycling bins near the tree or where you open gifts.
- Try to buy fair trade products and locally made crafts as gifts if possible.
- Try not to shop on Black Friday. Participate in the international Buy Nothing Day instead. Details can be found at <http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>.
- Donate leftover food instead of throwing it away to a local food bank or homeless shelter.
- Don't serve bottled water. By serving filtered tap water you will generate less plastic waste.
- Don't use disposable plates, cups, cutlery, etc.
- Encourage guests to carpool or use mass transit.
- Encourage guests to book on greener airlines.
- Use green transportation/Rent hybrid and alternative-fuel vehicles. Use a taxi or car service that uses alternative-fuel vehicles.
- Carbon-balance your dinner. You can balance the environmental impact of your meal or party with a carbon offset purchase from a company like TerraPass. It is quite simple to calculate an event's carbon output and the cost of mitigation based on how many people will be attending and how many flights and hotel rooms will be used.

Source: Ecopreneurist, TreeHugger.com

## The nature of animal tracks in snow

While hiking through the woods with a couple of teenage girls, we stopped for a moment to look at some tracks in the snow. They were neat, round prints, four toes per foot. The back foot had landed neatly on top of the front and the delicate footprints lined up like a necklace of pearls on a string, stretching into the woods. They whispered an irresistible invitation. We took off.

While tracking is a joyful experience any time of year, winter brings us incredible substrate with the snows. Tracking during the rest of the year is like snacking on short stories while tracks left behind in the snow are written like intriguing novels, rich with description and action and a much deeper plot.

A lot of people seem to be afraid to try tracking. It's easy though. You just find a few prints and start following them.

Give yourself permission to not get caught up in getting a quick ID. Just follow along and let all the clues unravel themselves.

That day when we left the trail we fell deep into the tracking spell and became the animal himself. Here he stood on a log and paused. We pause as well and without meaning to, we smell the

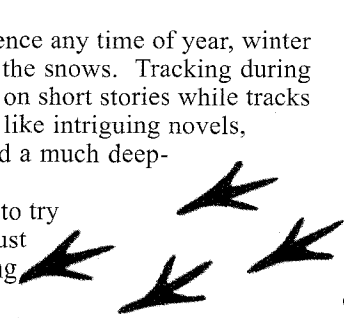


air, we listen, we look carefully around. Why did he stop here? What did he see? He moved on and we do also, in silence. Here is where the pace picked up. Why? Here is where a hole was dug. Was he looking for voles? Our senses sharpen with each step. We don't talk anymore as we move. We start becoming one with the woods.

Most folks think it's hard to figure out what animal they are tracking. If you want to get serious about it, get a good tracking field guide and go through it with a bright colored highlighter. Just highlight the animals in your state. Now that you got rid of most of the book it doesn't seem so overwhelming.

On your snow walk, find a good clear track and count the toes. Four toes on all feet, with claws equals the dog family. Fox, coyote, dog. Four toes no claws equal bobcat or domestic cat. Four toes in front, five in back equals rodents like mice, squirrels, rabbits, groundhogs (yes, they come out in the winter). Five toes each foot include skunk, mink, opossum, raccoon and bear. These aren't all the possibilities but they are the common ones and a good place to start.

Our walk takes us along game trails. We see a place where he sat and laid down. There is some scat and we dissect it with a



See tracks, page 13

# Christmas Bird Count

The Columbus Christmas Bird Count heads out on December 18

On Dec 18, teams of birders will be roaming around Columbus parks and neighborhoods looking for all sorts of wintering birds as part of one of the oldest green projects in the country. Who would want to spend a cold winter day birding urban Columbus? We had over 50 participants helping out last year, and we were one of over 50 counts in Ohio alone. There were several thousand Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) spread out across the U.S. and into Mexico and central America last year.

The CBCs are actually a long-running Audubon tradition, established over 100 years ago, and have become one of the longest-running volunteer bio-monitoring projects. The rules are simple: count all the birds you can in a 15-mile-diameter circle on one day between Dec 16 – Jan 7. Columbus aims for an early Sunday to minimize traffic and maximize temperature and that falls on Dec. 18 this year.

How do we do a CBC? Since few counts can hope to completely cover their areas, most CBCs focus their efforts on the best bird-finding locations in their count circles. Here in Columbus, our circle is centered just north of Bexley, so it stretches from Northland south to Groveport, and Blacklick west to Upper Arlington. We have 10 - 12 separate birding teams focused on the best parks and neighborhoods in this area: Blendon Woods, Blacklick Woods, Scioto-Audubon Metro Park and the Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC), Ohio State University, Clintonville, Grandview Heights, Greenlawn, Three-Creeks, and more.

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 surprised at the number and variety of birds that call Columbus a winter home. Over the past ten years, we've averaged 75 species and over 20,000 individuals. 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 finds all over town: Ring-billed Gulls,

Central Ohio Christmas Bird Count circles	
<b>COLUMBUS</b>	<b>DELAWARE</b>
DATE: December 18	DATE: December 18
Compiler: Rob Thorn	Compiler: Jed Burt
Phone: 614-471-3051	Phone: 740-815-5082
E-mail: robthorn@earthlink.net	E-mail: ehburt@owu.edu
<b>HOOVER RESERVOIR</b>	<b>O'SHAUGHNESSY RESERVOIR</b>
DATE: December 17	DATE: Jan. 2, 2012
Compiler: Charles Bombaci	Compiler: Darlene Sillick
Phone: 614-891-5706	Phone: 614-761-3696
E-mail: charlesbombaci@aol.com	E-mail: azuretrails@columbus.rr.com
.....	
<b>KINGSTON</b> (Chillicothe/Circleville)	
DATE: Jan. 1, 2012 • Compiler: Brad Sparks	
Phone: 614-751-6622 • E-mail: birdmansparks@yahoo.com	

Starlings, Crows, Cardinals, House Sparrows. But there are also a variety of other, wilder species that always are residing in our city. Mourning Doves, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Blue Jays, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, American Robins, Carolina wrens, White-throated Sparrows, and American Goldfinches are among the many 'wild' species that are adapting to human yards and parks in Columbus, and all of our teams usually see good numbers of these species. Other formerly-uncommon winter visitors, like Flickers, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Bluebirds, Mockingbirds, and Juncos, have become more common in recent years, perhaps attracted by the many fruit trees in our yards and feeders around our houses.

Do we ever get unusual birds? You bet, but even a 'usual' summer bird can be a treat in winter. Perhaps it's related to global warming, but many 'fair-weather' birds are now toughing it out here in the winter. Large numbers of Great Blue Herons now winter along our creeks and rivers, and waterfowl have also started to linger in these areas and open ponds. We have found 10-14 species of waterfowl, including lots of dabbling ducks, cormorants, and Pied-billed Grebes. We also have a burgeoning population of resident raptors, led by Cooper's hawks and Red-tailed hawks, which can be found in almost every area of the city. Bald eagles, almost unknown from the area 6 years ago, are now expect-

ed on every Count. Even secretive owls, like Great Horned and Barred, are still found in many of our wooded parks. We have even been getting increasing numbers of 'half-hardy' birds, species like sapsuckers, hermit thrushes, chipping sparrows, and even a few warblers, that are hanging on at the northern limits of their winter ranges. And every so often we get an outright jaw-dropping rarity, like a Rufous Hummingbird ('03), a Grasshopper Sparrow ('05), a Western Tanager ('06), or a Dickcissel ('08). So, yeah, we get unusual birds.

Why even go out into the cold to count birds? In a word, bio-monitoring. While some birds are increasing their winter presence here, other species aren't doing well, and counts like the CBC are the best way to chart these changes. Certain yard birds like chickadees, red-bellied woodpeckers, and white-throated sparrows, seem to be booming, while other species like titmice and House Finches might actually be getting scarcer. CBC totals will help us clarify these trends. Open country birds, like meadowlarks, blackbirds, harriers, and Savannah sparrows, have definitely declined as most of the open fields of past years have been turned into subdivisions. Our CBC will see if the open space initiatives in Columbus and the MetroParks can reverse this trend. Marsh birds like rails, Coots, snipes, and Swamp Sparrows have also become rare as their wetlands have

See CBC page 8

# Conservation success story: Ohio snake 'DeListed'

Every now and then we can celebrate a conservation victory and a recent one for Ohioans is the removal of the Lake Erie Water Snake from the Federal endangered species list.

The snake is native to the Lake Erie islands and was listed as endangered in 1999 due to loss of habitat and indiscriminate killing often in the mistaken belief that the animals are poisonous. They are not, but one that is picked up may defend itself and deliver a nasty bite.

The snakes grow to over 3 feet long and are once again a fairly common sight as they sun themselves on beaches, rocks, docks and decks of boats.

A combination of intensive research, pub-

lic education and shoreline protection through outright purchase or conservation easements brought about the recovery, and there are now over 12,000 snakes in a population that seems secure. A further positive note to the story is the interagency cooperation that got the job done.

The Black Swamp Conservancy, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Put-in-Bay Township Park District, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and Northern Illinois and Ohio State Universities all worked jointly with the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (The Lake Erie Water Snake remains on the Ohio endangered species list and it is illegal to kill one.)

In an ironic twist of the story, 90-percent of the Lake Erie Water Snake's food is the Round Goby, an invasive Great Lakes species native to eastern Europe (and the subject of a Song Sparrow article a few years back).

The Goby seems to be in Lake Erie to stay so it looks like the snake's food supply is assured for some time. (The snakes do eat native fish and amphibians and would likely turn back to these traditional prey should the Goby be eliminated some day.)

For more information and resources about the Lake Erie Water Snake visit: [www.respectthesnake.com/about.html](http://www.respectthesnake.com/about.html)

-Dave Horn

## Columbus Audubon 2011 SEED ORDER FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

ITEM	UNIT/PRICE	CODE	NUMBER	TOTAL
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER	20 lbs \$20.00	AA		
WBU SUPREME BLEND	20 lbs \$22.00	AK		
WBU DELUXE BLEND	20 lbs \$20.00	AB		
WBU CHOICE BLEND	20 lbs \$23.00	AC		
WBU SELECT BLEND	20 lbs \$13.00	AJ		
OHIO NO MESS BLEND	20 lbs \$20.00	AL		
NYGER/THISTLE	10 lbs \$15.00	AD		
NYGER/THISTLE	20 lbs \$28.00	AE		
SAFFLOWER	20 lbs \$24.00	AF		
CRACKED CORN	20 lbs \$9.00	AG		
WBU WINTER BLEND	20 lbs \$28.00	FC		
PEANUT CHUNKS	10 lbs \$18.00	AM		
PEANUT CHUNKS	20 lbs \$33.00	AN		
WHOLE PEANUTS	7 lbs \$15.00	FA		
WBU PEANUT SUET CAKES	11.75 oz. \$2.00	AI		
WHITE MILLET	20 lbs \$10.00	FB		
NEW: WHOLE KERNEL CORN	20 lbs \$8.50	AH		

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### OYBC members help with Lake Erie Water Snake research

Members of the Ohio Young Birders Club (OYBC) went outside the realm of ornithology to experience another field: herpetology on Aug. 20. Gathering at the Catawba Island ferry dock, the group proceeded to South Bass Island (SBI).

After disembarking from the ferryboat, the band of birders, led by club advisors Ken Keffer, Gerry Brevoort, John Sawvel, Tim Daniel, Darlene Sillick, and Susan Setterlin, took the OYBC bus to SBI State Park. Once the unit had assembled at the park shelter house, Kristin Stanford (of "Dirty Jobs" television fame), the Recovery Plan Coordinator of the Lake Erie Water Snake at OSU's Stone Laboratory, presented an interactive lecture on the snakes found on the Lake Erie islands, as well as data about snakes in general.

She also shared the exciting news that the Lake Erie Water Snake (*Nerodia sipedon insularum*) was taken off the federal endangered species list, as she showed us native snakes, including Brown Snake, Rat Snake, Fox Snake, Blue Racer, and, of course, the Lake Erie Water Snake (LEWS).

Once Kristin laid down a few basic rules about snake catching, the troupe broke into two groups; one following her, and the other following Lisa Brohl, Chair for the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of Black Swamp Conservancy. Following the bagging of the LEWS, the snakes were then "read" for a tag number and, if there was none, one was implanted within the snake.

Measuring the length and mass of each snake followed. Upon completion, the herps were put in a closed pillowcase to await release. When all the reptiles had been released, the group went to the Scheeff East Point Nature Preserve for a bird walk led by Lisa Brohl.

LEWS like to lie on, and especially under, large rocks in order to maximize their body temperatures because they are poikilotherms. Poikilothermic organisms are more traditionally known



By Tim Daniel

**Lake Erie Water Snake researcher Kristin Sanford, shows OYBC members how to measure the length of a snake.**

by the terms "cold-blooded" and "ectothermic," and use external heat sources (like a sunny rock) to warm themselves.

On behalf of all the OYBC members, I'd like to thank the Island Snake Lady, Kirstin Stanford, for an awesome day spent with snakes and all her work with and on behalf of the conservation of LEWS and their habitat. Thanks also go out to Lisa Brohl, for leading a wonderful island bird walk and helping with the snakes. Lastly, thanks belong to those who make OYBC trips such as these possible: Ken, John, Gerry, Sue, Darlene, Tim, and of course the parents and others who support OYBC members.

-Kat Seeley, OYBC student member

### New Columbus Audubon program format a success

Wow! OMG! Holy Cow! Oh, it's useless: I can't find the expression that conveys the excitement of our first monthly program of the 2011-2012 year. Greg Miller kicked it off with his presentation on The Big Year, and that's what my wow-ing is all about. Not only did Greg give a great presentation, but Mike Flynn started the evening with a hugely popular short program on Sandhill Cranes, our sponsors kicked in some great door prizes (thanks Wild Birds Unlimited), our new host Leslie Sours did a tremendous job, and Josh Cherubini and Abby King from the GIAC responded to every logistical need. Darlene Sillick has led the charge to bring our programs to a whole new level, and she and her team gave us an evening to remember.

By the time you read this, we will have had what promises to be another outstanding program October program. If you missed our September and October programs, take heart: we have six more coming up this season. The next is November 22 when you can hear from Dave and Jill Russell about "Birding the Ice Trucker Highway" in Alaska. I was fortunate enough to join them on this very highway earlier this year, and can tell you that they have a story not to be missed. (And, having heard them speak before, I also can tell you that their enthusiasm is contagious!) Check the Events Calendar on the Columbus Audubon Web site for all our programs.

While you're at the calendar, be sure to take a look at our field trips as well. You don't have to be a birder to enjoy our trips, but

beware: seeing birds and other wildlife in the beautiful areas that we visit can be addictive. You might just fall in love with such an inexpensive, family-oriented way to enjoy the outdoors. It's a nice way to get yourself – and the kids – away from the computer screen and the TV for a few hours as well.

Finally, I'd like to remind you about an activity that has been going on for years but often seems to fly under the radar. I'm talking about the "Service in the Preserves" series run by Katryn Renard. About once a month, Katryn rounds up some very dedicated volunteers to do maintenance and improvement work in Ohio's preserves and wildlife areas. For example, their November 12th job is in Christmas Rocks State Nature Preserve in the Hocking Hills, where they will mend some boardwalk, install several sign posts, and perhaps do some minor trail clearing. We all know that state budgets are down, but the need to preserve our natural heritage doesn't go away with shrinking budgets. And consider this: don't you like the idea of getting to the end of the day and actually seeing what you have accomplished? You sure can see a nice boardwalk and some new signs! So if you think it's time to get off the couch and do something productive, check out the Service in the Preserves work trips on the Events Calendar at the CA Web site or give Katryn a call at (614-261-7171).

You can find the CA Web site at [ColumbusAudubon.org](http://ColumbusAudubon.org).

-Bill Heck



# Columbus Audubon November-December activities

**Service in the Preserves: Christmas Rocks**  
*Saturday, November 12 at 7:45 a.m.*

Autumn and Christmas Rocks State Nature Preserve in the Hocking Hills are made for each other. It's a steep hike for the best view but once you get there you forget about the climb and simply soak in the magnificence of it all. We will mend some boardwalk, install several sign posts, and perhaps do some minor trail clearing. Meet in the parking lot inside the gate house at the Ohio Department Natural Resources Complex, 2045 Morse Road. Please call Katryn Renard by Wednesday, November 9 at (614) 261-7171 to sign up.

## **Alum-Hoover Waterbirds**

*Sunday, November 13 at 8:30 a.m.*

Can't wait til Spring to get that waterfowl fix? This trip may be just the finger to scratch that itch. We'll use a gap in the waterfowl hunting season to search for migrant waterbirds, starting at Alum Creek State Park, then making the short jaunt east to nearby Hoover Reservoir. Meet at the Westerville Community Center. Contact Rob Thorn at robthorn@earthlink.net or 614-551-0643.

## **Green Lawn Cemetery Birding**

*Saturday, November 19 at 8:30 a.m.*

Join Darlene Sillick and Warren Grody at one of the oldest cemeteries in central Ohio. <http://www.greenlawncolumbus.org>. Meet at the Green Lawn Cemetery Office. Contact Darlene Sillick at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com or 614-288-3696.

## **Deer Creek Lake**

*Sunday, November 20 at 2:30 p.m.*

A small group of Sandhill Cranes sometimes spends November 10-25 near Deer Creek Lake, and we will make our annual trek to see if this is a good year. We will meet at Deer Creek Marina, east off State Route 207 south of Pancoastburg. If the marina gate is closed, go to the boat launch area. Look for either a green or a black Subaru Outback. Contact Dave Horn at (614) 262-0312 or davehorn43@columbus.rr.com.

## **Killdeer Plains**

*Saturday, December 3 at 8:30 a.m.*

Join us to look for early wintering waterfowl

and raptors. Meet at the old Worthington Mall (SE Parking Lot). Contact Earl Harrison at harrison.304@osu.edu or 614-505-1123.

## **The Urban Scioto - Scioto Audubon MP**

*Saturday, December 3 at 9 a.m.*

Migration should be leaving its last marks as we survey the Scioto River north and south of the Green Lawn Dam. Meet at the Scioto Audubon Boat launch. Contact Rob Thorn at robthorn@earthlink.net or 614-551-0643.

## **Birding at Blendon Woods Metro Park**

*Sunday, December 4 at 10 a.m. and  
Sunday, January 1, 2012 at 8 a.m.*

Join metro park naturalist Bruce Simpson on a bird walk on the trails around Blendon Woods Metro Park. Meet at the Nature Center. Contact Bruce Simpson at Simpson@MetroParks.net.

## **Birding Around O'Shaughnessy Dam**

*Monday, December 26 at 9 a.m.*

We'll check out the new dam park west of the zoo, then move on to the Twin Lakes area and the Ohio Wildlife Center. We'll visit a quarry on Dublin Road and check out the Emily Traphagen Preserve before circling back to Wendy's. Dress warmly and bring your scope if you have one. Contact Darlene Sillick at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com or 614-288-3696.

## **New Year's Day Hike at Battelle Darby**

*Sunday, January 1, 2012 at noon*

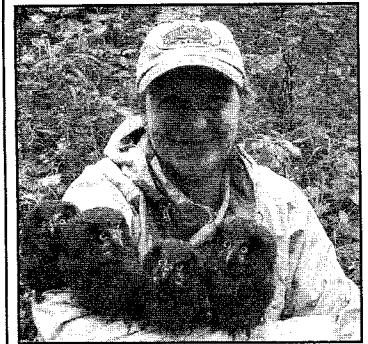
Join us as we discover some of the exceptional features to be found in our largest Metro Park. Battelle Darby Creek consists of 7,000 acres including forests, fields and prairies. Meet at the parking lot near the main park entrance. Contact Mike Flynn at (614) 769-1681.

## **Winter Birrrrr-ding in Minnesota**

*Feb. 9-13, 2012 (Tentative)*

Trip to Sax Zim Bog, one hour north of Duluth, Minn. Limited number of spaces available. We will search for winter species such as Great Gray, Snowy, and Boreal Owls. The tentative aspect of this trip is that there must be enough confirmed reservations by Dec. 1 to reserve housing and transportation. To find out more, please call Mike Flynn (614) 769-1681.

## November Program



By David Russell

## **Jill Russell with Boreal Owls on her arm.**

Please join us Tuesday, November 22 to learn about the birding adventures of David and Jill Russell along the Ice-Trucker Highway, also known as "Haul Road," in Alaska. (starting at 7:30 p.m. after the short program).

For the past two summers David and Jill have taught at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and, in addition this past summer, they conducted research on the growth and development of young Boreal Owls in Alaska. David and Jill are very passionate about their birding careers and they will share their work from our 50th state from their research project and photographic documentation.

David Russell, is a professor at Miami University. His wife, Jill Russell is Assistant Professor of Biology at The College of Mount St. Joseph.

The CA Short Program (7 p.m.) will feature Columbus Audubon Co-Field Trip Chair, Earl Harrison. He will discuss Gull ID and the Cleveland Lakefront area and where best to view wintering gulls.

## Columbus CBC heads out on December 18

Continued from page 5

been filled in. Can the mitigation wetlands springing up along Blacklick and Alum Creeks reverse this decline? CBC data will help answer this question. Only long-term counts like the CBC can tell if Columbus' efforts to 'go green' are actually helping wildlife in our city.

Why are we pestering you? Well, the bottom line is that we need good observers. The more sharp eyes we can field Dec 18th,

the better our chances of getting a good, representative count of Columbus' winter birds as well as ferreting out the rarities. You don't need to be a birding pro to help out. Most teams are a mix of veteran and neophyte birders. If you can walk and can look, you can help. So please consider coming out for the day, or at least the morning. Even just walking around your neighborhood and watching your feeders can be valuable. Join the green tradition of the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts.

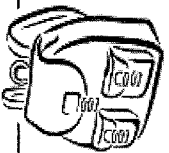
-Rob Thorn



# NOVEMBER 2011



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	NOTE: GIAC closed every Monday		Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.			Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
6 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	7	8 Daylight Savings Time Ends	9 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	10	11	12 <b>Service in the Preserves Christmas Rocks 7:45 a.m.</b> Holiday Shop Around 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
13 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. <b>Alum-Hoover Waterbirds 8:30 a.m.</b>	14	15	16 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	17	18	19 Explore the Many Wonders of Water at the GIAC (Brownies), 9-11 a.m. <b>Green Lawn Cemetery bird walk 8:30 a.m.</b> Get Energized and Take Eco-Action at the GIAC (Junior) noon-3 p.m.
20 Journey Between Earth and Sky at the GIAC (Daisy), Noon-1:30 p.m. Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. <b>Deer Creek Lake 2:30 p.m.</b>	21	22 <b>CA Short Program - Winter gull ID at 7 p.m. by Earl Harrison. David and Jill Russell will talk about the Ice Trucker Highway adventures at 7:30 p.m.</b>	23 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	24	25 GIAC and Audubon will close at 3pm on Wednesday 11/23 Closed on both Thursday 11/24 and Friday 11/25 Reopen on Saturday (10am-3pm) and Sunday (Noon - 5pm) that weekend	26 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
27 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	28	29	30 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.			Beginning Sept. 9 thru January 2012, limited edition watercolor prints by Jim Turanchik will be on display at GIAC.



Calendar key



GIAC events are in plain text. For complete descriptions of any event or program, see page 2.

**Columbus Audubon events are in bold.** For complete descriptions of any event or program, see page 2.





# DECEMBER 2011



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 Bird walk at Blendon Woods 10 a.m. Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	5 NOTE: GIAC closed every Monday	6	7 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	8	9 Cub Scout Overnight 7 p.m. Friday, - 10 a.m. Saturday.	10 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
11 Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	12	13	14 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	15	16	17 Breakfast w/ Father Nature 8-10am Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Hoover Reservoir Christmas Bird Count
18 Columbus & Delaware Christmas Bird Counts Audubon afternoons 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	19	20	21 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.  Drop-in Winter Day Camp December 21-23	22	23 • GIAC will close at 3pm on Friday, December 23 • Reopen at 10am Tuesday, December 27	24 GIAC will close at 3pm on Friday, December 23
25 Christmas Center closed	26 Biding around O'Shaughnessy Dam 10 a.m.	27	28 Tour of LEED Gold GIAC building 10 a.m.	29	30 GIAC will close at 3pm on Friday, Dec. 30	31 O'Shaughnessy Christmas Bird Count is Jan. 2, 2012

**Save the Date:**

New Year's Day Hike at Battelle Darby noon | Birding at Blendon Woods 8 a.m.  
Winter Birr-riding in Minnesota Feb. 9-13, 2012 (Tentative)

**Save the Date:**

GIAC will close at 3pm on Friday, Dec. 30  
GIAC Reopens on Tuesday January 3, 2012