

Cascade Effects

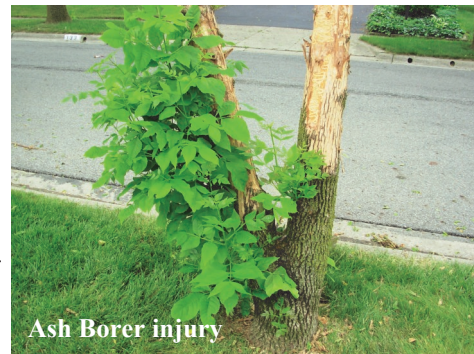
When I first started birding back in the middle of another century Red-headed Woodpeckers seemed common throughout upstate New York and I saw them frequently in New England. I thought things would stay that way but later I discovered that what I had seen in the 1950s was an expansion of both their numbers and distribution resulting in part from the ravages of Dutch elm disease, which provided a ready source of convenient dead limbs for woodpecker nesting.

The current invasion of the Emerald Ash Borer may result in a repeat performance. On recent trips through northern Ohio I could easily distinguish ash trees from other species – they are the dead ones. In a short few years these trees will provide additional roosting and nesting opportunities for all our resident woodpecker species. The resulting holes will provide shelter for many other species of cavity-nesters and while we understandably lament the passing of so many trees, many bird species from bluebirds to screech owls will find more favorable habitat to suit their needs. Prothonotary Warblers are already nesting at Columbus Audubon's own Calamus Swamp Preserve, where about one-quarter of the trees are ashes. Meanwhile some moth species that depend primarily on ash as a food source will decline and perhaps disappear. Impacts like this are called "cascade effects" by ecologists (and by systems analysts).

Waiting in the wings is the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), a close relative of aphids, whose sap-sucking activity generally kills hemlocks in five to ten years. HWA has recently been detected in the Hocking Hills. The good news is that natural spread of HWA is quite slow; the bad news is that another cascade effect is likely. There is a good list of Ohio birds that are largely or exclusively dependent on the hemlock forests for breeding habitat, and we can expect Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Green and Blackburnian Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos to decline and perhaps disappear along with hemlocks in southern Ohio. Fortunately these species aren't in global danger because HWA cannot withstand extreme cold like we have in northern New England.

The moral to the tale has not changed. International trade isn't going to stop because of invasive species, but we must continue to do what we can to educate others and not add to the problem ourselves. When they say "don't move firewood" don't move firewood. There are other cascade effects out there waiting to happen.

Dave Horn



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

Save the Dates:

Audubon at Home Education Programs

Mark your calendars for the second Wednesday of each month at GIAC at 7:00 pm.

RSVP to Amy Boyd at aboyd@audubon.org or 614-545-5486. Free and donations appreciated.

July 8: Jim McCormac with ODNR will discuss pollinators and the importance of milkweed.

August 12: Sara Ernst with Franklin Water and Soil District will discuss the benefits of rain gardens.

September 9: Amanda Duren with Ohio Bird Conservation Initiatives will discuss Lights Out Columbus and bird friendly buildings.

Upcoming Events



Grange Insurance Audubon Center
And Metro Parks
Present

B3 – Bands Birds & Beer

Friday, August 14, 6 PM

The Simba Jordan Band



And back by
popular demand

The Rain Crows



Tickets available soon at:

grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org

505 W. Whittier Ave Columbus OH In the Brewery District / German Village

Attention Kroger Shoppers!

The Kroger Community Rewards® program donates money to local schools, churches and other nonprofit organizations. Register to participate and choose Columbus Audubon from the list of local participants. Then, just shop at Kroger and swipe your Plus Card! The funds we receive will support our programs, activities and conservation mission.

All the details can be found at <https://www.kroger.com/communityrewards>.

Do you have other creative ideas for raising funds or supporting our conservation and education programs? We're all ears (and open arms!). Email us at information@columbusaudubon.org.

Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp Sales and Photo Contest

Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamps are a special way to support habitat and native species conservation, nature education, and research. The collectible stamp comes with a window cling, and commemorative card, and \$14 of the \$15 fee goes to the Wildlife Diversity Fund in the ODNR Division of Wildlife. You can purchase stamps through Columbus Audubon at <http://www.columbusaudubon.org/index.php/buy-oh-wildlife-stamp>.

Submissions for the eighth Legacy Stamp photo contest are open from August 10-23, 2015. Entry details can be found at <http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/about-contacts/support-ohios-wildlife/ohio-wildlife-legacy-stamp/ohio-wildlife-legacy-stamp-photo-contest>.

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

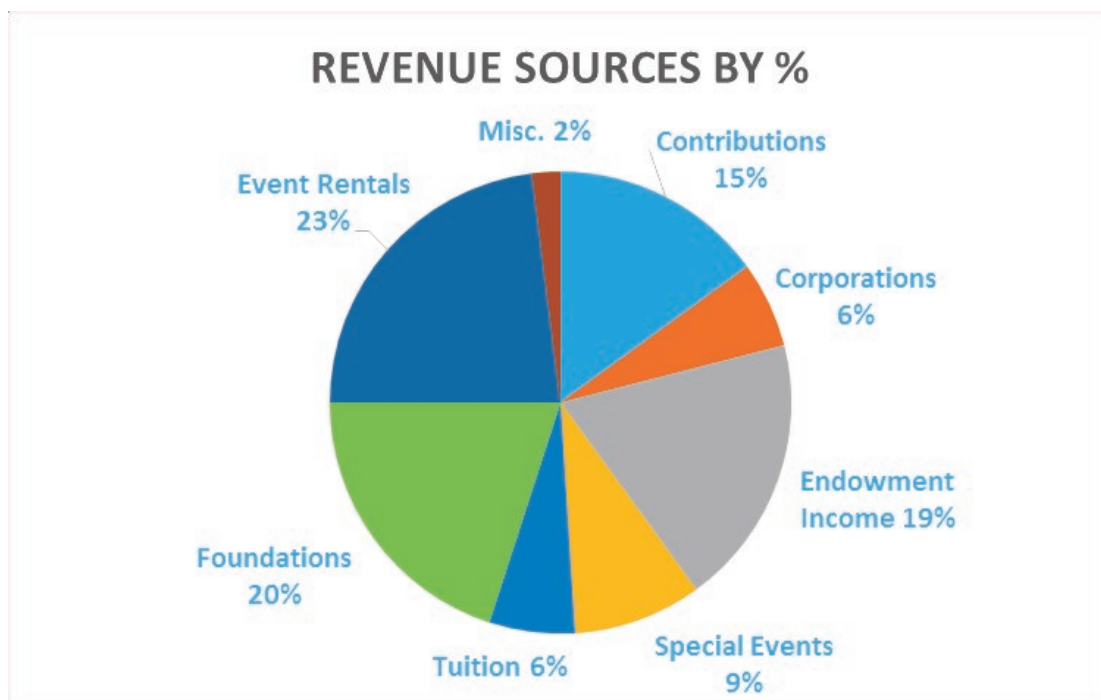
From center director Christie Vargo: Reset at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Six months have passed since we initiated cutbacks due to financial constraints at the Center. Many of our core programs remain: Conservation Classroom (repeat field trips for Columbus City School students), Partner Camps (in partnership with social service agencies in the summer), Audubon At Home (creating bird and pollinator habitat one property at a time), volunteer workdays (corporate associates working on habitat restoration), and Lights Out (in partnership with Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative; downtown buildings turn out lights during spring and fall migration). Center volunteers have stepped forward to keep Pre-School Story Time, Boy Scout and Girl Scout workshops, and birthday parties going. Volunteers also augment staff in education, greeting visitors, gardening, and more. Some programs have been put on hiatus for the immediate future: Summer Audubon Adventures Day Camp, after-school programs, bird banding and other in-depth research. The nature store has closed.

What was kept and what was set aside was determined in large part by a program's alignment with the Audubon mission, its funding and fundability, and its overall financial viability. Very difficult and heart-wrenching decisions.

We will emerge stronger and better. Our closest partners (the Metro Parks, the City of Columbus, and the Columbus Audubon Chapter) are working side-by-side with us to collaborate more than ever. The Stewardship Board is energized and engaged. Our volunteers have stepped up. Staff is committed and driven. National Audubon is behind us.

What some may not realize is that the Grange Insurance Audubon Center is a self-sustaining non-profit nature center. The Center depends on support from the Columbus community through contributions, program fees, and facility rentals.



The Center's ability to grow, to have impact, and to be part of the fabric of the community relies on donations of time, talent, and treasures. A huge thank you to those who have supported the Center through the years – our donors, volunteers, and board members. You have made a difference in all that you do. We also thank you for your continued support as we transition to new, better and more focused programs and experiences for our participants and guests.

Creature Feature: Map Turtles (*Graptemys species*)

We were looking at turtles basking along Darby Creek and something wasn't clicking. The kids were asking about the turtles, and my mind was drawing a blank. I was used to Painted Turtles and Sliders (both common in ponds in the Midwest), but these flat olive turtles didn't look right. When we tried to edge closer for a better look, they quickly dove into the stream. Definitely unlike the fairly human-tolerant Painted Turtles I had seen in many ponds in Ohio, these turtles also appeared to have a ridge (or keel) along the midline of their shell. Good thing that I didn't try to shoe-horn them into my concept of common pond turtles. These were Map Turtles, and they were a quite different beast.



Photo by D. Gordon E. Robertson

Map Turtles take their name from the parallel curving yellow lines that decorate their shells, necks, and legs, said to resemble the elevation lines on topographic maps. These vermiculations are bright yellow in young animals, but fade a bit with age, especially on the dome of the shell, so they don't make a good field mark unless you are very close to the turtle. The shape of the shell – flattened at the sides & back, with a pronounced ridge running down the center – is often a more helpful field mark from a distance. This flattened shell gives the appearance of streamlining, and that clues us in to the fact that these are very active aquatic turtles.

Map Turtles could just as easily be called Wary River Turtles. These turtles are more commonly found in rivers and streams than Painted Turtles, and they are faster, more adept swimmers. They dive under water to swim and crawl

along the stream bottom looking for clams, snails, bugs, and crawfish, which they grab with their jaws. Their “lips” are often thickened and hardened to enable them to bite and crush shells. This more predatory existence fuels a slightly faster metabolism, and these turtles are faster moving and more easily spooked than pond turtles. They also hibernate less, staying active often even after creeks and sloughs freeze over in the fall, and forage under the ice.

As is the case with many other predators, Map Turtles are sexually dimorphic. The males are quite a bit smaller than the females, averaging 4-6 inches in length to the females' 8-12. This helps to reduce the competition for food in the same stretch of stream. It doesn't, however, imply that the male helps out at the nest. Like most turtles, it's all on the female – after mating, she has to leave the water to seek out a site to lay her eggs, burying them in moist sand and leaving them to fend for themselves. Her nest site selection is also a form of sex selection of her offspring. Like many other turtles, Map Turtle gender is determined by the temperature of the nest. Colder temperatures (less than 80 F) incapacitate an enzyme that converts testosterone to estrogen, and most of the offspring become male. Warmer temperatures skew the brood towards females. Possibly this system evolved to calibrate the sex ratio to food availability: warmer weather indicates more food, which helps the larger females survive and reproduce.

Map Turtles' unusual habits have made them diverse – and threatened. Here in Ohio we have two species: the Northern Map Turtle (*G. geographica*) and the Ouachita Map Turtle (*G. pseudogeographica*). The former is over much of central and western Ohio, while the latter is mostly in the lower Scioto River drainage. As you move south, their diversity grows, and many different river systems in southern states have their own different Map Turtle species or subspecies. Many of these species are adapted to prey on specific clams and mussels, and the turtles have become scarce as river pollution and channelization has decimated their mollusk food source. Perhaps we had more map turtles before agriculture and industry altered Ohio's rivers. Our current two species seem to have stable numbers, and you can test your ID skills on them along most of our central Ohio streams. That is, if you can get close to them.

Rob Thorn

July & August Field Trips

For complete descriptions of all trips, visit our web site: www.columbusaudubon.org/calendar

Bird Hike at Blendon Woods

Sun, July 12 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Join Naturalist Bruce Simpson in search of Blendon Woods' winter residents. Meet at the nature center. Bring binoculars or borrow ours. For more information, call Blendon Woods Metro Park at 614-895-6221.

Birdwatching for Fledglings

Sat., July 18 from 10 am to 11:30 am

If you've wondered what birdwatching is about, but can't even see a bird in a pair of binoculars, this is for you. Bring your binoculars or use ours. We'll teach you tricks to start a fun hobby. Weather permitting we'll go on a short hike. For more information, contact Suzan Jervey at sejervey@gmail.com or 614-546-7857.

Early Migration at the Reservoirs

Sat., August 22 at 8 am to 2 pm

Think of August as the summer doldrums? By this time, mudflats are usually starting to appear around parts of local reservoirs, attracting early migrants like shorebirds, herons, flycatchers, and swallows. Join us for a morning of birding 'on the edge', but wear old shoes or boots, as this 'edge' is liable to be rather soft and muddy. Meet at the Hoover dam parking area (off Sunbury Road at the west end of the dam) and be prepared to drive/carpool to shorebird spots at any one of the reservoirs. For more information, contact Rob Thorn, 614-551-0643 or robthorn@earthlink.net.

Birdwatching for Fledglings

Sat., August 1 from 10 am to 11:30 am

If you've wondered what birdwatching is about, but can't even see a bird in a pair of binoculars, this is for you. Bring your binoculars or use ours. We'll teach you tricks to start a fun hobby. Weather permitting we'll go on a short hike. For more information, contact Suzan Jervey at sejervey@gmail.com or 614-546-7857.

Bird Hike at Blendon Woods

Sun, August 2 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Join Naturalist Bruce Simpson in search of Blendon Woods' winter residents. Meet at the nature center. Bring binoculars or borrow ours. For more information, call Blendon Woods Metro Park at 614-895-6221.



From CA president Barb Revard

Settling into Summer

*Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer
You'll wish that summer could always be here – Nat King Cole*

While I certainly enjoy the freshness and exuberance of spring and early summer, July and August really are months to settle in and make the most of summer. From our human perspective the flowers are in full bloom, the garden is bearing fresh vegetables and, hopefully, mowing the yard has slowed down after the spring rains.

This time of year is perfect to take a closer look for pollinators in your yard. They have not slowed down and are still busy at their jobs. If you have planted with bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators in mind, don't forget to also provide water. As the summer heat dries out your landscape be diligent about providing shallow water pans with sticks or rocks which can be used as perches for butterflies and bees.

If you need more information on expanding your pollinator garden visit the Ohio State University Extension Service website for a fact sheet on Attracting Pollinators to the Garden (extension.osu.edu), the Pollinator Partnership at (<http://www.pollinator.org/>) or the Xerces Society at (xerces.org) and view the fact sheet a for Midwest pollinator plant list. Late summer is a great time to take stock of your current efforts and begin to plan for fall planting. Our native pollinators need our help and we rely upon them for so much of our food crops. Some scientists estimate that one in three bites of food we take can be traced back to the role of animal pollinators. It's time to be a good partner with your pollinators!

Audubon at Home Education Series

Monarchs, Milkweeds & More

Jim McCormac, Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Wed., July 8 at 7:00 pm at GIAC

Milkweeds in the genus *Asclepias* are the primary hosts of the spectacular Monarch, an iconic butterfly whose numbers have crashed in recent years. Ohio is home to 13 species of milkweed, and Monarch reproduction has been documented on twelve of them. In addition to fueling Monarch caterpillars, the milkweed gardener will be supporting an entire ensemble of other obligate milkweed feeders: beetles, various bugs, and beautiful moths. This program will be a visual ride through the magical world of milkweeds and their always interesting occupants. We'll also look closely at the various species, and what conditions they require to flourish. The end goal? Plant a milkweed garden!

Jim McCormac works for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, specializing in wildlife diversity projects, especially birds. Prior to that, he was a botanist with the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. He has authored or coauthored several books, including *Birds of Ohio* (Lone Pine 2004); and *Wild Ohio: The Best of Our Natural Heritage* (Kent State University Press 2009). The latter won the 2010 Ohioana Book award.



Why Rain Gardens?

Sara Ernst, Franklin Soil and Water District

Wed., August 12 at 7:00 pm at GIAC

Rain gardens are a natural way to use rain water as a resource instead of a waste product. Every time it rains or snow melts, large amounts of water from our rooftops, roads, sidewalks, and parking lots are carried through our storm water system and drain directly into our creeks and streams. This storm water collects pollutants and creates flooding that is harmful to property owners, stream life, and our drinking water. Rain gardens are an easy, cost-efficient way to slow and decrease the amount of storm water runoff from our own properties that enters our natural waterways. They can help enhance the beauty of our neighborhoods and the quality of our stream water and stream life.

Lights Out and Bird Friendly Buildings

Amanda Duren, Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative

Wed., September 9 at 7:00 pm at GIAC

Every spring and fall, millions of birds migrate through Columbus on their way to or from their breeding grounds. Many birds migrate at night, and lights on tall buildings or aimed at the sky can cause birds to strike windows or circle buildings until they fall from exhaustion. Lights Out programs protect migrating birds by working with building owners to limit lighting during migration seasons. In this presentation, Amanda Duren, program coordinator for the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, will discuss the Lights Out program in downtown Columbus and share tips for preventing window collisions from happening at your home.



Columbus Audubon (Founded 1913)

Mission: To promote the appreciation, understanding and conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats, for present and future generations.

www.columbusaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/columbusaudubon

614-545-5496

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Officers

President: Barbara Revard, bsrevard@gmail.com, 614-580-4469

Vice President: Suzan Jervey, sejervvey@gmail.com

Treasurer: Maura Rawn, maura2garden@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary:

Past President: Bill Heck, bill.heck@gmail.com

Trustees (through June 30, 2016): George Arnold, Tim Daniel, Julie Davis, Lindsay Deering, Amanda Duren, Tamara James, Suzan Jervey, Barbara Revard, Tom Sheley, Christie Vargo (ex officio)

Additional chapter leaders

Birdathon: information@columbusaudubon.org

Conservation: Dave Horn, 614-262-0312

Eco Weekend: Dale Brubeck, dbrubeck@columbus.rr.com; Lois Day, 614-793-8843

Field Trips: Tim Daniel, information@columbusaudubon.org

Membership: Joe Meara, 614-430-9127

Newsletter Editor: Tamara James, editor@columbusaudubon.org

Newsletter Designer: Julie Davis, greenherons58@insight.rr.com

Programs: Darlene Sillick, azuretrails@columbus.rr.com

Service in the Preserves: Katryn Renard, 614-261-7171

Website: Bill Heck, webmaster@columbusaudubon.org

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Mission: To awaken and connect participants to the beauty of the natural world in the heart of Columbus and inspire environmental stewardship in their daily lives.

www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org

Facebook: GrangeInsuranceAudubonCenter

614-545-5475

Twitter: @grangeaudubon

Staff

Center Director: Christie Vargo

Outreach and Engagement Director: Amy Boyd

Education Manager and Volunteer Coordinator: Allison Roush

Finance and Operations Manager: David Chew

Development and Marketing Manager: Jeffrey Yost

Finance & Facility Assistant: Tina Starr

Facility Attendants: Linda FreemanWalker & Monica Johnson

Center hours: Mon - closed; Tues - Thurs - 10 am to 5 pm;

Fri & Sat - 10 am to 3 pm; Sun - 12 noon to 5 pm

Directions to the GIAC: From High St. or Front St. turn west on Whittier (which runs along south end of German Village and Brewery District). Follow Whittier, making no turns, across the bridge spanning the tracks, until you drive into the parking lot in front of the Center.

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Deadline for proposed submissions for the September - October issue of the Song Sparrow is July 15.

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