

The Chickadee's guide to gardening

In your garden, choose plants that help the environment

Reprinted with permission of the author. Originally ran in the March 11, 2015 edition of *The New York Times*.

I grew up thinking little of plants. I was interested in snakes and turtles, then insects and, eventually, birds. Now I like plants. But I still like the life they create even more.

Plants are as close to biological miracles as a scientist could dare admit. After all, they allow us, and nearly every other species, to eat sunlight, by creating the nourishment that drives food webs on this planet. As if that weren't enough, plants also produce oxygen, build topsoil and hold it in place, prevent floods, sequester carbon dioxide, buffer extreme weather and clean our water. Considering all this, you might think we gardeners would value plants for what they do. Instead, we value them for what they look like.

When we design our home landscapes, too many of us choose beautiful plants from all over the world, without considering their ability to support life within our local ecosystems.

Last summer I did a simple experiment at home to measure just how different the plants we use for landscaping can be in supporting local animals. I compared a young white oak in my yard with one of the Bradford pears in my neighbor's yard. Both trees are the same size, but Bradford pears are ornamentals from Asia, while white oaks are native to eastern North America. I walked around each tree and counted the caterpillars on their leaves at head height. I found 410 caterpillars on the white oak (comprising 19 different species), and only one caterpillar (an inchworm) on the Bradford pear.

Was this a fluke? Hardly. The next day I repeated my survey on a different white oak and Bradford pear. This time I found 233 caterpillars on the white

oak (comprising 15 species) and, again, only one on the Bradford pear.

Why such huge differences? It's simple: Plants don't want to be eaten, so they have loaded their tissues with nasty chemicals that would kill most insects if



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

Native gardening and birding rounds out CA program year

It is hard to believe that our program year is coming to a close! Our last two speakers will offer both nationwide and regional perspectives on birding and conservation. First up is Jeff Gordon, president of the American Birding Association in March, and former First Lady of Ohio Hope Taft will share her expertise on native gardening in April.

As is our tradition, Columbus Audubon will also be presenting a *Song Sparrow* award during the March program. The *Song Sparrow* award was created in 1996 to recognize outstanding contributions by Audubon members who promote our mission, often over the course of many years. The award commemorates the work of Margaret Morse Nice's groundbreaking scientific contributions on the life history of song sparrows.

CA Monthly Programs

March program: Birding together: How birding can save your life and maybe, just maybe, save the world

Tuesday, March 22, 2016 in the GIAC multipurpose room

6:45 - 7 p.m. - Refreshments, bird quiz and social time

7 p.m.- Welcome and announcements

7:15 p.m. - Conservation Spotlight: Ohio Young Birder Doug Whitman will share his experiences during a nine-week work trip to Ecuador this past summer. The experience was sponsored in part by the John Wilson Memorial Fund.

7:30 p.m. - Join American Birding Association President Jeffrey Gordon for a celebration of the power of birding to heal and transform, not only our own lives but even our world. Birding is a passion, a practice, and a community whose time has come. Jeff will not only address some of the many benefits of a strong, diverse birding community for our birds and for our natural heritage, he'll also address ways to conquer some of the special challenges that birding faces as it reaches a wider audience.

Jeffrey Gordon is the president of the American Birding Association, headquartered in Delaware City, Delaware. In addition to leading birding tours around a goodly portion of the globe, he is a frequent speaker and trip leader at birding and nature festivals. He served as field editor for *Birdwatcher's Digest*, and is the coordinator for the Delaware Birding Trail. A lifelong nature enthusiast, Jeff worked as an interpretive naturalist at national parks including Yosemite and Acadia, and at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. He spent 12 years leading birding tours full-time, specializing in North & Central America, as well as guiding trips to Antarctica and Africa. For more information on the ABA and on Jeff, visit www.aba.org.



April program: Native plants and why they are important

Tuesday, April 26, 2016 in the GIAC multipurpose room

6:45-7:00 pm: Refreshments, bird quiz and social time

7:00 pm: Annual Membership Meeting. We will be voting on CA trustee positions for a three-year term to begin July 1, 2016. You can review the schedule and see all the details at our website, www.columbusaudubon.org.

7:15 p.m. - Conservation Spotlight: Tom Sheley will share his insights on our annual Birdathon and it's importance to Columbus Audubon and the birding community. If you haven't yet joined a team or would like to get inspired to pledge a donation, you won't want to miss Tom's presentation!

7:30 p.m. - Columbus Audubon is honored to present Hope Taft, former First Lady of Ohio, who will talk about her work promoting the benefits of native plants and gardening. Mrs. Taft, served as Ohio's First Lady from 1999-2007. She focused on promoting positive youth development, alcohol and other drug prevention and community volunteerism during her tenure.

She transformed the Governor's Residence into a Living Museum to preserve the property's rich heritage and created a showcase of artistic, industrial, political, geological and horticultural histories of Ohio for educational purposes. This project includes the Ohio Heritage Garden, Ohio's botanical garden of native plants, designed to replicate the major ecosystems of the state.

She still oversees the garden's development and maintenance as chair of the Heritage Garden Committee of the Friends of the Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden, a non-partisan, non-profit organization and organizes over 100 volunteers to help maintain it on a yearly basis.

She is an honorary Master Gardener and an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist. She has been trained and taught the Landscape for Life program developed by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center, the US Botanical Garden, and the American Society of Landscape Architects.



Grange Insurance Audubon Center

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eaten. Insects do eat plants, though, and they achieve this by adapting to the chemical defenses of just one or two plant lineages. So some have evolved to eat oak trees without dying, while others have specialized in native cherries or ashes and so on.

But local insects have only just met Bradford pears, in an evolutionary sense, and have not had the time — millennia — required to adapt to their chemical defenses. And so Bradford pears stand virtually untouched in my neighbor's yard.

In the past, we thought this was a good thing. After all, Asian ornamentals were planted to look pretty, and we certainly didn't want insects eating them. We were happy with our perfect pears, burning bushes,

Japanese barberries, porcelain berries, golden rain trees, crape myrtles, privets, bush honeysuckles and all the other foreign ornamentals.

But there are serious ecological consequences to such choices, and another exercise you can do at home makes them clear. This spring, if you live in North America, put up a chickadee nest box in your yard. If you are lucky, a pair of chickadees will move in and raise a family. While they are feeding their young, watch what the chickadees bring to the nest: mostly caterpillars. Both parents take turns feeding the chicks, enabling them to bring a caterpillar to the nest once every three minutes. And they do this from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. for each of the 16 to 18 days it takes the chicks to fledge. That's a total of 350 to 570 caterpillars every day, depending on how many chicks they have. So, an incredible 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars are required to make one clutch of chickadees.

And chickadees are tiny birds: just a third of an ounce. What if you wanted to support red-bellied woodpeckers in your yard, a bird that is about eight times heavier than a chickadee? How many caterpillars would that take?

What we plant in our landscapes determines what can live in our landscapes. Controlling what grows in our yards is like playing God. By favoring productive species, we can create life, and by using nonnative plants, we can prevent it.

An American yard dominated by Asian ornamentals does not produce nearly the quantity and diversity of insects needed for birds to reproduce. Some might argue that we should just let those birds breed "in nature." That worked in the past, but now there simply is not enough "nature" left. And it shows. Many bird species in North America have declined drastically in the past 40 years.

Fortunately, more and more gardeners are realizing that their yards offer one of the most empowering conservation options we have, and are sharing their properties with the nature around them.

By the way, you might assume that my oak was riddled with unsightly caterpillar holes, but not so. Since birds eat most of the caterpillars before they get very large, from 10 feet away the oak looked as perfect as a Bradford pear.

Douglas W. Tallamy, a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, is the author of "Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants."



Save the Date:

Doug Tallamy to lecture at the Audubon Center on Aug. 4. Time to be announced.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

We knew the birds were there, long before we could see them, mostly from the noisy begging by the juveniles. We were near several Osprey platforms with nests. Osprey calls are piercingly loud, but the adults don't make them often. Big begging juveniles are another story; they squeal long and loud, imploring the adults to catch them 'one more fish'. These were big juveniles, fully capable of flight, but oddly reluctant to catch their own food. "Just like many teenagers I know," murmured one of my birding companions, while others nodded silently in agreement.

Anthropomorphizing aside, Osprey are a big success story of bird conservation in the Midwest. Back in the 1960s & 70s, Ospreys, along with Bald Eagles and Peregrines, were at an all-time low, decimated by pesticides that were ratcheting up the food chain to these top-level predators. They were all but extirpated in Ohio and Indiana, and hung on in some isolated areas of Michigan and Wisconsin. Similarly dire collapses were seen in the coastal areas of the mid-Atlantic states. Only after the most noxious of the pesticides were banned, and young captive-born birds were hacked back into the wild, did populations begin the slow climb back to normalcy.

Normalcy, though, is an elusive concept with Osprey. One of the most unusual of raptors, it's evolved expressly to catch fish. Its talons are very curved, its outer toe can flex forward or rearward, and its feet are covered in spiny tubercles, all to grip slippery targets. Its wings are very long and pivot easily about the wrist, which allows the birds both to soar effortlessly and to 'helicopter' – hang in one spot by sweeping their wrists back and forth. This allows them to search for and stalk fish from great height. Once they've locked on a potential target, they slowly swoop closer, making a wings-folded-back, talons-first plunge at the last possible moment. As she dives into the water, we invariably turn to watch. Did she catch the fish? It's great drama, one of the best shows in birding.



Photo by Tim Daniel

After you get past the fish-catching behavior, though, Osprey start to snap into the grid-lines of a typical raptor. They carry off their prey to a perch or nest, and use their hooked beak to tear it into bite-sized chunks. If they're trying to impress a mate, the males will shower her with food that they catch. They'll also perform an elaborate 'sky dance' of calls and aerial maneuvers to emphasize their flying prowess. If they're returning to a nest, it's a huge platform of sticks in a large shoreline tree, usually with 1-3 nestlings, depending on how proficient the adults are at fish-catching. And like most raptors, they migrate south for the winter, spending their non-breeding season along Caribbean or South American shores.

Still, though, the oddness of this raptor tends to seep through in almost all aspects of its life. The slow-flying skill that makes them excellent fish-catchers also makes them a target for fish-stealing eagles – Bald Eagles here, other species in Europe and Asia. Their nest site selection is very adaptable, using buildings, towers, poles, and

pylons, as long as it's near water. Parks and conservation organizations have even designed simple artificial nest platforms that Osprey will readily use. Our most reliable locations to find Osprey locally involve such platforms in upper Alum Creek Lake, Hoover Reservoir, and Pickerington Ponds. And there is this magnetic attraction to water, even on migration. You won't find many migrating Osprey at most traditional mountaintop hawk-watches. Look for them instead along coastal sites, whether along the Atlantic Coast, or the Great Lakes, or big rivers like the Ohio or Mississippi. Just don't expect to hear squealing juveniles on migration – the parents leave them back at the nest platforms, so the big juvies have to find their own way south. We don't recommend this to the exasperated human parents among you.

Rob Thorn

Audubon at Home registration open for 2016

Registration fee - \$125

Register online at www.grangeinsuranceauduboncenter.org

Do you want to do a little more for birds and other wildlife and you're not sure just what you can do? Audubon at Home is a program that works with homeowners to transform their landscape into an oasis for birds.

The program is a backyard conservation program aimed at properties within urban and suburban communities. Every property, whether an apartment, a suburban house or a rural farm, has the potential to create sustainable and natural habitats. Participants commit to managing their properties in a way that restores the ecosystem, while also benefiting humans. The emphasis is on collective small steps that will have a large impact, from managing water consumption to reducing carbon emissions to providing wildlife habitat in yards.

The goals of the program include: increased food and water sources for wildlife, shelter and nesting opportunities, native plantings, and biodiversity while decreasing the spread of invasive plants, lawn size, water and pesticide use, and polluted runoff. Citizen Science is a major component of the program as folks contribute observations to scientists so that they can further their reach.

Participants will get economic benefits in the form of incentives and rewards, as well as in the form of ecosystem services. Other benefits include access to community resources, technical assistance, reduced garden maintenance, increased garden enjoyment, increased water quality, and an increase in beneficial insects and other wildlife.

Each month an educational program will be offered at the Center on the second Wednesday of each month. Topics include: organic lawn care, attracting pollinators, bird feeding 101 to name a few. The programs are open to the public and you don't have to be enrolled in the program to participate.

Doug Tallamy the professor who made the case for why native plants are important to birds will be here the evening of Aug. 4 for a lecture. Save the date and plan to share a delightful evening with us at GIAC.

The program sold out last year, so if you are interested register now before the spots are gone. For more information about the program, contact Amy Boyd at aboyd@audubon.org or (614) 545-5486.

Fewer species seen in 2015 Columbus Christmas Bird Count

An old adage of Ohio birding says "Bad weather, good birds". In contrast, the Columbus Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was afflicted with a case of "good weather, meh birds". A period of mild weather lasted almost right up to count day on Dec 20, resulting in few wintering birds, especially waterfowl.

On a cool, clear count day, 60 observers (including two feeder watchers) logged 126 observer hours resulting in 36,856 birds of 79 species spotted. For the exact species totals, please click on the CBC tab on www.columbusaudubon.org.

Almost every team saw a burst of bird activity early in the morning, followed by low activity the remainder of the day. Most birds had lower-than-normal totals, and some species were noticeably scarce. Ducks like Scaup and Ruddies were absent, and we almost missed Ring-necked Ducks, as most diving ducks elected to stay in northern Ohio on open water.

Starlings may have seemed ubiquitous, but their winter roosts told another story, with numbers down to less than half of last year's totals. Field birds, like larks and blackbirds, continued to be a hit-or-mostly-miss proposition here as well. Half-hardy insect eaters, like warblers, kinglets, and Swamp Sparrows, were also tough to find. Possibly the long warm spells 'hatched out' most of their food bugs, which were later killed by the frosts around count day.

Despite the slow birding day, some notable prizes were found, including a Snow Goose found by Charlie Bombaci near Blendon Woods, a rare White-winged Scoter spied by Jeff Pontius and the Scioto team near the sewage treatment plant, a Peregrine that delighted two different teams near downtown, and a very late Wood Thrush lurking in a yard in Upper Arlington (Heather Luedecke, Toni Stahl). The list of count week birds that just missed the official count day was equally unusual, and included a Red-throated Loon seen by many near Griggs Dam, a Ross's Goose hanging out down near Three-Creeks Park (Mike Horn), a Merlin, and an Eastern Phoebe in Blendon Woods (Bruce Simpson).

Birdathon 2016 - experience the fun!

A slight chill and foggy mist punctuate the dawn in the Clear Creek Valley just south of Lancaster. Here, as the first shafts of light filter through the treetops and burn through the mist, members of the Wild Birds Unlimited Sawmill team wait with anticipation for what is about to happen. Suddenly, a Barred Owl's raucous calls incite a male wild turkey to gobble from its roost. There! Was that a Louisiana Waterthrush bursting boldly into song as a kingfisher flies down the creek with his rattling call? Wood Thrushes contribute their complex notes from the adjoining woods. Within minutes the magic of a dawn song give team members a lasting memory as hundreds of birds announce the arrival of the new day.

Dawn breaking is equally exciting for the Slate Run Colored Juncos team at Columbus' Slate Run Metro Park. Tanagers, warblers and thrushes have awakened, a Pileated Woodpecker drums and the calls of Sandhill Cranes reverberate through the air.

Meanwhile, the Deckbirds team is celebrating the backyard visit of an Eastern Bluebird as they partake of a continental breakfast from their selected starting and ending point: the home and deck of their choosing.

Teams of birders and nature enthusiasts organize in May to support Columbus Audubon through its annual Birdathon fundraiser. This event is a highlight of the spring birding season for many of our teams and their sponsors, as well as it being the main fundraiser for Columbus Audubon. The concept is simple. Join or form a team, collect donations and count all the bird species your team identifies in your chosen participation category on any day between May 1 and May 31. You don't even have to stay in Ohio. Be creative: bird anywhere in the world, or in your own backyard.

If you enjoy the outdoors, watching birds, camaraderie and competition for a good cause, why not consider joining us for a Birdathon adventure? The CA Birdathon is open to everyone of all ages and skill levels, and there is no limit to the number of teams with which you can participate. How about putting together a family team, a workplace team, or a school team? Columbus Audubon makes it easy to participate. We can help you form a team, find a team looking for members or to sponsor a team.

Your level of participation is entirely up to you. Log on to www.columbusaudubon.org/birdathon and we'll take you through the process of forming, joining or sponsoring a team. We'll also guide you through deciding on one of the participation categories and provide tips on fundraising for your team. Our goal this year is to raise at least \$10,000. Proceeds will help fund Columbus Audubon programs including conservation projects, public programs and youth scholarships.

You don't need to join a team to participate. Sponsors are just as important to the Columbus Audubon Birdathon as our team members. If you would like to sponsor a team, please contact a team member to make a donation or look for the team roster posted on www.columbusaudubon.org/birdathon, and sponsor your favorite team online! If you have

This program will cover common lawn issues including: insects/pests, disease, weeds, lawn exposure (sun & shade) and soil concerns. For each lawn problem, natural and non-toxic solutions will be discussed. The program will also include an explanation of proper cultural practices (mowing and watering), and how that affects the grass plant and can improve or worsen the current issue(s).

So what are you waiting for? Join us for Columbus Audubon's 2016 Birdathon, and let the fun begin!

COLUMBUS AUDUBON BIRDATHON



Tom Sheley

Columbus Audubon



March & April Field Trips

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

Birdwatching for Beginners

Saturdays, March 5 and 19

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 or improve upon a fun hobby. Weather permitting; we'll go on a short hike or 'arm chair' bird watch. Meet at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center at 10 a.m. Trip ends at 11:30 a.m. Contact Suzan Jervey at sejerv@gmail.com for more information.

March Avid Birders trip

Saturday, March 12

The Avid Birders will meet to carpool at 5:30 a.m. in the southeast corner of the Worthington Mall parking lot. Our likely quarry will be early migrants, including waterfowl.

Avid Birders are interested enough in birding to get out of bed very early for day-long field trips. The only requirements to join us are enthusiasm, binoculars, and a reliable alarm clock. A spotting scope is often useful, but not required. You do not have to be a member of Columbus Audubon to come along.

Ordinary trips involve no lengthy or arduous hiking, although we occasionally traverse snow, loose sand, or rocks, and several miles of leisurely walking is often called for. We can accommodate an unlimited number of persons on most trips; occasionally, longer trips out of state are planned, and these are usually limited to a small number of participants. The longer trips fill up early, and first priority is reserved for those who participate most regularly on the weekend trips.

For more information, or to be included on our email list, contact the [Avid Birders](#) or one of our leaders: Donna Kuhn (donna_kuhn@juno.com) or Andy Sewell (semillama@gmail.com)

Waterfowl at Lake Logan in Hocking County

Saturday, March 26

Join photographers/birders Tim Daniel and Nina Harfmann for a trip to Lake Logan State Park to look for overwintering waterfowl. Meet at the Lake Logan beach parking lot at 9 a.m. Contact Tim Daniel at tdaniel23456@gmail.com or 937-578-3105 to register.

Green Lawn Cemetery Owl Prowl

Saturday, March 26

Meet Andy Sewell and Randy Rogers at the Huntington Chapel at 9 a.m. on March 26th, where we will break into teams, and systematically search for saw whet owls among the numerous cedar trees. Dress for the weather, bring a bottle of water, and if you have a radio bring it as well. We will also keep our eyes open for siskins, crossbills, merlins, and other winter visitors. This was once an annual program, and reviving it will provide valuable data about the IBA!

Birdwatching for Beginners

Saturdays, April 2 and 16

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 or improve upon a fun hobby. Weather permitting; we'll go on a short hike or 'arm chair' bird watch. Meet at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center at 10 a.m. Trip ends at 11:30 a.m. Contact Suzan Jervey at sejerv@gmail.com for more information.

Green Lawn Cemetery

Sunday, April 10

Join Warren Grody and Darlene Sillick as they fill the bird feeders and look for the usual suspects plus a few surprises at one of the oldest cemeteries in central Ohio. Meet at 1 p.m. in the office parking lot inside the iron gate at 1000 Green Lawn Ave., Columbus. Contact Darlene at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com for more information.

May Avid Birders trip - Shawnee State Forest

Saturday, April 30 |

The Avid Birders will meet to carpool at 5:30 a.m. in the southeast corner of the Worthington Mall parking lot. This time it's our annual pilgrimage to Shawnee State Forest at the height of spring migration for warblers and other goodies. Those who wish to meet us in southern Ohio can do so at 8:00 am in the Shawnee Marina / Golf Course parking lot.

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44th year of EcoWeekend about to blast off at Camp Oty'Okwa

Feeling the effects of Nature Deficit Disorder? Craving the sounds, smells, textures and beauty of the natural world after the long winter? EcoWeekend is a family nature retreat like no other! This "all inclusive" weekend event will be held at Camp Oty'Okwa in beautiful Hocking Hills from April 29 - May 1. Over 50 nature, conservation and ecology-minded programs to choose from Friday through Sunday with exclusive youth programming on Saturday for kids ages four through the eighth-grade. EcoWeekend is perfect for nature lovers ages four to 104!



2016 programs cover topics such as birds, bats, owls, monarchs, bees, bugs and snakes, with stream discovery, archery, astronomy, guided state nature preserve hikes and local town historical tours. Enhance your knowledge about geology, ancient earthworks, photography and more! Our volunteer program leaders are passionate about sharing their favorite programs with you.

Your all-inclusive registration includes five sessions of programs, plus camp-style lodging and meals from Friday evening through Sunday noon at very affordable rates. Look for your EcoWeekend brochure and registration form mailed to Columbus Audubon mem-

bers on Feb. 1, or register online at www.ecoweekend.org. The registration deadline is April 8 so register today! Contact Maura Rawn, EcoWeekend committee chair at (740) 653-8574, with any questions. **COME JOIN US!**

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Ordinary trips involve no lengthy or arduous hiking, although we occasionally traverse snow, loose sand, or rocks, and several miles of leisurely walking is often called for. We can accommodate an unlimited number of persons on most trips; occasionally, longer trips out of state are planned, and these are usually limited to a small number of participants. The longer trips fill up early, and first priority is reserved for those who participate most regularly on the weekend trips.

For more information, or to be included on our email list, contact the [Avid Birders](#) or one of our leaders: Donna Kuhn (donna_kuhn@juno.com) or Andy Sewell (semillama@gmail.com).

Whetstone Park

Monday, May 9

Join Donna Siple and Lynn Wearsch for a morning walk through Whetstone Park of Roses, to explore a variety of bird habitats in the park, the Adena Brook area and nearby wooded ravine. This is for all levels – beginners are welcome.

We hope to see indigo buntings, orioles, tanagers, gnatcatchers, thrushes, vireos, waxwings, various warblers and maybe even a nesting wood duck. Trip duration is approximately three hours. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Park of Roses parking area just below the shelter house. Contact lmair5436@gmail.com for more information.

Green Lawn Cemetery

Sunday, May 22

Join Warren Grody and Darlene Sillick as they fill the bird feeders and look for the usual suspects plus a few surprises at one of the oldest cemeteries in central Ohio. Meet at 1 p.m. in the office parking lot inside the iron gate at 1000 Green Lawn Ave., Columbus. Contact Darlene at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com for more information.

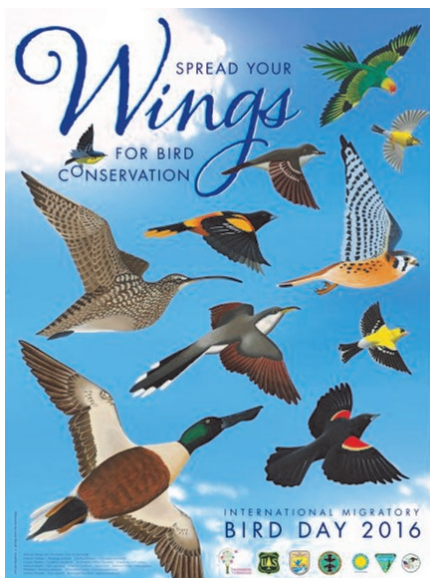


Grange Insurance Audubon Center

International Migratory Bird Day at GIAC

Spread Your Wings for Bird Conservation

May 14, 2016 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.



In 2016, International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) will focus on how birds have inspired many of the most significant environmental conservation actions in the Americas. We recognize the capacity of citizens in every country to support programs and laws that protect birds and their habitats, including a landmark treaty that, for the last century, has protected nearly all migratory bird species in the U.S. and Canada ~ the Migratory Bird Treaty.

The International Migratory Bird Act is celebrating 100 years and we are going to “spread our wings” in a big way at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center. Members of Columbus Audubon will lead bird hikes and will introduce participants to common urban birds in Scioto Audubon Metro Park and learn how to use binoculars and how to use bird markings for identification. Bird hikes will be offered every hour on the half-hour all day. Enjoy a creative nature craft project incorporating birds that will be fun for all ages. Volunteers will interpret the native plant gardens at the Center to encourage families to incorporate native plants in their gardens at home. Participants will learn why native plants are important for birds and how small changes in the backyard can add up to big advantages for birds. Don’t miss this exciting and fun day at the Center celebrating urban birds.

Sixth Annual Flight of Fancy event

Audubon Center Hopes to Surpass 2015

The Grange Insurance Audubon Center will hold its sixth-annual Flight of Fancy event on Friday, May 13 at 6 p.m.. Last year’s gathering of Audubon members, financial supporters, volunteers, and a ‘who’s who’ of local movers and shakers drew more than 300 guests raising over \$30,000 for the nature center adjacent to downtown Columbus.

A night of live music, magicians, live and silent auctions, great food and beverages as well as greeting old friends and making new ones; combine to create a wonderful way to support the conservation and education programs of the Audubon Center.

Most of the evening’s proceeds are put to use keeping the center free and open to the public year ‘round. And a significant portion is used to support Conservation Classroom as well as Audubon Partner Camp. These programs designed for elementary age school children from disadvantaged neighborhoods, starts them on a path of better understanding of the natural world, their place in it, and how they can help preserve and protect it.

Live auctions this year will include a weekend retreat at The Wilds, a private, up close tour of the Darby Creek Buffalo Sanctuary, and others to be announced. Be sure to watch your mailbox, email, and the Grange Insurance Audubon website for details as May 13 draws closer. Tickets are \$50 per person, or \$90 per couple and your admission price is tax deductible. We hope to see you there!



Leadership Letter

A year of changes and challenges

By Rich Shank, Chair GIAC Stewardship Board



I had just stepped off the plane in Columbus after a month in Australia and New Zealand and noticed I had an urgent email from Christie Vargo, Executive Director of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center. It was January 1, 2015, the date on which I assumed Chairmanship of the Center Stewardship Board. The news she had to share was a realignment due to deficits, meaning cuts in budget, programs, operations and staff. This was followed by a tense January board meeting and a resolve by the staff and the board to put the center on course. Board members stepped up in four significant ways – financial analysis and reporting, fundraising, education, and partnership development.

Jamie Taylor took the lead with a board finance committee to work with the staff to better understand and interpret to the board revenue streams and expenses. Lori Overmyer graciously volunteered to oversee fundraising and set to work with a dedicated group. The education group focused on Conservation Classroom, a signature program of the Center but one in which involvement had dropped dramati-

cally. Maury Walsh, Betsy Sidorenko and Barb Revard addressed challenges in recruiting Columbus City Schools' participation. Tim Moloney, Director of Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, led efforts to bolster emerging and unrealized partnership opportunities.

Over the next eight months and a lot of work and meetings, the staff and the board made great progress. The Center is on budget as determined during the realignment process; revenue has increased (both contributed and earned); and partnerships are successfully increasing both impact and efficiencies. Conservation Classroom is over-capacity at 27 classrooms for the 2015-16 school year. Triple that number are interested participating in 2016-17, given a corresponding increase in educators.

Metro Parks assumed a greater role in exterior maintenance, opened the Greenways Hub in the former Nature Store, and provided staff and security for extended evening hours of operation during warm weather months. The Columbus Department of Public Utilities will provide interactive exhibits to tell the story of the stormwater management features of the Center as well as grants to deliver STEM curriculum related to water quality once the exhibits are in place later this year. Columbus Audubon financially supported upgrading the sound and projection systems in the multi-purpose room, to benefit our joint membership meetings as well as to maintain the attractiveness of the Center as an event rental venue, which provides a quarter of the Center's revenue.

As if enough hasn't happened this year, Christie Vargo, the Center Director of five years announced her retirement. She will stay on until a new director is hired and in place. A search is underway, spearheaded by the board in collaboration with the National Audubon headquarters staff. Presently, we have over 50 applications from all over the country and many locally. Interviews should begin in February, and we may have a new director in place as soon as the end of March. A very exciting time of growth and transition.

As I sit here on this January day, writing this and watching the birds at my feeders, I can't help but feeling optimism, excitement and anticipation about what the upcoming year holds for the Audubon Center and its impact on Columbus and the community.

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Audubon at Home monthly programs

Natives in Harmony's Favorite Plants for Supporting Birds and Pollinators

Gale Martin, Natives in Harmony

March 9, 7pm Grange Insurance Audubon Center

If your goal is to support wildlife, then this program is a must see. Gale Martin of Natives In Harmony Nursery of Ma-rengo, Ohio, will discuss which native plants are best for attracting birds and other wildlife to your garden or backyard. No matter what the soil or sun situation is in your yard, there are natives that will be perfect for you.

Common Lawn Problems - Organic Solutions

Matt Cellura, Good Nature Organic Lawn Care

April 13, 7 – 8:30 pm Grange Insurance Audubon Center

This program will cover common lawn issues including: insects/pests, disease, weeds, lawn exposure (sun & shade) and soil concerns. For each lawn problem, natural and non-toxic solutions will be discussed. The program will also include an explanation of proper cultural practices (mowing and watering), and how that affects the grass plant and can improve or worsen the current issue(s).

For more information contact aboyd@audubon.org. No registration required.

Event, meeting & wedding rentals at GIAC

Spectacular city skyline views, and beautiful natural landscapes surround our unique 18,000 square foot nature center and event space. Located adjacent to downtown Columbus in the Scioto Audubon Metro Park on the Scioto River, our location is convenient for attendees from near or far.



For meetings, trainings, conferences or presentations the Audubon Center provides complete audio/video capabilities, flexible space rentals, full catering, and every amenity you'd expect.

Weddings at the Audubon Center will not be forgotten by you or your guests. Competitive rates, an array of beautiful natural back drops for photographs, first class catering, and unrivaled flexibility make the Center one of central Ohio's favorite wedding venues.

When you book your event or meeting with the Audubon Center you're not only getting first class service and facilities, you're also supporting the local conservation education mission of Audubon. It's a difference

you and your guests can be proud of.

For more information contact our event manager, Cynthia Savely; cynthia@boscandbrie.com or by calling 614-985-2215.



Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Anticipating the American Birding Expo

Mark your calendars for the second annual American Birding Expo, set for Sept. 16-18 at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center.



The Expo aims to connect birders with birding destinations, tour companies, artists, nonprofits, publishers, and optics companies. The inaugural ABE drew 85 exhibitors from around the globe and an estimated 2,500 attendees.

Proceeds from the conservation raffle, games, and direct donations benefited BirdLife International, the American Birding Association, and the GIAC. Funds received will support international, national, and local causes to include South America's critically endangered hooded grebe, the threatened rufa red knot, and the Young Urban Naturalist program here in Columbus.

The Expo offers a rare opportunity to try out the latest binoculars and spotting scopes side by side, at all price ranges, including the world's best and most expensive. Representatives will be on hand to make sure you know every bell and whistle of their products. They eagerly want you to try out their lenses and the GIAC is a great place to do that. It's nothing short of awesome to see several dozen high-end scopes lined up and aimed at the Columbus skyline just waiting for you to peer through and focus.

Spotlight presentations by exhibitors at the Expo allow you to find out more about birding opportunities in far-off places and meet with birding tour companies that can take you there, or to learn about the latest technologies in birding optics.

Thinking about a birding trip to Texas, Central America, South America, Africa, or India? Birders from those hotspots can give you ideas and even help you make arrangements. Trying to decide whether to go to Honduras or Costa Rica? Columbia or Guyana? Talk to birders from each of those countries—they might make your decision even more difficult, but at least you'll have more information! Or, you might hit it off with a tour guide, lodge operator, or national representative, making your decision easier. At the Expo, you can make friends with birders from Uganda or Papua New Guinea and then visit them in their country! What an opportunity!

Backyard bird watchers will have plenty to see and do at the Expo, too. Bird feeders and birdhouses, fine art, yard art, birding gear, books ... the Expo has something for everyone who enjoys birding and birds.

Because admission is free, the Expo needs several dozen volunteers for things like set-up, tear down, VIP check-in, exhibitor assistance, help with the conservation raffle, shuttle drivers, and more. We hope Columbus-area birders will sign up to help out. Encouraging birders and the birding industry encourages awareness of birds and habitat conservation. It's fun and rewarding to be a valuable participant of this high-energy, high-profile birding event. There is nothing else like it in the Western Hemisphere, and it is right here in Columbus!

Find out more about the upcoming Expo, register as a VIP and/or as a volunteer, or even as an exhibitor at www.birdingexpo.com. Although the event is free, attendees are encouraged to register early—which confers VIP status. VIPs will be invited to take part in several special events. Don't miss this chance to be an Expo VIP!

Dawn Hewitt

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

RWB @ the Audubon Center!

Reserve your table now for the best view in Columbus

BEFORE we make reservations available to the general public!

2016 Red White & Boom Fireworks!

Friday July 1st, 2016

- Table for 10 inside the Audubon center
 - Full barbeque buffet, soft drinks
 - Reserved parking
 - Roaming magicians and jugglers
- Games for the kids prior to the fireworks
- Plenty of reserved outdoor seating for the show
 - Clean indoor restrooms

\$495.00 per table

Call Jeff Yost at 614-545-5479 or email jyost@audubon.org

All proceeds benefit the programs of the Audubon center!

Beer & wine sold separately in advance with your table purchase or during the event.

Sorry, no outside beverages permitted



2016 WILDLIFE DIVERSITY CONFERENCE



Wednesday, April 12 at Ohio Union, 1739 North High Street, Columbus, 43210

Doors open at 8:00 am; conference from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm

Save 20% on an Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp; order with your registration and receive it with your name tag at the conference. All proceeds benefit Ohio's wildlife diversity.

Details and registration at <https://apps.ohiodnr.gov/wildlife/DiversityRegistration/>

Sponsored by ODNR Ohio Division of Wildlife

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Earth Day volunteer day at GIAC

April 16 from 9 a.m. – Noon

-with lunch (your reward for all the hard work!)

Gather a group from work or bring friends and family to join us at GIAC as we come together to help wildlife by continuing to restore critical bird habitat in our Important Bird Area (IBA).

Plan on getting your hands dirty and feet wet as we pick up trash along the Scioto River and on the peninsula. Honey-suckle removal is an ongoing battle and work will be done to clear a significant area of the invasive plant and replace it with native plants to continue the restoration efforts in the Scioto Audubon Metro Park. We will also be working in the gardens that surround the building, weeding, trimming, raking and planting native plants in the flower beds.

Join Green Columbus and a group of wonderful sponsors in celebrating Earth Day 2016, at its annual celebration at Columbus Commons on Saturday, April 23. The celebration, which will run from 1 to 10 p.m., will feature your favorite local bands, food trucks, kids' activities, environmental groups and businesses and much more. Bring your friends and family for a full day of fun in the heart of downtown Columbus.

Register yourself or your group at <http://www.greenbus.org/> to volunteer at GIAC on April 16.



Trip of a lifetime also benefits local Audubon

Costa Rica - March 19-26, 2017



With almost 900 recorded species, Costa Rica's avian biodiversity is surprisingly rich, especially in relation to the country's small size. This eight-day journey with Grange Insurance Audubon Center provides the opportunity to experience the abundant tropical bird life of Costa Rica's Selva Verde Rainforest Reserve and the cloud forests at Savegre.

With the aid of your expert bilingual guide, you will be able to identify hundreds of bird species while learning about the natural history of Costa Rica and the latest conservation initiatives to protect its precious ecosystems. Every trip booked includes a \$200 donation to the Audubon Center here in Columbus.

HIGH INTENSITY: This program is for serious birders. Expect 5-6 hours of birding each day. Pricing starts at

\$1,875.00. For more detailed information, photos, and costs please email [Jeff Yost](mailto:jyost@audubon.org) at Grange Insurance Audubon Center at jyost@audubon.org, or call (614) 545-5479.

Thank you new and renewed members

Roger and Madalyn Benjamin
Lynn Champney
Joesph Chornyak
Katie Clement
Anna Conrad
Nyssa Darter
Maureen Delphia
Evelyn Entler
Sheila Fagan and Todd Chaney
Paula Fenner
Elizabeth Guyton
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Thomas Jedinak
Karen Jennings
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Pamela Roberts
Frederick Roehrig
Jack Roy
Barbara Salsburey
Brenda Sams
Lucas Schrader
William and Katie Shelley

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

Twitter: @ColumbusAudubon

Officers

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

Vice President: Suzan Jervey, sejervy@gmail.com

Treasurer: Maura Rawn, maura2garden@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary: Amy Boyd, aboyd@audubon.org, 614-545-5486

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

Trustees (through June 30, 2016): George Arnold, Tim Daniel, Julie Davis, Lindsay Deering, 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: Maura Rawn, maura2garden@yahoo.com, 614-653-8574

Field Trips: Tim Daniel, information@columbusaudubon.org

Membership: Joe Meara, 614-430-9127

Newsletter Editor: Stefanie Hauck, editor@columbusaudubon.org

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

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

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

Website: Bill Heck, webmaster@columbusaudubon.org

Web/Social Media: Stefanie Hauck

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](https://www.facebook.com/GrangeInsuranceAudubonCenter)

614-545-5475

Twitter: @grangeaudubon

Staff

Center Director: Christie Vargo

Outreach and Engagement Director: Amy Boyd

Education Manager and Volunteer Coordinator: Allison Roush

Development and Marketing Manager: Jeffrey Yost

Office & Finance Assistant: Kristina Rawson

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 (Center periodically

closed for special events. Calling ahead is advised to ensure Center will be open for your visit.)

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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