Nestbox and feeding tips
Bluebirds and other cavity nesters

By Darlene Sillick

It’s April and birds are thinking of one main thing, it’s time to raise a family. While this article will come out in May and June it is not too late to still lend a hand to help. There are a few things for you to examine before you run out and build or buy a nestbox.

Look around your own backyard. What is the habitat? Do you know where to place a nestbox and how to make it safe for the guests? What is the level of activity? Are neighbors’ cats running loose and spending time in your yard and around your feeders? Before you put up a nestbox it is important to be responsible and do some homework. By putting up that nestbox you are accepting responsibility to the birds you hope to attract. Do some research online or pick up a book to learn more before you begin so you and especially the birds you hope to attract can be successful.

In Ohio there are several species of secondary cavity nesting birds that you can hope to attract to your yard. A secondary cavity nesting species is one who cannot excavate his own nesting site and he relies on holes excavated by woodpeckers or relies on the handiwork of humans to build him a safe home to raise his family. Each of these birds has specific habitat requirements and in some cases there is overlap and conflict when housing is at a premium. You have heard the phrase, location, location, location when looking for a home. The birds are looking for the right habitat, habitat, habitat.

In central Ohio, we can attract Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens and House Wrens to our manmade nestboxes. The ever present, non-native House Sparrow is always trying to capture a good home from one of our protected native species.

Let’s start with the bluebird. In central Ohio they are starting to nest in April however they will nest two to three times a season given the right nesting conditions. They prefer an open grassy space, short grass and perches (which may include trees, posts or garden stakes) to find their favorite food of spiders and ants to caterpillars to larger crawling, hopping and sometimes some flying insects. Try to place the nestbox 40 yards from a wood edge or structure and certainly away from a seed feeding station. Bluebirds will also eat fruit and berries so consider offering some bird friendly plantings in your yard. Offer water if it is not readily available.

Inspect your nestbox to see that you can open it for monitoring and cleaning and is ventilated and has good drainage. Make sure the inside of the door has grooves so the young can climb out for their maiden flight. Face the nestbox in a southeastern direction out of the prevailing northwest winds and weather. Place a baffle on the pole (do not place the nestbox on trees) to discourage climbing predators such as raccoons, snakes and feral cats.

Bluebirds build a nest of dried grass or pine needles in a week or less and are skillful to construct a level nest with a nice cup where they lay an egg a day (4-6 in a clutch) then begin incubation after the last egg is laid. Take the time to keep a notebook of your observations and be sure to monitor or open the nestbox weekly. The female will incubate the eggs for 14 days and they will all hatch on the same day. Try not to disturb the female during hatching. It could be harmful to the young if they become chilled or damp because you opened the box during cool, wet weather. Use a mechanic’s mirror and flashlight instead of opening the box. By watching the behavior of the adults you can tell if the young are cold and need to be warmed.

See bluebird tips, page 10
2007 CA Birdathon promises to be the best ever!

By Julie Davis

Our annual gathering to celebrate and tally the proceeds will be Friday, June 1 at the Ohio Wildlife Center/Education and Administration facility at 6313 Cook Road in Shawnee Hills.

Note: This is not the clinic facility located on Billingsley Road.

The celebration will begin with a bird-walk at 7 p.m. with Dave Horn. Meet at the OWC main building. At 7-8:35 p.m. the celebration begins and will include desserts, games, stories and the drawing for the Grand prizes.

To be eligible for the Grand Prize drawing you must turn in your money and sponsor sheets at the Birdathon Celebration Event. Or if you can’t attend, submit your sponsorship money (checks only), and sponsor sheets BEFORE June 1, to Julie Davis, 5748 Blackhawk Forest Drive Westerville, Ohio 43082.

All of our teams and sponsors are invited to celebrate their Birdathon success at the annual BAT celebration at The Ohio Wildlife Center.

The grand prizes this year include optic packages generously donated by Eagle Optics and free nightly stays at Campbell Cottage B&B. More details on the celebration will be included in the information packets all teams will receive by mid-April. You must turn in all of your pledges by May 26 to be eligible for door prizes.

Please plan to join us for a great night of birding, food, prizes and fun.

Go to www.ohiowildlifecenter.org for directions.

For more information or to RSVP, call Elaine Smith at (614) 850-0296.

Thanks! The Birdathon Committee

Two Grand Prizes to choose from

Campbell Cottage

We are delighted to announce that an overnight stay at Campbell Cottage on Kelleys Island will be this year’s B&B prize. Campbell Cottage is located on Lake Erie’s shore and “quiet side” of the island. Visit www.campbellcottage.com. According to their Web site, “Sunsets are our specialty, because Lake Erie sunsets are so beautiful and best seen from our front porch or yard. Only a few years old, Campbell Cottage has all the modern conveniences plus old fashioned amenities.” Owners June and Bill Campbell limit their donations to environmentally focused organizations and are avid birders in their own right. June wrote, “We always enjoy spreading the word of our island’s wonderful spring warblers, as migrating birds use the islands to cross Lake Erie.”

Audubon Intrepid

Great binocular viewing. Pause a moment to pick out the details of a hawk soaring far above you ... as well as the squirrel climbing a tree down the path through the powerful 10x42 Intrepid. This binocular provides comfortable 3-D views across a wide field throughout the day, and is surprisingly lightweight and more compact than many other 10x40 Porro prism binoculars on the market today. Rubber eyecups block out excess light, conform to your face, and fold down for comfortable viewing with eyeglasses. Waterproof construction fights off effects of rain and other elements. Fogproof views because nitrogen purging prevents internal lenses from fogging up.

With these Audubon Intrepid binoculars, you’ll feel confident about facing any wet, dusty, humid or frigid adventure nature throws your way. Included with the Audubon Intrepid 10x40 Binocular: Ocular lens covers, Objective lens covers, Woven neck strap and soft carry case. Check out http://www.audubon-binoculars.com/binoculars/view/116 for more information.

Birdathon celebration is June 1 at the OWC

What will our birdathon teams see this year? Blue-winged Warbler, Upland Sandpiper, Yellow-headed Blackbird or our own mascot, the Song Sparrow. Our teams are already hard at work planning their trips and recruiting sponsors.

We are all looking forward to this great spring tradition. It is all of you, our members, who help make the Birdathon such a huge success. Your support is what makes this an exciting and fun event every year for our birding teams.

Our sponsors are as important to our success as our birders. If you would like to become a sponsor, simply pick one of the teams, fill out the sponsorship form in this newsletter and send it in. You do not need to send your money in until you hear from your team.

All of the profits from the birdathon this year will go to support the Grange Insurance Nature Center, which is located in our Important Bird Area. This will be one of the nation’s first urban Audubon nature centers. Audubon Ohio envisions this as an opportunity to bring urban programs and education to children and families in the city. Columbus Audubon feels very strongly about this project. As such, CA will match every dollar up to $15,000 that is donated during the Birdathon. We hope this commitment will encourage new and larger donations towards this great cause. CA will still have all the necessary funds available to continue all of our own ongoing education and outreach projects for 2007-08.

If you have not formed a team yet, there’s still time! Just start with a couple of birding buddies, choose a team name and call Katryn Renard (614) 261-7171 to register. Ask friends and co-workers to sponsor you and then go birding! Count all the birds that you can identify in either 5, 10 or 24 hours on any day between May 1 and May 20.

Remember, you don’t have to stay in Ohio to do your birding, so be creative. The teams that have already registered are listed below. So, call now and add your name to the list.
# Sponsorship form

(Sign me up!) I would like to sponsor one of the teams above by pledging a specified amount of money for each species they see during the Birdathon. (For example, 100 species at 15 cents per bird would add up to a donation of $15.) The money will be paid in cash or check to Columbus Audubon when I am informed of the results of my team’s foray.

**Team Name**  
**My Name**  
**Street, City, State, Zip Code**  
**Phone**

Mail to: “Birdathon,” c/o Columbus Audubon, P.O. Box 141350, Columbus, Ohio 43214

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## Birdathon teams

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<td>Roger Stout</td>
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**Columbus Audubon**
Note: Field trip times, dates and locations are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If you plan on going on a trip, please contact the trip leader 24 hours ahead of time to make sure the trip has not been changed, postponed or cancelled. Also, check the Columbus Audubon Web site at www.columbusaudubon.org for any changes or additions to the field trip listings.

Field trips

Wednesday walks at Whittier

Wednesday May 2 and June 6, 6:30 a.m.

Leaders: Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond

Join Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond for a short walk around Whittier Peninsula to view wildlife as well as to watch the latest developments of the park and nature center. Meet at Lower Scioto Park in the boat ramp parking lot (west of Front Street and south of Whittier Street) For more information, contact Paul Gledhill at (614) 848-7666 or gledhillpaul@yahoo.com, or Heather Raymond at (614) 785-0342 or heather.raymond@epa.state.oh.us.

Saturday walks at Whittier

Saturday May 19, and June 16, 6:30 a.m.

Leaders: Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond

Join Paul Gledhill and Heather Raymond for a short walk around Whittier Peninsula to view wildlife as well as to watch the latest developments of the park and nature center. Meet at Lower Scioto Park in the boat ramp parking lot (west of Front Street and south of Whittier Street) For more information, contact Paul Gledhill at (614) 848-7666 or gledhillpaul@yahoo.com, or Heather Raymond at (614) 785-0342 or heather.raymond@epa.state.oh.us.

Spring Warblers at Whetstone Park

Monday May 7, 7:30 a.m.

Leaders: Donna Split, Gary and Lynn Wearsch

Join us for a morning walk through Whetstone Park in Clintonville, where we’ll explore a variety of beautiful bird habitats including the prairie, Adena Brook area and wooded ravines. This is for all levels – beginners are absolutely welcome. We hope to see indigo buntings, orioles, tanagers, gnatcatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers, various warblers and maybe even a nesting wood duck. Approximately 3 hours. Meet at the Park of Roses parking area. Directions: From High Street turn west on Whittier Street. Continue until you see the 161/Plain City/Post Road exit. Turn right at the light and then immediately left on Hyland Croy Road. The Honda Wetland Education Area is one mile north on the left (7825 Hyland Croy Road). Contact Donna Split at (614) 487-2742 or dsplit@highlights-corp.com.

Mother’s Day walk at Glacier Ridge

Sunday May 13, 2 p.m.

Leader: Mike Flynn

Join Mike Flynn for a Mother’s Day walk on the boardwalk to see what we can find. Take I-270 toward Dublin. Take 33/161 west to the 161/Plain City/Post Road exit. Turn right at the light and then immediately left on Hyland Croy Road. The Honda Wetland Education Area is one mile north on the left (7825 Hyland Croy Road). Contact Mike at (614) 882-9493 before Saturday evening at 7 pm.

Birding at Green Lawn Cemetery

Thursday May 17, 9 a.m.

Leader: Katryn Herrard

Join us as we search for warblers, scarlet tanagers, and other birds of interest at Green Lawn Cemetery. There are always “good islands” to hunt up a variety of migrants. Meet at the Prairie View Education Area one mile north on the left (7825 Hyland Croy Road). Contact Rob Thorn at (614) 471-3051 or rothorn@earthlink.net.

Important: Field trip times, dates and locations are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If you plan on going on a trip, please contact the trip leader 24 hours ahead of time to make sure the trip has not been changed, postponed or cancelled. Also, check the Columbus Audubon Web site at www.columbusaudubon.org for any changes or additions to the field trip listings.
May 15 special CA program
Costa Rica’s extraordinary birds
Featuring Costa Rican naturalist and master guide Paco Madrigal

Tuesday, May 15, 2007
7:00 p.m. social time, 7:30 p.m. presentation
The Museum of Biological Diversity on The Ohio State University main campus

NOTE: The May Program will be held at a special date and place. The normal monthly program will NOT be held in lieu of this special presentation.

Join us as Columbus Audubon welcomes Paco Madrigal, master bird guide from Costa Rica, to the United States for a special slide show exploration of Costa Rica’s extraordinary birds. We will journey through many of the incredibly diverse and rich habitats found in his West Virginia-sized country including tropical dry forests, wetlands and coastal habitats, Pacific and Caribbean tropical rain forests ranging from low to middle elevations, and tropical cloud forests of the misty highlands. Tinamous, trogons, parrots, manakins, owls, raptors, and a variety of jeweled hummingbirds are among the many groups of birds that will be covered in the presentation. There will be time for questions and answers at the end. The Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity is located at 1315 Kinnear Road.

You are also invited to a special open house with Paco on Wednesday, May 16, 2007 from 7-9 p.m. at Wild Birds Unlimited, 5400 Riverside Drive, Columbus (just north of Hayden Run Road). Please call (614) 766-2103 for more information.

-Courtesy of Joe Hammond

Scarlet Macaw.

South Side Settlement’s Bird Festival slated for May 9

Wednesday May 9, from 5:30-7 p.m., at 310 Innis Ave.

The students of South Side Settlement’s after school program have learned a lot this year about birds and conservation and are eager to share their experiences with the community. Displays about backyard birds, fun bird activities, food, live animal programs, conservation reading and learning more about the Grange Insurance Audubon Center are some of the activities planned for the event. For more information contact South Side Settlement at: (614) 444-9868 or Susan Setterlin at (614) 457-8130.

Ohio Lepidopterists announce programs

Butterfly Observer’s Group
The Butterfly Observer’s Group (BOG) now meets at the Upper Arlington Library, 2800 Tremont Road, in Upper Arlington. The monthly meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month in the lower level of the library. Meeting time is 7 - 8:30 p.m. every month. Beginners and experienced observers are welcome.

May 1, June 5 and July 3 – Program “What’s Flying”
May 6 – Joint fieldtrip with the Black Swamp Observatory to Northern Ohio to Kitty Todd and other Oak Opening locations in search of the Frosted Elfin butterfly as well as other early fliers.
May 12 and June 9 – Regular Fieldtrip

The group has regular fieldtrips throughout the spring and summer on the second Saturday of each month. There are several “special” fieldtrips planned this year, so be sure to check the Ohio Lepidopterists website calendar for additional information. The calendar can be found under the “about” section then click on “calendar of events” then by double clicking on the particular day provides additional information along with fieldtrip location, meeting times etc. The Web site is www.ohiolepidopterists.org.
Ohio Wildlife Center prepares for busy warm weather season

It happens every spring, warm weather heats up human activity making young, unskilled wildlife more susceptible to accidents and incidents. Wild animals are displaced by development and injured by domestic animals, toxins, cars, lawn mowers and inadvertently abused by humans. Baby wild animals and birds become orphaned, left hungry and vulnerable when sometimes their parents are killed. In these cases, wild animals need human intervention in order to survive. The Ohio Wildlife Center, a non-profit organization, is our area’s only agency whose mission is to care for and rehabilitate such animals with the goal of releasing them back into their natural habitat.

Founded 22 years ago by Dr. Donald Burton, local veterinarian and nationally respected wildlife rehabilitation expert, OWC cared for nearly 6000 animals who were injured, diseased or orphaned in 2006. Injured animals are treated at OWC’s veterinary clinic at 2661 Billingsley Road in northwest Columbus. Their 24-hour wildlife crisis hotline is (614) 793-WILD. Successfully rehabilitated animals are then released back into the wild upon a successful recovery. When wildlife issues and questions arise in your community please think of Ohio Wildlife Center as the “go to” agency to contact for help. Such issues might develop in many ways – injured or at risk animals, homeowners with unwanted wild visitors in their dwellings and animals not acting quite right might be injured or could be suspected of some type of illness. Visit www.ohiowildlifecenter.org for more information that will further explain both the mission and the kinds of services provided. The Cook Road location in southern Delaware County near Shawnee Hills houses OWC’s education animals and offers educational programs by appointment. Visit the OWC Web site to learn more about day camp offerings and opportunities.

Another successful trip to Jasper-Pulaski

By Michael Packer

Fall trip planned to Hawk Mountain Pennsylvania

First off, Columbus Audubon has some of the nicest and funniest birders around. The group dinner at Indian Head Restaurant was a lively social feast on a Saint Patrick’s Day weekend. We went around the long table introducing ourselves and the stories took off from there. But onto the birding report. Twenty people attended this fully-booked Sandhill Crane trip to Jasper-Pulaski Indiana. The sky was clear, the air very brisk, and 6000 cranes were there upon our arrival. The cranes did not put on a special show for us however. Only sparse dancing was observed. But their group behavior was quite splendid for those who have never seen them in these numbers. Observed at nearby Kankakee marsh was a Ross Goose, Snow Goose, hundreds of diving ducks and thousands migratory Canada Geese which are smaller than our local sub-species. A Golden Eagle was also seen.

Our next weekend trip will be in the fall to Hawk Mountain Pennsylvania. Last fall, Hawk Mountain counters recorded an astonishing 25,156 hawks, eagles and falcons - the largest number of migrants in two decades. Details of this trip will be in an upcoming “Song Sparrow” but contact Michael Packer (614) 498-1191 or Mike Flynn (614) 882-9493 now to reserve your spot.
“pests.” For instance, in evaluating the impact of an oil pipeline right-of-way in the Hocking Hills I’ve seen increased parasitism by cowbirds on cerulean warblers (the official emblem of the Ohio Ornithological Society), and the warblers are definitely declining in the area. On the Lake Erie Islands the commonest population increase is a threat to nestling herons, including the great egret (the official emblem of National Audubon). Livestock producers in Appalachia (southeastern Ohio included) complain of black vulture predation on lambs. Mute swans float gracefully around the Lake Erie marshes, muddying waters and aggressively driving away other waterfowl species. It seems that there are quite a few “pest” birds out there.

Then I heard a blue jay. According to “Birds of America” (1917, edited by T.G. Pearson, then-president of National Audubon) the blue jay “is a persistent and merciless nest robber. He eats the eggs and kills and devours the young of smaller and defenseless birds. Elloquent testimony concerning the commission of these crimes is furnished by the outcry set up by such birds ... we need not take the birds’ word alone for it, because he has been caught and convicted.” 

*See bad birds, page 8*

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**Conservation Corner**

**Good birds, bad birds**

By Dave Horn

With a few hours to go before the “Song Sparrow” deadline, I was removing my bird feeder so that the local gang of house sparrows had to go somewhere else for food. My house sparrow flocks of 20-30 birds seems to chase everything else from the feeder but is “chum” for an occasional cooper’s or sharp-shinned hawk.

Overhead flew a line of two dozen honking coopers or sharp-shinned hawk. Today many people think that Canada geese are pests. I thought of other avian species while seriously disrupting ecosystems, but they are not the pest. This plant has a somewhat tropical appearance and is among the most tolerant of pollution of all tree species. It has a relatively distinct form and is often found along fences or next to buildings in small strips of soil not covered with concrete or asphalt. Despite that Ailanthus seems to love growing in the difficult conditions found in cities, it is not a desirable landscape tree. It sheds lots of leaf stems that cover the street, creating problems for pedestrians and vehicles. Ailanthus produces allelopathic chemicals that are toxic to other plants.

A single tree, perhaps planted at an old homestead, will rapidly invade adjacent areas. It is not tolerant of shade, and typically invades open areas but can also invade partially open forests, where it may persist until a significant disturbance encourages rapid growth. The chief concern with Ailanthus is that it replaces native species, reducing biodiversity and altering the ecosystem. This species is not readily controlled by natural or prescribed forest fires. Once established, this plant is very difficult to control. Perhaps small seedlings can be pulled, but larger stems, if cut, will resprout and require repeated herbicide applications.

Unfortunately, invasive species are not going away. In fact, they have been getting worse every decade. The bulk of invasive species problems are policy and management issues. Each one of us can do our part by voicing support for policies and programs that seek to eliminate or minimize introductions of invasive species.

At home, we should learn to be aware of these species and do what we can to control their spread.

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**Invasive species: Ailanthus, Tree-of-heaven**

By Paul Knoop

There are many non-native plants growing in Ohio. Some grow fine in the landscape and have been imported from other states, such as the Colorado blue spruce. Others, like the dandelion, upset many homeowners but rarely cause much concern in undisturbed landscapes. There are some non-native species that become highly invasive and disrupt the balance of many ecosystems. One such species is Ailanthus, or “Tree-of-heaven.” This plant has a somewhat tropical appearance and is among the most tolerant of pollution of all tree species. It has a relatively distinct form and is often found along fences or next to buildings in small strips of soil not covered with concrete or asphalt. Despite that Ailanthus seems to love growing in the difficult conditions found in cities, it is not a desirable landscape tree. It sheds lots of leaf stems that cover the street, creating problems for pedestrians and vehicles. Ailanthus produces allelopathic chemicals that are toxic to other plants.

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**The Moth that wasn’t invasive**

An invasive species moves in, takes over, and thrives at the expense of native species while seriously disrupting ecosystems. Not all introduced species become invasive. The Ailanthus Silkmoth is an example. This large (5 inch wingspan) and attractive moth was introduced near Philadelphia in the 1860s in hopes of establishing a commercial silk industry in North America.

The moth spread up and down the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to Virginia, with outpacing populations as far west as Missouri. The caterpillar prefers to feed on the invasive Ailanthus tree but can feed on tree species too, so there is plenty of food around. Yet the moth has never spread far from urban areas and in recent decades has declined to the point of elimination in many places.

There are no existing populations in Ohio, although the moth was present in some Ohio cities in the early 20th century. In the East I have never seen a population away from junkyards, abandoned houses, or railroad rights-of-way. Maybe there are fewer predators in such places. It would be helpful to know why this moth wasn’t invasive, but so far we don’t have a good answer.

- Dave Horn
Bad birds

Red-handed by man, more than once, in the very perpetration of these villains.” That’s a viewpoint from 90 years ago. On the other hand, some of my birding friends from Europe have told me that the birds would most like to see is the blue jay! One Hungarian birder has told me that the blue jay is “the most beautiful bird in the world. You are so lucky to have them in America.”

Our attitudes toward birds depend on our perspective. Most of our conflicts with birds result from our own activities, changing their environment. The birds are simply responding to what we give them. Our perceptions vary as to what is acceptable and what is not. Your Conservation Committee is modifying our stance on corrormant management, developing a statement about nuisance vultures, and continues to strive for a balanced viewpoint when conflicts arise between Audubon members and birds.

The challenges will go on: Several years ago, ranchers in central Texas became convinced that money could be made from raising emus (the second-largest living bird after the ostrich). Roadside signs sprouted throughout the region: “Emus: Big Birds Big Bucks.” Well, money can be made from ostriches, and emus, but emus aren’t as profitable as ostriches, and some of the emu ranchers got tired on slow profits and simply let their birds loose. Emus are now multiplying on the Texas plains. Is this good or bad? We’ll keep you posted.

Columbus Audubon KIDS!
The Spring newsletter has hit the streets! Contact Nadya Bennett, CA Kids Committee Chair to get your child’s issue mailed to them and to sign up for our CA Kids monthly programs. You can contact Nadya at nadnya2003@msn.com or (614) 306-8215.
Avid Birders group travels to Colorado
By Randel Rogers

Eight Columbus Audubon Avid Birders braved high altitude and the mountain weather in search of Colorado specialties from April 2-8 and were rewarded with a beautiful trip.

Starting in the Denver area, our first significant birds were at the Genesee Mountain Park, where we enjoyed excellent looks at Williamson sapuckers, red crossbills, and other western species.

The excitement really shifted to high gear at Loveland Pass, where we watched 10-12 white-tailed ptarmigans, one of our main targets. Later that day we found our first stunning mountain bluebirds and also had great looks at several long-billed curlews.

Our next target was a bit of a disappointment, as we found that the Colorado population of lesser prairie chickens had suffered a cold winter and was only present in token numbers. A long morning at the Campo Lek produced only a fleeting chicken-shaped silhouette and a few calls.

The next day in Gunnison was much more satisfying, and the Gunnison sage grouse put on an impressive performance. Equally exciting was our stop in the Gunnison sage grouse put on an impressive performance. Equally exciting was our stop in Crested Butte. As we drove up to the home where rosy finches had been reported there was no need to look for street numbers, only for the trees dripping with the birds! A flock of about 250 rosy finches of all three varieties gave us ample opportunities for viewing, and when a pair of evening grosbeaks joined them at the feeders we were all smiles. We also found Clark’s nutcracker outside of town.

A visit to the breathtaking Black Canyon of the Gunnison and drive around Grand Mesa produced numerous trip birds, including a pine grosbeak that posed for several up close pictures and a small group of brilliant cinnamon teal.

The following morning the Road 80 Leks were incredible, as several greater sage grouse contested over hens, dodged a raptor. Our final morning we found our first stunning mountain bluebirds and also had great looks at several long-billed curlews.

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John James Audubon was a naturalist and artist who traveled in the United States in the 1800s painting birds and other animals in the wilderness. His work and his name became famous. Even the newspaper you’re reading was named for him! Audubon was born in Haiti in 1785 and spent his childhood in France. He came to the United States when he was 18. He did not speak English when he arrived, but he soon learned the language and, in 1812, became a U.S. citizen. Audubon was born in another country, but he became a very important person for all Americans. Today, parks, streets, and buildings are named in honor of him. What did he do to earn such respect? Audubon had been fascinated by nature and wildlife—especially by birds—even as a young boy in France. He combined his love of nature with his skill at drawing and painting from a very early age. In America, he quickly fell in love with the vast and beautiful wild places he saw all around. In the early 1800s, when the United States was still a young country, Audubon carried his paints and his gun into unexplored forests. He waded into swamps and drifted in small boats down its rivers. He became a skilful woodsman and an expert rifleman. He faced many dangers in the woods. But when he arrived in frontier settlements, Audubon was often the life of the party. He was a good dancer and musician. He was even a clever magician! Devoted to exploring and painting, Audubon struggled to earn money to support his family. His wife, Lucy, worked as a schoolteacher. John James earned money selling portraits and giving music, fencing, and art lessons. Wherever he went, Audubon looked for birds. Some of them were unknown to scientists. He painted North America’s birds where he found them in the forests and fields, along the banks of rivers, and sometimes far out at sea. Audubon believed birds were so exciting that he wanted to paint them as big as life. The book in which he showed North America’s birds to the world had to be big, too. Audubon insisted on using the biggest paper available. The sheets measured a little more than three feet by two feet, and were called “double elephant sheets.” When it was published, Audubon’s book, The Birds of America, was a great success. It had life-size paintings of 497 species of birds. Today, copies of it are owned by many large museums. If you wanted to buy a copy, it would cost you more than a million dollars.

The National Audubon Society was founded in 1905 to protect birds and our natural environment. It took its name from the artist, naturalist, and explorer who made it his life’s work to show the beauty of birds and the natural world.

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Bluebird nestbox and feeding tips

Continued from page 1

will be able to see them flying to the nestbox with food and leaving with a whitish facet sac in their beaks. This is a good sign of a growing family! The parents can feed the young 30 to 50 times a day. Offering mealworms can help the adults and later the young and can be a fun thing to do in your yard.

As the young grow older, be careful to keep good notes and do not open the nestbox after the young are 12 days old. Opening the nestbox after the 12th day can cause the young to prematurely fledge or leave the box too early and lessen their chance to survive. As it is, only 50-percent make it to their first birthday. The young fledge or leave the nestbox between 18-22 days of age. The adults, primarily the male, will carefully watch over the young after fledging and will teach them to fly and hunt for their own food. About 2.5 weeks after fledging the young will begin to hunt on their own. Soon the female will start another nest preparing to raise another family.

Life is not always so easy for bluebirds and some of the other cavity nesting species. Pick up the most widely read book by Julie Zickefoose “Enjoying Bluebirds More.” Visit the Web sites of Bird Watchers Digest, Cornell and their Birdhouse Network site and the North American Bluebird Society to obtain more useful information.

Some of the other species to move into a nestbox (depending on the habitat) are Tree Swallows, a neo-tropical migrant and delightful aerial insect eater who prefer to be somewhat close to water. They line their dried grass nests with curved feathers and it is fun in the spring to toss the curved duck or chicken feathers near water where the birds are swooping to feed. They will take these feathers, fly about doing their work, and we will be able to see the birds nesting in the box with these feathers. It is a delightful aerial insect eater who prefers to build its nest near water.

House Wrens are also neo-tropical migrants and are called the boss-of-the-brush land and eat insects while they scold us from the shrub and brush habitats they prefer. While they are delightful little sprite songsters, they are territorial in nature and they check out any cavity near their shrub habitat and sometimes at the mercy of evicting other bird species. Their willingness to nest close to people in small gourds or small wren boxes up close to our windows make them a popular bird to attract and enjoy.
Bluebird tips

Chickadees and titmice, year round residents and cousins, prefer a woods or wood edge to build a nest. The nest of the chickadee is a large moss nest and the titmice are a mixture of moss and dried leaves and grass. Both species can hiss at you when you monitor their nests.

This is just a sampling of some of our backyard favorites. Keep in mind these birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Act. Providing food, water, cover and housing is a rewarding experience for the whole family. You will learn together, feel like you are really lending a hand to who ever moves in to your backyard housing then share your experiences with others. It is very important to eliminate the use of pesticides and to try to garden with native plants for the benefit of the well being of your guests.

Birding is the number two hobby in the country second only to gardening.

Keep a field guide handy, binoculars, journal and good resources to help you. The rewards are endless and your contributions to conservation important. Spread the word to your friends and neighbors so they can join in on the fun. The sharing of family time is priceless.

Henry David Thoreau said, “If the warble of the first bluebird does not thrill you, know that the morning and spring of your life are past…His soft warble melts in the ear as the snow is melting in the valley’s around. He wears the sky on his back.” Maybe Mr. Bluebird will Zippy Doo Dah just for you!!

Good luck.

Coming up

Continued from page 4

birds” there and you never know what we’ll find. We’ll meet at “The Pit”. Take I-71 south to the Grecelawn exit. Head west on Greenlawn and enter the cemetery after about a third of a mile. Continue straight as follow the red line. When the mausoleum comes into view, the red line will curve to the left. Follow it through a few small intersections and the Pit, or the pond, will be on your right, although it will be hard to see with the vegetation around it. Park on the road (not on the grass) anywhere around the pond and meet at the north end of the pond.

Glacier Ridge evening stroll
Tuesday May 22, 7 p.m.
Leaders: Tom and Donna Sheley
Meet at the Honda Wetland entrance. Join Tom and Donna Sheley on an evening meander in search of late migrants and nesting residents to this wonderful Metro Park wetland in NW Columbus. Contact Tom at (614) 766-2103 prior to 5 p.m. on May 22 if you have questions.

Whittier/Berliner parks and Green Lawn Cemetery
Sunday May 27, 8 a.m.
Leader: Rob Thorn
If you can’t get up to Erie or don’t have the full day for birds, make a morning of it with us at one of Columbus’ most diverse birding areas, as well as its future urban nature park. Migration should be just past its peak, and we’ll especially be on watch for an array of late warblers, flycatchers, tanagers, and grosbeaks as we hope for a good fallout. What we don’t find along the bike path, we’ll try to find at the nearby Green Lawn cemetery later in the morning. This is a great time for rarities. Meet at the South Scioto boat launch (off Whittier Street west of Front St.), Park along Whittier across from the Impound Lot entrance if the boat launch isn’t open. The trip should be over by 1 p.m. For more information, contact Rob Thorn at (614) 471-3051 or rthorn@earthlink.net.

Riverway-Kiwanis Park, Dublin
Sunday May 27, 8:45 a.m.
Leader: Tom Sheley
Meet at the Wild Birds Unlimited store parking lot at 5400 Riverside Drive to car pool. Join Tom Sheley for a morning walk at this 8.8-acre riverway park. We will be looking for some late migrants, the regal resident Prothonotary Warbler, wildflowers and there are always exciting finds in this Scioto River flyway.

Riverway-Kiwanis Park, Dublin continues
Thursday May 31, 8:45 a.m.
Leader: Mike Flynn and Darlene Sillick
Meet at the Wild Birds Unlimited store parking lot at 5400 Riverside Drive. Join Mike Flynn and Darlene Sillick for an evening walk at this 8.8 acre riverway park. We will be looking for some late migrants, the regal resident Prothonotary Warbler, wildflowers, bats and beavers. Contact Darlene at azuretrails@columbus.rr.com or after 5 p.m. at (614) 288-3696.

Wildlife walk at the Columbus Zoo
Saturday June 2, 8 a.m.
Leader: Barbara Revard
The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium will host a bird and nature hike around the Zoo property. We will explore woodlands, and the O’Shaughnessy Reservoir. Wear appropriate footwear as we will be hiking through the woods in an undeveloped area with no trails. Meet at the Zoo Business Office located at 5220 Powell Road. Contact Barbara Revard at (614) 645-3448 or Barbara.Revard@columbuszoo.org.

An evening at Pickerington Ponds
Sunday June 24, 6 p.m.
Leader: Mike Flynn
Experience the gathering of wildlife and their new family members as evening draws near. From I-70, take U.S. 33 east toward Lancaster about three miles. Take the Canal Winchester/State Route 674/Gender Road exit. Turn left onto Gender Road, go about 1 mile and turn right onto Wright Road. Go about 1 mile to Bowen Road and turn left. Glacier Knoll picnic and parking area is about 0.25 miles on left. Contact Mike at (614)-882-9493 before Saturday evening at 9 p.m.

Watch for more June trips

Avid Birders field trips
Go to http://www.columbusaudubon.org/avids/avids.html for more information.

May 2007 Work trip (rescheduled from April)
Call Sharon Treater at (614) 292-1395 for updates on this project.
Memberships

Memberships in Audubon and Columbus Audubon and gift memberships are available through Columbus Audubon.

Audubon Membership
Includes membership in the national organization and Columbus Audubon; includes 4 issues of Audubon magazine and 5 issues of the chapter newsletter, local activities, and when submitted with our chapter code helps fund our programs. Rates below are available to NEW subscribers.

- $20 - 1-year introductory rate
- $30 - 2-year introductory rate
- $15 - 1-year student/senior rate

Audubon Membership

Columbus Audubon Chapter Only Membership
Chapter only membership includes 5 issues of the chapter newsletter, local activities and helps fund our programs.

- $20 - 1-year new membership
- $20 - Renewal (currently $15 less than Audubon renewals)

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Clip this form and mail to Columbus Audubon, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 141350, Columbus, OH 43214

Please make checks payable to: Columbus Audubon. Thank you for your support!

Chapter code S57

To change your mailing address, call Joe Meara at 614-781-9602 or e-mail membership@columbusaudubon.org.