

-
- **OUR FIRST K-12 ART CONTEST UNVEILED: PAGE 2.**
 - **READY FOR THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT? PAGE 3.**
 - **WARM UP THIS WINTER WITH AMV PROGRAMS: CALENDAR, PAGES 4-6.**
-



Spirits soar Down Under

Not too many girls growing up in Hamilton, Ohio, dream of diving the Great Barrier Reef.

But Joey Flowers did, and her passion led to her open-water certification at age 16.

Thanks to Earth Expeditions and a summer scholarship from Audubon Miami Valley, Joey, now a teacher, made her dream come true.

That's Joey on the left, in a photo taken by Jennifer Risola.

Her trip's details and more photos are in the E-Extra supplement to this newsletter, available to online subscribers. It's free for members. Just contact Membership@amvohio.org.

audubon
MIAMI VALLEY



Winter 2011-2012
Volume 37

the quarterly newsletter of Audubon Miami Valley, in Ohio's Butler and Preble Counties

AMV NEWS

Hey, kids! Ready, set, draw! It's our first art contest!

Kindergarten through 12th grade students living in the Talawanda School District are invited to enter the first Audubon Miami Valley Contest.

This 2012 art event focuses on two themes: Birds of the Midwest and Endangered Bird Species.

Students can submit their work in one of three award categories:

- Realistic Rendering,
- Graphic Design, or
- Cartooning.

All submissions must interpret one of the themes. A work of art could depict either one or more Midwestern birds in their native habitat, or an endangered bird species.

The contest is open to all students, whether they are in public or private school or are taught at home.

Teachers, students and parents can find descriptions of the three award categories and requirements for all entries on the Audubon Miami Valley Web site: at amvboard.wordpress.com.

Deadline for submission of entries is Saturday, Feb. 18. Entries must be delivered to the Seminary Presbyterian Church (the white brick building) 104 E. Church Street in Oxford, on Friday Feb. 17 from 4 to 6 p.m. or on Saturday Feb. 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Each grade level will have separate judging and prizes.

All participants will have their work displayed in the Rotunda of Alumni Hall on the Miami University campus on Saturday March 3, noon-4 p.m.

On that day, all Excellence and Merit Award winners will be hon-

More AMV chapter news, Page 6

ored at a special awards ceremony in Room 1, Alumni Hall, at 2 p.m. During that ceremony, each winner will receive a ribbon and a special prize.

A live raptor presentation will follow the presentation of awards.

Both the awards ceremony and the art exhibit are free and open to the public.

If you have questions or need more information, or if you'd like to volunteer to help with this event, please call Janet Ziegler at 523.2411, or e-mail zieglejk@muohio.edu.

— Janet Ziegler,
AMV Board member-at-large



OUR VISION

We envision a world where humankind accepts the obligations of being part of nature, especially the obligation of stewardship. We seek to shape a culture in which the violation of nature is socially, politically, and morally unacceptable. In short, we seek a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.

OUR MISSION

Audubon Miami Valley works to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

The Audubon Miami Valley newsletter is published four times a year, as the seasons change.

Deadline for the spring 2012 issue is Feb. 1. Send contributions to Newsletter@amvohio.org or to Newsletter, P.O. Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056

- Judi Hetrick is editor.
- John Blocher is proofreader.
- Caitlin Stone designed the Meadowlark logo.



The newsletter is printed by Letterman Printing in Oxford on 100 percent recycled paper.

Visit us online at amvboard.wordpress.com/



Time to bundle up and count some birds

Saturday Dec. 17 is the date for Audubon Miami Valley's 112th Annual Christmas Bird Count. This dawn-to-dusk census of bird species covers 176 square miles around Oxford.

Counters will meet at 7 a.m. at Miami University's Ecology Research Center on Somerville Road. New participants are welcome to join groups led by experts covering portions of the count area.

First-timers do not pay the \$6 fee that covers data processing, publication, and the noontime hot lunch. Counters under the age of 18 do not pay the fee, either.

Hunting season includes this date, so participants should be cautious and wear bright orange hats or vests so they can be clearly distinguished from game animals.

Count areas include Springwood, Four Mile Creek, Bachelor Wildlife Preserve, Upper and Lower Indian Creek Valley, Rush Run, Hueston Woods State Park's Acton Lake and the Miami University Airport.

Lunch will follow the count. Participants are encouraged to bring food to share and their own table service.

At any time on the day of the count, reports from birdwatchers at their home feeders can be phoned to Leslye Sherman at 513.523.2458. Just leave a message with your count data on the answering machine.

Soon after the count, results will be available from Audubon Miami Valley's web site: amvboard.wordpress.com.

— Larry Sherman, CBC Coordinator

Summer Hog Island sojourn leaves board member 'pumped'

As an "early bird" registrant and scholarship recipient from our AMV chapter, I had the great fortune to spend a week on Hog Island, one of National Audubon's best kept secrets.

Imagine a week of good birding, gourmet food, lectures by leading authorities and informational workshops. Juxtapose this with the scenic beauty of a 330-acre protected island one-quarter mile off the coast of Bremen, Maine. How could anyone, especially a birder, resist?

The week included daily morning bird walks; a boat ride to see puffins; evening lectures on the history of John James Audubon, the organization, the island, the story of saving Maine's puffins; and numerous day sessions with National Audubon leaders including Steve Kress (Director of Hog Island and Bird Conservation Director of Project Puffin)

and David Yarnold (President of National Audubon).

Campers included state and local Audubon leaders as well as Frank Graham, current field editor for Audubon Magazine.

We ALL worked together, talked, and shared experiences in the place where Roger Tory Peterson, Scott Weidensaul, and Kenn Kaufman, among others, have worked, learned, and taught ornithology, environmental education, conservation and the need to preserve our natural world.

I came away "pumped" about National Audubon's evolving strategic plan to collaborate with local and state chapters to promote conservation and protection of habitat. I also networked with other "campers" and learned much about other state and local Audubon chapters, their programs, and projects.



Sarah Michael and David Yarnold

Hog Island is a special place to anyone who has ever attended a session. It celebrated its 75th season this summer, after a one-year hiatus during which time National Audubon united with Project Puffin to collaborate and recommit to fund programming on the island.

I encourage other AMV members to attend one of the many week-long summer camps there, or to visit for a day if you are in the area.

I thank AMV for sending me.

Registration opened for 2012 on Oct. 17. Look at www.maineaudubon.org for more information.

You will NOT be disappointed!

— Sarah Michael,
AMV Board Member at-large



CALENDAR

MONDAY DEC. 12 AMV public program

Eyes Along the River: A Journey through Time

Jim Williams, naturalist, educator

7:30 p.m., 2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

Join us for a story of the Ohio River. We will explore some of the natural and cultural history of the river from the late 1700s to the present. We will look at some of the changes in the flora, fauna and people, and how transportation changed the face of the river forever.

Jim Williams was born and raised in Greater Cincinnati. His ancestors came to Southwest Ohio in the late

1700s by flatboat.

He attended the University of Cincinnati, earning a bachelor's degree in education with a major in the biological sciences.

While teaching high school in Cincinnati, he earned a Master of Arts in Teaching at Miami University.



Jim Williams

SATURDAY DEC. 17

112th Annual Christmas Bird Count

7 a.m., MU Ecology Research Center,
Somerville Road,, Oxford, Ohio

Put on your long johns and carry in a lunch dish to get ready for this year's Christmas bird count.

This is the 112th time intrepid bird watchers have joined in the annual winter enumeration.

Last year we counted 9,438 individual birds and 65 species. What will be our totals this year? Count details on Page 3.

THURSDAY JAN. 19

The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World

Wade Davis, Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society

7:30 p.m., Hall Auditorium, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Tickets are free but must be obtained from the Miami box office in the Shriver Center.

Wade Davis has been described as a "rare combination of scientist, scholar, poet, and passionate defender of all of life's diversity."

An ethnographer, writer, photographer, and filmmaker, Davis holds degrees in anthropology, biology and ethnobotany, all from Harvard University.

Currently an Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society, his recent work has taken him from the Amazon to Tibet, from the Arctic to Africa, from Australia to Mongolia, and from Polynesia to New Guinea. He has lived for extended periods in indigenous communities, learning and recording complex rituals and customs, and peoples' uses of plants as food, medicine and psychotropic agents.

Davis is the author of 14 books, most recently "Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest," and "The Sacred Headwaters: The Fight to Save the Stikine, Skeena and Nass Rivers."



Wade Davis

His 2009 Massey Lectures in Canada were published as "The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World."

"The Wayfinders" celebrates the human imagination as expressed in cultures, from the Polynesian navigators who influenced life throughout the Pacific to the Amazon, where the People of the Anaconda are inspired by mythological ancestors who even today dictate how humans must live in the forest.

Those are only two of the many peoples whom Davis will introduce to the audience at his lecture.

He maintains a fire is burning over the Earth, taking with it plants and animals, ancient skills and visionary wisdom. At risk is a vast archive of knowledge and expertise — in fact, the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual expression of the full complexity and diversity of the human experience. Rediscovering an appreciation for the diversity of the human spirit expressed through culture is among the central challenges of our times.

This lecture at Hall Auditorium is sponsored by Miami University's Center for American and World Cultures. See the above note on obtaining free tickets.



CALENDAR



Last year, AMV President Gail Reynolds (among others) met a resident of the Wolf Creek Habitat near Brookville, Ind. That's where we will return for our Jan. 28 field trip. For more information on Wolf Creek, go to www.nighthowls7.com online. For more photos of last year's Wolf Creek field trip, see the E-Extra edition of this newsletter.

MONDAY FEB. 13 AMV public program

Birding the Ice Truckers Highway

Dave and Jill Russell,

Miami University and Mt. St. Joseph College

7:30 p.m., 2nd Floor Community Room,
Lebanon Citizens National Bank,
30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

The Dalton Highway runs from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Deadhorse Camp at Prudhoe Bay, more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle.

The road is a brutal dirt, gravel, semi-paved, frost-heaved, pot-holed highway that passes through boreal forest, over the Brooks Mountain Range, and across 100 miles of tundra on the North Slope.

Coveted North American species including Northern Wheatear, Gyrfalcon, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Spectacled Eider are encountered among the hordes of nesting shorebirds and waterfowl. This is also the only

place where those of us from the "outside" can witness the last North American great large-animal migration, that of the caribou.

Dave and Jill Russell teach at Miami University and Mt. St. Joseph College. They operate the Avian Education and Research Institute bird banding station at Hueston Woods State Park. Jill initiated the Queen City Bird Festival in 2007.

During the past several summers they have taught at the University of Alaska and they have initiated a research project on Boreal Owls.



Jill and Dave Russell

SATURDAY JAN. 28 **Wolf Creek Habitats** **and Rescue, Inc.**

Thanks to many requests for a return to Wolf Creek Habitat, we will go back on Jan. 28 to play with the wolves.



There is no charge to visit the facility near Brookville, Ind., but the cost to go in the pen with the wolves is \$20 a person. Don't wear fur or red coats if you want to go in the pens. It will be muddy, so wear clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Also, no dangle earrings or piercings.

Wolf Creek Habitat only allows pocket cameras on the property. This is not a field trip for children.

Meet on the southwest side of the old Oxford Walmart parking lot near McDonalds at 9:30 a.m. to car pool or caravan. We will stop for lunch on the way back to Oxford.



CALENDAR

MONDAY MARCH 12 AMV public program

Birds of the World: **Assessing the Status of Accessible Knowledge of World Birds**

Town Peterson,
Kansas University Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
7:30 p.m., 218 Pearson Hall, Miami University, Oxford

Town Peterson's research on the geography of biodiversity focuses on the ecology of species' distributions in space and in time.

His formal training began at Miami University, with a degree in Zoology. In his graduate studies at the University of Chicago he specialized in tropical ornithology, with a focus on systematics.

One component of his research looks at the taxonomy of birds and the phylogeny of clades. (A clade is a species and its descendants).

Tied to this is work with the basic geography of bird distributions and the composition of local avifaunas, based on detailed site inventories and scientific collections around the world, which he will discuss with us.

Peterson's work also has taken him into conservation biology and planning, invasive species biology, and disease transmission systems.

Peterson's 7:30 p.m. talk will be in 218 Pearson Hall, Miami University, Oxford.

Audubon Miami Valley meets the second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. All meetings are free and open to all.

We usually meet in the 2nd Floor Community Room of Lebanon Citizens National Bank, in uptown Oxford, Ohio. This newsletter will note when any meeting, such as this one with Town Peterson, is moved to a larger venue.

SATURDAY FEB. 25 **Spring Grove Cemetery**

Leader: Dick Munson



Join us for a brisk and inspiring hike through a truly beautiful place. Spring Grove Cemetery is one of the premier arboretum cemeteries in the United States.

It contains the final resting place of many local and national luminaries, such as Proctor and Gamble, and Civil War General Joseph Hooker (famous for his propensity to associate with prostitutes, who were known as "Hooker's Girls," later shortened to "Hookers").

Spring Grove contains numerous examples of some of the largest and rarest trees in North America and is a great birding site. A winter hike allows us to see many trees without leaves, revealing their shapes, bark and branching habit.

Dress warmly and wear good boots for warmth and traction. The hike will involve some hills.

Meet on the southwest side of the old Oxford Walmart parking lot at 8 a.m. to car pool or caravan.

AMV NEWS

Raffle winner (and birds) say thanks

I was the lucky recipient of the bird feeder from the Audubon Bird Seed Sale raffle, and I just want to thank you all.

It turns out that the feeder is particularly attractive to the Tufted Titmouse, Nuthatch and especially Chickadee.

So on their behalf, thanks again.

— Tally Harwood

Bird Festival seeks volunteers

Planning is well under way for the Sixth Annual Queen City Bird Festival, scheduled for May 12 at the Hueston Woods State Park Nature Center.

This all-day, free festival introduces the "young and young at heart" to birds and birding.

Anyone interested in volunteering to help organize or to work a shift at, please contact Sarah Michael at 513.523.3129 or sk65michael@gmail.com.

Your help will be greatly appreciated!



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our conservation plan begins with area IBAs

Birds lead us to our work in the critical habitats across the Flyways of the Americas — from our majestic coasts, rivers, and marine areas to our precious grasslands and forests.

— David Yarnold, National Audubon Society President

Using what 10 billion migrating birds already know, the strategic planning team of the National Audubon Society (NAS) identified the major North American flyways as the focus for their conservation goals. A variety of rich habitats make up the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central and Pacific flyways, providing migratory rest stops, breeding or wintering areas, as well as homes for non-migrating birds.

Scattered along the flyways are 2,500 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), part of a global system that identifies areas of biodiversity critical to one or more bird species' survival. IBAs may be a few acres or thousands, private or public land, protected or not. Local conservation efforts are needed to protect these areas.

Audubon Miami Valley's "strategic planning team" (board members) were encouraged in a recent workshop to prioritize and define achievable conservation goals as our part in the NAS network. We began by looking at our three local IBAs: Voice of America Park in West Chester, Gilmore Ponds Interpretive Preserve in Hamilton, and Hueston Woods State Park.

While AMV provides financial support to bird banding stations at Gilmore Ponds and Hueston Woods, we have thought the chapter should be doing more to protect our local IBAs. We just weren't sure what that would be, or if we had manpower to do it.

We are now in the beginning stages of developing a long-term conservation plan: identifying threats to biodiversity, gathering baseline data, monitoring and restoring habitat through volunteer efforts in one of our IBAs. To be successful, we will need to build partnerships of landowners, agencies, and others that use the land for recreation, hunting, hiking, biking, etc.

The good news is that our chapter's activities already include important aspects of a conservation plan:

- Programs, field trips, Earth Clubs, and the Queen City Bird Festival all contribute to raising awareness and appreciation of birds and our local natural areas.



- Fund-raising efforts — our bird seed sale, native plant sale, and annual giving campaign (going on now) — make these activities possible.

- Citizen science participation in the Christmas Bird Count (Dec. 17) and the Great Backyard Bird Count (Feb. 17-20) provide monitoring data. Audubon and other conservation organizations were alerted to startling population declines in 20 of our most common birds on the basis of this historical data.

We will keep members informed as we refine our conservation plan. In the meantime, please know that your financial support and participation in all chapter activities directly impact conservation efforts. Thank you.

Raise your voice for the birds!

— Gail Reynolds, AMV President



the newsletter of
Audubon Miami Valley
Volume 37, Winter 2011 2012 issue
P.O. Box 556, Oxford OH 45056

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Butler and Preble Counties of Ohio

**“There can be no greater
issue than that of
conservation in this country.”**
— Theodore Roosevelt

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