

audubon

MIAMI VALLEY



Fall 2015
Volume 41

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

**A trip to Egg
Rock to see
Puffins is a
highlight
of a week at
Hog Island.**

Photo by
Brenda Hente



Hog Island learning inspires Hefner educator

Hog Island, Maine, has inspired people for generations. Happily, I've now joined their ranks!

As a Rosie Bloom scholar, in June 2015 I attended Hands-On Bird Science, an Audubon program geared specifically toward museum professionals. It was a natural fit, since I work at Miami University's Hefner Museum of Natural History.

I'm a novice birder, at best. However, I'm an enthusiastic outdoors-person and an avid learner, and I looked forward to the camp with great anticipation.

As a specialist in early childhood environmental education, and as the supervisor for the museum's many undergraduate volunteers, I interact with young people — ages 3 to 23 — daily.

By attending the camp, I hoped to absorb as much knowledge as possible and develop as many skills as I could so that I might bring my newly found expertise to my work at the museum. And, with any luck, I secretly hoped to see a double-crested cormorant in the wild, the first specimen I ever cleaned at the Hefner!

The journey to Hog Island was an experience in itself for this land-locked Indiana girl. I traveled by plane, van, and pontoon boat to reach Hog Island, where I met my roommate, and we settled into our digs in a refurbished

building called the Queen Mary.

Before I'd even unpacked, we had our first seminar, learning about the decades-long effort to reintroduce puffins to Hog Island. This iconic bird was extirpated from the area in the late 1880s, a victim of unregulated hunting.

Each day followed roughly the same schedule: A rise-and-shine hike at 5 a.m., a morning boat ride to explore nearby sanctuaries, educational sessions in both the morning and the afternoon, and an evening seminar.

Under the expert tutelage of the camp's staff, I learned how to prepare study skins, make nature sound recordings, band birds, and use migratory tracking technology. I learned about a veritable flock of amazing birds, from the tiny ruby-throated hummingbird to the majestic snowy owl.

An all-star cast of instructors and lecturers included Tom Johnson, field guide; Brad Walker of Cornell University; ornithologist and author Scott Weidensaul; Angelika Nelson, Curator at Borror Lab of Bioacoustics at the Ohio State University; Fred Dietrich, tracker of migratory hummingbirds; Sandy Lockerman, bird bander; and Steve Kress of Project Puffin and the Seabird Restoration Program.

(Continued on page 2)

Hog Island learning inspires Hefner educator

(Continued from page 1)

The week's highlight? Topping a long list was our adventure to Eastern Egg Rock to see the puffins.

The previous day's balmy weather had given way to cold winds and pouring rain. Waves splashed over the sides of our boat as the temperature plummeted to the 40s. We downed our Dramamine and donned our rain suits, wool hats (yes, wool), and gloves. Our boat captain encouraged us to embrace the weather, and we did.

It was the most extraordinary experience to see the puffins flying overhead and diving into the water. Their brilliant colors easily overcame the weather. I also spied many cormorants flapping their gangly wings -- a treasured memory.

I departed Hog Island on the Friday of that memorable June week. Truth is, a part of me is still there. Truer still, I took much of Hog Island with me when I left.

I continue corresponding with several of the staff, seeking their tips and suggestions.

I'm incorporating many of the week's recommendations and activities into projects our volunteers will tackle this fall.



Camp instructor takes measurements before banding.

Photo by Julie Robinson

And I'm weaving information from the seminars into new inquiry lessons for visiting school groups. Thank you for making such an incredible experience possible!

For a complete retelling of my Hog Island adventure, please visit www.miamioh.edu/hefnermuseum

– **Julie Robinson**



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 several times a year and includes program and field trip information.

Deadline for the winter 2015-16 issue is November 1. Send contributions to jhetrick@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.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

How Hueston Woods got its Important Bird Area

The Important Bird Area concept is simple — in order to save habitat for birds, we must first understand where the birds are, compile an inventory of priority areas that need to be saved to sustain healthy and diverse bird populations, and then focus on saving them.

In 1995 the National Audubon Society adopted the Important Bird Area program of Bird Life International and applied it to the United States. This program has been responsible for safeguarding hundreds of sites and thousands of acres around the world.

Key to the success of the program is the involvement of ordinary citizens in the science and advocacy of bird conservation.

The following article was submitted by Casey Tucker, director and founder of American Avian Conservation and Research Institute. Tucker earned his undergraduate and master's degrees in Zoology at Miami University.

— Mickey Simonds

Audubon Miami Valley has been attending to the Hueston Woods Important Bird Area (IBA) for decades.

Today, thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, efforts are under way to remove invasive plant species that have been shown to be detrimental to nesting birds.

Regular bird monitoring and bird-banding track the movements and habitat use of migratory songbirds.

Improvements have been made to make birding and education more accessible, including a bird blind near the marsh.

However, Hueston Woods hasn't always been an Audubon Important Bird Area. To receive that status someone had to file a nomination form to illustrate that it was indeed an area important for birds. That nomination was supported by scientific data about the presence of breeding and migratory birds in the state park and natural area. How many of us remember who helped gather that data and file the nomination form?

Dr. David "Doc" Osborne was an ornithology professor with Miami University's Zoology Department. Doc and his students used Hueston Woods as an important habitat where they could study and record the birds of the lake and its old-growth beech-maple forest.

Many future ornithologists got their first field experiences gathering bird data, under Doc's supervision, in Hueston Wood's "Big Woods."

Quite a few of Doc's students have gone on to become successful ornithologists in their own right, studying parrot conservation, bird habitat and land use patterns in Latin America, the mating behaviors of Greater Prairie Chickens, and have even become leaders of the National Audubon Society.

However, it was their student data that helped establish Hueston Woods as an IBA, providing greater protection status to this unique Ohio habitat. Without Doc and his students, Hueston Woods would not be the unique IBA gem that it is today.

You have an opportunity to recognize Dr. Osborne and the conservation and education work that he has done, while also supporting emerging young ornithologists who will carry on bird conservation research into the future.

You can do so by making a contribution to the Dr. David R. Osborne Ornithology Award, a fund managed by the Oxford Community Foundation.

The Osborne Ornithology Award is given each fall to a deserving student (undergraduate or graduate) for an exceptional research presentation given at the Ohio Avian Research Conference. Last year's recipient, Sarah Winnicki of Denison University, presented her work titled "Aggregation of Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) territories: a test of the extra pair mating and cooperative care hypotheses."

Today Osborne is enjoying the retired life, but he continues to help generate valuable data through the annual Audubon Miami Valley Christmas Bird Count.

Contribute to the Dr. David R. Osborne Ornithology Award at the Oxford Community Foundation, and say thank you for his efforts as a conservationist, helping designate Hueston Woods as an Audubon IBA, and his efforts as an ornithology teacher who influenced the lives of many students over the years.

For more information contact the Oxford Community Foundation (513-523-0623) www.oxfordfdn.org.

— Casey Tucker



SEPTEMBER 2015 CALENDAR

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 14

A Bird's Eye View of Climate Change

Marnie Urso, National Audubon Society Senior Program Manager

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

Scientists at the National Audubon Society (NAS) recently completed the Audubon Birds and Climate Report, a comprehensive, first-of-its kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds.

The research shows that 314 species of birds will lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080 if global warming continues at its current pace.

Join us as Marnie Urso, Senior Program Manager at NAS, discusses the results of this study and the steps

being taken to protect our nation's birds.

Urso has been working to advance environmental public policy initiative in both Washington, D.C., and in Ohio for the past 17 years.

She has a degree from Slippery Rock University in Environmental Science and has worked for NAS for 10 years.

Her focus has been state and federal Great Lakes restoration and climate change policy. Currently, she is a senior manager and directs Audubon's Climate Initiative in Ohio.



Marnie Urso

She lives in Cleveland and enjoys birding along the shore of Lake Erie with her two children.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20 Rush Run Wildlife Area



Horticulturalist Dick Munson will lead us on a visit to the hilly terrain of the Rush Run Wildlife Area, located in southern Preble County near the village of Somerville.

Half of this 1,174-acre preserve is in woods, mostly on the hillsides of Rush Run Creek Valley. The rest includes meadows, cropland, and fields that are reverting to woodland. A map is at

wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/Portals/wildlife/Maps/Wildlife%20Area%20Maps/PDFs/rushrun.pdf.

Rush Run Creek is an intermittent stream, named for

its rapid water flow. In a four-mile stretch it descends 300 feet. The lake, covering 58 acres, was constructed in 1970

Large numbers of waterfowl and songbirds migrate through in spring and fall, many bird species nest there, and hawks stop over during fall migration. Rush Run is also an excellent place to hunt fossils. The trip will leave at 8 a.m. from the TJ Maxx parking lot (on Locust Street across from McDonald's) and return to Oxford in the afternoon.

Pack a lunch and bring binoculars if possible.

Audubon Miami Valley Chapter meetings during the school year are at 7:30 p.m. the second Mondays in the 2nd floor Community Room, LCNB building, 30 Park Place West in uptown Oxford. (We note when the location changes.) All meetings are open to the public.

For information about Audubon Miami Valley field trips, including meeting at the trip site or information on last-minute changes, contact trip coordinator Jim Michael at jmichael@amvohio.org.



October 23-24: Bird seed sale at the Whistle Stop

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MONDAY OCTOBER 12

MetroParks of Butler County:

Past, Present & Future

Jason Shamblin, Deputy Director, MetroParks Butler County

7:30 p.m., 2nd Floor Community Room,

Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West, Oxford, Ohio

Jason Shamblin of MetroParks of Butler County will provide an overview of the agency's roles in land management and conservation.

He will discuss the status of the parks' progress since receiving their first consistent funding from the 2010 tax levy. He also will address its organizational philosophy of leveraging resources through collaborations, sponsorships, donations and grants, along with the resulting capital projects successes.

Shamblin joined the MetroParks team in September 2012 as the deputy director. Prior to his arrival in Butler County he was the director of parks and recreation for Reynoldsburg, Ohio. He also has worked for Grove City and Gahanna.



Jason Shamblin and children

He started his career with the YMCA in Akron. He is an alumnus of Ohio University and Hocking College.

Jason and his wife, Allison, have three children, ages 6, 4 and 3.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7

Twin Creek Metropark



At 1,000 acres, Twin Creek is one of Five Rivers MetroParks' most expansive and untouched parks.

This outstanding natural area contains steep, wooded ravines, mature, second-growth and floodplain forest, several managed grasslands, a scenic pond, a hilltop vista, and the beautiful Twin Creek.

Natural succession and ideal habitat provide excellent opportunities to observe both plants and wildlife. In addition, the Metropark contains a 2000-year-old Hopewell Culture earthworks.

The park is connected by the

wooded Twin Creek Corridor to Germantown MetroPark, which we visited last year.

A map of the Twin Creek Metropark is at <http://www.metroparks.org/Parks/TwinCreek/Maps.aspx> <http://www.metroparks.org/Parks/Germantown/Home.aspx>.

Our visit to Twin Creek will be hosted by Lauren Asquith, education specialist with Metroparks.

The trip will leave at 7:30 a.m. from the TJ Maxx parking lot (on Locust Street across from McDonald's) and return to Oxford in the afternoon.



SUNDAY OCTOBER 18

Salamander Run

Salamander Run Preserve in Morgan Township is an excellent example of the superb conservation results that are possible through cooperative efforts.



In 2011, Three Valley Conservation Trust was selected by the Fernald Trustees to develop conservation easements on eligible lands in the Paddy's Run drainage. Ohio EPA is project manager with collaboration from U.S. Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Department of Energy.

The Preserve, which contains the headwaters of Paddy's Run Creek, consists of 125 acres, 93 of which are forested. Conservation efforts will protect the land from incompatible surface development, protect streams and buried aquifers from excessive surface runoff, and further mitigate damage associated with the Fernald processing facility.

Butler MetroParks has also partnered in the project and is expected soon to take ownership and management of Salamander Run.

Leaders for this outing will be Steve Gordon and Eric Hollins, Three Valley contractors who have spearheaded the preservation and enhancement of the property.

We will have an informative tour and opportunities to view the Preserve's diverse flora and fauna. Our guides will also be able to show the progress of site restoration, including 21 acres of newly established prairie.

The trip will leave at 8 a.m. from the TJ Maxx parking lot (on Locust Street across from McDonald's) and return to Oxford in the afternoon.

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2015 CALENDAR

MONDAY NOVEMBER 9

The Big Picture:

Pictures and Stories from the Field

Steve Gifford, Wildlife photographer

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

Steve Gifford says, "It's amazing to me as I look back how by closing one door so many new and exciting doors have been opened."

After a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease at the age of 35 brought Gifford's career in automotive engineering to a close, he had no idea how returning to his love for photography and the outdoors would lead to new and exciting opportunities.

Come and enjoy pictures and stories from the field as Gifford shares his passion for wildlife and our natu-



Steve Gifford

ral world.

Gifford is a native of Oxford, a graduate of Talawanda High School and Miami University, and is serving on the Board of Directors for Sycamore Land Trust.

His images have appeared in a variety of media including CNN, Birds&Blooms magazine and Outdoor Indiana, and are frequently used by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Indiana Department of Natural Resources and other groups to promote land conservation.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12

Brookville Lake Area

Dr. David Russell will again lead us on a birding tour of the Brookville Reservoir area between Liberty and Brookville, Indiana.



We'll visit a number of good spots around Brookville Lake and White-water State Park looking for migrating ducks, geese, gulls, terns, sandhill cranes and other species.

A map of the area can be found at www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/brookville_trail.pdf

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the west end of the Walmart parking lot (on U.S. 27 north of Oxford). Pack a lunch and bring binoculars if possible

Add to your calendar:

Sept. 26: Hike-a-Thon
October: Hefner Lecture TBA
Dec. 23: Christmas Bird Count

MONDAY DECEMBER 14

Belize It or Not: Birding the Mayan Ruins

Jim Michael, Audubon Miami Valley Board Member and Field Trip Coordinator

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

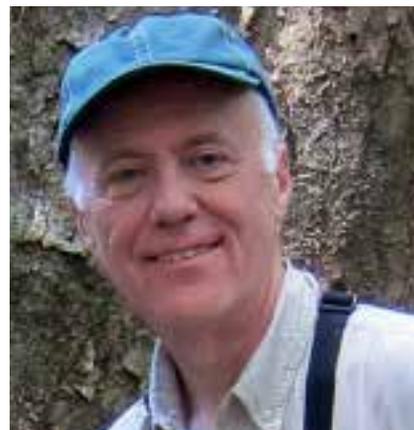
Jim Michael will make a presentation of a March 10-19, 2015, birding trip to Belize which included visits to rainforest, savannah, and riparian habitats as well as Mayan ruins.

A tiny country in northern Central America, Belize is home to over 560 species of birds and is also recognized as the center of the ancient Mayan world. We can anticipate a travelogue featuring both the avian and archaeological aspects of this

fascinating country.

A retired attorney, Jim spent most of his professional career at Millikin & Fitton Law Firm based in Hamilton, Ohio.

Jim has done volunteer work with Oxford Kiwanis, Planned Parenthood, Audubon Miami Valley, United Way, and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. He has also appeared occasionally in theatrical productions with Oxford Area Community Theater.



Jim Michael



Battle to save ash trees reaches 11th hour

The battle to save one of our region's important trees is at a critical crossroads: it must escalate with the help of an "Ash Tree SWAT Team," or we may miss an opportunity to preserve many old-growth trees.

Our work has centered in the 200+acre Hueston Woods State Nature Preserve old-growth beech-maple forest, a National Natural Landmark since 1967, and within an Audubon Important Bird Area. One estimate says 19 percent of its trees are white ash.

A year has passed since the Audubon Ash Tree Project began, allowing us to treat 50 "legacy" ash to try to save them from the fatal effects of Emerald Ash Borer infestation.

We've also found about 60 other candidates to be treated before fall.

But the number of trees healthy enough to be saved is dwindling. We are in the 11th hour of what researchers call the "exponential death phase" of ash mortality.

To preserve 100 or more trees there this season would be an enormous logistical undertaking, requiring immediate support from Oxford, Miami University, and area business.

Here's a thumbnail sketch of how the SWAT Team phase could work:

Volunteers with strong tree identification or GIS mapping skills get busy a.s.a.p. to locate and map the next 60-100 trees.

People trained in our chosen treatment would convene on "SWAT" weekend sometime late September or early October for this "barn-raising" style event.



Ash tree, dark sky

Photo by Chris Hawes on flickr, licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Our shopping and support wish list includes:

- 3-4 cases of insecticide at \$4,000 per case,
- lodging for out-of-town crew,
- restaurant meals and catering,
- communication assistance
- first-aid, weather and hygiene support.

Even should such an effort coalesce and preserve a hundred or more trees, please keep in mind that with what we currently know about emerald ash borer, these trees will have to be re-treated every 2-3 years. Maintenance funding and logistics must be sustained.

– Mark Gilmore

Mark Gilmore offers tours of Hueston Woods State Nature Preserve to anyone interested in viewing treatment progress. Contact him at 513-523-5595, or mgilmore@amvohio.org.

Audubon Miami Valley (a 501c3 non-profit organization) asks any donors or patrons to please consider financial support of AATP. Donations could be made to Audubon Miami Valley with notation "for AATP," sent to PO Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056.



the newsletter of
Audubon Miami Valley
Volume 41, Autumn 2015 issue
P.O. Box 556, Oxford OH 45056

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non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization in
Butler and Preble Counties of Ohio



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