

Winter 2015-2016
Volume 41

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

Beyond the headlamp: Costa Rica's night life

A night hike introduced me to Costa Rica's rainforest.

Donning my headlamp and gripping a flashlight, I traveled across a long, narrow suspension bridge (with a 15-person limit!) to enter the beauty of the rainforest.

That night was truly mesmerizing as I traveled through the pristine home of fauna and flora I had seen before only on television and in pictures. I saw snakes, spiders, and red-eyes tree frogs, all in their native environment.

But what really hypnotized me were leafcutter ants.

You need to know that I actually detest ants. But something happened as I watched these leafcutters travel in straight lines with a mission to make it back to their underground nests. I found them intriguing!

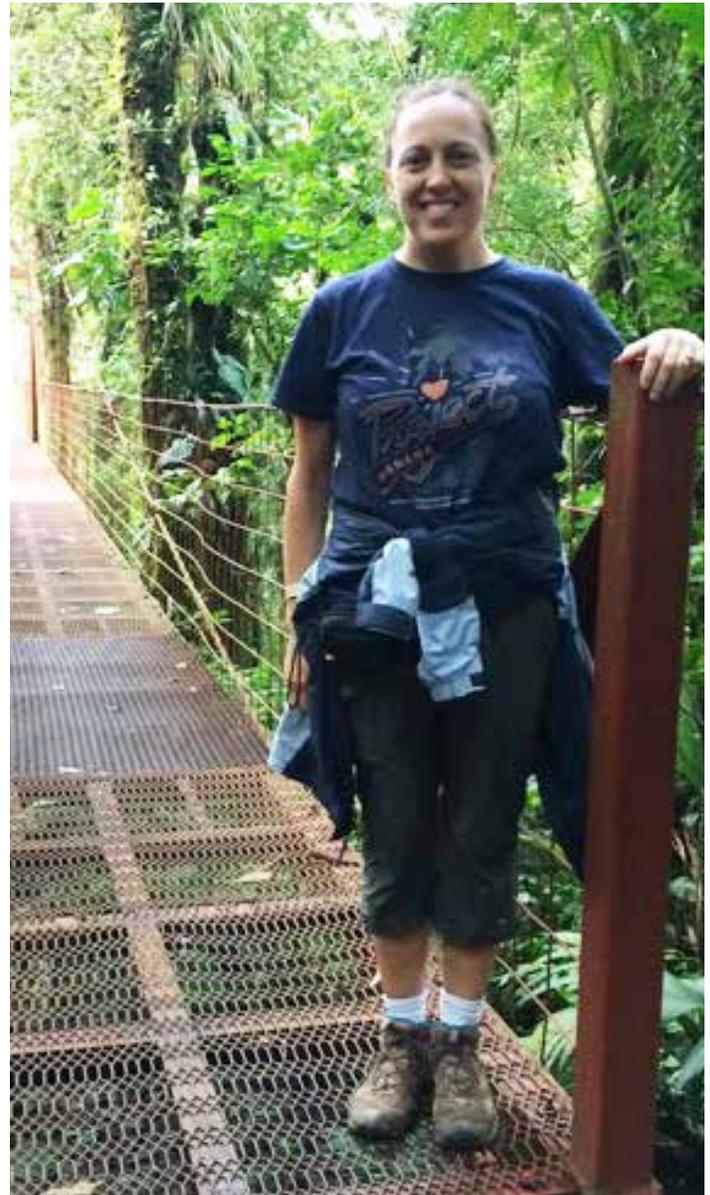
I have my biology students watch videos of leafcutter ants each year to study their symbiotic relationships. And here I was, seeing them in person. Not only did I watch them that first night, I even studied them during a later inquiry activity. I look forward to describing that experience to my students!

Other hikes allowed me the privilege of seeing howler monkeys, white-faced capuchin monkeys, green iguanas, emerald basilisks, poison dart frogs, bullet ants (yes, more ANTS!), peccaries, rhododendron, heliconia, coati-mundis, black-mandibled toucans, kapok trees, morpho butterflies, hummingbirds, bats of all species, American crocodiles -- and an active volcano.

The plants were so dense and varied (obviously, I was in the rainforest!) that I felt I could turn 360° and see nothing but green everywhere I went! It was exhilarating!

— **Gina Smearsoll,**

2015 AMV Earth Expedition Scholar and
science teacher and K-12 STEM Coordinator at Cin-
cinnati Christian Schools in Fairfield



Even more exhilarating than night hikes were Gina's zipline adventure. See her on the zipline and read about her experiences in the Winter 2015-16 E-Extra newsletter, available only to our e-mail subscribers. Contact Liz Woedl at lwoedl@amvohio.

AUDUBON NEWS

37th Bird Seed Sale is in the bag

On October 23 and 24, Audubon hosted the fundraiser bird seed sale at the Whistle Stop Drive Thru. Kelly Hansel and staff have been our wonderful host for many years.

New this year, we gave away photographs of native birds that were donated by Bob Scholl. They seemed to be a big hit with our customers.

Thanks to all our helpers this year. They were Neil Poppendeck, Dale Layton, Rick Momeyer, Ken Grabach.

Thank you to all our loyal patrons. The birds will have a good winter at your houses.

— **Marlene Hoffman, special project chair**

Speak up for Climate Action

Audubon is asking world leaders at the current United Nations climate negotiations in Paris to take decisive action on climate change. The meeting is a crucial opportunity for an international agreement to rein in climate change, which threatens 314 species of North American birds.

Please add your voice to the One Voice, One World petition. (Just search for the secure site with “One voice one world.”)

App update includes 821 species

The National Audubon Society has released an updated Audubon Birds Pro mobile app. It includes an 821-species checklist from the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) and is the first time a complete field guide to North American birds is available for free mobile download via iTunes, Google Play and Amazon.

With the Audubon Bird Guide you can identify 821 species with in-depth descriptions including information on appearance, habitat, behavior and more.

The app also offers a gallery of more than 3,200 images from the VIREO, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University’s world-wide collection of bird photography.

And you can listen to up to eight hours of bird calls, differentiated by region and season, and browse species in a gallery view and filter by shape, region and color, aiding quick identification.



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 spring 2016 issue is February 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.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gail, Mark share ‘best practices’ at state conference

Audubon Miami Valley board members Gail Reynolds and Mark Gilmore were invited to serve on the “Best Practices” panel at the Ohio Conservation Conference. (I joined them just to attend, not speak.)

We left Oxford early on October 25 headed for the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus, excited about the full agenda pertaining to climate change and protecting birds in our state.

Here’s some of what we learned:

Grange transformation

Christie Vargo, center director, told how the Grange Center was once an impound lot for the city but today, due to support by Audubon and Columbus, it has prairie grass, native plants, a river walk, a green roof and hosts of birds, mammals and amphibians. It provides a safe, welcoming and interactive setting for kids to experience nature.

Urso explains data use

Marnie Urso explained how Audubon’s Citizen Science Program uses data from the Christmas Bird Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count and the Hummingbirds at Home programs to determine the effects of climate change on birds.

They found more than half of our winter bird species stay farther north than they did 50 years ago. For the most-threatened birds, shifts in climate range changes would mean they leave Ohio.

Urso directs Audubon’s Climate

GRASS PROJECT PROTECTS

BIRDS, AIRLINE PASSENGERS

One of the success stories shared during the Ohio Conservation Conference’s “Best Practices” panel was about a project keeping you safe when you fly in and out of Dayton International Airport.

Aullwood Audubon Center helped the airport establish prairie grass near the runways. After accidents elsewhere involving Canada Geese flying into airplane engines, one solution was discovered as eyes turned earthward. Airport grass had been kept short, just the way geese like it. Geese do not graze in tall grasses, and that’s why Aullwood Audubon and the Dayton Airport staff teamed for this proactive and environmental friendly solution to a potentially deadly problem.

AMC’s Gail Reynolds spoke on the success of our “Volunteer Day at Hueston Woods,” where over 100 people pulled out invasive bush honeysuckle from our adopted Important Bird Area. (See story page 8.)

Mark Gilmore shared the AMV Ash Tree Project story with the audience. His efforts to save 50 legacy ash trees from Emerald Ash Borer infestation were well-received.

Initiative in Ohio

Lights Out helps birds

Dramatic photos show the tragedy of birds striking buildings and windows. Under the heading of “What can we do to help save Birds?” the Lights program is significant.

Amanda Duren, Program Coordinator for the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, spoke about the “Ohio Lights Out” program. Solutions include eliminating lights on tall buildings at night and using window coverings that deter birds from thinking they are openings. (See www.lightsoutcolumbus.org)

Fracking limit proposed

State Rep. David Leland (D-Columbus) discussed a proposal to

prohibit fracking on state park land. We all should let our representatives and public officials know we care about the issues that protect our environment.

How IBAs start, grow

Stan Searles of Global Conservation Connections talked about Important Bird Area conservation and how the program began in 1999. Ohio now has 63 IBAs.

Cheryl Harner talked about growing IBAs by planting natives. Native trees require less water than imported varieties.

Our team thought the conference was well done and worth the trip.

— **Mickey Simonds**



DECEMBER 2015 CALENDAR

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 Whitewater 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.

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.) The public is welcome at all meetings.

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.

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's March 10-19, 2015, birding trip to Belize included visits to rainforest, savannah, and riparian habitats as well as Mayan ruins.

A tiny country in northern Central America, Belize is home to more than 560 species of birds and is 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



Jim Michael

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

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19

Christmas Bird Count



For more than 100 years, Audubon has been counting birds at Christmastime.

Whether you are a beginner or accomplished birder, come out for a brisk walk to look for winter birds.

Meet at Miami University Research Ecology Center at 5806 Somerville Road in Oxford at 7 a.m. Join AMV for a potluck luncheon and bird tally at the Research Center at noon, immediately after the count. Please bring a dish to share and your own place setting.



JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2016 CALENDAR

SATURDAY JANUARY 9

Hamilton Riverside

Natural Area

Hamilton Riverside Natural Area is located along the Great Miami River in Hamilton, Ohio. It includes a lagoon formed from an old river channel, a small man-made wetland that backs up against the south side of the lagoon, and approximately 130 acres of prairie.

Mulched trails wind through the north side of the preserve, an observation deck overlooks the lagoon, and a paved access road leads into the large prairie.

In cold weather, the river can be good for waterfowl. Pipits and killdeer can be found along the river's edge in January. We will be met at the site, in a parking lot off Fairview Avenue, by our guide, Charlie Saunders, an experienced birder who knows the area well. 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 late morning. Most of the field trip will consist of hiking along the river. Bring snacks if desired and binoculars if possible. If you have questions, call Charlie at 513-829-6981.



Beth Davis traveled half-way around the world to Borneo for what she calls a truly "pinch me, am I really here" experience.

Beth, who traveled with the help of an Audubon Miami Valley Earth Expedition Scholarship, worked in Borneo to complete a primate conservation course for Miami University's Project Dragonfly.

Highlights of her work included working with international scientists, at the Danau Girang Field Station, where within 15 minutes of arrival, she saw her first wild orangutan.

She also visited with the villagers of Sukau, who work diligently with the Hutan Kinabatangan Oran-utan Conservation Programme (a French NGO) in preserving wildlife, the rainforest, and their own futures.

Beth teaches fifth-grade science

MONDAY FEBRUARY 8

On the Other Side of the World

Beth Davis, Kramer Elementary School, Oxford, Ohio

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



**Beth Davis
in the field**

and language arts. After many years as a secretary, stay-at-home mom, professional clown, bank teller, and elementary school librarian, Beth received a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Childhood Education from Miami University. She now is working toward a Master of Arts in Teaching Biological Sciences degree.

Earlier, Earth Expeditions helped Beth travel to Mexico's Baja Peninsula to study desert ecology and marine biology.

Whether face-to-face with a curious orangutan or a curious fifth-grader, Beth is always prepared to teach about nature and science.

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20

Otto Armleder

Memorial Park



Armleder Park borders the Little Miami River on the east side of Cincinnati. In addition to soccer fields and a dog park, the park's 305 acres contain attractive walking trails through varied habitats. We may see raptors, ducks, waders, shorebirds and passerines. A park map is at www.greatparks.org/assets/uploads/pageuploads/park-map-otto-armleder.pdf Experienced Cincinnati birder Steve Bobonick will lead the trip. We 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. Bring lunch and binoculars.



CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2016 – AND BEYOND

SUNDAY MARCH 13

Caesar Creek State Park

Caesar Creek State Park is highlighted by clear blue waters, scattered woodlands, meadows and steep ravines. The 3,741-acre park sits astride the crest of the Cincinnati Arch, a crest in bedrock layers caused by an ancient upheaval. Younger rocks lie both east and west of this crest, where some of the oldest rocks in Ohio are exposed.

The park's excellent fossil finds testify to the life of a long-vanished body of water.

The forests of the area include more than 65 plant species. A northern flood plain forest is found in the valley, while mixed associations of oak-hickory and beech-maple woodlands clothe the ridges and hillsides.

We'll check out the lake for waterfowl, gulls and waders. The adjoining wooded and grassy areas may host raptors and passerines.

Expert naturalist Sam Fitton will lead this outing, which 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. Pack a lunch and bring binoculars if possible.



AMV Field Trip

MONDAY MARCH 14

One Less on the Bucket List -- Madagascar

Bill Creasey, Chief Naturalist, Cincinnati Nature Center

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

The Republic of Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Southeast Africa. The nation comprises Madagascar (the fourth-largest island in the world), as well as numerous smaller islands.

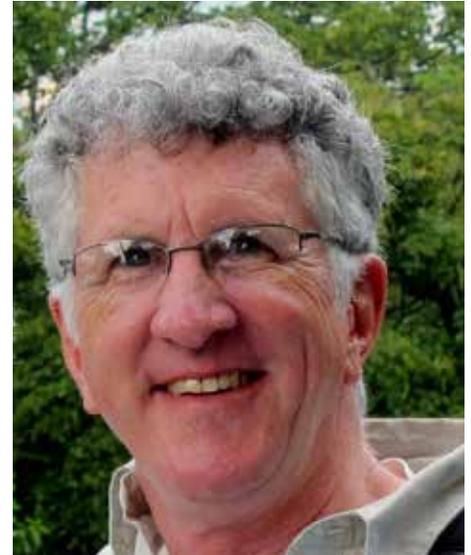
Madagascar split from the Indian peninsula around 88 million years ago, allowing native plants and animals to evolve in relative isolation. Consequently, Madagascar is a biodiversity hotspot; over 90 percent of its wildlife is found nowhere else.

The island is especially known for its unique plant families, unique primates (Lemurs), a diversity of amphibians, and many unusual insects.

The island's diverse ecosystems are threatened by the encroachment of the rapidly growing human population, deforestation, and other environmental threats.

Bill Creasey is the Chief Naturalist, Adult Program Manager, and Travel Coordinator at the Cincinnati Nature Center. He began his dream job there in 1973. He has led trips all over the world.

Bill majored in Botany and Zoolo-



Bill Creasey

gy at Miami University. His Master's with Certification in Education is from the University of Cincinnati.

Creasey's enthusiasm and desire to educate others about nature and land conservation has influenced generations of local conservationists.

In 2014 Creasey and Hardy Eshbaugh received the Cincinnati Nature Center's Wood Thrush award. This award recognized that both men have worked in environmental education for over 40 years.

APRIL 10 PROGRAM

Let's get fired up for spring!

A photographic nature tour with Mo Henning

APRIL 16 FIELD TRIP

Hunter/Hoffmeier property

APRIL 19 AT CHRISHOLM METROPARK

It's raining Neotropical Migrants

Dr. David Russell

MAY 1-7

Big Week of Birding in Butler County

MAY 9 PROGRAM

Birds of Peru

Richard Amable, Metro Parks of Butler County

JUNE 6 FIELD TRIP

Deer Creek State Park





This group is just a fraction of the 100 Miami University Field Botany students who pitched in to save the Big Woods during an October work day.

100 botany students volunteer to save Big Woods

Audubon Miami Valley adopted the Hueston Woods Nature Preserve, an Important Bird Area (IBA) in 2012. Our “Save the Big Woods” volunteer work days help preserve the biodiversity of this old growth forest by removing invasive plants.

This fall’s habitat restoration event saw the biggest turnout ever, thanks to more than 100 Miami University Field Botany students joining AMV members on an October Saturday morning.

Their professors partnered with Dick Munson, AMV conservation chair, by making this a required lab activity for their students.

Crews of students led by their teaching assistants removed invasive bush honeysuckle throughout the wooded conservation site and along the Hueston Woods loop road.

Some pulled seedlings by hand, while others attacked tree-sized shrubs with a variety of tools, leaving 8-foot-tall brush piles along the park road.

The result is astonishing, allowing clear vistas into the woods in place of the dense stands of honeysuckle.

(To see the site, take Brown Road from Oxford to Hueston Woods, turn left on the main loop road and drive about a half mile to a parking area on the right. From there to the beach road is the project site.)

More than ever, we are learning the importance of this

mature woodland habitat. Some birds, such as the Cerulean and Prothonotary Warblers, require it for nesting, and others need it for critical migration stopovers.

Using information gleaned from internet sources, Mark Gilmore, who heads the ash tree preservation project in the Big Woods (treating legacy trees against the Emerald Ash Borer) estimates that this 200-acre nature preserve accounts for 5 percent -- or possibly a bit more -- of all remaining old growth forest in Ohio.

(The Hueston Woods preserve is designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Interior Department.)

National Audubon’s 2015 Birds & Climate Change report documents the threats to 314 of our North American birds. Using data from years of citizen science (including Christmas Bird Counts)

Audubon scientists used climate models to project the shift and/or reduction of birds’ traditional ranges. Habitat, food sources, predation, and competition are all affected. Find out more at audubon.org/climate.

Their take-away message is that habitat protection is more critical than ever, and the best way to accomplish that is through community groups protecting local natural areas that they care about.

Thanks again to our 100 student volunteers! We certainly appreciate your energy. Thanks also to Miami University for providing pizza for the volunteers.

— Gail Reynolds, AMV secretary



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Audubon Miami Valley is
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