



Serving Butler & Preble counties in Ohio. Winter 2017-18 Volume 43

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AMV NEWSLETTER

How should we balance paper, pixels?

"Paper or plastic?" That's an easy choice for many who care about the environment: "I brought my own bags!"

But when the choice for information is "paper or digital," the answer can be more difficult. E-books and news websites work for many, but not for all.

We've been discussing whether Audubon Miami Valley should choose digital or paper — or both — for this newsletter, weighing both sides of the issue.

Now we'd like to hear from you.

A very simple survey on this question will be distrib-

uted at the December chapter meeting. It should also be online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SN77CDJ>

If you have problems with that link or wish to comment, call or e-mail newsletter editor Judi Hetrick at 513.523.4298 or juhetric@yahoo.com.

We value all of our AMV members and friends, and we want to make a decision about the newsletter that works for as many people as possible to keep everyone informed.

— Judi Hetrick, newsletter editor

Birding club rises again in land of the Redhawks

It started with a question from Brian Grubb, a member of Audubon Miami Valley and my employer at the Miami University Hamilton Campus Conservatory. It was something offhand, from what I recall; "Why not have a birding club at Miami University?"

However it was worded, that question set off a chain of events, culminating in revamping a forgotten club, meeting many new faces, speaking with several National Audubon members, and a wonderful partnership with Audubon Miami Valley.

The club was named Birders of Miami University in early September 2017. This was after much rushing around by Dr. Dave Russell, the advisor for the organization, and by me. Our first meeting was held, some funding was secured, and the

revival of the old Bird Watching Club of Miami University was complete.

That first meeting was lovely, and the meetings after it were even better: Facilitating our members to do neat things like attend talks given by speakers invited to Oxford by Audubon Miami Valley, getting to know one another better and putting ideas together for events, and experiencing our first birding outing, where we saw almost 50 different species, including a Lincoln's Sparrow, a Kingfisher, and my personal favorite, two Wilson's Snipes.

The first outing, held on a lovely day in October at Fernald Nature Preserve, was a great and informative experience, led by Russell. Honestly, it exceeded expectations, with a good turn-out. All who attended seemed to have a good time. One



such member is Matthew Valiga, one of many new faces in Birders of Miami University. Our members are all passionate about wildlife, but many, such as Matt, have a new-found love for birding;

"The birding club so far has introduced me to some of the less-known and appreciated components of biodiversity.

"Growing up, I did a lot of zoo work and it developed a passion for large, exotic animals in me, just by the nature of what normally is

(Continued on page 7)

These native plants belong in everyone's garden

In this issue we'll begin looking at native plants which belong in everyone's garden that also happen to attract and feed birds.

Strangely enough, one of the most ubiquitous yet unknown plant is the White Snake Root, *Eupatorium maculatum*. This plant most likely caused the death of Abraham Lincoln's mother.

She reportedly drank milk from cows that ate this plant, resulting in milk fever, and subsequently her death.

Since that is not a problem in these times, the question is why don't we plant it more frequently? You've probably noticed it along the trails and roadsides in the autumn with its fuzzy white flower clusters but were totally unaware of its presence during the growing season.

What makes it a worthy addition to your garden? The white flowers in great abundance are reason enough. However, we have noticed great numbers of American Goldfinches feeding on the seeds.

The plants will multiply on their own, so you should consider limiting its spread. But since it plays well with other plants we let ours do their thing!

Some of my favorite ornamental shrubs are the Ser-



The birder's garden

viceberries, *Amelanchier* sp. There are several species of Serviceberry (aka Saskatoon) from which to choose. All, however, have the same ornamental characteristics: deciduous shrub with white flowers in the spring, followed by very tasty dark red to black pome fruits, which are held against a bright red fall color.

Besides humans who collect this fruit to make preserves and pies, it attracts multitudes of Robins and Cedar Waxwings as well as other fruit-eating species. The plants are very winter hardy and easy to grow. Deer, however, savor the foliage, but a couple of sprays of deer repellent during the growing season fixes that problem.

Finally, another common plant that feeds birds as well as dresses up our landscapes is the Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*. We've all valued and enjoyed the purple flowers with a prominent cone in the center. Once the flowers have matured they are irresistible to Finches and Goldfinches. They extract the small seeds from within the spiny cone. The genus name, *Echinacea*, is derived from its similarity in appearance to that of the Spiny Echidna, a small monotreme (egg laying mammal) native to Australia and New Guinea.

Next time: Malus, Crataegus, Pyrus, and Rosa!

— **Dick Munson, Conservation Chair**

Welcome, winter birds!

Tips for welcoming wintering birds to your yard:

Make sure there's ample water near protective shrubs. Many kinds of birds bathe in and drink from open water in frigid weather. Use a plastic birdbath with a built-in heater, or add a heater to one without a built-in heater. Baths on pedestals are ideal for reducing risks from predators such as cats,

Clear out nest boxes in the fall and again in spring.

Discard seed that has been stored in the hot summer. Clean bird feeders.

Rake fallen leaves under shrubs to create mulch. Earthworms, pillbugs, insects, and spiders—songbird delicacies—will thrive as the mulch decomposes.

See more tips at www.audubon.org/news/winterize-your-yard-birds



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 three times a year. 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% recycled paper.

Deadline for the spring 2018 issue is March 1. Send contributions to jhetrick@amvohio.org or to Newsletter, P.O. Box 556, Oxford, Ohio 45056

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DECEMBER 2017 AND JANUARY 2018 CALENDAR

**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 9**

Brookville Lake Area

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

We'll visit a number of good spots looking for migrating ducks, geese, gulls, sandhill cranes and other species.

You can learn more about the area at www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2961.htm



The group will 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 if desired and bring binoculars if possible.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 16 Christmas Bird Count

Before the 20th century, hunters competed during the winter holidays to see who could shoot the most game and birds. Then in 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed instead a "Christmas Bird Census." That tradition is alive today.

We'll gather at 7 a.m. at the Miami University Ecology Research Center on Somerville Road for the Christmas Bird Count.

Dress warmly and wear boots for walking. Wear a bright jacket and bring binoculars if possible.

Counters work in groups, so both experienced and new counters are welcome. Bring your own table service and a covered dish to share for lunch.

MONDAY DECEMBER 11

Global Climate Change:

Sound-bytes vs. Critical Investigations

Mark Boardman, Professor Emeritus, Miami University

2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West

The words "global climate change" and "global warming" can elicit gut-wrenching reactions.

Emotions about climate change and global warming are good, but without being coupled with data (versus alternative facts or telephone game information), our reaction and response might be hyperbolic or hysterical, rather than deliberate and measured.

Global climate change and global warming are real and happening today.

This talk provides data-based information on several principal measures of climate change.

Mark Boardman grew up in the Virgin Islands, earned an A.B. in Geology from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in Marine Sciences from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

As part of the geology faculty at Miami University, where he taught a variety of environmental courses on campus, led dozens of international environmental field courses in the tropics, and was Director of the Institute of Environmental Sciences.

SUNDAY

JANUARY 14, 2018

Oxford Area Trails

The growing Oxford Area Trail system is the pride of our community!

We'll meet at the Black Covered Bridge at 9



a.m. and take a leisurely walk on the new trail, following the paved walkway to Leonard Howell Park. From there, those wishing to do so may continue to the DeWitt Log Cabin area or beyond.

Dress for the weather and come out for an enjoyable winter walk.



FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2018 CALENDAR

MONDAY FEBRUARY 12, 7:30 P.M.

Long-Distance Commuting: Birds in the Fast Lane

David Russell, Department of Biology, Miami University, Oxford
2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West

The disappearance of North American long-distance bird migrants has been well documented. Reversing these trends has been a priority for conservation organizations and land managers.

Recent studies have shown the importance of stop-over habitat in the success of these migrants. However, little is known about how birds use these stop-over sites and, in fact, where the sites are actually located.

Recent technological innovations

have proven valuable in revealing these closely held secrets of bird migration and offer hope for future bird conservation efforts.

Dave Russell is a senior lecturer at Miami University, teaching a number of courses including biology, environmental biology, and ornithology.

A Master Bird Bander and certified North American Banding Council Trainer, he is co-founder of the Avian Research and Education Institute (AREI).

MONDAY MARCH 12, 7:30 P.M.

The Nature Conservancy Unveils a New Evolution to Our Conservation Approach: Conservation by Design 2.0

Davin Schenk, JD, The Nature Conservancy Program Manager, Ohio
2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West,

With invasive species, climate change, unsustainable agriculture, energy expansion, and the expanding footprint of human settlements, now more than ever conservation is faced with major challenges.

The Nature Conservancy, a worldwide non-profit organization founded in 1951, has recently revealed a new strategy that requires us to be bold and adapt our traditional ways of planning and implementing our work.

This talk will explore the Conservation by Design 2.0 strategy and what TNC is doing in Ohio to address these challenges at a regional and global scale.

Devin Schenk is the Mitigation Program Manager for The Nature Conservancy, where he is responsible for running the state-wide Stream and Wetland Mitigation Program. He has worked in the field of stream and wetland mitigation for over 17 years in California, Kentucky, and Ohio.

Devin received his B.S form the University of Cincinnati, master's in Environmental science from Miami University, and juris doctorate from Northern Kentucky University.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 16-

MONDAY FEBRUARY 19

Great Backyard Bird Count

February brings with it four days of one of the most flexible bird-watching events of the year. The 21st annual Great Backyard Bird Count allows people to stay warm and cozy inside while counting the birds that visit their yard and feeders. See the website at gbbc.birdcount.org for more information.

**SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 17**

Engelwood MetroPark

Englewood MetroPark is one of the largest parks within the Five Rivers MetroPark system.

At 1,900 acres, it is home to lakes, woodlands, wetlands, meadows, three waterfalls, and more than 20 miles of trails.



With its floodplain forests and wetlands, the park helps to buffer and protect the Stillwater River, which serves as a focal point of the Park. A remnant swamp forest, accessible by boardwalk, supports an unusual population of trees, including black ash, swamp white oak and pumpkin ash.

Our visit will be hosted by Lauren Asquith, Education Specialist with Five Rivers MetroParks.

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.



MARCH, APRIL AND MAY 2018 CALENDAR

SATURDAY MARCH 17

Student Art Show

Stop by the Oxford Community Arts Center to enjoy this year's crop of bird art created by local students. Their images are always delightful, and their efforts deserve our support.

SATURDAY MARCH 24

Shaker Trace Wetlands

Shaker Trace Wetlands, near the village of New Haven in northern Hamilton County, is part of Miami-Whitewater Forest, a Hamilton County Park. It features a nice observation deck and primitive trails. The wetlands are surrounded by fields, which the park district is converting from cropland to prairie. Located just a 30-minute drive south of Oxford, it is part of a growing wildlife corridor that also includes



the Fernald Preserve. We will look for ducks, shorebirds, and other water and marsh species, as well as raptors. A map of the park is at www.greatparks.org/assets/uploads/park-map-miami-whitewater-forest.pdf.

Expert birder Bill Wilson will lead this outing. We 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 food if desired and bring binoculars if possible.

SATURDAY APRIL 21

Big Woods Volunteer Day

The Big Woods at Hueston Woods State Park can use our help. Garlic mustard and other invasive species have moved in, and we want to move them out. Please plan to help!

Audubon Miami Valley board members Dick Munson and Gail Reynolds will lead volunteers.

SUNDAY APRIL 22

Hunter/Huffmeier Property

This will be another delightful visit to the rural Indiana property of our hosts, Kathy Hunter and Ron Huffmeier. The land, located just to the west of Brookville Lake, features stunning old-growth forest along with open grassy areas and lovely streams. We



are sure to find a nice variety of birds while walking through this attractive setting. Pack a lunch, and we will dine on the deck of Kathy and Ron's home overlooking the woods. We'll leave at 8 a.m. from the west end of the Walmart parking lot (on U.S. 27, north of Oxford) and return to Oxford after lunch.

MONDAY APRIL 9

Hummingbirds 101 **Amy and Carl Wilms, Indiana Audubon Society,** **Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary**

2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon
Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place

Hummingbirds 101 is intended to provide attendees with an overview of the hummingbird banding process while sharing information about the lives of these gems of the wing. Data will be shared along with research plans. Participants will find the talk light-hearted, research-oriented, and fun! There are more questions than answers, but the aim is to learn more about these fantastic birds.

Amy and Carl are resident managers for an Indiana Audubon Society property, the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary near Connersville. Amy is the assistant to the chair in psychology at Miami University. Before meeting and marrying Carl, she knew nothing about bird watching. She started banding in 2012 and earned her Master Banding Permits for songbirds, owls, and hummingbirds in 2017. Carl is a retired middle school science teacher who earned his Ph.D. in education in 2014.

MetroParks

Big Week of Birding

Check the Butler County MetroParks web site at www.yourmetroparks.net to find out what variety of activities are planned for the 2018 Big Week.





Mongolia photo by Hardy Eshbaugh

MONDAY MAY 7

Mongolia Revealed – Land of the Blue Sky

Hardy Eshbaugh, Professor Emeritus, Miami University

2nd Floor Community Room, Lebanon Citizens National Bank, 30 Park Place West

An opportunity arose for six people to accompany George Archibald, founder of International Crane Foundation, on a conservation expedition to Mongolia, a landlocked country between China and Russia.

It is a vast emptiness that links land and sky and is one of the last few places on the planet where nomadic life is still a living tradition.

Mongolia is an exotic destination for any traveler to a land of superlatives. It is also a land of extremes: largely a treeless landscape with extensive grasslands, and many lakes. It is home to a bounty of exotic wildlife and unusual birds. The average summer temperature is 65°F. Winter average is -13°F.

Mongolia has 250 sunny days a year, often with clear cloudless skies. Precipitation is sparse, averaging only 14.9 inches for the entire year in Ulaanbaatar, the capital. Mongolia, the second oldest communist

country, shifted to capitalism in 1996. Three million people live in the country that is 78 percent urban. The rural population density is five people per square mile. Journey with Hardy and his son David as he introduces us to this most fascinating destination

Hardy Eshbaugh is a professor emeritus of Botany, Miami University. He earned his A.B. at Cornell University and his M.A. and Ph.D. at Indiana University.

In 1991 he received the Benjamin Harrison Award (Medallion) from Miami, the institution's highest award for faculty "in recognition of contributions to the advancement of education to the nation."

In 2014, Eshbaugh received the Cincinnati Nature Center's Wood Thrush Award for significant contributions to conservation and stewardship in the Greater Cincinnati region.

Photo safari set for summer '18

If you have a photography safari on your bucket list, you may want to consider this late summer 2018 trip led by John Munson, Dick Munson's brother.

While the exact itinerary for the August 14 to September 4, 2018, journey has not been finalized, participants can expect to:

- Fly round-trip from Chicago to Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - Join safari outfitters Daniels and Dorea Du Toit of Kolobe Safaris, for a trip to Kolobe Ranch in the Bushveld-Springbok Flats.
 - Experience Kolobe Ranch and view wildlife in a natural setting.
 - See the 5-star private game resort, 5-star Hannah Lodge.
 - Stay at the "Tree House" game preserve.
 - Spend several days at Kruger National Park to view big game, small animals and birds.
 - Stop at Blyde river canyon, the world's third largest canyon and visit the Shangana Cultural village.
 - Stay at the Crystal Springs mountain resort, which offers exciting walking trails, spa, heated indoor pool and a 4x4 trail.
- A \$250 per person donation will be made to Audubon if anyone from AMV goes on the trip.
- John Munson expects to lead only 6 to 8 people on this trip.
- Call 715-341-1208 for information or send email to barbjohn@charter.net.



Rosie Bloom scholar visits Cheetah project, school

During my experience in Namibia, we spent most of our time at the Cheetah Conservation Fund.

We learned about the work they are doing with cheetahs in captivity and about a guard-dog program they are building to help farmers keep predators from killing livestock. The dogs will scare predators like the cheetah in hopes the cheetah will walk away.

During the Earth Expedition, we also did game-count drives at night to keep track of animals that were coming into and exiting CCF land. These animals included elephants, giraffes, warthogs, Kudu and more!

We also got to visit at the Ludwig Ndinda Primary School near Okakara. This school is for students through the 8th grade. Since schools are not very abundant, some students stay in hostels right outside of the school. I also talked with some teachers and students.

I absolutely loved this experience



Courtney Snider (in shadow in the foreground) snaps a selfie with students from the Ndinda Primary School in Namibia.

and being able to compare schools in America to schools in Namibia.

— Courtney Snider

Rosie Bloom scholar Courtney Snider teaches biology at Anderson

High School in Cincinnati and is working on her M.A. in teaching biological sciences at Miami University through Project Dragonfly.

Birding club reborn at Miami University

(Continued from page 1)

exhibited at a zoo. I retain that same passion for those types of animals as I did before, but the birding club is starting to create a passion for the unsung animals in the world (take, for example, sparrows), a lot of which could be found almost right outside my door. It's truly wonderful."

— Matthew Valiga, Birders of Miami member

It is incredibly rewarding to know that our student organization is inspiring a love of birding and conservation in our members. After all, that is its whole purpose! To further that goal, we've partnered with Audubon Miami

Valley by volunteering at events and meeting awesome speakers. We hope to attend events like the Christmas Bird Count and field trips.

While all of this progress took hard work and dedication by many, many different people, it cannot be overstated how helpful it has been to have encouragement and support especially by the likes of the Birders, Audubon Miami Valley, the National Audubon Society, and our many professors, like Brian Grubb and Dave Russell.

I sincerely hope that our progress continues, and more than that, hope you can come birding with us sometime!

— Carly Zeis, President, Birders of Miami University

Carly is a junior majoring in zoology.



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