



# The HOUSE WREN

## Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland

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Visit our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org)

May, 2023

### Shrink your lawn!

Many of you might recall what being a “responsible” citizen and community member looked like back in 1953... when lawns were perfectly mowed, fertilized, and weed-free.

A homeowner in 2023 is more likely to shrink their forever green and “perfect” lawn, plant natives, and create a more functional, purposeful landscape. This has become a necessity rather than a choice. A landscape that is sustainable and supports life, sequesters carbon, feeds pollinators, and manages water is one that is responsible and shows your neighbors and friends that you care about the health and well-being of your community.

As explained and taught by Doug Tallamy, American entomologist, ecologist,

conservationist and professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, there are four functions or goals that every homeowner’s landscape and yard must perform to produce a healthy and viable ecosystem that we all need:



A native plants garden is lush and colorful.

Photo: M. Salomon

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### Centennial Celebration!

**When:** June 3, 2023

**Where:** Lake Farmpark, 8800 Euclid-Chardon Road, Kirtland, OH

Transportation will be provided from the guest center (parking lot) up to the Red Machinery Barn and back.

**Schedule:**

3pm — Nature Walk

4pm — Social Hour

5pm — Annual Meeting and Awards

6pm — Dinner

7pm — Al Batt, Guest Speaker

**Cost:** \$40 per person

Please send your reservation with name, number attending, and payment to our Solon address. Include an email address or phone number in case we need to contact you. Reservations need to be received by Monday, May 22. Seating is limited.

**Get your reservations in early and help us celebrate 100 years of conservation!**

### We need you!

Are you handy with tools? Enjoy carpentry or painting? Hiking the trails?

Join the ASGC Trail Crew for those and many more projects:

- Maintain and monitor the trails and sanctuaries.
- The Education Center and storage barn need a new coat of paint.
- Signs and kiosks need attention.

Contact Ban Twaddell at [trail-crew@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:trail-crew@clevelandaudubon.org).

### ASGC mourns passing of trustee John Weber



We are sad to announce the passing of John Weber (age 76) at his home in Munson, Ohio. John was a Certified Public Accountant with a Masters of Accounting degree

from the University of Missouri (1972). He worked for Price Waterhouse, Chardon Rubber Company for 30 years and retired in 2008 as the CFO. In retirement, John held leadership positions in

the Chardon Rotary, the District Rotary Foundation, and the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, where he served as Treasurer.

“John will be truly missed in our Audubon Family,” writes Trustee Mark Demyan. “John and I did woodworking projects since he had a wood shop in the basement!! I have his last project in my back yard—An OWL BOX...”

ASGC President Jim Tomko also appreciated John’s owl box carpentry. “John built four barred owl nest boxes that were installed in our Aurora Sanctuaries. Each time I pass them I think of

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### From the Nest...

Are you ready to wish your chapter a happy 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary? We hope that you will be able to join in the celebration on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at Lake Farmpark. The keynote speaker is a nationally recognized speaker, author, storyteller, humorist and birder. His talks will have you intrigued and laughing at us birders. Each time



I’ve heard him speak it has been enlightening and uplifting. This is an annual meeting you won’t want to miss.

I hope you get a chance to immerse yourself in the wonder of migration and that you are able to be astounded by the colors and habits of our migrating and summer resident avian friends.

Since this is the last edition of the newsletter until September, please stay in touch and updated by visiting our website or our Facebook page.

See you on the trails,

—Jim Tomko  
President, ASGC

## From the heart

Concerning ebird, let me just say what's in my heart: Please create eBird checklists when you go birding because they make a difference for the conservation of the birds we love to watch!

If you go to [science.ebird.org](http://science.ebird.org), you can learn how eBird data contributes to bird research and ultimately to bird conservation. Birds experience many challenges, especially migratory birds, and we need to find new and novel ways to help them. The data from every one of our checklists, even your backyard feeder checklists, contributes information that helps in the conservation of birds.

We updated the Warbler Warm Up program recently to include Bar Chart data, showing when to expect warbler

### Arizona adventure

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along with a short-eared owl hunting at 10:00am! Persistence paid off!

Patton Center for Hummingbirds is like birding someone's backyard – because that's what it was before Tucson Audubon took it over and left it alone. Anna's, broad-billed and violet-crowned hummers were among the 36 species seen in two hours.

Friday, we traveled the vegetable growing areas on our way back to Phoenix, and found four Bendire's thrashers, lots of raptors, thousands of blackbirds (100 Brewer's) and a roadrunner! Our last stop was Riparian Preserve at Gilbert Water Ranch, another water reclamation area. 59 species in three hours.

### John Weber

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John and what a good friend he was to me and our Audubon chapter."

Carol Lillich writes, "John was a wonderful person and a great Treasurer. He worked very hard to re-instate our organization to its non-profit status after it was lost."

"He worked closely with the board at the time," remembers current ASGC Treasurer Stephanie Demyan, "to make sure the society was in good standings with the IRS and complied with all regulations at the local, state, and federal

arrivals and departures. We discussed where warblers winter and where they breed. We discussed changes in summer ranges for some warblers due to climate change. All that information comes from checklists submitted from Canada to southern South America. When we use eBird to plan a trip or to stay current on recent sightings nearby, that information is there because people take the time and effort to contribute in the form of checklists.

Not sure where to start? Download the eBird 101 handout from our website under Docs/Info. Or email [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org) to request a link to the eBird 101 Zoom program from January 2023.

—Matt Valencic

Broad-billed hummingbird  
Photo: M. Valencic



GRAND TOTAL – 149 species in 5 days and 54 life birds for John! We laughed for five days and are still friends after spending every waking hour together. If you get the chance – do this trip. Just wait until April when more migrants will be there.

—Matt Valencic

level." As John grew ill, he transitioned the Treasurer responsibilities to Stephanie. "We met together for a year and his gentle leadership and encouragement on how to maintain auditable financial records was incredible. He was always there with a kind word and knowledgeable expertise on how to manage the financial aspects of the organization."

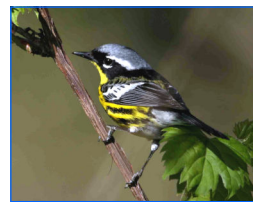
In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in John's name may be made to the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, the Rotary Club of Chardon, or St. Helen Catholic Church.

## Spring bird walk series for 2023

This is one of the oldest community science partnerships between Northeast Ohio park systems, Audubon chapters, and other organizations now in its 90th year. Walks are led by experienced birders and will be held on **Sundays, May 7, 14 and 21 at 7:30am** unless otherwise noted. See the full list of walks on our website at [www.clevelandaudubon.org](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org) under Birding.

## Critter Corner

Photo: M. Valencic



### Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*)

Here is a little gem that will make you gasp and when you find your voice, you will shriek "Look at that!"

This mini beauty is easily identified by its vibrant field marks which include brilliant yellow throat, belly, and rump patch; bold black mask, necklace, breast stripes; bright white eyebrow, wing-bars, and vent; blue-gray cap; dark olive back and dark tail.

When it spreads its tail feathers it flashes white outer patches almost forming a bar. Matt Valencic, our Education Committee Chairman, says a view from below shows under tail feathers that look like the tail was dipped halfway in ink. It is our only warbler with its tail colored like that.

They often sing a rapid "weeta-weeta-weeteo" while foraging for insects and caterpillars in all sorts of trees during migration.

Occasionally they will consume berries. Most nest in the boreal coniferous forests north of us but a few do nest in Ohio in the deep hemlock gorges of Lake County, Hocking County and Mohican State Forest. Those areas have habitat and a micro-climate that mimics their northern forests.

"Maggies" place their nests in thick stands of small conifers near the top or well concealed on a horizontal branch two to six feet off the ground. The nest consists of a loosely woven cup of grasses, fine twigs, and weed stalks, lined with moss and black rootlets into which three to five creamy white eggs covered with reddish-brown, lavender, and purple flecks are laid.

I hope you are able to catch a glimpse of these spectacular birds in the next few weeks while they pass through to their northern nesting grounds. Otherwise, you will have to wait until September and view them in their subdued winter plumage.

—Jim Tomko



## In case you missed it

*"Woodcock Watch" April 14th*

We were all very curious about the how the woodcocks at the Novak Sanctuary would react to having their fields cleared of the horribly invasive buckthorn saplings just before their annual courtship season. It turned out that all the field work did not greatly affect their behavior.

Eleven observers noted at least one woodcock in each of the four fields. The male we concentrated on never allowed us to approach too close but he put on a nice show and allowed some dim/fuzzy photos just after dark. He sang as if he was on stage which of course he was!

Photo: J. Tomko



It was wonderful weather and we had a cooperative performer. One of our members even brought a lawn chair to sit and enjoy the show.

Hopefully next season we will have even more woodcocks because the fields will have the buckthorn invasion under control and the fields will have begun recovery with native plants.

—Jim Tomko

## Earth Day at CSU

Cleveland State University hosted over 20 organizations on April 20th for their annual Earth Day celebration. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland was represented by Trustee Mark Demyan who enjoyed talking with students about our mission of conservation and managing our sanctuaries.



Photo: M. Demyan

## Lawns

*(Continued from page 1)*

- 1) Support a diverse community of pollinators throughout the growing season.
- 2) Support and provide for the local food web.
- 3) Manage the watershed in which they lie.
- 4) Capture and remove carbon from the atmosphere where it is wreaking havoc on the Earth's climate.

How well a landscape accomplishes these goals depends on how well we, as backyard stewards, choose and install the plants on our landscapes.

Traditional lawns fail at achieving these four goals. Grass is an ecological wasteland. Lawns degrade the local watershed by discouraging infiltration, fa-

cilitating stormwater runoff, and adding nitrogen, phosphorous, herbicides, and insecticides to the nearest stream or river. Today's cultural standard for lawns supports no pollinators and does not nourish the insects that enable birds, reptiles, amphibians, and many mammals to reproduce. And when it comes to carbon capture, turf grass is our worst plant choice.

Native plants, however, succeed at achieving these four goals! We can help our yards become healthy, productive, and purposeful by planting the plants that are good at supporting pollinators, good at capturing energy and sharing it with our local wildlife, and good at holding carbon,



Shrink your lawn and you never know what might show up!

Photo: A. DeBroux

allowing it to remain in the soil instead of finding its way into the atmosphere. We can also choose plants with large canopies that soften the impact of pounding rain and shade our homes from the sun and heat. Their large root systems encourage rainwater infiltration and thus hold tons of water on site after a storm event.

How cool is it to think that we can create and build ecosystems, feed our local pollinators, control runoff and flooding, and capture and remove carbon all in the landscape of our small yard! There are 20 million acres of lawn in the United States. Can you imagine if everyone just took a small part of their lawn and converted it to productive native plants and purposeful space? The path to a sustainable way of life is a must and not a choice any longer. Let's embrace the changing of the guard and welcome a new, positive, healthy, and responsible landscape into our yards!

Carol Markham

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy

## Upcoming Events

### Third Thursday

**May 18 7:00pm**

*"Native Plants for Birds & Insects"*

Via Zoom®

Birds, insects and native plants are inextricably linked in nature. This talk explains those relationships, then shows you ways to enhance your personal landscape for birds, insects, or just for the beauty of native plants. Presented by Matt Valencic, who also will introduce a new PILOT program for homeowners wishing to make changes to their landscapes using native plants to attract more birds and insects. About 1-hour long.

**Register for the above program at  
[www.clevelandaudubon.org/Events](http://www.clevelandaudubon.org/Events)**

### Field Trips

**May 12 7:30pm**

*"Rush for Thrush!"*

Novak Sanctuary

Did you know that there are seven species of thrush in our area in May? We hope to set a record for the most species of thrush seen in one of our sanctuaries in one session.

The possibilities are hermit thrush, wood thrush, Swainson's thrush, gray-cheeked thrush, veery, American robin, and bluebird. We will meet at the Novak Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Townline Road almost a mile north of State Rt. 82 on the Aurora/Mantua border.

## DATED MAIL

### AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND (S 70)

**Board of Trustees 2022-2023**  
**Jim Tomko, President**

Alison DeBroux	John Lillich
Jim DeBroux	Sarah Mabey
Mark Demyan	Mary Salomon
Stephanie Demyan	Matt Valencic
Jane Ellison	Harvey Webster
Carol Lillich	Steve Zabor

To contact an individual trustee, send an email  
to [info@clevelandaudubon.org](mailto:info@clevelandaudubon.org)

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newsletter

*A Wry Smile*



You do not need a parachute to  
skydive. You only need a parachute  
to skydive twice.

## Arizona adventure, Part 2

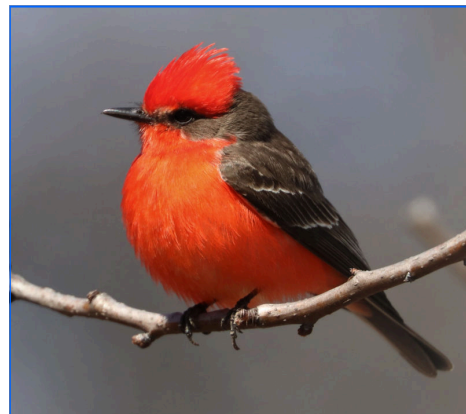
*A December text started a big adventure  
in Arizona for some intrepid birders.  
After a first day at Canoa Ranch Con-  
servation Park outside of Tucson, the  
adventure continued...*

Tuesday's target was Las Cienegas  
National Conservation Area looking for  
thick-billed and chestnut-collared long-  
spurs. We found the gate was closed and  
assumed that meant KEEP OUT! We  
learned later it's a working cattle ranch  
and you just close gates after passing  
through. UGH! But the road there pro-  
duced white-winged kites, Harris's  
hawk, Swainson's hawk, nine harriers,  
twelve red-tails, eight kestrel, six logger-  
head shrike and 24 Chihuahuan mead-  
owlarks and a rufous-crowned sparrow.  
Awesome two hours!

Ash Canyon Sanctuary produced our  
first pyrrhuloxias. Cool birds – a 38 spe-  
cies day.

Montosa Canyon failed to produce  
Montezuma quail but at Sweetwater  
Wetlands, a wastewater reclamation area  
with many ponds and lots of vegetation,  
we found 36 species in 2 ½ hours. Reid  
Park in Tucson had hundreds of ducks

on artificial ponds including two Mexi-  
can ducks we all needed for our lists.



Vermilion flycatcher

*Photo: M. Valencic*

Thursday it was back to Las Ciene-  
gas through 3" of snow for those long-  
spurs. We opened the gate and closed it  
behind us, then drove through the  
'pasture' among grazing cattle. After  
two hours walking we found 40 chestnut  
-collared and four thick-billed longspurs

*(Continued on page 2)*