

Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS



photo by GREG PASIK

Common Loon, *Gavia*

This bird, somewhat larger than a mallard, regularly visits Lorain County ponds, reservoirs, and lakes during migration seasons. In 2012 eBird listed common loons in the county in small numbers during March, April, and May as well as during October, November, December, and January.

Editors: Harry Spencer, and Cathy Priebe

Photographer: John Koscinski

Webmistress: Arlene Lengyel

Mission Statement

The mission of the *Black River Audubon Society* is to promote conservation and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through advocacy, education, stewardship, field trips, and programs for the benefit of all people of today and tomorrow.

Help Preserve Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats!

Charitable giving through planned gifts to the Black River Audubon Society helps make sure that the Society's mission to conserve habitats for wildlife and educate the public about birds continues to thrive. No gift is too small and every gift is welcome. All are deductible.

Black River Audubon Society sets aside all sizable bequests, endowments, and other planned gifts in various available trusts in which only the income generated is used for support of the organization or designated programs. Benefactors thus leave this world with a feeling that they made a gift that keeps on giving in perpetuity.

Program

Tuesday, May 7, 7:00 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

Green Fire

This is a film about Aldo Leopold and his legacy shown by **Grant Thompson**, Chief Naturalist of the Lorain County Metro Parks, who will facilitate discussion.

The partnership of the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Center for Humans and Nature, and the US Forest Service produced the film. It provocatively examines Leopold's thinking and renews his idea of a land ethic for a population facing twenty-first century ecological challenges. Dr. Curt Meine, conservation biologist and Leopold's biographer, serves as the on-screen guide.

Green Fire describes the formation of Leopold's ideas that permeate all arenas of conservation. The film draws on Leopold's life and experiences to provide context and validity, before exploring the deep impact of his thinking on conservation projects around the world today. Through these examples, the film challenges viewers to contemplate their own relationships with the land community.

The high-definition film utilizes photographs, correspondence, manuscripts and other documents from the voluminous Aldo Leopold Archives, historical film, and contemporary full-color footage on location, including landscapes that influenced Leopold.

Field Trip

Saturday, May 4, 9:00 a.m.

Magee Marsh

Meet at the Board Walk

Jack Smith Outstanding Speaker: Al Batt

Stories by Al Batt, Naturally

Saturday, April 27, 2 p.m., Carlisle Visitor Center



Batt, who hails from Hartland, Minnesota, is a man of many talents. Along with storytelling and speaking at festivals all over the United States and Canada, Batt is an author and a monthly columnist for *Bird Watcher's Digest*. He also contributes nature articles to weekly newspapers, hosts radio shows and is a nationally syndicated cartoonist.

His quirky laugh-out-loud humor about nature and birding escapades will leave you with a newfound appreciation of birds and the world we live in.

This program is free to the public. For more information contact the Lorain County Metro Parks at 1-800-LCM-PARK or visit www.metroparks.cc. For more information about the Black River Audubon Society visit www.blackriveraudubon.org or call 440-225-7601.

My Friend and Mentor, Jack Smith

By **Debbie Mohr**

In the 1980s Jack called me and asked if I would sit on the Board of the Black River Audubon Society. I said, "Sure, I don't know a lot about the Society, but I'm willing to learn. For a few years, I served on the Board until my outside life became very busy. I went in a new direction and tucked Black River Audubon into the back of my mind, intending to reengage someday when I had more time.

In 2004 I lost my job, creating an empty space in my life. I think that Jack sensed my frame of mind because he called. He said, "Debbie, would you sit on the Black River Audubon Board? We need you." My immediate reply was "Yes, but I don't know much about the job, but I'm willing to learn."

I did not realize that Jack's call would begin a journey of learning and extensive interaction with so many wonderful and dedicated people.

We have spent the past year celebrating Jack Smith, his life, and the impact he had on our lives. Each month I eagerly looked forward to receiving my monthly copy of *WINGTIPS* just to read another story of how Jack touched someone's life. As I read each story, I could see Jack, hear Jack, and laugh with Jack! How blessed we

have been to have had him in our lives.

Jack's influence extends beyond those who knew him. He counseled many who will teach their knowledge and skills to many pupils of all ages.

I hope that when my life approaches completion, I can say that I followed Jack's teaching and worked to change our world, making it a little better. Had it not been for him, I might not have fallen in love with the great outdoors and learned so much about birds, flowers, and mushrooms.

I would not have been associated with members of the Audubon Society. Never have I known such a group of people who are so passionate and knowledgeable about the natural world. They teach others. I am proud to serve as President of the Chapter.

Jack's calls changed my life.

My First Indigo Bunting

Passerina cyanea

By **Cathy Priebe**

From as far back as I can remember I have always been fascinated with birds. As a child, I was particularly fond of robins, sparrows, doves and even pigeons. As time marched on, my interest in birds took a back seat as school, jobs and other activities kept me busy until I met my future husband, Dave.



Every Memorial Day weekend, Dave's family held an outdoor breakfast at Whipps Ledges in Hinckley, Ohio. At one of those annual outings, I reacquired my earlier passion for birds.

The indigo bunting is one of the most striking blue-colored birds in Ohio and can be one of the most difficult to see. Its bubbly and bright song heralds its presence, but locating this creature can be challenging. It has the ability to blend into the shadows of leafy green trees and bushes until a ray of sunlight turns it into a spectacular blue blaze that always causes me to catch my breath.

Wintering in Central and South America, males arrive first, usually at the end of April. The females arrive around a week later. The breeding male bunting, as shown on the below, is predominantly blue with a slightly peaked head, slender body, small conical bill and short narrow tail. The female, also shown on the back cover, is a soft brown overall, has a whitish throat, a brown streaked breast, and pale wing bars. They are about the size of a chipping sparrow.

Buntings can be found in open deciduous forests and woodland edges, shrubby fields, and overgrown pastures. Their diet consists of various insects and seeds from goldenrod, dandelions, thistle and other native plants. They will come to thistle and mixed-seed feeders in early spring and late summer.

The female builds a cup-like nest of leaves, grass lined with hair and feathers, in a shrub or small tree. She lays three or four white to bluish-white eggs and incubates for 14 days.

According to Jim McCormac, author of *Birds of Ohio*, "the male indigo bunting is one of the most persistent singers of any of our songbirds, vocalizing even throughout the heat of a summer day."

While hiking after a filling Memorial Day breakfast, Dave and I caught flashing glimpses of blue in the tree canopy. The air suddenly filled with a joyous bird song. We tracked this bird from tree to tree until it perched above us, the sun glistening on its bright blue feathers. It was an indigo bunting, a first for me, and both the beginning of a shared relationship with my partner and a lifelong pursuit of birds.

References: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* by Pete Dunne; *Birds of the Cleveland Region* by Larry Rosche



INDIGO BUNTING, MALE, photo by JOHN KOSCINSKI



INDIGO BUNTING, FEMALE, photo by JOHN KOSCINSKI

A Birder's Diary

By Carol Leininger

Many birds are in jeopardy. Some bird species are spreading around the world. Others are disappearing. Is this just nature's way? Should we help the birds?

Spotted owls are declining in numbers as the loggers cut old growth forests in the Northwest. Bald eagles declined in numbers until we stopped using DDT. But what are the consequences of using the chemicals that replaced DDT? Brown pelicans still suffer, not from DDT use, but from oil spills. Common loons are declining in numbers. For breeding habitat, where is the lake undisturbed by humans? How far must birds fly to find a lake, undisturbed by acid rain, with abundant fish to feed their young? Will wood thrushes get enough calcium to lay eggs? Their snail diet taken from the forest floor is dwindling due to acid rain.

As we learn to appreciate the birds and other wildlife around us, often we are willing to go the extra mile to help them. Is this a good idea? Purple martins in the eastern United States will only nest in manmade structures (apartment houses, gourds, etc.). The martins depend on us. Much time and effort successfully results in human-raised California condors. Yet gunshots and poisoned prey kill many condors after release into the wild. Kirtland warblers need humans to keep jack pine forests of the right age by use of controlled burns. Eastern bluebirds need nest boxes constantly monitored by humans to thwart other aggressive cavity nesters.

I do not intend to be pessimistic, and I understand the need to encourage others, especially future generations, to appreciate helping wildlife, but I wonder how long can we continue helping? Today many people survive without jobs and proper shelter, food, and water. How long will future generations be willing and able to help wildlife?

*“Only after the last tree has been cut down,
Only after the last river has been poisoned,
Only after the last fish has been caught,
Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.”*

American Indian Proverb, Cree Indian Prophecy

Birds in Your Backyard: Plants that Attract Hummingbirds

By Angie Adkins

During this spring season, you should expect daily arrivals of new birds to your yard, including many warblers and other migrants that will stop for a short time before continuing spring migration. But ruby-throated hummingbirds arrive for the summer season. To attract the hummers, besides mounted and filled hummer-feeders, are landscape plants, some of which are listed here. **Annuals:** salvias (all varieties, especially Lady in Red), petunias, fuchsia (all varieties), and cannas (all colors); **Vines:** cardinal climber, morning glory, and scarlet runner bean; **Perennials:** agastache, columbine, bee balm, coral bells, honeysuckles, trumpet vine, and butterfly bush.

Chapter engages in cooperative projects.

This account is based upon Harriet Alger's Conservation Committee March report.

Community Service Partnership Program with Lorain County Community College: Bird survey hikes are planned at Sandy Ridge and the LCCC campus; Trail maintenance projects are planned at the LCCC campus.

American kestrel nesting encouragement with Lorain County Metro Parks and Western Reserve



Land Conservancy: Members of Black River Audubon and Western Reserve Land Conservancy constructed nesting boxes, most of which are mounted at Lorain County Metro Parks and other sites. Volunteers will monitor the boxes during the nesting season.

Purple martin nesting encouragement with Lorain County Metro Park: Members of Black River Audubon and Metro Park employees relocated several nesting boxes in preparation for the second season of the purple martin nesting program.

Nature Education

This account is based upon **Dick Lee's** March Education Report.

The Chapter placed **Audubon Adventures** kits in 23 schools, three park districts and one community organization, providing environmental education materials to 78 teachers/naturalists and materials for 2762 students in one charter school, four parochial schools, and 18 public schools. Dick estimates that material went to 112 classrooms.

Again this year not all classes requested all four themes included in the kits: Forest, Grasslands, Birds, and Save our Shores.

The Lorain County Metro Park naturalists will soon be meeting to plan their summer camp programs and will let me know if they decide to use any Audubon Adventure materials.

No one has applied for the Hog Island Audubon Camp scholarship this year, so the money designated will be added to next year's appropriation for scholarship.

Black River Audubon publicizes widely

This account is based upon **Cathy Priebe's** March Publicity Report.

All local newspapers have been publishing press releases for our talks, programs, and volunteer opportunities, especially for the Kestrel Project, which has elicited positive responses. Chuck Jakubchak and his wife, our February speakers, have agreed to document the progress of the Kestrel Project to provide material for talks and other programs.

Elyria Black River Audubon Park

Clean-up May 18, 10 a.m.

Kate Pilacky has scheduled a park clean-up with Nordson Corporation volunteers. Additional volunteers are welcome.

Black River's Financial Underpinning is Solid

By **Harry Spencer**

A couple of days prior to the March Board meeting, Treasurer Steve Chavez emailed the current update of the Chapter finances. In his usual style, Steve clearly and concisely summarized the information, and I quickly absorbed it. Before each Board meeting held every other month, I enjoy my education as taught by Steve.

Here, I summarize our Black River Audubon financial system. It is largely an important legacy of the late Jack Smith.

The Chapter has invested donations and bequests in four trust funds, each devoted to different Chapter activities. One trust is devoted to Audubon Adventures, a program sponsored by National Audubon, supports nature and wildlife education of young students in Grades 3 to 6. Another trust supports conservation activities. A third provides scholarships at summer Audubon camps with intensive nature-related classes. The fourth trust



covers general activity of the Chapter including much supplemental support for the other three trusts.

Steve's report lists about \$192,000 as the current value of the trusts invested in an equity-income fund of American Funds. We spend dividends only and reinvest all capital gains to counteract inflation.

For a forgotten reason, my files contain the 2005 annual reports for our four American Funds trust funds. Then the value of our trusts was about \$162,000. In spite of the national and international financial troubles during the 2005 to 2012 years, our investments increased appreciably in value due to inflation, re-investment of capital gains, and investment of bequeaths and donations. During those financial troubles the dividends paid to our chapter seemingly continued unabated. Jack chose wisely when he established our trust funds.

For the current period, July 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013, Steve's report lists revenues of slightly more than \$11,000 and expenses of a little less than that amount. The two largest expenses, each somewhat more than \$3600 are production of WINGTIPS and donations of Audubon Adventures to classrooms and home schoolers. The Chapter checking account balance slightly exceeds \$16,000.