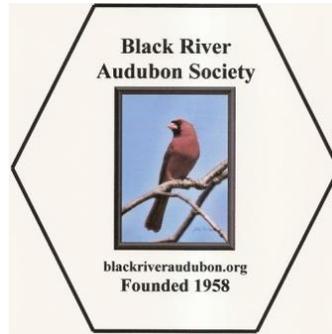


Black River Audubon Society

WINGTIPS



Editors: Jack Smith and Harry Spencer
Photographer: John Koscinski
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Belted Kingfisher/John Koscinski

Program

Tuesday, October 6, 7 p.m.

Carlisle Visitor Center

Cathi Lehn

Conservation Program Coordinator, Biodiversity Alliance

Earthworms, Garlic Mustard, and the West Virginia White Butterfly

Cathi Lehn came to Cleveland from New York City three years ago to be Conservation Program Coordinator for Biodiversity Alliance. While in New York she worked for the Wildlife Conservation Society/Bronx Zoo and the American Museum of Natural History. She has a long history of working in zoos and natural history museums. Biodiversity Alliance is a collaborative venture of the Cleveland Botanical Garden, the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Holden Arboretum. The alliance aims to use scientific knowledge to conserve biodiversity and natural environments.

Field Trip

October 17, 2009 (Saturday)

Carlisle Equestrian Center at 8:00 a.m.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 29, 304 West Ave., Elyria

A Birder's Diary

By **Carol Leininger**

The word common may mean widespread, widely known, or mediocre or inferior quality. The common grackle is, indeed, widespread throughout the United States, but definitely not of inferior quality. This sleek blackbird can show off the most beautiful iridescent colors of blue and purple when lit directly by sunlight. It's a bird easy to identify even in silhouette due to its long wedge-shaped tail. Grackles can also be very noisy birds when they get together in large groups as seen on numerous occasions.



My own experiences with common grackles are that they are curious creatures. I once caught a feisty



one in my live-chipmunk trap. Why he ventured in there, I have no idea. I do not even bait the trap. All I wanted to do was reduce the chipmunk population around the foundation of my house by transporting them to a lovely city park. Another time I placed mothballs around my flower beds to deter wild mammals eating the flowers. Again a common grackle came along. He sure spent a long time playing with the moth balls before he realized they were just too big for him to swallow.

What did I learn from these experiences?

1. Be careful what you place in your own backyard. 2. Most birds have an extremely poor sense of smell!

Common Grackle/Dane Adams

President Mohr Writes

Dear Audubon Members and Friends,

As your recently elected President of Black River Audubon, I'd like to take a moment to share with you a little information about who I am and how I got involved with this wonderful organization. I was born and raised in

Lorain County, the oldest daughter among nine children.

Approximately thirty years ago on a L.C. Metro Park hike, I had the wonderful fortune to meet the kindest, most generous, most knowledgeable man I had ever known, Jack Smith. I don't remember how I learned of either that hike or the L.C. Metro Parks, but I do know that I was somewhat of a "stranger in a strange land." I soon learned that Lorain County had other birds besides robins, blue jays and red birds (cardinals).

I showed up at the hike wondering whom I would meet and what I would see. After brief introductions, our hike began with Perry Johnson, L.C. Metro Park naturalist, in the lead. At the back of the group I began talking and walking with a few hikers who were members of a group called, Black River Audubon. I asked, "What is Audubon and what does it mean?"

Before the explanation could be given, Jack Smith said, "I hear a tufted titmouse and a red-eyed vireo." Everyone stopped to look through their binoculars. Someone exclaimed, "Sure enough, there they are, the titmouse on the tip of a branch of an oak tree and the red-eyed vireo in the top of a maple tree." I was so lost; I had no idea of the difference between an oak tree and a maple, let alone know what a titmouse was. I thought to myself, a flying mouse up in a tree? A bird with a red eye, how can these people see that?

And so began my adventure, education, and life-long friendship with Jack Smith and Black River Audubon!

Jack started me on my journey of learning about the glorious wonders of our outdoor world, in his now-familiar boy-like enthusiastic manner. Jack's enthusiasm for everything he looked at was soon to rub off on me and open my eyes to things that had always been there but to which I just hadn't paid attention!

That's what Black River Audubon is all about, an incredible group of people who love the outdoors and love to share and educate others about all the splendor and glory around! As we continue to grow as an organization and bring in new members I know there will always be a Jack Smith in our group to start a new Debbie Mohr on her journey of discovery. I feel privileged and honored to hike, to bird, and to learn with all of you!

Sincerely,

Debbie Mohr

President

Black River Audubon Society

Audubon Ohio Changed

By **Harry Spencer**

The following are excerpts from an email sent August 15, 2009 to all Audubon Chapters in Ohio. The message came from Liz Would, former Chair, Audubon Ohio, and Henry Tipper, Vice President of Eastern State Programs, National Audubon Society.last spring Jerry Tinianow left his position as the Director of Audubon Ohio, and during the course of the spring and early summer, most of the rest of the staff in the Columbus Office left as well. Following these departures, the senior staff of National Audubon made the decision to re-focus Audubon's activities in Ohio on the Aullwood Center and the soon-to-open Grange Insurance Center, and not replace Jerry or the other positions in the Columbus office.



....On July 27, the Audubon Ohio Board met by conference call to discuss these changes. After a wide-ranging conversation, the Board voted to dissolve.

....In order to provide Audubon chapters and conservation constituents in Ohio with the support they need, we have assembled a network of resources. Christy Smith at Grange will be available to answer administrative questions, and Heather Stack and Doreen Whitley, Grange's Director of Education, will respond to conservation and Important Bird Area questions.

....following the opening and start-up of the Grange Center, we expect to re-convene a statewide conservation planning process, under the leadership of Grange and perhaps the Aullwood Center.

....Henry Tipper, Audubon's Vice President of Eastern State Programs, who is based in Albany, New York, has

assumed responsibility for working on Audubon issues in Ohio.

Free Environmental Education Materials

By **Dick Lee**

Black River Audubon Society supports environmental education for the young people in our community by purchasing Audubon Adventures kits for teachers, naturalists, and homeschoolers. Audubon Adventures was developed by professional environmental educators for children in grades 3-6. It presents basic facts about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. The goal is to develop in young people an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the natural world. The program is packaged either as a classroom kit serving 32 students or as an individual kit serving one student. The theme this year is *Action for Planet Earth*. Units cover *Water, Energy, Habitats, and Pennies for the Planet*. Each kit includes student handouts, background information for the teacher, hands-on inside and outside activities, a large classroom poster, and information about starting and keeping a nature journal.



Each kit has a chart which shows how the content meets national and state standards.

If you are an educator and desire information or a free kit contact Dick Lee at leedck@windstream.net or **440-322-7449**.

Wednesday Sandy Ridge Walks

By **Nancy Miller**



Sandy Ridge is not one of the largest Lorain County parks, yet has a wealth of wildlife. Every Wednesday in the spring and fall, naturalist led walks attract local birders. Occasionally more than 80 birds are seen in the two mile, three hour walk.

Normally Tim Fairweather leads the walks, often joined by Gary Gerone. Both men have outstanding knowledge of the flora and fauna present. I have learned about fungi, flowering plants, galls, trees, dragonflies, mink and lately even a visiting beaver.

But the chief reason for attending is the birds. Usually the resident eagles and sandhill cranes are seen. Breeding birds include bluebird, both orioles, indigo bunting, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, yellow warbler, wood thrush, veery, pewee, phoebe, and eastern kingbirds. Woodcocks display in May and stick around to breed. Warblers are abundant in their gorgeous spring plumage and their more cryptic fall feathers. Caspian terns and ospreys dive for fish. Raptors that stop by include peregrine falcon, merlin, kestrel, Cooper's, sharp-shinned, red-shouldered, red-tailed, and broad-winged hawks. Two pairs of great horned owls raised young last year. Great blue heron, great egret, green heron, both bitterns, sora, and Virginia rail ply the marshes. Many different sparrows, swallows and shorebirds (including a phalarope) have been tallied.

And then there are the people. At the height of migration, there are sometimes an unwieldy number. More often there are 5 to 10 with a core group of regulars keeping everything lively. Dan always has a joke and can find the owls' nests and perches. Elza and Helen tote scopes of major magnifying power. Others spot unseen birds. Most of us put up with occasional drizzle, cold, and wind. We know that hot coffee and a treat brought in by someone are waiting at the Nature Center.

If you enjoy learning about nature, finding out what else has been seen around the area, and seeing many bird species, join us at 8 a.m. next Wednesday. In the spring we even get to open the park at 7:30.

Indian Hollow Field Trip

By **Erik Bruder**

Seven birders visited Indian Hollow Reservation on August 15th to explore the woods and quarries in search of summer residents and early fall migrants. The participants included Marty Ackermann, Harriet Alger, Kenny Austin, Erik Bruder, Jack Smith, Jean Sorton, and Harry Spencer.

The day was warm and slightly humid, an indication of the hot and humid weather that was going to take hold in the afternoon. This was one of the few "steamy" days of what has otherwise been a relatively cool summer. The humidity hung in the air and was visible as a foggy haze as you



Indian Hollow Field Trip



looked into the distance.

The group crossed the bridge and walked the trail back to the quarries. While birding, we also took some time to discuss the history of the area. The large stone waste piles and damaged quarry stones really help to demonstrate the working past of this area.

The birding was challenging with the thick tree cover but we were rewarded by carefully searching. The highlight birds were a neck-bending, tree-top-loving scarlet tanager and a calling eastern towhee that was heard but not seen. On a day like this, “Drink Your Iced Tea” would have been a more appropriate song.

Species seen included great blue heron, American robin, American goldfinch, eastern bluebird, orchard oriole, black-capped chickadee, northern cardinal, common grackle, song sparrow, white-breasted nuthatch, eastern towhee, house wren, ruby-throated hummingbird, cedar waxwing, pileated woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, scarlet tanager, great-crested flycatcher, red-eyed vireo, eastern wood-peewee, tufted titmouse, blue jay, and turkey vulture.

At the end of the walk, everyone was asked to give their trip highlights. Responses ranged from the birds and wild flowers to the weather. The bridge with the sound of the flowing river underneath was also popular. The other big highlight was a fine specimen of Berkeley's polypore, a large edible mushroom that parasitizes oak trees. The example we found weighed about 10 pounds, had a pleasant, earthy aroma when handled, and had pores that resembled a coral reef.

***Bondarzewia berkeleyi* (Berkeley's Polypore)**

By Jack Smith

At our August 15 Field Trip, we spotted what appeared to be a large rosette glob at the base of a large red oak tree. It looked to be overripe. (I plead guilty to observing and studying other things besides birds on Black River Audubon Field Trips.) When I picked it up, and turned it over, a mass of white porous structures, architecturally designed, was apparent. We had found a Berkeley's polypore mushroom, a fine representative of one of the five kingdoms of organisms, the Fungi Kingdom.



Bottom Berkeley's Polypore



The estimated weight range of seven to ten pounds indicated a baby-sized fungus compared to the largest specimens, sometimes three feet in diameter with a weight of fifty pounds. Our specimen was populated with thousands of pores, each no more than 2 millimeters in diameter, which indicated that it was a member of the Polypore-family subdivision classified as Basidiomycetes.

From each of the pores thousands of microscopic spores are ejected, if they do not fall of their own weight. Wind can scatter the spores over a wide area, and some will be deposited under a large oak tree or rarely under another deciduous tree, at which site another Berkeley's will begin to grow. From the suitably deposited spore, microscopically elongated hyphae begin to grow down to the tree roots where they invade rootlets. There they withdraw nutrients from the tree. Rarely is the tree damaged.

The fungi part portrayed here is only the fruiting body at the top of the organism. If the organism were an apple tree, the part portrayed here would be an apple.

A few words about the scientific name: *Bondarzewia* is the genus name and *berkeleyi* is the species name. The American mycologist, M. A. Curtis (1808-1872) named the mushroom in honor of his friend M. Berkeley (1803-1889), a British mycologist. (The final letter i on *berkeleyi* indicates that the species was named

for an individual.)

Is the mushroom edible? Yes, if it is picked early before it matures and develops a bitter taste.

References: Audubon Society Field Guide of North American Mushrooms, Gary Lincoff (1981, Knopf); Mushrooms of West Virginia and the Central Appalachians, William C. Roody (2003, University Press of Kentucky)

The Girl and the Mockingbird

By **Peg Spencer**

In my girlhood in southern California, one of my chores was hanging laundry to dry on the backyard clothes lines. For the most part I found this to be a tedious and repetitive task, but it was outdoors where I might chat with a passerby or just enjoy the sun and breezes.



During the mockingbird breeding season, though, an element of danger was added. The mockers did not want to share the yard where they had their nests with me or anyone else. They let me know their feelings with their raucous calls and by their repeated diving at my head, attempting to peck me. My mother had developed a protective scheme, however, which she passed on to me. An old hat of my father's hung by the back door and I put it on before going out on laundry duty. The hat was made of some fabric that was heavy enough that the mockers' bills didn't penetrate, and I could go ahead with my task without injury or too much humiliation.

The attacks of the mockingbirds couldn't be classified as a good thing, but they livened things up for me. Perhaps I felt more like a dragon-slayer than a laundry drudge.

Northern Mockingbird/John Koscinski

BRAS Honors Arlene Lengyel

At our September 1 general meeting, Black River Audubon presented a framed certificate to Webmistress Arlene Lengyel for her skill in establishing and maintaining our Web Site, **blackriveraudubon.org**. She was cited for cooperating with our members while promptly and cheerfully posting new entries utilizing her artist's eyes and judgment. Additionally she was praised for exercising initiative in creating an archive of WINGTIPS issues and decorating our Web Site with some of her own attractive, topical nature photos.



Arlene Lengyel/Dave Bragg

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
John Koscinski

