



The Hushwing **HERALD**

Blackbrook Audubon Society
Volume 58 Number 2

November / December 2022, January 2023

Spreading the Love of Nature in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula Counties

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE: Tuesday, November 15, 2022
PROGRAM: Meet the Kirtland's Warbler
SPEAKER: William Rapai, Executive Director of Kirtland's Warbler Alliance
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Holden Arboretum, Kirtland

DATE: Tuesday, January 17, 2023
PROGRAM: Mentor Marsh Salt Fill Remediation: A Story Worth Sharing
SPEAKER: Bill Zawiski, Ohio EPA
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Penitentiary Glen Reservation

[The Kirtland's Warbler](#) is an iconic species in Michigan, nesting primarily in the jack pine forests of the northern Lower Peninsula. As recently as 1987 there were fewer than 400 birds in the entire population. Today, there are more than 4,000 birds, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has declared this wood warbler's population is now "recovered." In October 2019, the Kirtland's Warbler was [removed from the Endangered Species List](#).

That's a reason to celebrate, but tonight's speaker wants us to know it doesn't mean we can wash our hands and walk away because conservation of the Kirtland's Warbler has special challenges. Unlike some other animals that have been removed from the Endangered Species List, the Kirtland's Warbler is [conservation-reliant](#), meaning this bird will require continued human intervention to ensure its survival over the long-term.



Kirtland's Warbler male, (*Setophaga kirtlandii*)

Photo from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Bill Zawiski is currently overseeing the salt fill remediation work at Mentor Marsh. Tonight, he will share the story and update us on the Mentor Marsh Salt Fill Remediation project that has the goal of removing fill materials, both salt and limestone fines, and returning the former site of Blackbrook Creek to a stable, more natural condition. This large remediation project is an enormous success story that coincides with the larger, adjacent Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve restoration project tackled by the [Cleveland Museum of Natural History](#). Come hear about the details of the excavations over the summer and fall of 2022 and get a feel for the scale of this long-awaited correction of a wrong.



Continued on Page 3 . . .

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Birding Opportunities!

[Please let us know you are coming to a field trip by sending an email to blackbrookaud@aol.com.](mailto:blackbrookaud@aol.com)

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

DATE: Sunday, November 13, 2022
ACTIVITY: Exploring the lake edge at [LaDue](#)
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
PLACE: [LaDue Reservoir](#)



JANUARY FIELD TRIP

DATE: Saturday, January 7, 2023
ACTIVITY: Winter raptor and waterfowl extravaganza
TIME: 3:00 p.m.

If you have a spotting scope, bring it to the largest body of water in Geauga County to better see the diving ducks out in the middle of the lake. We'll meet in the boathouse parking lot at **17759 Valley Road, Auburn Twp.** and caravan north on Valley Road to bird the ponds and lake toward the spillway. We'll also head south to check the State Rt. 44 bridge.

A lower water level exposes muddy areas for shorebirds and gravel bars for waterfowl, gulls, terns and Sandhill Cranes. We'll keep an eye out for irruptive species like Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin too. Here's the [recent eBird](#) list.



Cedar Waxwing
Bombycilla cedrorum

**Photo by
 Debbi
 Schuster**

Over 100 waxwings were spotted here last November.

An outing for Friends of Blackbrook only! RSVPs are required to blackbrookaud@aol.com as group size is limited.

Meet at Lake Metroparks' [Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park](#) parking lot at 301 Huntington Beach Dr. We'll assemble and carpool from here due to limitations at our next site. While we've got great views of Fairport Harbor and Sunset Harbor, we'll scan for winter waterfowl taking refuge behind the breakwall and in the marina. (Check out the Fairport Harbor beach [webcam](#).)

Then, join us for the hottest open grassland winter birding in Lake County. We will be in and out of our vehicles for a behind-the-scenes look at winter raptors and more.

Wear winter layers for birding outdoors in the January elements mixed with some car birding. We'll bird until it's too dark to see birds! Bring warm beverages, food or snacks to tide you over as well!

As owl breeding and nesting season begins, first for Great-horned Owls, Blackbrook asks all nature enthusiasts to keep a safe, respectful distance from these birds so they are not forced to leave ideal nesting territories for less desirable ones.

Let's Cover Blackbrook's Circle in the Christmas Bird Count

Add the birds you find to this early-winter bird census as Blackbrook Audubon joins thousands of other volunteers across the U.S., Canada, and many countries in the Western Hemisphere for the [123rd CBC](#). This year we'll be birding on **Sunday, December 18!** Email Dan Donaldson, our CBC compiler, at dano057@yahoo.com to find out which locations in our 15-mile diameter circle need to be covered, to join a group, or to find out how you can report your backyard feeder counts. We could always expand our driving CBC routes, too, so if you want to avoid the elements, but still count birds, let Dan know.

This year, our traditional lunch will be at [Hellriegel's Inn](#) in Painesville Township for their breakfast buffet 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please RSVP to Dan. Then head back out for more birding, and/or a nap! We'll also meet virtually for a list sharing and the day's wrap-up on Zoom at 7 p.m. Zoom registration details for the CBC after-party will be sent out once you let Dan know you are birding with us! *See you out there!*

November program continued Kirtland's Warbler from page 1

Ornithologist Charles Pease collected a bird on his father-in-law's farm in northeastern Ohio in 1851. He couldn't identify it and gave the bird to his father-in-law, Jared P. Kirtland, who compared it to his own extensive collection of bird skins. Unable to identify the little gray and yellow bird, he passed it to Spencer Baird, the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who took the specimen back to the Smithsonian. He wrote a paper describing the species and named it for Kirtland.

William Rapai wrote [*The Kirtland's Warbler: The story of a bird's fight against extinction and the people who saved it*](#) (2012). He's the



president of Grosse Pointe Audubon and executive director of the [Kirtland's Warbler Alliance](#), a nonprofit created to support the [Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team](#). This

team is a "collaborative network of public and private partners working to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Kirtland's Warbler."

Michigan drivers can help in these efforts by purchasing a special license plate depicting the Kirtland's Warbler. The extra fee goes to the Nongame Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund.



A State House Representative submitted a bill in September to name Kirtland's Warbler the state bird of Michigan. Turns out the American Robin was chosen in 1931 by resolution, not a law, so this technically expired at the end of that legislative session. Here are [more reasons](#) the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance supports the bill.

Meetings or Hikes Cancelled Due to Weather

Blackbrook Audubon will announce an event cancellation via the **I-Alert system**. Check WKYC-TV 3, [wkyc.com](#); WVIZ-TV 25; WKSU-FM 89.7; WCPN-FM 104.9; WCLV-FM 90.3; WCRF-FM 103.3. We will also update our Facebook page and website, [www.blackbrookaudubon.org](#).

January program continued Mentor Marsh remediation from page 1



This photo looks west behind the Deer Wood Estates subdivision, north of Lakeshore Blvd.

Bill Zawiski is the Water Quality Group Supervisor in Ohio EPA's Northeast District and has worked for OEPA since 1989. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in biology from the University of Akron. The Division of Surface Water ensures compliance with the federal Clean Water Act ([passed 50 years ago last month!](#)) and works to increase the number of water bodies that can be safely used for swimming and fishing. Bill has taken an active role in the local movement to remove dams to improve the quality of rivers. He's also co-authored several professional publications on dams and water quality.

Nearby Christmas Bird Counts

The Ashtabula CBC, centered just east of Kingsville, will be Saturday, December 31. [Marc Hanneman](#) compiles this count which covers Ashtabula and Conneaut Harbors, as well as several [Ashtabula County Metroparks](#).

The Burton CBC will be Monday, January 2, 2023. [Linda Gilbert](#) is the primary compiler and [Dan Best](#) is listed as the secondary compiler.



FROM the DESK of the PRESIDENT

by Trevor Wearstler

Have you ever stopped and thought “I want to be a better birder?” I have, mostly when I just can’t identify a bird by sight or call. I love observing bird behaviors from feeding to nesting. I want to see new birds and add them to my life list. That’s fine. I could spend more time in the field tracking down birds and learning the calls and that would make me a better birder, for me. However, I’ve been thinking about how I can be a better birder *for the birds*.

There are some everyday habits I have that are not so beneficial for our avian friends, from drinking coffee to eating chocolate. I’ll talk more about what I can stop doing for birds in a future article. I can feel pretty conflicted about how my actions affect birds near and far. So, I want to talk about something we can do this fall to help benefit birds. Planting native plants for the birds.

Okay, this isn’t the newest of ideas. But the study [Nonnative plants reduce population growth of an insectivorous bird](#) written in 2018 by Desirée L. Narango, has some enlightening findings. Surveying home landscapes around Washington D.C., the study’s authors inventoried plants, native and nonnative, and the insects on them, while monitoring one particular nesting bird. The finding showed that the Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) needs 70% native plant coverage to sustain their populations. I am sure if a study was done with Black-capped Chickadee, it would yield similar results.

Here is the good news. It doesn’t matter what you plant, as long as it is a native plant. Co-author Doug Tallamy says, “*Each plant in your landscape you should think of as a bird feeder.*” The overall goal is to attract native insects to native plants. This is especially important during the breeding season when birds are foraging for insects to feed their young, not seeds. Our native

plants support a sustainable base in the food web, providing food and shelter for insects that would otherwise not recognize it in nonnative plants. I suppose the human equivalent would be trying to do your grocery shopping at the pet store. It might work, but not for long.

So, if chickadees require nearly three-quarters of native plant coverage, bird species feeding exclusively on insects would likely require even more. Our urban to suburban patchwork of grassy yards is lacking those much-needed native plants. This may be one of the reasons we find ourselves out birding in parks and chasing birds in more suitable habitat. I am not saying to turn your home landscaping into a forest. I’m going to start by replacing a nonnative dogwood I have. Consider planting a few native trees and shrubs for a win-win scenario resulting in more birds at home and maybe less grass to cut, promoting more insects to feed, grow and in turn feed those birds we love so much. With this plan in mind, I’m starting to feel like a better birder already and come spring, I might have a few more birds in the yard.



[Carolina Chickadee](#)
from [allaboutbirds.org](#)

Monthly IBA Walk at Mentor Marsh SNP November 27, but NOT December 25

The fourth Sunday of each month we meet at the entrance gate to the Utility Pipeline Access Road, an otherwise restricted area, by the intersection of Woodridge Lane and Forest Road in Mentor at 8:00 a.m. After birding the pipeline, we explore the other path that leads to the interior of the Marsh, the Wake Robin Trail boardwalk. Park in the lot at 8936 Woodridge or along the south side of Woodridge Lane. Wake Robin starts with a steep, dirt hill and a rope railing.

Mentor Marsh falls within the [Grand River – Lower Watershed Important Bird Area](#).

Get your tickets here!

After a two-year hiatus, Blackbrook’s November program will be back at Holden Arboretum and you’ll be able to do some holiday shopping at our annual ticket auction. The 50/50 raffle will be back too, when someone will win half the money collected that night. Everyone will have time to browse the nature-themed books, puzzles, decorative items and artwork before the presentation on Kirtland’s Warbler on November 15.



We’d like to thank the owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Willoughby/Mayfield Heights for donating a punch card good for one free bag of their No-Mess Blend birdseed every month for one year. The total value of this prize is \$179.88.

Tickets cost \$1 each or six for \$5. The funds raised help us purchase [Audubon Adventures](#) newsletters for over 800 kids participating in the Geauga Park District’s [Nature Scopes](#) program.



Sharing our Shores



Plants are for the Birds!

Project FeederWatch is in progress

Project FeederWatch is an annual winter survey of birds at your choice of location and schedule. This year’s [FeederWatch](#) season runs November 1 to April 30. You only need a food source, a bird bath, or plants that attract birds.

The participant fee is \$18 for U.S. residents. The survey is run by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and [Bird Studies Canada](#), both non-profits.

We are sad to report the recent passing of two of our Blackbrook Audubon members:

Betty St. John

Carole Clement

May their love of nature live on in all of us.



Going back to Nature!

Have you seen the new wetland at Headlands Beach State Park? Since several of the parking lots at the far west end of the park were flooded so often the area started hosting fish, frogs and birds, the state of Ohio decided to turn the excess parking lots into a [coastal wetland dune/swale habitat](#). They built up dunes between the wetland and Lake Erie for protection against storms. The plans call for three water impoundments. Most of the work was done in-house by the northern construction crew under the Division of Parks and Watercraft. The project is funded by the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) and H2Ohio. Native wetland plants will be added in the spring. The Buckeye Trail will also be re-routed around this wetland, simplifying its route to the northern terminus by the Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve.

This project will be one of the topics covered by Adam Wohlever, NEO Regional Manager with the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, when he presents our program on April 18.



Encouraging update on our program about plastics from March 2021



We learned tips for breaking free from plastic from Jill Bartolotta, OSU Sea Grant Educator, in a virtual program. She is now working with the Council of the Great Lakes Region to deploy [two remote-controlled trash-scooping devices](#). A BeBot rakes plastic from beaches and Pixie Drones collect debris from water while recording data such as temperature, turbidity and dissolved oxygen. They were acquired with a grant from Meijer grocery store and will be deployed around the Great Lakes.

Jill says the BeBot will be at Fairport Harbor beach this spring and they'll partner with Lake Metroparks in its use. Jill and Sarah Orlando, another SeaGrant educator who manages the [Clean Marinas Program](#), are finding that while seeing what this equipment can do is an "exciting pilot program," expectations must be realistic since some problems have been encountered.

Sarah has been working with local marinas to deploy [SeaBins](#), devices that work 24/7 to skim and collect marine debris from the water's surface, as well as filter out gasoline, oils and microplastics. She said "This past summer, two Seabins were installed at Ohio Clean Marinas - one at Geneva Marina and one at Mentor Harbor Yachting Club. The plan is to work with local partners to install additional Seabins in the Huron area, Lorain, and likely Toledo."

Marina staff reported improvements in less trash and better water circulation, but also had issues with clogging of the units, needing to be mindful of impacts on native wildlife, and maintenance demands. Trash trapping technologies are not a "set and forget" tool. The property owner must make a commitment to maintain the unit if they agree to have one placed on site.

Jill and Sarah hope to create case studies on the different devices being used and develop best practices to share with colleagues around the Great Lakes. It would be fascinating to watch these skimmers do their thing in the water, but the ultimate solution goes beyond picking up the trash. It needs to be stopping debris at the source so it doesn't end up in our lakes in the first place. A mission we can all accomplish!

Quest completed along the Chagrin

Birders of all ages enjoyed another successful Chagrin River Bird Quest, thanks to perfect weather and the contributions of 20 volunteers from Blackbrook Audubon, the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC) and the Geauga Park District. More than 100 birders went afield September 9 and 10 on 28 teams and found 116 species of birds in the Chagrin River Watershed. "There were seven new teams, which tells us this free, fun event continues to resonate with families and birders," said Matt Valencic, ASGC's Education Committee Chair.

Cleveland Audubon led an owl prowl Friday night at the Novak Sanctuary in Aurora plus a Saturday morning bird walk at The Rookery. Blackbrook Audubon led a Saturday morning bird walk at Chagrin River Park, where we ran into Buster's Birders and several other teams.

All participants receive a Bird Quest t-shirt and an invitation to the Bird Quest celebration. Everyone attending the celebration is eligible to win prizes. We appreciate the continued support of Centerra Co-op Country Store in Chardon, Wild Birds Unlimited in Willoughby/Mayfield Heights and Geauga Feed & Grain plus anonymous contributors who donated prizes.

Congratulations to the Bird Quest 2022 Winners

Most Creative Team Name: Birdnocular Bunch

Rarest Bird: Common Raven by Hangry Birders at the mouth of the Chagrin River in Eastlake

Most Warblers: GPD Nat Catchers - 15

Most Species 3rd Place: Just Winging It (70)
The Chester Kurtz family team camped overnight at The West Woods, and birding with a driver, took third place.

Most Species 2nd Place: GPD Nat Catchers (84)
They also camped overnight.

Most Species 1st Place: Hangry Birders (85)

The Blackbrook Audubon Listless Listers, joining the Quest for the 6th straight year, recorded 54 species, including Merlin and Warbling Vireo.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Bird Quest 2023 will be September 8 and 9.

National Audubon Society reflects on the Audubon legacy

Every organization with an environmental mission tries to help people develop their knowledge of and empathy for the natural world. Since we all depend on a healthy planet Earth, the goal is to encourage people to make wise choices in their everyday lives and stop harming ecosystems. If we are to invite people onto our membership rolls and really make a difference for all forms of life, we need to include *all* people.

This is why the National Audubon Society is reconsidering having [John James Audubon](#) (1785-1851) as its namesake. An artist, naturalist and fabulist, he is also known for committing academic fraud and plagiarism, enslaving people and stealing human remains. Although the name "Audubon" has become synonymous with bird conservation, National Audubon Society is conducting the Audubon Naming Project to decide how to move forward.

The Board Task Force is examining four sets of inputs: historical research, engagement data, and legal and financial analyses. In addition to Audubon's biography, historical research includes the organization's origin story. Audubon's wife, Lucy Bakewell Audubon, pushed for the name. Engagement data is being gathered by a consultant—sparks & honey—to ensure anonymity of individual respondents. They will use surveys, 1:1 interviews and small group listening sessions conducted in October and November. The consultant will present its findings to the Task Force in December. The Task Force will deliberate and make a recommendation to the Full Board in February 2023.

As far as what National's actions mean for the chapters, National states: "We recognize the power of a network unified in name. As independently incorporated entities, each chapter has the autonomy and authority to make decisions in respect to their naming as best serves their needs.

Some chapters name their organizations after prominent geological features, others after conservationists. Some have never had the name Audubon in their organization's name at all. Still other chapters are eschewing the word "society" as it can be seen as exclusionary and superfluous. We welcome all of your organizations in our network, regardless of name."

Seattle Audubon is going through a similar process as National, [seeking input](#) from its members and volunteers. This is their current logo.



The [Audubon Naturalist Society](#), founded in 1897 and working to protect natural areas in the Washington D.C. region, renamed themselves Nature Forward, though a secondary reason was that people confused them with National Audubon Society. For comparison, **1905** The National Association of Audubon Societies was incorporated in New York State. **1940** The National Association of Audubon Societies became the [National Audubon Society](#).

Blackbrook's Board feels you should be aware of changes that may be coming. If you would like to chirp, caw, or screech at someone at National, write to National Audubon Society 225 Varick St. New York, NY 10014, call 212-979-3196 or use their [contact us page](#).

Friends of Blackbrook Audubon

New Renewal

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Blackbrook Audubon does not share or sell its mailing list.

_____ \$30 Individual _____ \$45 Household

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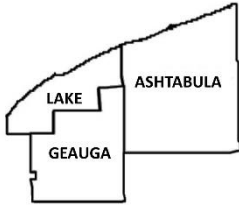
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Thank You!



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Trevor Wearstler - President
Laurie White - Editor

NOVEMBER

Wednesday, 16th 10 am

[Free webinar](#)

**Spotted Lanternfly and
the Potential Impacts on the
Maple Syrup Industry
Penn State Extension**

Registration required.

Friday, 18th 7:30 pm

[Burrough's Nature Club](#)
Rest in Peat by Dan Best
at Willoughby UM Church

Saturday, 26th 2:30 pm

**Research in Geauga
Parks: Survey Results**
Butterfly, dragonfly, bird surveys
[Virtual program registration](#)

Wednesday, 30th 6:30 pm

[NEO Railways:](#)
[The Maple Leaf Route](#)
by author Dan Rager
Interurban RR thru The Rookery,
Geauga Park District
at Mentor Public Library

DECEMBER

Sat., 10th 8:00 – 12 N
**Second Saturday Science
Open House, Mentor Marsh**
Woodridge Ln & Forest Rd
Free, utility access path

JANUARY 2023

Friday, 20th 7:30 pm
[Burrough's Nature Club](#)
**Bringing Nature Home:
Importance of Native Plants**
by [Doug Tallamy](#) on Zoom

Record birds on eBird for the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) February 17 – 20.