



The Hushwing **HERALD**

Blackbrook Audubon Society

Volume 60 Number 1

September / AUKtober 2024

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE: Tuesday, September 17, 2024
PROGRAM: Drones in Conservation
SPEAKER: Stuart Davis
Cleveland Metroparks
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Penitentiary Glen Nature Center

DATE: Tuesday, October 15, 2024
PROGRAM: Wonderful Woodpeckers
SPEAKER: Renell Roebuck, Naturalist
Geauga Park District
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Big Creek Park, Chardon

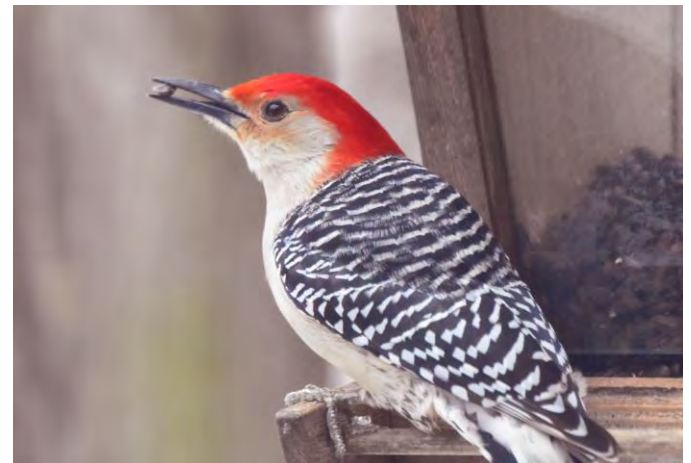
Tonight's presentation will illustrate how drones benefit land managers today and how these tools are changing our techniques for preserving biodiversity in the environment.

Stuart currently works for the Cleveland Metroparks in the natural resource department and has worked for many other organizations in northeast Ohio, including Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. He received an M.S. from the University of Akron where he was introduced to drones as a potential tool for land managers. For his thesis, he assessed the efficacy of drones for estimating deer populations. Since grad school, he has continued to operate drones for multiple conservation projects, including mapping wild-fire damage, monitoring Prairie Falcon eyries, and counting Joshua trees in the Mojave Desert.

In his current position for the Cleveland Metroparks, he flies drones to map invasive species, look for rare plants, count deer, and document storm damage.

Did you know we have seven possible woodpeckers to see in Northeast Ohio? We'll look at woodpecker identification and learn about the fascinating features of the family [Picidae](#). From their bristled tongues to stiff tail feathers, these unique birds are highly adapted to utilize trees for both nesting and foraging.

Renell has been an avid birder since her ornithology class at Lake Superior State University. She enjoys leading camps and programs that feature birds, aquatic critters, and nature journaling. It is one of her favorite birding challenges to see all seven woodpeckers in one day each year. As she shares her passion for the natural world and these amazing birds, we'll also discover why this challenge may be more difficult than you might think.



Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*
Photo taken by Bill Childs

We're expanding the BYOM raffle!

In addition to earning a raffle ticket for bringing your own mug or water bottle, you can now sign up in advance to bring a snack to share at a program meeting. Then you can fill out a ticket toward a gift card to a nursery, feed store or other fun spot when you bring the snack.



Birding Opportunities at State Nature Preserves!



SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

DATE: Saturday, September 21, 2024
ACTIVITY: Headlands Birding Festival Big Sit
TIME: 8:00 a.m. - noon
PLACE: [Headlands Dunes SNP](#)

DATE: Sunday, October 20, 2024
ACTIVITY: Exploring the Estuary
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
PLACE: [Old Woman Creek SNP and NERR](#)

Blackbrook Audubon is partnering with several other entities to cohost the inaugural Headlands Birding Festival. Among the Saturday morning activities, Blackbrook Audubon will supply coffee and doughnuts as we gather to scan the nearby shrubs and trees for warblers and other fall migrants. This is a perfect outing for less mobile folks who enjoy group birding.

Meet us in the picnic area near parking lot P-1 at the east end of Headlands Beach State Park in Mentor at the northern end of State Rt. 44. Bring your binoculars and a chair or blanket. Come when you can and stay as long as you like. Public restrooms are nearby and so is the entrance to the handicapped-accessible boardwalk leading to the beach. It is not necessary to register in advance to attend our Big Sit, but other festival events do require registration. See page 3 for details on the festival.

Both of the festival's keynote speakers have been invited to stop by our Big Sit. Some of us know Jim McCormac from his 30+ years as a botanist and other work for ODNR or as an author of several books, including *Birds of Ohio*. We've also invited Greg Miller, the Saturday evening speaker and consultant for the movie *The Big Year*.

New location for our monthly bird walk

We've "flown the coop" from our IBA walk at Orchard Hills Park and have decided to land at [Veterans Park](#) starting September 22. This walk is also one of the events during the Headlands Birding Festival. Then, after September, you can join us on the fourth Sunday of each month at Veterans, 5730 Hopkins Road in Mentor. Veterans Park protects the largest inland pond in Lake County, Granger Pond, and a remnant of original Ohio swamp forest. The [eBird list](#) has 204 species.

Designated in 1980 and encompassing 574 acres, Old Woman Creek is part of a national network of 30 State-Federal partnership coastal reserves that address state and regional coastal management needs through research, education and stewardship. It's also a [National Estuarine Research Reserve](#). It is co-managed by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

As a transition zone between land, creek water and Lake Erie water, the site contains a variety of habitats including marshes and swamps, upland forest, open water, tributary streams, barrier beach and near-shore Lake Erie. At times the creek flows naturally into the lake, but sometimes the mouth of the creek is closed off due to winds and shifting sands. There are several trail options, from blacktop to gravel and mowed grass, and the terrain is slightly rolling.

We'll meet there, 2514 Cleveland Road E, Huron at 9:00 a.m., or if you're interested in carpooling, meet at Lakeland Community College's Rt. 306 parking lot at 7:30 a.m.

Please RSVP at blackbrookaud@aol.com if you're planning to join us.

So why is it named Old Woman Creek?

According to the Friends of Old Woman Creek's website, there are [two possible legends](#). One involves a love triangle between a Frenchman and two Native Americans. The mother of the girl in the triangle drowned in the creek after her daughter died. The other tells the story of an elderly squaw who would not leave the area when the Ottawa tribe left for Canada due to the War of 1812. She was later found dead, her head pierced with the pick end of a Native American trade hatchet. More recently, a woman's skeleton was found with a hole in her skull by the creek. Evidence of the 2nd legend?

Come find the birds at the 10th annual Chagrin River Bird Quest

Know someone who'd like to start birding, but they just haven't gotten out there? Invite them onto your team for the 10th annual Chagrin River Bird Quest. The 24-hour challenge means birders hit the usual hotspots and their private retreats along the Chagrin River Corridor Important Bird Area to find as many bird species as possible.

Team check-in will be 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Friday, September 6 at [The Rookery](#), 10110 Cedar Road, Munson Township. This is when teams pick up their quest rules, maps, checklists, free t-shirts, and list of guided walks in the Chagrin watershed. From here, everyone hits the field and are asked to send photos of teams in action.

Blackbrook Audubon will lead a walk at Chagrin River Park, Rural Road entrance at 8:00 a.m. Saturday, September 7.

Each team has to turn in their complete checklist 4:00 p.m. Saturday, September 7 at The Rookery. The Quest Celebration offers free food, prizes and giveaways while the judges tally which teams earned certificates for most species overall, most warblers seen, most creative team name, most habitats visited and rarest bird.

All Bird Quest events are free and open to the public with registration at clevelandaudubon.org. Blackbrook Audubon co-sponsors CRBQ with Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland and the Geauga Park District.



John Lillich carved this half-scale Northern Shoveler to be raffled off at Bird Quest. It's black cherry and the base is black walnut. The sponsors thank John for his donation.



Inaugural Headlands Birding Festival Highlights Fall Bird Migration

As summer draws to a close, signifying the end of another breeding season, birds are beginning to head south for their wintering grounds. Shorebirds are mostly gone and kettles of Broad-winged Hawks swirl southward in mid-September. Warblers, vireos and thrushes who raised their young in Canada are passing back through our area. Join in the celebration of this fall spectacle with Blackbrook Audubon as we collaborate with local partners to help the first Headlands Birding Festival take off!

The Festival will open with a keynote address by Jim McCormac the evening of Friday, September 20. A columnist for the Columbus Dispatch and publisher of his own [natural history blog](#), Jim will speak at Springbrook Gardens at 6:00 p.m. His latest book, coauthored with Chelsea Gottfried, is [Gardening for Moths](#).

On Saturday, September 21 birders can take the 65-foot Holiday on a Lake Erie pelagic trip for a 3-hour adventure with expert guides helping to ID jaegers, terns and gulls. Novice and veteran birders and their families are invited on Saturday to guided walks at local hotspots and free presentations by expert birders and local park staff. Fine tune your bird identification skills,

Continued on Page 4

Headlands Birding Festival continued from Page 3

enhance your birding adventures with tech tools and learn how to take better photos in the field. From noon to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, food trucks and vendors will be available at Headlands Beach State Park. Along with a variety of culinary delights, browse native plants at the [Meadow City](#) and [Avonlea Gardens](#) nursery tents, explore top birding gear with Time and Optics and check out local artists and authors. Then enter the Friends of Headlands Beach State Park raffle, and connect with the Headlands Birding Festival Partners. Saturday wraps up at Springbrook Gardenhouse at 6:00 p.m. with a keynote talk by Greg Miller, a [senior tour leader](#) for Wildside Nature Tours. Greg was the inspiration for Jack Black's character in the 2011 movie *The Big Year*, based on a 2004 book of the same name.

On Sunday, September 22 you'll find walks on spotting migratory birds, outings for beginners and bird banding demonstrations at Mentor Lagoons. Walk locations include Lake Erie Bluffs, Painesville Township Park, Headlands Beach State Park, Mentor Marsh and Chagrin River Park.

All walks are free but some require registration. Fees apply to the keynote addresses and pelagic trip. Register at [Eventbrite](#). Tickets will not be sold at the door.

The festival is presented by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Lake Metroparks, city of Mentor, Lake County Visitors Bureau, Friends of Headlands Beach State Park, and Blackbrook Audubon Society.

As birds fly over the complex known as Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve, Headlands Beach State Park and Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve, they discover a place where they can rest and recharge on their journeys to the southern U.S., Central America and even South America. Let's see them off and wish them safe travels at the Headlands Birding Festival.



The Grand River Watershed in Geauga, Portage, Trumbull, Ashtabula and Lake Counties.

Celebrating 50 years of the Wild and Scenic Grand River!

by Becky Donaldson

The Grand River, with its headwaters in Geauga and Portage Counties, was Ashtabula County's first river to be designated in the Scenic Rivers program. On January 17, 1974 it met the classifications for both wild and scenic sections.

The WILD segment runs 23 miles from the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark downstream to the Norfolk and Southern Railroad trestle south of Painesville.

The SCENIC segment stretches 33 miles from the State Route 322 bridge in Orwell downstream to the Harpersfield covered bridge.

There is a close connection between the water quality of a river and the lands surrounding it. The clear waters, heavily wooded riverbanks, and the abundance of flora and fauna associated with designated [wild, scenic, and recreational rivers](#) remind us of a time long gone.

Ohio's 15 state scenic rivers are a testament to the natural grandeur of pre-settlement Ohio. Each of these high-quality streams has been designated because of the stewardship of local municipalities, landowners, and residents.

A map of Ohio's scenic rivers and the upcoming celebration of the Grand River's 50th anniversary can be found on the [Division of Natural Areas and Preserves](#) website.

The Cranes Are Here – We Just Need Volunteers to Find Them for a Survey

Ohio's participation for the fourth year in the [Annual Midwest Crane Count](#) yielded 412 Sandhill Cranes on April 13. Volunteers surveyed 32 counties this year and found cranes in 26 of them. Once again, Geauga County came in third with 48 sandhills, although this is a drop from last year's 63. One Sandhill Crane was found in Ashtabula County, the first such survey there! Alas, cranes did not turn up in any of the 10-square mile survey blocks in Lake County on count day, but a pair was seen the day before and the day after, according to Megan Hart, Lake's county coordinator.



Megan says they are looking for more volunteers for next year's count, which is held for two hours on a Saturday morning in April. Results from previous years and a list of county coordinators can be found at [Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative](#).

Use Site Review to Plan Bird Outings



"Birding is for everybody and every body." That's the tagline of [Birdability](#)[®], an international network of volunteer birders working to improve inclusion and accessibility in the birding community. They hold accessible birding outings and maintain the Birdability[®] Map. This map, in partnership with the National Audubon Society GIS team, is a crowdsourcing tool that describes in detail the accessibility of birding locations around the world. Among the features included are trail conditions (surface, grade of hills, etc.), width of parking spaces, accessible restrooms, benches, railings and more.

Lake Metroparks Naturalist Tony Gazso has been adding various Lake Metroparks sites to the map and has also started an Accessible Birding program that takes place at Lakeshore Reservation in Perry. Check Parks Plus for the next Accessible Birding outing.

The Sandhill Crane, *Antigone canadensis*, is listed as threatened in Ohio. Besides joining the survey during breeding season, you can help them by purchasing the [Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp](#). Proceeds go to the Wildlife Diversity Fund, which supports habitat restoration, wildlife and habitat research projects and the creation of free wildlife educational materials. New this year, \$1 from every stamp sold will go to the [Southern Wings](#) program, which protects the overwintering habitats of Neotropical

migratory birds that pass through Ohio. The legacy stamp can be purchased online through [Ohio's Wildlife Licensing System](#) and at any location that sells hunting and fishing licenses.

Photo of Sandhill Cranes courtesy of Ohio Division of Wildlife

Tour Unveils Solar Potential

The American Solar Energy Society's [National Solar Tour](#) will shine October 4 - 6. Anyone interested in seeing local solar projects in action can visit open houses at homes and businesses on the [Ohio "Wish You Were Here" Tour](#). A guided bus tour leaves the Willoughby Senior Center on Friday, October 4 with stops in western Lake and eastern Cuyahoga counties. In addition to visiting Lincoln Electric's 2.5 mega-watt wind turbine, they will stop at Laketran's Wickliffe Transit Center to check out several EV models and learn about their electric bus fleet.

Another guided bus tour will leave the Mentor Senior Center on Saturday, October 5. Participants can view and discuss solar applications, battery-backup systems, electric cars and many examples of energy efficiency.

For more information, contact Valerie Garrett at 440-231-0842.

Purple Martin Colonies Continue to Thrive in Lake County by Alison Huey

The 2024 [Purple Martin](#) season got started in early April when the first martins began returning to northeast Ohio from their wintering grounds in Brazil. By mid-May, nest building was underway and the first egg was laid at the Chagrin River Park colony around May 24. Eggs hatch in about 14 days and when the nestlings are between 14 – 20 days old, they are ready to be banded. In total we banded 400 nestlings and 16 adults between 5 sites: Chagrin River Park, Osborne Park, Walsh Park, Mentor Lagoons and Lake Erie Bluffs. This total doesn't include the martins banded at Holden Arboretum and Penitentiary Glen by Holden staff and volunteers. The number of nestlings at each site seems to have either stayed steady or increased from 2023. We didn't have a late cold snap, like in the spring of 2023 that led to some adult bird fatalities, but we did have a week of temperatures at or near 90° in mid-June, which led to a few nestling fatalities.

Ann Bugada and I continue to work with Mentor Natural Resources staff, and besides banding, we were able to recapture nearly 20 previously banded martins. Among these birds we caught a female at Mentor Lagoons that was banded at Chagrin River Park, as a nestling, in 2018! She's flown to Brazil six times and back six times. That's almost equal to flying around the world twice! Another fun find was a female caught at Mentor Lagoons that was banded by the [Purple Martin Conservation Association](#) in Erie, PA, as a nestling, in 2021. She nested at Mentor Lagoons this year, but we found her nesting at Osborne Park last summer (2023). It's interesting to see how the birds move around between the colonies here in Lake County.

Two animal ambassadors at Lake Metroparks Wildlife Center pass away

Manuel, a Broad-winged Hawk, came in 2007 as an adult with a permanent wing injury. He passed in May and his true age was unknown.

Ms. V, the Turkey Vulture, was taken from a nest in 1985. Imprinted on people, she died in July.

Wildlife Center staff and volunteers celebrate the time they got to spend with these birds.

"Purple Martin populations have declined by 24.1% over the last 55 years. That is 2.8 million birds lost," according to the Purple Martin Conservation Association. This decline is caused by many factors including climate change, habitat loss in both North and South America and the over use of pesticides, which affects their food supply. We hope our efforts to monitor nesting colonies around Lake County will help the Purple Martin population rebound in years to come.



Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) nestlings getting banded. Photo courtesy of banding team

As September rolls around, Purple Martins are well on their way back to Brazil, gathering together at migratory roosts as they head south towards the Gulf of Mexico. We wish them a safe journey and look forward to their cheerful return in the spring.

Chimney Swifts Stop at Oberlin Preserve

[Western Reserve Land Conservancy](#) manages Oberlin Preserve and reports that Chimney Swifts have started to use a tower built by a Girl Scout troop in the fall of 2020 for nesting and roosting! Oberlin College Green Edge Fund, The Girl Scouts of Northeast Ohio Troop #50439, Black River Audubon Society, and the Ohio Ornithological Society collaborated on the 12-foot tower.

[Chimney Swifts](#) (*Chaetura pelagica*) and Purple Martins are both aerial insectivores and migrate to South America, but they are not related. They are in different families and even different orders. Purple Martins are a perching bird, but Chimney Swifts can't perch. They cling to and attach their nest to vertical surfaces.

Blackbrook Audubon Carried Out Our Tag Line of "Spreading the Love of Nature"

After a bulk purchase of 8x42 Vortex Crossfire HD binoculars, Blackbrook donated two pair to the [Ashtabula County District Library](#) system in June. Valued at \$210 each with a lifetime warranty, one pair will be kept at the Ashtabula Public Library, 440-997-9341, while the other will be housed at the Geneva Public Library, 440-466-4521.

Ryan Whelpley, the Ashtabula Branch Manager, said the timing was perfect as the theme for the Summer Reading Program was "Adventure Begins at Your Library." They will use the binoculars "in house" and will share them with patrons to check out too. Mr. Whelpley said they cherish the binoculars and are touched by Blackbrook Audubon's kindness.

Over the past year or so, Blackbrook has also donated binoculars to the Mentor Marsh Nature Center and the Geauga Park District. We are grateful for the support of our Friends of Blackbrook, whose generosity makes these

donations possible. Blackbrook kept two pair of binoculars for attendees of our monthly Important Bird Area Walks and/or field trips.

The east entrance to Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve now has a fishing line receptacle at the start of fisherman's trail. Everyone who enjoys fishing along the breakwall can drop their discarded line into this tube and it will be recycled. It was assembled and donated by the family of a Blackbrook Audubon board member and installed by avid birder Roger Beuck. Well-known Ohio naturalist Jim McCormac pleads with Ohio fishermen to be careful with their line in his [blog of 28 July](#). This happens to be the same day Blackbrook installed the tube! The board would be grateful for any volunteers who would like to check the tube or assemble additional receptacles as the need warrants.



Roger Beuck with the fishing line receptacle he installed in July at Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve. Thank you, Roger!

Friends of Blackbrook Audubon

New Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

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Blackbrook Audubon does not share or sell its mailing list.

_____ \$30 Individual _____ \$45 Household

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I do **not** wish to be a Friend of Blackbrook, but would like to donate \$ _____.

Make checks payable to **Blackbrook Audubon Society**.

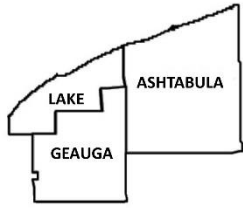
Mail to: **Friends of Blackbrook Audubon**
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Thank You!



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Becky Donaldson - President
 Laurie White - Editor



International
BAT WEEK
 October 24-31



**Tues., Nov. 5th
 Election Day**

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, 8th 1 - 3 pm
Monarch Migration
 Free tagging program
 by City of Mentor
 at **Mentor Lagoons**

Thursday, 19th 6:30 pm
[Transforming the
 Mentor Marsh
 State Nature Preserve](#)
 Register for free program at
 Mentor Public Library,
 Main branch, Village Room.

OCTOBER

Saturday, 12th
[October Big Day](#)
 Report birds at
**Second Saturday
 Science Open House
 at Mentor Marsh**
 Woodridge Ln. & Forest Rd.
 Free, 8:00 am - noon
 – OR –
**at Lake Metroparks
 100 Bird Quest
 Lake Erie Bluffs, Lane Rd.**
 Free, 8:00 am - noon

NOVEMBER

[Ashtabula County
 Metroparks](#)
 is seeking to renew a
 0.5 mill levy
 for 5 years.
Tuesday, 19th
**Blackbrook Program
 Turkeys in America**
 by Chuck Jakubchak
 Holden Arboretum
 Raffle and 50/50 fundraiser

Join us for this year's Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 28