



The Hushwing **HERALD**

Blackbrook Audubon Society

Volume 52 Number 2

November/December, 2017 and January, 2018

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE: Tuesday, November 21, 2017
PROGRAM: “Mentor Marsh: History, Tragedy, Recovery”
SPEAKER: David Kriska, Ph.D
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: The Holden Arboretum

Mentor Marsh has been a National Park Service-designated National Natural Landmark since 1966 for being one of the most species-rich sites on the Great Lakes shoreline. It was named Ohio’s first State Nature Preserve in 1971 and is a National Audubon Society Important Birding Area. This unique wetland suffered dramatically in the 1960s when salt-mine tailings leached into Blackbrook Creek. By the early 1970s, most of the swamp forest trees and marsh plants had died. The site was overtaken by reed grass (*Phragmites australis*), a 15-foot-tall non-native invasive plant. *Phragmites* grew so densely within the nearly 4-mile-long marsh basin that an estimated 1 billion plants were growing just an inch apart. After partial abatement of the salt source, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History began a large-scale restoration of Mentor Marsh in 2012. Under the guidance of Museum restoration ecologists, the *Phragmites* is being sprayed via helicopter and a ground-based treatment. The *Phragmites* is also being physically mashed to allow native plants to grow. The results thus far have been heartening. Dozens of native plant species are sprouting throughout the marsh, and rare marsh birds — such as American Bittern and Virginia, King and Sora Rail — are now nesting. Fish, such as Northern Pike, are spawning, and Yellow Perch fingerlings are starting to use the marsh as a nursery.

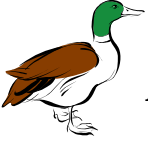
Continued on page 3...

DATE: Tuesday, January 16, 2018
PROGRAM: “Song Structure and Variation in the Veery in the Appalachian Mountains”
SPEAKER: Courtney Brennan
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Penitentiary Glen Nature Center

The Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) is a Neotropical migrant thrush whose breeding range spreads across southern Canada and the northeastern United States, and their breeding range narrows as it continues south through the higher elevations in the Appalachian Mountains. Despite their wide distribution, this species is poorly understood in many regards- including a clear and basic description of song structure and an investigation into geographic song variation. This lecture presents an updated description of Veery song and singing patterns and on how elements of Veery songs vary geographically across the Appalachian Mountains.

Courtney Brennan is a Cleveland native and graduated from Cleveland State University with a Master's degree in Environmental Science with research focused on birdsong variation. Her work at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History began as avian specimen preparator before being promoted to Collections Manager for the Ornithology Department. As Collections Manager, Courtney assists in the curation, care, and maintenance of the museum's 36,000 avian study skins, 4,000 eggs and nests, and its 1,500 osteological specimens. She also coordinates weekly volunteer specimen preparation sessions, which adds approximately 500 new specimens to the Ornithology collection annually.

**NOTE: There is no meeting in December!
Why not take part in our Xmas Bird Count
instead? See Activities on Page 2!**



ACTIVITIES

December Activity

DATE: Saturday, December 30, 2017
 ACTIVITY: Mentor Xmas Bird Count
 TIME: all day!
 PLACE: Lake County, Ohio

118th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

It is time once again to get involved in the oldest citizen-science project in North America. Blackbrook Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count will take place on Saturday, December 30, 2017.

The object is to count all the bird species and number of birds in our 15 mile radius in one 24-hour period. This means we need as many eyes and ears as we can find to help us get as accurate a count as possible. All the data is turned into National Audubon for a full tally from across, not only our state, but all of North America. We will assign our volunteers to specific areas, in teams, to cover as much of our territory as we can with the resources we have available.

We also need volunteers to be "feeder" watchers. This is an important part of our count, as it covers many backyard birds that we don't see while we are out in the "bush". This also is an excellent way to become involved in this annual activity if you cannot physically do the "leg" work and have a feeder in your yard. Please consider this option and call us.

We know the weather can be a factor, but those of us who have been doing this for several years tend to think of it as a day of "FUN" and we usually meet somewhere for a warm lunch. We hope you will consider becoming a part of this important project by contacting Dan Donaldson, our Christmas Bird Count Chairman, via email at danook57@yahoo.com to get your assignment to a team. Keep in mind you do not have to be an expert "birder" to enjoy this outing just a lover of birds.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR !!!

12/30/2017

November Activity

DATE: Sunday, November 19, 2017
 ACTIVITY: Local inland lakes
 TIME: 9:00 a.m.
 PLACE: Headwaters and LaDue

It's waterfowl time! Join us as we scan local inland lakes for migrating ducks, loons, and grebes. As always we'll keep an eye to the skies for raptors and any other feathered friends. We will meet at the Rt. 608 parking lot of Geauga Park District's Headwaters Park and from there carpool or caravan to LaDue Reservoir, and perhaps chase any local reports of interesting migrants. Dress for the weather and bring along a spotting scope if you have one – the more the merrier! Meet at 9:00 am at Geauga Park District's Headwaters Park main parking lot on Rt. 608. For more information, contact Pat Morse at 440-256-1404 x2101.

January Activity

DATE: Saturday, January 20, 2018
 ACTIVITY: West Side Lakeshore Birding
 TIME: 9:00 a.m.
 PLACE: Lorain Impoundment-Lakeside Landing

Planning ahead for birding along the Lake Erie shoreline is always a challenge in winter since the weather and ice-cover of the lake are unknown. We will venture to the west side and explore along the lakeshore for wintering waterfowl, raptors and any other winged wonders. Meet at the Lorain Impoundment-Lakeside Landing at 9:00 a.m. and we will caravan from there to Avon and other nearby birding hotspots. For directions to the Lorain Impoundment-Lakeside Landing, use 301 Lakeside Ave., Lorain, 44052 (that is the Jackalope Lakeside Restaurant which is at the entrance to Lakeside Landing parking lot). It is about an hour drive from Mentor. Dress for cold, windy and wet conditions and bring along a spotting scope if you have one. For more information, contact Pat Morse at 440-256-1404 x2101.

Continued from page 1.

“Mentor Marsh: History, Tragedy, Recovery”

Come be inspired by a story from David Kriska, Ph.D, the Museum’s Biodiversity Coordinator, about Nature’s resilience.

David joined the Museum in 2003 as the Biodiversity Coordinator for the Center for Conservation & Biodiversity & the Natural Areas Division where he specializes in rare plant and animal surveys, wetlands ecology, and wetland restoration. David became interested in the natural world when he was ten years old and has been working in the natural history field for over 25 years. Since 2008, he’s helped the Natural Areas Division acquire nearly 2,000 acres, raising over \$4M in the process. The Museum currently has 53 scientific natural areas spread across nearly 9,000 acres that contain unique natural communities, such as hemlock northern hardwood forest, Lake Erie island alvar, fossil dune ridge, marshes, swamps and glacial wetlands. These high-quality habitats -- many are globally rare -- together protect 250 different kinds of endangered, threatened, or rare plant and animal species. Together, they represent the remarkable biological diversity that was once widespread throughout the region.

MEETINGS OR HIKE CANCELLED DUE TO WEATHER

How do I know if a meeting or hike is cancelled? Blackbrook Audubon is registered with the I-Alert system that is seen on WKYC-TV 3, wkyc.com; Newsradio WTAM 1100 AM, wtam.com; and as well our website: www.blackbrookaudubon.org

Please check one of these sources if the weather is bad or it is extremely cold outside. We do not want any members making a trip to a meeting or hike only to find out that it had been cancelled.



Chagrin River IBA Walks

Please lend us your eyes and ears. Blackbrook Audubon’s Chagrin River IBA Walks continue on the fourth Sunday of each month throughout the winter. Meet at 8 AM at the Reeves Road main parking lot at Chagrin River Park in Willoughby, located at 3100 Reeves Road, Willoughby, OH 44094.

The Mentor Marsh Nature Center

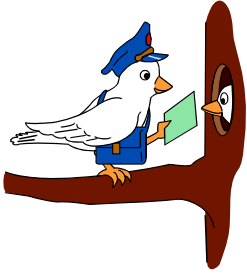
Located at 5185 Corduroy Road in Mentor. November through March, the Mentor Marsh Nature Center is open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. the first Sunday of the month. April through October, we’re open 12-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Free, family nature hikes are offered 2-3:30 pm every Sunday we’re open. Meet at the Nature Center. Our programs are a go in all but severe weather, so please come prepared for weather conditions. RSVPs requested for programs; (440) 257-0777, rdonaldson@cmnh.org or Mentor Marsh FB page.

December 3 Waterfowl Hunt Mentor Marsh provides wetland habitat along the lakefront which migrating waterfowl use as stopover habitat. Join us on a roving program hitting some of the hotspots around the Marsh, scoping for waterfowl and other early winter birds.

Mark your calendars for the 9th annual Mentor Marsh Bald Eagle Fest on May 6th, 2018!

Celebrate our nesting bald eagles at our annual open house from 12-5 p.m. Register for a guided hike to view our Marsh Eagle nest at 12:30, 1:30, 2:30 or 3:30 p.m. RSVPs required for hikes.

Volunteer with us! Join our efforts at Mentor Marsh. Projects include helping at the Nature Center, with events, stewardship and more! Contact Becky for more information



FROM the DESK of the PRESIDENT

By Becky Donaldson

Hope your fall is going well so far! In addition to some great fall birding, I also had a neat, new experience to share. I volunteered with the Lights Out Cleveland Crew this fall. Several Blackbrook Audubon members have been volunteering as well. In addition to the outreach with property owners and building managers--getting them to adjust their lighting schedule in order to help stop attracting birds to the lit buildings overnight, a crew of volunteers has been walking the streets of downtown Cleveland, collecting deceased birds and saving stunned, live birds from getting predated upon by gulls, crows or hawks.

The Lights Out Cleveland Crew have been meeting every morning this fall season (and first started this past spring migration period) at the Drury Hotel on East 6th Street at 5 a.m. unless it's heavy rain. This fall's season will only last until October 31, but efforts will start again in mid-March through the end of May for the spring migration.

Excerpted from Tim Jacinski, from Lake Erie Nature and Science Center (LENSC): "The group has everything you'll need, and you will be paired with others that know the routes and have been capturing and collecting birds already. If you aren't a fast walker, or maybe can't walk long distances, you can be placed in front of the "bad" spots and rest your feet and still help immensely.

It is a lot of walking and unfortunately many birds are deceased BUT, some are alive and are taken back to (the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center) wildlife rehab center and released when they are ready."

On the morning that my daughter Ella and I joined their efforts, we did a lot of walking, but circled around a couple buildings and parking garages that are notorious for window strikes. We had five live birds that we collected—4 White-throated Sparrows and a Gray Catbird. So glad we could help save them!

This group can use more help! For more information (including donations to fund their rehab efforts), contact LENS C at wildlife@lensc.org or by calling 1-440-471-8357 or check out the Cleveland group's webpage at <http://ohiolightsout.org/cities/lights-out-cleveland/>

A Holiday Gift Idea

Do you have someone on your holiday gift list that is difficult to buy for? Is this person interested in nature? Then why not consider giving them a membership in Friends of Blackbrook.

Friends of Blackbrook Audubon

Blackbrook is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Friends of Blackbrook Audubon

Please check one:

New Member

Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

_____ \$30 Individual Membership

_____ \$45 Household Membership

_____ \$ Additional Donation

Hushwing via Snail Mail

Hushwing via email

I do not wish to be a Member, but would like to donate \$ _____

Check payable to: Blackbrook Audubon Society

Mail to: Friends Of Blackbrook
PO Box 1306
Mentor, OH 44061-1306

Project FeederWatch Benefits Birds and People

Connection with nature promotes wellness

Ithaca, NY- More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch have been doing-benefiting themselves and the birds.

"It is a great winter time activity for the whole family," says Alaska FeederWatcher Nancy Darnell. "If you have children, they will come to love watching the birds. All of this is fun and a chance to contribute to scientific studies, too!"

The 2017-18 season of **Project FeederWatch extends from Saturday,**

November 11 through early

April. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants now exceed 20,000 during the 2016-17 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges-a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.



"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same time helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations," says project leader David Bonter. "We are grateful for the contributions our participants have made for the birds and are proud of the joy they say it brings to their busy lives. Since we started in 1987, more than 40,000 people have submitted observations, engaging with the wildlife beyond their windows."

"Project FeederWatch opened up a whole new world for me," says participant Cheri Ryan of Lockport, Kentucky. "It's so interesting to watch the activities of the birds. I learn something new each time I participate."

Scientists learn something new from the data each year, too, whether it's about the movements of common backyard birds or unusual sightings of rarely seen species. Highlights of the most recent

season include the largest southward movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the history of the project-part of an expected influx of northern birds that fly farther south when their food supplies run short. Other northern species showing up in record numbers included Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins. Among the rare birds reported was a Streak-backed Oriole in Loveland, Colorado-the state's first report of this bird, native to Mexico. A December nor'easter deposited a Dovekie in Newton, Massachusetts, the first time this North Atlantic seabird has ever been reported to Project FeederWatch.

Long-term data show some species increasing in number, such as the Lesser Goldfinch in the Southwest. Other populations continue a downward trend, such as the Evening Grosbeak throughout their range. Once one of the most common species seen at feeders in the northern half of the continent, the grosbeaks are declining for unknown reasons.

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well being. Wells also notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$18 fee (\$15 for Lab members) participants are sent a Research Kit with complete instructions for participating. You provide the feeder(s) and seed. In addition, U.S. participants receive a subscription to the Lab of Ornithology's newsletter, Living Bird News.

Lake Metroparks programs

Registration required. Call 440-358-7275 or visit lakemetroparks.com.

Christmas Bird Count at Lake Metroparks

Saturday, December 30, 2017

FREE, All ages (younger than 18 with an adult)
8 to 10 a.m. at Penitentiary Glen Reservation
or at Lake Erie Bluffs

Join our friends from Blackbrook Audubon Society for this traditional winter hike. This is the longest running Citizen Science project in the world, providing info on bird population trends. It's fun, too! Beginners welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them, although loaners are available.

Bird Walks

Ages 14 and older (younger than 18 with an adult), FREE

These morning birding adventures are at Lake Metroparks' best birding locations, located along major migration corridors with histories of good migration days. New birders are welcome!

Saturday, December 9, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Lake Erie Bluffs-Lane Road

Saturday, January 13, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Lake Erie Bluffs-Lane Road

Saturday, January 27, 8:30 to 10 a.m. at Penitentiary Glen

Saturday, February 10, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Lake Erie Bluffs-Lane Road



Geauga Park District's Programs.

Registration Required

via www.geaugaparkdistrict.org or 440-286-9516.

Winter Wildflower Workshop

Saturday, November 18, 2-4 PM
The West Woods Nature Center

After the colorful petals are gone, many of the summer wildflowers are still identifiable by their unusual seed pods. Learn how to tell many of these plants using the Winter Weed Finder booklet, available at the gift shop before the program for \$6.00. An indoor session will be followed by an exploration in search of plants to identify. Joint program with Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio.

Partially Wheelchair/Walker Accessible.

Winging It: Waterfowl on the Move

Sunday, November 19, 9-11 AM
LaDue Reservoir Boathouse Parking Lot

Meet up at the parking area on Valley Road to bird LaDue Reservoir for loons, waterfowl and Bald Eagles during prime migration time. Spotting scopes provided. Van seats available first come, first-served. Caravan behind if bus fills.

Coffee & Chocolate - The Benefits of Shade Grown Products

Sunday, December 3, 10-11 AM

The West Woods Nature Center
Enjoy a cup of coffee and a piece of chocolate while learning about the important role these uniquely grown products play in saving Neotropical migrant and local bird species, conserving forest habitat and more. Discuss details of creating a local coffee club to purchase this coffee at a discount. Wheelchair Accessible.

Visit either park's webpage for updates on these or many other great opportunities to enjoy nature!

Trevor's Tips

As winter approaches and many birds have headed south, we are left with some of our favorite year-round birds, the woodpeckers. Of all our woodpecker species, no two are more challenging than The Downy and Hairy woodpecker. Despite their size difference, they look very similar. When spotting an individual bird the easiest way to help birders determine which bird is which, is by examining their vastly different bill sizes.



Illustrations © David Allen Sibley

Pictured above: Hairy on the left and Downy on the right. Both male, females lack the red spot on the back of the head.

The Downy is the smaller bird and so is its small nub of a bill, less than half the length of its head. Where the Hairy's bill is the more dagger shaped and nearly the full length of its head. If you were to mentally flip the birds' bills back into their heads, a Hairy woodpecker's bill would extend well past its eye compared to a Downy bill that would just touch the eye. Next time you are out birding and see a difficult woodpecker flip that bill for an easier ID.

[Editor's Note: "Trevor's Tips" is a new feature column by our very own Trevor Wearstler.]

Eighth Annual Ticket Auction and now a 50/50 Raffle too!

Blackbrook Audubon's popular ticket auction will take place during our Tuesday, November 21st meeting at the Holden Arboretum. Tickets will cost \$1 each or 6 tickets for \$5. Several nice gifts have been donated already.



We have several books, including *Sibley's Birding Basics* by David Allen Sibley and *Letters From Eden – A Year at Home, in the Woods* by Julie

Zickefoose. We also have a 2018 Charley Harper calendar and a set of brackets to create a raised flower bed. Dave and Jodi Pretnar, owners of the Wild Birds Unlimited stores in Willoughby and Mayfield Heights, have once again donated a generous prize—a bag of birdseed each month for an entire year! Prizes keep coming in until the very last minute, and we're sure to have lots of fun! There will be time to browse the selection of items before and immediately after David Kriska's talk regarding the restoration of Mentor Marsh (see program description on page 1).

New this year will be a **50/50 Raffle**, where the lucky winner will win half the evening's proceeds! The Ticket Auction and 50/50 Raffle proceeds help Blackbrook Audubon purchase Audubon Adventures, a quarterly nature-themed newsletter for middle school classrooms in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties.

SHOP LOCAL AT GIFTS FROM THE HEART OF NATURE at The Holden Arboretum

Saturday, Nov. 18 - Wednesday, Jan. 3, 9am - 5pm

Jump-start your holiday shopping this year with a trip to the Holden Arboretum's popular Gifts from the Heart of Nature Show and Sale. Shop for environmentally-friendly and unique gifts for the holidays at the annual holiday show, featuring nature-inspired work from regional artists. Each year, artists showcase something different, from paintings and handcrafted tableware to one-of-a-kind jewelry and accessories, so be sure to check out what is in store this year!

Visit holdenarb.org for more information.

BLACKBROOK AUDUBON SOCIETY

PO Box 1306

Mentor, OH 44061-1306

LOOK FOR BLACKBROOK ON THE WEB!

AT www.blackbrookaudubon.org

Becky Donaldson - President

Bruce Roberts - Editor

Mary Ann Wagner – Assistant Editor

Blackbrook Audubon Hats and Mugs

We have a limited number of our water-resistant Blackbrook Audubon baseball caps still available. The brown hat features our screech owl logo with the words Blackbrook Audubon Society embroidered on the front. Also available are white ceramic coffee mugs with the Blackbrook Audubon logo printed in deep brown on both sides of the mug. Hats cost \$15 each. Mugs cost \$7 each. If interested, email blackbrookaud@aol.com or call Mary Ann at 440-255-0961.

And something to ponder:

A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.

~Chinese Proverb

