

WINGTIPS



AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, photo by Chad Wilson

Or Current Residents
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SEPTEMBER 2022

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September 2022 Program
Tuesday, September 6 at 7 p.m.
Carlisle Reservation Visitor Center
Plastic Pollution in the Great Lakes
Dr. Lara Roketenetz



Lara Roketenetz paddling while her dear friend supervises

Lara Roketenetz has her Ph.D. in Integrated Biosciences from The University of Akron where she studied aquatic invasive species and biological control methods. She currently serves as the Director of The University of Akron Field Station where she educates students from K-college on environmental issues. She hopes to help foster the love and stewardship of nature in people of all ages. She also serves as the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for Surfrider Foundation Northern Ohio. She loves living near Lake Erie and paddleboarding with her partner Josh and their dogs (yes, the dogs go on the boards!). She helps organize beach clean-ups in the Greater Cleveland area with partner organizations such as Black River Audubon and Keep the Lakes Great to raise awareness and action for Lake Erie.

Lara will present a slide show about Plastic Pollution and what can be done about it. While we often hear about the extent of plastic pollution in the oceans, our freshwater water bodies face some of the same pressures. Lara will present data from local, regional, and national sources. She will then discuss the importance of every day acts by individuals to reduce plastic pollution, as well as collective action that can help combat this pressing issue for our lake and the people and animals that depend on it.

September Field Trip
All trips are on Saturdays
Guests Are Always Welcome!

September 17, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
Augusta Anne Olsen SNP
4934 W River Rd, Wakeman, OH
Meet in the parking lot.
Paul Sherwood to lead

Notes from the President

By Rob Swindell



Last year was an engaging and tumultuous year for Black River Audubon. From our efforts to preserve Cromwell Park and speaking events in public libraries to outreach events in local festivals and beach cleanups, we sought to serve our mission in the community. After our second major speaker event in a month, by late May our board was ready for a break.

But we are back and ready to go this fall! We have a great list of speakers lined up again this year including a wide variety of topics, such as Judy Semroc on “Dragon, Damsels and Hummers,” Tim Fairweather on raptors, Robert Edwards discussing “Diversity of Flora,” and Christine Bailey on bird activity and forensic anthropology.

Our Outstanding Speaker returns this March, and we have another widely acclaimed speaker lined up. We will announce this in the coming weeks as soon as it is made official.

We are also excited about our field trips this year. The bird nerds will lead a field trip at Sandy Ridge, Kate Pilacky will share the Oberlin Preserve, and of course, there is the annual trip to Magee Marsh. See the

insert for a complete line up of speakers and field trips.

In addition, we are planning a return to Minnesota this February to go looking for the Great Gray Owl and many other northern friends. Those who went last year had a blast. We are also looking to make a road trip to the Upper Peninsula in Michigan in June in search of Kirtland's warbler in the jack pine forest and other species.

We again have several public speaking events lined up this fall and winter and will continue our outreach into the community. I am looking forward to seeing everyone when Lara Roketenetz talks to us about plastic pollution on September 6 and at our fall picnic on September 17 at the beautiful Vermilion Reservation-Bacon Woods.

“Birds and Burgers” Fall Picnic

Sept. 17th, 1:00-4:00 pm

Mill Hollow-Bacon Woods Memorial Park, Shelter #4

Catch up with fellow birders!

Black River Audubon invites members to a fall cookout to welcome everyone back! We will take a short hike and then enjoy veggie burgers from the grill, snacks, and cold beverages.

Meet at Shelter #4 in the back by the trails for prizes and fun! Registration is required by Sept 16th to order food. Please respond to Gina Swindell at ginaswindell@roadrunner.com.

American White Pelican

Pelecanus erythrorhynchos

by Chad Wilson

Few Ohio birds are as impressive as the American White Pelican. Weighing up to 19 pounds with a wingspan of 9 feet, these giants are always a memorable sighting.

Once a declining species in the first half of the 1900s, populations have increased 10-fold since the 1960s, and now number over 120,000 birds in about 60 colonies. Interestingly, all the range maps for this species show them coming no further east than Illinois. They will need to update these maps with the Pelican's recent Eastern expansion!

In Ohio, White Pelicans were a rare vagrant until 2014, when more sightings were reported. Now it is not unusual at all to

see them at Howard Marsh, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, or hanging out near the Lake Erie Islands. Sometimes groups of over a dozen individuals are seen, and the all-time Ohio high count was 600(!) birds reported at Mercer Wildlife Area on April 10th, 2020. They have also attempted to nest on a couple of Lake Erie Islands (Big Chicken and Hen Islands) but have so far been unsuccessful. I would not be surprised, given their increasing numbers, if a successful breeding site is discovered on one of the less populated Lake Erie islands in the near future.

While relatively easy to observe in the western marshes of Ohio, they are still a fairly difficult bird to see in Lorain County. Usually flyovers seen from the Lorain Impoundment or the Lorain Fishing Pier are the only chance to see them, so birders have to be in the right place at the right time. However, one lovely Pelican saw the brand new Lorain Impoundment mudflat and decided to take a rest earlier this year, allowing many birders great looks and pictures!

American White Pelicans have quite an appetite and consume over 4 pounds of fish per day. They often work in groups to encircle fish in shallow areas where they can then scoop them up with their over-sized bill pouches.

Their scientific name means "red-billed pelican", from the Latin term for Pelican, *Pelecanus*, and *erythrorhynchos*, derived from the Ancient Greek words *erythros* (ἐρυθρός, "red") + *rhynchos* (ῥύγχος, "bill").

They also love to ride thermals and soar, sometimes rising so high in the sky that they disappear from view. This is quite a feat since they have the second-longest average wingspan in North America! The only bird with a longer wingspan is the endangered California Condor.

A good tip for identifying them in flight is that they are the only large white bird with black-tipped wings that flies without extending their necks. If the neck is extended it is most likely a Snow Goose, with the rarer options being Whooping Crane, Wood Stork, or White Ibis, all of which are extremely rare in Ohio. So if you are birding along the Lake Erie, look up and you might be rewarded with one of our most amazing birds!

References: American White Pelican, Wikipedia; allaboutbirds.com; Kennedy and McCormac, *Lone Pine's Birds of Ohio*; Sanduskyregister.com; greatlakesecho.org

The Lorain Impoundment's Magical Mudflat

By Chad Wilson

Many areas of the country have a saying: *“If you don't like the weather, wait 5 minutes”*. This holds true to our very own Lorain Impoundment as well, although its changes are usually measured from one year to the next. Having birded multiple times a week since 2018, I can say that it has never looked the same from one year to the next. Some years trees are cut down. Last year they did a huge controlled burn there. Some years everything grows unabated. And then there is 2022: the year of the mudflat.

In the spring of 2022 the Lorain Port Authority dredged the Black River and deposited the mud from the bottom of the river into the south side of the impoundment pond, creating a mudflat. *“Who cares?”* one might ask. The answer is, the birds do. Birds absolutely love mudflats.

Let's back up a step and make sure everyone is aware of the Lorain Impoundment. It sits right next to the Mile Long Pier in Lorain. Oasis Marina and Lake Erie Steak and Seafood are also there. To get up to the impoundment loop park on the south lot and walk up the path toward the metal dock to the east. Right at the metal dock you can climb up to the Lorain impoundment loop, and if you go left you will soon see the mudflat on the right.

The impoundment is owned by the Army Corp of Engineers and leased and maintained by the Lorain County Port Authority. It also happens to be the single best birding spot in Lorain county, with 279 bird species having been reported there! (The next best place in Lorain County is Sandy Ridge Reservation, with 257 species reported).

OK, back to the mud. According to the US Army Corp of Engineers, Buffalo District's Facebook Page, they moved over 80,000 cubic yards of mud from the Black River up to the impoundment! They dredge every 3 to 4 years to keep shipping lanes deep enough for vessels and their cargo to safely navigate the river.

Although I have heard wondrous tales of the past when the Lorain Impoundment was one big mudflat and was the best

shorebirding spot in Ohio, this is the first time a mudflat has been there since I began birding. And I must say, it has exceeded my expectations. American Avocets and Marbled Godwits have been hanging out there multiple times, and shorebirds that used to be very difficult to find in the county are now becoming commonplace. We even had an American White Pelican stop by!

Having a place to rest for shorebirds as they migrate along Lake Erie is a blessing for both the birds and the birders. Before this mudflat the best spot along the lake was often the Lorain Fishing Pier, which is not especially friendly to birds as cars are often driving there.

On the back cover of this issue of Wingtips I have pasted a collage of some of the better birds that have already enjoyed our new mudflat. Go take a look and see how many you can name. I'll post the answers on the bottom of the inside back cover. And make sure you stop by the mudflat sometime between now and October...shorebird season in northern Ohio is typically July-October, although we had some great visitors in June this year as well!

Thanks Jim and Barbara!

By Chad Wilson



Jim and his trusty sidekick Archie

I want to give a huge thanks to both Jim Jablonski and Barbara Baudot for their tireless Wingtips efforts over the last eight years!

Wingtips has been published by the Black River Audubon Society since 1958. That is 64 years of great birding and conservation information! The current format of Wingtips is published 9 times per year, with a 3 month summer break. That makes for a lot of articles that need to be written, and Jim and Barbara have risen to the challenge.

Jim has been a driving force in the Black River Audubon Society for many years. He has been a member since 2008, a board member from 2013-2019, President from 2017-2019 and has been Wingtips editor from 2014-2022.

Some of the current board members wanted to say a few words about him as well:

“When I joined the BRAS board, Jim was a mentor to me. We connected right away. We talked for hours, including a road trip to Nebraska, sharing ideas for BRAS and debating their merits. He has been committed to both BRAS and the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters, where he represented our organization. He won’t tell you, but Jim holds a doctorate degree and is a very interesting and socially-conscientious person. He knows a lot about not just local history—as depicted in his books about Elyria—but also about world affairs.” - Rob Swindell

“I just wanted to say that Jim has been a tireless environmental advocate for many years and appreciates the importance of coalitions and networking. Jim was extremely helpful in getting me in touch with Audubon naturalists and bird experts in the larger Northern Ohio region to assist Western Reserve Land Conservancy with bird surveys for properties that we were looking to preserve outside of the BRAS region. He set me up with contacts in Canal Fulton, Hudson, Mahoning and Wayne Counties. And we were successful in our grant applications for these properties! His knowledge and interest in history in Lorain County and Elyria was especially helpful in regards to acquiring funding for the National Audubon Society grant for Black River Audubon park. And Jim always calls it as he sees it and I always appreciate his candor. A really genuine good guy with a big heart.” - Kate Pilacky

Jim can still be found at most Black River Audubon meetings offering his expertise on a wide variety of subjects. He has written 2 histories of Elyria (*Elyria: The First Century* and *Elyria: The Second Century and Beyond*), has been involved in the Quincy Gillmore Civil War Roundtable and loves taking his dog

Archie to the Black River Audubon Park in Elyria.

Barbara is from the Oberlin area and now lives in Europe, and loves nature and writing.

Both Jim and Barbara are stepping down from Wingtips after their epic contributions, and we wish them the best!

Black River Audubon Apparel is Now Available

Black River Audubon Society now has apparel and accessories available! They provide a chance to share your passion and pride for our organization in the community. T-shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, hooded and zipped sweatshirts, long-sleeve t-shirts, mugs, and more are available in a large selection of colors and sizes. Designs currently feature our logo in color, black & white, and white. More fun designs are coming.



Sample of Black River Audubon apparel

Black River Audubon has its own Artist Shop at Threadless, which offers convenient, on-demand printing. All orders are processed and shipped by Threadless and Black River Audubon receives the proceeds to help fund conservation and educational programs. Just go to blackriveraudubon.threadless.com. Threadless is also the chosen artist shop for National Audubon.

**Black River Audubon Membership Only
(but including Wingtips) is \$15/Year**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Email address _____

**Send with \$15 check to Black River Audubon
P.O. Box 33, Elyria, OH 44036**

**“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.”**

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**Chapter Code S52, 7XCH8
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Attention: Chance Mueleck**

To pay online, go to *blackriveraudubon.org/membership*
and select the type of membership you prefer.

That's Not a Kestrel!

By Chad Wilson



Great Crested Flycatcher on Kestrel box (picture by Ed Wransky)

Black River Audubon has an American Kestrel Nesting Box Program. It was doing well through 2019, when 13 fledglings were recorded being raised from the boxes. Since 2020, however, there have been a total of zero successful fledges. And it is a mystery as to why the Kestrels are no longer using the boxes.

But waste not want not, as a pair of Great Crested Flycatchers decided to raise their family in the Kestrel box of a Bluebird monitor volunteer, Kit Fleming, who lives in Grafton. The eggs were laid around June 20th and hatched around July 7th. Note the beautiful marbled coloring of the eggs. Interestingly, the flycatchers had several snake skins in the nest as well! What a treat to see someone getting use out of the Kestrel boxes!



Great Crested Flycatcher eggs (picture by Penny Brandau)

Answers to back cover birds: (Top row: American Avocet, Green Heron, Glossy Ibis, Short-billed Dowitcher. Second row: Western Sandpiper, American White Pelican, White-tailed deer (not a bird), Semipalmated Plovers. Third row: American Pipit, Willet, Laughing Gull, Stilt Sandpiper. Bottom row: Least Sandpiper and Dunlin, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, White-rumped Sandpiper.)



LORAIN IMPOUNDMENT MUDFLAT VISITORS, photos by Chad Wilson



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