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Western Cuyahoga Audubon Conservation Value

Interview with Terry Robison, Director of Natural Resources, Cleveland Metroparks, and Tom Romito, Board Member, Western Cuyahoga Audubon

Tom Romito: Hi viewing audience, I am Tom Romito, a board member of Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society. I'm sitting here at West Creek Reservation with Terry Robison, Chief of Natural Resources at the Cleveland Metroparks.

We're going to talk in this brief video about the conservation value of the Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society.

Hello Terry and welcome to this video.

Terry Robison: Tom, it's good to be here.

Tom Romito: Terry, as you know Western Cuyahoga Audubon has a vast history of participation in the community by bringing conservation value to northeast Ohio. In projects such as Donald Gray Gardens, the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, and the Rocky River Important Bird Area.

I'd like to ask you Terry to reflect, from your point of view, upon what value Western Cuyahoga Audubon has to offer to the community.

Terry Robison: That's a good question Tom, it's been a great relationship. First of all, I think the Rocky River IBA and the initial data collected over those five or seven year period, provided a point in time, a really good average over some years to give us a really good handle on what birds use that area in those periods when you were surveying.

And since then, we've established a series of 400 points park-wide where we have a lot more vegetation data than we did on the plots you worked on, but that data is feeding into what we had and we've just started to do some bird counts on those plots too.

The work Western Cuyahoga Audubon did was like a precursor to a much bigger project which gives us a really good snapshot of Rocky River.

And then as we spoke earlier about land acquisition, a lot of the grants we go for have an environmental or ecological component to them so, we often need data on what's using these areas and especially if there's a rare species or a threatened and endangered species, it's really important.

The granting agencies are very interested in preserving habitat, not only for birds, but for bats and small mammals also. So, that kind of data feeds directly into our land acquisition program for obtaining and protecting additional acreage connected to the park district.

Birds are obviously a very good indicator of habitat quality and the types of birds we find in the forests or the meadows and whether they are nesting or not - those kinds of things - are important.

Tom Romito: So Terry, it sounds like Western Cuyahoga Audubon, ten years ago, set the standard for doing this, how to do this, how to draw the picture of bird populations in this area. Would you say that this is true?

Terry Robison: Yes. I will give Dan Petit a lot of credit, the previous Chief of the Natural Resource Division, he was a bird researcher, he and his wife both, and Dan knew the scientific techniques, the experimental techniques, and how to set up sample sizes and how to do point counts.

I know that Western Cuyahoga Audubon brought a lot of people, a lot of volunteers, which is hard to get sometimes. And the training that went into it to teach everyone how to do point counts, how to collect the data properly, yes, that set the stage for the things we're doing now.

We've got new people involved, we've got other universities involved, but that really did set the stage for what we're doing.

Tom Romito: Thanks Terry. Western Cuyahoga Audubon is looking for a reason to continue to be, a reason to exist. And I'm wondering if you could share with us, how can we continue to add value in conservation to this community?

Terry Robison: I know that some of your members are still helping us with our point counts. Tim Krynak, one of our Natural Area Resource Managers, has been recruiting members of your group to continue to help them with the point counts we're doing now.

I know you helped a lot with the Lake to Lake Trail, putting in some permanent monitoring

points in that area. I think those opportunities will always be there. I think what's taking over now somewhat is eBird and electronic ways of people just tracking birds wherever they are at anytime.

We actually use that data also, so I think Western Cuyahoga Audubon being able to teach those technologies, or encourage the use of those technologies, is really important too.

I think that the land acquisition part, and then help with this big series of plots we have out there, those will always be things we need help with.

Tom Romito: Great, Terry. Well, we will look forward to hearing the call to duty from you so that we can continue to do what we love to do.

There we are folks, thanks for listening.