



THE FEATHERED FLYER

May 2020 - July 2020

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The Brighton Park Initiative

By Tom Romito, WCAS Board Member

"The park will be quintessentially Cleveland," says Isaac Robb, Director of Urban Projects for WRLC, "because the surrounding neighborhood is densely populated." It will feature a system of trails that Lizzie Sords, Manager of Urban Forestry for WRLC, calls "multi-modal." That means that hikers, bicyclists, and birders can use them.

A 25-acre abandoned plot of industrial wasteland stands adjacent to West 25th Street in Cleveland, just at the top of Wildlife Way, which leads downhill to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, and next to Burger King. Imagine that this year, this site will become a natural park in an urban setting and abound with natural life to the benefit of the Old Brooklyn neighborhood.

This story began when members of Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society (WCAS) visited the property last year with officials of Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC). We learned that the site was a construction debris dump site in the 1990s and dumping ceased in 2000. WRLC acquired it in 2015 with a grant from Clean Ohio Conservation Fund and named it Brighton Park. Remediation efforts removed contaminated soil from two acres and capped it with clean soil in 2017.

WCAS has decided to help WRLC make the park a reality. How can we do that? "Bringing programs to the area will help keep it alive," says Stella Dilik, Chief Development Officer of WRLC. "WCAS can create opportunities to engage people, such as organized bird walks on the property."

But that's not all. WCAS is going to develop a strategy that supports conservation communication. Betsey O'Hagan, WCAS web consultant and platform design strategist, calls this a social network strategy. "It's the pillar that supports all other efforts and is based on communications. We'll make a shoutout to stimulate resident engagement and sponsorships for needed costs." *(continued next page...)*



Above: (left to right) Western Reserve Land Conservancy's Lizzie Sords, Manager of Urban Forestry and Isaac Robb, Director of Urban Projects meet with WCAS members Janelle Reardon, Tom Romito, and Joe Reardon at Brighton Park on December 23, 2019. Photo by Betsey O'Hagan.

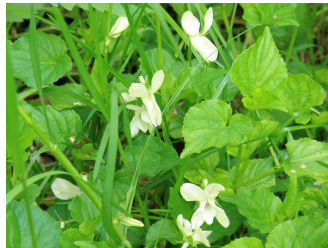
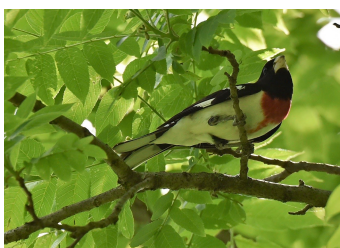
(continued from page 1...) "The park will be quintessentially Cleveland," says Isaac Robb, Director of Urban Projects for WRLC, "because the surrounding neighborhood is densely populated." It will feature a system of trails that Lizzie Sords, Manager of Urban Forestry for WRLC, calls "multi-modal." That means that hikers, bicyclists, and birders can use them. Anyone who visits the property right now will be "walking on fill," says WCAS member Joe Reardon. But that's going to change this April when WRLC begins construction of trails. They should be complete in July of this year.

Besides trail construction, significant improvements to the area will be planting of trees, signage, and lighting. WCAS is planning to conduct a five-year breeding bird survey starting this year to establish a baseline for bird occurrence and to see how the bird population changes with the growth of new trees. [Read Online](#)

Practice Good Social Distancing Methods During COVID-19

- Limit group sizes to to 10 people or less.
- Use social distancing, working in a scattered fashion at least 6' apart from each other.
- Plan to travel separately, unless part of a family living together.
- Plan to bring and wear face masks.
- Wash hands with soap and water or use a high-alcohol based gel hand sanitizer.

BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS >>>



Second Saturday Bird Walk Photos at Rocky River Reservation, Cleveland Metroparks, 24000 Valley Pkwy, North Olmsted, OH 44070 (left to right): May 2019 Birders by Bill Deininger; Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) June 2019 by Michelle Lindsey; White Violets (*Viola blanda*) May 2017 by Penny O'Connor; Wood Duck female (*Aix sponsa*) July 2019 by Earl Peck.

SPRING BIRD WALK SERIES - THERE WILL BE ANOTHER YEAR!

By Nancy Howell, WCAS Board Member and (one of many) Spring Bird Walk Leaders

Those who enjoy birding, want to take up birding or become a better birder, always look forward to spring migration and the six week series of Spring Bird Walks co-sponsored by Audubon groups, park districts, the museum, the arboretum, and more institutions in northeast Ohio. The walks are an opportunity for the leaders to share their knowledge, enthusiasm, and their passion of birding. Perhaps it's the quiet contemplation of the song of a Wood Thrush or a WOW moment when six different warblers are seen by a group. Each week is always different.

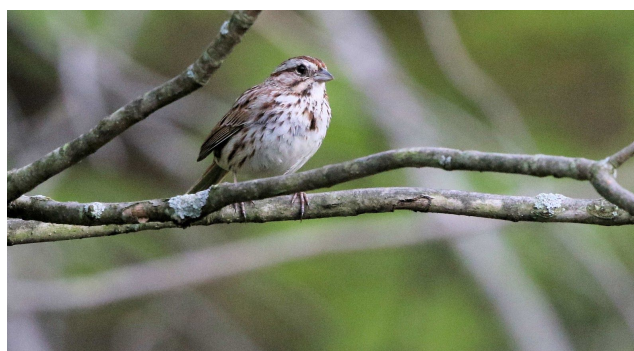
So many things, including the Spring Bird Walk Series, came to a screeching halt with the COVID-19 outbreak. This year the Spring Bird Walk Series celebrates its 87th year, and perhaps with the exception of some years during World War II, data from these walks has been collected and the archived lists entered into eBird. Does this mean no data for the year 2020? Not necessarily. Several walk leaders have chosen to go out on their own and treat the walks more like a bird survey. Information is collected and submitted, but the part that is missing are the participants.

Walk leaders are finding that one of the most difficult parts of the spring walks is not being able to share their excitement and knowledge with others in real time. These walks are more than finding the birds, but also information the leaders are able to provide, as well as the camaraderie of the group. Have you tried remaining at least 6 feet apart when sharing bird sightings or talking with a group with a mask on? It is not easy, hence the cancellation of the walks. We did not want to jeopardize people's health and safety, we want people to be able to bird another day.

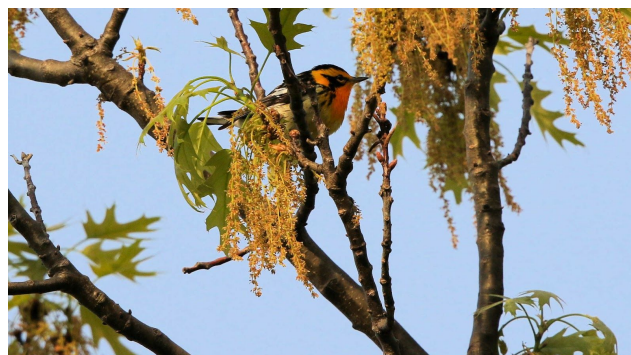
The COVID-19 pandemic will pass and, yes, things will be different in all our lives. This has given us the chance to look more closely at the natural world right in our backyard, our neighborhood or nearby greenspace. It has given many of us time to slow down and stay put for a while, a little like meditation. It has given us time to look around and maybe some introspection. There will be an 88th year of Spring Bird Walks. We want to see you there. [Read Online](#)



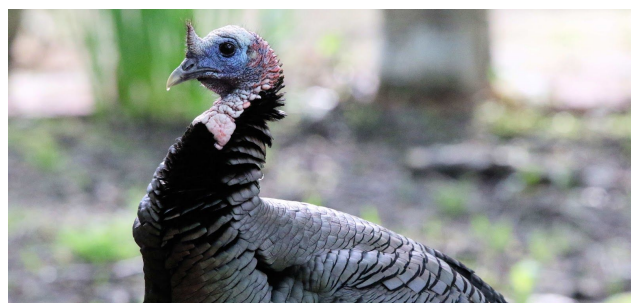
Above: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) by David Lewis.



Above: Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) by David Lewis.

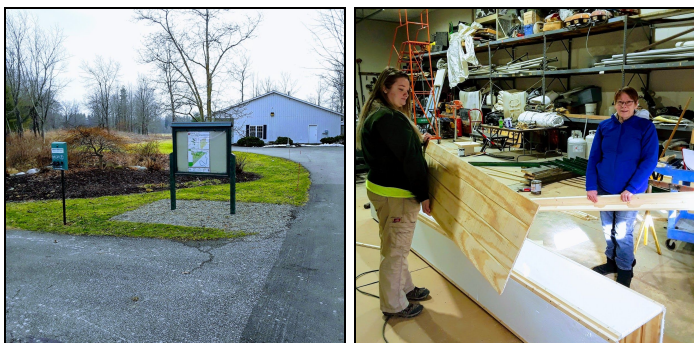


Above: Blackburnian Warbler (*Setophaga fusca*) by David Lewis.



Above: Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) by David Lewis.

PROJECT UPDATES >>>



Photos: Entrance to Royal Oaks, Lorain County Metro Parks; Becah Troutman, Natural Resource Land Steward and Amanda Sebrosky reviewing tower construction; Standing in front of finished tower several weeks later.

Spring 2020 Chimney Swift Tower Update

By Amanda Sebrosky, Founder, NEO Chimney Swift Conservation Society

The COVID-19 health crisis has been hard on all of us and that often includes projects that require close contact. Because the Chimney Swift Towers are so large, they require the help of a team of workers to construct and plant the tower. The hope is always that we can have the towers up by nesting season in early May but, as with trees, any time we can plant a tower is a good time since Chimney Swifts need a place to roost while they are in the area. Once a tower is discovered as a good place to hide, a pair may claim it as their own the next season since Chimney Swifts tend to return to the same area year after year.

We were fortunate to be part of placing the first tower WCAS funded in Royal Oaks Park in Grafton, Ohio. The Lorain County Metro Parks Natural Resources team braved the winter months to get their tower placed well before Spring. The location seems ideal; close enough that people can observe from 30 feet away and plenty of plant material to support the insects needed by birds. The open fields of the park provide open air devoid of wires and trees, giving the Chimney Swifts plenty of space to catch their food -- and when attaining speeds of up to 150 mph while catching an insect, space is good!

Chimney Swifts will only allow one nesting pair per tower. Some people say 'Why bother!' but I say 'All the more reason to build as many towers as rapidly as possible'.

Chimney Swift populations have declined by 70% since 1966. There are many factors contributing to this decline but one big reason is lack of habitat. Originally, Chimney Swifts nested in hollow trees. With the decimation of the forests, they adapted to using chimneys. Now, chimneys are being capped or simply not built as heating-and-cooling technology has changed.

This is one thing we can do something about in several ways by:

- Incorporating old industrial chimneys into remodeling plans
- Encouraging removal of chimney caps
- Planting native species of trees, grasses and flowers for insects
- Stopping the use of pesticides that poison the insects birds need
- Building additional housing for Chimney Swifts

Chimney Swift towers were developed by wildlife rehabilitation specialists, George and Paul Kyle of Texas. Wildly successful in the southern US, their towers seem less successful in the northern states. Scott Burnet, a naturalist with Lehigh Valley Audubon Society in Pennsylvania, has developed a tower that seems to be much more successful in the North. It has the same basic shape but has a larger surface area inside and a larger entry hole on top for the Swifts. At a cost of \$1000, these towers are about 50% higher in price than the 'Kyle' towers but it's money well spent if the occupancy rate is improved.

The towers are easy to build, requiring minimal tools and carpentry skills. Free instructions can be obtained by emailing: info@wcaudubon.org. We hope that citizens will be encouraged to build a tower on any open land they have or contribute to WCAS efforts to add sheltering habitat by donating at wcaudubon.org and earmarking it for 'Chimney Swift towers'.

[Read The Article and Make A Tower Donation Online](#)



VOLUNTEERING AND ADVOCACY >>>

Urban Birding Cleveland Volunteer Updates By Gloria Ferris, WCAS Board Member

Urban Birding Cleveland Routes a team shared the plan to map an urban birding route through Tremont. They visited five of the nine block clubs before the COVID-19 "stay at home" guidelines came into effect. Block club members were enthusiastic, with practical suggestions and insightful questions. Once the all "all clear" is sounded, WCAS will visit the remaining four. Meanwhile, an article about Urban Birding Cleveland appeared in the local newspaper, "Inside Tremont". *UBC Community Outreach* a small core of volunteers are meeting virtually to continue their work compiling information and knowledge from Cornell, Ohio Department of Wildlife, and other sources adding to the options for preparing a curriculum to be shared with libraries, schools and the Boys and Girls Club. These resources are intergenerational and will be shared with young and old. *The Grant Committee* meets weekly using free conference calls to continue fine tuning grant applications and identify other resources. As of now, we have two applications waiting for new submissions dates and another that is very close to completion. During the health crisis of COVID-19, foundation and grant funds will be focused on ways to lessen the impact of the virus on our communities. Sometime, we hope sooner than later, proposals like ours which will use social distancing guidelines, restricted small groups, etc. that will be necessary to enable people to be together. We will be ready. [Read Online](#)

Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters Synopsis By Nancy Howell, WCAS Board Member

On Saturday, April 4, 2020 WCAS Board members wowed 10 Ohio Audubon chapters at the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters (COAC) Spring Gathering. The gathering was to take place in Columbus, but with the COVID-19 outbreak was hosted virtually. Participating chapters found that videoconferencing may be one of the ways to keep in touch with certain audiences. The gathering is a venue for chapters to share ideas and the COAC's Plants for Birds initiative was a main theme. The speakers focused on planting native plants and the importance of utilizing local resources, particularly people and volunteers within the chapters as well as chapter partners. Michael Goldman, Grange Insurance Audubon Center, kicked things off with a presentation on native plants and the structure of a "natural setting" with overstory vegetation, mid-story vegetation, understory vegetation and even the importance of leaf litter. Plant the plants that provide food, fruits, seeds AND insects and the wildlife will be attracted. Leaf litter is especially important for invertebrates to overwinter so the next generation of invertebrates are available to wildlife. Western Cuyahoga's beautifully produced powerpoint presentation by Jess Bibbo, Michelle Brosius, and Gloria Ferris, covered WCAS's beginnings and the wealth of ideas coming out of the Conservation Lab, such as the Urban Birding Cleveland initiative, connecting with Boys and Girls Club, native plant sales, and Tremont birding trails. The Conservation Lab is an incubator of ideas that people can "run with". So important to partner with the people and organizations in communities. Important to select a project that chapter wants to do AND have fun doing it. Begin with a small project and grow. Sometimes chapters want to start off with a bang and when things don't go well, the project is dropped and considered a "failure". As Gloria stated in her presentation, "start slow to go fast". Lastly, the importance of a strong website and social media presence. The Keynote speaker was Kendra Wecker, Chief of the Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODOW). Her presentation covered what ODOW does in Ohio, where and how funding is obtained and the importance of wildlife areas/habitats not just for game species but for non-game species. People who do not hunt or fish benefit from the wildlife areas through wildlife watching, photography, etc. yet it is through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses that supports maintaining and increasing habitats for Ohio wildlife. A representative of Ohio's Natural Areas and Preserves spoke about the importance of maintaining the preserves utilizing volunteers. As mentioned above in WCAS's story, she encouraged projects that are meaningful and fun. To have a sense of accomplishment, camaraderie and as well as providing habitat for wildlife and a place for people to visit. Lastly, Matt Valencic from Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland reiterated the importance of plants for birds. Getting native plants that fit the habitat AND having partnering groups volunteer, such as Master Gardeners and Ohio Volunteer Naturalists. [Read Online](#)

PROGRAMS >>>

Member Meetings and Summer Speaker Series 2019-2020

Western Cuyahoga Audubon programs are free and open to the public.



Above: Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) enjoying a Mulberry Tree in Berea, OH. Photo by Tom Fishburn.

Program: "Plants for Birds"

Presenter: Michael Goldman, Conservation and Outreach Manager, Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Date & Time: Tuesday, May 5, 2020: Member Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Speaker at 8:00 p.m.

[How To Join The Program Online](#)

Description: Ever wonder how to attract more birds to your home without buying bird seed? Audubon's Michael Goldman will explain how to do just that. By planting native plants in your yard you too can have a whole menagerie full of birds. Michael will also be going through Audubon's Plants for Birds database to help you learn what will best grow in your gardens and what kinds of birds you can attract to your home. Not only can you learn how to help the birds but native plants will also help local pollinator populations. [Announcement](#)

Program: "Perspectives on Urban Birding"

Presenters: David Lindo, The Urban Birder

Date & Time: Tuesday, June 2, 2020: Member Meeting at 7:30 p.m. and Speaker at 8:00 p.m.

[How To Join The Program Online](#)

Description: UK celebrity birder David Lindo, The Urban Birder, shares the magic and thrills of urban birding, tips for birding during global pandemics, and urban migration patterns. [Announcement](#)



Above: Brighton Park, Cleveland, OH. Photo by Betsey O'Hagan.

Program: "From Landfill to Urban Park"

Presenters: Isaac Robb, Director of Urban Projects, Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Date & Time: Tuesday, July 7, 2020: Member Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Speaker at 8:00 p.m.

[How To Join The Program Online](#)

Description: Isaac Robb will discuss the importance of land reuse in urban areas by removing toxic materials to return the land to nutrient-rich soils for a healthier green infrastructure for wildlife and people. [Announcement](#)



Above: David Lindo, The Urban Birder. Courtesy of David Lindo.

NEWS AND MEMBERSHIP >>>



Photo: Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) by Tom Fishburn.

WCAS Bird Friendly Coffee Club Updates

Due to COVID-19 complications, WCAS volunteers are unable to deliver coffee orders. WCAS hopes to resume local operations sometime in the months ahead. To keep our coffee club going, Birds and Beans Founder Bill Wilson is offering WCAS Coffee Club members, chapter members and friends FREE SHIPPING at the [Birds And Beans Store](#) so you can stock up and get direct delivery to your home. The coffee is very good/fresh for +90 days so members can order for the duration.

To order, go to the [Birds And Beans Store](#). Use the 7-day WCAS Free Shipping Code 'WCAS20' active during Apr 27-May 3, May 25-31, and June 29-July 5th. Coffee orders keep southern hemisphere Birds & Beans® coffee supply chains alive that produce the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center Bird Friendly®-certified beans, 100% shade-grown, USDA Organic, and ensure the livelihood of Fair Trade certified coffee farms and the families that work them.

Every Coffee Club order helps our chapter accumulate valuable points toward an annual 5% reimbursement by Birds and Beans, LLC, which the WCAS Board re-invests in local conservation projects right here in Cleveland, Ohio. Thank you for continuing your commitment to drink and enjoy delicious Bird Friendly Coffee and to protect birds and forest habitat locally and all around the world. If you have a question email us at info@wcaudubon.org [Read Online](#)

Welcome New Members! Timothy Myshrrall, Morgan O'Leary, Megan Palfalvi, Cynthia Smith, Daryl Thornton II.

Membership Reminder Watch for the next newsletter (August through October) which is the beginning of Western Cuyahoga Audubon's membership year. If you participated in any of the Urban Birding events, if you like the Chimney Swift tower projects, if you like to provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, through planting of native plants, then your membership support is crucial in maintaining these and more projects and programs. So many things are planned for WCAS's new year and you can be part of it. [Become A Member And Renew Membership](#)

Thank You Speakers Dr. Tobin Hieronymus, Northeast Ohio Medical University and Dr. Anne Farley Schoeffler, Seton Catholic School. *Bird Walk and Field Trip Leaders* Marty Calabrese, Bill Deininger, Janice Farral, Ken Gober, Dave Graskemper. *Photographers and Writers* Michelle Brosius, Tom Fishburn, Paula Lozano, Penny O'Connor, Cynthia Smith. *Program Volunteers* Mary Lou Czajka, Karen Czerniawski. *Special Thanks* to Bethany Presbyterian Church.

Save The Date!

Event: 'Socially Distanced Birding Challenge'

Date & Time: May 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. – May 2, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. EDT

Location: Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Compiler: NancyHowell@WCAudubon.org

[Details And Rules](#)

The Western Cuyahoga Audubon Chapter Newsletter is published four times per year in February, May, August and November.

Western Cuyahoga Audubon programs are free and open to the public. Donations are appreciated.

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Nancy Howell

Recording Secretary

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Michelle Brosius, Gloria Ferris, Bruce Missig, Kurt Miske, Mary Anne Romito and Tom Romito

Field Trip Coordinators

Tim Colborn, Penny O'Connor, and Kaoru Tsubone

Web and Marketing

Betsey O'Hagan

Western Cuyahoga Audubon Volunteer Opportunities and Leadership Positions

Volunteer to do more for birds and habitat conservation! Let us know what you're interested in by completing our WCAS Volunteer form. [Fill Out the Form](#)

Volunteer and Public Relations Coordinator - The Coordinator oversees recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers and is an advocate for the Audubon mission, WCAS programs and services. Attend Board meetings. Don't miss this rewarding opportunity to engage in meaningful work! **Fundraising Coordinator**. The fundraising coordinator attends Board meetings, plans events, monitors activities, and builds relationships to grow donations and revenue for chapter operations and projects. Attend monthly Board meetings. Join us! Read, [WCAS Volunteer Positions 2020](#)

Membership. Become a member, renew membership, and make a donation online or by mailing a check payable to 'Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society'. Mail to: Nancy Howell, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Treasurer, 19340 Fowles Rd, Middleburg Heights, OH 44130 or, purchase [Membership Online](#) You'll be glad you did and the birds will thank you for it!



Shop today at **AmazonSmile** and designate Western Cuyahoga Audubon as your charitable organization of choice. When you shop at smile.amazon.com the AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Western Cuyahoga Audubon.

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