



WESTERN CUYAHOGA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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WHAT IS A COAC?

By Nancy Howell, Board member of Western Cuyahoga Audubon and the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters

“It is imperative that Audubon chapters, like Western Cuyahoga Audubon, affiliated organizations, and individuals - “speak in a common voice” and continue to lead the way - as the founders of COAC envisioned.”

Perhaps you have attended a WCAS program meeting, looked at the WCAS website, or glanced through *The Feathered Flyer* newsletter and have run across the letters COAC. The acronym stands for the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters of which Western Cuyahoga Audubon is a part.

In its early years the organization was called Ohio Audubon Council and was begun “to coordinate the thoughts and programs of the Audubon chapters and affiliates of Ohio, to speak in a common voice on important conservation issues, to act as a sounding board for various and common problems among Audubon chapters and affiliates, in some cases to consolidate efforts in field activities, to act as a liaison with the National Audubon Society and, to act as a center for the dissemination of information.” That statement has withstood the test of time.

As with many organizations, COAC has had its ups and downs. At its strongest, 19 Audubon chapters were part of the organization, covering more than 60% of urban, suburban and rural areas of Ohio. When COAC had a 12 year hiatus due to changes in leadership, a number of chapters struggled. Today, 15 Audubon chapters remain covering less than 30% of the state. The organization asks - why? Was it the lack of people stepping up and keeping up with changes?

With today's political climate, with environmental concerns, with so much social media, Audubon, as an environmental organization, needs to be leading the way. It is imperative that Audubon chapters, like Western Cuyahoga Audubon, affiliated organizations, and individuals - "speak in a common voice" and continue to lead the way - as the founders of COAC envisioned.

A revitalized COAC needs Western Cuyahoga Audubon, affiliates with like-minded missions, it needs individuals to step up. The present Mission Statement of COAC says, "COAC is to aid chapter development in strength, growth, and leadership through dialogue and networking between the Chapters, affiliates, individuals, and the National Audubon Society; and to provide an independent, collective voice of Ohio chapters and affiliates in all Audubon affairs". We at WCAS have been a driving force in rejuvenating COAC by running and participating in workshops, joining in conference calls, having our members on the COAC Board. In addition, WCAS will communicate with all of our chapter members and guests to bring aboard individuals and organizations who want to help make a difference.

Audubon is not just for birds, but encompasses the entire system that birds, wildlife that **we** need. Clean water, clean air, food not tainted with herbicides or pesticides, and a safe place to live. Birds are the enjoyment for many, but they are also environmental barometers. Please consider raising your hand ... your voice and your thoughts ... and join us, Western Cuyahoga Audubon, in making the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters that collective voice. [Subscribe to the COAC Social Network](#) for updates and connect to new opportunities.