

Watershed Watch

Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation

Ohio's Breeding Bird Atlas II Project

by Carol Bretz, President

Over 20 years ago a number of Columbiana County birders helped the Ohio Division of Wildlife conduct a 5 year breeding bird atlas to document Ohio's avian diversity and its spatial distribution throughout the state. This year, a second Breeding Bird Atlas has been started as a partnership between the Ohio State University's School of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. This atlas project will run from 2006 through 2010. The goals of the Atlas Project are to: 1. Document the current distribution of breeding birds in Ohio by surveying all blocks in Ohio, 2. Assess changes in the breeding bird population over the past 20 years, 3. Provide new measures

of abundance of breeding birds in Ohio, 4. Identify specific important areas that support high diversity or species of concern, 5. Collect statewide information on the distribution of species that are hard to survey, and 6. Generate new information on the status of Ohio's rare, threatened, and endangered birds.

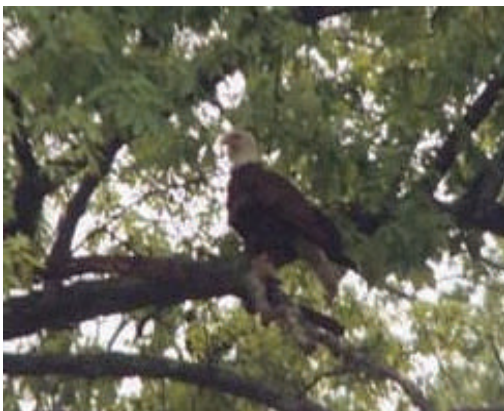
Each atlas block covers 10 square miles. Individuals can sign up to "own" a block which means they commit to spend a minimum of 25 hours birding within the block over the 5 year period. Data on breeding species is entered on Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology Ohio Atlas Project website, where it can be viewed in "real time". Go to www.ohiobirds.org, which is the website for the Ohio Ornithological Society, [the LBC Land Foundation is a member], and go to the article about the Breeding Bird Atlas and follow the links to the data entry section. You can bring up specific blocks in Columbiana County and see

how many species have been confirmed so far this spring in each block. The Block that contains Fredericktown is a "hot" one, with over 80 species documented so far this year. The big



Common Merganser with chicks, photo by Jim Dolan

event was the confirmation of Common Mergansers breeding on the North Fork. Sightings have occurred over the past few years, but we have photos this spring. This is significant because there are no documented reports of Common Mergansers breeding anywhere in Ohio, and it's happening right here in Columbiana County. Volunteers also documented breeding Bald Eagles and Blue-headed vireos. The diversity of the blocks along the North Fork occurs because of the intact riparian corridor which has been achieved through conservation easements and outright purchase of property by the Division of For-



One of the Bald Eagle pair, photo by Jim Dolan

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Watershed Action Plan Submitted to OEPA by Josh Noble, Watershed Coordinator

On May 31, 2006, the draft watershed action plan (WAP) for the Little Beaver Creek watershed was submitted to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) for initial review and comment. The LBCLF was awarded a Clean Water Act §319 Nonpoint Source Pollution planning grant in 2003 for the purpose of researching the existing condition of nonpoint source pollution (*pollutants that cannot be traced to or controlled at a single location*) within the LBC watershed and then develop a management plan which outlines mitigation strategies for the long-term management of the most impactful pollution sources.

The LBC WAP explains that the most significant NPS sources in the LBC watershed are agricultural pollution from crop and livestock farming, nutrient enrichment from

failed septic systems, soil and streambank erosion resulting for agriculture and urbanization, and acid mine drainage from current and past mining. The plan provides potential timelines and mitigation activities that will be undertaken through cooperative efforts which will lead to sustainable management of NPS pollution. It is not the purpose of the plan to call-out polluters or create a list of those in violation of regulations so that they can be targeted for fines and mandates. Developing the plan has been a local effort involving watershed and county groups and agencies which have vested interests in the health and improvement of water and land resources of the LBC watershed.

Josh Noble, the Watershed Coordinator, completed the plan and submitted the draft plan to the

OEPA by the deadline. The draft plan is currently under review by the OEPA and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). Upon completion of their review, comments and required revisions will be submitted to the LBCLF. The revisions will be completed and the plan will be re-submitted for subsequent review. The plan will ultimately be endorsed by the State.

Endorsement of the LBC WAP will give preference to pollution mitigation projects for the LBC watershed when the LBCLF applies for future grant funding. The process of achieving endorsement for the WAP will take several months at minimum. However, mitigation projects have been planned and will soon be put into action, pending receipt of funding.

LBCLF Hires Summer Intern

The Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation has hired Lisa Butch of Salem at its summer intern. Butch is a 2003 graduate of Allegheny College in Meadville, PA where she studied Environmental Science. She completed her graduate school coursework in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island in 2005, where she focused on coastal development and watershed based planning. Butch was also the 2005-2006 Sea Grant Fellow for the Great Lakes Commission in Ann Arbor, Michigan. While at the Commission she worked on aquatic invasive species management planning and coastal wetlands monitoring. She is very excited to have the opportunity to work for the LBCLF for the summer.

Home Depot Easement Completed

by Mitch Cattrell, Consultant to the LBCLF

The LBCLF completed a conservation easement on 17.176 acres of Little Beaver Creek bottom land on the property of Father Joe Fata, Dick and Susan Ross, and Jim and Jean Piero in July. The easement, which took nearly two years to complete, was paid for with OEPA mitigation money from the Salem Home Depot site which was built over some small wetlands.

The property, which will now remain in its natural state for perpetuity, is located off of Bear Hollow Rd, in the northeast quarter of Section 35, of Elkrun Township and is adjacent to another pre-existing easement to the east on the DiOrio family property. The LBCLF hopes to complete an additional easement on the west and north bank of the stream soon, in order to provide an even better conservation corridor. The goal of the LBCLF is to tie as many easements together so there is continuous protection along designated portions of the Creek.

The current easement includes nearly three quarters of a mile of creek frontage and contains a diverse number of ecosystems, including steep hillsides, a flood plain with isolated wetlands, upland hardwoods, hemlock groves, and sycamore-maple bottomlands.

The entire Fata-Ross-Piero property is about 109 acres and currently has one residence. The landowners have retained their rights to continue managing the forest based on their woodland management plan outlined in the conservation easement, and will be allowed to harvest timber in the future according to the plan. The plan does not allow timber harvest within 200 feet of the Creek. The owners are very committed to preserving the Beaver Creek stream corridor and the LBCLF appreciates working with like-minded conservationist landowners like the Fata-Piero-Ross group.

The Truth About Global Warming

by Josh Noble, Watershed Coordinator

These days, it is rare to turn on the television, read a paper or surf the internet without encountering some mention of global warming. But is global warming fact or environmental fiction? It is a fact that average annual temperatures around the globe are on the rise. By some accounts, temperatures have increased by as much as 1°C in the last 10 to 15 years. This may not appear to be much, but on a global scale, this is a dramatic increase. There is no doubt that the polar ice caps are melting. Their reduction in size is plainly visible from satellite photos.

To make a long story short, there is substantial evidence to support global warming. However, the more important question is what is the cause of global warming? Are human beings the most significant causative factor? The likely correct answer is no. If we look back in recorded history to the beginning of the Common Era (C.E. (formerly known as 1 A.D.)), the earth has exhibited regular “hot” and “cold” periods. The best documented evidence begins around 800 C.E. Global temperatures were warm, with evidence of persistent droughts. This warming period lasted until about 1200 C.E. Around 1300, annual global temperatures began to decrease significantly. This global cooling lasted until the late 1800’s, a period known as The Little Ice Age, which included what is known as the “year without summer” in the early 1800’s. During this 500-year period, global temperatures cooled so much that farming became impossible around much of the mid-latitude regions because the growing seasons were so brief. In fact, the cold temperatures affected historical events we are familiar with. For example, failing grain crops drove French peasants and farmers to revolt against the monarchy, the failing potato crop in Ireland led many to emigrate to the United States, and the bitter cold of the winters of the 1770’s give us the event simply referred to as Valley Forge.

Since 1 C.E., we can trace at least five occurrences of global warming or cooling. So, increases in temperature are nothing

new. And only the most recent warming trend has occurred at a time when human culture was industrialized. Therefore, we are most likely not the cause of global warming. That’s not to say that we are not affecting it. In comparison to previous warming periods, the current increase in global temperatures has occurred at least twice as fast. The ridiculously massive amounts of greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere has significantly expedited the natural warming process. So although we cannot stop a natural warming cycle, we can lessen its impact and reduce its pace by being conscious of how our habits and behaviors affect global temperatures. In addition, deforestation has dramatically reduced the earth’s natural cooling capacity, since forest canopies can both absorb and deflect solar radiation. In the place of forests we place buildings, roads and parking lots, which all absorb, hold and release heat back into the atmosphere.

Although a complete discussion of global warming cannot fit into one newsletter article, the discussion itself must continue. We need to better understand what little steps we can all take that will add up to great positive impacts. It is also critical that each person learn about global warming themselves by researching and forming their own opinion. The LBCLF encourages all its members to take up the challenge of learning about global warming and passing the information on to others. The global community needs to cooperate to bring about timely change.

Attention Landowners!

The LBCLF is interested in working with landowners to develop a wildlife sanctuary program. You can purchase signs that let the public know you are treating your land as a wildlife sanctuary in order to protect the land and the wildlife that inhabits it. You can work with the LBCLF and the County Wildlife Officer to ensure that your land is protected as valuable wildlife habitat. If you are interested in learning more about this project, please call the LBCLF at 330-420-9507.



Common Merganser pair, photo by Jim Dolan

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Natural Areas and Preserves. Our local birders have definitely raised the interest of Ohio’s birding community with our finds so far this year. Other blocks within the county are yielding interesting results also. The key to species diversity is habitat preservation and we are fortunate to be the home to the Little Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River System. Its diversity of excellent habitat ensures that the remaining four years of the Atlas Project will surely be interesting.

Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation

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Clean Ohio Easement Update

Of the 4 potential sites that the LBCLF had identified for Clean Ohio Grant easements, 2 have been completed through the Home Depot Easement project. The two other sites are still in the process of being completed through the Clean Ohio Grant. Further information will be provided in future issues of *Watershed Watch*.

Funding Received!

The LBCLF is pleased to announce that its application for a Section 319 nonpoint source grant, under the Clean Water Act, has been accepted for funding by the Ohio EPA. The grant, written by Watershed Coordinator Josh Noble, will allow the LBCLF to partner with landowners in the watershed to fence horses out of Little Beaver Creek and its tributaries in order to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and pollution.

Trustee Profile: Dr. Jacquelyn Yates

Before moving to East Liverpool, Jacquelyn Yates, Ph.D. lived in the Pittsburgh area and was a devoted horseback rider. When she first began riding in the hills north of the city, there were ample trails to take her horse on, but over the years the number of trails kept being reduced through land development and other means until there were only islands of woods and pastures left. It was impossible to ride long distances from farm to farm as before. There were ever more subdivisions and individual homes closing off the old byways. What islands of access remained were public parks and nature centers, and they were so heavily used that they weren't welcoming to riders any more. This experience helped the political science professor learn that citizen action from the grassroots level is necessary to keep some spots of land open and undeveloped.



Because of this experience, Yates became a member of the Pittsburgh area Nature Conservancy. After moving to East Liverpool she learned of the Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation from a tiny newspaper article, and she decided to become involved. She has served as a Trustee of the Land Foundation since 1997.

When not busy teaching at Kent State University, Salem or serving as a Trustee for the LBCLF, Yates enjoys riding and hiking in the watershed, as well as canoeing through Little Beaver Creek State Park, which offers "one beautiful vista after another." One of her favorite spots in the watershed is an eddy near where Rough Run enters Little Beaver Creek. At certain times of the year, especially late summer, she sees dozens of snapping turtles of all sizes riding in circles in the eddy. She loves living near the edge of the Little Beaver Creek Valley, where she can hear the owls hooting their love songs in early spring, and five kinds of frogs singing in the ponds.

In addition to the LBCLF, Yates is also involved with the Northeast Ohio Forestry Association. She says that the group's ideals overlap with her conservation ethic well, because they are interested in growing trees in specific areas as crops, land and wildlife conservation, pollution control, and erosion management and control.

Yates' dream for the Little Beaver Creek watershed is to see many conservation easements to protect the creek and its surrounding lands, especially those around the tributaries of the creek. She hopes that the citizens of our area will take action to see that Beaver Creek State Park