

MINUTES OF COAC MEETING OF 06032018¹

1. CONVENING. The Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters (COAC) met at 11:00 a.m. on June 3, 2018 at Miami Regionals' Hamilton Conservatory in Hamilton, Ohio. Attending were Betsey Merkel, web consultant to COAC and of Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society; Jackie Augustine and Volker Jeschonnek of Tri-Moraine Audubon Society; Em Smith, Liz Woedl, Linda Williams, Elizabeth Birch, Gail Reynolds, Mickey Simonds, Brian Grubb, Mark T Gilmore, Gylaine Gilmore, Jim Michael, Larry Gersbach of Audubon Miami Valley; Sherilyn Burns of Greater Akron Audubon Society; Ned Keller and Penny Borgman of Audubon Society of Ohio (Cincinnati Audubon); Imani Smith of Miami University Birders and Rebekah Duquette, both of Miami University; Thomas Lacerda of MetroParks Butler County; Dale F Gaul of Kirtland Bird Club; and Martha Merkel.
2. NATURAL AREA TOURS. Three Natural Area Tours were conducted by guides Jim Michael, Penny Bergman, Joe Dumyahn, Steve Gordon, Eric Hollins, Kathy and Troy Schwable, and Charlie Saunders with COAC members participating.
 - a. Fernald Nature Preserve Visitors Center, 7400 Willey Rd, Hamilton, OH on Sat June 2, 2018 at 3:00 PM. [PHOTO ALBUM](#)
 - b. MetroParks of Butler County, Salamander Run Preserve, 4821 Layhigh Road, Hamilton OH on Sunday, June 3, 2018 at 9:00 AM. [PHOTO ALBUM](#)
 - c. Riverside Natural Area, 2451 Fairview Ave, Hamilton, OH on Sunday, June 3, 2018 at 4:00 PM. [PHOTO ALBUM](#)
3. WELCOME. Linda Williams, President, and Liz Woedl of Audubon Miami Valley Society welcomed COAC members. Brian Grubb, Manager of the Miami University Hamilton Conservatory welcomed COAC members to the botanical garden meeting facility.
4. COAC PLATFORM PRESENTATION. [[PPT](#)]
 - a. Betsey Merkel reviewed the history of The Ohio Audubon Council (and then later the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters (COAC)) as of January 25, 1969: that the organization was founded by 25 people wanting to address the lack of Ohio chapter connectivity and collaboration, coordinate Audubon chapters and affiliates, speak with a common voice on conservation issues, act as a sounding board for common problems, consolidate project efforts, act as a liaison with National Audubon Society, and a center for the dissemination of information.
 - b. Betsey reviewed COAC history as of 2002: a new name was adopted, the COAC mission further defined to “aid chapter development in strength, growth, and leadership through dialogue and networking between the Chapters, Audubon Ohio, and the National

¹ Last update: 12:00 PM Wed June 13, 2018

Audubon Society, to provide an independent, collective voice of Ohio chapters and affiliates in all Audubon affairs.”

- c. Betsey reviewed COAC history as of 2006: citing the “COAC Strategic Plan of 2006” with updated mission, vision, and values; core strategies, goals and objectives to communicate and collaborate with Audubon Ohio and other entities, review proposals COAC receives, and work with chapters who want help.
- d. COAC was not active between 2006 and 2016. In 2017, Audubon chapter activity had declined 50% in Ohio and 5 chapters closed.
- e. Betsey described the COAC platform as connected Internet tools to carry out centralized operations on behalf of chapters in Ohio and connect to next generation Audubonners.
- f. Betsey said COAC could operate without a platform but not as well. Betsey outlined what and how a COAC platform will support chapters. Betsey is the project manager and developer of the COAC Platform project that COAC chapters voted March 2018 to fund.
- g. Betsey outlined we want to raise between \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 to fund the platform in years 2 & 3.
- h. Betsey listed multiple ways to fund the outyears including “Big Asks”. Attendees received the handout, “Talking Points for Making ‘Big Asks’ for the COAC Platform” compiled by Tom Romito, Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society.
- i. Jackie Augustine, Tri-Moraine Audubon Society, facilitated a discussion to address platform funding. [[Transcription](#)] Jackie announced Tri-Moraine Audubon is contributing \$1,500.00 to COAC, raised as a line item on the chapter’s annual campaign and from the chapter’s greatest need fund.
- j. Questions: (ii through vii has been previously or will be addressed in the June 25, 2018 Chapter Rep call, shared via COAC email notification, and posted to the (future) COAC website.)
 - i. Q: Are we asking National Audubon Society (NAS) for support? A: Yes, Tom Romito wrote a grant proposal and submitted it to NAS. The proposal was rejected.
 - ii. Jim Michaels, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV): Request for clarification of cost structure. Will there be ongoing costs and what are they?
 - iii. Linda Williams, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV): What about the chapters that are not here? Or who have not come? Will they be responsible for dues?
 - iv. Sherilyn Burns, Greater Akron Audubon Society: When did year one start?
 - v. Jackie Augustine, Tri-Moraine Audubon: Can chapters opt in an opt out?

- vi. Penny Borgman & Ned Keller, Audubon Society of Ohio (Cincinnati Audubon): A list of concrete benefits and metrics is needed to present to chapter Board.
 - vii. Brian Grubb, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV): What is the proposal based on and where is the budget?
- k. Liz Woedl said NAS no longer provides a fee per member to chapters, and in the past chapters who wanted help paid COAC dues to concentrate on ‘networking’ chapters. It did a little advocacy as well but mostly worked on supporting chapters. Jackie Augustine summarized, COAC is independent of NAS and wants to be independent of NAS because it doesn’t want to do NAS’ bidding but wants to let NAS know that there are needs in our local community, to communicate that and maybe perhaps do other things.
- l. Jackie concluded by asking the group to go back to their chapters and ask if they can put a line item in their budget. Getting a few chapters to commit will help move COAC forward to solid plans. Jackie suggested a target of \$1,000.00 per group considering there may be some who are not able to meet that target and on average, we might get to the \$700.00 dollar per chapter needed to function.
5. SHARING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES PRESENTATION. [[Meeting Notes](#) | [Survey](#)] Jackie Augustine of Tri-Moraine Audubon Society led a discussion on how chapters can improve communications citing a successful and long lasting television ad case. Jackie published a survey listing communication methods to grow a vibrant chapter and to ascertain correlations that might exist between chapter and individual use.
6. HOW DO YOU GET MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED? DISCUSSION. [[Meeting Notes](#)] Linda Williams and Liz Woedl of Audubon Miami Valley (AMV), led a discussion of first-hand stories, successful and less-successful practices for getting more people involved in chapter events.
7. LUNCH. The attendees enjoyed lunch, which was provided by Silver Spoon Catering in Westerville, Ohio. We each paid for our own lunch.
8. SUCCESSFUL CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES AT AUDUBON MIAMI VALLEY
- a. MIAMI UNIVERSITY BIRDING CLUB PRESENTATION. [[VIDEO](#) | [PPT](#)] Imani Smith, Alumni Outreach Coordinator for Birders of Miami University, led an overview of the birding club, it’s recent revival, what activities it is engaged in, and how the group wants to expand its reach beyond campus.
 - b. THREE VALLEY CONSERVATION TRUST PRESENTATION. [[AUDIO](#) | [PPT](#)] Liz Woedl, Past Director TVCT & Founding Member, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV) presented an overview of the Trust established in 1994. It is recognized by farmers, landowners, developers, and public officials in southwest Ohio as an important resource for land protection, conservation planning, and environmentally-responsible

development. The Trust preserves woodlands and streams through donated conservation easements and tackles long-term projects to restore and preserve land throughout South West Ohio.

- c. AUDUBON MIAMI VALLEY BIRD ART EXHIBITION PRESENTATION. [VIDEO | [PPT](#)] Elizabeth Birch, Board Member-Education, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV) reported on the Audubon Miami Valley (AMV) sponsored Spring Bird Art Exhibition. The exhibition engages local district art students to study birds and climate change. Students research all aspects of one species of bird. Art entries are displayed at the Oxford Community Art Center in Oxford, Ohio and awards are presented to K-12 grade applicants.
 - d. STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION IN AN OLD-GROWTH IBA PRESENTATION. [AUDIO | [PPT](#)] Mark T. Gilmore, Board Member-at-Large, Audubon Miami Valley (AMV) detailed an AMV major habitat restoration project begun in 2012 by adopting Hueston Woods State Nature Preserve (HWSNP), designated in 1967 as a National Natural Landmark, and then the entirety of Hueston Woods State Park as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The stewardship project involves invasive species removal and catalyzed the creation of the Audubon Ash Tree Project (AATP) to treat select high-value ash trees (*fraxinus* spp.) using an insecticide trunk-injection process to prevent near-certain mortality due to the exotic invasive pest Emerald Ash Borer.
9. BIRDS, HABITAT AND CONGRESS PRESENTATION. [AUDIO | [PPT](#)] Liz Woedl said that Audubon chapters have played a historic role in advocating for the protection of birds and habitat. Liz presented a closer look at IRS guidelines and helped participants distinguish between advocacy and lobbying activities.
10. WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS [[Meeting Notes](#)] Jackie Augustine facilitated a closing conversation with the group. The next quarterly workshop will be Sept 16, 2018 hosted by Tri-Moraine Audubon Society at Myeerah Nature Center, 7405 OH-540, Bellefontaine, OH. Important deadlines: July 15, 2018 presenter topics due; July 30, 2018 workshop schedule posted; September 1, 2018 registration deadline.
- a. Group feedback on the workshop:
 - i. The group liked the variety of topics, the Conservatory venue, and the lunch.
 - ii. Future topics: annual gifts letters and results.
 - iii. Yes, the group agreed they like field activities included in the schedule.
 - iv. Having a COAC business portion to the meeting is important.
11. ADJOURNMENT. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. A majority of attendees participated in the natural area tour immediately afterwards.