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### AMV 2020 OFFICERS

President  
Larry Gersbach  
lgersbach@amvohio.org

Vice President  
TBD this Fall

Treasurer  
Neil Poppendeck  
npoppendeck@amvohio.org

Secretary  
Gail Reynolds  
greynolds@amvohio.org

We're happy to send you Audubon Miami Valley's (AMV) Spring newsletter. AMV plans a full line-up of meetings and events this Spring. Find the details both in this newsletter and at our website [amvohio.org](http://amvohio.org)

## COVID-19 Related Closures and Cancellations

The spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has led to the cancellations of professional sports, Broadway plays, March Madness, and parades. Now, we can add birding festivals, conventions, and other events to the list of functions being called off.

With the State of Ohio's stay-at-home order, a number of local events and establishments have had to make adjustments. As of the date this newsletter was written, the current stay-at-home order extends until May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Below is a list of cancellations and closures that may be of importance to our readers.

**\*\* Things have been changing at a rapid pace. Please contact a location to confirm its status before attempting to visit. \*\***

### Cancellations:

- AMV has cancelled all public events for April and May. Saturday, April 11 – This includes the Student Art Festival (April 11) and Hueston Woods volunteer day (April 19).
- Butler County Metroparks Big Week of Birding (scheduled for the week of April 26) has been cancelled for 2020.
- Biggest Week in American Birding events (scheduled for May 8-17) have been cancelled for 2020.
- Bluegrass Birding Festival (scheduled for May 8-10) has been cancelled for 2020.

### The following are closed until further notice:

- Fernald Nature Preserve
- The Cincinnati Nature Center's property and all trails.
- Aullwood Audubon Center property and trails closed through April 30.
- Grange Insurance Audubon Center is closed but trails are open.
- Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden
- Magee Marsh Wildlife
- Glen Helen Nature Preserve
- Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary
- Hocking Hills State Park
- Spring Grove Cemetery
- Charleston Falls Preserve
- The boardwalk at Maumee Bay State Park
- State Park golf courses (this includes the course at Hueston Woods).
- State park playgrounds
- State park marina buildings

## MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Marlene Hoffman  
mfhoffman@amvohio.org

Randy Morgan  
rmorgan@amvohio.org

Steve Sullivan  
ssullivan@amvohio.org

Mickey Simonds  
msimonds@amvohio.org

Carly Zeis  
czeis@amvohio.org

## APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audit  
Citizen Science  
Larry Gersbach  
lgersbach@amvohio.org

Conservation  
Dick Munson  
dmunson@amvohio.org

Conservation Advocacy  
Carly Zeis  
czeis@amvohio.org

Education  
Libby Birch  
lbirch@amvohio.org

Field Trips  
Eric Hollins  
ehollins@amvohio.org

Finance  
Neil Poppendeck  
npoppendeck@amvohio.org

Membership  
Beverly Thomas  
bthomas@amvohio.org

Newsletter  
Alexandria Horne  
ahorne@amvohio.org

Programs  
Hardy Eshbaugh  
heshbaugh@amvohio.org

Website  
Liz Woedl  
lwoedl@amvohio.org

## Most Parks are Open. Many Have Waived Their Fees!

The Ohio stay-at-home order does permit leaving a person's residence for outdoor activity provided the individuals comply with social distancing requirements. However, all public access playgrounds, visitors' centers and nature centers are closed.

### Open Parks:

- State park trails are open
- State park dog parks are open but the number of visitors may be limited.
- State park non-marina docks are open.
- Hueston Woods State Park trails are open.
- Gilmore Metropark trails are open.
- All parks in the Metroparks of Butler County system. Voice of America Metropark has temporarily waived entrance and fishing fees.
- All Indiana DNR properties including state parks, state forests, fish and wildlife areas, nature preserves and state recreation areas are open. Entrance fees at all properties have been temporarily suspended.

\*\* Most parks have temporarily closed restrooms and water fountains. Most events have been cancelled as well \*\*

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## Bored While Practicing Social Distancing? Go Birding!

As long as you don't put yourself or others at risk—birding is the perfect thing to do while practicing social distancing. Of course, social distancing doesn't work without the distance part, so this only counts for open spaces that you can reach while avoiding close contact with others.

There's a growing body of scientific evidence indicating that contact with nature can ease anxiety and provide an all-around mood boost. With rising fears and palpable tension in the air, we can all benefit from this calming influence. Below are a few AMV staff favorite local birding spots:

### **Hueston Woods State Park**

A local favorite located just 6 miles north of Oxford. The park has nearly 3,000 acres of outdoor recreation and surrounds the 625-acre Acton Lake. Birders can enjoy watching for some of the park's 150 bird species. The park also contains the Hedgerow Project which is a 14-acre managed wildlife habitat featuring native grasses, wildflowers, an observation blind and vernal pools, along Hedgerow Road. A great place to see Spring migrants including the Louisiana Waterthrush, Wood Thrush and a host of warblers. You may even see the occasional Common Loon or Red-breasted Merganser at Acton Lake.

### **The Oxbow**

Herons, ducks, shorebirds—if it likes water, you can find it at the Oxbow. Located in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, the best time of year for birding the Oxbow area is during the spring migration, which extends from February for ducks, through May for shorebirds. Before you bird the Oxbow area, check the level of the Ohio River. Flood stage at Cincinnati is 52 feet, but the Oxbow begins to flood at 30 feet.

### **Riverside Natural Area**

Despite the interesting mix of diverse habitats, Riverside Natural Area isn't very well known among local birders. The natural area is located along the Great Miami River in Hamilton, Ohio. Among the features certain to be attractive to birders are a lagoon formed from an old river channel, a small man-made wetland that backs up against the south side of the lagoon, and approximately 130 acres of prairie. There is a modest 10-acre prairie just off the parking lot, but on the south side of Riverside Natural Area you'll find the large, 120-acre prairie.



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## Upcoming Field Trips

Each month (excluding July and August), Audubon Miami Valley sponsors a field trip to a regional site of special interest. All are welcome on AMV field trips. More information is available at <http://amvohio.org/events/field-trips/> or send an email to Eric Hollins, AMV field trip coordinator, at [ehollins@amvohio.org](mailto:ehollins@amvohio.org) Please join us even if you don't have binoculars; AMV members are always happy to share and help beginning birders.

### **June 14, 2020 Aullwood Audubon Center**

The Audubon Center of the National Audubon Society focuses on environmental education, sustainable agriculture, leads and inspires people to preserve, protect and enjoy nature, farming and the environment. Come discover the center's woods, streams, ponds, prairies, meadows, nature center and working sustainable farm!

\*\* Please check the AMV website for updates regarding the status of this field trip \*\*

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## Upcoming Audubon Miami Valley Programs

AMV will meet on the following dates at 7:30 PM in the 2nd floor conference room of the Lebanon Citizens National Bank building, 30 West Park Place, Oxford, OH. These meetings are free and open to the public.

### **September 14, 2020 Elephants, Lions and Lapwings: A Southern Africa Safari**

#### **Presenters - Kathy Beil-Morgan and Randy Morgan**

This program will feature some natural history highlights from Kathy and Randy's vacation expedition to Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Deserts bisected by wetlands and bordered by coastlines support incredible wildlife such as elephants, lions, wild dogs, rhinos, hippos, antelopes, crocodiles and more. Kathy Beil-Morgan is currently Marketing Manager & Veterinary Nurse at Peach Grove Animal Hospital. Randy Morgan holds the honorary position of Emeritus Curator-Insectarium at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, where he worked for 32 years prior to retiring. He is also a Board Member-at-large for AMV.

### **October 12, 2020 Giant Panda Conservation and the Global Goals for Sustainability**

#### **Presenter – Nancy Ferguson**

Nancy Ferguson Robinson will present a program on Giant Panda Conservation and the Global Goals for Sustainability. Nancy will discuss Giant Panda conservation and her role as an envoy to the United Nations Development Programme. In January 2017, Nancy traveled to China to learn about the challenges of Giant Panda conservation and understand the role of Giant Pandas as ambassadors of hope for the Global Goals. Nancy is currently the Director of Counseling Services at Miami University Middletown. Nancy also worked as a naturalist educator/Program Leader at the Cincinnati Zoo, teaching about wildlife conservation, biodiversity and animal adaptations.

### **November 9, 2020 Restoration of the American Chestnut Tree – An Icon Returns**

#### **Presenter – Carolyn Keiffer**

Once called the "Redwood of the East," the American Chestnut was rendered functionally extinct by an imported fungal pathogen. Now, a century later, scientists from the American Chestnut Foundation hope to return the tree to the canopy of eastern forests. Historical significance, restoration efforts and reintroduction plantings will be highlighted. Dr. Carolyn Keiffer joined the Miami University faculty in 1996 after earning her doctorate in restoration ecology at Ohio University. She is currently working with ODNR, the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to restore the American Chestnut to U.S. Forests. Dr. Keiffer is passionate about involving students in community service projects and many of her students are active in local parks, arboreturns and nature sanctuary projects.

### **December 14, 2020 (Program to be announced)**

#### **Presenters – Lindsey Rustad**

Lindsey is a research ecologist with the USDA Forest Service Center for Research on Ecosystem Change in Durham, NH and co-director of the Northeastern Hub for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change. She has a B.A. degree in Philosophy from Cornell University, a M.S. in Forest Science from Yale and a Ph.D. in Plant Science from the University of Maine. Lindsey has several Distinguished Science awards from USDA and in 2019, was selected as an AAAS IF.THEN Ambassador representing women in STEM. Her areas of expertise include biogeochemistry, climate change impacts, advanced environmental sensor systems, and the integration of art and science.



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Butler and Preble Counties of SW Ohio

## Aullwood Audubon 2020 Native Plant Sale

Celebrate Ohio's first ever Native Plant Month by ordering the perfect plants from Aullwood's Native Plant Sale. This year, they have over 100 species and thousands of individual native wildflowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs available.

Due to the current coronavirus situation, the Native Plant Sale will be pre-order only. No public sale will be held, but we will deliver your plant order directly to your local residence! You can print and mail an order form or call in your order at 937-280-4780. Find more information here <https://aullwood.audubon.org/special-event/native-plant-sale-2020>

**Please have your order submitted by April 30.**

