



A number of Ohio's winter birds shelter and feed here on the Quarry Farm, including (from the top) a Dark-eyed Junco, Red-bellied Woodpecker and a Carolina Wren. (Photos by Deb Weston)

It Took a Blizzard

The other day I stopped my car beside a roadside juniper to watch a flock of small birds feeding on frosty blue berries fallen on snow. The scene reminded me of a more somber one of 42 years ago: The blizzard of '78 had struck with icy fury. The deck where my husband and I kept several feeders drifted so rapidly that soon frantic, hungry birds couldn't reach their food. Lashing snow drifted high and fast on the sliding doors and froze solid in the near zero-degree temperatures, effectively blocking our attempts to help them. When the blizzard finally quieted, countless birds had starved and frozen to death. Bodies of blue jays and other species littered our deck. Farther out in the countryside, populations of quail and other seed-eaters like the jays were decimated. The quail have never recovered around here (habitat loss hasn't helped), and it took a long time for jays to come back in any numbers.

The shocking images of those birds losing their battle against insurmountable odds made a lasting impression on my husband and me, causing us to see our pleasant pastime of feeding the birds in a more serious light. Doing a good job that matters to their survival, we understood, takes more than throwing out buckets of birdseed. While not every winter produces a catastrophic blizzard, even in a mild winter, birds face challenges and the more accurately we can meet their food needs, the better their chances. Scientific studies from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and other institutions, observations from the Audubon Society and the legions of birders like Quarry Farm Board member Deb Weston continue to enlighten us about such issues as how to feed the birds with specially adapted feeders (an interesting subject for another time), what foods are most nutritious—and what we shouldn't feed them. For example, we've been told that bread, fresh or dried, offers no nutrition to birds and can be deadly if it contains mold; and table scraps can be sickening.

Thanks to the studies, a lot of sound information is available now about what to feed birds throughout the year. In a recent online search I found several detailed articles about the best foods for the birds we see in our NW Ohio backyards right now, when they especially can use the help. The food considered the best for the most species is black oil sunflower seed. One writer calls it "the hamburger of the bird world." The shells are thinner than those of striped sunflower seeds, making the nutritious, high-calorie content easier to reach. Another good high-fat bird food is suet, raw from the butcher shop or rendered and formed into blocks containing seed mixes. The blocks tend to last longer than raw suet, which can melt and become rancid more quickly in warmer temperatures.

Small finches love thistle seed (also, nyjer). Something to keep in mind when feeding thistle seed is that it can quickly become moldy and rancid when wet. A sure sign of thistle seed gone bad is that birds stop eating it. Woodpeckers, jays, nuthatches, chickadees and titmice, and to a lesser extent finches and cardinals, like peanuts—shelled, dry-roasted and unsalted. Birds will go for peanut butter (not peanut "spread"), as well, rubbed into bark, packed in pine cones, etc. Many small ground-feeding birds such as juncos, sparrows and doves like the starchy content of white proso millet. Cracked corn appeals to sparrows, blackbirds, jays, doves (and squirrels) and many other birds.

If you feed a seed mix, as I suspect most of us do, read the label to make sure it's a good one with large amounts of the seeds mentioned here, and very little junky filler. Or you can buy the individual seeds in bulk and mix your own.

There is so much more to know about helping birds survive the extremes of winter and mounting pressures of other kinds. The rewards of making the effort are great for all of us.

—The Quarry Farm Gardener

Winter 2021 Programs & Events

Register by the Thursday before each event by calling 419-384-7195 or by emailing thequarryfarm@gmail.com. Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. Masks are required for the safety of everyone present.

Annual Hat Day Hike

Saturday, January 16, 2 to 3 p.m.

More body heat is lost from your head than other parts of the body. National Hat Day (January 15) is not to just keep your noggin warm. It's a chance to make a statement and to display your favorite headgear. In celebration, style a hat and join us for a nature hike. This year, dress up your mask for added pizzazz.

2021 Great Backyard Bird Count and Night Hike

Saturday, February 13, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Each February, the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology coordinate the Great Backyard Bird Count. Bring your binoculars as we document the many species of birds that prepare to shelter in the preserve at night. All recorded species will be submitted to the international count as part of the largest snapshot of global bird populations.

New Moon Hike

Saturday, March 13, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Bring a flashlight and be sure to dress for the weather, including good walking boots/shoes, then take a guided walk to the preserve area under the night sky. We will take a break in the Nature's Classroom to listen for nocturnal animals.

Spring Sparrow Hike

Saturday, March 20, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Join us for a hike on the first day of Spring 2021. We will look for the earliest spring wildflowers. As March 20 is also World Sparrow Day, we will see how many different species of sparrows we can spot and submit our findings to ebird, one of the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for photos and updates.



THE Quarry FARM
NATURE PRESERVE & CONSERVATION FARM



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Questions? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, visit us online at www.thequarryfarm.org or call 419-384-7195. Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax deductible.



Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



A moth overwinters on the forest floor. (Photo by Deb Weston)

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: This tree along Cranberry Run is a good example of how effective roots are at curbing erosion caused by forceful floodwaters.

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org

Printed on recycled, recyclable paper

Under One Big Sky

Friday, October 9 was The Quarry Farm 5K. The pandemic forced the event to be virtual this year and we thank all who laced up their athletic shoes and made tracks wherever they.

October 17 was October Big Day. Big Days, a project of the Cornell Lab, is a 24-hour opportunity to celebrate the birds both near you and around the world. The 2020 October Big Day happened during the first Global Bird Weekend. The goal of Global Bird Weekend was to make October 17–18 the biggest ever birding weekend and support BirdLife International's appeal to end illegal bird trade. Globally, birders found a total of 7,014 different species of birds, with more than 30,000 birders participating (the goal was 25,000). The eight birders who hiked here spotted several species, including two Winter Wrens along the Upland Trail.

Rich and Nora Parks got the new trailhead message center project started this fall after First National Bank of Pandora funded the project. They assembled the frame and started to dig post holes, but ran into rocky resistance courtesy of the 19th- and 20th-century stone-quarrying operation. After almost two years of engineering bridges and moving boulders in the nature preserve, David Seitz set aside his bush honeysuckle-rooting mattock in December to tackle the dig and complete the installation. The message center will feature a trail map, information about the different ecosystems here and upcoming events. The message center itself tells a great environmental story as it was manufactured from recycled plastics—a lot of them, as it took David's extensive engineering expertise to set in place. Thanks to funding from Ag Credit Mission Fund, trail markers are on the 2021 to-do list.

Congratulations to Board Member Deb Weston for reaching 500 on her personal bird-documentation list in 2020 (a tally she has already exceeded.) The Quarry Farm is Putnam County's #1 birding hotspot on The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird.org, thanks to Deb Weston and David Smith. When Deb wasn't logging spring and summer miles on the trails to document and photograph most of the species of birds currently on our hotspot list, she was leading other avian enthusiasts here. View some of Deb's bird photos in this newsletter and on our website. If you're lucky, Deb may join us here for the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 13 (see Winter 2021 Events on the back page.)



The view from David's Landbridge: As Cranberry Run (left) flowed merrily with December rain, the quarry (right) finally filled after two dry seasons.



The Upland Trail was rich with sugar maple fall foliage on October Big Day.

Although we aren't able to offer hands-on projects right now due to the pandemic, we can lead small groups on hikes in the nature preserve and tours of the farm animal sanctuary. If you wish to schedule an outdoor visit onsite during Winter 2021, send an email to thequarryfarm@gmail.com with a details about your group, including number of people, ages, and possible dates and times. Masks are required for the safety of everyone present this winter.

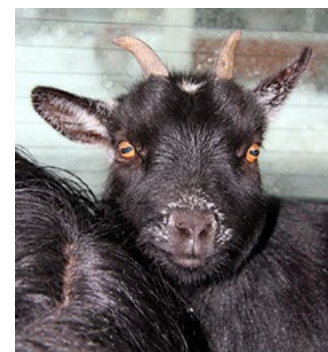
Resident Spotlight:

MISSY

In Spring 2020, Dawn Gossman drove in the lane with Pygmy Goats Missy and Molly. Although well-loved, Dawn chose to re-home them as they were being bullied by another nanny. She entrusted their care to us, much to the enthusiastic appreciation of long-time resident Elora. Sophisticated Molly refused to acknowledge Elora's presence in the paddock. Missy was the first to break the ice, allowing their goaty twosome to be joined by a tiny, round Elora.

Missy was also the first to allow her new humans to approach. She loves her feed and was never afraid to voice her demands for more hay or anything else she might fancy. Most of the goats that made their home here before Molly and Missy arrived were somewhat quiet, leaving the donkeys to sing lead when something interested the sanctuary herd. Missy, however, shares lead vocals, especially when someone pulls in the gate.

Sweet feed and fresh hay may have been the way to Missy's heart. Whatever it took to gain her trust, we'll take it. She has developed a soft woolly winter coat which makes morning and evening goat hugs all the more enjoyable for the Food Lady.



In the Fall 2020 Newsletter, Elora was featured in the Resident Spotlight. I said that it wasn't the first time and it probably wouldn't be the last. With great sadness, the next time is in memory of her. Elora died on December 12. She arrived here in February 2013 and lived out the rest of her life eating hay, grass, pine and running up and down the slopes with everyone. She is buried on the north slope between the pine groves, next to Willow and Martigan. We miss her wonky horns—one short and straight; the other curved down like a slicked side part—and most especially, her sweetness.

Want to Feed the Birds? Leave the Bread at Home

Angel Wing, also known as airplane wing, slipped wing, flipped wing, crooked wing, and drooped wing, is a syndrome that affects primarily aquatic birds. Angel Wing is a deformity in a bird's wings where the outer wings or wrists twist outward instead of lying flat against the bird's body.

Waterfowl diet consists mostly of grass. Angel Wing is attributed to a diet high in carbohydrates and proteins. The unnaturally rich diet causes fast growth. The weight of the growing flight feathers stresses the developing muscles that move the wing bone, causing twisting and slipping. Even just a few days of eating foods like bread and popcorn can cause irreparable damage.

Angel Wing prevents a bird from ever being able to fly. Caught early enough in a young bird's life, the condition can be treated with veterinary advice and therapy. If this condition is in an adult bird, it will remain so as the growth is set and cannot be reversed. Several victims of well-meaning bird lovers are federally-permitted on the farm animal sanctuary. While it is a joy to get to know these birds and to study their behavior, each time they lift their heads to watch a migrating flock fly overhead, our hearts break a little more.



Thank you...

...to Brad and Bonnie Brooks for maintaining the grassland and for black walnuts

...to the Bridenbaugh family for pumpkins

...to Dave and Jane Hilty for pumpkins

...to Deb Kemerley for black walnuts and osage oranges

...to Nora and Rich Parks for invasive species removal

...to Butch Radabaugh for birdhouses

...to David Seitz for continued trail work and invasive plant removal

...to Deb Weston for black walnuts



Board President Laura displays a check from AgCredit Mission Fund, a grant that will be used to install trail markers.

Monetary Donations:

Bruce Coburn, in memory of Bert Coburn

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