

Every day in YourTown, we spotlight a different Lorain County community:

MONDAY: Avon/Avon Lake
TUESDAY: Amherst/Vermillion/South Amherst
WEDNESDAY: Wellington/Oberlin
THURSDAY: North Ridgeville
TODAY: Grafton/LaGrange/Columbia
SATURDAY: Lorain/Sheffield/Sheffield Lake
SUNDAY: Elyria/Elyria Township

YOURTOWN & COLUMBIA GRAFTON & LA GRANGE

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Protecting the natural world

Black River Audubon Society hosts penguin march

Melissa Linebrink
 The Chronicle-Telegram

The Black River Audubon Society is reaching beyond Ohio in an effort to teach others the importance of birding, conservation and education of wildlife.

The society will host its "March of the Penguin" event 7 p.m. March 6 at Lorain County Metro Parks Carlisle Visitor Center, 12882 Diagonal Road, LaGrange. The program is free.



Leiden

Tom Leiden, CEO and president of Leiden Cabinet Co. in Twinsburg, will be the guest speaker. He has studied penguins for many years. Leiden is a trustee at Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration and an honorary trustee of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

In 2007, Leiden went on an expedition with EarthWatch to Robben Island, South Africa, to assist researchers studying the African penguin.

"I have always been fascinated by penguins," he said.

Since 2007, he and his wife, Kathy Leiden, have traveled back to South Africa seven times to visit the penguins and aid researchers.

During the program, Leiden will discuss the plight of the African penguin and how others can help.

Even though penguins are not found in the wild in Ohio, the Black River Audubon Society's past president Jack Smith, is hopeful that other species of birds will start migrating back to northern Ohio.

One such bird is the purple martins. The purple martins are slowly making their way back to the Lake Erie region because of the efforts of the society. That is in keeping with the society's mission to promote conservation and restoration of various ecosystems focusing on birds and other wildlife.

It is doing so despite the declining number of active volunteers.

The organization has 647



Black River Audubon Society members Jack Smith, left, and Mike Smith recently installed a bluebird house at Golden Ages Nursing Home in Amherst.

national members, but only 60 are active members.

For an organization that has been around since 1958, active members are now hoping others will step forward to lend a helping hand.

Three founding members are still active — Jack Smith and Jane Coven, both of Elyria, and Norma Kraps, of Grafton.

"We're trying to leave a footprint that will carry on into the future," Smith said. "We want a better environment. It's very important for people to learn and appreciate what is around them because they are less likely to have trash in our society," Smith said, referring to cleaning up sites where birds tend to migrate.

Dick Lee, education chairman for the organization, joined the National Audubon Society during his teaching career, but did not become active until after his retirement in 1998.

"It is the efforts of the grassroots members that reach individuals and result in making a difference in our local activities," Lee said.

Harriet Alger, a retired dean of early childhood education from State University of New York, College at Cobleskill, joined the Black River Audubon Society when she returned to her hometown of Lorain in 1997.

"In addition to my interest in birding, I was an advocate for conservation and preservation of our natural environment," she said.

Alger is the chair of the conservation committee within the organization.

The Black River Audubon Society has active conservation, education and advocacy programs.

But now, the organization is in need of members to begin playing an active role in order for the programs to continue

to thrive.

"We need volunteers to reach our people and help develop an awareness of the need to conserve our environment," Lee said.

Alger said there are plenty of volunteer positions within the society for those who are not interested in birding.

The Black River Audubon Society distributes educational kits called "Audubon Adventures," which are geared toward third- through fifth-grade students in creating the awareness to help keep the environment safe.

Lee said volunteers are needed to help spread the word about the educational kits. Volunteers also are needed to write, edit and prepare upcoming issues of the local newsletter, "Wingtips," which is mailed out to between 750 and 800 residents and organizations.

If volunteers are looking for

outdoor activities, the local chapter has created bluebird trails throughout the county. Each trail requires a monitor to check the nest boxes about every five days from March through August.

"Otherwise, the house sparrows take over the nests and destroy the bluebird eggs and kill the young," Lee said.

There are more than 500 bluebird boxes to check. "Volunteering is rewarding," Lee said. "I don't know if it is the endorphins or what, but there is a sense of satisfaction and pride in having given of one's time and self to help work toward the mission of the organization."

Volunteers do not need to be members in order to help.

For a complete list of upcoming Black River Audubon Society events, volunteering or membership visit www.blackriveraudubon.org or call (440) 322-0820.



Send your Grafton/LaGrange/Columbia news to **Melissa Linebrink**
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CRIME WATCH

LaGrange police

Wednesday, Feb. 15
 7 p.m. — 400 block Hendrix, resident claimed he received a "fraudulent" purchase from Craig's list.

9:30 p.m. — Terry McGuire, 27, LaGrange, charged with driving under suspension, expired license and failure to dim headlights.

Saturday, Feb. 18

12:58 a.m. — East Main Street, Robert Fisher, 22, LaGrange, arrested on an active warrant.

2:05 a.m. — Railroad Street, Matthew Disbennett, 25, Litchfield, charged with weapons under disability and possession of marijuana.

Grafton police

Friday, Feb. 17
 11:06 p.m. — 1000 block Woodland Chase, loud music complaint.

Saturday, Feb. 18

9:44 p.m. — Main Street, caller advised that a group of juveniles were playing around on the railroad tracks as well as on the stopped train. A police officer eventually found the juveniles at the old school on Elm Street. They were advised to not play in traffic or on train tracks.

STUFF TO DO

Through April 13

AARP tax aide program offers free one-on-one counseling and tax preparation for low- and middle-income taxpayers with special attention to those ages 60 and older. Sessions are each Friday. Volunteers help prepare basic tax forms including the 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ and other standard schedules. Call (440) 926-3317 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for an appointment. Registration required. No walk-in appointments.

Today to Wednesday

Leap Day trivia contest at Grafton Midview Public Library, 983 Main St., Grafton. Pick up entry forms at the library and deposit in entry box. Winners will be randomly chosen from all correct entries and will win a prize. Call (440) 926-3317.

Today to March 2

Teen tech week celebration at Columbia Branch Library, 13824 West River Road N., Columbia Station. Teens may submit pictures through March 2 for a collage to be on display March 5 to 10 during regular library hours. Pictures will not be returned. Call (440) 236-8751.

Saturday

Teen video game day, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Grafton Midview Public Library, 983 Main St., Grafton. Features an open video game session, teens may select to play various Wii games as well as an assortment of classic Atari 2600 games and Sega Genesis games. Food and prizes will be available. Call (440) 926-3317.

Monday

Adult afternoon book discussion, 1 p.m., Columbia Branch Library, 13824 West River Road N., Columbia Station. "The Worst Hard Time" by Timothy Egan will be discussed. Copies of the book are available at the library. New members are welcome. Call (440) 236-8751.

Friends of library meeting 6 p.m., Columbia Branch Library, 13824 West River Road N., Columbia Station. Future volunteer activities will be discussed. Members and new members are encouraged to attend. Call (440) 236-8751.

March 3

Spring cupcake decorating program, 11 a.m., Columbia Branch Library, 13824 West River Road N., Columbia Station. Brenda Daugherty, cake decorator at Pat Catan's will present the program. Participants are to bring nine cupcakes to decorate with butter cream icing and fondant decorations. Pre-registration is required. Call (440) 236-8751.

Submit calendar items at least two weeks prior to the event by faxing to (440) 329-7282 (Attention: Grafton-LaGrange-Columbia news) or email ctnews@chroniclet.com.

NOTEBOOK

Friday fish fry

Ladies Auxiliary of Grafton Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3341 will hold its annual Lenten Lake Erie Fish Fry Fridays 5 to 7 p.m. starting today and continuing through April 6 at the Post Hall, 781 Huron St., Grafton.

Carryouts available by calling (440) 926-3341.

Pierogi time in Columbia

The pierogi sale at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 25801 Royalton Road, Columbia Station, is in full swing.

Orders need to be called in by Monday for pick up on Thursday; order March 12 for pick up on March 15; and order March 26 for pick up on March 29. The pierogi are \$7 a dozen (sold only by the dozen) and an 8-inch strudel strip is \$4.

Pierogi flavors are potato, potato/cheese, sauerkraut, ricotta cheese, prune, apple and cabbage. Strudel flavors are apple, cherry, cheese and blueberry.

Forms are in the entrance way of the church. Orders may be faxed to (440) 236-5804 or call the church office at (440) 236-5095 between 9:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Keystone teacher named to national advisory board

Keystone Elementary first-grade teacher Jill Hetsler was chosen as one of 22 teachers nationwide who will make up the 2012 Scholastic Book Clubs Teacher Advisory Board.

As a member of the advisory board, she will work with teachers from across the country to help influence every aspect of Scholastic Book Clubs.

Keystone tops Brookside in Scholastic Games

Keystone High School defeated Brookside High School during the Feb. 13 Scholastic

Games radio quiz program.

The final score was 410 to 180.

Keystone was represented by team captain Sarah Speck, Westley Lincicome and Janice Sikon. Janice won the program's "Standout Scholar" award.

Maple sugaring returns to Carlisle Visitor Center

Learn one of the many things that happen in nature as winter fades and spring arrives — making maple syrup at Lorain County Metro Parks' maple sugaring program at the Carlisle Visitor Center noon to 4 p.m. starting Saturday and Sunday, and March 3, 4, 10 and 11.

Visitors can stop at the center and get a quick lesson on the history and science of maple sugaring.

Afterward, head outdoors with a naturalist to hike the sugar bush and view the sap collection process. Visitors can even try to tap a tree. After the sap is collected, visit the Sugar Shack and see the sap being converted into syrup.

The fun doesn't stop there — take a train ride through a second sugar bush, weather permitting.

All of these family friendly events are free, but guests are asked to bring canned food items that will be donated to Second Harvest Food Bank for their annual Harvest for Hunger campaign.

Try some maple syrup on pancakes at the annual pancake breakfast 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and continuing March 3, 4, 10 and 11. Cost is \$6.50 per adult and \$3.50 per child ages 2 to 10 years, payable at the door. Children younger than 2 eat free.

The Carlisle Visitor Center is at 12882 Diagonal Road, LaGrange.

For more information about maple sugaring, call Mary Ewers at (440) 458-5121.

— Melissa Linebrink



CHRONICLE FILE

Bob Shaffstall, a volunteer with Friends of Lorain County Metro Parks, checked on the evaporator, which boils off the excess water in sap, leaving maple syrup at the Sugar Shack at Lorain County Metro Parks Carlisle Reservation in March.