

## NATURE TALK by Nancy Bain

January 2024



### WHO ARE YOU?

Although popular culture tends to trivialize it, resolution making is an ennobling process. As Socrates saw it, the unexamined life is not worth living. Rather, a mindful (I repeat—mindful) review of one's life can give shape to the three essential questions each one of us faces every day: Who am I? Why am I here? How shall I live?

I didn't know it at the time, but a resolution I made as a sixth grader has had a profound effect on my life: I simply decided to become a birder. My parents, avid backyard birdwatchers, always maintained a birdbath and kept binoculars and a Peterson's field guide at the ready. Birds opened up my child's world and augmented my love of nature. I kept track of all the birds I saw, especially when traveling. I wrote "research" papers that I copied verbatim from the family's set of *Encyclopedia Britannica*—an interesting mimicking exercise, perhaps foretelling my becoming an English major in college, an

English teacher for my profession, a freelance writer for a time, and the privilege to apply my writing skills wherever they could be used.

During high school and college years I put birding aside but recommenced it after marrying and moving to Dayton. And what serendipity I met! It just so happened that the naturalist Edith Blincoe wrote a "Nature Walks" column for the Dayton *Journal Herald* from which I learned about the Dayton Audubon Society and their weekly bird walks that offered occasions to improve birding skills and explore the area's many parks. Next up was my decision to join the DAS board and volunteer to edit the monthly *Yellow Warbler* newsletter that went out to more than 1800 members. What a job! But, that participation led to my also becoming a member of the newly formed Native Plant Society of the Miami Valley (I served as its president from 1998 to 2006) that led to helping to found the Beaver Creek Wetlands Association, the Marianist Environmental Education Center (MEEC), attending all kinds of conferences and workshops, and working on committees that championed Ohio's extraordinary biodiversity and natural beauty.

Mind you—I'm not crowing. In fact, I'm astonished that I, a nonscience person who disliked and did poorly in science classes, nevertheless developed a thoroughly science-based avocation made possible by a vibrant environmental community that welcomed all to learn about the natural world and develop talents and skills. It's only now, as I look back upon my life, to realize how these involvements helped me answer those three questions: Who am I? (an environmentalist); Why am I here? (to advocate for our natural environment); How shall I live? (in continual support of environmental efforts that offer chances for others to grow and learn in community with like-minded souls).

This year, B-W Greenway's Forever Campaign highlights its efforts to continue and expand the Greenway. Beyond donating dollars, now might be a good time to look closely at your resolutions. How about participating more regularly at work sessions or joining the Board? Maybe gather a group—young or adult—for regular hikes to see properties you've not visited before. Set a goal to practice identifying birds or flowers. Take notes or keep records of your experiences. By next January, you'll have something to examine to see how much you've accomplished, discovering in the process who you are that you really never thought about before.