



Chickadee Chatter

Volume 7 Issue 3

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

September 2008

www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org

Dear Members:

We were very excited to see the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch listed in *Wild Bird's* article on hawk watches across the U.S. in the July/August issue that focused on birds of prey. The article, entitled "Touch the Sky," encouraged birders to visit hawk watches.

Some changes were recently made to the parking situation at the hawk watch. The previous owner granted usage of the parking lot and roadside parking. Unfortunately, that owner recently passed away and the new owner does not permit us to use either the lot or road. We are working to make a parking area alongside the short road going to the counting area. It is parallel to the road by the port-a-john and cars can pull in at an angle. It will hold about eight cars. There is also a satellite parking area just beyond the entrance gate that will hold three cars. It is surrounded by stone walls and is on the right side of the road about 50 feet or so beyond the blue gate. On work day there was a great deal of activity with lots of help and much of the clearing for a new parking area took place at that time. We will continue to work on the new parking area with loads of shale and it should hold just as many cars, if not more, than the old parking lot.

A special THANK YOU from the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch to all those who came out to help on work day, August 23, 2008: Jeff & Retta Payne, Mike Jackson, Gene, Nancy & Randy Flament, Ed Gowarty Jr. & Ed Gowarty Sr., Eric Hall, Merle & Karen Jackson, Dennis & Rosemary McGlynn, Tony Barle, Tom Miller, Che & Marian Mincone, Jack Julian, Tom Dick, Bill Miller, Lee Tosh, Jim Rocco, Dave Darney, and Bob Gorsuch.



Ev Merriman, Editor

Sensible Wind Solutions

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society members have been busy with their legislative organization, "Sensible Wind Solutions." Kim Moore had two fundraisers which brought in enough money for several months of lobbyist activity. We also got support from those members at the picnic who purchased books from the collection donated in memory of Peggy Wisner by our advisory board chairperson Bob Wisner. These are all deeply appreciated.

We now have the support of State Trout Unlimited, most of the Audubon Chapters, and the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsman Clubs. Senator Eickelberger, on behalf of Sensible Wind Solutions, will hold a legislative hearing in Blair County this fall and afterward he will introduce our bill into the Senate.

We're still looking for other groups to join in, but we have little time to solicit support from others when we spend so much time in Harrisburg talking to senators and house members. The purpose of Sensible Wind Solutions is to keep wind turbines and their associated infrastructure of roads out of continuous forests; instead we believe they can and should be placed on strip-mines or other degraded lands. This means that rich areas of biodiversity, migratory corridors, high quality streams, wetlands (bogs, emergent marsh, ephemeral ponds) would receive protection. It also means that intact forests would not be degraded by wind infrastructure.

If you are not moved by anything else, think about those cute little Saw-whet Owls that migrate along the Allegheny Front and are very vulnerable to turbine mortality. Last year at the hawk watch we banded 236 Saw-whet Owls. Many families visited with their children who were able to release the owls after banding. I wish more people could see the glow of compassion in the eyes of these children. The Saw-whets are those robin-size feather balls depicted on the Pennsylvania license plates. All new energy sources need regulations, and the classic example is acid mine drainage from a coal industry that was unregulated during its time. With unregulated wind, we will destroy intact blocks of forest and the species dependent on it. Bats, Golden Eagles, a host of songbirds, Allegheny Wood Rats, and rattlesnakes are all dependent on unspoiled wild places. They have a right to exist and we must have the determination to safeguard our natural heritage. Donations made out to "Wind Siting Reform Fund," 123 Hummer Lane, Cairnbrook, Pa. 15924 will be greatly appreciated. This money goes directly to Sensible Wind Solutions.



Tom Dick

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North American Butterfly Count Results

Our North American Butterfly Count was postponed this year from July 13 to July 19 due to horrific thunderstorm predictions that never happened. As a result, our participant list dropped from 22 to 13 and guess what materialized? We had, possibly, the highest total count in the Middle Atlantic and Northeast. Our participants were George Bercik, Tom and Debbie Bodenschatz, Tom and Sally Dick, Curt Lehman, Bill and Karen Parker, Pauline Petrucci, Walt and Dana Shaffer, and Lee Tosh. The count is as follows: 45 Black Swallowtail, 50 Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, 13 Spicebush Swallowtail, 98 Cabbage White, 60 Clouded Sulfur, 52 Orange Sulfur, 1 Little Yellow, 104 American Copper, 2 Banded Hairstreak, 12 Coral Hairstreak, 3 Striped Hairstreak, 2 Gray Hairstreak, 71 Eastern Tailed Blue, 80 Spring Summer Azure, 577 Great Spangled Fritillary, 38 Aphrodite, 12 Atlantis, 21 Meadow Fritillary, 2 Mourning Cloak, 458 Pearl

Crescent, 2 Silvery Checkerspot, 50 plus Harris's Checkerspot larvae, 1 Question Mark, 5 Eastern Comma, 1 Gray Comma, 4 American Lady, 2 Painted Lady, 2 Red Admiral, 1 Common Buckeye, 6 Red-spotted Purple, 2 Vicroy, 2 Northern Pearly-eye, 42 Common Wood-Nymph, 12 Appalachian Brown, 32 Monarch, 131 Silver Spotted Skippers, 14 Wild Indigo Dustywing, 1 Juvenile's Dustywing, 2 Common Sootywing, 1 Least Skipper, 8 European Skipper, 1 Peck's Skipper, 1 Tawny-edged Skipper, 4 Crossline Skipper, 1 Long Dash, 5 Northern Broken Dash, 40 Little Glassywing, 92 Dun Skipper, 2 Sachem, 1 Delaware Skipper, 3 Black Dash. The total was 51 species of which 50 were adults and 1 larval species. In retrospect, our species count and individual totals would have been higher if we had more counters, but this beats our previous record of 47 species. Another great example of APAS biodiversity.



Tom Dick

2008 Spring Hawk Watch Count Results

Surprisingly, the spring count, with its much lower numbers, becomes very important in the study of raptors since few hawk watches have a spring migration. Fortunately, the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch has a solid spring migration, which usually is around 2,000 individuals yearly. The new records for spring were 185 Osprey, 35 Bald Eagle and 110 Red-shouldered Hawks. Other noteworthy occurrences were an above average 94 Golden Eagles with the best Golden Eagle flight on March 3 with 37 GEs on Eric Hall's day. The best count day was Jim Rocco's with 260 raptors and our spring Red-shouldered record was the second highest in Pa. The counters spent 429.75 hours counting 2,111 raptors.

The results are as follows: Black Vulture 12, Turkey Vulture 410, Osprey 185, Bald Eagle 35, Northern Harrier 29, Sharp-shinned Hawk 171, Cooper's Hawk 56, Northern Goshawk 9, Red-shouldered 110, Broad-winged 433, Red-

tail 478, Rough-legged 1, Golden Eagle 94, American Kestrel 26, Merlin 4, Peregrine Falcon 4, Unidentified Accipter 17, Unidentified Buteo 30, Unidentified Falcon 3, Unidentified Eagle 4.

A special thanks to Che Mincone, our compiler, and to the counting crew and many helpful spotters.

Audubon Picnic

Those of you who attended the annual APAS picnic may be pleased to know that 140 people attended. Several meetings were held, children learned about and collected snakes and insects, and a tree tour and foray to the hawk watch were the activities for the adults. Some folks simply chose to relax and enjoy the beautiful day, great comraderie, and all the wonderful food.



Tom Dick



2008 Calendar of Events

PROGRAMS & OUTINGS

Programs begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Engineering and Science Bldg., Room 200, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown on the third Thursday of Sept., Oct., Nov., Mar., Apr. and May.

August 15 to Dec 15 - Autumn Hawk Watch -

Join up with other members and guests from distant locations to watch the spectacle of migration that takes place on our mountain. The average raptor count is 8,500 per season with occasional years up to 18,000 plus. It's a great way to learn your birds of prey and potentially see a lot of migrating songbirds.

September 18 - Wildlife of Pennsylvania - Tom Diez, a noted naturalist and cinematographer, will present this movie. Tom felt the movie would be particularly good for APAS since we're a biodiversity group. Don't miss this important fall meeting.

October 16 - Members Wildlife Photography Night - APAS has a lot of talented nature

photographers and the subjects will be varied depending on their interests.

November 20 - Insect Diversity: Theme and Variation by Dennis McNair.

December 14 - Christmas Bird Count - This is an adventurous way to spend a December day. At the end of a vigorous day of bird counting we meet at Hidden Acres Farm for a covered dish and tally. It is not only fun for experienced and beginning birders, but the information obtained is extremely important for determining trends in bird populations. This past year we had over 10,000 individuals and 80 species. A great way to learn your birds!

Tom and Sally Dick: 814-754-5727
Rosemary McGlynn: 814-255-5734

Global Warming Legislation A Priority

Global warming legislation is one of National Audubon's highest priorities in the coming year. The scientific evidence indicates that global warming is one of the biggest threats to the survival of birds and their habitats. The good news is that the experts tell us that by reducing our CO2 emissions we can solve this problem.

Audubon, as one of the leading conservation organizations in the country, is bringing not only its professional expertise but also its collective experience as citizen scientists to the national dialogue on solutions for clean and affordable energy.

Our members in the House of Representatives in Washington as well as Senators Specter and Casey must hear from us that we need strong climate change legislation to be among the top priorities in the 111th Congress in January, 2009.

Many different opinions are being voiced about how to address our energy needs. As Audubon members, we must advocate for birds and their habitats so that new energy policies and laws protect them.

National Audubon recently hired Anne Crowley to lead the effort here in the Commonwealth to educate and activate members about global warming and related energy/conservation legislation. She will be a resource to our chapter and would like to recruit a person in each chapter to be a global warming contact for her.

Anne welcomes invitations to speak about global warming to groups you know - community, agriculture, education, labor and faith. She can be reached at acrowley@audubon.org or by phone at 610-640-3303.

In the meantime, you can log onto the Audubon website for more global warming information - <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/globalwarmingprinciples>.

**Want to be a part of the solution to
Global Warming?**

Take the Audubon Climate Action Pledge

<http://audubonaction.org/campaign/climateactionpledge>



An Anytime, Anywhere Celebration of Nature in the City

Simple citizen-science project reaches urbanites of all ages

Ithaca, N. Y. - Nature has the power to soothe and enthuse. More people are finding that out as they join the free, year-round "Celebrate Urban Birds!" citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From schools, hospitals, and senior centers, to wellness programs, scout packs, and military bases, participants are reaping the benefits of a closer connection to the natural world and a new appreciation for city birds.

A girl in 4-H changed her mind about city birds after taking part in the project. "At first I didn't like urban birds," she said. "I thought of them as pests. Then I realized that they are just like me and other kids. We are ignored or people just see us as pests or don't see us at all...yet if you look a little deeper you can see that on the inside we are pretty unique and cool!"

People of all ages and backgrounds participate in Celebrate Urban Birds through gardening, cultural activities and citizen-science. For the citizen-science part of the project, participants watch city birds for 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Once enough data are gathered, scientists hope to learn more about how birds survive in cities and how they use urban green spaces such as parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies for food, resting sites, and shelter.

Individuals can participate on their own or through public events organized by local groups. Celebrate Urban Birds has partnered with more than 2,000 organizations to hold special "birdy" events featuring the arts, science, gardening, or other ways to draw people into bird study and observation. While supplies last, everyone who signs up will receive a Celebrate Urban Birds kit in English and Spanish with two colorful urban birds posters, educational materials about birds and urban greening, a data form, and a packet of sunflower seeds to plant in pots and gardens. More than 60,000 free kits have been distributed.

After receiving his kit, one elementary school youngster with Down syndrome declared, "I will take these posters home and put them up on my wall forever because I'm going to be a scientist when I grow up!" Teachers find that the 10-minute bird observation can be done within a class period, and it reinforces math, reading, scientific, artistic, and team-building skills. One teacher noted, "Our group of middle school boys was impressed with being able to help with a project sponsored by a university."

Some groups go beyond a single event by greening their neighborhood creating habitat for birds on balconies, rooftops, front stoops, or community spaces. Others are tapping into the arts, creating dances, drawings, murals, sculptures, puppet shows, and short films based on city birds. The Celebrate Urban Birds web site has lots of resources and suggestions about how to craft an event or project for [libraries](#), [nature centers](#), [schools and youth groups](#), [community gardens](#), home-school [groups](#), or individuals.

Winners have been chosen for the project's first "Beautiful Birds in Urban Places" video and photo contest. Marian Mendez of Hialeah, Florida, captured first prize with her images of birds found in her back yard. She said, "I like to single out one bird and watch it for a while, trying to see the personality and mind behind it. And I'm out in the fresh air, getting sunshine and a new perspective on life." You can see Marian's photos and other great entries on the web site. Stay tuned for the next photo contest! Learn more about Celebrate Urban Birds and sign up at www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org!

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The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.



APAS Membership Dues Are Due

It is once again time to renew APAS chapter dues. Chapter members will receive the *Chickadee Chatter* newsletter but not *Audubon* magazine published by National Audubon. National membership includes both the newsletter and the magazine. Our chapter retains all chapter dues but only a portion of national dues. All members are welcome at meetings, outings, Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, Dunning's Creek Wetlands, and other events. Please bring your friends. New this year, *Chickadee Chatter* is available electronically on your computer via e-mail. Please indicate on your renewal if you would prefer US Mail or electronic version.

2008-2009 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Sept 1 2008 to Aug 31 2009 (chapter dues)

Please complete this form and mail with your check to:
Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society
c/o Bob Stewart
257 Krings St.
Johnstown, PA 15904

Name _____

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City _____ County _____

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Check how you wish to receive *Chickadee Chatter*, the APAS newsletter:

____ I want a paper copy of the newsletter sent to my physical address

____ I want the newsletter electronically sent to my email address (this saves mailing costs)

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP (includes local chapter membership) (make checks payable to: National Audubon Society)

____ I am a new member (\$20 check)

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CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP ONLY (make checks payable to: Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society)

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____ I am including a donation to the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

Amount of donation _____

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Johnstown, PA 15904

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Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society Mission Statement

The APAS was founded in 1984. We are dedicated to protection and understanding of the earth and all its inhabitants. Through our series of meetings, programs, and outings, we hope to reach individuals of all ages to understand, respect, and protect the earth.

Through such activities as the Breeding Bird Survey, raptor counts, the Christmas Bird Count, and outings, members can do field work and learn first-hand about the wonders of nature. Our Allegheny Front Hawk Watch count has become an important tradition over the past decade. We have 10 dedicated counters who cover the site daily during the Spring and Fall migration seasons. Currently we are participating in an important research project in cooperation with Powdermill Nature Reserve and Carnegie Mellon University to band Golden Eagles as they fly our ridges.

We also maintain the Dunning's Creek Wetlands, a Wetlands Restoration Project. Interest in local bogs, wetlands, and riverine habitats has led us to promote outings such as the annual Butterfly Count, dragonfly outings, and more recently, family outings to encourage the involvement of children.

Officers

Vice President - Gil Weakland	President - Dennis McNair
Recording Secretary - Shirley Houston	Corresponding Secretary - Sally Dick
Fundraising - Rosemary McGlynn	Treasurer - Retta Payne
Conservation/Activism - Jeff Payne	Programs and Outings - Tom Dick, et.al.
Hospitality - Wanetta Escherich	Newsletter Editor - Ev Merriman
IBA Coordinator - Neil Woffinden	Hawkwatch Compiler - Che Mincone
Nature Photography - Dave Escherich	Sanctuaries - Tom Dick
Web Master - Jack Julian	Membership - Bob Stewart

Contact the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society at: wetmeadow@aol.com
or visit us on the web at: alleghenyplateauaudubon.org