



# Chickadee Chatter

Volume 7 Issue 1

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

February 2008

[www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](http://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org)

Dear Members:

New Year's greetings to all. First let me apologize about the tardiness of this issue, which normally appears in your mailboxes in January. No meetings or outings were planned for January or February, so we took a little extra time to develop the meetings and outings schedule for March through June.

It was exciting to have Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza, the founder of the hawk watch in Veracruz, Mexico helping with the count at the Allegheny Front for an afternoon last Fall. Ernesto works at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which is also where Chris Woods works, who a few of us know from our trip to Veracruz for the River of Raptors tour last October. It is ironic that we visited Ernesto's hawk watch and a few weeks later he visited ours. It is truly gratifying to see the Allegheny Front receive this kind notoriety within a network of renowned researchers.

Even though it is still winter, there's lots going on with the APAS. Presently we are working on developing an advisory board that will work on numerous projects such as hiring a full-time naturalist to work with schools, and we are also working on preparations for a nature center.

Looking forward to seeing you at one of the meetings or outings.



Ev Merriman, Editor

## Shaffer Mountain Wind Development Update

Last November, Greg Hitt, a reporter with the *Wall Street Journal*, contacted me regarding our controversy with the wind industry. Greg was interested in knowing the reasons for our resistance to the Shaffer Mountain wind project. I explained that our resistance is due to poor siting, and that we are backed by good science from the National Science Foundation and from our own Pennsylvania Biologic Survey (an organization of 250 Pennsylvania Scientists). Inappropriate siting results in unnecessary bird and bat mortality and incredible forest fragmentation. Any benefits accrued by alternative energy for climate change are lost with fragmentation.

I advised Greg to speak with other Audubon Chapters which are dealing with this problem. After many calls to me and other Chapters, an article finally appeared in a December issue of the *Journal*. John Flicker, Chief CEO and President of National Audubon, responded fiercely with strong statements regarding National Audubon's concern for siting. He, however, did not elaborate that the individual Chapters are doing all the fighting, spending their own money, and had become fiercely independent of the National Audubon by necessity. Flicker reacted by telling State Audubon to meet with their respective Chapter leaders.

In response, Tim Schaeffer, President of State Audubon, called a meeting on December 12 of all Pennsylvania Audubon Chapters at State College to discuss wind problems. Dennis McNair, Jeff Payne, Che and Marion Mincone and I represented our Chapter at this meeting. Tim Schaeffer conducted a well-balanced meeting with several Audubon employees from Washington DC in attendance. Representing National Audubon were Mike Daulton, Director of Conservation Policy, and Sean Saville, National Outreach Coordinator.

In general, the ever-mounting frustration of the Chapters was evident with the hard and sometimes angry testimony of

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## Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Fall 2007 Season Totals

Following is the summary for the Fall 2007 raptor migration season at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. This season produced three new diurnal raptor records:

Bald Eagle - 76  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1,732  
 Cooper's Hawk - 505

Other notable days:

**9-17-07 - One-day high count** – 887 - Eric Hall

**10-25-07 - 558 RT and 9 GE**, day total – 765 – Merle and Karen Jackson

**11-28-07 - One-day high count for GE** – 18 – Tony Barle and Rosemary McGlynn

**12-21-07 - A Raven** hovered over Ed Gowarty and talked for two to three minutes. It made sense, so Ed replied, and they carried on a conversation.

Due to many days of inclement weather, we missed some of the major Golden Eagle flights migrating through the Franklin Mountain/Allegheny Front corridor. Or did the Allegheny Ridge Wind Turbine Project contribute to our below average Golden Eagle Fall 2007 count??

Also, this season produced two new Saw-whet Owl records for Dave Darney who conducted 10 nights of netting: 232 new captures, 3 recaptures, for a total of 235 owls. Dave's best night produced 54 Saw-whet Owls and 1 Barred Owl.

HOURS	772.75
Black Vulture	24
Turkey Vulture	416
Osprey	118
Bald Eagle	*76
Northern Harrier	85
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*1,732
Cooper's Hawk	*505
Northern Goshawk	3
Red-shouldered Hawk	93
Broad-winged Hawk	3,217
Red-tailed Hawk	2,429
Rough-legged Hawk	6
Golden Eagle	139
American Kestrel	99
Merlin	39
Peregrine Falcon	32
Unidentified Accipiter	81
Unidentified Buteo	48
Unidentified Falcon	2
Unidentified Eagle	6
Unidentified Raptor	195
TOTAL RAPTORS	9,355
Birds/HR	12.1

\* = RECORD

Many thanks to the 2007 counters and observers.

§§§

The Spring 2008 Allegheny Front Hawk Watch season begins February 23 and ends on May 7. Following is the daily schedule of our volunteer counters:

Sunday - Bob Stewart  
 Monday - Eric Hall  
 Tuesday - Dean Jobe and Bob Gorsuch  
 Wednesday - Rosemary McGlynn  
 Thursday - Tom Dick  
 Friday - Jim Rocco  
 Saturday - Ed Gowarty  
 Back-up counters - Karen Jackson and Kevin Georg

Please let me know if you would like to volunteer as either counter or back-up counter.

Che Minone received the following cryptic message from Kenya, Africa:

Dear Che and Hawk Watchers,  
 Almost lost my binocs in Customs but, luckily, I'm now enjoying my best birding in Africa. From the sky to the water, I see new beautiful birds. Identifying them is a challenge.

See you in the Spring,  
 Ima Krazi





## 2008 Calendar of Events

## PROGRAMS

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.

**March 20 - APAS Meeting.** Dennis McNair will discuss climate change. Dennis is a trained global warming lobbyist for the National Wildlife Federation, and he will bring important updates and information on this extremely important human-induced phenomenon. You won't want to miss this presentation.

**April 17 - APAS Meeting.** Wildlife photography by Jim Richey. Jim's stunning presentation will

include both his expeditions and local photography. He will also give hints on how to take quality photographs using digital photography.

**May 15 - APAS Meeting.** Spring skies by Jack Beuthin of the Earth and Planetary Department at UPJ. This will be our first classroom introduction to astronomy and it will be a fun-filled educational introduction to our Spring skies.

## OUTINGS

**Outings:** Please remember to contact outing leaders three to five days prior to the outing. Details can be discussed at that time. Outings can change due to weather or be rescheduled for other reasons.

**The Breeding Bird Survey** is now in its final year and many blocks are still not completed or even started. This premier project, conducted from January to August of 2008, needs your help. Jeff and Retta Payne, Neil Woffinden, and Tom and Janet Kuehl are among the coordinators for Bedford, Somerset and Cambria Counties. If you can participate in this important survey, please contact one of the coordinators.

**February 25 to May 10 - Spring Raptor Count at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch -**

Our spring count produces some of the highest numbers in the Eastern US (including Hawk Mountain). We love visitors and, if you want, you can learn to be an observer or a counter. The earliest birds are Golden Eagles in late February, and the latest are Osprey in May.

**(March through May) - Dunnings Creek Waterfowl Survey** - Join Tom Dick or Rosemary McGlynn for this seasonal phenomenon. We visit the wetlands and Shawnee State Park three times weekly, spending about three hours on the survey. Please call 814-754-5727, and leave a message and phone number if you would like to join us.

**March (TBA) -** Help clean Wood Duck and blue-bird boxes at Dunnings Creek Wetlands. If interested, call Tom Dick.

**March (TBA) - Wilmore Dam** - Join Debbie Bodenschatz to search for salamanders and other wetland species. Wilmore is rich in wetlands and Debbie is just the one to find all those salamanders and frogs like you've seen at the Earth Day displays. When the weather is just right she will give us a date. This will be a night foray; boots, flashlights, and rain gear are usually in order. Call Tom Dick.

**April 2 - Spotted Salamander Migration at the Payne Farm.** Don't miss this opportunity to see Spotted Salamanders migrating en masse to a vernal pond. This is a wonderful children's outing and there is also a possibility for Jefferson Salamanders. Jeff, Retta and Chris Payne are the leaders. Directions and time will be presented at the March meeting. Call Tom Dick.

**April 3 - Cub Scout Outing to Dunnings Creek-** Hands-on fun for kids. **Note:** This is our first outing for a Windber troop, but we would like to encourage members to request additional children's outings.



Bring your children, grandchildren, and give suggestions on outings to introduce them to outdoor critters, trees, ponds, streams, and just the fun of being outside. We have great naturalists, and it will get the kids away from computer games.

**April 19 - Earth Day Celebration** – Guess what? No work parties! Just food and guided nature tours of wetlands and adjacent areas. Bring family and friends. Call Sally Dick or Rosemary McGlynn if you can join us.

**May 3 - Nocturnal Rail Survey at Dunnings Creek Wetlands** - This will be a late evening survey for Sora and Virginia Rails. We will walk the trails at night and play tapes to hear the rails respond. Occasionally the rails can get quite bold and come out of hiding. Bring a flashlight and wear boots.

**May 10 - Migratory Bird Day** - This is a fun-filled day greeting all the returning birds. Our location is Bedford County where we separate into teams and scour the County for as many species as possible. We meet back at the Wetlands where we tally and eat. If you have never participated in this outing, it's a great way to learn your species and see them in their colorful new spring molts. Call Rosemary McGlynn or Tom and Sally Dick. (Please contact us a full week prior to the event since many of us will be away the week before.)

**Date TBA - Astronomy Field Trip by Jack Beuthin** - This will be a hands-on field trip to practice what you learned from Jack during the lecture. Since we need clear skies, the date and location will be announced at the May 15 meeting.

**May 28 - Spring Shore Birds at Dunnings Creek Wetlands** - Depending on the migration, other dates will also be considered. We draw down Bittern Pool by several inches to lure shorebirds from their migration. Over the years, we've had 22 species of shorebirds.

**May through August** - Dennis McNair and Tom Dick will be doing dragonfly and damselfly censuses of the following environments: streams, bogs, emergent wetlands, ponds and rivers. Anyone is welcome to join us and learn. Let us know of your interest!

**June 8 - Hiking Charles Lewis Natural Area** - Jim Pemberton of the Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club will lead. This is an extremely interesting location in the Conemaugh Gap, home to interesting plants, mammals (Pa. Woodrat), and reptiles such as Timber Rattlesnakes and Copperheads. The emphasis of this trip will be on the snakes. The time will be 9:30 a.m. and directions will be provided at meetings or via e-mail for participants.

**June 14 - Kayaking Shawnee Lake from a Naturalist's Perspective** - Leaders are Tom and Sally Dick and Rosemary McGlynn. Meet at the Colvin parking lot (first parking lot before bridge on Rt. 96 after Schellsburg.) We'll look at all the natural features of the lake including plants, insects, birds and, if possible, aquatic invertebrates and fish. Bring your own kayak or rent a canoe. We will schedule additional kayak outings in different environments this Summer.

**Tom and Sally Dick: 814-754-5727**

**Rosemary McGlynn: 814-255-5734**



Tom Dick

## APAS Website News

- Anyone who would like to join the APAS e-mail bulletin list should send an e-mail message to me at: [webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org) You will receive occasional e-mails with reminders of upcoming events and any important news or bulletins as they arise.
- A gallery has been set up on the APAS website where members can upload and then discuss photos they want to share. Go to the APAS website at: <http://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org> and click

on the links in the announcement to view the gallery. Any APAS member who would like to contribute photos or share comments can request a free gallery account by e-mailing me at: [webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org) Include your name, and the username and password you want to use for your account.

- If you would like your copy of *Chickadee Chatter* e-mailed to you to help us save printing and mailing expenses, just drop me an e-mail.



Jack Julian



### 2007 Christmas Bird Count Results

Needless to say, the weather on December 16 was horrible. Dire weather predictions including ice, snow and blizzard conditions generated the first big group of volunteer cancellations. Still, 16 intrepid souls surged forth producing incredible results and probably producing our highest Christmas Bird Count ever (including count week) of 80 species and 9,261 individuals. We missed a lot of commoners, as always, but picked up a nice spread of winter finches that have been missing for many years as well as other "hard to finds."

The list is as follows:

Canada Geese 697, Gadwall 2, American Widgeon 1, American Black Duck 22, Mallard 177, Mallard/black hybrid 1, Northern Pintail 10, Canvasback 2, Redhead 7, Ring-necked Duck 22, Greater Scaup 1, Lesser Scaup 4, Long-tailed Duck 2, Bufflehead 4, Common Goldeneye 4, Common Merganser 4, Hooded Merganser 83, Red-breasted Merganser 1, Ruddy Duck 184, Ring-necked Pheasant 7, Ruffed Grouse 2, Wild Turkey 14, Common Loon 4, Pied-Billed Grebe 6, Horned Grebe 4, Great Blue Heron 3, Bald Eagle 3, Northern Harrier 1, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 2, Red-tailed Hawk 4, Rough-legged Hawk 1, American Kestrel 1, American

Coot 14, American Woodcock 1, Ring-billed Gull 22, Herring Gull (CW), Rock Pigeon 204, Mourning Dove 179, Belted Kingfisher 1, Red-bellied Woodpecker 1, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 6, Downy Woodpecker 9, Hairy Woodpecker 2, Northern Flicker 3, Pileated Woodpecker 2, Blue Jay 62, American Crow 321, Common Raven 7, Horned Lark 439, Black-capped Chickadee 82, Tufted Titmouse 18, Red-breasted Nuthatch 1, White-breasted Nuthatch 18, Brown Creeper 1, Carolina Wren 2, Golden-crowned Kinglet (CW), Eastern Bluebird 22, American Robin (CW), European Starling 382, Cedar Waxwing 20, Eastern Towhee 1, American Tree Sparrow 47, Fox Sparrow 6, Song Sparrow 10, White-throated Sparrow 37, White-crowned Sparrow 52, Dark-eyed Junco 92, Lapland Longspur 1, Northern Cardinal 59, Red-winged Blackbird 27, Eastern Meadowlark 2, Rusty Blackbird 44, Purple Finch 2, House Finch 20, Common Redpole 120, Pine Siskin 2, American Goldfinch 39, Evening Grosbeak 2, and House Sparrow 124.

Participants: Tom and Sally Dick, Ed and Eddy Gowardy, Eric Hall, Rosemary McGlynn, Jim and Meg Mosses, Richard Murphy, Jeff, Retta and Chris Payne, Ron Rovanseck, Paul Sheesley, Bob Steward, Mike and Pat Wolfe.

 Tom Dick

### Wind Development Update (continued from Page 1)

Chapter members. The meeting was an intense four hours, and most expected a good outcome. However, as of this writing (February 1), nothing has really been accomplished, with no further dialog, scheduled meetings, or additional input from state Audubon Chapters planned.

In conclusion, it is hard to say whether it was all worthwhile; for the moment we'll wait, but not for long. Tim e-mailed me to schedule a phone conference involving Mike Daulton, Tim and I, regarding a siting regulations bill that I hope will be introduced this month. Since receiving that e-mail, I am still waiting again.

The APAS will greatly appreciate any contributions to our wind fund. We are in dire need of money, especially to help cover the costs of the lobbyists. The lobbyists have been very costly, but also very effective in our fight for good wind siting regulations. Better sitings will help save our hawk watch and our saw-whet owl banding site. Costs thus far have been assumed by only two of our members, and we are seeking help from other APAS members as well as our local community. Please help support these efforts in any amount that you can. Please contact me at [thomasd102@aol.com](mailto:thomasd102@aol.com) for more information.

 Tom Dick

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or visit us on the web at: [alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](http://alleghenyplateauaudubon.org)

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Newsletter Editor - Ev Merriman  
Hawkwatch Compiler - Che Mincone  
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Membership - Bob Stewart

### Officers

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.

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society  
Mission Statement