



Chickadee Chatter

Volume 7 Issue 2

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

May 2008

www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org

Dear Members:

A dry, beautiful Earth Day celebration with NO WORK - a rare and wonderful event indeed! About 45 people shared in the fun on Saturday April 19 at Dunnings Creek Wetlands. As usual, Connie and Jerry were great hosts and we feasted on covered dish goodies in the barn before venturing out in groups to explore the stream, meadows and ponds. A few of the notable sightings were: 1 pied billed grebe periscoping, 10 great blue herons, 3 tundra swans, 50 Canada geese, 5 wood ducks, 6 mallards, 6 blue winged teal, 1 gadwall, and 30 snipe. Also observed were midge larvae suspended on rocks in the stream, green and pickerel frogs, snapping turtle, osprey, red-tailed hawks and one broad-winged hawk. What a fabulous way to usher in spring and celebrate Mother Earth!

Once again at the APAS picnic this coming August we will have a Chinese auction to benefit the chapter. Please bring one new or nearly new treasure to add to the inventory. Books and nature related items are especially popular. As always, thanks for your support.



Rosemary McGlynn

Our Crowning Jewel - The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch

APAS is steeped in collecting bio-data that dates from our first hawk watch on Tussey Mountain to our present location at the Allegheny Front. Overall, we've been counting raptors for 23 years. These reports are published in the *Journal of the Hawk Migration Association of North America* and the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's journal *Pennsylvania Birds*. Similarly, our butterfly counts are published in the *Journal of the North American Butterfly Association* and our odonate surveys have added to the range of dragonflies and damselflies within our counties.

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch has, however, been our crowning jewel of discovery. We've managed to take this relatively unknown mountain into the realm of the top 15 raptor sites in North America. This becomes especially relevant when you realize there are over 100 hawk watches in North America. The AFHW is also one of the few sites with a good spring migration.

The following figures are the highest numbers per season for individual raptors over a 10 year period: Black Vulture 56, Turkey Vulture 1193, Osprey 159, Bald Eagle 76, Northern Harrier 111, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1732, Cooper's Hawk 505, Northern Goshawk 42, Red-shouldered Hawk 167, Broad-winged Hawk 13974, Red-tailed Hawk 3331, Rough-legged Hawk 8, Golden Eagle 222, American Kestrel 101, Merlin 68, and Peregrine 52. The counts corresponded somewhat to the number of hours counting which varied from 457 to 910 hours depending on the year.

The average count per hour is 10.2 hawks over a 10-year period. Fortunately, we have lots of visitors, up to 4,000 per year in the fall. With all those eyes scanning the sky, we pick up considerably more birds. The hawk watch draws 17 birding clubs, five colleges and numerous scout troops.

The spring count is coming to a close in early May, but remember to join us this fall. The fall count starts on August 15 and concludes in early December.



Tom Dick

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The 2008 Spring Waterfowl Migration at Dunnings Creek Wetlands (DCW) and Shawnee State Park (SSP)

Each year, we draw down the impoundments at DCW, allowing oxidation of nutrients which stimulates a new growth of aquatic plants. This provides food for waterfowl, especially in the spring. So the wetlands become a sort of "McDonalds" where ducks can pull over, grab a snack and rest for a while. This year we had a March average of 1,500 individual ducks and geese on a daily basis until the first of April.

Here are the peak numbers and dates: 65 Common Loons 3/9 SSP, 19 Pied-billed Grebes 3/19 SSP, 38 Horned Grebes 3/19 SSP, 85 Double-crested Cormorants 4/5 SSP, 2 American Bittern 3/26 DCW, 16 Great Blue Heron 3/19 DCW, 8 Great Egret 4/9 DCW, 400 Tundra Swan 3/19

DCW, 10 Snow Geese 3/9 DCW, 2000 Canada Geese 3/9 DCW, 560 Wood Duck 3/31 DCW, 76 Green-winged Teal 3/29 DCW, 47 American Black Duck 3/29 DCW, 392 Mallard 3/23 DCW, 138 Northern Pintail 3/21 DCW, 41 Blue-winged Teal 3/29 DCW. 8 Northern Shoveler 3/26, DCW, 6 Gadwall 4/5 DCW, 244 American Widgeon 3/15 DCW, 16 Canvasback SSP 3/14, 50 Redhead 3/15 SSP, 246 Ring-necked Duck 3/15 DCW, 600 Greater Scaup 3/15 SSP, 40 Lesser Scaup 3/15 SSP, 70 Long-tail Duck 4/5 SSP, 2 Common Goldeneye 3/13 SSP, 111 Bufflehead 3/19 SSP, 179 Hooded Merganser 3/29 SSP, 84 Common Merganser 3/19 SSP, 316 Red-breasted Merganser SSP, and 24 Ruddy Duck 4/5 DCW.

 Tom Dick

The Chatting Gourmet

Cucumbers and Onions

This is more a list of ingredients than a recipe, but everyone seems to like them, so here it is. The amounts for the ingredients depend on how many cucumbers you use.

- English cukes (the kind wrapped in plastic)
- Salt (Kosher is best, but any kind will do)
- Vinegar (tarragon is most flavorful, but white does nicely)
- Dill weed
- Sour cream
- Onions (preferably Vidalia)



Peel and slice cucumbers. Put in a colander and add quite a lot of salt. Toss to spread salt to all slices. Allow to sit in the sink and drain for 30 minutes. In the meantime, in a large enough bowl to hold all ingredients put the sour cream, vinegar, dill weed and salt. Taste - it should be a little too salty and vinegary now, since the cukes and onions will take up some of the flavor. Rinse the cukes in cold water and dry well in a kitchen towel. Add to the dressing along with the thinly sliced and quartered onion. Taste again and adjust seasoning. (I usually end up adding more salt, but that's my addiction.)

For two cukes, I use about 1/2 cup sour cream, 3 or 4 Tbsp. vinegar, 1 tsp. dill weed and start with 1/2 Tbsp. salt. (This is the salt you put in the dressing, not what you soak the cukes in.) Taste at the end and add whatever suits your taste.

 Lee Josh



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.

May 15 - APAS Meeting - We've had a speaker change for the May 15 meeting. The new speaker is Steve Lindberg who teaches Astronomy at UPJ. Steve will speak on learning the spring/summer night sky. He suggests that people bring their binoculars. If the night is clear and dark enough, we'll do some basic stargazing outside at the end of his talk.

September 18 - Wildlife of Pennsylvania - Tom Diez, a noted naturalist and cinematographer

will present this movie. He 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. This will also be the last meeting for organization of the Christmas Bird Count. This is also the last APAS meeting of the year.

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 outing, which runs from January to August of 08, needs your help. Jeff and Retta Payne, Neil Woffingden, Tom and Janet Kuehl are among the coordinators for Bedford, Somerset and Cambria Counties. If you can contribute to this important survey, please contact them.

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 of horizontal retreat to lure shorebirds from the migration. Over the years we've had 22 species of shorebirds.

May - August - Aquatic Insect Surveys - Join up with Dennis McNair and Tom Dick in studying and identifying our dragonflies and damselflies. If you notify us of your interest, we will get you on our list to call. Our objective is to teach and appreciate these beautiful and delicate insects. Call Dennis McNair at 255-4088.

June 8 - Hiking Charles Lewis Natural Area with Jim Pemberton - This relatively short hike is located in a rich biodiversity area where interesting

botany overlaps one of the few dependable areas to see timber rattlesnakes and the occasional copperhead. The state endangered Allegheny Woodrat also finds its home here. Meeting time is 9:30 a.m. at Charles Lewis. Charles Lewis Natural Area is located just outside Johnstown on Rt. 403 before Cramer on the right side of the road. Call Tom Dick for further information.

July 13 - North American Butterfly Count - Similar to the Christmas Bird Count, we spread out in teams and look for butterflies in different areas of the county. It is a great way to learn your butterflies and our count is usually one of the highest counts in the Northeast. Last year's count produced 47 species and 2,000 individuals. We are always looking for new counters to train. If you want to be part of this fun effort please call the organizers several days in advance. Tom/Sally Dick 814-754-5727 or Rosemary McGlynn 814-255-5734.

June 14 - Shawnee Lake from a Naturalist's Perspective - Leaders are Tom and Sally Dick and Rosemary McGlynn. Using canoes or kayaks, we will visit out-of-the-way places near old beaver dams and stream flows into the lake. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Colvin Bridge parking lot which is on the



road coming out of Shellsburg. The parking lot is just to the left before crossing the bridge. Canoes can be rented or bring your own canoe or kayak. Please notify the trip leaders of your intent to participate.

July - Work Group - If you want to be involved in building a nature observation blind at DCW, please contact Tom Dick at 814-754-5727.

August 17 - Annual Audubon Picnic - A great covered dish picnic with nature events including hawk watch visits, trail walks and hands-on nature at Hidden Acres Farm. Each year is different and fun-filled with frequently over 100 members attending. Field parking and signs lead you along the way. Bring kids and grandchildren or friends since everyone is welcome! Meeting time is 12:00 noon. Any questions? Call Sally Dick at 814-754-5727.

August 15 to Dec 15 - Autumn Hawk Watch - Join up with other members and guests from distance 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 plus seeing a lot of migrating songbirds.

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

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

 Tom Dick



Ev Merriman Photo

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 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 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



2008 World Series of Birding

Wow, it's April already! It's still pretty cold and blustery on the mountain. Can it possibly be time for the yearly onslaught of migratory birds? The World Series of Birding is coming up again. The Roadrunners have competed for the last 20 years – an awfully long time! And life is sure busy with other things – work, sports, school, gardens, picking up the eldest from college. Do we really want to do this thing again? We only visit one of the greatest migration crossroads in the world, rub elbows with the country's best birders, raise money for worthy conservation causes. Oh, and stay up for 24 hours scouring swamps, fields, woods, and shorelines for as many of nature's winged marvels as we can find.

Should we do it again? We asked the youngest Roadrunner – Chris. "Why wouldn't we?" he replied.

So, on May 10, 2008, Jeff, Retta, and Chris Payne will be in the marshes and tick-infested woods of Cape May County, NJ. We may be shivering, sweating or rain-drenched, or some combination of the three, but we will be working to exceed our previous county record of 156 birds. A summary of the day's events will follow in the next issue of *Chickadee Chatter*.

We hope you can help by making a pledge to one of the excellent groups below.



Retta Payne

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

I wish to pledge:

.10 ¢ _____ **.25 ¢** _____ **.50 ¢** _____ **\$1** _____ **\$2** _____ **per species**

I prefer a straight pledge of \$ _____

I would like to support:

- Allegheny Plateau Audubon** _____
- Sensible Wind Solutions** _____
- The Nature Conservancy** _____
- Somerset County Conservancy** _____

Please send to:

Jeff Payne
9755 Glades Pike
Berlin, PA 15530

Or e-mail your payment to: chilitech.com

Editor's Note: Unfortunately, I was not able to produce this issue of *Chickadee Chatter* in advance of the World Series of Birding and we realize the event may have already taken place by the time you receive this. However, your generous contributions are still welcome!

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society
1003 Eisenhower Blvd.
Johnstown, PA 15904

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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Contact the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society at: wetmeadow@aol.com
or visit us on the web at: alleghenyplateauaudubon.org

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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