



# Chickadee Chatter

Volume 8 Issue 2

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

June 2009

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

Dear Members:

As always, we are extremely interested in your thoughts and comments about our Chapter. In particular, we are interested in your input regarding the content of *Chickadee Chatter*. We try hard to vary the content to make this newsletter interesting and informative, and we remain open to suggestions at all times. Please let me or Tom Dick know if you would like to contribute content or photos to any issue. All content should be submitted electronically to me at [merrie4121@yahoo.com](mailto:merrie4121@yahoo.com). Deadlines to submit content are roughly one month before the quarterly publication. The specific date of publication varies from quarter to quarter depending on availability of material.

We are also interested in your thoughts regarding the outings offered each year. Feel free to let us know if you would like to see an outing that is not listed this year, so that we can consider it for next year.

Although we do not have any kayaking outings listed for this summer, a number of us are interested in kayaking. Please let us know if you would like to be added to the calling list if we organize an outing.

Until next time, wishing you a wonderful summer,



*Ev Merriman.*

## Autumn Olive: The Enigma and Benefactor

Society has dramatically changed the landscape of our nation by importing non-native plants, of which many have become invasive. The net effect is that almost all open fields today would be completely alien to early Indians. Old fields have non-native plants such as spotted knapweed, imported



roses, barberry and European grasses. Buckthorn, honeysuckle and garlic mustard displace native species in the forest. It is not clear what Autumn Olive is displacing in already modified fields.

Autumn Olive is an invasive shrub originally from China and Korea and was imported to the U.S. for erosion control and wildlife food. Most of it was brought in by government agencies, state game commissions and highway departments for road side reclamation and soil stabilization. The Soil Conservation Service introduced this plant in the 1940s with a new variety called "Cardinal" that pushed the expansion across the Eastern states. It has been planted for wind-breaks, re-vegetating disturbed areas, reclaiming strip mines and other dismal sites.

Autumn Olive is a great provider for birds, mammals and butterflies, however, it has its limitations and that is its unlimited profundity. The invasiveness or success of colonization of Autumn Olive is due to its almost total lack of specific needs; it is an incredible generalist with its only requirements being sunlight and relatively dry soil (although we do have some growing at the wetlands). It can thrive on rich soils, nutrient deficient soils, and degraded soils. Its ability to grow on poor soils is due to its capability to make its own fertilizer. The nodules on the roots provide

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## Results of the 2009 Migratory Bird Count

The 2009 Migratory Bird count was conducted on May 9. The Piping Plover is the bird of the year, a threatened species moving rapidly to endangered status. Its vulnerability is due to its open nesting on sandy habitats such as river bars, flood plains and sandy beaches, all of which are threatened by dams, off-road vehicles, dogs, cats and other human disturbance. This bird had numerous leg bands of varying colors that will soon give us an idea of where the bird originated. In the mean time, we are all thrilled that Debbie Bodenschatz discovered this bird cryptically hidden in a mosaic of small stones, and managed to get photographs to confirm her find.



Debbie Bodenschatz Photo

Canada Geese (108), Wood Duck (18), Mallard 22, Green-winged Teal (7), Red-breasted Merganser (13), Ring-necked Pheasant (2), Ruffed Grouse (2), Wild Turkey (1), Double-crested Cormorant (70), American Bittern (2), Great Blue Heron (18), Green Heron (3), Turkey Vulture (35), Osprey (1), Bald Eagle (2), Northern Harrier (1), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1), Cooper's Hawk (1), Red-shouldered Hawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (13), American Kestrel (3), Sora Rail (1), American Coot (1), Sandhill Crane (1), Semipalmated Plover (4), Piping Plover (1), Killdeer (5), Greater Yellowlegs (1), Lesser Yellowlegs (6), Spotted Sandpiper (9), Semipalmated Sandpiper (16), Least Sandpiper (1), Short-billed Dowitcher (18), American Woodcock (2), Ring-billed Gull (14), Common Tern (16), Rock Pigeon (21), Mourning Dove (35), Black-billed Cuckoo (3), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1), Barn Owl (1), Eastern Screech Owl (1), Great Horned Owl (1), Barred Owl (1), Chimney Swift (12), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (3), Belted Kingfisher (3), Red-headed Woodpecker (2), Red-bellied Woodpecker (17), Downy Woodpecker (6), Hairy Woodpecker (4), Northern Flicker (14), Pileated Woodpecker (5), Eastern Wood-Pewee (1), Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (2), Least Flycatcher (1), Eastern Phoebe (12), Great Crested Flycatcher (1), Eastern Kingbird (13), White-eyed Vireo (2), Blue-headed Vireo (2), Warbling Vireo (2), Red-eyed Vireo (28), Blue Jay (105), American Crow (44), Common Raven (5), Tree Swallow (52), Northern Rough-winged Swallow (2), Bank Swallow (43), Barn Swallow (105), Carolina Chickadee (1), Black-capped Chickadee (23), Tufted Titmouse (19), White-breasted

Nuthatch (12) Carolina Wren (1), House Wren (2), Golden-crowned Kinglet (1), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1), Eastern Bluebird (42), Hermit Thrush (2), Wood Thrush (20), American Robin (101), Gray Catbird (67), Northern Mockingbird (5), Brown Thrasher (13), European Starling (105), Cedar Waxwing (35), Golden-winged Warbler (6), Northern Parula (4), Yellow Warbler (34), Chestnut-sided Warbler (23), Magnolia Warbler (4), Black-throated Blue Warbler (8), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1), Black-throated Green Warbler (4), Blackpoll Warbler (1), Cerulean Warbler (5), Black and White Warbler (14), American Redstart (50), Worm-eating Warbler (1), Ovenbird (31), Northern Waterthrush (1), Louisiana Waterthrush (1), Kentucky Warbler (1), Common Yellow-throat (39), Hooded Warbler (3), Scarlet Tanager (25), Eastern Towhee (78), Chipping Sparrow (28), Field Sparrow (1), Savannah Sparrow (1), Song Sparrow (27), Swamp Sparrow (15), White-throated Sparrow (2), White-crowned Sparrow (7), Dark-eyed Junco (1), Northern Cardinal (22), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (46), Indigo Bunting (15), Bobolink (3), Red-winged Blackbird (76), Eastern Meadowlark (8), Common Grackle (97), Brown-headed Cowbird (30), Orchard Oriole (6), Purple Finch (4), House Finch (25), Pine Siskin (2), American Goldfinch (12), House Sparrow (15).

**Participants:** Tom Bodenschatz, Debbie Bodenschatz, Tom Dick, Sally Dick, Connie Hunt, Gene Flament, Nancy Flament, Lee Tosh, and Ev Merriman.





2009 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., March and April. Refreshments are served. Notice with the outings there are many "Date TBAs." When you sign up for a Date TBA, the leader will contact you personally

on the best date to have this outing. Unfortunately, in nature, weather is important to the success of the event and dates set in stone frequently result in weather cancellations.

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

**June 15 to 19 (Specific Date TBA) - Astronomy outing with Steve Limbaugh** - The date for this outing will be selected on the basis of the clearest day between 15th and the 19th for observing the planets and constellations. Telescopes will be available! Get on the list by contacting Dennis McNair (814-255-4088).

**September 17 – Audubon Meeting** - Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Presentation - This will include an overview of what we've learned over 20 years of counting hawks at the Allegheny Front. The presentation deals with both Fall and Spring counts. It is also a tribute to the counters and supporters who helped open up the secrets of the Allegheny Front. Speaker: Tom Dick.

**July 12 - NABA (North American Butterfly Association) Count** - As most of you know this count is one of the largest in the Northeast. Our count circle includes the high Allegheny Plateau and the hill and valley region of Bedford County. If interested contact Tom or Sally Dick (814-754-5727).

**October 15 – Audubon Meeting** - Christmas Bird Count news and numerous other topics of interest and Audubon subjects. There will also be overviews and discussions with members to decide what the membership wants in terms of programs and outings for 2010.

**Dragonfly Outings (All Summer)** – This is a great learning experience open to anyone interested. This is a weekly event where dragonflies are assessed at the ever-changing Dunning's Creek Wetlands. If interested, please contact Dennis McNair (814-255-4088).

**November 19 – Audubon Meeting** - Charles Eckerberger will discuss the three-year Natural History Inventory of Bedford County and ways our Chapter can contribute to the information.

**Moth Lighting at Night** - Another way to appreciate biodiversity. Setups will be at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch and will include each month. Contact Dennis McNair or Tom Dick for dates.

**December 20 - Christmas Bird Count** – With over 40 members in teams, we scour the area for winter residents and migrants. It is a fun-filled winter activity that provides good information on bird distributions, expansions and contractions. Call Tom or Sally Dick to participate.

**August 2 - Audubon Picnic at Hidden Acres Farm** - This is a great children's outing with hands-on-biology. We collect snakes, fish, butterflies, and other insects only to be released unharmed later. There will also be fund raising events, book sales, great food, camaraderie and, hopefully, a beautiful day. Last year we had a 140 people.

 Tom Dick

**August 15 to Dec. 15 - Fall Hawk Watch at The Front** - The Fall season, as our chapter knows, does very well with good stable counts. Best numbers are dry east wind days, but during peak flight times birds can be seen with any wind.



One of our favorite counters at the Front.



## Book Review

*Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson*  
by Elizabeth J. Rosenthal (2008)

What started Roger Tory Peterson's fascination with birds as a young teenager? Perhaps it was Miss Hornbeck. Like many others, this teacher was concerned about the massive killing of birds for fashionable hats. She had her students join the Junior Audubon Club. This club was for bird study, and everyone who became a member was expected to be kind to the birds and protect them. Peterson was 14. He was known for falling asleep in class but he had good reason. He rose quite early to deliver newspapers to earn enough money to buy his first camera. He needed a camera to take pictures of birds. He was obsessed with them.

Taking photographs wasn't the only way Peterson could memorize the birds he saw. He also had artistic talent which he worked hard to master. In his late teens, he developed an interest in other aspects of nature. He learned butterflies, insects, and then flowers. Peterson negotiated permission from local police to stay out after curfew to catch moths.

His first bird field guide was published in 1934 introducing his famous field mark system, which made bird observation accessible for the average

person. His field guides were portable, making them practical to carry.

Peterson was an artist, photographer, writer, filmmaker, and scientist. But more than just birds interested him. He loved to talk about the bigger ecological picture. Nearly everything he wrote came from a conservation standpoint. He educated the public and lawmakers about endangered species and the causes of their decline, and lobbied for funding of conservation programs.

To write this book, Rosenthal interviewed over 100 surviving people who knew Peterson, so the book is full of excellent quotes and great stories. You will recognize some of the names, like Peter Dunn. She also quotes extensively from Peterson's writings. This makes for enjoyable reading. You will come to know the man personally -- enormous intellect, excellent memory, his shyness, detachment from family life, his absent-mindedness and dependence on others to meet many of his personal needs. Several times he neglected his own health and safety to get to birds throughout the world.



Jim Ritchey

*(Autumn Olive continued from Page 1)*

nitrogen and other nutrients to make the soil richer. Autumn Olive can compete in rich grasslands, open woodlands and forest edges. It is fast-growing, easily propagated, adaptable to all soil pH, pollutants and even drought. Cutting and girdling the tree does not deter it; you must apply Roundup to the cut portion to be successful in controlling it.

On the positive side, it provides wildlife habitat and its fragrant flowers attract butterflies and other pollinators. Its shrub growth habit is excellent nesting habitat for catbirds, mockingbirds, brown thrashers, and chestnut-sided warblers. Grouse, turkey and other birds eat its fruit. Woodcock consume worms in its nitrogen-charged soil. Many mammals, including deer, bear, rabbits and mice, consume the brilliant red berries. I have seen an opossum that was red from a night of eating

Autumn Olive berries!

For humans, Autumn Olive berries taste similar to cranberries; juicy and delicious. The berries have 15 times the amount of lycopene than raw tomatoes. Lycopene is associated with prevention of certain chronic diseases including prostate cancer. They also make great jelly! Autumn Olive berries are sold at farmer's markets in some regions and can be ordered from some catalogs for consumption.

I inherited the Autumn Olive on my farm from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. It's only recently that the Game Commission eliminated planting Autumn Olive, but it is too late for the private land on the mountain. I must admit that I love seeing all the birds in the Autumn Olive thickets.



Tom Dick



### Pine Siskin Invasion



considering how tiny they are. I have seen them chase away Starlings and Blue Jays.

We still have a flock of about 50 Siskins visiting every day. We have not had the problem of dying birds that other folks are encountering, probably because we have a metal feeder which is very easy to keep clean. We still have to fill the feeder every day between our large flock of Goldfinches and the Pine Siskins. They have been a lot of fun this year, but I do not hope for such an extreme invasion again next year because it was very expensive!

In November 2008, about a day after a severe ice storm hit New England, our yard was invaded by Pine Siskins numbering in the thousands. The tiny birds were much disheveled and pretty much starving. For a few days we were filling our Niger feeder as many as three and four times a day, as well as scattering seeds on the ground and the platform feeder. After about a week we were down to about 300 birds. They stayed for the entire winter and became quite friendly, eating out of my hand and landing on my head and shoulders as I filled feeders. They are very aggressive to other birds,



Debbie Bodenschatz

### Kudos!

Thanks to all who helped in the Spring cleanup at the hawk watch and especially to Nancy Ott and her family for their effort to continue clearing the hawk watch slope for days after the Spring Cleanup. Clearing of the "deadly slope" opened a wide deep view for spotting low flying birds.

Kudos to Doug Warshel, Sally and Tom Dick, Debbie and Tom Bodenschatz, Rosemary and Dennis McGlynn, Jack Julian, Gil Weakland, Jerry Fetter and Connie Hunt for planting 1,000 potted White Pine trees in a relatively dry field at the wetlands. The trees were planted in a period of less than five hours. The trees were purchased using a Quaker grant of \$1,500. The project provides wildlife habitat and protection for the riparian environment at Dunnings Creek. Upon inspection a week ago, they are growing well with many new growth buds.

### Annual APAS Picnic

As in picnics past, we will have a "Chinese Auction" at the August 2 picnic at Hidden Acres. Please bring one new or gently used item to contribute to the cache of treasures. Nature related items are especially popular. Tickets will be available for purchase on site. Tickets can then be used to bid on the many amazing offerings. Who could resist????

### APAS Website News

Please remember to let Jack Julian know if you prefer to receive your issue of *Chickadee Chatter* via e-mail. Doing so not only helps the environment by cutting down on the use of paper, it also helps us control printing costs. Jack's email address is: [webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@alleghenyplateauaudubon.org). Thanks!

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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

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