



# Chickadee Chatter

Volume 8 Issue 3

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

October 2009

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

## Dear Members:

I have been asked by some of the APAS officers and the Allegheny Front counters to remind you of proper etiquette at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

Parking at The Front is always a challenge, but we will all be better served by remembering these few tips:

- Never park on the one-lane road into the The Front; this blocks the roadway and other members can't enter.
- When parking in the lane that goes into the woods, always pull in as far as possible. Parking at the opening of the lane blocks others from pulling in and reduces utilization of precious space.
- Parking on the flat is reserved for the handicapped, the counters, and official observers only.
- Other nature groups are always welcome, but please make sure your members carpool as there is not enough space for everyone to bring their own vehicle.

Always be courteous of your fellow hawk watchers and especially be considerate of our volunteer counters. Please don't count the passing birds out loud.

Please keep your voices down, particularly when Eagles come. No foul language or off-color jokes.

Please don't stand or place your scope in such a way as to block another person's view.

If you put food on the picnic table, it is for everyone to enjoy.

And, most importantly, always remember that The Front is private property – not a state park. It is privilege for us to be able to use this wonderful place, not a right of citizenship.



Ev Merriman, Editor

## Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*)

In an earlier article I described the attributes of Autumn Olive as part of a series on invasive plants. Unlike Autumn Olive, Spotted Knapweed has few virtues and is widespread within the state. It was introduced from Europe in the late 1800s and quickly spread across the country. In appearance, the leaves and stem appear grayish, while the flowerhead is pinkish, and it grows from 18 inches to three feet in Pennsylvania. Each plant can produce over a 1,000 small seeds that can last up to five years in the soil. They are allopathic plants that secrete toxins in the soil, preventing other plants from growing.



It's not unusual for Knapweed to take over acres of old fields. Frequently, when you find the plant, it is already displacing grasses, forbs and flowers. Knapweed is very common along disturbed areas such as highways, old fields, overly grazed pastures, or yards where bare soil is exposed. Knapweed can grow anywhere there is adequate sunlight, but will have difficulty if the soil is rich and the grasses are healthy.

In that scenario, they are rarely capable of becoming aggressive; still they should be pulled since they can spread under conditions of drought or flooding where most plants would be stressed.

With the decline of native plants, native pollinators have turned to exotic or introduced plants. The only good attribute of Knapweed is the solitary bees it attracts, which visit its flowers. The most important is the bumblebee, which can be found buzzing and flying from flower to flower. I have seen various butterflies such as Skippers and Pearl Crescents

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## News About a Few of Our Members: the Good and the Sad

Occasionally, we lose perspective of those highly active members that make things happen. For instance, Lee Tosh, our most affable and adaptable member, succeeds in turning most of our outings into picnics. These picnics, with their heavy attendance, turn into feeding frenzies at both the hawk watch and the wetlands. They usually outshine the outing itself. Debbie Bodenschatz, besides being our resident herp specialist, also knows how to throw a banquet and joins in with Lee to boost the average weight of our members. Thanks, Lee and Debbie, we all appreciate you very much!

Then there is Rosemary McGlynn, our fundraiser extraordinaire, who operates out of the 'Mall' at the hawk watch selling hats and shirts and anything else that looks promising. Rosemary is also an excellent hawk counter, and has been an active speaker on our behalf within the community. But her greatest attribute is a good sense of humor. She will always be known for establishing our first Earth Day at the Que, which was a great event for Johnstown.

Ed Gowarty is another one of our favorites, frequently referred to as the Czar of the hawk watch grounds. The hawk watch has turned from a relatively rough area filled with rocks and holes into a well-managed lawn due to his effort. According to Ed, he was just tired of seeing people tripping over rocks and falling into holes. (Gee, I thought that was part of the fun). Ed, you are deeply appreciated!!!

Fond remembrance of a member - Mike Stibich passed away in early September. He was an outstanding activist for the Sierra Club and loved our hawk watch. He was also a board member of APAS. He requested that his ashes be distributed at the hawk watch. More details will be available in the next newsletter.

Kevin Georg is a 50s style itinerate hawk watcher who counted at our Tussey Mt. Hawk Watch and the Allegheny Front. That was his background before he went professional. His resume since he left our site is that of a paid counter at Smith Point for Hawk Watch International in Texas, Kiptopeke Hawk Watch on the Delmarva Peninsula, and now he is at the Corpus Christi Hawk Watch in Texas. His next counting job is Costa Rica for their huge Spring count in 2010. Of course, he still prefers our hawk watch for its close views and cool temperatures, especially when compared to the 105 degree temperatures in Texas.

Jack Julian has taken on the interim position of treasurer. He is well known at the hawk watch for his oversight of the hawk watch weather station. The high winds and fog wreak havoc on batteries and other weather station parts, and Jack is the fixer. Jack is also our webmaster, and I would suggest you check out [alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](http://alleghenyplateauaudubon.org) to learn more about our chapter. Our internet site lists programs and outings that you might miss with a late newsletter. If you contact Jack, he'll put you on his list for broadcast emails announcing events, outings, and programs. He can be reached through the above internet address.

Dave Darney is a nocturnal member who can only be found under the cover of darkness. He is the official Saw-Whet Owl bander at the hawk watch. Dave bands owls on weekends every Fall which, in this case, is Friday and Saturday nights starting in October and going into early November until the owl migration slows down. He usually has his mist nets set up around 7:00 p.m. and quits in early morning. The electronic owl call is used to draw owls in and amplified so it can be heard over a mile on a quiet night. This is one of our premier outings for members, which attracts the greatest number of non-member participants over a period of three to four weeks.

Chris Payne received the Allegheny Plateau Audubon's Conservation Award for 2009 for building a viewing/photography blind at the wetlands. This project, plus a great deal of other Scout work, earned Chris the coveted and highest award in Scouting - the rank of Eagle Scout. Congratulations, Chris, for your high achievement in Scouting. (See photo of the blind on Page 4.)

As most of you know, Retta Payne, our treasurer, has been fighting cancer. She was always at the APAS meetings, always involved in Audubon events, and is in the rare category of outstanding birder. We all miss her and want her to win this battle. I have received numerous requests for the Payne's address from those who wished to send get-well cards. Their address is 712 Glades Pike, Berlin Pa. 15530-5513. You can also go to the website [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org). Enter your email address and get a password. Jeff updates it when news is available. This way we don't have a lot of phone calls going to the Payne's during this difficult time. It is a time for deep prayer.



Tom Dick



## 2009 Calendar of Events

## PROGRAMS &amp; OUTINGS

Programs begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Engineering and Science Bldg., University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown on the third Thursday of Sept., Oct., Nov., March and April. Refreshments are served. Sometimes with the outings there can be "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

**August 15 to December 10 – Allegheny Front Hawk Watch** – This Fall outing attracts lots of people each year. We have a dedicated group of volunteer counters who can answer questions and point out species. The best day so far this year was 651 birds on September 10, which brought eight Bald Eagles, eight Ospreys, and plenty of Broadwing Hawks. If you like Fall foliage, migrating hawks and eagles, and friendly people, this is the place for you.

**October 15 – APAS Meeting - Conservancy Natural History Inventory for Bedford County** – Charlie Eichelberger, who heads the program in Bedford, will discuss the program and the focus of the study which is botany, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. He will also ask for our help! Why Bedford? Because it has the least amount of information and it is rich in biodiversity! Charlie is a great guy; you will enjoy his presentation and how members can get involved. Don't miss this!!

**October 16 – Astronomy Field Trip** – An astronomy outing will occur at the Hawk Watch at 7:00 p.m. on Friday led by Steve Lindberg. It will last as long as there's enthusiasm and stuff to see. Bring binoculars. Some telescopes will be provided. If the weather appears uncooperative, call Dennis McNair (814-255-4088) to verify whether the outing will still occur or has been canceled. The weather this year has caused the outing to be postponed several times.

**October to November – Saw-Whet Owl Banding with Dave Darney** – At the hawk watch on weekends. Bring children and grandchildren! They will be encouraged to hold and release the owls. No event excites children more than holding a little owl and releasing it. Adult members can help with this outing by tending to the nets and helping to remove owls for banding. Dress warm, bring along a folding lawn chair, a flashlight, and enjoy this nocturnal experience. You can stay to 8:00 p.m. or to 8:00 a.m. - it's up to you! The banding takes place at the hawk watch with parking along the road since the usual parking area will be for the mist nets. Participants usually arrive between 7:00 and 8:30 p.m. Late night people are particularly valuable, especially on busy nights. The banding typically starts around Oct. 10 and

extends into the first part of November. As we get closer to the time you can call Tom Dick for more information.

**November 19 – APAS Meeting** – Join us for Christmas Bird Count strategy and member slide night. This meeting is always lots of fun with members sharing their experiences and getting questions answered. Tell us who you want to join up with for the 2009 Christmas Bird Count and which area you want to cover.

**Dec. 20 – Christmas Bird Count** – This is, by far, one of the most enjoyable winter outings we do. We look for the winter birds - Purple Finches, Lapland Longspurs, Pipits, Horned Larks, and all the birds that linger through the Winter. Winter birds of prey are interesting since we sometimes see the Northern Goshawk, Northern Harriers, and once, the Golden Eagle. It's a great day in the field, complete with food and warm beverage at the end of the day when we do the compilation at Hidden Acres Farm.

### Overview of Spring 2010 Programs and Outings

This coming year outings and programs will be sharpened to include multiple opportunities for member participation. Due to frequent weather cancellations, we will offer "all weather outings" next year. Light rain or colder weather will not cancel these particular outings, only very severe weather will result in cancellation. The all-weather outings will be diversified to include birds, butterflies, dragonflies and botany all in the same outing. The habitats we visit will include bogs, marshes, fields, forests and streams. Many outings will include our two APAS sanctuaries. We will also be requesting work parties at Dunnings Creek Wetlands and the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. The outings will include kayaking, shorebird counts, waterfowl counts, Migratory Bird Day, the NABA Count, night lighting for moths in Spring and Summer, herp outings at Charles Lewis Natural Area which includes the rattlesnake/nature walk, frogs and salamanders. Hopefully conditions will be right this year for Rails. We will not advertise, but those interested should call Tom Dick to get on the list. There will also be the annual picnic at Hidden Acres Farm and the picnic at Dunnings Creek wetlands. The Spring newsletter will have dates and times and possibly more events.



### Results of the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Spring 2009 Count

Following is the summary for the Spring, 2009 raptor migration season at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, Central City, Pa.

This season produced three new Spring records:  
Broad-winged Hawk 854  
American Kestrel 39  
Season Total 2377

Noteworthy: The Osprey count of 61 was very low compared to last year's record of 185. The Red-shouldered Hawk count of 36 was very low compared to last year's record of 110. No Rough-legged Hawks were recorded this Spring. Best count day for this Spring was 735 raptors on April 24 – Eric Hall's day. Best Golden Eagle flight was March 17 with 24 GE's - Bob Gorsuch's day. Our GE count of 81 was above our 10-year Spring average of 70.6 per year. Rosemary McGlynn had one late Golden Eagle on May 6.

Many thanks to our dedicated volunteer counters: Bob Stewart, Jim Rocco, Bob Gorsuch, Tony Barle and Rosemary McGlynn, Tom Dick, Eric Hall, Ed Gowarty Sr. and Ed Jr., and our alternates: Karen Jackson and Jack Julian. Thanks also to our many spotters and observers.

Black Vulture	9
Turkey Vulture	384
Osprey	61
Bald Eagle	32
Northern Harrier	28
Sharp-shinned Hawk	220
Cooper's Hawk	57
Northern Goshawk	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	36
Broad-winged Hawk	854*
Red-tailed Hawk	465
Rough-legged Hawk	-0-
Golden Eagle	81
American Kestrel	39*
Merlin	9
Peregrin	3
Unidentified Accipiter	11
Unidentified Buteo	28
Unidentified Falcon	1
Unidentified Eagle	1
Unidentified Raptor	51
<b>Total Raptors</b>	<b>2377*</b>
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>412</b>
<b>Average Birds/Hr.</b>	<b>5.76</b>



Che Mincone. Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Compiler

(Spotted Knapweed continued from Page 1)

working the flower heads, but they are seen much more commonly on native flowers. Spotted Knapweed has few natural enemies so, from a practical point of view, there are only two alternatives for elimination. The first is pulling the plants out, being sure not to leave any root behind. This should be done in the Spring when the soil is moist. You cannot eliminate them by mowing, since they respond by re-growing and flowering at a height below the mower blade. The second, and unfortunately most successful, approach for elimination is with the use of herbicides. Spraying must be done prior to the development of flowers. I would suggest pulling the plants, carefully bagging them, and disposing of them properly by burning or deep burial (landfill). However, if you have an acre or more, then spraying may be the only alternative. Afterward, you should cultivate the ground and plant new ground cover, especially with plants that are adaptive to the soil and hydrologic regime.

 Tom Dick

The new blind at Dunning's Creek  
built by Chris Payne





### APAS Membership Dues Are Due

It is once again time to renew your APAS chapter dues. Chapter members receive *Chickadee Chatter*, the chapter newsletter with information on chapter happenings including outings and meetings. Chapter members do not receive *Audubon* magazine, published by the national Audubon Society. National membership includes both the newsletter and magazine. Chapter dues are directed in their entirety to the APAS. The chapter receives a much smaller portion when you pay national dues. All members and friends are welcome at our functions, including meetings, outings, Dunnings Creek Wetlands, and the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Please be sure to indicate if you want your newsletter mailed or sent over the internet. Also, if you use e-mail, indicate that you want occasional updates on outings or news bulletins. Please consider an additional donation to the APAS!! Thank you for your continued support of our chapter.

### 2009-2010 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Sept 1 2009 to Aug 31 2010 (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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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)

I am renewing my membership (\$35 check)

I am renewing my membership, but address has changed

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

I am a new member - chapter only (\$15 check)

I am renewing my membership - chapter only (\$15 check)

I am including a donation to the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

Amount of donation \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Non-Profit Organization**  
**U.S. Postage Paid**  
**Johnstown, PA**  
**Permit #5**



## 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 - Jack Julian (Interim)
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](mailto:wetmeadow@aol.com)  
or visit us on the web at: [alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](http://alleghenyplateauaudubon.org)