

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society
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Johnstown, PA 15904

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Johnstown, PA

Permit #5

APAS 2011 FALL NEWSLETTER

2011 Team Roadrunner Birding Report Somerset County, PA

Jeff Payne's Big Bird Day

The incessant Spring rains finally abated and Team Roadrunner was ready to start the 24 hour, non-scouted, Somerset County Big Day. We decided to go from 2 p.m. May 7 to 2 p.m. May 8 due to the vagaries of schedules. Chris Payne and Jeff Payne along with Carolyn LaBute started on the Payne property and Jim and Meg Moses were to meet us later. We quickly added our first 35 species including great looks at Canada Warbler, but the Northern Waterthrush

was silent. Off to the car we went east of Allegheny Front and found Kentucky and Worm-eating Warbler and got the white wing flashes of a flying Northern Mockingbird. A trip towards Callimont yielded a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers (and a little drenching rain shower)! Then it was off to Somerset Lake for nesting Osprey, migrating swallows and a couple late Ruddy Ducks and Red-breasted Mergansers. The Garrett Mud Flats were disappointing but a singing Vesper Sparrow gave us a smile. The Buffalo Creek swamp was awesome with five shorebirds, Virginia Rail, and the new to Southwestern PA, nesting Sandhill Cranes coming in at dusk. No Whip-poor-wills or Screech Owls were near Glencoe, so we headed in for a couple hours of sleep (must be getting old!)

At 3:00 a.m., Jeff and Chris were headed to Mt. Davis where they find 4 owls – unfortunately all were Barred! Dark-eyed Juncos were singing at the top along with a drumming Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker. Then a nice group of migrant and resident warblers and kinglets were at the entrance to Deer Valley YMCA Camp. Just down the road at High Point Lake, while looking at two lingering Common Loons, a fortuitous adult Bald Eagle flew through the scope.

The Confluence area produced many warblers including Cerulean, Hooded, Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Yellow-throated and a Yellow-breasted Chat as well as Orchard Oriole and Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos. White-eyed Vireo eluded us and where were all the expected Great-crested Flycatchers?

A great singing Winter Wren was near Blue Hole and when going to Camp Soles for nesting Blackburnian Warblers, we got an unexpected treat on some exposed mud – the second Somerset County record of Willet!

We split up and shot around after that on some clean up birds. Jeff & Chris found Grasshopper Sparrow, Pectoral Sandpiper and Horned Lark while Jim and Meg spotted Horned Grebe and Pine Warbler and then 2 p.m. came all too soon!

It was shortly after when Chris and Jeff took some fresh-cut yard flowers to Retta's cemetery when the almost expected happened – calls of "freep, freep" came from the woods as the Great-crested Flycatchers were finally allowed to sing. What a difference an hour or so makes? So the tally on Jeff and Chris's list was 133, Jim and Meg had three not on that list and Retta added one for a total of 137. The result was a pretty impressive one-day list for Somerset County, but even more impressive was all the support from our sponsors.

Several conservation groups benefited from the sponsor funds and the Allegheny Plateau Audubon received \$700.00 for the wetlands fund to help rebuild some bridges and other needed maintenance work.

Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology Meeting

The Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology's Annual Meeting was held May 20 to 22, for the first time, in Bedford Co. Tom Kuehl (member of our chapter and President of the PSO) made the decision and what a good decision! The focus was on Dunnings Creek Wetlands and the county-at-large. This was the first time the Wetlands were open to such a large group of very skilled birders. The result was 130 species at the wetlands which when coupled with the county-at-large

birders produced 180 species and one subspecies, the highest count ever for an annual meeting and that includes the extremely birdy area of the Presque Isle meeting.

Brief summary of the specials at the Wetlands:

Least Bitterns, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Merlin, Sora Rail, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper (SP), Spotted SP, Ruddy Turnstone, Semipalmated SP, Least SP, White-rumped SP, Baird's SP, Pectoral SP, Dunlins, and Short-billed Dowitcher. Other wetland birds were the following: Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Eastern Screech Owl. Flycatchers seen at the wetlands included Olive-sided, Alder, Willow, Least, Acadian and Great Crested. The following warblers were seen: Golden-winged Warblers, Yellow Warbler, Pine Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Our Golden Eagle research group, Mike Lanzone, Trish Miller, Todd Katzner and David Brandes were given conservation awards at the banquet.

If you remember, the research started at our Allegheny Front Hawk Watch where the first eagles were captured, fitted with telemetry devices, and released. Since that time we learned a great deal about where they migrated and, unfortunately, how some died. We have two reports of eagles caught in traps designed for mammals. For me it was a very warm feeling knowing they received this award, since our Golden Eagle count is one of the highest in the Eastern US, and we had the great pleasure of knowing the team.

A group of participants visited the hawk watch only to meet Che Mincone who filled them with information regarding the migration of raptors that use the ridge.

The banquet speaker was Tom Dick. He had the wonderful opportunity to talk about the genesis of Dunnings Creek Wetlands and all the members of our chapter who planted some 250,000 aquatic plants at the wetlands. That brought great memories of camaraderie where work was considered an outing! We all had fun running around in 4 wheelers hauling loads of plants mostly donated by the Pa. Game commission, USFWS, and many private donors.

2011 Butterfly Count Results

Our count this year of 56 species replaced our previous highest count of 51. This count may be one of the highest of the Middle Atlantic's 100 plus counts.

The species and numbers are as follows: 4 Pipevine Swallowtails, 30 Black Swallowtails, 1 Giant Swallowtail, 121 Tiger Swallowtails, 160 Cabbage White, 72 Clouded Sulphur, 87 Orange Sulphur, 3 Cloudless Sulphur, 23 American Copper, 8 Coral Hairstreak, 2 Banded Hairstreak, 1 Hickory Hairstreak, 3 Gray Hairstreak, 82 Eastern Tailed-Blue, 71 "Summer" Spring Azures, 1 American Snout, 32 Variegated Fritillary,

358 Great Fritillary, 145 Aphrodite Fritillary, 45 Atlantis Fritillary, 25 Meadow Fritillary, 4 Silvery Checkerspot, 1 Harris Checkerspot, 102 Pearl Crescent, 2 Baltimore Checkerspot, 6 Question Mark, 10 Eastern Comma, 2 Gray Comma, 9 Mourning Cloak, 8 Red-spotted Purple, 6 Viceroy, 1 Hackberry Emperor, 9 Pearly-eye, 2 Appalachian Brown, 1 little Wood-Satyr, 87 Common Wood Nymph, 26 Monarchs, 322 Silver-spotted Skipper, 2 Juvenal's Duskywing, 27 Wild Indigo Duskywing, 1 Common Checkered-Skipper, 1 Common Sootywing, 2 Least Skippers, 22 European Skippers, 44 Peck's Skipper, 4 Tawny-edged Skippers, 4 Crossline Skipper, 3 Long Dash, 2 Northern Broken-Dash, 48 Little Glassywing, 7 Delaware Skipper, 1 Hobomok Skipper, 3 Black Dash, and 41 Dun Skipper.

Participants: Tom Bodenschatz, Debbie Bodenschatz, George Bercik, Ellie Cochran, Marian Cowan, Thomas Dick (Compiler), Sally Dick, Tom Kuehl, Janet Kuehl, Mike Lanzone, Curt Lehman, Rosemary McGlynn, Dennis McNair, Trish Miller, Bill Parker, Karen Parker, Pauline Petrucci.

Annual Picnic

The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society annual picnic was held on August 7th at Hidden Acres Farm. We escaped rain, however, very narrowly, and once again the food and attendance was great. Tommy Allman was our legendary barbeque griller and did a perfect job. The high light was the presentation of the APAS Conservation award to Kim Van Fleet for her outstanding commitment to Cerulean Warbler Surveys and Chapter Support.

Programs and Outings for Fall of 2011 and Spring of 2012

Meetings for the APAS are the third Thursdays in Sept and October of 2011 and then in April and May of 2012. Meetings are 7:00 at UPJ in the Science and Engineering Building (behind the Living and Learning Center and Pasquerella Performing Arts center)

September 15: Alaska Images: Laura and Mike Jackson, Sally and Tom Dick

October 20: Larry Adams of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will present a program on the work of the Conservancy.

Oct. to Nov.—Owl banding with Dave Darney, our official bander at the hawk watch on weekends. Bring children and grandchildren! Members can really help with this outing by tending to the nets and helping to remove owls for banding. Dress warm, bring a folding chair and flashlight, and enjoy your nocturnal experience. Please park along Lambert Mt. Road rather than the hawk watch road. Banding starts around 7 pm. Late night helpers are particularly valuable

on busy nights. Usually the banding starts around Oct. 12 and extends into the first part of November. As we get closer to the date you can call Tom Dick at 814-754-5727.

Hawk Watch—August 15 to Dec. 10th---- Fall Hawk and Eagle Flight at the Allegheny Front. The hawk watch provides an incredible view and is also the most important ridge on a yearly basis for the Eastern Golden Eagle. It's also known for its 17 species of raptors and the excellent close views on east winds.

Christmas Bird Count--- December 18—Annual Christmas Bird Count---- This is by far one of the most enjoyable winter experiences. We look for Purple Finches, Lapland Longspurs, pipits, waterfowl, raptors and lingering birds of fall. Compilers: Jeff and Chris Payne

Spring outings and speakers

Spring hawk watch---February 25 to May 10- The AFHW is one of the few Spring Hawk Watches in the Eastern US. The first birds to come through are Golden Eagles and among the last are Broad-winged Hawks. It's also a time of year that we can really use spotters (it's a big sky and its easy to miss high flying birds) so anyone can be a spotter.

April 19---- Dunnings Creek Wetlands Update—This will be a presentation by Tom Dick on the wildlife of Dunnings Creek Wetlands and what we've learned over the years about this massive project.

May 17—The Everglades--- Gene Wingert (if you remember, our great speaker on Vernal Ponds) will give an unusual presentation that links the Everglades to our area. Gene is one of our top speakers!