



ALLEGHENY PLATEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY
Dedicated to Biodiversity. The rich heritage of our Bioregion

Chickadee Chatter

APAS
2015 SPRING-
NEWSLETTER

Somerset Lake Update

Somerset Lake is an Important Bird Area due to its bird diversity, nesting Osprey, and incredible waterfowl & shorebird migrations in spring and fall. Recreational opportunities are abundant. Boating, fishing, hunting, bird watching, hiking, nature photography. And one must not forget its educational potentials in getting both adults and children into the outdoors to experience nature.

The Somerset County Conservancy is committed to preserving and conserving the important outdoor areas and resources of our county. Somerset Lake has been identified as a Biological Diversity Area in the Somerset County Natural Heritage Inventory as well as an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society. In addition, it boasts one of the best fishing opportunities in the state.



In the spring of 2012 a leak was discovered at the base of the dam. This problem coupled with the dam not meeting new federal regulations forced the PA DEP to place it as a high risk dam. The PA Fish and Boat Commission was forced to lower the level of the lake, currently it is down

Future Newsletters

This will be the last paper newsletter mailed to your address. The newsletter will only be available, in the future, at the chapter web site (www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org). Timely announcements of events are sent out through email. You can get onto the list for emails at the web site by submitting an email in the Contact Us box under the ABOUT/CONTACT button. Please put "add to email blast list" in the message section.

Somerset Lake Continued

6 feet. If it gets worse, an additional draw down may be required. It is possible that it could be drained completely at some point in the future if further problems are discovered. The lake will remain at these levels until the dam can be replaced. Somerset Lake is one of 9 lakes in the Commonwealth that are in the same predicament. Unfortunately, there are only limited amounts of funds to repair or replace these dams. We need to show the state that this lake is important to us, without this it is unlikely that funds will be allocated. The Somerset County Conservancy is organizing the effort to save Somerset Lake. The Conservancy has formed a committee called Somerset Lake Action Committee. This committee will function to bring together interested groups and individuals interested in keeping this important community resource and raise awareness within the state and county governments. In addition the Committee was challenged by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to raise \$100,000 locally to demonstrate community interest in replacing the dam.



Immature Bald Eagle grabs a fish!

Common Yellowthroat, a common breeder at the lake



The Somerset Lake Action Committee on Tuesday January 13th reached the fundraising goal during an event hosted by the committee, the Daily American, Somerset County commissioners and Somerset County Chamber of Commerce at the Georgian Inn of Somerset. "The Rally to Restore Somerset Lake" featured guest speakers as well as local businessmen, politicians and residents who presented donations to the committee. In December the commissioners pledged to match donations to the committee of up to \$50,000. The money comes from impact fees from Marcellus Shale drilling. "We have over \$51,000 now with all the donations that came in today, so we have met the commissioners' challenge," committee co-chairman Jeff Payne said at the end of the rally. "We are over our initial goal, and now we're starting to make money toward putting this park into place." The committee is working to raise an additional \$50,000 for the construction of a county park at the lake, which would feature hiking trails, picnicking areas and other recreational spots.

The Somerset County commissioners have approved a 25-year lease agreement for the approximately 250 acres of land. The lease is part of an effort to save the lake as a recreational resource. If the state Fish and Boat Commission approves the lease, the commission will be responsible for the dam and the waterway itself. The county would be responsible for the land. The land will become Somerset County's first County Park.

Please Donate : www.somersetlakepa.org

2014 Allegheny Plateau Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Jeff Payne, compiler

On December 14, 2014 twenty two intrepid members of APAS set out for the annual CBC. The weather was not too bad for a CBC with moderate temperatures and just some ice on the still waters. We found a very respectable 83 species of birds that day with 5 more being recorded during the count week. There were 51.5 party hours by car covering 650 miles and another 8 party hours on foot covering 11 miles. In addition there were 2 party hours spent owling. There were a total of 6913 individual birds counted during the day and Team 2 which encompassed the Quemahoning Reservoir had the highest total species with 69.

Some of the more unusual species included Long-tailed Duck, Black Scoter, Wilson's Snipe American Woodcock, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Towhee and one Cackling Goose during count week.

The following people participated. Team One: Michael Wolfe, Patrick Wolf, Ian Russ, Jake Murphy, Julia Wentz. Team Two: Tim Fox, Ian Fox, Tricia Miller, Mike Lanzone, Phoebe Lanzone, Willow Lanzone. Team Five: Jeff Payne, Jim Moses, Meg Moses. Team Six: Scott Bastian, Jill Bastian. Team Seven: Deb Bodenschatz, Wanetta Escherich, Sandy Cline. Team Eight: Evelyn Merriman, Sally Dick, Rosemary McGlynn.

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Events

Save the dates

Spring chapter meetings – There will be an **April** meeting at the Pitt-Johnstown Engineering and **Science Bldg, Room 200**, at 7:00 on Thursday, April 16. Mike Lanzone will be speaking about the Snowy Owl Invasion that recently took place.

The **May** meeting will be **Thursday, May 21, at 7:00 AT A NEW LOCATION – the Pitt-Johnstown Krebs Hall, Room 240 (second floor)**. In May we'll have a Members' Images meeting, so bring videos or slides on a flash drive or CD. We'll share our outdoor adventures.

Outings will be announced by email or at the web site as they're scheduled.

www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

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