

Chickadee Chatter

Summer 2018 Newsletter - Web Version

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Membership use only

Chickadee Chatter

Summer
2018

The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

From the President

Winter and early spring can be brutal at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. It can also be lonely! This spring hawkwatching season was filled with blustery weather, complete with snow, freezing rain, high winds, fog, and hail. All of that on a single Saturday. Unfortunately, the next Saturday was similar, and the Saturday after that, and the Saturday ... You get the point.

Looking at the hawk count for the season, the numbers are dismal this year. So many days of zero migratory hawks. So why do we do it? The answer is because so few other sites can muster the manpower to do it! And we have been doing just that, manning a site in very difficult conditions for decades.

Allegheny Front Hawk Watch will celebrate its 30th season this fall. That is 30 years of hawkwatchers standing in the cold collecting scientific data. Because of this, we now know significantly more about all of the raptors. Without this citizen science piece that hawkwatchers provide, we may still believe that Golden Eagles do not exist in Pennsylvania.

To all of those who have helped make the AFHW one of the great hawk watches in America for the past 30 years, I sincerely thank you!

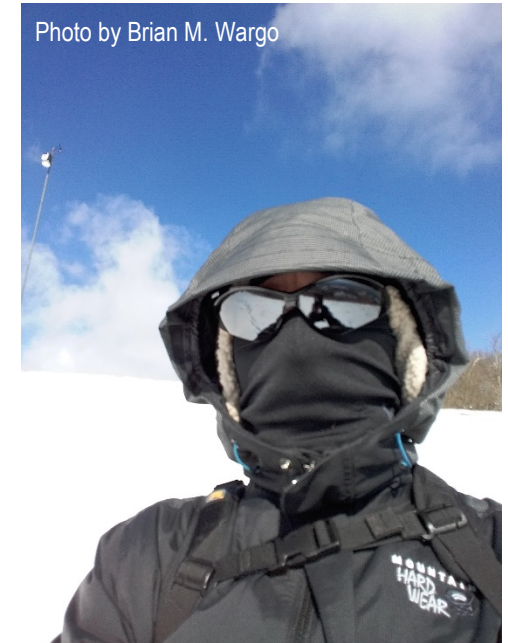


Photo by Brian M. Wargo

Brian M. Wargo

Annual Picnic and Membership Meeting - Sunday, August 5, 2018

The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society will hold its annual picnic and membership meeting at Shawnee State Park—pavilion #7 on August 5, 2018.



Photo by Brian M. Wargo

Debbie Bodenschatz -
Picnic planner extraordinaire
and APAS Secretary.

This year marks our 30th Hawk Watch Anniversary and our celebration will feature a pig roast, a Trash-to-Treasure Silent Auction, and a presentation on butterflies by Steve Johnson (and maybe a butterfly walk).

The annual meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. and voting for APAS board members and officers will begin at 11:00 a.m.

Food will be served at noon.

Please bring a covered dish to share and your own beverages (non-alcoholic). You may also bring one or two items for the silent auction.

Another email will be sent at the end of July with last minute or additional information.

We hope to see you all there!

APAS Board

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society (APAS) Board Briefs – By Jeanine Ging

The APAS board and officers have been busy meeting monthly since January to accomplish tasks and plan for future endeavors. Some of the highlights of our five board meetings are as follows:

- Election of Board of Directors: Rosemary McGlynn, Ed Gowarty Jr., Dave Poder, Jeanine Ging, Wayne Sierer, and Sally Dick
- Planning and preparation of annual picnic at Shawnee State Park, August 5, 2018
- 30th Anniversary celebrations of Allegheny Front Hawk Watch
- Treasurer's reports
- Planning for field trips and possible off site meetings with speakers
- HMANA sponsored Raptorthon raised \$790, half of which will be donated to Allegheny Front Hawk Watch
- Planting and preparation of hawk watch site
- Peregrine mating watch
- Spring and Fall count logistics



Photo by Brian M. Wargo

Board member-Jeanine Ging

We look forward to seeing all of the fellow hawkwatchers and members at the annual picnic and at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch for our regular fall season. If you have any further questions about the above topics please see an officer or board member for details.

From the Compiler—Bob Stewart

The spring watch commenced on February 13, 2018 and coverage continued through May 7, 2018. The watch was manned for 285.25 hours and the total raptor count was 926 for the season. This equates to 3.25 raptors per hour. There were no high counts this season.

Weather was more detrimental than normal this year, with only five days of counts in February. March continued the same sorry saga. The resulting counts were extremely low. There were 34 days of no migrants in the months of February, March, and April. This caused coverage to decrease by almost 100 hours.

Conditions such as snow, blowing snow, rain, and fog were not uncommon on the ridge. Specie counts for Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Red-tailed hawks were new low records going back to 1998.



Photo by Brian M. Wargo

A Broad-winged Hawk takes off from its morning perch at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Picture captured by Brian M. Wargo.

From the Compiler—Bob Stewart Continued

The poor conditions resolved during April and this allowed a favorable showing of Broad-wing Hawks, with the season total of 477. This was the greatest number in a nine year period.

April 21, 2018 and April 22, 2018 brought a nice flight of several species. The wind was light to moderate out of the southeast and the temperature was seasonable. Visibility was 20 to 30 km. There were 121 and 242 broad-winged hawks recorded respectively. Other two-day species counts included 19 Osprey, 20 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 15 Red-tailed Hawks, 2 Golden Eagles, 2 Bald Eagles, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, and more.

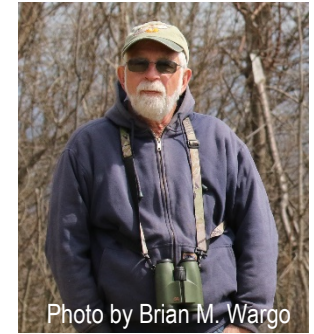


Photo by Brian M. Wargo

Our intrepid and wise counters this year include: Brian Wargo, Debbie Bodenschatz, Jim Rocco, Rosemary McGlynn, Ed Gowarty, Tom Dick, Bob Stewart, and Bob Gorsuch. All these individuals give their time in this endeavor.

Breakdown of the spring 2018 count by species:

Black Vultures - 5	Rough-legged Hawks - 0
Turkey Vultures - 112	Golden Eagles - 35
Osprey - 42	American Kestrel - 8
Bald Eagles - 5	Merlins - 2
Northern Harriers - 3	Peregrine Falcons - 1
Sharp-shinned Hawks - 45	unidentified accipters - 2
Cooper's Hawks - 25	unidentified buteos - 3
Northern Goshawks - 1	unidentified falcons - 1
Red-shouldered Hawks - 16	unidentified eagles - 2
Broad-winged Hawks - 477	unidentified raptors - 18
Red-tailed Hawks - 123	Total raptors= 926

APAS Elections at the Picnic

The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society (APAS) will hold its elections at the Picnic this summer. The officers and board members are all running unopposed. If any member would like to also be placed on the ballot, please contact any of the current officers or members of the board.

Officer Positions:

President: Brian M. Wargo

Vice-President: Bob Stewart

Secretary: Debbie Bodenschatz

Treasurer: Jack Julian

Board Members Positions:

Sally Dick

Jeanine Ging

Ed Gowarty, Jr.

Rosemary McGlynn

Dave Poder

Wayne Sierer



Dave Poder – board member.
(Photo by Brian M. Wargo)

Pictures from Spring



A Black-throated Blue Warbler was behind the picnic table at the hawkwatch this spring. Photo by Brian M. Wargo



A Tree Swallow perches on the top of the anemometer at the hawkwatch.
Photo by Brian M. Wargo

Peregrine Falcon Watch

by Bob Stewart

On February 22, Brian Wargo sent out a request to the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society for volunteers to help monitor a pair of Peregrine Falcons nesting on a cliff about an hour's drive from the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. This pair is the first known cliff-nesting pair in this particular state since the early 1950s, prior to the extirpation of the entire eastern population due to reproductive failure caused by DDT and other organochlorine pesticides. This particular site was last known to be occupied by peregrines in the late 1940s. All other peregrine eyries (a large nest of a bird of prey) in the state are found on man-made structures such as high-rise buildings, bridge supports, and water towers.

Through Brian, Matthew Olear made contact with Peter Livengood and myself. Matt Olear is the lead observer and helps monitor several peregrine pairs in the Mid-Atlantic region as a volunteer with the individual state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and other agencies. My interest in this activity was peaked and I traveled to the site to meet Matt and receive an orientation. In addition to Peter and myself, Jack Julian, Kevin Georg, and Brian Wargo made at least one visit. Also assisting were perhaps five additional personnel from the DNR, other state agencies, and college student interns.

Observations began around March 4, 2017. Although peregrines are diurnal and can be observed any time of day, we followed the protocol set forth in the USFWS's post-delisting monitoring plan of conducting



Female Peregrine Falcon in her favorite Tree.

(Photo by Matthew Olear)

observations during the times of day the birds are most active: four hours after sunrise and before sunset. At this time of the year, volunteers are primarily watching for mating and courtship behavior and behaviors that might indicate which ledge or ledges they are considering as nest sites. Also, conditions are monitored for breeding success or failure such as human interference.

Once incubation began, the observation site changed to a location that allowed observers to see into the nest ledge without disturbing the falcons. Incubation is thought to require 28 to 35 days. On May 20, 2017, Matt was the first to observe live chicks. His report indicated at least two chicks.

With a successful hatch, monitoring will continue for several more weeks until the eyasses (young hawks or falcons) fledge. All the volunteers are hoping for a successful pair! I will update you later in the next newsletter.

Bob Stewart



Photo by Matthew Olear

A pair of Peregrine Falcons perched together in the spring of 2018.

Fall Meeting at UPJ

We will be holding a chapter meeting on Thursday, September 20, 2018 at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. There will be a video presentation entitled “Cathedral – The Fight to Save the Hemlocks of Cook Forest.” This should be a very interesting video. Please invite all your friends.

The meeting will begin at 7 PM. As of now there is no room assignment. It is quite likely we will meet in a different room than in past years. There will be a short membership meeting before the video. Room location will be passed along at a later date.

Bob Stewart – Vice President Candidate, APAS

Somerset Lake - Mudflats for Shorebirds Concept

Somerset Lake (a National Audubon recognized Important Bird Area) has been drawn down since 2012 due to problems with the dam which will be repaired starting in 2019. During the drawdown there have been varying amounts of mud during shorebird migration periods in spring and late summer to autumn. There have been more than 30 species of these long distance migrants observed, sometimes in large numbers, feeding on invertebrates at the lake which is incredible for a mountainous, inland site. Some of the more unusual species observed have been 2 species of phalarope, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Ruff, Red Knot and Willets. These good birds have attracted many birders who normally would need to travel to coastal New Jersey or Delaware for a chance to see these species.

There is a proposition being advanced by the Somerset County Conservancy to do some habitat work at the North end of the lake during drawdown that, combined with some management practices, could continue to make habitat for these birds and the birders who like to observe them. We are hoping to see this work done—but in the meantime this August through later fall could have some good flights so check it out!

Jeff Payne – Vice President, APAS

Events and Outings Summer/Fall 2018

As with all outings, presentations, walks, meetings, talks, etc., always check the APAS website for updates or cancelations before leaving home at www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org.

July 15, 2018 NABA Butterfly Count

Just like hawk counting, except with butterflies! If you are interested in participating, please contact Sally Dick at sallydick7@gmail.com

July 28, 2018 – Kittatinny Roundtable

Regional hawkwatches meet at Hawk Mountain to discuss spring and fall counts. Registration (free) is required to determine the number of attendees.

August 5, 2018 – APAS Annual Meeting

Pavilion # 7 at Shawnee State Park starts at 10:00 a.m. with voting for board members and officers starting at 11:00 a.m.

August 5, 2018 – APAS Summer Picnic

Pavilion # 7 at Shawnee State Park starts with food at noon.

August 15, 2018 Fall Hawkwatching

The hawkwatch opens for regular counting.

Forest Stewardship – Summer 2018

Adam Katrancha will highlight the work that Beaverdale Sportsman’s Association has completed on their grounds. Date will be announced on the website news feed.

Moth Lighting - Summer 2018

Rarely seen moths, butterflies, and flying insects are active at night and are attracted to UV lamps. Join us for a night of adventure. Dates and locations will be announced on the website news feed.