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From the President

This is a special issue of the Chickadee Chatter, for it marks the two milestones. The first is the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society turns 35 years old and the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch turns 30 years old.

In 1984, the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society was founded by members who were dedicated to the protection and understanding of the earth and all its inhabitants. The loosely banded group committed to conservation, education, and restoration of habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Over the years, APAS group grew stronger and larger, topping out at over four hundred members. Today, membership numbers are down a bit as members come and go. However, the hard core stays and continues to inspire the next generation.

Many of the founders remain active today, albeit at a slower pace. Tom Dick continues perfecting the Dunning Creek Wetlands; Jeff Payne is still imploring creation of mudflats at Somerset Lake; Kevin Georg is still showing younger hawkcounters how to scan the skies; Laura Jackson fights the good fight on siting issues for wind power; Dave Darney continues to endure the cold nights counting owls...the list goes on.

Other long-time members are continuing the vision laid out by our founders, strengthening our organization through advocacy, outreach, and the daily work needed to keep us moving forward. Thankfully, some of our newest members are becoming active and helping to carry the load. This will become evident in the following pages.

But what I would like you to notice as you read is the fun that everyone is having. Every outing, picnic, workday, walk, or day spent together chatting, eating, counting, exploring, or just watching, is filled with joy. When interacting with nature, you can't help but be excited!

P.S. This also marks the 30th anniversary of enjoying nature with my partner, Jeanine.



A beautiful female box turtle strolling through the field of the hawk watch creates smiles.

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Brian M. Wargo

Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Turns 30!

By Brian M. Wargo

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch turns 30! What a monumental accomplishment. For three decades, hawkwatchers have been volunteering their time counting the migrating raptors flying south for the winter, and for the last twenty years, counting them when they head back north. This has not been a cursory count, but one that has been highly consistent and reliable, making the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch as one of the most important in the nation.



The cake celebrating 30 years of hawkwatching was enjoyed at the Summer Picnic!

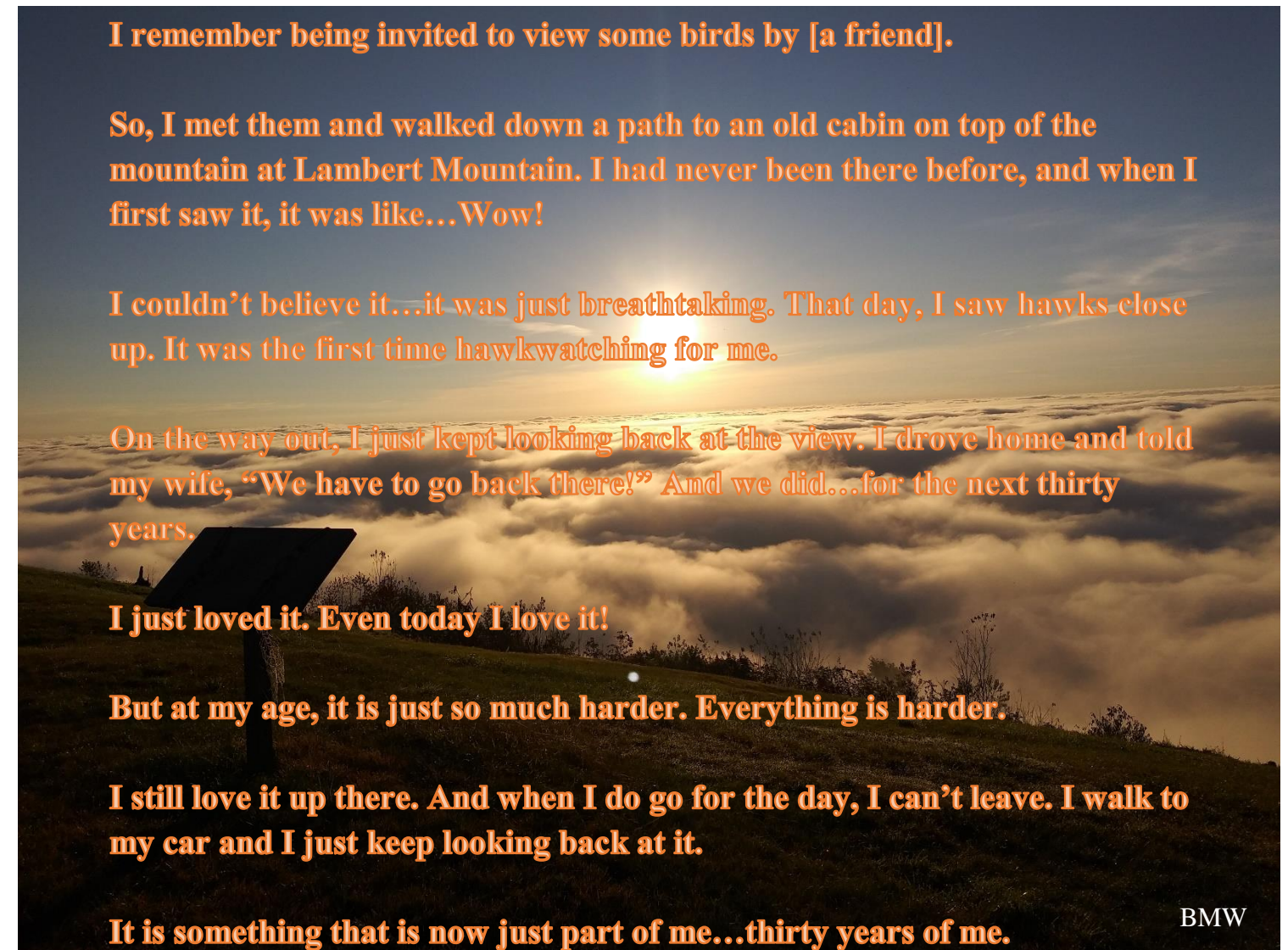
The APAS is known as the Golden Eagle capital of the Eastern Flyway. For several years, we have held the records for highest daily count (74), highest fall count (320), and highest yearly count (386). While these records will wane, our commitment will never waver. Some of our hawkwatchers have been with us since the beginning. To them, we say Thank You! To our newest counters, we say, Welcome Aboard!

Whether you are new to our organization or a veteran, we all share the same passion for nature. Let us celebrate our great work this year and devote ourselves to helping others learn about our most sacred endeavor – appreciating nature through hawks.

Che Reflects on Allegheny Front 30 Years Ago

Words by Che Mincone - Typed by Brian M. Wargo

Che Mincone interviewed by Brian M. Wargo at the Summer Picnic.



I remember being invited to view some birds by [a friend].

So, I met them and walked down a path to an old cabin on top of the mountain at Lambert Mountain. I had never been there before, and when I first saw it, it was like...Wow!

I couldn't believe it...it was just breathtaking. That day, I saw hawks close up. It was the first time hawkwatching for me.

On the way out, I just kept looking back at the view. I drove home and told my wife, "We have to go back there!" And we did...for the next thirty years.

I just loved it. Even today I love it!

But at my age, it is just so much harder. Everything is harder.

I still love it up there. And when I do go for the day, I can't leave. I walk to my car and I just keep looking back at it.

It is something that is now just part of me...thirty years of me.

Sitting above the clouds at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch early in the morning.

As I spoke to Che, I thanked him for everything that he and the rest of the original hawkwatchers had done over the years. Che, grabbed me by my shoulder and said, "You're going to make me get emotional here!" With that, he swallowed a big gulp of air, patted me on the back, gave me a squeeze and walked away as he held his emotion in.

Thanks Che!

Falling in Love with Mini Cooper's

By Phyllis Terchanik

I may be the luckiest birder around. I got to witness how Cooper's Hawks are made!

It all started when the male and female were fixing up the nest and mating. Acting as a voyeur, I watched it all from my back deck. Then the leaves began to grow, ending my view. So, every day since June 11, 2018, I've been walking up the steep hill behind my house to the only spot where I could see the nest. At just about eye level, I would take my tripod and my 100-400 mm lens and take photos and videos, but the nest is pretty far away.

On June 15, 2018, I noticed the heads of the young. By July 5, 2018, they started testing the branches. Five days later, one flew about 25-30 feet. Dad also chased a Great Horned Owl out of the area today and everyone is hoping it stays away until the young are out on their own. Mom also dropped off the food and didn't feed them. It was the first time one actually mantled over it and the others hopped onto branches and waited for him to have his fill before coming back to the nest to snack.



Phyllis T.

Above: The male Cooper's Hawk mounts the female after offering food!

Left: Four Cooper's Hawks young in the nest.



Phyllis T.

The next day was filled with short flights and the following they all starting to self-feed and engage in a lot of preening. The next couple of days, all were wandering quite far from the nest—about 100 yards. The next day was some mantling.

On July 19, 2018, I got to see blue eyes! It was also the first time that I saw dad fly over the nest for the kids to see, purposely dropping the prey, without being plucked, to the ground. One of the young immediately flew down and mantled over it and then started picking out the feathers. It then picked it up and took it further into the woods to eat.

Two days later was the first time seeing one of the young leave the woods. It landed on a wire in front of the house, only to get dive bombed by a couple of robins. A few days later, another left the woods and sat on a roof top, making me nervous.

There was no sign of the birds on July 26, 2018. I thought they were gone. But, one came to keep us company while we had supper outside. Then while I was filling the bird feeders a Mourning Dove flew into the tree where I was standing and one of the kids flew towards me and made a U-turn about 10 feet in front of my face! It was amazing! I was so happy to see that he/she is learning to hunt!



Phyllis T.

Above: A Juvenile Cooper's Hawk stretching and testing its wings. Notice the beautiful white eyes!

By August 2, 2018, I thought I'd never see them again. But one was in my mom's backyard, about two blocks from my house.

This has been the most exciting birding experience I have ever had. The only thing I would enjoy more is to hold an eagle. Visiting a falconer and have a raptor fly to my arm would also work. That is on my list!

Going back through these photos brings back so many memories. I miss these guys and I'm hoping that they all make it on their own. Only nature and God know now the outcome! Looking forward to the parents starting all over in 2019!

Editor's note: Phyllis has had her photos in several publications, including the Johnstown Magazine. You can find her at most Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society events.

Kittatinny Round Table

By Brian M. Wargo

Each year in July, the Kittatinny Roundtable convenes at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. This group of hawkwatchers from Pennsylvania and its surrounding states comes together to try to make sense of the trends that hawk sites are reporting. This year's gathering was large, with many hawk sites sending representatives. There was also a good showing from HMANA, with five members of the board present.



Above: Hawkwatcher meet at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

Right: A baby hummingbird in a lichen covered nest.

If you are interested in hawkwatching, this is the group for you! There are so many dedicated hawkwatchers at this meeting, it is difficult not to learn something new every few minutes.

To give you a sense of the people that attend, the hawkwatcher next to me, Giselle Chazotte Smisko, was feeding a baby hummingbird every 20 minutes or so with a modified syringe tube. Clearly, this is a group that loves birds.

Plan on attending next summer with the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch members.



BMW

HMANA's Executive Director Visits the AFHW

By Brian M. Wargo

Jane Ferreyra, the executive director for Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), visited the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch this summer. Jane feels it is important to show that HMANA is committed to partnering with local hawkwatches. In April she launched HMANA's Raptor Road Trips, visiting several spring sites along lakes Erie and Ontario. She notes the purpose of these trips: "HMANA wants to know sites' local needs, goals, and impediments. Together, we can form and implement a plan for keeping hawkwatches stable and strong."

Allegheny Front was at the top of the list on her second Raptor Road Trip in July.

Jane's first comment as she stepped out of her car, was "Wow! This place is special even without the great migration that you guys count!"



Jeanine Ging

Above: Jane Ferreyra, Meadow and Theo Ging-Wargo, Brian M. Wargo, and Kevin Georg at AFHW.

Making the day extra special was having Kevin Georg at the site. Everyone knows, loves, and respects Kevin and it was no surprise that Jane recognized him: Kevin is currently counting at the Detroit River Hawk Watch near what will be HMANA's new national office outside Detroit. This makes Detroit River Jane's home hawkwatch.

She was excited to show off the Junior Hawk Watch program that was adapted from the Allegheny Front booklet. "The Junior Hawk Watch Program that is being implemented around the country started at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. It is so cool be where it all began. Your watch is awe inspiring...and you can see why people, young and old, love it." She then asked, "Where are those Golden Eagles?"

October Jane...See you in October!

Monarch Mania at the Allegheny Front

By Meadow Ging-Wargo

At Allegheny Front Hawk Watch we find many types of bugs, including my favorite, the Monarch Butterfly. I was excited when I found out that they can be tagged. Now, I know you might be wondering how you tag a butterfly. Tagging an animal usually means putting a little object on them that won't hurt them. For butterflies a tiny sticker is placed on their wing.

To do this, I stand by our flowered field waiting for a butterfly to land on a flower. Then I sneak up on it carefully. As it is about to fly away a gently swoop my net down to try to catch it. About half of the time I catch it on the flower. If not, I must chase it by running after it with my net.

Once caught, I take it to any person who knows how to handle them correctly. This means holding them by their body with your index finger and thumb along their leading edge. To determine if they are male or female, you look for the black pheromone pouch dots on the top side of their wings, near their tail.

The male has skinnier veins and that dot on its wing—the female has thicker veins and no dot. We record this on a piece of paper and also record the numbers that are on the stickers. We then carefully put the sticker on its wing. Then we release it and it flies to Mexico.

Whenever someone catches it there, they can read the numbers on the sticker and see how long it took them to get there. This helps scientists see how long a butterfly takes to go to Mexico.

At Allegheny Front Hawk Watch we are going to add different things to study, such as weight, color, and length of the monarch. We came up with this idea from a guy named, Terry Whittam from Rosetta McClain Raptor Watch in Canada. If you ever come to Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, tagging Monarch Butterflies is an exciting sight.



Above: Meadow holds two monarchs. Notice the white tag on the butterfly on the right.

Snakes Become Salamanders

By Theo Ging-Wargo



Above: A Red-backed Salamander at the AFHW.

Right: Jim Pemberton visiting the AFHW.

Below: A Milk Snake found on the hillside of the AFHW.



We met Jim Pemberton for a snake walk on the Charles F. Lewis Natural Area trail. I thought there would be snakes on the snake walk, but it rained so hard that the salamanders came out instead of the snakes! We found four different types of salamanders on the walk, including the Northern, the Dusky, the Seal, and the Slimy. The Slimy Salamander is exactly what it sounds like. I picked one up along with a huge slug. Greg Gdula told me that was a mistake. He was right. It took me hours to get the thick layer of slime off my hands.

A few weeks later at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, we found two more salamanders. One was a Red-eft and the another one was a Spotted. We may

have not found snakes on the original snake walk, but we found a couple of snakes up at the Hawk Watch when Jim stopped by. I was excited to show him where they lived. One was a Ringneck and the another one that I thought was a Black Rat Snake turned out to be a Milk Snake. Thanks Greg Gdula for picking them up for me! (I wanted to pick it up myself, but my Mom yelled at me that it could be a Rattle Snake!



Summer Picnic and APAS Meeting at Shawnee

By Brian M. Wargo

The APAS Summer Picnic and Annual Meeting was held this year at Shawnee State Park. There was good food, good weather, great people, and an excellent presenter. The day started with everyone looking over items at the Chinese Auction, preparing food, and chatting about their latest trip or rare species siting. During this time, members cast their votes for board members and officers. The votes were tallied and presided over by APAS Secretary Debbie Bodenschatz and can be seen on the last page of this newsletter.

The annual meeting began with the election results, had plenty of membership participation, and ended with a special Lifetime Achievement Award being given to a very surprised Tom Dick. The award signified the awesome body of work Tom completed over the last forty years. In his impromptu remarks, he said, "Wow!...It has been a lot of work. But it really...most of all...it has just been fun!" Well done Tom!



Jeanine Ging

APAS Treasurer - Jack Julian, Secretary - Debbie Bodenschatz, and President - Brian M. Wargo honor APAS Founder - Tom Dick with a lifetime achievement award.

After the meeting, everyone enjoyed the wonderful food that everyone brought and shared. A roasted pig was the main course, but most had already filled themselves with the amazing homemade cuisine that members brought. Everything was delightful, including the Hawk Watch 30-Year Anniversary cake.



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Sally Dick introduces Steve Johnson at the Summer picnic.

After eating, Sally Dick gave a warm introduction to Steve Johnson, who delivered a spectacularly informative presentation on butterflies! The only thing that could top the presentation was to go butterflying with Steve, which several of the members took advantage of. During the walk, everyone expected Steve to pick up butterflies, but no one expected him to pick up a mouse!



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Overall, the picnic and meeting could not have been better. It was a fantastic day that everyone wanted to last forever. We will have to wait until next year.

Hope to see you there!



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Above: Steve Johnson was a great presenter and trip leader! Notice the mouse!!!

Youth Outreach with Loaner Binoculars

By Wayne Sierer

Give a kid a binocular and stand back. That's advice from astronomer Neil DeGrasse Tyson, whose career in astronomy began when he was handed a binocular at age 11. His first look at the moon launched a career.

We at the APAS look around our hawk watch and see lots of parents with children and wonder how to engage them more in nature. Too often, we see the younger ones among us engaging the world almost exclusively through the screen of a smart phone.

Binoculars aren't high on the list of 'must have' items for most modern families, nor are regular trips into the wild to view the natural world first hand. Child advocacy expert Richard Louv nailed it a few years ago with his book *Last Child in the Woods* in which he coined the term 'Nature Deficit Disorder'.

So, what can we do to help turn this around and help bring today's children to nature? Well, we can start by being welcoming to our hawk watch guests, of course. Most who visit, especially on weekends aren't there specifically to watch hawks, eagles and falcons. They're there for the view, the fresh air and perhaps just a break from their busy lives.

Google



We've just purchased two inexpensive and good binoculars to share with our guests and have made sure that we've purchased binoculars that are particularly child-friendly. They're classic Porro prism 6X30 models from Leupold. Their optics are bright and sharp; the center hinge closes down to fit children's eyes properly and the low power, wide field and lightweight construction make them easy for kids to use. Most importantly, they allow a child to have a quality experience. There are lots of 'kiddie binoculars' out there that, frankly, are really bad in terms of their optics. These are incredibly good, especially for their low price. Oh, by the way, they'll work with adults, too!

Above: Leupold BX-1 Yosemite 6X30 So, keep in mind that we'll keep these at the table for our guests – both child and adult. It's a great ice breaker and a way to engage our guests and introduce the young to nature and to our hawk watch. Feel free to invite our guests to try them out. It's also an opportunity to inform young ones and their parents of our Junior Hawk Watcher program. That gives them reason to return more often.

The particular glass we've purchased is the Leupold BX-1 Yosemite 6X30. It was designed specifically with children in mind by a Leupold optical designer and his Japanese colleague from Kamakura with their young daughters in mind. While you're undoubtedly familiar with the Leupold name, Kamakura might not be so familiar, but Kamakura is the biggest binocular maker in Japan and the world. If you own a Japan-made binocular from Nikon, Zeiss, Leica or many other brands, it was probably made by Kamakura. Like other manufacturing concerns, the optics industry now utilizes a lot of China-based manufacturing, Kamakura included – especially in the lower cost ranges. Very often, the large companies have an ownership stake in these China-based companies. This allows for higher quality control and lower costs for the consumer.



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Above: Wayne is a natural with kids! He should be—he is a retired Environmental Science teacher. Here he instructs Theo about how the safety of using a hatchet.

Right: Rachel, Bob Stewart's granddaughter, poses with an owl on an October night. Wayne is always there to help the youngsters understand what is happening with the banding process.

optics and prices are in the \$85-\$175 range, with the BX-1 6X30 at the bottom of that range. For younger children, a 6X glass is ideal and probably the best. This optical formula allows for a wide field of view, steady viewing, easy 'target acquisition' and good depth of field – which means less re-focusing. Eyecups go up and down, so the glass can be used with or without eyeglasses. Older children might find an 8X glass a bit better for distance and detail as their physical and observational skills develop, but you'll be surprised to discover how pleasant a lower powered glass like a 6X can be. Save the 10X for the far away hawks and shorebirds. The point is this – allow the child to have a quality experience – then they have a reason to do it again and again. The low power child-friendly design is the way to start.

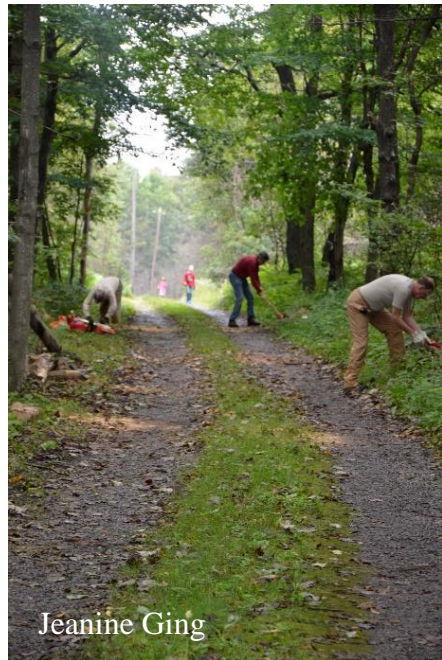
Editor's Note: Wayne is on the board of the APAS directors, a fill-in hawk counter, and one of the few who can survive a full night of owl banding in the bitter cold. Wayne also has an encyclopedic mind and continually shares his knowledge in an effort to help educate the public.



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All Work Feels Like Play at the Workday!

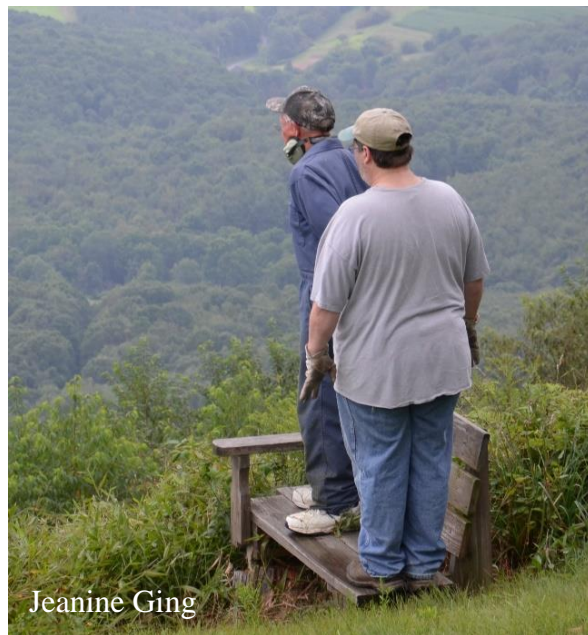
By Jeanine Ging



Jeanine Ging

Allegheny Front Hawk Watch's annual clean-up day was held on August 11, 2018. There was a tremendous turn out of support on this day. Over 25 members of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society showed up with gloves and tools at hand to make Allegheny Front even better than it already is.

Hours were spent on the steep hillside spraying to control weeds, weed whackers and chainsaws buzzed all the way up and down the lane. Signage and the beloved eagle were brought out of storage and secured into their proper places.



Jeanine Ging

Above Left: The lane might need to be renamed as lumberjack lane as Bill Kline, Tom Kuehl, and Wayne Sierer remove dangerous trees.

Above Right: Gene Flament and Ed Gowarty, Jr. survey the overgrown hillside.

Below: Meadow is all smiles about the great turnout and the good deserts.



Jeanine Ging

Charlie Voytko spent time repairing and preparing the Golden Eagle statue for another season of harsh conditions on the Front. It is amazing how everyone finds something useful to accomplish. The big box was cleaned out of all of the critters that took residence in it over the summer and wood was chopped for cookouts on the fire pit.

Of course we ended the day with food and good conversation about what the fall count has in store for us. Lots of left-overs from the summer picnic were consumed by the hungry workers and we all left excited about the fall migration.



Jeanine Ging

Above Center: Theo Ging-Wargo, Brian M. Wargo, and Randy Flament begin attacking the hillside.

Below Right: Adam Katrancha is nearly lost on the overgrown hillside.

Thank you to all who contribute your time, effort, and sweat into the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Your efforts are truly appreciated. If you are interested in volunteering for the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, work days are a great opportunity to contribute and have fun.



Jeanine Ging



Jeanine Ging



Jeanine Ging

Above Left: The workday had a feel of a tailgate party.

Above Right: The signage crew hard at work.

A Walk in the Woods with Adam Katrancha

By Laura Jackson

It's snowing right now – a mid-November heavy wet snow -- so it's nice to think back to late August when APAS members took a walk in the woods led by Adam Katrancha on property owned by the Beavertdale Sportsmen's Association (BSA). Adam and other club members have done some amazing forest management projects on their property – not only turning a degraded forest into a healthy one but improving the forest for a number of wildlife species. We followed Adam on a rainy morning walk, learning the story of this forest. Mike McNamara, a retired forester, also added to the story, as much of the work has been guided by his suggestions.

As a Pennsylvania Forest Steward, Adam has received training on forest-related topics ranging from treating invasive species to creating healthy forests for wildlife. As we walked the trails, we

Right: Laura Jackson listen to BSA's expert, retired forester, Mike McNamara.

Below: Adam Katrancha explains the project goals at the BSA to the members of the APAS. Notice the various ages of the trees in the background.



BMW



Jeanine Ging

saw that oak was now regenerating thanks to careful management. We looked at a stand of black cherry where birch, striped maple, and invasives were removed and select cherry trees were cut, which thinned the stand to allow room for the remaining trees to grow without crowding. Adam explained that this type of management is called crop tree release. Black cherry trees are an important wildlife tree –birds feed on the high diversity of caterpillars feeding on cherry leaves. The cherry fruits high in the canopy are highly prized by birds and bears. Deer don't browse on cherry trees, though, so the Club works hard to maintain a healthy diversity of different tree species.



Jeanine Ging

Above: APAS Members having a great day at Beavertdale Sportsman's Association.

Part of the property is fenced to keep deer from eating the seedling oaks and maples that are regenerating from a habitat improvement cut for Cerulean warblers – a rapidly declining sky-blue warbler that benefits from healthy forests. Other areas of the property are managed for Golden-winged Warblers – another species in trouble which relies on young forests for nesting habitat.

But what about deer? Isn't that the main reason the club exists? Fortunately, many of the club members understand that a healthy deer herd depends on a healthy forest. An understory of fern or striped maple would not supply enough food for deer. Targeted removal of fern and striped maple, in addition to removal of specific trees, allows seedling regeneration and more food for deer. Mike McNamara closely follows the deer impact on oak regeneration and explained that there is an increase in deer, but still enough oak regeneration. That's good news for both hunters and foresters.

As Audubon members, we were impressed with the number of bird species that benefit from other Club projects: managing American woodcock singing grounds, building nest boxes for wood duck and mallards in riparian areas, and planting evergreens for thermal cover.

Learning the story of the woods and how this club works hard to help forests and wildlife really brightened the cloudy day. Many thanks to the Beavertdale Sportsmen's Association for all of their hard work.

The Fall Picnic is Happiness!

By Brian M. Wargo

The Fall Picnic is a great combination of watching birds, eating great food, and enjoying the company.



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Above: It is like being at a drive-in, but with better food, a better view, and better company.

Below Left: The newly constructed high capacity double rack cooker for the fire pit works great!

Below Right: Everyone is happy at the Fall picnic.



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Above: Monarch Tagging is as popular as the wonderful food. Adam finally gets to tag a butterfly after chasing them all day.

Below: At the end of the day, the fire burns down and you are left with the counter and some very satisfied APAS members. They will be back next year!



BMW

For the Bats! Supporting Biodiversity at the Hawk Watch

By Adam Katrancha

Adam K.



Above: The foundation for the bat box that will be a permanent fixture at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

Right: Ms. Heidi Mullendore presents a bat box to the AFHW.

Anyone visiting the hawk watch may have noticed the beginnings of a new feature on the lower edge of the field. The protruding posts are the base of what will become an installation of bat roost boxes that will provide the mammalian aviators with safe summer quarters. Accepting an invitation to present at APAS's 2018 summer picnic at the hawk watch, Ms. Heidi Mullendore, Environmental Educator at Canoe Creek State Park in Blair County, offered insight into the near total loss of some bat species and ways to aid in the recovery of these nocturnal acrobats.

The little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), formerly the most prevalent species in southwest Pennsylvania, has experienced a 99% population loss due to white-nose syndrome, an uncontrollable fungus that attacks the bare skin of hibernating bats. The northern long-eared (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and tricolored (*Perimyotis subflavus*) bats have also experienced drastic population loss. All three species are being considered for listing as endangered in addition to the already listed Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). The fungus thrives in the cold, humid environment where cave-dwelling bats need to hibernate. As the fungus invades the bat's bodies, the bats become severely stressed during hibernation, burning up essential fat they need to survive the winter and becoming severely dehydrated.



Bats with white-nose syndrome may exhibit odd behavior, like flying outside in the daytime in the winter, but ultimately perish from starvation and exposure. Arboreal bats that migrate or do not hibernate in caves have been spared for the most part. While there is no known cure, scientists from across the globe are working together to study the disease and its hosts in hopes of discovering a way to control it.

After fielding questions and facilitating a robust discussion, Ms. Mullendore concluded with the donation of a bat roost box to the APAS along with species identification keys and guidance for construction and installation of the roost structures. Explaining that the bat box is constructed to the exact specifications preferred by the imperiled bats, Ms. Mullendore encouraged the members to install the box as a haven for summer habitation as the species struggle to recover. Since bat reproduction rates are extremely low, at most one pup per year, the protection of the individuals is vital to the preservation of the populations and will help support the APAS's promotion of biodiversity. As a glimmer of hope, current research indicates that the surviving bats are entering hibernation with increased fat reserves and that pups are also being born at a slightly greater weight, increasing winter survivability.

Building on the enthusiasm initiated at the picnic, Mr. Brian Wargo, APAS President, engaged students at Freedom Area School District, Beaver County, with their own bat box projects. Adhering to the Pennsylvania Game Commission's specifications, students will construct a collection of boxes for installation on the school's campus along with a second box for the APAS that will allow for a double box installation at the hawk watch. Initiated with casual conversations and friendly invitations between environmentally inspired enthusiasts, the perilous circumstances affecting subterranean bats and efforts to aid in their recovery is now being shared with a myriad of new supporters. Most importantly, the message of conservation and biodiversity has been shared, and enthusiastically received, by the inspiring young minds that will be relied upon to overcome these and more challenging conservation concerns of the future.

Editor's Note: Adam Katrancha has become an indispensable member of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society! His tireless work ethic is appreciated by all!



Above: A completed bat box at Beaverdam Sportsmen's Association – one of several that Adam (wearing safety helmet) has erected. Greg Gdula is on the far right and is Adam's right-hand man.

HMANA Conference in Detroit

By Jeanine Ging

The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) held a conference in Detroit October 12-14th, 2018. This conference was attended by hawkwatching enthusiasts from all over the globe.

The weekend was filled with presentations and conversations with folks who love raptors as much as all of us. Kate Davis was a keynote speaker on Raptor Rapture: 30 Years of Education. Todd Katzner also presented on the Golden Eagle as a keynote speaker. Other lectures covered topics of climate change, Harlan's Hawks, drone use for raptor research, raptor population index analysis, tagging Monarch Butterflies, and mobile data entry, to just name a few.



Theo mans the BMW Books Table, which is filled with Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Materials.

Brian M. Wargo presented on Citizen Science in the Classroom: The Confluence of Authentic Science and Technology. He was also awarded the Counting for the Future Award at the Awards ceremony.

During the conference participants had the opportunity to visit the nearby Detroit River Hawk Watch and see Kevin Georg while he counted. Kevin also attended the banquet and awards ceremony on Saturday night.



Notice the picture of the Golden Eagle taken at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Todd Katzner's research was based on his time there. Kevin Georg stopped by to say hello.

Live raptors even attended the conference (a Bald Eagle and an American Kestrel). The Ging-Wargo family manned a table for Allegheny Front Hawk Watch and BMW Books. There were many participants interested in visiting AFHW after seeing the photo that Dave Poder donated for the table. Several even made it a point to stop by that week on their drive home.

The topic of a "hawk watch tour of central Pennsylvania" was brought up numerous times. Maybe this could be in the works for the future? This conference was worth the drive and was a wonderful way to meet others who are interested and experts in our feathered friends.

HMANA Golden Eagle Trip to Montana

By Dave Poder

“There’s a change of plans because of the weather.” That statement was heard soon after we landed in Bozeman, Montana and it was to be repeated several more times throughout our tour...

The 2018 Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) - Golden Eagle Tour took place in the mountains of western Montana, spanning nine-days, from October 3, 2018 to October 11, 2018. Three members of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society (APAS) and I, participated, including Vice President Bob Stewart and longtime members Tom and Janet Kuehl. There were also five other non-APAS members that joined us. Our tour guide was the famed founder of HawkWatch International, Steve Hoffman and it was his voice that let us know our plans were changing! Under Steve’s guidance, we were able to find flying raptors, despite the uncooperating weather. Below are a few of the highlights:

Our day spent at the Raptor View Research Institute’s (RVRI) banding site at Rogers Pass in the Bridger Mountains was one of my favorites. At this remote site we witnessed the sighting, netting, banding, and subsequent release of two Golden Eagles, a Rough-legged Hawk, a Northern Harrier, as well as five other raptor species. A few other tour members, including myself, had the exciting opportunity to actually hold, and then release a raptor.

Camp Baker, on the Smith River was the result of another change in plans due to the heavy snow in the mountains. It turned out to be such a good spot that we spent nearly nine hours over three visits there. Impressive count totals of Golden Eagles (200+) and other raptors were recorded at that location.

Yellowstone National Park is considered to be the largest intact ecosystem in the lower forty-eight. For a long time, I have wanted to see its celebrated mammals and scenic landscapes and Yellowstone did not disappoint. The Lamar Valley, Trout Lake, and Dunraven Pass with its iconic wildlife were just some of the many highlights.

Throughout the tour we were able to add many birds to our lifetime bird lists. Some of birds I added include: Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Harlan’s Hawk, Mountain Bluebird, Steller’s Jay, Clark’s Nutcracker, Eurasian Collared-Dove, American Dipper, Trumpeter Swan, and Sandhill Crane.

Overall, a thoroughly enjoyable trip—made even better by experiencing it with friendly and like-minded birders who were on the tour.

Editor’s note: Dave Poder is on the APAS board of directors and is an avid photographer.



Above: Dave photographs the release of a Golden Eagle that was tagged at the Raptor View Research Institute last year and recaptured this year.

APAS Young Person Pilots a New Hawk Watch

By Peter E. Livengood

For those of you that do not know me, I started my hawk watching journey visiting at the Allegheny Front. Since then, I have done some counting at Cumberland Gap in Maryland and recently counted at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. For several years, I have wondered if raptors also migrate along Chestnut Ridge, which is a 90-mile ridge running from near Indiana, Pennsylvania to near Morgantown, West Virginia. This fall, I found the answer!

Welcome to the Summit Mountain Hawk Watch, located on Chestnut Ridge, the farthest west ridge in the Allegheny Mountains, with peaks in elevation between 2,300 and 2,800 feet. The most interesting fact about the topography of Chestnut Ridge for hawkwatchers is that it generates the best updraft on west winds, which is the prevailing wind!

This fall we logged 185 observation hours at Summit Mountain, totaling 1,014 raptors. With only three counters and a few observers, this is an incomplete data set, with many good bird days missed. If we increase our observation hours to the same as the Allegheny Front, I estimate a fall total of about 3,500 birds!

We counted from several sites during this experimental year, trying to find the most productive place to observe. There is a possibility of having an observation tower with 360-degree visibility for future counts. With a tower, I think that Summit Mountain Hawk Watch could see 3,000-5,000 raptors a fall season!

Moving forward will require additional counters and spotters. (Note: All the sites are easily accessible). Our research will continue this spring, so stay tuned!

I want to thank those who helped with the research, including my brother Calvin, my grandfather David Whipkey, and Che and Marian Mincone.

Happy hawk watching!

Editor’s note: Peter is a finalist for the William T. Hornaday Silver Medal Award for Conservation, a highly coveted and distinguished service in natural resource conservation award in the Boy Scouts of America.

More Dave Poder Pictures



Above Left: A Northern Harrier stares at Dave in Montana.



Above Right: Dave captures an amazing close-up of a Juvenile Golden Eagle in Montana.

Early and Late Birders Get the Eagle!

By Ed Gowarty, Jr.

I know that the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch is not known as an early morning hawk watch, but I am here to tell you there are times to consider an early arrival. Just a few weeks ago, on October 25, 2018, I stopped up late on a Thursday afternoon. Ed Gowarty, Sr. (better known to me as Dad) was the counter. Along with Bob Stewart, they were last hold outs of the day.



Jeanine Ging

During the time when most people already left the site for the day, we were afforded eight more Golden Eagles during the last two hours of the day. They were coming much later than normal, so I got the idea to make it an early morning the next day. I arrived before sunrise the next morning. Being there that early, I saw the sun come up over the horizon, got to see many different migrating song birds, and then came the Golden eagles.

It was just before 7:00 a.m. when Mike Smith came in and parked. As I was about to walk up and greet him, he points to the valley as the first Eagle came around the point. It was a great look! No sooner than it got out of sight, another Golden came around the point. Before I could make it to the parking lot a third eagle rounded the point.

By the time a typical count begins, we had already counted five Eagles. Bob Stewart (counter for the day went on to tally 66 Golden Eagles, the second highest one day record for the Allegheny Front. The total of the day was 156 birds. But it all started with late day eagles the day before and a very early start the next day.

Outings, Meetings, and Events

December 16, 2018 – Johnstown Christmas Bird Count – A full day of birding! Each team scours an area to count as many birds as possible. Then, over dinner, the numbers are tallied. New birders can be paired with more experienced birders. The APAS's Jeff Payne is the compiler, so if you are interested in joining us, please contact him at paynemt@gmail.com.

January/February – Snow Hike with Snow Shoes and/or Cross-Country Skis – Check the website for details and updates.

February 25, 2018 - Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Swan/Snow Geese Outing - Wayne Sierer will lead a walk/talk concerning Swans and Snow Geese at Middle Creek. This outing is weather dependent, so be sure to check the APAS website for details. If interested, please contact Wayne directly at wcsierer@verizon.net.

Late February - Spring Hawkwatching – The hawkwatch will attempt to open in late February, but is dependent on the conditions of the lane. Snow tends to build at the gate and the lane often has deep snow drifts. Check the website, Twitter, and our Facebook pages for updated conditions.

Late March – Waterfowl Walk with Jeff Payne – Jeff is one of the APAS's best birders and he has offered to lead a waterfowl walk. As always, this is weather dependent. Check the website in March for more details.

April 18, 2019 - UPJ Meeting at 7:00 p.m. – Nick Bolgiano will present his analysis of decreasing Red-tailed Hawk numbers and provide a potential answer for the phenomena, called short-stopping. Recently, he has applied this analysis technique to investigate Red-shouldered Hawks and Cooper's Hawks.

April 13, 2019 - Raptorthon – Raptorthon is a joint venture between the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch and the Hawk Migration Association of North America. The purpose of Raptorthon is simple, to have fun birding while raising funds for raptor monitoring throughout the Americas.

May 3-12, 2019 - Biggest Week in American Birding – APAS members and AFHW frequenters will enjoy the most spectacular warbler migration at Maumee Bay in Ohio. If interested in meeting as a group, please contact Jeanine Ging at neanpsu@gmail.com.

May 16, 2019 - UPJ Meeting at 7:00 p.m. – A meeting is scheduled, but details will be announced on our website as the date approaches.

Membership and Donations

The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society relies on memberships, donations, and volunteerism to remain a viable organization that conserves, educates, and spreads joy through encounters with nature. Please continue to support the APAS.

Membership - If your membership has lapsed or you would you would like to join the APAS, please visit the membership tab on our website.

Donations – Please consider donating the APAS. Visit the Donation tab on our website.

Volunteers – If you have something to offer to the APAS, albeit time, expertise, or resources, please contact one of our board members or officers.