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The Newsletter of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

From the President

The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society (APAS) is firing on all cylinders! The energy of our membership is infectious. Each week, something new and exciting is happening. Even days of work are joyful, mainly due to the camaraderie and sense of learning that seems to pervade all of our activities.

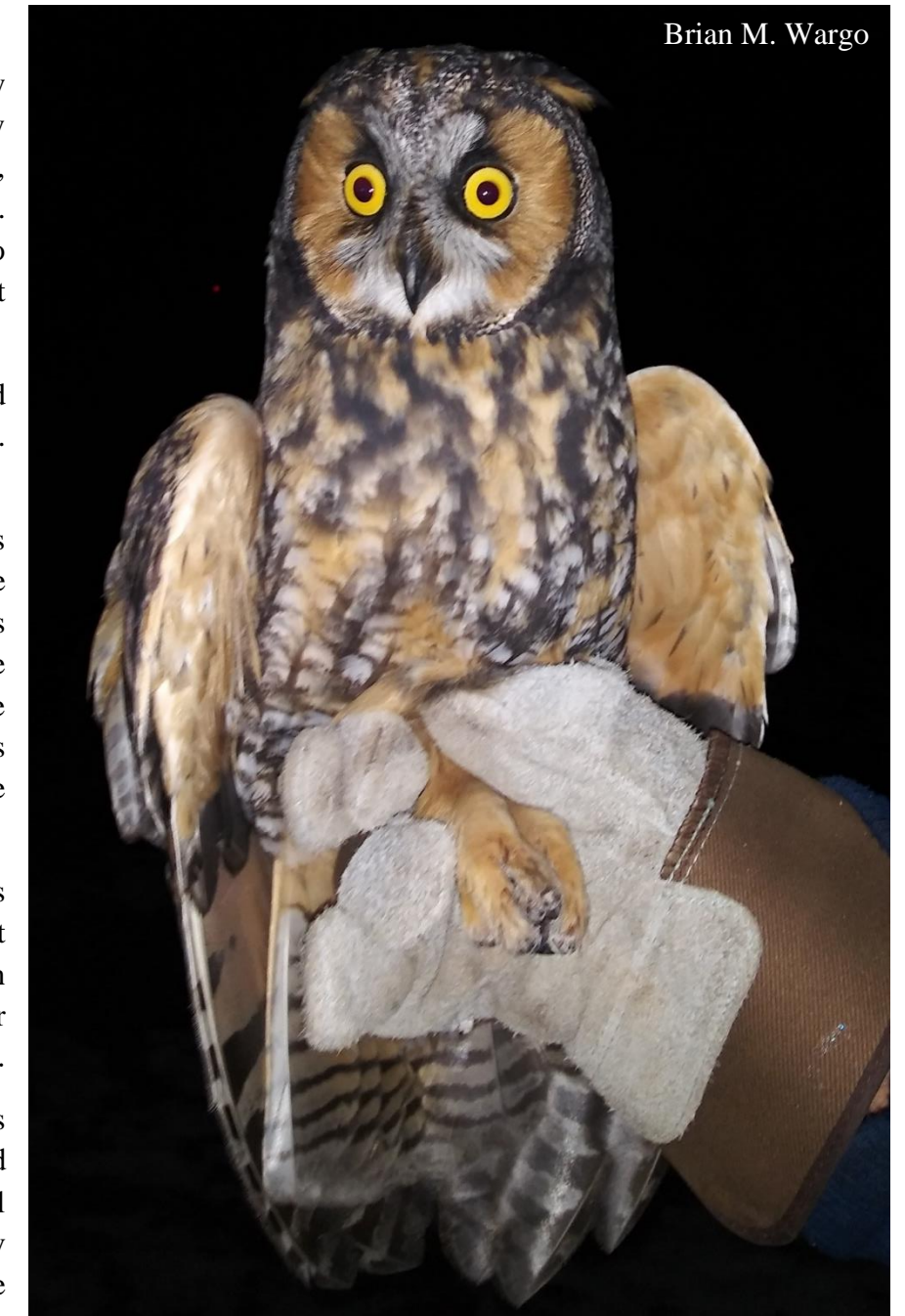
Like any organization, we invest our time and effort to keep things running smoothly. Thankfully, we have lots of volunteers.

In addition, we also have expertise. That is why participating in any activity with the APAS is so rewarding. Our membership is diverse, and we like it that way. Someone always has skill, knowledge, or experience that complements the others in the group. This makes us not only stronger, but more interesting.

You can tell how durable an organization is not when things are running smoothly, but when times are tough. Being able to rely on each other when conditions are dismal or uncomfortable...that's when it really matters.

Thankfully we have members that are always there...no matter the conditions. And occasionally, they are rewarded. One small example is Dave "The Owl Man" Darney pushing far into November, trying to ensure that he was not missing ephemeral Saw-whets. On that last attempt, Dave and those supporting him were rewarded with a once-in-a-lifetime treat—a Long-eared Owl!

Thanks to everyone who makes our organization special (you know who you are). Read on to hear more about what our members have been doing and what they are planning!



Brian M. Wargo

Long-eared Owl being held by Dave Darney

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society
257 Krings Street
Johnstown, PA, 15904

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Johnstown, PA
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Brian M. Wargo

Social Media: Like it or Tweet it!

By Jeanine Ging

Social Media is one of those topics that people love, hate, or love to hate. However, it is an easy and inexpensive way to communicate with likeminded people. Allegheny Front Hawk Watch (AFHW) has both a Facebook page and a Twitter feed. The twitter feed can be followed even if you do not have a twitter account by accessing the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society website. The Twitter feed is on the left side of the main page with the latest updates. If you are on twitter, then simply follow us.

The Facebook page is Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Live updates are made most fall weekends with conditions, sightings, or events. Photos of the hawk watch show the conditions as they are at a particular time. These posts allow followers to judge what it actually looks like as opposed to what the weather station says. Viewing a simple post can give the actual weather, conditions, or bird numbers before making the trip up the mountain.

Another technology that is being utilized at AFHW is live counts on Saturdays with counter Brian M. Wargo on Dunkadoo. You can go to hawkcount.org and see live updates as the raptors fly by as well as hourly weather conditions. This is a great way to anticipate the day before coming to visit Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

My personal advice is to always make the trek. Any day outside in nature is better than sitting on your couch. Just be sure to bring more clothes than you think you will need because it is always colder at the Front than any forecast predicts.

Messaging is also an option through Facebook if you have questions about events at the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society. Users sending through *Messenger* usually get answered immediately (or at least in the same day). Our average post on Facebook reaches several hundred followers and some posts, such as the bobcat sighting, have reached as many as 14,000 viewers. When used properly social media is a great, free way to share information, photos, and updates. Follow us on Facebook and Tweet us on the Twitter feed.

twitter: APAS audubon@apasnews

Facebook: Allegheny Front Hawk Watch



Dave Poder would have missed this great show of a male American Kestrel at AFHW if he stayed home.

2019 Allegheny Plateau Audubon's Johnstown Christmas Bird Count

By Jeff Payne

Sunday morning on December 15, 2019 started with a pre-dawn snow squall that included high winds. This weather did not seem conducive to owling, however there were Barred owls at Somerset Lake and near Shanksville. In addition, calling Great Horned Owls and Eastern Screech Owls were also heard.

The weather remained challenging with wind gusts up to 30 mph and temperatures hovering around freezing. Despite this, 28 volunteers braved the elements and found a very respectable 66 species on the count day. A Killdeer was also added for the count week. This compares to the 68 total species counted for count week last year.

The waterfowl species count was low because most water that was not frozen was dominated by the 927 Canada Geese, which will scare all other ducks away! Diurnal raptors were led by an impressive 41 Red-tailed Hawks and a better than average 9 American Kestrels. The stars of the show were the 3 Rough-legged Hawks who made an appearance in the snowy, windy conditions.

Not a single Ruffed Grouse was found this year, which is probably the first time ever none were found despite a moderate amount of trudging through suitable habitat. Overall passerines put up respectable numbers with some species being represented by a single individual. Perhaps the most unexpected visitor was a Least Sandpiper on the extensive mud of the drained Somerset Lake. It was first found on December 14, 2019 and it was spotted again on Sunday. Unfortunately, his four Killdeer buddies had departed.



The Christmas Bird Count volunteers compile data at Hoss's after a very cold day of counting. Note: Not all members are shown in this picture.

After the counting, everyone met at Hoss's restaurant for compiling the master list. A great effort by all was celebrated with dinner and talk of going out next year. A huge thank you to all the stalwart volunteers: Michael Wolfe, Patrick Wolfe, Jake Murphy, Ian Russ, Tim Fox, Ian Fox, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Dennis Stahl, Brian Wargo, Jeanine Ging, Meadow and Theo, Scott Bastian, James Bastian, Jeff Payne, Chris Payne, Jim and Meg Moses, Deb Bodenschatz, Wanetta Escherich, Sandy Cline, Becky Carstens, Rosemary McGlynn, Bob Stewart, Becky Fiddler, Carol Kolesko, and Sandy Cook.

Work All Day – Stars All Night!

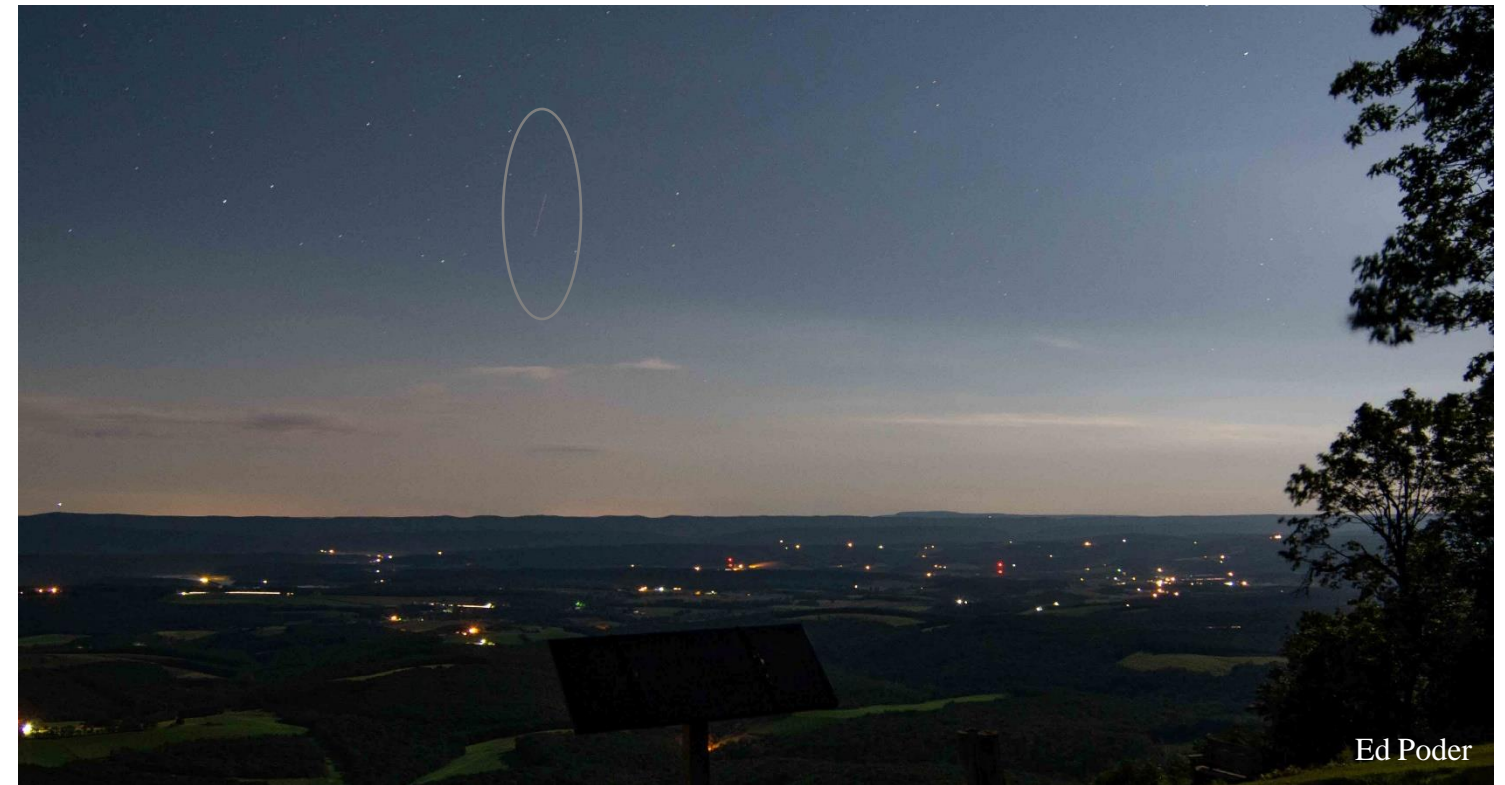
By Brian M. Wargo

The workday held in August is a time to get the hawk watch ready for a season of raptor counting. There is lots to be done on this day and thankfully lots of people show-up, sometimes from far distances. This year, it was decided that blending a workday and a night program would allow those that made the drive to the hawk watch more worthwhile.



Bob Stewart and Bill Cline patiently wait for the sun to set while Wayne tests the lighting of the Moon.

When the sun finally set, about 20 people were treated to a beautiful sky and the encyclopedic brain of Wayne Sierer. While Wayne can be difficult to keep up with in a common conversation, when he is in full teacher mode, he is humorous, focused, and dare I say...riveting! His ability to connect science with history and mathematics all while taking the crowd through a tour of the night sky was one of the highlights of the summer. It was a great night of learning that capped off a great day of work. Thanks Wayne!



Above: Ed Poder catches a shooting star (circled above) in one of his extraordinary pictures!

Below: Greg Gdula is the muscle for the repositioning of the signage at the workday.



Catching Up with Tom and Sally

By Sally Dick

Tom and I have been visiting Chincoteague Virginia for many years, and for the last six years, we spent the winters here. We came mostly for the birding as there is the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) five miles from our house. Plus, there is Ocean City, Indian River Inlet, and south to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and many little inlets and bays in between.

Winter brings the snow geese in huge numbers. We watch and hear them fly over our house. We also watch them feeding in the dune grasses and the marshes at the NWR. Gannets and Scoters, Red-throated Loons and Common Loons are often seen in large numbers just off the beach as well as other sea ducks. In recent years I watched a snowy owl sitting on the dunes as a Golden Eagle flew over. I could see the eagle from a distance and wondered what would happen; but the owl just sat still. The eagle passed directly over her and kept on going (for which I was happily surprised).

There are lots of Natural Area Preserves that serve as stopovers for the warblers in the spring. And of course, the beaches and bays give us plenty of shorebirds to study and get excited about.

Now we have just finished staying for an entire year, enjoying the peaceful winter and surviving the heat, crowds, and mosquitos of summer. We miss all our friends and favorite birding sites in Pennsylvania, especially the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch. We enjoy the posts and connections with the members and hawkwatch counters...keep up the good work!



Sally Dick

Sally Dick captures a Little Blue Heron having a bad hair day!

Butterfly Count Bullet Points

By Debbie Bodenschatz

Day of the count: July 14, 2019

Observers: Deborah Bodenschatz, J. Ging, M. Ging-Wargo, T. Ging-Wargo, C. Hunt, J. Kuehl, T. Kuehl, B. Wargo, B. Wolf, L. Wolf.

Weather:

* Sun AM 26-50%, PM 76-100%;
74-85°F; wind 4-19 mi/hr

* Humidity was high and the wind picked up at noon.

Total party-hours:

* 22 with total party

* 5 miles on foot

Imminent threats to habitat:

* A lot of the milkweed is dying off with more road edges being mowed and/or sprayed

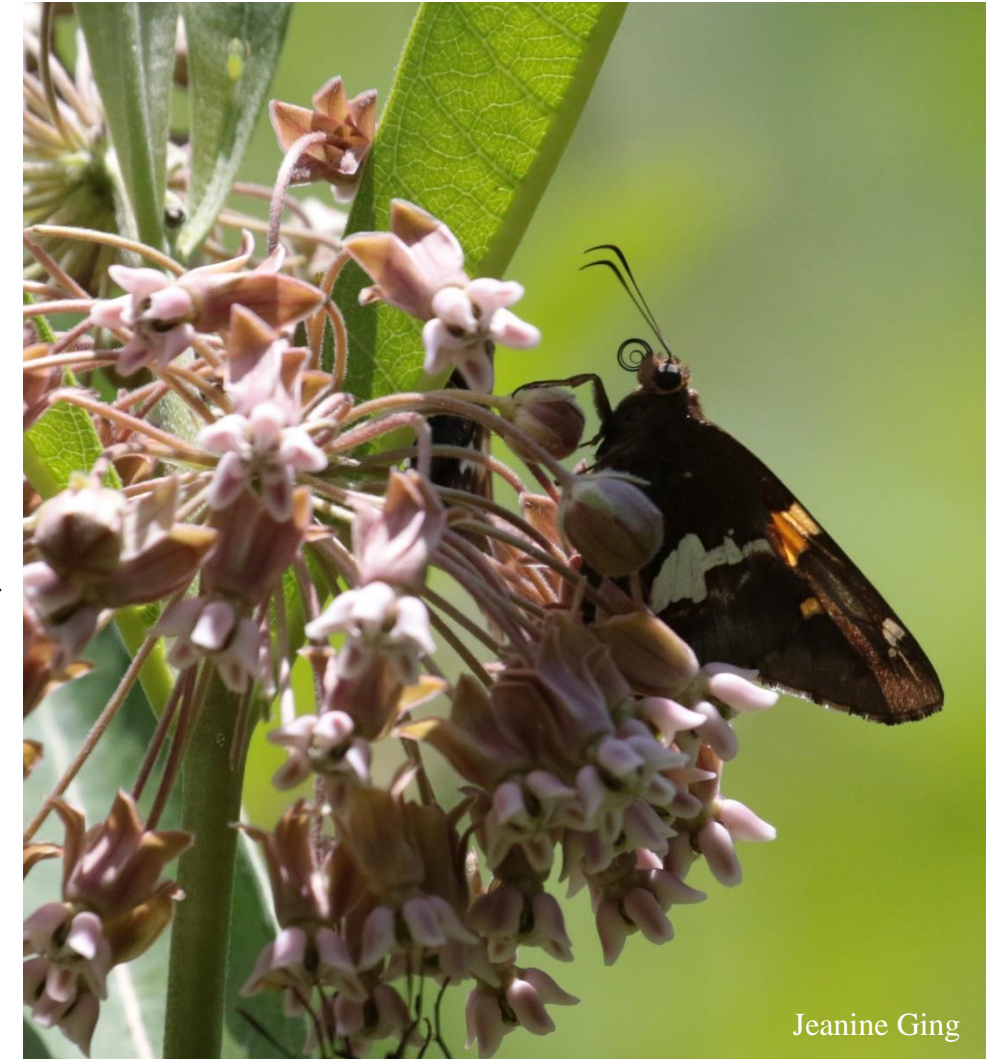
Habitat changes since last year:

* Host plants are blooming earlier in the year, especially thistle and milkweed which were almost all finished.

Butterfly counts:

* Pipevine Swallowtail 2, Black Sw. 13, E. Tiger Sw. 22, Spicebush Sw. 2, Cabbage White 253, Clouded Sulphur 13, Orange Su. 8, Little Yellow 1, E. Tailed-Blue 29, 'Summer' Spring Azure 27, Gr. Spangled Fritillary 80, Aphrodite Fr. 4, Meadow Fr. 4, Pearl Crescent 56, Question Mark 6, Mourning Cloak 2, Am. Lady 3, Painted La. 1, Red Admiral 6, Red-spotted Purple 12, Viceroy 5, N. Pearly-eye 3, Eyed Brown 2, Appalachian Brown 3, Little Wood-Satyr 1, Com. Wood-Nymph 14, Monarch 39, Silver-spotted Skipper 44, Wild Indigo Duskywing 2, European Sk. 2, Little Glasswing 5, Dun Sk. 46. Unidentified: Skippers 7, Anglewing 1.

Totals: 34 species and 718 Butterflies.



Jeanine Ging

Silver-spotted Skipper rests on Milkweed during the Butterfly Count.

MOTUS NETWORK

By Bob Stewart

A recent study revealed an alarming decrease in the bird population over the past fifty years. Common backyard variety birds have dramatically decreased. Some species are down fifty percent or more. This concern generates the thirst for more knowledge on migration and steps to understand the ecosystem.

The Motus wildlife tracking system enables animals too small to support traditional GPS or telemetry to be tracked. The word motus means movement in Latin. Nanotag transmitters weighing as little as 0.3 grams are placed on the animal. All the tags operate using the same frequency, but each emits a unique pulse from the coded microchip. In this manner a signal identifies a specific individual. This is how so many birds can be identified using only one frequency that can be detected by any receiver station. This technique has been deployed on monarch butterflies, migrating dragonflies, songbirds, raptors, seabirds, and bats.



Mike Jackson

Bob Stewart and Laura Jackson help the APAS Motus group download data.

The Bird Studies of Canada initiated the Motus network. Initially the network was established along the Great Lakes and Atlantic shorelines. Now the network extends from Alaska and the arctic to South America. A network of receivers has been deployed in Pennsylvania over the last two to three years. With funding by the PA DCNR and the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Williston Trust has been coordinating this effort. Currently there are 36 receivers spread across the state.

A representative of Willison Trust contacted Bob Stewart to see if there was interest in a receiving station on Shaffer Mountain in Bedford County. After learning about how the Motus system operated and talking with other informed individuals, he enthusiastically endorsed the idea. After researching the area, the Trust decided to deploy the station on the state game lands near the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch (AFHW).

The receiver is a standalone solar receiver with four antennas. A team of Mike and Laura Jackson, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Bob Stewart, and Wayne Sierer visit the site four times a year to gather data from the spring and fall migrations. A visual inspection along with a system check is performed on each visit. Detection data which is stored on a microchip is downloaded to a laptop computer. The data is then transmitted to a Motus network associate who interprets the data. The data is then made available to researchers and our local Motus team. Below is data downloaded from <https://motus.org/data/receiverDeploymentDetections?id=4971> for our site.

Detection date	Tag deployment	Species	Date deployed	Latitude	Longitude
10/7/2018	MONTREAL_MOULT#376:7.1 M.31283	Swainson's Thrush	8/12/2018	null	null
10/8/2018	MONTREAL_MOULT#373:7.1 M.31259	Swainson's Thrush	8/11/2018	null	null
10/8/2018	MONTREAL_MOULT#376:7.1 M.31283	Swainson's Thrush	8/12/2018	null	null
10/12/2018	MONTREAL_MOULT#375:7.1 M.31261	Swainson's Thrush	8/12/2018	null	null
10/13/2018	MONTREAL_MOULT#379:7.1 M.31286	Swainson's Thrush	8/16/2018	null	null
5/5/2019	OntWOTH#513.1:12.7 M.29307	Wood Thrush	7/10/2018	42.6974	-80.4201
5/9/2019	SORA#43:6.7 M.34281	Sora	5/1/2019	38.7738	-76.7113
5/20/2019	SCDNR#262:4.7 M.33887	Red Knot	5/6/2019	32.5503	-80.1954
5/21/2019	SCDNR#279:4.7 M.33903	Red Knot	5/6/2019	32.5503	-80.1954
5/23/2019	LA_chenier#103:3.7 M.34151	Swainson's Thrush	5/13/2019	29.7495	-92.8948
5/23/2019	USFWS_R4#32:10.9 M.33212	Red Knot	5/6/2019	32.5503	-80.1954
6/23/2019	PARC#149:9.7 M.33859	American Woodcock	4/18/2019	42.1602	-80.0861
8/2/2019	PARC#329:4.7 M.34087	Chimney Swift	7/28/2019	40.243181	-79.23369
8/17/2019	PARC#328:4.7 M.34086	Chimney Swift	8/6/2019	40.441943	-79.771822
8/19/2019	PARC#331:4.7 M.34089	Chimney Swift	8/19/2019	40.391418	-79.411304
8/19/2019	Tonra#331:9.4 M.28519	Virginia Rail	4/23/2018	null	null
8/21/2019	PARC#328:4.7 M.34086	Chimney Swift	8/6/2019	40.441943	-79.771822
8/23/2019	NorrisLabNightjars#490:4.7 M.29545	Common Nighthawk	7/22/2019	44.9415	-79.5134
8/23/2019	NorrisLabNightjars#492:4.7 M.29548	Common Nighthawk	7/12/2018	44.9414	-79.5136
9/25/2019	Tonra#364:4.7 M.33330	Virginia Rail	5/1/2019	41.4707	-82.9766
10/4/2019	LA_chenier#267:15.1 M.28691	Swainson's Thrush	5/14/2019	29.7495	-92.8948

The station on Shaffer Mountain was erected the first week of October in 2018. Now through the fall migration of 2019, eight tagged species with twenty individual birds have passed near the tower. While many of us spend numerous hours monitoring individual raptors during the day at the AFHW, we have been unaware of many other species flying along the ridge, many of them nocturnal flights. The Motus network now includes over 500 receivers. This network will help enable researchers to understand migration and habitat use.

Monarch Tagging

By Jeanine Ging

This is the second year that participants at Allegheny Front Hawk Watch have partaken in the citizen science of tagging Monarch butterflies. From mid-August when the hawk watch opened until late October, butterfly nets lay at strategic points readily available for anyone to grab and net a Monarch butterfly.

On peak days hundreds of Monarchs flooded the skies often being mistaken for a raptor in binoculars. Our faithful group of butterfly collectors ran, jumped, and leaped to capture these delicate creatures and place a numbered tag on them before proceeding on their trip to Mexico.



Brian M. Wargo

Jeanine Ging is placing the tagged butterfly into the envelope for weighing.

Despite best efforts our highest tagging day was 10 Monarchs out of over 550 that passed by. Once netted they were carefully removed from the net, identified as male or female, weighed, and measured for wing length, then tagged on their wing with a sticker that can track their origin.

A lucky observer is chosen to release the butterfly to continue its trek to Mexico. Statistics on the 34 Monarchs that we tagged were loaded onto the Monarch Watch database. If a butterfly is recaptured or found in transit a notification will be sent letting us know where it was located. A grant has been written and more milkweed has been seeded with hopes of expanding the meadow at Allegheny Front for next year.

This expanded area should entice more Monarchs to stop and feed allowing the taggers more opportunities to net a specimen. This is a fun and active citizen science that literally anyone can participate in by grabbing a net and chasing butterflies, so join us next fall for raptors and butterflies.

Fall A.P.A.S. Chapter Meetings at U.P.J.

By Bob Stewart

Spotted Lantern Fly

On Thursday night, September 26, 2019, Tom Ford of the Penn State Extension presented on the Spotted Lanternfly at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Topics included discovery, identification of adult, nymph and egg mass, host plants, possible control methods, and quarantine zones.

Since being first discovered in Pennsylvania in 2014, the spotted lanternfly has potential to seriously impact the hardwood, grape, nursery, and tree fruit industries. Spotted Lanternfly are on the move and may be hitchhiking on motor vehicles to areas outside the quarantine area. Mr. Ford reported to expect this insect in the Johnstown area in the near future. There are many locations of the Tree of Heaven in the river valley of Johnstown. The Tree of Heaven is a favored host plant of the spotted lanternfly.

The speaker gave a fact filled presentation. The questions after the power point were extensive. The members in attendance greatly appreciated Mr. Ford's extensive knowledge.

Member Image Night

Our October chapter meeting was held at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown on Thursday, October 17, 2019. Members were told to bring photo images to present at the meeting. Phyllis Terchanik and Dave Poder were gracious

to share many shots of birds and other wildlife. The ability of these photographers to capture a clear and vivid image is exceptional. Many thanks to Phyllis and Dave for sharing their efforts with us. In addition, Adam Katrancha shared a power point presentation of the long and ongoing effort to restore the forest land at the Beaverdale Sportsman's property near Ogletown.



© Dave Poder

© David Poder

Dave Poder shares his picture of an Eastern Towhee.

Bob Stewart is a Forest Steward

By Adam Katrancha

Over a long weekend in September, Mr. Bob Stewart, Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society vice-president, attended Penn State's Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Training. This training, sponsored by the Center for Private Forests at Penn State and Penn State Extension, provides volunteers with field training in forest ecology, biodiversity, silviculture, wildlife science, environmental resource management and other subjects related to stewardship. In addition to approximately 40 hours of home schooling, Bob attended 40 hours of onsite classroom and field work at beautiful and fitting Krislund Camp and Conference Center, located on over 800 acres in scenic Centre County.

Bob and the rest of the Forest Stewards are now primed to volunteer their time sharing what they have learned with motivated peers and forest landowners in their communities to promote healthy and productive forests. With his completion of the basic training, Bob has joined a network of volunteers that promote sustainability through face-to-face meetings and property visits that are supplemented with workshops, conferences, field tours and online seminars.



Bob Stewart (center with distinguished white beard) with his training partners pose for a picture.

There is no cost for the training and Bob, along with several other APAS Forest Stewards, can nominate anyone for application to future basic training classes. Bob is excited to share what he has learned, along with his array of resources, with anyone interested in forest sustainability and management.

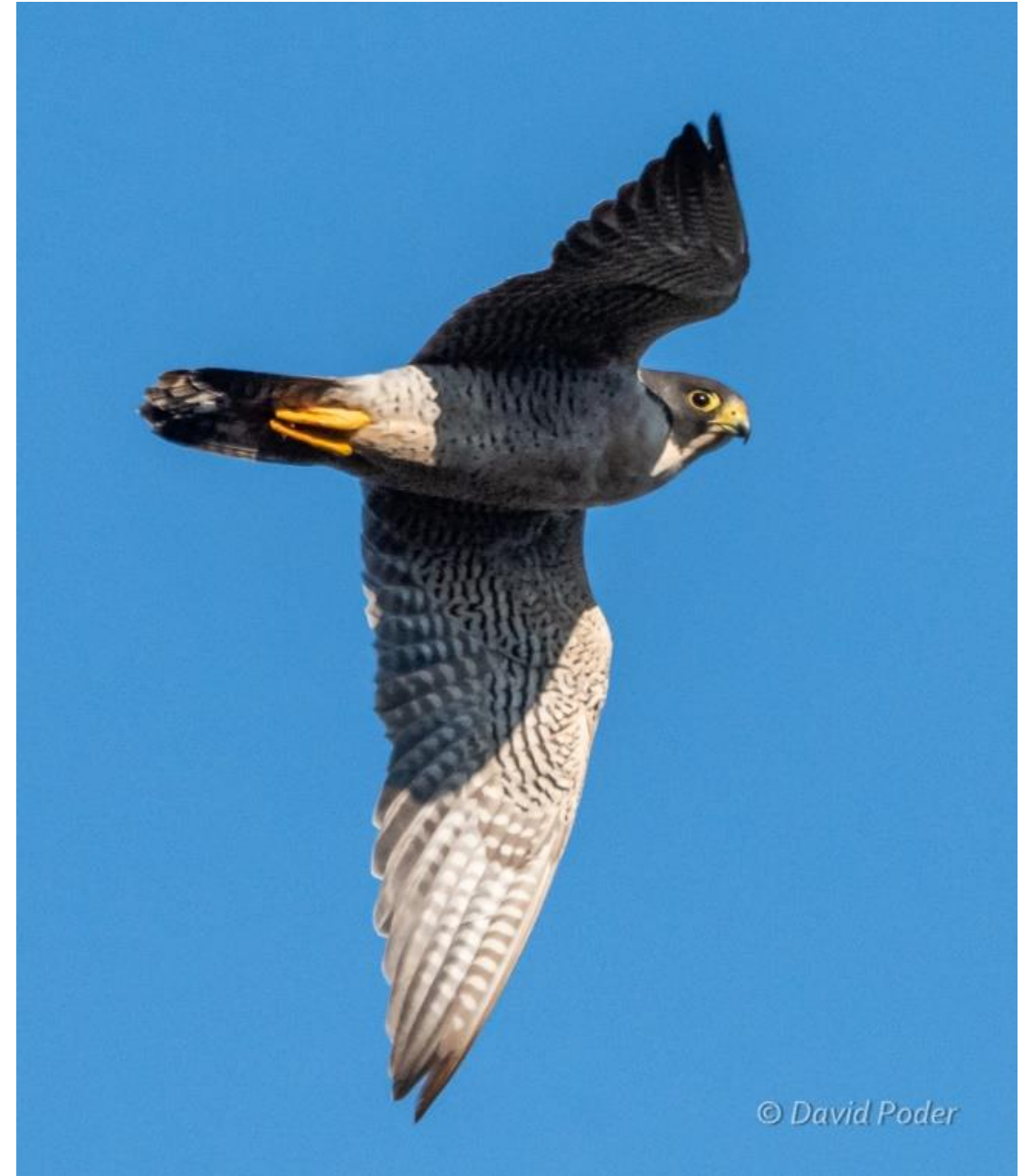
Fourth Highest Golden Eagle Day Count at Allegheny Front Hawk Watch

by Brian M. Wargo – Saturday Counter

November 16, 2019 was a cold day with strong east winds. These conditions made it favorable for a robust Golden Eagle flight. It took only one minute before that notion became reality. The first bird of the day was an unaged Golden Eagle at 8:01 a.m. that flew so low, he barely made it over the trees. Despite the very close view, the lighting conditions made the bird look like a black silhouette.

The bird was entered into Dunkadoo, thus allowing anyone who checked hawkcount.org to see that the variable wind forecast had become an east wind. This information convinced many to head to the hawk watch. Joe Kelly needed no such convincing. He arrived early, stepped inside his hawkwatching sleeping bag, sat back in his chair and faced north for the rest of the day. As each eagle passed, he grinned, laughed, and radiated the happiness that only Golden Eagles can provide.

By the end of the first hour, three more Golden Eagles had been logged. From that point until the end of the count, the Golden Eagles were steady. Towards the end of the day, the numbers began to approach the third highest record of 61, however the flight stopped just a couple of birds short of breaking the record. For the nearly 30 pairs of eyes scanning the sky, it was an unexpectedly high number day, ending as the fourth highest single day Golden Eagle record at 59 birds.



The only thing better than 59 Golden Eagles is Dave Poder capturing the elusive Peregrine Falcon.

Slow Saw-Whet Season Still has its Highlights

By Jeanine Ging

This fall Dave Darney and his assistants sat in the cold and the dark on weekends from the beginning of October until the third weekend in November waiting in anticipation for our evening visitors, the Northern Saw-whet Owls. Although this year proved to be a slow season for banding Saw Whets all over Pennsylvania, Allegheny Front Hawk Watch was able to successfully band 12 owls. We had one “busy” night with five of those Saw-whets arriving on November 2, 2019. Even with low numbers and low temperatures, with several nights plummeting into the 20s, we had a few transients that made it all worthwhile.

On November 1, 2019, a female foreign recapture that was originally banded near Picton, Ontario in 2017 as a hatch year bird, stopped at Allegheny Front. The USGA Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Bird Banding Laboratory was able to provide immediate information from its database on this owl since it was already in the system.



Jeanine Ging

The most exciting highlight of the season was November 15, 2019 with the banding of a Long-eared Owl. This large, beautiful bird hit the nets in the first few minutes of the call being turned on. All the nets had not even been lowered. This was the first time I have seen Dave put on gloves to handle a bird and this was the first Long-eared Owl Dave has ever banded.

We had to scramble from our usual routine of collecting data to pull out larger bands, measure for proper band size, and calculate wing lengths since our measuring equipment was too small. Many photos of this majestic bird were taken before it was released. It flapped away without looking back.

Having the opportunity to experience this Long-eared

Dave Darney uses gloves to handle the much bigger bird!
Thankfully Dave was prepared with larger bands.

Owl up-close made sitting in the cold, dark woods for nights on end worth every minute. Check for owling opportunities next fall in the newsletter, on the website, or on our social media.

New Records Set this Fall at A.F.H.W.

By Bob Stewart (compiler) and Brian M. Wargo

Broad-wing Hawks

Astounding Broad-winged Hawk numbers buoyed the total tally this September with a three-day period from September 15 - 17, 2019 resulting in 13,739 Broad-winged Hawks. This set a new Broad-winged Hawk total for the month to a total of 15,698 and a total count of all raptors to 16,381 birds, both new monthly records.

By the end of the fall, the Broad-winged Hawks set the fall record at 16,208 birds and a total for all raptors at 20,362. When this is added to the spring numbers, 2019 is the highest year counts for Broad-winged Hawks (16,583) and total raptors (21,710).

Bald Eagles

Bald Eagle numbers set a new fall record in 2019 with a total of 246 birds. This coupled with the 42 Bald Eagles counted this spring (the second highest spring record) yields a year total of 288, a new record for AFHW.

Species\Season	Fall	Spring	Year Total
Broad-winged Hawks	16,208 *	375	16,583 *
Bald Eagles	246 *	42 **	288 *
Total Raptor Count	20,362 *	1,348	21,710 *

*denotes record high **denotes second highest record



© David Poder

Shooting Birds at the Allegheny Front

By Dave Poder (Thursday counter)

Shooting birds? Yes, but with my camera, of course. [As seen on previous pages] Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Bald Eagle, and Merlin (next page) are now on my list of “Keeper Shots” of raptor photos. The 2019 Fall Hawk Watch gave me the opportunity to finally capture nice images of these raptors in flight. I had taken photos of each of them in the past, but most are now deleted after getting these shots. In order to get these photos, quite a few things had to come together all at once: camera settings, focusing, tracking, steady hands, and lighting. As for lighting, the low, late day autumn sun was perfect. Red-tailed Hawks were also great subjects in the beautiful fall sun.



© David Poder

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch has a beautiful view, but it also has its share of times of minimal visibility. On two such occasions, when the fog was very thick, I walked around and managed to get some good shots of birds along the edge of the clearing.

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch has a beautiful view, but it also has its share of times of minimal visibility. On two such occasions, when the fog was very thick, I walked around and managed to get some good shots of birds along the edge of the clearing.

The first one was a Black-throated Green Warbler (above), and two weeks later, I took photos of Black-throated Blue Warblers (right). Despite having to record a big zero for those two hawk counts, it was offset a bit by the warblers.

There are still quite a few birds that I hope to get good pictures of, and I hope next year's Hawk Watch will provide me a chance for additional good shots.

Editor's Note: Dave Poder has become the de facto photographer for the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch and his amazing pictures are spread throughout the newsletter.



© David Poder

Road of Hawks

By Rosemary McGlynn (Wednesday counter)

Environmentalist Rachel Carson was long interested in ornithology and bird conservation. Below is an excerpt from notes she made during a 1945 field visit to Hawk Mountain entitled Road of the Hawks.

They came by like brown leaves drifting on the wind. Sometimes a lone bird rode the air currents; sometimes several at a time, sweeping upward until they were only specks against the clouds or dropping down again toward the valley floor below...

On the horizon to the north...an indistinct blur takes form against the sky. Second by second the outlines sharpen. Soon the unmistakable silhouette of a hawk is etched on the gray. On he comes... Sometimes he banks steeply and his outlines melt into the sky. Then a swift wing beat or two and we have him in our glasses again...

Now follows a long wait with no more hawks...

Here on the mountain top we are in the sweep of all the winds... and the cold seeps through to the very marrow of my bones. But cold, windy weather is hawk weather, and so I am glad, although I shiver and my nose reddens, and I look speculatively at my thermos of hot coffee. But that must last the day, and now it is only ten o'clock...

Perhaps it is not strange that I, who greatly love the sea, should find so much in the mountains to remind me of it... in these Appalachian highlands there are reminders of those ancient seas that more than once lay over all this land... And these whitened limestone rocks on which I am sitting—these, too, were formed under that Paleozoic ocean, of myriad tiny skeletons of creatures that drifted in its water. Now I lie back with half closed eyes and try to realize that I am at the bottom of another ocean—an ocean of air on which the hawks are sailing.



Merlin © Dave Poder

Pictures



Brian M. Wargo



Brian M. Wargo

Rich Jones (above left) and Mark McConaughy (above right) helping to scan the sky!
Ed Gowarty (below left) is the assigned as head butterfly catcher. He immediately resigns!
The raising of the Owl decoy is marks the beginning of the season!



Brian M. Wargo



Jeanine Ging

Outings, Meetings, and Events

Sunday, February 2, 2020 – Winter Outing at the Beaverdale Sportsmen's Association – If conditions allow, this will be a snowshoe/cross country ski excursion. If there is insufficient snow, we will hike to the cabin and explore the winter landscape on foot. There will be a fire to cook over and warm by. Plan to carry in your lunch and anything you would like to share with the group. Spring water is available and camp coffee can be brewed for those that wish to enjoy the nostalgia. It will be a nice time to see each other in the winter. Everyone should access the area via Hollow Road in Ogletown off of Rt. 56. Old Bedford Pike (from Windber) does not receive winter maintenance so it may be impassable. If there is substantial snow, parking will be along Skyline Drive adjacent to the club's lane. Check the website for details before coming out.

We will meet at the Sportsmen's property along Old Bedford Pike/Skyline Drive at 9:00 a.m. Bob Stewart will meet anyone not familiar with the Beaverdale Sportsmen's property at the Clear Shade Wild Area parking lot, just off Route 56 in the Gallitzin State Forest west of Ogletown. Bob will depart the Clear Shade lot at 8:30 a.m. Check the website for updates.

Sunday, March 1, 2020 - Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Swan/Snow Geese Outing – This is the first day that the interior roads open. This outing is weather dependent, so be sure to check the APAS website for details. Wayne Sierer will lead a walk/talk concerning Swans and Snow Geese at Middle Creek. 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.

Thursday March 19, 2020 - UPJ Meeting at 7:00 p.m. – Laura and Mike Jackson will present about their trip to see the Monarch butterflies in Mexico.

April 11, 2020 - 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.

Thursday April 16, 2020 - UPJ Meeting at 7:00 p.m. – To be announced.

May 8-17, 2020 - 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@hotmail.com.

Saturday, June 6, 2020 - Birding at the Beaverdale Sportsmen's Association – An early morning excursion will scour the club's ongoing habitat improvement projects at the Beaverdale Sportsmen's property for the returning migrants as well as the avian residents. Tammy Colt, Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Diversity Biologist, will join the group and share her expertise on the programs supporting species of concern. Based on interest, we will review the project areas for comparison to previous year's counts, or venture into new areas and the adjoining Game Lands. A light lunch will be provided. Rendezvous at the Beaverdale Sportsmen's cabin at 7:00 a.m. Bob Stewart will meet anyone not familiar with the property at the Clear Shade Wild Area parking lot, just off Route 56 in the Gallitzin State Forest west of Ogletown at 6:30 a.m.

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. Visit our website and search membership or donations.