



THE DRUMMER

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November/December 2012

Volume 29, No. 2



A Common Redpoll would be a nice find on the CBC

Christmas Bird Count *November 14 Program* *by Gary Edwards and Mike Leahy*

Gary Edwards and Mike Leahy will be discussing the upcoming December 29th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) at the November 14th meeting. Last year Ron Montgomery's Power Point presentation covered the history of the CBC as well as some of the long-term national population trends, based on CBC data. This year, the focus will be on streamlining SRAS's efforts. The time will be spent reviewing traveling team section maps, identifying and assigning areas needing coverage, discussing a novel Ron Montgomery suggestion for maximizing our short-eared owl count, and soliciting ideas for enlisting more feeder watchers.

Cerulean Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler Response to Forest Management: Can forest management produce more breeding birds?

December 12 Program by Dr. Jeffery Larkin

Dr. Jeff Larkin completed a B.A. in Biological Sciences at Ithaca College, an M.S. in Forestry at the University of Kentucky, and Ph.D. in Animal Sciences/Wildlife Ecology at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Larkin began his work at IUP in 2005 in the Biology Department and was recently promoted to the rank of full professor. Dr. Larkin's research focuses on conservation biology and wildlife ecology, and is very high quality and extensive. His research is pragmatic. It aims at real solutions to real-world problems. His research topics range from moose in Sweden and black bears in Kentucky to the ecology and conservation of songbirds, Allegheny woodrats and forest dwelling salamanders in the eastern United States. Over the past 7 years, he provided significant research experience to 16 graduate students and 13 undergraduates via externally funded research graduate assistantships or research assistant stipends. Dr. Larkin is skilled at building collaborations and at organizing the teamwork

Our programs are held at the Clarion Free Library. Come early to socialize - program begins at 6:30 pm.

necessary to make them succeed. He serves his profession in many ways ranging from peer-reviewing scientific manuscripts, his appointment to state, regional, and international conservation and research boards, and his leadership role in developing, organizing, and implementing workshops for conservation professionals who work in government agencies, non-government conservation organizations, and private industry. Additionally, Dr. Larkin is routinely invited to speak about his research findings at various public forums. Dr. Larkin's public outreach service is particularly noteworthy in that such activities help ensure that his conservation work is understood by the non-scientific community. Ultimately, his outreach helps ensure a better future for both our wildlife resources and the general populace.

A few years ago we enjoyed Dr. Larkin's program about the ecology and distribution of fishers in Pennsylvania. Join us as we welcome him back to learn about his on-going research with Cerulean and Golden-winged Warblers.

CBC Program at Strattanville YMCA

Ron Montgomery and Gary Edwards will be giving a public presentation at the Strattanville YMCA on the CBC. It will be on Saturday November 17, 2012 from 11AM until noon. It is intended to inform the public about the CBC and especially to encourage people who live inside the circle to participate in the CBC feeder watch. Of course if we get folks interested in going into the field, so much the better.

The *Drummer* is the bi-monthly newsletter of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS), PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214. SRAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The *Drummer* is published 4 times per year—September, November, February, and April.

The *Drummer* is available on our website in Adobe pdf and may be read or downloaded from the site –

www.senecarocksaudubon.org.

Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc., to Editor Flo McGuire, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at fmcguire1@verizon.net.



September 12 outing at the Winslows'

Thanks to Carole and Alan for hosting this walk on their beautiful property. Red-breasted Nuthatches abounded, Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers and a Swamp Sparrow were some other highlights. Thanks to Deb Freed for the photo - the other 6 birders were, left to right, Sandra Budd, Richard Nugent, Alan and Carole Winslow, Flo and Jim McGuire.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT NEWS

~ Gary Edwards



On Saturday, December 29th, SRAS will participate in the 113th annual and 26th SRAS Christmas Bird Count.

Our main goal is to significantly improve our dismal totals of last year. Our 42 species total was an all-time low and our individual count of just over 5,300 was third lowest. Additional goals are to locate the common species missed last year. These include Carolina Wren, Brown Creeper, Cedar Waxwing, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Northern Flicker. Reserve the date and help us out of our CBC doldrums.

As an added incentive, The CBC is now a free program. National Audubon has eliminated the \$5.00 participation fee for field participants. In the past, SRAS paid the \$5.00 fee for members, but non-members who wanted to be officially included were charged \$5.00. Additionally, American Birds will no longer be printed on paper and mailed to participants. A summary of results will be available on-line.

2012 COMMON NIGHTHAWK MIGRATION COUNT

~ Gary Edwards

The Common Nighthawk migration count at the Oil City Marina began on August 15 and ended September 13. We counted from 1½ hours before sunset until dark. During that time, eleven participants counted 991 nighthawks. Again this year, the count started well and then abruptly fizzled....this time even worse than last year.

August 24 marked the peak, with 323 birds counted. By August 28, our total stood at 967 and we were anticipating easily eclipsing our 2009 record of 1,246. Then the bottom fell out. Even with two to five watchers every evening until September 13, ten of the final 13 counts were zero. Historically, until last year, the counts during the final two weeks equal or exceed the first two weeks.

In 2011, we were doing well until September 1 but had only 35 birds the final two weeks. Hurricane Irene hit the Atlantic coast August 28-29, and that may have impacted the migration route....or not. This year, Hurricane Isaac came inland at New Orleans on August 28 causing heavy rain events through the country's midsection. Did this impact our results, or are we just grasping at straws? Probably grasping, but maybe next year will help sort things out.

SRAS CALENDAR PROJECT

~ Gary Edwards

We are in the process of putting together a 2013 calendar with photographs taken by SRAS members. The project is on-track and will be unveiled at the November meeting when orders will be taken. The cost has not yet been determined, but we're making every effort to keep it in line with the Audubon calendars. If all goes well, we'll do it again next year.



Herbicide Spraying Project

George Miller, PGC Land Management Group Supervisor, sent this photo from the spraying that took place on SGL 330 (Mt. Zion) on September 16. The crew treated all woody vegetation on approximately 60 acres. George reported that, if time permits, another 60 acres would be treated before leaf drop.

SRAS continues to work with the PGC to manage this important habitat.

Winter Finches—Coming to a Feeder Near You?

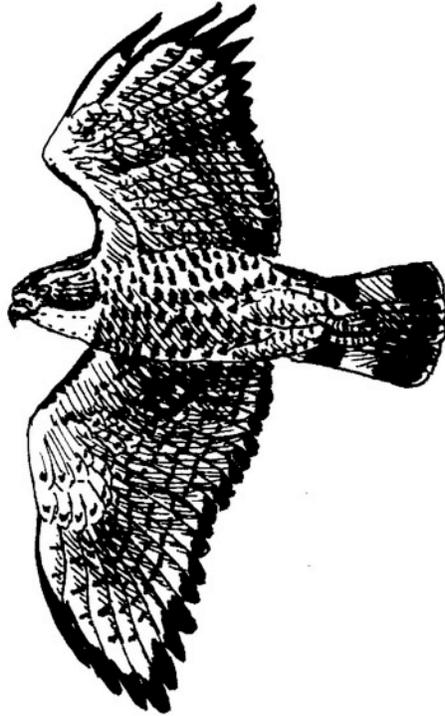
From Cornell Lab of Ornithology...

Daylight is fading and pumpkins are starting to appear on doorsteps—there can be no doubt winter birds are on their way. And this year could be a big one, suggests the annual Winter Finch Forecast hosted by [eBird](#). Poor cone and berry crops from this year's drought mean northern finches are likely to move far and wide in search of food, according to longtime finch forecaster Ron Pittaway. The project focuses on Ontario data but often uncovers trends that apply more widely across the continent. In particular, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Red Crossbills already seem to be on the move. Also keep your eyes out for Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, and Evening Grosbeaks.

September Hawk Watching Trip

by Deb Freed

On September 13 Michael Leahy headed to Waggoner's Gap with fellow travelers, Paulette Colantonio, Margo Wimer and Deb Freed. This was a first-time visit for the birding quartet. Owned by Audubon since 2001, Waggoner's Gap is a rocky outcrop along the Kittatinny Ridge. We arrived by late morning and hiked an increasingly steep and rocky path to the ridge where it was apparent to us that the regulars claimed the best "seats" among the rocks. We got there and settled in for the better part of the day. The most attractive aspect of Waggoner's Gap is the ability to watch two sides of the ENE to WSW ridge. We were comfortable under the sunshine and clear skies making counting, however, a little more difficult.



Broad-winged Hawk, art by Steven d'Amato

From Waggoner's Gap we traveled to Hawk Mountain B&B in Kempton for the evening. We were lucky to have dinner that night at the Stoney Run Inn where the German cuisine was delicious. The next morning, our host at the B&B cooked up a hearty breakfast and directed us to a small specialty store, Wanamakers, in Kempton where we picked up some gourmet sandwiches to take along to Hawk Mountain, our next stop.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary visitor center is worth spending some time, but we headed up the trail soon after we arrived. The trail is a switchback of mostly rocky terrain leading to the rocky outcrop where the official daily count takes place. This was broad-winged season and the count for the day was 1,597 with several kettles of hundreds of them. One particularly memorable view was at an overlook where we observed three broad-winged hawks soaring below us! Again clear skies and sunshine

were wonderful for us, but made counting a little harder.

Early on Saturday we headed to Higbee Beach near Cape May. We probably arrived a little late for the most birds but walking the fields allowed us to enjoy the wildflowers and butterflies too. Our first duty was to prepare for ticks and mosquitos. The bird "du jour" was the palm warbler. Nearby, at the Cape May Lighthouse platform, birders and park interpreters gathered under beautiful blue skies. The migration numbers seemed very low, but our walks on several of the marked trails proved worthwhile. Late that afternoon we stopped at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor. We were among only a few visitors to scan the drier than normal acres and were rewarded with some great birds.

The next day we headed to Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge where we drove and walked the wildlife trail. The roadway runs along the top of the dikes that impound fresh and brackish water in the heart of a natural tidal salt marsh. Even in September the mosquitos were out in full force plus some other flying insect that covered the interior of Mike's car. Many of them traveled all the way back to Clarion County with us. Making use of the walking trails along the edges, the boardwalks over the salt marsh and the roadway could easily take half of a day. Our limited hours were filled with wonderful avian diversity and an unusual challenge. At one point, a molting juvenile European Starling had us get out the spotting scope and Sibley.

There's a lot to see from the mountain ridges in Pennsylvania to the salt marshes and coastal habitats of New Jersey in a few days of travel. Thank you, Michael, for organizing and guiding us to some of your favorite places. Join us next year!

Editor's note - See the impressive species list below - fun, food, and birds, what more could you ask?

Hawk Watch Trip Species List by Paulette Colantonio

9/13/2012 Wagoner's Gap	cardinal	Wetlands Institute (Stone Harbor)	Carolina wren
13 ospreys	sharp-shinned hawk		Prairie warbler
16 bald eagles	catbird		Dunlin
1 northern harrier	mockingbird	Glossy ibis	Ruddy turnstone
51 sharp-shinned	common yellow throat	Black-bellied plover	Black skimmer
1 red-shouldered		Greater yellowlegs	European starling (molting juvenile)
7 cooper's	Lighthouse (Platform)	Lesser yellowlegs	Wimbrel
1 kestrel	Cooper's hawk	Common tern	Great black-backed gull
790 broad-winged	Sharp-shinned hawk	Blue-gray gnatcatcher	Semi-palmated plover
6 red-tailed	Black vulture	American robin	Greater yellowlegs
1 merlin	Bald eagle	Tri-colored heron	Lesser yellowlegs
	Merlin	Little blue heron	Boat-tailed grackle
9/14/2012 Hawk Mountain	Palm warbler	Great blue heron	Marsh wren
25 ospreys	Mockingbird	Boat-tailed grackle	Seaside sparrows
1 northern harrier	Great blue heron	Cattle egrets	Sharp-tailed sparrows
21 sharp-shinned	Forster's tern	Great egrets	Double-crested cormorants
4 cooper's	Common tern	Snowy egrets	Cattle egrets
4 kestrels	Blue-gray gnatcatcher	Mourning dove	Snowy egrets
1,597 broad-winged	Tree swallow		Great egrets
1 merlin	Blue jay	Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge	Canada geese
tree swallow	Carolina wren	Red-winged blackbird	Snow goose
chimney swift	Gray catbird	Marbled godwit	Clapper rail
	Pied-bellied grebe	Black-bellied plover	Tree swallows
9/15/2012 Higbee Beach	Mallard	Veery	Black-crowned night heron
white-eyed vireo	American wigeon	White-eyed vireo	
red-eyed vireo	Mute swans	Common yellowthroat	
palm warbler	Gadwall	Palm warbler	
bald eagle	Northern shoveler	American redstart	
	Northern harrier	Carolina chickadee	

Erie National Wildlife Refuge

The Erie National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1959, is one of over 500 national wildlife refuges in the United States. There is only one other Refuge in Pennsylvania - John Heinz NWR at Tinicum, in Philadelphia. The Erie Refuge is a namesake of the Erie Indians, a Native American tribe that resided in the area. The Refuge lies in Crawford County, 35 miles south of Erie and 10 miles east of Meadville on the outskirts of Guys Mills village.

The primary objective of the refuge is to provide waterfowl and other migratory birds with nesting, feeding, brooding, and resting habitat. The refuge also aims to enhance opportunities for wildlife-oriented public recreation and environmental education.

Highlights

- The only Refuge in the nation protecting endangered Northern riffleshell and clubshell mussels. French Creek, the most biologically diverse stream in Pennsylvania, flows through the Refuge, where over 80 species of native fish are found.
- Designated an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Attracts 237 species of birds.
- Three distinct habitats, forests, fields and water's edge, found within the Refuge support 47 species of mammals.
- A diversity of habitats provides homes for 37 amphibians and reptiles. Many of them are overlooked because they are secretive or nocturnal.
- Numerous wildflowers can be seen throughout the Refuge during spring, summer and fall along all the Refuge trails.

Inspiration of Land and Forests

Two Book Reviews by Janice Horn

After hearing the recent SRAS program by Rob Hilliard I reflected on two books I had read recently. One is *Nature's Second Chance; restoring the ecology of Stone Prairie Farm*, by Steven I. Apfelbaum with a foreword by Nina Leopold Bradley. The author had been interested in nature and the out-of-doors since childhood. After founding an ecological consulting firm, Applied Ecological Systems (AES), Apfelbaum began looking for a small farm where he could apply the goals of restoration. He found 80 acres in the southern Wisconsin area that fit his criteria and began effecting changes that would change it from the domination of corn and grazing cattle to the native prairie that it had once been.

Over many years and with the help of his partner, Susan Lehnhardt, the 80 acres became a mecca with its restored stream and rolling hills for wildlife including fish, birds and small and large animals. Skeptical neighbors became friends and enthusiastic supporters of the changes that took place.

Apfelbaum is an engaging writer and does not shy away from tales that were embarrassing for him. He describes living with the land and not just on it. The book is part memoir and part map for a more sustainable future.

The second book is also part memoir and tells of the love of woodlots. It is *A Sanctuary of Trees: beechnuts, birdsongs, baseball bats, and benedictions*, by Gene Logsdon. He begins by saying, "We are all tree-huggers" and goes on to relate how important trees are for us and how we have depended upon them for food, shelter, livelihood, and safety.

Logsdon, after several years in suburban areas, returned to the north central Ohio area of his youth and became the owner of 17 acres with 3 woodlots that have varying characteristics. He describes each and the multiple uses and virtues of the different trees that grow in them. He reflects on the history of the area and how that has affected the trees that are in each woodlot.

Throughout the author's almost 80 years he has had a love for trees and the sanctuary that they provide

for him. Along with many practical details of woods wisdom, his writing is infused with a philosophy and descriptive lyricism that comes from his lifelong relationship with nature.



Photo by Paulette Colantonio
Here Janice Horn (right) is delivering books to librarian Sue Whitling at Allegheny-Clarion Valley Elementary School.

Books for Schools

--Janice Horn

Seneca Rocks purchased library books for 11 elementary schools in our area using funds donated by the Clarion County Garden Club. Eight selections were offered on the list covering three genres.

Fictional titles included *Feathers for Lunch* by Lois Ehlert, *How to Heal a Broken Wing* by Bob Graham, and *Mouse and Mole: Fine Feathered Friends* by Herbert Yee.

Nonfiction books included *Thunder Birds: Nature's Flying Predators* by Jim Arnosky, *The Life Cycle of Birds* by Susan Gray, *Bird, Butterfly, and Eel* by James Prosek, and *In the Belly of an Ox: The Unexpected Photographic Adventures of Richard and Cherry Kearton*.

The only book of poetry on the list is Michael Rosen's *The Cuckoo's Haiku and Other Birding Poems*. Rosen offers haiku describing 24 different species of birds, arranged by season.

On a beautiful autumn day Paulette Colantonio and I delivered the books to the following schools: Allegheny-Clarion Valley, Brookville, Clarion Area,

East Forest, Immaculate Conception, Keystone, North Clarion, Redbank, St. Joseph, Union, and West Forest. Because of budget constraints at many (all) schools the librarians and teachers are especially grateful for the donations.

The Clarion County Garden Club has again contributed \$400.00 to be used to buy bird and nature related materials, so the project for the area schools will continue.

Paulette wrote an excellent description of the books in this year's February/March issue of the Drummer.

Hog Island Trip

Part 2

~ Daniel Winstead

(Daniel was one of our enthusiastic teen scholarship winners. Part 1 of his article about his experience was in the September/October Drummer.)

Tuesday morning we had breakfast and headed for Eastern Egg Rock. While it did call for rain, we didn't get a lot, just a drizzle. On the way we had a chance to see about ten Wilson's Storm-petrels and a Manx Shearwater. At arrival at Eastern Egg Rock, Puffins were flying around the boat along with Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns. Then on one of the outer seaweed covered rocks someone spotted a Razorbill. We stayed there and admired the scene of Puffins and Terns. On our way back we saw more Wilson's Storm-petrels and Harbor Porpoises. We ate lunch and then headed off for a hike across half of the 330 acre island led by one of the youth camp leaders, Josh. While hiking in the spruce forest, carpeted by moss and lichens, we heard Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes resonating in the distance. White-throated Sparrows and Winter Wrens also singing their songs added to the scene. While seeing some awesome birds on that trip we also saw things like Slime Mold. Near the end of that walk we had a really good look at a Blackburnian Warbler. After getting back and eating another amazing dinner, we went to the evening presentation. Julie Zickefoose, author of [The Bluebird Effect](#), shared some stories about her adventures with raising different birds such as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Mourning Doves

and Chimney Swifts. Not to mention she sang! After meeting with the Corvids (the teen campers) we went back to the "Crow's Nest". After about five minutes one of the other teens barged through the door and told us there was a Porcupine outside, so quite a few of us went down behind "The Bridge" to the compost pile where the Porcupine was climbing a tree very slowly. We got within fifteen feet of it, but then it went higher into the tree until we couldn't see it any longer. We all went back to the nest and listened to Heather, the other teen camp leader, who sang some songs with her guitar.



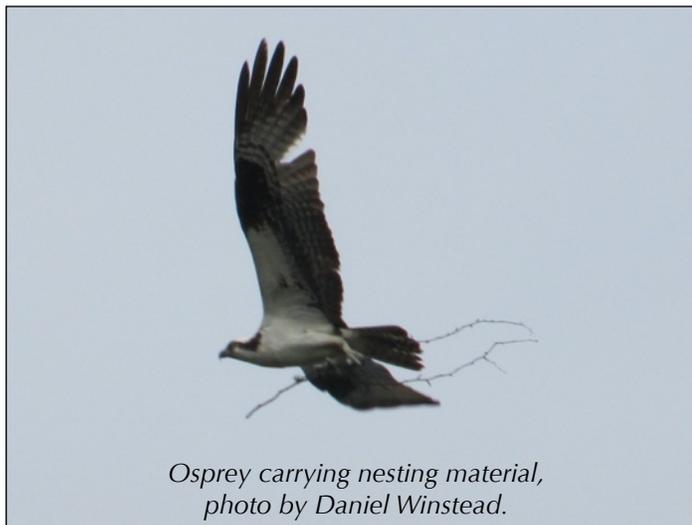
Black-throated Green Warbler, photo by Daniel Winstead

On Wednesday morning, we went to a small bird banding intro with Sara Morris. After about twenty minutes or so, we caught a Song Sparrow. Sara explained markings she was looking for on it and how she measured the wings, feet, etc. She let the sparrow go after a short time because it was a female and it needed to tend to its young. After the presentation we went to breakfast and got ready for the day ahead. Before we headed for Harbor Island we heard a Red Crossbill. After hearing it for about five minutes and trying to get our binoculars on the bird, it flew out of the spruce and flew towards the mainland. At around 8:30 AM, we got on the boat and headed off. We saw more cormorants and seals on the way. When we landed on the island, we heard Yellow Warblers singing and Chipping Sparrows chipping. We hiked a short ways where we came to a rocky shore where we dropped most of our stuff there and went to a cave-like formation. We came back and started to ferry to the "Snow Goose III" with the

“Audubon.” When we arrived back at Hog Island we had lunch and then went a little deeper into Hog Island to do some more bird banding with Sara. After a little bit, we caught a Black-throated Green Warbler. It was a male so we were able to make more measurements than the Song Sparrow. After measuring it and banding it we talked about some of its anatomy. Sara put the warbler up against each of our ears so we could listen to its heart beat. It was so warm even though it was so small. Its heart beat was like a cat purring without interruption. After letting it go we waited for another bird but never caught anything else, so we went to dinner. The evening presentation was with Lang Elliott. Across the week, if we wanted to, we went out at 4:00 AM and recorded some of the birds of the Island. His presentation was showing us what everyone had recorded so far during the week. This included Swanson’s Thrushes, Winter Wrens, Brown Creepers, American Crows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Dark-eyed Juncos. That night those of the “Corvids” who wanted to went to a pollen covered pond to find Gray Tree Frogs. When we went up there we were met with a chorus of frogs singing their surprisingly loud calls.

Thursday morning after breakfast I suggested that before we go to the mainland to bird that we go on a small twenty minute hike to go find the Merlin, which was seen on the island several other times by other groups. So a few of us went up to where the Merlin was nesting to see it. When we went up there, on schedule, the Merlin called and flew to the top of a spruce for all of us to see. We hurried back to the dock in time to get on the ferry to the mainland and headed off to Medomak. We saw some awesome birds there including Chestnut-sided Warblers, a Willow Flycatcher, a Hooded Merganser, and a Swamp Sparrow. We went back to the Island and ate

lunch. Afterwards we headed off to WesKeag Marsh. Upon arrival we saw Snowy Egrets, heard Nelson’s Sparrows, and a Belted Kingfisher flew over our heads. We scanned the marsh for anything different and then went to a new vantage point. There we saw Killdeer and two Lesser Yellowlegs. When we got back to Hog Island we had a lobster dinner. Not only were there sixteen



teens there but there was also a large group of adults on the island as well, and each of the sixty people there, who wanted one, had their own lobster. After the dinner we went into the Fish House. There Bill Thompson III told us some hilarious stories and played some songs on his guitar. That night the Corvids went out on to the dock and shined our flashlights in

the water to attract any plankton so we could scoop them up with a net to see them. Afterwards we shut off our flashlights and put our hands in the water and moved them around to see the bioluminescent plankton.

On the last day, I woke up at 3:30 AM to go record bird songs with Lang Elliott and a few other birders. Lang gave us a little tutorial on how to work the parabolic microphones and then we were off. The first thing we recorded was a Dark-eyed Junco. We rotated the microphones around when we would come across a new bird. I had the chance to also record a Brown Creeper and a Winter Wren.

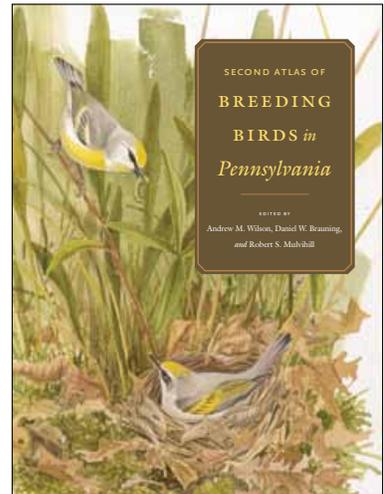
The trip list for everyone at the camp was 121. My personal trip list was 89. It was a very successful trip! Not only were there great birds on that trip but also great people. Teens came from as far as Georgia, and some of the adults came from California and Canada. From the great food to making up fake birds like the Vampire Pygmy-mango, this was a trip I will never forget. I highly recommend that you visit Hog Island someday.

SECOND ATLAS OF BREEDING BIRDS IN PENNSYLVANIA

ANDREW M. WILSON, DANIEL W. BRAUNING, AND ROBERT S. MULVIHILL, EDS.

Twenty years after the first *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* was published, the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* brings our knowledge of the state's bird populations up to date, documenting current distribution and changes in status for nearly two hundred bird species. More than two thousand dedicated birdwatchers completed the surveys of birds in 4,937 blocks across the state from 2004 to 2009. The data amassed provide a comprehensive understanding of the distribution of each species and show in detail the changes in distribution since the first *Atlas*. Additionally, a highly trained survey crew carried out bird counts at more than 34,000 locations statewide. These counts tabulated not just species, but individual birds, in a manner that enabled for the very first time precise estimates of the actual statewide populations for more than half of the 190 breeding species detected during the *Atlas*. In all, more than 1.5 million sightings were compiled during the second *Atlas*, providing an unprecedented snapshot of the bird life of Pennsylvania—perhaps even of any comparably sized region in the world.

The data gathered and summarized for the second *Atlas* were used by the more than forty contributing authors in writing comprehensive and authoritative species accounts. Each account is illustrated by a stunning photograph, usually taken somewhere within Pennsylvania. Up to three maps per species show in fine detail the current distribution based on the second *Atlas*, changes in distribution since the first *Atlas*, and, for more than one hundred species, detailed maps of abundance. In addition, a chart shows forty-year population trends. Introductory chapters describe and discuss recent changes in climate and bird habitats within Pennsylvania and provide other information used by the species account authors to inform their detailed accounts.



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Robert S. Mulvihill is Conservation Outreach Manager at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh.

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Clarion County Summer Report for Pennsylvania Birds

by Carole Winslow

Clarion County Locations: Cook Forest (CF), Cullsville (CV), Mount Airy (MA), Mount Zion (Piney Tract/SGL 330) (MZ), Armstrong Trail at Redbank (RB), Sarah Furnace (SF).

One of the most interesting events from the summer season involved a species not frequently confirmed breeding, although commonly seen in the county. On July 8, a young **Turkey Vulture** was found still in white downy feathers, in the granary of an abandoned barn near the CV strips area (MM). The bird had been heard from approximately one week earlier, making hissing sounds but was attributed to another animal until being investigated further. The single young bird was observed for the next month as it gained its black adult feathering and photos were obtained throughout this process (MM,ST,DW,CW). At one point before fledging, it was able to get out of the partitioned grain bin it had been in and move to another, probably as it was trying out its wings. It fledged approximately one month after being found and a last photo was obtained of it perched on the barn roof for several days after fledging. **Northern Harriers** continue to have a summer presence on the southern grassland areas. At a newer grassland that has been reclaimed only in the past several years along Spring Rd. near West Freedom, a female was seen hunting 6/8 (CW). At the CV strips area an adult female was present 6/1 (CW), and a pair of adults was present there 7/14 (JM,ST). At MZ, a pair was observed at the main site area 6/8, 6/16, 6/17, and 6/30 (CC,JV,MB,TR,PK). On an even more positive note for breeding status, a pair of adults were seen in the same area 6/12, with the male bird observed transferring food to a female (AB). This is just one of many examples of the significance of this IBA area for grassland birds in the county, as it regularly hosts these beautiful raptors along with many other grassland species. The last raptor observation of note is that of **American Kestrels** seen together at a recently reclaimed strip mine area outside of Rimersburg. At one point on 7/14, a total of 14 birds were seen together here, certainly a combination of at least 2 successful nests in the area (MM,ST,JM).

Another great success story for grassland breeders in Clarion is that of **Upland Sandpipers** at their regular breeding spot on MA. This year they were able to be confirmed breeding by the sighting 6/8 of between 5 and 7 adult birds, along with one downy fledgling (CW). This was during a survey being conducted for a study through Gettysburg College by Andy Wilson. On this date the young bird was seen as well as initially two adult birds with it who were very active in trying to defend the young, being very vocal in their alarm calls as well as chasing and holding their wings up frequently. At this same spot 6/18, between 4 to 5 adults continued to be seen actively flying around the field and calling frequently (CW). The owner of this property was aware of these birds and had reported seeing a young one himself, so haying of this spot was delayed by him for several weeks hopefully giving the birds a better chance of survival, especially for the young. At the CV strips site a single adult bird was seen 6/16 where it was heard calling and then landed in the field, and then seen a short time later

also calling but seen flying away (KSJ,CW). With just a single bird and at this date, it's difficult to determine status since no other sightings were reported here this summer.

A single unconfirmed report of a **Short-eared Owl** was received for MA, a single bird seen at dusk 6/15 by the property owner there. While not an experienced birder, he is familiar with these birds from watching them in other seasons as this is now one of the most reliable sites for them in the county. Interestingly the last spring report this year came from this same spot in early April. Follow-up on this sighting was done over the next couple of weeks with 3 visits at dusk but disappointingly no birds were found. It would be great to have another breeding record for these birds, as no evidence of this has been noted for the past six years now.

Whip-poor-wills were heard once again in East Brady in early June, with 2 heard calling in early evening 6/6 (PW). **Acadian Flycatchers** were found again in good numbers at the two extremes of the county, at the southern border along hemlock lined streams leading down to the southern river border at SF, as well as up in the northern county edge at CF where they continued to sing on 7/9 (CW). At SF five birds were heard on territory 6/18 (CW) and birds continued to sing through 7/22 (ST). **Alder Flycatchers** were reported from only one location, at MA 6/8, where they were heard singing in two locations, one nearby to **willow flycatchers** who are resident during the summer (CW). It is not unusual to see these birds early into their safe season as they migrate through, and no breeding activity is known at this time for any areas in the county. A male **Yellow-throated Vireo** was found along the rail trail at RB 6/7 where it appeared to be defending a nest or young nearby as it was down at eye level and very agitated (RN,CW). These birds are usually found mostly in the southern riparian woods of the county, but it's unusual to see such close views of these beautiful birds when they spend most of their time in the treetops. Again going from southern to northern habitat, a **Blue-headed Vireo** was found nesting rather late into the season 7/31 at CF where they are regular breeders (CW). On this day an adult bird was seen at close views scolding and then taking food to a nest with at least 3 visible young birds, approximately 10 ft off the ground in a small hemlock.

Continuing with more northern species, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were present at CF as they typically are during breeding season, with 3 birds heard/seen 7/9 and 2 also heard calling 7/31 (CW). In the same area on that date, a single **Brown Creeper** was seen and continued to sing (CW). **Winter Wrens** are another species typically present in this northern habitat at CF and 4 birds were present and still singing actively 7/9(CW). In this area 7/31 a group of 3 birds was seen at close range together, with one bird appearing to be a fledged young bird (CW). These birds also sometimes utilize smaller patches of appropriate habitat further south in the county, and this year a singing male was still present and vocal 7/14 at SF, along the dark hemlock forest by the stream running down to the Allegheny River here (ST). On 6/9 a report of two **Swainson's Thrush** at CF near Longfellow Trail was exciting news, leading to the hope of finding these rare PA breeders here again (RN). Unfortunately a follow-up visit did not get done until 7/9 when no birds were found

in the area, the only thrush present being **Hermit Thrush**, with 6 singing birds found that day (CW).

Warbler reports start with a bird that has been found to be a regular breeder in the wooded hillsides of the southern border, **Worm-eating Warbler**. This year a total of 8 singing males were found along at least a 3 mile stretch of the Armstrong Trail and Redbank Valley Trail at RB (RN,CW). At one area of the Redbank Trail, two adults were seen with a recently fledged young bird. At SF 6/12, a single bird was found (AB), and on 6/18 a total of 5 adults were heard and seen, with 2 agitated birds at one spot, and seen carrying food (CW). These birds continued in the area until 7/14, when two adults were again seen along the start of the trail here (JM,ST). **Louisiana Waterthrush** also share the habitat in this area, and a single bird was heard singing here 6/18 (CW), and another bird seen still 7/14 (JM,ST). Not far from here at RB, a great total of 6 birds were both heard and seen along the rail trails 6/7, taking advantage of the many small seeps and streams running into the Allegheny here (RN,CW). A family of **Black-and-White Warblers** were found at SF 6/18 feeding fledged young birds (CW). **Kentucky Warblers** are not as regularly reported as other warbler species, so this year it was promising to find two singing males along the trails at RB 6/7 (RN,CW) as well as a single male still present at SF 7/14 (JM,ST). A nice total of 6 singing male **Cerulean Warblers** were also found at RB 6/7 (RN,CW), and a single male still singing was noted near East Brady 6/27 (CW). Another nice find to add to the southern records for the county was that of a territorial singing male **Northern Parula** found along Redbank Creek at RB 6/7, a new southern record for the county for this compiler (RN,CW). This bird was found along the trail with a section of mixed woods, including some hemlock and pine. Back north in CF, a male **Magnolia Warbler** was found 7/31 along part of the North Country Trail here, feeding at least one fledged young bird, a rather late breeding record for these birds (CW). At MZ, a **Pine Warbler** continued to be present and singing near the parking area at the main grassland site 6/5 (CW). Although these birds have been present in this seemingly appropriate habitat before, as of yet no positive breeding evidence has been obtained. A singing **Canada Warbler** was found rather late on 7/14 at SF, providing a new species record for this site (JM,ST). Lastly for warblers, **Yellow-breasted Chats** were reported regularly through the summer season at CV strips site, with up to 5 individuals seen through 7/23 (MM,SC,RM,KSJ,JV,JF, KR, et al). This species has become a consistent breeder here with the continuing great successional habitat at this site.

This summer **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found back at MZ, where they have been largely absent for the past three years after habitat changes there made by the PGC to benefit Henslow's sparrows. Two singing males were found there 6/12 (AB) and they were reported also on various dates through the end of June as well (CW, CC,PK,MB). On MA these sparrows were also found for the first time, with a single singing male found in suitable habitat 6/8 and two birds present and singing 6/16 (CW). The area they were found in has very similar habitat to where they are found at CV strips site, where they were again present this year. Numbers at CV seemed slightly lower this year with no more than 6 birds seen at one time, sightings were received through the end of July (MM,GM,JM,ST,JF,DY,CD, et al). As usual **Vesper**

Sparrows are the most uncommon grassland sparrow and only two reports were received from MZ, where a singing male was heard and seen 6/12 (AB) and a single bird was also reported 6/17 (JV). **Grasshopper Sparrows** were reported in average numbers with no apparent changes noted in population. They were confirmed this year at CV strips site 6/16 with an adult seen carrying food (KSJ,CW). **Henslow's Sparrows** were numerous at MZ in their usual spots, with 20+ individuals not uncommon in reporting through late July (CC,JV,CW,MB,PK). The numbers at CV strips site are lower as time goes by and more of the area becomes overgrown, the highest number reported this year was 7 birds (MM,GM,JM,ST,JF, et al.). At MA as land usage changes for some of the site providing better habitat, numbers were up this year with as many as 15 birds reported and likely more present (KR,DY,JV,CW).

Certainly the best story of the summer season is the presence of **Dickcissels** in the county, thanks to the invasion eastward of these birds, likely due to drought conditions in their usual range. Initially found in late spring, these birds were found present in the reclaimed strip mine fields at CV strips site with 3 singing males 6/12 (CW). The field primarily being utilized was planted with switch grass and a wildflower mixture two years ago, with thistles also common. At least 3 birds were again found 6/16 (CW,KSJ), singing and appearing territorial. These birds continued to be seen at this site through the end of July (ML,RM,KR,SC,CD,DY,JF, et al.). A high number of 8 birds was reported 7/14 (JM,ST). Adult females were seen carrying both nesting material and food from July 13th through the end of the month and photographic documentation was obtained of this rare nesting record (MM). Thanks to good reporting, many birders were able to enjoy these beautiful birds throughout the summer season.

This summer season proved to be a good one for **Bobolinks**, with an adult carrying food at MA 6/8 (CW), and a high number of 30 seen there 6/17(JV). Higher than usual numbers were noted also at CV strips with 40 birds reported there 6/17, and this likely on the conservative side (JV). **Purple Finches** were present in a yard near CV throughout the summer season with a pair visible almost daily at a feeder and a singing male common through mid-July when singing stopped and sightings became less frequent. This site has plantings of Norway and blue spruce present, and though breeding seemed likely, no positive confirmation was had for this year (CW).

Observers: Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255, 814-745-3818, cjnal@windstream.net, Anthony Bledsoe, Michael Bowen, Chip Clouse, Shawn Collins, Gary Edwards, Steve Gosser, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Peter Kwiatek, Mike Leahy, Jeff McDonald, Geoff Malosh, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Robert Mulvihill, Richard Nugent, Theo Rickert, Kate St. John, Shannon Thompson, James Valimont, Dave Wilton.

Note - Our Hummingbird Contest continues through the end of November. One Rufous Hummingbird has been found, coming to Carole Winslow's feeder near Sligo. Bob Mulvihill was able to capture and band this female.

Upcoming Dates & Events

October 29-November 3 - Pick up Bird Seed
Nov. 4 - Erie National Wildlife Refuge outing
Nov. 10 - Project Feederwatch Begins
Nov. 14 Program - "Get ready to Count: The 113th
Christmas Bird Count"
Dec. 12 Program - Dr. Jeff Larkin, Cerulean & Golden-
winged Warbler Research
December 29 - Clarion Christmas Bird Count
February 13 Program - Members' Night
Feb. 15 - 18 - Great Backyard Bird Count
March 13 Program - Waterfowl ID
March 23 - Geneva Marsh Outing
May 11 - Warbler Walk at Oil Creek State Park

*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings,
Nature's peace will flow into you
as sunshine flows into trees.
The winds will blow their own freshness into you,
and the storms their energy,
while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.
~John Muir*



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