



# Upland Informer

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Official Newsletter of the Bartramian Audubon Society

Fall Winter 2009

Editors- Suzanne Butcher and Nancy Baker

Check us out online at [www.bartramianaudubon.org](http://www.bartramianaudubon.org)



## Upcoming BAS Membership Meetings

....Kathie Goodblood, acting program chair  
Our membership meetings are held the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Jennings Environmental Education Center, 2961 Prospect Road, Slippery Rock, PA. The Education Center is located on Rt. 528 just west of its junction with Rt. 8- about five miles south of Slippery Rock. The meetings are free and open to the public.

### **December 14, 2009-Monday-Holiday Pot Luck**

Join us for our annual holiday get together. Bring a dish to share. As a special treat, Cathy Setzer of The Bird Watcher's Store will give us some pointers on feeding birds and what type of feeders work best.

### **March 8, 2010-Monday-To Be Announced**

### **April 12, 2010-The Ferns and Fern Allies of PA with Thomas R. Lord**

Have you ever walked through the woods and seen several types of ferns, and wondered what species they were? Here is your chance to learn about these beautiful plants that cover the ground. Thomas Lord is the co-author of "The Ferns and Fern Allies of PA." He will give a power point presentation on the fern species in Pennsylvania.



## Upcoming Field Trips/Activities

**December 19, 2009-Butler CBC**, Suzanne Butcher, compiler.  
See additional info inside.

**January 3, 2010-Pleasantville CBC**, Russ States, compiler.  
See additional info inside.



## Field of View

....Kathie Goodblood, President

Like many non-profit organizations, the Bartramian Audubon Society has always struggled with the ability to draw volunteers to our projects. I did a little research on why people volunteer, in hopes that I would better understand how to attract people to our cause. Many have more than one reason, but here are the top five. Achievement, opportunity for personal

growth, to give something back, to bring about social change, and for friendship, support, bonding, and a feeling of belonging. All of these are good reasons. I feel I have experienced each one of them at many times in my volunteer career. Think about these reasons and consider volunteering in your community, in particular for your local Audubon chapter. I know it has made a positive impact on my life. Contact me to talk about how you can help Bartramian Audubon Society achieve its goal to educate and conserve.



## Sanctuary News

....Gene Wilhelm

I confess, I am a Leo, and because of it, I love cats of all kinds. There was a time when several wildcat species dwelled in the United States: jaguar, mountain lion, jaguarundi, bobcat and ocelot. Living in Pennsylvania makes it rough to experience even one of these: the bobcat. But in my daily walks in Slippery Rock Borough, I am quite conscious of the number of feral and released cats there are even active in early daylight hours. For owners of our BAS sanctuaries and other members, you should know that domestic cats even well fed, vaccinated cats, kill birds. Lots of them. The American Bird Conservancy estimates millions of birds are killed each and every year by free-roaming cats in the United States. Susan Schaffel, of Austin, Texas, is trying to do something about the problem. "There's a real double standard between dogs and cats," she says. "It's no longer acceptable for dogs to wander freely, and we have laws designed to prevent it. We're still not at that point with cats. People don't see the problem. We have to change public consciousness about free-roaming cats...People still think that cats killing birds is a part of 'nature.' People need to stop thinking that this is acceptable-that it's OK for domestic cats in the U.S. to kill birds. I call it the 'slow drip effect.' It's a people problem-not a cat problem" (*Bird Conservation*, Fall 2009, pp.20-21). So **Please Keep Your Cat Indoors** or if you release your cat outside, how about using an enclosure that allows your cat to play safely? For up to date information about another problem called TNR (Trap, Neuter and Release) cat colonies, go to the website [www.youtube.com/abcbirds](http://www.youtube.com/abcbirds) and for more information on the problems with feral and free-roaming cats see [www.abcbirds.org/cats](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats). Let's all start a "Cats Indoors Campaign" and in so doing enjoy both domestic cats and wild birds in our homes, yards, gardens and woods.



## Activities in Review

### **BAS Receives Earth Friend Award**



Gene Wilhelm, Erin Kienzle, and Ron Fodor

.... *Gene Wilhelm*

On September 9, the Bartramian Audubon Society received its third 2009 conservation award for its unique and excellent sanctuary program from Sony, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and WTAE-TV, Channel 4, in Pittsburgh. Earlier in March, the Western Pennsylvania Environmental Council and in May, The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, presented awards for the chapter's unique ecoscape approach to preserving natural habitats and rich biodiversity through direct land owner involvement. Thank you, Bird&Butterfly and Wildlife Sanctuary members, for making this nearly fifteen-year old program such a huge success.

### **September Field Trip at Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary**

....*Kathie Goodblood*

Birding began at 8:00 with migrating warblers from the deck. We then took a walk in hopes of finding more. The weather was good for the birdwatchers but not so good for the migrants. We did manage to tally 20 species for the morning. We finished with a close Cooper's Hawk circling overhead.

### **September Program- Vernal Pools**

....*Kathie Goodblood*

Will Taylor, Program Coordinator for Jennings Environmental Education Center explained some of the indicators of a vernal/seasonal pool to our group. We started out with a short walk to see one of these microhabitats up close. Seasonal pools are breeding grounds for many amphibians and invertebrates, in particular the spotted salamander. We learned that Pennsylvania has a citizen science project called PA Seasonal Pool Registry ([www.paconserve.org](http://www.paconserve.org)). To learn more about vernal pools go to [www.vernalpool.org](http://www.vernalpool.org) or [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).

### **September Field Trip to Miller Woods**

....*Gene Wilhelm*

The BAS Wildlife Sanctuary Program, inaugurated in 1995, celebrated its fourteenth anniversary by exploring the beautiful

and naturally diverse Miller Woods. The clear blue sky, gentle breeze, perfect temperature (74 degrees F.) and spectrum of tree colors only accelerated the enthusiasm and excitement of the human explorers. Owned and managed by Slippery Rock University as an outdoor laboratory, the 42.11-acre sanctuary is situated on geologic benches or tiers above the northwest bank of Wolf Creek. A rare, mature, northern hardwood forest community is dominated by towering American beech, sugar maple, white and red oak, tulip poplar and wild black cherry trees. It is an important archaeological and historical site as well. Participants slowly investigated and identified many herbaceous wildflowers along the trail and creek including colorful asters, goldenrods, sunflowers, jewelweed, sweet joe-pye weed, boneset, tall anemone, black-eyed susan and ironweed. The emergent skunk cabbage wetland had completed its reproductive cycle for another year but the small oxbow ponds, resulting from flooding and changes in the Wolf Creek course, still harbored vocal spring peepers and American toads. Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Phoebe, Pileated (heard drumming at a distance) and other species of woodpeckers were recorded as were large suckers, small mouth bass and schools of minnows in the clear creek water. The inviting water was too much of a temptation for three young boys who waded into the creek seeking aquatic life under the watchful eyes of their parents. Another father was attentive in helping his budding photographer young daughter adjust her digital camera to the many colorful wildflowers. At the end of our visit, we quickly surveyed the northeastern side of the Wolf Creek Narrows bottomland, owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. We agreed to return in the future to complete our thorough reconnaissance of this wonderful place when we had more time. Why is it that the human loses all sense of time when enjoying the varied pleasures of nature?

### **October Program- Owls and Owl Prowl**

....*Nancy Baker*

Gary Edwards gave us an overview of the owls in our area, explaining how to identify them by their field marks and calls. Screech owls are the most common in our area. They come in two colors, or phases. Seventy-five percent in our area are red, the rest are gray. Other species commonly encountered are the Great Horned Owl and Barred Owl. He also described the less often seen Barn, Long-eared, Short-eared, Snowy, and Northern Saw-whet Owls. Did you know that a group of owls is called a parliament? After the program we went outside to see if we could attract some local owls by playing their calls. We had no luck. Disappointed, we went back in for refreshments. Young Colin Campbell was more disappointed than most. He and his family had come to our program to get a first ever look at an owl in the wild. This was their second owl prowling with no owls. Colin didn't give up hope. While stragglers were finishing up inside, he went back out with his own portable bird call device. The "Who cooks for you" call of the Barred Owl rang out. His Mother looked at him and said, "Was that you?" It wasn't. The remaining group rushed out to join them and get a great look at the cooperative Barred Owl. Colin and family, needless to say, were thrilled. Thanks to Colin for his persistence, and congratulations on his first wild owl! Sharing his excitement was the highlight of the evening for me.

## October Field Trip to Polk Wetlands

....Russ States

Five birders attended the BAS field trip at the Polk Wetlands led by Kathie Goodblood. Habitat was looking good, with plantings of sunflower and sorghum. The water level at the main pond was low. Though target birds for the trip were sparrows, they mostly proved elusive. Possibly some of this was due to a Sharp-shinned Hawk that was strafing the sparrows and goldfinches as we assembled in the parking lot. Sparrows seen included Song, Swamp, Lincoln's, and White-throated. Raptors seen included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Bald Eagle, and Turkey Vulture. The only shorebird at the pond was a single Solitary Sandpiper. Several Wood Ducks were seen swimming at the west end of the pond. Other highlights were Yellow-rumped Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Species numbers were not high, but an enjoyable day nonetheless.



## Christmas Bird Counts

### **Butler CBC December 19, 2009**

The center of the fifteen mile diameter of the count circle is located approximately 1.5 miles east of the junction of Lindy Road and Rt. 528. Lake Arthur, Moraine State Park, McConnell's Mill, Wolf Creek Narrows and the campus of Slippery Rock University are within the circle. If you are interested in participating, either by being a feeder watcher or field observer, contact Suzanne Butcher at 330-759-1945 (leave messages) or [sarbird@hotmail.com](mailto:sarbird@hotmail.com) as soon as possible so count assignments can be made.

### **Pleasantville CBC January 3, 2010**

The circle for this count encompasses the area approximately from Titusville in the northwest to Pleasantville to Tionesta in the northeast south to President east to Oleopolis and Rouseville and then north along the western edge of Oil Creek State Park. The count is centered on the historic ghost town of Pithole. Please feel welcome to participate in this count. Assignments can be made for an area easy to get to if you are unfamiliar with this count. Also needed are feeder watchers who live in the area. If you are unsure if you are in the count circle call and ask. This is a more northern count than the Butler count, so expect some more northern species. If you are interested in helping, please contact Russ States at 814-676-6320 (please talk to the machine), or [pabird-er@verizon.net](mailto:pabird-er@verizon.net).



## Odds and Ends

### **Nominations Needed**

You may have noticed that at our annual awards night this year no individuals, businesses or organizations were honored. The board needs your help! We need nominations for conservation awards for next year. Please contact any board member if you have suggestions.

## **Birds, Banding, and the Bluffs**

.... Linnea Rowse and Andrea Reinhardt, Audubon PA

As many people know, a long history of bird banding exists at Presque Isle State Park. In recent years, Dr. Sarah Sargent, of Audubon Pennsylvania, has been operating the banding station at the park, with the help of a hired bird bander and a banding intern. A typical day of bird banding begins when the sun rises. As the twelve mist nets are set up, the woods become alive with foraging birds and their calls. Birds have a hard time detecting the fine mesh material of the nets and fly into them. Nets are checked every half hour, and the unharmed birds are promptly removed. Birds are banded with a small metal band on the right leg, supplied by the US Geological Survey. They are also measured and weighed, then released quickly so they can return to their daily activities. Audubon Pennsylvania bands migrant songbirds six days a week, at two sites on Presque Isle and one site at Erie Bluffs State Park. Banding began at Erie Bluffs last spring; this fall marks the second complete season of data collection. Interestingly, species diversity and abundance vary between sites. Erie Bluffs offers a different habitat type than that at Presque Isle. Substantial edge habitat, located between agricultural fields and mature deciduous forest, is present at Erie Bluffs. Additionally, invasive plant species are minimal and the understory of the forest is very open. As of early October, 121 birds, of 35 different species, have been captured at Erie Bluffs. The majority of the time spent banding is at Presque Isle, so more birds are caught there. The two Presque Isle banding sites have yielded 515 birds of 65 different species.

Some species of birds have only been caught at Erie Bluffs, and not at Presque Isle. Erie Bluffs is the only site where Indigo Buntings have been caught. Blue Jays are also banded more commonly here. In both spring and fall banding seasons in 2009, many Hooded Warblers were caught at Erie Bluffs; they are known to breed at this site. Eastern Kingbirds can also be seen perched on top of corn stalks. Furthermore, large flocks of White-crowned Sparrows use the edge habitat during spring migration, and subsequently fly into the nets. Banding here has offered a unique experience. Erie Bluffs State Park is approximately twelve miles west of Erie, PA, located on Route 5. It is comprised of diverse ecosystems, including bluffs along Lake Erie, streams and wetlands, upland forest, and agricultural fields. Birding opportunities are plentiful, including watching raptors, songbirds, and Bank Swallows along the bluffs. Our banding site at Erie Bluffs is located along the back edge of the cornfield. It can be accessed by foot from the parking lot displaying the PA DCNR State Park sign. Thursdays are the current banding day at this site. Check out our blog <http://pispbirdbanding.blogspot.com> for more information. Please visit us at the banding table!

**BARTRAMIAN AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 315  
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### **Paper-Free Newsletter**

Starting with September 2008 the Upland Informer will be available online. It can be viewed at our website [www.bartramianaudubon.org](http://www.bartramianaudubon.org) by clicking on the newsletter link and then clicking on the issue you wish to view. The newsletter is in the PDF format, so you must have a PDF program on your computer. Read only programs are available free at Adobe.com and other sites.

Bartramian Audubon Society would like to encourage its members to begin to receive the Upland Informer online. As each newsletter is published, members who have elected to do this will receive an email informing them that the next issue is now available online, and they can then view it at their leisure. For the Bartramian Audubon Society, this will mean a savings both in paper costs and postage costs. For our environment it will mean less paper and less fuel usage in delivery. To enroll in this program, please email our Membership Chair, Russ States at [pabirder@verizon.net](mailto:pabirder@verizon.net).



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### **Membership Reminder**

.....*Russ States, Membership Chair*

We welcome the many of you who have recently joined Bartramian Audubon Society.

As a reminder, the expiration date of your membership with the BAS should be on your address label. Please renew in a timely fashion as to not miss future newsletters. If you have any questions about your membership status, feel free to contact the membership chair, Russ States - [pabirder@verizon.net](mailto:pabirder@verizon.net).

**B&B and Wildlife Sanctuary renewals should be handled through the sanctuary chair in June or July each year. The \$15.00 dollar checks should be made payable to BAS and mailed to Gene Wilhelm, 513 Kelly Blvd., Slippery Rock, PA 16057-1145.**

### **Bartramian Audubon Society Associate and Newsletter Application**

Please check below

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 BAS associate fee- includes newsletter

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 newsletter only

Please send this form along with your **name and address** with payment to the:

Bartramian Audubon Society  
PO Box 315  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

**FYI- Subscribers to National Audubon Magazine will note some changes: The magazine will be published bimonthly starting in 2005 -Jan./Feb. March/April etc. There is also a new format in which the expiration date will be given as the last bimonthly issue and use J/F or M/A 200\_. All membership expiration dates have been adjusted to insure that you get your full subscription. THIS DOES NOT affect those who only have Sanctuary, BAS Associate, AA School or Upland Informer subscriptions.**

### **National Audubon Society Membership Application**

Please enroll me as a **NEW** member in the National Audubon Society. This membership will include membership in the National Audubon Society and *Audubon* magazine and the local Bartramian Audubon Society and the local chapter newsletter, the *Upland Informer*, but excludes the BAS Sanctuary Program.

Current introductory membership offer \$20.00  
Student/Senior (62 and above) membership \$15.00

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