



December Program— A Decade of Saw-whet Owl Banding

Presenter: Sandy Lockerman
Thursday, December 13th at 7:30 pm
(for directions to meeting location, see page 2)

Sandy Lockerman is an Environmental Educator at Dauphin County's Wildwood Lake Sanctuary. She is a licensed bird bander and participates in several banding projects including the Ned Smith Center's northern saw-whet owl banding project. She also is an education volunteer at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Region 78's coordinator for the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

In 1997, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art embarked on a research project to study the northern saw-whet owl's migration routes through Pennsylvania and to learn more about its natural history. Sandy spoke with Appalachian Audubon in 2001 about this project and she returns this year to update everyone on the banding project and to explore some of the exciting findings of the past ten years.



Joe Kosack/PGC photo

Come learn about this small and charismatic owl by joining us on December 13th!

And remember... prior to all monthly AAS programs is social time (with snacks) at 7:00 pm, followed by "Sightings of the Month" at 7:20 pm. Please join us for this fun get-to-know-you time!

Got Loose Change? Drop it in the "Coins for Conservation" Birdhouse

"Coins for Conservation" is a new program we kicked off at our September meeting. Pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters add up! Bring change you've collected through the month, or reduce the weight of your pockets or pocketbook at our monthly meetings. This year all proceeds will go to our friends, Beth and John Carricato, at Dauphin County Wildlife Rescue, to feed and manage the various injured birds and wildlife that end up in their care. Please look for the *Coins for Conservation* birdhouse at our monthly meetings on the refreshment table, and help us support a worthy cause.



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www.appalachianaudubon.org/

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President's Perch by Lorrie Preston

Holiday shopping, gift wrapping, addressing holiday cards, stringing lights, baking cookies, attending parties...whew! How did all of this become "expected" of us every holiday season? Now, read through that list again and think about those things from an environmental perspective. Thought provoking, isn't it? It is worth remembering that some of the best holiday memories are not bought or wrapped or returned later for something better. How about giving the gift of time spent together in nature?

One Christmas, after the gifts were unwrapped and an early dinner was shared, my husband, our two sons, and I bundled up and visited Pine Grove Furnace State Park. We were the only ones in the park that afternoon. A fresh snow had fallen, and the sun was sparkling through the branches overhead. The boys slid down a hill over and over on their bottoms, like otters, laughing all the way. We walked along the trail in the peace and quiet of nature, enjoying the birds flitting overhead and the patterns in the ice of the gurgling brook.

I have no memory of what material gifts I was given that year, but I will never forget the joy I felt that Christmas Day sharing nature with my family. Here's wishing you and yours special moments in nature this holiday season to savor for years to come.

Appalachian Audubon monthly (Sept-May) programs normally take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month in Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill, at 7:30 p.m. Exceptions are announced in this newsletter, as are field trips and other activities.

PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Directions: Take New Cumberland exit off I-83; cross Carlisle Road. Turn left onto Allendale Way; take first left at Deerfield Road (from the south, take New Cumberland exit, turn left onto Carlisle Road, left onto Cedar Cliff Road, left on Allendale Way, then left onto Deerfield Road) to the church.

AAS Field Trips

Eagles at Conowingo Dam - Saturday, December 1st

Join Appalachian Audubon to witness this annual gathering of Bald Eagles along the lower Susquehanna River at the Conowingo Dam in Maryland. Other birds of note are the large concentrations of gulls that usually include some of the more uncommon species.

Contact trip leader Al Mercik at 657-8548 for more details.

Christmas Bird Counts – December 15, 22, 27, 29

Appalachian Audubon participates in four of the surveys in this century old tradition of Christmas Bird Counts. Teams of birders are given designated areas to conduct the counts. The CBC's provide an excellent way to volunteer and spend a pleasant winter day away from the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

Information for each count can be obtained from the contacts listed below.



Harrisburg Christmas Bird Count – December 15th – Deuane Hoffman at 564-7475

New Bloomfield CBC – December 22nd – Ramsay Koury at 761-1871

Curtin CBC – December 27th – Scott Bills at 896-8859

Newville CBC – December 29th – Bill and Linda Frantz at 776-4463



Northern Jersey Shore for Winter Specialities – Saturday, January 5

Shark River, Manasquan and Barnegat Inlets will be the target for this field trip. Birds of interest include alcids, gulls, and Herlequins. Travel on your own to Shark River where the trip will begin. Contact trip leader Ed Chubb at 233-4807 for more details.

Leader's Choice – Saturday, February 9

This unusual format trip will be determined by what birds are being seen in the Harrisburg area, but could mean traveling as far afield as Philadelphia. Participants should contact Deuane Hoffman at 564-7475 or email at corouscorax@comcast.net for the most up-to-date trip details.

Middle Creek Waterfowl Trip – Saturday, March 8

Late winter is the peak time to visit this wildlife management area. Tens of thousands of Snow Geese and other waterfowl can be seen. Call Ramsay Koury at 761-1871 for more details.



Honoring the Memory of a Loved One



You can honor the memory of a loved one, or mark a special occasion with a memorial or tribute gift to AAS. For more information, contact Ellen Zeph, Treasurer of AAS, at 691-0288.

Last Chance Calendar Reminder

If you have not already done so, please pick up your pre-ordered Audubon calendars at the December 13 general meeting (deadline for orders was October 25th).



Calling all Pre-teens, Youth and Educators - **Audubon 2008 Camp Scholarship Applications Available!**

If the sound of waves lapping against rocks and the song of the loon calls to you, consider applying for an Appalachian Audubon scholarship to the Audubon Camp in Maine. We award scholarships to applicants seeking to learn more about the outdoors and who show a strong interest in conservation. Camp sessions include a Youth Camp in August, a Teen Camp in June, and an Educators Camp in July.

Educators and young people alike will gain valuable experiences in the outdoors while they gain a sense of stewardship for the natural world. The curriculum includes marine studies, pond life, oceanography, geology, forest ecology and ornithology. Campers from all over the United States attend, creating lasting friendships around the nation. Dormitory sleeping accommodations and hearty meals create a memorable experience.

Scholarships include tuition to camp, but all campers must provide their own transportation to and from camp, as well as the cost of any souvenirs. All scholarship recipients are expected to attend an Appalachian Audubon meeting prior to attending camp, and to share their experience at a meeting after camp.

One partial scholarship will also be awarded to an Appalachian Audubon member who wishes to attend one of the adult camping sessions.

Visit the website www.maineaudubon.org to find out more. **Deadline to apply is March 1, 2008.** For more information, or for an application, contact Marci Mowery at 717-371-2155 or at mmowery-ppff@pa.net.



Field Guide Donation Request for Inner City Youth

We have received a request for nature field guides from Tony Croasdale, of Americorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia/Delaware County. Tony is working to introduce inner city youth to nature at the refuge. He leads a 4th grade birding club there each Wednesday and is initiating other programs with schools and community groups.

Any kind of field guide would be appreciated, new or used. "First Field Guides" are appropriate, as well as all other levels, as Tony is working with kids from grade school to high school. Guide books on birds, insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees, wildflowers, and other subjects would be welcome.



Let's work together to make the holiday season and every season brighter for kids, by helping to introduce nature to the young people at John Heinz. **Please bring donations of new or used field guides to the December 13th general meeting, and our chapter will ship these books to Tony and the kids in time for the holidays.**

Cats and the Outdoors Don't Mix

Reprinted with permission from "Ask Umbra" at www.grist.org.

Umbra Fisk dispenses advice on all things green for Grist.org, an online publication that tackles green topics with irreverence, intelligence and a fresh perspective. Want more green advice? Check out Grist's book, *Wake Up and Smell the Planet*, for guidance on how to green your day at www.grist.org/wakeup.



Dear Umbra,

I have three cats, and live in a close-in suburb of Boston. I love the cats dearly, and let them outside during the day to wander about, and generally not have to live an indoor, sedentary, boring life. My question concerns their hunting instincts: I haven't had any luck with any particular way of preventing them from killing birds, mice, etc. I worry most about the birds, having read repeatedly that the millions of pet cats we have in this country really do a number on songbirds and other birds. I've put bells on them (more than one per cat), I feed them well and regularly, and don't feed them anything approaching a recognizable animal. I keep them in at night, after reading that's when they do the most damage, but I still get at least a bird a month, and often more. I read about a gizmo in Australia that does inertial sensing of when the cat leaps and makes sound and light, but it was very expensive, and I'm not even confident it'd work. Any suggestions?

Richard Soenneker – Malden, Massachusetts

Dearest Richard,

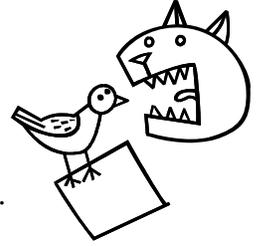
I am answering your question at the request of a dear friend. She believes that if cat owners only knew the impact their cats have on songbirds, they would keep their cats indoors. We will see. You've read all the reasoning behind the indoor cat recommendation, I'm sure, so let us see if we can shock others into compliance. Here are the accepted facts about domestic cats and their decimation of the songbird population.

Cats are natural hunters, and no matter how well satiated you keep them, they still want to practice their hereditary skills. I suppose if you spooned Meow Mix into a cat until it was comatose it wouldn't hunt, but a regular old self-regulating cat probably finds a good meal fuel for a nice prowl about the neighborhood. It is not a natural predator-prey relationship: Household cats have an unfair advantage over other bird predators (and their prey) in that their food source is constant, and their own populations will not fluctuate if their prey's population declines.

Several oft-cited studies form the basis for an estimate of 100 million to 1 billion U.S. songbirds killed annually by domestic cats. One study, from the University of Wisconsin, finds that a reasonable estimate is 39 million birds killed by cats each year -- in Wisconsin alone. Here's a dramatic quote from the same study: "Worldwide, cats may have been involved in the extinction of more bird species than any other cause, except habitat destruction." The University of Florida Conservation Clinic, in a report to the Fish and Wildlife Service, estimated that a free-roaming cat kills 100 mammals and birds per year.

Continued on page 6...

Cats and the Outdoors *(continued from page 5)*



These and other studies are the driving force behind various campaigns to keep cats indoors, so one might tend to be skeptical -- perhaps they do not cite the studies finding that cats prefer to lovingly hug birds and are misunderstood. Then one remembers that one learned math in elementary school. You say you have three cats and see more than one killed bird per month. You live in a city, where bird populations are lower than in the country, so let's assume each of your cats actually kills two birds per month. I think that sounds reasonable. Over a year, then, your pack of pets kills 72 birds. That is the low-balled price of having your cats outdoors: 72 birds per year, not including various small (perhaps endangered) mammals.

I don't have a cat these days (and no, I did not keep my childhood best friend inside), so I have no firsthand knowledge of the bells that purportedly warn prey of death's approach. All we can go on is the general bird powers-that-be report of failure: Cats are smart enough to learn to stalk quietly wearing the bell, or, if the bell jingles at the last moment, it is already too late. Plus the prey may not have gotten that memo about running away when it heard the bell ring. Even if the bell were effective half the time (as has been reported in one study), you're still looking at 36 dead birds per year (to keep using you as an example). The American Bird Conservancy, which runs the Cats Indoors! Campaign, mentions two other products. One is CatAlert, a sonic cat collar from Britain, which reduced but did not eliminate bird kills, and did nothing to reduce small mammal murder. The other is the CatBib. Hee hee. It's a neoprene bib that physically interferes with the predator's killing stroke.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that if you value a diverse and numerous wild bird population, you should keep your cat indoors. The Cats Indoors! Campaign also highlights various benefits indoor-only life brings to cats, particularly a much longer life span. But no one thinks their own special pet kills lots of birds, or they believe living indoors causes the cat to suffer (who can say, really?), and certainly no one thinks their cat is going to be the one whose life expectancy is cut to five years instead of 17. There's always a reason to postpone removal of culpability. We all take unnecessary small car trips that could be postponed and clumped with other errands or avoided altogether (special clause in my contract: relate everything to the automobile).

Probably the best that birds can hope for is to host bird flu in a form that is deadly to cats. Cat owners, in denial about the impact their cute pet has on cute wild animals, will come to their senses as they see increasing numbers of dead cats with birds in their mouths. Will this happen before the rising oceans cause us to stop driving? I'm on tenterhooks. By the way, before I get any angry letters -- did I mention I loved my cat? And this column has been approved by a certified crazy cat lady. I'm just giving you the facts, everyone.



Umbra

“LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS” Book Available for Audubon Members

Last Child in the Woods - Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder, the best-selling book by Richard Louv, is being offered in paperback to Audubon members across America at a 40 to 60 percent savings compared to the \$13.95 retail price. We will have a small number of these pre-ordered books available to purchase for holiday giving. Our chapter can place a second order, as long as we have enough interest to order 10 or more books.

Last Child in the Woods is the first book to bring together a growing body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for the health of children and adults alike. Child advocacy expert Richard Louv directly links the lack of nature – he calls it nature-deficit disorder – in the lives of today’s wired generation to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. More than just raising an alarm, Louv offers practical solutions and simple ways to heal the broken bond – and they are right in our own backyard.

If you are interested in placing an order for this book, please send an e-mail to Lorrie Preston at mitandpak@aol.com or call 732-5615. If there is enough interest, a one-time book discussion group could be arranged to share ideas within our community after we have read this book.



Join Appalachian Audubon Society AND National Audubon Society

AT THE SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY RATE OF \$20 (\$15 FOR SENIORS AND STUDENTS)

This application is for **NEW** members joining Appalachian and National Audubon for the **FIRST** time (for members renewing, *renewal* information will come to you directly from National Audubon). This introductory offer includes membership in both National and Appalachian Audubon societies, the beautiful *Audubon* magazine, and our own *Kingfisher Courier* newsletter. Please send the form below, with check payable to **National Audubon Society**, to: Appalachian Audubon, PO Box 15123, Harrisburg, PA 17105-5123.

New Member's Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Address: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Phone: _____ Senior Membership? _____ Student? _____

Is any of this contact information new? If so, place an X here: _____ U07 7XCH

Chapter-Only Membership: \$12.00 per year

Chapter-only members receive the *Kingfisher Courier* and support the local chapter. Make check payable to **Appalachian Audubon Society**; send to Appalachian Audubon, PO Box 15123, Harrisburg, PA 17105-5123.

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Phone: _____

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December 2007

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MOVING? TAKING AN EXTENDED VACATION?

To receive AAS mailings when away on long vacations or after moving, PLEASE contact our AAS chapter Membership chair (see p.2) with your address change. This saves us money while keeping you current with our activities. Giving a change of address form to the US Post Office (USPS) **will NOT help**; our USPS addresses are handled by National Audubon. We incur a \$.41 charge per item for each piece of incorrectly addressed, returned mail.

Please help us help you!