



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

November 2009

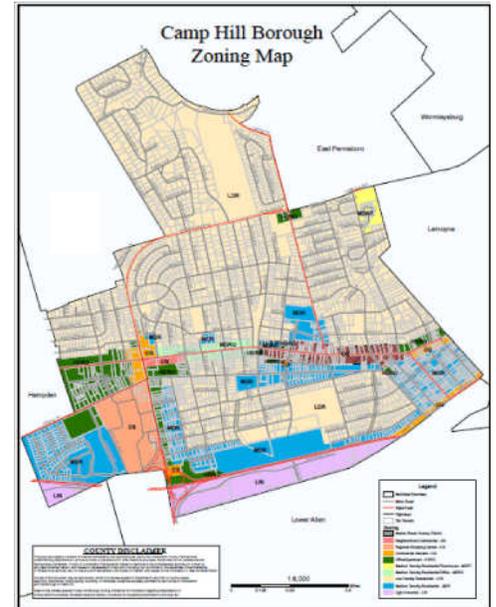
November 19 “Green Space and Land Use in Cumberland County”

A recent survey conducted by AAS revealed that our members have an interest in learning more about sprawl, preservation of green space, land use, and development. We address some of these interests and questions by welcoming **Stephanie Williams**, the Greenway and Open Space Coordinator for the Cumberland County Planning Department (CCPD) to our next program meeting.

Ms. Williams will present an overview of the CCPD, review trends and data used in land use planning including growth and land preservation, and offer an overview of County greenway and open space initiatives.

Stephanie has worked for Cumberland County for over 10 years and has a degree from PSU in Environmental Resource Management. She is responsible for developing and implementing countywide programs designed to promote farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks and greenways and development of more livable communities.

AAS monthly programs (September—May) take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the **Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill**. Join us at 7:00 pm for refreshments and conversation. The program begins at 7:30. *Directions to church on back page.*



Cumberland County's award winning website has lots of information available to viewers. For instance, currently 29 of the 33 municipalities in Cumberland County have adopted zoning ordinances. The County Planning Commission has collaborated with the GIS Department to convert the official paper maps to a digital format using Geographic Information Systems for online users. Map courtesy of www.ccpa.net.

In the Field with Ralph Kinter ...Revisited

“In this series of articles, we hope, not only to acquaint the reader with what we have in the fields, the streams and the forests, but to create within our readers a sense of awareness and a responsibility to help preserve what is left of our wild habitats.” With these words, Ralph Kinter, as President of AAS in 1986, began a monthly column in the *Kingfisher Courier* that

continued through 1998 until Ralph was too ill to continue.

Many AAS members have remarked over the years that Ralph's column taught them much about the natural world, and inspired them to be better stewards of our corner of the planet. Great teachers never leave us; and we hope that by reprinting

some of Ralph's articles that his words can help teach another generation, and can help re-inspire us all to work to save the critical habitats around us.

With a field trip to Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area coming up on November 8 (see back page for details), it seemed appropriate to reprint one of his many articles about this fascinating and diverse place, one of Ralph's favorite destinations any time of the year.

See Page 3 for Ralph's story.

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Lights Out for Migrating Birds

As I left work at the Rachel Carson building in downtown Harrisburg about a month ago, I came upon a dead Nashville Warbler lying at the base of a large window in the next block. Its beautiful yellow plumage caught my eye as I was walking briskly by, and upon closer inspection I could see the light grey head defining the species. It appeared to have flown into the window and died instantly, as happens to so many birds this time of year. Seeing almost no wear on the feathers, it surely was a first-year bird—that is, a juvenile that was hatched this summer.

Seeing this small, fragile creature lying on the cement brought to mind all the many hazards we have erected on the landscape that kill, by some estimates, more than a billion birds annually. Window collisions are thought to be the largest factor by far for songbirds, with house cats, communication towers, transmission lines, vehicles, and agricultural pesticides adding to the toll. With all the human-made obstacles, inclement weather, habitat loss and predators encountered along the way, I am amazed that any survive to return next year at all!

Many cities have started what is called a “lights-out” campaign to darken tall buildings during fall and spring migration. It not only protects birds, it conserves energy and saves money. Perhaps we can start a similar initiative in Harrisburg. Audubon PA is working on such an initiative in Philadelphia, and I’m sure we can learn from their efforts there. I’ll let you know how you can help with this in the future.

Giving Thanks!

For all the obstacles we have created for our feathered friends, there is something positive in Pennsylvania that we have done to help their survival. Our state forests, parks, and game lands; and county and local parks and green spaces all provide protected habitat.

Let’s give thanks this November for all our public lands, and let our elected officials know that we not only value these lands, we want our taxes used to help protect these places and keep them well-managed. That means, in part, increased funding for the State Parks and Forestry bureaus. Unfortunately, the recent legislative zeal to cut “bureaucratic fat” in the recent budget battle has resulted in a serious reduction of funds to Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

We must move in the opposite direction if our public lands are to be protected, and our elected officials need to hear this message from all of us or they will assume the public doesn’t care and they will continue cutting in the future.

Middle Creek by Ralph Kinter (originally published February 1997)

With Autumn approaching and the birds in migration, Middle Creek Wildlife Preserve, near Kleinfeltersville, is a wonderful place to visit.

Canada geese, *Branta canadensis*, and mallards, *Anas platyrynchos*, are permanent residents, but one is apt to see great blue herons, *Ardea herodias*, as well as great egrets, *Casmerodius albus*, most of the year.

At this time of the year, however, one can frequently see bald eagles, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, particularly if you walk out to Willow Point.



The Short-eared Owl prefers open grassland habitat. It is one of the most widely distributed owls in the world. Photo: USFWS/Dave Menke

Nevertheless, our favorite birding sites are along the road, in the ponds. Here one can see many species of waterfowl. This past October, we found a large gathering of northern shovelers, *Anas clypeata*, which superficially resembles the mallards, with a bit more white just below the neck, where the mal-

lard is more brown. Then below the wings, the shovelers are brown, while mallards are a dirty white. But the best way to tell them apart is the broader, more spatulate bill on the northern shovelers.

The following week, the scene had changed. Instead of shovelers, we had diving ducks. Most of these ducks tend to be smaller than the dabblers, but they kept further back on the ponds, making difficult to identify one species from another. However, one lone diver approached us, and we were pleasantly surprised to find that it was a red-head, *Aythya americana*.

At the same time, on one of the other ponds, there was a gathering of black ducks, *Anas rubripes*. They were working the pond that was closest to the road, and we had an excellent view of their markings. Of course, as usual, the black ducks were working with a couple of pairs of mallards.

Others reported having seen mergansers at the preserve that Sunday, but, try as we might, we could not spot any.



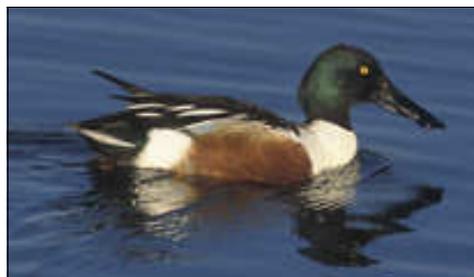
Redheads have a distinct red head and gray back. Many female Redheads lay their eggs in the nests of other ducks rather than making nests of their own. Photo: Steve Kress/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

We usually drive around, stopping at the various ponds, but there is more to see at Middle Creek than this. There is a nice walk through the woods, where one year several short eared owls, *Asio flammeus*, spent the winter.

Hidden among the evergreen branches, they were most difficult to see, but using a scope, and with the help of some fellow Auduboners from another Chapter, we finally did find them.

Another nice walk is along the Old Millstone Trail, where an unfinished millstone is to be found. Also, the Museum and Headquarters (Open from April through November) is a good place to visit. Here the various findings of the day are listed, as well as free literature along with items that the Game Commission has for sale, are available.

- R.K.



Northern Shovelers are distinct dabbling ducks that have a spoon-shaped bill with a comb-like projection along its edges, which filter out food from the water. Photo: Marie Read/Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Thank You Bird Seed Sale Volunteers

Our annual bird seed sale in October raised more than \$5,000 for our education and conservation programs, and would not have been possible without the assistance of many volunteers and partners.

A special thank you to our bird seed sale chair, Tom Lehman, for all his work behind the scenes; to Ken Davis of Davis Country Living in Mechanicsburg for his assistance providing the seed, feeders, tent, and trailers; to Equipment Rentals of Mechanicsburg for donating the use of the forklift; and to Isaac's Restaurant & Deli for supplying meals for the volunteers Friday and Saturday.

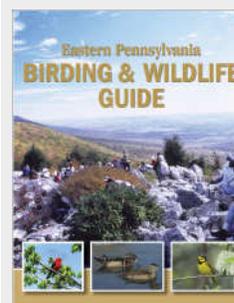
Thank you to all who purchased seed and feeders, and to the following volunteers who gave their time to load seed, sell feeders, direct traffic, take inventory and do anything else that was needed:

Chris Atwood
 Karen Atwood
 Judy Bowman
 Graham Cassel
 Maureen Cassel
 Denna Claypool
 Jon Dale
 Helen Delano
 Craig Dunn
 Marty Felion
 Jan Getgood
 Steve Horner
 Ramsay Koury
 Kathy Kuchwara
 Gary LaBelle
 Marilyn Mamone
 Dick Martin
 Annette Mathes
 Susan Miller
 Dot Montaine
 Marci Mowery
 Karen Parpagene-Shamenek
 Lorrie Preston
 Peggy Price
 Rick Price
 Thyra Sperry
 Sue Strassner



Volunteers Jon Dale, Judy Bowman, and Sue Strassner taking a break from selling bird feeders.

Bird Resources



Eastern Pa Birding & Wildlife Guide

“Eastern Pennsylvania is a birding paradise.” So begins the introduction to the new *Eastern Pennsylvania Birding and Wildlife Guide* — an introduction written by Pulitzer Prize finalist Scott Weidensaul.

The easy-to-use 130-page spiral-bound book presents readers with a road map on where, when and how to explore that paradise. The book was introduced in May and funded in part through a PA DCNR grant from Growing Greener. It was created through a partnership of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA), Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) and Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

The guide covers 13 counties and includes a variety of sites such as parks, state game lands and wildlife sanctuaries. Site descriptions are concise and useful, and include information about which species of birds and other wildlife may be seen in every season. Full-color photographs and illustrations abound.

Guides are available free of charge at selected parks, nature centers and birding sites while supplies last. They can also be ordered from the SRHA and the D&L at a cost of \$10 to cover shipping and handling. For a list of locations where the guide can be obtained, or to order a copy, visit the SRHA Web site at www.schuylkillriver.org, or the D&L Web site at www.delawareandlehigh.org.

Audubon Pa News: Bird Banding on a Beach and a Bluff

A first year warbler, hatched this June in the forests of eastern Canada, travels south until it reaches Lake Erie. Stopping on the shoreline, perhaps at Long Point in Ontario, the bird will forage and wait for good weather conditions before launching its perilous journey across the lake towards Pennsylvania.

Leaving at sundown, the warbler, along with thousands of other birds, will head out across the dark lake with the goal of reaching land before its energy reserves are depleted. As daylight appears, the first piece of land that the weary bird may see is Presque Isle State Park (PISP) – a vegetated sandy peninsula jutting out into Lake Erie that acts as a funnel during spring migration. Here each fall, birds drop out by the millions to rest and feed before continuing their southerly sojourn. A few dozen each year may also find themselves an unexpected participant in Audubon's science work.

A long history of bird banding exists at PISP, which in recent years, has been continued by Dr. Sarah Sargent, Audubon Pa's Northwest Important Bird Area Coordinator. With the help of banding supervisor Linnea Rouse, and Student Conservation Association intern Andrea Reinhart, Dr. Sargent is conducting a study on habitat quality for migrant birds. In addition to banding birds at PISP, Erie Bluffs State Park (EBSP) has been recently added to the study and banding data from both sites are being compared.

Bird banding provides useful information for research and manage-

ment projects. Long term data from banding can show researchers where birds migrate, how long birds can live, and even illustrate long term population trends, such as if a certain species of bird is increasing or decreasing in population size. This information is used for bird conservation, as well as to learn more about individual species. The data can also be used to improve management practices for different species, and especially for monitoring threatened or endangered species.

caught somewhere else.

A typical day of banding begins when the sun rises. As 12 mist-nets are set up, the woods come 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. A small metal band supplied by the USGS, is placed on the right leg. They are measured and weighed, then released quickly.

Audubon Pa bands migrant songbirds six days a week, at two sites at PISP and one site at EBSP. Banding began at EBSP last spring; this fall marks the second complete season of data collection.

Interestingly, species diversity and abundance vary between sites. EBSP offers a different habitat type than that at PISP. Erie Bluffs provides substantial edge habitat located between agricultural fields and mature deciduous forest. Additionally, invasive plant species are minimal and the understory of the forest is very open.

As of early October 2009, 121 birds, of 35 different species, have been captured at EBSP. Most of the banding time is spent at PISP, so more birds are caught there. The two Presque Isle banding sites have yielded 515 birds of 65 different species.

For photos and stories, visit <http://pispbirdbanding.blogspot.com>.

Story By Linnea Rouse and Andrea Reinhardt, Audubon Pa; with intro by Paul Zepb.



As a migrant trap, PISP is unparalleled in Pennsylvania. The Lake Erie shoreline acts as a leading edge for migrants, with approximately 325 species of birds recorded, making this one of the most diverse Important Bird Areas in the state.

The newest, and yet undeveloped State Park, Erie Bluffs, is 540 acres of Lake Erie shoreline in western Erie County, 12 miles west of the city of Erie. It is the largest undeveloped stretch of shoreline remaining in Pa and provides a different habitat from PISP due to its steep bluffs and wooded ravines.

Visit <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/eriebluffs.aspx> for more information on Erie Bluffs State Park.

All banding data are sent to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Bird Banding Laboratory. They receive data from all banders in North America, and use the data to conduct research. When a previously banded bird is caught on PISP, the USGS will send Dr. Sargent (who holds the banding permit for this location) information on when and where that bird was initially banded. She will also get a report of any bird that is first banded here and is later



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Directions to Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road in the Allendale development in Lower Allen Township:

From I-83 South, take exit 40B towards New Cumberland. Stay straight, cross Carlisle Road to Cedar Cliff Drive. Turn left onto Allendale Way and turn left onto Deerfield Road. The Church is on the left. Park in second lot.

From I-83 North, take exit 40B, turn left onto Carlisle Road/Simpson Ferry Road under I-83. Turn left again at the light onto Cedar Cliff Drive. Turn left onto Allendale Way and turn left onto Deerfield Road. The Church is on the left. Park in second lot.

Also inside:

Thursday, November 19th

Monthly public program featuring
Stephanie Williams with
"Green Space and Land Use
in Cumberland County"



Read about Audubon Pa's **Bird Banding project** at Presque Isle and Erie Bluffs State Park!
Page 5

Upcoming Field Trips

Sunday, November 8
(raindate is November 15)

Waterfowl at Middle Creek WMA
Contact Art Shiavo at 520-5711 or
aschiavo@hersheypa.com.

Coming Soon!
Christmas Bird Count

Participate in 4 local surveys in this century-old tradition. Teams of birders meet at designated areas to conduct the counts. For details, visit <http://www.appalachianaudubon.org/>

More reasons to attend our monthly meetings!

In addition to communing with like-minded birders and hearing a great speaker, AAS also offers: COFFEE (organic, shade-grown, fair-trade), GIANT GROCERY CARDS, HATS and BIRDING LISTS, for sale at the meetings. Please see the display tables during refreshments & conversation prior to the program!

Save Trees and
Mailing Costs! Receive the
E-version of the
Kingfisher Courier!

Recognizing a national trend of organizations converting from paper newsletters to e-versions, AAS would like to offer you an option of receiving the **Kingfisher Courier** by e-mail.

This will result in a significant cost savings to the chapter!

To receive the e-version, please send an email **from the account that you wish to receive the email notice** to appaudubonsoc@yahoo.com or call Ed Smith at 717-960-9441. **Please include your name and address in any correspondence so we can match you to our mailing list!**

Thank you very much for considering this option!