



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

March 2012

March 15 “Adventures of a Bird Bander”

Sandy Lockerman has had her share of exciting bird adventures (and misadventures) from her 15 years of banding hundreds of birds from hummingbirds to owls.

A licensed bird bander and senior naturalist at Wildwood Park, Sandy will give us a quick review of banding techniques used by field ornithologists to learn about the ecology, migration and abundance of many different species of birds.

Her talk, however, will focus primarily on the many escapades, road trips, and unusual situations in which she has found herself, as she and her fellow banders have made efforts to find, capture, and attach bands; while trying to avoid sharp talons, crunching beaks, and fast-flapping wings.

Program time, location and driving directions are on back page.



Sandy Lockerman banding a Saw Whet Owl

Photo by Gary Lockerman

A Rare Winter Treat by Ramsay Koury

A retired physician near King's Gap, south of Carlisle, has a very interesting bird coming to his feeders. It is a Townsend's Warbler, a bird normally found in the western U.S. This is only the fourth record for Pennsylvania.



Townsend's Warbler (left) and Pine Warbler (right) in winter plumage.

This bird is similar to a Black-throated Green Warbler, but has more markings on the face. It has been visiting the feeders, both suet and seed, since the beginning of the year. Amazingly there is also another warbler visiting these feeders, a Pine Warbler. This is a fairly

common warbler in our area and sometimes does stay the winter. The homeowner has graciously allowed many, many people to view these great birds.

To learn more about rare sightings and other birding related activities in PA, you may want to visit www.pabirds.org, the website of the PA Society for Ornithology. Click on **PABIRDS Listserve** then read the introduction and rules of the list. If interested, you may subscribe to receive e-mail notifications of bird sightings and related topics.

Save the Date! Saturday, April 28

AAS Spring Native Plant Sale at Meadowood Nursery

This will be the first year that we'll have a spring plant sale as a fundraiser for the chapter. More details will be included in the April newsletter.

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President's Perch

Paul Zeph (guest columnist)

Coal Mining, Industrial Wind Energy and Colombian Coffee (What does this have to do with Cerulean Warblers?)

Our chapter president, Annette Mathes, has been traveling during the time she would ordinarily be writing this column, so she asked me if I would fill in this month. She and several other members of AAS took a trip to Costa Rica to do a little avian eco-tourism. I'm guessing they saw more than a few warblers down there that will soon be winging their way back north to nest this summer.

This relates directly to a talk I attended in early February at Wildwood Park. First-time author Katie Fallon gave a fascinating, distressing, and entertaining presentation on the subject of her new book, *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird*.

Katie was (and still is) a creative writing instructor in West Virginia who happened to hear a talk at an Audubon chapter meeting ten years ago by a local wildlife biologist, who was describing her research on why the cerulean's population had gone into freefall. This struck a chord in her and she thought that someone should write a book to tell the bird's story. Years later she became obsessed with the bird and made it her mission to learn all she could and write the badly-needed book.

She visited several research stations and projects in the Appalachians (its primary summer/breeding location) and in Colombia (its primary winter home). As she assisted with a cerulean leg-banding project at the Lewis Wetzel Wildlife Management Area in West Virginia, she momentarily held a banded bird before releasing it back to the woods: "I could feel the bird's lungs expanding and contracting as he twisted his head to keep his black eyes focused on me. The bright electric blue of his crown contrasted sharply with the white under his chin. In my opinion, there is not a more beautiful bird than the cerulean warbler anywhere in the world – and no other habitat as diverse and spectacular . . . as an Appalachian hardwood forest."

The destruction of the old river-bottom forests of the Mississippi and Ohio basins drove the bird east where it adapted to older ridge and mountain-top forests of the central Appalachians where 80% of the global population currently nests from Pennsylvania south through West Virginia to eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. Now it is losing that habitat to mountain-top coal mining in West Virginia and ridge-top clearing in Pennsylvania for industrial wind turbine facilities. The double-whammy is the destruction of its wintering grounds on the slopes of northern South American countries where the forests are being cleared for full-sun, high-profit coffee plantations.

How do we save this neotropical migratory wonder and all the other warblers and songbirds that use the Atlantic Flyway? We can buy bird-friendly (shade-grown) coffee that is grown under a canopy of tall trees left on the mountain slopes. (We sell some delicious varieties at every Audubon program meeting.) We must fight for protection of Appalachian forest habitat, be it in West Virginia or Pennsylvania. We must also celebrate warblers and introduce them to new audiences and policy-makers. And, of course, if you take international vacations, plan a trip to cerulean winter habitat (the Andes mountains of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and tell everyone you see that you are spending money there because of the beautiful birds. More coffee please.

Seasonal Sightings

by Ramsay Koury

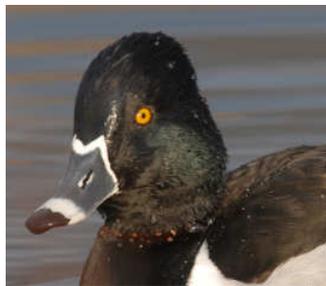
Waterfowl!

March is the big month for northbound waterfowl migration. Both Canada and Snow Geese, along with Tundra Swans, have already begun their journeys in February. Their numbers will peak sometime in early to mid-March and then thin out fairly quickly as they go north.



One of the best places to observe huge numbers of geese and swans is at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area near Kleinfeltersville. If you have never seen this spectacle you should try to do that this spring. Most of the birds roost there at night and go out to feed in nearby fields in the early morning. From late morning until evening the birds begin returning. Usually in excess of 100,000 Snow Geese will pass through Middle Creek in the spring.

Other waterfowl species, ducks, loons, and grebes are also moving. Their peak numbers occur a little later - mid-March to mid-April. Middle Creek is an excellent spot for these species as well, but other locations



Waterfowl that are passing through in mid-to-late March can be found on the Susquehanna River and larger bodies of water and include (clockwise from upper left): Horned Grebe, Ring-necked Duck, and Snow Goose.



Photos this page by Joe Kosack/PGC

such as the Susquehanna River are often excellent too. Bad weather for birders, such as stormy and wet conditions, can be the best times to look for migrating waterfowl!

February Bird Quiz Answers

Last month's Kingfisher Courier had the bird quiz below, but without the answers. How many did you guess correctly?

What bird...

- Is a sad letter? (blue jay)
- Is an outfielder? (flycatcher)
- Is crazy? (loon or cuckoo)
- Is what thieves are doing? (robin)
- Might give milk? (cowbird)
- Is a country? (turkey)
- Is a famous magician? (merlin)
- Is a short conversation? (chat)
- Is a construction machine? (crane)
- Is a regal angler? (kingfisher)
- Is an invoice for silverware? (spoonbill)
- Is a feline alarm clock? (kittiwake)
- Is a highway sprinter? (road runner)
- Helps elect the pope? (cardinal)
- Murders a game animal? (killdeer)
- Would beat a destitute man? (whip-poor-will)
- Is a tiny monarch? (kinglet)
- Is a cowardly singer? (yellow warbler)
- Is an aged Indian? (oldsquaw)
- Is a lame relative? (limpkin)

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Kingfisher Courier

March 2012

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AAS monthly programs typically 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 socializing and refreshments. **The program begins at 7:30.**

Directions to Christ Presbyterian Church:

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

I-83 Northbound, take exit 40B, turn left onto Carlisle Road/Simpson Ferry Road and go 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 the second lot.

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Middle Creek was designated as a Globally Significant Important Bird Area because it hosts annually a large percentage of the continent's Snow Goose population (above) and tundra swans, and provides critically important migratory stopover habitat within the Atlantic Flyway.

Photo by Hal Korber/PGC

MARCH FIELD TRIPS

March 3, 2012

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area

Join **Pete Fox** for an exciting day of snow geese, tundra swans, waterfowl, eagles and many more species at the peak of their migration. Meet at 7AM in the Lower Dauphin High School parking lot. Contact Pete at 583-2639 (before 9PM) or pfox@raiderweb.org.

March 10, 2012

Winter Stonefly Foray

Join **Jane Earle**, Pennsylvania stonefly expert, to look for these unique winter emerging insects, which can be seen congregating on rocks and bridge rails, on snow covered stream banks, and flying over water. Trip is a short distance walk along the Conodoguinet Creek. Snow date March 11, 2012. Contact Jane at 728-4241 or janeearle7@msn.com.

March 11, 2012 (Sunday)

Ned Smith Waterfowl Watch

We join the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg for this annual Susquehanna River watch of migrating waterfowl. Experts will be on hand to assist with species identification. Dress warmly. Contact Beth Sanders at the Ned Smith center at 717-692-3699 or Judy Bowman at 761-3815 or bowma99@aol.com.

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Thanks!