



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

April 2011

Thursday, April 14

Note the early date!

Eye and Lens:

Tips for Capturing the Natural World in Photos

Our popular traveling photographer and AAS member **Walt Pomeroy** will join us at 7 PM with a fun evening of photography of the natural world, people and travels, both in the U.S. and abroad as well as from the Arctic to Antarctica.

It will be a whirlwind photo tour and stories of culture and the natural world at select locations on all seven continents (and a few oceans as well!). Whether you use a simple "point & shoot camera" or a sophisticated digital single lens reflex, his ideas and stories will share ideas for everyone. And he will provide some examples of how you can tell photo stories about your photographs within your presentations to families and friends.

Some of his picture examples will be from his just completed trips over the past 3 months to Alaska, Hawaii and the Sand Hill Cranes along the Platte River in Nebraska.

He will share simple "how to" ideas for every photographer, things to think about when taking pictures, composing pictures and some of the equipment you should have for various photographic activities you wish to pursue. He will also provide materials for everyone to take home for later reading and study.

Be prepared to thoroughly enjoy this non-technical and less-than-sophisticated approach to improving your photography. Note the early date this month (take a break from your last-minute tax forms!).



Photographer Walt Pomeroy studying and "staring down" Rockhopper Penguins on Pebble Island in the Falkland Islands. Photo courtesy of Lin Pomeroy.

AAS monthly programs (September—May) typically take place 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.*



Black-throated Blue Warbler

Laura Meyers/Flickr Photos



Scarlet Tanager

Blumin/Flickr Photos

What do all these Birds have in Common?



Canada Warbler

Dave W/Flickr Photos



Blackburnian Warbler

Kyle McCreary/Flickr Photos

See President's Message on page 2...

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Energy vs. Birds

We've heard a lot about Marcellus Gas drilling and industrial wind complexes, and the impact they are having on Penn's Woods; but what does this mean in terms of birds? Let's put a face on the issue – or rather, many feathered faces.

First, a look at the effect of **Marcellus Shale** drilling on birds. The ecological impact of this industry includes chopping up the forests of Pennsylvania into 5-acre clearings that are scraped bare and compacted by hundreds of truckloads of water, sand, and chemicals. Add to that, wide swaths of gas line corridors cut to pipe out the gas, new compressor stations and new roads, and it is clear the fragmentation result to our forest habitat will be enormous. A recent energy impact assessment by conservation groups concluded that over the next two decades, 200,000 acres of forest interior habitat could be cleared or seriously compromised for nesting birds.*



Wood Thrush

Plus Birdsave. Vraw/Flickr Photos

An example of the forest interior species that will suffer greatly from this fragmentation is the beloved Wood Thrush. At 1.5 nests per acre, this could equate to 300,000 nests impaired, or up to one million young Wood Thrushes per year not hatched or killed due to the “edge-effect” predators that follow fragmentation.

The Wood Thrush population has already seen a 62% decline in the past 40 years in Pennsylvania, and in 2007 was placed on the global Watchlist produced by Audubon and American Bird Conservancy due to other landscape impacts occurring statewide.

Other forest interior birds that will suffer similar impacts include the Northern Goshawk, Scarlet Tanager, and numerous wood warblers like the Hooded Warbler and Canada Warbler.

Second, a look at the effect of industrial wind turbine complexes on ridge-top nesting species and birds that use the ridges for migration. The poor soils and boulder fields found on Pennsylvania's ridge tops resulted in numerous shrubby, scrubby openings in the forests—important nesting habitat used by Golden-winged Warblers, Cerulean Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, and Blackburnian Warblers, to name a few.



Hooded Warbler

Geno K. Flickr Photos

Each **wind turbine** complex results in an unfathomable swath of cleared habitat winding for miles along the spine of a ridge or edge of an escarpment— at times as wide as a football field. The energy impact assessment mentioned above also looked at the habitat impacts of the wind industry, and found that for every turbine constructed, an average of 1.9 acres of habitat is cleared and another 13.4 acres of nesting habitat

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Energy vs. Birds continued

(Continued from page 2)

is indirectly impaired from the resulting edge effect. Multiply that by the thousands of turbines being planned, and we stand to lose more than 50,000 acres of ridge-top nesting habitat.

Golden-winged Warblers are also on the Watchlist, showing a whopping 98% decline in the past 40 years. Ridge-tops are some of the last places these birds have to nest in Pennsylvania. Cerulean Warblers are also on the list exhibiting

a precipitous decline. The Ruffed Grouse is another ridge dweller, and is showing up dead at the base of the gargantuan turbine towers



Cerulean Warbler

that measure 30-50 feet wide, with speculation that they are flying headlong into the unexpected walls of steel.

Additional neotropical migrating species are impacted by turbine complexes, such as the Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue warblers, that utilize ridge-top habitats as rest stops in fall and spring. And, of course, the 18 species of migrating raptors that fly through the



Golden-winged Warbler

Pennsylvania ridge-and-valley system by the hundreds of thousands each fall, often soaring low and close to the ridge-tops and diving down after prey into trees and forest

openings. The raptors and all migrating songbirds are threatened by the spinning blades, particularly in low visibility conditions.

Regardless of whether a severance tax is imposed on Marcellus Shale drilling, or whether turbines are moved a hundred yards one way or another, bird habitat will continue to be lost at an alarming rate, and some populations will decline further to even more historic lows. We hope that between fragmentation of nesting habitat, the erection of thousands of spinning blades in their migration corridor, and continued habitat losses in their wintering areas, that our Watchlist species are around to watch in the decades ahead.

* *Pennsylvania Energy Impacts Assessment, Report 1: Marcellus Shale Natural Gas and Wind*; The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy; Nels Johnson, et. al.; November 15, 2010; [http://pa.audubon.org/PDFs/energy_analysis%20report.pdf]



The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, along with many of the area's best-known businesses and environmental groups, invite you to attend the second annual **Wild & Scenic Film Festival**! This national film festival celebrates green lifestyles and explores environmental issues.

The festival will take place at **7:00 pm, on April 26** at the **Wesley Center, the state-of-the-art facility at Camp Hill United Methodist Church!** Local sponsors include Pa. Parks and Forests Foundation and Penn Future; national sponsors include Patagonia, Sierra Nevada, Osprey and Cliff Bars!

The line up includes: ***Better Bones and Gardens***, ***Change for the Oceans***, and ***Living Downstream***.

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival is the largest environmental film festival in North America.

To sample some of the film trailers, visit: <http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org/on-tour/films-on-tour/>.

Also visit: <https://allianceforthebay.org> for more information.

Revisiting Ralph Kinter — A Murder of Crows

Back a few generations, our forefathers gave some strange names to groups of animals and birds—such as a pod of seals, a gaggle of geese, and above all, a "Murder of Crows."

The American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, and its relatives, the Fish Crow, *Corvus ossifragus*, and the Northern Raven, *Corvus corax*, have long been hated birds for some unknown reason. For years, while other birds enjoyed a protected status under the law, the crows were fair game to all hunters and sportsmen the year 'round.

When I was young we had crows around, but they were wary, rarely approaching the house, although they would raid the corn fields, pulling up the tender corn shoots. So we made extensive use of scare-crows, but I expect we were fooling no one but ourselves. Then, perhaps ten years ago, laws were passed placing crows on the protected list.

It took several years, but gradually, the crows seem to have learned this, for they are becoming bolder. At first they would simply fly overhead, cawing and talking between themselves. Then, they ventured to settle in the trees close by the house. Occasionally, one would venture down to feed briefly with the little birds at the feeder.

When they fly over, cawing, I like to caw back and occasionally, they will answer me. But, I never get the sense that I am fooling them. On the other hand, the smaller Fish Crow is not as smart. His call is more a "caw-haw."

And, on occasion when I talk with them, they will turn and come back, circling overhead, talking back to me until they spot me. Then they take off. Small wonder that there are fewer Fish Crows than American Crows.

The crows and the various hawks and owls are mortal enemies. Many is the time that I have seen a hawk or an owl cornered in a tree, with a murder of crows on the attack. At this time, the caw is more excited, being called more closely, one after another. And this call seems to have the effect of bringing in more and more crows to the attack.

Christmas week, we had an incident that was especially note-worthy. A Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*, approaching the feeder, was spotted by a crow. Its excited cawing brought two more, and soon the harassed hawk took off. The small birds, alerted by the cawing, took refuge in the bushes until the incident was over.

The murder of crows, in this case, served a very useful purpose.



Roger Tory Peterson Institute Third Annual Bird Festival June 9-12

Appalachian Audubon Society members and friends are invited to attend the **Third Annual Birdfest at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown, NY**, a four-day celebration of birds and birding, **June 9-12**. Cosponsored by the American Birding Association, this year's festival will offer three all-day field trips including the popular "Whirlwind Warbler Tour," as well as many half-day trips, complemented by speakers and workshops in the afternoons and evenings. Representatives and vendors from bird-related organizations will be on hand throughout the festival. Friday is a special day, loaded with programs for children and novice birders.

RTPI President Jim Berry will launch the event on Thursday, June 9, with a special presentation on The Peterson Collection, during which he will unveil a few of the rarest pieces of Peterson art and memorabilia and talk about their significance. Also featured will be Dr. John Rappole, author of *Birds of Texas: A Field Guide*, *Ecology of Migratory Birds: A Neotropical Perspective*, and *Wildlife of the Mid-Atlantic: A Complete Reference Manual*. Additionally, Jeff Gordon, President of the American Birding Association, will be the keynote speaker at the Saturday dinner. (AAS members and friends may remember Jeff as the engaging keynote speaker at last year's spring banquet.)

Complete details about this event appear on the web at <http://Birdfest.RTPI.org>. Register early to assure your first choice in field trips! Spread the word!

Tidbits

Nesting Boxes for Sale by the Game Commission

As development continues to take over wildlife habitats, the Game Commission's Howard Nursery has a way for wildlife enthusiasts to help support wildlife housing needs without having to apply for a second mortgage. The Nursery is selling a variety of wildlife nesting structures for several species of birds – from bluebirds to flickers, from ducks to owls – as well as housing boxes for bats and squirrels.

“According to Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan, development consumes more than 300 acres of Pennsylvania's landscape per day,” said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. “Although we can't keep pace with losses caused by urban and suburban sprawl, the Game Commission is working hard to preserve and improve habitat on its more than 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands and other public and private lands.

The entire selection of nesting structures for sale can be viewed on the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) by clicking on “General Store” in drop-down menu bar under the homepage banner, choosing “Howard Nursery” and then “Wildlife Homes Order Form.” The two-page brochure and order form list the nesting structures by habitat type, to guide land-owners in determining which nesting structure is best suited for their property.

Available nesting structures, listed by habitat types, are as follows:

Open Land or Woodland Margins -- American kestrel; gray and fox squirrel; bluebird, chickadee or wren; northern flicker; bats; winter roosting box (can be used by chickadees, wrens, nuthatches, titmice, woodpeckers or bluebirds)

Hardwood Forests -- barred owl

Farmlands or Open Lands -- barn owl; northern flying squirrel

Wetlands and Associated Uplands -- wood duck; mallard

All boxes come assembled and with instructions on where and how to place. The bluebird, chickadee, wren nesting box can be either fully constructed or provided in an unassembled kit complete with nails and screws.

Take Important Action ... and It Only Takes a Minute!

Dedicated folks who volunteer many hours each month to bring you the *Kingfisher Courier* wish to appeal to AAS members to **receive the electronic version!**

If you have email, you will receive a .pdf of the *Kingfisher* **in full color!** You can then print pages at your discretion. This aligns with AAS's vision to **save paper and reduce waste**, and results in **significant savings in printing and mailing costs!!**

To receive the e-version, please send an email **from the account that you wish to receive the email** 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!**

Please take this very important eco-friendly step today!!

Save the Date!

As noted below, May 19th is the AAS Annual Banquet at the Radisson in Camp Hill. Watch for your registration in the mail!

Last Call for Silent Auction Items

Spring is just around the corner and plans are being made for the silent auction that takes place at our annual banquet on **May 19th**. We are seeking new or gently used nature-related items for the auction.

Past donations have included nature books and field guides, binoculars, artwork, jewelry, outdoor gear and clothing, bird feeders and houses, and a few surprises. If you have items to contribute, please contact Susan Miller (697-6696), Sue Strassner (243-5731) or Annette Mathes (566-0149).



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

I-83 Southbound, 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.

I-83 Northbound, 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.

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Inside: Public Program

Thursday, April 14
Eye & Lens



What's the big picture? Join us on April 14
as **Walt Pomeroy** shares his nature
photography adventures and tips.

Look inside for some terrific events
to add to your spring calendar!

Songbirds in Peril

See President's Message—page 2 & 3

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, April 16, 2011
Bombay Hook NWF

Join Jane Barnette for an excited trip
to Delaware searching for waterfowl,
shore birds and early warblers. Meet at
7 AM at Lowe's on Union Deposit Rd.
Contact Jane at 657-2055 or
jbird558@aol.com

Saturday, May 7
Warbler Walk in Stony Creek Valley
(Dauphin County)

Tom Smith will lead our annual warbler
walk through the beautiful Stony Creek
area. Meet at 7AM by the PP& L
entrance along Stony Creek Valley Rd
near Dauphin. Call Tom at 921-2461.

Sunday, May 8
Warbler Walk in SGL 230
(Cumberland County)

Join Pete Lusardi for a tromp around
the game lands NE of Carlisle. Meet at
7AM at the eastern-most parking lot on
Route 944 (½ mile west of the intersection
of SR 34 and SR 944) Contact Pete at
243-6419 or plusardi@cet-inc.com.

Be Seen!

Remember to wear your blaze
orange while walking state
lands this spring.

Gobbler season is all of April
until noon each day (except
Sundays), and coyotes can be
hunted every day.

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
- ◆ BIRDING LISTS

for sale at the meetings. Please
see the display tables during
refreshments & conversation
prior to the program!