



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

May 2012

May 17

“Birds and Birding at Cape May”

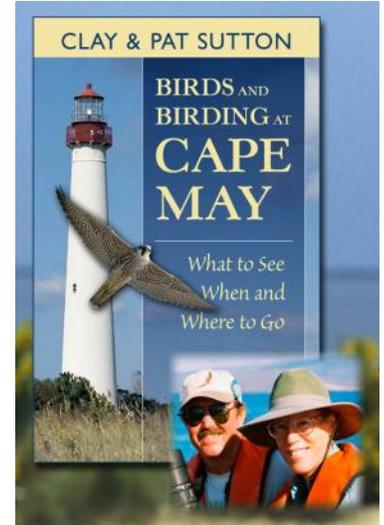
Clay and Pat Sutton

Clay & Pat Sutton are a husband and wife team of naturalists and writers whose careers and names are synonymous with their home town of Cape May, New Jersey, a place that has been aptly called the migration capitol of North America. They have keenly studied the natural world for over 30 years.

Cape May's ornithological history is unparalleled in North America, and over the years such titans as Alexander Wilson, John James Audubon, Witmer Stone, Edwin Way Teale, and Roger Tory Peterson have all worked and studied at Cape May. Clay and Pat will share the rich history of Cape May birding - from these early days until the emergent exciting discoveries of today. Expect a walk through time as they share images over the past 30 years and earlier, a journey that offers a unique perspective of both "Old Cape May" and the opportunities available today.

Come to the AAS Annual Banquet and enjoy this very special program!

See page 4 for banquet reservation form and details -- postmark deadline is May 11



Bring your checkbook (or cash) for the Silent Auction and book signing -- we can't take plastic, but it goes to a great cause! Do you have a nice item to donate? Call Susan Miller: 697-6696.

Field Trip Report by Jane Barnette

On Saturday, April 14, six of us set out to Sandy Point State Park near Annapolis. We arrived shortly before 9:00 and were greeted by a Great Blue Heron looking for leftovers at the marina. A walk along a lovely wooded trail yielded Chickadees, a pair of Hermit Thrushes, and many Ruby-crowned Kinglets to name some of the goodies. At the end of the trail we found a pair of Ospreys working on their nest atop a channel marker.

After returning to the parking lot we headed over to the Chesapeake and found a picnic table where we ate our lunches. The weather was perfect, and we enjoyed watching sailboats on the Bay, while both Ring-billed and Black-backed Gulls as well as countless Ospreys soared overhead.

We tore ourselves away from our picnic spot to explore another section of the park. In a grassy field we found quite a few Savannah Sparrows and a bright male

The red crest of the male Ruby-crowned Kinglet is often hidden, but is raised when the bird is agitated or displaying.



Eastern Bluebird. Along a road through another wooded area the only warbler of the trip made a brief appearance - a male American Redstart. There wasn't a whole lot of bird activity, so we left the park around 3:00, having seen 38 different species.

On the way back to Harrisburg, we stopped in York to check out a Bald Eagle nest. The female was at the nest when we arrived, and we got the impression she was feeding at least one unseen eaglet. The male did a fly-by, but later returned, and we watched with awe these two magnificent birds and their massive nest. We added several species to our list for the day, including Killdeer, Wood Ducks, both Rough-winged and Tree Swallows, and a pair of Belted Kingfishers.

We topped off a delightful day with a male American Kestrel that flew in and landed on a nearby sign. Including sightings along the road, at Sandy Point, and in York, we saw a total of 49 different species.



The male American Redstart “flashing” its colors in spring.

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Annette Mathes

A Wren Story

I thought I'd never see a bird actually fledge its nest. But in the summer of 2010 my friend Sue Strassner gave me a new wooden wren box that her husband, Fred, made. I hung it from the pergola of my deck, just outside the kitchen window. In a matter of days a pair of very noisy House Wrens filled the box with sticks and took up residence. Before long I could hear tiny chirping, and eventually the babies began to poke their heads out of the box when their parents arrived with food.

Over the next few days, the young birds became more and more aggressive, coming further out of the box to be the first to get fed. Sitting on my deck just a few feet away, I watched one evening as one of the babies kept coming almost completely out of the box, barely hanging on to the edge of the hole with his feet. He was successful in getting all of the food, but after one feeding he went too far—when he turned to go back into the box, his sibling was blocking the hole with its head. I saw the panic on his face and then suddenly, plop! He lost his grip and fell a few inches below the box onto the wisteria that was entwined around the pergola. He looked up at his sibling and his sibling looked down at him, and through their boisterous chatter seemed to say to each other, “Boy, are you going to be in trouble when mom gets home!”



Baby wrens waiting for their parents to return with food.



A House Wren striking its classic pose with upright tail.

The baby on the wisteria soon realized that he needed to find a safe place. As he tried to make his way through the branches, he would twirl around them, turning upside down and back up again in full 360-degree circles. While he was maneuvering, a car came down my neighbor's lane, catching his attention. His eyes grew wide and he looked around in wonder, and it dawned on me that he had never seen anything of the world other than what he could see out of the hole of the box—probably only his parents and the white siding of my house. It was a great moment.

Soon the parents came back, and immediately began to focus almost solely on the fledgling on the wisteria. The baby whose head was still poking out of the hole was dismayed to find that he now was being ignored. The parents continued to feed the fledged bird until it was almost dark and he was tucked away in the wisteria branches, barely able to keep his eyes open, apparently worn out from the ordeal.

The next day the nest and wisteria were empty. I think three birds fledged in all. I saw the family in the corner of the yard that day, but didn't locate them again. Hopefully they all made it! I truly enjoyed the experience, and have a new appreciation now for these feisty little brown birds with their turned up tail, curved bill, and endless scolding and chattering. And I sure am looking forward to hosting a beautiful new family this year!

What were you doing in April 1991?

Twenty one years ago, AAS had a tree planting along the Appalachian Trail in the Cumberland Valley A.T. Club's trail section just north of Trindle Road. Below are two snippets from the *Kingfisher Courier* article about the event. Note that the tree between Chris Atwood's ankle and shovel is only a few inches high. We thought it would be fun to find the trees 21 years later and see how they were doing!

Seven hardy members of Appalachian Audubon planted pine trees near the Appalachian Trail on Saturday, April 13. Pete Lusardi and Grace Randolph, both Audubon board members, are about to push soil around the roots of a seedling (visible behind Pete's shoe).

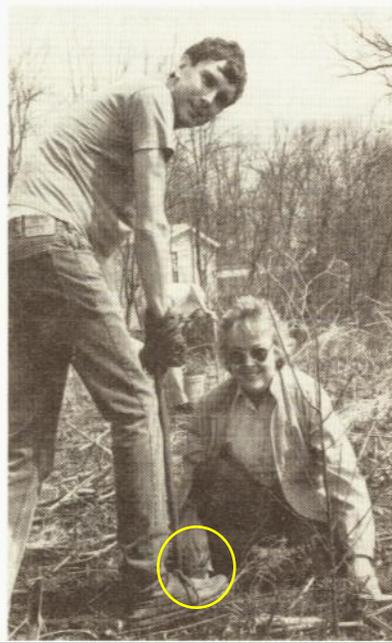
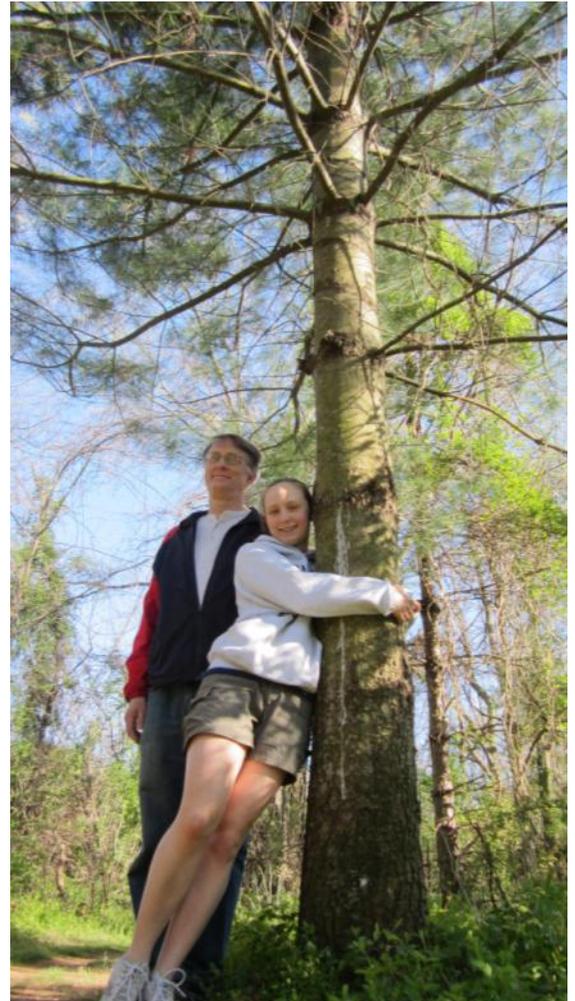
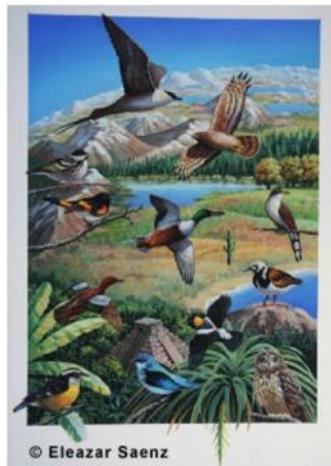


PHOTO BY KAREN ATWOOD

Chris Atwood, who co-chairs the *Kingfisher Courier* mailing team with Grace, towers over one of his tenderly planted pines. Give these teeny green babies about 20 years, and THEN stand next to one, Chris!



Chris Atwood in April 2012, with his daughter Julia (age 17), standing next to one of the white pine trees planted by AAS volunteers 21 years ago to provide a visual screen for A.T. hikers from a nearby housing development.



© Eleazar Saenz

Where do Pennsylvania birds spend winter?

The Sierra Club Presents:

Gene Wingert "Three Days in the Everglades"

A guided hike will follow the presentation

Sat May 12th on
International
Migratory Bird Day
1-2:30 pm
At Wildwood Nature Center

Sponsored by your local Sierra Club – Governor Pinchot Group

100 Wildwood Way Harrisburg, PA 17110

Thank you to our sponsor:

LOST CREEK SHOE SHOP

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Aden Troyer
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Please join us for the Annual AAS Banquet

(this replaces our May meeting at the Church)

RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY 11!

When: Thursday, May 17

Where: Radisson Penn Harris Hotel
Governor's Ballroom
1150 Camp Hill Bypass, Camp Hill, PA 17011

Program:

6:00 p.m. Silent Auction (cash or checks only), Cash Bar
6:45 p.m. Reception, followed by speaker

Banquet Reception Menu Details

Served "hors d'oeuvre style" with table seating.

Chef-attended **Pasta Station** with Choice of Sauces and Toppings, Garlic Bread and Bread Sticks; Chef-attended **Stir Fry Station** with Sesame Marinated Chicken Breast and Mongolian Beef Strips Tossed with a Bounty of Stir-fried Vegetables and served with Fried Rice; **Salad Bar**; Assorted Pies and Cakes; Hot Coffee; and Iced Tea



Birds and Birding at Cape May

(with book signing) **Clay and Pat Sutton**

Cape May is a major migratory bottleneck and one of the most famous bird watching destinations in all of North America, where over 444 species of birds have been found. **Clay and Pat Sutton** are veteran naturalists and noted authors who have lived and worked at Cape May their entire careers. Their program, based on the landmark book of the same name, will detail major phenomena such as the autumn raptor migration, the internationally-known spring shorebird gatherings, and the seasonal concentrations of waterfowl, seabirds, waders, owls, and songbirds. Hear all that makes Cape May great from the insiders' point of view!

Reservation Form for AAS Banquet on May 17, 2012

Please mail this form with your check by May 9 -- must be received by the 11th!

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make reservations for _____ Adults or Youth (12 years and up) @ **\$32 each**

I also want to donate to the AAS Camp Scholarship Program \$ _____ **Total included \$** _____

*Mail this form along with your check payable to AAS or Appalachian Audubon Society to:
Andy Groff (AAS Treasurer), 1508 Carlisle Road, Camp Hill, PA 17011*

Note: If you are also sending in a donation for the appeal, both can be in the same check, but include both forms.

KCE

Help Save Tundra Swan Habitat at Middle Creek

This year we're asking our members to help preserve the farmland in and around the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. The Lebanon Valley Conservancy, along with partners such as the Pennsylvania Game Commission, created the "Middle Creek Initiative" to insure that adequate farmland is retained in southeastern Lebanon County to protect the habitat of Middle Creek's migratory waterfowl, especially the Tundra Swan.

The dollars we raise will help to protect the area farmland by buying easements from the landowners. These easements will ensure that the properties are protected in perpetuity from development.

Tundra swans — identified as a "species of greatest conservation need" in the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan — are attracted to Middle Creek annually because it has and continues to provide a secure resting and water-roosting area for them from late February through early March. The large birds converge on Middle Creek as a migratory stopover and staging area before they continue north to the arctic region to breed.

Their stay at Middle Creek ranges from a few days for some to a few weeks for others. The birds are attracted to local privately-owned farmlands that yield winter wheat and waste grain in harvested cornfields. (Fortunately, winter wheat is a hearty crop that can recover from some grazing.) *Their dependency on Middle Creek in spring migrations led to the wildlife management area being identified as a "globally significant important bird area" in 2010.*

The problem that is beginning to surface around Middle Creek is that some of the fields tundra swans

depend upon for feeding are being consumed by housing subdivisions and other development. The Middle Creek Initiative partnership was formed to protect vital and historic tundra swan feeding and roosting areas.



If lands cannot be preserved, substantial numbers of swans may no longer be able to use Middle Creek. (The highest recorded number in one year is 14,700.)

That would open the door for tundra swans to encounter new threats in their quest for food and sanctuary on their annual journey north. It also would increase their risk of arriving at breeding grounds in poor condition, which would jeopardize their reproductivity and overall health.

The continent's eastern population of tundra swans is better off without these dangers encroaching further on their already complicated relationship with and dependency on humans.

That's why the Middle Creek Initiative was organized, to protect tundra swans through the preservation of farmland and open space through conservation easements.

Every \$5,000 raised will help protect one acre of farmland from development.

Yes, I'll help protect Tundra Swan Habitat at Middle Creek!

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

***100% of your dollars will be used to preserve the farmland in and around Middle Creek.**

I also want to donate to the AAS Camp Scholarship Program \$ _____

Total Donation: \$ _____



Mail this form along with your check payable to Appalachian Audubon Society to:

Andy Groff (AAS Treasurer)
1508 Carlisle Road
Camp Hill, PA 17011

KCE



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May 2012

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MAY & JUNE FIELD TRIPS

May 5 (Saturday) Warbler Walk in Stony Creek Valley

Join warbler expert **Tom Smith** in this annual trip through the Stony Creek area to see, hear, and learn about many species of warblers. Meet at 7 AM by the PPL substation along Stony Creek Valley Road. Contact Tom at 921-2461.



Male Magnolia Warbler

May 6 (Sunday) Warbler Walk at SGL 230

Pete Lusardi leads a walk along the base of the Blue Mountain in Carlisle Springs to look for the migrating and summer resident warblers and other songbirds. Meet at 7 AM in the easternmost parking lot. Call Pete at 243-6419.

May 12

Pennsylvania Migration Count

Join this annual scientific study of counting as many bird species as possible within the day. Dauphin County contact: Carl Juris, 564-1479 or hbgbdrds@verion.net; Cumberland County contact: Vern Gauthier, 385-9526 or pabirder@gmail.com.

June 2

Breeding Birds of the Tuscarora State Forest

Cumberland County Compiler **Vern Gauthier** guides a search for warblers and other woodland breeders of the Tuscarora Ridge. We'll also stop at local fields to search for Bobolinks, Dickcissel, and Blue Grosbeak. Meet at 7 AM at the Colonel Denning State Park Pavilion One parking area. Contact Vern at 385-9526 or pabirder@gmail.com.



Male Dickcissel