The Wandering Tattler

SPRING 2014

President's Message

Wow! What a winter this has been, and since I am writing this during the final week of February, we are by no means out of the woods.

Last November I traveled to Uganda and South Africa, which was indeed the trip of a lifetime. In the northern part of Uganda we took a launch on the Upper Nile where I saw and photographed many interesting wildlife, including a pair of Bee Eaters which were by far the most colorful birds I have ever seen. We also got up close to Murchison Falls, for which this spectacular national park was named. I also had the opportunity to go on a wild Chimpanzee trek in the rain forest. The next seven days I spent in South Africa where I visited Kruger National Park, which is as large as Wales. The wildlife is spectacular, especially the elephants with their babies.

Hopefully I will be able to present a full program on this trip next season at the Anthracite Museum either in November or February. Stay tuned!

There has been no shortage of snow this winter, but then again snow is not a bad word when used in connection with Snowy Owl or Snow Bunting. The first made its presence known when it perched atop one of the hangars at the airport in West Hazleton and allowed several of us the opportunity to see this magnificent bird from the Arctic north from a distance of less than 60 yards.

On the annual Harvey's Lake trip a large flock of Snow Buntings was seen in the Sordoni fields. See more on this trip elsewhere in this issue.

We are certainly all ready for spring. Come join us on one of our exciting field trips and as always, "Good Birding."

Bill Speare, President

Snowy Owl in the winter of snowy owls. If you didn't see one, you just weren't looking.
©Sharon Templin

(Editor's note: I didn't see one)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This schedule covers programs and outings through July 2014. Locations are familiar to most LAS members. However, if you desire more information regarding any of the events listed or need directions, please call the appropriate leader or contact person who will be happy to answer your questions.

Call the listed leader or contact person the evening before the event if you have questions concerning possible weather cancellations. Dress appropriately for weather and terrain on all outings. On longer distance trips, car-pooling is in order and can be coordinated with the trip leader or on the day of the trip. Drivers – have a full tank; riders - help share the cost with the driver. Pack a lunch for trips beginning in the mornings. Bring you own binoculars, scopes, etc.

Apr 12	**Saturday**	**9:00 am. LAS Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup – Snake Road. Meet in the first parking lot in McDade Park, Scranton. Show up and help out if you possibly can. Contact: Sue Zenke (563-1565).**
Apr 26	**Saturday**	**8:00am. Nature walk at the Spring Hill Farm. Located along PA Rte 524 about 1 mile east of Lackawanna State Park. The farm is on the north side of the road. Meet at the Pond House at the top of the hill. Contact: Derry Bird (945-5226).**
May 3	**Saturday**	**8:00am. Nature walk on Iroquois Trail, Tunkhannock. Take Rte. 6 from Factoryville toward Tunkhannock. Pass Deer Park Lumber on right. See Perkins Restaurant & Bakery (at Shadowbrook) on right. From there, go one mile. See Ace-Robbins, Inc. on right. At far end of Ace-Robbins parking lot, make a sharp right onto Sunnyside Road. Go ½ mile (past cemetery on left) to parking lot on left. Contact: Beverly Johnson (378-2194).**
May 9-10	**Fri-Saturday**	**5:00pm-5:00pm LAS High Count Day. Count as many bird species as you can within a 30 mile radius of the Lackawanna County Courthouse. Then bring your count to tally at a potluck dinner starting at 6:00pm, May 10, at the house of Mike and Barb Carey. Even if you didn't count, join in the fun at the dinner anyway. Call Mike Carey (575-5293) for information and directions to the dinner.**
May 17	**Saturday**	**8:30a.m. Nature walk through Nescopeck State Park. Meet at the Park office along Honey Hole Rd. The road can be reached from PA Rte. 309 just south of the I-80 underpass. Contact: Jim Montgomery (759-1322).**
May 31	**Saturday**	**9:00 A bird walk on Dr. Doug Sheldon's property in Susquehanna County. Take I-81 North to Exit 211 Lenox and meet in the parking lot of Bingham's Restaurant along PA Rt. 92 near the exit. If you want a good breakfast, meet at the restaurant at 7:45. Contact: Bill Speare (586-8343).**

June 7 Saturday	**9:00a.m. Nature walk at Prompton State Park. The park is just off Rt. 6 on PA Rt. 170 north. Meet at the first parking lot near the dam. Contact: Bill Speare (586-8343).**
June 13-14 Fri-Saturday	**BIOBLITZ at Lackawanna State Park from 3:00pm Friday – 3:00pm Saturday. Watch or participate as a variety of experts on all forms of life (from algae to mammals) try to identify everything in the park. Let Angela Lambert know if you are interested in helping out in any way (945-3239).**
June 21 Saturday	**9:00 Nature walk at Lake Carey. We will meet at the convenience store on Rt. 29 in Lemon (formerly Davan's). Contact: Cheryle and Mark Catalano (760-6556).**
July 26 Saturday	**10:00am. Ferns and flowers at Nescopeck State Park led by Jim Montgomery (857-0141). Meet at the Park office along Honey Hole Rd. The road can be reached from PA Rte. 309 just south of the I-80 underpass. You must also pre-register with the state park for this event. Call the park at 570-403-2006.**

The current calendar and full newsletter can be accessed online at:
http://www.scranton.edu/faculty/carey/pdf/lascal.pdf

EAGLE WATCH 2014

by
Gene Gallagher

Since our daughter Beth was planning to drive Lois and me on the annual January eagle watch trip, she gave up her usual Saturday run with a group of friends. But then the trip was cancelled because of bad weather. The next day at 9:30 the phone rang. It was Beth announcing she was bored and was going looking for eagles. If we wanted, we were welcome to come along. So we dropped everything and met her at the Viewmont Mall. We were on our way on a beautiful morning. We spotted a red-tailed hawk along I-84, and even though the river was not frozen at Milford Beach, we spotted no birds.

We made the usual wrong turn in Port Jervis, and after correcting we stopped at the boat launch and the resort. But all we saw was a Cooper hawk. After Rio Reservoir, we spotted ~35 black ducks and 25 common mergansers frolicking in the water in an open area along Plank Road. We also saw our first immature eagle here. At Mongaup we saw 2 red-tailed hawks, 3 immature eagles, and one adult.

There were also numerous birds at the feeder near the blind. We saw a red-breasted nuthatch (Bill Speare's favorite), mourning doves, white-breasted nuthatches, blue jays, chickadees, juncos, and gulls. The treat of the day was to see an immature eagle swooping down on a merganser, but fortunately for the duck, he was unsuccessful in catching it.

Bald Eagle over the Delaware
©John Goldman

HARVEY'S LAKE TRIP
by
Derry Bird

This has been one of the worst winters as far as the weather is concerned in years. One of the better days was Saturday February 22nd. It was at least partly sunny with temperatures in the 40's and low 50's in the area. A group of winter weary LAS members began the day at the Lakeside Skillet for a hearty breakfast. We then began what turned into a rather uneventful birding trip in the Harvey's Lake area.

The lake was frozen over, which was no surprise, but the bubblers near many docks were bubbling away. The open water provided by these is where we usually find waterfowl. This year the Redheads, Canvasbacks, and Scaup were nowhere to be found. Canada Geese and Mallards were there in small numbers, and we did find a few Ring-necked Ducks, Common and Hooded Mergansers. Early on there was a female Wood Duck with a group of at least 30 Mallards a short distance from the lake in the outlet stream.

One area loaded with feeders near the lake was bare except for a Blue Jay, a Chickadee, and a Junco. Even the wooded section where we have found Barred Owls in the past was a no go. That area has been timbered in the recent past which may have something to do with it.

We saved the best for last. At the nearby Sordoni's Farm a group of Wild Turkeys ambled across the road. But the best, at least in my eyes, was a small flock of Snow Buntings which flushed from some roadside bushes and scattered to the wind ahead of us. That alone made the trip worth while. It has been a few years since I was able to add the Snow Buntings to my yearly list.

Snow Bunting

NATURE QUIZ
by
Gerry Klebauskas

New question for this issue:

Anticipating an early spring (sorry Gerry, it didn't happen – ed.), let us take a look at the order of birds known as Caprimulgiformes, including the families of nightjars, nighthawks, frogmouths, potoos, and oilbirds. The family name ofr our common nighthawk (which is not as common as it used to be) is Caprimulgidae. What does that latin name mean in English: A) insect eater B) night flyer C) goat sucker D) rain bringer

Starting with this issue, the answer for each quiz question will be in the same issue. So look for the answer to this question on the next page.

Answer to last issue's question:

The groups of vertebrates that have taken to flying using their own muscles are bats, birds, and a group of flying reptiles known as pterosaurs.

Primitive wingless insects are first found in the Devonian Period (350-400 million years ago – mya); winged insects are somewhat younger. The oldest known pterosaurs are known from 225 mya. The oldest bird Archaeopteryx 150 mya, and the oldest bats 50 mya.

Flying fish, flying squirrels, flying lemurs and colugas, and flying snakes do not use muscle activity to power flight. They are just gliders.

Returning to pterosaurs, fossil evidence shows a wingspan ranging from 1.5-39 feet, the largest from a species known as Quetzalcoatlus discovered in Big Bend National Park, Texas. It is the largest known flying creature in the history of the planet. But perhaps there are larger ones yet to be found.

Answer to this issue's question:

According the "Encyclopedia of Birds" edited by Christopher Perrins, goat herdsmen in the past flushing the big mouthed nightjars from their pastures and hearing their "night jarring" voices through the wee hours thought that they were the cause of their goats failing to give milk the next morning. They decided that these strange birds were the culprits and gave them the name goatsucker. Besides the common nighthawk and nightjars, other goatsuckers include whip-poor-will, chuck-wills-widow, poor-will, pauraque, and lesser nighthawk.

(Editor's note: I'm going to have to give Gerry time to give all of his answers in the same issue. I know it's a tough change to make. So…..

By the way, the poor-will is thought to be the only bird that…….. (Answer in the next issue)

Although I'm guessing the answer is: ……sings a song that sounds like "poor-will". (ed.)

DONATIONS TO LAS

In memoryof Elaine Thomas from her nephew.

From Dolores Trycinski in honor of Carol Lizell's birthday.

John and Elna Wargo – a general contribution to the society.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE HARVEY'S LAKE TRIP

An article by Geri Gibbons printed in the Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader on February 22.

"Group Enjoys Friendship That is For the Birds"

HARVEYS LAKE — Members of the Lackawanna Audubon Society share more than a love of birds and nature.

The group also shares a deep sense of friendship and passion that has evolved over decades. That was evident as members gathered at the Lakeside Skillet Saturday prior to a bird-watching trip around Harveys Lake.

Derry Bird said the organization is unique in that each member seems to have a special talent or skill benefiting the entire group.

“We have ornithologists, etymologists, photographers and other experts,” he said. “Each perspective bringing a broader understanding to the entire group.”

The society is an independent organization centered in Lackawanna County, originally called the Scranton Bird Club. In existence since 1915, many current attendees have been involved for over 30 years.

On Saturday, a hearty breakfast was followed by a drive around Harveys Lake looking for birds — some rare and some common to the area and the season. Mother Nature fully cooperated with temperatures approaching 50 degrees and snow surrounding the icy lake, providing the perfect setting for bird watching.

Participants stressed that in addition identifying such birds as cardinals and blue birds by sight, many members identify birds by their calls.

Karen Hiller, an avid “birder” since 13, said she will often recognize a bird by its song, even if she doesn’t see it.

Birder Lois Jean Gallagher also enjoys becoming familiar with the sound of various birds, saying it gives her an additional tool to enjoy bird watching.

The group also sometimes uses a listening devise to better hear calls of the birds they come upon.

Member Jim Montgomery is a published botanist and brings a sense of context to the birds within their environment.

Jon Thomas describes the group’s gatherings as often being “like a workshop,” an opportunity to exchange information and learn new techniques.

Many members of the group have favorite memories of unusual birds they have spotted.

Bird especially remembers traveling to Hazleton to see a snowy owl. Native to Canada, the bird migrates south when there is a shortage of food.

Hiller fondly remembers seeing a scissor-tailed flycatcher, native to Texas.

As Gene Gallagher sat amidst approximately a dozen birders gathered, he called them a “bunch of great people,” many of whom he had known for over 30 years.

Gallagher said both the hobby and the society provided opportunity to be involved in outdoor activity, exercising both the mind and the body.

He said he appreciated the mild weather on such a beautiful day, but added “birds are out in all kinds of weather.”

Bill Speare, a two-term president of the group, said the society looks forward to continuing to gather, bird watch and learn from each other. The group usually meets every other Saturday, sometimes locally and sometimes traveling to areas of special interest to attendees.

Christmas Bird Count 2013 Results

By Lisa and Paul Mundy

The 114th Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 21, 2013. Seventeen birders from the Lackawanna Audubon Society participated in this years count. The ten sectors surveyed produced a total of 48 species and 7028 individual birds.

The LAS Countdown Potluck Supper was held this year at Beth Gallagher's house. Over thirty members and guests attended the traditional dinner which as always featured a wide variety of delicious foods and deserts.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the Christmas Bird Count and extend a special thanks to Beth Gallagher for her kind hospitality.

Species	
1. Great Blue Heron	1
2. Mute Swan	2
3. Canada Goose	85
4. Mallard	81
5. Black Duck	12
6. Common Goldeneye	2
7. Common Merganser	36
8. Hooded Merganser	4
9. Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
10. Cooper's Hawk	2
11. Peregrine Falcon	2
12. Red-shouldered Hawk	1
13. Red-tailed Hawk	14
14. American Kestrel	2
15. Wild Turkey	73
16. Herring Gull	250
17. Ring-billed Gull	1285
18. Rock Pigeon	584
19. Mourning Dove	232
20. Eastern Screech Owl	6
21. Belted Kingfisher	1
22. Pileated Woodpecker	5
23. Red-bellied Woodpecker	8
24. Downy Woodpecker	47
25. Hairy Woodpecker	12
26. Blue Jay	152
27. American Crow	1373
28. Fish Crow	5
29. Common Raven	4

30. Tufted Titmouse	73
31. Black-capped Chickadee	276
32. White-breasted Nuthatch	46
33. Carolina Wren	15
34. Northern Mockingbird	17
35. American Robin	18
36. Eastern Bluebird	23
37. Hermit Thrush	1
38. Golden-crowned Kinglet	7
39. European Starling	1070
40. Northern Cardinal	100
41. Eastern Towhee	1
42. American Tree Sparrow	13
43. Song Sparrow	25
44. White-throated Sparrow	14
45. Dark-eyed Junco	227
46. House Finch	44
47. American Goldfinch	72
48. House Sparrow	704
Total Species	Grand Total
48	7028

In addition to count totals

Merlin	1	seen 12-19-13
American Crows	10,000+	seen 12-23-13

The usual suspects at the Christmas Count dinner.

The Mundys arrive at the tally potluck dinner.

At the November program on barn owls

Three photos above ©Carol Lizell

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Address service requested