

APPALACHIAN AUDUBON SOCIETY

February 2006

## ***BIRDING THE SOUTH TEXAS GULF COAST AND THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY***

The American Birding Association rates Texas as the # 1 birding destination in the lower 48 states. It's no surprise why! Nearly 500 bird species have been documented in the biologically diverse four counties that comprise the lower Rio Grande Valley. Further, ornithologists term forty-eight of those species "specialties" because they are usually found nowhere else in North America, or are especially numerous here.

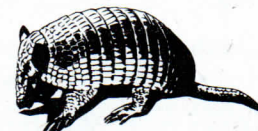
During our evening slide program we'll bird the Texas Gulf Coast from Corpus Christi to Brownsville on the U.S.- Mexico border, with stops at Aransas NWR, Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens, Laguna Atascosa NWR, and South Padre Island. We'll see Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Red-crowned Parrot, Groove-billed Ani, Chachalaca, endangered Whooping Crane and more.

The next leg of our adventure will be to look for more South Texas specialties along the Rio Grande from Brownsville west to Salineno, Chapeno, and San Ygnacio. We will make "stops" in McAllen, at Sabal Palm Audubon Center and Sanctuary, Santa Ana NWR, and Bentsen-Rio Valley State Park. We'll observe Altamira and Audubon's Oriole, Clay-colored Robin, Ladder-backed and Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Least Grebe, Brown Jay, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl at El Canelo ranch. Along the way we'll see other fauna such as American Alligator, Nine-banded Armadillo, Grey Wood Rat, Fox Squirrel, and Collared Peccary, and enjoy the scenery and flora of South Texas as well.

Join Appalachian Audubon and our presenter, Jon Dale, long-time member, on **Thursday, February 16, 2006, at 7:30 p.m.** (see sidebar, p. 2, for location). Jon has made presentations to our chapter and other groups on local flora and fauna as well as birding adventures in Southeast Arizona and Central California.



***JOIN US! THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup>, 7:30 P.M.***



NEXT MONTH: *Thursday, March 16, 2006: "Birds and Wildlife of Israel"*



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Newsletter Editor - Karen Atwood: 766-0146

[atwoodphoto@onemain.com](mailto:atwoodphoto@onemain.com)

(Please contact before emailing files > 100KB)

#### Newsletter Mailing Team

- Ron and Marcia Wilson: 737-7973

- Barbara Collins

Programs - Ramsay Koury: 761-1871

Publicity - Jan Getgood: 566-9875

Trout Run - Jon Dale: 432-0335

- Kathy Kuchwara

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## ADOPT-A-BIRDER - HURRICANE KATRINA

Appalachian Audubon has "adopted" a birder couple in Mississippi. Their names are Ned and Lucy Boyajian. They lost their home and most of their possessions in Hurricane Katrina. They have relocated and are trying to put their lives back together. Our chapter has volunteered to help them replace their birding library. **Please see the list of books, below. If you have one or more of these and are willing to donate it, please contact me (761-1871; [rkoury123@aol.com](mailto:rkoury123@aol.com)).** The Boyajian's will appreciate it. Thanks. — Ramsay Koury

<u>Advanced Birding</u> (Kauffman)	<u>Birds of the West Indies</u>
<u>Birds of Belize</u> (Jones)	(Raffaele)
<u>Birds of Chile</u> (Jamarillo)	<u>Field Guide to Hawks</u>
<u>Birds of Colombia</u> (Hilty)	(Clark and Wheeler)
<u>Birds of Ecuador</u> (Ridgely)	<u>Gulls</u> (Grant)
<u>Birds of Mexico</u> (Howell)	<u>Seabirds</u> (Enticott)
<u>Birds of South America</u>	<u>Seabirds</u> (Harrison)
(Ridgely and Tudor)	<u>Studies in Neotropical</u>
<u>Birds of Surinam</u>	<u>Ornithology</u> (Remsen)
(Haverschmidt)	<u>Terns</u> (Olsen and Larsson)
<u>Birds of Venezuela</u> (Hilty)	<u>Warblers</u> (Dunn and Garrett)

### 9TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count will span February 17-20, 2006. Get the whole family involved in this citizen science project! Identify birds right at your backyard feeders and provide the species and numbers to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. **THERE IS NO COST FOR THIS!** School classrooms can get involved, too. You can also report birds from a park or other public lands. One of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind, this count allows people to enjoy birds and help science at the same time. It doesn't matter if the counters are novices or experts, their participation is important in helping North America's birds. For more information go to this website: [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

Appalachian Audubon monthly (Sept.-May) programs normally take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month in Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill, at 7:30 p.m. **Exceptions are announced in this newsletter**, as are field trips and other activities.

#### PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Program Location: Take New Cumberland exit off I-83; cross Carlisle Road. Turn left onto Allendale Way; take first left at Deerfield Road (from the south, take New Cumberland exit, turn left onto Carlisle Rd., left on Cedar Cliff Rd., left on Allendale Way, then left onto Deerfield Rd.), to the church.



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY —Ramsay Koury

The 2005 Harrisburg Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday, December 17th. As part of the count, I cover the New Cumberland area and part of Fairview Township. This year my team included Joan Renninger, Gary Labelle and Rob Ross. The big story of the day was the American Robins! We had robins at first light and saw them throughout the day, almost until dusk. We had them at almost every stop. The largest group was several hundred flying overhead while we were along the Susquehanna River. There were so many that we had difficulty counting them. Our final tally for the day was **1,001!!** Other groups on the count also had many robins - one group had over 2000 of them! Robins were not the only good birds on the count. There was an abundant supply of berries this fall, which attracted other berry-eating birds. We had several dozen Cedar Waxwings and many Hermit Thrushes. We also found other birds that normally don't stay around in the winter. We found two Gray Catbirds, a Brown Thrasher and three Eastern Towhees. Four Fox Sparrows were another good find. Much of the river was frozen on count day, but in the open areas we found several interesting duck species: Greater Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser. This fall also brought many Red-breasted Nuthatches to the area, and we were fortunate to find three of these neat birds. Next year's count will be held on **Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006** – please put it on your calendar and consider joining us! **In addition to birders in the field we need drivers, stop-over “break” houses, and backyard feeder observers.** Please contact me (761-1871; [rkoury123@aol.com](mailto:rkoury123@aol.com)) if you would like to know more, or would like to be contacted come December.



### UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

**Susquehanna River Waterfowl: Saturday, February 25.** We will check several sites between Dauphin and Middletown for waterfowl. The group will meet at 9:00 AM. Phone trip leader Pete Fox at 583-2639 (please call earlier than 9:00 PM) or email [pfox@raiderweb.org](mailto:pfox@raiderweb.org).

**Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Waterfowl Survey: Sunday, March 12.** Join Scott Bills of the PA State Game Commission for this true Ned Smith tradition as we survey for waterfowl around the *old Millersburg Gun Club Headquarters*, at the mouth of the Wiconisco Creek. We especially invite families to attend and learn the basics of waterfowl identification. Please dress appropriately for the weather. Telescopes and refreshments will be provided. Survey time: 8am – 1pm. Phone trip leader Pete Fox at 583-2639 (please call earlier than 9:00 PM), or email [pfox@raiderweb.org](mailto:pfox@raiderweb.org).

***Directions to the old Millersburg Gun Club HQ:*** Coming from the south, immediately after the bridge coming into Millersburg, turn left off Rte. 147 onto Keystone Street and follow it to the river. The headquarters building is on the corner of Keystone Street and River Street, at the mouth of the Wiconisco Creek.

### AAS CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS — With New Offering for Teens!

Appalachian Audubon invites you to apply for a scholarship to the Educator's Workshop or to the Maine Audubon Youth Ecology Camp. We award scholarships to applicants showing a strong interest in conservation and seeking enhanced environmental knowledge through a unique Audubon Camp experience. Camp offerings include Bird Studies, Coastal Maine Natural History and Kayaking. All camps have limited enrollment, but we are interested in hearing from all interested applicants.

One educator will be chosen to attend the one-week Educator's Camp. Two students, 11-13 years old, will be chosen to attend the 7-day Audubon Youth Ecology Camp on Hog Island, Maine. **We are now also offering brand-new scholarship opportunities to 14-17 year olds.** All camps are held in July and August. Students will gain valuable experiences in the outdoors while they gain a sense of stewardship for the natural world. The curriculum includes Marine Biology, Pond Life, Oceanography, Geology, Forest Ecology, and Ornithology. Sleeping accommodations and hearty meals are included, but you must provide your own transportation to and from the camp. Visit the website [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) to find out more. **Deadline to apply is March 1, 2005. Contact Pete Fox at 583-2639, or [pfox@raiderweb.org](mailto:pfox@raiderweb.org).**



## LOCAL HAWK WATCH – FALL 2005 MIGRATION SUMMARY



A group of dedicated hawk-watchers, led by Dave Grove, counted raptors at the nearby Waggoner's Gap Hawk Watch from August 1 through December 31, 2005. They watched on 141 different days, and spent 1,115 hours counting hawks in all kinds of weather: 90-degree heat, ice storms, rain, fog and wind. These observers counted 21,582 raptors as they migrated south! Seasonal records were set for Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin and both Bald and Golden eagles. The Bald Eagle record was especially impressive, as this year's total exceeded the previous record by 107 birds! They also counted Monarch butterflies, totaling 4,461 for the season, which represents a tremendous increase over the previous year, in which the total was a mere 156. The number of visitors to the site this season was also exceptional: 1,860 people visited the Waggoner's Gap site.

Waggoner's Gap is owned and maintained by Pennsylvania Audubon with the help of many Appalachian Audubon members. The site is located north of Carlisle on Route 74, at the top of the mountain. The parking lot is on the north side of the ridge; park there and walk up to the hawk watch. All Appalachian Audubon members are welcome and are encouraged to visit Waggoner's Gap when the season begins this fall. Hawks are counted all fall, but the peak time is from mid-September to mid-November. See you on the mountain!

### WAGGONER'S GAP, AUTUMN 2005, FINAL COUNTS:

Black Vulture	95	Broad-winged Hawk	4123
Turkey Vulture	1814	Red-tailed Hawk	4938
Osprey	450	Rough-legged Hawk	12
Bald Eagle	303	Golden Eagle	242
Northern Harrier	332	American Kestrel	397
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7020	Merlin	147
Cooper's Hawk	1054	Peregrine Falcon	66
Northern Goshawk	103	Unidentified Raptor	219
Red-shouldered Hawk	267		
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,582</b>

**Audubon**

### Join Appalachian Audubon Society AND National Audubon Society

AT THE SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY RATE OF \$20 (\$15 FOR SENIORS & STUDENTS)

This application is for **NEW** members joining Appalachian and National Audubon for the **FIRST** time (*for members renewing, renewal information will come to you directly from National Audubon*). This Introductory Offer includes membership in both National and Appalachian Audubon societies, the beautiful *Audubon* magazine, and our own *Kingfisher Courier* newsletter. Please send the form below, with **check** payable to **National Audubon Society**, to: Appalachian Audubon, PO Box 15123, Harrisburg, PA 17105-5123.

New Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Senior Membership? \_\_\_\_\_ Student?: \_\_\_\_\_ **U07 7XCH**

### Chapter-Only Membership: \$12.00 per year

Chapter-Only members receive the *Kingfisher Courier* and support the local Chapter. Make **check** payable to **Appalachian Audubon Society**; send to: Appalachian Audubon, PO Box 15123, Harrisburg, PA 17105-5123

Chapter-Only Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ **U07 7XCH**





## LIVING GARDENS

— Lorrie Preston, Penn State Master Gardener - Cumberland County



It was the morning of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006...a new day, in a new year. I opened the floor-length window blinds onto the backyard to let in the morning light and to see what was happening out there on this particular day. I immediately recognized this was not your average day in the backyard wildlife garden. A party was going on, and I felt like a late arrival. Wow! The whole area was absolutely teeming with life.



American Robins seemed to be everywhere, certainly an unexpected sight this early in the season. Several of them were hopping around the perimeter of my water garden, taking turns getting to the area where they could safely take a drink. This pond, I believe, is what makes my backyard such an attractive stopping off place for birds. Other robins perused the lawn area, now visible again after the snow melt. The tree tops in my shallow woods were also filled with robins. As I opened another window blind, they must have perceived the movement, and they all took off flying in the same direction, only to turn back and settle in the trees at the other end of the property. There must have been 30 or 40 of them.

In the high limbs of an ash tree in the woods, two squirrels chased each other with glee. Out onto the skinniest branches one ran at top speed, with his buddy right on his tail. Chasing and leaping and always finding their mark, it looked like delightful fun. Another squirrel galloped across the backyard with six or eight-foot strides, so as not to get his belly wet in the grass. One lone cottontail rabbit sat quietly near a thicket along the hedgerow, prepared to run and hide if danger approached.



At one end of the platform feeder, a Red-bellied Woodpecker carefully selected his morning breakfast, while two Mourning Doves pecked and hunted for their favorite seeds on the other side. Several cardinals waited in the native dogwood shrubs at the woodland's edge for their turn at the feeder. I have had as many as seven cardinals here at once this winter – it must have been a good year for them. Beneath the feeder, several sparrows scratched to come up with a delectable morsel.



Nearby in the grass, a Dark-eyed Junco foraged for wayward seeds. Another junco searched the fountain grasses, almost seedless now, at either side of the steps leading up to the deck. The sparrows and juncos have been feeding on the seeds daily since they ripened in the fall, a sight amusing to behold, as the little birds hop into the air, grab a seed, and land back on the ground to eat it.

Two olive-brown American Goldfinches hung upside down, feeding on Nyger seed on a sock feeder, only 8 feet from the window, while another sat on the shepherd's hook, waiting his turn.



This is why I garden for wildlife - to be surrounded by nature and celebrate the simple joys of living, even during the bleakest months of the year. This is my reward.







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**FEBRUARY 2006**  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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### **GIFT CARD PROGRAM**

As a fundraiser, Appalachian Audubon is selling gift cards to Giant and Weis grocery stores. These stores are kind enough to give non-profit organizations a discount on gift cards to their stores. We will have them for sale at our monthly programs and hope you will consider using these cards to purchase your groceries. There is **no additional cost to you**, beyond the face value of the cards, but your use of them will help our chapter in its fundraising efforts. Thank you!

### **MOVING...? GOING ON A LONG VACATION...?**

To receive AAS mailings when away on long vacations or after moving, PLEASE contact our AAS chapter membership chair (see page 2) with your address change information – this saves us money while keeping you current with our activities. Filling out a change of address with the US Post Office (USPS) will **NOT** accomplish this; our USPS address database is handled by National Audubon. We incur a \$37 charge per item for each piece of incorrectly addressed, returned mail. Please help!