

January Meeting: Birding Northern Nevada and Utah



Thursday, January 18 at 7:30 p.m. *(for location and directions, see page*

In August 1997, seven stalwart birders from the Harrisburg area, lead by Cliff Jones, ventured into the majestic Ruby Mountains of northeastern Nevada in search of the elusive Himalayan Snowcock. This trip is considered one of the greatest birding quests in the lower forty-eight states. Past presenter Jon Dale, one of the participants, chronicles this challenging trip that begins at the group's "base camp" in Elko, Nevada and progresses to the spectacular Ruby Mountains, known as "Nevada's Swiss Alps." Follow these determined birders as they ascend into the stunningly beautiful Lamoille Canyon area to trailheads at 8,600 feet. Here they begin the strenuous climbs into Right Fork and Thomas Canyons to reach glacially carved cirques at over 10,200 feet where this bird is found. Enjoy breathtaking views, alpine vistas, wildflowers, and other higher altitude bird species such as Clark's Nutcracker, American Dipper, Mountain Bluebird, Green-tailed Towhee, and Black Rosy-finch.

The second part of the presentation will take you on a fascinating tour of Deseret Ranch, Utah's largest piece of privately owned property at nearly 250,000 acres. Owned by the Mormon Church, Deseret Ranch is managed according to the principles of holistic range management. Under this philosophy, the primary goal is to maintain a healthy ecosystem. As a result, the ranch abounds with wildlife, including elk, moose, mule deer, pronghorn, coyote, badger, beaver, prairie dog, and over 270 species of birds. Located just northeast of Salt Lake City and stretching through five counties all the way to the Wyoming border, Deseret Ranch encompasses nearly all the habitats of the region, including rolling hills of sagebrush and grass, wet meadows and marsh, ponds and lakes, and mountain ridges and valleys. You'll see bird species such as Cinnamon Teal, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Western and Clark's Grebes, Blue Grouse, Franklin and California Gulls, and Short-eared Owl. You'll visit the Uinta Mountains at night to find species such as Northern Saw-whet and Flammulated Owls and Common Poorwill, and make a stop at Antelope Island on the Great Salt Lake to see Chukar and a few other species.

Come out on a cold January evening and warm up with these two exciting adventures that await

Please Don't Forget...

Please let us know what your email address is so we can keep our membership list up-to-date. Send an email to Ramsay Koury at rkoury123@aol.com with your name and email address. Thanks for your help!

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**Upcoming AAS
Field Trips**



Saturday, February

10 —

Juniata County Winter Birds — Noon

Join Aden Troyer and Chad Kauffman for an afternoon of winter birding. The group will first drive to Aden's *Lost Creek Shoe Shop* near Mifflintown. In addition to shoes, the shop handles outdoor gear, birdseed, and quality optics used in birdwatching. Approximately an hour will be allotted for visiting or birding around the shop. Aden and Chad will then lead the group in search of winter birds such as Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, and Rough-legged Hawks. The birdwatching will continue until dusk in hopes of locating Short-eared Owls. For more information, contact trip leader Pete Fox at 583-2639 (*please call earlier than 9:00 PM*) or pfox@raiderweb.org.

**Sunday, March 11— Ned Smith Center 13th
Annual Waterfowl Survey — 8 am to 1 pm**

Scott Bills of the PA Game Commission will lead this family-friendly waterfowl survey at the Millersburg Gun Club Headquarters at the mouth of the Wiconisco Creek. Telescopes and refreshments will be provided. For more details, contact Pete Fox at 583-2639 (*before 9 pm*) or

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.

Directions: 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 Road, left onto Cedar Cliff Road, left on Allendale Way, then left onto Deerfield Road) to the church.

Living Gardens

By Lorrie Preston, Penn State Master Gardener,

Would you be surprised if I encouraged you to maintain *dead trees* in your backyard wildlife habitat? A **snag is a dead or partially dead standing tree that provides food, shelter and nesting sites for living creatures.** They are common in the undisturbed forest, and less common in our backyards, as we tend to think of dead trees as an eyesore that must come down. Snags are incredibly valuable to wildlife, however. Dead trees provide habitat for 25 percent of forest wildlife species in the northeastern U. S., and are highly attractive to backyard wildlife, as well. 35 species of birds, 20 species of mammals, and 23 species of amphibians and reptiles make use of dead trees at some point in their life cycle.

Many birds prefer to perch high in the canopy of a snag. Indigo buntings and others use dead branches as a singing perch when attracting a mate. Raptors perch in high dead branches for an unobstructed view while hunting. Dead snags at the water's edge are often used by kingfishers, ospreys and bald eagles for fishing. Woodpeckers hammer on dead wood to attract a mate and establish territorial boundaries.

After a tree dies, abundant insects will make their home in the decaying bark and wood, providing an essential food source for nuthatches, woodpeckers, and more. Woodpeckers, primary cavity excavators, create cavities in the trees for nesting. When they move on, the secondary cavity nesters will move in. These creatures can not excavate on their own – wood ducks, eastern bluebirds, squirrels and others. Cavities provide a safe place for resting, nesting, and protection from predators and weather extremes. Small creatures, like the black-capped chickadee and the tufted titmouse, look for small cavities in which to nest, while barred owls and larger creatures require large





Eventually pieces of bark loosen up on the snag, creating crevices where brown creepers nest and some varieties of bats will roost and raise their young. The dead snag will continue to provide food, cover and nesting sites to an ever-changing cast of inhabitants in each season. And then at last, when the tree is riddled with holes and has sufficiently decayed so that it can no longer stand upright, it will fall to the ground.

Now laying on the ground, the tree receives less light and retains moisture. Small mammals now use the log as a runway, staying hidden from predators. Grouse drum on the logs to attract a mate. Fungus, moss and lichens begin to grow upon the tree, which are eaten or collected by various creatures for nesting. At this stage, the tree is known as a "nurse tree," for the many forms of life it supports. Insects such as beetles, ants, and centipedes nest in the still decaying wood. Bears, amphibians, and birds feast on the insects. Rabbits, opossums, skunks and other small mammals, as well as salamanders and box turtles, raise their young in the relative safety of the decaying wood. Snakes and fox hunt for the small mammals. Nutrients from the tree return to the forest floor to support the seedlings that sprout in the moist decayed wood, which is now almost soil-like in texture. The tree has come full circle in the web of life.

So what can you do as a backyard gardener to support more snags? Resist the urge to cut down and clean up every tree that dies. If the trunk of the dead tree is 6 inches or more wide, it is worth trying to retain. With that being said, safety is always a top priority in your decision on how to proceed. If it is in a position to be a danger, then the tree will have to go.



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 * **Living Gardens** — *continued from previous page* *
 * Because I live in a development with many neighbors, I had the brittle limbs *
 * of some large snags in my woods professionally removed. The slightly shortened *
 * trunks and lower branches remain, however, turning silver with age, and the cavities grow and *
 * change as various critters move in and out. Even tree stumps are beneficial to wildlife. *
 * If you have live trees that you want to remove, consider girdling – removing a 4 inch strip of inner *
 * and outer bark around the entire trunk near the base – to deaden the tree rather than totally *
 * removing it. If you are concerned about the sight of a dead tree on your property, disguise it by *
 * planting Trumpet Vine or Virginia Creeper at the base. Both are native vines that attract wildlife *
 * and grow vigorously. Create brush piles in secluded spots on your property. And if a snag is to- *
 * tally out of the question, erect bird boxes. These artificial cavities are the next best thing. *
 * *****



MOVING? TAKING AN EXTENDED VACATION?

To receive AAS mailings when away on long vacations or after moving, PLEASE contact our AAS chapter Membership chair (see p.2) with your address change. This saves us money while keeping you current with our activities. Giving a change of address form to the US Post Office (USPS) **will NOT help**; our USPS addresses are handled by National Audubon. We incur a \$.39 charge per item for each piece of incorrectly addressed, returned mail. Please help us help you!