



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

November 2012

November 15

Second PA Breeding Bird Atlas Bird Conservation Blueprint for the 21st Century

Just how many American Robins do you think actually nest in Pennsylvania?

Dan Brauning has the answer!

Not only is Dan the Wildlife Diversity Chief at the PA Game Commission, but he also served as Co-editor of the 500-page *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, which is scheduled for publication this fall. More than 2,000 volunteers generated over 1 million observations between 2004 and 2009 to create this exhaustive study of Pennsylvania's breeding birds.

Dan will present the highlights of the findings, including changes from the first *Atlas* (published in 1992) and new density maps. Many AAS members participated in this important research project. Come and hear the results!



Dan Brauning has spent countless hours coordinating the publication of the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*.

Program time, location and driving directions are on back page.

Field Trip Report

Ralph Kinter Memorial Wildflower Walk

On October 6th eight people joined leader Dan Welte for the annual Ralph Kinter Memorial Wildflower Walk to look for Fringed and Bottle Gentians near Cornwall.

The search was successful with the group getting good views of both species, as well as numerous other wildflowers and a small Ring Necked snake that crossed the path along a power line next to Camp Shand. Although the group started out in somewhat questionable weather it turned out to be a beautiful fall afternoon and a great first AAS field trip for a couple of the participants.

Thanks, Dan!

A nice way to spend an October afternoon!
Trip leader Dan Welte is front right.



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Birding in the Information Age

Like a lot of birders, the first place I go to for help in identifying a bird is *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. I take it with me every time I go birding and often study it the night before. Written and illustrated by David Allen Sibley, its beautiful, detailed drawings and identification tips make it my favorite field guide.

But one of the best clues to identification is knowing how likely it is to see a certain bird. So, for instance, if you know that Purple Finches don't breed in your area, you can be pretty sure that the bird you see at your feeder on the Fourth of July is a House Finch no matter how "purple-y" it is! Our November program features the soon to be published *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, the most comprehensive guide we'll have for what birds breed where, and in what number, throughout the state. For every bird that breeds in Pennsylvania, it will provide an analysis of habitat, behavior, population trends, and much more.

Now if you want to know what birds, including migrants, are being seen in Pennsylvania *today*, join the PABIRDS listserve, an email distribution list hosted by National Audubon. Birders from all over the state post their sightings from birding "hotspots" or their own back yards. Most of the listserve members are happy to share their knowledge and insight with other members. To join, check out the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology (PSO) at http://www.pabirds.org/PA_BIRDS_Listserve.htm—and while you're there, join the PSO!

Taking technology a step farther is PABirders Facebook http://www.facebook.com/?ref=tn_tnmn#!/groups/PABirders/. It's like the listserve, but with the benefits of photos and Facebook interaction with fellow PA birders. Its spin-off, "ID That PA Bird!", http://www.facebook.com/?ref=tn_tnmn#!/groups/pabirdID/ helps less experienced birders with identification. I enjoy trying to identify the photos, and I've learned so much from the experienced birders, who give hints like "it can't be an Empidonax flycatcher because it doesn't have wing bars," or, "Blackpoll Warblers tend to be pudgy"! The site features challenging photo quizzes, and the occasional identification debates among the experts really make you think! (Click on the "Join Group" button and you will be let in promptly.)

Cornell's eBird, www.ebird.org, is an online database of sightings from birders like you and me all over the world and a valuable tool for ornithologists and amateurs alike. The more sightings we report, the better the information, so you should report to eBird every time you bird! There's even a smartphone application (*BirdsEyeBirdLog*) that allows you to count the birds, mark your location, keep track of how long you are birding, and instantly submit the results to Cornell. It makes it fun to be a "citizen scientist."

Any way you look at it, no matter how sophisticated our learning tools become, the best way to get information and improve your skills is to go birding!! (The answer to the photo challenge above is Blackpoll Warbler.)



A confusing fall warbler.
Can you guess what it is?

Photo by Drew Weber

Bird Blog

This winter's irruptives.

Drew Weber

September 7, 2012

One of the exciting things about winter birding is the prospect of large movements of winter finches and other more northern species. Already we are seeing signs that this winter may be good for Red Crossbills and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and it's not even fall yet.

Irruptions are fun because they give many of us a rare chance to see a species that is rare in our location, and sometimes they are found in large numbers as well, which makes it quite a treat. Some of the finch species that occasionally irrupt are both species of crossbills, Common and Hoary Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Grosbeaks.

Black-capped Chickadees and Blue Jays are also occasionally found moving south in large numbers in pursuit of better food resources. Raptors too, can travel south in



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Anna Fasoli from [Nemesis Bird](#)

large numbers to find food. The most well-known are Snowy Owls, which had a huge irruption last year.

There have been many reports of Red-breasted Nuthatches well south of their range with some [high counts recorded at Cape May](#). Red-breasted Nuthatches are most easily found by listening for their high-pitched tin-horn-like *ank-ank-ank-ank*. You will often find them in spruce plantations and around other conifers.



Female Purple Finch

Photo by Drew Weber from [Nemesis Bird](#)

It seems that Ontario has also been experiencing a Purple Finch irruption. I haven't heard much mention of this species in the Northeast but we may start to see signs of it as the weather gets colder and we approach their typical migration period.

The most exciting species for me will be Red Crossbills. I have not seen many Red Crossbills in my life, and the most recent sighting was of a small flock flying past me at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary when I was a hawk counter one fall. Red Crossbills have popped



Red Crossbill

Photo by Alex Lamoreaux from [Nemesis Bird](#)

up in random locations across Pennsylvania and New York, including a small flock in Central Park in NY where they haven't been reported for decades (I believe, don't quote me on this). It seems that the irruption is made of mostly Type 3 Red Crossbills, which are the smallest billed of the Reds. Type 3 Red Crossbills also have a high-pitched *jip-jip-jip* flight call, which may be confused with White-winged Crossbill calls. Type 3's are hemlock specialists but during irruption years can be found foraging on a broad spectrum of conifers.

So what are you waiting for? Get out there and find some irruptives and be sure to use eBird so we can chart out this year's irruption.

Drew Weber is a young ornithologist from PA living in central New York and pursuing a master's degree at Penn State studying grassland birds. Drew is chairman of the bird records committee and eBird.org reviewer. You can find more of Drew's writings at [Nemesis Bird](#), www.nemesisbird.com, a blog by six young birders and naturalists who enjoy birding in and doing fieldwork across North America.

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Another Successful Birdseed Sale!

Great weather, plus enthusiastic volunteers, plus lots of customers all added up to a terrific birdseed sale! Thanks to all of you who came out to support AAS by buying seed and feeders and thanks to our many volunteers who made it all possible. On Saturday **Brownie Troop 10796** of Susquehanna Township joined us with their bake sale to raise funds for their troop, and they also enjoyed our family activities that included face painting and making pine cone bird feeders.

A very special **THANK YOU** to the following businesses for their support:

Tim Lehman of **Davis Country Living Agway** supplied and delivered the birdseed and a wide selection of bird feeders, and Ken Davis, the former owner, even came out to help load the seed! **Boscov's of Camp Hill** provided the space to hold the sale, as well as the tables and chairs for our various activities. **Equipment Depot of Mechanicsburg** supplied a modern forklift—full of gas! **Isaac's Deli** at the West Shore Plaza delivered delicious sandwiches for our volunteers on both days of the sale.

Wood and Myers Oral Surgery let us hang our banner on their property, and **Lower Allen Township** provided the traffic cones. **Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art** delivered lots of great kids' activities.

And special thanks to Kay Cribbs who drove the forklift with expert precision and without splitting a single bag!



Top: The Brownies were all business!

Right: Dot Montaine generated lots of sales and displayed her sense of humor as the AAS bluebird.



There is no question that the key to our success was our smiling group of volunteers! We really had a lot of fun. Thanks to all of you:

Karen Atwood
 Judy Bowman
 Arlene Buchholz
 Denna Claypool
 Kay Cribbs
 Jon Dale
 Ken Davis
 Ann Glasscock
 Bob Glasscock
 Andy Groff
 Ramsay Koury
 Gary LaBelle
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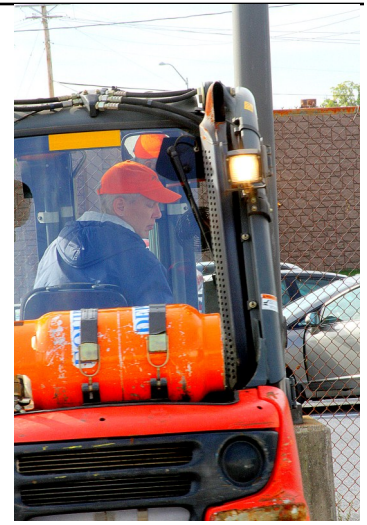


Service with a smile! Andy Groff and Marcia Wilson (top) provided prompt customer checkout and kept the books in perfect order, while Ann Glasscock and Thyra Sperry (below) organized the bird feeders and helped customers choose the perfect solution to keep those squirrels away!





Left: Some of our volunteers take a break for the paparazzi.



Right: Kay Cribbs was a smooth operator!



Bob Glasscock (left) and Rick Price (right) direct traffic. (Contrary to how it might look, there were no crashes!)

Top left: Always great to see longtime members and AAS volunteers Nancy, Carl, and Muffin Juris. Top right: One of our younger customers enjoys the bake sale.



Fred Strassner wonders where he's going to put all of the birdseed that his wife, AAS board member Sue Strassner, just bought. Mark Markiewicz loads the seed while Ramsay Koury "supervises." Meanwhile, Sue is over at the feeders...



Jeri McEwen knows how to take care of her birds!

Thanks to Brownie Dad Mark Himes for contributing some of these photos!



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AAS monthly programs typically take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the **Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill.** *Join us at 7:00 pm for socializing and refreshments. The program begins at 7:30.*

Directions to Christ Presbyterian Church:

I-83 Southbound, take exit 40B towards New Cumberland. Stay straight, cross Carlisle Road to Cedar Cliff Dr. Turn left onto Allendale Way and turn left onto Deerfield Road. The Church is on the left. Park in the second lot.

I-83 Northbound, take exit 40B, turn left onto Carlisle Road/Simpson Ferry Road and go 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 the second lot.

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NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

November 17, 2012

Eagles at Conowingo Dam

Long-time birder **Ed Smith** leads a trip to the Conowingo Dam and lower Susquehanna River to watch for Bald Eagles, gulls, and other species. Contact Ed at 960-9441 or SmithE@awkengineers.com.

Field Trip Etiquette

While there is no charge for participating in our field trips, if you ride in a carpool please be sure to offer your driver a contribution towards the cost of gas.