



Kingfisher Courier

FEBRUARY|MARCH 2014

APPALACHIAN AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

AAS PROGRAM | FEBRUARY

Fascinating and Funny Fauna

Jon Dale has entertained us over the years with presentations of many of his birding adventures. A longtime AAS member, he served on our Board for many years and continues to participate in AAS activities such as the birdseed and plant sales and serves as a leader for beginning birder field trips. He has provided outreach programs on birding and related topics for community organizations and to youth groups at Trout Run. Jon is a respected birder who freely shares his knowledge with others.

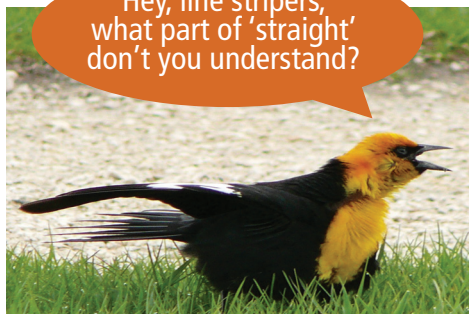
This program will showcase some of Jon's, and his brother Steve's, extensive photographic collections with a humorous, yet informative, twist. We will be treated to photos with names like "Budding Birdbrains,"

"Charming Chicks," and "Rauchous Rodentia."

Being "in the right place at the right time" has made it possible for Jon and his brother Steve to capture unique, one of a kind, shots. "Fascinating and Funny

and Funny Fauna" includes unusual photos taken in Pennsylvania and other areas. There will be some fun opportunities for us to participate and interact during the program while enjoying and learning about nature's creatures.

Please join us on Thursday, February 20, at 7pm for a social time, followed at 7:30 by a brief meeting and our program.



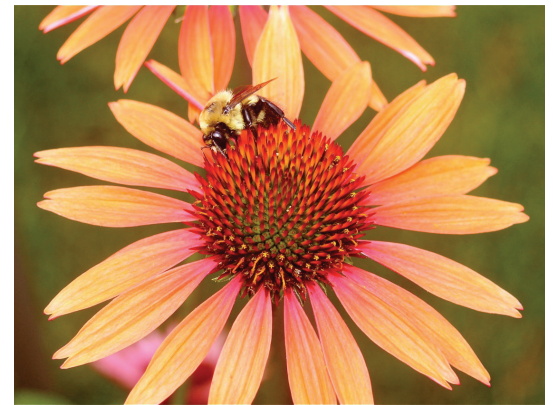
Before his morning caffeine, the Steeler's new groundskeeper is a bit cranky.

Yellow-headed Blackbird photo by Jon Dale

AAS PROGRAM | MARCH

Bees, Bugs and Blooms — How You Can Help Our Pollinators

World-wide our pollinators are in trouble. Pesticides, degraded nesting habitat, diseases and lack of floral resources are all part of



Backyard Pollinator by Rick Price

the problem. The good news is that we can be part of the solution. On March 20, Connie Schmotzer will help us learn how to make our properties more pollinator friendly. She will discuss some of the top plants from the Penn State 2012–2013 pollinator trials and provide valuable information to aid in choosing the best plants to support pollinating creatures.

Connie is the Consumer Horticultural Educator for Penn State Cooperative Extension in York County, where she also coordinates the Master Gardener Program. She has taught landscaping for pollinators throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland and administers the Penn State pollinator Friendly Garden Certification Program. Connie is currently coordinator of an extensive pollinator plant trial at the Penn State Southeast Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursday, March 20, beginning with social time at 7pm. Our meeting starts at 7:30, followed by the program.

Remember that excellent pollinator plants can be purchased at the AAS Native Plant Sale at Meadowood Nursery on Saturday, April 26, from 9 AM–1PM.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Thursday, February 20 @ 7:00pm

SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, March 20 @ 7:00pm

Great Backyard Bird Count



The 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be held Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2014. The GBBC is an annual four day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or longer if they wish) at a specific location on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Anyone can take part, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from anywhere in the world!

It's free, fun, and easy. Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are

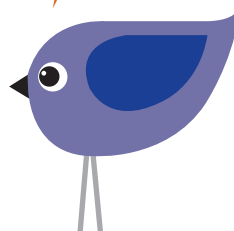
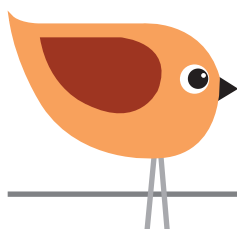
doing and how to better protect them and their environment.

Last year's participants:

- Submitted 134,935 checklists
- Observed 3,610 species
- Counted 34,512,432 individual birds

Please visit the official website at www.birdcount.org for more information including how to set up your free GBBC account to submit your checklists.

Show your love for the birds by counting them over Valentine's Day Weekend.



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Finding the Mac

By Sue Hannon

A half-hour wait for a prescription turned into an exciting discovery at Highspire Reservoir Park on November 22, 2013. I arrived planning to just look at the ducks, geese, and herons on the reservoir, but a glimpse of a Golden-crowned Kinglet lured me onto the trail, and as I was trying to get a good shot of it lined up in my camera viewfinder, I was astonished to see a flash of yellow pass across my view just in front of the kinglet. Vivid yellow. *Warbler* yellow? I pulled away from the camera just in time to see a brilliant golden undertail disappear around a pile of logs. Yes, it was a warbler, and it was one I had never seen before. And, in late November, it was one that definitely did not belong here! I strained to hear or see where the mystery warbler had gone,

determined that I was NOT leaving the park without a usable ID photo, or at least a good description of its field marks.

Suddenly I heard a chip and spotted a flash of bright yellow half hidden behind tangled leaves and vines on a branch a few inches above the top of the log pile. Half a moment of creeping under cover along the branch, and it darted across a few feet of open air and under more vegetation at the base of a nearby tree, and disappeared. But I could see the shadow of its movement as it hopped along under a row of low brush, so I waited. After about fifteen minutes, it finally popped out into the open and paused, looking around. I squeezed off half a dozen shots with the camera then pulled up

my binoculars to get a good look. It sure was a cute little thing; but I had no clue what kind of warbler it was. So I pulled out my field journal and did my best to jot the most thorough notes I could.

It was a tiny bird, a bit larger than a chickadee, with olive-toned back and wings, a blue-gray head and throat with a slightly darker smudge of gray where the throat gave way to a brilliant yellow breast and belly. It had a long, pointy bill, subtly broken white eye ring, pink legs and a long tail. The undertail was yellow all the way to the end, even brighter yellow than the breast. The bird continued foraging along the ground, constantly chipping as it hopped about. Even after it ducked back

Continued on next page

under cover and disappeared, I could hear its chip note as it moved farther from the trail.

Even with a pair of excellent field guides, I could not make a positive ID on the bird. It didn't quite match any of the images in my Sibley or in the Stokes Field Guide to Warblers. But my experience has been that the birds I see do not always exactly match the field guide illustrations, and fall warbler plumages offer even more variation than breeding plumages, so I tried to figure out which of the several similar possibilities was the closest and most likely. The blue-gray head and yellow underside quickly reduced the possibilities to a very few birds, and of the options available, I settled on "maybe a Nashville".

Well, I was wrong! Within a minute of posting a photo on the PA Birders Facebook Group, someone responded that it was definitely not a Nashville, looked like a Mourning. I googled "Mourning Warbler", and a few of the images that came up did sort of look like the bird in my pictures. So I posted the sighting to PABIRDS with a link to my pictures, and within a very few minutes received half a dozen responses, with nearly as many alternative IDs, including Alex Lamoreaux's suggestion it might be a MacGillivray's Warbler, the Mourning Warbler's Western counterpart. As the MacGillivray's is a bird of western North America, I had not even considered it, but when I looked it up, it seemed like a good match.

The next morning, the crowds began. More than a dozen birders were gathered around the first big bend in the nature trail when I arrived, and more continued to arrive. The bird had been seen and heard a little while earlier, but had been silent for some minutes before I got there. It was exciting to be part of what felt like a big event. Yesterday's sighting had been a completely unexpected treat. Today there were serious

“ With a wealth of ... evidence ... it was quickly settled that the ... bird was a first year male MacGillivray's Warbler, a bird that should have been somewhere in Central America, and only the 2nd PA record.”

expectations in the air. Everyone spoke in hushed voices, attempted to move along the gravel trail as soundlessly as possible, and all attention was focused on one thing: a tiny bird thousands of miles from where it belonged, an unseen but palpable presence moving about in the brushy vegetation looking for bugs to eat.

Whenever the bird showed itself, however briefly, the clicking of camera shutters sounded all around me. Fortunately, that did not appear to disturb the bird, as it gave several opportunities for good long looks at it. With a wealth of photographic and video evidence, as well as physical observations by a number of skilled birders,

“ What I do know is that for seventeen days, one tiny wanderer brought color and excitement to a dreary end-of-autumn for me and for many other area birders.”

it was quickly settled that the Highspire bird was a first year male MacGillivray's Warbler, a bird that should have been somewhere in Central America, and only the 2nd PA record. Over the next two weeks, "the Mac" was a mini-celebrity, seen, photographed, and enjoyed by birders who traveled from all over PA and neighboring states to see him. I did not get the names of nearly everyone who made the trip, but I did compile a list of over 175.

In a seventeen day period, it was a rare thing for the Mac to disappoint his public. Every day, he delighted his visitors with his colorful presence as he offered one golden opportunity after another for great looks and photographs. He quickly established a pattern, covering a territory stretching maybe one-quarter mile along the nature trail from one end to the other several times a day, foraging in clear view of the nature trail, bathing in the little pools or streams that feed the reservoir, or perching atop the pile of logs where I first saw him, for hours each day.

Then he vanished as suddenly as he had appeared. Dave McNaughton reported that he and several other birders enjoyed watching him on December 8. A winter storm the next day deposited 1–2 inches of snow on Highspire. Tom Johnson and a friend saw and photographed him in the snow. As far as I know, he has not been seen since then. I still listen and watch for him every time I walk the trail, although by this point I don't expect to see him again.

Where he came from, how he got here, why he left — these questions will remain unanswered. That's okay. I don't need to know everything. What I do know is that for seventeen days, one tiny wanderer brought color and excitement to a dreary end-of-autumn for me and for many other area birders.



Field Trips

February 14, 2014 (Friday)

TOUR OF HUNTSDALE STATE FISH HATCHERY — NEW!

This field trip will show us one of the sites where Pennsylvania's cold water trout are bred and raised. A member of the Fish and Boat Commission staff will take us on a tour of the facility. We will meet at 9:00 AM in the hatchery parking lot which is located approximately 12 miles southwest of Carlisle. This is in the village of Huntsdale in Cumberland County. For more information contact Rick Price at 657-1950 or rprice210@comcast.net.

March 2, 2014 (Sunday)

MIDDLE CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Birders from all over the region visit Middle Creek to view the many species of birds and waterfowl that can be found at this time of year. We will look for Snow Geese, Tundra Swans, ducks, eagles, and Short Eared Owls and Northern Harriers. Be prepared to stay after 4:00 PM as they tend to appear around dusk. Pete Fox, veteran trip leader, will meet us at Lower Dauphin High School rear parking lot at 1:30 PM from where we will carpool. Contact Pete at peterfoxjr@yahoo.com or 583-2639 to register.

March 9th, 2014, 8:00am–11:00am (Sunday)

DUCKS AND GEESE OF THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER

You can stop by for just a few minutes or stay all day for this 19th Annual Waterfowl Watch, held at the old Millersburg Gun Club Headquarters, 2 miles west of the Ned Smith Center on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Scott Bills, Land Management Group Supervisor, Pa. Game Commission, will be there to discuss waterfowl and their seasonal migration patterns. It is not unusual to spot Bald Eagles fishing the chilly waters. Dress warmly. Binoculars, spotting scopes, a warm fire and refreshments will be provided. Pre-registration is recommended. For more information or to pre-register contact the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art at 717-692-3699 or nedsmithcenter.org. Admission is free.

SAVE PAPER!

Receive a full-color version of the *Kingfisher Courier* via email and help the environment. To sign up, email Susan Miller at millerscorner@msn.com.



JOIN OUR NEW FACEBOOK GROUP PAGE!

Our new FB page not only will inform and remind you of our events, it also will allow you to post your comments and photos and see what other AAS friends are up to! Please go to the following link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/515034908575016/> and click to join the group. An administrator will add you to the group promptly.



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2014

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

DIRECTIONS

I-83 southbound — take exit 40B towards New Cumberland. Stay straight, cross Carlisle Road to 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.

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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Save the Dates!



Project SNOWstorm

If you follow online bird lists, Facebook pages, or even the local news you probably heard about the recent irruption of Snowy Owls into the Northeast and Great Lakes regions of the United States, including the appearance of some of these northern visitors to South Central PA. A collaborative group of scientists, bird-banders and wildlife health professionals have mobilized an unprecedented research project to learn more about these arctic-breeding raptors. To follow some of the excitement, check on Project SNOWstorm activities at www.projectsnowstorm.org, a website set up to share information about the project and where you can also donate to the effort, if interested.

WINTER STORM CANCELLATION OF AAS PROGRAMS

If severe weather is forecast for the evening of an AAS program, please check one of the following for possible cancellation information:

- Our Facebook Page
- WHTM ABC27 at www.abc27.com
- Or call 717-697-6696

I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing than to teach ten thousand stars how not to dance.

— e. e. cummings