

CHICKADEE CHATTER

Newsletter of the Lycoming Audubon Society July – August 2009

LAS ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

July 22, 2009 - 6:00 pm

Rider Park, Warrensville

This is our annual picnic. Everyone brings a "Dish to Share"....along with their own paper tableware and utensils. Beverages will be furnished.



Family and Friends are encouraged to join us!!

Directions to Rider Park:

Proceed North on Warrensville Road (SR 2039) from Route

220/I-180, "crossing over" Route 973 at Warrensville, and continuing onto Pleasant Valley Road. Go approximately 1 mile, and turn right onto Caleb Creek Road (dirt road). Follow this road 1.7 miles until you come to a gate and parking area.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

As I write this note, summer seems reluctant to arrive, although I am certain we will have warmer weather and a good crop of sweet corn by the time of our summer picnic. I hope to see a lot of familiar faces as well as some of our new members at Rider Park. The summer picnic has always been a wonderful, relaxed gathering that includes many of our members' family that don't attend the regular meetings.

Your Board of Directors and officers have been (and I am sure will continue to be) a hard-working and dedicated group; and we need to recognize the efforts of Linda Burk and Teri Tule, who served us so well as president and secretary. I'm sure they will continue to be active in some role. We do have some other folks that would like to reduce their involvement, and if you have some experience or desire to work on arranging programs or creating publicity for the chapter, please let me or another board member know.

Enjoy the summer!

Dan Alters

* **LOCAL "CHAPTER ONLY"** *
* **MEMBERSHIPS...** *
* **DUES ARE DUE!!** *
* If you have a "Local Chapter ONLY" *
* membership, your dues were due on July 1, *
* 2009. To renew, send your check for \$10,00 *
* for July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 to: *
* Donna Krupilis, LAS Membership Chair *
* 728 Pennsylvania Avenue *
* Williamsport, PA 17701 *

FALL PROGRAMS 2009

Will be announced in the September – October newsletter.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS !!

Janet Barone
Nicole Cohick

Ann Spaga

GARDENING FOR BIRDS: ALTERNATE-LEAF DOGWOOD

North American Dogwoods are a varied group of plants that include shrubs, trees, and even a ground cover. One of the least well-known species is also one of the most attractive. Alternate-leaf Dogwood, *Cornus alternifolia*, is an understory tree native to Pennsylvania and adjacent states. Its leaves are *not* opposite each other on a branch as is true for the other dogwoods. Instead, the position of its leaves alternates from left to right along a branch, which explains its name. Yellow-white flower clusters in May and early June adorn the rather horizontal branches, which give rise to its nickname of 'Pagoda' Dogwood. Dark blue berries ripen on reddish stalks in July and August, and are favorites of dozens of bird species, including Eastern Bluebirds and Cedar Waxwings.



According to Donald Leopold, author of *Native Plants of the Northeast* (2005, Timber Press, Inc.), Alternate-leaf Dogwood tolerates very cold weather better than the well-known Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and is immune to anthracnose, a disease that can destroy Flowering Dogwood. *Cornus alternifolia* needs moist soil to thrive, grows best in partial shade, and will usually attain a top height of 20 to 25 feet. Due to its pagoda-like branching style, it can grow as wide as it does tall, if given plenty of room. Not all nurseries sell this species. Native plant sales and nurseries that specialize in trees that grow well in shade are your best bets to find this lovely tree, which often treats us to great autumn color. If you add it to your garden, be sure to give it a thorough soaking at least once a week during its first couple of years, unless the soil is saturated by rain.

Happy gardening!

Jim Green

Clipart: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 2: 663.

Saw-Whet Owl Patch !

This year's eight color patch depicts the Northern Saw-Whet Owl sitting on an evergreen branch; designed by wildlife artist Ron Beach. **See it in color on the Lycoming Audubon website!**

Patches are available from board members, at the website, or can be ordered by mail: Check or money payable to Lycoming Audubon, 1217 Cedar Street, Montoursville, PA, 17754. Patches are \$5.50, plus \$.50 for S&H.





AUDUBON AT HOME

Our "Audubon At Home" focus in this edition begins with the birds that visit each of our homes and adjacent properties. Many avid birders have a life list, but how many of us have a list of the species that we have seen or heard from our own yards, fields, and woodlands? If you have such a list, considering sharing it with the rest of Lycoming Audubon! Just write a short article for an upcoming newsletter and tell us how many bird species you have observed, and what your favorite species are. If you don't have this kind of list, why not start one this month? Creating and displaying a 'home species list' can help spark an interest in birds and conservation amongst children, grandchildren, other relatives, friends and neighbors. Creating this list may get you thinking more deeply about the Audubon At Home principles.

What can **you** do to increase the number of species and number of birds that visit, live, breed and dine on your property? Perhaps you can let shrubs grow taller and wilder, to provide more and safer nesting areas. Or maybe you can plant a few shrubs, wildflowers, or trees attractive to birds that are native to north-central Pennsylvania. And how about those bug sprays or herbicides in your shed or garage? It's so easy to use these products and assume they're we're *not* harming the environment, isn't it? Remember, though, that National Audubon estimates that 7 million birds die in the U.S. each year from lawn pesticides. Isn't it time to think about their potential effects on birds and other wildlife as well as the quality of our water supply, and then commit to no longer using such poisons?

Have you taken Audubon At Home's healthy yard pledge? Regardless of the size of your 'yard', Lycoming Audubon Society encourages you to take the pledge, which is your commitment to the Audubon At Home principles. What do you pledge? To do all of the following:

- Reduce pesticide use
- Support birds and other wildlife on your property
- Plant native species
- Conserve water
- Protect water quality
- Remove invasive exotic plant species



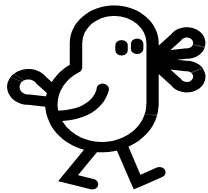
How do you pledge? On our Lycoming Audubon Society's website, click on the 'Audubon At Home' link and then click on the 'Healthy Yard Pledge' to complete and submit. In case you don't have Internet access, use a computer at your local library or a friend's house.

After taking the pledge, perhaps you are willing to let others know of your commitment. Pennsylvania Audubon has a Bird Habitat Recognition Program (BHRP) that includes a 10" by 14" BHRP metal sign with a silhouette of a Cardinal on it. You receive the sign for a donation to PA Audubon of \$25 when you register for the BHRP. Learn more from the Pennsylvania Audubon website, which is conveniently linked from our Lycoming Audubon site.

If we all commit to doing all that we can to improve habitat on our own properties, we can truly make a difference in improving the habitat of birds and other wildlife.

Jim Green





KID'S KORNER

How Do Birds Migrate? part 3

In recent Kids' Korner, we have explored the different cues that birds can use to guide their migrations north in the spring and south in the fall. We've learned that some birds use instinct, while others must learn their migration routes from other birds, and that some birds can use the location of sunset or even the stars to guide them. Today we'll consider how earth's magnetism, the length of the days, and weather patterns can help some birds find their way.

It's true that some species of birds like pigeons, European robins, and bobolinks can sense earth's magnetic field. Pigeons use a combination of magnetism and the sun's position to help them navigate. A pigeon fitted with a magnetic helmet to block its own sense of magnetism will get lost unless the sun is out, but a pigeon with a similar nonmagnetic helmet can navigate quite well whether the skies are cloudy or sunny. There is some controversy about these results, though: some scientists believe that pigeons use magnetism for their homing flights but not for migration. The shorter days and longer nights during the second half of the summer are cues to birds to begin preparing to migrate south. Songbirds that spend their winters in the warm tropics, called neotropical migrants, perform their migrations according to the length of the day. Other birds time their migrations according to temperature patterns: for example, Canada geese and robins in extreme northern regions will migrate to stay with the 37 degree isotherm line on your weatherman's map. Weather can help or hinder migration. The prevailing winds in any given area will change with the seasons. If you visit Hawk Mountain, or even watch carefully over Bald Eagle Ridge on the south side of the Susquehanna River in Williamsport, you may see large groups of birds riding the winds, getting a boost in their long fall flights south. Bad, blustery weather may cause migrating birds to "clump up," and approaching weather fronts often bring dense groups of migrating birds on their leading edges. On cloudy nights, when the stars are not visible, birds may fly toward tall buildings with bright lights, hit them, and die. Many Audubon Society chapters in urban areas have been successful at convincing the owners of tall buildings to dim or put out the lights on cloudy nights during the migration season. In reality, most birds probably combine a variety of cues to migrate. This is a sort of "back up" system to ensure that they have enough food and temperatures warm enough to survive the winter, but can find their way back to our seasonally rich nesting grounds to raise their young in the spring and summer. So as the summer months are ending, watch the skies, say a temporary goodbye to our migrating neighbors, and think about them frolicking down in southern Florida or even Costa Rica!

Migration activity:

Watch the birds in your yard or neighborhood. Try to make a list of the ones you see in July and August. Put your list someplace safe, so you can find it again during the winter. We will compare our list from the summer with the list from the winter, so you can learn first-hand which species of birds migrate. Then you can look for the birds that are missing in winter to come back again during next spring's migration!

This Kids' Korner provided by Dr. Mary Morrison, Lycoming College.



BIRD OBSERVATIONS



At Canfield Island on April 23rd, Joe Yoder saw his first Chimney Swifts along with Tree Swallows, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. On April 25th, at Rider Park, Joe had nine species of warblers: two Prairie, 13 Black-throated Green, 9 Black-and-white, 31 Yellow-rumped, 6 Black-throated Blue, 7 Blackburnian, one Pine, one Nashville, and two Ovenbirds. Also seen were: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Osprey, Brown Thrasher, Field and Chipping Sparrows, Common Raven, Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Towhee, and Pine Siskins.

On May 3rd, Dave Ferry reported a male and female Purple Martin active around the martin house at the Lysock complex. Then at Mill Street (Montoursville), and at Canfield Island, an early Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Black-and-white Warblers. At Canfield Island, a Northern Waterthrush was calling loudly. And at his home Dave reported Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Pine Siskin.

At Montour Preserve, on May 3rd, Laurie Cressman observed Eastern Meadowlark, America Kestrel, Eastern Bluebird, Red-winged Blackbird, a nesting Canada Goose with young, Osprey, Northern Mockingbird, Blue Jay, Killdeer, American Goldfinch, swallows, and three Baltimore Orioles.

Also on May 3rd, Brown Thrasher, House Wren, Wood Thrush, White-throated Sparrow and Pine Siskins were among the birds seen by Katie Bell. From Larry Waltz on May 6, at Buchanan Meadows in Lycoming County, he observed two male Eastern Bluebirds fighting over rights to a female/territory. From Maureen, the week of May 7th: two Brown Thrashers, Eastern Bluebirds, eight Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a nest-building Eastern Phoebe, and a Baltimore Oriole. And on May 9th, Eastern Meadowlark, Thrushes, Hairy Woodpecker, Baltimore Oriole, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Canada Goose with seven goslings, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

From Joe Yoder, on May 11th, at Canfield Island, a lone White-crowned Sparrow, in and out of the Japanese Knotweed which had grown five feet in the past week. Also two dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers and six American Redstarts. At Rider Park, on May 9th, two White-crowned Sparrows, two Black Vultures. On May 10th at SGL 252, a lone Orchard Oriole in a birch tree, along with many Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, seven Blue-winged Warblers, with several singing the song of the Golden-winged Warbler, - but no Golden-wings were present. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird shadowing a Nashville Warbler in scrubby second-growth habitat was an unusual sight. Each time the warbler moved, the hummer followed. This went on for several minutes.

On May 21st, at Dave Ferry's in Old Lycoming Twp., Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Wood Thrush, Brown Thrasher, bluebirds, Tree Swallows, both Black and Yellow-billed cuckoos, flickers, Wilson's Warbler and Chestnut-sided Warbler.

On May 23, at SGL 252, Laurie Cressman and Linda Zook observed 4 Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose with young, Tree Swallows, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Towhee, Baltimore Oriole, Northern Cardinal, Cedar Waxwing, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Yellowthroat, Ring-necked Pheasant, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a muskrat and some bullfrogs. At Montour Preserve, that evening, three Eastern Towhees, six Gray Catbirds, a pair of Northern Cardinals, Green Heron, Wild Turkey. Then at Forsythe NWR, near Atlantic City, at the end of May, five Black Skimmers, two American Oystercatcher, five Willits, Glossy Ibis, 15 Common Egrets, 11 Snowy Egrets, Semipalmated Plover, 10 Lesser Yellowlegs, four Dunlin, Common Tern, Cormorant, four female Osprey on nests, and three male Osprey, ten Ruddy Turnstone, 40 Brant, two Black-crowned Night-heron, immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Great Blue Heron, two Brown Thrasher, sandpipers, swallows, and gulls too numerous to identify. A great bird destination!

From Katie Bell, reporting on June 11th, cardinals, song sparrow, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, catbird, Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, hummingbird, Eastern Towhee, Wood Thrush, and finding a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the middle of the road. On Friday June 19th, Art Tripadrich and Mary Ellen Kiken, driving on Gap Road, discovered a bird flopping along the side of the road, apparently with a broken wing. It was taken to Watsontown, where a "rehabber" picked it up. Art and Mary Ellen believed it to be a Wilson's Snipe.

Thanks to all who submitted observations and hope to see you at the Summer picnic at Rider Park!