

CHICKADEE CHATTER

Newsletter of the Lycoming Audubon Society

May — June 2008

Annual Pot Luck Banquet and Silent Auction !!

May 28, 2008

Pine Street Methodist Church
441 Pine Street, Williamsport

5:30pm Book Sale and Auction
6:00pm Dinner

This is our annual dinner get-together. 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!!



Before dinner, everyone will have an opportunity to bid on the various items in our Silent Auction, and purchase books. Items that will be auctioned include a number of nice bird prints, both framed and unframed. Framed prints

include Ron Beach's hummingbird and chickadee prints donated by Dave Shollenberger. Ron Beach has donated the Red-winged Blackbird patch and the original art work for it, framed together. A Peregrine print "Return to Penn's Woods" by Mark Anderson, is unframed, as are twelve large bird prints mounted on foam core. Additionally, there are more than fifty "bird books" that have been donated by Wes Egli and others.

**Our ANNUAL PICNIC
will be held on July 23,
2008 at Rider Park,
6:00pm**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Our programs are coming to a close for this season on May 28th. Remember that we will be meeting *at the Pine Street Methodist Church, for our annual tureen dinner, and fund raiser!!* [More info](#)

This event is a chance to bring friends, talk with other Audubon members and support Lycoming Audubon by purchasing books at the book sale and art work from the silent auction.

OUR OWN Dave Shollenberger will be our Dinner Speaker, and will continue his slide presentation on African Wildlife.

We have had a variety of stellar programs this past season. We are fortunate to have talented members who brought enthusiasm and knowledge to increase our understanding of the natural world and our need to work for conservation of our resources.

A special thank you for all of you that have helped make Lycoming Audubon Society a great organization.

Linda Burk

Welcome!! New Members

Cynthia Alexander	Barbara Foley Baedel
Georgia Coffey	Linda Frakes
Nellie Greenaway	Sara Kiessling
Sheila Lunger	Gretchen Lysy
Jim Merrick	Gloria Miller
Denise Polis	Erica Starr
Phyllis Van De Worp	

Rose Valley Lake Field Trip

On Saturday morning, April 5, fourteen participants journeyed to Rose Valley Lake for Lycoming Audubon's first spring field trip of 2008. The weather was cloudy with a chilly breeze that made us question if winter truly was over. The lake provided the answer: spring was here since all of its ice had disappeared, giving us the entire lake to scan for waterfowl. We observed approximately 20 species of waterfowl and other birds



during our stops at several key points on the lakefront. Perhaps the most uncommon species we saw was Long-tailed Duck, formerly called Old Squaw. Only the males have the lengthy tails for which they are named. Other waterfowl included Common Loons, Double-breasted Cormorants, Ring-necked Ducks, Mergansers (Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted) and Grebes (Horned and Pie-billed). Red-winged Blackbirds and a Belted Kingfisher greeted us, a Fish Crow called in the distance, and with the help of binoculars and spotting scopes, we had an excellent view of a Great Blue Heron sitting along the north shore. Ron Beach, Wes Egli, and Fred Stiner were among those who helped identify species.

Jim Green



Riverfront Park Loyalsock Township

Lycoming Audubon, with the assistance of Ed Reish, has provided Riverfront Park with bird identification posters. These are on display panels located at the pavilion along Greevy Road at the park. LAS is working with the Loyalsock Township Recreation Commission to provide bird counts at Canfield Island.

Riverfront Park and Canfield Island are great places for bird watching and just "plain" walking! [To get there: proceed east on East Third Street/Old Montoursville Rd, pass the Golden Strip towards Montoursville. Watch for sign to Riverfront Park/Greevy Boat Launch, just before Super Motel 8.]

Peregrine Field Trip

Mike Kuriga lead 18 participants on a bird walk on Saturday April 19th.

The weather was excellent and those of us who lingered long enough, were excited to see the peregrine. He put on quite a show while eating a small bird. Ray and Larry had their scopes so everyone had a good view of the bird. Mike pointed out the call of the female, but we could not see the nest in the cliffs.



Other birds that flew over the ridge: 12 turkey vultures, one black vulture, two red tail hawks, one broad wing hawk, and a mature bald eagle. Smaller birds that entertained us while we waited for the peregrine to appear included: red bellied woodpecker, mourning doves, cardinals, titmouse, eastern phoebe, Carolina wren, ravens, and grackles. Fred pointed out the Dutchman's breeches, blood root, and trout lilies which were in full bloom. It was a great and educational trip for all.

Linda Burk



Summer Bat Counts

The disturbing news that many of the bats in New York, New England are dying during the winter makes our efforts to count bat colonies in the summer habitat extremely important this year. We have five sites to cover this summer. Also if you know of any other sites that have at least 500 bats please let me know. Counting is easy for anyone. We usually have 4 -5 people for each site. We start at dusk and count until dark so it is only about an hour of your time. It does not require identification of the bats nor are we touching the bats, so it is safe for anyone. Late June or July is the best time to count.

We usually plan a count on short notice since the weather is a factor. If you are interested in helping us this year [e-mail](#) or call (570) 546-6453.

Linda Burk

BOOK REVIEW

BY JIM GREEN

Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens

by Douglas W. Tallamy, 2007, Timber Press, Inc. ISBN – 13: 978-0-88192-584-9

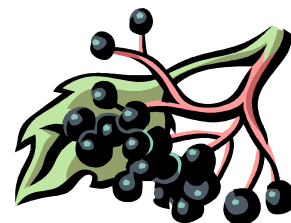
This easy-to-read, informative book, with dozens of color pictures, should be required reading for all of us interested in improving the quality and diversity of bird and other wildlife populations in our suburbs, rural lands, and cities. Professor Tallamy, an entomologist and naturalist, provides scientific evidence that native plants (those that evolved in a particular region over very long periods of time) provide food for plant-eating insects in ways that exotic plant species can not begin to match. These insects, which he states make up about 37% of all animal species on Earth, are generally absent from or sparse on exotic (alien) plants, a primary reason why species such

as Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive, Japanese Honeysuckle and many more have become invasive species that crowd out native plants. Yes, many gardeners detest plant-eating insects, yet the author provides sound evidence in a common-sense manner that such beliefs are contributing to our overall decline in insect and bird populations. Tallamy argues that we **must** plant species native to our regions and we need to convert a higher percentage of our lawns to native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and ground covers if we truly care about the present and future 'health' of our birds, our wildlife, our flora, our ecosystem. A large number of native plant species are identified in this passionate and educational book, which is available at the J.V. Brown Library in Williamsport, the Union County Library, and can be purchased online.



Gardening for Birds: Black Elderberry

This is the first of a series of short articles featuring a plant species native to central Pennsylvania that is good for attracting birds. Black Elderberry, [*Sambucus canadensis*](#), is a native shrub that is quite easy to grow and care for. It requires at least partial sunlight and prefers soil that does not become dry. Small clusters of creamy white flowers appear in late spring or early summer and are followed by a proliferation of small, dark purple berries. As Mario Giazzone pointed out in his April 23rd Lycoming Audubon presentation about native plants, dozens of bird species relish the juicy elderberries. Black Elderberry, also called American Elder, is one of the fastest growing shrubs around. In 2005, I purchased two plants, each about 18 inches tall. Other than adding compost at the start of each growing season and watering them during dry weeks, all I've done is watch them grow. And grow they have! Toward the end of the 2006 growing season, they were six feet tall and provided a great crop of berries. Last year's growing season, as you'll recall, was quite dry at times, so I watered my Elders more often and was again rewarded with a plentiful crop of berries. In fact, a parent and young Grey Catbird spent much of an entire week in August feasting on them!



If not pruned, this shrub reaches top heights of 8 to 14 feet and can extend almost as wide, so be sure to plant it in a location where it has ample room to expand. Like some other shrubs, it can spread by suckering. Most nurseries that specialize in native plants sell Black Elderberry, including the newly formed Ironwood Acres Nursery in Williamsport. Musser's Forests, Inc., a large nursery in western Pennsylvania (from which I've purchased many native plants) sells seedlings in bundles of five or more. A closely related species that also grows rapidly and may be just as attractive to birds is Red Elderberry, *Sambucus pubens*.



BIRD OBSERVATIONS



My birding outings have been few and far between this spring as I juggled work and family obligations, did the dreaded new-car-shopping thing for the first time in a decade and recovered from the nastiest bout of flu I've had in 20 years.

On the April 19-20 weekend, though, Meredith Lombard and I visited Montour Preserve on Saturday and Rose Valley Lake on Sunday. At Montour, we found our first warblers of the year: about a dozen Yellow-rumps. We heard them before we saw them, but I didn't announce my suspicions right away. It's amazing how the brain manages to forget the Yellow-rump song every spring until it has heard a couple again. We had plenty of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and some nice waterfowl, too, including Eared Grebe, but it was just nice to get out and hike in the delightful conditions.

On the way to Rose Valley on Sunday afternoon, we found two Bald Eagles (an adult and a second-year bird) soaring a couple of miles away. At the lake, we immediately found another (or perhaps the same) adult bird. We also saw lots of Tree Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. There were still plenty of waterfowl at the lake, including a couple of Common Loons, lots of Bufflehead and some Ruddy Ducks, but a rainstorm cut our trip short. On PA Birds, Rosemary Lunz also reported seeing an adult Bald Eagle at the lake in the morning, as well as a Horned Grebe.

On April 19, Michael Kuriga led a field trip to the Montgomery Peregrine Falcon nest site. A mature (banded) bird was seen near the suspected nest site eating prey. The group also heard the mate calling.

On April 11-15, Wes Egli found these birds in the Picture Rocks/Wolf Township areas: Osprey (5), Gray Catbird, Swamp Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk. That same week, Dave Ferry provided a photo of a Black-crowned Night-Heron visiting the pond at his home in Old Lycoming Township.

On April 13, Jeff Schaffer found a Blue-headed Vireo along the dike in Lock Haven. He also saw an Osprey (fishing over the dam), seven Double-crested Cormorants, a Common Loon and several Barn Swallows. On April 6, while hiking on the Eagleton Mine Trail, Jeff heard and saw his first Pine Warbler of the season. He found an American Bittern and two Northern-Rough-winged Swallows in wetlands near Mill Hall on April 3. A day earlier, in a puddle along Great River Road, he spotted a Greater Yellowlegs and 11 Wilson's Snipe. Waterfowl there included 40 Ring-necked Ducks, 16 Blue-winged Teal, four Redheads and a Canvasback. On April 1, he located a Northern Waterthrush and a Winter Wren at the State Game Lands at Farrandville.

In early April, Dave Ferry relayed an interesting report (and photos) of an American Kestrel that found its way into the northern Lycoming home of Maureen Wroblewski – via the chimney!

Laurie Cressman went to Rose Valley Lake on March 23 and found lots of waterfowl: 100 Ring-necked Ducks, 50 Bufflehead, 12 Common Mergansers, 12 Hooded Mergansers (she saw one dive for a fish and eat it), 25 Horned Grebes, 15 Canada Geese, two Great Blue Herons and a pair of Wood Ducks.

A few days earlier, Dave Ferry found many similar species there, as well as Lesser Scaup, Black Duck and American Wigeon (not to mention 75 Wild Turkeys along Rose Valley Road).

Dave also found six Greater Scaup among a group of Lesser Scaup and Horned Grebes at the Arch Street Bridge. And, he happened upon a new hot spot for waterfowl: two lakes at the end of South Reach Road, close the industrial heart of Williamsport but very near the river. There, he spotted 25 Canvasbacks, 100 Lesser Scaup and 200 Hooded Mergansers.

On March 24, Manny Barrera reported finding an adult

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Greater White-fronted Goose in a flock of Canada Geese in a field next to a farm pond on Elimsport Road.

Tom and Pat Dietrich reported spotting a European Goldfinch (no doubt an escaped bird) in a flock of American Goldfinches along Loyalsock Creek, six miles north of Montoursville on March 19-21.

Sandra Gorka and Jacob Miller observed two Bald Eagles and a Tundra Swan at Little Pine State Park on March 21. Ed & Mary Ann Pattock viewed a Red-shouldered Hawk and hundreds of Red-winged Blackbirds in their Cogan House Township meadow on March 12.

For raptor fans, March 3 was a banner day at the premier spring hawk watch for Golden Eagles in the East. On that day, Tussey Mountain Hawk Watch near State College reported an astounding 62 goldens, breaking the site's previous one-day record by 30! Steady south/southeast winds of 15-18 mph delivered the big birds to the ridge, along with 14 Bald Eagles.

This year's Winter Raptor Survey in Pennsylvania, which is coordinated by Greg Grove, reported record highs for Northern Harrier, Red-Shouldered Hawk and Black Vulture. Second-highest totals ever were reported for Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low, and most were found in northern counties.

Saving perhaps the best for last, on March 1, Dave Ferry was birding with Nate Fronk when they found an apparent adult female Northern Wheatear among a group of Horned Larks on Old River Road at the South Avis Fields. They had glimpses of the bird for only a couple of minutes, and a snow squall ended the excitement. The bird could not be relocated later that day or the next.

Dave, who has some experience with the bird in Ireland, was confident of the call. "With any rare bird sighting, I understand and welcome the scrutiny that comes along with making such a rare call," he wrote in PA Birds listserv. "I do, however, feel this call is a no-brainer. To me, wheatears don't closely resemble any of the other likely field birds. The black wing and plain buffy body color, and thin bill, were unmistakable."

Get out and do some birding this spring. You never know what you might find.

Joe Yoder

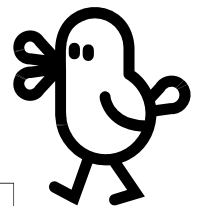
KIDS KORNER

Fill in the missing words in the sentences below.

1. Birds have _____ instead of teeth.
2. Birds have _____ instead of fur.
3. Birds have _____ instead of arms.
4. Birds lay _____ .
5. Birds have _____ instead of feet.
6. Birds _____ instead of walk.

Missing word choices:

wings, talons, beaks, fly,
feathers, eggs



Created by Judy Ryder, Education Committee Chair

Answers: 1-beaks 2-feathers 3-wings 4-eggs 5-talons 6-fly

WEBCAMS for "bird watching":

www.birdsofpreyatppl.com (Pennsylvania)

<http://mysite.verizon.net/vdziadosz/> (links to lots of cams worldwide)