



CHICKADEE CHATTER

Newsletter of the Lycoming Audubon Society

May—June 2009

MAY—JUNE EVENTS

May 27, 2009

Annual Potluck Tureen Dinner and Program by David Shollenberger

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!!



David Shollenberger will present an expanded presentation of his birding and wildlife photography trip to Brazil....."Quest for the Jaguar"

Dinner at 6:00 pm with program to follow
Little League Dining Facility
Fairmont Street, South Williamsport

**Our ANNUAL PICNIC
will be held on July 22,
2009 at Rider Park,
6:00 pm.**



LOCAL CHAPTER ONLY MEMBERSHIPS DUES ARE DUE!!

If you have a "Local Chapter ONLY" membership, your dues are due by 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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

May 27, 2009 will be our last meeting date of the season. It is our Annual Tureen Dinner and our speaker will be Dave Shollenberger who always provides wonderful photos of wildlife from his trips. I hope you all can join us at 6:00 pm for the dinner and slide show.

A special thank you to all the board members who provided so much support during these past two years. And thank you, everyone for your attendance at the meetings. We are so fortunate to have enthusiastic, expert birders among our members. Our field trips and programs are such a great way for us to learn more about birds and bird habitat and other wildlife.

We have a full slate of nominees for offices for next year. As always, LAS members will have the opportunity to nominate others and to vote at the May meeting.

Thank you again for a wonderful term, and happy birding!!

Linda Burk

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS !!

Sherrie Burgin
Donna Camp
Pamela Dill
Sandra Kaluzny
Dale Myers
M. R. Rohart

Tracy Russell
Amy Snyder
Mark Sonthemier
Kim Stiger
Marie Wartella

Our Web Site: <http://www.lycoming.org/audubon>



FIELD TRIP TO THE PEREGRINE SCRAPE

LAS took their annual trip on April 11th, to the site in Montgomery where one of our released Peregrines took up housekeeping and has successfully raised young for many years now. We started a lot earlier in the day (07:30 am) and consequently, only had about 6-8 people in attendance. Fortunately the rain held off and was actually clearing.

Parking at the scenic sewage treatment plant, the walk to the observation area is a real birders delight in contrast to where we left the vehicles. Many different species of songbirds, waterfowl and woodpeckers were heard and observed, a groundhog was in our path and several turkey came off the roost about 150 yards away. Also, noted were about 20 Turkey Vultures roosting on the cliffside about a third of the way on our walk in.

Michael explained about how peregrines make a scrape, versus nest building and pointed out the various locations that the pair have used for nesting over the years.

Mary Morrison had to leave for another function and just as last year, right after Mary departed we heard and saw the Peregrines. On her walk out, Mary spooked a few of the Turkey Vultures and as they flew low and near the scrape, the bird sitting eggs gave a few faint cries. As another vulture flew past, the male (?) gave some more distinct protests followed by the egg sitter and we confirmed that the pair are using the same crevice as last year. The one off the nest flew right in front of the group and settled on a tree limb and was finishing up breakfast of some bird. We noticed feathers coming from the meal.

Spring Turkey season is coming up next week so, if anyone wants to go and have a look, I advise you do it on a Sunday. Several of us will be returning to the scrape in May and hopefully get a glimpse of the young of the year. We will update the chapter at the meetings or in the newsletter.

Missed you all.

Michael W. Kuviga - Peregrine Field Trip Guide

BAT COUNTERS WANTED



We plan to continue the tradition of conducting the summer habitat bat surveys once again this summer. The white nose syndrome has reached

Pennsylvania, so the data is extremely important this year. We will be counting bats at Maple Hill, Linden, Muncy, Tivoli, and Farragut. If you are interested in helping, please send an [e-mail](#) or call 570-546-6453. I will make a tentative schedule for evenings in July. But it is dependent on the weather so the schedule may change on short notice and we will need to call you, so please include your phone number in the message.

Linda Burk

Two donations in memory of
Merle L. Lomison
have been received by Lycoming Audubon Society, the kindness of Alvin and Gloria Cooke, Deborah Cooke and David Fry; and the Anesthesia Association of Lewiston-Auburn, Maine.

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 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

National Audubon is promoting a national conservation program titled "Audubon At Home". Unlike many programs sponsored by environmental or conservation organizations, which seem to be in faraway locations or require efforts of a group of people, Audubon At Home encourages all of us to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife around our very own homes. Audubon At Home is based on the belief that we as individuals can make a difference in the environmental health of a significant part of America: our residential properties.

We know that many species of American birds are decreasing in number. Our ever-increasing human population is using more and more land every year for residential and commercial uses, leaving less and less high-quality habitat for birds and other wildlife. National Audubon states that 2,100,000 acres are converted nationwide each year to residential uses. In Lycoming County, our human population is increasing at a slower rate than the national average, but even here we have observed loss of woodlands, fields or farms converted to commercial properties, and so on. Such changes are beyond the control of most of us, but what we can control is the actions we take on our own properties.



There are several key principles to Audubon At Home, which is strongly supported by Pennsylvania Audubon. The first one is the elimination or reduction of pesticide use. Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and rodenticides. The majority of homeowners use one or more of these pesticides every year, and some homes contain many cans and bottles of these toxins. We don't often give much thought to the effect a pesticide will have on anything other than its intended target. Yet, many times there are innocent victims. National Audubon estimates that 7,000,000 birds die each year from lawn pesticides. Seven million! Pesticides do not necessarily remain in the location where they are applied. Rainwater washes pesticide residue into streams, rivers, and groundwater.

Many 'perfect' lawns contain herbicides, but is an appearance worth the environmental cost of the poisons? Audubon At Home encourages us to think long and hard before using any type of pesticide and to consider alternatives such as hand-pulling weeds, accepting an imperfect lawn, and using native plants that are more likely to survive insect attacks. Sometimes, a perceived problem really is not a problem. For example, five years ago a neighbor of mine recommended that I use an insecticide to remove ant colonies in my backyard. I did not understand her concern, though her warning prompted me to throw boiling water on the ants. As the days went by, though, I realized that the ants were not about to take over my yard, and I decided to just let them be. Interestingly, ant colonies have been rare in my yard in the years since.

Water conservation is another principle of Audubon At Home, since billions of gallons of water are used every day for landscaping. As Audubon members, we know the importance of water in our yards as a bird magnet. A simple birdbath or even a pond will certainly attract birds, and Audubon At Home recommends these water attractions. However, many homeowners waste water. An example is watering of a lawn during hot, dry weather. The grasses that make up most lawns are cool-weather grasses that will die in hot weather but then make a full recovery in cooler, wetter weather. Thus, it is normal for these grasses to turn brown in hot weather. No watering is needed! Flowers, shrubs, and trees native to central Pennsylvania can often tolerate dry stretches far better than non-native plants can.

Use of a rain barrel or a rainwater collection and storage system is a great way to store the vast quantities of rainwater that drains off the roofs of houses, garages, and other buildings. The Penn State Agricultural Extension Office located just off of Warrensville Road offers rain barrel seminars – participants leave a seminar with a ready-to-install rain barrel that helps to reduce runoff into our streams and rivers during rainstorms, and stores 45 or more gallons of water to be used for watering plants, washing cars, or creating a rain garden in your yard.

Another Audubon At Home principle focuses on the great harm that cats do to birds. Cats permitted to wander outside kill millions of birds annually. The fact that many of the birds killed by housecats each year are *not* killed because of hunger just adds to the tragedy of these unnecessary losses. Cats that stay indoors live, on average, much longer than outdoor cats and do not take a toll on our declining bird species. While an outdoor cat that wears a bell(s) will not surprise mature birds, realize that baby birds are very vulnerable until they can quickly take flight when danger is near. Do your part to help our avian friends by keeping cats indoors, and encourage friends and relatives to do the same.

There is more to Audubon At Home, and we will discuss more of its principles in our next newsletter. In the meantime, you can learn more from both the [National Audubon](#) and [Pennsylvania Audubon](#) websites.



GARDENING FOR BIRDS: JEWELWEED



[Jewelweed](#) is a common plant native to the eastern U.S. that is often overlooked by us humans. Do we ignore it because of the damp, shady habitat it thrives in, which most of us shun? Or could it be the 'weed' part of its name that turns us off? Who knows? One thing for sure: Ruby-throated hummingbirds **do not** ignore its orange and yellow flowers that bloom for extended periods during mid-to-late summer. Yes, Jewelweed is one of the best native wildflowers for attracting hummingbirds. Its charming flowers dangle like a showy jewel, and the 'hummers' sure take notice!

There are at least two species: *Impatiens capensis*, with orange flowers; and *Impatiens pallida*, with yellow flowers. Though the blossoms aren't all that big, these plants grow to 4 or 5 feet high, resulting in a large number of 'jewels'. Very easy to grow, provided you have a damp to wet part of your property that is at least partially shaded, Jewelweed is an annual that self-seeds. It's so good at self-seeding that under ideal habitat it can come to dominate your garden, so plan wisely if you choose to add it to your yard. Its common name is 'Touch-me-not', so named because its seed pods burst open when touched.

Jewelweed's unique stems are translucent and quite succulent, and its oval-shaped, bluish-green leaves have coarse teeth. Many folks believe the plant is a good natural remedy to combat the itch from Poison Ivy or the sting of Stinging Nettle. To be effective, we need to crush Jewelweed's leaves or stems and apply to an affected part of our skin as quickly as possible.

Jewelweed is hard to find at nurseries, and that likely has something to do with our tendency to ignore it, and also its abundance in 'the wild'. The easiest way to introduce it to your property is to transplant one or two small plants from a friend's or neighbor's streamside bank, and let the self-seeding process work in the coming years! Of course, you can also gather and plant seeds. Either way, hummingbirds will appreciate your efforts. Happy gardening!

Jewelweed clipart: courtesy of Florida Center for Instructional Technology

Jim Green



KID'S KORNER

TRUE or false ??

Do you know the answers to the following true or false statements???

1. Birds get cold and wet when it rains.
2. Pileated woodpeckers hammer their heads into trees 20 times a second. In spite of this beating, they do not hurt themselves.
3. Owls can move their eyes in any direction.
4. If you find a baby bird on the lawn, the best thing to do is leave it alone.

Answersare upside down!

1. **PROBABLY NOT** Nature has given birds a means to survive the cold and wet. Their feathers are layered and oily to shed water. They have an extra layer of soft, warm downy fluff next to their bodies. The quills are hollow to lighten the weight and also act as insulation to help them retain body heat.
2. **TRUE** Thick muscles and sponge-like bones absorb the shock of the pounding. In addition, a third eyelid closes with each strike and protects the eye from flying wood chips.
3. **FALSE** An owl has such big eyes they cannot roll them from side to side. They can only look straight ahead. However, it can turn its whole head 360 degrees to see in any direction.
4. **TRUE** Chances are, it is exactly where it should be, learning to fly or feed itself. The parents are nearby, keeping a watchful eye on it.

<http://www.outdoor-nature-child.com/nature-true-false-birds-q.html>



BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Spring migration is in full swing in Pennsylvania. Hopefully you can get out and enjoy the beauty and wonder of nature as it occurs. The 2009 Great Backyard Bird Count (February 13th - 16th) yielded 136 species in Pennsylvania, for a total of 905,097 individuals. Numerous counts (over 60) took place in Lycoming and Clinton counties. Some of the highlights in our LAS region included: five White-winged Crossbills in Williamsport, 8000 Snow Geese and 45 Snow Buntings in Woolrich, one Peregrine Falcon in Lock Haven, six Common Goldeneye in Howard and four Black Vultures in Waterville. Nationally, a Sinoloa Wren was spotted north of Mexico for the first time; Xantu's Murrelet and Pink-footed Shearwater were two new oceanic species spotted from California.

Local Spring observations include from Mill Street, Montoursville, a pair of American Kestrel, a pair of Belted Kingfisher and Common Merganser sighted by Manny and Lucy Barrera. From Old Lycoming Township, Dave Ferry reports 20 plus Northern Flickers, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrows, Brown Thrashers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush and 20-30 Pine Siskins. From Linda and Skip Frye visiting Bald Eagle State Park: Bald Eagles with young in the nest, Ring-billed Gulls, Northern Flicker, Wood Thrush, Double-crested Cormorant, Eastern Phoebe, Purple Finch, Chipping Sparrow, and Eastern Bluebird, and in Woolrich 40 plus Pine Siskins.

Maureen in Jackson Township reports Eastern Bluebird, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel and Eastern Meadowlark. On March 7th, a late winter sighting of a Pileated Woodpecker was seen by Jim Green in Brandon Park, Williamsport. At Rose Valley Lake on March 8th, a Bald Eagle was observed by Laurie Cressman. Also from Laurie, on April 12th, in Wolf Township, two Ruffed Grouse, her first Common Redpoll, Wild Turkeys, Northern Mockingbird and Killdeer. At Rose Valley Lake on April 15th, she saw a tern, Great Blue Heron, Ring-necked Duck, and gulls. On April 19th, at SGL 252, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Northern Mockingbird, Wood Thrush, and Ring-necked Ducks.

On April 18th, Joe Yoder observed a juvenile Golden Eagle flying over his home in Faxon, Loyalsock Township. At Canfield Island, he had his first Broad-winged Hawk of the spring, also, Ring-billed Gull, and around his home, Pine Siskins. On April 19th, back at Canfield Island, he had 11 Yellow-rumped Warblers and 15-20 Pine Siskins in the spruces. Alex from Bastress reports Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallows, 50 Pine Siskins, a nesting Eastern Phoebe, Purple Finch and Chipping Sparrows.

My observations included my first Killdeer in Wolf Township on March 17th. Pine Siskins have been seen daily in eastern Lycoming County. Common Mergansers were seen on Muncy Creek, from March 8th to April 16th. My first Eastern Phoebe was on March 27th. Migrant White-throated Sparrows have been seen from March 29 - to the present (April 21st). Osprey were first seen on March 31st in Picture Rocks thru April 21st. A male Purple Finch was singing brightly on April 4th. First Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows on April 10th. First Chipping Sparrow on April 14th, with a surprising total of 42 Fish Crows flying north through Picture Rocks. On April 16th, a pair of Wood Ducks, a Palm Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Field Sparrow in Wolf Township, near Picture Rocks.

With the irruptions of White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins this winter, be on the look out for possible nesting activity to occur.

Enjoy the many gifts of nature this Spring.

Wesley Egli



Late News Flash!!! It has been reported that there is a pair of Purple Martins nesting in our Martin house at the Loyalsock Complex!! This is very positive note with hopes of more martins will continue to show up.