



CHICKADEE CHATTER

Newsletter of the Lycoming Audubon Society

November – December 2007

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER EVENTS

November 9, 2007 – DEADLINE for BIRD SEED SALE orders!!!

November 28, 2007

PLEASE NOTE: This is the LAST Wednesday in November!!!



"In Darwin's footsteps - Wildlife of the Galapagos" Dr. Mary Morrison will give a presentation on her recent trip to the fabulous Galapagos Islands! Most of the wildlife in the Galapagos is still unaccustomed to humankind, producing some great photo opportunities. Galapagos tortoises, marine iguanas, lava lizards, white-tipped reef sharks, and several different species of Darwin finches among many others species will be shown and discussed.

December 3, 2007 – Reservations due for Holiday Party!

December 12, 2007 – Holiday Party – at the Genetti Hotel.

See insert for details and reservation form. Please RSVP with check before December 3rd.



December 16, 2007 – Northern Lycoming Christmas Bird Count—Dave Ferry, Coordinator.

December 23, 2007 – Williamsport Christmas Bird Count— Dave Ferry, Coordinator.



January 23, 2008 – "Songbirds to Waterfowls in Alaska's Interior" Christy Bowersox, will tell of her experiences working for the Alaska Bird Observatory, banding passerines and her study of waterfowl.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Our Fall schedule is off to a great start! In September Mel Zimmerman shared his enthusiasm, wonderful photos, and videos of the wildlife in the coral reef of the Caribbean. In October, Wayne Laubscher presented a very informative program on the barn owl projects in the area.

We appreciate your response to our survey. It is great to hear your ideas. One suggestion, made by several members, **is to start the monthly meetings at 7:00pm with a social time at 6:30pm. We plan to try this starting JANUARY 23, 2008.**

As a conservationist, I found the report on the 2007 Solar Decathlon in Washington DC very exciting. This was the 3rd competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. Twenty teams were selected to compete including Penn State's Morning Star solar powered home which also had a display of native plants. Read more about this at www.solardecathlon.org.

Our volunteer job focus this month is participating in the **Christmas Bird Counts**. Dave Ferry does a great job organizing these and this year a new count territory, which includes Rose Valley Lake had been created. Please note the details in Dave's report. You do not have to be an expert birder to participate. It is a great way to learn about the birds in the area. Contact Dave Ferry if you can help.

Another way to learn more about birds is to participate in the field trips. Seven Mountains Audubon Society in Lewisburg, has a field trip once per month on the first Saturday of the month, and we are welcome to participate. You can check their website at www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org

Remember to place your questions in the "**ASK AUDUBON BOX**" on the sign-in table at the general meetings. I am sure we will all benefit from this information. The questions will be answered in future newsletters.

Looking forward to seeing you at our November 28th meeting.

Linda Burk

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

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 ? **Ask AUDUBON.....from our question box:** ?
 ? Do female Downy Woodpeckers have red on their ?
 ? heads? ?
 ? According to "Birds of the Mid-atlantic", by Fred ?
 ? Alsop II, (Smithsonian Handbooks) the female ?
 ? *Picoides pubescens* (Downy Woodpecker) "differs ?
 ? from the male only in that it **lacks** the red ?
 ? occipital (head) patch". ?
 ? The Cornell online bird guide indirectly states the ?
 ? same: [http://www.birds.cornell.edu/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Downy_Woodpecker.html) ?
 ? [AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Downy_Woodpecker.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Downy_Woodpecker.html) ?
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TWO Christmas Bird Counts in Lycoming County!!



The Williamsport Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Will be held on Sunday, December 23rd. A second count in cooperation with the Rose Valley / Mill Creek Watershed Association has been organized in northern Lycoming County, and will be held Sunday December 16th. The Northern Lycoming CBC includes Rose Valley Lake, much of the Lycoming Creek watershed, the farmland of Cogan House and Jackson Townships, as well as part of Laurel Ridge. A map of this new area is included in the newsletter.

Both counts are in need of volunteers to monitor bird feeding stations and survey rural areas within the count circles. A basic familiarity with backyard birds is all that is needed to monitor a bird feeder, and no experience is necessary to help assist area leaders. Volunteers should contact Dave Ferry at dferry@wasd.org or phone before 6:00 PM at 570-323-1590. A \$5.00 donation to National Audubon is requested but not mandatory to volunteers.

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Environmental Directory 2008 is Available Now

The Lycoming Audubon Society and the Environmental Advocates of Northcentral Pennsylvania have joined together to publish a directory identifying many organizations, clubs, special interest groups and individuals that are concerned about our environment.

This directory is intended to serve as a resource and guide for program planning at all levels as well as serving as a guide for anyone wishing to created cooperative activities within the environmental community, for example; hosting an environmental fair, developing a nature center, building a nature trail or uniting for any other environmental purpose.

This directory is also available on the LAS website: www.lycoming.org/audubon At this site additions, changes and other information can be made. Unlisted groups are encouraged to add their information and become available to the public online.

Help is needed with the distribution of the directory to various centers for pick up. Please sign up at the November LAS meeting if you can assist with the distribution of the directories.

"Welcome New Members"

Dale Bower	Thomas Bryerton
Lillian Cole	Anna M Curcio
John Felix	Nathan Fronk
Ruthann Geyer	Arnold Majerle
Daniel Miley	Camilla Sisino
Barbara Smith	Oscar Smith
Maria Stahel	

Who am I, and where do I live?

- ↓ I have a black "jacket" and a white belly
- ↓ I bray like a donkey and I'm about 30 centimeters tall
- ↓ My parents raised me in a cave between some lava flows, **NOT** on ice!
- ↓ My parents mated for life, and so will I, if I'm lucky
- ↓ I sleep on land at night and hunt for fish in the ocean all day
- ↓ I cannot fly through the air, but I do "fly" underwater at up to 35 miles per hour!
- ↓ I have to watch out so I'm not eaten by a hawk or a white-tip reef shark
- ↓ There are only about 1600 birds of my species left on planet earth
- ↓ ...and I do NOT live in Antarctica, I live near the equator!



Who am I and where do I live?

↓ *Answer: My ancestors were probably swept to the Galapagos islands by the icy cold Humboldt current that runs north up the coast of South America. I am a Galapagos penguin!*



BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Fall migration is winding down, but as I write this (October 26th), we are just entering my favorite time of the fall-migration season.

At fall hawk watches in Pennsylvania, this is when the big boys start to arrive. The Eastern population of Golden Eagles that summers in northern Quebec and Newfoundland/Labrador, soon will be moving down the Appalachian ridges (and the Allegheny plateau) in numbers. It's also the time when another coveted late-fall species, Northern Goshawk, appears at the ridge-based watches.

Goshawk migrations are cyclical, with big years coming about every nine to 11 years (supposedly linked to prey-species availability in the northern forests). The last really big flight in the Northeast was in 1999. On November 7th of that year at Waggoner's Gap, we were privileged to watch a record 29 Goshawks and 27 Golden Eagles scoot down the ridge on northwest winds.

The largest concentrations of Northern Harriers, Red-shouldered Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks are also moving in November. If you are lucky, you may find a few Rough-legged Hawks at the watches, too. Rough-legs also begin showing up this month on their winter territories in Lycoming County.

This fall at Waggoner's Gap, we have already eclipsed the previous seasonal record for Sharp-shinned Hawks (8,962 in 1987). The Sharpie count was 8,983 as of October 26th. Most of the eastern sites have had big Sharp-shin flights this fall, an encouraging sign (unless you are a warbler, I guess). Merlin flights have also been up, and I've gotten some of the best looks I've ever had at the feisty falcon species this year.

There have been lots of reports of Purple Finch and Pine Siskin flocks all over the state in the past few weeks (due to a poor seed/cone crop up north), and we've seen plenty of them at the hawk watch, along with many Red-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

If you have the time and the inclination, an early- or mid-November trip to Cape May, NJ, can reap big rewards, particularly if your thing is rarities/vagrants like Cave Swallows, Fork-tailed Flycatchers or Western Kingbirds, or if you hope to see huge "fallouts" of common birds like American Robins, Northern Flickers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and various sparrow and blackbird species. I won't bore you again with tales from our Lycoming Audubon trip to Cape May in early November a few years ago, but trust me, a flight of a half-million birds of any species – even a common one like robins – is a spectacle you won't soon forget.

Such flights are dependent on specific weather conditions. Typically, a warm southerly air mass, similar to those producing the big springtime flights, predominates for an extended period of time, followed by the passage of a strong cold front and northwest winds. Such conditions are building as I write this. The coming weekend and early next week could be interesting.

Onto the local sightings: A report of a Red Crossbill was relayed by Wayne Laubscher on October 22nd. The juvenile male (just coming into red adult plumage) was seen and photographed October 17th at the northern outskirts of Williamsport in a bush behind a barn that's being torn down on Alexis Drive. On October 20th Wayne also reported two American Avocets at Bald Eagle State Park.

Dave Ferry noted on October 20th that the wintering Peregrine Falcons are again using the Genetti Hotel in downtown Williamsport. Since late August, Dave has been noticing the birds on the southeast corner of the building. They perch on other faces of the building, too, but seem to prefer the southeast corner. He assumes the birds are the same ones that are using the cliffs along the river near Montgomery to nest. The birds have been in downtown Williamsport (after the breeding season) for a decade now.

On the same day, at Rose Valley Lake, Dave reported Ruddy Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes and a Ring-necked Duck, as well as Tree Swallows and three Common Ravens. At his home in Old Lycoming Township, Dave has had White-crowned Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows, Song Sparrows and Field Sparrows. Jim Green observed a White-crowned Sparrow in his birdbath in Williamsport on October 14.

On October 10th, Jeff Schaffer reported watching a Merlin harass a flock of American Crows for 10 minutes at a farm field just north of Lock Haven on Farrandville Road. A couple of times, he noted in his post on Audubon's "PA Birds" listserv, the crows started chasing the falcon, but it wasn't long before the Merlin turned the tables and resumed chasing the crows.

On September 30th, Skip Heller relayed a report from Dawn Sweeley, who spotted a Bald Eagle flying over the Susquehanna River near the archeological dig just south of Muncy. She later spotted an eagle (presumably the same bird) at the Muncy-Montgomery bridge. Katie Bell reported seeing two adult Bald Eagles circling over Williamsport (driving up Market Street near Confusion Corner) on September 13th.

Larry Waltz saw a pair of Pectoral Sandpipers at Rose Valley Lake on September 22 while kayaking the upper pond.

Keep reporting your bird sightings, and give us a hand on one (or both) of the Christmas Bird Counts if you can.

Joe Yoder

The map of the reverse shows the boundary of the "new" CBC circle established this year: the Northern Lycoming CBC. Please contact Dave Ferry if you are interested in volunteering for either CBC circle. dferry@wasd.org or phone before 6:00 PM at 570-323-1590.

All about the Christmas Bird Count

More than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

History

Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt": They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition - a "Christmas Bird Census" - that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count.

What do the Count data tell us?

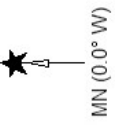
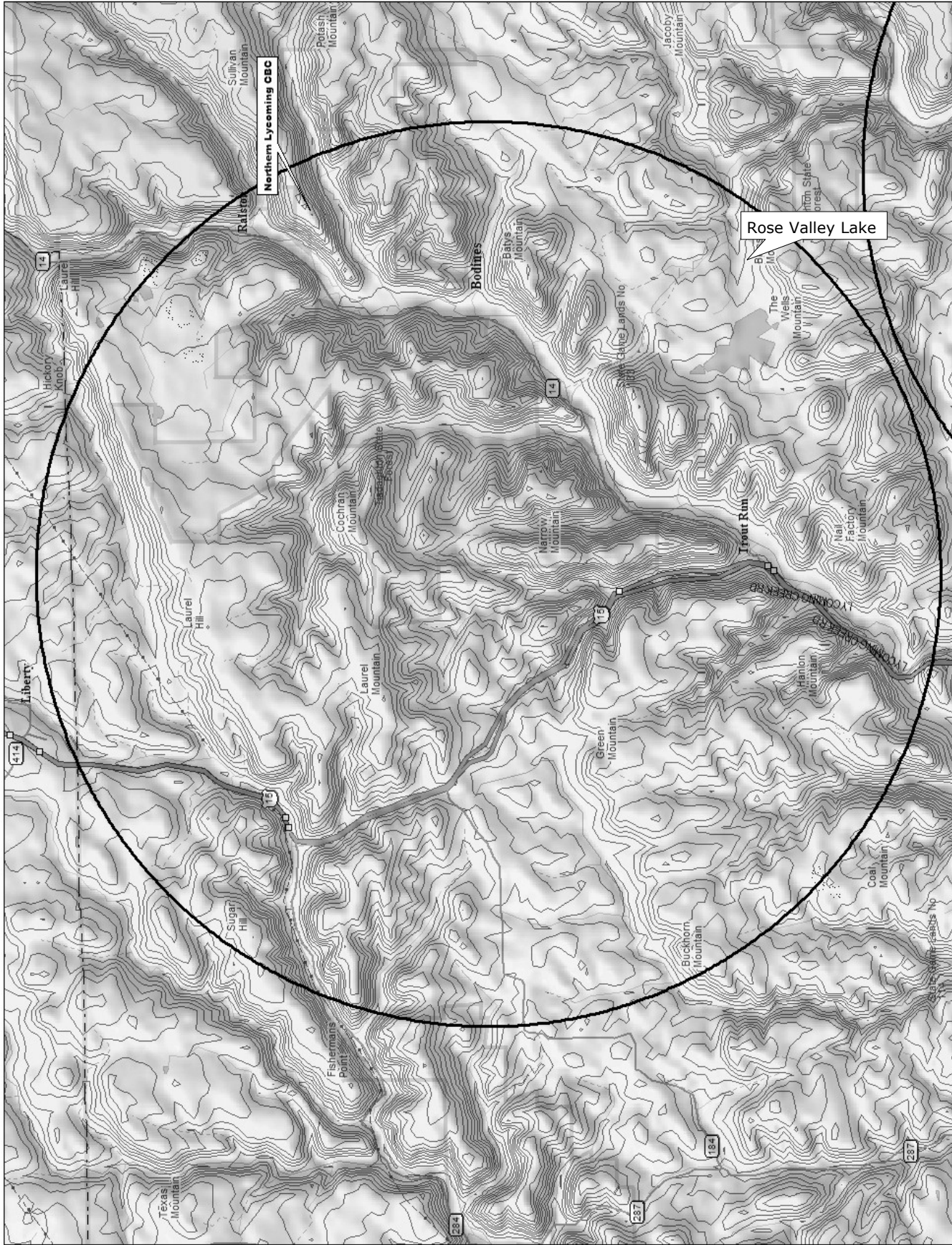
The primary objective of the Christmas Bird Count is to monitor the status and distribution of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere.

The count period, which is from December 14th to January 5th, in North America is referred to as "early winter," because many birds at this time are still in the late stages of their southward migration, so it is not "true" winter. When we combine these data with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, we begin to see a clearer picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The information is also vital for conservation. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

NORTHERN LYCOMING CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT AREA



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