

CHICKADEE CHATTER

Newsletter of the Lycoming Audubon Society (LAS) November - December 2011

UPCOMING 2011 EVENTS

November 16, 2011 at 7:30 pm



Ramsay Koury— Ramsay is a very knowledgeable and accomplished birder from the Harrisburg area. "**Ramsay's Road Trip**" is a driving trip Ramsay took out through

Minnesota, the Dakotas and Colorado in June of 2009. He will cover birds, mammals and some tourist spots: Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, and Devil's Tower.

14 December 2011

HOLIDAY PARTY!!



Our annual Christmas Holiday Dinner. This year we are going to **Le Jeune** Restaurant at Penn College. This will be a buffet dinner. See inside last page for Reservation form.

Social hour will be at 6:00 pm, with the buffet at 6:30 pm.

WE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS!!!

Martha Amaral
Joseph Borrosco
Walter Braunbeck
Susann Browning
Diane Charles
Marion Confer
Robert Falk
Ray Fisher
David Fox
Bonnie Gardner
Dora Gold
Susan Gray
Tina Hague
Bruce Hoffer

Mabel Huggins
Jo Johnson
Monte Kemmener
Birgit Krape
Matt Russell
Thelma Stellfox
Russell Struble
Byron Stuart
Janice Trapp
Mary Trimble
Melinda Updegraff
Celeste Wenzel
Rodney Williams
Anna Windell

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Let me start by telling you that Lycoming Audubon is currently in fine fiscal shape, with enough money in the bank to continue operations for the time being. However, our latest budget review indicates we are spending almost \$2,000 a year more than we bring in. We cannot sustain this, and the Board desires to maintain enough reserves to fund worthy projects in the near future. A recent membership drive cost us dearly, and netted only a small handful of new members (but we are grateful we have them!). We are looking at our income and expenses, and we will be making some changes for the new year. There are two ways every member could help.

If you have computer access, you could opt to have your newsletter delivered electronically, saving the cost of printing and postage. If half our members did this, we could save almost \$1,000 a year. To request an e-newsletter only (which has the photos in color), just drop us a line at LycomingAudubonS@aol.com including the email address you want us to use.

Membership has remained steady for many years, and we derive some income through National Audubon based on our membership. If even a small fraction of our members found one new member among their friends and acquaintances we could improve this income source as well as our social and political influence. We are offering current members an incentive while they last. If one of our members brings a **new National member** into LAS, we will give both the new member and the sponsoring member the choice of either an Audubon fanny pack or garden tote bag. Membership applications are available on our website. Please be sure to choose the National membership box, to make the check out to "Audubon", and send it to us at PO Box 4053, Williamsport, PA 17701.

Dan Alters

TWO WINNERS OF THE LAS 2011 WINTER HUMMINGBIRD CONTEST!

On October 5th, Steve Pinkerton received a call from homeowners in the Unityville area about a possible western hummingbird coming to their porch feeder. Remarkably, this was the same location of a visiting *Selasphorus* sp. hummingbird in October of 2006. Although the 2006 bird did not allow itself to be trapped, Steve was able to get some video footage which did indicate it was a probable Rufous/Allen's type hummingbird. The homeowners, who wish not to have their location disclosed, were the first winners in 2006's contest.



This year I arrived on October 6th and attempted to trap and band the "new" hummer. I did manage to get several photos early on. The bird came back to the feeder and the trap several times into the early afternoon but as with the 2006 bird, would not enter the trap. I also tried putting some flowers in the trap, as an extra enticement, but to no avail. I last saw it around 1:30 that day.



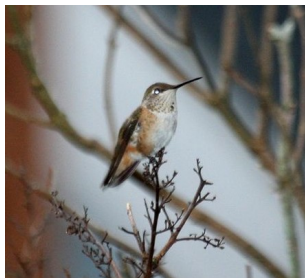
I returned early the next morning with some fresh pineapple sage flowers as additional bait, but the hummer never returned, and I left around midday. Because there had not been any frosts there yet, there were still a lot of flowers around for hummingbirds to feed, lessening the chance one would be inclined to use a feeder.

The photos I took confirmed that it was a *Selasphorus* sp. or Rufous/Allen's type hummingbird. Regrettably, the photos also revealed that both legs of the bird had some sort of fibrous material hanging from them. Had I caught it, I probably could have removed it.

The Unityville homeowners are again first winners of the 2011 LAS contest.

On October 24th, Steve got another call from Rosemary Lunz in Warrensville about a hummingbird coming to a feeder. I was at the location late that afternoon and found another *Selasphorus* hummingbird coming into Lunz's yard.

As with the Unityville bird, this one refused to enter the trap during several visits over two days. Based on photos I was able to get, it was determined to be a *Selasphorus* hummer, probably a hatch year female. I decided to leave the trap at that location for a while with the door fixed open, in hopes that it would stay in the area and become accustomed to it.



Rosemary and Raymond Lunz are the second winners of the LAS Winter Hummingbird Contest. There is still one more chance for someone to win, so please keep your feeders up until at least Thanksgiving.

Wayne Laubscher



NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL FALL 2011 BANDING UPDATE

As of this writing I have been unable to do any Saw-whet Owl banding this fall at my site in Swisssdale, Clinton County, due primarily to the long spell of horrific weather during most of October. Also, I did have some issues with clearing the netting area earlier in October but am now ready to attempt some banding as soon as I get a window of good weather. I hope to have some results to report in the next newsletter.

Wayne Laubscher

GARDENING FOR BIRDS: RED MULBERRY

Red Mulberry is a great choice for a backyard tree because it produces juicy drupes (fruit) at a relatively young age and often in great abundance. It is also a fast grower, especially when planted where sunlight is plentiful. The valleys of north-central Pennsylvania are near the northern edge of the natural range of *Morus rubra*. Don't confuse this native tree with the common Asian species, White Mulberry, that has naturalized across much of the U.S. Actually, the two species are quite similar and sometimes even hybridize. White Mulberry, an invasive species, has leaves that are glossier than that of our native Red species.



The drupes are green as they first develop, and then turn red, purple, and eventually almost black as they ripen. This picture of a very ripe drupe from Virginia Tech's *online TreeID* illustrates the similar appearance to black raspberries and blackberries. According to Stephen Kress of National Audubon, at least 44 bird species eat the drupes, which ripen in late spring and early summer. No wonder a mulberry tree that time of year is a bird magnet! Squirrels, raccoons, and other mammals join in the feeding frenzy when the fruits become red and purple. Even us humans are known to take our share, although I don't find them as tasty as raspberries. Sidewalks, vehicles, and other 'human' objects will become stained underneath a Red Mulberry tree, which is why I consider it a 'backyard' tree!

Red Mulberry's alternate leaves are quite interesting due to their varied shape. Deeply lobed and unlobed leaves are often found on the same tree and sometimes even the same branch! A few years ago, I overheard a father 'teaching' his young son about the varied leaves, although the father incorrectly identified the mulberry tree as a Sassafras. This tree is a loner. It's rarely found in groups, but it does just fine on its own, thriving on moist or moderately dry soil. Sandy or clay soil suits it well. In the 'wild' it is typically an understory tree.

Primarily a small to moderate-sized tree with a short trunk, Red Mulberries do occasionally exceed 60' in height in optimal conditions. This deciduous tree serves as a larval host for Mourning Cloak butterflies. Autumn color is usually not spectacular. Its main attraction, of course, is the fruit which ripens earlier than that of most other trees and shrubs.



I am certainly not a dendrologist but I researched dendrology sources to help me finalize this article. From what I read, so much hybridization between Red and White Mulberries has occurred that pure Red Mulberry trees may be hard to find. You may want to question nursery sources on the 'purity' issue if you plan to purchase any next spring. Its rapid growth allows you to buy it small. Musser Forests, Inc. does sell Red Mulberries at low cost and will ship them to you. Some native plant nurseries in southern PA also sell *Morus rubra*.

Thank you for supporting and promoting native plants!

References:

[Virginia Tech's online TreeID](#)- source of pictures
[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

Jim Green

INJURED RED PHALAROPE FOUND NEAR SALONA

On October 8, I received a call from David Stoltzfus in the Salona, Clinton County area about a small sandpiper-like bird that was found unable to fly in his family's pasture. It was being kept in a box. I was unable to get there until the next day so I told him to give it water and some earthworms. I was expecting **to find one of the fairly common sandpipers or small plovers that migrate through the area in the fall, but** when I got there it turned out to be a Red Phalarope. This bird was a new record for Clinton County.

Phalaropes are unusual, rather dainty-looking sandpipers.

There are three species that nest in North America: the Wilson's, Red-necked, and Red. The Red Phalarope is the most northerly of the three and the rarest to be seen inland and in Pennsylvania. Phalaropes are unusual birds in that the female is more brightly plumaged than the male and once the females lay their eggs, they depart and the males incubate the eggs and raise the young. Red Phalaropes winter in flocks on the open ocean.



The Salona bird was unable to fly well enough to get airborne but did not seem to have any obvious injuries or wounds. It was actively eating. I transported it to Centre Wildlife Care in Port Matilda where it was determined to be in an emaciated condition and therefore was unable to fly. It had a very minor wing injury. It's prognosis was good and within a week it was eating well and regained much of its weight. Recently it was transferred to a Delaware rehabilitation facility which is experienced with ocean birds. It is expected to make a full recovery and to be released.

Photos supplied by Wayne Laubscher

Wayne Laubscher



PENNENVIRONMENT – MARCELLUS SHALE CITIZEN ORGANIZER TRAINING

PennEnvironment is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization with home offices in Philadelphia. Their professional staff combines independent research, practical ideas and tough-minded advocacy to overcome the opposition of powerful special interests and win real results for Pennsylvania's environment. They draw on 30 years of success in tackling Pennsylvania's top environmental problems. On Thursday, November 17, they are sponsoring a free event aimed to educate the citizens of Pennsylvania about the current situation surrounding the rapid expansion of Marcellus Shale gas drilling. Their training can provide citizens with the tools they need to voice their concerns about this issue to their decision-makers and friends. During the free training they will be providing practical tools such as writing letters to the editor and how to effectively lobby one's representative. Pre-registration is required.

If you want to attend this free event, contact us at LycomingAudubonS@aol.com by Monday, November 14. Feel free to [visit their website](#) for more information.

PennEnvironment Marcellus Shale Citizen Organizer Training
Thursday, November 17, 2011 – 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Bucknell University's Dana Engineering Building, Room 113
Lewisburg, PA

**LYCOMING COUNTY
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Saturday, December 17, 2011

**Please contact Dave Ferry if you are
interested in participating – at:
lycohawk@aol.com or 323-1590.**

**MONTHLY TIPS AND REMINDERS
FOR YOUR HEALTHY YARD**

November



Sign up for *Project FeederWatch* and become a citizen scientist by counting the birds that come to your feeding station from November to April. Visit: www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw

Plant deciduous trees and shrubs up until the ground freezes.

Set up a submersible heater in your birdbath to keep water unfrozen and accessible throughout the winter.

Clean and oil your garden tools for winter storage.

Begin sowing seeds that need stratification or cold treatment.

December

Participate in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count. See ABOVE for our chapter's date.

Decorate the trees and shrubs in your yard with holiday treats for the birds: edible garlands of popcorn, cranberries, raisins, peanut butter pinecones, cut apple chunks.

Before the ground freezes, erect nest boxes for next spring. Bluebirds, especially, will check out possible nesting sites in late winter.

After the ground freezes, mulch around perennial beds to prevent heaving during freeze/thaw cycles.

<http://athome.audubon.org/healthy-yards>

**FYI - GREEN VEHICLE GUIDE:**
www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/Index.do
**A guide for choosing clean and fuel
efficient vehicles, for good fuel economy
and the environment!!**

THE BROWN BOOBY!!

Back in mid-summer, a tropical bird decided to visit the southern tip of New Jersey, causing a great deal of interest among "local" birders. It was already present in Cape May on August 20th, before Hurricane Irene hit the area.

The Brown Booby is a bird of the Caribbean, and is, generally, an open ocean seabird, rarely seen from land. It has a large yellow bill, huge yellow feet, a dark brown body and wings, and white belly. This bird appeared in Jarvis Sound, first finding Intercoastal Waterway Buoy number 475 to its liking. It



The female Brown Booby of Cape May, 2011
Photo by Wayne Laubscher

did not seem to be bothered by "birding tour" boats. By late September, it also began hanging out on an old rotting dock on the other side of Jarvis Sound, along with some of its "new" friends,...the cormorants.

It was last reported being seen (as reported on eBird) on October 23rd.



"Sharing the buoy"....photo by Joan Knight

Kids' Korner: Backyard Bird Feeders

Backyard bird feeders are a fun way to see, support, and learn about local birds. And they're easy to make! Try making one or more of these simple feeders with your parents and see what kinds of birds you attract.

Wayne Laubscher

Pine Cone Feeder (easy)

Materials: pine cones birdseed
 peanut butter string or yarn

Gather pine cones. Use spoons to slather peanut butter and suet onto the cones. Roll the cones in birdseed. Tie to a tree branch with a piece of yarn or string.



Citrus Feeder (easy)

Materials: empty grapefruit or orange halves string or yarn
 birdseed

Make 3 evenly-spaced holes through the top rim of an empty grapefruit or orange half. Thread pieces of string or yarn through each hole and knot one end to keep them from slipping out. Fill with birdseed and hang in a tree.



Bagel Feeder (easy)

Materials: stale bagels birdseed
 peanut butter string or yarn
 lard

Slather the outside of a stale bagel in a mixture of peanut butter and lard. Roll in birdseed. Tie yarn or string around the bagel and hang from a tree.



Cranberry-Popcorn Feeder (intermediate)

Materials: needle and thread cranberries
 cooked popcorn

Use a needle and thread to string together popcorn and cranberries. Drape in trees.

Suet Feeder

Materials: Crisco cornmeal
 peanut butter birdseed
 flour mesh bag (like the ones onions come in)

Combine one part Crisco, one part peanut butter, one part flour, and one part birdseed with three parts cornmeal. Roll the mixture into a ball and put it in an onion bag to hang. Or you can drill 1 inch holes in a small log. Fill the holes with suet and hang the log in a tree.

Bird Feeding Tips

- Place your birdfeeders in places that aren't too windy and have good cover nearby.
- Fill your birdfeeders with the amount of food that can be eaten in 2-3 days.
- Keep your feeders and your feeding area clean by raking up spilled seed under them.

This Kids' Korner Adapted from National Audubon's Backyard Bird Feeders site by Carol Hildebrand.

Lycoming Audubon Society
Annual Christmas Dinner

Guests are Welcome



Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Social Time — 6:00 to 6:30pm

Dinner 6:30 pm

Le Jeune Chef at Penn College

Hagan Way and Park Street

Williamsport, PA

Parking is near the restaurant and free



MENU

Full Buffet

Price is **\$23.00** per person, which includes the gratuity.

Please respond by **December 7, 2011**

Make checks payable to: **Lycoming Audubon Society.**

Mail to: Dan Alters, 1478 Rock Run Road, Cogan Station, PA 17728-9375.

Questions? Call Dan at 570-998-9015 or 570-244-8671

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Number of persons attending _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email (for a reminder message) _____