

Winter 2013

Bulletin

Volume 78
No. 4

newsletter

Christmas Bird Count 2013



Book Signing

By Cameron Cox

Co-Author of *Peterson Reference
Guide to Seawatching-Eastern
Waterbirds in Flight*



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Bulletin

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ON THE COVER:

Looking to get involved in Citizen Science? The Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, and Project Feeder Watch are great opportunities to help scientists monitor bird populations—and by extension, the health of our natural world.



Allegheny Regional Asset District

This Audubon View

Christmas Bird Count, Project Feeder Watch, Great Backyard Bird Count! It seems like we are always counting birds at Audubon – or asking you to help us count birds. Well, you’re right, we are.

So why are we always counting birds? Aside from giving us an excuse to do one of our favorite things – look at birds – there are a number of reasons to count birds. As with all Citizen Science projects, these counts allow the public to help collect vital information for scientists and researchers on a huge scale, all while enjoying their favorite pastime.

But why so many bird counts? First, there are a large number of people already out there looking at birds, so there are many opportunities to enlist counters. Birds are also relatively easy to count. They are larger than insects, easier than amphibians and fish to find, simple to identify, and have that wonderful tendency to come to us via our backyard feeders. They’re also one of the few creatures you can effectively count from inside!

Aside from being easy to count, birds are good sources of information on the general health of the environment. Many species migrate, so they yield data on different regions across their flyways. Important discoveries on topics as diverse as climate change, water quality, pesticide use, and forest fragmentation have all come from bird census data.

There’s one more reason to consider one of the winter bird counts. If you are new(er) to birding, they are a great way to get started. With the leaves down and fewer species around in winter, learning birds is easy.

So I invite you to participate in any of our bird count programs – the birds and the researchers that study them are counting on you.

Jim Bonner
ASWP Executive Director



NATURE STORE HOURS

Tuesday 9 am - 7 pm
Wednesday - Saturday 9 am - 5 pm
Sunday 1 pm - 5 pm

Trails open year-round.
7 days a week, dawn to dusk
(412) 963-6100

DIRECTIONS TO BEECHWOOD (FROM PITTSBURGH)

Take Route 28 north to Route 8 North/Butler exit. Turn right at first traffic light on to Kittanning Road which becomes Dorseyville Road. Travel 4.3 miles and Beechwood will be on your left. For additional directions, visit us at aswp.org.

DIRECTIONS TO SUCCOP CONSERVANCY (FROM PITTSBURGH)

Take Route 8 North from Pittsburgh or South from Butler and turn on to West Airport Road. Once on West Airport Road, Succop Conservancy’s driveway will be the first road on your left.

DIRECTIONS TO TODD NATURE RESERVE

Take Rt. 28 North to the Butler/Freeport Exit 17. Turn right at Rt. 356 North, and then right at Monroe Road. Travel about 2 miles, and make a right at Kepple Road. Travel 1.5 miles and Todd Nature Reserve will be on your right. Park in the lot and please sign in at the informational kiosk at the cabin. Trail maps are located at the kiosk.

You Can Make a Difference: Participate in the 2013 Christmas Bird Count

Did you know that the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is the longest standing Citizen Science project?

Scientists rely on the remarkable trend data of Audubon's CBC data to measure changes in the environment and in bird populations throughout North America. This information paints a clear picture of bird distribution and abundance that aids in the understanding of overall bird health what of what can be done to conserve bird species.

While scientists rely on the data, the success of the CBC relies on people like you!

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania hosts the Pittsburgh CBC. This year, the count is scheduled for December 28th for the area surrounding Pittsburgh.

Participation is free and experience is not necessary – new birdwatchers can be teamed up with experienced birdwatchers. Counting birds at bird feeders is also an important part of this count, so you don't even have to leave your home!

Please contact the area leader nearest your home for additional participation details:

Fox Chapel	Brian Shema	(412) 963-6100
Franklin Park and Ohio Township (N)	Stacy Widenhofer	(412) 741-7536
Hampton Township	Al Werling	(412) 487-8581
Indiana Township	Steve Gosser	(412) 855-5220
Kilbuck and Ohio Township (S)	Paul Brown	(412) 963-1979
North Park	Sheree Daugherty	(412) 322-5271
Oakmont and Harmar Township	David Yeany	(814) 221-4361
O'Hara Township	Steve Thomas	(412) 782-4696
Penn Hills and Verona	Eric Hall	(412) 247-5528
Pittsburgh (Frick and Highland Park)	Jack Solomon	(412) 521-3365
McCandless and Ross Township	Bob Machesney	(412) 366-7869
Shaler	Joyce Hoffman	(412) 487-0921
Pittsburgh (rest of city)	Mike Fialkovich	(412) 731-3581

Many other CBCs occur in western Pennsylvania, including the ASWP-led South Butler Count on January 4. We are looking for participation for each of them. They are scheduled for between December 14th and January 5th:

Pittsburgh South Hills	Nancy Page	412-221-4795	December 14
Buffalo Creek (Butler)	George Reese	724-353-9649	December 14
Lower Buffalo	Larry Helgerman	412-508-0321	December 15
Butler	Suzanne Butcher	330-759-1945	December 21
South Butler	Chris Kubiak	412-963-6100	January 4
Beaver	Rick Mason	724-847-0909	December 21
Bushy Run State Park	Dick Byers	724-593-3543	January 4
Clarksville	Terry Dayton	724-627-9665	December 28
Ryerson	Marjorie Howard	724-223-6118	December 21
Washington	Tom Contreras	724-223-6118	December 14

Citizen Science Does Make a Difference! Quick Facts from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Over 200,000 people each year provide information to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Citizen Science Projects. Based on this information, and the enormous amount of data collected:

- *More than 60 scientific papers have used Cornell Lab citizen-science data since 1997*
- *97,331 checklists were reported from the four-day Great Backyard Bird Count in 2010*
- *More than 96,000 nesting attempts have been reported to the Cornell Lab since 1997*
- *1,000,000 bird observations reported monthly to eBird, an online bird checklist program*
- *More than 80,000,000 bird observations made on the online Avian Knowledge Network, an international organization focused on understanding patterns and dynamics of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere*

Source: www.birds.cornell.edu

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Audubon is always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help us with everything from potting native plants to helping in the Nature Store.

If you have a special talent that you think could make a difference at Audubon, please contact us at (412) 963-6100.

Program Schedule

DECEMBER 2013 - FEBRUARY 2014

Register for programs online at aswp.org or by calling (412) 963-6100

SPECIAL EVENTS

Holiday Teas at Succop Conservancy

December 7 – Girls and Dolls Holiday Tea, Succop Conservancy
December 14 – Holiday Tea, Succop Conservancy

(11am-1pm) Cost: \$15 member, \$20 non-member Succop Conservancy is beautifully decorated for the holidays! Join us for tea, snacks, holiday carols, and a craft. December 7 is a special tea for girls and their favorite doll—accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Audubon Nature Store Holiday Specials

December 7-24 – Holiday Sale
January 4-12 – Winter Clearance Sale

Store hours: Tuesday 9-7 • Wednesday - Saturday 9-5 • Sunday 1-5
Visit Audubon Nature Store at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve for seasonal specials and gifts for everyone on your list!

Pittsburgh Christmas Bird Count

December 28 – In Pittsburgh
Various dates for other regional counts

(All Day) Participate in one of the nation's longest running citizen science activities. A complete list of bird count dates, locations, and organizer contact information is on page 4.

Christmas Bird Count Dinner

December 29 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

(6pm) Join us for a recap of the Christmas Bird Count. Bring a donation or a covered dish and enjoy the company of your fellow bird lovers!

Cameron Cox Presentation and Book Signing

February 5 – Phipps Garden Center
1059 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15232

(7:30pm) Free Join us for a special evening with Cameron Cox, co-author of *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching—Eastern Waterbirds in Flight*. Mr. Cox will talk about techniques to identify Eastern Waterbirds by size, structure, flight style, and appearance. He will also sign copies of his new book. This event, held in conjunction with the Three Rivers Birding Club, takes place at Phipps Garden Center.

Great Backyard Bird Count Hike

February 1 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

(10am-Noon) Join us as we hike through Beechwood, participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This event is fun for birders and families alike!

BIRDING & NATURE HIKES

Birds and More: Naturalist Led Morning Walks

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve – Every Wednesday Morning
Succop Conservancy – Every Thursday Morning

(9am) Free Explore our reserves with one of our naturalists and experience the changing of the seasons. Please note: There will not be walks on December 25 or January 1 at Beechwood. There will not be a walk December 26 at Succop.

Outdoor Adventure—

Solstice Hike

December 21 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
December 21 – Succop Conservancy

(10am-Noon) Cost: \$6 member, \$10 non-member Join us for a hike celebrating the transition to winter. Look for birds and animals that stay here in Western Pennsylvania for the colder months. Appropriate for all ages.

Outdoor Adventure—

Tracking and Animal Signs

January 12 • 2-3:30pm – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
January 18 • 10-11:30am – Succop Conservancy

Cost: \$6 member, \$10 non-member There is lots of activity out there on the trails, especially when we're not looking. Learn how to read the evidence that animals leave behind. Appropriate for all ages.

Outdoor Adventure—

Fire Making in Extreme Weather

February 8 • 10-11:30am – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
February 15 • 12-1:30pm – Succop Conservancy

Cost: \$6 member, \$10 non-member Extreme weather can inhibit one's ability to create a campfire; even in such conditions, dry wood can be found. This hike will explore creative methods for procuring fuel and kindling a fire. We will cover multiple ways to light our fire without matches or paper using just what nature provides. Appropriate for all ages.

CHILDREN'S AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fledglings: Bird Tales

Dec. 12, Jan. 9 and Feb. 13 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
Dec. 10, Jan. 14 and Feb. 11 – Succop Conservancy

(10-11am) \$4 member, \$6 non-member (*price per person*) Give your 3-5 year old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Bird Tales programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants. Parent or caregiver must be present.

December: Treats for the Birds—What do birds like to eat?

January: Sensational Snow—Learn about the wonders of snow.

February: Plant Party—Snow seeds for a native plant to take home.

HANDS-ON CONSERVATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

Audubon Center for Native Plants: Decorating with Nature Sources

December 7 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
December 8 – Succop Conservancy

(1-3pm) \$20 member, \$25 non-member

Learn how to create festive decorations using materials found in nature. You'll create a piece to take home; we'll provide the materials. *Materials fee included in the program cost. Pre-registration is required.*

Christmas Bird Count Training

December 7 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
December 7 – Succop Conservancy

(10am-Noon) Free Get ready for the Christmas Bird Count and learn tips and techniques for the count. Your help provides insight into bird health and overall species numbers. Act 48 credit available.

Frog Watch

January 21 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
January 27 – Succop Conservancy

(7-9pm) Free Frog Watch adds to our understanding of frogs by counting calls at a pond near you. Frog activity begins in later winter. Act 48 credit available.

Great Backyard Bird Count Training

February 1 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
February 8 – Succop Conservancy

(10-Noon) Free Great Backyard Bird Count is Presidents' Day weekend. Get up to speed with common local species and learn reporting procedures. Act 48 credit available.

AUDUBON AT NIGHT

Owl Prowl and Full Moon Hike

January 17 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

(7-8:30pm) Cost: \$6 member, \$10 non-member

Enjoy the beauty of Beechwood under only the light of the full moon. Nocturnal animals, including owls, will be out and familiar surroundings take on a new appeal.

Night Hike and Campfire

February 22 – Succop Conservancy

(7-8:30pm) Cost: \$6 member, \$10 non-member Succop Conservancy at night is beautiful and quiet. Join us for a guided hike through the conservancy, then warm up after the hike at a campfire! Appropriate for all ages.

SCOUTS

Bird Study Merit Badge

January 18 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
January 4 – Succop Conservancy

(9am-3pm) \$25 per Scout Earn credit toward your Bird Study Merit Badge.

We cover most of the requirements, and can serve as counselor to approve the remainder. Contact us for details. Bring blue cards and a bag lunch. Pre-registration required.

Set up Your Own Scout Badge Program

Contact Scott Detwiler to set up your own scout badge program at Beechwood Farms Nature reserve or Succop Conservancy! (412)-963-6100 or sdetwiler@aswp.org.

EDUCATORS

Bringing Citizen Science Into the Classroom

January 25 – Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
January 25 – Succop Conservancy

(10am-Noon) Free Learn about the many opportunities for your students to participate in citizen science data collection during the school year. We will review a variety of projects involving birds, plants and insects. Act 48 credit available.



BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

SUCCOP CONSERVANCY

DECEMBER

- 4 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 7 **Christmas Bird Count Training** (10am-Noon) Free
- 7 **Decorating with Natural Sources: Native Plants** (1-3pm)
\$20 member / \$25 non-member
- 7 **Audubon Nature Store Sale** (9am-5pm)
- 11 **Birds and More—Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 12 **Fledglings: Bird Tales—Treat for the Birds** (10-11am)
\$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 18 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 21 **Solstice Hike** (10am-Noon) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 24 **Audubon Nature Store Closing** at 1pm
- 25 **Audubon Store Closed All Day** No Birds and More Walk Today
- 28 **Pittsburgh Christmas Bird Count**
- 29 **Christmas Bird Count Dinner** (6pm)
Bring a covered dish or make a donation.

JANUARY

- 1 **No Birds and More Walk Today**
- 4 **Audubon Nature Store** Winter Clearance through January 12
- 8 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 9 **Fledglings: Bird Tales—Sensational Snow** (10-11am)
\$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 12 **Tracking and Animal Signs** (2-3:30pm) \$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 15 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 17 **Owl Prowl & Full Moon Hike** (7-8:30pm)
\$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 18 **Scout Day: Bird Study Merit Badge** (9am-3pm) \$25 per Scout
- 21 **Frog Watch** (7-9pm) Free
- 22 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 25 **Teacher Workshop Bringing Citizen Science into the Classroom** (10am-Noon) Free
- 29 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free

FEBRUARY

- 1 **Great Backyard Bird Count Training** (10am-Noon) Free
- 5 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 5 **Cameron Cox Presentation & Book Signing** (7pm) Free
- 8 **Outdoor Adventure: Fire Making in Extreme Weather** (10-11:30am) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 12 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 13 **Fledglings: Plant Party** (10-11am) \$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 15 **Great Backyard Bird Count Bird Walk** (10am-Noon) Free
- 19 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 26 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free

DECEMBER

- 5 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 7 **Christmas Bird Count Training** (10am-Noon) Free
- 7 **Holiday Tea Girls & Dolls** (11am-1pm) \$15 member / \$20 non-member
- 8 **Decorating with Natural Sources: Native Plants** (1-3pm)
\$20 member / \$25 non-member
- 10 **Fledglings: Bird Tales—Treat for the Birds** (10-11am)
\$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 12 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 13 **Meteor Shower Hike** (7-8:30pm) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 14 **Holiday Tea** (11am-1pm) \$15 member / \$20 non-member
- 19 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 21 **Solstice Hike** (10am-Noon) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 26 **No Birds and More Walk Today**

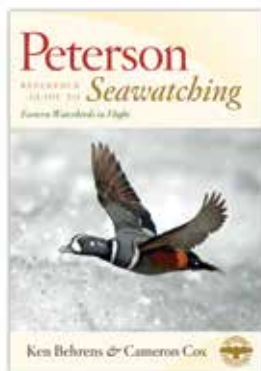
JANUARY

- 2 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 4 **Audubon Nature Store** Winter Clearance through January 12
- 9 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 14 **Fledglings: Bird Tales—Sensational Snow** (10-11am)
\$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 16 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 18 **Tracking & Animal Signs** (10-11:30am) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 23 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 25 **Teacher Workshop Bringing Citizen Science into the Classroom** (10am-Noon) Free
- 27 **Frog Watch** (7-9pm) Free
- 30 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free

FEBRUARY

- 6 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 8 **Great Backyard Bird Count Training** (10am-Noon) Free
- 11 **Fledglings: Plant Party** (10-11am) \$4 member / \$6 non-member
- 15 **Outdoor Adventure: Fire Making in Extreme Weather** (Noon-1:30pm) \$6 member / \$10 non-member
- 18 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 20 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free
- 27 **Birds and More Naturalist Led Walk** (9am) Free

BOOK SIGNING With Cameron Cox



**Don't Miss
Cameron Cox,
co-author of
*Peterson Reference
Guide to Seawatching—
Eastern Waterbird
in Flight*, at Phipps
Garden Center on
February 5 at 7:30 p.m.**

Book Review: *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching—Eastern Waterbirds in Flight*

It is early November on the Atlantic coast. You drove six hours from Pittsburgh to Avalon, New Jersey to enjoy seabird migration. As the sun rises, you begin seeing shapes moving across the water but in typical fashion, the weather has not cooperated. The skies are cloudy, mist is in the air and the sunlight has no chance of cutting through. Certainly not the conditions you had hoped for. Through your binoculars, you can see distant strings of birds flying above the horizon but without sunlight, they appear black. And because of the conditions, you realize they could be any number of birds. Nearby, you hear people calling out birds with confidence; they are tallying birds by the thousands. What do they know that you don't know?

The *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching—Eastern Waterbirds in Flight* provides the answers. Authors Ken Behrens and Cameron Cox have combined their considerable experience and expertise to shed light on the art of seawatching. 112 species accounts representing 15 families are discussed within the text and nearly 900 images supplement the information. But take note—this is not a field guide. Rather, this book outlines the techniques of identification by size, structure, flight style, and appearance. By setting standards and comparing similar species, the authors detail what to look for in each species. Fun photo quizzes are included to be sure that you understand the principles. Not sure where to go to see these birds? Then choose from over 47 popular seawatching sites that the authors identify— from Newfoundland to Texas. Local spots include Dashields Dam and Presque Isle.

The information contained in this book is unparalleled and the techniques described will have you identifying more waterbirds, in all types of conditions, at any time.

Memorials

Alan Berger
Bonnie and Gene Schwartz
Mr. and Mrs. Demetriou

Frances Rae Brooks
Becky Byerly

Josie Wiley
Friends and Family at
Professional Suites

Sylvan (Red) Easler
Ginny and Gil Glenn

Sylvia Grace Kraus
Jean Purvis

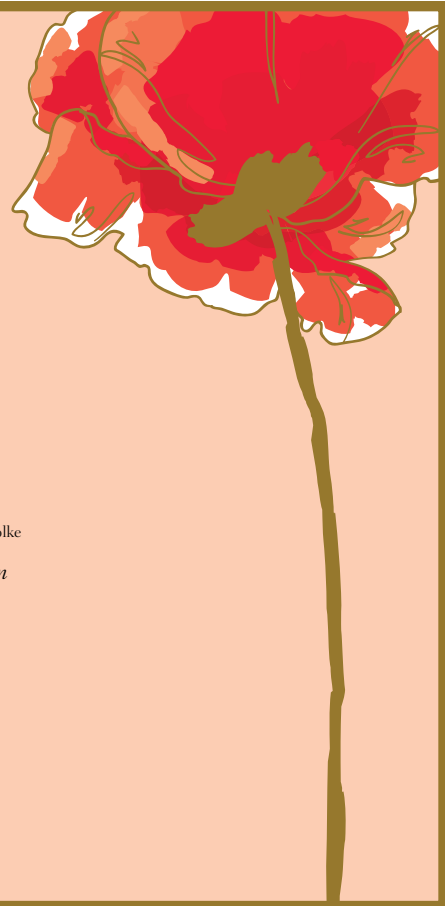
Martha Petronko
Marlene Parrish and Robert Wolke

Eugene Donald Boltson
Marlene Parrish

David M. Crossman
Marian Crossman

Honors

Ginger and Ray Morris
Bruce Conder



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\$50,000 +

- ▶ Columbia Gas – NISource
- ▶ Fred J. and Shirley H. Jordan Foundation
- ▶ Succop Family Charitable Trust

\$10,000 - \$24,999

- ▶ Allegheny Regional Assets District
- ▶ Clapp Charitable Trust
- ▶ EQT Foundation
- ▶ Laurel Foundation
- ▶ The Sprout Fund
- ▶ White Pine Fund

\$5,000 - \$9,999

- ▶ Dominion Foundation
- ▶ The Florence Boyer Foundation
- ▶ FTS, Inc.
- ▶ National Audubon Society
- ▶ pair Networks, Inc
- ▶ PNC Bank

\$1,000 - \$4,999

- ▶ The Ahmanson Foundation
- ▶ Church Brew Works Foundation
- ▶ Medure's Catering
- ▶ PA Department of Environmental Protection
- ▶ The Pittsburgh Foundation
- ▶ The Techs
- ▶ United Way of Allegheny County
- ▶ Whole Foods — Wexford

\$500 - \$999

- ▶ Fox Chapel Area Rotary
- ▶ Fox Chapel Garden Club
- ▶ Morgan Stanley Pittsburgh
- ▶ PPG Industries Foundation
- ▶ T.N. Walker, Inc.
- ▶ The Webb Law Firm
- ▶ Western PA Mushroom Club

There's a Lot to See at Audubon Nature Store!

DECEMBER HOLIDAY SALE

December 7th-24th, 2013

Save on our selection of seasonal items – cards, calendars, candles, ornaments, home décor and more.

CLEARANCE SALE

January 4th-12th, 2014

Find great bargains throughout the store.

BOOK SALE & SIGNING:

CAMERON COX

February 15, 2014

Meet and greet Cameron Cox, author of *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching—Eastern Waterbirds in Flight*.

MARCH IS MAPLE MADNESS TIME!

Shop Audubon Nature Store during Maple Madness at Beechwood, Saturday March 22, where you will find locally-made maple syrup, sugar and more.

Audubon Nature Store is located at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, 614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel.



Free Citizen Science Programs Across the Region

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania is pleased to offer free citizen science programs at locations across our service region. These programs are made possible by a generous donation from the Dominion Foundation.

We're always adding new programs and dates, so be sure to check our website for times and locations! Act 48 credit is available for all programs.

Frog Watch Training

FrogWatch adds to our understanding of frogs by counting calls at a pond near you. Frog activity begins in later winter.

Jan 21 Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

Jan 27 Succop Conservancy

Great Backyard Bird Count Training

Great Backyard Bird Count is Presidents' Day weekend. Get up to speed with common local species and learn reporting procedures.

Jan 7 South Butler Library

Jan 11 Moon Community Center

Jan 18 Beaver Area Memorial Library

Jan 18 Fern Hollow Nature Center

Jan 19 Crooked Creed Environmental Learning Center

Jan 25 The Outdoor Classroom

Feb 1 Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

Feb 8 Succop Conservancy

Close out 2013 with a Tax-Deductible Donation to ASWP

As yet another exciting year for Audubon comes to a close and the promise of 2014 begins to dawn upon the horizon, there is no better time than now to make a donation to Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania! Not only do you get the satisfaction knowing that your support is helping ASWP start off the new year strong—helping us deliver our programs, projects, and places to the public—but your donation (if received by December 31st) can also be deducted from your 2013 income taxes. This is a fantastic way to help us fulfill our mission to connect the people of southwestern Pennsylvania to birds and nature while reducing your taxes at the same time.

Please contact Chris Kubiak, Development Associate, at ckubiak@aswp.org or (412) 963-6100 for further information.

Ask the Naturalist

Q: How is Citizen Science Data Being Used in Science?

A: Citizen science refers to members of the general public gathering data about natural phenomena. The collection methods are relatively simple, requiring minimal training. ASWP is actively recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers for many citizen science projects.

A frequent topic covered in training is to explain why the data being collected is important. And while we promise that researchers find the information valuable, it's even better to have a specific example of how the data is being used to find trends of scientific significance.

In past Ask the Naturalist columns, we have discussed how Christmas Bird Count data has been used to document significant shifts of the geographic center for many bird species. This data is consistent with the hypothesis that changes in climate are affecting birds.

Recently, another study has been released using citizen science data. ("Effects of the emerald ash borer invasion on four species of birds," Koenig, et al, Biological Invasions, March 2013.) This time, Project FeederWatch data was used. The hypothesis is that the explosion of emerald ash borer (EAB) activity is having an effect on woodpeckers and similar insectivorous bird species. Such a relationship makes sense: lots of beetles for eating and dead trees for nesting is probably good for many birds. We often say that in our education programs when we observe a dead tree.

The study contains some interesting insights into how citizen science data is used. For example, one concern of that citizen science data is "bad data" from inconsistent observers. However, in the present study, the researchers controlled for that by discarding reports that lay outside the range of 99% of reports as a whole. Dealing with outlying data points is done with all data, from professional and citizen scientists alike. Another issue, specific to FeederWatch, is the influence of the bird feeders themselves on the data collected. For example, feeder visitations tend to go down when natural food sources are abundant. However, that was seen as a good thing here, because it meant that the population increases expected would be reported conservatively: using feeder observations would not likely exaggerate population increases.

The study concluded two things, both using the Project Feederwatch data: First, EAB did have an effect on insectivorous bird populations, but not always in the same way. Red-bellied Woodpeckers and White-breasted Nuthatch populations went up right away. However, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker numbers actually dropped at first, but then went up. Hairy Woodpeckers had the least consistent response with variable populations year to year. The latter reminds us that these relationships are often not as easy to predict as they might first seem. The study also supported the notion that the increase was due to increased survivability rather than immigration from areas away from the EAB zones. Populations at areas of lesser EAB activity were not changing in the way expected, had the high-EAB-area increases just been birds moving in from elsewhere.

The study is available at http://www.nbb.cornell.edu/wkoenig/K179TA_13.pdf. The study used data from the Pittsburgh area, so perhaps some of you readers are actually contributors! If you would like to participate in Project FeederWatch or of the many other citizen science projects ASWP coordinates, watch our public calendar for training dates, or contact our education department.

A Friends of Audubon Membership Makes a Great Gift

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP) is a nonprofit organization supported in large part through membership dues.

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A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999.
Registration does not imply endorsement.



2013 Day of Giving

Thank you to everyone who supported us through Pittsburgh Gives' 2013 Day of Giving. This year, we received a total of \$8,845.00 and an additional \$1,150.00 through The Pittsburgh Foundation's matching 13%. We especially welcome the following new members to ASWP:

Michelle Fries	Deborah Walker
Lee Oehrle	Laura King
Deborah Carter-Gordley	Beth Lawry
Sandra L. Beard	Barbara Testa
Jonathan Szish	Elora Cunningham
Linda Snyder	Yvonne Thickey
Maureen R. O'Brien	Laura Hansen
Alyce Amery-Spencer	Marilyn Pesci
Anne Bosnyak	Celia Brownell
Deborah A. Darnbrough	Ellen Jakub



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Pittsburgh, PA 15238-1618
aswp.org

Mark Your Calendar!
March 2014 is

Maple Month

at ASWP!

March 8

Maple for Scouts at Succop Conservancy

March 15

Maple for Scouts at
Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

March 22

Maple Madness at
Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

March 29

Maple Madness at Succop Conservancy

MISSION STATEMENT

Connecting the people of southwestern Pennsylvania to birds and nature through our programs, projects, and places.



Become a fan of Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania on Facebook and receive updates on Beechwood, Succop Conservancy and Todd Nature Reserve.

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