



BULLETIN

FALL / WINTER 2022



In this issue: The Wonderful World of Woodpeckers

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Red-headed Woodpeckers are easily identifiable by their crimson head, white body, and black and white wings. The birds' numbers have decreased considerably in the past 50 years due to climate change and habitat loss.

*Photo by Jeffrey Faulkner,
Great Backyard Bird Count*



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This Audubon View

The day before we were set to go to print on this edition of the Bulletin, new information was released regarding how woodpeckers avoid concussions as they pound away on trees. We'd already written a piece on the topic for this issue, so we quickly updated it to incorporate the new findings. We've already begun the process of updating that information in the material we use for our programs and classes—but it got me to thinking about the need to update our perception of things we once thought we understood.



New information comes at us all the time—in science, economics, politics, and history. The ability to be willing to consider, analyze, process, and accept new information is considered by many to be critical to success. Challenging preconceived concepts is what drives progress and knowledge. One of my favorite quotes, which is often attributed to economist John Maynard Keynes, and stated in several different forms, is “When my information changes, I alter my conclusions. What do you do, sir?”

(Lack of) concussions aren't the only reason woodpeckers are making news. While the last confirmed sighting of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was in 1944, field researchers (including our colleagues at the National Aviary) may recently have spotted it, alive and pecking. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker had been added to a list of 23 species set to be declared extinct by US Fish & Wildlife Service. Now, it's been given a 6-month reprieve to allow for additional evidence of its continued existence to be submitted. While studies suggest the species may still survive, the documentation is insufficient and experts are sharply divided. I've long been firmly in the “extinct camp” but would be very happy to receive “new, convincing information so that I could alter my conclusion”!

—Jim

OUR RESERVES, NATIVE PLANT NURSERY, AND NATURE STORES

BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, PA 15238

- Audubon Nature Store & Native Plant Nursery
- Dogs not permitted on trails

BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK

154 Monroe Road, Sarver, PA 16055

- Audubon Nature Store
- Dogs on leash are welcome

SUCCOP NATURE PARK

185 W. Airport Road in Penn Township, Butler, PA 16002

- Audubon Nature Store
- Dogs on leash are welcome

TODD NATURE RESERVE

367 Kepple Road, Sarver, PA 16055

- No restrooms or other facilities
- Dogs not permitted on trails

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION: For accessibility needs or questions about any of our sites, please contact Brian Shema at (412) 963-6100 or at bshema@aswp.org. For accessibility needs or questions about any of our programs, please contact Chris Kubiak at (412) 963-6100 or ckubiak@aswp.org. All other questions regarding accessibility or inclusion can be directed to Jim Bonner at (412) 963-6100 or jbonner@aswp.org.





Headbangers in our Midst: THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WOODPECKERS

Did you know that there are more than 300 species of woodpeckers throughout the world, with 23 species found within the United States and seven within Pennsylvania?

Woodpeckers are part of the larger family of birds known as Picidae that are found across the globe with the exception of Antarctica, Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, and the more extreme regions in the arctic. Most species of woodpeckers can be found living in forested or woodland habitats, although a few are known to live in treeless areas with cacti. Woodpeckers' fossil remains date back 25 million years to the Lower Miocene period.

They excavate trees to find food, to nest, and to communicate. Woodpeckers drill into trees to uncover insect food, such as wood-boring grubs, insects, insect eggs and pupae found in dead and living trees. The bird's tongue is exceptionally long and covered in sticky saliva cells with a pointed and barbed tip.

After pounding into the tree, the birds use their tongue to probe for insects that happen to be inside. They also consume sap from trees, nuts like acorns, and the fruits of trees and vines.

Woodpeckers also have special physical adaptations including short, muscular legs and sharply clawed feet. On most species, the first and fourth toes are paired facing backward and the second and third toes face forward. These 'zygodactyl' feet are excellent for clinging to and climbing trunks of trees.

Woodpeckers' stiff tail feathers catch on the bark to brace the bird as it works on opening holes in trees and branches. During molt, the two middle tail feathers (the strongest ones) do not fall out until the other 10 have been replaced and can support the bird's weight.

Courtship and nesting habits are essentially alike in all woodpeckers. After males and females pair, both sexes work together to excavate a nest cavity in a branch, tree trunk, or desert cactus. The female usually lays eggs directly on wood chips or vegetation left in the bottom of the cavity.

Can you name the 7 woodpecker species found in Pennsylvania?

Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Depending on the species, the female can lay anywhere between 3-10 eggs. Both sexes incubate the eggs, with the more aggressive male often incubating the eggs overnight.

Young are altricial, or hatch featherless and blind. As they develop into mature birds, they'll remain in the nest for two to three weeks prior to fledging.

A unique niche in the ecosystem...

Woodpeckers fill a unique niche in the ecosystem by using their pick-like bills to open up holes in wood. Special physical adaptations, such as short legs, two sharp-clawed, backward-pointed toes, and stiff tail feathers, allow these birds to cling to a trunk while drilling.

What's your favorite Woodpecker?

We asked our staff members to name their favorite woodpecker—and give insight into why the bird stands out for them.



RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

This bird is my clear choice—and my opinion is shared by the father of ornithology, Alexander Wilson, who says that this is the very bird that got things started for him. This bird's stunning red head contrasting with its crisply-plumed black and white wings makes it incredibly handsome and charismatic. It's an aerialist, catching insects on the wing like a flycatcher. It's also one of the few birds that hides its cache with leaves or bark. Red-heads are just as protective of their territories, dismantling other birds' nests, even destroying their eggs to reduce competition.

—Brian Shema, Operations Director (Photo by Patrick Dennen, Audubon Photography Awards)



NORTHERN FLICKER

The Northern Flicker is a gorgeous bird with bold colors that catch the eye. I love the black bib and bright flashes of red, white, and yellow—even I can't miss such a defined coloration. Although some stay around all year, I get excited when more show up in my yard in springtime. They're found across North America and I saw them during a recent trip to Washington state. Last year, my sister participated in a bird banding study at Central Michigan University and I have a photo of her working with a flicker, I don't think I'd want to be that close to such a strong and sharp beak!

—Betsy Monroe, Finance & Administration Director (Betsy's twin sister, Amy, holds a Northern Flicker)



DOWNY WOODPECKER

I like to find downies in the woods as their "pik" call descends into frenetic laughter. In mixed winter flocks with chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches, this pint-sized acrobat with the short-ish beak hitches up, down, and around the tree quite rapidly. But they can play "statue" remarkably well when a predator is nearby. I've watched a downy hang absolutely motionless against the trunk of a tree for 10 minutes while a Cooper's Hawk perched nearby. Chickadees and titmice gave up the ghost and returned well before the downy relaxed. Having never won a freeze game or staring contest of any kind, I admire the bird's tenacity.

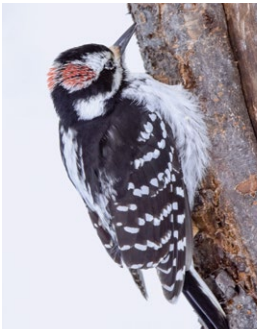
—Gabi Hughes, Environmental Educator (Photo by Dan Mendenhall, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania)



YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

I don't consider myself to be a great birder; I tend to notice and see behaviors and when I finally connect that behavior with a specific bird—then I know it for life. That relationship sums up me and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The birds actually drill small holes into the xylem in early spring, to catch the sap moving up the tree—just like I do when I tap a maple tree for sugaring season. Then the birds adjust to making shallower wells into the phloem to catch the sap flowing down the tree once it leafs out. That very cool fact is why I now know, and enjoy, looking for the sapsucker each spring.

—Karen Stein, Butler Centers Director (Photo by Jennifer Upchurch, Great Backyard Bird Count)



HAIRY WOODPECKER

They are not the largest woodpecker to visit my yard, nor the smallest. They are not the most frequent, flashiest, or the most vocal to visit my feeders. So why do Hairys make me stop, watch, and smile every time I see one? It was years before I saw the first one in my yard and sightings were very infrequent. Over the past few years, sightings have increased. This year, it is an almost daily occurrence. Given their shy nature, and preference for larger mature trees, they give me hope that our neighborhood, and my yard in particular, is becoming more “bird friendly.” That, and they have a huge bill—it’s as long as the rest of their head!

—Jim Bonner, Executive Director (Photo by Betsy Bass, Great Backyard Bird Count)



PILEATED WOODPECKER

What’s not to like about this bird? I can see it without my glasses on—it’s huge—and it has distinctive white stripes and a blazing red crest on its head. Pileated Woodpeckers are as large as a crow and peck rectangular-shaped holes in the wood of dead trees in search of carpenter ants. The large holes they create are eventually inhabited by other species of birds and bats—including owls and swifts. I’m lucky to have woods surrounding my backyard, allowing these birds to utilize fallen and dead trees to search for food and show off their impressive stature. They’re loud, too! There’s no mistaking their pecking for that of a smaller woodpecker.

—Rachel Handel, Communications Director (Photo by Gary Kunkel, Audubon Photography Awards)



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER

The Red-bellied Woodpecker was one of the first birds whose calls that I learned. I remember hiking through Beechwood, searching for the birds’ zebra-like back and bright red cap, as their rolling *kwirr* call echoed through the woods. Red-bellied Woodpeckers are fairly conspicuous in western Pennsylvania, which makes them a great species for beginner birders to try and find. The female has what looks to be a bald patch on the top of the head, only having bright red on the back of the neck and above the bill. This spring, I was thrilled to be able to observe a male and female zipping in and out of their nesting cavity, bringing food to their young. Sadly, I have yet to see their “red-belly,” which I am told is only visible when they are hanging upside-down.

—Dan Mendenhall, Facility Steward (Photo by Peter Waksmundzki, Audubon Photography Awards)

HAVE A FRIEND WHO CANNOT GET ENOUGH OF WOODPECKERS?

We’ve got you covered with great gifts like t-shirts, puzzles, & holiday décor. Don’t forget that ASWP members get a 10% discount on all Audubon Nature Store purchases!



Fall/Winter

PROGRAM SCHEDULE




REGISTER FOR PROGRAMS ONLINE AT ASWP.ORG
OR BY CALLING (412) 963-6100.

Events take place at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR), Succop Nature Park (SNP), Buffalo Creek Nature Park (BCNP), Todd Nature Reserve (TNR), or online via Zoom. Register online at aswp.org or call (412) 963-6100.

SOME EVENTS WE JUST CAN'T PLAN IN ADVANCE!

So watch for Audubon Pop-up events—great experiences like Chimney Swift watches, Gull watching at the Point, and Ice Fishing. Learn about these events by following us on social media or subscribing to our email newsletter. Email us at register@aswp.org and let us know that you'd like to be added to the list.

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Special Events

FLYING SOLO FARM FAIR

Saturday, August 27, 10am–4pm / BCNP

It's time for the second annual Flying Solo Farm Fair, where members of the Flying Solo Birding Club will showcase their exceptional talents—and sell their wares to support of Audubon. Flying Solo was started by an active Audubon volunteer and Master Birder.

H2O CELEBRATION: BUFFALO CREEK WATERSHED FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 10, 10am–2pm / BCNP

Clean water is key to the survival of people and wildlife—and Buffalo Creek is one of the most biologically diverse watersheds in the state. So let's celebrate its abundance and impact on birds, animals, and fish throughout southwestern Pennsylvania with a festival! Along with our partners in the Buffalo Creek Watershed Coalition, we're offering a day of family-friendly activities including fishing, hands-on nature crafts, and games. Visit aswp.org for a full list of the day's events. *This event is offered for free to the public by ASWP through funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener Fund and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation's Environmental Stewardship Fund in support of the Buffalo Creek Watershed Coalition.*

CROSS POLLINATION: BACKYARD HABITAT SHOW & TELL

Thursday, September 22, 6–8pm / BFNR

Want to show off your Certified Backyard Habitat? Know that your native plants make your property the prettiest in the neighborhood? Showcase your garden during an evening of camaraderie, skill-sharing, and show and tell. ASWP's Certified Backyard Habitat program has over 750 participants and has created over 1,000 acres of Certified Habitat! Light refreshments will be provided. Registration is required so that we can plan accordingly. Free.

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT FAMILY-FRIENDLY HALLOWEEN PROGRAM

*Thursday, October 20; Fridays, October 14 & 21; Saturday, October 15 / BFNR
Friday, October 21 / SNP
Saturday, October 29 / BCNP
6:30, 7, or 7:30pm Start Time at All Locations*

Audubon's legacy Halloween program introduces you, your friends, and family to larger-than-life costumed nocturnal creatures. Hike the Creatures of the Night trail to hear stories from nocturnal creatures such as the Great Horned Owl, Flying Squirrel, and Little Brown Bat. There will even be a real, live creature of the night! Come in costume for twice the fun. This event takes place outdoors, even if it's raining. Registration required. \$6 member; \$10 nonmember; under 2 is free.

AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS TRAVELING EXHIBITION

*November 30–December 3, 12–5pm Daily / SNP
December 6–11, 9am–5pm Daily / BFNR
December 13–18, 9am–5pm Daily / BCNP*

Birds are naturally photographic. See some of the best camera-catches during the 2022 National Audubon Photography Awards Traveling Exhibition. Visitors of all ages will enjoy this engaging display of the winning photos—and learn more about bird life. Free.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Join one of our ASWP Christmas Bird Counts! For a list of local count leaders, please visit www.aswp.org. Can't get outside that day? You can still take part through a feeder count. Please contact Chris for more information: ckubiak@aswp.org. Participation is free.

Buffalo Creek Valley (includes Todd Nature Reserve and Buffalo Creek Nature Park): Saturday, December 17

Pittsburgh (includes Beechwood): Saturday, December 31

South Butler (includes Succop Nature Park): Sunday, January 1, 2023

KIDS' CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 17, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Saturday, December 31, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Sunday, January 1, 2023, 10am–12pm / SNP

Kids love watching and counting birds, too, so we created a count just for them. Children and parents are invited to participate in a family-friendly, naturalist-led version of the Christmas Bird Count. This event is appropriate for school-age and up. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult and advance registration is required. Free.

Birding & Nature Hikes

BIRDS & MORE NATURALIST-LED MORNING WALKS

BFNR: Every Sunday at 9 am; Free

BCNP: Every Tuesday at 9 am; Free

BFNR: Every Wednesday at 9 am; Free

SNP: Every Thursday 9 am; Free

TNR: Every Friday at 9 am (through October); Free

FALL MIGRATORY BIRD HIKES

Saturday, September 10, 9–11am / BFNR, SNP, and BCNP

There's a chill in the air. Fall is coming and the birds know it. During this naturalist-led hike, we'll be looking for birds that are ready to make their way south for the winter. \$6 per member, \$10 per nonmember.

HARRISON HILLS BIRD WALK

Sunday, October 16, 8am–12pm / Harrison Hills Park

Meet us at Harrison Hills Park, one of the region's most popular places to birdwatch, then hike the surrounding trails. We will meet in the parking lot at the Environmental Learning Center. \$6 per member, \$10 per nonmember.

OWL PROWL

Friday, November 18, December 2, 7–9pm / BFNR

Saturday, November 19, December 3, 7–9pm / BCNP

Learn about our local owls, then take a naturalist led walk on our trails to search for these exciting nocturnal birds. This event is appropriate for all ages. We will meet participants in the parking lot and get started from there. Registration required. \$8 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Spark your Natural Creativity

BIRD DRAWING & PAINTING TWO-DAY WORKSHOP: PLAN TO ATTEND BOTH DAYS!

Saturdays, September 17 & 24, 10:30am–2pm / SNP

Join Marianne Pionati, renowned local artist and teacher, for a painting program focused on basic bird shapes using value, line, texture and more. Parts of the bird will be demonstrated to help understand the process from start to finish. Bring graphite for the first week of the class; during the second week, your project can be in graphite or any other medium of choice. Bring books or images for inspiration; we'll also have some available. \$100 member; \$125 non-member.

NATURE JOURNALING: TWO-PART SERIES

Part 1: Saturday, October 1; Part 2: Saturday, October 8 / BFNR & SNP

Part 1: Sunday, October 2; Part 2: Sunday, October 9 / BCNP

Parts 1 & 2 on All Days are 10am–12pm

Many naturalists utilize journals to keep track of observations and to make field notes on species they encounter. In part one of this program, we will craft an heirloom quality, hand bound, leather covered journal and personalize it with unique decorative motifs. During the second session, we will venture into the forests and meadows to put our journals to use. Registration required. \$35 members, \$50 nonmembers.

DRAWING LEAVES TWO-DAY WORKSHOP: PLAN TO ATTEND BOTH DAYS!

Saturdays, October 15 & 22, 11am–2pm / BCNP

Led by local artist and teacher Marianne Pionati, you'll learn to draw, work with textures and shapes, and begin your own unique project. Bring in a collection of different leaves to work with—and feel free to share any information about the leaves with others. A selection of leaves will be available if you do not have any. \$100 member; \$125 non-member.

DECORATE A LIVE, MINI TREE

Saturday, December 3, 10am–12pm / BFNR, BCNP, & SNP

Natural materials gathered from our reserves add an elegant, fun, festive touch to your live mini tree. Choose from pine cones, seed pods, berries, and many other materials collected in nature to create a one-of-a-kind decoration that can be repotted or planted outdoors as the tree grows. \$35 members, \$50 nonmembers. One live tree per registration.

**Registration required 1 week prior to workshop for gathering of materials.*

YULE LOG HIKE AND CRAFT

Saturday, December 10, 10am–12pm / BFNR & SNP

Saturday, December 17, 2–4 pm / BCNP

Hike with us into the woods to gather natural materials to decorate a birch Yule log. We will drill candle holes and level the log so that it will stay in the proper position when you use it! \$15 members, \$25 non-members. **Registration required 1 week prior to workshop for gathering of materials.*

Online Nature Series

Free programs that connect people to birds and nature. After registration, you'll be emailed a program link; check your spam folder for the Zoom link if you don't see it in your inbox.

TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

Tuesday, August 9, 7–8:30pm

We all have to be vigilant about spotting and removing ticks after we're outdoors—it's the best defense against Lyme Disease. This presentation will explain the lifecycle of the tick and how the spirochete is transferred to humans. Don't let fear of Lyme disease keep you from enjoying the outdoors! The best thing that you can do is arm yourself with knowledge.

CONFUSING FALL WARBLERS

Tuesday, August 23, 7–8:30pm

Identifying fall warblers is one of birding's greatest challenges. This program will look at some of the most common "confusing" fall warblers, show you how to identify them, and use birding by impression to develop your birding skillset.

THE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

Tuesday, September 6, 7–8:30pm

The Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive species native to Asia that arrived in Pennsylvania in 2014. It has since spread to multiple counties including Allegheny and Beaver. In addition to damaging trees and impacting quality of life, the spotted lanternfly is a huge threat to Pennsylvania's agriculture industry. Learn about this new pest's ecology, how to identify the lanternfly, and how you can help stop its spread (Hint: It involves squishing).

BIRDS OF PREY: IDENTIFYING RAPTORS

Tuesday, September 20, 7–8:30pm

Because many raptors migrate in the fall, autumn is a great time to learn how to better identify them. From soaring hawks to the ambush predators, this program discusses strategies on how to understand field markings and ecologies of the raptors found in our region.

FRESHWATER FISH AS WATER QUALITY INDICATORS

Thursday, October 6, 7–8:30pm

Western Pennsylvania's watersheds are home to a large number of freshwater fish. This program will highlight a number of our local species, their importance to the ecosystem in which they are found, and how they indicate water quality.

Hold your holiday gathering or corporate winter party at Audubon! Call us to learn more at (412) 963-6100.

CO-EXISTING WITH THE WHITE-TAILED DEER

Tuesday, October 18, 7–8:30pm

Did you know that White-tailed Deer are our largest native grazing mammal? Deer greatly impact our environment (and our yards and gardens) when they are out of balance with the ecosystem. This program will teach you about the ecology of this abundant species, how to garden with deer-resistant native plants, and other tips to coexist with these animals.

LITTLE BROWN JOBS: SPARROW ID

Tuesday, November 8, 7–8:30pm

Remember when you asked your grandmother to identify a bird, and she called it a "little brown job"? This Pittsburgh colloquialism lives on, but it's not exactly helpful! In this program, we'll investigate these birds—which are generally sparrows, one of the harder species of birds to identify. You'll leave the class with an appreciation for the art and science of sparrow identification.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRESHWATER MUSSELS

Tuesday, December 6, 7–8:30pm

While the world's oceans are filled with bivalves like clams, oysters, and scallops, our own local watersheds have their own shelled mollusks. These fascinating creatures have important roles and are growing in numbers as our rivers, creeks, and streams become cleaner. Learn about their interesting life histories and roles as water quality indicators.

PENNSYLVANIA'S ICE AGE PAST

Tuesday, December 20, 7–8:30pm

Just a geologic instant ago, portions of Pennsylvania were covered in massive glaciers. This program will explore how this recent event has shaped our state's geography and biology. There are still many signs of this violent age written into our landscape; you will learn how to identify weathering patterns and rock types that are indicative of glacial activity.

Backyard Nature Series

These programs are offered for free thanks to underwriting from the Fox Chapel Garden Club. Certified Backyard Habitat participants—taking these programs will help you to earn your certification!

FORAGING YOUR BACK YARD-USING NATIVE PLANTS

Saturday, August 27, 10am–12pm / BFNR & SNP

Saturday, August 27, 2–4pm / BCNP

Ever wonder how native plants like Snakeroot, Joe Pye Weed, or Indian Hemp got their names? If you think the answer is related to foraging your backyard, you're onto something. In this program, you'll learn about the ways native plants have been used for centuries as food, clothing, tools, and medicines—as well as a few surprises. Registration is required for this free program.

PLANTING NATIVE PERENNIALS IN THE FALL

Saturday, September 10, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Saturday, September 10, 2–4pm / SNP

Saturday, September 17, 2–4pm / BCNP

Why plant in the fall? Autumn planting gives perennials time to establish roots that will develop into strong plants that provide pollinators and birds springtime food. You'll learn about some of the best native species to plant in your yard while using the iNaturalist app to document the type of species. This program is appropriate for adults and interested teens. Registration is required for this free program.

NATIVE SEED COLLECTION WORKSHOP

Saturday, October 29, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Saturday, October 29, 2–4pm / SNP

Volunteer to seed the future of our native plant nursery! Learn to harvest native seed while you help us to replenish our seed stocks. You'll also add to your own seed collection! Participants will gain hands on experience collecting, cleaning, and sowing a variety of native plant seed during this free program.

Preschool Programs

FLEDGLINGS: AGES 3-5

BFNR: Thursdays: August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, & December 8

BCNP: Wednesdays: August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, & December 14

SNP: Tuesdays: August 9, September 13, October 11, & November 8, December 13

Give your 3-5 year old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Fledglings programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants. A parent or caregiver must be present. \$4 member; \$8 nonmember. Upcoming themes: Dragonfly Jewels (August), Meadow Meander (September), Chattering Chipmunks (October), Leaf Man (November), and Holiday for the Birds (December). All programs run 10–11:15am.

Scout Programs

CUB & GIRL SCOUT BADGE DAY

Saturday, October 8, 10am–12pm / BFNR & SNP

Saturday, October 15, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Choose your nature-related badge or activity! This program is for Cub Scouts and elementary Girl Scouts and is booked by group or den. Contact Scott Detwiler at (412) 963-6100 to make your reservation \$10 per scout; one adult chaperone (free) required per den. Other dates are available by arrangement, subject to minimum fees.

Outdoors 101

FALL INTO PHENOLOGY & TREE ID

Saturday, September 24, 10am–12pm / BFNR & BCNP

Saturday, September 24, 2–4pm / SNP

What's phenology? It's the study of the timing of the biological events in plants and animals such as flowering, leafing, hibernation, reproduction, and migration. In this program, participants will learn about plant life cycle events (known as phenophases) followed by a tree ID hike. Free for members; \$5 per nonmember.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKYARD?

Saturday, October 29, 10am–12pm / BFNR & BCNP

Saturday, November 5, 10am–12pm / SNP

Everyone has a place they call home, including plants and animals. In this program, participants search our meadows, forests, and ponds/creek for animals and their homes. Learn about "niches" each plant and animal has and how they interconnect with the ecosystem around them. Then go home and start finding and identifying plants and animals in your own backyard! Free for members; \$5 per nonmember.

BETTER BACKYARD BIRD FEEDING

Saturday, November 5, 10am–12pm / BFNR & BCNP

Saturday, November 5, 2–4pm / SNP

Ever want to attract more birds to yard? This program explains the dos and don'ts behind backyard bird feeding, and tells you what the experts do to attract more birds to their yards. Participants will also learn about Project Feeder Watch and how it helps scientists to monitor bird populations. Appropriate for adults and interested youth. Free for members; \$5 per nonmember.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WARM UP WITH COFFEE & BAGELS

Saturday, December 3, 2–4pm / BFNR, BCNP, & SNP

Want to participate in the world's longest running Community Science program? Get ready for the Christmas Bird Count by learning the basics while enjoying coffee, bagels, and a short outdoor bird hike. Learn or review the birds most likely to be seen for Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count. Beginners welcome! Appropriate for adults and interested youth. Free for members; \$5 per nonmember.

WINTER PLANTS & BERRIES FOR BIRDS

Saturday, December 10, 2–4pm / BFNR, BCNP, & SNP

When winter sets in, birds depend on plant resources to provide critical nutrients as insects become scarce. We will discuss how we can help to sustain birds during the harsh winter months using bird-friendly native woody plants—as well as ways to prepare your landscape at the end of the season to support resident birds through the winter. Participants will learn proper pruning and planting techniques to successfully establish trees and shrubs in a home landscape. Free for members; \$5 per nonmember.

Buffalo Creek Watershed & Important Bird Area Series

These programs are offered free of cost by Audubon and the Buffalo Creek Watershed Coalition with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener Fund.

NATIVE LANDSCAPING

Wednesday, August 31, 6:30pm / BCNP

Make a difference for pollinators, birds, and water quality—right in your own backyard! Join Audubon and the Buffalo Creek Watershed Coalition as we focus on key aspects of native landscaping and highlight some of Pennsylvania's over 2,000 native species that are critical for keeping our wildlife healthy and streams clean. This program is open to everyone. Attendees who live in the Buffalo Creek Watershed will receive 2 free pollinator plants.

STREAM HEALTH WALK

Thursday, September 8, 1–3pm / BCNP

Join Audubon, Penn State Extension, and the Buffalo Creek Watershed Coalition for a stream health walk event along Buffalo Creek. Learn more about stream health, water quality, and ways to protect Pennsylvania's streams as you explore aquatic life, riparian buffers, stream restoration, and wildlife habitat. We'll also practice using Penn State Extension's First Investigation of Stream Health protocol! Please wear appropriate footwear for walking and exploring uneven terrain. You will also have the chance to get into the water if you choose. Attendance is limited to 15 people.

BECOMING STORMWATER SAVVY

Thursday, September 29, 6:30–8pm / BCNP

Did you know that stormwater is the primary way that pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, petroleum products, harmful bacteria (pet waste), and other toxic materials are transported into our local creeks and rivers? Join Audubon and Penn State Extension to talk about stormwater, problems associated with runoff, and what we all can do about it. We'll discuss rain barrels, rain gardens, and other initiatives to improve regional water quality. This program is open to everyone. Attendees who live in the Buffalo Creek Watershed will receive a free tree.

Volunteer Opportunities

There is no cost involved in volunteer activities. Please note proper dress recommendations for the weather and conditions.

PUBLIC LANDS DAY HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AT CROOKED CREEK LAKE

Saturday, September 24, 9am–12pm / Crooked Creek Lake, Ford City

Join Audubon and the Army Corps of Engineers-Crooked Creek to help introduce pollinator plots at the Resource Manager's Office. The day will consist of tilling the yard, preparing the soil, broadcasting pollinator seeds, and laying cover crop. All volunteers are welcome and no experience is needed. Wear sturdy shoes (bonus if you have steel-toed for running the tiller), dress for the weather, and wear your "play clothes"! Drinking water, gloves, and tools will be provided. Feel free to bring your favorite tool. Meet at 114 Park Main Road, Ford City, PA 16226. For more information, please call (724) 763-3161 or email Christian.l.cledenning@usace.army.mil.

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

Saturdays: October 15, October 22, and November 5, 9am–12pm / BFNR
Wednesdays: August 17 and September 14, 9am–12pm / SNP
Saturday, September 17 and Wednesday, October 12, 9am–12pm / TNR

Volunteers are needed to help make Audubon's Nature Reserves even more pollinator and bird-friendly. Activities will include removing invasive species and replacing them with native plants (such as milkweed) that provide food and shelter for native species. All materials will be provided and no experience is necessary. Please wear sturdy shoes, dress for the weather in clothes that can get dirty, and bring a reusable water bottle. Can't make these dates but want to get involved? Contact Tim at steward@aswp.org or (412) 963-6100 for additional information. *Special thanks to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Monarchs and Pollinators Conservation Fund for their support of ASWP's efforts to protect and enhance habitat for native pollinators.*

LITTER PICKUP

Thursday, September 15, 5:30–7pm / BFNR
Saturday, November 5, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Help us with litter pick-ups near our nature reserves! It's an easy way to make an immediate positive impact on local habitats and waterways. All materials will be provided, including gloves, trash bags, and safety vests. Meet in BFNR parking lot for the 9/15 event and BCNP parking lot for the 11/5 event; groups will disperse from there. Please wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather. Thank you for helping to keep our streams and forests healthy!

RATED THE #1 SUET CAKE BY DISCRIMINATING WOODPECKERS

We hear again and again from repeat Audubon Nature Store customers that woodpeckers love Pine Tree Farms Suet and Seed cakes. Stop in and pick some up today!



Ask the NATURALIST

HOW DO WOODPECKERS AVOID BRAIN INJURY?

One of the questions that has plagued modern science is how a woodpecker can smash its beak against a tree again and again and not damage its brain. Humans are much more delicate than these tough birds. Our large brains slosh about in our skull, squishing against the bone in a sudden stop. Professional sports medicine and equipment design spends a great deal of time preventing and treating concussion. Not only from a single hard tackle, but from accumulating over a career of many lesser contacts. Then there is the woodpecker, drumming and chiseling every day without a care, withstanding blows measuring hundreds of G-forces at a time.

An explanation once popular is the unusual structure of the woodpecker tongue. In order to retrieve an insect from deep inside a tree cavity, a woodpecker uses its long and far-reaching tongue. The tongue wraps over the bird's forehead, around the head, and is anchored at the back of the skull. The thought was that this wrap of tongue somehow absorbed energy, the way a seat belt does, funneling the energy away from the brain. The math, though, does not pan out. The tongue structures are too delicate to help.

Another explanation suggested that the woodpecker skull has spongy sections to the front to absorb the blows. It so happens that spongy bone in the skull is a common feature in many bony skulls. A woodpecker does not have any particular abundance of this structure compared to birds that do not peck in this manner. Similarly, strong neck muscles have been proposed to absorb the blow, but woodpeckers don't have particularly large neck muscles either. Once again, there just isn't enough of these other structures to absorb the energy of banging on the drum all day, so to speak.

In recent years, it has been suggested that the shape of the bird's brain could provide the answer. Human brains are shaped like a grape; the narrow ends in front and back are susceptible to concentrated force in a collision. Woodpecker brains are more of a round ball.

This could allow the force to distribute over a larger area, spreading the energy uniformly and allowing it to dissipate with a lesser chance of brain damage.

Enter a new study by Sam Van Wassenbergh at University of Antwerp, published this July in *Current Biology*. By reviewing footage of woodpeckers pecking, Van Wassenbergh and his colleagues tracked two points on each bird's beak and one point on its eye. The eye is very similar to the brain in the way it reacts to force. The eye becomes a study proxy for the brain, a proxy you can see from the outside. According to the *New York Times*, "they found that the eye decelerated at the same rate as the beak and, in a couple of cases, even more quickly, which meant that — at the very least — the woodpecker was not absorbing any shock during pecking."

The explanation given is that brain of a woodpecker is small and the space inside the skull tight enough that there is not enough mass or room to move to create the forces to cause damage. The head acts as one piece, like the head of a metal hammer, rather than say a car full of passengers all flung about at a sudden stop. Indeed, shock absorption would be its own problem, reducing the effectiveness of the peck. The trade-off is that the woodpecker family is limited in size. Too large, and the forces could become too strong to accommodate with the "hammer head" strategy.

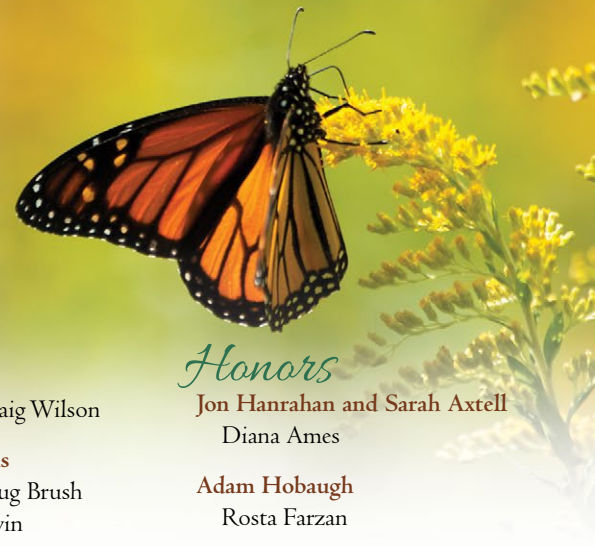
WOODPECKERS GO NUTTY

(SEE WHAT WE DID THERE?)
FOR NUTSIE SEED LOGS SOLD AT
AUDUBON NATURE STORES!

And pick up peanut mesh feeders
and suet feeders featuring tail
props to rest those tail feathers.



Memorials AND Honors



Memorials

Frances Edwards

Piccadilly Herb Club

Carly Ann George Voigt

Regina and Doug George

George H. Gilmore

Betsy Owens

Laura Grindel

Melissa Attanasio

Fred J. Hann

Kathleen Hann

Charles E. Hollerman

Betsy and Lee Shaw

Gil Hurite

Betsy Owens

Lewis and Sally Johnson

Lee Swartz

James M. Kirby

Kathy McLean

Bobby Kitch

Kane Suarez

Madeline Lyon

Teresa Bradley

Beth Cober

Kelly and Paul Dickson

Holly Dobkin

Weldon Doran

Anne and Mark Frederickson

Amy Lewandowski

Stephanie Lind

Jane McConnell

Yukon Croatian Club

June Marshall

Patricia and Craig Wilson

Dr. Kevin Mullins

Nancy and Doug Brush

Barbara Goodwin

Nancy Orman

Judy and Mick Mohr

Rachel and Mark Handel

Deborah and Michael Mohr

F. and J. Pascelli

Colette Veney

Ann Sloan Barbour

Joan Sieber

Honors

Jon Hanrahan and Sarah Axtell

Diana Ames

Adam Hobaugh

Rosta Farzan

Scott Detwiler

Regan Fetterolf

Joseph Gentile

Marian and Joseph Gentile

Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan

Briana McCormick

Nathan and Sarah Miller

Judith and William Miller

Alan and Natalie Eisen

Donald Nicoll

Ruth Surdyk

Loretta and Vince Schmidt

DO YOU KNOW *a Good Lawyer?*

No, we're not in trouble. But we are looking for some legal assistance. As an organization with a wide range of complex activities, we try to be as diligent and proactive as possible. At the same time, we are always trying to manage our limited resources as best we can. It occurred to me that we have volunteers assisting us in many facets of our operations (see page 14 for a list), so why not legal?

What do we need help with? Hold harmless language, rental agreements, governmental MOUs, insurance documents, conservation easements, and estate documents, just to name a few. We would like to put together a pool of attorneys who would be willing to help us on a pro bono or "low bono" basis. If you or your firm would have an interest in working with us, please let me know. You may contact me directly at (412) 963-6100 or by email at jbonner@aswp.org. I know we count a number of attorneys among our financial supporters. This is just one more way that you can help us connect more people to birds and nature. As always, thank you. — Jim

ASWP MEMBERS-ONLY HOLIDAY SALE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 9AM-5PM
AT ALL STORE LOCATIONS

Audubon Nature Stores have you covered for holiday gift giving! Find the perfect present for all the nature lovers on your list—and pick up some items for yourself, too!

During this one-day sale, ASWP members receive 20% off* in our three nature stores. Not a member? Has your membership lapsed? Become a member in good standing now and enjoy all the benefits of ASWP membership for a whole year.

Please note: the 20% discount excludes optics, birdseed, and select artwork.

AUDUBON News

GRANTS SUPPORT IBA AND CONSERVATION

Two new projects will be funded through a \$14,900 grant from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds (FPW) and a \$7,930 grant from the Coldwater Heritage Partnership's Coldwater Conservation Grant Program (CHPCC). The awards will be used to continue expansion of ASWP's conservation projects in the Buffalo Creek Watershed and Important Bird Area (IBA).

ADDRESSING EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION

CHPCC funding will be used for the Upper Buffalo Creek Watershed Habitat Enhancement and Streambank Restoration Project, which will address erosion and sedimentation. The goal is to improve aquatic habitat at a popular fishing location via natural stream restoration techniques—preventing approximately 22.5 tons of sediment from entering Buffalo Creek annually and improving water quality.

ASSESSMENT OF ROAD-STREAM INTERSECTIONS

The FPW grant will allow ASWP to evaluate road-stream intersections to determine whether aquatic organisms and riparian species are able to reach necessary cooler headwaters. These cooler waters allow the organisms to carry out different life stages and prevent climate stress. In the past, most road-stream crossings were designed without consideration of the ecological process—the goal was just to move water away as fast as possible. Our research will evaluate impacts on native aquatic and riparian species, restore biological corridors, and maintain the integrity of Buffalo Creek's High-Quality streams.



VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE: TREES, MILKWEED, AND MULCH, OH MY!

Where would we be without our amazing volunteers? This spring, we were excited and grateful to welcome the following groups as they helped us with numerous conservation projects that are actively making an impact in our region. Huge thanks to everyone—over 100 volunteers—who worked to plant trees, pull invasive species, plant pollinator gardens in Garfield, sow hundreds of trays of milkweed, and spruce up the Discover Ground at Beechwood:

- Ally
- American Eagle
- BNY Mellon
- Duquesne Light Company
- Fox Chapel Area Rotary Club
- Patagonia Pittsburgh

In addition to our work outside, we also are always looking for volunteers for the office and our nature stores. Get involved with us! We'd love to have you!

HAVE AN IDEA OF WHERE YOU'D
LIKE TO VOLUNTEER? HERE'S WHO
TO CONTACT TO LEARN MORE:

Native Plants/Tree Planting

Sarah Koenig, Conservation Director: skoenig@aswp.org

Beechwood Nature Store

Samantha Ditch, Store Manager: sditch@aswp.org

General administrative help at Beechwood:
info@aswp.org

Succop Nature Park and Buffalo Creek Nature Park Administrative Help or Nature Store

Karen Stein, Butler Centers Director: kstein@aswp.org

Nature Reserves Outdoor Care and Stewardship

Brian Shema, Operations Director: bshema@aswp.org

SHARE AUDUBON
WITH YOUR FRIENDS:
GIFT THEM AN
Audubon Membership

Give the gift of birds and nature with a yearlong membership to Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. They will enjoy a 10% discount on Nature Store purchases and bird seed, advanced notice of sales and events, discounts on the nature programs they love, a subscription to our quarterly Bulletin, invitations to members-only events, and updates on important scientific, conservation, and legislative issues, all while you get the 100% good feeling of supporting the birds and environment of our region!

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP) is a nonprofit organization supported in large part through membership dues. You can also join or renew your membership at www.aswp.org.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or Renewal Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ecologist: \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household: \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservationist: \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Naturalist: \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward: \$1,000 |

Go online now or mail this form with payment to:
ASWP Membership, 614 Dorseyville Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

Your Name: _____
E-mail: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Employer (for matching gifts): _____

IF THIS IS A GIFT MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE COMPLETE ABOVE SECTION & THE FOLLOWING:

Recipient's Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____

NOTE: Gift memberships will be sent directly to the recipient.

How to list your recognition on the recipient note:

PAYMENT BY:

Check Enclosed Credit Card
Credit Card No.: _____
Expiration Date: _____ CVV: _____

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.

Audubon Society OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve
OCTOBER 14, 15, 20 & 21

Succop Nature Park
OCTOBER 21

Buffalo Creek Nature Park
OCTOBER 29

Join us for an all-outdoor non-scary Halloween trek and meet nocturnal animal characters who tell you their story of life beneath the moonlight.
Register now at aswp.org or by calling (412) 963-6100.



614 DORSEYVILLE ROAD
PITTSBURGH, PA 15238

SHOP AUDUBON NATURE STORES

FOR EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO ENJOY THE BIRDS
THIS FALL AND WINTER!

BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE
614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel · 412-963-6100
Tuesday-Sunday from 9am-5pm

BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK
154 Monroe Road in Sarver · 724-295-3589
Tuesday-Sunday from 9am-5pm

SUCCOP NATURE PARK
185 W. Airport Road in Butler · 724-586-2591
Tuesday-Saturday from 12-5pm

