

Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society

Eco~Notes

Winter 2011

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Photo by Georgette Pascotto

PLEASE DON'T FEED THE DEER ...



Photo by Georgette Pascotto

We moved to northeastern Pennsylvania about six years ago. The community we live in is wooded and one of the joys we have found is observing the white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, red fox, squirrels, and chipmunks that share our community. Many of our neighbors put out food for the deer, and I think this is typical in many of the wooded private communities here in northeastern Pennsylvania. Deer that live in communities like ours are accustomed to visit houses each day in search of food, especially during the fall and winter. Residents who mean well will oblige and toss out a few slices of bread. Some will even go the distance and buy 50-pound bags of shelled corn so they can feed the moochers every day.

According to Richard Fritsky, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, Northeastern Region, Pennsylvania Game Commission, feeding deer may enhance wildlife viewing and, under certain extreme circumstances, provide some benefits, but decades of research has shown that it does more harm than good:

- Feeding can cause more deer to survive than the natural habitat can support, leading to long-term degradation of the habitat.

- Supplemental feeding congregates deer in a smaller area, leading to increased disease risk. With Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) approaching our borders, the increased potential for disease transmission and outbreak is perhaps our greatest and most immediate concern.

- Weeds contained in feed increase the likelihood of invasion by exotic plant species.

- Deer have complex and delicate digestive systems. If fed the wrong food, they can actually die with stomachs that are full of food.

- When deer congregate to feed, it's "every deer for itself." The larger deer push the smaller deer—the fawns—aside. Fawns often end up receiving less food than they would have received under natural conditions.

- Feeding deer near a road increases the chance that deer will be killed by cars.

- Feeding takes the protective wildness out of deer and makes them dependent on humans, so that they may no longer know how to forage for themselves.

- Feeding deer also has the potential to lure in predators, which may pose a danger to people and domestic animals as well.

Although people who feed wildlife do so with the best of intentions, wildlife should derive its food and shelter from natural habitats and under natural conditions. This will help maintain natural adaptations that ensure the long-term survival of the animals themselves, and of the species. The general rule is: "Do not feed wildlife."

—MaryAnn Lunniss

Eco-Notes by E-mail

Eco-Notes is available by e-mail. It appears in the same colorful, easy-to-read format as the paper version, but without the cost, paper, or ink. Go to our web site, nepa-audubon.org, to sign up.

Our Mission Statement

Our goal is to conserve and restore our environment to benefit humanity as well as birds and other wildlife through education, action, and advocacy.

CABIN FEVER CURES

At this time of year, whenever I hear people talk about winter, it is always about the difficulties the season poses: cold winds, snow removal, icy conditions, etc. Those challenges often cause us to shut ourselves in and do little but look forward to a milder season. My experience, however, tells me that the key to enjoying winter lies in engaging in activities that bring out the enjoyment that is inherent in the season; most of these activities are very simple and easy. Here are some examples:

-Come to our Audubon-sponsored activities, like the Eagle Watch in January, or the winter snowshoe hike in February. (www.nepaaudubon.org)

-Participate in the Christmas Bird Count or Project Feeder Watch. (birds.audubon.org, birds.cornell.edu)

-Engage with others in activities sponsored by SEEDS, Transition Honesdale, or the Wayne County Public Library. Google any of these for more info.

-If there's no snow, take a hike and enjoy the skeletal beauty of the hills, woods, and streams in our area. Wayne County and its surrounding areas have wonderful hiking trails, and the country roads are great for walks, especially with less traffic in winter.

-If there is snow, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are terrific ways to get exercise, see the outdoor beauty, and fight the feeling of being "trapped" indoors. While you are doing that, look for tracks and marks in the snow that tell their own "stories": animals foraging for food, the wing marks of an owl plunging down for a mouse, or an otter sliding into a stream. Study snowflakes and the amazing story of "Snowflake Bentley" at www.snowflakebentley.com.

-Night walks often give us the opportunity to hear owls very clearly, and taking children on these walks adds to the adventure, wonder, and satisfaction of the activity.

Winter is a great season: enjoy it to the fullest!!

—Jim Sanders

Audubon Conducts 112th Christmas Bird Count

Northeast PA Audubon Society is looking for volunteers to join in the Christmas Bird Count which counts birds within a 7.5-mile radius of White Mills. The Count will be on Saturday, December 17, 2011 beginning at dawn and ending when the last volunteer is finished! This is a wonderful way to take note of the many birds that are around at this time of year. You might get a chance to see late migrating birds if the weather permits.

Many of our members are familiar with the Count, which was begun by Frank Chapman, ornithologist and writer, in 1900. It was intended to be an alternative to the "side hunt" conducted during the time as recreation during the Christmas season, when many hunters would go afield with guns in search of anything with feathers and bring back as many as they could. Instead, we go afield with binoculars in search of birds that may have stayed because of a mild, early winter and those that have arrived because of harsh conditions in Canada.

In our previous counts we have spotted many nice species including red-winged crossbills, many ducks and waterfowl, and evening grosbeaks. You don't need to be experienced, just enthusiastic about birds, happy being outdoors, and willing to brave whatever Mother Nature has for us on that day. Call Barbara for more information at 570-253-2364.

—Barbara Leo

Welcome New Members

Lillian Banick	Kathleen Corpuel	Joseph Kurey	Douglas Sheldon
Lorraine Bennett	Dan Cox	Janus & Gerry L.	Victoria Sinclair
Tina Bernardi	Helen Crispino	Laraine W. Lee	Marion Slevin
Rebecca Bollinger	Edward Diminno	Ron Logan	Michael Soskil
Juliana Brussell	Linda Dougher	Mary McHale	Angelo Talarico
Isabella Brzeski	Arlene Ericson	Elizabeth Meyer	Sandra Talarico
Donald Chapman	Joanne Everett	Joseph F. Petrilak	J. Thomassen
Bette L. Chernin	Patricia A. Farley	Judith Robertson	Teresa Tyler
Kenneth Clifton	Jeanee Fenton	Debbie A. Ryan	Andrea Whyte
Elizabeth A. Connery	Kim O. Furbacher	Frank A. Salt	Dr. Midori Yamanouchi-Rynn

Update on the Keystone XL Pipeline

Four days after over 10,000 people surrounded the White House to protest TransCanada's proposed Keystone XL Pipeline, President Obama announced a delay in his decision to either give the go-ahead or nix the project, until 2013. This was a victory for the planet, and demonstrated that people DO have some power over government and corporations. Two of our board members were among those 10,000.

This pipeline would facilitate the extraction of heavy bitumen oil from tar sands in the boreal forests of Alberta, Canada, a breeding ground for about **three billion** birds. It is the world's largest intact forest, and soaks up carbon with twice the efficiency of tropical rainforests, making this region ecologically priceless. With climate change becoming more and more visible in the form of major weather catastrophes, destroying such a carbon sink on the scale that is unfolding in Alberta is senseless. James Hansen, the Government's leading climate scientist, calls the tar sands project "...game over for the planet." Extracting tar sands oil creates about three times the greenhouse gas emissions as conventional oil production. The process uses

massive amounts of water, natural gas (to create steam to heat the oil), and chemicals added to the bitumen in order for it to move through pipelines. It leaves toxic pools of waste in the once pristine forest and contaminates waterways and land.

The Keystone XL Pipeline protest seems to mark a huge shift in the way we think of life on this planet. Local activist and Audubon member Virginia Kennedy described it as a massive critique of the system, led partly by the indigenous community, which has always held a far-sighted view of planet stewardship.

For two excellent articles on the tar sands in Audubon Magazine, please visit:

<http://mag.audubon.org/articles/climate/crude-awakening>

<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/climate/tar-red-and-feathered>

March-April, 2010; "Crude Awakening" by Barry Yeoman.

July-August, 2011: "Tarred and Feathered" by Ted Williams.

—Katharine Dodge

A more in-depth version of this article is on our website: nepa.audubon.org.

Photo by Georgette Pascotto



Bald Eagle Field Trip Coming Up

Don't miss NEPA Audubon's annual Bald Eagle Excursion with the Eagle Institute on Saturday, January 21, at 10 a.m.

Accompanied by a trained guide from the Eagle Institute, we will visit several locations to view

eagles. In addition to having the opportunity to observe and photograph these majestic birds, you will learn tips and safety procedures for viewing eagles on your own.

Meet at the Eagle Institute in Lackawaxen, PA. Dress warmly in layers and wear waterproof boots. Bring binoculars, a camera, and a bagged lunch. There will be a non-refundable fee of \$12.50 for bus transportation. Contact Bob at 570-676-9969 to reserve a place.

Reader Poll: Is Wildlife Disappearing from Northeast PA?

We have had several calls this fall from people concerned about a lack of birds and squirrels. If you have noticed changes in wildlife populations, please let us know either by calling 570-253-9250 or e-mailing us at: audubonworks@gmail.com. Thank you.

Join Us

Would you like to become more involved with your local Audubon chapter? All members are welcome to attend our board meetings, which are held on the first Monday of every month. Four times a year we get together for a combined potluck dinner and business meeting. Meet knowledgeable birders, and help NEPA Audubon with its many community programs throughout the year. Call 253-9250 for more information.

NEPA Audubon Society
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Phone: (570) 253-9250
E-mail: audubonworks@gmail.com
Web: www.nepaaudubon.org

The date on the address label is the date your national and/or local chapter Audubon membership expires. National Audubon will send you reminders well before your national membership expires.

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Jim Sanders.

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Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, December 17: Audubon's 112th Christmas Bird Count. This survey provides critical data to scientists who study long-term trends in bird populations. Participate and learn how we conduct this local bird count within a 7.5-mile radius of White Mills, PA. Call Barbara at 570-253-2364. (See more information on page 2 of this newsletter.)

Saturday, January 21: Bald Eagle Field Trip with the Eagle Institute. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. View bald eagles with a trained guide. Meet at the Eagle Institute in Lackawaxen, PA. Dress warmly in layers and wear waterproof boots. Bring binoculars, camera, and a bagged lunch. Contact Bob at 570-676-9969 to reserve a place. There will be a non-refundable fee of \$12.50 for bus transportation. Snow date: Jan 22. (See more information on page 3 of this newsletter.)

Sunday, February 5: Guided Snowshoe Hike at Varden Conservation Area. 10 a.m. to noon. Brief instruction in snowshoeing will be provided. Snowshoes available if you do not have your own. Plan on hiking if snow cover is insufficient. Bring plenty of water, good boots, and gloves. Meet at the Tannery Road access in Varden. Call Pete at 570-253-9250 to register.

Friday to Monday, February 17-20: Great Backyard Bird Count. Dawn to dusk. Everyone can have input in Cornell Lab's important *National Survey*, from your own backyard! Call Bob at 570-676-9969 or get tools and how-to's on the web at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.