

Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society

Eco~Notes

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Photo by Georgette Pascotto

Boycott Urged to Get Right-to-Know GMO Labeling

GMOs or Genetically Modified Organisms are in lots of food that we eat containing corn syrup, canola oil, soybean and corn oil. But unlike sixty-one other countries that have disclosure of GMO foods through labeling, the US is not required to have such right-to-know labeling. California tried to change this in the November election with Proposition 37. Five million Californians voted “yes” to the measure, but some huge food companies, using a relentless, \$46-million advertising blitz, scared a slim majority into voting the measure down.

In hopes that upcoming initiatives in Washington State, Vermont, and Connecticut will not be similarly thwarted, the Organic Consumers Association is calling for a boycott of organic-brand parent companies that helped defeat Prop 37. Organic foods are not allowed to have GMOs in them, but, many companies offering organic products produce non-organic products as well, and fought against the labeling.

There are many doubts about the safety of GMOs for ecosystems in general, agriculture, and ultimately humans. “GMOs do invade other field crops and native vegetation that surround planted fields,” says our Conservation Chair, Barbara Leo, “thereby changing the structure of the habitat for the bird species that rely on it for their life cycles.” One step toward a safer food system is at least to allow consumers to know if they are buying GMO products. There is much talk of “freedom” in this country. It should include a right to know what is in our food. Boycotting the companies below may be enough to convince them that GMO labeling is the right thing to do. Here are some of the companies that helped to defeat the measure:

PepsiCo (Donated \$2.5M): Naked Juice, Tostitos Organic, Tropicana Organic

Kraft (Donated \$2M): Boca Burgers and Back to Nature

Safeway (Member of Grocery Manufacturers Association, which donated \$2M): “O” Organics

Coca-Cola (Donated \$1.7M): Honest Tea, Odwalla

General Mills (Donated \$1.2M): Muir Glen, Cascadian Farm, Larabar

Con-Agra (Donated \$1.2M): Orville Redenbacher’s Organic, Hunt’s Organic, Lightlife, Alexia

Kellogg’s (Donated \$791k): Kashi, Bear Naked, Morningstar Farms, Gardenburger

Smucker’s (Donated \$555k): R.W. Knudsen, Santa Cruz Organic

Unilever (Donated \$467k): Ben & Jerry’s

Dean Foods (Donated \$254k): Horizon, Silk, White Wave

Information for this article was obtained from an Organic Consumers Association press release dated Nov. 15, 2012.

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/>

Here is a good site for a non-GMO shopping guide. <http://www.nongmoshoppingguide.com>

—Kathy Dodge

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 website, nepaaudubon.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.

Getting Involved in Citizen Science

As the temperature starts to drop around this time of year, it becomes a little more difficult to get ourselves outside to enjoy nature. But you can bring nature to your own backyard this winter by participating in several citizen science projects available throughout the cold season. Citizen science is a great way to learn more about nature, conservation, and in this case birds, by contributing to real scientific studies.

It's really simple to get started and anyone who has an interest in birds can participate, since these studies are conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, from children in a classroom to individuals at home. To set up your own count site, all you need to do is place a few bird feeders outside a window in your yard, preferably in a quiet area that is close to trees or shrubs that can provide birds with cover for refuge.

Once your feeders are set up, you can research and choose which projects you want to participate in and then start counting! For Project FeederWatch you will periodically count the birds you see from November through early April and then send your counts to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The Great Backyard Bird Count, a project sponsored by Audubon and other partners, is an annual 4-day event taking place Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18. And the longest running citizen science survey in the world, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, will take place from Dec 14, 2012 to January 5, 2013. Scientists will use your count information from all of these citizen-science projects to figure out what is happening to bird populations around the globe! For more information, call Audubon at 570-253-9250 or find links at our web site, www.nepaaudubon.org.

—Sarah Hall

Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon gratefully acknowledges memorial contributions from Mary Ann Osmun and Kevin Chadwick in memory of Eugene Gilmartin.

Looking for gift ideas this holiday season?

Consider a donation to help those in need. To aid victims of Hurricane Sandy, "Occupy Sandy" has launched online gift registries on Amazon.com so that people from anywhere, wishing to give aid, can contribute useful things. Other gift registries have been created for Hurricane Sandy, including one in Staten Island and one in Long Island.

—Kathy Dodge

Welcome, New Members

Jean N. Anke	Sharon Campbell	Lee Gruen	Lorraine Mack	John Shelhart
Beth Baker	James Card	Carol Hemphill	Kathryn Murphy	Inez Stabilito
Colette Ballew	John Clever	Christine D. Holland	Alison Nistad	Janel Stalker
Robert Barrett	Elizabeth K. Coughlin	Eva Holloway	Joan Oakley	Jean Taylor
Jeffrey Behnke	Mary Ellen Daniels	Jane Kazista	Marty Panek	Pamela Townsend
P. Bidlake	Terence Donohue	Karen Kernoski	Randall Paxton	Jeanette Trodden
Meridith Billingskey	Nettie Else	Ms. Colleen Kolucki	Sally Petrusa	Sandi Weisel
Heidi Bockelkamp	Joanne Farley	M. S. Lathrop	Wendy Pfurr	Shirley B. Wicker
Jason J. Bosco	Lorraine Faughnan	Grace Little	Frances Robbins-Murphy	Shelley A. Wilson
Anna Bound	George Fezy	Gary Ljaeger	Jeanne Roe	Douglas Yeager
Betty J. Button	Evelyn Gasko	David Lord	Joanne Schmidt	

Audubon's Plan for Bird Conservation

Natural habitat and open spaces are disappearing at an alarming rate. Protections for wildlife, natural places, and clean air and water are in jeopardy. By protecting birds, we're also safeguarding America's great natural heritage for future generations, preserving our shared quality of life and fostering a healthier environment for us all.

These words from the **Audubon Strategic Plan 2012-2015, A Roadmap of Hemispheric Conservation** are more important than ever as damage from Hurricane Sandy reveals itself along the coast and far inland.

This is Audubon's first conservation-focused plan in 20 years. The planning team began by following the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific flyways to identify bird species with the greatest conservation need. It looked at a range of factors affecting each species and what could be achieved by applying successful conservation methods used in one flyway to another.

Major storms in coastal waters cause massive disruptions to shorelines and wreak permanent destruction to inland habitats. Overfishing, development, and sea-level rise put 60 percent of coastal birds at risk. It is hoped that by working with partnerships across flyways, we can achieve many of the outcomes sought in the Plan.

The complete Plan can be found on the Audubon web site, nepaaudubon.org, where it is discussed in depth and accompanied with beautiful photographs and illustrations. As Conservation Chair, I will keep you informed of the activities that this chapter can become involved with that contribute to the conservation goals outlined in the Plan.

—Barbara Leo

Owl Be Seeing You



Photo by Robin Ayers

On Friday night, October 19, at 8 o'clock, twenty-eight children and adults joined Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon at Skytop Lodge to watch Darryl and Jackie Speicher of Pocono Avian Research Center and their helpers capture and band saw-whet owls. We met in a room at Skytop's skating rink where Darryl explained the procedure and talked to us about saw-whet owls. From there Darryl and those who wanted to accompany him went down to a rhododendron grove to check the mist nets to see if they had caught any saw-whets.

Mist nets are fine nets about six feet high that are stretched across an area to capture birds or bats with small risk of harming them. A recording of a saw-whet owl was played behind the net in hopes of attracting one to fly into the net.

On their first trip down to the nets, the team caught a saw-whet. They put the owl in a cloth bag to calm it down and then brought the owl up to the room at the skating rink, collected all the data they needed, put a band on one of its legs, and took it outside and released it. During this activity, flashing cameras made the room look like the president's press conferences. Almost everybody had a camera or a camera phone. We didn't catch any more owls that night, even though we kept trying until 11 o'clock, but everybody went home satisfied.

Join us next year on October 25 and get to see this tiny owl. We have caught saw-whets almost every year that we have been there, so your chances of seeing one are excellent.

—Bob Campbell

There's much more to explore on our web site. Check it out at www.NepaAudubon.org.

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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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Contributors: Robin Ayers, Bob Campbell, Katharine Dodge, Sarah Hall, Barbara Leo

Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, December 15: AUDUBON'S 113TH 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, Pennsylvania. For information, call Barbara at 570-253-2364.

Saturday, February 2, 9 AM-2 PM: ANNUAL BALD EAGLE FIELD TRIP WITH THE EAGLE INSTITUTE. Join us for great eagle viewing 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. Snow date is Feb 3. There is a \$13 fee to pay for the bus.

Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon, February 15-18, dawn to dusk: GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT. Everyone can have input into 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.

Saturday, March 9, 2 PM: Join Sue Thompson, Proprietor of Mariposa Gardens, a local native-plant nursery, for an informative talk on using native plants in the landscape. PPL Environmental Learning Center, off Rte. 6, Hawley, PA. No fee. No registration required. Contact Sue at 570-253-4006.