

# Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society

## Eco~Notes

Winter 2013

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Photo by Georgette Pascotto

### Owls in the Night



Photo courtesy of Andrew King

#### **A young volunteer holds the light on a saw-whet owl.**

On the evening of October 25<sup>th</sup> fifteen men, women, and children joined Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society, represented by me, hoping to observe Darrel and Jackie Speicher of Pocono Avian Research Center catch, weigh, and collect other data from saw-whet owls. We have been doing this annually for at least five years at Skytop Lodge, near Canadensis, Pennsylvania, but this year the event was moved to nearby Spruce Lake Retreat.

Darrel and Jackie met us and helped us get parked off the road. We then hiked to a Spruce Lake Retreat

wilderness campsite which consisted of a large lean-to with a wooden floor about three feet off the ground, a fire ring with no fire, and rustic benches around the ring. The light was supplied by flashlights which worked out fine, and heat was supplied by our own bodies which was all right by me. The temperature was in the low 30s and everyone was advised to dress for it. (I don't think the fellow with the frozen feet got the message.) The setup allowed everybody to get to know each other and see what was happening.

When things are working right, the owls are attracted by a saw-whet owl recording and caught in mist nets, fine nets that are stretched across an area near the recorder. The hope is that the owls will fly into the nets, and they did—three of them.

Darrel carefully and skillfully retrieved the owls from the net and put them in cloth bags, which supposedly calms them down. A volunteer carried them back to our campsite. They aren't heavy, as they weigh only about three ounces. Darrel and Jackie recorded the data they needed, making sure everybody could see, and then had somebody release them.

This was definitely more fun than in past years as we were out in the forest the whole time in the dark. Please join us next year and share this experience.

—Bob Campbell

#### **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, [nepaudubon.org](http://nepaudubon.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.

## Loyalsock State Forest and the Threat of Gas Drilling

It has been a policy of the past and current state administrations to lease state lands for gas drilling. Much has been written about this controversial position over the last four to five years.

What has come to the attention of the environmental community is the possibility of gas exploration within the 114,494 acres in Loyalsock State Forest in central Pennsylvania. The issues surrounding this state land are complex and reach back to the intensive logging era during the 1930s and ending in a lawsuit filed in the 1980s by Clarence Moore asserting his ownership of the subsurface rights of 25,000 acres in Lycoming county, including the Old Loggers Path and Rock Run water way. Many beautiful vistas with cold-water trout streams are within these acres. The subsurface mineral rights were subsequently sold to Anadarko Petroleum and Southwest Energy Corporation.

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has a Standard Surface Use agreement with all companies that extract gas or oil on state lands. Recently, Anadarko approached the Department about possible exploration in the Clarence Moore area of the forest. Pursuant to those discussions, the DCNR recognized the unique character of this tract and began work on a Surface Development Management

Agreement. There are no formal laws or regulations dictating the process but the DCNR is guided by its primary responsibility to protect Loyalsock State Forest while acknowledging the complex legal issues that surround it.

Once the word was out that drilling could possibly occur in the Loyalsock State Forest, many groups, including this chapter, mobilized and sent letters to the DCNR expressing concerns.

A summary of these concerns appear in a letter from Daniel Devlin, State Forester, to interested stakeholders. Fifty-five percent of the responders specifically mention the recreational impacts; twenty-six percent specifically voice concern over wildlife habitats and threatened and endangered species; twenty percent specifically voice concern about the impact to Old Loggers Path and Rock Run; and twelve percent specifically voice concern about impact to streams, creeks, waterways, and any fresh water or drinking water supply.

As of October 31, 2013, Mr. Devlin concluded that the DCNR is hoping to have a meeting to discuss a process and that all stakeholders will be invited. We are glad to see that the DCNR is doing its job.

—Barbara Leo

Northeastern Pennsylvania Audubon Society gratefully acknowledges the generous donation by Melissa Y. Rosiecki in memory of her grandmother, Lois Truitt.



Find lots more great information about birds, the environment, and upcoming programs at [www.nepaaudbon.org](http://www.nepaaudbon.org). Join us on **Facebook** (search Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society) and follow us on **Twitter**:

### Welcome, New Members

Charlotte Alexander	Colin Gillette	Michael S. Keklak	Catherine Rainey	Margaret E. Swingle
Elizabeth Anderson	Marie M. Hale	Mary Kline	Diane Richardson	Angelo Talarico
Albert Bertsch	Marjorie Harer	P. Leigh	Jeannine F. Rickert	Charles Taylor
William Cresswell	Linda Hoban	Olin Miller	Beverly Rose	Thomas Teneralli
Patricia Fornes	Joan Hyman	Carole Nasser	Gail Rudy	Linda Tucker
Annabel Franchak	Gerard Ide	Patrick O'Toole	Mary B. Sherwin	Janet Watrous
Elsa Friede	Jemille Kearney	George Peragine	Loni Strausbaugh	Sandi Weisel

*Editor's note: Your Board works hard throughout the year carrying out the mission of the Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society. For the past few issues, we have been looking at the different committees of the Board and the contributions they make.*

## **The Program Committee**

Planning programs, field trips, and hikes for an environmental organization can be lots of fun, especially when you have a committee of dedicated, flexible, and well-organized members. I've been blessed with all three. Just as important is making sure I offer them the same qualities. I find our first planning meeting especially inspiring. This is the "brain-storming" stage. We bring to the table ideas and networking we have done throughout the past year, create our lists, and assign tasks for each of us to contact the appropriate sources. Much contact among ourselves also occurs via e-mail in order to sort, sift, modify, add, and eliminate. We then meet a second time to report our information to each other and to begin the finalization of our plans. My job, as Chair, is to maintain a process of putting it all together, to create a final draft of our program, and to get it to our editor in good time. In the end, we have created an interesting, educational and, hopefully, enjoyable program for anyone who decides to join us. We always invite new ideas regarding our programs, so if you know of something or someone who might offer a program that lies within our mission statement, please contact us and we will be happy to listen!

—Sue Thompson

## **114th Christmas Bird Count Announced**

It's the time of year when Audubon asks people to get involved in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The date for this year's count is Sunday, December 15, 2013. This will be the 114th year that this historic international count has taken place. Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon is looking for people to help scour a 7.5-mile radius around White Mills looking for as many early winter birds as possible. There might also be late migrating birds if the weather cooperates.

The CBC has captured a snapshot of bird populations over eleven decades, and with the advancements in computer databases, the information

has come to be used by increasing numbers of researchers studying bird population trends. The data has helped Congress to pass and fund the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the CBC data is accepted by the US Environmental Protection Agency as one of the twenty-four major indicators of climate change.

You don't have to be an expert to join a team. Inexperienced birders are paired with more experienced birders, so anyone can help, no matter what level of expertise they have. Call Barbara at (570) 253-2364 to get involved.

—Barbara Leo



**A popular program in 2013 was a tour of the beautiful waterfalls in northeastern Pennsylvania, led by Sue Thompson. Shohola Falls is pictured above.**

**Want to get involved?** Anyone who is or becomes a member of our Audubon chapter is eligible to serve on a committee. Chairs of committees, appointed by the president and ratified by the board, are voting members of our Audubon board. There are many ways you can help. If you would like to join a committee, just let us know. Email us at [audubonworks@gmail.com](mailto:audubonworks@gmail.com) or call us at 570-253-9250.

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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.

Editor: Marileta Robinson

Contributors: Bob Campbell, Andrew King, Barbara Leo, Sue Thompson

### *Mark Your Calendars*

**Sunday, December 15.** AUDUBON'S 114TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. This survey provides critical data to scientists who study the 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. For more information, call Barbara at 570-253-2364.

**Saturday, February 1st, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** BALD EAGLE WATCH BUS TRIP. 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 2. Bus fee is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members.

**Friday-Monday, February 14-17, 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](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

**Saturday, March 22, 6:30 p.m.** WOODCOCK DANCE. Learn about this amazing bird and its dramatic nuptial flight, then walk to the "dance floor" and wait for the performance to begin! Varden Conservation Area [Tannery Access](#). Call Barbara at 570-253-2364 or visit [nepaaudubon.org](http://nepaaudubon.org) for more details.