

SPRATCOATHEB

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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December 1980

Strong hands to weak, old
hands to young, around the
Christmas board, touch hands.
The false forget, the foe forgive,
for every guest will go and
every fire burn low and cabin
empty stand.
Forget, forgive, for who may say
that Christmas day may ever
come to host or guest again.
Touch hands!

- from John Norton's Vagabond
(by William Henry Harrison "Adirondack" Murray
1840 - 1904)

The Twelfth Annual Christmas Bird Count

DATE: Sunday, December 21st TIME: 24 hour period - all day

From dawn to dusk mostly. Owling earlier and later for some. Fair or foul: unless a blizzard hits us. Blizzard make-up date: Sunday, December 28th. Directions as follows:

1. Clear with count compiler, John Orr - 943-5629 - so as to avoid overlap complications. He has answers to all questions.
2. Count species and every bird of every species.
3. Juniata Valley Audubon is again paying the fees for each counter.
4. Report in whole hours only and in whole miles only
 - a. Hours of party - feeder hours separate. If party splits, count hours of each portion as well as hours together.
 - b. Hours on foot - hours by car, boat, etc.
 - c. Miles on foot - by car, etc. same as hours. If party splits, count each.
5. If you see bird of a family but cannot name species, list the family, unless you see another of that family that you can name.
6. "Not seen on count day" means 3 days before and 3 after count. Just furnish name of species, not numbers.
7. Give John Orr telephone report or written record before Dec. 25th.

Counters must keep notes on exact locations along a line or in any area so as to verify sightings (avoid overlap) when checked out after the day's work. The problem is greatest when two teams or individuals have areas adjacent to one another. No real problem if everyone keeps landmark notations with species recorded.

In counting, remember to count as many birds as can be sighted at one time only in one spot. This is especially applicable to the feeder watchers. Also, moving along a line - moving on - one should consider birds at point B not to be the same as those counted at point A. (Of course, in some case of probability, they could well be).

Dress warmly: layered clothing; good warm boots, good hat, scarf and gloves. The wind can be what gets you the most. Food for snacking upon and for lunch is most appropriate. Hot drinks as well. Paper towels and spray bottle of window cleaner come in handy for clear vision out of car windows.

One primary rule is: "If not sure, don't count!" It is better to be safe. The compiler will be tough in his evaluation of any and all birds reported by teams and individuals. A bird that is unusual must be seen closely and all characteristics must be carefully written up. In some cases a verification by another counter or the compiler will be necessary for the species to be accepted and counted. It is all too easy to make quick calls or judgments but in the manner of objective, scientific reporting this must be avoided at all costs. Make a note of an unexpected species: where it was seen, who saw it, what the light was like, the distance from it, the features of size, color, shape, song, behavior, habitat, etc. Birds may be counted by song. Great care must again be the rule here on voice identification.

The covered dish supper is to begin at dusk (5:30 or so) at the Skelp Grange Hall in Skelp just over the mountain from Jack's Restaurant on Rt. #220 near Bellwood. All are welcome. The tallies of birds seen will be made there and it is a lot of fun seeing just what species and numbers are obtained. Good food for all. Bring a favorite dish. Call Olga Orr (943-5629) or Paulette Rosevear (674-5021) for information on the supper - what to bring, what's needed, etc. Everyone with an interest should consider this as a December meeting of sorts. It isn't necessary to have been on the count. Just come out to Skelp for some good food and fun.

Counters who need help with rules, site location, species to be expected, etc. are urged to call John Orr (943-5629) so as to set up a get-together with him before the actual count day. A large map of the overall count area is most helpful and may be seen by stopping by Orr's at 3001 4th Avenue, Altoona. New, smaller topological maps are available for specific areas. Remember: it is most important that all members of all parties each have decent binoculars for field observations. Good field guides are also imperative or standard equipment.

January Field Trip Date: January 11th 1981. Object: Winter birds in Sinking Valley. Larks, buntings, and longspurs.
Time: 1:30 p.m. Sunday.

Call John Orr (943-5629) for information or otherwise: meet at 1:30 p.m. at the country store at Sickie's Corner in Sinking Valley. Car pooling is advised.

1981 Summer Audubon Workshop Scholarship Names of members or others interested should be given to Colette Heller, president, so a choice can be made soon as to who will attend the workshop in Connecticut. Our group pays the fee. Call Colette at 742-7481. Candidates for consideration should be people who could profit from the outdoor ed background picked up at this one week camp.

Project Osprey - New Juniata Valley Project Donations in a matching fund set-up are asked for now and in early 1981 to support the new, osprey reintroduction project taken on by the Pennsylvania Audubon Council as a part of our non-game species effort. The osprey no longer is known as a breeding species in our state. Our goal is to change that. Send in \$1.00 or more in contribution to this work. Mail to Colette Heller at 425 Bellview Ave., Bellwood, Pa. 16617 or give to Wilson or Teddie Kreitz at Bird Count Covered Dish Supper, or at next regular meeting (February 1981).

Tentative Cutings for Winter Birds and to Improve Bird Count Operation

Sundays, December 28th and January 4th: in the field observations to improve coverage for Christmas count. Get in on these small bird hikes by calling John Orr. Times not decided yet. Sign up with Orr.

Winter Birds Sighted
Sharp-shinned hawk - Fran Burgoon Nov. in his yard;
Saw-whet owl (Oct. 30th), purple finch (Nov 21st),
evening grosbeaks (Nov. 22nd) - Bontas at their home;
Red-breasted nuthatch - Virginia Smeltzer in yard.
(Nov.); Albino brown-headed cowbird - Mrs. Arford,
Hollidaysburg; Cooper's hawk - John Orr - in yard
after songbirds near feeders.

The Gnatcatcher
3001 4th Avenue
Altoona, Pa. 16602

December 21st = Christmas Count
+ Covered Dish Supper
January 11th = Winter Bird Hike
January ---- = No meeting
February --- = Meeting Feb. 24th