

Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

February 2011

Thursday, February 17 Native American Life in the Susquehanna River Basin Region

Did you ever wonder what life was like for Eastern Woodland Native Americans in the 17th & 18th Centuries? **Steve Runkle**, retired Hydraulic Engineer and Engineering Supervisor formerly with the Pa DEP, will present an overview of Native American life in the Susquehanna River Basin, including a discussion of the various tribes that inhabited the region.

We will also become acquainted with their physical appearance, dress, dwellings, occupations, medicine, hunting techniques, warfare, government, and much more. Steve has a keen interest in

local history and Indian tribes that once lived in the Susquehanna Basin. He is a volunteer with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission's (SRBC) Public Information and Outreach Program. He also has served as an independent contractor with the SRBC in the field of water resources engineering.

Steve and his wife, Janeann live in Mechanicsburg. They have 2 children, and 4 grandchildren.

Watch for a follow-up program next season when Steve presents *Native American History of the Susquehanna River Basin Region during First Contact with Europeans.*)



Distinctly decorated clay pottery enables archaeologist to distinguish one Woodland Period group from another. Artifacts typically include bone and shell tools and beads, fish hooks carved from deer toe, turtle shell rattles, awls and needles. Credit: TheState Museum of Pa; Explorepahistory.com.

AAS monthly programs (September—May) typically take place at the **Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill.** Join us at 7:00 pm for refreshments and conversation.

The program begins at 7:30.
Directions to church on back page.

Steve Hoffman to Speak at Wildwood Park on Rocky Mountain Hawk Migration

How did an eastern Pennsylvania hawk watcher come to discover and study raptor migration in the Rocky Mountain West? How do eastern and western North American raptor migrations differ? **Steve Hoffman** will visit Pennsylvania to answer these questions and to share his work with western North American raptor migration. In his presentation, he will also address prime time for observing and how environmental factors are impact-

ing the health of western hawk and eagle populations.

Steve began his 30-year hawk watching "career" as a student at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. He went on to found HawkWatch International, worked as the Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon PA, wrote over 30 scientific papers on raptors, and has given many presentations on raptor migration to audiences across the U.S. He is currently the Executive Director for Montana Audubon.



When and Where: Thursday, February 24 at 7:00 p.m., at the Olewine Nature Center at Wildwood Park, Harrisburg.
Admission is Free.

Steve's presentation is being co-sponsored by Appalachian Audubon, Dauphin County Parks and Recreation, and Friends of Wildwood.

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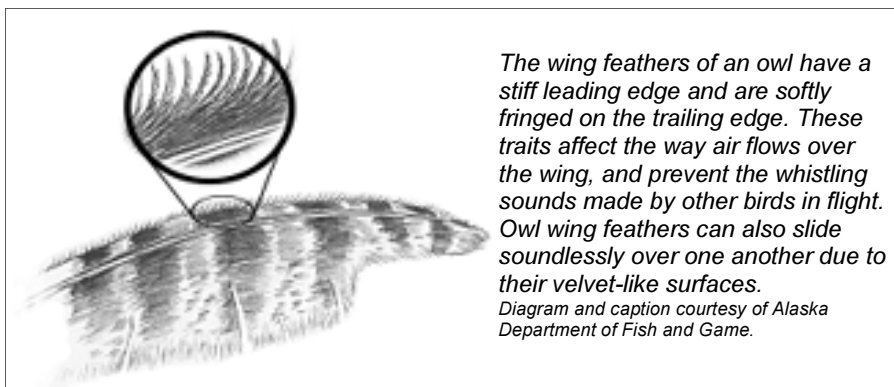
Paul Zeph

Giving a Voice to Wildlife

In December, I received a call from a woman who lives not far from me in Upper Allen Township (southeastern Cumberland County). She discovered a dead Great-horned Owl on her farm property, and wanted it to be used for educational purposes if possible.

The owl was a friend, as she and her husband heard it hooting regularly for several winters from a small grove of white pines. In the past she had collected pellets from below its roost to show children the wad of rodent fur and bones that its digestive system had so nicely cleaned, sterilized and then coughed up.

Upon inspection, I was struck by the magnificent beauty of its feathers – newly grown for the winter, and not yet damaged by a long season of survival. You could clearly see the fringe of tiny comb-like feathers along the leading edge of each wing that breaks the wind and silences the sound of its flight—an adaptation in owls that helps it sneak up on unsuspecting prey at night. Its talons were also impressive—the business end of the most powerful grip of any North American bird of prey.



The wing feathers of an owl have a stiff leading edge and are softly fringed on the trailing edge. These traits affect the way air flows over the wing, and prevent the whistling sounds made by other birds in flight. Owl wing feathers can also slide soundlessly over one another due to their velvet-like surfaces.

Diagram and caption courtesy of Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

“What do you think killed it?” she asked me as I inspected the beautiful bird. The only thing I could find was a badly scraped section of the right leg—just above its talons. The “ankle” (for lack of a better description) was scraped clean of flesh all the way around, right to the bone. I guessed aloud that the bird must have been caught by its leg somehow, eventually got free and returned to its roost; only to get an infection and die. Not being an expert in bird disease, it was only a conjecture. It looked to me, however, that the owl had encountered a leg-hold trap, or perhaps got caught in something else in pursuit of a meal. We’ll never know.

It’s hard enough to see habitat destroyed and know (indirectly) that birds and other wildlife will be lost as a result. But physically holding a large, beautiful, dead bird in your arms is really saddening, especially knowing that it died needlessly and unnaturally. It is yet another death, like so many, that we never hear about. A quiet disappearance of life, since birds and other natural habitat-dwellers have no voice to cry out as their homes are permanently destroyed.

(Continued on page 3)

Voice to Wildlife... continued

(Continued from page 2)

That is why Audubon is so important. We work to be their voice. This includes not only Appalachian Audubon Society, but also Audubon Pennsylvania, the policy work of the National Audubon Society, and the 20 other Audubon chapters in Pennsylvania.

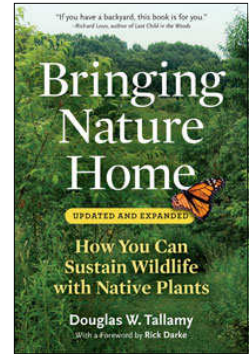
With a huge budget gap to fill, our incoming governor, Tom Corbett, is looking at all possible sources of revenue. One visible target in his eyes is the remaining half of our state forest land that is located above the Marcellus Shale natural gas field, but not under lease yet to drilling companies. These forests were set aside by Pa DCNR, deemed off limits due to the important ecosystem services they provide; such as: home to endangered and threatened species; large, intact forest blocks critical for dozens of species of warblers, tanagers, thrushes, orioles, and other neo-tropical migrating birds; and water quality. Not to mention outstanding scenic beauty, and recreational tranquility for bird-watching, hiking, fishing, camping, or hunting. This will not be the only threat to our environment during this administration. And it's not just the fact that it is a Republican administration. Every governor has given away or allowed degradation of some aspect of Penn's Woods or Penn's Watersheds. It is usually worse, however, when the economy is poor – politicians look for a short-term economic fix, and push any long-term consequences off to the next administration or the next generation.

What can you do? Filling the budget gap will be a political process of seeing which people will complain the least as funding solutions are proposed. If you are happy with having more of your state forests badly fragmented by a five-acre patchwork of drilling sites, wide pipeline swaths and bigger roads, then stay quiet. If you value our natural resources and want to support the decision DCNR staff made that we've leased enough of our state forests already, then please make some noise.

Give wildlife and habitat a voice. Send an e-mail, pick up the phone, or write a letter. We have state representatives, state senators and a governor who are in control of the state budget as well as the state agency's budgets. If you do not have internet access and need an address or phone number, please give me a call and I'll get you the information. Let's make some noise!

~ P.Z.

Save the Date!



On April 14, Dr. Doug Tallamy will be back in our area as a guest speaker, sponsored by the Manada Conservancy. The public is invited at no charge. Spread the word to municipal officials, parks and recreation boards, schools, garden clubs, and other conservation groups.

Dr. Tallamy is a professor and chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He's also the author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*. He is a terrific speaker and makes a very compelling argument for the importance of natives in suburban landscapes. He spoke several years ago at an AAS program, and packed the Mechanicsburg Middle School auditorium.

If a winter storm is forecast... for AAS programs scheduled for February or March, check the following news stations for cancellation information:

WGAL News 8— Watch the TV station, or visit their website: www.wgal.com; click on “Weather” then on “Closings” OR

WHP TV 21— Watch the TV station or visit their website: www.whptv.com; click on “First Warning Stormwatch” and check the Cumberland County listings. Also radio WLAN 96.9 FM / 1390 AM or WQLV 98.9 FM.

Citizen Action: To learn who your local representative and senator are, visit: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/find.cfm>. Send them a message about protecting our environment when budget-filling decisions are being made.

Send the governor an e-mail by going to his web site at: <http://www.governor.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/contact/2998>.

Notin' Could be Finer than to Free a Carolina... By Lorrie Preston

I had spent the better part of the November afternoon in the kitchen and I was feeling tired, but pleased, as my husband, Bob, and I sat down to enjoy our dinner. The roasted chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy and green beans looked and smelled delicious. We prepared our plates, savored the first wonderful bite, and then the doorbell rang.

There at the door was my sweet little blonde-haired, blue-eyed, 6-year old neighbor and friend, Sophie. Her tall daddy, Ed, stood behind her. She had a big smile on her face and proudly extended her arms, holding a big plate with two pieces of homemade pumpkin pie, each with a dollop of whipped cream on top. "Thank you, Sophie!" I exclaimed. "This will go perfectly with the nice dinner Bob and I are having tonight!" That didn't take long, I thought. How nice of them! I was anxious to get back to the dinner table, started to say good bye and got ready to close the door.

Almost as an afterthought, Ed gently tipped his head and said "Lorrie, it looked like birds flew into your house when you opened the door." I hadn't seen any birds coming in! Could he be right? I remembered that the previous evening, just as dark had fallen, I had exited my front door and saw two birds explode forth. I assumed they must have been roosting in the wreath. "Oh dear," I said. "Well, if they got in, they'll just have to wait until after dinner to get out, because we are just sitting down to eat."

But as I returned to the kitchen, I heard something in the dining room. I turned on the light. Sure enough, there was a Carolina Wren hopping along the top edge of my china cabinet! There was no mistaking this compact, energetic, rusty-brown bird with his little buff belly, white eyebrow, and short tail. He didn't look happy and he flew to the chandelier and grasped the vertical chain with his little feet above the dining table. From there, he flew to the top of the 2-story window in our foyer. No one could reach him there, and he flew from one end of the window treatment to the other and back again.

Bob ran outdoors to the deck and got the pond skimmer with extendable handle. I ran upstairs and shut every door in the house to minimize the number of places the bird(s) could fly. Each time Bob would get anywhere near the little bird with the skimmer, it would fly to the other end of the window. For a few minutes, it looked hopeless.

Finally, the little guy flew to the large brass chandelier in the foyer and once again grasped the chain with his little feet. From the upstairs landing, Bob took a deep breath and held the pond skimmer out steady near the bird. Almost as if the wren had been trained, it stepped onto the edge of the skimmer obediently. I opened the front door. Bob gingerly came down the stairs, the little bird blinking and looking around as it perched on the extended skimmer. Once outside, it flew off into the darkness. Whew! One down, but was there another?



"There was no mistaking this compact, energetic rusty-brown bird with his little buff belly, white eyebrow, and short tail."

We quickly surveyed the other rooms of the house. "Here it is!" yelled Bob. The bird had made it upstairs and was in the bonus room above the garage on the other end of the house. Our gray cat, Misty, was already on the case! This was an indoor cat's dream! The bird flew back and forth, landing only on the house plants, a silk arrangement of twigs and greenery on the wall, and a metal wall decoration of oak leaves and acorns – the most natural items the wren could find in the room. I finally caught it in the tip of a butterfly net, opened the window, and off it flew.

As we sat down to our lukewarm meal, we breathed a sigh of relief. It could have been a lot worse. I realized that after all of the excitement, I wasn't tired anymore! And the pumpkin pie was delicious!

~LP

Winter Bird Feeding Courtesy of Chesapeake Audubon & Paul Zeph

Winter is a crucial time for the birds that remain in our area. They spend their time facing the elements of bitter cold and snowstorms. There are few insects to eat and the natural seeds are often covered with snow; the berries and crab apples are almost gone. Birds need enough food to maintain their body temperatures and must search for food from sun up to dusk. Fortunately for the birds, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 41 million Americans spend \$2 billion annually on bird feed and the numbers are increasing yearly.

FATTY FOODS are important for our winter birds. Fat is metabolized into energy much quicker and more efficiently than seeds to help them maintain their 108° body temperature necessary for survival.

The following are excellent sources of quick energy and some protein:

- ◆ Suet made from animal fat is widely used because it is inexpensive, provides an excellent energy source for birds and can be mixed with seeds, cornmeal, insect eggs and peanut butter to appeal to a wider range of species.
- ◆ Peanut Butter is more expensive than suet and is also very popular with a large number of birds. To reduce the cost of feeding peanut butter, you can melt it down and mix it with suet. This also lessens the potential risk of a bird choking on the thick, sticky peanut butter.
- ◆ Kitchen Fat requires care if you put it out for the birds. Make sure it is not overly salted or spiced. It is best to mix kitchen fat with cornmeal or flour if you are going to serve it to birds.

SEEDS are very important. Seeds contain high levels of carbohydrates that are turned into glucose to help with the bird's high energy demands. They also are a good source for vitamins and some protein. Make sure the seed you purchase does not have a lot of fillers (milo and wheat seeds) that are not eaten and a waste of money. Buy mixes that have a large percentage of sunflower seed and white proso millet.

- ◆ Sunflower Seeds are a favorite of many birds. The black oil sunflower seeds have a softer shell than the striped seeds and can be eaten by the smaller birds as well as the cardinals. The oil seeds are not overly expensive, they appeal to a wider variety of species, and they contain a larger amount of vegetable oil to help supply the energy birds need in the winter. They are also a good source of protein.

- ◆ Millet is quite nutritious, containing approx. 10% protein and 4% fat in addition to starches. White proso millet was rated as the best food for birds that eat small seeds.
- ◆ Cracked Corn is a good, inexpensive food that appeals to a large number of birds, including doves, sparrows, juncos and cardinals.
- ◆ Niger Thistle seeds are expensive but can also be fed. Hulled sunflower seeds will also attract finches and may be cheaper.

It is less expensive to buy the individual type of seeds in bulk and mix your own seeds: 50% oil sunflower seeds (unhulled); 35% white proso millet; and 15% finely cracked corn.

NUT MEATS are highly nutritious and provide necessary amino acids and protein that birds need. They also have oil and provide good energy.

Other Year-round Feeding Tips:

- ◆ Dried or fresh fruit and baked goods (and stale bread) are liked by many birds. Break items into small pieces.
- ◆ Sand or ground oyster shells are also welcomed to help their gizzards grind food.
- ◆ The location of the food is also important. Put feeders near to shrubs or trees. More than one feeder attract more types of birds.
- ◆ A year round supply of clean water is very beneficial. During winter water is very hard to find and birds need a source.
- ◆ Disinfect bird bath and feeders with diluted bleach periodically to prevent diseases.

Summer Ecology Camp Scholarships Available

AAS provides scholarships for students and educators to attend seek-long camps to learn more about the natural world around us, or to learn how to be a better environmental educator.

For information on recommended ecology camp programs or how to apply for a scholarship, contact: Kathie Bard at 717-238-0004, or kathiebard@yahoo.com



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February 2011

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Directions to Christ Presbyterian Church,
421 Deerfield Road in the Allendale
development in Lower Allen Township:

I-83 Southbound, take exit 40B towards New
Cumberland. Stay straight, cross Carlisle
Road to Cedar Cliff Drive. Turn left onto
Allendale Way and turn left onto Deerfield
Road. The Church is on the left. Park in
second lot.

I-83 Northbound, take exit 40B, turn left onto
Carlisle Road/Simpson Ferry Road under I-
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Drive. Turn left onto Allendale Way and turn
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left. Park in second lot.

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Inside: Public Program

Thurs., February 17
Native American Life
in the Susquehanna River
Basin Region



Try your wit!

Send your caption for this photo to
hsmamabear@embarqmail.com.
Entries will be included in the
March Kingfisher Courier.

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, February 26 **Ramsay's Winter Road Adventure**

Join AAS "birder extraordinaire" on another
winter birding trip, most likely to the New
Jersey Shore, looking for loons, ducks,
scoters, gulls, purple sandpiper and
more! Contact Ramsay at
761-1871 or rkoury123@aol.com.

Sunday, March 13, 2011 **Ned Smith Waterfowl Watch**

8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. This annual event
along the Susquehanna River in Millersburg
is hosted by the Ned Smith Center for
Nature and Art. Birding experts will be on
hand. Dress warmly and bring binoculars
and spotting scopes. Contact Beth Sanders at
692-3699 or Judy Bowman at 761-3815.

Sunday, March 19, 2011 **Middle Creek Wildlife Mgmt. Area** **Snow Geese, Swans and More!**

At this time of year, Snow Geese and
Tundra Swans stop at Middle Creek for
several weeks during migration. Join veteran
leader Pete Fox and look for waterfowl,
eagles, and more! Contact Pete at 583-2639
(before 9 PM) or pfox@raiderweb.org.

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