



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

May 2011

The AAS Annual Banquet was held on May 19 More about that Young Ornithologist

At the time of this writing, the Annual AAS Banquet has likely come and gone. Featured as this year's keynote speaker was AAS's own **Tom Johnson**. We felt *Kingfisher* readers might like to know a bit more about this extraordinary young man who was, not so long ago, a birding fledgling with AAS members helping him grow his wings.

Tom grew up in a family with a birding legacy. His grandmother, a consummate birder, had participated in the first Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird surveys in three states back in the day, as well as run migration routes and Christmas count routes, and Breeding Bird Atlas blocks annually in Oklahoma and Michigan.

As a youngster, Tom devoured her bird record journals, which had been maintained daily since the

1950s. Tom developed an interest in population dynamic and migration patterns and the importance of record keeping.

Birding with his family since toddlerhood, Tom refined his interest in birds first with falcons, and then gradually all things avian. He volunteered with the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding project at age 9, and served as a raptor rehab volunteer with Beth Carricato beginning in 2001. Tom participated in the American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year Programs and earned recognition for his record keeping and his photography. He established a hawk watch site in his front yard and tracked hawk migration from there annually.

AAS provided Tom scholarship support for birding camp



experiences in Vermont, West Virginia and Maine, including attending the first Coastal Birding Youth Camp on Hog Island. The young birders he met during camp formed a World Series of Birding team and participated annually in the New Jersey Audubon event from 2004, raising funds for conservation. Many of you supported the efforts of this dynamic young birding team.

In 2005, Tom was employed as a

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Welcome New AAS Officers, Directors, and other Board Members!

By the time members receive the printed version of this newsletter, our annual banquet may have already taken place, and a new set of officers may have been approved by the attendees. Unless something unforeseen happens, the new AAS Board of Directors will be as follows:

President, **Annette Mathes**; Vice President, **Susan Miller** (both with two-year terms); Treasurer, **Andy Groff**, and Secretary, **Judy Bowman** (one year terms). New Directors (two-year term), are: **Ann Glasscock**, **Arlene Buchholz**, and **Ramsay Koury**.

The Directors elected last year that have one more year left in their term are: **Jane Barnette**, **Sue Strassner**, and **Kathy Kuchwara**. Additional voting board members will be the chairs of the standing

committees that will be formally appointed by the new President in the near future.

Congratulations to the new leadership team! Many of them are continuing on the board with a different position, and were invaluable assisting me with the running of the chapter over my term as President. Your officers and board members work very hard behind the scenes keeping our finances in order, updating membership and mailing lists, taking care of our Trout Run Sanctuary, organizing and helping out at events, and making sure the chapter keeps humming along.

Our chapter runs entirely on volunteers, and all that we accomplish is the result of members volunteering to do a little or a lot, in whatever capacity they can.

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**OFFICERS & BOARD
OF DIRECTORS**

President

Paul Zeph: 691-0288

Vice-President

Vacant

Secretary

Carole Norbeck: 766-0956

Treasurer

Annette Mathes: 566-0149

DIRECTORS

Term Ending May 2011

Kathie Bard: 238-0004

Judy Bowman: 761-3815

Susan Miller: 697-6696

Term Ending May 2012

Jane Barnette: 657-2055

Kathy Kuchwara: 319-0828

Sue Strassner: 243-5731

President's Perch

Paul Zeph

Going Bananas for Neotropical Birds

A couple of weeks ago, on one of the last days of April, I happened to be looking out a window to my backyard, and noticed a yellow bird in an old lilac tree. It was hopping from branch to branch just above a little waterfall and pond, then flew down for a drink. At first, I thought it was a female warbler, as all I saw was an all-over pale, olive-yellow color to its feathers. The longer I looked at it, though, I realized it was too large to be a warbler.

I ran for my binocs and Sibley Guide, thinking perhaps it was a tanager or oriole. It stayed long enough for me to get my ten-power glasses on it, and I saw it had a small black throat patch and a slim, pointy beak. It definitely had an oriole look about it, but I was still stumped until I looked in the book and decided it was a first-year male Orchard Oriole who had returned to Pennsylvania from the tropics in Central America or perhaps Colombia. Like other orioles, he won't get his adult plumage until later this summer. I'd never seen an Orchard Oriole in this stage of plumage, so that was very cool for me.

Each spring I get reminded all over again about Pennsylvania's link to the Neotropics – that is, the tropics in the New World -- southern Mexico, Central and South America, and the West Indies. These “neotrops,” as birders refer to them, come north to nest at a time when there is a profusion of small caterpillars in the northern forests – essential protein for a nest full of hungry young birds. Our forests are critical for their reproduction and species survival; and researchers are finding that the birds play a critical role for the health of the Neotropical forests. Orioles, for example, have been shown to be important pollinators for certain tropical plants as the birds probe for nectar and spread pollen from flower to flower.

Neotropical migrants are some of our most beloved birds, and include: warblers, tanagers, swallows, swifts, vireos, phoebes, meadowlarks, grosbeaks, hummingbirds, thrushes, whip-poor-wills, flycatchers-- and the list goes on. Much work is being done throughout North America to protect the nesting habitat for these species, and we all can play a role by encouraging our communities to plant native shrubs and trees, reduce pesticides, and protect large blocks of un-fragmented forests. Without protection of their wintering habitat, however, the birds will still be in peril.

If you come across opportunities to help conservation organizations in Central or South America, don't hesitate to help. Many farms in Latin America are “modernizing” and spraying large amounts of pesticides that are banned in the United States due to their longevity in the food chain. Forests continue to be cleared for agriculture at an alarming rate, and energy and mining operations are fragmenting what is left. The demand by Americans for an ever-increasing variety of food choices all year long is helping to drive the destruction. “Buying local” helps Neotropical birds. So does buying organically grown tropical fruits and “shade-grown” organic coffee.

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Orchard Oriole Photo: en.wikipedia.org



Eastern Phoebe Photo: en.wikipedia.org



Neotropical continued

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Helping to protect local birds is a lot more complicated than protecting local habitat. We must all examine our consumer choices and help support healthy habitats globally. Even if I never see another Orchard Oriole, it's important to me to know that they are not being poisoned on Central American banana or coffee plantations.

-PZ

Neotropical Migrants and Latin American Agriculture

The Coffee Research Institute reports that approximately 150 species of birds live on shade grown coffee farms, compared to non-shaded coffee plantations that support as few as 20–50 species. The birds which are helped by shade-grown coffee include warblers, orioles, tanagers, buntings, flycatchers, vireos, grosbeaks, hawks, and more!

Bridget Stutchbury, in a 2008 New York Times Op Ed, wrote that precipitous declines in many bird species in North America, including Bobolinks, Swainson's Hawks, Eastern Kingbirds and Barn Swallows, are thought to be the result of heavy use of pesticides in Latin America -- pesticides that are banned in the United States.* She makes the following recommendations:

“What should you put on your bird-friendly grocery list? Organic coffee, for one thing. Most mass-produced coffee is grown in open fields heavily treated with fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. In contrast, traditional small coffee farmers grow their beans under a canopy of tropical trees, which provide shade and essential nitrogen, and fertilize their soil naturally with leaf litter. Their organic, fair-trade coffee is now available in many coffee shops and supermarkets, and it is recommended by the Audubon Society, the American Bird Conservancy and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

“Organic bananas should also be on your list. Bananas are typically grown with one of the highest pesticide loads of any tropical crop. Although bananas present little risk of pesticide ingestion to the consumer, the environment where they are grown is heavily contaminated.”

**Excerpted from “Did Your Shopping List Kill a Songbird?” New York Times op-ed, March 30, 2008. Ms. Stutchbury is a professor of biology at York University in Toronto, and author of “Silence of the Songbirds.”*

Officers & Board Members continued

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Though too numerous to list by name, I want to thank all who gave of their time to our annual Bird Seed Sale, Native Plant Sale, as presenters for monthly programs and leading our many field trips.

Thank you to the various individuals bringing refreshments to our programs, helping out with the annual bird counts, writing newsletter articles, contacting your elected officials about issues, assisting at Waggoner's Gap, and donating to the various causes we support through our fundraising initiatives. I would also like to give a special thanks to Holly Smith for her outstanding work editing and producing our newsletter. They look great, and are especially beautiful when viewed on-line in full color!

We can all be proud that, collectively, Appalachian Audubon Society makes an important conservation contribution to the greater Harrisburg area. We come together to learn, to share, and to have fun, but we also contribute to the greater good of our local environment, and the protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitat. Thank you!

- Paul Zeph, outgoing President

Young Ornithologist continued

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field ornithologist with Pennsylvania's 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas and spent four summers on the Atlas project. As an undergraduate at Cornell University, Tom continued to study migration patterns of Northern Saw-whet Owls; nurtured his keen interest in gulls; spent two years working on a collaborative project studying Hudsonian Godwits (which allowed him to summer at the Northern Studies Center in Churchill, Manitoba, and winter in Chiloe, Chili); and helped with Dr. David Winkler's trans-continental, long-term collaborative swallow study.

After graduation in 2010 with a degree in Biology, Tom took a position with New Jersey Audubon as Morning Flight Counter at Cape May Bird Observatory, and currently works for The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory completing bird surveys on the Colorado plateau in southern Arizona.

Tom's photographs have appeared in various publications and national journals. He serves as a member of the New York State Avian Records Committee as well as the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee, and he writes for North American Birds Online on a regular basis.



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Appalachian Audubon Society
P.O. Box 234
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Programs September—April are typically held at Christ Presbyterian Church:

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-83. Turn left again at the light onto Cedar Cliff Drive. Turn left onto Allendale Way and turn left onto Deerfield Road. The Church is on the left. Park in second lot.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Wood Thrush
Photo: en.wikipedia.org

Eastern Meadowlark
Photo: Tom Johnson



Rufous-sided Hummingbird
Photo: Tom Johnson

Use your shopping power to contribute to the health of these, and other, birds. Pg 2-3.

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, June 4, 2011 **Breeding Birds of the** **Tuscarora State Forest & More**

Join Cumberland County breeding bird survey compier Vern Gauthier for a look at the breeding birds of the Tuscarora. Meet at 7:00 AM at the Colonel Denning State Park day use area. Woodland trails and local fields will be visited. Contact Vern at 385-9526 or pabirder@gmail.com

Visit www.appalachianaudubon.org/events for *Early Bird and Die Hard Specials!*

Saturday, June 4, 2011 **State Game Lands 246** **Round Top Mountain (Dauphin Co)**

Join members of the Quittapahilla Audubon Society in search of flora and fauna as well as late spring warbler migrants. Meet Saturday, 9 AM at Karns grocery store parking lot on Cherry Drive, just south of Route 322 (Governor Road).
Leader Art Schiavo, 533-1978.

All field trips are free of charge (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. Please contact the trip leader before going. For more information on any trip, call Judy Bowman at 761-3815.

In Memoriam

Friend and long-time AAS member, Mary Ludes, passed away on April 8th. Mary was 91 years old and had been living at Country Meadows for several years.

Mary was a very adventurous woman in her day. She was the first woman engineer at Bell Telephone Co. She had done extensive hiking, including most, if not all, of the Appalachian Trail. She had also traveled and hiked with Elderhostel groups over the years. She was very interested in birds and nature. She often donated items for our annual banquet to support the chapter.

Mary made things happen. She often greeted drivers as they picked up birdseed at the annual sale, and once bluntly asked a male driver why he wasn't helping to load seed in the cars. It turns out he was the manager of a local restaurant, and since then, Isaacs has donated sandwiches for the bird seed sale volunteers.

For further details, call Mary's niece, Beth, at her home at 938-9838. Mary will be missed.