



The Mountain Chat

Newsletter of the Mountaineer Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Volume 39 No. 2

Fall 2014

Annual Christmas Bird Count Planned

By LeJay Graffious

The Morgantown CBC will be Saturday, December 20. It is centered on the Morgantown Airport and, like all counts, is a circle with a diameter of fifteen miles. Last year we exceeded all records for count day species (81 species), count week species (an additional 14 species) and number of participants (40). Our impossible goal is to count all the birds within 7-½ miles of where the two runways intersect. We don't worry about our impossible goal, but just have a fun day counting birds. The CBC circle is divided into areas, which are covered by teams. We encourage team efforts. The team is usually out from dawn to dusk, with individual participants joining in for as much of the day as they choose. Once again this year, LeJay Graffious is the compiler and will determine the number of teams based on how many people contact him about participating. Smaller areas give teams a better chance at getting a good sample of species and numbers. The count usually has four teams covering the count area.

Owling is another phase of the count. It extends the time period up to the entire twenty-four hours. Owling is listening for owls, and the few other nocturnal calls or sightings that might be made. The Morgantown CBC Owling effort has great growth potential.

Feeder Counts are another phase of the count. People interested in this phase tally the greatest number of each species seen at their feeders at any one time during the day of the count and contact LeJay Graffious with their totals Saturday evening through Wednesday, December 24.

Count Week Birds are yet another phase of the effort. Species that are completely missed on count day can be footnoted as "seen during count week", if seen during either the three days prior to, or the three days following the count day. Count Week for the Morgantown CBC is Wednesday, December 17 to Tuesday, December 24.

The Count Day Dinner is the most social phase of the effort. The teams and all interested friends join for the evening meal and tally up the day's results. The final count comes when all feeder counts, counts for teams not represented at the dinner, and any after-dinner owling birds are added in with any count week birds footnoted. The final tally of species and numbers of individual birds, participants, and miles covered in the effort, and number of feeder counts is submitted for inclusion in the collective record of National Audubon Society's 115th Christmas Bird Count.

On November 11 our evening program by Doren Burrell will feature winter birds found in West Virginia. This program is open to everyone whether they are participation in the CBC or not. Check this newsletter for field trips prior to the CBC. All Mountaineer Audubon programs, field trips and the Christmas Bird Count are free to public. People who want to get involved may register on-line at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>, email lejay@oldhemlock.org, or call 304-379-7505

Come join one or all three events. Birding is great activity to enjoy outside and be with nature and friends. We will have a social that evening at a local restaurant. Everyone, counters and friends, are invited to join us.

President's Message

At our annual banquet last May, I had the honor of being elected President of Mountaineer Audubon. I look forward to serving this fine organization during the next two years and hope I measure up to the standards set by previous presidents.

As I have yet to meet many of you, I will take this opportunity to tell you a little about myself. I have always been interested in all aspects of nature and the outdoors, and have been an avid birder for as long as I can remember. Over the years, my family and I moved a lot, giving me the opportunity to experience and enjoy many different parts of this country. The places in which I have lived and birded include Vermont, Colorado, California, Illinois, Indiana, and West Virginia. I moved to Preston County a little over two years ago, and am now proud to call the Mountain State home.

My new position with Mountaineer Audubon is not my first experience with Audubon. While in Indiana, I sat on the board of the Sassafras Audubon Society in Bloomington for four years, two of which I served as Vice President.

In this volume of the *Mountain Chat* we have included information about our fall presentations, fall bird outings, bird seed sale, and the annual Christmas Bird Count.

The fall presentations and bird outings have long been popular activities hosted by Mountaineer Audubon. The presentations provide members with informative talks and slide presentations about birds or other aspects of the natural world, and the bird outings give us a chance to get together to look for, and learn about, birds in local hotspots. Neither the presentations nor the bird outings would be possible without our volunteers who take time out of their busy lives to make a positive contribution

to our organization. To that end, I would urge members to attend as many presentations and bird outings as possible, not only to learn new things and have an enjoyable time, but also to support our volunteers, as well as Mountaineer Audubon.

Over the years, many of you have taken advantage of our bird seed sale. Board members and volunteers work hard to make this sale possible, so we will look forward to your continued support. Not only do you have the chance to buy quality bird seed at reduced prices, but you provide the birds with a much-needed source of food during the winter months, as well as help support Mountaineer Audubon.

And finally, the annual Christmas Bird Count allows us to count as many species and numbers of birds as we can find. The data gathered by participants helps scientists to assess bird population trends, which can be useful in determining conservation needs. So by participating in the Christmas Bird Count, we not only get together, enjoy finding the birds, and have a good time overall (sometimes in spite of the weather!), but our efforts contribute to scientific understanding as well.

I will look forward to meeting many of you over the next two years, as well as being your new President.

Happy Birding,

David Daniels

Most of you are probably aware of the red winged hawk eco-sculpture that Ben Gazsi created at the West Virginia Botanic Garden this summer. The public is being asked to name the sculpture.

In other exciting news, the WVU Solar Decathlon log home will be moved to the Botanic Garden this year!

Gate is now open Saturdays 10-4 and Sunday 1-4 for those who need to drive down.

Check <http://wvbg.org> for more information.

FALL 2014 MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON BIRD WALKS

All walks are free and will be on Saturdays except as noted. They will only be canceled for extremely inclement weather. Bring binoculars and dress appropriately for the weather. For more information, contact Terry Bronson, bronsonwv@gmail.com or 304-225-0999, except as indicated for the Dec. 6 walk

Sep. 6—Cranesville Swamp. 7:30 am at side of Kroger Store in Suncrest Town Center. David Daniels, leader.

Sep. 15, 16, 18, 19, 20—Hawkwatch and fall migration at Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area. Weather permitting, Gretchen Nareff will be there on these days beginning about 8:00 am and will usually stay into the early afternoon. That week is normally the peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration, but there should be many fall migrant songbirds as well. From the I-79 exit for Morgantown Mall, go west on Route 19 about 4.5 miles, turn left on Little Indian Creek Road and follow it to the WMA sign, bear left, go up the hill, and park under the power line. Walk in on the road behind the gate about 0.5 mile until you find Gretchen. Contact her at marshbirder@gmail.com before going to confirm she'll be there on a particular day. You might want to bring a camp chair, water, snacks, etc. if you plan on staying awhile and a scope if you have one. The location is out in the open and it could get hot.

Sep. 27—Decker's Creek Trail, Reedsville. 8:00 am where trail crosses Burke Road. David Daniels, leader.

Oct. 4—Dorsey's Knob Park. 8:00 am at mosaic wall parking area. John Boback, leader.

Oct. 18—West Virginia Botanic Garden. 8:00 am at upper Garden parking lot on Tyrone Road. Terry Bronson, leader.

Nov. 1—Friendship Hill National Historic Site. 7:30 am at side of Kroger Store in Suncrest Town Center. Terry Bronson, leader.

Nov. 15—Tygart Lake/Pleasant Creek waterfowl trip. 8:00 am at southernmost boat launch at Tygart Lake Marina. For those coming from Morgantown, meet at

7:00 am at Mountaineer Mall near the water tower. Joe Hildreth, leader.

Dec. 6—Cheat Lake Waterfowl trip. 8:00 am at Ruby and Ketchy's Restaurant on Route 857 east of Cheat Lake. If you'd like breakfast first, meet at 7:00 am. LeJay Graffious, leader, lejaygraffious@gmail.com.

Dec. 20—Morgantown Christmas Bird Count. Contact LeJay Graffious, compiler, to volunteer at lejaygraffious@gmail.com.

Fall 2014 Programs

All programs take place at the Spruce Street United Methodist Church, 348 Spruce Street, in downtown Morgantown, which is next to the farmers market pavilion. Parking at 50 cents per hour is available in the adjacent city lots. Enter at rear of church. The room is available at 6:30 pm; the meeting will begin at 7:00 pm; the program about 7:15 pm. There is no charge and anyone is welcome.

September 9—Ross Brittain will speak on Coastal Birds

Ross Brittain is the Dean of the College of Science, Technology and Mathematics at Alderson Broaddus University in Philippi, WV, and Assistant Professor of Environmental Science. He has a PhD in Environmental Science from Indiana University where he studied avian trophic webs (what birds eat) for birds in ecosystems of coastal Georgia, as well as modeled the potential impacts of sea-level rise and urban development. Prior to moving to WV in 2012, Ross served as a Senior Environmental Manager for the State of Indiana and as the Indiana Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society. Ross also started the first migratory banding station for Northern Saw-whet Owls in Indiana in 2002, and got his first "graduate degree" from the School of Reality while owning and managing the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Bloomington, Indiana for 7 years.

October 14—LeJay Graffious —Allegheny Front Migratory Observatory: Bird Banding on Dolly Sods

November 11—Doren Burrell (tentative) —Winter Birds. An excellent way to prepare for the Christmas Bird Count.

The Demise of the Passenger Pigeon

This September marks the 100th anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. On September 1, 1914, at approximately 1:00 pm, a Passenger Pigeon named Martha died at the Cincinnati Zoo. She was the last remaining Passenger Pigeon on earth, and her death brought about the extinction of what was probably the most abundant bird the world had ever seen.

It was believed that the Passenger Pigeon's population exceeded five billion, amounting to about one-quarter of all the birds in North America. Some flocks contained tens of millions, possibly hundreds of millions, of birds and were estimated to be up to a mile wide and as much as three hundred miles long. These flocks darkened the skies, blocking out the sun for days as they passed. When the birds roosted at night, they were stacked several birds deep on tree branches, and their combined weight was known to break even large branches.

The Passenger Pigeon was a communal breeder, nesting in colonies that covered hundreds of square miles. Each large tree in these breeding colonies contained hundreds of nests.

The range of the Passenger Pigeon included much of the forested areas of the eastern part of the United States and the southern regions of eastern Canada. West Virginia was well within the range of the Passenger Pigeon, our forest-covered mountains providing the type of habitat they needed. The bird was considered abundant throughout the state, and there were major nesting areas in the northwest part of West Virginia, as well as in the Ohio and Kanawha river drainages. The last recorded Passenger Pigeon in West Virginia was a bird shot in Putnam County in 1895.

The extinction of the Passenger Pigeon was brought about primarily by the systematic shooting and netting of the birds as a source of food. One shotgun blast into a passing flock could

bring down dozens of birds. Professional hunters followed the flocks, killing millions of birds, filling untold numbers of boxcars with their bodies for shipment to the markets of the cities in the east and Midwest. Hunters killed huge numbers of birds, including young squabs, at nesting colonies, preventing them from reproducing.

By the early 1900s, the bird that was thought to be so abundant that its numbers could never be diminished was in trouble. At the time, there were no conservation organizations or government agencies that could have put a halt to the slaughter or worked to restore the bird's numbers.

More can be read about the Passenger Pigeon on the interesting website of Project Passenger Pigeon (www.passengerpigeon.org). This is a group of scientists, conservationists, educators, and artists that was formed to use the centenary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon as an opportunity to promote habitat preservation and species conservation. The group's goals are to familiarize people with the Passenger Pigeon and its extinction, explore how human activity impacts other species, and motivate people to take actions that promote biodiversity, and prevent further human-caused extinctions.

David Daniels



Birders and the Federal Duck Stamp

The Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, popularly referred to as the Duck Stamp, is produced by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as a federal license required for hunting migratory waterfowl. In addition to its use as a hunting license, the stamp can also be used as an entry pass into any National Wildlife Refuge in the nation that charges admission, and is popular with stamp collectors for its beautiful artistic portrayals of ducks or geese.

The proceeds from the sale of the Duck Stamp are used to purchase or lease vital wetland habitat for protection as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Across the country, wetlands are one of the fastest disappearing habitats, being filled in or plowed over to make farmland or provide land for new developments.

Since its inception in 1934, the Duck Stamp program has generated well over 800 million dollars that has been used to purchase or lease more than six million acres of wetland habitat. Unlike many wasteful government programs, most of the proceeds from the sale of Duck Stamps are actually used to benefit the program's intended beneficiaries. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar goes to preserve wetlands across the nation.

Not only waterfowl but many other species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and plants benefit from the protection of wetland habitat that is made possible by the sale of the Duck Stamp. About one-third of the endangered or threatened species in the United States use these wetlands to breed or for food and shelter.

Although most birders are conservationists at heart, many have been reluctant to participate in the Duck Stamp program despite its success

as a means of conserving wetland habitat. The reasons are varied, but many birders, not being waterfowl hunters or being against hunting, are reluctant to buy Duck Stamps because of a belief that by purchasing Duck Stamps they are condoning or contributing to hunting. Others are concerned that the numbers of non-hunters using the National Wildlife Refuge System are not tallied and the non-hunters' support of for habitat protection is not being adequately assessed.

To try to address those concerns, and to promote wetland habitat protection among birders, the American Birding Association (ABA) is now selling Duck Stamps. (The ABA makes no money in selling Duck Stamps). By purchasing Duck Stamps through the ABA, birders can make their voices heard, and their numbers can be used to track how many non-hunters support wetland preservation.

Don't just feel like you need to stop at one, either. Duck stamps make fantastic gifts for birders, young and old. You can use them as birthday or holiday gifts or bird clubs can sell them during their monthly meetings. Consider them for end-of-year appreciation gifts for bird club field trip leaders or awards for birders who go above and beyond. The possibilities are nearly endless.

To learn more about purchasing Duck Stamps through the ABA, visit their website at www.aba.org.

David Daniels

Join us on our facebook page at Mountaineer Audubon. Just click on LIKE.

We will post bird news, reminders for outings and programs and interesting items about local environmental programs.

Audubon Bird Seed Sale

It's time to order your bird seed for the feathered residents of your winter back yard. This is the primary fundraiser for Mountaineer Audubon. Projects that received funds from the sale last year included donations to send a young (and very accomplished budding ornithologist) to an Audubon camp, the WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center, and the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia.

Southern States in Sabraton is again providing a venue for distribution and high quality seed and suet products for the sale. They've done a good job this year in keeping prices down – we're able to offer many items at the same prices as last year – and some are significantly lower than last year. We are again offering a few inexpensive basic feeders: a platform feeder, a hopper feeder, a thistle sock, and a suet basket. You can see more detailed images of these on our website (www.mountaineeraudubon.org). We hope you will consider these items. Let us know how you like them, and what we might change for next year. We want to hear from you!

The deadline for ordering seed this year is Saturday, September 13, 2014. Mail your completed order form and a check for full payment (made out to Mountaineer Audubon) to: Susan Olcott, 305 Paul Davis Rd, Independence WV 26374. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Sue at (304)288-2999, or email at solcott@frontiernet.net.

Seed pickup will be on Sunday, October 19, 2014 at the following locations. Remember to indicate which location you want to use on your order form.

Morgantown: 11am – 3pm - Southern States (BFS) in Sabraton on Earl Core Rd near I-68
 Hopwood, PA: 4:30pm - 5:30pm – Adrian's Market on Old Rt 40
 Clarksburg: 1pm - 3pm – Meadowbrook Mall parking lot next to Outback Steakhouse



Platform Feeder



Hopper Feeder



Thistle Sock



Suet Basket

ORDER FORM

Mountaineer Audubon Bird Seed Sale 2014

Last Date to order is: 13 Sept 2014
 Orders postmarked after 9/9/2013 will be returned

Customer contact information (all fields required)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zipcode _____

Phone number _____

Email _____

Pick up Location (check one): Morgantown Clarksburg Hopwood

FREE Delivery (only orders over \$200)

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
Bird Seed Products			
Mountaineer Audubon Custom Mix —45% black oil sunflower, 4% striped sunflower, 33% cracked corn, 17% safflower, 1% peanuts			
20 lbs		\$14.00	
40 lbs		\$26.00	
Regional Mix —33% black oil sunflower, 5% striped sunflower, 47% white proso millet, 12% wheat, 2% canary seed, 1% peanuts (no corn)			
20 lbs		\$17.00	
40 lbs		\$31.00	
Black Oil Sunflower			
20 lbs		\$12.00	
50 lbs		\$28.00	
Chickadee Select —black oil sunflower, peanut pieces, mixed nuts, sunflower kernels, striped sunflower			
8 lbs		\$11.00	
20 lbs		\$28.00	
Safflower —20 lbs		\$24.00	
Nyger —20 lbs		\$21.00	
Whole peanuts in the shell —25 lbs		\$30.00	
Whole corn on the cob			
6.5 lbs		\$5.00	
20 lbs		\$13.00	
Cracked corn			
10 lbs medium		\$6.00	
20 lbs medium		\$10.00	
Suet Products			
Regular —beef suet, cracked corn, white proso millet, peanut pieces—case of 12		\$12.00	
Peanut —beef suet cracked corn, peanut pieces—case of 12		\$17.00	
Specialty and Gift Items			
Fruit, Berry, and Nut Bell —black oil and striped sunflower, white proso millet, peanut pieces, sunflower kernels in a bell shape with a hanger		\$3.00	
Birdie Wreath —black oil sunflower, peanut pieces, safflower, white proso millet in a wreath shape with a raffia bow		\$12.00	
Feeders (NEW!)			
Hopper Feeder —four ports accommodate several seed types including nyger, wide mouth for easy filling, removable top allows easy cleaning, holds 2 lbs of seed		\$12.00	
Platform Feeder —size 13 X 13 inches, made of recycled green plastic resin, metal screen bottom, can be hung from a tree or structure		\$26.00	
Suet Basket —coated wire easy fill basket holds one suet cake		\$3.00	
Thistle sock —perforated nylon sock allows finches to feed in any location on it—holds 13 oz of nyger seed		\$2.00	

Make your check payable to: Mountaineer Audubon. Thank you!

Mail this form and your check to: Susan Olcott, 305 Paul Davis Rd, Independence WV 26374

TOTAL

\$

JOIN MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON TODAY!

Chapter Code: C2ZY510Z

(Do not use this form if you are currently a member of National Audubon)

Join Mountaineer Audubon and receive all the benefits of Chapter membership. For \$5 more also receive a National Audubon membership and receive the AUDUBON magazine. Mark your choice below.

_____ \$15 – Mountaineer Audubon Membership Only

_____ \$20 – Mountaineer & National Audubon Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

Email: _____

Mountaineer Audubon does not share email addresses with anyone. Your email will be added to the Mountaineer Audubon listserv to receive Chapter updates on trips, bird sightings, etc. If you do not want to receive these emails, please check here: _____

**Clip and mail this form with your check made payable to
Mountaineer Audubon**

Mountaineer Audubon
P.O. Box 422
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Thank you for your support!

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www.mountaineeraudubon.org

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