



Mark Your Calendar:

Monday, January 8, 2007 7:30pm

Meeting & Program, "Behaving Beautifully" by Jeffrey Hall.

Saturday, January 20, 2007 8:30am

Field trip to Hamilton-Trenton Marsh. Lead by John Maret.

January Meeting:

Our next meeting will be on Monday January 8, 2007 7:30pm at the Audubon Senior Center, Oak and Oakland Avenues in Audubon, NJ. The meeting will feature a program entitled, "Behaving Beautifully" by Jeffrey Hall. Refreshment volunteers are Chris Herz and Shirley Shannon.

President's Message

Happy New Year! Best wishes to all for wonderful year in nature. Let's work to conserve and preserve our nature so it's around for many years to come!

Pat Brundage



*Seeing a Common Eider
will warm your heart on a cold day.
Photo by Chip Krilowicz.*

Trenton Marsh Field Trip

Saturday, January 20, 2007 8:30am, Lead by John Maret.

Directions to Hamilton-Trenton Marsh

- Take 295 North to exit 61A – **Arena Drive East**, and exit towards Whitehorse Avenue.
- **Merge** onto **Arena Drive/CR620S**
- Take slight **right** onto **Maddock Avenue**
- Turn **right** onto **South Broad Street/US206N**
- Turn **left** onto **Sewell Avenue** (As you travel north on South Broad Street, you'll see a tall church steeple ahead on the left. Sewell is the light just before the church.)

PLEASE NOTE – Sewell Avenue is crossed by several alternating one-way streets. The drivers on those streets do not have stop signs. Please take care before proceeding. Continue to the end of Sewell then left down the hill to the parking area.

Time for the trip is 8:30am. John's home number is 609-490-0670 and his cell number is 609-605-9230.

A Birder's Journal: Chincoteague, VA

Dates - Friday, November 10 to Sunday, November 12, 2006.

Participants - Diane Boyd and myself, Sandra Keller.

Motel - the Refuge Inn located ¼ mile or so west of the entrance to the refuge along Maddox Blvd. The place was on the pricey side, but quiet, clean, and they did provide coffee and a continental breakfast. Unfortunately, the breakfast didn't start until 7:30AM. Diane and I came back from a few hours birding and would eat. Bird species seen - 99 including our targets of Sedge Wren and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Mammal species seen - 7 with Sika Elk and the Delmarva Fox Squirrel as highlights.

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Please send news items to Janet Goehner-Jacobs at awspublicity@aol.com

<http://www.audubonwildlifesociety.org>

This trip was actually my second this year to Chincoteague and Diane's first ever foray to the place. It's really rather close to South Jersey being only a short 4 ½ hour drive away making it a great weekend getaway destination. My last trip was back in early April. Diane and I hit a lot of the same areas, and as expected with the change in season, had different birds and even different habitat. For example, the Snow Goose Pool was basically dry last trip.

Diane and I left the South Jersey area - my house in Barrington - at 9:00AM. We couldn't leave any earlier because of my work. We decided to hit some Delaware birding spots very quickly for a break in the drive more than anything. Cartanza Rd. off of Rt. 9 was slow. The fields still had crops on them making it difficult to spot stuff on the ground. Two NORTHERN HARRIERS play fighting, 5 HORNED LARKS, and 2 SAVANAH SPARROWS perched atop soybean stalks were our highlights.

Next up, Port Mahone Rd. for any staging waterfowl. Not too much, but close RUDDY DUCKS were nice, hunting OSPREY, etc. We had wanted to spend time at Ted Harvey WMA since neither of us gets down this far often. It was closed for hunting! Well, a short lunch break did produce a PRAIRIE WARBLER - which I would consider late for Cape May, so probably late for this area of DE as well. Next up, Deal WMA near Princess Anne, MD. The write-up in the book "Finding Birds in the National Capital Area" by Claudia Wilds suggested we might have some sought after birds here. For example, *"Deal Island is at its best at the end of the day, when it is alive with marsh birds."*

Many species are quite common here like AMERICAN BITTERN, SEDGE WREN, and SHORT-EARED OWL. All of which we had. After a few hours birding here, we continued on to the Refuge Inn - about an hour further South. If anyone happens to be around Deal Island, please stop and get us a picture of the little church and the above ground graveyard. We were both intrigued with the issues of living in this marshy area. Most of the houses we passed were on tiny elevated sections of the slightly flooded lands. Hence the above ground graves I presume! Start digging a hole and it's probably full of water before you can do anything with it.....

On Saturday our birding was strictly in Chincoteague NWR. The Woodland Trail had all the Passerines we

could expect. Not too many numbers wise though because South winds the past few days had migration at a standstill. I had heard from other birders down here that the big HERMIT THRUSH movement in early Nov. in Cape May was also experienced here. One couple suggested over 1000 on the island that first day. Maybe in a year or two I can make migration down here. Kiptopeke State Park - another 40 miles or so south on 13 - is an organized hawk count site and impressive. I was there years ago on NW winds but haven't made it back since. Anyway, we had two flocks of BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES along this trail. We just listened for their distinctive nasal calls and then patiently scanned the Loblolly Pine Trees for them feeding. We also kept watch for them flying in between trees. That small nuthatch flight look is distinctive. These birds move around quite frequently in between feeding spots, but once in a feeding tree, they can be surprisingly difficult to spot.

The Woodland Trail was our best for looks at the Delmarva Fox Squirrel. Some close enough for small scenery camera shots - if either of us had thought to bring it along the 1½ mile loop hike. And, yes, the Pony Overlook did have ponies! We had nice looks at them feeding in the marshes here. Back to the Refuge Inn for brunch. Back out for some water birding. GANNETS heading south off the ocean. BROWN PELICANS flew right over us. One BLACK SCOTER in one of the impoundments - I believe unusual. MALLARD, BLACK, PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and RUDDY DUCKS were by far the most numerous waterfowl species. Also around were 7 MARBLED GODWITS, and a lone SNOW BUNTING.

Picture taking opportunities abound in the refuge. The birds were fairly close all day long for us. I would have loved a Brown-headed Nuthatch shot, but I never took my scope along on our hikes. The Nuthatches actually didn't move much when feeding (one of the reasons so hard to locate) so a shot through a scope would have been quite feasible.

We took a cultural side trip and toured a decoy museum in mid afternoon while waiting for the Wildlife Drive around the Snow Goose Pool to open at 3:00PM. Quite convenient being right across the street from the Refuge Inn - that's also another way of saying I forget the name of the place! Anyway, after picking up a decoy weighing 15 pounds or so, I knew more was involved than just attracting the ducks to a hunter! Turns out the heavy decoys were

used to weigh down those lightweight boats the early duck hunters used. Diane and I both thoroughly enjoyed that place and would highly recommend a visit.

The Snow Goose Pool is aptly named! We enjoyed the sight and sound of the SNOW GEESE flying into roost. The dabbling ducks here were like we had in the morning. Our looks at the Sika Elk were probably the best along this loop road. The TUNDRA SWANS calling could be heard around the loop drive. We had a GREAT HORNED OWL calling briefly, but not much else for our night birding. The winds had kicked up so much by then with the coming cold front that it was hard to hear. Dinner this night was takeout at Maria's Family Restaurant on Maddox Blvd. Not gourmet, but quite good and filling! Both Diane and I needed bed early.

Sunday was cloudy, but no rain yet. The wind was still strong though. We decided to walk a few trails to stay out of the wind if possible and then head home. The Lighthouse Trail was short and non-birdy, but the lighthouse history was nice! A short trail near the headquarters yielded yet more BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES. But my favorite trail was the Marsh Trail - accessed from the parking lot for the Wildlife Loop Trail. Three more SEDGE WRENS in the tall, wet grassy areas were nice. We thoroughly worked a mixed feeding flock of Sparrows and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS for anything out of the ordinary. No luck with that. Almost back to the parking lot we came across a small mixed flock of CAROLINA CHICKADEES, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, TUFTED TITMICE, and maybe our surprise of the trip - 2 BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES feeding on Sweet Gum seed balls. I have never had this species anywhere but in Loblolly Pines before. We both felt this trail has good night birding possibilities depending on season with the wet grassy areas. Next trip.

We left for home around 11:00AM and it still wasn't raining yet. We got lucky! We made one stop on our way home as by then it had started to rain. Not heavy at first, but it got much worse. Shad Landing State Park off of Rt. 113 in Maryland is well worth a visit any time of year. We walked the Trail of Change for 30 minutes in the light rain and had still more BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES! I like the Bald Cypress Swamp along this trail and try to walk it in different seasons just for the botany possibilities.

Any questions, suggestions for future trip driving stops, comments, etc. should be sent to me at the address below. To ready the report online (with more photos!) visit:

<http://audubonwildlifesociety.org/Sandra%20Keller/chincoteague/chincoteague.htm>

Sandra Keller
sandrakeller@verizon.net



This Rufous Hummer is currently in Barrington, NJ and has been there since Nov. 18th and at least through Dec. 30th. The bird comes to this feeder and roosts in some honeysuckle and holly in between!

Photo by Sandra Keller.

The Winter Tree

A tree is a vessel for catching sunlight, a large, woody plant energized by a star. In fulfilling their purpose of performing photosynthesis, the leaves or needles of trees keep the sun from the ground, providing shade and cover. Once their light receptors are brown, shriveled and scattered by the wind, the deciduous trees become prominent metaphors for the bleakness of winter. They can look forlorn, battered by the cold winds. By revealing what in the warmer months they obscured, they also lose most of their mystery.

I don't remember ever climbing a winter tree. The allure of a high vantage point is lost for me without a leafy canopy to explore and disappear into. Vertigo becomes more likely in a denuded tree: leaves keep us from seeing how high we might get and how far down a slip could send us.

Still, the textured bark of the winter tree and its filigree of elaborately twisted and random branches against the sky make it a thing of beauty. Its solid, rooted trunk and the buds holding next year's leaves are symbols of steadfastness and hope. Now that the solstice has passed, the tree's skinny shadow shortens a little each day like the style of a sundial and points us towards Spring.

John Maret
January, 2007



*Purple Sandpiper is an uncommon visitor to the Delaware Bay, Reeds Beach.
Photo by Chip Krilowicz.*

The Christmas Count

The Princeton Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which covers a circle 15 miles across centered by the Princeton University Graduate School tower, was held on December 17, 2006 marking its 107th year. My group covers an area in Hopewell at the western extremity of the circle. We start each count around 5:30 with a drive down Aunt Molly Road. Shortly after we pass a paddock containing some captive Emus (so far, we've resisted counting them) we stop at the edge of a large plowed field and start calling for owls. This year there was an appropriate crescent moon visible to the south and we heard the calls of Great-horneds within seconds of leaving the car. Close listening determined that there were three of them. We got two more before dawn but, disappointingly, no Screech Owls. Our next stop is the Cedar Ridge area, a stream valley with overgrown fields surrounded by woods. This is the place where we log most of our foot miles and also the spot where I typically start shivering from the cold. Right on cue, just like 2005, two Pileated Woodpeckers rose noisily from the woods. We usually walk in ankle deep ice water and mud along the stream path but conditions were drier this time. We picked up most of the

reliables - Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush and Tree Sparrow among them – but no Purple Finch. Our lone gull of the day, a Ring-billed, flew over. By the time we started hiking up the ridge, the sun broke over the hill behind us and we began to warm up. No Wild Turkey, though. There's very little standing water in our territory but the milder-than-usual temperatures kept what little there is ice-free and we reaped a bonanza of 37 Ring-neckeds and one Pintail in the retention pond of a development. Both these birds were firsts for our section. The rest of the day passed slowly with a new species popping up every so often. There were many vultures, both Turkey and Black, a high count of Red-tailed Hawks, one Cooper's and a Northern Harrier (rare for us) but no Kestrel or Sharp-shinned. A walk along Stony Brook didn't produce the usual Kingfisher and Winter Wren but we did flush a couple of Wood Ducks and heard a squabble between two male Ring-necked Pheasants, a species that doesn't make it onto our list very often. The day closed with two late entries, a Brown Creeper and a Golden-crowned Kinglet. The relatively mild weather probably helped our group's tally which reached 53, an all-time high. Had we seen some of the birds we can usually depend on, we would have passed sixty species. Early total for the entire count area is 92.

John Maret
January, 2007

Other Clubs Events:

Burlington County Natural Sciences Club, BCNSC presents, "Bears of Alaska", Wednesday Jan. 10, 2007 by Barbara Solem and Gordon Stull. BCNSC meets the second Wednesday of the month, September through May at 7:45pm in Lumberton Leas Meeting Room, Lumberton, NJ. For more information on BCNSC go visit: <http://oldsquaw.tripod.com/index.html>