



Black Brant, pictured above, is an uncommon visitor to New Jersey. It is a subspecies of Brant and was photographed in South Amboy on March 22.

-Photo by Chip Krilowicz

May Meeting

On Monday, May 8, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. Audubon Wildlife Society will hold its final monthly meeting of the season at the Audubon Senior Center, Oak Street and Oakland Ave. Refreshment volunteers are: Eileen Reed and Pat Brundage. This month's program will feature a presentation by AWS club member, Lloyd Shaw, on "Birding in NJ".

Officer Nominees for 2006-2007

Following is the slate of nominees for 2006-07:

President--Pat Brundage
First VP---Eileen Reed
Second VP--Joan Ziegler
Rec. Secy.--Jean Gutsmuth
Corr. Secy.--Janet Goehner-Jacobs
Treas.-----Laura Mitchell
Trustee (2009)--Robert Metrione

Additional nominations may be made at any time; up to the election on May 8th.

President's Message

Thank you to all who have served as volunteer, officer and trustee this year for our club. In particular, I'd like to thank Pat Winter who volunteered this year to lead the refreshments charge, making sure that we have had food and drinks provided during our

meetings. Merilee Heffron has volunteered to lead that charge for the upcoming year.

At our last meeting, Don Kirchoffer, Conservation Chair, challenged the club to take a stand with conservation and preservation issues. There are many issues that have a direct effect on wildlife and the environment in areas local, regionally and statewide. By taking a stand on these issues and thus a voice, we are more apt to have an effect on issues. I challenge each member to think about this and write/email to anyone of your officers to bring issues and stances on conservation issues of concern to you. At our summer board meeting, I expect to discuss this at great length and hope to come up with a platform on how to promote our club's positions. Other clubs such as the Delaware Riverkeeper and Sierra Club are committed to their issues. We have a great resource in Don and we appreciate the affiliations to New Jersey Conservation Foundation and other organizations that he has. Let's accept the challenge and be heard.

Please come to the meeting to see Maggi Downham accept our 'Paul S. Battersby Award' for 2006. Maggi Downham was nominated by Janet Goehner-Jacobs (awarded previously) who knows first hand the contribution that Maggi has provided to the Saddlers Woods Conservation Association. She helped save the woods in Haddon Township, N.J. from athletic fields development. Goehner-Jacobs said, "since its preservation, she has continued to work vigorously to ensure that Saddler's Woods remains a living legacy for future generations". We thank her, congratulate her and welcome her to this list of people who have accepted this clubs most prestigious award.

-Pat Brundage

Correction:

Please note that the article, "Birding is like a box of chocolates..." which appeared in the April edition was authored by Lloyd Shaw.

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

<http://www.audubonwildlifesociety.org>

Garden tour Saturday May 20

For our garden tour we are collectively visiting each of the five gardens included on the tour so the presenters can also visit them. Car pooling is encouraged, if you need a ride contact Joan Ziegler (856) 428-1914. Donations are appreciated.

Stop #1 Kathy Kellagher 206 2nd St. Riverton

We will first meet at 9:00am at Kathy Kellagher's house. Directions: Take route 130 North to the Riverton – Moorestown jug handle. Take the jug handle toward Riverton and cross route 130. Make a right on Riverton Road and go through two traffic lights. Cross the railroad tracks. Continue on Riverton Road until you get to 2nd Street, turn left. Continue two and a half blocks to number 206.

Stop #2 Betsey Schnorr 435 E. Main St. Moorestown

Go back on to Riverton Road and continue into Moorestown (where Riverton Road becomes Chester Avenue). Continue on Chester Avenue until it ends at Main Street and make a left. Go past the Lutheran home, continue two blocks until you come to N. Stanwick Street. Betsey's home is the fifth home on the left past N. Stanwick. She will have a marker outside.

Stop #3 Ardis and Bill Kuehne 209 Plymouth Place Merchantville

Turn back on Main Street in Moorestown and go through the shopping area. Continue on Main Street. It will become Maple Avenue in Maple Shade. Cross over Haddonfield Road and continue on Maple Avenue until you come to Cove and Church Roads. Go left on Church Road. Make the first right off of Cove Road which is Plymouth Place. Ardis' home is on the left side and it is a two story white house with pillars. Their garden is a national wildlife federation habitat in memory of their son, Daniel.

Stop #4 Merilee and Joe Heffron 226 E. Madison Ave. Collingswood

Go back on Church Road to Haddonfield Road where you make a right. Continue on Haddonfield Road to Route 70 where you make a right. Continue on 70 until the second Cuthbert Road exit (Collingswood) Turn there. Continue on Cuthbert until you reach Haddon Avenue where you make a right. Continue on Haddon Avenue, go through the shopping area. Madison is the third street after Sun bank. Turn right

on Madison. Their house is in the third block down Madison on the right. They have a double lot.

Stop #5 Chris Herz 132 Carlisle Road Audubon

Go back to Haddon Avenue where you turn left. Continue on Haddon Avenue to Cuthbert Road where you make a right. Go past the Westmont shopping plaza and continue until you come to Rite Aid which is on the right hand side. Make a left turn there onto Hopkins Road. Go past Paul VI High School and Bruno's restaurant. About 3 or 4 blocks beyond the restaurant is Carlisle Road where you turn right. Chris' home is on the second block on the left. (Double lot).

Field Trip Report Trenton Marsh Saturday, April 22, 2006

Our club members are more tolerant of cold (remember January, 04?) than rain. The day of the trip, done jointly with the Washington Crossing club and Friends of the Marsh, was cool and wet and pretty much a wash-out. Perhaps ten people showed with Pat Brundage and the writer being the only representatives of AWS. In the 45 minutes or so before we all beat a retreat, a Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Common Snipe were seen or heard. Nesting water birds consisted of Mute Swan (two nests) and Canada Goose; a pair of the latter were herding 5 goslings along the edge of Spring Lake while others sat on eggs. The weather was perfect for mushrooms and a highlight was the discovery of some morels (*Morchella esculenta*). Mary Lek, who's done an extensive and ongoing survey of plant species in the Marsh, hadn't found this fungus before. They appeared on a dinner plate that night.

-John Maret

Fieldtrip Report: Brigantine Wildlife Refuge Saturday April 29.

Only a few were able to make the field trip to Brigantine Wildlife Refuge, but we enjoyed a bright, but windy day there. Some enjoyed the Willets and Osprey (three on nests), while I liked seeing two Rails (Clapper) swimming across a 30 foot wide stream and then disappearing into the weeds. Other highlights were a Royal Tern, Black Bellied Plovers and a Rufous Sided Towhee that visited us while we were eating lunch. Total species for the day was 45.

-Bob Duke

Rancocas Woods Checklist Update – March

I was still working on adding waterfowl to the checklist in March. GREEN-WINGED TEAL put in another appearance for the month, as did COMMON MERGANSER, but Red-breasted Merganser and Northern Shoveler are still missing from the checklist for any month! That surprises me. I will keep trying for them in April. SNIPE are fairly regular around the wet grassy areas and the exposed grassy tidal areas at low tide. March is a good time to look for the bigger stick nests and will keep an eye on them through April since nothing is in them now.

My biggest treat this month was the overall increase in singing. Every time I went out, I would notice a new bird species singing! Toward the end of the month when the resident WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and returning PINE WARBLERS started singing, I was hearing upwards of 20 species in full song!

TOWHEES are definitely wintering more in the area. They weren't on the checklist for March, but I found many on my journeys up there. Another surprising miss for the month was Catbird. They can be found in Jan. and February, but not March! Maybe those that decided to winter finally succumb to the elements, lack of food, who knows?

GREAT HORNED OWLS are feeding their growing chicks this month. Come April, they will be much more visible as the young are "branching" as it is called. Another treat for me has been watching the flora start to bloom with Red Maple trees and Skunk Cabbage being the main ones this month. Spring Azures and Mourning Cloak butterflies were flying on those really warm March days. April will see me exploring some new areas up here and I look forward to sharing my results! So far, I have just been walking the Rancocas Ave. area, the nature center trails, and the area behind the school.

- Sandra Keller

Rancocas Woods Checklist Update – April

Well, I had high hopes for really updating the checklist during April, but the weather fronts just didn't cooperate and I had other commitments during the last half of the month that really took up my time. Waterfowl such as GREEN-WINGED TEAL and COMMON MERGANSER should have been around in April, but I had no success in tracking them down. Perhaps they leave the area to go to a staging area and then migrate north later in the month. That would explain their absence. I picked up BLACK VULTURE

for this month and RED-SHOULDERED HAWK. I am trying to confirm the RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS breeding here. This species is endangered in NJ. I had wanted to get here a couple times the last 5 days of the month or so to see if the usual May migrant warblers could be found now. They aren't on the checklist for April. Unfortunately I could not make it here in the morning - the key time for warblers. Spring wildflowers such as Mayapple and Spring Beauty were blooming and showy! I look forward to trying to confirm a couple species nesting in the area - MARSH WREN and HOODED WARBLER. I welcome questions and comments from those interested in this area or about the process of creating a checklist. Until next month, hope everyone is enjoying spring!

- Sandra Keller
sandrakeller@verizon.net



Spring Beauty

The Cat Celebrates Spring

During the winter, as I looked out my kitchen window shortly after each dawn, I would usually see a large, gray tom-cat, domicile unknown, plodding across the road. He walked the same route every morning on his way to a wooded gully where he no doubt found many things of great interest to cats. His one pause on this resolute walk was to raise his tail and spray a small, undeserving maple tree. On the last two mornings of March, when the temperature was headed into the 60s and a few Robins were singing, different synapses began to fire in this feline's brain. From six yards he would suddenly break into a headlong charge at the maple tree, scaling its trunk to about five feet where he clung, all claws dug in, ears back, thick tail lashing from side to side. After holding this pose a moment, he'd slide back a cat-length or so and drop to the ground. He didn't spray and headed for the gully at a trot.

-John Maret
May, 2006



Woodcock

Spring is a Timberdoodle

When I was about 12 years old I did some research and read that the male Woodcock starts his courting ritual when the light fades to a certain candlepower. I had only the vaguest idea what candlepower was and even less as to how it might be measured but by the time I turned to the book I had had plenty of experience “on the ground” and could have brought the male bird to center stage right on cue.

Few things have amazed or enchanted me as much as my initial encounter with a Woodcock, also called “timberdoodle” for its erratic flight pattern through the woods. On the first mild evening of a new year, I was standing at the edge of a large, overgrown field when I heard a noise unlike anything I’d experienced before, a strange chirping and whistling that seemed to come from the rubbing together of molecules or the descent of a flying saucer. It completely infused the air, coming at me from several directions at once as its source approached the ground.

I don’t remember if I actually saw a Woodcock that first evening nor how I discovered that the most mysterious sound I had yet heard in Nature was produced by a big, dumpy sandpiper. But once I knew, I became determined to learn more about its exotic mating ritual. I was young enough to be convinced it was possible, with practice, to move along the surface of the earth without making a sound – stalking was one of the high arts to me then. On many soft evenings of an unfolding Spring I would wait until the monotone “peenting” stopped and then set out across the field while the Woodcock was in the air, stopping behind a bayberry bush or large clump of grass and freezing there when the bird came to earth. While in flight the male was probably oblivious to all activity on the ground but I was convinced it was my stealth that enabled me to

advance right up to his staging area. I could rarely catch sight of one in the grass (the candlepower was too low) but I could see it take off, flying almost straight up and out of sight with a whirring of wings. Its strange wind-produced twittering would then begin as it tumbled to earth and I would usually pick it up in the dimming sky just before it leveled out and passed like a flying paperweight over my head. There’s no doubt that the birds occasionally spotted me also because there would sometimes be silence on the lake for awhile before the “peenting” would begin again at a distance.

I spent many a glorious, early spring evening crouched in that field becoming an expert on the strange flight of the Woodcock. Ironically, though, I couldn’t have described his plumage. The birds were often very close to me but never materialized except as a vague movement in the grass or a black silhouette against the sky. I guess that’s why the wily Woodcock was so particular about candlepower.

-John Maret
May, 2006

Other Club Events:

Program: Burlington County Natural Sciences Club, BCNSC presents, “Natural History of an Urban Marsh” by Charles and Mary Lek on May 10, 2006. BCNSC meets the second Wednesday of the month, September through May at 7:45pm in Medford Twp. Safety Building, Court Room Union and Jones Sts. (off Rt. 70) Medford, NJ. For more information on BCNSC go visit:

<http://oldsquaw.tripod.com/index.html>

Fundraiser: Our friends at Camden Children's Garden will conduct a 1st Annual Garden Party Fund raiser at 3 Riverside Drive, Camden, NJ on June 10, 2006 from 6-10PM. For information, an invitation or to place an ad, call Tracy Romchik @856-365-8733 or email ttomchik@camdenchildrensgarden.org.

Nature Programs On TV:

Nature: Crime Scene Creatures

Airs on WHYY May 7th at 8:00pm. Meet a host of scientists and law enforcement agents who are enlisting crime-solving recruits from the natural world. Watch remarkable real-life case studies reconstructed to reveal the elegant detective work that animals and plants carry out. To view a preview go to: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/preview.html>

NATURE airs in most markets on Sunday nights at 8:00 p.m. Please check local listings.