



### **April Meeting**

On Monday, April 10, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. Audubon Wildlife Society will hold its monthly meeting at the Audubon Senior Center, Oak Street and Oakland Ave. Refreshment volunteers are: Robert Lambert and Sally Duncan.

This month's program will feature a presentation by AWS club member, Robert Robertson, on NJ Seashells and their natural history.



### **Officer Nominations 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.

ATTENTION: Pat Winter is resigning as the refreshment chair; we need someone (or sometwo) to carry on this enjoyable part of our monthly meeting. Please call Pat Brundage at 858-0431 or Jean Gutsmuth at 546-9170 to volunteer.



*Brewer's Blackbird, Salem County  
-photo by Chip Krilowicz*

### **Birding is like a box of chocolates... You never know what you're gonna get....**

Early in February I thought I'd go to Money Island Road in Salem County and hopefully see or hear a sedge wren that had been reported near the platform at the end of the road. It's a beautiful area, if you've never been there it's a must stop in Salem county. There is a nice trail and two observation platforms overlooking the bayshore. There have been several reports of sedge wrens along the Delaware bayshore this year. Range maps show that sedge wrens' winter range extends North along the Atlantic coast into Southern N.J. I imagine, like many species, their presence in N.J. is dependant on several factors; breeding success, weather, availability of food and suitable habitat etc. Whatever the reasons, this seems to be a good year for wintering sedge wrens along the Delaware bayshore. It's a bird I've only seen or heard once and previous visits to Salem and Cumberland counties this winter had been unsuccessful. I arrived at about 6:30 and enjoyed many pleasant sights and sounds as the marsh inhabitants awoke, but no sedge wren. Oh well. I enjoyed a nice walk around the nature trail and down the road, then decided it was time to explore some other areas. I thought Supawna National Wildlife Refuge might provide me with another chance at a sedge wren and give me the opportunity to explore the refuge. I don't know it as well as I'd like, much of

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Please send news items to Janet Goehner-Jacobs at [awspublicity@aol.com](mailto:awspublicity@aol.com)

<http://www.audubonwildlifesociety.org>

it is inaccessible but there are still a few places open to explore.

I looked in my DeLormes for the best route. It's a great tool for birders; everyone should have two, one to keep in the car and one for home. You'd be surprised by what you can discover by studying good maps.

I chose my route and off I went. A lot of birding in Salem county is done by car as many of you know, stopping to scan any flock of geese or gulls or blackbirds. The rarities are usually found in the large flocks of more common species and no large congregation of any species should ever be overlooked. I started doing an inventory of what I wanted to find... ross's goose, cackling goose, lapland longspur, turkey, kestral.. ( Can you imagine having trouble finding a kestral in Salem County?) All birds I needed for my year list. I'm a big lister, life lists, state lists, year lists, month lists, day lists... They not only help me know how many and what. But where and when. And knowing where and when will always get your more. After mentally checking the year list I recalled my life brewer's blackbird seen in early Feb. 2004 in a spot I just drove past. It was not a good look, the bird was at least 50 yards away, it was a male, only one, but even at that distance, in a good scope, certain things were obvious. Light eye, small pointy bill, short tail. It didn't stay long. It flew away with the flock about 5 seconds after I got the scope on it, but I know what it was, someone else had reported it earlier. It was a life bird but definitely not a life look.

I turned off of Rt. 49 heading to Supawna N. W. R. There were large fields on either side, one with and one without cows and two large flocks of blackbirds in each field. They were almost the first birds I put my bins on. Cowbird...cowbird...redwing... redwing... WOW! Not a cowbird (too big)... Not a redwing (no yellow eye) ... not a grackle (bill too small, tail too short)... it's out in an open field with other blackbirds. No barring or facial pattern... It's not a rusty... IT'S A BREWERS BLACKBIRD! And it's only 30 feet away and its staying there and there are others!!!

Seconds later they were in the scope and there were at least 6 birds - 4 males, 2 females. Probably more, as they moved and mixed. I could only ever see six at one time. I was able to observe them well for minutes at a time at close range for over 45 minutes. It was wonderful having such great looks at such rare birds... at least for N.J. Actually brewers blackbirds

aren't rare at all within their range. And in recent years they have been expanding their range, both winter and breeding. I wouldn't be surprised to see more brewers showing up more often. They are also probably under reported because they go undetected. They look so similar to so many other common, more abundant species and blackbird flocks are very dynamic and mobile.

I won't go into the "technical" aspects of what the birds looked like, that's what field guides are for. Hopefully you'll open yours and have a look, maybe even open two or three and really study that small pointy bill and short tail, that grayish brown of the female. It's all there. Have a look and go find them for yourself. They could be out there in any flock of redwings or cowbirds or grackles or starlings. The best part about this sighting was the close, long looks. "Life Looks" as they say. Another nice thing was that I found them myself. I like to say "good birders find rare birds, they don't chase them" But I still chase others! This time the saying came true. Studying my field guide beforehand and knowing where, when and how, helped with my find. I love birding... you never know what you're going to get. See you on the birding trail!

#### **Salem County Field Trip Report, March 11, 2006.**

Sunshine and a prediction for a warm spring day brought 19 of us together for a day of birding in Salem County. The birds cooperated along with the weather and we totaled 47 species. After departing Richman's, our group drove a short distance to Featherbed Lane where we had elusive White-crowned Sparrows including adults along with immature. Difficult to see at first, we finally had them sitting out where we were able to get them in our scopes. A little further down the road, we heard a Meadowlark singing and it was spotted perched and singing in a distant tree. With a look in a scope, all were able to see this wonderful harbinger of spring. Our next stop was to the eagle's nest where we did not see anyone on the nest....at first. As we were packing up to leave, one participant alerted us to something moving in the back of the nest. Some of us were at the wrong angle and sure enough, with perseverance we observed the adult's white head and bright yellow bill. Mannington Marsh was our next stop and here we observed Coots, Pied-billed Grebe, Ruddy Ducks, Swans, both Tundra and Mute. Numerous Wood Frogs were calling and also Leopard and Grey Tree. We spotted numerous turtles sunning themselves on rocks. Turtle species included Painted, Red-bellied, and a Snapper. Looking from

the observation platform also at Mannington, we had a number of duck species including Pintail, A. Wigeon, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, and N. Shoveler. Returning to Richman's, we had a picnic lunch and returned to Mannington after lunch. The lighting was perfect and we added a single Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, and Great Egret to our list.

Some diehards in the group stayed with us as we made two stops on the way home. One stop at Pedricktown Marsh where we picked up Ring-necked Ducks and the second at Floodgates where we saw Common Mergansers in the river and many Great Blue Herons in the nearby rookery. A single Spring Peeper was heard calling here.

Everyone in the group kindly car-pooled to cut down on the number of cars, but with the traffic we did lose some in our group. Luckily, they caught up with us again! Thank you to everyone in the group who helped spot and id all the birds.

Jean Gutsmuth and Chris Herz

#### **Saturday April 22<sup>nd</sup> to Trenton Marsh.**

Joint trip with Washington Crossing. Meet at 8:30am.

**Directions :** Take 295 North to 195 E. Exit at 206N. Continue to the traffic circle . Go ¾ way round to 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. Contact John Maret at: 609-605-9230

#### **Saturday April 29, field trip to Brigantine Wildlife Refuge. Lead by Bob Duke.**

The field trip to Brigantine Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, April 29, 2006, will meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM. We will walk the path at the parking lot in search of early migrants until about 9 AM. We will then do the "Auto-Tour". Bring bugspray, binoculars, and lunch. **Directions:** Take White Horse Pike (US 30) to Rt 575 in Pomona. Turn **LEFT** onto Rt 575 and go a short distance to the first traffic light. Turn **RIGHT** onto **JIM LEEDS RD** and go a few miles and make a **LEFT** turn onto **GREAT CREEK RD.**

Continue straight through to the refuge.  
If you have any questions, call Bob Duke @ 848 7012.

#### **Camden Greenways Bike Tour**

**Sat. April 8<sup>th</sup> (8:30am- 10:30am)**

Meet at Cooper River Park Armitage Pavilion on South Park Drive next to Route 130 in Collingswood. Parking available. This is an 8 mile, slow paced bike ride on roads, sidewalks and trails. Good riders of all ages are welcomed. Stops planned at points of interest. Helmets required. Bring snack and water.

#### **Camden Greenways - Linking Parks with People.**

Camden Greenways Inc. (CGI) started operation in 1993 as the Camden Greenways Working Group (CGWG), bringing together three neighborhoods in Camden that shared concerns about open space, particularly the land along the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. The organization's work evolved into a comprehensive greenway plan for Camden, incorporated as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan in the summer of 1997. After unsuccessful attempts to have the organization staffed with a City employee, the group decided to incorporate as a non-profit. During 1999-2000, the group's members decided on a new structure, set membership guidelines, incorporated, and received tax-exempt status. The non-profit Board officially started operations in March of 2001.

Camden Greenways, Inc. (CGI) seeks to implement a comprehensive Greenways Plan, which will protect open space, improve water quality, and encourage economic development, while establishing a continuous 9.5-mile multi-purpose trail. The Greenways Plan is an ambitious, community-oriented program of open space planning and economic development for areas bordering the Cooper and Delaware Rivers, and Newton Creek, in Camden, New Jersey. Approximately 50,000 people will be served by the greenway. Most of the city's neighborhoods, including North Camden, Cramer Hill, Parkside, Morgan Village, and Fairview, are affected by the greenway. The greenway covers areas along the Cooper River, the back channel of the Delaware River, and Newton Creek.

The greenway system must be useable, continuous, secure, and interesting. To the extent that it is, the greenway will primarily benefit Camden residents, but will also benefit users from around the region. It will improve water quality in urban portions of Cooper

River and Newton Creek. It will stimulate development and enhance the value of land adjacent to the greenway, most importantly in Camden City. It will significantly improve the quality of life for Camden residents, providing them with increased access to the water with its many amenities and recreational opportunities. Other benefits include the following:

- The Phase-One greenways loop will protect Camden's natural resources, help to improve the quality of the Cooper River, and improve the aesthetics and quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods;
- Home buyers and business' alike prefer properties near natural, open space, and walking and biking paths. An increase in property values in areas surrounding the greenway is expected;
- Educational activities held along the greenway will be beneficial to schools in the area by enhancing their classroom activities through hands on environmental education.

Camden Greenways, Inc. has an ongoing commitment to the communities of Camden and its residents. We believe it is important for the sustainability of the City's last remaining natural areas to involve the community in the stewardship of the greenway. Camden Greenways, Inc. engages community residents in riverbank cleanups and educational walks. Many residents volunteer their time and effort to support the system. Our organization also offers seasonal biking and walking tours of portions of the greenway to increase awareness and membership of the group.

Camden Greenways, Inc. also has a diverse Board of Trustees consisting of Camden neighborhood representatives (all volunteers), City and County officials and representatives from various environmental groups. We offer leadership training sessions and workshops to our board members. In the future we would like to work with several Philadelphia region environmental organizations to increase environmental awareness throughout the City of Camden.

- Algiers Holmes, Co-President  
Camden Greenways, Inc.

For more information visit:

<http://www.camdengreenways.org>

### **Rancocas Woods Checklist Update – February**

Waterfowl – I was convinced that just spending time overlooking the marshes would get me the waterfowl species missing for February on the checklist so far. Common stuff like Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser is missing for February. Well, most waterfowl isn't really moving yet. March is the prime month. Green-winged Teal start to congregate toward the end of February and a dusk outing near the Rancocas Ave. environs was successful! Raptors proved difficult for the month, but Merlin was new. Passerines are basically set until April. If I had the month to do over again though, I would spend more time looking for owls – at least the first half of the month. March is upon us now and hopefully with the waterfowl moving, I can spot some missing species for the checklist. Maybe some early passerines, but still my focus will be on raptors and waterfowl.

- Sandra Keller



### **The Beaver Situation at Scotland Run Park, Gloucester County**

On Sat. February 8<sup>th</sup>, I was set up at the Raptor Festival in the Mauricetown Firehall for Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. Two gentlemen associated with Al & Sam's Canoe and Boat Rentals in Newfield mentioned that beavers recently set up a dam and lodge on Scotland Run where it spills into Wilson's lake at Scotland Run County Park. Both of these fellows were petitioning the park to have the beavers removed, as they had to portage their kayaks and canoes over the dam. I explained as much about beavers to them in the short time I had, and offered my assistance in dealing with the matter.

On Monday, Terri Straub, Scotland Run Park Recreation Supervisor, called me to get information about options on how to deal with the beaver problem. She indicated that she had been in contact with the NJDEP Fish and Wildlife office to discuss trapping and relocating the beavers to park owned

land in East Greenwich. I suggested that they leave the beavers be.

On Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, I went to Scotland Run and kayaked the stream to see firsthand what the beavers had done. They have built a small dam just upstream from Wilson Lake. It was a simple crossing; I put one foot on the dam, and left the other in the kayak, tipped the kayak forward and sat down; 10 seconds minimum to cross over. Just upstream from the dam, on the west stream bank, was a small beaver lodge with a food raft consisting primarily of alder and sweetpepper bush.

I continued to kayak to the northern limit of Scotland Run Park, turned around and kayaked back. I didn't even have to get out on the way back over the dam. The stream has several obstructions - fallen cedar trees - that previous boaters had trimmed back. These trees were not chewed by beavers, however, they could be the result of the beavers raising the water 8 – 10" behind the dam. They could have been uprooted by high winds. There was no other beaver activity except for the dam, lodge and localized cuttings.

### **About Beavers**

Beavers create and maintain wetlands that enhance our watersheds. They provide (for the cost of some trees and a little ground) soil erosion control and headwater protection; these beaver-made terrestrial kidneys filter out pesticides, fertilizers and settle out dissolved solids, improving water quality for everyone above and below the waterline. At Scotland Run Park, there are no nearby roadways, homes, businesses or buildings to flood or damage, and there is ample food. It is the *perfect* beaver habitat.

Beavers are colonial, and over thousands of years, have developed a very complex social structure. Beavers mate for life, and upon the death of a mate or kitten, they have been observed to experience a period of mourning or depression. It may take a long time for a beaver to find a new partner.

In South Jersey, beavers generally have their kittens in March. Before giving birth, the female will force the male out of the lodge to set up a bachelor pad nearby. She will give birth to the babies and care for them alone in the lodge for a month or so, with the male bringing her food. She will take short swims and grab a bite. The kittens are totally dependant upon their mother. Their coats are puffy with air and they cannot dive, so they are forced to stay in the

lodge until they are able to dive and swim. Trapping beavers can be fatal if done at the wrong time; taking the mother with kittens in the lodge is a death sentence for the babies. Even leaving a one year old behind could be dangerous for that individual beaver.

A beaver family, or colony, can consist of anywhere from 6 to 12 individuals depending upon environmental conditions. Beavers require a minimum of 3' of water to access food, shelter and protection. In three feet of water, a beaver pair may have only one or two kittens; in 6 feet of water, they may have four or five. So by this rule, humans can control the water level, and ultimately, control the beaver population. Inexpensive PVC pipes can be installed through the dam to maintain a minimum water level and minimum number of offspring.

In a beaver lodge, there is only one reproductive pair of beavers. They will have a litter of kittens, and one year later, will have another litter. The first litter (yearlings) helps raise the next litter like a built-nanny service. By the time the third litter is born, the two year olds are old enough to mate and have learned how to be respectable beavers. They will be forced out of the lodge by their parents to start their own colony somewhere else.

Since beavers leave their family in the third year, there are always young beavers looking for a homestead. Trapping beavers out of a prime habitat like Scotland Run will only result in a vacuum. A homeless beaver will come along in the spring and set up residence. Trapping creates an endless cycle.

Trapping to relocate beavers is not practical, especially in South Jersey, as there are beavers in just about all viable habitats. Relocating is just moving your problem into someone else's yard. Even if the County has other, less traveled water courses, to receive this family they will not be accepted by the beavers who live there now. Either the existing pair will be forced out, or, more likely, the relocated family will be run off.

If you introduce new beavers into a new watershed, even if no other beavers are there, you must be certain that there is ample food for them. Since beavers literally eat themselves out of house and home and then move on, how do you know that the habitat that you are choosing for the family has adequate food sources? You could be dumping them into an area that has been cleaned out by another

colony. Again, they will move on and become a problem for someone else.

NJ Department of Fish and Wildlife has to deal with quite a few serious wildlife problems all over New Jersey. With limited funding and staff, their involvement in a minor beaver problem like this would be an unnecessary drain on resources.

Most people, in fact, all the people whom I know to kayak or canoe are doing so in order to see things like beaver dams and lodges, and hopefully the beavers themselves. They also hope to see all the other creatures that rely on beaver habitat for food and cover. It makes absolutely no sense to eliminate a keystone species like the beaver from their rightful habitat just to accommodate a few boaters. The beavers are far more valuable where they are.

Please take a moment to draft a letter and send to the contacts below so we may preserve the beaver den.

-Sarah Summerville  
Director, Unexpected Wildlife Refuge

### **Contacts**

#### Rodney A. Groff, Director

6 Blackwood – Barnsboro Road  
Sewell, NJ 08080  
856.468.0100  
856.468.4497 fax

#### Frank DiMarco, Freeholder Liaison

1967 McKee Avenue  
Deptford, NJ 08096

#### Gloucester County Parks and Recreation Advisory Council

6 Blackwood – Barnsboro Road  
Sewell, NJ 08080

### **A Last Look at Winter**

I'm not one of those people who prays for Spring and warm weather. On March 6, a Sunday, I peeped through my blinds around 6:00 a.m. to see light in the east and Venus clear and very bright in the southeastern sky. That was all it took. An hour later I had my boots on and was out the door to take advantage of my last opportunity for a walk in the Winter woods. You may remember that March came in like a lion, albeit a small one, and brought the return of cold weather. When I came to my

destination, I stepped from my car onto frozen ground; it was going to be a perfect day.

Nearby, some familiar tokens of Winter, Dark-eyed Juncos or "Snowbirds", scabbled in the grass and as I started my hike a Red-breasted Nuthatch jeered at me from a nearby pine. From the tangle of bushes and tall grass to my left I was able to call up more Northerners. At the sound of my scolding buzz, both White-throated and American Tree Sparrows, two of the more attractive examples of their family, popped into view. The White-throats seemed agitated, the Trees, a special favorite of mine, sleepy. Against the cloudless blue sky, a hardy resident, a Red-tailed Hawk, hung on the northwest breeze. A strung-out flock of blackbirds, looking like a message in Morse code, flew southward, calling, while another flew north.

I entered the woods where the trees were large. There were tulips, oaks, sweet gum and maples. Here and there the reddish burrs of the sweet gum littered the leaves. I glassed the upper branches and the dark recesses between limbs and trunks but found little going on except a few Tufted Titmice practicing their Spring whistles. I rarely find anything just scanning the woods with my binoculars but I do it anyway because I like the patterns of black branches against the sky and the textures of bark.

I walked downhill into a creek bottom that looked like prime territory for a Barred Owl and spent the next hour walking slowly through it. There was a broad deer trail conveniently paralleling the creek. Many animals had walked the wet ground in warmer weather and their hooves had pulled the mud up like taffy. Now the mud was frozen and full of frost crystals and I felt like I was stepping on champagne glasses. I looked carefully into every tangle of vines and bower of interlaced branches. There were a few large cavities that would have been just right for nesting. Hoping no fellow humans were around, I even practiced my Barred Owl call but to no avail. Bored, I backtracked to the creek's source, a small, winding lake. The high March sun was boring a golden hole in the water but through the dazzling glare I could see ducks against the far shore. Circling, I got close enough to identify them as Ringed-necks and spent several minutes watching them dive. The males were in their courting plumage and there was much showing off in addition to feeding. I counted 140 birds before moving on.

I walked to another large stand of tall hardwoods and as I approached, a Woodcock came zig-zagging towards me, wings whistling. Again, the ground was wet and there were some high-bush blueberries growing near the margin of the woods. Hanging upside down from a branch was a Chickadee, probably a Carolina. You can see this bird at any feeder but it looks its best in the winter woods foraging for food in every crevice, a little spark burning against the cold. Just below the tiny bird, picking up its color, was a small puddle covered with a thin sheet of grayish, opaque ice. Spring doesn't offer such pictures.

Walking deeper into the woods I came across another flock of American Tree Sparrows. This time a few were singing, a weak, pleasant warble previously unknown to me. Here and there the dark woods kept a memento of the season's last blizzard. Keeping my eyes on the ground as I prepared to jump a small stream I noticed pellets and whitewash under a twisted tree. The bird, a Great-horned, was actually roosting in a tall, sparsely-leaved holly a hundred feet off and when I jumped the stream it flushed, gliding away and disappearing into the upper canopy. I couldn't find it and decided to leave the woods in a direction that wouldn't disturb the bird again. I came out below the long, grassy dike that holds back an impounded lake. After examining the frothing outlet I turned in time to see a mature Bald Eagle just clearing the dike and flying fast. A second or two after, another one, presumably its mate, followed. There was now a stiff northwest wind blowing and the birds fought hard to gain altitude and make way against it. Their broad, dark bodies with their white heads and tails reminded me of the forest floor with its few patches of snow, making the mighty birds seem like manifestations of a fleeing season.

-John Maret  
April, 2006

#### **Other Club Events:**

**Program:** Burlington County Natural Sciences Club, BCNSC presents, "Rare Pinelands Plant Protection" by Donna McBride, Pinelands Commission on April 12, 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>



**Volunteer Opportunity:** Saddler's Woods Earth Day Activities. Saturday 4/22 9am – 3pm. Raindate, Sunday 4/23. Meet at the well pump buildings on MacArthur Boulevard, Haddon Township, NJ. Volunteers needed for stream bank restoration, plantings, litter clean up and invasive species removal. For more information contact Janet at 856 869 7372 or [janet@saddlerswoods.org](mailto:janet@saddlerswoods.org).



#### **Nature Programs On TV:**

##### **Nature: Murder in the Troop**

Airs on WHYI April 2 at 8:00pm. In a wildlife story with Shakespearean overtones, life becomes very dangerous for twin baboons in Zambia when their father is defeated as alpha male of the troop by the dominant ruler of a neighboring troop, throwing the social order into turmoil and unleashing potentially deadly intrigue. 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.