



# TERN OF EVENTS

PRESQUE ISLE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
DECEMBER 2014 ISSUE 14:09

*To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the enjoyment and benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity in northwestern Pennsylvania.*

## THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH



One benefit of writing the President's Perch for the Tern of Events is all that I learn while researching each topic. Last month my article was about the devastating impact that feral and roaming cats have on the bird and small mammal populations. I hope that you were able to pick up a copy of the pamphlet from the American Bird Conservancy about keeping cats indoors at our last Friday night program, not only for the sake of the birds but also for the safety of the cats. If not, contact me at [info@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:info@presqueisleaudubon.org) and I'll make sure we get one out to you. As I write this it is only 14 degrees outside and I can't imagine letting my cats outside. This month, as promised, I am going to try and relay some information about what may seem like a rather benign tradition: Balloon releases.

Balloon releases are meant to commemorate or celebrate. The symbolism is meant to be well, uplifting, and representative of the

outpouring of emotion someone, usually a group, is feeling. Some groups add messages to their balloons and use the release to spread the word and share their thoughts or beliefs: a purely innocent venture, never meant to cause harm. I, myself, recall being at a family reunion one year and we had helium balloons (why? I don't know). My cousins and I wrote down the name of the park we were at and the date of the release as well as my address (no email back in the day☺). (Cont. on Page 2)



## DECEMBER/JANUARY THINGS TO DO!

**December 20, Saturday** – Christmas Bird Count, Meet at the Ranger Station at 7:00AM (Page 6)

**January 6, Tuesday** – Festival of the Birds Committee Meeting at the TREC at 6:00PM

**January 20, Tuesday** – PIAS Board Meeting at 7:00PM in the Board Room at the TREC

## 2014-2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Retiring President	Janet Price

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The *Tern of Events* is published by the **Presque Isle Audubon Society**, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Pennsylvania serving northwestern Pennsylvania including Erie and Crawford counties.

**Address:** 301 Peninsula Dr., Suite 8  
Erie, PA 16505

**Website:** [www.presqueisleaudubon.org](http://www.presqueisleaudubon.org)

## THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH (Cont.)

About two weeks later I got a postcard stating that the balloon had been found. It had made it to somewhere in Ohio on the coast of Lake Erie as I recollect. My only interest was to see if someone would find the balloon and contact us to let us know how far it had travelled. I had no idea that through my curiosity I was, at least, causing pollution, and, at worst, causing the death of some wild animal!

If I only knew then what I know now. No bird groups are immune to the threat of balloons. There are several ways in which balloons threaten the lives of birds, one of which I really hadn't thought about. The first way in which birds can be harmed or killed by balloons is starvation. A bird might inadvertently eat a piece of the balloon which, because it is not digestible, causes a blockage in the bird's stomach, not allowing for passage or absorption of real food. Even sea going birds might spy a deflated balloon on the surface of the water and think that it is a jellyfish. If the piece of rubber or string is large enough it might even choke the bird. Secondly, balloons are often released with ribbon or string tying them together. These strings pose another threat in the form of tangling and/or strangulation.



**GUILLEMOT TANGLED IN A BALLOON STRING**  
(Cont. on Page 3)

## THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH (Cont.)

Local birder and friend, Shawn Collins, once saw a red-tailed hawk flying over the highway with a balloon attached to its leg. How effective a hunter do you think he was after that, if he even made it without getting hung up in a tree. Birds that get tangled in these strings can be tethered and unable to move. They will be unable to hunt but can easily be hunted. Also, birds might use the string for nesting material which can cause a hazard to hatchlings who might become entangled in the string and develop deformities, or worse.

One final way the balloon is harming birds that I am going to mention, and I really can't be sure how big a threat this is as relates specifically to balloons, is the loss of habitat, namely, rubber trees. The rubber tree does not have to be completely cut down to be harvested, but the continued and growing demand for balloons threatens to cause these trees to be denuded and or changed and less suitable as habitat for birds.

In addition to the harm they cause birds, balloons also are a serious threat to most other wildlife. Particularly at risk are sea turtles that feed on jellyfish, which, as mentioned above, balloons can resemble when floating in or on the water. Thankfully, through the work of conservation groups such as the National Audubon Society, people are becoming more aware of the threat of balloon releases to birds and other wildlife. Some states (NY, FL, TX), municipalities and entities (National Park Service, the White House, Walt Disney theme parks) have enacted laws or instituted rules to prohibit the release of balloons, but these are few and far between and questionably enforced. The balloon industry itself has answered by developing biodegradable balloons that will decay over time, however, this does nothing to protect a bird that ingests a released balloon or gets tangled up in a string.

As with roaming and feral cats, the answer is, we must educate people about the

harm these balloon releases cause wild animals. We should spread the word to teachers, event planners and other individuals who may consider balloon releases about the threats these events pose and encourage them to embrace alternatives instead. Last fall a church in neighboring Ohio planned a massive balloon release to spread their word. Members of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory in Oak Harbor found out about it and actually went and talked to the pastor about the dangers balloon releases posed. They were initially met with distrust and skepticism (including suggesting that the photos they brought of dead birds were fake) but after a friendly and persuasive social media campaign which included suggestions for many great alternatives to balloon releases, the church relented. Instead of a balloon release, they decided to take the balloons and their message to shut-ins in local hospitals. That, my friends, is the power of a grass roots campaign injected with a little internet savvy. If you find out about a planned release, let people know of the hazards of balloons releases and offer alternatives. If they don't believe you, suggest they visit the site, [BalloonsBlow.org](http://BalloonsBlow.org), a site dedicated to providing information to educate others of the dangerous effects of balloon releases on wildlife and the environment.

~Michele Rundquist Franz, PIAS President

### ERIE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE NEWS

The Friends group of the Erie National Wildlife Refuge in Guys Mills is excited to be selling their **first calendar**. Containing 12 beautiful full-color nature photographs from the talented participants in past Nature Photo Contests, the 2015 calendar pages contain plenty of space to record your special events. The cost is \$10.00 plus \$2.00 for shipping and handling. You can order a calendar from their website at [www.friendsofenwr.org](http://www.friendsofenwr.org). or send a check to:

Friends of ENWR  
c/o Erie National Wildlife Refuge,  
11296 Wood Duck Lane  
Guys Mills PA 16327.

## BIRD REPORT FOR DECEMBER

The following birds of note were reported from October 27, 2014 to November 17, 2014 from Presque Isle State Park unless noted otherwise.

**Common/King Eider** — 1; Nov. 2; Sunset Point (Waterbird count, WC); J.M.



**COMMON/KING EIDER**

**Red Phalarope**—1; Nov. 2; Sunset Point (WC); J.M.

**Short-eared Owl** –1 or 2; Oct. 28 & 30; Gull Point; A.V.Y., L.M. resp. 1; Nov. 9; Sunset Point (WC); J.M., S.S., R.D.



**SHORT-EARED OWL IN FLIGHT**

**Harlequin Duck**—1 pair; Nov. 15; Sunset Point (WC); A.T., J.M.



**HARLEQUIN DUCK**

**Red-necked Grebe**—1; Oct. 31; Sunset Point (WC); J.M. 1; Nov. 1; Sunset Point (WC); J.M. 1; Nov. 8; Sunset Point (WC); J.M.



**RED-NECKED GREBE**

**Little Gull**—1; Oct. 30; Sunset Point (WC); J.M. 1; Nov. 1; north pier; R.S.



**LITTLE GULL**

(Cont. on Page 5)

## BIRD REPORT (CONT.)

**Evening Grosbeak**—1; Nov. 15;  
Harborcreek; M.F.



**EVENING GROSBEAK**

**Snowy Owl**—1; Nov. 12; house top at the  
corner of W 20<sup>th</sup> and Cranberry Streets, Erie;  
fide B.G., Photo by J.M. 1; Nov. 15; Gull Point;  
L.S. (fide M.F.)



**SNOWY OWL**

**Contributors:** R.D.-Roger Donn, M.F.-Michele  
franz, B.G.-Brian Gula, J.M.-Jerry McWilliams,  
L.M.-Linda McWilliams, L.S.-Larry Slomski,  
R.S.-Randy Stringer, S.S.-Sam Stull, A.T.-Adam  
Troyer

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members and hope to  
see you at one of our Friday night  
membership meetings.

**Erie:** Pam Wassell, Robert Maxa, Helen Hovey

**Cambridge Sps:** Maryann Miller

**Meadville:** Kenneth Pinnow

**Warren:** Susan George

**Waterford:** Karen Zeitz

Is your membership up for renewal? The  
expiration date of your membership in one  
of the mailing label above your name for those  
of you who get the Tern of Events mailed to  
them. I will send out notices to those of you  
who are on our email subscription. To rejoin,  
just go to [presqueisleaudubon.org](http://presqueisleaudubon.org) and click  
on membership/support tab at the top. You  
can join online, or print out the application  
forms for National Audubon or Chapter only  
membership if you want to mail it in.

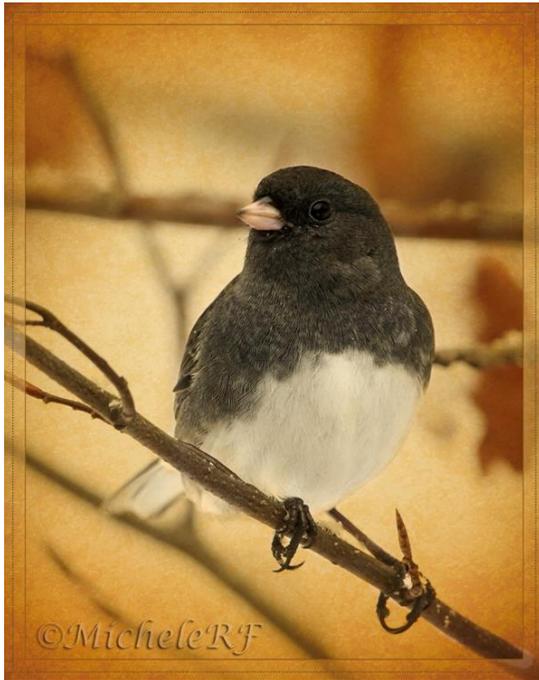
~ Ron Intrieri, Membership Chair  
[membership@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:membership@presqueisleaudubon.org)

## FUTURE OF ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY PROGRAM

I am not continuing the Adopt-a-Highway  
program, and would like to know if anyone  
else would care to take over this project. I did  
the highway cleanup twice a year, but it can  
be done more often if desired. PennDOT  
supplies all of the equipment such as gloves,  
vests, etc. I can help out in the beginning. If  
interested, e-mail me at

~Ron Intrieri, Adopt-a-Highway Chair  
[membership@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:membership@presqueisleaudubon.org)

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**  
Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>  
7:00 AM at the Ranger Station



**DARK-EYED JUNCO**

This year marks the 115<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christmas Bird Count, probably the original citizen science project. The PIAS group is responsible for one of over 2300 count circles that will hold local events sometime between December 14, 2014 and January 5, 2015 which is the official date span as determined by the National Audubon Society (NAS).

Our local event will take place on Saturday December 20<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested, from beginner to advanced birders, should meet at the Ranger Station at Presque Isle State Park between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. on that day. Please sign in when you arrive at the Ranger Station as we need this information for the NAS database. Once we've all gathered at the Ranger Station we will form groups that will count birds in assigned areas of the park and nearby.

Never participated in a count? Have no fear. We'll assign you to a group that best suits your interest and abilities. Some of the groups do A LOT of walking, while others do some birding by car, stepping out for short

walks as needed. At noon we will reconvene at the Ranger Station for lunch (bring your own) and discuss our initial tallies. We will also devise a game plan for counting areas we might have missed before lunch.

Finally, we will meet for dinner at 5:00 p.m. at Hoss's Steak and Seafood on 26<sup>th</sup> Street in Erie for final tallies and some tall tales of the birds we spotted! It is not mandatory that you stay for the entire event. Some people come in the morning and leave after lunch. If you come during lunch, please check in and make sure you sign the participant sheet.

We hope to see you and your binoculars on December 20<sup>th</sup>!! If you have any questions, please contact Michele Franz at [info@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:info@presqueisleaudubon.org).

**MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBER  
KEL MCDONALD, TREASURER**

Kel McDonald joined Presque Isle Audubon Society in 1985 after attending a two day PIAS workshop called Oasis which was quite similar to the annual PIAS birding festival. He has been a member of ad hoc committees that search for new ways to focus the organization's personal and financial resources. In early years he was secretary and for the past 8 years he has served as treasurer. McDonald's desire for PIAS is to find a way to promote Presque Isle and other natural environments to people in the Erie area who have never experienced the uniqueness and potential fascination of Presque Isle.

Kel was a pre-oceanography major at Marshall University in his home city of Huntington, WV, until in his sophomore year he discovered he was terrified of the ocean. He graduated with a degree in advertising. During the Vietnam War his values changed and he believed he needed to commit to a career in the helping professions. He earned his master's degree in social work from WVU and worked in mental health, child welfare, legal aid, and home health counseling. (P. 7)

## MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBER (Cont.)

While in the military and graduate school McDonald used his basic knowledge of art learned from college courses to dabble in painting. Upon moving to Erie in 1973 he decided that rather than have bare walls in his apartment he would paint his décor. For years and years he checked out four art books a week from the Erie library and learned how to create. In 1976 he sold his first painting and began displaying his watercolors in many art galleries for nearly 30 years. He has retired from marketing his work, but continues his art by teaching our own Pat Howell and Janet Price. This avocation has been on-going for 6 very long years. Both students have developed such talent that Kel paints very little these days. He now “lives his painting” vicariously through these two student friends.

Before Kel learned to avoid outside activities in winter he used to go to PI every weekend, photograph ‘everything’ and use these photographs as basis for his impressionist and abstract paintings. Over the years his favorite subject has been great blue herons in Presque Isle waterscapes.

Kel’s inability to identify bird species has never once influenced him to actually learn. His happiest nature moments occur not with bird ID, but with talking to birds and mammals. The animals seem to hate it, but it brings joy to Kel.

Kel loves his Audubon friends, flower gardening, and painting and pencil doodling.



**MAY 8, 9, 10, 2015**

Special Guest & Keynote :

## **George Armistead**

ABA Coordinator & Author

- Expert Trip and Workshop Leaders
- Dinner and Keynote Saturday
- Friday Reception
- Bird Banding Station
- Lagoon and Night Birding
- All Skill Levels Welcome



Information and Registration

[www.presqueisleaudubon.org](http://www.presqueisleaudubon.org)

Questions?

[info@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:info@presqueisleaudubon.org)

The Presque Isle Audubon Society’s newsletter, the *Tern of Events*, is published monthly, except in January and July. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. All published material is subject to editing.

Send submissions to Janet Price, editor, via [jrplkm@aol.com](mailto:jrplkm@aol.com) or 418 E. 36th St., Erie, PA 16504. If you have any questions, call Janet at 814-825-8394.

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ERIE, PA 16505

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**Presque Isle Audubon Society  
Chapter Only Membership Application**

Chapter only membership includes membership in the Presque Isle Audubon Society ONLY and the chapter newsletter, *Tern of Events*.

Individual membership \$15.00/year

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Return this form with your check payable to the Presque Isle Audubon Society to:

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Please enroll me as a new member in the National Audubon Society which includes membership in BOTH the National Audubon Society and the local Presque Isle Audubon Society. National members receive *Audubon Magazine* (6 issues per year) and the local chapter newsletter. **Please include your e-mail address to receive the online version of the newsletter.**

Introductory membership \$20.00

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