



# TERN OF EVENTS

PRESQUE ISLE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
JUNE 2013 ISSUE 13:05

Our mission is to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife, plants, soil, and water in relation to human activity, to initiate and carry out plans and activities which would contribute to the conservation and protection of these natural resources; and to provide opportunities to become more aware and appreciative of our physical and biological environment.

## THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Recently my husband took me to my favorite restaurant (no, not Red Robin or the Blue Heron Inn although I have nothing against those fine establishments) and on the way home we stopped at a few antique stores, his idea. THANK YOU American Pickers for making antiquing cool and manly! I was browsing through some old books and came across "Todd's book" that I have heard so much about at our board meetings when we discuss the PIAS rare book collection. The book is Birds of Western Pennsylvania by W. E. Clyde Todd, who at the time of its publication, was the Curator of Ornithology at Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, PA.

As someone who loves books, especially old ones, and birds, especially ones in Western PA, I had no choice but to buy it. Right? Thumbing through the book recently, I skipped through to the section entitled, "Present Status of Bird Life." In this case, present status meant the late 1930s as the book was published in 1940. Imagine how deeply my heart sunk when I read the first few sentences.

*"In early times bird life in western Pennsylvania, as elsewhere, must have been incredibly more abundant than it is today. The advent of the white settler with his ax and gun doomed the wilderness and much of its wild life. Unfortunately we are without trustworthy records of primitive conditions so far as birds are concerned; even Wilson and Audubon, who arrived on the scene before great changes had come to pass are virtually silent on this phase of the subject."*

Imagine how deeply Todd's heart would sink were he to learn of the status of bird life today! Deforestation, fracking, pesticides, poorly placed turbines, free roaming cats...Each has taken some toll on the bird population, likely more so than the early settler's ax and gun. One advantage we do have in this day and age is that, unlike Todd, we do have more trustworthy records of birds and bird life. (Cont. on Page 2)



## JUNE AND JULY THINGS TO DO!

- June 6, Thursday** - Meeting of the Weed Warriors Committee, 9:00 AM at the TREC
- June 15, Saturday** - Wildflower Trip along the Tanbark Trail, 11:00 AM (Page 6)
- June 19, Wednesday** - Conservation Committee Meeting, 5:00 PM at Quinn Firm
- June 21, Friday** - PIAS Membership Picnic Meeting, 7:00 PM at AAUW Pavilion (Page 5)
- June 29, Saturday** - Paddling the Presque Isle Lagoon, 10:00 AM at Sara's (Page 6)
- July 16, Tuesday** - PIAS Board Meeting at 7:00 PM in the TREC Board Room
- June 17, Wednesday** -- Conservation Committee Meeting, 5:00 PM at Quinn Firm
- July 27, Saturday** - Nature Photography on Presque Isle, 8:00 AM (Page 6)

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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.

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## PRESIDENT'S PERCH (Cont.)

These monitoring tools and records come in the form of some citizen's science projects like the Christmas and Great Backyard Bird Counts, Project Feeder Watch among others as well as more direct research projects such as bird banding. Bird banding takes place all over the world including Presque Isle where bird banding has been going on since the 1930s. Both provide some insight into the status of birds over the past few decades including declines in some bird species, resurgence in others, changes in migratory patterns and timing, nesting habits and bird mortality. In the photo below, Sarah Sargent, Ph. D., Master Bander and Coordinator of the Western PA Important Bird Area Program, consults Pyle's Identification Guide to determine which of the empidonax flycatchers she has in hand. Yes, even Ph. D. level biologists have trouble with those tricky empids! In this case, based on wing length, the bird was a female least flycatcher.



Sarah with Least Flycatcher

Understandably, not everyone is in favor of bird banding as a way of monitoring changes in bird populations and status. It is, after all, one more intrusion into the life of the bird going through the banding process. The banding process starts with the bird being caught in a mist net that is specially designed for netting birds. The bird is then removed from the net by a trained individual, identified by species, weighed, aged, sexed (if possible), measured for wing chord length and amount of fat stores and then a small

(Cont. on Page 3)

## PRESIDENT'S PERCH (Cont.)

metal or plastic numbered band is placed on the bird's leg. Each of these bits of data is recorded in a spreadsheet and entered into a database where it can then be compared with data gathered over the years. It is with this data that scientists and conservation groups such as the Audubon Society are able to make their case about the need for policies that will stop or slow the decline in bird populations. I've talked to many people who have been birding for many years and all have remarked about the decline in the number and variety of birds over the years. Unfortunately, such subjective data is not enough. We need the objective data provided by bird monitoring research such as bird banding to strengthen our voices in defense of the birds. In this photo, Jason Fidorra, bird bander and shore bird monitor for the spring season at Presque Isle, checks a cat bird for fat stores.



When the operation of bird banding was threatened due to loss of funding this year, the board of the PIAS decided to partially fund banding this spring so as to avoid a gap in the data that has been being collected for approximately 80 years. We received some donations from our generous membership and some was allocated from our Special Projects fund. Because we feel so strongly about the importance of bird banding we are continuing to try and raise money for future seasons of banding. We will be holding a fund raiser this fall, the proceeds of which will be earmarked for future banding seasons. Check

your future Tern of Events, the PIAS Website and/or the PIAS Facebook page for details. We will also continue to accept donations however, small or large. Please consider donating to this very special cause and Thank You! in advance.

## BIRDATHON REPORT FROM TEAM

### TIMBERDOODLE

By Sarah Sargent

#### Members:

Judy Acker, Mary Birdsong, Jason Fidorra, Sarah Sargent

Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> dawned as the first day of nice weather in about a week. I picked up Judy at the Saegertown exit on I-79 and we drove up to Presque Isle. We didn't get a particularly early start because Jason had some beach monitoring to do, and we were going to meet him and Mary after he had done this initial (boring) part of the survey between the lighthouse and Beach 10. However, we got there early enough that he and the two volunteers were still near the lighthouse, and he made sure we saw the Common Loon that was hanging around out beyond Breakwater 45. That was our first species confirmed under our rule that three out of the four team members had to see or hear each species.

At Beach 10 parking lot we met Mary, Jason and the regular Thursday shorebird volunteers Jerry and Phil who were honorary Timberdoodles for the Gull Point part of the day. We took the inland route out to Gull Point and scored lots of land birds along the way. There were loads of Palm and Yellow Warblers the whole way out, plus a variety of other warblers, thrushes, the first Great Crested Flycatchers of the year, sparrows, vireos and more.

We detoured down a side trail to Thompson's Bay, where we found a lone female Canvasback swimming with a lone female Ruddy Duck. Two Great Egrets flew over. Although a previous birder had left a note along the trail saying he had seen Red-headed Woodpeckers there, we didn't see them. Shortly after we got back on the main trail, three Sandhill Cranes flew over, giving their distinctive calls. When we arrived at the Point we caught sight of a perched Merlin and had good looks at him. (Cont. on Page 7)

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

The following birds of note were reported from April 22 to May 21, 2013 from Presque Isle State Park unless noted otherwise.

**Brant**—50 (high spring count); May 19; Presque Isle Hawk Watch (12<sup>th</sup> & Peninsula); R.D., J.M., R.S.

**Snowy Egret**—1; May 15; Thompson Bay; D.S.



Snowy Egret

**American Bittern**—1; May 15; Gull Point; J.M.

**Eared Grebe**—1; April 25; off Beach 10; M.W.

**Black Vulture**—2; May 15; Siegel Marsh; M.W.

**Sandhill Crane**— a total of 13; April 30 to May 19; Presque Isle Hawk Watch and Presque Isle; m.ob.

**Kentucky Warbler**—1; April 25 to May 1; Beach 10 parking lot; M.P.. Record early in Erie Co. by about two weeks. (See below)



**Piping Plover**—1 adult (banded); May 14 & 15; Gull Point; J.F.

**American Avocet**—1; May 1; Sunset Point and later off Beach 11; M.B.

**Summer Tanager**—1; April 25; Northeast; T.L.. Earliest spring record by about two weeks.

May 18; several sites at the east end of Presque

**Iceland Gull**—1 imm; to May 21; Gull Point; J.M.

**Glaucous Gull**—1; May 4; Gull Point; J.F.

**American Golden Plover**—1; May 8; Gull Point; D.M.. Fourth spring record in Erie County. (below)



**White-rumped Sandpiper**—4; May 18; Gull Point; M.W. 1; May 21; Gull Point; J.M.

**Yellow-throated Warbler**--total of 4; April 25 to Isle; J.F., J.T., R.D., S.C.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**—1; May 1 to 7; off Beach 11; M.W.

**Barn Owl**—1; May 12; east of B-trail; R.D.

**Long-eared Owl**--1; April 30; east of B-trail; R.D.

**Worm-eating Warbler**—1; May 3; Fry's landing; M.F., M.B. 1; May 5; Pine Tree Trail; G.M. 1; May 19; Fry's landing; J.M.

**White-winged Crossbill**—4; April 24; Beach 11 parking lot; J.M., R.D.

**Brewster's Warbler**—1; May 12; east end of Sidewalk Trail; S.C.

**Golden-winged Warbler**—1 to 3; May 9 & 10; Sidewalk & Pine Tree trails and Fry's landing; J.M., K.A., R.S.

**Orange-crowned Warbler**—1; May 10; Pine Tree Trail; S.C.

**Red Crossbill**—1; May 15 to 17; Erie; N.A.

**White-winged Crossbill**—2 or 3; May 4; B-trail and Pine Tree Trail; G.M.. Second Erie County May record.

**Contributors:** K.A.-Katie Andersen, N.A.-Nancy Andersen, M.B.-Mary Birdsong, S.C.-Shawn Collins, R.D.-Roger Donn, J.F.-Jason Fidorra, M.F.-Michele Franz, T.L.-Tim Lyons, G.M.-Geoff Malsoh, J.M.-Jerry McWilliams, D.M.-Drew Mortensen, M.P.-Mike Plyler, D.S.-Don Snyder, R.S.-Russ States, R.S.-Randy Stringer, J.T.-Joao Taveres, M.W.-Mike Weible, m.ob. many observers.

~Jerry McWilliams, Bird Record Chairperson  
814-240-8594 [jerrymcw@aol.com](mailto:jerrymcw@aol.com)

## JUNE MEMBERSHIP PICNIC MEETING

Join us on **Friday, June 21 at 7:00 PM** for a meeting with a twist! Instead of our typical gathering, we will meet in the AAUW pavilion, adjacent to the parking lot of the Tom Ridge Center, for a picnic. The Program Committee is providing pizza and soft drinks, but we ask you to bring something else to share.

We don't have any set agenda except the election of officers and trustees and maybe some fun and games, laughs and some casual birding! Bring your sense of humor and a favorite bird joke, if you have one.

~Michele Franz, PIAS President

## MEMBERSHIP EMAIL SURVEY

In the near future, the Presque Isle Audubon Society will be sending out an email survey to members looking for input about several different things including, among other things, how the PIAS communicates with its members and what members see as priorities for the society moving forward. Please look for this brief survey in your email and take the time to fill it out. We certainly value your opinion and look forward to your input!!

~Michele Franz, PIAS President

## PIAS MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Welcome to the new members of the Presque Isle Audubon. When you join the National Audubon, you are automatically a member of our local chapter, the Presque Isle Audubon. Hope to see you at one of our monthly membership meetings or our field trips.

**Erie:** Robert Lutton, Judith Lynch, Mary Wierzbicki, Anne Mazzeo, Anna Marie Senita

**Edinboro:** Mary Melvin

**Cambridge Sps:** Mike Bodak

**Cochranon:** Lois Peterson

**Conneaut, Oh:** Carol Brown

**Conneautville:** Kendall Zook

**Jamestown:** David Graham

**Meadville:** Frank Frisina, Fran Orfino

**Waterford:** Barbara Bentze, Rob Blaha  
Ralph Bashor

**Wattsburg:** Suzanne Bowen

~Ron Intrieri, Membership Chair

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

## APRIL AND MAY PIAS FIELD TRIPS

In spite of the rain on Sunday, April 28th, six of us spent 3 hours **exploring the Newbold Estate in Irvine, PA**. The forest service recently took a brush hog to the area, so I was worried that many of the wildflowers would have been destroyed. Although there were fewer trilliums and other areas had been disturbed and wildflowers destroyed, we still found a nice variety of wildflowers and old garden escapes in bloom: wild oats, golden Alexander, yellow and white trout lilies, cutleaf toothwort, coltsfoot, spring beauties, Virginia bluebells (below), Dutchman's



breeches, chickweed, shadbush, dandelions, periwinkle, forsythia and a patch of red trillium in a variety of color forms (below). (Cont. on Page 6)



## PIAS APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS (Cont.)

We also were bid "farewell" at the end of our walk by the "twiiiiiiip" call of a Broad-shouldered Hawk who flew in and landed nearby.

Photos on Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leeann-charlie/sets/72157633358870465/>

~Lee Ann Reiners, Field Trip Chair

The **Presque Isle State Park Bird Walk** was held on **Saturday, May 12**. Sixteen people participated some from as far away as Philadelphia, Rochester, and Buffalo. High winds were a problem so the banding station could not open. Yet, we added life birds for some and tips on binoculars, birds and Presque Isle birding locations. Some of our best birds were the chestnut sided warbler and American redstart.

~Susan A. Smith, Field Trip Leader

## JUNE AND JULY PIAS FIELD TRIPS

### **Tanbark Trail in the Allegheny National Forest June 15, Saturday at 11:00AM**

Mountain Laurel is the Pennsylvania state flower, and there is no lack of these shrubs along the beautiful Tanbark Trail in the Allegheny National Forest south of Warren. A mostly easy 3 mile walk, with some tricky sections of rock scrambling. We will hike from Heart's Content Rd. to Sandstone Spring. Bring your camera, binoculars, some trail snacks and water. A walking stick might come in handy too. We'll hike through a boulder city along the way and look for the ghost! Meet at Sandstone Spring at 11 a.m. on Old Rt. 337/SR3005. Contact trip coordinator in advance to let us know if you plan to attend. GoogleMapped here: <http://goo.gl/maps/Do8YZ>

~Lee Ann Reiners, 814-282-1512

[larch@zoominternet.net](mailto:larch@zoominternet.net) (email preferable)

### **Wattsburg Fen**

(joint trip with Botanical Society of Western PA)  
**Sunday, June 23, 10:00 a.m.**

This wetland preserve, cared for by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, has both

alkaline and acidic environments that allow for an unusual diversity of native plants. Directions: Head east on US 6 out of Union City, drive 5.7 miles to the intersection of Rts. 89 & 6, where we will meet at a drive-in theater on the left (the northeast intersection). Loree Speedy ([mousemapper@verizon.net](mailto:mousemapper@verizon.net); cell: (724) 518-6022) and Tim Lyons ([timclyons@verizon.net](mailto:timclyons@verizon.net)).

### **Padding the Presque Isle Lagoons**

(You will be asked to wear your PFD while on the water)

**Saturday, June 29, 10:00 a.m.**

Meet at Sara's ice cream stand at the entrance of PI, at the foot of the entrance hill, at 10 am. We will drive to the put in, probably at PI Marina. Estimated paddle distance: 5 miles, time approx 3 hours. Bring canoe or kayak, paddles, PFD, water, snacks, lunch, though we can eat at Sara's afterward. This is a unique paddle through the interior lagoons of Presque Isle, returning via Presque Isle Bay with maybe a detour around Horseshoe Pond to check out the turtles and Fragrant Water Lilies (and houseboats). This is a combined PIAS/ACC paddle so bring binocs, also. The paddle is dependent on weather: too big of a westerly wind will make headway in that direction difficult. However usually weather conditions are just perfect! Call Issy 814 774 8264 for details.

### **Nature Photography on Presque Isle**

**Saturday, July 27, 8:00 a.m.**

Grab your camera, lenses and other photo equipment and meet us at 8 a.m. at the first parking lot on the right after you enter Presque Isle State Park. Michele Franz will be sharing her skills and photo tips with the group as we visit picturesque Presque Isle. Trip coordinator: Michele Franz- [president@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:president@presqueisleaudubon.org).

### **Titus Bog**

(joint trip with Botanical Society of Western PA)  
**Sunday, July 28, 1:00 p.m.**

Meet at the old drive-in theater near the intersection of Rts. 6 and 89, halfway between Union City and Corry. This is a really wet walk, so if you have hip waders, they might be a big help! If not, wear old clothes and shoes that you won't mind getting wet and muddy. Trip coordinator: Tim Lyons ([timclyons@verizon.net](mailto:timclyons@verizon.net).)

### Birdathon Report (Cont.)

We walked the perimeter of the Point to do a complete survey, as this walk was also serving as one of our five required shorebird surveys of the week. We do this to monitor for Piping Plovers which may use the park in the spring and, in fact, we had had a female Piping Plover at Gull Point the previous two days. Unfortunately, she was gone on Birdathon day, so we were unable to get this very rare Pennsylvania species for our list. We did have excellent looks at (and listens to) a handsome Black-bellied Plover. We found a roosting huddle of Ruddy Turnstone and three Sanderlings. A Bald Eagle flew in the distance, and American Pipits called around the observation tower. Two Short-billed Dowitchers probed along the large inland pond. The Iceland Gull with a fish hook in its bill put in an appearance shortly before we left the Point. It seems to be summering here, presumably due to its injury.

By the time we got back to the parking lot, it was pretty hot and we needed to get moving. We headed to Dead Pond Trail for more land birds, where we got quite a few more species including Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Brown Creeper. Then we went to Fry's Landing hoping for more warblers. We did get the Cooper's Hawk on her nest, plus Red-breasted Nuthatch and House Wren but things were getting pretty quiet. It was time for a common-sense strategy, so we headed to the bird feeders at the Ranger's Station! On the way we tried for Red-headed Woodpecker on the Sidewalk Trail, but only Jason and Mary saw one for a fleeting second as it flew over. I was on the beach trying to locate Red-breasted Merganser, normally a sure bet along this stretch. No luck this time.

The bird feeder provided Common Grackle, House Sparrow and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Then we moved on to Leo's Landing on Erie Bay and scored American Coot and a Common Tern diving for fish. We then quickly crossed back to the lake side and finally spotted our Red-breasted Mergansers! At Vista 1 we found a few Hooded Mergansers lingering along the far shoreline.

We drove down to Geneva Marsh and were able to locate Sora and Common Moorhen. We traveled down McMichael's road and picked up Yellow-throated Vireo, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Our last stop was Miller's Ponds in the Pymatuning Goose Management Area. This open habitat is great for grassland species, and sure enough, we picked up Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow, Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. The ponds themselves had a variety of shorebirds along the muddy edges, including Semipalmated Plovers, Least Sandpipers, Dunlin, both Yellowlegs and one lone Wilson's Snipe.

At 7:00 PM, we called it a day. We were pretty tired, enough so that we had trouble adding up our species. For some reason we kept getting different numbers. So, like many good birding teams, we decided to head for the brewpub to go over things more carefully. Our day ended there with a total of 115 species on our list, which did not include Red-headed Woodpeckers (or American Woodcock, darn it!)



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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.

Printed on recycled paper.

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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.**

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