



TERN OF EVENTS

PRESQUE ISLE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER/JANUARY 2021 ISSUE 21:01

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

Good news from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources about plastic use at Presque Isle State Park! On November 4, Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced the Dept. is taking steps to reduce the use of plastics and the amount of waste generated from food concessions at PA state parks. As contracts with food providers are renewed, new provisions prevent the use of plastic bags, straws, and cutlery. These items are to be replaced with compostable, paper, wooden or plant fiber alternatives.

Per the PA Environment Digest Blog: "As the state's conservation leader, DCNR strives to model practices that conserve and sustain our natural resources, and we are now extending that to the concessions that provide snacks at our state parks," Dunn said. "This step will help to reduce the emissions generated through plastic production and eliminate the amount of plastic that ends up in landfills."

New contract language also requires food providers to minimize the use of paper straws and disposable utensils, and when on-site composting is available at a state park, to work with DCNR to convert as many of their food service products to compostable, paper-based forest product alternatives and compost them and food waste.

These new measures are in place at Presque Isle State Park, which is one of six in PA currently enrolled in this program. Now if we

could only get duck hunters to stop using shotgun shells with plastic wads! Per the North Coast Environmental Center, a wad is the part of a shotgun shell that keeps the shot (pellets) together, but separate from the powder. Until the 1970s, shotgun wads were made of paper or cardboard. Because shotgun shells travel quite a distance before separating, and are typically shot over water, hunters do not consider wads retrievable—which creates a huge plastic problem. I know this is true locally, as we picked up hundreds of them at Fry's Landing this past April during a clean-up.

(Cont. on Page 2)

DECEMBER/JANUARY THINGS TO DO!



December 18, Saturday – Christmas Bird Count at Presque Isle at 7:30a (Page 5)

January 11, Tuesday - Festival of the Birds Committee Meeting at 6:00p.

January 18, Tuesday - PIA Board Meeting at 6:00.

January 29, Saturday – Field Trip (Page 5)

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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

THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH Cont.

If you missed Mary Birdsong's "Piper Palooza" Zoom presentation about plover antics at Gull Point this past summer, you can view it on our YouTube channel. Click on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w17540QPWp8>

While on the channel, you can also check out previous shows: Finch Superflight, Into the Marshes, Crane Conservation, Monty and Rose, Giving Ideas Wings, Plants & Birds at PI, Wetland Restoration, and the Erie Bird Observatory.

Have you spotted chimney swifts in Erie City or County this past year? Chimney swifts rely on tall, hollow, manmade structures (like chimneys) to roost and nest, since all the big, old, hollow trees they normally would have used have long since (been cut down. No other species of American bird is so dependent on humans and the physical structures we provide. They're helpful birds, they eat pesky insects, up to half of their own weight daily. Like most other birds, their numbers are dropping. Between 1966 and 2007, the number of Chimney Swifts in the United States declined 53 percent. To help protect these birds, the PIAS Executive Board is looking to fund the building of chimney swift towers to place in our area. If you have any ideas on where to place such a tower, let us know. There's a thought that swifts have been roosting in the chimney(s) of the Erie Malleable Iron Building on West 12 Street, which unfortunately is in the process of being torn down.

Keep in touch!

Sue Murawski

president@presqueisleaudubon.org

THE BIRD REPORT

The following Bird Sightings: birds of note were reported from Sept. 15 to Nov. 18, 2021 at Presque Isle S.P., unless noted otherwise.

Cackling Goose 1; Oct. 20; Waterford; J.H.

Surf Scoter—1; Sept. 20; Sunset Point (Waterbird count); J.M. Record early in the county by about a week.

Red-necked Grebe 1; Nov. 5 & 13; Sunset Point (Waterbird count); J.M. (Below)



American Avocet 1; Oct. 5; Elk Creek access; B.Gu., fide R.D.

American Golden Plover 1; Sept. 21; Sunset Point (Waterbird count); J.M.
1; Oct. 4; Gull Point; J.M. 27; Oct.16; J. Bo

Red Knot 1; Oct. 4; Gull Point; J.M.

Stilt Sandpiper up to 2; to Sept. 19; Gull Point; J.M.

Long-billed Dowitcher 1; Sept. 23 & 25; Gull Point; E.H., P.F.

Parasitic Jaeger 2; Nov. 18; Sunset Point; E.H.

Purple Sandpiper 1; Nov. 14, Sunset Point; S.Sm, S.B.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper 1; Sept. 28; Gull Point; E.H.

Dunlin 500; Nov. 2 ; Sunset Point (Waterbird count); J.M. (See Below)



Jaeger species 2; Oct. 16; off Beach 1; J.Bo.
1; Oct. 27; P.I.; J.Bo.

Lesser Black-backed Gull total of 6; Oct. 3 to Nov 14; Presque Isle Downs and Casino parking lot & P.I.; J.M. et al.

American Bittern 1; Oct. 1; Sunset Point (Waterbird count); J.M. Sitting on the water with a Peregrine circling it.

Cattle Egret 1; Nov. 10; Edinboro; hit by car, taken to Tamarack rehab.; fide S.S.

Black-crowned Night-Heron 1; Oct. 17; Gull Point; J.Bo. (See Below)



Black Vulture 1; Oct. 8; Vista 1; T.S., F.W.. First county fall record.

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THE BIRD REPORT (Cont.)

Northern Saw-whet Owl total of 9; Oct. 27 to Nov. 6; one at the TREC and six were banded by E.B.O. at Fry's landing; S.S., R.D.

Olive-sided Flycatcher 1; Sept. 21; Dead Pond Trail; N.H.

Lapland Longspur 2; Nov. 9; Gull Point; R.D. 1; Nov. 11; Gull Point; R.D. (Below)



Grasshopper Sparrow 1; Sept. 26; foot of State Street; S.K. Flew into a hotel window and was temporarily stunned. Second latest fall record.

Yellow-headed Blackbird 1; Sept. 13; Gull Point; J.B., J.M.

Northern Waterthrush 1; to Nov. 5; Presque Isle; J.Bo.; Record late in the county by about a month. (See Below)



Orange-crowned Warbler 1; Sept. 30; Dead Pond Trail; J.M. J.T. 1; Oct. 25; Leo's landing; J.M.

Connecticut Warbler 1; Sept. 17; Thompson Circle; J.M. 1; Oct. 1; Erie; K.A.

Mourning Warbler 1; Oct. 11; Fry's landing; fide B.G. First October record. Banded at Fry's landing

Cape May Warbler 1; Nov. 6; Leo's; K.L. (See Below)



Blackburnian Warbler 1; Oct. 15; Presque Isle; J.Bo.; record late in the county by about two weeks.

Dickcissel 1; Oct. 5; Dead Pond Trail; N.H. (See Below)



Contributors: K.A.-Katie Andersen, J.B.-Justin Berkheimer, J.Bo. Jason Bojczyk, S.B-Sara Busch, R.D.-Roger Donn, P.F.-Pete Fenner, B.G.-Bonnie Ginader, B.Gu.-Brian Gula, E.H.-Eric Hall, N.H.-Nathan Hall, J.H.-Jamie Hill, S.K.-Scott Kinzey, K.L.-Ken Limmer, J.M.-Jerry McWilliams, S.S.-Sara Sargent, S.Sm.-Steve Schmit, T.S.-Tom Shepard, J.T.-John Taylor, F.W.-Fran Willis, E.B.O.-Erie Bird Observatory

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FIELD TRIPS TO RESUME

On **December 18, 2021**, we will be holding the Christmas Bird Count starting at Shelter 3. Please see the article in this edition of the TOE for details. What better way to start our field trip Winter season? After that, our next field trip will be held on **January 29th** and as with our Spring field trips, we will meet in the parking lot of the **Stull Center at 8:00 a.m.** and from there head out to the designated trail. Please see our Facebook page and website for additional details regarding field trips.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



Hello everyone! The Presque Isle Audubon will host the Erie County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on **December 18, 2021**. We will meet at **Shelter 3 on Presque Isle at 7:30 a.m.** to form teams and designate areas of the park and count circle to be covered by each team. From there each team will spread out and cover their designated areas and tally birds counted. Unlike last year, we will reconvene at the shelter at noon for lunch and initial tally. Please bring a bagged lunch and drink to enjoy. We will follow social distancing guidelines during this event. We will not be meeting for dinner for the final tally this year and anyone who has additional information after lunch can send it to me at: info@presqueisleaudubon.org.

A little history of the CBS from the National Audubon Website: Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were

becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. SO here we are!

So, get out of the house and please join us on the **18th**! If you want to stay at home, are in the count circle and want to participate, you can count the birds in your yard and at feeders and send the information to me, Michele Rundquist Franz, Field Trip Chair, info@presqueisleaudubon.org.

Take a Free Chance on a John J Audubon Book

While cleaning out our basement storage locker at TREC, a two-volume book set, "Original Water-Color Paintings by John J. Audubon for the Birds of America" was found. The set includes 431 full page color plates, was printed in 1966, and fits in a cardboard carrying case. Current and past Board members had no recollection of where this book set may have come from. Evaluated by a book appraiser, it was determined the worth to be somewhere between \$25-\$50, probably due to the condition of the case, as the books look pristine. The Board opted to raffle this book set to Presque Isle Audubon members. Participation in this raffle is free, only for members, and is open until Jan. 15. Enter by sending an email to president@presqueisleaudubon.org

In the subject line of the email, type Audubon book raffle. In the body of the email, type your name. The winner's name will be randomly drawn on Jan. 16. To give you an idea about this set, here's a picture of the book.



The 2021 BIG SIT at JAMIE HILL'S OUTSIDE DECK

On 10 October, 2021, I hosted my 7th annual “Big Sit” bird census on the elevated deck of my Waterford, PA, house. My deck is at an ideal location for a Big Sit since it has a vast, wide-open vista overlooking wetlands, fields, and forests. For those who don’t know, a “Big Sit” is a global, 24-hour-long bird census (typically scheduled for the second weekend in October, everywhere) where the participants are required to stay within a 17-foot-diameter circle while counting all the birds they see or hear.

I was really looking forward to this particular Big Sit more than any of the previous ones, and I’m not sure why. I guess it’s because my passion for birding has grown to an all-time high. I know that I was busy preparing for it for weeks! I had the deck all power washed, the loose deck balusters all tightened, the house cleaned, the vistas opened up, and supplemental feeding stations established for ravens, vultures, and turkey. I even had hummingbird feeders freshened up, hoping for a wintering Rufous Hummingbird to show! Erie County, PA, has had about a dozen winter records of them.



We had 14 participants this year: me, Alejandra Lewandowski, Robert Scribner, Joshua Heiser and Dan Gonzalez (both undergraduate students from Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, and members of the Allegheny College Birdwatching Club), Roger Donn, Jerry McWilliams, Suzanne Winterberger, Sam Stull, Lisa Scott, Carol Allen, Jennifer Ferrick, Ruth

Swaney, and Carolyn Sturtevant. Some of the bird counters arrived at first light in the morning and stayed until dark, but personally, I was up at 12:01 am on the morning of the 10th listening for nocturnal birds such as owls, herons, and geese. I did hear Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech-owl, Canada Goose, Great Blue Heron, and Killdeer in the dark, and managed to get voucher sound recordings of most of them! We were off to a great start, tallying the hard-to-get trifecta of owls! At about 1:30 am, I went to bed and got back up in the dark of morning at 5:15 am to listen for other birds that might have been calling in the dark. If you would like to hear my owl recordings from the Big Sit, click on this eBird link for our nocturnal birds.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S95970240>



The 14 of us had a super fun day of birding and camaraderie, and we ended up seeing and counting 1617 individual birds of 49 species. It never ceases to amaze me that you can stand (or sit) in one spot for an entire day and see or hear 49 species of birds! We were hoping to break 50 species for the day, especially since we got off to a very strong start. We hit 30 species by 0734 hrs., 35 species by 0837 hrs., 40 species by 0920 hrs., and 45 species by 1021 hrs. However, we missed common species like Osprey, Pileated Woodpecker, Wild Turkey, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Mallard. We did add three new species to the Big Sit cumulative species list: Greater Yellowlegs, Peregrine Falcon, and House Wren. These three species have never been recorded before in our previous 6 Big Sits and brings our species total up to 87.

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THE BIG SIT (Cont.)

The highlights of the day were seeing 160 Chimney Swifts overhead, plus a Peregrine Falcon flying fast along the far horizon. Over the years our species average is 50 species and our 7 year average for individuals is 1307. These species and individual totals that we tallied over the seven count years aren't meant to reveal any population trends as our count day totals tend to be mostly weather related. Besides, a Big Sit is really designed just to be a fun gathering of fellow birders, sharing what they love best — being out in nature and bird watching! And the food was excellent, too. Everyone brings food to share. To see the eBird checklist for the diurnal part of our Big Sit, click this link. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S95971084>

Weather wise, it was sunny part of the day, but sprinkled at other times. It was a bit breezy, making seeing or hearing birds a bit more challenging. A beautiful golden glow lit up the red barn across the lake at sunset.

~James R. Hill, 814-323-2001 (cell & text)
Ivorybillguy@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Welcome everyone to the Presque Isle Audubon. We want to recognize all new members as well as people who rejoin. It's been quite a year, but next year we should be able to get out more and do some bird watching, and get back to in-person membership meetings.

Erie: Betty Cornman, Barbara Lamb, Eric Dail, Jeanne Szymanowicz, Chris Laird, Mary Tssario, Rena Wierinski, Patricia Loftus, David Ungerman, Kenneth Kohl, Patty Johnson, John Corwin, Dave Gustafson, Phillip Malinowski, Terry Pierce, Audrey Hertel, David Skellie, Daniel Burke, Leslie Stravinsky, Mike McAinich, Sheila McLaughlin, John & Lisa DePaul, Karen Bukowski, Clarence Schaney, Patricia Turk, Jerry McWilliams, Lyman Cohen, Don Synder

Albion: Russell Bromley

Cambridge Springs: Lori Freeman, Harry White, Robert Grinarmi

Cochran: Roberta Hudson, Gloria Corbert

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North East: Katherine Ditrich, H.J. Neal, Daniel Woodring, Barry Lichvar

North Springfield: Jean Ganger

Waterford: Dorothy Barringer

Mexico, NY: Ptrick Crotty

Pittsburgh, Pa: C.P. Kollar

Everyone have a good Holiday.

~Ron Inrieri

membership@presqueisleaudubon.org

Presque Audubon Society's newsletter, the *Tern of Events*, is published every other month: February, April, June, August, October and December. 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 or 418 E. 36th St., Erie, PA 16504. If you have any questions, call Janet at 814-825-8394.

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Presque Isle Audubon Society
Ronald Intrieri, Membership
Tom Ridge Environmental Center
301 Peninsula Drive, Suite 8
Erie, PA 16505

**National Audubon Society
Membership Application**

Renewal members can join as they have in the past, either by sending their membership check directly to National Audubon, or they can join online. New members are to send their first membership check to the local chapter. The address is at the bottom of this application.

Membership includes membership in BOTH the National Audubon Society and the local Presque Isle Audubon Society. National members receive *Audubon Magazine* (4 issue per year) and the chapter newsletter, *Tern of Events*. Please include your e-mail address to receive the online version of the newsletter.

Introductory membership \$20.00
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Mail this form with your check payable to the National Audubon Society directly to **YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER.**

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