



# TERN OF EVENTS

PRESQUE ISLE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020 ISSUE 20:06

*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

Our first Zoom program on Sept. 18 got off to a late start due to mysterious (to me) technical issues, but it was worth the wait. Sarah Sargent of the Erie Bird Observatory described this two-year-old organization, its accomplishments and ongoing projects. Here's a YouTube link to the recorded session; you can learn about their waterbird and shorebird monitoring, included piping plovers, bird banding, and helping with osprey platform placement:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WhyXPaMV PdsTrmeLkXFsc3NIkxVbGIIO/view?mc\\_cid=57278c3ea8&mc\\_eid=8227f3de73](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WhyXPaMV PdsTrmeLkXFsc3NIkxVbGIIO/view?mc_cid=57278c3ea8&mc_eid=8227f3de73)

If you did not receive the email invitations I sent to this Zoom program, or the emailed link to the recorded video afterwards, let me know. We use a MailChimp program, and I sent over 800 emails at once. Thus if you haven't received one, your email address is not on our list. If you'd like to receive email notices from PIA, please send it to me at [president@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:president@presqueisleaudubon.org) and I'll add it on. We do not share your email with any other organization, and you can unsubscribe from the list at any time.

I'm not sure PIA members know they support like-minded groups. We do! PIA donated \$1,200 to Tamarack Wildlife Center in Saegertown earlier this year; this is not our first donation to them. Director Carol Holgrem writes; "Dear Friends, You at PIA are wildlife heroes through your support. It is great to partner with you to help our area's resident and migratory birds!"

The Audit Committee members (Dave Gustafson, Steve Danko, and Janet Price) conducted the yearly audit of PIA finances in August. They found the records and investments to be in excellent order, well organized and recorded. Treasurer Julie Dell was commended for her "noteworthy diligence and perseverance in her work as Treasurer." Thanks Julie and committee!

(Cont. on Page 2)

## OCTOBER/NOVEMBER THINGS TO DO!



**October 16, Friday** – The Birders. Starts at 7:00p on Zoom. (See Page 3)

**November 3, Tuesday** – Election Day

**November 15, Sunday** – Decision re CBC (P.2)

**November 17, Tuesday** – PIA Board Meeting  
At 6:00p on Zoom

**November 20, Friday** – Wetland Restoration at PI. Starts at 7:00p on Zoom. (See Page 3)

## 2020-2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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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.)

PIA continues to advocate for our environment in multiple ways. We are a partner with several other regional environmental organizations in supporting the Clean Water Initiative of Penn Future. We have recently joined PA Audubon's Renewable Energy Working Group, which is monitoring wind turbine development in Lake Erie. We have signed letters to our legislators; one opposing House Bill 2025 which strips the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection of its authority to enact a carbon reduction program similar to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and another opposing Senate Bill 619 which relaxes requirements for reporting spills in waterways to the Department of Environmental Protection.

Did you ever feel that birds are not given credit for their remarkable brains? Or that "bird-brained" should not be a pejorative term? A recent article in the AAAS Science Magazine of Sept. 25 reports on two groundbreaking studies which explain the similarity between avian and mammalian brains. A newly-found region in the bird brain that is linked to conscious thought and self-awareness is described. John Marzluff, a wildlife biologist and specialist on crows at the University of Washington, who was not involved with either study, notes that researchers who have "demonstrated the cognitive abilities of birds won't be surprised by these results, but they will be relieved."

~Sue Murawski, PIA President

## PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

This citizen science project turns your love of birds into scientific discoveries. It is a winter long (Nov-Apr) survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards. You can count birds as often as every week, or as infrequently as you like: the schedule is completely flexible. All you need is a bird feeder, bird bath or plantings that attract birds. This is a great opportunity to be a citizen scientist and to fight the Covid-19 blues. To join or for information go to <https://feederwatch.org/join-or-renew>.

**PIA PROGRAMS  
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 2020**

Both programs are on Friday night and start at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

**OCTOBER 16, 7:00p**

**The Birders: A Melodic Journey in Northern Colombia**

According to Matthew Jeffery, International Director, National Audubon Society, The Birders “is an exquisite film. It captures perfectly the experience of birding in the neotropics, with amazing cinematography and a fascinating story.”



The Birders is a documentary film on Colombian bird diversity and birdwatching presented by ProColombia, the Colombian tourism agency. Directed by Gregg Bleakney of WhatNext Productions, the film highlights Colombian local birdwatching guide, Diego Calderon-Franco and National Geographic videographer Keith Ladzinski as they travel through one of the most diverse bird regions in the world to capture new and rare birds that have never been new and rare birds that have never been filmed before.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96696761460?pwd=MW9XV3BZWlhEQW54VU5NajlUcGdpdz09>

**The RSC's Native Plant Brochure:**

[https://www.regsciconsort.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Native-Plant-Brochure\\_CP.pdf](https://www.regsciconsort.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Native-Plant-Brochure_CP.pdf)

**NOVEMBER 20, 7:00p**

**Wetland Restoration at Presque Isle**



Jen Harrington Salem will share with us the process, plants and philosophy behind wetland restoration at Presque Isle State Park, which is a year-round endeavor. Learn about what has been done already and what is to come.

Jen is a Penn State Master Gardener is Regional Science Consortium's Horticultural Specialist. She was formerly the Tom Ridge Environmental Center's (TREC) Garden Coordinator since 2012. Jen manages the RSC plant lab and greenhouse, and coordinates approximately 300 volunteers annually to maintain a five-acre native garden. She also develops public programming for the TREC, including hosting the largest National Pollinator Week Celebration in Pennsylvania. Jen is the founder and program director of Go Native Erie!, a program she created to raise awareness about the benefits of using native plant species while discouraging the use of invasive plants. In addition to educational outreach, her program grows native plants for Presque Isle State Park and Erie Bluff State Park. These plants are used for wetland restoration and are propagated on-site in the RSC Greenhouse. Jen has a background in greenhouse management, perennial production and landscape design. Salem is also a Penn State Master Gardener.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95092047221?pwd=R1kzWjlweVREdEQ0dnV6M2VDVU9jZz09>

(Refer to Column 1 on this page to download the RSC's Native Plant Brochure.)

## BIRD REPORT

The following birds of note were reported from June 1 to September 22, 2020 from Presque Isle S.P. unless noted otherwise.

**Snow Goose**—1 white; Sept. 17; Gull Point; A.H.

**Cackling Goose**—1; Sept. 17; west Millcreek Twp.; R.S.

**Black-bellied Whistling Duck**—4; June 29 to about July 22; West Springfield; R.W.; First county record

**Brown Pelican**—1; Aug. 24; off Gull Point; fide J.F.

**Wilson's Plover**—1; July 7 & 8; Gull Point; M.B. 1; Aug. 15; Gull Point; M.B. (See below)



**Piping Plover**—Up to 5 including a nesting pair: from June to early August; Gull Point; M.B.. Four chicks fledged.

**American Avocet**—a season total of at least 50; July 11 to Aug. 16; Gull Point; J.M., et al.

**Willet**—season total of 20; June 13 to Aug. 17; Gull Point; M.B., et al 1; Sept. 2; Beach 10 (waterbird count); J.M.

**Whimbrel**—15; July 11; Lighthouse; C.K. Season total of 11; July 28 to Sept. 16; Gull Point; M.B., et al.

**Marbled Godwit**—1; Aug. 3 to 6; Gull Point; M.B.

**Red Knot**—season total of 17; Aug. 14 to Sept. 13; Gull Point; M.B., et al.

**White-rumped Sandpiper**—1; Aug. 13 to 15; Gull Point; M.B.

**Stilt Sandpiper**—season total of 7; Aug. 4 to 13; Gull Point; M.B., et al 1; Aug. 19; Union City Dam; M.D., J.F.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper**—1; Aug. 23; Gull Point; J.F. 1; Aug. 25; Union City Dam; R.S., J.F. 1; Sept. 3 to 6; Gull Point & Beach 10 (waterbird count); K.N., J.M., resp. 1; Sept. 17; Gull Point; R.S.

**Long-billed Dowitcher**—1 juvenile: Sept. 10-17; Gull Point; C.V., J.F., R.S.

**Wilson's Phalarope**—1; June 11; Gull Point; M.B. 1; Aug. 23 & 24; Gull Point; S.T., R.S., resp.

**Red-necked Phalarope**—1; Sept. 17; Gull Point; R.S. 1; Sept. 21; Beach 10 (Waterbird count); J.M. (See below)



**Sabine's Gull**—1; Sept. 18; Beach 11; N.H.

**Long-tailed Jaeger**—1 found dead; Sept. 18; Gull Point; R.S.; specimen collected and to be placed in the TREC Museum of Natural History.

**Barn Owl**—1 juvenile; mid-July; Girard Twp.; fide S.S.; taken to rehab at Tamarack.

## BIRD REPORT (Cont.)

**Sedge Wren**—at least 4; July 17 to at least Aug. 16; Erie Bluffs S.P.; J.C., et al.

**Prothonotary Warbler**—up to 4 with one nesting pair; through June; five chicks fledged on June 23; J.H.

**Orange-crowned Warbler**—1; Aug. 28; Fairview Twp.; D.S. Earliest county record.

**Connecticut Warbler**—1; Sept. 16; Fry's landing; E.H.

**Norther Wheatear**—1; Sept. 18; Gull Point; N.H. First county record. (See below)



**Painted Bunting**—1 male; June 1, continuing from May, near Mercyhurst College; E.S. 1; June 18; Waterford Twp.; J.Fe;

**Contributors:** M.B.-Mary Birdsong, J.C.-John Campbell, M.D.-Michael David, J.F.-Jennifer Ferrick, J.Fe.-John Fetzner, E.H.-Eric Hall, N.H.-Nathan Hall, A.H.-Ami Henrici, J.H.-Jamie Hill, C.K.-Chad Kauffman, J.M.-Jerry McWilliams, K.N.-Ken Nicholson, S.S.-Sarah Sargent, R.S.-Robert Scribner, E.S.-Eric Smylko, D.S.-Don Snyder, S.T.-Shannon Thompson, C.V.-Connor Vara, R.W.-Richard Wurst

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## PLASTIC EATING BACTERIA?

By Paul Burroughs

Many of the readers of this publication remember the time when plastics were the best thing since.... We loved Tupperware, milk cartons, packaging for other foods, toys, clothing. Time marches on and we are now swamped in plastics. Over packaged products consisted of plastic parts we needed to use tools to get through to the product adding to the waste. Add the single-use bags and it gets worse. Now mix in a pandemic where our use of reusable bags is hampered or forbidden increased and we have an explosion of debris.

Early in the week of September 14, I offered to write an article for the Tern of Events to the recent report on the investigation into the plastic eating bacteria and the quest to improve that bacteria's efficiency. Added to that issue, I had read an NPR article that the oil industry is alleged to have misled us into believing plastic could and would be recycled to a greater degree than actually achieved.

Recently, I joined a dozen other folks to hike out to Gull Point to assist the Erie Bird Observatory clean up Gull Point as part of International Coastal Cleanup events. I had not considered that event when I offered to write the article, but it impacted my thoughts on the issue.

As one approaches Gull Point appeared rather clean. As we got closer, not so. Debris, mostly plastic in all shapes, forms and stages of deterioration was everywhere. Bottles, capsules, shells, cups, bags, cigar tips, applicators, lids, and all manner of man's plastic manufacturing ingenuity were in the debris flow and among the grasses and sand. We also encountered insidious pieces of microplastics resulting from the collector's touch, likely destined to reenter the water and perhaps become aquatic food.

(Cont. on Page 6)

## **PLASTICS EATING BACTERIA? (Cont.)**

We filled multiple bags but with the realization it was but a small snapshot of the bigger picture.

So, what do we do with plastics? Some of us draw comfort that our garbage hauler/recycler collects those plastics with the certain numbers in the little arrow triangles on the bottom of the plastic pieces. We take our single use grocery bags back to the grocer for ultimate reuse. We get some solace thinking we are doing our part. Are we? An NPR article aired in September 2020 that suggests that we have been largely duped into thinking recycling was occurring at a good pace. For a good while, China was taking plastic trash but stopped in about 2018. U.S. companies found it was cheaper to produce new plastic rather than recycle and that any reuse is using an inferior product as it degrades upon reuse. The NPR report indicates that those little numbers in the triangles caused confusion to consumers, resulting in improperly separated products and difficulty in segregating recyclables by industry, increasing costs. Since the cost was high, exceeding the cost to manufacture new plastic resulted in more landfilling. It is estimated only about 9% of plastics are recycled (as of 2018).

While the industry is mired in handling this waste (or having us think it is) science is working on solutions, including harnessing the power of existing organisms and enhancing their abilities to consume/convert chemicals in plastic into by-products. Included in this work, scientists have discovered a bacterium in trash that consume certain type of plastics, primarily PET that is used in the single use water bottles seen in many peoples' hands...and discarded everywhere. And science has also developed an enzyme from this bacterium, PETase, which attacks PET, and enhancements to the enzyme cause it to consume PET in a matter of days instead of centuries in a landfill. While promising and

awaiting a scale-up for general use, it does not replace the need to properly handle our plastic wastes and manage our choices to help us avoid plastics in the first place. From what the industry reports, and as confirmed by what I saw that day at Gull Point (and every day and everywhere to be sure) a good start is not choosing single use water bottles and other plastics. #

## **MONITORING WATERBIRDS in and AROUND PRESQUE ISLE - VOLUNTERS WELCOME!**

By Sarah Sargent, Executive Director  
Erie Bird Observatory

From October until the lake ice completely freezes over, usually in January, then again in March and April, the waters in and around Presque Isle are teeming with ducks, geese, grebes, loons and similar waterbirds. But how many? And how many of which species in what locations? And most importantly, are those numbers changing over the course of many years?

This fall Erie Bird Observatory is continuing a long-term monitoring program to keep records of these numbers. We would love to have your help! We have a set of 16 locations we are using, and a simple protocol and data form for you to use, or you can use eBird and share your counts with us. Please contact us to find out how to participate! You do need to know how to identify most of the species you see. We track about 40 species, but some of those are quite rare. If you can identify the most common species of ducks, then we can use your help.

Thanks to funding from the Sustain Our Great Lakes program, part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, we are monitoring waterbird numbers as well as marsh bird breeding numbers at Presque Isle.

(Cont. on Page 7)

## MONITORING WATERBIRDS (Cont.)

Connor Vara is returning this fall as our official Waterbird Monitor, so you may see him out and about on the park. We are especially interested in whether or not we can see changes in waterbird numbers that we can tie to the control of invasive plant monocultures. Changes may be in the form of more (or fewer) birds, or different species from before and after. Although the treatments are being applied in the marshes, the diving ducks and fish-eating birds may be affected because the marshes are nurseries for fish species that move out to the bay when they get a little older.

From our first season in March-April of 2019, we estimated a cumulative total of 175,240 waterbird use-days at the 16 sites we monitored over an 8-week season. One “waterbird use-day” is just what it sounds like: one bird used that site on one day. We interpolate between days, so if there were 10 birds at a site one day, then 8 birds two days later, we estimate that there were 9 birds there on the day in between. So over those three days there were  $10 + 9 + 8 = 27$  total use-days. Our estimate is more accurate if we have an actual count from the day in between, which is why it helps to get more people out counting. Any counts you can contribute at any of our sites are valuable to us.

Last fall we tallied up 103,519 waterbird-use-days, over a 10-week season, with 33,990 of those being gulls. Excluding gulls, Scaup were the most numerous type of waterbirds we recorded. This year we are starting October 5th and trying to document more of the earlier season species, especially the dabbling ducks that are more directly tied to marsh habitat, including Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, and Northern Pintails.

If you are interested in participating, please email [ssargent@eriebirdobservatory.org](mailto:ssargent@eriebirdobservatory.org).

#

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – 2020

Like nearly everything else in 2020, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) just got a lot more complicated. In accordance with the guidelines recently distributed by the National Audubon Society to local chapters, we have been advised that we cannot make a final decision about holding our CBC until November 15, 2020.

If we decide to hold the CBC, we will post on our Facebook page, website and send an email on or soon after November 15, 2020 confirming or cancelling the CBC which is tentatively scheduled for December 19, 2020.

Although we don't generally ask ahead for participant registration, if you could please express your interest or pose any comments/questions to me at [info@presqueisleaudubon.org](mailto:info@presqueisleaudubon.org), that would be helpful in the decision making process. I'm willing to be the compiler and participate in the count with anyone interested. I know you as a responsible and cautious group and if you are in, I am in.

Michele Franz, CBC Compiler, PIAS

The Presque Isle 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 last week of the month prior to the publication date. All published material is subject to editing.

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

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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

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter only members, both new and renewal, will receive the online version of the *Tern of Events* unless they specifically request the paper copy. Please provide your e-mail address for the online version of our newsletter.

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

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**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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