

South Mountain Airs

The Newsletter of the South Mountain Audubon Society

January - March 2012, Volume XXXVII #1 – The E-mail Edition

SMAS Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) – Gettysburg Areas

Results of SMAS CBC #112 held Saturday December 17th

Our Annual Christmas Bird Count for Gettysburg and Surrounding Areas took place on Saturday, 17 December, 2011.

SMAS had 20 members and volunteers comprising 10 parties counting the number of bird species and the total individual number of birds in the field throughout most of the day in the Gettysburg count area, a 15 mile diameter circle centered on Knoxlyn, PA. Approximately 15 people also participated by observing at their bird feeders and in their yard and on property areas.

A total of 72 species were seen with 8037 individual birds tallied for the overall count. Four additional species were reported during the count week. 42 Feeder and Yard Area species totaling 673 individual birds were reported and are included in the overall totals above. These participants added several species not found by those involved in the field counts. There were 4 additional species observed during the count week period which are reported as such, but not included in the official results for the actual count day.

The species and individual totals this year compare with 73/6562 in 2009 and 76/7911 in 2010 respectively. Overall, the individual numbers of birds, per species, were down this year. We believe this was generally due to the mild weather during the count period this year. It was the first in a number of count years with open water in all count areas, thus we missed some usual waterfowl and water related species. Some of the land birds undoubtedly had yet to come South as far as normal for the date of the count due to the milder weather.

Total party hours this year were 73 ½ with 19 ½ hours on foot and 54 by vehicle. Party miles were 18 miles on foot and 402 ½ by vehicle.

The complete count is summarized by species and numbers in an Attachment at the end of the Newsletter for USPS hard copy mail recipients, and as a second attachment for recipients of the e-mail edition.

UPCOMING BIRD RELATED EVENTS

The 15th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

The GBBC will be held this year February 17 – 20, 2012

Discover and help the birds in your community. It's fun, family-friendly, and educational. It is free and open to all ages and skill levels.

Each year, tens of thousands of people throughout the U.S. And Canada take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Participants take part in their own backyards, out their office windows, at local parks and nature centers, and absolutely anywhere else. You can spend as little as 15 minutes or even make a whole weekend of it.

People of all ages and levels of bird-watching experience are welcome to participate. The GBBC is a great way to learn more about the birds in your community and connect with nature and is perfect for fledgling birders. You can count by yourself, with your family, community group, school, or friends. It is an ideal way for experienced birders to introduce children, grandchildren and others to the wonderful world of birds.

Learn how easy it is to participate. Enter your data. Explore results on-line. You can also enter a photo contest if you take pictures of the birds and have a chance to win birding prizes. For complete information visit the GBBC website on-line at:

www.birdcount.org

UPCOMING SMAS PROGRAMS & PRESENTATIONS

Unless indicated otherwise, all SMAS Programs are held at the Adams County Agricultural Resource Center, 670 Old Harrisburg Road, Gettysburg, PA at 7:30 PM. A room number for the SMAS meeting will be posted on the front lobby entry inner door.

Please note there are no regularly scheduled monthly Chapter meetings or other events in the summer months of July and August with the exception of the Annual SMAS Picnic in August, usually the second Monday.

Monday January 9th – **“The History of Hawk Mountain”**

Bill Anderson of the Appalachian Audubon Society will provide his presentation on the history of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. This will include not only information and details about the “Hawk Mountain” site but also about Rosalie Edge, the person instrumental in creation of the sanctuary and its opening to the public as the world's first refuge for birds of prey.

February - SMAS normally has no February Program or member Meeting.

Monday March 12th **“Deb & Ralph's Australian Odyssey”**

Our own members, Deb & Ralph Siefken, of South Mountain Audubon will share their recent experience birding Australia. They spent 32 days covering four Australian states visiting Perth, Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, Uluru, Sidney, Brisbane and Townsville. They observed close to 400 species of birds as well other things “Australian.”

UPCOMING SMAS FIELD TRIPS

Contact Mike O'Brien, Field Trip Chair, as necessary for more information on all Field Trips, the annual Christmas Bird Count and the Spring Migration Count: 717.642.6676 Res / maddogobrien@gmail.com E-mail. Please let the Leader know in advance if you plan to attend any field trip, especially if you plan to go direct. This is winter season and trips are subject to weathering out. In addition, if we have only one or two known attendees, we may cancel or reschedule a given field trip. We cannot alert you if unless we hear from you.

January 19th - **“Pine Grove Furnace State Park”**

We'll meet in the parking lot at the Camp Store and Visitors Center on route 233 (Pine Grove Road) at 8:30 A.M. We hope to see both resident and wintering land birds. We have had good luck in the past with winter species such as Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren and Red-breasted nuthatch.

If you arrive later than 8:30, the group will be in the area somewhere nearby. It can be cold there, so dress according to the weather forecast. Bring binoculars and a snack and drink as desired. If interested in carpooling to the site contact the field trip leader in this regard.

February 9th – “Conowingo Dam”

Conowingo Dam is located in Northeastern Maryland on the Susquehanna River just northwest of where the river flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

The primary avian attractions at the dam are gulls and Bald Eagles and these are at their peak in the winter months. Conowingo is an electricity generation plant and when the turbines are running, large intake valves suck water, and fish, through the dam, providing excellent feeding for fish-eating bird species.

The number of Bald Eagles can be impressive if conditions are right. Recent reports have numbered over 100 eagles and over 200 were reported as seen at one point in late 2011.

Travel time is about 2 hours from the Gettysburg area. We will meet at the parking lot area between CVS and Burger King (across road opposite Walmart) on US #30 near its intersection with US #15 at 8 AM (this is on the West side of the US #30 and #15 interchange).

Bring binoculars, appropriate clothing per the weather including windy conditions, and snacks/drink as per personal needs. Scopes are desirable if available. This is SMAS's first trip to the area so we will be feeling our way a bit. There are facilities available near the dam.

March 22nd - #Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area”

The Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, located on the Lebanon-Lancaster County line about one mile south of Kleinfeltersville, is a tract owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission for the protection, propagation management, preservation and controlled harvest of wildlife. Per the PA Game Commission, this area of more than 5,000 acres provides habitat for waterfowl, forest and farmland wildlife species, and includes a 40 acre shallow lake and 70 acres of impoundments.

Bring binoculars, appropriate clothing per the weather including windy conditions, and snacks/drink as per personal needs. Scopes are desirable if available. Mixed birding from vehicles on wildlife drive loop roads and some walking to include, if desired, about a quarter mile to viewing point on the lake area (and return). Facilities available. Contact the leader as needed / for additional information.

Meet at the parking lot area between CVS and Burger King (across road opposite Walmart) on US #30 near its intersection with US #15 at 8 AM (this is on the West side of the US #30 and #15 interchange).

Feathery Factoid: How far can birds fly?

In recent issues of the Newsletter we have explored extreme examples of how high some birds fly. The last issue covered how deep some water related species have been recorded.

Continuing our avian trivia for this edition, we shall look at how far birds fly distance-wise. This category is not as simple as it might seem because we have to examine birds by different types and if they make their journey non-stop, i.e., without landing, or if they layover one or more times along the way.

The Arctic Tern is famous for its migration and generally accepted as the world champion distance flyer in this regard; it flies from Arctic breeding grounds to the Antarctic and back again each year, a round trip of 24,000 miles, a 12,000 mile journey each way, by far the longest regular migration by any known animal. This is measured point to point but the bird meanders to take advantage of prevailing winds and can be blown off course by storms at sea. Thus, it actually travels much further in total mileage and interestingly, the Arctic Tern sees two summers and more daylight per year than any other creature on the planet.

However, the Arctic Tern is a water bird and while it spends the majority of its life at sea, mostly far from any land features, it can, if necessary, alight. This is usually on flotsam at sea, but it can survive in the water briefly depending on conditions, and is able to take off again. In our next newsletter edition we will look at other distance migrants such as shorebirds, waterfowl and a few land birds in general.

Accessing the SMAS Newsletter

A great feature of having the Newsletter on-line and receiving it via e-mail, is that you can always access a misplaced or discarded issue at a future date.

You can access the Newsletter in several ways.

First, if you do not routinely discard your emails or you retain selected items in your in-box or transfer them to a saved information folder or similar, you can always access them at a future date on your own system.

Second, we post the electronic edition on the internet at the following url: perch.es

Simply copy the url and paste it into your browser search box or just type it in.

The first header that appears is for the current (most recent) issue. In addition, there is a heading, by year, for past quarter issues which we archive on the site. We have put the past few issues here since we started the electronic edition.

Third, you can access it on the internet at the Yahoo.com Chat Group site, Adams County Nature Chat (AdCoNaChat).

We post our SMAS field trips, meeting dates and topics, special events like an annual picnic, a spring luncheon, an owl prowl, and other club news on the calendar. There are directions uploaded to the files section for some areas we have trips to, and also, we often upload the species list from completed field trips and Christmas Bird Counts on the Files area. You can access the AdCoNaChat web-site at the link provided below. This is the link to the home page and from there you can access posts and messages by members, the Calendar and Files section, and much more. Copy and paste the following url into your browser search box:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AdCoNaChat/>

OTHER SMAS RELATED INFORMATION

<u>Board Members</u>	Point of Contact	Telephone	Email address
President	Melissa Deitz	334-5585	sdeitz1630@comcast.net
Vice-President	Cy Deitz	253-0297	sdeitz1630@comcast.net
Secretary	Vacant		
Treasurer	Mike Bertram	Currently NA	the2nomads@hughes.net
Director At Large	Carole Simon	337-1662	carolesimon@embarqmail.com
Director At Large	Bob Brandt	677-8323	brantownb@aol.com

Committee Chairs

Conservation	Rusty Ryan	642-9293	rryan@adamscounty.us
Education	Vacant		
Field Trips	Mike O'Brien	642-6676	maddogobrien@gmail.com
Hospitality	Vacant		
Membership	Nancy Locher**	334-4768	nclocher@embarqmail.com
Programs	Deb Siefken	677-4830	siefkend@embarqmail.com
Publications	Vacant*		

* Mike O'Brien, pro tempore

** Ms. Locher for questions on joining as a member, etc., / Mr. O'Brien re statistics and detail information
See the respective contact information above for these asterisked areas.