



The Mountain Chat

Newsletter of the Mountaineer Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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Winter—Spring 2011

Happy Serendipity

By Betsy and Mike Breiding

I'm a firm believer in serendipity. We've taken vacations that were planned and scheduled to the hilt, driving hours on end to reach our booked hotel or getting to our reserved state park campground to find it crowded and noisy. But our best vacations seem to be the ones on which we have been brave enough to leave the details to chance. Our trip to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan this past June confirmed my belief in serendipity again and again.

Surprise #1: Due to bad camping experiences on previous trips, we decided not to choose a campground until we could actually see what it looked like, how crowded in was, etc., then choose a site and register on the spot. Our plan was to stay in a hotel in Marquette and then find a secluded campsite in the Hiawatha National forest the next day. On a whim we decided to stop in at the US Forest Service Office half an hour before it closed. We told the "Forest Service Ladies" our plans. "Oh, no, we don't use the on site registration system anymore", said one. "You have to register and pay for your campsite at a Forest Service Office ahead of time." So - not enough time now for us to go look at campsites, come back to Marquette and register! But the kindly "FS Ladies" took pity on us. They questioned us on what type of site we were looking for, put their heads together, and came up with site #3 at East Lake about 30 miles to the north.

We headed out to East Lake the next morning and found a beautiful site with its own stretch of beach. We could put in our kayaks right from the site, skinny dip and sun on our private beach. Whippoorwills sang us lullabies at night and bald eagles circled overhead in the sun. A mother loon swam with her babies on her back. We stayed four nights!

Surprise #2: Continuing on our UP adventure, we headed up the west coast of the Keweenaw Peninsula looking for a quiet little motel, hopefully on the water. At Eagle River we found the Eagle River Inn perched right on the beach. However it didn't look very personable and didn't seem to have anyplace to sit outside. We

stood in the parking lot haggling with the owner over the price of a room. "Well, since it's off season, I can let you have it for \$85 a night. You can try farther up the coast if you want, but you won't find ANYTHING on the water." For some reason, maybe just to be perverse, we headed up the coast anyway. And there in Eagle Harbor was the Shoreline Resort - not a "resort" at all really, but a little motel nestled in the curve of the harbor with old Adirondack chairs scattered around on its deserted beach. We decided to stay! Lying in bed in the dark we could hear the waves slapping the shore and bell buoys clanging in the distance out in the harbor. At 6:00 a.m on the beach our slightly dotty next door neighbor sang Happy Birthday to me, and later that day we took a hike just up the road from the motel and came face to face with a black bear! What an adventure!

Surprise # 3: We've found that it can be a mistake to try going back to a favorite spot from a previous vacation. We had planned to camp at Porcupine Mountains State Park Camp Ground - a place we had enjoyed on two earlier occasions. What a mistake! Something had changed since our last trip. Maybe it was the time of year, or maybe it was us. Whatever it was, as one after another RV rolled past our tent, dogs barked and neighbors called happily back and forth to each other, we quickly took down our tent, retrieved our camping fee and headed south into the National Forest once again. There at the end of many back roads we found Robbins Pond Campground, a little place with just three sites. During our three day stay we were able to hopscotch to fairly close-by areas to hike and swim, enjoying the country roads where we saw sand hill cranes, flocks of bobolinks and miles of luxuriant stands of Ostrich fern. The campsite next to us was occupied by an older gentleman named Keith and his two dogs. He was a quiet neighbor, interesting and companionable and we keep in touch with him still.

These are just three of the many serendipitous experiences that made our trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula so memorable. Would they have happened if we had planned our vacation to the day and hour? I don't know, but I'm glad we did not.

To read the whole story visit
www.EpicRoadTrips.us/michigan

President's Message

Dear Members,

Thanks to the continued support of our members, we have another interesting newsletter and a very promising spring calendar of activities. I especially want to call your attention to our annual banquet on June 3, 2011. Dr. Greg Good, Director of the History of Physics Program in Washington, DC, will be our speaker. His illustrated talk is entitled: "Reflections on Hiking and Working in the Mon National Forest." Greg is widely known and respected in the state for his environmental work and will be a great speaker.

Before the banquet and talk we are planning a brief business meeting and the election of officers. If you cannot make the business meeting, we still hope that you can attend the banquet, and that you will invite friends and family. Based on last year's banquet we can promise a delightful meal, drinks, and a stimulating talk. Details on price and menu will follow in the spring.

Thanks, and I look forward to seeing you at one of the spring outings.

Joe Super

New Wetland Boardwalk at the West Virginia Botanic Garden

By Erin Smaldone

Hi everyone! This is a note from the WVBG to let you know that the construction of our new Wetland Boardwalk is now completed! Interpretive signs will be added soon and the official ribbon cutting will happen in the spring. This is a wonderful new addition to our existing trails and should prove rewarding for birders. I am currently working on a new interpretive sign about wetland wildlife. It would be great if I could get reports from folks about what they are seeing on the boardwalk so I can include some of those species on the sign and eventually in a bird guide. The boardwalk is located in the area marked "wetland" on the trail map, on the eastern side of the reservoir loop trail (map available at www.wvbg.org). Gain access on a short wooded path near the intersection of the reservoir trail and the service road. Please report your wetland bird and other animal sightings to me by email at Erin@wvbg.org. Thanks, and happy trails!

Events Calendar

Winter—Spring 2011

Programs

February 8, 2011 7:00 pm, Terry Bronson, "New Hampshire Birds" Heritage Village

April 19, 2011 7 pm

The Maurice Brooks Lecture will be held on April 19th at 7 PM at 316 Percival Hall, WVU Campus. The speaker will be Todd Katzner, Ph.D. His topic will be **Eagles and Windmills in WV**. Dr. Katzner is a co-author of the book, The Eagle Watchers. This lecture is jointly sponsored by The WVU Division of Wildlife, Mountaineer Audubon and the Old Hemlock Foundation.

June 3, 2011 Banquet and Annual Meeting

Westvaco Center, Chestnut Ridge

Meeting: 6:00-6:30

Cocktails: 6:30-7:00, followed by

Dinner and Speaker

Dr. Greg Good, "Reflections on Hiking and Working in the Mon National Forest"

Spring Bird Walks

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| April 19, 2011 | 7:00 am, WVU Arboretum
Leaders: Terry Bronson and LeJay Graffious |
| April 26, 2011 | 7:00 am, WVU Arboretum
Leaders: Sue Olcott and LeJay Graffious |
| May 3, 2011 | 7:00 am, WVU Arboretum
Leaders: Brett White and LeJay Graffious |
| May 10, 2011 | 7:00 am, WVU Arboretum
Leaders: Caden Haines and LeJay Graffious |
| May 10, 2011 | 5:00 pm, 2 nd Annual South Park Neighborhood Bird Walk. Meet in the Morgantown High Parking Lot
Leader: Kelly Williams |
| May 14, 2011 | 8:00 am Warbler walk on Snake Hill hosted by Dee Fulton. Contact Dee at dfvet@aol.com or watch the mountaineeraudubon.org website. |
| May 17, 2011 | 7:00 am, WVU Arboretum
Leaders: Hillar Klandorf and LeJay Graffious |

CBC—for the Love and Excitement of Birds

Report by LeJay Graffious, CBC Coordinator

Thirty birders participated in the Mountaineer Audubon annual Christmas Bird Count on December 18, 2010. The group concentrated their efforts in a fifteen mile diameter circle centered on the Morgantown Airport. This area was divided into four areas covered by a team. The efforts paid off. Seventy-two species and 9276 individuals were documented during the twenty-four hour period. An additional five species were found during count week.

Some observers started the day before sunrise searching for owls. The team leaders set their meeting locations and starting times. The teams came together at dusk to socialize over dinner and compile the day's results. We have always felt that if we could find 60 species of birds, then it would be a good count. For the past two years, the Mountaineer Count topped 70 species. This was unexpected this year with cold weather having frozen all still water, greatly limiting the migrating waterfowl.

This year seventeen species topped the twenty-six year high for each species. The new high count birds were for Mute Swan, Redhead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Bald Eagle, American Coot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-shafted Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Carolina Chickadee, European Starling, Eastern Towhee and Fox Sparrow. The Northern Mockingbird equaled the all-time high. The Horned Lark was added as a new bird for the count. A complete report of the Mountaineer CBC can be viewed on-line at <http://mountaineeraudubon.org/cbc/CBC-2010.pdf>.

Participants were Kyle Aldinger, Nancy Bronson, Terry Bronson, Alan Clark (team leader), Bennet Clark, Christian Clark, Jane Clark, Crisa Cooley, Derek Courtney, Edward Crowell, Jonathan Crowell, Susan Crowell, Katie Fallon, Dee Fulton, Hillar Klandorf (team leader), Bruce Ludwick, Gail Ludwick, Bob Lueckel, Tommy Lueckel, Brian McMillian, Phillip Murray, Sue Olcott (team leader), Mike Peters, David Phillips, Virginia Phillips, Larry Schwab and Cindy Tischer. John Hall and Erica McCord added data from their home feeders. Again this year LeJay Graffious coordinated and was a team leader.

The results for the Mountaineer Audubon Christmas Bird Counts are posted on the National Audubon web site. The data from counts from across the world is available on-line for citizen scientists to use. The data these counts provide annually are important long term data sets used to assess environmental health.

Everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

Update on Marcellus Shale Legislation

By Dee Fulton

On January 10th Judiciary Subcommittee A met and passed the hydraulic fracturing bill out to the Legislature. Currently there are three fracking bills to watch: the hefty 90-100 page Judiciary and WV Department of Environmental Protection bills and the brief House Bill 2403 introduced by Barbara Fleischauer. All three have many good provisions and some that fall short of what environmental and conservation groups seek.

Among the good provisions:

- All three bills require a water management plan that details where, when and how much water will be withdrawn from a waterway and accountability for the disposition of the wastewater.
- The Judiciary bill requires inspection of well casing construction at each step in the cementing, completing and altering.
- All three require that chemicals added to frack water be identified.
- Fees: The DEP bill establishes a well drilling permit fee of \$10,000 per well. The Judiciary bill calls for \$15,000 per well.

Among what is missing is a requirement for use of closed loop systems rather than open pits for containment of frack fluids. Both the Judiciary and DEP bills allow the burial of pit liners on site. There is no mention of air quality regulation except for a simple provision in the DEP bill that requires the adoption of measures consistent with known technology to control fugitive air emissions.

Visits with legislators in Charleston are being encouraged by allies of clean water and clean air and it is very likely that there will be at least one carload of Mon-Preston citizen lobbyists making the trip each week that the Legislature is in session. Contact Duane Nichols of the Upper Mon River Association at duane330@aol.com to join in a carpool. To keep current on the latest news about fracking, including updates on the progress of the fracking bills in the Legislature, visit FrackCheckWV.net and use the Subscribe function on the left side of the homepage to receive emails

Lobbyists representing the gas industry are routinely promoting the economic benefits of more jobs in West Virginia to our state representatives. It is incumbent upon us to bring balance to the dialogue by discussing the risks of hydraulic fracturing and demand regulation to protect our water and air quality for the benefit of our health and the health of our feathered friends and other denizens of Nature.

The time is now to make a difference for tomorrow. Get involved.

National Audubon Society

A gift membership to Audubon will be enjoyed for the entire year. First year dues of \$20.00 include local chapter membership.

National Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Application

YES, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the Mountaineer Chapter. Chapter code:C92Y5107. Send Audubon magazine and my membership card to the address below.

Please send a gift membership to the National Audubon Society and the appropriate local chapter to the person and address below.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS _____

Please make checks payable to the National Audubon Society

Send this application and your check to:
 National Audubon Society
 Chapter Membership Data Center
 PO Box 420235
 Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235

Mountaineer Audubon Directory

President	John Super	292-4336
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Newsletter	Sally Wilts	379-7567

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