



WARIOTO WARBLER

National
Audubon
Society



CLARKSVILLE NATIONAL AUDUBON CHAPTER

VOLUME 40, NUMBER 5

February 2009

WARIOTO AT A GLANCE

REGULAR MEETING: Thurs., Feb. 5, 7:30 p.m., Sundquist Science Bldg, conference room, D126, APSU.

PROGRAM: Blaine Hyle, Certified Wildlife Biologist with USDA Wildlife Services of Tennessee will present a program on protecting endangered birds.

FIELD TRIP: Feb. 14; to Bells Bend seeking Whooping Cranes and other opportunities; leave from APSU's 8th St. parking lot at 7:30 a.m. See information below.

BOARD MEETING: Sundquist Science Building, Biology Conference room, D126 at 7:00 p.m.

Visit our webpage at http://www.apsu.edu/schillers/Audubon/Warioto_Chapter.htm

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, Barbara Wilbur

Even after several weeks I am still excited about our 2008 Christmas Bird Count. It has been years since we had such great participation. And, it was delightful to have so many folks stay for the tallying - and chili. Thanks to each and all who counted, tallied, brought food and desserts. A special thanks to Debbie for coordinating, plus thanks to Elvira for getting there with the "necessities." It was a super day!!

There has been a great deal of excitement in the local birding world recently. The two Whooping Cranes returned to Bells Bend in December and several of our group has been over to see them. They are tremendous, and if you have not seen them, you should make the trip! (See planned field trip - editor) Plus, the property owner, George West, is there often chatting with viewers and discussing ways to keep Bells Bend from being developed.

Then a Snowy Owl showed up near Spring Hill, TN in December and has been making lots of news, plus causing quite a traffic problem at times. It too is certainly worth the trip over, even if you've seen them before. Snowy Owls are beautiful and this one is no exception! (Check the TN-birds website or touch base with me if you need directions.) Along with the excitement of the unusual birds, there have been some not-so-pleasant reports of ill-mannered observers who thought it okay to climb the fences, flush the birds, and trespass on private property. How can we educate the uneducated???

In closing, we have some excellent chapter programs scheduled for the remainder of this Audubon year, so be sure to mark the first Thursday night of each month on your calendar now. Also, watch closely for upcoming field trips. There will definitely be one to pique your interest.

CHAPTER PROGRAMS, Kathy DeWein

Last month: Richard Tippit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers explained the management mission for the Cumberland River basin. The USACE monitors the river's reservoirs and determines the spillage and flow rates depending on several factors. In recent years the Corp had turned to more "green" management of these areas. With the recent drought the impact of low water levels has hit many areas. The Corps also has environmental education days for school-aged children where they are shown some of the current efforts of the Corps in managing the Cumberland's waters.

Dam repairs are part of the management efforts and are very costly. Water quality and dissolved oxygen levels have topped the list of immediate concerns with hydropower and recreation falling at the bottom of the list until substantial water replacement occurs. Those in attendance were very interested in his presentation and a lively discussion followed the meeting. This meeting was also the 39th anniversary of the Warioto chapter being formed with Audubon.

February Program: Blaine Hyle, Certified Wildlife Biologist with USDA Wildlife Services of Tennessee will present a program on protecting endangered birds. He will also give information about his agency at the February 5th Audubon meeting.

FIELD TRIPS, Chris O'Bryan

It is my hope that all of you had a great New Year and have recovered from all those Christmas Bird Counts! Our February field trip will take place at Bells Bend in West Nashville. There have been multiple accounts of Whooping Crane observations at this location and it is my hope that we can get in on the action. Those who plan to attend need to meet at the 8th St. Parking Lot adjacent to the Sundquist Science Complex by 7:30am on February 14th. What a better way to spend Valentine's Day than with the Whooping Cranes? Should we not have luck with the whoopers, we can also visit Bells Bend Park, a Metro Nashville park with a nice new visitor's center. Also, if folks are so inclined, we can continue south to Spring Hill and see if the Snowy Owl is about.

CONSERVATION LETTER, Joe Schiller

The inauguration of President Obama marks a "shining new day" in the minds of many Americans. However, before we get too caught up in the history and symbolism of the moment, I would like to throw a strong dose of political reality on our collective expectations. First, our economy is staggering along with problems not seen for generations. Second, we are mired in two wars that are costing us billions of dollars a month. Third, we are in the throes of a global climate crisis screaming for major energy policy action to avoid global catastrophe. Many of our political leaders would have you believe that the first item prevents any action on the third, but refuse to apply that same reasoning to the second. In short, President Obama has his work cut out. The easiest part was the election, now the real work begins. He is not going to succeed without our help.

Don't misunderstand my message. I really do believe that President Obama "gets it." He understands that solving item one above cannot be done without first solving item 3. He understands that item 2 is also largely due to our past failure to solve item 3. That is why he has maintained that the economic stimulus plan he is proposing will seek to double renewable energy production in the United States within three years. That is why he has made restructuring our national energy policy around a renewable energy future a centerpiece of almost all of his cabinet appointment announcements and comments on economic recovery strategy. But don't get to feeling all warm and fuzzy and thinking you can relax because everything is going to get better now. It is not. We have a long, hard slog ahead.

Many of you may be surprised to discover that I am not beside myself with ecstasy at the prospects for renewable energy, a post carbon economy, and the avoidance of a climate catastrophe that an Obama presidency may achieve. I am more optimistic, but I have been studying these issues for a long time, and I have a pretty good idea of how bad things have gotten and how great the challenge is to overcoming them. Take for example President Obama's bold sounding statement that he is going to double renewable energy production in the U.S. in three years. Well, guess what, except for the effects of the economic downturn, renewable energy probably would have doubled, or come pretty close to it, in the next three years regardless. A truly bold goal would have been to quadruple it. Perhaps president Obama was not aware of renewable energy's incredible recent growth. More likely he wanted to set a goal that sounded lofty, and would impress, but also would offer a high probability of being met. President Obama did not become president because he does not understand politics.

I am not worried about President Obama's political acumen. I am worried about the political acumen of his throngs of supporters. Those who most fervently want President Obama to succeed, that includes me, must understand that now is when they must be the most involved to help him succeed. Now is the critical time! Here are just a couple examples to illustrate.

Now is the time the provisions of the economic stimulus package are being debated in congress. Now is the time the vested interests are lining up at the trough for a handout! You may be surprised to learn that the coal industry has already succeeded in obtaining \$2.8 billion of last year's economic stimulus money and currently has a commitment for \$2.4 billion dollars more in "clean coal" research in this year's version of the recovery plan. And, they are still seeking more! Now is the time to say "no" to coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear. These industries have received, and continue to receive, hundreds of billions of dollars in economic subsidies since their inception decades ago. If they cannot stand on their own now, they never will. Besides, these are the technologies of the past. These are the technologies that are jeopardizing our children's futures. Now is the time to say "yes" to investment in the renewable energy technologies that will create the jobs of tomorrow that will employ our children without destroying our planet in the process. The decisions congress writes into the stimulus package will almost certainly favor the traditional industries that have poured millions into the campaign coffers of elected officials unless *we insist on change!* Now is the time to get involved!

Now is the time legislation to control greenhouse emissions is being debated. I believe a tax on carbon is the best policy option, but a carbon cap and trade program is more politically palatable because it is more complicated, and thus, easier to hide where the political favors are going to and coming from. Coal companies and coal burning electric utilities will be working overtime like never before to get congress to award them carbon credits on the cheap so they can go on doing pretty much what they have always done. The coal companies and electric utilities that count many elected representatives their indentured servants will almost certainly win these concessions unless *we insist on change!* Now is the time to make your opinions known to your elected representatives!

Change is never easy. The changes we must make are breathtaking. We must restructure our way of living and the entire economy. There will be losers. Some of the losers are rich and powerful. We are poor and weak, but we are many! Change will only happen if the millions who travelled to Washington for the inauguration and the tens of millions who traveled there in spirit via their televisions demand change-- of their governments, of their communities, of themselves. Only a committed, involved electorate can make this change happen.

"You must become the change you seek," Mahatma Ghandi

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORT, Debbie Hamilton

The 109th CBC, Clarksville's 38th, was held on January 3, 2009, and was the highest number of counters that we've had in a decade with 24 participants. There were six different birding parties including a courageous boating group. There were 8 feeder counters, also an increase in the number of participants that we've had in the last few years.

We had a gray day but the temperature was pleasant for birding. The birds seemed to enjoy the weather and were active throughout the day. The maximum temperature for the day was 60 °F. The low was 49 °F.

A total of 11,195 birds were counted in 69 species. The average number of species counted in the last 20 counts has been 69.7 species. This was a record year and the highest number of individuals counted for several species: Turkey vulture – 357, Black Vulture – 689, Mourning Dove – 564, Cedar Waxwing – 1301 and Bald Eagles – 5, (2 immature and 3 mature). We counted 1442 American Robins and while the counters were weary or counting American Robins at the end of the day, it still was not the highest number ever counted in the Clarksville count. That record was set in the 104th count with 1886 birds.

Lee Lang added a species to the count that has never been seen before on the Clarksville Count: Eurasian Collared-Dove.

One of my favorite parts of the count is the chili supper after the count and the tally of species. Larry Safko provided us with another great record of the counters through his photography.

Thanks to all that participated in the field count. They were Faye Balbac, Suva Bastin, Allison Bennett, Cheryl Binion, Alan Bottomlee, Kathy DeWein, Kevin Fitch, Elaine and Glenn Foust, Steve and Debbie Hamilton, John and Cheryl Koons, Bill and Gloria

Milliken, Daniel Moss, Dan Nelms, Duane Rice, Polly Rooker, Larry Safko, Joe Schiller, Karen Sorenson, Paul Schwab and Barbara Wilbur.

Thanks to all the feeder counters: Gene Baker & Elvira Roberts, Nita Heilman, the Heaton Family, Lee Lang, Marilyn Rachlin, Sally Schiller (feeder compiler), and Amy Wallace.

Count results will be reported in the March newsletter.



RUSTY BLACKBIRD BLITZ: FEBRUARY 7-15, 2009
Daniel Moss



Rusty Blackbird populations have taken a nose dive over the last few decades. Breeding bird counts and Christmas counts show their numbers have declined as much as 90% across North America. Although no one knows the cause for this alarming decline, winter habitat loss and degradation are likely candidates.

The Rusty Blackbird Working Group is collaborating with National Audubon and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology to enlist the help of birdwatchers in locating important Rusty Blackbird concentrations. During the February 7-15 timeframe volunteers are asked to check out potentially suitable locations or habitat to help learn about the distribution and abundance of these blackbirds. Important data to keep track of includes: date, location, habitat, number, sex of birds, and activity (for example roosting or feeding). This blitz occurs during part of the Great Backyard Bird Count (Feb 13-16) so if you're doing a backyard count and see any Rusties, then that data can be sent as Blitz data. Any

observations can be submitted to e-bird (www.ebird.org). For more information on the Blitz or about Rusty Blackbirds in general go to Smithsonian's Rusty Blackbird website (http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty_Blackbird/blitz.cfm).



THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT, February 13-16, 2009.

Because you are a bird and nature fan you are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), **February 13-16, 2009.**

A joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.cornell.edu/ornithology) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org), this free event is an opportunity for you and your family to make an important contribution to conservation. Even if you are a novice bird watcher or can identify just a few species, you can contribute to the count. You can count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event in your yard, park, school yard, or just about anywhere where birds can be found. Report your sightings online at www.birdcount.org. This website is chocked full of information including tips to [help identify birds](#), a [photo gallery](#), and special materials for educators. There's even a regional bird checklist to get an idea of what birds may be found in our area in February.

The data you collect as a "citizen scientist" helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Your efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

NEW MEMBER FORM

Yes, I would like to become a member of the National Audubon Society and the local chapter: **Clarksville Warioto Audubon Society** for the introductory rate of \$20.00.

I will receive six issues of National Audubon magazine, the Warioto Audubon society newsletter (9) issues, and help to protect America's Birds, rescue endangered wildlife and preserve vital habitat.

Please Print:

Name _____

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Make Checks payable to National Audubon Society and send this coupon and your check to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 51005, Boulder, Colorado 80323-1005

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**WARIOTO AUDUBON SOCIETY
C/O STEVE HAMILTON, EDITOR
290 ARDMOOR DR.
CLARKSVILLE, TN 37043**

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ARTICLES AND INFORMATION FOR THE MARCH NEWSLETTER ARE DUE 13 FEBRUARY.

MAIL TO: Steve Hamilton, 3040 Snardon Mill Rd., Allensville, KY 42204 or *hamiltonsw@apsu.edu*