

Wissahickon Nature Club

www.wissahickonnatureclub.com

NOVEMBER 12, 2015

Announcements

Treasurer's Report

According to Treasurer

Dianne Machesney:

412.366.7869

Previous balance: \$1005.02

No activity

Don't miss our next meeting. **December 3, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Pete Woods** will present **Observing Nature in the Digital Age: Options for Documenting and Sharing Your Discoveries**. When you are walking in the woods and find something really beautiful / unusual / interesting / perplexing, what do you do with that discovery? Platforms such as *iNaturalist*, *eBird*, and *Odonata Central* allow you to make permanent records of your finds and share them with others who are interested. You benefit by getting help identifying observations, compiling your life lists, and seeing what others are finding in your area. The scientific community benefits from improved knowledge of a species' distribution, phenology, and relationships with other species. **Pete Woods** will introduce you to *iNaturalist* and explain how the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program uses observations of rare species to aid their conservation.



Tonight's Program

Due to a power outage during our last meeting **Don Weiss'** program has been rescheduled for:

complete inventory of the over 490 different species, will be an enjoyable journey. <http://www.donweissphotography.com>

November 12, Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Don Weiss will present **Mammals of North America**. This program is *Mammals of North America* which, while it falls far short of being a

We will reschedule **Judy Stark's** program **Gardens Around the Globe** for a later date.



In Memoriam

Melvin Madeoy, Marlow
Madeoy's father, Nancy's
father-in-law

Ross Little, Melissa Little's
brother

Worth Repeating

*The chill winds blow and
every leaf is winged with the
flame of autumn.*

-Linda Knight

Volunteer, Please

Who wants to make Party Favors
for our traditional Holiday,
Christmas Cookie Exchange?

P-l-e-a-s-e. We need a little help.

Why Owlers Wear Hats

by Chuck Tague

from the *Nature Observer News* archives December 23, 2000

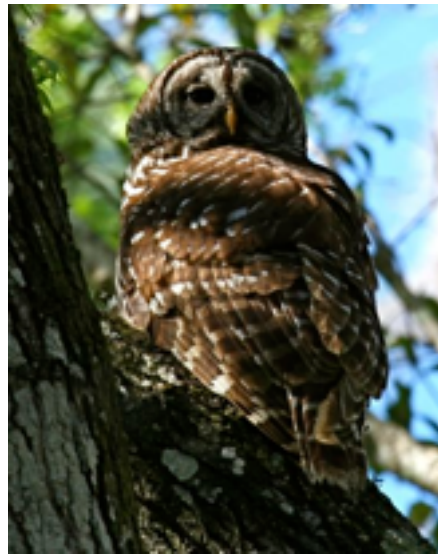
Moisture from my breath condensed and froze in my beard. My face must have looked like a snow cone but my companion never noticed. Dan was concentrating on the whinnying screech owl. Besides, it was dark -- so dark we could barely see the trees against the sky.

We never saw the owl fly to the branch over our heads. Nor did we see it leave. Owls fly on silent wings. We never heard the owl come or go. At least we assumed it was an owl. Chunks of soggy ice fell from the tree. A large piece hit my hat. Another piece brushed Dan. I scanned overhead with my flashlight. A branch shook but the owl was gone.

The owl called again. This time it called from across the creek. I searched with the light but the tangle of twigs concealed the pint-sized bird. Indeed screech owls are pint-sized. They are not much larger than an eight-ounce bottle. We walked a few hundred yards down the road. I turned on the tape player. Ahead of us another screecher answered the recorded whinny. "That's number four". I think Dan shook his head in agreement. He was too cold to talk.

Dan Hinnebusch is a high school junior and a bird fanatic. I met him on a walk I led for the Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship a few years ago. He

joined me on several outings and bird surveys since, but that cold December morning was his first official Christmas Bird Count. It was also the first official Christmas Bird Count in the hills south of Pittsburgh.



Barred Owl by Chuck Tague

The National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count began one hundred and one years ago. It began as an alternative to the traditional bird hunt on Christmas afternoon. In 1999 50,000 participants surveyed birds in over 1800 counts circles across North America. It is the longest running continuous bird survey in history.

During a three-week period around Christmas observers count and identify the bird within a circle. All count circles are fifteen miles in diameter so the data can be compared. Also to keep the

information comparable, compilers record the number of observers and the amount of time they observe. The observers are then divided into three groups, field observers, feeder watchers and owlers.

I suppose there are valid analytical reasons for separating owlers from the other observers. In western Pennsylvania a party of counters records about a hundred individual birds an hour. Any more than three owls an hour is exceptional.

I suspect, however, count organizers have a more sinister motive for segregating owlers from the general population. Owlers by nature are of questionable character. They totally lack both social grace and common sense. Many regard owlers as despicable misfits who wander fields, forests and city neighborhoods under the cover of night. How can you trust anyone who lurks in the shadows; who has no apparent fear of the dark?

Besides, we wear funny hats.

Many normal birders have romantic notions about searching for these mysterious nocturnal flyers and the people who chase them. Every year a birder or two offers to accompany me on my rounds. When the sun comes up they politely say they had an enjoyable time. When it's time for the next bird count, however, they always have an excuse. I no longer feel hurt. I expect it.

Continued on Page 3



At the organizational meeting three days before the Pittsburgh South Hills count, the participants were divided into teams. Almost as an afterthought, the compiler announced that Chuck Tague will go out before dawn to look for owls. Everyone turned and stared at me. To break the tension I asked if anyone would like to come along. People mumbled and squirmed in their chairs. Everyone I looked at turned away. When the meeting resumed Dan leaned over and whispered, "I'll go with you".

We began owling at four in the morning at Mingo Creek County Park. The day before I called for permission to be in the park after dark, which is normally against the rules. At the first stop the loud hum of an industrial installation near the park entrance made owling impossible. I'm not sure what the plant made besides noise.

In the park, at the end of a wooded ravine, I played a recording of a calling screech owl. No owls responded. When we tried by the creek an owl

answered immediately. A second owl called from the hillside. At the next stop a Great Horned Owl "hooted" in the distance before the screech owl trilled and flew over our heads. We tried several more stops. At each we walked several hundred yards along the roads and trails. The ridges and slopes were quiet. All the screech owls were in the woods along the creek.



We found five screech owls by the time we reached the covered bridge, including the one that shook the ice off the branches. But we didn't come to Mingo to find screech owls.

We came to find the Barred Owl that hangs out near the covered bridge. We called it for twenty very cold minutes. No owls answered. We backtracked through the park and tried several more spots.

Eastern Screech Owl and Great Horned Owl photos by Chuck Tague

We called and called until I shivered from the cold. We never heard a Barred Owl.

It was almost six o'clock and still dark. I wanted to look for the Great Horned Owl in Peters Lake Park so we had to leave.

In the car I turned the heater knobs as far as they would go. It took five minutes before we felt any heat. I pulled off one of my gloves and wiggled my fingers. A few minutes later I removed the second glove. Dan began to talk. In spite of the cold he still sounded excited. "He may be back," I thought.

Dan was disappointed about the Barred Owl but he never heard that many screech owls before. We both talked about the owl that knocked the ice on us. Eventually the chill was gone from our clothes and the car felt comfortable. I reached up to remove my hat.

My fingers squished into something cold and gooey on the brim. It definitely was an owl that landed in the tree, but not everything that fell was ice.





Celebrate Nature

Photo by Chuck Tague

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

Loree Speedy 724.518.6022

loreespeedy@gmail.com

<http://www.botsocwpa.org/>

Meeting

Meetings have moved to the **Ford-Mateer Classroom** of Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland).

For details go to <http://www.botsocwpa.org/>

December 14, Monday, 7:15 p.m. Holiday Wild Foods Party. Bring a wild foods dish to share and 12 photos.

Environmental Book Club

Kim Metheny kmetheny@hotmail.com

Chriss O'Lare colare@outlook.com

Meet at the Panera on McKnight Road.

Upcoming Books

November 16, Monday, 7:15 p.m. Mother Nature is Trying to Kill You by Dan Riskin

Fern Hollow Nature Center

1901 Glen Mitchell Road

Sewickley, PA 15143

412.741.6136 April Claus, Naturalist

For upcoming events visit:

<http://www.fhnc.org/>

Three Rivers Birding Club

Bob VanNewkirk, President

412.366.1694

www.3rbc.org

Outings

November 22, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Moraine State Park. Meet at the Moraine State Park day use area (south shore) in the first parking lot on the right.

Meeting

December 9, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Slide Slam. Members present their favorite images of birds. Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue in Shadyside.

The Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club

wpamushroomclub.org

Cecily Franklin cs4wpmc@gmail.com

412.781.6581

Meeting

November 17, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Pot Luck Dinner and Member Photos.

For the Pot Luck, bring something for 6 – 8 people. Your choice, does not need to be mushroom related (cultivated mushrooms only if mushroom based).

Meet at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, 614 Dorseyville Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

LOOK WHAT YOU CAN GET BY
SIGNING UP AT
LEARNYOURLAND.COM

AND THERE'S MORE THERE,
LIKE A SORTABLE CALENDAR
OF NATURE OUTINGS,
MEETINGS, AND OTHER
EVENTS.

WE NEED IDEAS

WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT IDEAS
YOU, OUR MEMBERS MAY HAVE
FOR OUR CLUB. IS THERE A
PARTICULAR SPEAKER WHO
WOULD SUIT OUR MEETINGS?
CAN YOU PRESENT AN EXHIBIT
FOR A MEETING?

DO YOU HAVE A PHOTO TO
SHARE IN OUR BULLETIN OR ON
FACEBOOK? CONTACT
SUSANNE 412.771.4737 OR
MYWINTERMOON@VERIZON.NET

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN
OUTING, OR WOULD LIKE TO
LEAD OR CO-LEAD ONE?
CONTACT JUDY 412.363.0462
OR STARKJ2@AOL.COM

"LIKE" US ON OUR FACEBOOK
PAGE.

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
WISSAHICKONNATURECLUB?
FREF=TS&REF=BR_TF](https://www.facebook.com/WISSAHICKONNATURECLUB?FREF=TS&REF=BR_TF)

Happy Thanksgiving Everybody

UFO

+Thanksgiving fruit

Cranberry Saucer

Dizzy Person

+Turkey

"Wobble! Wobble!"

Orange vegetable

+Green vegetable

Pumpkin Pea!