

Wissahickon Nature Club

www.wissahickonnatureclub.com

DECEMBER 3, 2015

Announcements

Treasurer's Report

According to Treasurer

Dianne Machesney: 412.366.7869

Previous balance:	\$1005.02
Deposit: dues	66.00
5 yr renewal of URL	65.00
New balance:	\$1006.02

Don't miss our next meeting

December 17, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. **Dianne Machesney** will present **Cape May, NJ and the surrounding area**. This program is a compilation of photos Dianne has taken over various weeks and years in September, featuring flowers, birds, butterflies and interesting places to study nature. This will also be our **Christmas / Holiday Cookie Party**. We will continue Wissahickon's long-standing tradition of games, silliness and of course, the cookies.

Volunteer

We still need somebody to make our Christmas favors. **Dianne** found some really neat crafts that don't look too difficult to make. We simply need somebody who will put them together. This has been an important tradition for years and it needs to continue. Contact Dianne.

Worth Repeating

The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans, too.

..Luther Bear, Native American



iNaturalist graphic

Tonight's Program

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.



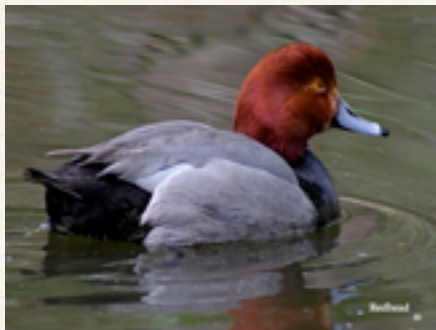
Woodpeckers in Winter

from *The Nature Observer's Journal* by **Chuck Tague**, January 25, 2011

The mid point of winter occurs on February 3, 2011, at 11:20 p.m. From then on we will be closer to the Vernal Equinox than to the Winter Solstice. The days will still be short and the nights cold, but the average daily temperatures will slowly rise. Folks will notice that the sun sets a bit later each week. In spite of some groggy rodent's fickle shadow, spring will return on schedule .. in about six weeks.

The inevitability of spring's return is never in doubt to the woodpeckers in northeastern United States. Vigorous drumming from unseen percussionists began in mid January. Like the robin's song, woodpeckers drum to claim territory and attract a mate. Although it's not their intention their rhythmic beat also announces the changing season.

Celebrate Nature



Redhead by Chuck Tague

Fern Hollow Nature Center

1901 Glen Mitchell Road
Sewickley, PA 15143

412.741.6136 **April Claus, Naturalist**
<http://www.fhnc.org/>

December 6, Sunday, 1:00 p.m. Spirits for the Holidays. Learn how to make infused vodka using any flavor you love. Chefs from the Italian Garden Dinner will host a food tasting. \$35 / \$45 + 2 fifths of vodka. Please register.

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.

Field Trip

January 1, 2016, Friday, 1:00 p.m. New Year's Day Field Trip North Park, Irwin Road, Allegheny County by Richard Nugent. In case of bad weather please call Richard at 412.487.5549.

Three Rivers Birding Club

Bob VanNewkirk, President
412.366.1694 www.3rbc.org

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.



Coyote by Chuck Tague

Pittsburgh Christmas Count Will Be Held on December 26

By Brian Shema, Pittsburgh CBC Compiler

The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's Pittsburgh Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 26.

Participation is free, and everyone (including non-participants) is invited to the count dinner on Sunday, December 27, At Beechwood Farms in Fox Chapel. Bring a covered dish, salad, or dessert that feeds 10, or make a donation to cover costs of the dinner. Immediately after dinner, the area leaders will announce their results.

To participate, contact one of the following area leaders:

Fox Chapel – Brian Shema, 412.963.6100;
bshema@aswp.org

Franklin Park/Ohio Twp. (N) – Stacey Widenhofer,
412.991.3657; stacey.fhnc@gmail.com

Hampton Twp. – Al Werling, 412.487.8581

Indiana Twp. – Steve Gosser, 412.855.5220;
smgoss@verizon.net

Kilbuck Twp. & Ohio Twp. (S) – Paul Brown,
412.963.1979; pmbrown1944@gmail.com

North Park – Sheree Daugherty, 412.322.5371;
shereedaugherty@gmail.com

Oakmont & Harmar Twp. – David Yeany,
814.221.4361; dyeany@paconserve.org

O'Hara Twp. – Steve Thomas, 412.782.4696;
thomassj22@verizon.net

Penn Hills & Verona – Mike Smith, 412.526.8360;
skeetor72@yahoo.com

Frick & Highland Parks – Mark VanderVen,
425.273.1786; nevrednav@gmail.com

Pittsburgh (rest of city) – Mike Fialkovich,
412.731.3581; mpfial@verizon.net

Ross & McCandless Twps. – Bob Machesney,
412.366.7869; remach@aol.com

Shaler Twp. – Joyce Hoffmann, 412.487.0921;
ibird@juno.com

Other Christmas Bird Counts

South Hills, December 19 – Nancy Page,
412.221.4795; **Buffalo Creek (Washington County),**

December 20 – Larry Helgerman,
bobolink1@earthlink.net; **Buffalo Creek Valley (Butler County),**

December 19 – George Reese, 724.353.9649; **South Butler**

December 26, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. April Claus, Fern Hollow Nature Center 412.741.6136 <http://www.fhnc.org/>

Woodpeckers in Winter (Continued from Page 1)



Pileated Woodpecker

Unlike other insect-dependent birds, woodpeckers do not migrate when cold weather makes food scarce. They are well equipped to dig out insects and larvae from tree bark and decaying wood. Although beetles and ants retreat for the winter, few are beyond the reach of the woodpecker's adaptations.

Woodpecker beaks are long and sharply pointed with a chisel-shaped tip. The birds drive their fine-tuned boring tools with powerful neck muscles. The 'peckers' heads are efficient shock absorbers, with thick skulls and carefully packed brains. Their tongue extends far beyond the tip of the beak because of a unique arrangement that wraps it around the back of the skull. The sensitive tongue is equipped with backward facing barbs and liberally coated with sticky saliva. After drilling into an appropriate spot, the woodpecker feels and extracts an ant, a beetle grub, or some other morsel.



Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers

Woodpeckers drill like a woodsman chops with an ax. An angled blow from the right, another from the left and wood chips fly. A millisecond before each strike protective translucent inner eyelids snap shut.

These feathered acrobats move up and down vertical trunks with the ease of a spider. They grasp the tree with short legs and powerful, long-clawed toes. Their toes are arranged in an "X" pattern. Rigid tail feathers prop up the woodpecker's rear end so the bird can hammer and probe while clinging to the trunk.



Red-bellied Woodpecker

An upright posture on a vertical surface make take offs and landings challenging. When a woodpecker flies, it drops backward, twists and levels off into an undulating flight. The landing involves a head first, collision-course approach to the tree. It pulls up at the last moment and grasps the trunk using its leg joints to absorb the impact.

Woodpeckers do not rely solely on insects but supplement their winter diet with seeds and fruit. Red-bellied Woodpeckers consume acorns and Downy Woodpeckers pluck berries from Poison Ivy vines.

Most species come to bird feeders for suet and sunflower seeds and provide much enjoyment for feeder watchers.

Woodpeckers are the carpenters of the forest. Their cavities provide nest holes and winter roosts for many other animals. There's a good chance the chickadees, nuthatches and titmice at your feeder hatched in a woodpecker hole. Flying squirrels also breed in abandoned woodpecker nests, and Gray Squirrels use them for winter shelters and storing acorns.

There are seven woodpecker species in Pennsylvania. Their numbers and diversity reflects its richness of tree species and tree ages.



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Woodpeckers need standing dead wood to excavate nest holes and roost cavities. Dead limbs on the older oaks and maples are ideal for Hairy Woodpeckers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Downy Woodpeckers nest in more open woods or forest edge, in the decayed stub of tree, usually a locust or maple. Northern Flickers and the crow-sized Pileated Woodpeckers find the Sycamore trees very satisfactory.

Sycamores have hard wood and hollow centers. So do many oaks. Woodpeckers seek the ones with the best resonance to enhance their drumming. Enjoy their performance. Spring is on its way.