



# *The Crossing*

*The Crossing* is the newsletter of Washington Crossing Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization and the local chapter of National Audubon Society. Correspondence should be sent to WCAS, PO Box 112, Pennington, NJ 08534. Visit us at [www.washingtoncrossingaudubon.org](http://www.washingtoncrossingaudubon.org).

## WINTER 2016/2017

### PROGRAMS/MEETINGS

*Meetings of the Washington Crossing Audubon Society are held on the third Monday of each month from September to May (except December), starting at 8:00p.m. Join us for our refreshment social at 7:30p.m. Programs are held in Stainton Hall on the campus of the Pennington School located on Delaware Avenue between Route 31 and Main Street in Pennington. Enter campus from Delaware Avenue between the brick lamp posts, proceed a short distance and turn right into the parking area. Parking is free. The walkway to Stainton Hall is evident at the end of the parking lot.*

#### **David Wilcove: Conserving Asia's Vanishing Birds**

Monday, November 21, 2016, at 8:00 PM

Southeast Asia harbors some of the world's most charismatic and endangered birds. As the region's human population grows in size and wealth, the pressures on natural resources are increasing dramatically. Professor Wilcove will discuss some of the major threats to the region's birdlife, including agriculture, logging, coastal development, and the wild animal trade, and explore what steps can be taken to protect the region's imperiled birds.

David S. Wilcove is Professor of Public Affairs and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. He joined the faculty in 2001 after 16 years working in various environmental organizations. His research interests focus on the conservation of biodiversity. Professor Wilcove, his students and postdocs have worked in Southeast Asia, the

Himalayas, New Zealand, East Africa, South America, Central America, and North America. Their work typically combines ecological research with economics and other social sciences to address issues such as deforestation, commercial logging, agriculture, and the wild animal trade.

#### **Juanita Hummel: *Birds of Cuba***

Monday, January 16, 2017, at 8:00 PM

The largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba is home to 26 endemic bird species, far more than any other Caribbean nation, as well 22 Caribbean endemics. Its natural habitats are the least despoiled by development (at least for now). Juanita Hummel was inspired to visit Cuba after viewing the film, *Cuba: The Accidental Eden*, in which naturalists documented its variety of largely-undisturbed natural habitats and focused concern about their fate, and the future of their endemic species, as US/Cuba diplomatic relations move toward "normalization". This talk is based on a 2015 birding tour of Cuba with in-country guide Orlando Garrido, Cuban ornithologist and co-author of *Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba*.

Juanita is a WCAS board member and an avid birder and nature lover. Retired from pharmaceutical research, she has happily left the lab behind to go outdoors and explore the diverse and fascinating natural landscapes of the world.

*(Programs continued)*

**Gregory George: *The Cerulean Warbler, a Migrant in Decline: Population Status and Conservation in Eastern Pennsylvania***

Monday, February 20, 2017, at 8:00 PM

Gregory George will discuss the background and population trends of Cerulean Warblers across the species' range and highlight how populations are changing in Eastern Pennsylvania. His talk will include information gathered from his 2015 field research season along the Delaware River within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

Dr. George is an Associate Professor of Biology at Delaware Valley University (DVU) where he teaches Ornithology, Ecology, Quantitative Ecology and a Tropical Ecology course in Costa Rica. He has spent the majority of the last 10 years studying Cerulean Warblers. From 2004-2009 his research focused on foraging ecology and the influence of silviculture operations on Cerulean population demographics at West Virginia University (WVU) while completing his Ph.D. in wildlife management. More recently, he has focused on areas of population expansion in northeast Pennsylvania. Greg volunteered for 19 years with the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary research department and was afforded the opportunity to assist research crews quantifying raptor migration in the Florida Keys (1997) and Veracruz, Mexico (2000). In 2003-04, Greg expanded on his international research investigating niche partitioning among a guild of obligate riparian songbirds in Costa Rica for his Master's thesis from East Stroudsburg University.



**FIELD TRIPS**

*For more field trip information, contact our Field Trip Chair, Brad Merritt, at (609) 921-8964. In case of inclement weather, contact Brad for field trip cancellation updates by 10:00 p.m. the night prior to the trip. If the trip is co-sponsored with an organization, please note the registration request in the trip description. There is no fee for WCAS field trips, though exceptions are noted for co-sponsored trips.*

**Birds of Shark River**

A field trip on Saturday, November 12 at 9:00 AM, led by Brad Merritt, Andrew Bobe and Mary Doscher.

Migratory birds from northern climates more frigid than New Jersey's head our way to spend the winter in the warmer, open, and fish-filled waters they find here. Mary Doscher helps us see these winter arrivals as they add beauty and interest to the fresh, brackish, and salt waters along the Jersey shore.

Directions: Take I-295 to I-195 to Route 35 in Belmar. Meet at Marina in Belmar. Bring lunch and beverage, dress for the weather. For more information, contact Brad Merritt (609) 921-8964.

**Abbott Marshlands: Marsh Cleanup**

A program on Saturday, November 19 from 9:00 AM

Bring gloves, boots, water to drink, wear long sleeves, long pants. Meet at Spring Lake, Roebling Park.

Directions: Take South Broad St. to Sewell Ave. turn onto Sewell at traffic light; at road's end, turn left and continue downhill to parking lot. Contact Mary Leck, 732-821-8310.

*Cosponsors: Americorp Watershed Ambassador Program, Friends for the Abbott Marshlands, D&R Greenway Land Trust*

**Winter Bird Walk**

A field walk on Saturday, December 3, 8:00-10:00 AM, led by Jeff Hoagland, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association (SBMWA).

Join Education Director, Jeff Hoagland, on a hike of the Watershed Reserve in search of wintering birds. Bring binoculars and dress for winter weather conditions. *15yo+*. *Free to SBMWA members; \$5 Non-member*. Register by calling the SBMWA Education Dept, 609-737-7592. *Co-sponsored by Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.*

## **Abbott Marshlands: Bordentown Bluffs**

A field walk on Saturday, December 3, 10:00 AM-noon

The focus will be on trees, with views of Crosswicks Creek, mountain laurel, rhododendron, and stately trees. Directions: Take US-206 South; first right after Pointe Breeze apartments. Look for Abbott Marshlands sign.

*Cosponsors: Friends for the Abbott Marshlands, D&R Canal State Park, Bordentown Township Environmental Commission*

## **117<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count**

Sunday, December 18, 2016 (Princeton Count)

Saturday, December 31, 2016 (Trenton Count)

National Audubon Society urges volunteers in central New Jersey to participate in one of Audubon's great traditions, the annual Christmas Bird Count. WCAS sponsors both the Princeton Count, which this year will be held on Sunday, December 18, and the Trenton Count, to be held this year on Saturday, December 31.

This year marks the 117<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Christmas Bird Count, when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by ornithologist Frank Chapman, changed the course of history. On Christmas Day 1900, the group initiated an alternative to the traditional holiday 'side hunt,' in which teams competed to see which could shoot the most birds. Instead of hunting, the group counted the birds they saw and founded a century-old institution.

Today, over 50,000 volunteers from all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific islands will count and record every individual bird and bird species encountered during one calendar day. About 1800 individual Christmas Bird Counts will be held during a two-and-a-half week period. Each count group has a designated circle 15 miles in diameter-about 177 square miles--where they try to cover as much ground as possible within a 24-hour calendar day.

Christmas Bird Count serves as an up-to-the-minute bird census. Counters catalogue every bird and bird species they see over one calendar day, from midnight to midnight. Growing in popularity since its inception, the count serves an important scientific function as well. Birds are one of the first groups of animals to be affected by environmental threats like pollution and habitat destruction, and CBC data provide indispensable information, not only on long-term health of bird populations, but also the status of the environment that birds share with all living things.

Apart from its attraction as a social, sporting, and competitive event, the annual count reveals interesting and scientifically useful information on the early-winter distribution patterns of various bird species and the over-all health of the environment.

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running ornithological database. It continues to grow in importance as a means to monitor the status of resident and migratory bird populations across the western hemisphere. The CBC is 100% volunteer generated data that, over the years, has become a crucial part of the United States Government's natural history monitoring database. Count data from 1900 to the present are currently available through BirdSource ([www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org)), a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

All counts are open to birders of all skill levels. For more information, contact:

Brad Merritt, P.O. Box 178, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553  
609-921-8964, [balmerritt@aol.com](mailto:balmerritt@aol.com)

## **Winter Birds at Barnegat Light**

A field trip on Saturday, January 7, 2017 at 9:00 AM, led by Brad Merritt.

Barnegat Light, located at the north end of Long Beach Island, is a great site for wintering birds. The inlet, beach, and jetties are well known for unusual visitors, including at times the beautiful harlequin duck. Bring lunch and beverage, and dress warmly.

Call Brad at (609) 921-8964 in the evening one or two days prior to the trip for date, time, and directions.

## **Abbott Marshlands**

A field trip on Saturday, January 14, at 9:00 AM, led by Brad Merritt, Charles Leck, Andrew Bobe.

Roebing Park is a Mercer County park adjacent to the Hamilton/Trenton marsh. We plan to follow the trails and see how the marsh and its wildlife adjust to the cold weather. In case of inclement weather, contact Brad Merritt at 609-921-8964.

Directions: Take South Broad St. to Sewell Ave. turn onto Sewell at traffic light; at road's end, turn left and continue downhill to parking lot.

Please see the Friends for the Abbott Marshlands website, [www.abbottmarshlands.org](http://www.abbottmarshlands.org), for listings of additional outings that complement those of WCAS. *Cosponsor: The Friends for the Abbott Marshlands.*

### **Return to Shark River**

A field trip on Saturday, January 28 at 9:00 AM, led by Brad Merritt, Andrew Bobe and Mary Doscher.

The Shark River area allows us to visit a number of interesting habitats (bay, ocean, and fresh water ponds). We can compare the list of birds we saw in November with the birds that decide to stay for the winter.

Directions: Take I-295 to I-195 to Route 35 in Belmar. Meet at Marina in Belmar. Bring lunch and beverage, dress for the weather. For more information and confirmation of trip location, contact Brad Merritt at (609) 921-8964.

### **Round Valley Reservoir**

A field trip on Saturday, February 4, at 8:30 AM - noon, led by Mark Witmer and Brad Merritt.

This reservoir in northern Hunterdon County covers over 4,000 acres, is more than 180 feet deep, and is a popular recreational site year-round. Winter is a good time to search for bald eagles, various waterfowl, and gulls. Depending on weather conditions, we will combine this with a tour of the adjacent Cushetunk Mountain Nature Preserve or nearby Spruce Run Recreation Area. For further information, or notice of trip cancellation due to weather, call Mark Witmer at (609) 730-0826.

### **UPCOMING TRIPS IN 2017**

Sat, Mar 11, 8:30 AM	Assunpink WMA
Sun, Mar 19, 1:30 PM	Washington Crossing SP
Sat, Mar 25, 7:30 AM	Cumberland County
Sat, Apr 1, 8 AM	Mercer Meadows Pole Farm
Sun, Apr 9, 9 AM	Peace Valley PA
Sat, Apr 29, 8 AM	Abbott Marshlands
Sat, May 6, 7:30 AM	Garret Mountain
Sun, May 7, 8 AM	Princeton Institute Woods
Sat, May 13, All Day	WCAS Birdathon
Sat, May 20, 8 AM	Princeton Institute Woods
Sun, May 21, 8 AM	Baldpate Mountain
Sat, May 27, 8 AM	Negri-Nepote Grasslands
Sat, Jun 3, 7 AM	Delaware Water Gap
Sat, Jun 10, 8:30 AM	Washington Crossing SP
Sat, Jun 17, 8 AM	Assunpink WMA
Sat, Jun 24, 8 AM	Mercer Meadows Pole Farm
Sat, Aug 19, 9 AM	Allentown Sod Farms

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### **President's Corner: Penn East and Open Space**

PennEast has sent out a flier to all residents near the route of the proposed pipeline, claiming that the proposed pipeline will create more open space and thus is environmentally friendly. What they do not mention is that the quality of open space matters. In a mostly built out state, it is not possible to replace the preserved lands they are degrading with properties of similar ecological value. Large areas of New Jersey are ecologically highly degraded and support little biodiversity. Intact functioning ecosystems with a healthy diversity of species are rare, stressed, and irreplaceable. Many of the remaining areas of significant biodiversity with functioning ecosystems have been designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). IBAs were chosen because they contain significant numbers of birds, rare

birds, or rare ecosystems. Healthy bird populations indicate healthy, diverse populations of other taxa, notably the plants and insects on which the birds depend. These IBAs are not interchangeable with random open space. Quality matters.

Over forty percent of the proposed PennEast pipeline is routed through IBAs in New Jersey. PennEast claims that the buried pipeline will have little lasting effect with most of the land returning to its original condition. Yet the pipeline route goes through forests, including the two remaining largest contiguous forests in central New Jersey, the Sourland Mountain Region IBA and the Baldpate Mountain IBA. The routes through both IBAs parallel existing right-of-ways but go through adjacent mature forest, requiring the harvesting of

**President's Corner** *continued*

mature trees. This is particularly damaging at Baldpate Mountain because of the long narrow shape of the mountain and the small size, already at the lower size limit for interior forest habitat. Any diminution of the mature forest at Baldpate would have serious consequences for the bird species that require interior forest habitat to breed. It would take over a hundred years to return these forests to their original condition. There is no way to replace the lost habitat within a time frame that is meaningful to a breeding bird population that has no place else to go.

The proposed PennEast pipeline also traverses grassland IBA's which will be negatively impacted by the construction of the pipeline. Construction can cause loss or degradation of native soils, causing a long term decrease in soil productivity. Disturbed lands are a conduit for invasive species, which once established are difficult to eradicate making the land's return to prime farmland or grassland habitat problematic and long term at best. Studies have shown that the area of vegetation affected by pipeline construction is much more extensive than the area of soil disturbance. The vegetation will be disturbed for a much greater distance than the 30' corridor PennEast implies. PennEast's assertion that vegetation will be restored to its original condition significantly omits the extent of the damage and the time frame required for restoration.

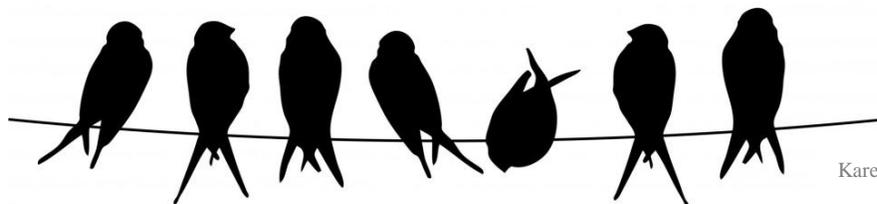
The PennEast pipeline will also have long term negative effects on C-1 streams and their adjacent wetlands. Potential impacts on stream crossings include effects from sedimentation and changes in stream morphology and flow, which can permanently alter the stream's flora and fauna. Tree removal and the resulting changes in tree

canopy along the streams can change the temperature of the streams, causing a change in the organisms that the streams support. This is particularly worrisome for high quality trout streams. Any adjacent wetlands would be susceptible to changes in the plant composition and at risk for loss of wildlife. Fill replacing wetlands is of special concern. The PennEast flier is silent on the long term damage to C-1 streams and wetlands.

The PennEast flier states that "Federal regulators now agree environmental impacts can be reduced to less than significant levels", which was the conclusion of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). PennEast neglects to mention that the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection disagreed, calling the DEIS too data deficient to draw conclusions about the environmental impact of the PennEast pipeline. The DEIS glosses over the environmental impact of the pipeline.

We live at a time of unsustainably decreasing biodiversity. The State of North America's Birds 2016 states that "More than one-third (37%) of North American bird species are of high conservation concern and at risk of extinction without significant conservation action." Other taxa are in similar steep declines. The first essential step in reversing this loss of biodiversity is to protect the ecological integrity of the remaining intact ecosystems. The proposed PennEast pipeline cannot be built and maintained in a way that is consistent with protecting the ecological integrity of the lands and waters which it will transverse. No slick publication with pretty pictures will change this. Caveat emptor.

*~ Sharyn Magee  
President, WCAS*



Karen Arnold

## CHAPTER NEWS

### Scholarship Offered to Outdoor Educators

Outdoor or environmental teachers and educators in the Central NJ region are invited to apply for a scholarship to attend the *Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week* at National Audubon's Hog Island Center on Muscongus Bay in Maine. The program is held July 16-21, 2017.

National Audubon will have a complement of well-known environmental instructors covering many aspects of teaching and field techniques along with identifying different habitats and the plants and animals that occupy them.

There is only one scholarship to be awarded. It covers tuition and expenses while on the island. It does not cover individual travel expenses. If you wish to be considered, send an e-mail to:

contact.wcas@gmail.com

Please include your contact information, your position, your teaching experiences and how this program at Hog Island would benefit you. More information about the program can be found at [hogisland.audubon.org](http://hogisland.audubon.org).

The application deadline is Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. We will notify the successful applicant mid-January 2017.

### BIRDATHON 2016 Results are in!

This year's Birdathon was a success thanks to our generous supporters and the efforts of our individual birders and team leaders, bringing in \$5,878 for our research and educational outreach efforts. Prizes will be awarded for the highest dollar amount solicited and received (thank you, Landis Eaton!) and the highest number of bird species observed (great job, John Maret!) Mark your calendars and tune up your binoculars for Birdathon 2017, happening on Saturday, May 13, 2017!

**Our total for 2016 is \$5,878.**

**Thank you!**

## Meet our New Board Members

### Beth Nichols

I attended Antioch College, and have a BS in Natural Resources and an MS in Botany from the University of Michigan. I started my career as a naturalist on Staten Island, and then taught Biology at Hunterdon Central High School. I was an instructor at Trenton State College, and then a lecturer at Princeton University before spending 25 years as a science test developer at ETS. The highlight of my career was helping invent an AP course in Environmental Science. I am a sometime volunteer at the Featherbed Lane Bird Banding Station, and plan to spend more time birding after my upcoming retirement.

### Mary M. Penney

I live in Montgomery Twp., NJ and have a B.S. in Communication. I am a consultant in open space preservation and renewable energy. A founding trustee and past president of Montgomery Friends of Open Space, Inc., I am former Managing Director of the Bucks County Audubon Society at Honey Hollow.

I joined the Board of Washington Crossing Audubon to work alongside like-minded naturalists who share a passion for birding and protecting the wild places the birds and other wildlife need to survive and thrive. I care deeply for our planet, instilling in humankind a respect for our world, and leaving a legacy of strong environmental stewardship.

### Michael Perlin

I have lived in Trenton, NJ (one block from the Delaware & Raritan Canal and two from the Delaware River) since 1979. I practiced law for 13 years (as a Public Defender in Trenton, and as NJ state Mental Health Advocate) and taught for 30, focusing on mental disability law, mostly in the contexts of criminal law and procedure, and of international human rights law (I did one environmental law case in my career back in the early 1980s: seeking to stop the nuclear power plant at Merrill Creek because of how the construction would imperil the threatened bog turtle). Though I am now "retired" from my day job, I am working pretty much full time – writing books and articles, speaking at professional conferences and advocacy workshops, and teaching (mostly online) through my company, Mental Disability Law and Policy Associates.

I was a casual birder for over 35 years, and that changed dramatically in February 2014, when my wife,

Linda, with whom I bird regularly, and I went to Belize with Wildside Nature Tours. That rocked our world, and led us to go to Honduras and to the Peruvian Amazon (both trips also with Wildside). My work involves lots of travel, and I have been fortunate to have combined business with birding pleasure on recent trips to New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, the UK, and many states in the American west. After our return from Belize I began going on WCAS trips regularly, Brad Merritt took me under his wing, and when he learned that I had retired he asked if I might be interested in being on the Board and I readily accepted. I am so looking forward to being part of this group.

the annual publication Winter Bird Highlights. Participants also receive access to the digital version of Living Bird, an award winning Cornell Lab quarterly magazine. FeederWatch participants report that the tremendous satisfaction they receive from participating in the program is well worth the small investment of time and money.

ProjectFeederwatch is a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### Project FeederWatch Season Begins November 12

Fall migration is just about over. Our summer visitors have headed south and the winter birds will soon be here. What surprises are in store for us this year? Will there be an irruption of species from the north, as we have seen in some previous years? You can be part of a continent-wide team that monitors winter bird abundance and distribution throughout the FeederWatch season, which ends April 7, 2017.

It's not too late to sign up now to be a FeederWatch participant for the 2016-2017 season. If you maintain bird feeders and have basic bird ID skills, you can do this—you don't have to be an expert and you can do it from the comfort of your home. You simply must be willing to commit to keeping an eye on your feeders during a time span of your choosing during two consecutive days at least 5 days apart during the count season. There is no minimum number of count days. You may be rewarded with some surprise observations!

Everything you need to know about Project FeederWatch can be found at <http://feederwatch.org>, including information on how to register, tips and more. You may also register by writing to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850 or calling them at 800-843-2473. The regular registration fee is \$18, Cornell Lab members can sign up for \$15. You will receive a project kit and



Karen Arnold



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Washington Crossing Audubon Society  
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## Audubon Membership Form

- 1) **WCAS Chapter only membership:** \$10 \_\_\_Basic \$20 \_\_\_Supporting. *Enclose check payable to WCAS.*  
You will receive Washington Crossing Audubon Society's newsletter, *The Crossing*, plus programs, field trips, and the opportunity to make a difference on the local level.
  - 2) **Student Membership:** \$5 \_\_\_ *Enclose check payable to WCAS.*  
Same benefits as Chapter Only membership. All students under 18 years old.
  - 3) **National Audubon Society membership:** \$20 \_\_\_ (new members and renewals)  
*Enclose check payable to National Audubon Society or fill out credit card information below.*  
National Membership includes Chapter membership, as shown above, plus *Audubon* magazine, and the opportunity to support Audubon's work on national and international levels. WCAS gets back a share.
- Additional tax deductible donation for WCAS:** \$ \_\_\_ *Enclose check payable to WCAS.*  
This and a NAS membership result in highest benefits for everyone.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

May we call on you to volunteer? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

<b>NAS Membership Only</b>
Visa _____ MasterCard _____
Credit card# _____
Expiration date ____/____
Signature _____

Mail to: Membership Chair, WCAS, PO Box 112, Pennington, NJ 08534

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