



# BULLETIN

WINTER 2025



IS WATCHING BIRDS IN FLIGHT THE KEY  
TO STAYING GROUNDED?

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# BULLETIN

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## OUR RESERVES, NATIVE PLANT NURSERY, AND NATURE STORES

### BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
*Audubon Nature Store & Native Plant Nursery / Dogs not permitted on trails*

### BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK

154 Monroe Road, Sarver, PA 16055  
*Audubon Nature Store / Dogs on leash are welcome*

### SUCCOP NATURE PARK

185 W. Airport Road in Penn Township, Butler, PA 16002  
*Audubon Nature Store / Dogs on leash are welcome*

### TODD NATURE RESERVE

367 Kepple Road, Sarver, PA 16055  
*No restrooms or other facilities / Dogs not permitted on trails*

**Accessibility Information:** For accessibility needs or questions about any of our sites, please contact Brian Shema at (412) 963-6100 or at [bshema@aswp.org](mailto:bshema@aswp.org). For accessibility needs or questions about any of our programs, please contact Chris Kubiak at (412) 963-6100 or [ckubiak@aswp.org](mailto:ckubiak@aswp.org). All other questions regarding accessibility or inclusion can be directed to Jim Bonner at (412) 963-6100 or [jbonner@aswp.org](mailto:jbonner@aswp.org).



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# THIS AUDUBON VIEW

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

If you are like me, you are probably trying to come up with a few resolutions for the new year. And if you are *really* like me, you're already finding excuses for why you're not keeping them. I'm here to help make things easier for you. Resolve to spend more time enjoying birds!

As you will learn in this newsletter, bird watching is not just fun, it's good for you. There are well documented physical and psychological benefits to watching birds. Another huge benefit is social. In our increasingly polarized society, being able to connect with other people by sharing the common bond of bird watching can be restorative. Even a friendly debate over which is prettier—a Cedar Waxwing or the Common Yellowthroat—can bring joy.

It is not just us humans that benefit from bird watching. Birds do, too. The proliferation of identification and recording apps like Merlin and iNaturalist have resulted in previously unimaginable amounts of data for scientists to process and learn more about bird populations, the impacts of climate change, and other emerging threats.

So, make your 2025 resolution an easy one. Simply spend more time enjoying birds. It will benefit both you and our feathered friends. And by the way, the prettiest bird is the one you are looking at—at any given moment. If it happens to be a Cedar Waxwing, that's just an added bonus!

—Jim



**AUDUBON**  
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

## TRAVEL WITH US IN 2025!

**MARCH: COSTA RICA**  
Explore the Caribbean lowlands, Premontane Forest, tropical dry forest, and mangroves.

**APRIL: KANSAS**  
Featuring Prairie Chickens on their lek and two Globally Important Wetlands that support migrating shorebirds and waterfowl.

**SEPTEMBER: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**  
Showcasing Santa Cruz Island and the Salton Sea.

**FALL: COLOMBIA**  
Explore the Caribbean lowlands.

*We have over 20 years of exceptional travel experiences focusing on birds, their habitats, and local culture. Join our travel email list at [travel@aswp.org](mailto:travel@aswp.org).*

Painted Bunting



# THE JOY OF BIRDING



What would you say if we told you there's a way to do something you already love to do—and to see positive health benefits as a result? A new study from the College of Natural Resources at North Carolina State University does just that. It asserts that birding not only connects people to nature, it brings down stress levels and adds to an overall feeling of positive well-being.

The study, "Birdwatching linked to increased psychological well-being on college campuses: A pilot-scale experimental study," published by the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* in June 2024, backs up our own personal experiences—as well as those of our newly recruited College Birding Program participants. But one of the greatest impacts of birding positivity is that it has the potential to reach beyond age, gender, and background. Almost anyone can get outside and bird (or even watch birds by looking out a window). It's a great unifier that brings people together, builds community, and—perhaps as a direct result—makes people feel happy.

The NC State research acknowledges previous studies that have scientifically proven the relationship between exposure to nature and improved health. But this is one of the very first studies that takes things one step further—focusing on birdwatching, in particular, to understand the connection between birds and human psychological well-being.

To best assess before-and-after mental health in study participants, researchers asked 112 individuals to fill out the World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index, a survey that rates how a person has felt over the past two weeks. From that information, the researchers created rankings that assessed each participant's overall quality of life.

The participants were then broken into three cohorts that consisted of a group that bird watched, one that walked in nature but did not bird watch, and another that served as the control. At the end of the sessions, individuals again filled out the WHO Well-Being Index. Those in the bird watching group showed the highest overall gain in feelings of well-being.

According to Science Daily, the study "supports the idea that birdwatching helps to improve mental health and opens up many avenues for future research."

Because this study was specifically focused on individuals on a college campus, there were limitations on the age and socioeconomic status of participants that begs further research.

The positive feelings associated with birding will come as no surprise to those who already understand the joy of seeing a life bird—or even the first Ruby-throated Hummingbird to return during spring migration. Birds connect us to nature, and studies like this one reaffirm our responsibility to act as responsible stewards to both our feathered friends and the environment that they live within. It's a balance that will help to ensure a healthy future for us all.

## CITATIONS FROM THE STUDY AUTHORS:

An assessment of birding popularity conducted in 2000–2001 determined membership in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds exceeded membership in all political parties combined in the UK (Cordell, 2002, pp. 54–61).

Nearly 100 million Americans birdwatched in 2022 (US Department of the Interior, 2023).

There is evidence that birdwatching may be particularly beneficial to well-being. Across Europe, increased biodiversity of birds is associated with increased life satisfaction (Methorst et al., 2021).

Spending time in nature can promote well-being and mitigate anxiety and stress across all age groups (Beall et al., 2022; Jackson, Stevenson, Larson, Peterson, & Seekamp, 2021a, 2021b; Larson et al., 2022).

Birdwatching helped improve psychological outcomes for nursing home patients (Zieris et al., 2023) as well as mental health professionals (Murawiec et al., 2021).

Study Link: [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272494424000793?via%3Dihub](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272494424000793?via%3Dihub)  
Science Daily: [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/05/240503135334.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/05/240503135334.htm)

# WINTER

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE



REGISTER FOR PROGRAMS AT [ASWP.ORG](http://ASWP.ORG) OR CALL (412) 963-6100

Programs take place at **Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR)**, **Buffalo Creek Nature Park (BCNP)**, **Succop Nature Park (SNP)**, **Todd Nature Reserve (TNR)**, or online via **Zoom**. Select programs take place at **Renzie Park (RP)** in McKeesport and **Freeport Community Park (FP)** in Freeport. Register for programs online at [aswp.org](http://aswp.org) or call (412) 963-6100.

### SPECIAL PROGRAMS

#### Great Backyard Bird Count Walk

Saturday, February 15, 10am-12pm / BFNR & BCNP  
Sunday, February 16, 2-4pm / SNP

Join the ASWP naturalists for our annual Great Backyard Bird Count walk on Audubon's trails. Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online community-science projects to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. Free.

#### Master Birder Program

Spring & Fall 2025 (Classes begin Thursday, March 20)

This 12-week program includes a 6:30-8:30pm online program on Thursdays and in-person outings on Saturdays. Audubon's Master Birder Program is for the beginning to intermediate birder who would like to take his or her birthing knowledge to another level. Outings are designed to reinforce class subject matter and to get firsthand experience with the variety of birds that occur in western Pennsylvania. Graduates will gain a detailed understanding of local habitat, bird identification, and behavior along with the desire to share their learning through an ongoing volunteer commitment to ASWP. Email Chris Kubiak at [ckubiak@aswp.org](mailto:ckubiak@aswp.org) for more details. \$500 per member; \$575 per nonmember.

### BEGINNING BIRD WATCHERS!

Identify the birds in your backyard easily with Birds iView Window Clings! Available now at Audubon Nature Stores!



Three unique events  
at three locations!

#### Maple Drink Tasting: Adults Only Happy Hour

Thursdays, March 6 & March 13, 7-9pm / BCNP

In this 2-hour, adults only program, you will learn a little about the history of sugaring and we'll talk about the varied ways in which you can use the products—it's not just all syrup and it's not just for breakfast. We will have a maple syrup tasting, try some drinks and snacks made with maple syrup and share what's happening in the maple sugaring industry. Participants must be at least 21 years of age. \$20 per member; \$30 per nonmember.

#### Hike Thru Maple History

Saturdays, March 15 & 22, 10am-1pm / BFNR

Maple isn't just something you put on your pancakes—there's so much more to maple sugaring! Experience the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Maple Sugaring as you take a trip through time. You'll tour our maple sugar demonstration trail and discover the history and science of maple syrup—and how to collect and make your own. This event will take place completely outdoors. Please dress for the weather! Registration required. \$10 per member; \$15 per nonmember.

#### Sweetest Season Pancake Breakfast

Sundays, March 23 & 30, 11:30am & 1pm / SNP

The sweetest season sure is short but we have the whole year to enjoy the product of this season—maple syrup! Join us for a pancake breakfast—pancakes, sausage, fruit, and, of course, real maple syrup. We'll also have a fun activity for when you are done and plenty of syrup on hand to purchase. Spaces are limited per seating so registration is required. \$10 per member; \$15 per nonmember; under 3 free.

## BIRDING HIKES

### Birds & More Naturalist Led Morning Walks

These free walks begin at 9am

BFNR: Every Sunday and Wednesday

SNP: Every Thursday

RP: First Friday of every month

BCNP: Every Tuesday, starting April 1

TNR: Every Friday, starting April 4

FP: First Friday of every month, starting April 4.

Meet at Laube Hall

### Moraine State Park Bird Walk

Saturday, January 18, 9am–12pm / McDaniel's Boat Launch

Join us at Moraine State Park as we bird during the height of winter. We will focus on overwintering species, residents and other interesting birds. We will meet in the parking lot at McDaniel's Boat Launch and bird several locations at Moraine. Bring your optics, water, and a snack and dress for the weather. Registration required. Email Chris Kubiak at ckubiak@aswp.org for more details. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

### Harrison Hills Bird Walk

Saturday, February 22, 9am–12pm / Harrison Hills Park

Join us at Harrison Hills Park, one of the region's most popular places to bird. We will meet in the parking lot at the Environmental Learning Center and bird some of the surrounding trails. Email Chris Kubiak at ckubiak@aswp.org for more details. Registration required. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

## NATURAL HISTORY ONLINE SERIES

### The Oaks: A Three Part Series (Part One) The Life History of Oaks: Acorns and Eggs

Tuesday, January 14, 7–8:30pm / Online

Oak trees can be found in many parts of the world. In Western Pennsylvania, we are fortunate to have many species to observe, however; oak diversity quickly peters out at the Isthmus of Panama in the Western Hemisphere. Yet, Europe and Asia have many species of oak. This program looks at the ecology of oak and how birds and oak trees have a tightly woven evolutionary relationship. Free.

### Amphibians of Pennsylvania

Wednesday, February 12, 7–8:30pm / Online

Did you know Pennsylvania is home to 40 different species of amphibians? This fascinating group of animals includes frogs, toads, and salamanders. Join us as we discuss general characteristics and life history of amphibians. We will then take a look at how to identify some key species you can find around Western Pennsylvania. Free.

### FrogWatch

Thursday, February 27, 7–8:30pm / Online

Frogs and toads also play an important role, serving as both prey and predator, in wetland ecosystems and are considered indicators of environmental health. Visit [frogwatch.org](http://frogwatch.org) for details about the Frog Watch Citizen Science program. Act 48 hours available. Free.

### Create a Habitat Garden in a Weekend\*\*

Saturday, March 8, 10–11:30am / Online

This program teaches individuals how to create a habitat garden in one weekend and on a realistic timeline. Learn how to create and complete a 5x5' pollinator garden from concept to finished garden in one weekend, and one that will be ready to support Western Pa wildlife. Free.

### The Oaks: A Three Part Series (Part Two) Insects and Oak Associations

Tuesday, March 11, 7–8:30pm / Online

Oaks are one of the greatest supporters of insect diversity and abundance. While many of those insects serve as food for a wide variety of bird species, insects that are leaf feeders, borers, or plant suckers can cause serious damage to oaks, even mortality. Learn about the impacts that insects have on our native oaks, how they support our bird populations, and a special look at how oak flowers support early spring bees. Free.

### Poisonous Pennsylvania

Wednesday, March 26, 7–8:30pm / Online

From rattlesnakes to poison ivy, some organisms of Pennsylvania seem to hold a grudge against humans. We'll review the what, how and why of many of our spiciest nature neighbors. Free.

### The American Chestnut Tree

Tuesday, April 15, 7–8:30pm / Online

This tree once ranged from Maine to Louisiana but was severely affected by an airborne fungal blight that has made it functionally extinct in most of its native range. The American Chestnut was a keystone species and its demise caused ripples up and down the food chain. This program will explore the natural history of the American Chestnut, its disappearance, and what is being done to bring it back. Free.

### The Oaks: A Three Part Series (Part Three) The Symbiotic Relationship of Oaks and Fungi

Wednesday, April 23, 7–8:30pm / Online

Discover the fascinating world of fungi and their vital connection to oak trees. We will discuss the various roles that fungi play in oak ecosystems including forming symbiotic relationships with the roots, fungal pathogens that can impact oak forests, and how fungi are crucial to the natural decay process of the forest floor. Free.



## LUNCH & LEARN ONLINE PROGRAMS

### **CBH Lunch and Learn: Winter Invasive Plant ID**

Wednesday, January 22, 12–1pm / Online

Get a head start on your invasive plant control strategy this year. This program will cover some of the woody invasive plant species common to Western Pennsylvania. We will discuss how to identify them, look-alike species, and potential physical control methods you can use during the winter months. Free.

### **CBH Lunch and Learn: Eat the Weeds**

Thursday, March 19, 12–1pm / Online

Invasive plants can have serious ecological impacts, but some can add a seriously delicious flavor to a dish. Join us as we take a deep dive into four invasive plant species and how they can be harvested for your next meal. Free.

## KIDS & PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

### **Fledglings Preschool Activities: Ages 3-5**

January 9, February 13, March 13, April 10 / BFNR

January 14, February 11, March 11, April 8 / SNP

January 8, February 12, March 12, April 9 / BCNP

All programs run 10–11:15am

Give your 3-5 year old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Fledglings programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants. Parent or caregiver must be present. \$4 per member; \$6 per nonmember.

January: *Who Gives a Hoot*

February: *Run for Cover*

March: *Down the Maple Trail*

April: *Bunny Hop*

### **Beechwood After-School Series**

Wednesdays, January 8 & 22; February 5 & 19 / BFNR

All programs run 4:30–6pm

Want to get your child or student outside into nature this winter? This after-school program at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve serves as the perfect respite from an overload of screen time. Winter at Beechwood has its own unique features and fascinating encounters with nature. Explore our meadows, forests and ecosystems for animals and their homes with an Audubon educator all the while having fun! Ages K-3rd grade. \$10 per member; \$15 per nonmember.

## FEED THE BIRDS THIS WINTER!

Stop by Audubon Nature Stores for the region's largest selection of feeders and seed.



### **"Summer in Winter" Afternoon of Fun**

Sunday, January 26, 1–4pm / BCNP

Take a break from winter and join us for an afternoon of "summer" with themed snacks and drinks, and a variety of summer activities—making rainbows, bubble painting, stories, and more. Registration required. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

## HANDS-ON LEARNING

### **Winter Firecraft**

Saturday, January 18, 12–2pm / BFNR

Saturday, January 25, 10am–12pm / SNP

Saturday, January 25, 2–4pm / BCNP

Cold weather can make it difficult to get a fire going; however frozen conditions make for very dry tinder! In this program we will learn how to find natural fire making materials in winter and make ferrocerium rod fire kits for you to take home. The kit includes a pouch, charcloth, a ferro rod, and a striker. If the sun is out we can use lenses to ignite our fires! S'mores to follow the educational portion. Limit is 12 people, one week advance registration is required. \$25 per member; \$35 per nonmember.

### **Native Seed Papermaking**

Saturday, February 1, 10am–12pm / SNP

Let's recycle junk mail and scrap paper into "new" paper. Learn the process of making paper and then dive in to make your very own shaped paper that will have native seeds embedded in it. Spring will be coming—these can be great gifts for Mother's Day or just to plan your own spring planting day in the garden. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

### **Fly Tying Series**

Tuesdays, February 4, 11, 18, 25, 7–9pm / BCNP

Join Trout Unlimited, Arrowhead Chapter and ASWP on Tuesday evenings through February to learn how to tie flies. The art of fly-tying allows the individual to imitate the live food of gamefish by attaching different materials to a hook. Most often used to imitate various stages of insects, the craft can also imitate minnows and other natural foods. Participants will learn to tie two, or three, flies at each session, beginning with easy ones and building their way up to more difficult ones. Beginners welcome! Appropriate for adults and interested youth, age 10 and up (minors must be accompanied by an adult). Tools and materials will be provided; you'll end the series with 8-12 new flies! Your registration for February 4 enrolls you for the entire series. Registration required. \$30 per member; \$50 per nonmember.

### **Ranger Beads**

Saturday, February 8, 1–2:30pm / SNP

These bead sets are used to count paces and estimate distance traveled. We will each make our own set of ranger beads and then walk a course to ascertain our pace length. Then we will go on a short hike and practice using our beads. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

## Winter Seed Sowing\*

Tuesday, February 11, 6–7:30pm / RP, Jacob Woll Pavilion

Unlike common vegetable and herb seeds that we typically sow in spring, late fall and winter are the best time to plant native perennial seeds for spring germination. Join us for a basic lesson on collecting, cleaning, and sowing with some of the Pittsburgh area's classic native landscape plants. Free.

## Eco-friendly Spring Cleaning

Thursday, April 24, 6–8 pm / SNP

Ever wonder if all those home-made cleaning options really work? Why would you want to make your own anyhow? In this program we will make and share a few of our favorites and look for you to share some of your own eco-friendly cleaning ideas. \$25 per member; \$35 per nonmember.

## Buffalo Creek Coalition Meeting

Thursday, March 13, 3:30–5pm / Hybrid–BCNP or Online

Buffalo Creek Coalition Meeting: Do you live, work, or play in the Buffalo Creek Watershed? Join Audubon and the Buffalo Creek Coalition to learn more about the state of the watershed, habitat restoration and enhancement efforts, monitoring programs, and opportunities to get involved while also sharing your priorities, perspectives, and concerns within the region to help guide our work. Attend in person at Buffalo Creek Nature Park or join the live stream. Free.

## Geocaching

Saturday, April 19, 10am–12pm / SNP

Saturday, April 26, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Saturday, April 26, 2–4pm / BCNP

Geocaching is a fun treasure hunt using your cell phone, but the “treasure” is real, not virtual. Learn to find physical caches hidden all over the world, and hundreds hidden locally. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

## Creating Bee-Friendly Habitat\*\*

Wednesday, April 23, 6–7:30pm / Hybrid–BCNP or Online

Bees play an important role in nature and in the human diet. Pennsylvania is home to 437 different species of native bees and many rely on different suites of floral resources and habitat types. Join Audubon to learn about landscaping efforts you can implement to attract and support our native bees. Free.

*\*This program is offered free of cost under an assistance agreement from the Environmental Protection Agency's Region III Environmental Education Fund and funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Five Star and Urban Waters grant program.*

*\*\*This program is offered free of cost, thanks to support from NiSource / Columbia Gas.*

*We thank the Fox Chapel Garden Club for sponsoring our Native Plant programs.*

 AUDUBON NATURE STORES  
ARE NOW ON INSTAGRAM!

Check us out @aswpnaturestores and follow us for the latest on new merchandise!

## CITIZEN SCIENCE

### Christmas Bird Count (CBC)\* – Recap and Bird Walk

Saturday, January 18, 10am–1pm / RP, McKeesport Regional History & Heritage Center

Join ASWP and CBC participants to explore the results of the Mon Valley's second annual Christmas Bird Count. This will be a time to share your experiences, discuss birds, and then go for a bird walk around Renzie Park. Refreshments will be served. Free.

### Citizen Science: Great Backyard Bird Count Training

Saturday, February 1, 10–11:30am / BFNR & BCNP

Sunday, February 2, 10–11:30am / SNP

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place Presidents Day weekend and can be done anywhere there are wild birds. Get ready to count with this training reviewing common species and reporting procedures. Visit GBBC.org for details about the count. Great for scout leaders, parents, and others who want to learn about the count and get tips for getting their groups involved. Free.

### Great Backyard Bird Count Walk\*

Saturday, February 15, 10am–12pm / RP, Renzie Park Senior Center

Join the ASWP naturalists for our annual Great Backyard Bird Count walk at Renzie Park. Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. Free.

### Spring into Phenology & Tree ID

Saturday, April 5, 10–11:30am / BCNP & SNP

Sunday, April 6, 10–11:30am / BFNR

Phenology is the study of the timing of biological events in plants and animals such as flowering, leafing, hibernation, reproduction, and migration. Gain insight on plant life cycle events (known as phenophases) in the classroom, the head outside for a tree ID hike. Free.

## ECO-MARKET

@ Buffalo Creek Nature Park

Accepting Vendor  
Applications

SEEKING VENDORS OF NATURE-THEMED  
ARTWORK & GOODS MADE FROM RECYCLED  
& SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS. VENDOR  
APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED MARCH 1 - 31.  
VISIT ASWP.ORG FOR DETAILS.

THE ECO MARKET WILL TAKE PLACE  
MAY 24, 2024 | 10 AM- 4 PM  
BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK IN SARVER



## OUTDOORS 101

### Full Moon Hike

Tuesday, January 14, 6–7:30pm / BCNP

There's nothing like a hike on a crisp winter night under a full moon. Join us for a walk along the trails at Succop Nature Park during the full moon. Please dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes that can get wet. We will end the hike around a fire and have some hot cider or cocoa to enjoy. This program will be held weather permitting and will be canceled in the event of heavy rain or heavy snow. Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

### From Farm to Nature Park: Succop Nature Park Over the Years

Saturday, January 18, 1–3pm / SNP

Want a peek inside the MarCraig House? Ever notice the details in the remodel of the barn for modern use? Join us for a behind the scenes look at the house and barn at Succop Nature Park. We will share the history of the property and look at details that nod to the past but are in use for our modern day. With some warm drinks and light snacks, this will be a great way to experience something new this winter! Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

### Animal Tracks in Winter

Saturday, February 8, 12–2pm / BFNR

Saturday, February 8, 2–4pm / BCNP

Sunday, February 9, 2–4pm / SNP

Animals can be secretive and oftentimes can be difficult to see in the wild. By learning to identify tracks and other signs that animals leave behind, you can become a nature detective to learn what animals are in the area. Join us for this indoor program covering all things tracks. We will discuss how to go about identifying animal tracks you might find in Western PA. We will also have a hands-on demonstration of how to make a plaster cast of an animal track that you can take home. Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

### Early Signs of Spring

Saturday, March 1, 10–11:30am / BFNR

Saturday, March 1, 2–4pm / BCNP

Saturday, March 8, 10–11:30am / SNP

What's coming? When will it get here? It may already be here! Let's look for the first glimpses of the return of spring on our trails. Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

### Succop Nature Park Tree Tour

Saturday, April 19, 10–11:30am / SNP

The Arboretum at Succop Nature Park Boasts over 95 species of trees. While some of these are non-native, we will personally visit and identify well over 50 species of native trees. Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

## NATURE & IMMUNITY SERIES

### Hot Toddies & Teas

Saturday, February 8, 2–4pm / BCNP

Need a little warm up this winter—let's try herbal teas! At this program, you'll meet Erica Peiffer, ASWP volunteer, who uses her backyard gardens to grow, harvest and process herbs and flowers to create tasty tea blends that support self-care all year round. Enjoy refreshments while learning how Erica got started and keeps growing in this practice, and how you can incorporate more relaxation, wellness and creativity into your daily routine with herbal teas. Try your hand at mixing your own blends to take home with you! \$30 per member, \$40 per nonmember.

### Native Plants: Medicine Chest

Saturday, February 15th, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Western PA has an abundance of beneficial plants Indigenous People used throughout history to soothe, heal and nourish the body. Join us for a short lesson to uncover some common medicinal plants with a focus on growing and sustainable collection tips. Participants will plant seed to grow and take home. Offered at no cost thanks to support from the Fox Chapel Garden Club.

### Fire Cider Workshop

Saturday, February 22, 11am–1pm / SNP

Building strong immunity requires many inputs like eating a healthy diet, engaging in gentle exercise, and managing stress, but adding herbal medicine to your repertoire really takes it up a notch. Herbal tonics like Fire Cider are all the rage, for a good reason—it's the people's medicine and it works! Join us for a fun hands-on workshop with herbalist Jennifer Eppolito of Dandy Botanicals where we'll explore the history and all the basic ingredients that make up this potent panacea. Learn about 'agni', and how to stoke your digestive fire, and then roll up your sleeves to make your custom blend to match your constitution. You'll leave with your very own jar of fire cider, new herbal skills, and the power to boost your own health! \$30 per member, \$40 per nonmember.

**AUDUBON**  
**NATURE CAMPS**  
**FOR KIDS AGES 5-18**

Camps take place at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (Fox Chapel), Succop Nature Park (Butler), and Buffalo Creek Nature Park (Sarver). Register today at [www.aswp.org](http://www.aswp.org) or by calling (412) 963-6100.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### **Beechwood Conservation Corps Introduction**

*Saturday, March 29, 10am–12pm / BFNR*

Do you enjoy working outdoors? Want to help the environment on your own schedule? The Beechwood Conservation Corps (BCC) is a dedicated group of volunteers that helps to steward priority conservation areas at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR). BCC volunteers adopt an area and work independently with support from Audubon staff. This program will highlight major conservation efforts happening at BFNR, provide an overview of the BCC, and explore priority management zones that would benefit from additional volunteer support.

### MISS ONE OF OUR ONLINE PROGRAMS?

Watch them anytime on our YouTube Channel [@aswpyoutube4149](#)

## WATERCOLOR WORKSHOPS WITH JES REGER DAVIS

### **Botanical: Chicory Blooms**

*Saturday, April 5, 10am–12:30pm / BFNR*

### **Rosy Maple Moth**

*Saturday, April 5, 1:30–4pm / BFNR*

Immerse yourself in one—or two—beginner-friendly workshops to learn the basic watercolor techniques and brushstrokes needed to create loose, expressive Chicory Blooms or Rosy Maple Moths. Students will be provided with materials and supplies, guidance, and a communal space to explore their creativity.

Jes Reger Davis is a watercolorist and teaching artist from Wheeling, West Virginia, and a 2020 Tamarack Emerging Artist Fellow recipient whose work can be found in ASWP Nature Stores. Register for one or both classes; there is a one hour break between the two workshops. Space is limited and registration is required. Please note, there is a separate charge for each class: \$55 per member and \$65 per non-member.



### **Native Plant Nursery**

*Tuesdays from April to October, 10am–1pm / BFNR*

Join us on Tuesdays from April through October to get your hands dirty while learning new skills and making a difference for local habitat! Volunteers are needed to help with native plant nursery tasks such as transplanting seedlings, watering, and sowing seed. Space is limited; registration is requested.

### **Dig in the Dirt! Garden and Landscaping Support**

*Thursdays from April to October, 10am–1pm / BFNR*

Join us on Thursdays from April through October to help ASWP maintain demonstration gardens and other landscaped areas around Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve. Materials and training will be provided. Registration is requested.

### **Garlic Mustard Madness**

*Saturday, April 5, 9am–12pm / BFNR*

*Saturday, April 19, 9am–12pm / TNR*

Invasive plants degrade ecosystems and displace native species. It's best to get them under control when they're just becoming established—and even easier with extra hands. Volunteers are needed to help remove garlic mustard at our preserves. All materials will be provided and no experience is necessary. Registration is requested.

### **Litter Pickup: Renzie Park**

*Saturday, April 12, 10am–12pm / RP, Renzie Park Senior Center*

Help us clean up Renzie Park with this litter pickup! It's an easy way to make an immediate positive impact on local habitats and waterways. All materials will be provided including gloves, trash bags, and safety vests. Please wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather. Thank you for helping to keep this beautiful local park clean and healthy! Registration requested. Please dress appropriately for the weather conditions.

### **Litter Pick Up: Monroe Road**

*Tuesday, April 22, 10am–12pm / BCNP*

Picking up litter is an easy way to make an immediate impact on local habitat and creeks. Help us celebrate Earth Day as we step out to pick up litter—all materials will be provided, including gloves, trash bags, and safety vests. Meet at Buffalo Creek Nature Park at 10am. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather. Thank you for helping to keep our streams and forests healthy.

## SCOUT PROGRAMS

### **Maple for Scouts**

*Saturday, March 8, 10am–12pm / BFNR*

*Saturday, March 15, 10am–12pm / SNP*

*Saturday, March 22, 10am–12pm / BCNP*

Experience the science and history of Maple Sugaring. Groups or individuals welcome; advance registration is required. Contact Scott Detwiler at (412) 963-6100 or [sdetwiler@aswp.org](mailto:sdetwiler@aswp.org) to make your reservation. \$12 per scout.

# ASK THE NATURALIST

## THE BENEFITS OF NATURE CAMARADERIE

In this issue, we're talking to one of our newest Master Birders about the benefits of connecting with nature, birds, and other birders.

Lisa Fleckenstein, from Versailles Borough, is a 2024 graduate of our Mon Valley Master Birder program. She shared with us her thoughts on the importance of both the program and the many pluses of getting outside to connect with nature—even in the colder winter months.

Audubon's Master Birder Program not only teaches participants to become better birders, enhance their existing avian identification skills, and understand local ecology, it creates an environment of camaraderie and joy in simply being outdoors. Recently, in conjunction with our expanded outreach in the Mon Valley, we started a special Master Birder Program for participants who live in that region. We were excited to welcome an inaugural class of individuals who wanted to gain proficiency in identifying birds by sight and sound—and who will use these skills to teach others in the future.

We asked Lisa a few questions about her program experience:

**Q: What or who helped to connect you with the Mon Valley Master Birder program?**

**A:** As a Mon Valley resident who is interested in birds and the outdoors, I'd received emails from Audubon about programs that matched my interests. That's how I learned about the Master Birder program.

**Q: How has the program inspired you to grow your nature/bird stewardship?**

**A:** The Master Birder program has expanded my knowledge of birds in general. It's also helped me to see first-hand how we can nurture our environment to help birds thrive.

**Q: You've put in a lot of time and effort to complete the Master Birder program—it's a big accomplishment! Have you experienced anything surprising or noteworthy regarding your connection with nature, thanks to the program?**

**A:** I'm surprised how much I've learned about the symbiotic relationship between insects, plants, and birds.



LISA FLECKENSTEIN (SECOND FROM RIGHT) WITH FELLOW MON VALLEY PARTICIPANTS

**Q. What benefits have you felt or experienced thanks to your participation in the program?**

**A:** The program gave me a sense of belonging to a group of like-minded bird lovers. I will never stop learning about birds, and this program provided many resources to continue along my journey.

Fleckenstein adds that program leaders—Audubon educators Nick Stahlman and Ben Kehoe—were supportive and informative guides through her learning process. “They are such an asset, and stellar examples of stewards of our environment.”

Master Birders complete training sessions that include weeknight lectures and in-person weekend birding fieldtrips. The excursions reinforce class subject matter and provide firsthand experience with the breadth of birds that occur in western Pennsylvania. Learn more about our Master Birder program at [aswp.org](http://aswp.org).

## CONNECT YOUR KIDS WITH NATURE!

Get the kids in your life connected to nature: explore, learn, and enjoy the outdoors with fun gear and guides from Audubon Nature Stores! Including this best-seller—The BugView™ that enables users to safely capture bugs for close observation and then release them back into their natural environment unharmed.





# ASWP NEWS

## BIRD TOWN – BIG NEWS

Four more communities in our area have become Bird Towns—Clinton Township (Butler County), Freeport Borough (Armstrong County), and Tarentum and Wilkinsburg Boroughs (Allegheny County). This brings the total number of Bird Town communities in southwestern PA to 10!

We are also very pleased to share that The Pittsburgh Foundation has awarded ASWP a grant of \$150,000 to help an additional 20 communities in Allegheny County to become Bird Towns. This initiative will focus on under-resourced municipalities that are overburdened by pollution and will include funds for community projects. It will also provide support for 100 Certified Backyard Habitats. The project will begin in January 2025 and run for two years.

## CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER USAGE GROWS

We're still analyzing the results of this year's Chimney Swift nest tower usage, but one thing is immediately clear—tower utilization continues to increase. This summer, 87 out of 146 towers had signs of nesting activity. This is an increase of 23% over 2023. We still need to determine if all towers used in previous years were used again this year or if some were abandoned for other sites.

There's still a lot we don't know about Chimney Swifts, including why some chimneys are preferred over others, and why the towers we've installed locally seem to have a better success rate than those installed in other parts of the country. That's why we're excited to have received a \$50,000 grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to help answer some of those questions.



ASWP will be installing several new “test towers” and will be including temperature and other monitoring devices to gather additional data. We'll also be working with Dr. James Kellam of St. Vincent College to delve deeper into the data collected. We look forward to sharing more information with you about our discoveries.

## THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

This fall, we were fortunate to receive onsite support from volunteer groups representing Ally Financial, Columbia Gas, Dunkin Donuts, US Bartender's Guild: Pittsburgh Chapter, and US Steel. Thank you to all of these great individuals—and organizations—who helped to complete projects at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve and Succop Nature Park.

We also want to thank our volunteer corps at each of our locations. These dedicated individuals do everything from store sales to answering phones, potting native plants, pulling invasive species, leading bird walks, and guiding school groups. We appreciate you!

# MEMORIALS + HONORS

## MEMORIALS

**Gaye Burkett**  
Sarah Miedel

**William Cooley**  
Lindy Butler

**Leila Croskey**  
Linda Croskey  
ASWP Staff

**Carly Ann George Voigt**  
Regina + Doug George

**Mary Louise McCune**  
Jeffrey Askam  
Audrey Bensy  
Alvaro, Sandra, + Nicole  
García-Tuñón  
Neva Hawpe  
Alice Jane Jenkins  
Wendy + Pope McCorkle  
Betsey Owens  
Susan Paisley  
Anne + Scott Reid

Diane Stewart  
Linda Timmons  
Sharon Wrigley

**James Roberts**  
Susan Stripay

**Dorothy Shewey**  
David Shewey

**Rosalie Snyder**  
Bryan + Donalee  
Thomas

**Ruth Weir**  
George Weir

**Faye Zebrowski**  
Sabrina Gould

## HONORS

**Dr. Thomas S. Chang**  
Antoinette Riffer

**Chris Kubiak**  
Terry + Ted Scheetz

**Allie Wight**  
Katherine Carberry

**Sarah La Rue + Gabe Miller**  
Patricia Appelbaum

# YEAR *in Review*

There's an Emily Dickinson poem that begins "Hope" is the thing with feathers—that perches in the soul. For many of us, birds are a symbol of optimism, excitement, and yes, hope. As seasons change, many of the bird friends that we see outside change—but they reliably return year after year, giving us hope that the environmentally conscious choices we make are benefiting birds, wildlife, and people in Western Pennsylvania and beyond. At ASWP, we connect people to birds and nature early—starting in childhood. We provide engaging programs that keep people coming back for summer camps, college birding outings, and family-friendly bird walks. If people can't get to us, we'll go to them—at local libraries and senior centers. Last year, over 31,600 individuals participated in one of our programs. 217 individuals enrolled their homes/yards in our Certified Backyard Habitat program. And over 20 communities chose to become Bird Towns. What do these numbers add up to? Hope. The feeling that continues to propel us forward as we look back at the successes of the past year—and look ahead to 2025.



## OUR PROPERTIES

4

Public Parks and Reserves  
(8 Properties Total)

599

Acres Owned or Managed;  
137 Acres Protected by Easement

12.5

Miles of Trails Maintained

65,000

Estimated Property  
Visitors



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

276

Count Hours in Pittsburgh  
with 76 Species Seen

54.4

Count Hours in South Butler  
with 59 Species Seen

53

Count Hours in Mon Valley  
with 51 Species Seen

298

Total Participants



## NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

18,000

Plants Sold or Donated

130

Native Plant Species  
Propagated at Nursery

200

Total Native Plant Species  
Available in Inventory

2,200

Native Seed Packets  
Donated in our Region



## OUR VOLUNTEERS

1,244

ASWP Volunteers

7,884

Volunteer Hours

\$264,035

Estimate Value of  
Donated Time

## PRICELESS

The Real Value of  
our Volunteers



## ASWP MEMBERSHIP

3,620

Member Households

864

Members for at Least 10 Years;  
527 for at Least 20 Years

594

Members at the \$100+ Levels;  
49 at \$1,000+

751

New Members



## CBH ENROLLMENT

1,280

Total Certified Backyard  
Habitat Enrollees

217

New Enrollees

689

Total Certified  
Backyard Habitats

1,646

Total Certified Acres



## NATURE STORE HIGHLIGHTS

5,818

Suet Cakes Sold

317

Bags of Bird-Friendly Coffee Sold

2,100

Zinc Garden Markers to ID Native Plants Sold

**NEARLY 100**

Unique Birdfeeder Options



## COLLEGE BIRDING PROGRAM

180

Students

8

Universities

82

Outings

355

eBird Checklists from 26 Counties and 7 States Reporting 224 Species of Birds



## SUMMER CAMPS

47

Summer Camp Days

434

Total Campers

\$3,620

Camp Scholarships Awarded

10,940

Hours Spent Enjoying the Outdoors



## FIELD CONSERVATION

7

New School and Community Pollinator Gardens Installed

107

Acres of Invasive Plant Management

329

Hemlocks Protected from Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

1,800

New Trees in the Ground



## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

411

School Programs Reaching 20,290 Students

487

Public Programs and Classes Reaching 7,256 People

60

Online Programs with 2,710 Households Viewing

199

Hikes with 1,393 Participants



## BIRD TOWN PENNSYLVANIA

10

Official Bird Towns in Southwestern PA

52,696

People Living in Southwestern PA Bird Towns

26,086

Official Acres of Bird Towns in Southwestern PA

71

Official Bird Towns in PA





## OPERATING INCOME

Contributed Income	614,285
Earned Income	1,095,358
Interest Income and Tax Credits	109,918

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**Total Operating Income** **\$1,819,561**

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Money Spent from Multi-year Support	\$704,843
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## EXPENSES

Programs, Projects, & Places	2,173,552
Management & General Administration	130,522
Fundraising	103,792

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**Total Program Expenses** **\$2,407,866**

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Money Reserved for Multi-year Projects	\$40,596
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## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (AS OF JUNE 30, 2024)

### ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	134,403
Accounts/Pledges Receivable	481,360
Inventories	145,377
Investments	1,060,370
Fixed Assets (Net of Accumulated Depreciation)	7,561,907

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**Total Assets** **\$9,383,417**

### LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	112,511
Accrued Expenses	83,696
Deferred Revenue	81,186

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**Total Liabilities** **\$278,186**

### NET ASSETS (WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS)

Unrestricted - Undesignated (Land & Buildings)	7,678,727
Board Designated Land Acquisition & Projects	22,878
Endowment	355,281

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**Total Net Assets without Donor Restrictions** **\$8,056,886**

### NET ASSETS (WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS)

Projects	369,678
Endowment	678,666

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**Total Net Assets with Donor Restrictions** **\$1,048,345**

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**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$9,383,417**



*These numbers are for the fiscal year running July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Our audited financial statements and IRS 990 are available online or by request.*



**AUDUBON**  
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

614 Dorseyville Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238-1618

## SHOP AUDUBON NATURE STORES

FOR EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO  
ENJOY THE BIRDS THIS WINTER!

### **Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve**

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel / 412-963-6100

*Tuesday–Sunday from 9am–5pm*

### **Buffalo Creek Nature Park**

154 Monroe Road in Sarver / 724-295-3589

*Tuesday–Sunday from 9am–5pm*

### **Succop Nature Park**

185 W. Airport Road in Butler / 724-586-2591

*Tuesday–Sunday from 9am–5pm*



*Barred Owl*



**DID YOU GET ENGAGED  
OVER THE HOLIDAYS?**

Schedule a tour of Succop Nature Park, a beautiful location for your big day! Contact us at (724) 586-2591 or [events@aswp.org](mailto:events@aswp.org).