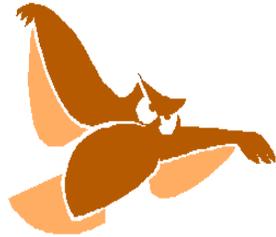


The



Syrinx

Voicebox of the Westmoreland
Bird & Nature Club
Vol. 36 No. 4
Oct - Dec 2017

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Dues payable beginning January unless you joined after Sep. 1. \$7 Family or Individual. Supporting - \$20. Must be paid by the July-Sep. Syrinx issue.

Autumn Leaves

Too soon the gold and ruby leaves
Will drift to ground, and snow in glittering showers
Will sift upon them where they lay.

My thoughts drift backward through the years to golden
days.

You ran before me through October's windfall -
Scattering the piles the neighbors neatly mounded.

Not satisfied, were we, until we'd searched through all.
Our choices near perfection in the color
Or the shading near the veins.

Delighted in the beauty and the bounty,
And each with bouquet tightly fisted,
We hurried homeward with our harvest
To coat with wax so they would never fade.

And now, you've gone before me once again.
Each season brings bright memories, never fading.
Such joy we shared as children and as friends.

One day, when time stands still, perhaps in Autumn,
When gold and ruby leaves drift to the ground,
I'll close my weary eyes and see you holding
A bouquet of lovely leaves to lead me home.

Linda Ditrich

Club Meeting

Donohoe Center

Thur. Nov. 16

7:00 pm

Doors open 6:30

Our annual membership meeting where members get to "show and tell" pictures taken in the past few years of trips, vacations, birding adventures, etc. There will be, as usual, a raffle of nature books and natural history objects after the membership show. Raffle tickets are, as usual, 25 cents apiece or 5 for a dollar. Place your ticket in the container by the book or object you wish to win. Optional: Bring a dozen cookies to share - and lots of money!

Post Christmas Party

Wed. Jan. 3 at Carbone's

Restaurant in Crabtree

Banquet Room at 5:30 - 6:00 pm. Order from the menu. Separate checks. Details page 13.



Field Trips and Outings

Sat. Oct. 7 The Big Sit This will be our **10th Year** at the Big Sit! Current standing records are 48 species in one day, 84 all-time, 728 individuals in one day and 15 attendees. Casual birders come whenever you can and stay as long as you want. Those participating in the counting coordinate your hours with Dick (otusasio@lhtot.com) so we can have continuous counting from dawn to dusk. Same place on the marsh end of Keystone S.P. lake on the north side of the causeway. Bring a folding chair and food to share (optional). Come and enjoy a day of leisurely bird watching camaraderie where we let the birds come to us.

Sat. Oct. 14 Cooper's Rock, WV. This Westmoreland Conservancy outing begins with a carpool at Catan's Craft Store in Murrysville at **8:00 A.M.**

Sat. Oct. 21 Don Harrison Community Trail
The 5-mile hike starts in Townsend Park in Murrysville at **10:00 A.M.** This is a WC outing commemorating Don Harrison who passed away this summer.

Thur. Oct. 19 McConnell's Mill & Slippery Rock Gorge Fall Photo Opt. Like to take scenic pictures? This is designed for the camera bugs, but anyone can attend. Meet at the Kidoo parking lot at **9:30 A.M.** We can hike several trails above and below the mill and drive over to Hells Hollow, where there is an old lime kiln and a waterfall - if time permits. Bring lunch.

Sat. Nov. 4 - Nov. 10 Golden Eagle Watch

Let's try for an impromptu outing to the Allegheny Front before/after the passage of a cold front.

Sat. Nov. 11 Jan Merlino Exotic Bird Farm

Explore a possible future nature reserve with WC. Directions from Greensburg: Follow Business 66 North to the first Turnpike 66 underpass (Exit 9). From this point, travel 2.3 miles and turn left onto Old Route 66. The second driveway is 899 Old Route 66. From Murrysville: Take Route 22 to Rt. 66S. As you enter 66 South, you will see Exit 12. Take the last exit before toll road. At the first light turn left and travel 500 feet. Turn right on to Old State Route 66. The 66 Grill will be on your right. Travel 1/2 mile to a stop sign and bear left. At the intersection on the right hand side there is a large white house. The second house is yellow siding on red brick. Immediately after this house, turn right in to the driveway. **Be advised the driveway is hidden and you cannot see the owners house from the road. You'll know you're in the right place if you see a herd of llamas on the left when you turn into the driveway. Meet at 9:30 A.M.**

Thur. Nov. 16 Club Meeting Details p. 1

Sun. Dec. 31 Bushy Run Xmas Bird Count

Contact Dick for an assignment or to request a route. Meet at the Delmont McDonald's at **7:30 A.M.** We are doing things differently this year. The count tally will not take place at 4 pm at McDonald's. The count tally will be done at the **Post Christmas Party** dinner at Carbone's Restaurant (see front page). The leader or a member of the party will read their list after we're done eating. The list contents are to be kept secret until the dinner to inspire a spirit of competition between parties. The dinner is on Wednesday, Jan. 3.

Tue. Jan. 2 Post Christmas Party at Carbone's Restaurant Detail's page 13.



Outings Revisited

Sun. July 16 Dragonfly Outing Only four showed since our fearless leader Tom Pearson was unable to come, but we managed to identify 14 species of Odonata thanks to the agility of Tim Vechter, who captured all but one of them. The two wetlands of the Loyalhanna Watershed Farm are new additions for aquatic species in Westmoreland County. The wetland installed just last fall is already full of water and had **turtles, spotted sandpipers** and **green frogs** besides dragonflies. Our survey included **common whitetail, widow skimmer, twelve-spotted skimmer, Eastern amberwing, green darner, pond hawk, blue dasher, Halloween pennant, black saddlebags** and one UID, possibly **wandering glider**. Damselflies consisted of **ebony jewelwing, common forktail, bluets** and one UID, a small, very dark blue species. Participants: Dick Byers, Ellie Cochran, Dale Matuza, Tim Vechter.



Part of the new wetlands, installed in the fall of 2016 along Old Route 30. This is about a 4-acre plot.



Tim photographing a 12 spotted Skimmer



The Loyalhanna Watershed Association wetlands in December of 2014 from the trail up the hill on the Watershed Farm.



Sun. July 23 Club Picnic at Bushy Run S.P.

Forty souls attended on a day that threatened rain, but held off after a short drizzle.



After enjoying the astonishing variety of food, Mark McConaughy led us to the oldest trees on the property, two beeches that were suspected of being "witness" trees to the battle, but came up short, having germinated around 1809 and 1819. The Bushy Run battle was fought in 1763.



Carl Kish measured the younger beech at 95" which translates into an estimated age of 189 years, close to the pro estimate of 198.

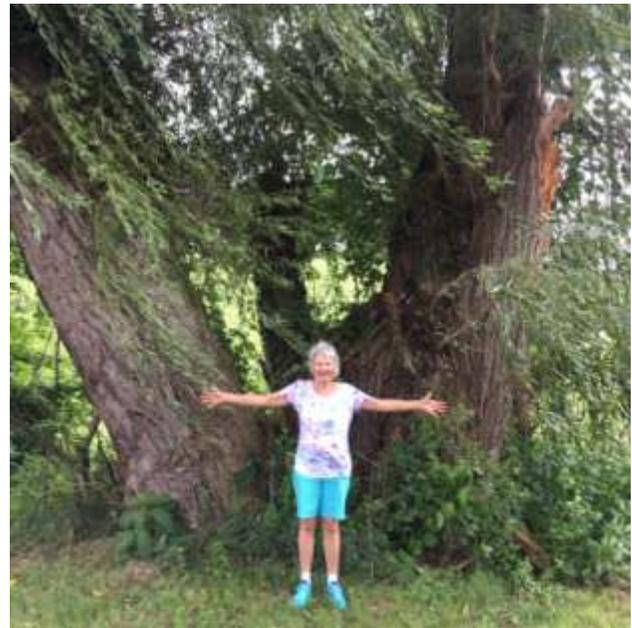
The tree was dark from being wet by rain.

Tom Pearson found an uncommon fern for our area that he called the narrow-leaved spleenwort. We found out later that it had been decided it isn't a spleenwort and has been reclassified into another genus as the **narrow-leaved glade fern**.



Narrow-leaved glade fern (Diplazium pynocarpon)

The last walk was to the swamp guarded by a huge weeping willow.



Nicole McCoy in front of the willows

Thur. July 27 Whitney Wetlands



Whitney Wetlands

New club members Jim and Deborah Hart called an impromptu outing at their home in Whitney July 27 to show us the impressive stand of blooming **Turks-cap lilies** in the wetlands next to their farm. They also had an impressive stand of **blue vervain**. Neither are shown here because the color pictures of both got washed out in black & white print. We plan on visiting again in the spring to see what birds this area is drawing. I used to live nearby in the 1950's when this wetland was mostly a mining slag dump. It has been completely cleaned up and is now a productive wetland. Eight were able to make the outing on short notice. Participants: Dick Byers, Nancy Murphy, Ron Repine, Georgia Shalek, Barb Kochaniack & daughter, Deborah and Jim Hart. **DB**

Sat. Aug. 19 Youghiogheny Canoe Trip

Seventeen people enjoyed a relaxing trip down the Yough River from Smithton to West Newton on a cool, partly sunny day after heavy rains had raised the water level and increased the flow speed. We literally learned the meaning of "going with the flow." You didn't have to paddle at all; using directional correction strokes was all that was needed. It made photographing items on the shoreline a bit difficult. For a decent picture you had to crash land your canoe on the bank to allow time to focus and shoot the wildflowers.

Wildflowers on the banks consisted mostly of **sunflower** species, **cardinal flower** and **Japanese knotweed**. Other species in lesser numbers were **monkshood**, **virgin's bower**, **purple loosestrife**, **garden phlox**, **Joe-Pye weed**, **touch-me-not** and **jewelweed**.

Birds seen included **green heron**, **wood duck**, **kingfisher**, **bald eagle**, **cedar waxwing**, **goldfinch**, **black duck**, **spotted** and **solitary sandpiper**, **rough-wing swallows** and **broad-winged hawk**. Kingfisher den holes were spotted.

Some huge trees lined the river. At Cedar Creek Park, where we had lunch, **silver maple**, **willow**, **basswood**, **tulip poplar** and **sycamore** graced the picnic area. The latter is by far the most abundant tree along the banks as would be expected.



We put in at 10 AM and clambered out at 3 PM WBNC participants were Tom and Billie Moser, Mark Bowers, Loree Speedy, Jim and Deborah Hart and daughter, Tim Vechter, Dick Byers, Delia White, Joe and Arlene Kalinowski, Larry Helgerman and Mary Gray.



One of the big trees on the Yough River

Sat. Sep. 2 Morosini Pond Survey Ten people were not intimidated on this cold morning with rain threatened by advancing Hurricane Harvey, reduced to a tropical storm. The rain held off, and the sun even came out for awhile. Dick still got wet losing his balance in the pond searching the pond floor with an aquatic net for insect larvae. We did not know that the hunters on Morosini had many years before stocked the pond with **blue gill** and **catfish**, so the aquatic insect catch was reduced to **backswimmers, water striders, and whirligig beetles**. Every net brought up a few tadpoles, identified by Jim Pemberton as belonging to **green frog** and **leopard frog**. That was pretty much it, no dragonfly or damselfly nymphs, no caddisflies, diving beetles, water scorpions or boatmen. The water was a bit cloudy without any algae. The shoreline is shallow with a sharp drop-off. Dan Barber said it was originally about 15 feet deep.

Participants also visited the chimney swift nesting tower, a recent eagle scout project, and the Morosini viewing site at 1300 feet after a tough walk through the tall grass prairie **big bluestem** and **Panicum switch** grass. We hope to build an observation platform there in the future.

Jim Pemberton also caught a **garter snake** near the kiosk. We lunched at King's in Delmont.

Participants: Dick Byers, Rob Malley, Don & Judy Koch, Sue Miller, Shelly Tichy, Dan Barber, Jim Pemberton and two more WC members.

Strange Deer Behavior Puzzle Solved

Billie Moser called in mid-July to report a white-tailed doe in the woods behind her house was "bellowing" a loud call almost constantly and wondered why. I have heard deer make this loud bleating sound - usually when they are in pain, but Billy said the deer was walking around okay and eating apples in her yard. The loud bellowing, however, went on for five days almost non-stop. The deer didn't appear injured, but certainly sounded like she was in distress. We wondered if she was having problems trying to give birth, a possibility, even in mid-July. A call to the Game Commission didn't yield any answers.

Billie's neighbor began cutting down trees on his property with a chain saw and the noise drove the doe away. About three days later a doe accompanied by a fawn that had lost its spots appeared in the yard. Billie recognized the mother deer by a scar on the hind leg as the one that had been doing the loud calling. She was no longer bellowing. We surmised her distressed calling was due to losing track of her fawn, which she now had found. This probably happens more often than we think. I frequently see fawns moving by themselves in the woods. They get disturbed and run from the place where the mother hid them. The mother can usually track them down by smell, but this was a case where rain or something had washed away the scent and she stayed in the vicinity calling her fawn.

Solar Eclipse 2017

The August 21 solar eclipse will long be remembered by those who made the trip to the path of totality. It was the first total solar eclipse to touch the United States since 1979 and the first one to cross the United States since 1918. The 2017 eclipse began in Oregon and ended in South Carolina. Thousands flocked to the 70-mile wide path of totality through 14 states. Days Inn reported charging \$1600 per night and a gas station

somewhere wanted \$99 for a bottle of water. This is why we have to REGULATE businessmen!

This was by far the most watched and photographed solar eclipse in history. There were no eclipse deniers saying it was all a hoax, even through the astronomers use the same scientific methods as the climate scientists. There was one comment on Facebook that asked (If the eclipse was real, why did you have to use colored glasses to see it?) It could rank as the dumbest question in history if you can even figure out what they were asking.

Two club members sent eclipse pictures: The first below is from Dale Matuza.



Dale used his old Canon 10 mp camera rather than his full frame Canon because he didn't want to risk camera damage. Magnified radiation could ruin the camera sensors. The shots were made through a 400 mm lens with an inexpensive solar filter. Dale made test shots before he went to determine exposure, and taped the focal ring in place on the correct focal point so he wouldn't have to waste time during the short totality duration. The seven exposures were lined up on Photo Shop.

The second photo at the top of the next column is from Mark McConaughy who took it with a 250mm telephoto lens with solar filter at totality and got a wide corona. Mark was mostly watching the eclipse through his solar telescope in Grand Island, Nebraska. Dale was in southern Illinois.

The next total solar eclipse will be on April 8, 2024 which will cut through northwestern Pennsylvania and pass over the town of Erie.



Erie will experience a 3-minute, 45 second totality. People are already booking reservations for the event at Erie hotels!



Mary Shirland

Long-time club member Mary Shirland passed away in July at age 97. She was the club's savior back in 1992 when we lost all the officers to new employment opportunities. Mary took over the club newsletter while Dorothy Ferguson and Linda Berg took over the administrative duties.

Mary was born in England in 1920. She met her husband Fred Shirland while he was stationed in England during World War II and came to America afterwards, living in Ohio for a spell before coming to Murrysville where Fred worked for Westinghouse and was one of the founding members of the Westmoreland Conservancy and one of their past presidents.

After accepting an invitation to be the club president in 1993 I relied on Mary's good advice for club activities. She attended most of the club bird outings and I could always count on her for the Bushy Run Christmas Count and PAMC in May.

Mary was a great story teller. I was all ears when she talked about her life growing up in England and her experiences during WWII. I particularly remember one story when she and her mother and sisters were in the bomb shelter at their home just outside London during a heavy Meeserschmitt bombing raid. They were quite cramped in their little shelter and her mother said, if we're going to die, we'll die in comfort. With that they left the bomb shelter and went into the house.

While Trump Tweets to Distract your Attention...

Trump's ignorant appointees at the EPA and Dept. of the Interior are hard at work rescinding the environmental safeguards that protect our health and safety for the benefit and profit of the corporate polluters.

From Washington: When career employees of the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) are summoned to a meeting with Scott Pruitt, the agency administrator, they no longer can count on easy access to the floor of his office. Doors to the floor are now frequently locked, and employees have to have an escort to gain entrance. Some employees say they are also told to leave behind their cell phones when they meet with Mr. Pruitt, and they are sometimes told not to take notes. Some need a pass. Mr. Pruitt, according to the employees who requested anonymity out of fear of losing their jobs, often makes important phone calls from other offices rather than use the phone in his office, and he is accompanied, even at E.P.A. headquarters, by armed guards, the first head of the agency to ever request round-the-clock personal security.

As a former Oklahoma attorney general who built his career suing the E.P.A., and whose [LinkedIn profile](#) still describes him as “a leading advocate against the EPA’s activist agenda,” Mr. Pruitt has made it clear that he sees his mission to be dismantling the agency’s policies — and even portions of the institution itself. But as he works to roll back regulations, close offices and eliminate staff at the agency charged with

protecting the nation’s environment and public health, Mr. Pruitt is taking extraordinary measures to conceal his actions, according to interviews with more than 20 agency employees. Everything is done in secret. You call this democracy? Transparency?

Ryan Zinke, now under investigation for threatening Alaskan Senator Lisa Murkowski for not voting for the health bill, has been recommending certain national monuments be reduced in size, or lose their federal land status entirely or be opened to mining and mineral extraction - and they don't have to restore it to the way it was originally since Pruitt has rescinded the law requiring they do so. Restoring the EPA and the federal lands to the way they were before Trump will be the dastardly job for the next democratic administration.

Westmoreland County Bird

Report

Dec - 2016-Feb 2017

4th quarter

Tom Kuehl

Locations: Beaver Run Reservoir at Rt. 380 Overlook (**BRR**), Ethel Springs Reservoir (**ESR**, also more commonly known as Derry Lake), Kuehl Property – Murrysville (**KP**), Keystone State Park (**KSP**), Love Hollow – Andy Mack property north of Ligonier (**LH**), Latrobe Reservoir (**LR**, also known as Trout Run Reservoir), New Stanton (**NS**), **PNR** (Powdermill Nature Reserve), St. Vincent Lake/Wetland (**SVW**), Westmoreland Heritage Trail (**WHT-BR**).

The Bushy Run Christmas Count was just 58 species, well below the record 81. Contributing was the absence of diving ducks with only the three mergansers species tallied. Record highs were of **16** Pied-billed Grebes and **12** Bald Eagles. The Rector CBC species count was 63, a respectable total with just 9 waterfowl species.

There were 200 **Tundra Swan** at WHT-BR on 12/7 (KB), a flock of 75 flew over PNR on 12/9 (BV), 29 **Tundra Swan** were counted at KSP 12/14

(KJ) and 57 where at LR 12/19 (AM). No substantial reports for the season, one **Snow Goose** was at ESL 12/23 (MD) and one at SVW on 1/5 (SG). One **Blue Morph Snow Goose** was at BRR on 12/28 (DB). **Canada Goose** was widely reported during this mild winter season, with a season-high count being of 490 at LR on 12/19 (AM). The highest of many counts for SVW was of 423 **Canada Geese** on 12/26 (RC).

There were 7 Gadwall at LR 12/19 (AM). Ken Byerly reported a build-up of **American Wigeon** at the WHT-BR in February; with a first report of 11 on 2/7, and peaking with 41 on 2/28. Andy Mack reported 150 **Mallard** on 12/19 at LR, the season high. There were several reports of **Black Duck**, with a high of 24 counted at BRR on 1/1 (KB). There were counts of **Green-winged Teal** at WHT-BR late in the season by Ken Byerly, with 3 found on 2/21, and the high-count of 14 on 2/28 - likewise, for **Northern Pintail**, with 20 on 2/12, and 34 on 2/17 at WHT-BR (KB). **Northern Shoveler** was a rare sighting for this season, with 2 on 12/14 and one on 12/12, both at BRR and both reports by Michael David.

Diving ducks were sparsely reported although there were several of **Ring-necked Duck**, with a high count of 20 on 12/11. No **Greater Scaup** for the season, and just two **Lesser Scaup**; one at Twin Valley Lake on 2/10 and one photographed at Twin Valley Memorial Park in Delmont on 2/16 (ME). Few reports for **Bufflehead** with 2 at BRR 1/28 (MVT) and one at LR on 12/3, and again one on 12/11 (AM). Ten **Hooded Merganser** were at BRR 12/10 (MVT), and the highest count was of 18 at LR on 12/11 (AM). Seen from Harrison Hills Park on 12/25 were 19 **Common Mergansers** that were on the east side of the Allegheny River were credited to *Westmoreland* (AH). A very high count of 120 **Common Mergansers** were at BRR on 12/28 (DMP). The only counts for **Ruddy Duck** were provided by AM at LR, 22 on 12/3 and 25 on 12/11.

The Rector CBC tallied 3 **Ruffed Grouse**, and one at PNR on 1/6 (MR). A substantial flock of

30 **Wild Turkey** foraged in the farm fields along Borland Farm Road on 2/24 (TK).

One **Common Loon** was at ESL 12/1 (AM) and one was at PNR on 12/9 (BV). **American Coots** are normally quite common, and especially so at ESL - but not for this season. The high for several reports at ESL was 10 on 2/12 (KB) and 13 at BRR on 12/28 (DM). **Pied-billed Grebe** were reported often, but almost exclusively at BRR, with the high-count coming on the Bushy Run CBC on 12/28 with 13 being reported by the Matusza Party.

Michael Gagliardi reported that he had observed a **Green Heron** along the creek going through his back yard in Murrysville on 1/13. There were also many warm winter season reports of **Great Blue Heron**. One flew over Ken Byerly's home in Delmont on 2/17, one was along Four Mile Run near Darlington on 1/22 (TK/JK), and the species was tallied for both CBC's.

Turkey Vultures are consistently reported in the Ligonier Valley during the winter and rare elsewhere in Westmoreland. This year was no exception beginning with the tally of 46 for the Rector CBC on 1/2. There were also 5 **Turkey Vultures** in the Ligonier Valley tallied on a WRS on 2/22 (JK/TK). One **Turkey Vulture** soared over the hay fields along Italy Road on 2/18 near the Borland Farm Road junction (JK/TK). **Black Vulture** was again reported in the Ligonier Valley with 2 on 12/1, on 12/21 and 2 as well on Rector CBC.

Bald Eagles again congregated at the Loyalhanna Dam this winter. On 1/5 Steve Gosser captured 17 in one photo and observed 4 others for a total of 21 that day. High numbers continued until at least 2/18 when two pairs of at least 17 **Bald Eagles** attempted talon-locking (MVT). Further upstream at the bridge on Mission Bridge Road in Latrobe there was one Bald Eagle on 1/20 (CK). December reports for **Northern Harrier** included one on Saul Road near Delmont on 12/21 (KB) and one at Brinker's Farm, also near Delmont on 12/23 (KB). After being spotted sitting in a farm field at the bend in Livermore Road near the West Penn Trail parking area, a juvenile **Northern Harrier** lifted off and

briefly hunted the field for JK/TK on 2/18. There were several **Sharp-shinned Hawks**. Non-feeder sightings include singles seen on 12/4 and 1/29 on the Delmont to Trees Mills section of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail (KB). Likely a routine visitor to the KP feeders, sightings of one **Cooper's Hawk** were made on 1/8 (TK) and 1/12 (JK). Two **Cooper's Hawks** visited the feeders at Ken Byerly's home on 2/23. **Red-shoulder Hawks** were tallied on both CBC's, with 3 for the Rector Count, and just one for the Bushy Run. Rarely reported, one **Golden Eagle** was seen at the WHT-BR 2/2 (KB).

Another sign of a warm winter, Andy Mack saw 3 **Killdeer** at LR, with 2 on 12/3 and 12/11 and 5 on 1/4. Late season reports for **Killdeer** included 3 in NS on 2/21 (MF) and 2 at WHT-BR on 2/28 (KB). Lured out near the KP by the unseasonably warm weather were 2 **American Woodcock** heard by Tom Kuehl on the evening of February 20. The same day 3 more were reported on the Latrobe farm of Skip Shawley. Another was reported at the Love Hollow home of Andy Mack on 2/22, and on the record-breaking warm day of 2/24 (76 degrees) two more woodcock were heard at the intersection of Rt. 66 and Silvis Road (JK) and across Hilty Road from the KP (TK).

The only gull reports were one **Ring-billed Gull** at LR 12/11 (AM), another at the Rt. 286 crossing of the Beaver Run Reservoir on 1/1 (KB) and 2 at Acme Dam on 2/25 (MJ).

Owling for the 12/28 Bushy Run CBC, one **Eastern Screech Owl** responded to call-back near the wetland at the Murrysville Community Park (JK/TK). The first **Barred Owl** calls heard at the KP occurred on 12/19. One Barred Owl provided an emphatic response to call back at the Walter's Reserve on the 12/28 Bushy Run Christmas Count (JK/TK) and one Barred Owl was seen in early morning light on Majolie Road that same morning (JK/TK/SG). One **Barred Owl** was at LH 2/26 (AM). One **Great Horned Owl** was at LD on 1/21 by Tina Alianiello. The David-Colleen Yeany and Matt Webb party for the 1/2 Rector Christmas Bird

Count had one **Saw-whet Owl** respond to playback at the Spruce Flats Bog boardwalk.

Belted Kingfishers were tallied on both the Bushy Run and Rector CBC's and frequently seen during this warm winter. Andy Mack reported 2 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** in Laughlintown on 1/1. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were reported on the 1/2 Rector Christmas Bird Count and one was reported on 2/27 on the WHT-Delmont to Trees Mills section (KB). There were 6 **American Kestrel** tallied on the Crabtree WRS route on 1/28 (KB,SG,JK,TK).

Common Raven was heard and seen in the City of Jeannette on 1/31 (TK). Ken Byerly, reported one **Common Raven** on the WHT-BR on 12/1 and 2/28. There were also several reports of **Common Raven** in the Laurel Highlands and a celebrity Ebird report of a Common Raven by Louise Zemaitis, on a drive-through of the New Stanton area on I-70 on 12/14. Perhaps another reflection of a warm winter season, missed on both CBC's, and just one report for the season, one **Horned Lark** was at Ice Pond – Ligonier on 12/11 (AM).

There were many reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** including 7 by the Katie Barnes/Mary Shidel and Mallory Sarver party for the whopping grand total of 32 tallied for the Rector CBC, which seems to confirm over-wintering of the species following an early irruption across the Commonwealth. **Brown Creeper** was recorded on both CBC's, but in low numbers with just 3 for Bushy Run and 2 for the Rector Count. The early report of several at the KP for the season was of one **Brown Creeper** on 12/18 (JK) and again on 2/26. Reports of one **Brown Creeper** on 12/4, 1/22 and on 2/10 all at WHT-BR were provided by Ken Byerly. One **Winter Wren** was tallied on the Rector CBC, and another at King's Nature Reserve in Murrysville 1/21 (PF). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** over-wintered in Westmoreland, recorded on both the Bushy Run and Rector CBC,s. Four were at Pleasant Valley Park on 1/1 (MD).

There was a large flock of over 1000 **European Starlings** on a WRS near Crabtree on 1/28 (KB,SG,JK,TK). Dick Byers had 25 **Cedar**

Waxwings in Stahlstown on 1/15 (DB), and the season-high count was of 132 at Ken Byerly's Delmont home on 1/17. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was tallied in both Christmas Bird counts.

One **Eastern Towhee** was tallied for the Rector CBC and there were 2 at LH on 12/4 (AM). There were 13 **Field Sparrows** on the Rector CBC, and 2 **Field Sparrows** were at the WHT-BRR on 2/21 (KB). The first of many sightings at the KP feeders of **Fox Sparrow** began on 12/14 (JK), and the high count was of 2 **Fox Sparrows** on 12/18 and again on 2/26. The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve location provided 2 **Swamp Sparrows** on 1/17. (James Kellarn) and the Yeany/Webb party tallied one on 1/2 for the Rector CBC. The cold days of 1/5 and 1/6 for a Cornell Feederwatch count provided 25 **White-throated sparrows** and 19 **Northern Cardinals**. Twenty-one **White-crowned Sparrows** were observed during the Crabtree WRS route on 1/28 (KB, SG, TK, JK). There was a total of four reports by James Kellarn and Michael David for **White-crowned Sparrows** at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve, with the season high coming on 2/24 with 7 by James Kellarn. **White-crowned Sparrows** visited the feeders at the Scottdale home of Georgia Shalek from 12/10 to 12/13; with a high daily count of 8 on 2/10.

Red-winged Blackbirds returned well before the end of the season and three visited the feeders at the KP on 2/21 (JK). There were also 20 in the Beaver Run Reservoir territory 12/28 (DMP). There were 100 **Common Grackles** in the Beaver Run Reservoir territory on 12/28 (DMP). Three visited the home feeders of Ken Byerly on 2/23. There were 8 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** tallied for the 12/28 Bushy Run CBC.

A male **Purple Finch** visited the KP feeders on 11/4 (JK) and the first of recurring sightings of a female Purple Finch was on 12/30 (JK). The Yeany/Webb Party tallied 3 Purple Finch on Linn Run Road during the 1/2 Rector CBC.

And on cold nights throughout the season two or more **Carolina Wrens** loudly announced that the day was coming to an end, then commenced to

stuff themselves into a wicker pocket on the side porch of the Kuehl House in Murrysville.

Observers: **Tom Kuehl, 3615 Hilty Road, Export, PA 15632, (724)-325-1918, tjkuehl@comcast.net .** Dick Byers, Ken Byerly, Michael David, Mike Fialkovich, Sharon Gewecke, Steve Gosser, Amy Henrici, Karen Jackson, Matt Juskowich, Chuck Kuchta, Janet Kuehl, Dale Matuza Party for 12/28 Bushy Run Christmas Bird Count, Margaret Rohde, Marjorie Van Tassel, Ben Viazzachero.

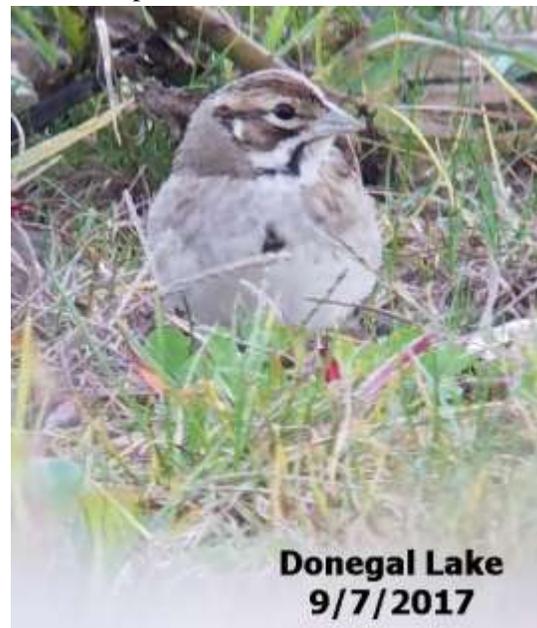
Ed Note

The total # of species seen in Westmoreland County in 2016 was **208**. The record count is **238** set in 2007 with an average of 220 over 22 years.

The current year tally as of Sep. 5 is 190 species. DB

First Westmoreland County Record for Lark Sparrow

Josh Lefever saw a lark sparrow among a flock of chipping sparrows on September 7, 2017 in the main boat launch parking lot at Donegal Lake. Shannon Thompson confirmed the sighting the next day with the below picture.



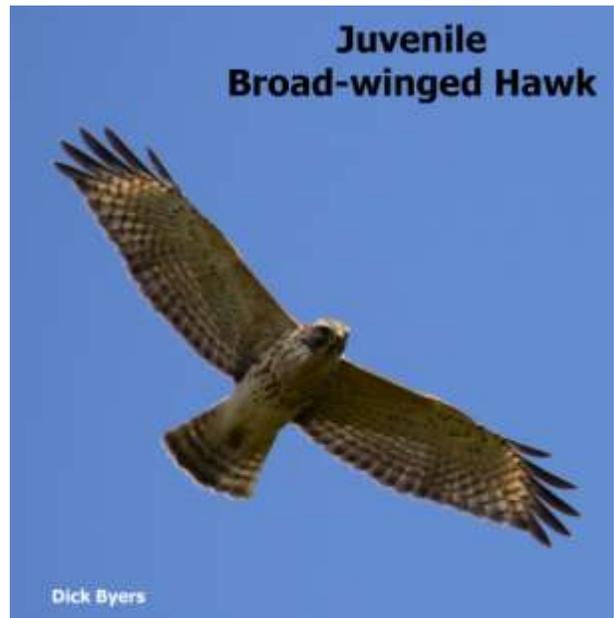
Outings Revisited continued...

Sun. Sep. 17 Allegheny Front We had 423 birds of 9 species on our count, 374 of which were broad-winged hawks that came directly overhead and often circled, so we had a good day. The previous day had more broadwings (591) that Georgia Shalek said reminded her of World War II bombing movies since they were barreling over in glide formation out of the clouds.

We obviously missed the peak day by one. September 18 had 1150 birds of 10 species with 1109 of them being broadwings.



Attendance for a pleasant Sunday afternoon was surprisingly light. Club attendees: George Bercik, Dick Byers, Ellie Cochran, Karen Jackson, Tom & Janet Kuhle, Monica Miller.



Thunderhead shaped cumulus clouds entertained us all afternoon making it easy to pinpoint the location of hawk kettles with reference to the blue patches in between the castle-like cloud prominences.

Club Book Update

If all goes well, there is a small chance we just might have copies of the club book available for members and the public before the January newsletter comes out. We have only four more localities to finish up, all four assigned and the book cover to do.

Currently we have 230 pages proof-read, 531 pictures, 77 maps, 89 places and a text of 71,522 words. The additional four places to finish will probably bring the final version to around 240-260 pages. I hope to have a finished manuscript to present to a printing company before the end of October and copies for sale before Christmas. I hope the book company doesn't present any hurdles to clear. All comments by people who have seen it are good. DB

Post Christmas Party

Back in the old days (1990's), we had a Christmas Party either before or after Christmas, usually at Carbone's with a program. Rather than dragging the evening out with a program, the executive committee decided to bring it back in conjunction with the Bushy Run Christmas Bird Count. The count this year will be held on Sun. Dec. 31, but we are not reporting back to McDonald's to tally the count. The count will be tallied at the Carbone's dinner with the reading of the field lists along with any accompanying tales that occurred during the count in the same fashion that ASWP has been doing the Pittsburgh Count and Dinner. This is not restricted to count participants! Everybody is encouraged to attend. Maybe some of you will discover how much fun the Christmas Count is and join us the following year.

RSVP to Dick Byers (724-593-3543) otusasio@lhtot.com by Thur. Dec. 27 if you are coming to the dinner party.

Winter Finch Forecast

Wayne Laubscher

GENERAL FORECAST: Cone crops in the Northeast are bumper in 2017. It is the best cone

crop in a decade or more. This will be a banner winter to see boreal finches in central and northeastern Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, northern New York, and northern New England States. White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins have moved east to areas of abundant seed crops. This is not an irruption year south of traditional wintering areas in the Northeast.

PINE GROSBEAK: Most should stay in the north because the mountain-ash berry crop is good to excellent across the boreal forest from Alaska to Newfoundland. Some should get south to Algonquin Park.

PURPLE FINCH: Most Purple Finches east of Lake Superior should stay north this winter because of heavy seed crops on eastern conifers and mountain-ashes.

RED CROSSBILL: There will be a good showing of Red Crossbills in Ontario and the Northeast this winter.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: This crossbill flooded into the Northeast over the summer, drawn here by the bumper cone crops. Winter trips to hotspots such as Algonquin Park, Laurentians and Adirondacks are guaranteed to see this crossbill.

COMMON REDPOLL: Redpolls should move south because White Birch and alder seed crops are below average in northern Ontario. However, as redpolls move south they likely will be slowed or stopped by abundant conifer seed crops and better birch crops.

HOARY REDPOLL: Watch for Hoaries in flocks of Common Redpolls. **PINE SISKIN:** Siskins will be frequent and locally common this winter in the Northeast drawn here by abundant cone crops, particularly on White Spruce.

EVENING GROSBEAK: Most should stay in the north this winter because of abundant conifer seed crops and increasing outbreaks of spruce budworm. The most reliable spot to see this spectacular grosbeak is the feeders at the Visitor Centre in Algonquin Park.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: This nuthatch is now in areas with high cone abundance. Its presence indicates that White-winged and Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Purple Finches will be in the same areas.

Blue Jays will also stay north in greater numbers because of the pronounced nut crop.

