December is now underway, and the season for winter birding has just begun. The waterfowl migration is tapering off, and trip lists are no longer two-page affairs. Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows have arrived in numbers. Already reports of White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks have enticed birders out into the field. Congregating in cornfields and other manured fields with the Horned Larks are Snow Buntings and a few Lapland Longspurs. 'Tis the season!

Winter birding can be boring, but it doesn't have to be that way. Add some spice to the holiday season by taking part in a Christmas bird count.

This year marks the 98th year for the Christmas Bird Count. The count period runs from Friday, December 19, 1997, through Sunday, January 4, 1998. We would like to encourage all our members to take part in at least one count. To help facilitate this goal, we are publishing a list of counts being held in Pennsylvania. This list follows on page 2 of this newsletter.

What better way to end the year than with an entire day in the field. Or even better—begin the new year with a Christmas bird count. Get a good start on your 1998 list.

Good birding!

Bird Related Web Sites

Those of you who have access to the internet might be interested to visit a few of the web sites listed below. More will be listed in your next newsletter.

African Bird Club
http://www.netlink.co.uk/users/aw/abchome.html

American Ornithologists' Union
http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/AOU/

Association of Field Ornithologists
http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/AFO/

Backyard Birding page
http://www.bcpl.lib.md.us/~tross/backyard.html

Bjoennes, Tor Ivar homepage and links
http://home.sol.no/tibjonn/

Baltimore Bird Club
http://www.bcpl.lib.md.us/~tross/baltbird.html

Banff National Park, Alberta
http://www.worldweb.com/ParksCanada-Banff/birding.html

Bird identification page--Patuxent
http://www.mbr.nbs.gov

Bird On! European birds
http://birdcare.com/birdon/

Birds of North American (Academy of Natural Sciences)
http://www.acnatsci.org/bna

Birdnet
http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET

Bluebird Box
http://users.aol.com/jimmcl/index.html

Breeding Bird Survey (National Biological Survey)
http://www.mbr.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.html

(continued on page 5)
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<td>Audubon</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>*Tony Fernandes</td>
<td>814-353-8212</td>
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<td>Bald Eagle S.P.</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Gene Zielinski</td>
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<td>Harry Henderson</td>
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<td>John Cruzan</td>
<td>412-846-5342</td>
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<td>Elaine Mease</td>
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<td>Ed Barrell</td>
<td>610-926-2962</td>
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<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Bob Sagar</td>
<td>717-925-6461</td>
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<td>Butler</td>
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<td>Margaret Buckwalter</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:buckwalter@mail.clarion.edu">buckwalter@mail.clarion.edu</a></td>
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<td>Clarksville</td>
<td>Greene</td>
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<td>Bill King</td>
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<td>Curtin</td>
<td>Dauphin</td>
<td>Scott Bills</td>
<td>800-228-0791</td>
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<td>Dallas Area</td>
<td>Luzerne</td>
<td>Deuane Hoffman</td>
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<td>Dingman’s Ferry</td>
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<td>*Kate R. Monahan</td>
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<td>*Marianne Atkinson</td>
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<td>Bob Cook</td>
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<td>*Bob Martin</td>
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<td>Tom Dick</td>
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<td>Greg Grove</td>
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<td>Dick Nickolson</td>
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Lewistown        Mifflin        *Linda Whitesel        814-337-5445        12/28
Linesville      Crawford      Ron Harrell        717-859-4179        12/28
Lititz          Lancaster      Bruce Carl        717-376-5394        12/20
Lock Haven/Jersey Shore  Clinton      *Wayne Laubscher       714-662-4372        12/21
Mansfield       Tioga         Bob Ross               714-662-4005 (w)
Mount Davis     Somerset       John Tilley        717-761-1871        12/27
deheni@ark.ship.edu
Newville        Cumberland    Don Henise        717-761-1871        12/27
Pennypack Valley Philadelphia    *Peter Kurtz        412-828-5338        12/27
Pittsburgh      Allegheny     Jim Valimont        412-828-5338        12/27
Pleasantville   Venango       Russ States        814-676-6320        1/4/98
Pleasantville   Venango       Russ States        814-676-6320        1/4/98
Pleasantville   Venango       Russ States        814-676-6320        1/4/98
Pocono Mt.      Monroe        Chris Turn
Raccoon Creek S.P. Beaver      Bill Smith        717-375-9613        1/4/98
Reading         Berks         Bill Uhrich        610-373-8109        1/4/98
Reactor         Westmoreland  Bob Mulvihill        610-373-8109        1/4/98
Scranton        Lackawanna   Rosann Bongey        717-698-8266        12/27
Southeastern Bradford Co. Bradford  Bill Reid        717-836-2374        12/27
Southern Lancaster Co. Lancaster  Bob Schutsky        717-548-3303        12/21
State College    Centre        John Peplinski        814-238-6541        12/21
Susquehanna Co.  Susquehanna  Jerry Skinner        814-238-6541        12/21
Thompson        Susquehanna  *Katherine Cameron
Tunkhannock     Wyoming       Rick Koval        717-829-4381        12/21
Upper Bucks Co.  Bucks         Hart Rufe        412-223-6118        12/20
West Chester    Chester       Voni Strasser       717-226-1460        12/20
White Mills     Wayne         Voni Strasser       717-226-1460        12/20
Wild Creek/Little Gap Carbon/Monroe  Joel Silfies        610-826-3817        12/21
Williamsport   Lycoming     Mark Cline        717-323-4008        12/21
Wyncote        Montgomery  Martin Selzer        215-233-9090        12/20
York           York         *Bill DelGrande

*Compiler of the indicated count in 1996; no current information concerning this year’s count.
Celebrate the New Year with a Field Trip

Don't be a couch potato; get out of the house and do some birding on New Year's Day. Sure, I know there's a football game or two on TV. But you can't start your year's list or add to your SAP list by sitting around watching somebody else play football.

Think of all the calories you can lose, or at least avoid gaining, by taking a walk in the woods and looking at a few birds.

Of course, a visit to your favorite SAP would help the project, add some winter birds, and help get the year off to a feathery start. You don't absolutely have to start at the break of dawn. (Yes, I know you are tired and have a bit of a headache.) Wintertime birding can be good even in afternoons.

On New Year's Day I have watched ravens perform their acrobatic courtship flights and listened to crossbills crunch hemlock seeds. Find some blooming witch-hazel or fox tracks on the first day of the year.

Want to start the New Year off on a good foot? Go birding.

Let's see how many species we can get in our SAPs on New Year's Day. Please report your results to Doug for a total SAP New Year's Day list.

Be Careful Out There... with Your Bird Reports

The integrity of the Special Areas Project data can only be as strong as its weakest link. It is very important to be careful about the quality of information that enters the SAP database and our common bird records. Therefore, it is always good to be careful about identifications. When you submit your reports, please resist the temptation to include birds that have not been positively identified.

From the start of the project, SAP has intended to maintain the same standards as PORC. This is a challenging task because it is only too easy to misidentify birds. Our eagerness to find rare birds and earn a reputation as a top-notch birder can sometimes affect what birds we report. Please resist the temptation to be a rare bird warrior and get others involved with verifying unusual sightings—the sooner, the better.

If you think you have found a rare species, it is a good policy to contact an experienced birder, perhaps the Pennsylvania Birds county editor, as soon as possible to verify the bird's identity. Do it the same day while there is light for bird finding. A second pair of eyes and ears can verify your report. It might seal a great bird sighting.

Twelve Months of Birding in Each SAP

The Special Areas Project takes a long view of the bird occupancy throughout the year. Other projects have a narrow focus on one day of the migratory or the breeding seasons.

By doing a little bit each season, SAP volunteers can get a well-rounded list of birds. It is amazing how many species can be accumulated by just being there on a regular basis. A visit each month is my personal goal for my SAPs in 1998. Who knows what will fly over.

Bad Weather: Good Birds

It's an old birding adage. Bad weather makes good birding. Storms can fling winged creatures many miles off their usual paths. Recent
storms have brought some rarities to the state. Some intrepid birders got out in the wind and rain to check out the possibilities. Odd loons and strange sandpipers have delighted dozens of birders as a result. Of course, it helps to keep an open mind about what species might show up in the Keystone state.

Lately, we received reports of scoters at Marsh Creek State Park. This lake does not have a great reputation for sea ducks, but a coastal storm blew a few inland. Thanks to SAP volunteers, Skip Conant, Rob Megraw, and John Ginaven, more ducks and other water birds (Eared Grebe) have been added to the site list.

I have my parka, skis, and snowshoes ready. Storms can come from any direction and bring in all kinds of birds.

Please send SAP data to Douglas A. Gross, SAP Coordinator, Ecology III, R. R. 1, Box 1795, Berwick, PA 18603.

Web Sites

(continued from page 1)

*Brookline Bird Club (Massachusetts)*
  http://world.std.com/~jane/bbc.html
*Cape Cod, MA birding info*
  http://www.capecodconnection.com/capecod/ccbirds.htm
*Central Park*
  http://www.centralpark.org/home.html
*Chicago and Illinois birding information*
  http://www.xnet.com/~ugeiser/Birds/Birding.html
*Cornell Lab of Ornithology*
  http://www.ornith.cornell.edu/
*Crockette, Don (Virtual Birder plus)*
  http://www.grtblue.com/index.html
*Delaware birding (site guide & checklists--also MD and NJ)*
  http://www.physics.udel.edu/~barnhill/delloc2.html
*Dick E. Bird News*
  http://www.traverse.com/media/dbnews/home.html
*Falcon Project in Montreal (in French)*
  http://www.deev.com/falcons/
*Flint Hills Audubon Society (Kansas)*
  http://www-personal.ksu.edu/~drintoul/falcon.html
*Houston Audubon Society*
  http://www.io.com/~pdhulce/audubon.html
*Internet Flyway (World Birding)*
  http://www.netlink.co.uk/users/aw
*Jaramillo, Alvaro home page*
  http://www.quake.net/~alvaro/index.html
*Jasper Ridge photos*
  http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/1104
*LA Audubon Bookstore Catalog*
  http://www.mbi.ucla.edu/people/lesa/laas.html
*Larson, Laurie (compilation of BirdChat reference postings)*
  http://pluto.njcc.com/~llarson/
Jon Dunn to Speak

Noted author Jon Dunn will be speaking to the Todd Bird Club in Indiana, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, February 3, 1998. Jon, an editorial consultant for Birding, served as the chief consultant for the Field Guide to the Birds of North America produced by the National Geographic Society. He also co-authored Birds of Southern California. His most recent book is A Field Guide to Warblers, the newest addition to the Peterson Field Guide series.

The subject will be warblers. Jon will be bringing copies of Warblers, for sale that night.

The Todd Bird Club meeting, held at the lodge in Blue Spruce County Park, will begin at 7:30 p.m. Access to Blue Spruce is from Route 110 near the town of Ernest. All PSO members are invited to attend. For further information or directions, contact Roger or Margaret Higbee at 412-354-3493 or e-mail at bcoriole@twd.net.

Annual PSO Meeting

The PSO Board of Directors met recently at State College to continue planning for the 1998 meeting at Mansfield University in Mansfield, PA. The meeting is scheduled for May 15-17, 1998. This year's theme is "Birds of the Northern Tier."

Shonah Hunter has already been busy obtaining prices and planning with the university concerning meals and lodging. One difference this year is that Mansfield does not provide bath linen. Everyone must bring his/her own towels and wash cloths.

Committees have been organized to recruit speakers. The afternoon sessions will once again include a topnotch field identification program.

Field trips will be organized by the local Tiadaghton Audubon Society. Target species will be listed in the next newsletter.

The Earl Poole Award Committee has also been active. Anyone interested in serving on this committee should contact Alan Gregory at 717-788-1425 (home) or 717-455-3636 (work) or e-mail him at meg5@psu.edu.