



The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society

January/February 2015

Volume 2014/2015

2014-2015 Officers

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Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month (September through May) in the Education Building at the Hattiesburg Zoo. Refreshments at 6:30 pm. Meetings begin at 7:00 pm and are open to the public.

Pine Woods Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

January/February Meetings—Joshua Hodge

January 8—Wild South by Nkrumah Frazier

Nkrumah works as the Mississippi Outreach Coordinator of the nonprofit organization Wild South. His presentation will cover an overview of Wild South and his work with the organization. The overall work of this organization is vitally important to the protection of Mississippi natural resources. When it comes to our natural resources, we can either protect them forever or lose them forever.

February 5—Conservation of the Lower Mississippi River: A New Paradigm by Paul Hartfield, Endangered Species Biologist—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Mississippi River is one of the most highly engineered rivers in the world. Even so, the Lower Mississippi has experienced no extinctions or extirpations, and retains a highly functional aquatic ecosystem. Over the past decades, the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, and other partners have developed and implemented a management strategy and partnership to maintain and improve ecosystem values of the river. On the Mississippi River, Paul heads up the endangered species recovery programs for the Interior Least Tern, the Fat Pocketbook freshwater mussel and the Pallid Sturgeon. He will discuss the ecology of the river and these endangered species.

January/February Field Trips & Events—Diane Lafferty

Jan. 17—Ducks at the Hattiesburg Sewage lagoons. Meet at the lagoons at 8am.

Jan. 24—Sparrows at the Pearl River Agricultural Experimental Station near McNeill. Meet at Midtown Market (time to be announced later).

Feb. 13—William Carey Bird Count. Meet at baseball diamond parking lot at William Carey (time to be announced later).

Feb. 14—PWAS Window Watch and Lagoon Count. Host for this is Jerri Simmons. Directions to her home will be distributed later. The Window Watch will be from 9am-noon. The Lagoon Count will be from 1:30-3:30pm.

Feb. 16—Annual President's Day Gull Run. Leave at 7am from Midtown Market for birding along the Coast.

Feb. 28—Country Girl Creamery, Buttercup Flats, and Flint Creek Water Park. Meet at Midtown Market (time to be announced later).

These, as well as other events, are included in the calendar pages included with the e-mail version of the newsletter. This can also be seen (and downloaded) at the PWAS [website](#).



Q & A From Bird Watcher's Digest

From March/April 2013 issue

Question—I may have offended a friend who was enthusing about how much seed the birds were consuming from her bird feeder. I suggested, partly facetiously, that she was promoting dependency. Does my comment have any merit?

Answer—Pet birds obviously show dependency because owners either feed their birds or they starve to death. Wild birds are not so stark, but some backstory is necessary.

The one line I remember from John Naisbitt's 1982 book *Megatrends* is "We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge." This well describes our situation with feeding wild birds.

Under the encompassing title of "citizen science," huge amounts of information about birds are collected; but because that information almost invariably lacks the rigor of scientific methodology, the credibility and usability of that information are extremely low.

From a bird-feeding perspective, I would tender an analog to Naisbitt's observation: We know a lot but understand very little.

But we do understand a few things.

Seed-eating birds such as chickadees, juncos, house finches, and house sparrows will use a food source so long as it is both productive and reliable. If either the amount of food or the availability of the food falters, these birds will find other supplies.

Seed-eaters are off the hook as dependents; however, we do have other birds.

Downy woodpeckers are notorious for becoming virtually addicted to suet. A downy may feed on suet for hours, day after day, to the point its plumage becomes so saturated with fat that the bird can no longer fly. The relatively recent trend in feeding jelly to orioles suggests a similar problem may be developing there. Fledgling orioles fed jelly by their parents may become virtually addicted and wait for more jelly rather than learning to forage for other foods.

Such birds as these could be counted as "dependent." But those birds that remain independently mobile and move around to use various food sources would not qualify.

Food for thought during our winter feeding season.

In order to see birds it is necessary to become part of the silence.

- Robert Lynd -

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can now participate from anywhere in the world!

It's free, fun, and easy. Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.cornell.edu/ornithology) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org) learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, participants turned in more than 144,000 online checklists, creating the world's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

The 18th annual GBBC will be held **Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16, 2015.**

Pine Woods Audubon Society encourages its members to participate in the GBBC to add data from our area to this annual snapshot of bird population. We sponsor a social on the Saturday during the count (this year on February 14) at a member's house to generate a Chapter count. This year Jerri Simmons has graciously agreed to host our "Window Watch" at her house. The portion at Jerri's house will be from 9am until noon. We would also like to encourage our members to join us at the Hattiesburg Sewage Lagoons between 1:30pm and 3:30pm to continue the count for this important backyard for the Chapter. A map and directions to Jerri's house will be distributed via the listserv in the near future. If you have any questions or miss the information on how to get to Jerri's house, contact Diane Lafferty.

We hope all of our members will do backyard counts at their own homes for this event on any or all of the days of the count.

Welcome, New Members!—Kelly O’Neal

Here are the new members who have joined Audubon at the national level since the last issue of The Pine Warbler. If you know any of these people, please take a few minutes to welcome them, to tell them about PWAS, and to invite them to join us at a meeting, field trip, or other activity.

Linda Shemper—Hattiesburg
 Sally Morrow—Hattiesburg
 Chris Carlise—Laurel
 Janie Haden—Laurel

Carroll Cook—Collins
 Bill Harris—Columbia
 Deborah Gandy—Laurel
 Helon Herth—Purvis



Hattiesburg Christmas Bird Count—Larry Basden

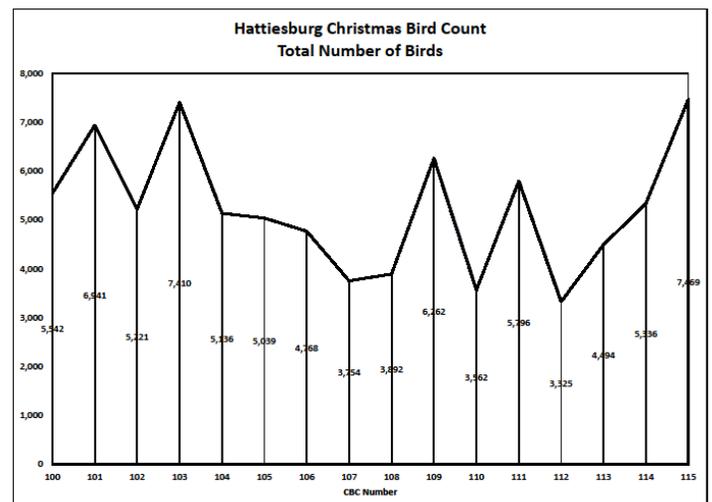
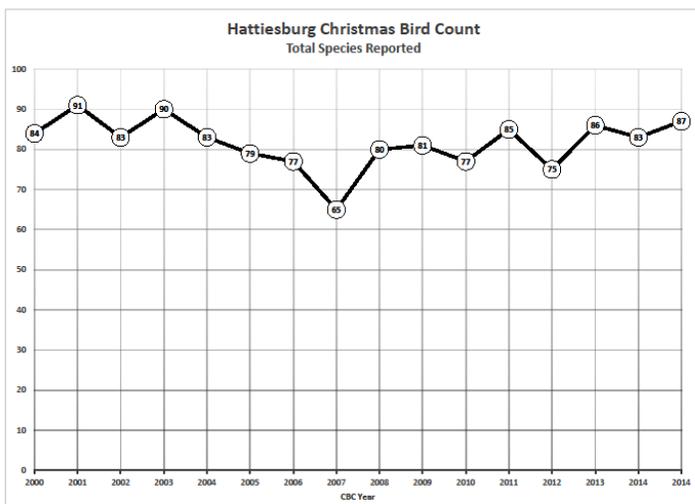
The Hattiesburg Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 27, 2014. A total of 19 participants braved “iffy” weather which turned to rainy weather in the afternoon. In spite of the weather, the count was a good one. Total identified species for the count day and the 3 days prior and 3 days after was 87. Not the highest we have ever seen but slightly higher than our average total species reported for counts over the last 15 years. Our total number of birds counted (7,469) was the highest recorded for the last 15 years. In reviewing historical count data for our CBC, it is evident that the greatest swings in total birds counted on any given year depend on two species groupings—ducks/geese and blackbirds. Our total blackbird count for this year was slightly below last year’s count but our total ducks/geese count was significantly higher this year than we have seen since the count for 2000.

The sighting of a Hummingbird (even if we were unable to identify the species) was a pleasant surprise for our count. The total miss on Gray Catbird on count day was an unpleasant surprise. We were able to sight one during count week so the species remains on our “found” list for this year’s count.

Species with significant increases in number for this year’s count are—Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, American Robin, and Cedar Waxwing.

Species with decreases in number for this year’s count are—American Coot (what are the Bald Eagles surviving on?), Kildeer, Crow, Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch (not here in large quantities like previous year counts), and Vulture (both species down due to weather on count day?).

This was the second year in a row where rain (and gray skies) might have affected our count. It looks as though we should start asking for weather intercessions earlier next year.



We're on the Web!

www.pinewoodsaudubon.com

The Pine Warbler

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Address Service Requested

Bird Sightings & Field Trips



The typical bird sightings of winter in South Mississippi appear to be somewhat late in coming (or, just have not yet been reported). For my own backyard feeders, I am just now finding it necessary to refill on a daily basis. The largest number of winter birds at my feeders are the sparrows—Chipping and White-throated. American Goldfinch are seen sporadically and in small numbers (the largest sighting I have had so far is less than 6 at the same time, a far cry from the hordes seen in previous years). The CBC missed Pine Siskins completely but I had a group of 8 at my feeders the day after count day so they are included in the species count for the CBC this year. I guess that this was a fly-thru feeding as I haven't seen them again. I am seeing Brown-headed Cowbirds at the feeders again (and I'm NOT thrilled by this). Fortunately, there have been no more than 2 at a time. I am certain that the word will spread as we head into spring and they will once again prove to be pests in flocks by the time I take the feeders down for the summer. Very recently I have seen a male Purple Finch at my feeders. It seems to be mainly a grab-and-go visit once or twice during the day. I have not been able to get a photo of the bird yet. Patience is our friend in bird photography. I do see the occasional feeding flock of Yellow-rumped Warbler (with an occasional Ruby-crowned Kinglet) foraging through the backyard. An occasional Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Downy Woodpecker also do a quick visit. The Red-bellied Woodpeckers regularly visit the suet and sunflower seeds. And the usual suspects—Northern Cardinal, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Towhee, and Brown Thrasher also make their appearances. No Tropical Kingbird, Western Kingbird, or Painted Bunting seem to be staying in the area. Or, if they are, they are being really sneaky about it. It seems that we still need to travel to either North Mississippi or the Coast to get our looks at the really unusual winter visitors.



PWAS CALENDAR

january 2015

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday
29	30	31	1 Happy New Year!	2 Lauderdale Cty. Christmas Bird Count—Meridian	3 Jackson Cty. Christmas Bird Count—Ocean Springs	4
5	6	7	8 PWAS Mtg. Zoo Educ. Ctr. 7:00pm	9	10	11
12	13 Keg & Barrel Mtg. Keg & Barrel 5:30pm	14	15	16	17 Ducks at Sewage Lagoons—H'burg 8am	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Sparrow Trip MSU Agr. Station	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

notes



PWAS CALENDAR

february 2015

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5 PWAS Mtg. Zoo Educ. Ctr. 7:00pm	6	7	8
9	10 Keg & Barrel Mtg. Keg & Barrel 5:30pm	11	12	13 Wm. Carey Bird Count WCU	14 Window Watch Jerri Simmons 9am & Lagoon Count	15
16 President's Day Gull Run	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 Country Girl Creamery Trip	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

notes February 13-16—Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count