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**November/December Meetings**

**November 7—iNaturalist for Birders—and Everybody!—Janet Wright**

iNaturalist is a digital resource to widen our eyes to biodiversity all around us. It's a life-changer, and it's fun. We'll explore some of its facets: how you can use iNaturalist as a buddy in the field to identify what you find, how your observations add to an international database, how you develop a project, and how you become part of an amazing community of naturalists near and far. We'll also discuss how eBird and iNaturalist complement each other.

If you're a smartphone user, download the free iNaturalist app and register an account before the program, and we'll get you going! But if you're not, don't worry; iNaturalist has plenty to offer for other users.

**December 5—Malodorous but not Unloved—Musk Turtles—Grover Brown**

The Southeastern United States is a well-known hotspot of turtle diversity, driven in large part to the endemism of highly aquatic turtle species to its rivers. The musk turtles (genus *Sternotherus*) also follow this pattern by replacing another species in geographic sequence. The Pascagoula River is an intriguing region for two species of *Sternotherus*. The river lies near the westernmost extent of the Stripe-necked Musk Turtle (*S. peltifer*) range and is the easternmost extent of the Razorback Musk Turtle (*S. carinatus*) range. This narrow overlap provides interesting insights to the forces that create and maintain biodiversity.

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.

**The President's Corner**

It can't be! This is the last newsletter of 2019 and it is filled with a modestly busy November and a "how can we fit it all in" December. Enough activities that we couldn't fit them on the first page. So you'll find them on page 2.

The majority of December is filled with Citizen (now called Community) Science, especially the Christmas Bird Counts. You will see on page 2 that the 3 area counts that we usually provide help with are all scheduled within a single December week. I can already see that I won't be able to participate in all of them.

On a sad note, if you hadn't already heard the news, we lost a long-term PWAS member late in October when Mike Lafferty passed away. Our deepest condolences to Diane. Our thoughts and prayers go toward her at this time.



## November/December Field Trips & Events

**November 11** (Tue.)—Monthly Keg & Barrel Get-Together at Keg & Barrel beginning at 5:30pm

**November 23** (Sat.)—Lux Road Birds (meet at Buck's Bargain Barn on Hwy. 49 at 8am) duration about 4 hours.

**November 30** (Sat.)—Monthly lagoon survey (meet at lagoon gate at 8am).

**December 7** (Sat.)—Ducks at the lagoons (meet at lagoon gate at 8am) duration about 3 hours.

**December 10** (Tue.)—Monthly Keg & Barrel Get-Together at Keg & Barrel beginning at 5:30pm

**December 14** (Sat.)—Monthly lagoon survey (meet at lagoon gate at 8am) duration about 4 hours.

**December 17** (Tue.)—South Hancock County CBC. Contact Ned Boyajian at [nedrbo@gmail.com](mailto:nedrbo@gmail.com) if you want to participate.

**December 18** (Wed.)—Camp Shelby CBC. Contact Tony Crowe at [admiral\\_crowe@yahoo.com](mailto:admiral_crowe@yahoo.com) if you want to participate.

**December 20** (Fri.)—Jackson County CBC. Contact Janet Wright at [jwright01@cableone.net](mailto:jwright01@cableone.net) if you want to participate.

**December 28** (Sat.)—Hattiesburg CBC (see article in this issue)

These, as well as other events, can also be seen (and downloaded) at the PWAS [website](#).

## Another Insect Alert (*September/October 2019 Bird Watcher's Digest*)

A study published earlier this year in *Biological Conservation* raised real concern over the global loss of insects. It was a 40-year review of the scientific literature related to 653 published papers on insects mostly referring to bumblebees, flies, beetles, and butterflies and moths.

Why should a study on insects concern us as bird devotees? We really cannot ignore the status of insect populations when so many birds depend on insects for food. For starters, think swifts, nightjars, flycatchers, and most songbirds.

The authors' findings were sobering, indeed. Although insect declines were not universal and did not show equal losses among all insect groups and locations, they were certainly distressing.

The authors point to four main drivers for these insect declines. They are habitat change (47.9%), pollution (25.8%), biological factors (17.6%), and climate change (6.9%).

The authors also recommended some solutions. Most have to do with changing agricultural practices (e.g., reducing and changing pesticides and creating specific habitat for insect production). The improvement of water quality is crucial for insect revival, in this case to reverse an aquatic insect decline.

Even without getting too deeply into the subject, it is easy to see that what benefits or harms insects will surely benefit or harm birds.

# Hattiesburg Christmas Bird Count

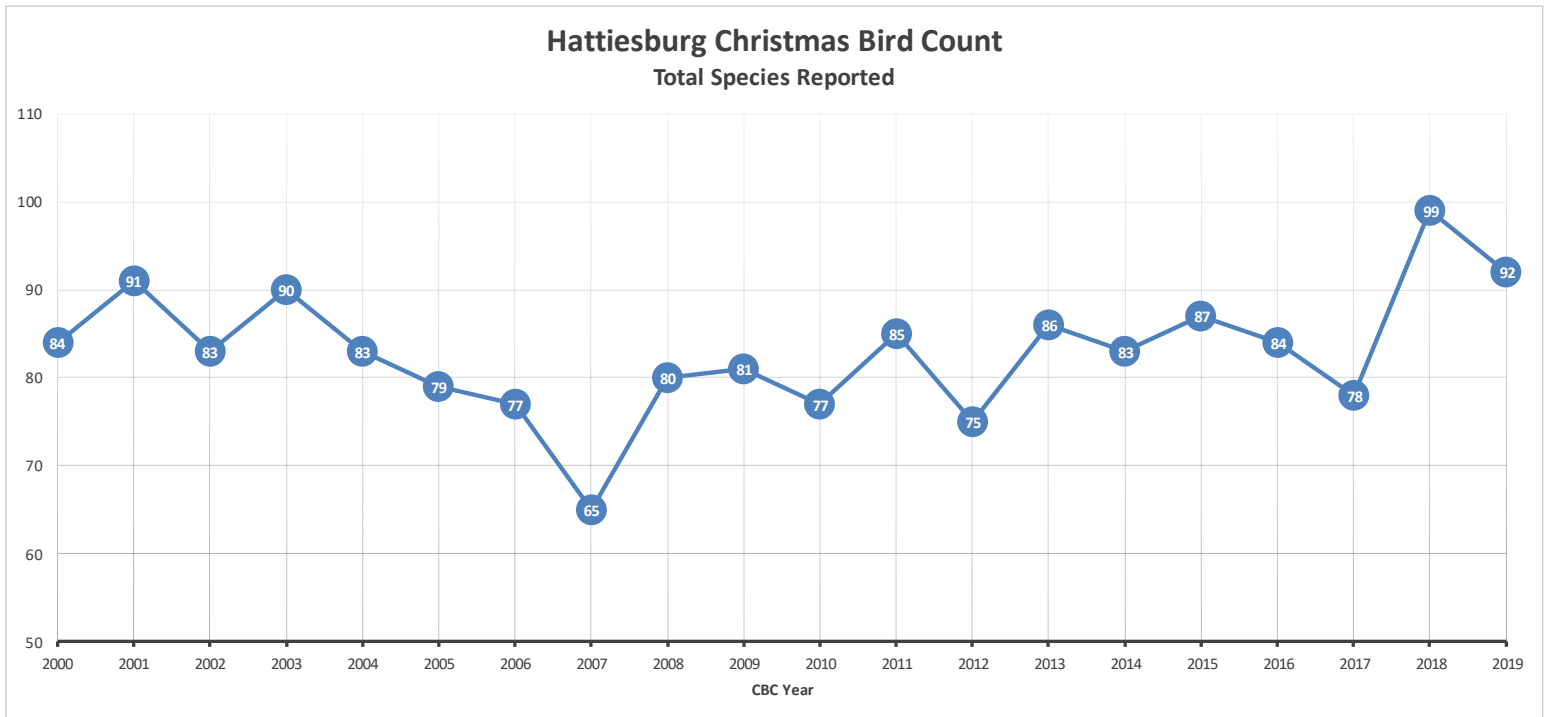
Mark the date on your calendar—Saturday, December 28, 2019.

The 120th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) takes place between December 14 and January 5. Our traditional time for the Hattiesburg count is the Saturday after Christmas.

While we would love to have you join us as we cover our 15-mile count circle on the 28th, if that isn't possible you can still contribute to our effort by doing a feeder count in your own backyard.

The Hattiesburg CBC is an important part of our Chapter's contribution to citizen science for the Audubon Society. This count will mark the Chapter's 46th consecutive year of participation. If you are willing to help with our effort this year, contact Larry Basden (home-601-544-1784 or cel-601-329-8698) whether you want to help in the field or as a feeder counter. All help in this effort is appreciated.

The graph below shows the total species counts for Hattiesburg CBCs since 2000. Pre-Katrina we show 80's and 90's for the number of species found on the count. Since that time we had not reached 90 and above species until the last two years. More eyes searching make higher species counts more probable. The actual count number of individual birds in each species can include only the count day itself, December 28 for this count. However, we can report species (but not individual count numbers) for the 3 days prior to and the 3 days after our count date. So, if we all keep eyes (and ears) open during this period, we may be able to reach this year's target of 100 species. Let's see if we can make that happen with your help.



## From the November/December Issue of Bird Watcher's Digest

**Question**—A cardinal was incubating eggs in a pine tree in my yard. This morning, she and the eggs were gone, and the nest was full of bird poop. What would do that? A jay?

**Answer**—Birds are most vulnerable as eggs or helpless nestlings, and probably more nests fail than succeed. There are many creatures that raid nests and eat eggs, including some birds. It seems like something ate the eggs, and after that the adult birds wouldn't be expected to return. Many birds are messy around the nest; it's possible that the droppings you found were those of the parents, but it is also possible that they were from the predator. Without other evidence, however, we're left to guess. Blue jays and crows are known egg eaters, and larger woodpeckers, such as red-bellied woodpecker, also sometimes raid the nests of other birds and eat the eggs. Perhaps it was a snake. Black rat snake poop looks like bird poop.

Fortunately, cardinals, like most birds, will try again after a nest failure, but they're unlikely to try again in the same location.

We're on the Web!

[www.pinewoodsaudubon.com](http://www.pinewoodsaudubon.com)

## The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society  
134 Sweet Bay Trail  
Petal, MS 39465

Address Service Requested



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## Bird Sightings & Field Trips



Quite a few sightings and eBird checklists showing migrants passing through the area over the past few weeks.

So far, we have not seen eBird checklists showing the arrival of our winter visitors in our area except for the numbers and variety of duck species seen in our latest monthly lagoon survey.

Sparrow reports are beginning for northern MS and we can expect them to begin showing themselves in our area soon. Always good to see sparrows and goldfinches begin to arrive.

It was a small crew at Dauphin Island for fall migration. We had a combined checklist of 76 species (below what we have seen in recent years).

If you see any “out of the ordinary” sightings, send an email to [newsletter@basdenfamily.com](mailto:newsletter@basdenfamily.com) or use the contact form on our website [www.pinewoodsaudubon.com](http://www.pinewoodsaudubon.com) to let us know so we can include them in this section of the newsletter.