

NORTH AMERICAN BIRD PHENOLOGY PROGRAM

www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bpp/



E-Newsletter
August 2013

With the help of volunteers worldwide, the North American Bird Phenology Program is working to understand the scale of global climate change and how it is affecting bird populations across North America

Announcements

- The BPP website is still in the recovery process after a hacking event this past June. If you experience any trouble with the website, please email [Jessica](mailto:jessica@pwrc.usgs.gov). We are working very hard to make sure the site functions well for all users.
- Many pages have been updated on the BPP site over the past month including: Newsletters, AboutBPP, ObserverBios, and BPP News.
- New York observer card project: We have a list of about 70 observer names which we have not been able to verify. If you are interested in putting on your research gloves and taking on this small project with us, [email](mailto:jessica@pwrc.usgs.gov) the office.
- Steve Hilburger, USGS Biologist, just completed his Masters Thesis at GMU on the BPP. Congratulations Steve! His thesis describes the relationships between the timing of spring migration of four bird species and eight environmental variables which could influence migration. To read the thesis in its entirety, [click here](#).
- Meetings continued this month between the BPP office, Ali Arab of Georgetown University and Robert Deleon of the Buffalo Ornithological Society to analyze NY bird migration data for an upcoming paper.
- We are continuing to work on the BPP observer data set. Danielle Swanson, rising junior at Georgetown University, is helping with this project.
- BPP Coordinator, Jessica Zelt, is starting her Masters this fall at Towson University and will be completing her thesis on the BPP. She will be switching to a part-time schedule in the BPP office to accommodate the additional workload.
- Note: If you are transcribing a card and can not see the right edge of the card, try using the Zoom tool.

What We're Working to Bring You

- Secondary pages have been developed for the entire BPP website to make website navigation using our drop-down menus easier. The new pages will be unveiled over the next month.
- A volunteer satisfaction survey is currently being developed and will be emailed through Constant Contact.

Volunteer of the Month

Brad Halcums

I retired five years ago as a civilian accountant for the Federal Government. About the same time, several Virginia State agencies chartered the Virginia Master Naturalists. I took the Naturalist classes with my wife in 2009 and became a member of the Peninsula Chapter.

Current Progress



Photograph by Crow Vecchio

Current Migration Card Count:

861,890

Cards Transcribed Online

1,042,494

Cards Scanned

Quick Links

Register to become an online transcriber

Become an office volunteer

Like us on Facebook 

USA-NPN



USA-NPN

The BPP is part of the USA-NPN which brings together citizen scientists, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States. [Learn More....](#)

Naturalists must volunteer forty hours each year in approved projects. One of the Naturalist goals is to aid citizen science and entering bird phenology records was a good choice to participate in a citizen science project. As I had been in accounting for many years, the logic of the bird records also tied into my background.

Like many others who enter records, I often wonder what it would be like to be with some observers as they note things. It would be very interesting to go back in time to tell observers that their work would be entered into technology which would be magical to them. I would also tell them to either print or use clearly cursive writing so others can read what was seen.



I have a goal of trying to enter at least 30 records each time I am at the computer. Sometimes I put on some music and get a good rhythm going. While some people are addicted to computer games, it is easy to get hooked on bird entries. It can be like climbing a mountain very slowly and then looking back at what has been accomplished. As we get older we need to keep our brains active and entering the records helps memory plus hand and eye coordination.

I have achieved a personal goal of volunteering forty plus hours in 2012 on bird entries. This proves to other Master Naturalists that it can be done. For those who may be uncomfortable outside, bird entries not only meet the Naturalist annual requirements, but also help scientists access the old records.

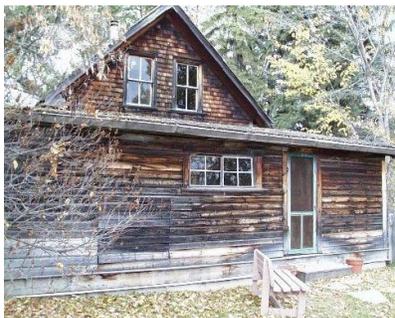
I was glad to see that USGS has led the way with these entries and note that other groups have begun to digitize their plant and insect collections. Despite my now helping with the latter work, bird phenology is my favorite. I hope more records can be scanned after the initial 1,042,000 are completed.



Photograph by John Paul Benante

Observer of the Month

George Pegg



The Pegg Homestead

George Pegg was a pioneer botanist and taxonomist of west central Alberta. His family established a homestead, which George continued after his parents passed away. George was very interested in plants and birds from a young age, leading to major contributions primarily in Botany later in life. He made many first-time identifications of native Alberta plant species and amassed a tremendous plant collection over his lifetime.

George Pegg was born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1910, the second of eight children. The Pegg family moved to Ontario in 1911, and later to Glenevis in 1913. George and his brothers spent

their early childhood playing outdoors and developed an interest in birds. The boys kept migration records and every June 1st the Pegg boys would go on a bird count, comparing notes on what species they had seen that night when they got home. The boys also took a course in taxidermy through the mail and mounted several animals.

In 1929, the Peggs built a new house to live in on the same property. After this time, George spent a great deal of time traveling around North America in searching for a job and observing and identifying birds and

plants.

In 1945, George became interested in the weather so he set up a weather station. He took daily high and low temperature readings, as well as precipitation.

George and his family kept identification and migration records of all birds sighted since the 1920's and had identified 180 species. In George's free time he would identify plants, taking the ones he could not identify to the University of Alberta. There he met Dr. Ezra H Moss. Dr. Moss took notice of George's tremendous collection of plant specimens. Most notably, George had discovered an area that had escaped the glacial scrubbing eradication of earlier plant life that took place during the last ice age. George continued to work with Dr. Moss and contributed more than 100 species to the Flora of Alberta, published in 1959. George's collection recorded in this paper also extended the known ranges of more than 50 species in Alberta.

George lived with the company of his plants and books in the homestead that was his home for nearly 70 years, shunning any technology more advanced than a wood-burning stove.

We are in need of volunteer help to put these write-ups together. If you are interested, please [contact](#) the BPP.

Picture of George Pegg from www.historicplaces.ca. Resources for biography include, www.pegggarden.org, www.historicplaces.ca, and www.mayerthorpefreelancer.com. Thank you, Judy Reynolds for suggesting this BPP Observer.

Bonus Story: History in the Cards

During the Dust Bowl Era, as agricultural fields dried up across North America, so did wetlands and ponds, crucial habitat for waterfowl. In 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Thomas Beck to head a special committee to conserve migratory waterfowl. The committee also included Aldo Leopold and Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling. The committee requested urgent funds and better management practices. Soon after, both were addressed with the appointment of Ding Darling as Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey and Roosevelt signing the first Duck Stamp Act.

Name of Bird		Mallard & Pintail Ducks				
Locality		Wiseton Sask			Year	
Observer		Mrs. Mary E. M. Dickson			1937	
First seen	Number seen	Next seen	Became common	Last seen	Common or rare	Breeds
Apr 7 th	12	April 8 th	100- seen		Common	No.
Our lake went dry in 1936. & no water ran into it in 1937 so duck, geese, & swans did not remain. I have no record of them on the fall migration.						
Form BI-501		8-5250		GPO		

Migration card by Mrs. Mary E.M. Dickson of Wiseton, Saskatchewan. Bottom of the card reads, "Our lake when dry in 1936 and no water came into it in 1937 so duck, geese, and swans did not remain. I have no record of them on the fall migration."

For more information, go to: FWS.gov
Thank you for sending this in, Stella Walsh!

Trivia

Last month's trivia question, "What native North American bird is the most prolific breeder?" was correctly answered first by Crow Vecchio with, Mourning Dove.

The correct answer was also sent in by: Leyla Kocaoglu, Rosane Guimaraes and Claire Lea.

This month's trivia question is: What is the smallest bird in the world?

Remember to send your answers to [Jessica](#). The first person to email a correct answer will receive a BPP prize!

As always, if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or complaints, please [contact me](#).

Jessica Zelt
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U.S. Geological Survey/ Patuxent Wildlife Research Center



Photograph by Crow Vecchio