

NORTH AMERICAN BIRD PHENOLOGY PROGRAM



E-Newsletter
February 2012

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

Announcement

- The BPP would like to update the [Featured Photos](#) webpage and we are looking for pictures of volunteers transcribing. If you are interested in adding a picture, please send [Jessica](#) an email including a picture of yourself transcribing from your home computer, couch, office, or wherever! Please include your name and location in the email.
- The BPP has updated several webpages over the past month including: [Observer Bios](#), [E-Newsletters](#), [Become An Office Volunteer](#), [Notable Cards](#), [Charts](#), and [Register](#).
- Volunteer, Winger West, updated his Bird Observer list which has been added to the [FAQ sheet](#) in both [PDF](#) and Exl formats. Thank you Winger!
- Phil Hicks has been joined by volunteers Jim Gray, Janice Devine, and Winger West in transcribing our dataset of Observer cards. So far they have transcribed approximately 3,200 names. When the list is complete it will be used to verify observer names transcribed online.
- In response to transcriber requests, volunteer Robert Turk, updated the [Top 25 Transcribers This Week](#) chart so that it begins counting transcriptions on Sunday morning.
- The BPP would like to thank volunteer Bob Hartman for helping with a special project to rectify mismatched common species names assigned through our verification system. This will ensure the correct common names are tagged to transcriptions through our database.
- The BPP has recently taken v3 off the website. We ask that all volunteers only use the [v4 data entry system](#) moving forward.
- Remember: Please mark all cards with multiple years or more than 4 dates, as a "problem card." Under reason you can select "Other" and then type into Transcriber Notes, "multiple years." These cards will have to be addressed in the BPP Office.

What We're Working to Bring You

- The BPP has temporarily taken down our data-set of verified records from our [Download Data](#) page while we implement a new automatic validation system to our database. Check back soon for an updated list of validated records.
- To make transcribing a little bit easier, we are working on adding an auto complete function. We will first add this to the Observer field before adding it to other fields.
- We are working to keep the webpages up-to-date, by adding content, keeping all links functional and secure, and providing assistance as needed.

Current Progress



Current Migration Card Count:

2,666
Online Volunteers

582,464
Cards Transcribed Online

4
Office Volunteers

1,104,494
Cards Scanned

Quick Links

[Register to become an online transcriber](#)

[Become an office volunteer](#)

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Volunteer of the Month

Charles Bombaci

I grew up in Essex, Connecticut, a small town nestled on the banks of the Connecticut River and only a few miles from Roger Tory Peterson's house. This remarkable man influenced my interests in birds and conservation. From the time I was young I have had an interest in nature and often explored the woods and wetlands of my parents' property. After college in Boston and a tour in the army, my career took me to central Ohio where I became very involved in the local birding community. I have participated in Audubon Christmas Bird Counts since the late 1970s, spent 6 years collecting data for the Second Ohio Breeding Bird Survey, and I am a member of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Nature Conservancy, the Ohio Ornithological Society, and the advisory council of the Hoover Nature Preserve in Delaware County (OH).



It is in the Hoover Nature Preserve that my true passion resides. In 1987, I and a graduate student from The Ohio State University installed 12 Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes. These boxes successfully provided nesting habitat for the warblers, which are listed as a Species of Concern in Ohio. For the past 25 years I have continued to expand the Hoover Nature Preserve's Prothonotary Warbler nest box program. There currently are 250 boxes distributed throughout the area's swamp forest, resulting in Prothonotary Warblers nesting in most suitable habitat throughout the site. I do most of the monitoring and nest box maintenance myself, but I am always happy to share the joys of the Prothonotary trail with others. I have the most fun when I host chapters of the Ohio Young Birders Club on a tour of the Prothonotary Warblers.

Bill Heck of Ohio Audubon made me aware of the phenology program, its goals and the huge amount of records that needed to be transcribed. I understood the importance of the historic data and what could be learned from it. Once I began transcribing the cards I got enthralled in the information, especially when I encountered cards from around the area I grew up in Connecticut and the town where my grandparents lived in Massachusetts.

Observer of the Month

Joseph Dewey Soper

Joseph Dewey Soper, born in 1893, grew up in awe of nature. He disregarded his mother's request to enter the ministry and his father's wish that he stay on their Ontario farm. Instead, Soper dreamed of the life of an outdoorsman and pursued that passion after his family moved to Edmonton in 1911. For twelve years following, he took courses at Alberta College and the University of Alberta in zoology, while also working as a carpenter and trapper and pursuing personal investigations in ornithology and mammalogy. In 1920, Soper met Dr. R.M. Anderson of the National Museums of Canada who sent him on his first expedition in 1923 to the Arctic as a naturalist. The expedition visited Labrador, Greenland, and Baffin, Devon, Beechey, Bylot, and Ellesmere islands.

Over the course of Soper's life he went on three expeditions, which were relatively short compared to his lengthy career but which shaped Soper's identity and greatest achievements. His three expeditions were conducted in 1923, 1924-26 and 1928-31. The latter two were to Baffin Island and were comprised of eleven separate journeys. Although previous expeditions were made to Baffin Island, knowledge of the area was inaccurate and incomplete. Soper explored and track-surveyed unknown coasts, rivers, lakes, and the interior, while collecting samples and specimens along the way.



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.

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In 1929, newspapers published accounts of Soper's successful search for the nesting grounds of the blue goose. Even Ripley's Believe-it-or-Not featured the "Wild Goose Chase," creating Soper's nick name, "Blue Goose Soper." The location of the nesting grounds had been a mystery and from Soper's first expedition in 1923, Soper had hoped to solve it. In 1926, Soper met an Inuk hunter on the Tikkuut Islands who claimed he knew where the Blue Goose nested. This location, Bowman Bay, was confirmed by another Inuk at Cape Dorset. In the spring of 1929 Soper was there waiting when thousands of Blue Geese arrived.

In 1927, between expeditions, Soper went to visit his sister in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. There he met and married a young nurse, Carolyn Freeman, and brought her back to Baffin Island in 1930. Their marriage lasted for 55 years during which they had two children.

Soper later returned south, completing a two-year wildlife study of Wood Buffalo Park from 1932-1934, an appointment as Chief Federal Wildlife Officer for Prairie Provinces, Canadian Wildlife Service in Winnipeg, from 1934-1948, and an appointment as Chief Federal Wildlife Officer for Alberta, Yukon, and Northwest Territories from 1948-1952. Soper disliked offices and the piles of paperwork keeping him from the outdoors so instead he opted for early retirement at the age of 59 so that he could continue field work.

Over Soper's lifetime he published over 130 research papers, monographs, and general-interest articles in a variety of publications. He also collected over 10,000 specimens deposited in the National Museums of Canada, the Manitoba Provincial Museum, and the University of Alberta. In recognition of his work, the Government of Canada established the Dewey Soper Bird Sanctuary on Baffin Island in 1957. His contribution to the exploration to Baffin Island was also recognized by the Canadian Committee on Geographic Names by the naming of Soper River, Soper Lake, and Soper Highlands. He was also a fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America, a charter member of the American Society of Mammalogists, and a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union. Dr. Joseph Dewey Soper died in Edmonton on November 2, 1982.



Joseph Dewey Soper

Manitoba - Pas District

24. AMERICAN ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK. Buteo lamopus.
Two of these birds were seen on Oct.
23, 1941, in the vicinity of the big
muskeg a few miles north of Overflow-
ing River.

J. D. Soper, Field Report

Information for the biography and picture were collected from the following resources:

[Arctic Institute of North America: University of Calgary](#)

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

Trivia

Last month's trivia question winner was Louise Plankenhorn. The question was, "What is the current common name for Brasher's Warbler?" The correct answer was, Golden-crowned Warbler.

The correct answer was also sent in by the following participants:

Roberto Arias, Val Kipping, Grace McEntee, Janet Burnett, Bob Hartman, Dave Dean, Pat Johnson, Nick Kerlin, Isabelle Doucet, Jace Stansbury, Judy Staberow, and Stella Walsh.

Excerpt about the origin of the Brasher's Warbler name from Bulletin Nuttall Ornithological Club, Vol. Y, No. 1, p. 239, found and shared by Dave Ziolkowski: Brasher's Warbler Sclater, in his " Note on the Sixteen Species of Texan Birds named by- Mr. Giraud of New York, in 1841 " (P. Z. S., XXIII, 1855, pp. 65, 66), decides that the bird should be called Basileuterus hrasieri. The specific name, however, needs correction. Mr. Giraud named his bird in honor of my ever-regretted friend, Mr. Philip Brasher, of Brooklyn. Through some unaccountable mistake Mr. Giraud quoted the name as Philip Brasier. That it was an unintentional error may be seen by referring to Giraud's " Birds of Long Island," where the name frequently occurs, and is correctly spelled. The name of the species in question should therefore be written Basileuterus brasherii. I wish to make the correction in order that the bird may correctly perpetuate the name of my honored friend. - DeL. Berier, Fort Hamilton, N. Y.

Here's this month's trivia question: What does "auxed" mean? (See card for example of use)

Otus asio kennicotti

OREGON: Eugene and vicinity.

Field Report File

Jewett shot one at our camp on Spencers Butte and I
auxed one in the evening at the edge of town where it was
so intently watching the swarm of rats in the city dump
heap that it paid no attention to me. V. Bailey.
June 15-20, 1914.

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](#).
Sincerely,

Jessica Zelt
Program Coordinator
North American Bird Phenology Program
U.S. Geological Survey/ Patuxent Wildlife Research Center