



Growing Together Growing Together

Daffodil & Hosta Society of Western Pennsylvania

JULY 2021

JUNE MEETING: BIRDS OF PREY AT SUCCOP

By Susan Gahagan



On Saturday, June 5th at least twenty DHSWP members met up at Audubon Society's SUCCOP Nature Park, in Butler, PA for a fantastic lecture by Chris Kubiak, Director of Education, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. Members were overjoyed at seeing one another at this, the first in-person meeting since the pandemic began.

His program, Live Birds of Prey, was interesting, informative, and, as it turns out, timely. Just days following the meeting, DHSWP member, Keith Portka came upon a fledgling Eastern Screech Owl in the middle of a busy road. Having heard the fledgling's parents carrying on, Keith was confident the bird was not injured so he gently gathered the owl into his hands and moved it to a fallen tree in the wooded area bordering the road.

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At the presentation, we learned many interesting facts about owls, eagles, hawks, vultures, as well as other birds. Chris provided hands-on learning experiences and we were able to see a live screech owl.



He played audio recordings of various birds and explained how learning their calls is helpful in locating and identifying the birds. The Audubon Society has been “connecting people to birds and nature since 1916” and it was obvious Chris very much enjoys his role in that mission.

Though the subject of Birds of Prey is not directly related to gardening, most members share a love of the outdoors that includes all aspects. There are several birdwatchers in our club and even the seasoned “Birders” learned new things and found the presentation quite interesting. Following the meeting, some members retired to Serventi's On The Runway, a lovely authentic Italian restaurant located at the Butler airport where we enjoyed food and friends.

Editor's Note: For me the most interesting thing I learned was how the eyes of the birds can focus just like binoculars or telescopes. There are hundreds of small muscles & tendons around the eyes that re-shape the eye ball when the birds focus on the prey...& that's why also they rarely missed!

Editor's Note: And speaking of birds: Have you heard that something out there is killing birds in PA & other mid-Atlantic states? Below is an article from the Post-Gazette but I have read several now & it is very discouraging that we have no idea what's happening: is a bird & snakes mystery too!

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/snakes-look-like-monsters-as-fungal-disease-spreads-in-eastern-us-experts-say/ar-AAMIPpb?ocid=se>

STOP FEEDING, COOLING BIRDS IF YOU WANT TO REALLY HELP THEM

Linda Wilson Fuoco, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A mysterious, unidentified contagious disease is sickening and killing birds in Pennsylvania and other Middle Atlantic states, and it is breaking the hearts of bird lovers who are being told to remove feeders and bird baths from their yards.

On July 1, the Pennsylvania Game Commission released an alert recommending that people remove their bird feeders and baths until it can figure out the root cause of a disease that is plaguing the songbird population in many states, including Pennsylvania. Some of the most affected are blue jays, starlings and common grackles, but so are robins, cardinals and European starlings.

The birds will not starve, but people will miss the peace and pleasure they get from watching the birds that regularly flock to their yards. Bird watching and sales of bird food bird increased dramatically during the pandemic as more people worked from their homes.

Sick and dying birds appear to have eye and neurological issues. Bird experts are hoping to stop the spread of the disease by stopping birds from congregating at bird feeders and bird baths.

The do-not-feed recommendation starts with the U.S. Geological Survey, which is leading an interagency initiative to document, monitor and report on the disease. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has issued the same advisory, and so have many other organizations, including the nonprofit American Bird Conservancy.

As of mid-July, research indicates birds are not dying from salmonella poisoning, avian influenza virus, West Nile virus, poxviruses nor any other "known pathogens," said a recent news release from ABC. And there is no indication that people or pets are having "health issues reported in connection to this situation."

The bad news is that no one knows why birds are dying or exactly how to prevent it.

"Earlier this spring, people across the Mid-Atlantic region started reporting an unusually large number of ill and dead birds," says the ABC release.

The U.S. Geological Survey and ABC offer these tips:

- Avoid handling birds unless absolutely necessary. If you do handle them, wear disposable gloves.
- If picking up a dead bird, place an inverted plastic bag over your hand to avoid direct contact.

- Keep pets, including pet birds, away from sick or dead wild birds as a precaution.

Bird baths should be regularly cleaned with a solution that is one part bleach and nine parts water followed by a thorough rinse with water. The bird bath should be completely air dried before being refilled.

"Bird feeders are basically the kitchens and dining rooms of our backyards," said Jordan Rutter, ABC's director of public relations. "It would be hard for us to imagine not washing our dishes. We should think of bird feeders and bird baths in a similar way."

Investigations are ongoing at a number of university laboratories, the National Park Service, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, the US Geological Survey, state natural resource management agencies and wildlife conservation agencies.

The public is encouraged to report the date, time and location of dead and sick birds at <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/bird-report> on the website of the Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute. They are not collecting dead birds from private citizens.

I don't have bird feeders, but I enjoy visiting people who do. The birds are beautiful and come very close because they are fed regularly by people they have come to trust.

Regular bird watchers often claim they can recognize individual birds of the same species even though they look almost exactly like each other. They also have multiple feeders, each containing the type of food that specific birds eat.

On a recent visit, I saw colorful gold finches, blue jays and hummingbirds. Because I generally can't tell a wren from a nuthatch, there were many less colorful birds that I couldn't identify.

ABC always has tips on helping birds at its website, abcbirds.org. Under the current threat in the Mid-Atlantic region, there are tips for helping birds.

In the summer, birds "are now more reliant on invertebrates" which includes caterpillars, spiders and other insects, says ABC. "Incorporating native plants into your yard is a great option at any time."

The plants provide birds with natural food, including nectar and berries, and attract the bugs that birds like to eat.

NEW YORK: ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CARPOOL TRIP

By Susan Gahagan

Each year Western New York becomes a destination for thousands of garden tourists as nearly 100 homeowners open their gardens for the annual "Open Gardens" tours, organized by Gardens Buffalo Niagara. This year, Karen Schmidt planned a day trip for DHSWP which included four beautiful gardens and several garden centers. Several cars formed a convoy but since it was go-at-your-ownpace, we got split up. Nonetheless, several of us met up along the way.

We began the day by meeting in Edinboro, PA at Scotland Yard Greenhouse who graciously agreed to open early for us. The nursery had a vast supply of both annuals and perennials available for sale, and the group started its buying spree early. Cars were already getting full, and the day was just getting started.

From there, we stopped at Eagle Bay Gardens, Dunkirk, NY where Ran Lydell's fantastic collection of unusual trees and plants will amaze. A highlight of my day was seeing a beaver in his pond, albeit the beaver is an unwelcome guest. At nearly the same time, I saw a Belted Kingfisher. What a paradise the Lydells have there!



At Ran Lydell's Eagle Bay Gardens

After a 45-minute drive further north, the group arrived at the always beautiful garden of Marcia Sully, The Hidden Gardens of Eden, in Eden, NY. Marcia's meticulously kept garden brims with flows and patterns accomplished only by those with a keen artistic talent. Her immaculate display of Hostas and other plants was simply awesome, and she personally led us on a tour of her grounds. Although the Hostas were not labeled, she was there to identify each of her over 500 varieties. Marcia spends her winters in Florida and each year she painstakingly packs up hundreds of succulents to take with her

only to return in the spring and plant again. Dozens of hypertufa planters are seen as well as an impressive collection of glass garden ornaments. I could spend the entire day there and feel the trip was worth taking.

You cannot go on a Western New York Garden tour without stopping at Mike and Kathy Shadrack, who welcomed us to their Hamburg, NY garden, Smug Creek, with a friendly greeting and huge smiles. The couple is constantly making changes and improvements to their space. It looks quite different from the first time I visited them several years ago. Theirs has a definite Frank Lloyd Wright feel as the home is built over top a small creek but Mike jokes that theirs is Frank Lloyd WRONG. Covered with pots of beautiful hostas and Japanese hostas, the lovely deck they've built begs one to linger with a glass of wine.



At Marcia Sully's Hidden Gardens Of Eden

Last, but certainly not least, is Whit's End Garden in Hamburg, NY. Here, Barb and Dave Whittemore have created a magical kingdom where working model trains track through elevated communities of hostas, miniature conifers, and other plants. This "small" garden leaves a big impression that you will not soon forget. Everywhere you look you will notice small details which make this garden special in so many ways. Perhaps the size of the garden was the motivation behind the small details, which were obviously well thought out. Real estate is at a premium here, and only special things get to stay (and it shows).

We stopped at several garden centers along the way and came home with quite the haul. It is always fun to find new and interesting items not available in our own backyards. Before heading home, some of us stopped for sit-down meal where we discussed the gardens and how inspirational visiting them was. It was a long day...but definitely didn't feel like it.

BEYOND THE NEW YORK GARDEN TOUR 2021

By Jim Kalka

While the majority of the group was off for more shopping and dinner, Margie and I headed east on the New York Thruway until we got to Troy, NY (6 1/2 hr.) for our overnight stay. A quaint town, and we had an awesome dinner at a restaurant called Dinosaurs Bar B Que. (Guess what we had). A wonderful and unexpected meal.

Next day off to the nurseries in New Hampshire. We drove through the scenic Green Mountains of Vermont for our first stop at New Hampshire Hosta in South Hampton, NH. Their retail nursery was impeccably organized with hundreds of plugs, 4" pots, and full-sized specimens, all alphabetized for easy location. All of the plants were perfectly groomed and the staff was extremely welcoming and helpful. The owner was very generous to us and added two complimentary Hostas to our order.

Our next and last stop was to Sue and Chuck Anderson's Mason Hollow Nursery. Again, the nursery was large and the Hostas were in a full, well designed space. It was quite easy to shop, and of course, we did.

They had many Hostas that we generally do not see in our area. It was a pleasure to walk around their beautifully landscaped property. We discover that Chuck Anderson is also an Orchid enthusiast and he graciously included a tour of his Orchid greenhouse. Their New England hospitality was evident, and it was a wonderful way to end our shopping adventure.

Back to Pittsburgh with a carload of Hostas and over 2000 miles on the car. It was a marathon of a "weekend", but after a year of COVID coop-up, we were ready to get out and explore.

Our thanks to Karen for the New York Garden tour planning, and we look forward to next year's adventure to the Mid-West.

SAVE THE DATE - FALL HOSTA FORUM SEPTEMBER 17-18, 2021

We have decided to hold the Forum live!!!

There is a great line up of speakers and we will have the all favorite vendors and auctions. If you are interested and plan to spend Friday night, I would suggest you get your hotel room soon. Comfort Inn is offering our group a special rate of \$89, you will have to call the front desk to make your reservation.

Tim Boebel - Northern Hardy Hydrangeas

Tim has written two books on growing hydrangeas in our climate and he will share varieties and methods to succeed.

Noah Schwartz - From Model T to Roadster

Noah will walk us through the production of hostas from liner to consumer plant...like Ford's assembly line, the process is fascinating.

John Totten & Linda Kramer - Appalachian Forests; Cultivating Place

Stretching over 2000 miles from Newfoundland to Alabama, the Appalachian Mountain chain is one of the longest, oldest and most botanically diverse on Earth. These botanical riches have been sought after for centuries by plant explorers and including them in your woodland garden can add excitement and a sense of place.

Don Rawson - Jazz Up Your Hosta Garden

Has your garden become dull and boring? Well then, it's time to get out of the gardening rut and add some eye-popping street appeal to your landscape. Don will give you some tips to make your garden more exciting, beginning with evaluating your design, examining your selection of hostas and companion plants, and creating interest with the addition of art and humor...all in order to make your garden unique, appealing, and memorable. Let's jazz up the garden!

DHSWP 2021 SCHEDULE

When	What	Where	Time	Website of location
Friday, July 30	Trip to Indiana County	Carpool		See information below
August	Planting event	Hoop House		
Sept 17-18	Fall Hosta Forum	Edinboro, PA		
Sat, Nov 6	End of season banquet	Lucianos	12 Noon	Lucianos

NEXT Shopping Car Pool Trip: Indiana County - Friday, July 30, 2021

We will visit 5 nurseries and eat at a nice restaurant in the Indiana area.

On Friday, July 30th the day will start off at Sheetz, 13510 US-422, Kittanning at 10:00 a.m. We will pair up people who want to ride with other people, but you are free to drive yourself, if you prefer. We will follow each other so no one gets lost and we enjoy the experience together. If you prefer, you can meet us at our first stop Pike's Peak Nursery around 10:45 a.m., we can stay at each place at our leisure.

THE NURSERIES WE WILL BE STOPPING AT:

PIKE'S PEAK NURSERY

<https://www.pikespeaknurseries.net/>

8289 US-422, Penn Run

FAUGHT'S GARDEN CENTER

50 Airport Road, Indiana

TWOLICK'S VALLEY NURSERY

<http://twolickvalleynursery.com/>

3200 Airport Road, Indiana

BURKETT'S NURSERY

233 PA-110, Indiana

MUSSER FORESTS

<https://www.musserforests.com/>

1880 Old Rte. 119 Hwy. N, Indiana

RESTAURANT:

BLACK BULL STEAKHOUSE AND SALOON

9369 PA-85, Rural Valley

<https://www.menupix.com/menudirectory/menu.php?id=30667494&type=4>

Looking forward to spending the day with you, please let me know if you are going and if you will meet us at Sheetz's or Pike's Peak Nursery.

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