

A LOOK BACK AT 2003, by Kenyon Stebbins, PRAS President

The year 2003 was a busy one for PRAS, and we hope you enjoyed not only our indoor programs, but also our outings. PRAS also made a few donations for worthy causes, and took positions on a few environmental issues. A brief Treasurer's Report for 2003 will appear in the March newsletter.

2003 Indoor Programs: Our programs were as follows:

January: Hibernating Black Bear Research, by Kieran Fleming – 40 folks

February: Peru's Manu Biosphere Reserve, by Joey Arbaugh & Marilyn Smith – 31 folks

March: Birding Chile & Argentina, by Sally & Kenyon Stebbins – 63 folks

April: Birding for Fun & Science, by Ray Adams – 34 folks

May: Informal & lively discussion of Spring bird sightings by all present! -- 54 folks

June: Outdoor potluck at East Park – 44 folks

September: Early American Naturalists, by Mary Whitmore 37 folks

October: The Pleasures & Challenges of Sharing your Backyard with Nature, by Brian Mastenbrook – 28 folks

November: Our Vanishing Dark Skies, by Mary Lou Tanton – 47 folks

December: Members' Slide Fest & Holiday Treats – 24 folks

Attendance at these programs totaled 400 people, for an average of 40 folks per program. A big thanks to each and every presenter for sharing his and her knowledge and enthusiasm with us (and to Sally Stebbins for organizing them)!

2003 Outdoor Activities:

Feb. 16 Cross-country skiing at Birchwood Farms – 7 folks

March 16 Snowshoeing at the Bay View Woods – 5 folks

April 25-27 Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Spring Fling

May 1,8,15,22,29 Bird walks at Mineral Well Park -- 39 folks

May 6,13,20,27 Bird walks at Spring Lake Park -- 40 folks

May 16 Piping Plovers at Cross Village – 6 folks

May 10 North American Migratory Bird Count – 13 folks

May 18 Wildflower Walk along the Boyne River – 14 folks

June 19 Piping Plovers at Cross Village – 6 folks

June 17 Bird walk at East Park (w/ potluck) – (44 folks)

July 19 Birds & Blooms at Thorne Swift Nature Preserve --16 folks

Aug. 9 Birds & Blooms at Thorne Swift Nature Preserve – 16 folks

Aug. 30 Waldron Fen Nature Walk – 9 folks

Sept. 20 Hawk Watching at Thorne Swift Nature Preserve – 24 folks

Oct. 19 Bicycling, Birding & Brunch in & around Bay Harbor – 9 folks

Nov. 1 Waterfowl field trip at the Straits of Mackinac -- ?? folks

Dec. 14 Christmas Bird Count – 13 folks

A total of 233 people participated in these outings, for an average of 11 folks per outing. A big thanks to each field trip leader (and to Sally Stebbins, who coordinated them)!

2003 Treat Providers: Our indoor programs are made extra special, thanks to the delicious treats that seem to almost magically appear on the table each month. Thanks to the following folks for their "magic"!:

Carol & Hank Ross, Ron Krause, Linda Taylor, Dolores Wehrenberg, Faith Brooks, Sue Felt, Art MacAdams, Joey Arbaugh, Jane Friend, Suzie Frisk, Marilyn Smith, Audrey Etienne, Jane Smith, Mary Lou Tanton, Cindy Hofstetter, Ron Krause, Jan Miller, Suzie Frisk, Jane Guisinger, Jake Snider, Sue Felt, Barb Freiberg, & Jan Miller. Thanks, again, Jan, for a super job of coordinating this appreciated effort!

Other 2003 activities: In addition to programs and field trips, in 2003 PRAS also took the following "political" actions:

Informed our local politicians of PRAS's opposition to the hunting of Mourning Doves

Signed onto the Coalition to save MEPA (Michigan Environmental Protection Act)

PRAS also made the following financial donations during 2003:

\$37.50 to MAS in February, to help with MAS's annual meeting

\$100 to Raven Hill Discovery Center to help stuff a Common Loon

\$100 to help the Coalition to save MEPA (Michigan Environmental Protection Act)

\$50 to Raven Hill Discovery Center for bird seed.

[NOTE: A more complete 2003 financial report will appear in the March newsletter.]

Also in 2003 PRAS prepared a simple checklist of "*Birds of Emmet County, Michigan*" which has proved useful on our field trips, and for keeping track of sightings at home and around the county. Free copies are available at every PRAS program and outing.

Finally, in March of 2003 PRAS was awarded a \$250 mini-grant from MAS. PRAS used these funds to purchase three pairs of binoculars (which were pleasantly doubled to six pairs thanks to the generosity of Eagle Optics!) These loaner binocs have proved to be a big hit, encouraging folks who have none to try birding with us!