

A Nice Little Birding Spot. . . Buckingham Wetlands

By Ray Hendrick

“Buckingham Wetlands” is the name I have given to this small gem of a wetlands complex located in Buckingham Township, Bucks County beside the Township Building on Route 413 just south of Route 263 (York Road).

Just five years ago it did not exist (at least not in its present form). Twenty years ago it was not much more than a small trickle of water meandering through multiflora rose bushes, golden-rod, small willow trees, etc and the best you could hope for in birds would be a nesting pair of Cat-birds or Song Sparrows.

But now the marshy swale between the Township Building and the Buckingham Elementary School has been transformed into a newly man-made pond of approximately fifteen acres. Native water and wetland perennials have been planted – cattails, Arrowhead, Pickerel Weed, sedges, and rushes. These new plantings plus the constant water supply have attracted many species of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and other denizens of

watery places. An extra bonus also includes at least one pair of nesting Yellow Warblers.

A trail through the wetlands, a bridge over the stream, and now a gazebo provide many vantage points for viewing the area and its interesting wildlife. As you all know, as the seasons change, so to the variety and number of birds also change, and let me give you a few examples.

Spring (my favorite season) finds me stopping by almost daily, either early AM or late in the day after work. Redwing Blackbirds are busy defending their territories; Tree, Barn, and Rough-wing Swallows are cruising back and forth over the cattails. Eastern Bluebirds use at least

two of the seven nest boxes I have installed around the perimeter of the wetlands and Tree Swallows use two or three boxes also.

At the waters edge during March and April I can always find several Snipe that explode from cover but soon settle back down. Wood Ducks, Green and Blue-wing Teal are all regular waterfowl on the water, and last year I observed the first Sora Rail and American Bittern since its creation. Harriers visit and hunt back and forth over the pond as well as the surround-



Gazebo at Buckingham Wetlands



Interpretive Sign at Buckingham Wetlands

ing reed canary grass complex (approximately another twenty acres). In the slightly higher elevations Meadowlark and Savannah Sparrows are regular visitors. I have, I hope, convinced the township not to mow more than once a year to encourage these grass-land species and so far, so good.

Green frogs, Garter snakes and Painted turtles can also be found in the spring. In 2004 I found the first muskrat lodges, with adult muskrats sitting on top eating cattails. With Spring 2005 here, I am looking forward to the first Marsh Wrens, Virginia Rails, Coots, Moorhens, etc. Since April of this year both Canada Geese and Mallards have nested successfully on the muskrat lodges.

If you stop by to look it over, drive into the township parking lot and go all the way to the end – it borders a large farm property. Stay in the car for a few minutes and look over the marsh as it will be in front of you and below. Great viewing through the car windshield. Then leave the car and walk down from the parking lot on to the trail and check it out.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I do and keep me posted as to your observations. It's not Cape May Meadows, but it is a "nice little birding spot" where something new might drop in anytime.



Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Photo by Howard Eskin, Peace Valley, 5-12-05

Birding Activities Around the County

Below are listed the phone numbers and web sites for various nature centers in Bucks County. Most have bird walks on weekends and many have field trips. Call or check the web sites for further information.

Bucks County Audubon Society

6324 Upper York Road

New Hope

215-297-5880

www.bcas.org

Churchville Nature Center

501 Churchville Lane

Churchville

215-357-4005

www.churchvillenaturecenter.org

Peace Valley Nature Center

170 Chapman Road

Doylestown

215-345-7860

www.peacevalleynaturecenter.org

Silver Lake Nature Center

1306 Bath Road

Bristol

215-785-1177

www.silverlakenaturecenter.org



Oops, There Goes the Neighborhood! Photo by Howard Eskin, Silverdale, 4-30-05