

THE

PSO PILEATED



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The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 18, Number 3

From the President's Desk....

When Nick Pulcinella took over as Chief Editor of *Pennsylvania Birds* in March of 2003, he felt like he had entered a marathon at sprint speed. His first job was to produce a double issue, published in August of 2003, to begin bringing the magazine back on schedule. The pace didn't slow much after that as one issue followed another with no breaks. But Nick achieved his main goal of producing most issues on schedule, not an easy task considering that the bird records forming the backbone of the magazine are voluntarily contributed by many birders through volunteer county compilers and seasonal editors.

Another of Nick's goals was to add color pictures to the magazine, now seen on the cover and bird quiz photos, which is all the color that PSO can currently afford. With the rapid adoption of digital photography in general and digiscoping by birders in particular, photos are, rightly or wrongly, beginning to supplant written accounts as the preferred way of documenting bird records. In keeping with this trend, Nick has expanded the photo highlights section of the magazine to several pages.

Since *Pennsylvania Birds* is our state journal of record, it is important to receive records from as many counties as possible if we are to achieve an accurate overview of bird occurrence in Pennsylvania. Knowing this, Nick lined up new or more active compilers for nine counties. He also condensed the annual report of individual bird lists while adding the Total Ticks category. Nick especially enjoyed working with authors in crafting their ideas for articles and seeing them through to publication, one of the most important jobs of a professional editor. The quality of

articles published during his tenure confirms his success. He did all these things while managing the many time-consuming, nitty-gritty editorial details, performed in the commercial world by editorial assistants, that must mesh if a magazine issue is to come off well.

Nick may be retiring from *Pennsylvania Birds*, but his schedule as a volunteer sounds as full as ever. After serving one more year as president of the Birding Club of Delaware County and of the Delaware Rare Birds Committee, he wants to devote more time to his work with PORC. He especially looks forward to spending more time in the field birding and enjoying his other interest, cycling. Nick sometimes felt as though *Pennsylvania Birds* took up as much of his life as a second full-time job.

Flip through the past year's issues with their core bird reports, articles, photos, complex bird counts, and other features, and you will see that his assessment was correct. For several years, I worked on the editorial staff of a national magazine and know that in the commercial publishing world such a heavy workload would be compensated with a professional level salary. Anyone who donates the time and effort to do such work shows a rare level of dedication.

Thank you, Nick, for not only maintaining the quality of *Pennsylvania Birds*, but for finding the time to improve it. And thank you to the editors past and future for your contributions to the magazine. Geoff Malosh, Nick's successor, has his work cut out for him and needs PSO's full support.

– Rudy Keller
Boyertown, PA
Berks County



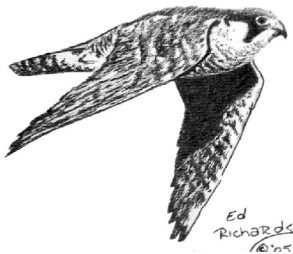
Looking Ahead to 2008

Our 2008 PSO Annual Meeting will be held Friday, May 16, through Sunday, May 18, 2008, just 18 miles north of Pittsburgh, at the Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. The local co-hosts are the Three Rivers Birding Club and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Many fine outings and speakers will, as usual, be featured. In addition, we'll try to take advantage of cultural features of nearby Pittsburgh in addition to the avian-related attractions.

First though, the birdy stuff... Harrisburg's Deuane Hoffman volunteered to lead an outing for this meeting two years ago, when he confidently (for good reason) said, "I can lead an outing in any county in this state." He'll head up a trip to Raccoon Creek State Park. Other outings' destinations include:

* good spots near the famed Imperial area for Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows, as well as other grassland specialties;



* Pittsburgh's Oakland area for nesting Peregrine Falcons and a look at some of the original Audubon prints at the University of Pittsburgh's Hillman Library; and,

* local hotspots for migrating passerines, including Frick Park, Sewickley Heights Park (where Yellow-throated Warbler is found) and the Buffalo Creek Valley IBA in nearby Butler County (another good spot for grassland species).

The Four Points is a bit more upscale than other motels where we've held meetings, but easy access to major highways, large meeting and banquet rooms, and three on-site restaurants make this an ideal meeting location. Other features and activities include an indoor heated pool and complimentary 24-hour fitness facility. And for the children, grandchildren, and non-birding spouses and partners who might otherwise skip a PSO meeting, the hotel's amenities and Pittsburgh's theaters, museums, professional sports teams, zoo, and other attractions are reasons to bring them along.

— Jack Solomon

Hummingbirds— Another Perspective and More

by Arlene Koch

When September arrives and kettling Broad-winged Hawks are moving down the ridges, my thoughts are as much on Ruby-throated Hummingbirds as they are on hawks. But I admit that there's seldom a time that I don't think about hummingbirds even in the dead of winter. I love the little things.

You won't find me calling them flying jewels, little pets, or giving them names though. I guess it's their size that makes people react so strongly to them, and I'm no exception, but they're just little birds. And they are, in fact, nasty little birds to boot. If they were humans, we'd have social services or lawyers after them.

By the end of the first week of September here where I live, midway up the eastern end of the state, almost all the adult males are already gone. They arrive first in the spring, and they're the first to go south in late summer. Their whole purpose in life is to breed with as many females as possible. Once that's over, usually by early or mid-July, they begin moving around, feeder to feeder, yard to yard, and eventually state to state.

Anthropomorphism reigns supreme when it comes to hummingbirds. In every hummingbird program I do I explain that the only contact males and females have with each other is during copulation. But many people don't want to believe that. Once an audience member told me that she didn't care what I said, she knew the male and female in her yard were a pair by the way they looked at each other.

It's not hard to tell that the ruby-throats of September haven't been in my yard long. They eat nectar at the flowers and catch bugs from the shrubs and trees instead of using the feeders. Some take to the feeders right away, but most don't stick around long enough for that to happen.

There are always a lot of immature males at this time of the year. They're usually easy to identify because of a red spot here and there on their throats. These spots, or in some cases spots, can be anywhere on the throat. There's no



The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is our smallest Pennsylvania bird.

Photo by Roger Higbee

rhyme or reason as to where they appear first. And some don't have any at all, in which case you need to look closely at the tail to determine if the bird's a young male or female or even an adult female.

Some females show a strong yellow cast to their feathers. According to Nancy Newfield, well known hummingbird bander from Louisiana and friend, this is usually, but not always, associated with adult females. Until she told me that, I always thought it meant the bird was a young one, but apparently I was wrong.



Young males are usually easy to identify because of a red spot here and there on their throats.

Photo by Chris Bohinski

All young ruby-throats have buffy edges to their fresh feathers. Others, whether they are adults or immatures, can show a lot of cinnamon or light rufous color on their flanks. This sometimes mistakenly leads to the assumption that the bird's a Rufous Hummingbird or one of the other western *Selasphorus* species. I made the same mistake when I was first learning how to identify hummingbirds. But the bird must have rufous on its tail to be a western vagrant.

Some other things I've learned by making mistakes are that you can't rely on tail pumping to differentiate a Ruby-throated from a Black-chinned Hummingbird. In late summer all ruby-throats take on fat, which makes their tails look shorter. The yellow at the base of their bills or on their heads is usually pollen. Bill length is very variable; so is curvature. But you can't fake violet ear coverings and I'm still waiting to see one like this.

How high do they fly? Did you know that?

A Mallard struck a Western Airlines plane above Elko, Nevada, on July 9, 1963, at an altitude of 21,000 feet.

DCNR Secretary Seeks to Convert State Forest Land into Industrial Windplants

by Stan Kotala

On June 1, Michael DiBerardinis, secretary of Pennsylvania's DCNR, announced that agency's proposal to convert portions of our State Forests into industrial windplants. The secretary in the past has written that 40,000 acres of state forest land would be suitable for industrial windplant development.

This announcement should alarm all users of our State Forests. Because of the problems of severe habitat fragmentation, direct mortality to birds and bats, and the inducement of avoidance behavior, industrial windfarms are incompatible with the stewardship and conservation goals of these lands. Each turbine requires the clearing and bulldozing of several acres of forest around it for construction, maintenance, and operational efficiency. In addition, a mile of permanent heavy-duty road is constructed for every 5-8 industrial turbines. Further carving of the forest takes place to accommodate transmission lines, substations, and other infrastructure. Since more than 4000 industrial wind turbines would be required to meet just 10% of Pennsylvania's electricity demand, it should be obvious that the severe ecological costs of industrial windfarms on our public lands far outweigh their puny benefits.

The Pennsylvania Biological Survey's Mammal Technical Committee released a statement last fall describing the effects of industrial windplants on Pennsylvania's wildlife as "severe." Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's Director of Conservation Science Dr. Keith Bildstein has called for a moratorium on industrial windplant construction at high risk sites. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has designated many of central Pennsylvania's ridges as high risk sites for industrial windplant development. Last month, a report by the National Academy of Science stated that industrial windplants pose a significant threat to bats and birds, especially in known migratory raptor flyways. The same National Academy of Science report condemned "the lack of any truly coordinated planning" in the rapid growth of windplants. A poll conducted by the *Harrisburg Patriot* earlier this month revealed that 83% of Pennsylvanians are opposed to industrial windfarms on our State Forests.

While supportive of wind energy in appropriate locations where it will not fragment large forested areas or endanger sensitive wildlife species or habitats, we ask that sportsmen, hikers, birders, and all other outdoor enthusiasts contact their state senators and representatives to oppose this disturbing scheme to radically alter our State Forests.

Conservation Corner

Many PSO members may already be aware of the National Audubon Society's latest announcement regarding common birds in decline. In the July/August issue of *Audubon*, an article lists 10 common birds that are in serious decline. All of them can be found in Pennsylvania at one time of the year or another, and I suspect that all of us have noticed these birds aren't as common as they once were.

The Northern Bobwhite is the first bird listed, and the article stated that the species has suffered an 82 percent decline. This is a species that many of us remember seeing in PA but now is absent. Second on the list is the Evening Grosbeak, with a 78 percent decline; many of us can remember the winter days when a flock of grosbeaks appeared at our feeders and cleaned them out.



The Northern Bobwhite population has decreased by 82 percent.

Photo by Roger Higbee

Third and fourth are the Northern Pintail (77 percent decline) and Greater Scaup (75 percent decline) that we are still able to see during migration/winter but their populations are down. The fifth is a rarity in Pennsylvania, the Boreal Chickadee. The article states that this species has seen a 73 percent decline. The sixth bird is a bird that I remember as a kid often seeing on my uncle's farm in Sullivan County – now it is certainly less common. It is the Eastern Meadowlark with a 72 percent decline.

Seventh is another bird that is not very common in Pennsylvania but is or at least was common along the Jersey/Delaware shore. It is the Common Tern with a 70 percent decline. Also suffering a 70 percent decline and at number 8 is the Loggerhead Shrike, another scarce bird in Pennsylvania.

The last two species listed are the Field Sparrow (68 percent decline) and the Grasshopper Sparrow (65 percent decline) that many of us have noted are not as common as they were several years ago.

So, what can birders do to help? The article lists several things we can do. First, we can not only support the preservation of habitat but support organizations financially that preserve land. And we can let our elected officials at all levels know that we expect open space to be preserved and even expanded. More specifically, we can let our elected representatives in Washington know that we support farm bills that include conservation funding such as the Conservation Reserve Program. And we can let our state and county elected officials know that we support the farmland preservation program and want it adequately funded.

We can strongly urge or even demand that our state and federal foresters practice sustainable forestry and encourage private land owners that we know to practice the same. More information on good forestry practices is available from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). As for grasslands, in addition to supporting the grassland reserve section in the federal farm bill, we can contact the PA Game Commission and DCNR and urge them to not only protect/preserve what little grassland they have but expand that habitat where feasible. And the same applies to wetlands.

Members are also encouraged to become involved in their local conservation groups/nature centers and organize programs to preserve/protect/restore bird habitats. And finally, if you haven't been involved in bird surveys such as the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas for PA or other bird counts, I encourage you to sign up – they are a lot of fun and it will help the birds.

– Mark Henry

PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Of the three jaeger species, which was the first to be verified in Pennsylvania by a specimen? For a bonus, where was it collected?
2. About 500 birds of one species were shot while migrating near Girard, Erie County, on May 6-7, 1967 (before they were protected in Pennsylvania). Which species?
3. Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures are more closely related to the Wood Stork than they are to raptors. True or false?
4. You are watching a shorebird with a slightly down-curved bill, whose wing tips do not extend as far as the end of its tail. Are you most likely seeing a Stilt Sandpiper, a Curlew Sandpiper, or a Dunlin?
5. Which out-of-range towhee species had its first Pennsylvania record at a feeder in Bucks County in 1987?

(Answers on page 9.)

In Memoriam

Dr. Kenneth C. Parkes was one of the most important and influential ornithologists and avian taxonomists of his time, but I do not think it is wrong to say that he was first and foremost a bird lover and a birdwatcher. Pennsylvania can proudly claim (or at least share) Dr. Parkes – both the renowned ornithologist and the everyday birder – as one of its own. He passed away on July 16, 2007, at the age of 85 from complications related to Parkinson's disease.

Born August 8, 1922, in Hackensack, New Jersey, Kenneth C. Parkes completed both his undergraduate and graduate studies at Cornell University. He received his doctorate in 1952 for research on *The Birds of New York State and Their Taxonomy*, which resulted in a 612-page thesis in two parts (non-passerines and passerines). Immediately following this, Dr. Parkes began a distinguished 43-year career with the Section of Birds of Carnegie Museum of Natural History, from 1953 until his retirement in 1996. For more than 30 of those years, he was its Senior Curator (succeeding W. E. Clyde Todd), and for many years after his retirement, he maintained his office in the section and was a very active Curator Emeritus, working in the bird range and continuing to work and collaborate on technical papers.

Dr. Parkes' appreciation of birds was not only intellectual, (although his intellect was indeed substantial!) but it also expressed itself in his admiration of those who had good field birding skills and through his own lifelong love of birdwatching. For many, especially those of us in western Pennsylvania, Ken Parkes was an unusually accessible professional ornithologist whose interest, knowledge, and opinions regarding field bird identifications, trends in local bird populations, and even the aesthetics and scientific accuracy of bird art and illustration, were always much sought after and appreciated. Ken was as well known and well liked by the community of birdwatchers and bird artists in his own backyard as he was admired and well-respected for his significant and always scholarly scientific contributions by ornithological colleagues around the world.

Of his more than 500 contributions to professional ornithological literature, one in particular stands out as being among the most influential of the twentieth century. Co-authored in 1959 with Philip S. Humphrey, his colleague from Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History, "An Approach to the Study of Molts and Plumages" (*Auk* 76:1-31) proposed the first tenable scientific framework and terminology for describing and understanding the evolution of molts and patterns of plumage succession across a wide range of birds, both taxonomically and geographically. This seminal paper and the semantics of the Humphrey-Parkes system of molt

terminology – including the now very familiar terms basic and pre-basic, alternate and pre-alternate, supplemental and pre-supplemental, plumages and molts – have been a *tour de force* not only for advancing evolutionary studies of molt, but also for increasing the accuracy and precision of field and in-hand bird identifications. And, over the course of his long and very productive career, Ken's many cogent studies of subspecific taxonomy and hybridization in birds created still more opportunities for overlap between his scientific expertise and the interests of an increasingly sophisticated birding community.

Ken was a rare breed of professional ornithologist who always maintained a strong connection to the amateur bird-watching community. His classic *Field List of the Birds of the Pittsburgh Region* was written to serve that community, and Ken always participated extensively in the dialogue surrounding field bird identification through innumerable letters-to-the-editor sent to local and national birding magazines. Ken served the Pennsylvania birding community in other ways, too. He served on records and advisory committees for several statewide and local birding organizations and for the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. Ken truly respected and greatly encouraged the contributions of amateurs to the science of ornithology, a tradition that he helped to formalize with the professional ornithological societies and which embodies the well known "Citizen Science" mission of his alma mater, Cornell University and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

In short, Dr. Kenneth C. Parkes was an ornithologist's ornithologist, a curator's curator, a birder's birder, and a bird artist's very discerning and appreciative critic. His life-time contribution to all things avian was, to say the least, monumental. He was, if not one of a kind, then surely "a very rare bird," and I, along with many other birders in Pennsylvania, feel fortunate and proud to be able to include him on my life's list.

– Bob Mulvihill

Atlas Reminder

Please enter the fourth season's data in a timely manner. It's important to complete all the necessary verification forms and submit them to Powdermill promptly.

Next year is the last year of field work, and we need to plan now to maximize our results.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



PBBA Data – We Need It Now!

Atlasers have completed the fourth year of field surveys for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. I might call it “field work,” but this project is so much fun that I would hate to call it “work” at all. I know that I have enjoyed many hours in the field searching for and finding birds.

The 2nd PBBA has been eminently successful. The many birders who have contributed to its huge database deserve congratulations and gratitude for their considerable assistance with the program. You have logged many miles and plotted many bird data points. Don’t stop! We have one more year of fun survey work and data input.

Several of the many interesting results of the PBBA have been the range expansions of Sandhill Crane, Double-crested Cormorant, and some gulls into the state. For the PGC wildlife diversity section, the new sites for our rare nesting herons and rails also have been very illuminating.

Many of us have a wanderlust for Pennsylvania birding hot spots, out-of-the-way natural areas, and the back roads to the proverbial “Podunks” of the state. So, it is very easy to get a little bird data here and there. I know that I’ve been “holding back” some of my own spring and summer bird data in blocks I did not “own,” because I did not want to duplicate the efforts of others or to discourage a new Atlas block owner from taking on a block and giving it its due. I am starting to dig into my own notebooks and data sheets and to enter the odds and ends into the database.

Now is the time to empty the notebooks and spare data sheets from everywhere in the state. Dig out the Atlas bird records and fill in some holes in the coverage. Don’t hold back!

It is important, if not critical, to enter these data into the Atlas database as soon as possible. The full-blown Atlas database will be a better measure of our Atlas effort and give us better understanding of where the last year’s efforts

need to be focused. And, while you are at it, check out the Atlas maps and pick out a block or two in a remote region to start planning your next year of field trips. There is a real need for the quality birders to step out into the hinterlands of Pennsylvania and adopt blocks where there are lots more birds than birders. Also, the Atlas badly needs bird “specialists” who will focus on hawks, owls, marsh birds, colonial birds, or other species that tend to be missed by casual Atlas coverage. Everyone can help in his or her own way.

Bald Eagle and Heron Colony Updates

We have learned of at least 125 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania this year. The burgeoning eagle population has provided us many challenges in coverage. The number of nests has overwhelmed our “work force” for nest watching, especially since the PGC workforce is fairly low this year and many nests are in remote locations. I can say that most pairs were successful, but the storms of late winter and early spring took their toll on eagle nests. Although we probably did not have the fabulous success of 2006 when we had about 80% nest success of the territories with known results, the 2007 season was still pretty successful.

Although the nesting season is long over, we still are searching for results for several nests. If you know about a nesting pair of eagles, please feel free to contact me and let me know how they did. I may be sending you an e-mail soon.

The mid-winter Bald Eagle survey will be held again in January 2008. We hope that some of you will participate to help us evaluate the wintering population. This survey is also a good way to start searching for new eagle nests and checking on the status of known pairs. The agency also is interested in learning about eagle roost sites. We can better study and protect them if we know where they are located. As the eagle population grows, these roost sites will probably grow in size and importance to eagle conservation.

The PGC is still looking for information about the state’s heron colonies. This is one of the years when we attempt a full survey of our Great Blue Heron colonies. Although the herons are



The PGC is seeking information about Great Blue Heron colonies.

Photo by Chris Bohinski

“long gone” from the colonies, we do not have accurate nest counts on some colonies. If you know of any remote, poorly known colonies that may not be accounted for, please contact us about them. For some situations, it is easier to access and count nests in the fall. Please send any info to me or Deb Siefken, our heron colony coordinator. You can reach Deb at 717-677-4830 or siefkend@cvn.net.

Laurie Goodrich Honored with Maurice Broun Award

At its annual meeting held at Fogelsville, PA, the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) presented Laurie Goodrich with the prestigious Maurice Broun Award for her enormous long-time significant contributions to that organization and to our understanding of raptor migration and conservation. It could not be more appropriate that Laurie received this award at the “Kettling on the Kittatinny” meeting practically in the shadows of Maurice Broun’s beloved ridge. In true form, she organized the “Kettling” and involved many professionals and volunteers in a very successful meeting that highlighted the great success of the organizations, of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and for better appreciation of the great hawk watch sites of the region.

All of us offer congratulations to Laurie for her well-deserved and long-overdue recognition. Many of us are Laurie’s friends. We know how much she has done to help us in our various pursuits. There’s no better partner than Laurie for bird conservation projects. She has earned our trust, respect, and cooperation through her own considerable activities and sacrifices.

One of Laurie’s biggest contributions was taking the lead in the writing of the book, “Wildlife Habitat in Pennsylvania: Past, Present, and Future.” This was a herculean task that summarized much of what we know about bird habitat and populations in the state. It is available on the DCNR website.

As Chair of the OTC for several years, I had the good fortune of interacting with several fine ornithologists. Laurie served ably as secretary for almost all of those meetings. The OTC secretary has a very important position as recorder of the decisions and the reasoning behind decisions of an organization dedicated to advancing research and conservation of birds. When you give advice to a state wildlife agency, you need to document the how, when, and why of your decisions. As an OTC member, she also has been a champion of progressive ideas on the

leading edge of research and conservation initiatives. Several years ago, for example, she advocated for official recognition of the vulnerability of Golden Eagle as a passage migrant and wintering species in Pennsylvania. We could not fit this “square peg” (a passage migrant) into our available “round hole” (state lists for breeding species) at the time, but the discussion led to future recognition of its status. The current Species of Greatest Conservation Need status of Golden Eagle reflects our commonly held perception of this species.

We wish her the best in her continued research of hawk migration and the birds of our state.

Golden Eagle Migration Study and More



The Golden Eagle population of eastern North America is fairly small and probably has a fairly restricted migration corridor that runs right through our state, especially near the Allegheny Front, Bald Eagle Mountain, and Tussey Ridge. We have recognized the importance of learning more about this population, including its behavior. Wind power development is a growing concern along the state’s ridges and potentially serves as a threat to this population. There at least is a perception of a growing conflict. Also, our state may be important to the conservation of this population of one of our largest and most charismatic raptors.

The PA Game Commission is partnering with the National Aviary in Pittsburgh and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History at Powdermill Nature Reserve to evaluate the eastern Golden Eagle migration through the Keystone State. We intend to identify areas of potential conflict that migrating eagles face from the developing industrial wind energy program and other changes to the landscape. The Golden Eagle team has employed some innovative methods to study their birds. Satellite telemetry enables the researchers to record movements and deliver the information from wild, free-flying birds directly to the research team via the Internet. These data will help determine how flight routes and elevations are influenced by topography and meteorology. It also will help assess risks posed by wind energy development to these birds.

The Golden Eagle team has successfully captured and marked some eagles. This is a time-consuming and expensive process. Since Golden Eagles migrate long distances over many boundaries, this is a multi-state and international issue. The team has been seeking and finding cooperation across the range of interest. There is great

interest down the Appalachians into West Virginia and Kentucky where many of the eagles spend the winter as well as in to the north in Canada where they nest. As we add partners to the study, we can enrich our data set, enabling the study to be more successful. We hope and intend to capture birds in the eastern part of the state where we have less information.

In addition to being a migration corridor, Pennsylvania also hosts some Golden Eagles in the winter. This population also is of interest to the PGC and the Golden Eagle research team. If you find any wintering Golden Eagles, please contact me at the address listed below.

The Golden Eagle project is expanding in its geographic scope and partnerships. Its success might be limited by the expense of telemetry units and the associated costs of capturing and following Golden Eagles. The more partners we have, the more we can learn together.

We congratulate the Powdermill Nature Reserve team of Tricia Miller, Mike Lanzone, Todd Katzner, David Brandes, Dan Ombalski, and their many partners on their successes. To learn more about this exciting project, please visit the website of the National Aviary: <http://www.aviary.org/csrp/eaglePA.php>.

Pennsylvania Hawk Watches

Thanks to the long and storied traditions of the Hawk Mountain Association and the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), Pennsylvania has a good string of hawk watch sites that document raptor populations and trends. Many of you are among the legions of hawk watchers, watch site volunteers, and association supporters. Even if you don't contribute directly, most of you check the posts on the PA Birds list serve that generously update our watch sites daily during the migration season.

Yet, much of the state is a mystery for raptor migration. There are large gaps in coverage. Most of our "minor" and unconnected ridges and summits are unwatched. There also are many summits, some unnamed, on the Allegheny Plateau (north and west of the Allegheny Front) for which we know little or nothing about raptor migration. I invite the hawkwatchers out there to check out new locations for watch sites and share this information with HMANA. Your data will help all of us better understand raptor migration in all parts of the state. Industrial wind development may pose serious risks to raptors at various locations. The Golden Eagles that fly by Waggoner's Gap and the Allegheny Front come from some place, yet the way that they enter our state and reach these concentration points is not yet known.

Please consult with HMANA on hawk watch site protocols and possible site locations. A good HMANA contact is board member and PA Audubon IBA biologist, Kim Van Fleet: 717-213-6880 ext.11; kvanfleet@audubon.org

Pennsylvania eBird Progress

We are gradually making progress setting up a Pennsylvania portal to Cornell Laboratory's very successful eBird project. Good things take time, especially in state government and with large research institutions, so please be patient with our progress. It is coming along. Our support is coming right from "the top" in the PGC. The value of volunteer contributions to our common knowledge of bird distribution and populations is very well understood and greatly appreciated here! We simply cannot do our job without the assistance of the volunteer birding community. *PA eBird* will enhance everything we do in that regard.

We can envision a variety of bird monitoring and inventory projects in the "post-Atlas" world. The inventory of our various public lands and privately owned reserves is an important task accomplished for some years by the PSO Special Areas Project and will be continued with *PA eBird*. We will be able to expand this network of locations through the *eBird* hot list, allowing data entry into Important Bird Areas in the process. There also is great potential for species-specific surveys like those conducted in the past by CLO for Golden-winged Warbler and Cerulean Warbler. Of course, we always will be interested in nocturnal birds including the owls and our few nightjars. The Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring network will offer guidance on region-wide consistency in monitoring efforts. I anticipate that *PA eBird* will offer links to our research, monitoring, and conservation partners including worthwhile projects in which PA birders may get involved.

Sponsorship of *PA eBird* fulfills many of the objectives of our Wildlife Action Plan for conserving low and declining populations of fish and wildlife. Many projects supporting the Action Plan are supported by State Wildlife Grants (SWG), a federal program for supplying needed funding to state wildlife agencies. A significant requirement of the SWG program, which emphasizes endangered species prevention, is that each state had to produce a Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) and submit it for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval. The PGC has met this requirement, and the WAP is in place and you are able to view this plan. This draft document provides a blueprint for the PGC and PA Fish and Boat Commission to pursue comprehensive fish and wildlife management. Check out the WAP for PA at the PGC website under "Wildlife" – <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view.asp?a=496&q=162067>.

The PGC's Wildlife Diversity group is taking the lead on *PA eBird*, partnering with PSO and PA Audubon to work with the CLO. We have several objectives with the *PA eBird*. A few of these can be summarized as:

- ★ Improve and expand important bird "citizen science" projects like the PA Breeding Bird Atlas;
- ★ Collect more data at the state's Important Bird Areas;
- ★ Enhance our knowledge of the state's Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (supported by the State Wildlife Grant program);
- ★ And, to grow and to develop a more informed and active bird monitoring community.

So, stay tuned!

New Stuff from Partners In Flight

The umbrella organization for landbird conservation in North America is known as Partners In Flight (PIF). Since birds know no political boundaries, those who care about birds also must overcome the boundaries that separate governments and organizations to partner together. The PIF website (www.partnersinflight.org) keeps growing, and there are many hidden gems there.

One powerful and intriguing new feature is an online database that allows the user to obtain the current PIF estimates of the continent-wide populations of our landbird species. Most estimates are based on BBS data with new techniques designed to account for the detectability of each species. These population estimates are similar but not identical to those included in the Appendix of the PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan (T. Rich and others, 2004) and in Ken Rosenberg's priority and objective PIF plan for the state that is available on the PIF website. For instance, you will find that the Olive-sided Flycatcher population is estimated at only 1,200,000 in all of Canada and USA – suggesting a big decline. Of the Pennsylvania *Empidonax* flycatchers, the Willow has the smallest estimated global population of 3,300,000 followed by the Acadian with 4,700,000. There is less confidence in the population estimates given for less detectable species (raptors, night birds) and those whose breeding range extends well north of the range of BBS routes which are confined to public roads. So, estimates for more northerly species like Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Alder Flycatcher are less likely to be accurate than those that live mostly in the lower 48 states.

As has been discussed in several forums, Pennsylvania is a "keystone state" for many of the deciduous forest birds of eastern North America and a few Watch List species. As such, we have a high responsibility for those species and need to keep those species common. The Keystone State for the Appalachians has a big responsibility for Scarlet Tanager with about 320,000 birds nesting, accounting for

14.6% of the total population. Pennsylvania's estimated population of Wood Thrush is also impressive at 1,100,000 (8.1% of the total). Our state's Cerulean Warbler population is approximately 50,000 birds. This might be only 8.5 % of the total number of pairs, but the state's population is particularly important because it appears to be expanding eastward when the species is declining in the center of its range. The Golden-winged Warbler population is estimated at 7000 birds, and who knows how many of them are "purely Golden." Our state has a lot of responsibility for other forest birds including Worm-eating Warbler (50,000; 6.2 %) and Louisiana Waterthrush (20,000; 8.3 %). This feature is worth visiting. I suspect that we will continue to revise these estimates and improve our ability to document ranges and trends in populations.

PIF is beginning to address the big and controversial subject of climate change. To find this section, go from the front page and click on "Other PIF Resources" and then click on "Global Climate Change and Birds." From there you can access a list of recent publications on global climate change and birds. This new section is still being built, so more will come. Will Baltimore Orioles be found in Baltimore in the future? The changes make you wonder.

For more information on the PSO Special Areas Project or PGC volunteer bird projects, please contact:

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Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 4)

1. Pomarine Jaeger. Spencer F. Baird reported in 1845 that he had collected one along the Susquehanna River in Cumberland County.
2. Blue Jay.
3. False. In 1998 the American Ornithologists' Union did move vultures to a checklist position next to Wood Stork – but in July 2007 the AOU rescinded the change after reevaluating the evidence. Vultures are now officially back in their old checklist position before Osprey.
4. Dunlin.
5. Green-tailed Towhee.

Ornithological Literature Notes

Forest “edge” – places where woodland and open area are adjacent – does not rank as high-quality breeding habitat for many forest species. Rates of nest predation and cowbird parasitism are typically much greater near the edge than near the interior.

For neotropical migrants, however, edge-dominated forests and mature suburban woodlands with edge appear to be quite favorable as stopover sites during migration, according to a study published by Paul G. Rodewald and Margaret C. Brittingham in 2007 (*Auk* 124:1063–1074). The authors studied patterns of migrant species' variety and abundance during three springs at various sites in Centre and Huntingdon County including Rothrock State Forest, State Game Lands 176, suburban forests in the State College Area, and private lands.

They classified the sites in five habitat types: early-successional shrub-sapling stage, mid-successional “pole” stage, mature forest interior, mature forest-agricultural edge, and mature suburban forest. During three spring migration seasons, the authors focused particularly on nine species: Least Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler.

Seven of them differed greatly in abundance among stopover habitats: the flycatcher, Nashville, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Blackburnian, and Blackpoll. Of those seven, all but the Blackpoll averaged significantly more abundant at forest-agricultural edge, suburban forest, or both. Blackpoll was more abundant in the forest interior. (The kinglet and Black-throated Blue did not differ among the habitats.)

From a broader viewpoint, total numbers of 22 neotropical-migrant species averaged significantly higher at the forest-agricultural edge and suburban forest. Species richness (the number of different species) was also higher in those same edge-dominated habitats. In research published in 2004 Rodewald and Brittingham had reported similarly significant importance of edge-dominated habitats during fall migration as well (*Auk* 121:1040–1055).

Rodewald and Brittingham translated their findings into conservation terms: “Effort should be made to manage forest edges where edges are more permanent (e.g., edges associated with woodlots in suburban and agricultural landscapes, powerline right-of-ways, highways).” They noted that many such forest edges have an abrupt transition between the tall forest canopy and the adjacent edge habitat. Creating wider and less abrupt edges with varied

vegetation should also increase use by stopover migrants, the authors said.

Pennsylvania’s birders know that greater numbers and variety of migrants are more likely to be found at edges than deep in mature forest interiors, but it is good to see the experience confirmed by solid statistical results.

– Paul Hess

Game Commission Releases Results

HARRISBURG - Dr. Walter Cottrell, Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife veterinarian, today announced that the test results from five Tree Swallows and a Purple Martin confirm that the birds died of starvation and environmental exposure.

"These birds were found to be in generally good body condition, but they had no food in their crops or gizzards, and their intestines had less content than would be expected," Dr. Cottrell said. "The birds had no significant lesions, but it appears that they had not been eating for a day or two."

On Thursday, August 23, agency officials submitted four swallows and one Purple Martin to the state Department of Agriculture's Animal Health and Diagnostic Laboratory for testing. The birds had been found near a marina along the Susquehanna River near Middletown, Dauphin County.

Dr. Cottrell also noted that tests conducted for avian influenza came back negative for all five birds.

Tree Swallows are primarily insect eaters, and prefer open water areas, usually with marshy margins. Purple Martins are large, dark swallows, and they prefer to eat flies, mosquitoes, and wasps.

"The starvation may have occurred as a result of the cold rainy weather that hit the area during the night-time, and that presumably affected their food supply," Dr. Cottrell said.

In spite of pleas to the public, the Game Commission did not receive any physical evidence regarding reports that waterfowl and egrets also had been found dead along the Susquehanna River near Middletown.

"While we had received calls from the public and news media suggesting mortality in those species, we did not receive any reports that lead to samples to submit for testing," Dr. Cottrell noted.

<http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=172462>>

It's Drawing to a Close

by John Fedak

The final year of the Breeding Bird Atlas is upon us, and we still have a lot of work to do. Where do we start? How can we manage it? Can it be completed on time? I hope to answer these questions and help you to answer them for yourselves.

Let's start with the last one, "Can the atlas be completed on time?" I would have to answer honestly and say that it is up to you and every other birder in the state. If we work hard and help each other, then the answer will be yes. If not, then it will be no. Each birder should be doing his or her part in helping to gather up-to-date breeding information for the areas in he or she lives, works, and visits. A little bit at a time adds up – believe it!

"How can we manage it?" and "Where do we start?" Well, start by making it manageable, and then work at it. Great Horned Owls are "safe" in January. Start by trying to find as many as you can in as many different blocks as you can. The same holds true for each species as it enters its safe date. It is more important to list the species in each block rather than staying in one block, attempting to confirm it. One block of data is not as meaningful as 10 to 20 blocks. At least we will have an idea of the species' range. We have months to hit each block and list each bird that is present.

Another important species to find is American Woodcock. Planning here is important because the window of being able to list it easily is so small. While you are getting your data on owls, make note of brushy, wet fields; wet powerline and pipeline cuts, wet clearcuts, marshes, and other likely courtship spots. Then visit them during woodcock courtship dates. If you plan an evening route well, you can add them to a lot of blocks in an evening. One route in Region 32 was able to add woodcock to 9 blocks in an evening. I know it is hard, but don't stop to enjoy them, you will have plenty of time after 2008 for that – just get them listed! Don't limit yourself to evenings. During turkey season, I hear lots of woodcocks at dawn. You can add turkey as well and maybe grouse, and lots of other things. If you target one species – note all you hear or see. In very little time, you will have quite the list for as many blocks as you do.

The most important thing is to enter all your data. Look on the website – How many blocks don't have American Robin? Do you think they are really missing? Enter everything you see and hear. With a little extra effort, we can complete this on time and be proud of the finished project. I know what I will be doing this winter and the next season, do you?

A Note for Our Bookworms

Some recently published books are available for bird and nature lovers:

National Geographic Field Guide to Birds: Pennsylvania by Jonathan K. Alderfer (Editor) is a paperback which includes birding hotspots and details on bird behavior. PSO's own Paul Hess is credited as the expert.

Roger Tory Peterson: A Biography by Douglas Carlson, described as authoritative and highly readable, is available from Bird Watcher's Digest or University of Texas Press.

Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America by Kenn Kaufman, Eric Eaton is a comprehensive field guide which emphasizes the insects that are most likely to catch our attention but includes information on all groups that can be recognized.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv shows that exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and provides simple ways to bring children back to nature

Caterpillars of Eastern North America by David L. Wagner is a Princeton field guide to identification and natural history. It was published in 2005. The illustrations include a large photograph of the caterpillar and a smaller one of the moth or butterfly.



Who Were We? PSO Quiz

When was the PSO organized and why?

Who were our first officers?

Where was the first official PSO field trip and who led it?

Where was the first official PSO meeting?

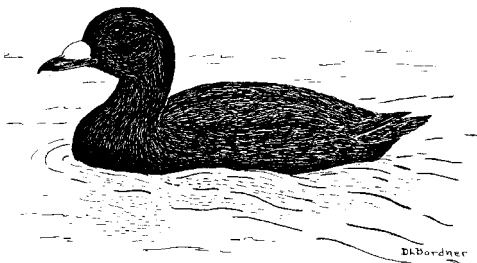
Who were the presenters at our first PSO meeting.
(See Answers on page 12.)

Answers to PSO Quiz

The PSO was organized in 1989 after the last Atlas coordinators' meeting. It was formed to promote the enjoyment of birdwatching in Pennsylvania and continue the across-the-state comradery that developed during the first atlas. Conrad Schmidt was our first president; Bob Martin, vice president; Gene Zielinski, secretary; and Jocelyn Smrekar, treasurer.

Jane Earle and members of the Appalachian Audubon led the first field trip on March 17, 1990, to Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Our first official meeting was held at Lock Haven University's Sieg Conference Center, October 12-14, 1990. Our presenters were Margaret Brittingham, Jerry Hassinger, Ed Kwater, and George Young.



PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. To renew your membership, send your check made payable to "PSO" to:

PSO	Membership Categories:	
2469 Hammertown Road	Individual	\$ 28.50
Narvon, PA 17555-9730	Family	\$ 32.50
	Sustaining	\$ 42.50

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