

PSO PILEATED



December 2007

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 18, Number 4

From the President's Desk....

Membership in PSO has slowly declined in recent years. The PSO Board of Directors had a lively discussion on ways to reverse this trend at our November 10th board meeting. Members agreed with Pennsylvania Birds Chief Editor Geoff Malosh that www.pabirds.org/, the PSO website, should become more of a focus for our activities since it is the easiest, cheapest, and most visible way to reach large numbers of potential members. Since *Pennsylvania Birds* magazine is one of the greatest benefits of PSO membership, board members Frank Haas, Carmen Santasania, and Rob Blye will, in coming months, be working with Geoff to better advertise the journal on the website. The journal cover, table of contents, and perhaps a teaser feature article will be posted on the website to show visitors what they're missing by not joining PSO. Carmen, who is list owner of [pabirds.aududon.org.](http://pabirds.aududon.org/), the state birding list serve (whose subscriber numbers have steadily increased), will allow posting of more references to the PSO website, which should increase hits. Dave DeReamus, who has worked hard and long to start and maintain the Lehigh Valley Birdline, has already improved the photo content on the PSO website and will continue to do so. If you haven't looked at the site recently, visit it again and watch it change.

A more immediate way each of us can help PSO is to promote benefits of membership at local bird club meetings. Thank you to the many members who have already done this. PSO's revised membership brochure can be helpful in recruiting because it lists benefits and gives clear contact information. To get a supply of the brochures,

contact Frank Haas, 2469 Hammertown Rd., Narvon, PA 17555; fchaas@pabirds.org.

One benefit of PSO membership that is much enjoyed but underused is attendance at the annual meeting. The enticing field trip list for the May 16-18, 2008, meeting near Pittsburgh is in this issue, and the speaker list will be finalized in a few weeks. Though the annual meeting's silent auction funds a scholarship enabling attendance by birders 18 years old and under, there were no applicants for this benefit last year. Awarding this scholarship is a fine way of nurturing young birders. If you would like to nominate one, contact Shonah Hunter at shunter@lhup.edu.

– Rudy Keller
Boyertown, PA
Berks County



PSO meetings always feature interesting field trips like this one at the 2007 meeting. Left to right are Trudy Kyler, Carol Guba, Greg Grove, and Sue Solomon.



There's always time for comradery at PSO meetings. Paul Hess and Mike Fialkovich share a laugh at the May 2007 meeting.

Plan Now to Attend the Annual PSO Meeting in Pittsburgh May 2008

The 2008 annual PSO meeting in Pittsburgh promises to be a good one. There will be something for everyone! The Three Rivers Birding Club has organized a great variety of outings. The March *Pileated* will feature our list of speakers. Below is a brief description of the outings that have been scheduled.

National Aviary

The National Aviary houses more than 200 species of birds from around the world. Several large free-flight rooms give visitors the feeling of being in a tropical swamp, forests, and other habitats. See www.aviary.org for more information.

State Game Lands #203

Located in Marshall Twp., just minutes from the hotel where our meeting is based, these 1240 acres host many breeding species. This is a good place to search for migrants as well as the most reliable location in Allegheny County for Whip-poor-will.

University of Pittsburgh in Oakland

The Cathedral of Learning on the campus is the site of Pittsburgh's second nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons. This outing will also feature the unique experience of viewing a collection of original Audubon prints at the University's Hillman Library.

Beaver County Raptors

Several species of raptors nest in nearby Beaver County, and this tour will take visitors to view the nests (from a respectable distance), including Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, and perhaps others.

Frick Park

Frick is a 550-acre Pittsburgh City Park that boasts an impressive list of birds. Many trails provide access to the birding hotspots including forest, clearings, and recently constructed wetlands as part of the restoration of Nine Mile Run.

Harrison Hills Park

Located in northeastern Allegheny County, Harrison Hills, part of the Buffalo Creek IBA, is a migrant hotspot with an impressive list of 180 species. Habitats include deciduous forest, a small pond, and adjacent wetland and meadow. See www.friendsofharrisonhills.org for more information.

Imperial Grasslands

The Imperial Grasslands are vast expanses of reclaimed strip mine land in the western part of Allegheny County and adjacent Washington County. The area is well known for a long list of county and state rarities, so almost anything is possible.

Settler's Cabin Park

This Allegheny County Park is an untapped resource located near the Pittsburgh Airport. Terribly under-birded, it is a great location for migrants and contains a large amount of good habitat.

Sewickley Heights Park

This borough park has a high density of birds and great habitat. This is an excellent location for neotropical migrants. Cerulean and Kentucky Warblers breed here in good numbers.

Boyce-Mayview Park

Located just south of the city of Pittsburgh in Upper St. Clair, this park began as mitigation for wetlands lost due to construction projects. The wetlands, woodlands, and fields attract a nice variety of local rarities, migrants, and breeding birds.

Raccoon Creek State Park

Located in eastern Beaver County, a mere 25 miles from Pittsburgh, this forested park is a good place to search for migrants, and the lake sometimes attracts waterfowl, but the best feature is the Wildflower Reserve, the park's gem.

Schenley Park

Schenley is a 456-acre Pittsburgh City Park that does not receive the attention or coverage that Frick Park does from birders. Nestled between the University of Pittsburgh (with nesting Peregrine Falcons) and Carnegie Mellon University, it provides green space in an urban area for migrants.

Buffalo Creek Valley

Located just over the border in southern Butler County, this is part of an Important Bird Area. One site we will visit is owned and operated by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. The area has the look and feel of a mountain forest with rocky outcrops, deep ravines cut by roaring streams, and a density of Eastern Hemlocks.

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

Headquarters for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Beechwood Farms is a large tract of natural habitat in the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Migrants can be found here in good numbers in the varied habitats that include meadows, brush, deciduous forest, a pine plantation, and a small pond. See www.aswp.org for more information.

Ned Smith Center Experiences Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Surprise

by Sandy Lockerman



This leucistic N. Saw-whet Owl (left) was banded at the Ned Smith Center 30 October 2007.

Photo by Andrew McGann

In the eleventh season of their saw-whet owl migration study, the Ned Smith Center owl banding volunteers are having a banner year with many saw-whets being caught and banded (832 as 11/15/07). The first week of November is the peak migration of these small

owls in central Pennsylvania, and this keeps the banding crews busy with the surge in the number of saw-whets caught and banded.

On October 30 banders were taken by surprise by one of the owls caught that night. As the owl was removed from the bag, it was realized that this bird was the Ned Smith Center project's first leucistic (*loo-kiss-tic*) saw-whet owl. Leucism is a condition characterized by reduced pigmentation in animals. The result is that either the entire surface of the animal or patches of the body surface lack a color pigment usually present in that particular species. Birds are commonly reported as having this condition.

In this particular instance, the entire owl was not its usual beautiful dark brown but a pale strawberry blond. Even the talons and beak were pale white. The photo above shows the leucistic owl beside a normally colored saw-whet owl. Although the condition is apparently rare in saw-whets, two other saw-whet owl banding sites, one in Saskatchewan and one in Kentucky, also encountered this condition in 2007.



Seeking Nominations for 2008 Awards

PSO presents the Earl Poole Award annually to a person who has made a significant contribution to ornithology in Pennsylvania. Can you think of a fellow atlaser, a mentor, or someone in PSO or your club or Audubon Chapter who inspires you? To make a nomination, please list the reasons this person is deserving of the award. The winner receives an engraved plaque and a gift certificate.

A second award was initiated in 2005. The Conservation Award (not necessarily given each year), is given to an individual, individuals, or group for projects that have resulted in significant bird conservation in Pennsylvania. To submit a nomination, please explain why your nominee merits the award. The winner will receive a certificate and a monetary award.

The award(s) will be presented at our annual meeting in May, 2008, in Pittsburgh. Please send your nominations by February 9, 2008 via email or mail to: fmcguire1@verizon.net or Flo McGuire, HC 1 Box 6A, Tionesta, PA, 16353. The PSO Awards Committee will give careful consideration to all nominations.

Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. An *Accipiter*, a *Buteo*, and three falcons on our state list have Holarctic distributions – breeding ranges extending around the entire Northern Hemisphere. How many of these species can you name?
2. Which of our “northern finches” has a distantly separated population in the West Indies that was split four years ago as a different species?
3. Of our two cuckoo species, which is more likely to be found at higher elevations?
4. One of our state's Christmas Bird Counts last year set an all-time high North American record for what species? Which CBC had the honor?
5. Which shorebird is a regular fall migrant through Pennsylvania but was not confirmed in the state until 1958?

See Answers on page 6.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



2008 Mid-winter Bald Eagle Survey

The 2008 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey will be held from 2-16 January 2008 with target dates of 11 and 12 January. This announcement serves as a reminder to regular participants and as an invitation for others to participate this year. The surveys involve adopting a stretch of river, a lake, a reservoir, or another body of water to survey for all eagles on a day in that count period. We aim for consistent coverage at our regular spots.

The statewide mid-winter survey yielded very good results in 2007. More than 130 hours of survey effort were contributed to the project. Cooperators recorded 138 eagles, including 84 adults and 54 immature or unknown-aged. The highest tallies were registered in the Lower Susquehanna drainage including Dauphin, Lancaster, and York counties. Larger bodies of still water were particularly attractive to eagles including Pymatuning Lake (Crawford Co.), Raystown Dam (Huntingdon County), Hammond Lake (Tioga Co.), and Kinzua Dam (Warren Co.). Some of these eagles were observed as pairs, apparently already on nesting territories. Other eagle hot-spots included the outflow of Tionesta Creek to the Allegheny River (Forest Co.) and the Lackawaxan River (Wayne and Pike counties). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) biologists were particularly instrumental to the success of the winter survey and were responsible for many of the routes run in central and western counties. Many streams were having high water events during the survey period, and eagles shifted to more protected locations. Temporary food bonanzas like carcasses also drew eagles away from areas where they normally are seen in winter.

We have great coverage along the main stem of the Susquehanna River, most reservoirs in the southeastern part of the state, and the USACE dams and reservoirs. We lack coverage along many smaller rivers including the West Branch Susquehanna and Juniata, for example, and many lakes and reservoirs not owned or managed by the Corps.

These mid-winter surveys also serve as a scouting inventory of nesting pairs in some areas, anticipating next year's nesting survey. It gives us a good excuse to find pairs setting up territories and building nests. Volunteer birders already have found two new Bald Eagle pairs building nests in our state (as of 16 November).

Another side-benefit of the mid-winter Bald Eagle survey is a search for wintering Golden Eagles in the state. Although we target the Bald Eagles, we are glad to collect information on Golden Eagles found in winter. With the National Aviary project on Golden Eagle migration behavior (with cooperation with Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Powermill Reserve biologists and Canadian biologists), it is a great time to find out more about our Golden Eagle population so we better understand its vulnerability to energy development and other threats.

The National mid-winter eagle survey has undergone a transition from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to USACE. The upcoming retirement of Karen Steenhof has prompted this change. Perhaps some of you met Karen when she came to the "Kettling On the Kittatinny" conference for the Hawk Migration Association of North America and Raptor Research Foundation at Fogelsville. This is not the first time that there has been a change. Nationwide counts of eagles were coordinated by the National Wildlife Federation from 1979 until 1992, when the Raptor Research and Technical Assistance Center (now SRFS) assumed responsibility for overseeing the count. We place emphasis on areas where we have consistently tallied more than four eagles each year. It also is important that participants use a consistent transportation method on each route. Consistency in location coverage is important across the project so we can better understand how changes in numbers of eagles can be interpreted. Nationwide, approximately 44% of the surveys are conducted from vehicles; 18% are conducted from fixed wing aircraft; 8% are collected from boats; and 7% are conducted by helicopter. Most of PA surveys are conducted by vehicle with some walking to good viewpoints. Due to weather and staffing limitations, not all standard routes are surveyed every year.

Let me know if you are interested in participating. Forms can be found at the USACE website: <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/bird/initiative.html>.

Pennsylvania eBird Continues Progress

The PA eBird project continues to make progress behind the scenes. PA Game Commission Wildlife Diversity team is partnering with PSO and Audubon PA to make this project a success. We had a joint meeting this month to share progress in the project and talk about the roles of the different organizations. There has been a great deal of

good will and common agreement among all of us on the benefits of the partnership. We are now working on some of the technical details.

I have been working to get the basic “nuts and bolts” of the internet site to Cornell’s team. We anticipate that the state website will be ready this spring before the PSO annual meeting. It will be an “eBird clone” like those of New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and other participating states. I invite you to visit the *eBird* website and a few of the state “clone” websites.

One of the implicit goals of the *PA eBird* project is to strengthen the organizations involved with the project. We want to attract more people to PSO and Audubon PA through *eBird* and increase the participation of birders and conservationists in their bird monitoring projects and conservation programs.

Not only do we want to advance knowledge of birds on public lands, but we also want to advance bird conservation throughout the state, regardless of the land ownership. Indeed, some of our best opportunities are on private land holdings, including yours.

The *PA eBird* will be part of the larger Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) of Cornell’s ornithological data network. In a sense, we are “already there” because the PA Breeding Bird Atlas is a node in the AKN database. The data from these and other projects are available through the AKN website which allows downloads of data to individuals.

One of the goals of *PA eBird* is to give volunteers the tools to collect data at such locations and make these data available to a wide audience. This applies to those at all levels of birding skills and experience. It also allows birders to collect data from their favorite recreational birding spots and share this information with many others and for multiple persons to collect data at the same location. The visual tools supplied by the *eBird* website allow quick and easy looks at the data.

As we consider all of the great birding locations in Pennsylvania, we need to think about what is known about each place. An alarming number of locations are threatened by various development projects, sprawl, land uses, and the increasing energy production. Even public lands are not immune from this pressure! Relatively remote ridgetops and summits are threatened by wind power development, especially where those sites are in large scaled forested landscapes. Watersheds are threatened by a variety of pressures, including erosion caused by development and unwise land usages. Wildlife habitat seems threatened almost everywhere from the urban landscape to the wildest parts of the state.

Owling and Atlasing in Winter

Great Horned Owls are hooting from the nearby hillside as I sit at my desk. A high pitched hoot echoed by a lower pitched hoot with a distant low hoot down the road a bit. The high hoot is the larger female owl; the lower hoot came from the territorial male who was answered down the way by a rival territorial male. So, from my seat here I can determine that there’s a Pair (with a capital “P”) in my Atlas block. So can you when you go out to do your CBC area. The “safe date” for Great Horned Owl is December 15, so any horned owl hoot you hear during the CBC period could count for the Atlas. Better yet, you can upgrade that “X” to a “P” or a “T” by careful listening.

Even if a birder has not participated in the Atlas thus far, any such records could involve that CBC participant. I know that many of the local CBC participants are not active in the Atlas but could be if they keep owl records now. CBC and Regional PBBA coordinators could recruit new Atlas volunteers with early owl observations. The activity can lead to more interest in bird behavior “watching” (actually, listening) and further involvement in the Atlas. This particularly pertains to those many CBC participants who do not feel confident in their bird identification skills to work on an Atlas block. (You know who they are!) There are fewer birds around in winter, so it is easier to be competent with CBC birds than for Atlas summer birds that are harder to see in the foliage.

Barred Owls can also be surveyed this way. The safe dates for this species (15 January) are a bit later than their ear-tufted cousins, the Great Horneds, but much earlier than most other species. The same pattern exists with Barred Owl vocalizations and gender identification – the higher pitched hoots are generally the females. A back and forth hooting session of high and low pitched “who cooks for you” is probably a pair on territory. Some pairs even indulge in caterwauling and raucous hoots, a way of duetting. I have even witnessed this while camping on snowy ground in early March with several pairs within earshot in a hemlock hollow. Winter is a good time to find Barred Owls, and the vocal pairs are easier to locate when they are establishing the pair bond and staking their territory than later in the season.

This is the last year for the great 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas Project, so now is the time to really get those owls at the “hooting hot spots” near you.

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

Douglas A. Gross, Wildlife Biologist, Endangered Bird Specialist, Pennsylvania Game Commission
144 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859
Phone: 570-458-4109 (or 458-4564)
E-mail: dogross@state.pa.us or dougross@sunlink.net

An Update on the PABIRDS Listserv

by Carmen T. Santasania

I have been asked by a number of Pennsylvania birders about the details of the PABIRDS listserv, so I would like to update you on some of the interesting information about this popular listserv that keeps many PA birders and PSO members connected electronically. A listserv functions as an electronic bulletin board, distributing information to others. When you subscribe to the list, your name is added to an electronic distribution list. When you post a message, your message is distributed instantly to the other members of the list. The result is a fast and easy way to inform others of your birding activities.

The type of information that can be posted to the list is quite diverse. Topics have included rare birds, bird finding, bird identification, bird behavior, backyard birding, trip reports, bird counts, and bird club information. Discussions are usually limited to wild birds in Pennsylvania and occasionally in bordering states.

I took over the list from Don Henise, who started the list, but Don had to find a new owner as he was moving out of state to pursue a new career. I was heavily involved with Audubon and had several other lists that resided on their server. I put Don's list on the Audubon server as well when I took over ownership of PABIRDS in September 1998. Initially, membership grew slowly. As more and more people acquired personal computers, the list has grown over the years. As of November 2007, the list now has just over 1000 members. Most list subscribers live in Pennsylvania or neighboring states. In addition, we have subscribers in Switzerland, Poland, Canada, the UK, and the Federated State of Micronesia.

The list archives are stored on the Audubon server in New York City and can be searched with a very powerful search engine should you need to look up any type of birding record. You do need to be a member of the list to search these archives which go back to September 1998. You may be a new PSO member or perhaps reading a friend's newsletter and would like to subscribe to PABIRDS. If so, just follow the directions below:

To join the list, send this command message:
SUBSCRIBE PABIRDS YOURFIRSTNAME YOUR
LASTNAME
to:
LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG (Capitalization
does not matter.)

**Very Important!!! After typing the above, hit the
ENTER key twice to be sure your e-mail software sees
your subscribe command.**

A confirmation will be sent to you; just follow the instructions. Should you have any questions on subscribing to the list, please contact me at ctsantasania@comcast.net.

Once you are subscribed to the list, you can manage your subscription over the web interface or use e-mail to manage it. For example, at very busy times on the list (e.g. spring migration) you may wish to set your subscription to the digest mode. In this mode you will receive all the messages in one large e-mail, once every 24 hours, instead of receiving each individual message as it is posted. Another example would be if you are going on vacation and want to suspend your e-mail. You can set your e-mail on the list to NOMAIL, and your e-mail from the list will be suspended until you return and turn on your mail from the list. These and many other options are available to you once you subscribe to the list.

In addition to receiving PABIRDS through your e-mail, you can also read the posting on line through a web interface. The link is: <http://birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/PENN.html>. This is a convenient way to read the postings without going into your e-mail. Although you can use this link to read the postings, you still need to be a member of the list to post. Finally, I would like to thank the many hundreds of you who have made the list a success over the years. We have been a model and an inspiration to many other states in our pioneering efforts in PA using the Internet to inform each other about birds and birding. Please direct any questions to me at ctsantasania@comcast.net.

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 3)

1. The *Accipiter* is Northern Goshawk, the *Buteo* is Rough-legged Hawk, and the falcons are Merlin, Gyrfalcon, and Peregrine Falcon.
2. White-winged Crossbill. The tiny Caribbean population was split in 2003 as Hispaniolan Crossbill.
3. Black-billed Cuckoo
4. Central Bucks County's 344 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were the all-time North American record – and as Nick Bolgiano also reported in *Pennsylvania Birds*, Southern Bucks had last year's most Great Black-backed Gulls with 5,684, and Upper Bucks had last year's most Eastern Screech-Owls with 161.
5. Purple Sandpiper

Christmas Bird Counts Held in Pennsylvania

	Name of Count	County	Compiler	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Date
1	Audubon	Montgomery Delaware Chester	Edie Parnum	610-964-8331	eparnum@comcast.net	12/22/07
2	Bald Eagle	Centre	Bob Snyder	814-863-6168	rhs2@psu.edu	12/30/07
3	Beaver	Beaver	Rick Mason	724-847-0909	rdmason@ccia.com	12/15/07
4	Bedford	Bedford	Janet Shaffer	814-356-3553	jgshaffer@yellowbananas.com	12/15/07
5	Bernville	Berks	Ed Barrell	610-926-2962	hawkman501@yahoo.com	12/29/07
6	Bethlehem-Easton	Northampton	Elaine & Donald Mease	610-346-7754	measede@enter.net	12/29/07
7	Bloomsburg	Columbia	Cathy Haffner	570-271-1244	cdhaffner@yahoo.com	12/16/07
8	Buffalo Creek	Washington	Larry Helgerman		bobolink1@earthlink.net	12/16/07
9	Buffalo Creek Valley	Butler Armstrong	George Reese	724-353-9649	g_reese@gaiconsultants.com	12/15/07
10	Bushy Run S.P.	Westmoreland	Dick Byers	724-593-3543	otusasio@lhtot.com	12/15/07
11	Butler	Butler Lawrence Mercer	Suzanne Butcher	330-759-1945 724-794-3534	sarbird@hotmail.com	12/15/07
12	Central Bucks	Bucks	Diane Allison	610-847-2085	dalliso@mail.ptd.net	12/30/07
13	Chambersburg	Franklin	Joan Bowen	717-264-9493	pischaff@innernet.net	12/15/07
14	Clarion	Clarion	Ruth Schurr		karu@penn.com	12/15/07
15	Clarksville	Greene	Terry Dayton	724-627-9665	tdayton@alltel.net	12/29/07
16	Culp	Blair	Heidi Boyle	814-381-8117	hboyle@state.pa.us	12/15/07
17	Curtin	Dauphin	Scott Bills		sbills@state.pa.us	12/27/07
18	Dallas Area	Luzerne	Jim Hoyson	570-696-4925 570-371-6581 (w)	birdder@aol.com	12/15/07
19	Dingman's Ferry	Pike	Chris Turn	570-588-6850	birder3@verizon.net	12/30/07
20	DuBois	Clearfield	Jocelyn Smrekar		smrekar@pennswoods.net	12/29/07
21	Elverson	Chester	Robert Cook	610-286-9919	dunlin@dejazzd.com	12/23/07
22	Emporium	Cameron	Bob Martin	814-486-1990	bmartin@adelphia.net	
23	Erie	Erie	Chuck Gehringer	814-490-4748	chuckg58@hotmail.com	12/15/07
24	Gettysburg	Adams	Art Kennell Russell Ryan	717 642-6995 717-334-5171		12/15/07
25	Glenolden	Delaware	Nick Pulcinella	610-583-3201	nickpulcinella@comcast.net	12/15/07
26	Hamburg	Berks Schuylkill	Laurie Goodrich	610-756-6961 570-943-3411 x106	goodrich@hawkmtn.org	12/30/07
27	Harrisburg	Dauphin	Deuane Hoffman	717-564-7475	corvuscorax@comcast.net	12/15/07
28	Huntingdon	Huntingdon	Dave Kyler	814-643-6030	davidkyler@verizon.net	12/16/07

29	Indiana	Indiana	Roger & Margaret Higbee	724-354-3493	bcoriole@alltel.net	12/26/07
30	Johnstown	Cambria	Sally and Tom Dick	814-266-7912	thomasd@aol.com	12/16/07
31	Lake Raystown	Huntingdon Blair	Greg Grove	814-667-2305	gw2@psu.edu	12/22/07
32	Lancaster	Lancaster	Chris Pederson	717-295-2607	pederson@epix.net	12/23/07
33	Lebanon	Lebanon	Fritz Heilman	717-273-0487	volks5@verizon.net	12/15/07
34	Lehigh Valley	Lehigh/Berks	Mark Boyd	610-432-0170	mrboyd@rcn.com	12/15/07
35	Lewisburg	Union, Snyder, Northumberland	Allen Schweinsberg	570-524-0432	aschwein@bucknell.edu	12/15/07
36	Lewistown	Juniata	Elmer Petersheim Chad Kauffman	717-463-3625 717-436-8257	chadkauffman@earthlink.net	12/15/07
37	Linesville	Crawford	Clare Nicolls	814-587-6395	tcnicolls@alltel.net	12/16/07
38	Lititz	Lancaster	Bruce Carl	717-859-4179	carls@dejazzd.com	12/30/07
39	Lock Haven-Jersey Shore	Clinton Lycoming	Wayne Laubscher	570-748-7511	wlaubsch@kcnet.org	12/16/07
40	Mansfield	Tioga	Gary Tyson	570-724-5789	gnats3@ptd.net	12/15/07
41	New Bloomfield	Perry	Ramsay Koury	717-761-1871	rkoury123@aol.com	12/22/07
42	Newville	Cumberland	Bill and Linda Franz	717-776-4463	wlf Franz1@yahoo.com	12/29/07
43	Northern Lycomong	Lycoming	Dave Ferry	570-323-1590	dferry@wasd.org	12/16/07
44	Pennypack Valley	Philadelphia	Peter Kurtz	215-342-3638 215-685-0470	peter.kurtz@phila.gov	12/15/07
45	Philipsburg	Centre Clearfield	Greg Kojadinovich	814-237-5964	ninthstreet1@yahoo.com	12/29/07
46	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	Jim Valimont	412-828-5338	valimont@verizon.net	12/29/07
47	Pittsburgh South Hills	Allegheny Washington	Nancy Page	412-221-4795		12/15/07
48	Pleasantville	Venango	Russ States	814-676-6320	pabirder@verizon.net	12/30/07
49	Pocono Mt.	Monroe	Brian Hardiman		bhmccd@ptd.net	12/16/07
50	Potter County	Potter	Dave Hauber	814-274-8946	haubers3@penn.com	12/30/07
51	Reading	Berks	Ken Lebo	610-856-1413	klebo@dejazzd.com	12/16/07
52	Rector	Westmoreland	Len and Linda Hess	724-771-5133	lnlhess@lhtot.com	12/22/07
53	Ryerson	Greene	Marjorie Howard	724-852-3155	birdwatcher@alltel.net	12/15/07
54	Scranton	Lackawanna	Paul Mundy		Pmraptors@aol.com	12/15/07
55	Southeastern Bradford	Bradford	Trudy Gerlach	570-746-9270	tgswoods@epix.net	12/29/07
56	Southern Bucks	Bucks	Robert Mercer	215-785-1177	ramercer@co.bucks.pa.us	12/15/07
57	Southern Lancaster County	Lancaster	Bob Schutsky	717-548-3303 (10 a.m. to 9 p.m.)	info@birdtreks.com	12/16/07
58	State College	Centre	Jim Dunn Bob Fowles	814-863-8625 814-238-1990	jwd6@psu.edu rbf@psu.edu	12/16/07

59	Thompson	Susquehanna	Stuart Slocum			
60	Tunkhannock	Wyoming	Rick Koval	570-829-4381 570-696-1691 (w)	koval@nblt.org	12/22/07
61	Upper Bucks	Bucks Montgomery Lehigh	Bill Etter	215-964-3613	esbittern@verizon.net	12/16/07
62	Warren	Warren	Michael Toole	814-723-4714		12/15/07
63	Washington	Washington	Tom Contreras		tcontreras@washjeff.edu	12/15/07
64	West Chester	Chester	Barry Blust	610-458-5616	BarryBlust@comcast.net	12/15/07
65	Western Chester	Chester	Rick Robinson		birder97@comcast.net	12/16/07
66	Western Schuylkill	Schuylkill	Dave Kruel	570-622-3704	accip@infionline.net	12/15/07
67	White Mills	Wayne	Voni Strasser	570-226-1460		
68	Wild Creek- Little Gap	Carbon Monroe	Joshua Nemeth Dustin Welch	610-753-8577	allroy1313@rcn.com	12/16/07
69	Williamsport	Lycoming	Dave Ferry	570-323-1590	dferry@wasd.org	12/23/07
70	Wyncote	Montgomery	Andy Fayer		AndyFayer@aol.com	12/15/07
71	York	York	Bruce Fortman	717-235-5982	fortas46@aol.com	12/15/07

2008 Winter Raptor Survey

by Greg Grove

The 2008 Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey (“WRS”) will be conducted from January 19 through February 10. This will be the 8th year for the survey. Last winter, volunteers recorded nearly 3000 raptors and almost 2000 vultures during more than 500 hours of survey time.

Interested birders are invited to participate in 2008. In December I will contact past participants by e-mail. If you have a new e-mail address since last winter, please contact me. If you wish to participate for the first time or at least get more information, contact me via e-mail (gw2@psu.edu).

The 2007 WRS results were published in *Pennsylvania Birds* (Volume 21, No.1). Red-tailed Hawks were found in good numbers as usual last winter, and American Kestrels set a record high, an encouraging sign. However, in the southeastern part of the state, kestrels are not doing well. I’ll be anxious to see what the numbers show this year. Rough-legged Hawks were down, perhaps because of the mild conditions last winter, but Northern Harriers, like kestrels, also set a record high.

Potential new participants please read carefully to learn

what the survey entails. The surveys are done from a vehicle along a route designed by the participants. In counties with previously established routes, I ask that new participants either join an established route or coordinate to ensure that new routes do not overlap established routes. I do encourage development of new but *non-overlapping* routes. For new folks I will provide e-mail addresses of previous participants in your county so that all parties can coordinate.



American Kestrels set a record high last year.

Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath

Routes should be largely in open country (not easy in some counties!) and should be designed with safety as the top priority. In other words, routes should not be on busy roads, or minimally so.

Detailed, but rather simple, guidelines for the WRS will be provided well before January 19. All raptors and vultures as well as owls and shrikes should be recorded.

Besides counting raptors, participants are asked also to record whenever possible age/sex/color-morph data as appropriate for raptor species (see forthcoming guidelines for details).

I close by expressing my appreciation to past participants and hope that you can all get out there again this winter.

Sparrows—Not LBJs!

by Arlene Koch

Even though it was the middle of November and the bulk of the migrating sparrows in my 25 acres of fields were gone, I took a walk anyway. The sky this day was overcast and misty, but there was no wind to keep the birds down. My biggest problem would be to try to find something other than robins. They were everywhere. Every plant, shrub, or tree with berries or crabapples on it was covered with robins. So was every tangle of wild grapes in the fence rows.

I knew I wouldn't have any trouble seeing or hearing Song Sparrows. It wouldn't matter if it was a sorghum, sunflower, millet, goldenrod, pigeon mix, switchgrass, or rye patch. There would be Song Sparrows in all of them. Even after all these years of looking at sparrows, I remain amazed at the color variability of Song Sparrows. Their base color below their stripes varies from a pale gray to dark and rusty. And a small percentage of them don't show the diagnostic central breast spot.

By now White-throated Sparrows were also easily seen or called up, as were White-crowns. It's been an exceptionally good fall for them at my place. Theirs are the first buzzy songs I'd been hearing in recent mornings. I think of White-crowned Sparrows as having a stately posture. I doubt it says that in most bird guides, but to me they seem to sit up just a little straighter and taller than other sparrows.

All the Lincoln's Sparrows should have already left, but once in a while a few linger longer than normal. Lincoln's are one of the most common species here from late September through mid-October. After that they're hard to find. Birders new to identifying sparrows often find it hard to tell a Lincoln's from a Song Sparrow. I tell them to think of a Song Sparrow as wearing a dress suit but think of a Lincoln's as wearing a tuxedo. Everything about the Lincoln's is finer, more refined and elegant. Its buffy streaked breast is of course diagnostic, but to the untrained eye its buffy malar stripes can be easily confused with the buffy face of a young Song Sparrow.

Although I usually start seeing Fox Sparrows from late October on, their numbers always increase when the first American Tree Sparrows show up. To me Fox Sparrows are easy to identify. They're big, heavily striped, and seem darker than most others even though I'm not sure they really are. The red caps of the Tree Sparrows replace those of almost all the adult Chipping Sparrows and the lighter red ones of the Field Sparrows.

Once in a while a Clay-colored Sparrow shows up, but I admit that I still check everything about it, especially its rump, to be sure it's not a juvenile chipper. The same goes for the occasional Vesper Sparrows I see. I have to see their white eye rings to be sure that's what they really are. By mid-November most Savannah and Swamp Sparrows are gone, but a few reliably spend the winter here. Both of them react well to pishing and often stay up and in plain sight for a long time. I'm not good on identifying chips, but to me the Swamp's chip is easy. It sounds like it's spitting while chipping.

I learned sparrows because they're here. They're hard to see and often stay hidden even when you know there are lots of them around. But I've been rewarded, having seen Grasshopper, LeConte's, Henslow's, Sharp-tailed, Lark, and even one Seaside Sparrow here. But I'm still waiting for a Harris's and the "big" one, a Golden-crowned Sparrow.

Christmas Gift Ideas for the Birder in Your Life

Field Checklists

This tri-folded Field Checklist is printed on card stock and is 3.85" W x 6.25" H when folded. It lists all of the species recorded in Pennsylvania (most current printing March 2005) and highlights those species requiring documentation. It has six columns per species (for 6 trips, 6 months, 6 years., etc.). It also has spaces for recording locations, weather, totals, and notes. They are available in packs of 10, 50, and 100. Binders are also available.

- * Pack of 10 Checklists \$3.25
- * Pack of 50 Checklists \$12.50
- * Pack of 100 Checklists \$22.00
- * Binder \$7.00
- * Binder/30 Checklist Combo \$12.00

Our official patch, featuring our emblem – the state with the Pileated Woodpecker imposed on it – is \$3, including postage.

Send your order with a check made out for the appropriate amount to "Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology" and mail to:

PSO
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555-9730.

Bartramian Audubon Sponsors Wildlife Sanctuary Programs

The Bartramian Audubon Society believes that ecology should begin at home so they have designed two programs to support their belief.

Through its Wildlife Sanctuary Program with private and public landowners, the BAS is seeking to preserve natural habitats, ecosystems, and a diversity of life in our eco-region for generations to come. Why are these programs important? Because they encourage, promote and inform others about your involvement in caring for our natural heritage. To apply for a Wildlife Sanctuary you must have at least 20 acres or a very unique, rare, or special natural area that you own and are willing to leave natural for wildlife. The area must provide food and water, shelter, habitat, and nesting sites for birds and other wild creatures. Your property will be assessed by BAS for a flat fee and if the criteria are met, the BAS board will review the assessment and application and vote to grant a "Certified BAS Wildlife Sanctuary" to your property. There are no tax breaks nor financial rewards connected with the program, but following the "Wise Use Movement" it offers another option and model for landowners who wish to retain their property in an undisturbed natural state.

With its Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary program, the group's goal is to develop a system of mini-sanctuaries to promote a better understanding of wildlife in general, and to introduce a natural way to invite birds and butterflies to the home, schoolyard, business, or municipality. The Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary program evolved for people who have small areas that they wish to plant and maintain to attract Birds and Butterflies. These highly mobile creatures react quickly to environmental changes and are especially suited for small yards, porches, or even balconies! The program requests that you plant shrubs, flowers, trees etc. (native vegetation) that supply the various needs of Birds and Butterflies. A fee is assessed for membership. Contact Gene Wilhelm at 724-794-2434 or GeneWilhelm@aol.com for details about either of these interesting programs.

Banding Resumes at Presque Isle

After a two-year lull, Audubon PA has taken over the banding of birds on Presque Isle. Between 1960 and 2005 an amazing 62,992 birds were banded at the state park thanks to Jean Stull and Ron Leberman and numerous volunteers. This fall banding has resumed at one of the best migrant traps in the state.

Will 2007-2008 Be a Good Winter Finch Year?

The Ontario Field Ornithologists' website (www.ofo.ca) produces a Winter Finch Forecast every year. Besides detailing predictions for the various finches, ornithologist Ron Pittaway also predicts movements of other irruptive passerines. So far he has been right about Red-breasted Nuthatches which have been reported widely across Pennsylvania. This irruption he attributes to poor cone crop across central Canada.

Evening Grosbeaks also have shown up in the Keystone State. Poor tree seed crops in northeastern Ontario and western Quebec have forced the grosbeaks to head south. Pittaway states, "Beginning in the early 1980s the Evening Grosbeak declined significantly as large outbreaks of spruce budworm subsided. The larvae and pupae are eaten by adults and fed to nestlings. Expect Evening Grosbeaks at bird feeders in southern Ontario and northern United States, but not in the large numbers seen during the 1970s." So far the ones reported in the state have been nomadic; they come, they eat, they leave.

Concerning redpolls, Pittaway predicts, "There will be a big flight of redpolls into southern Ontario and bordering United States. Seed crops on white birch, yellow birch and alder are very poor in most of Ontario. Expect redpolls at bird feeders this winter." Jerry McWilliams reported from Presque Isle on November 20, "A flock of about 100 Common Redpolls was feeding in the birches at beach 11 parking lot around 9:30 AM." This could be the beginning of a major irruption.

Check out the OFO website for the complete forecast. It looks like it could be an interesting winter!



Red-breasted Nuthatches are being reported across the state this year.

Photo by Chris Bohinski

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:

	Membership Categories:	
PSO	Individual	\$ 28.50
2469 Hammertown Road	Family	\$ 32.50
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PSO T-Shirts for Sale

PSO T-shirts are available for sale in pale green and light blue. Just a few off-white are left. Sizes range from small to XXL, but check with Linda Wagner for size availability (lwagner342@msn.com).

The fabric is a blend of 50% cotton, 50% polyester. These shirts feature the PSO Pileated logo in a three-inch diameter circle on the left front. On the back is an outline of the state with the counties outlined as well. Superimposed on the state is the flying Pileated Woodpecker, complete with red crest. Bold letters above the state declare "Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology."

These great shirts cost \$19.50 which includes postage and handling. See ordering instructions in the checklist article on page 10 of this newsletter.

Did You Know?

Thirteenth century German emperor Frederick II is sometimes credited as being the father of modern ornithology for his treatise on the art of hunting with birds, written around 1240. The work contains detailed illustrations of hawking scenes and birdlife, the first known serious bird paintings. It was in manuscript form only until 1596 when it was eventually published.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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