

# PSO Pileated



March 2013

*The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*

Volume 24, Number 1

## From the President's Desk....

As I look back to the first "From the President's Desk" that I had the privilege to write last May, I wrote "What a meeting!" I am going to write the same thing again right now – What a meeting! The 2013 PSO Annual Meeting will be held in Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County this year. I am sure all past PSO presidents and board members know this, but what a hectic time of year this is. At the same time, what a promising time of year this is.

PSO has been working hard for you. In this newsletter, on the website, and on our Facebook page, you will find information on the upcoming meeting. We are meeting at a slightly

different time of the season – the end of migration and the beginning of breeding will be coinciding. The main push of migration will be over, freeing up birders to attend the annual meeting. The meeting itself will be exciting and invigorating. It is being held in the eastern part of the state and is easily accessible. Field trips to various areas in Luzerne County have been planned; target birds have been identified; presenters and speakers have been arranged; awards are being given; and all of the things associated with the annual meeting are falling into place. Personally, I am still a little nervous about standing in front of so many adults, but I know you will help me get over it!

Camaraderie and friendship are the main reasons I like to attend the meetings in the first place. We have been busy making this meeting one to remember.

But that is not all that is going on. The PSO committees are working, some at a faster pace than others, but I am sure that most of you at least know about the PSO field trips that have been and are being held. The trips have been a great success, and we now have more trip leaders and places to bird, both in and out of state. (I just wish

that I had the time to participate in more of the trips!) The Publicity Committee has been working and has developed a new PSO brochure/pamphlet. If you would like to order copies, please contact a member of the board.



The meeting's pin bird will be the Golden-winged Warbler. Mike Lanzone photographed this beauty.

The Awards Committee has selected the recipients of the awards that will be presented at the 2013 annual meeting. We have also devised a new prestigious award! Please nominate worthy people and organizations to be recognized for outstanding contributions to PA ornithology.

Our journal has also changed its format slightly. Compilers

will no longer submit data tables for their counties, and we will utilize eBird information more readily.

This is just a sampling of the work being done for and by members of PSO. Of great importance to our group are young birders. One of the presentations at the annual meeting this year will target youth involvement. As a not-so-young youth, I think it is important to get more youth involved in birding at younger ages. Look at the contributions some of the younger birders in the state have made to ornithology since the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Breeding Bird Atlas. They are phenomenal in what they know and can do. They are the future of birding in the state.

Finally, I want to mention the Pennsylvania Migration Count that is coming up. Mark the date on your calendars – May 11, 2013 – the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual PAMC. We have compilers listed on the website for every county except the following four – Colombia, Lawrence, Union, and Pike. Please consider compiling the PAMC for one of these counties. Last year, we had great coverage for the

*(continued on page 5)*

## 2013 Golden Pileated Award

At PSO's last board of directors meeting in Boalsburg, PA, the directors recognized the need to create a new award for those who complete large-scale projects showing outstanding ornithological achievements. The Earl Poole Award remains the PSO's highest recognition for individual accomplishment and is awarded yearly. The directors voted unanimously to create the new award, The Golden Pileated Award. This award will be given for major projects in Pennsylvania that significantly advance the state of ornithological knowledge. Projects and research considered for this award must have high regional ornithological, conservation, and research value. Candidate projects may be conducted over multiple years, state-wide, utilizing many researchers and/or volunteers. The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology gives this award infrequently, only to outstanding projects which merit its highest award.

This year we are presenting the Golden Pileated Award to the three editors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird*

*Atlas*, Dan Brauning, Bob Mulvihill, and Andy Wilson, for their phenomenal work.

Planning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> breeding bird atlas started in 2002, and the statewide effort began in 2004 and ended in 2008. This effort could not have been successful without the huge number of volunteers, with 1800 people contributing data and 83 individuals serving as regional coordinators. In addition, seasonal staff conducted a rigorous point count sampling protocol in nearly every block in the state (4,694) for estimating detection probabilities, breeding bird densities, and overall population estimates. The results of the five-year effort were published in 2012 and set a new bar for all future atlases, world-wide. Currently, the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas* is likely the best example of a breeding bird atlas anywhere in the world. The research and conservation value of this project is unparalleled. This award recognizes this major accomplishment with PSO's highest award.

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## Dr. Terry Master to Receive Earl Poole Award

This year's Earl Poole Award recipient is Dr. Terry Master, a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at East Stroudsburg University, where he began teaching in 1989. His ornithological contributions to Pennsylvania are impressive. During his time at ESU he has taught many organismal-level biology courses, including Behavioral Ecology, Predator-Prey Relationships, and of course Ornithology. His active research program, which includes mentoring many excellent graduate and undergraduate students in the Avian Ecology and Behavior Lab, has focused on the foraging behavior of wading birds (Snowy and Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Forster's Tern), the ecology of mixed-species flocks, neotropical migrant ecology (Louisiana Waterthrush, Acadian Flycatcher,

Blue-headed Vireo, and Cerulean Warbler) and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid relationships.

Additionally, he co-edited a book on the contributions of Pennsylvania ornithology, "Avian Ecology and Conservation: A Pennsylvania Focus with National Implications," published in 2010 by the Pennsylvania Academy of Science. Dr. Master's long-term record of important ornithological research, education, and mentoring make him an important role model. His love of the ornithological world, signified especially through fostering our future leaders in the biological sciences, makes him the perfect candidate for this year's Earl Poole Award. Visit Dr. Master's website to learn more about his work, <http://www.esu.edu/~tmaster/>.

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## Conservation Award

This year's Conservation Award will be presented to the North Branch Land Trust in Trucksville, PA. North Branch Land Trust works with landowners and the community to conserve key natural land assets in northeastern PA. Over the last 20 years the trust has preserved or acquired more than 10,800 acres, including

some of the most biologically diverse and critically important natural lands in the region. They also conduct community outreach in an effort to educate citizens on the importance of natural areas, open space, and smart development practices. You can learn more about what they do at their website, <http://www.nblt.org/>

# Banding Owls on the Allegheny Plateau in the Allegheny National Forest

by John Fedak

Sitting at an elevation of just under 2100 feet near the village of Klondike, the Allegheny Highlands Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Station officially opened its nets on September 28, 2012. Vegetation consists of mixed forest – oak, maple, white pine, and hemlock – with a thick understory of Mountain Laurel. Six nets are arranged with 4 nets approximately north/south in orientation and 2 nets set up in approximately east/west orientation. Unlike some other owl banding sites, there is no building in which to band, so banding takes place in the open on a folding table.

Nets opened at dusk and the playback call operated until the nets closed at 11:00 p.m. Banding occurred every night that weather permitted from September 23 to November 15. A total of 27 days of banding totaling 133.5 hours were spent at the site. Sixty-one birds were caught with 58 banded. There were 3 recaptures, including 1 bird caught twice at the site.

In 2011, the site was opened for 3 weeks at a location in the area in November. The site had to be moved due to theft of net poles and rebar. During that time period, 7 birds were caught (6 new and 1 recapture). One of the recaptures in the 2012 season was the third bird banded in 2011. The other was a bird that was banded at Long Point bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada.

The birds that were captured were 70% HY; 10% AHY; 7% SY; and 13% ASY. Eighty percent of the birds caught

were female with 59% of the HY birds being female. Five percent of the birds caught were male and 15% of the birds captured were of unknown sex. Interestingly, expectations were that as the season progressed, captures would increase into the middle of October and then again at the end of October. That did not occur. Captures were relatively steady each night with the high capture night of November 7 with 8 birds.

Other avian species encountered at the banding site included Barred Owl, American Robin, Veery, and a night-flying Common Raven croaking as it went over. Mammals at the site included an abundance of deer mice, white-tailed deer, coyote, black bear, porcupine, and flying squirrel (probably southern).

Many visitors also visited the site including a group of students from Houghton College. Visitors were welcome, even encouraged to participate at the site by helping to release owls. It is felt that this will inspire young people (and older people) to participate more in natural activities such as bird watching. Thanks go to the Allegheny Highlands Bird Club, The Forest Service, Scott Stoleson, Jared Feura, Mike McElhenny, and Carson Adams for the help that they provided when needed. Thanks also to the visitors and anyone who has been inadvertently omitted. AHNSWOBS has plans on being open from the end of September 2013 until the middle of November 2013. See you there!

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## Pittsburgh Area Bald Eagles

by Mike Fialkovich

The Pittsburgh area in Allegheny County now has three Bald Eagle nests, one along each of the three rivers.

A pair built a nest several years ago in Crescent Township, near the Ohio River where the pair is often seen perched or catching fish.

A second nest was recently discovered along the Monongahela River within the city limits of Pittsburgh. This nest made the local news with a reporter interviewing Game Commission personnel. Fortunately, the news story stressed the importance of minimizing nest disturbance.

The nest is visible from a popular bike trail, but located on a hillside that is not easily accessible.

A third nest under construction was recently reported by a caller to a local nature radio talk show. That nest is along the Allegheny River in the town of Oakmont.

Bald Eagles have been regular winter visitors to the rivers in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area and now they have become residents. For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/HarmarEagles>.

# Ontario Field Trip Revisited

by Wayne N. Laubscher

In the early morning hours of February 15, twenty-one hardy birders left Pennsylvania for the Great White North of Ontario. This was the first-ever PSO sponsored multi-day field trip, and eager participants were seeking northern winter specialty birds. I was the designated leader. Our group included birders from western, central, southcentral, and southeastern PA – Tom and Janet Kuehl, Mike Fialkovich, Chad Kauffman, Nate Fronk, Alex Lamoreaux, Ian Gardner, Susan Braun, Debra Grim, Sarah MacLellan, Deborah Escalet, Lauri Shaffer, Bonnie and Galen Ingram, Joan Renninger, Annette Mathes, Jarrod Derr, Mike Leahy, and Andrew and Aiden Place.



We headed north on I-81, and our first stop was the harbor at Oswego, NY, for a Tufted Duck, a Eurasian vagrant. We located the Tufted duck with a variety of other ducks which numbered in the thousands. Here we also spotted Iceland and Glaucous Gulls and a Peregrine Falcon. We picked up a small flock of Pine Grosbeaks just before the border crossing.

After crossing the border into Canada, we headed to the Kingston area to take the ferry to Amherst Island with the hope of finding some unusual raptors. Taking an icebreaker-like ride on the ferry, we drove around the island and eventually made our way into the famous Owl Woods. However, we found no owls there that day. We did find several friendly Black-capped Chickadees, redpolls, waxwings, and a few White-winged Crossbills. Several large rafts of ducks, a Northern Shrike, a couple of Rough-legged Hawks, Snow Buntings, and two very distant Snowy Owls were the highlights. However, it was not the usual productive visit to the island. Late in the day we left Amherst Island and headed northeast to Ottawa, the capital of Canada.

The next day in Ottawa we picked up the three most wanted northern owls – Great Gray, Boreal, and Northern Hawk Owl. On two occasions we almost did not find the

Great Gray and the Boreal Owls. However, persistent searching by members of the group located these birds literally at the last minute. We also found a male Barrow's Goldeneye on the Rideau River, where it is annual. It was

frustrating when we were unable to find a supposedly reliable flock of Gray Partridges in outlying farmland, likely due to the presence of a Peregrine Falcon in the same area. Finishing up the day, we located some Pine Grosbeaks and a good sized flock of

Bohemian Waxwings, which was yet another eleventh hour hat trick.

Departing Ottawa, we drove to the Algonquin Park area for another full day. After braving the following morning's low temperature of about -20 F, the specialty birds we found at Algonquin included Pine Grosbeaks, White-winged Crossbills, Common and Hoary Redpolls, Snow Buntings, two Boreal Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Common Ravens, and birder friendly Gray Jays. Black-capped Chickadees, eager for handouts, were everywhere. Spotting a moose and a pine marten were nice bonuses. Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpecker were big misses. We also somehow missed all three Great Gray Owls that were being seen along the highway through the park.

Our final day's route going home took us through Toronto and the Niagara Falls area. Highlights were noted at St. Catharines, where our troupe enjoyed an adult, nearly pure white Snowy Owl at close range and at Port Weller, a male King Eider, a life bird for many. Iceland Gulls were seen on the Niagara River and Glaucous Gulls at Buffalo Harbor.

It was an excellent trip, and everyone enjoyed themselves. We had very good weather and saw many great birds. The total number of species seen was 79. We had a few misses

which is to be expected. Our success at finding good birds was due to a group effort and by very observant participants. Also, researching current eBird and listserv reports before and during the trip proved invaluable. Some private information not available to the public was

obtained as well. A more detailed and comprehensive trip report by Alex Lamoreaux can be found at: <http://www.nemesisbird.com/2013/02/owling-in-ottawa-part-1/>.

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### From the President's Desk *(continued from page 1)*

PAMC with reports from 63 of our 67 counties! Let's beat that this year. If you are a PAMC compiler, please double check your information on the website. Make sure it is correct, so that participants can contact you. Involve a young birder, a new birder, or any other type of birder.

(Continued on page 10) Data we have collected in 21 years of the count are beginning to show some interesting and occasionally disturbing trends. Participants in the southeast or south in general have noticed dramatically that migration itself is seemingly over by the second week in May whereas it was not 21 years ago. Is this a sign of climate change? Population declines? Habitat destruction? If we don't have the data, we will not be able to tell. Help us collect the information via citizen science.

Be a part of discovering something that may be worthwhile.

As always, I welcome member input. If there is something that you feel needs to be done, or if you have a suggestion for doing something differently, my email box is always open. Let me know about it so I can convey it to the board. We are here, elected by you, to work for you. Let us know how we are doing. Better yet, volunteer to help us out.

And, keep looking up. Good birding!

John Fedak, President

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## 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting

by John Fedak

The 2013 PSO meeting will be held at the Quality Inn and Suites in Wilkes-Barre. This site is easily accessible from Interstate 81. All meetings, presentations, and the Saturday night banquet will be held at the same location. See the enclosed Registration Form for more details and other accommodation choices.

Many thanks to Ramsay Koury who has organized the meeting field trips and to Bob Wasilewski who compiled the trip descriptions. Details of the wide variety of birds and habitats available to participants are included in this newsletter. Bring proper attire. As usual, there are too many choices of many great places to bird, so consider slipping into the area on Friday to visit one or more of these prime birding locations.

A late Friday evening field trip, possibly led by Doug Gross and Jim Hoyson, may produce Great Horned, Eastern Screech, and Northern Saw-whet Owls.

"Night owls" are invited to find these species and any other night birds that they come across.

Vendors will be present, so bring your checkbook. It is nice going home with a new pair of binoculars or another useful item. We will also have our silent auction to benefit the Youth Scholarship Fund. If you have a nice item you would like to donate, bring that along as well!

In addition, Saturday afternoon will feature five talks.

Have you wondered about the status of the eastern hemlock and the invasion of hemlock woolly adelgid? We'll have all the answers to that question as Dr. Terry Master, East Stroudsburg University, will be our Saturday evening banquet speaker.

Don't miss this exciting meeting!

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> PA Bird Atlas

If you haven't yet ordered your Atlas, copies are still available from the Penn State University Press at [www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-05630-2.html](http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-05630-2.html). PSO members may use the 20% discount code, SOC-12, during check-out at PSUP while that is still available.

# An Update Report on the PABIRDS LIST SERV

by Carmen T. Santasania

Many PSO members are aware of and are members of the PABIRDS LIST SERV. This article will update readers on the behind the scenes details of the history, operation, and membership composition of the list. Additionally, the list rules are posted on the PSO website in order for list members to review and to inform members who are not on the list how they can join.

To begin, a list serv functions as a large e-mail distribution list. People join the list to receive the postings that people send, and these emails are automatically sent to the members of the list who receive them in their email in-boxes. The software that does these operations is owned by the National Audubon Society (NAS) and the server for this software is located in New Jersey. The NAS is the owner of the list and I have been serving as the volunteer list owner (doing the day-to-day operations) since September 1998.

The PABIRDS list was started by Don Henise in 1997 who worked at Shippensburg University in their computer science department. This was the era of folks just starting to use personal computers, so the list started out fairly small. In 1998, Don decided to make a career change and left his university position. He asked me if I would be interested in taking over the list at that time. Since I was active on the PA Audubon board and the NAS was just starting to use list servs, I agreed. The list has survived continuously since that time.

As of December 31, 2012, the list had a total of 1,617 members with most members coming from the USA, but we also have members from Canada, the UK, and the Federated States of Micronesia. In the past we have had members from Switzerland, Italy, and Ireland. Many times birders traveling to PA will join the list for a few weeks before their trip to see which species people are reporting. After visiting PA, then unsubscribe from the list when they arrive home in their own countries. Membership of the list seems stable. On average, 3-6 people per week ask to be added to the list. I have noticed over the years that once most people subscribe to the list, they stay on the list, with few getting permanently off the list. Membership to the list is a simple process, but the list owner must approve all memberships. The reason for this is security of the list. In the early years, spammers tried to infiltrate the list to get names and email addresses. Although not successful, it seems that approval has halted any such attempted infiltration.

As the internet has evolved, there are now a number of alternative ways to receive PABIRDS. Certainly single

emails remain the most popular. In this mode, each subscriber receives the email as it is posted. Digest mode is also very popular for those who receive many emails per day. In digest mode, the subscriber receives one large email digest every 24 hours containing all the messages from the previous day. Since many people prefer web interfaces for reading their mail, there are several choices as well. Web archives can be read at the NAS website at: <http://list.audubon.org/archives/pabirds.html>. In addition, archives may be read at the American Birding Association website at: <http://birding.aba.org/maillistdigest/PA01>.

In addition to reading the posts daily, it is important to remember that the PABIRDS archives are available to search at: <http://list.audubon.org/archives/pabirds.html>. The list serv software provides a very powerful search engine to do searches all the way back to 1998. The archives can be edited by the list owner, so if you post something that is in error, please contact the list owner so it can be removed from the archive.

To join the list, send this command message:

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SUBSCRIBE PABIRDS YOURFIRSTNAME  
YOURLASTNAME  
TO: LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG
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A confirmation will be sent to you; just follow the instructions.

The PABIRDS list provides only one of the many ways you can connect electronically with other birders in PA. Facebook, Twitter, and local bird club list servs also provide additional ways to stay informed on the happenings of the birds in PA.

You will receive the posting rules for the PABIRDS list serv after you subscribe. If you already subscribe, you can review the rules if you have not read them in some time at [http://www.pabirds.org/PA\\_BIRDS\\_Listserve.htm](http://www.pabirds.org/PA_BIRDS_Listserve.htm).

Through sharing information, we can all learn more about birds and birding. We hope that you will find membership and the discussions in PABIRDS to be satisfying, interesting, and productive!

Audubon Pennsylvania – [pa.audubon.org](http://pa.audubon.org)  
100 Wildwood Way  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Phone: 717-213-6880  
FAX: 717-213-6883

# New “Birds of Pennsylvania” on Website

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is proud to announce the debut of the **Birds of Pennsylvania** (BOP) section of the PSO website. Go to [www.pabirds.org](http://www.pabirds.org) and click on **Birds of Pennsylvania**.

This project presents all of the species that occur in Pennsylvania currently accepted by the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC). It displays the following information for each species.

- ❖ A photograph of the species taken in the state
- ❖ Additional photos showing other plumages (not all species have additional photos).
- ❖ **Abundance** - How many of this species you can expect to see in the proper habitat and season
- ❖ **Occurrence** - How frequently this species occurs in the state
- ❖ **Seasonal Status** - When this species occurs in the state
- ❖ **PORC status** - Whether this species requires documentation
- ❖ **Species of Special Concern status** - Whether this species is listed on the PA Game Commission’s list of Species of Special Concern and its classification.
- ❖ **Notable Records** - A list of records of this species that were published in the *Birds of Note* section of *Pennsylvania Birds* since 1992 and records of rarities (fewer than ten records in the state) prior to 1992. Note: 1992 is when *Pennsylvania Birds* started the *Birds of Note* section. Prior to that most of these records were buried in County Reports and not easily found.
- ❖ **More Info** - A link to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website for life history and other

information about each species. The link goes directly to the species that is displayed.

- ❖ **Range Map** - Shows the seasonal status of each species on a county-by-county basis. **Note:** the status is shown countywide, so if a species nests in just a corner of the county, the whole county is still colored red for summer. This was a lot easier than trying to draw lines (which are constantly changing) across the state delineating breeding and wintering areas, etc.
- ❖ **Abundance Graph** - Shows the seasonal abundance of the species throughout the year.

This is a work in progress, as species’ status change from year-to-year and new information is presented. Most notably, the winter status of many of these birds is in flux. It can vary greatly from year-to-year, and many species that show up on Christmas Counts (in December) often do not stay into true winter (January-February). So determining the winter range is tricky.

The breeding status is easier— we have two breeding bird atlases to draw on — and migration has been well documented through many years of data published in *Pennsylvania Birds* and elsewhere.

So...

If you are knowledgeable about the birdlife in your county and feel (know) the range map status is incorrect, please contact me at [BirdsOfPa@pabirds.org](mailto:BirdsOfPa@pabirds.org) so I can correct the map(s).

Also, a few species still do not have accompanying photos. If you have a decent photo (**taken in PA**) of one of these missing species, you can send digital photos to me at [BirdsOfPa@pabirds.org](mailto:BirdsOfPa@pabirds.org) , or prints and slides to PSO, 2469 Hammertown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555. Any print or slide will be returned after I scan it.

– Frank Haas

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## Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

PSO has issued certificates of appreciation to individuals and organizations who have allowed birders access to their properties to view vagrants. The total number issued is now 84. The full list can be found on the PSO’s website.

Since last March, the following Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded to:

Snowy Owl, The Bowser Family, Armstrong Co.  
Snowy Owl, Sonny and Penny Kelley, Armstrong Co.  
Rufous Hummingbird, Carole Winslow, Clarion Co.  
Calliope Hummingbird, Joe Flood, Chester Co.  
Calliope Hummingbird, Bob and Amy Weiss, Lancaster Co.  
Allen’s Hummingbird, Babe Webster, Bucks Co.  
Evening Grosbeak, David L. Yeany, Sr., Forest Co.

# 2013 PSO Annual Meeting Field Trips

**Date: Saturday, June 1**  
**Destination: Moosic Mountain**  
**Leader: David Trently**

The Eales Preserve at Moosic Mountain is a Nature Conservancy property located in Lackawanna County. The Preserve ranges in elevation from about 1500 to 2000 feet. There are three entrances, all along State Route 247. This field trip will begin at the upper one. If there is time, we will try to visit the other two entrances, as different bird species are found in each section.

The trails we will walk are relatively flat, with mostly gradual elevation change. Footing is usually quite good, though there may be some muddy spots.

The upper entrance begins in a deciduous forest, where we will likely hear Veery, Black-and-white Warbler, Ovenbird, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, and Scarlet Tanager. After about a quarter mile, the area opens up into an area of young pines and various heath species. Here we will certainly hear Chestnut-sided Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Field Sparrow. As we walk farther, there is a good chance to find Canada, Black-throated Blue, and Nashville Warblers, all of which nest in the area. We may continue to Dunmore Reservoir (about 3/4 mile) where a few ducks are sometimes found. Ruffed Grouse is always a possibility.

Depending on the time, we may bypass the middle entrance, the preserve's main entrance, and stop at the lower parking area. The main target here is Blue-winged Warbler. Many of the species found at the higher elevation, as well as Hermit Thrush and American Redstart, are possible here.

For those interested in plants, two bogs on the upper site will have cranberries, *Rhododendron canadense*, hopefully in bloom, and Purple pitcher plants. Interesting butterflies include hairstreaks and brown elfin. At least two species of whiteface dragonflies are found here as well as a good assortment of other dragon and damselflies.

**Date: Saturday, June 1**  
**Destination: Susquehanna Riverlands**  
**Leader: Jon Beam, Sandy Goodwin**

The Wetlands Nature Area at PPL's Susquehanna Riverlands, a Pennsylvania Important Bird Area, is a refuge for a wide variety of wildlife and plant species. This field trip will include a walk along the old North Branch Canal, past several ponds, and through riparian forest habitat. Although the trail is relatively easy walking, the 2 to 2.5 mile walk can be wet at times. Species may include cormorants, herons, waterfowl, and Black-billed Cuckoo. Woodpeckers, Least and Great Crested Flycatchers, vireos, Carolina Wren, Wood Thrush, Prairie Warbler, and Chipping, Song and Swamp Sparrows as well as Baltimore Orioles. There is a possibility of seeing a Peregrine Falcon.

**Date: Saturday, June 1**  
**Destination: Nescopeck State Park**  
**Leader: John Jakoby, Diane Madl, Megan Taylor**

Located in lower Luzerne County, this 3,500 acre state park boasts more than 170 bird species and more than 650 plant species. Nearly 20 miles of trails, the beautiful Nescopeck Creek, and popular Lake Frances are the park's highlights. The park has an active bluebird and Wood Duck monitoring program and an official Geocache "The Bird Cache" [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) (GC3YQED).

Additionally, the environmental education center/office recently installed brand new natural history exhibits depicting the habitats and biodiversity within the park. The park has nurtured a Junior Bird Club with support from the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society since 2009. Species diversity peaks during spring migration in mid-May and fall migration in early September. Nesting warblers include Yellow, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Common Yellowthroat. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Blue-headed Vireos, Least Flycatchers, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatchers, Scarlet Tanagers, Baltimore Oriole, Wood Thrush, and Brown Creeper all inhabit the park. Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper, Osprey, Marsh Wren, Great Blue Heron, and the occasional American Bittern frequent the park's wetlands. The park also has an excellent population of American Woodcock and Eastern Whip-poor-wills frequent the park each summer. Recently, research on parasitism of Veery nests by cowbirds is being conducted through Penn State University. The park has both a Common Birds and more extensive Birds of Nescopeck State Park checklist as well as a Waterford Press Guide – "Nescopeck State Park Flora & Fauna, A Biodiversity Snapshot." Our walk will be approximately 2-2.5 miles on easy to moderate terrain.

**Date: Saturday, June 1**  
**Banding Demonstration: Kirby Park.**  
**Leaders; Jeff Stratford, Bob Wasilewski**

This banding demonstration will take place in riparian forest along the Susquehanna River in Wilkes-Barre. Most commonly captured birds are Gray Catbird and American Redstart. Surprise captures may include Worm-eating Warbler and Ovenbird. Some walking will be involved. The forest can be muddy, and mosquitoes are abundant.

**Date: Saturday, June 1**  
**Frances Slocum State Park**  
**Leader: Jim Hoyson**

Located in the Back Mountain area of Luzerne County,

Frances Slocum State Park is typical of Pennsylvania's state parks. Ballfields, picnic areas, a campground, swimming pool, and nature education center are popular amenities, as are the hiking trails that traverse forests, meadows, and the shorelines of wetlands and the man-made lake. The trails and paved roads provide easy access for birders to search for species such as Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Wood Thrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Bald Eagles also may be seen near the lake, and male American Woodcocks display at dusk in at least one shrubby meadow area. The terrain is varied, and some areas will be wet. Appropriate footwear is recommended. Restrooms are available throughout the park.

**Date: Saturday, June 1, and Sunday, June 2**  
**Destination: mainly Luzerne and Lackawanna**  
**Leaders: Michael Lanzone, Drew Weber**

This eBird training and listing outing will walk you through the basics of using eBird to find species. This fast-paced outing will be geared toward finding the highest species total we can on Saturday and Sunday morning outings.

**Date: Sunday, June 2**  
**Destination: Kirby Park & Nesbitt Park**  
**Leader: Bob Wasilewski**

Located along the banks of the Susquehanna River, Kirby and Nesbitt Parks, collectively known as "Riverfront Parks," resulted from land donations to the city of Wilkes-Barre by the Kirby and Nesbitt families in the early 1900s. The original Kirby Park was designed by the Olmstead firm, which is famous for having designed New York City's Central Park and Prospect Park, among numerous others. Flooding in 1936 resulted in the construction of a levee system, which in 1937 divided Kirby Park into two sections. One section remained a developed park with ball fields, tennis courts, and playground equipment, while the section closest to the River was all but abandoned. Left to the devices of nature, this area, now known as the Kirby Park Natural Area and managed by the non-profit Riverfront Parks Committee, became overgrown with various trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation, all of which attracted mammals such as gray squirrels, eastern cottontails, skunks, and raccoons. The riparian forest also attracted birds, and since it is surrounded by urban development, this "island" became a stopover point for songbirds that migrate along the eastern flyway. On a good day during the peak of the spring songbird migration, seventy or more species can be seen and/or heard in or near the natural area. Typical among the 40 or so breeding species are Wood Duck, Broad-winged Hawk,

Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Phoebe, Gray Catbird, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, and Indigo Bunting. In recent years, Peregrine Falcons have taken up residence near the natural area, and they can be seen quite easily from March through July. The terrain is level, so walking the two or three miles of trails is easy, although the ground can become sloppy and slippery after a rainstorm. There are no restrooms in the Kirby Park Natural Area.

**Date: Sunday, June 2**  
**Destination: Ricketts Glen State Park and SGL 13**  
**Leader: Doug Gross**

At 13,050 acres, Ricketts Glen State Park is one of the largest in the Pennsylvania state park system and gateway to the North Mountain forest block that includes Game Lands 13, 57, and 66; Loyalsock State Forest; and World's End State Park. Ricketts Glen features the Glens Natural Area – an old growth forest in Kitchen Creek gorge, the 245-acre Lake Jean, and one of the largest forests in the state. The 26 miles of trails make many good bird habitats in this park accessible on foot. For all these reasons and more, the park was designated as a PA Important Bird Area. The park is perched at the edge of the Allegheny Plateau, including hemlock gorges at the bottom and blueberry swamps and boreal forest bogs on top. The highest parts of the park exceed 2300 feet in elevation. Dark-eyed Juncos and Black-throated Green Warblers are among the most common nesting birds. The Glen features birds like Acadian Flycatcher, Winter Wren, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Inhabiting the blueberry swamps are Alder Flycatcher and Northern Waterthrush as well as Canada Warbler and White-throated Sparrow. Conifer groves especially the hemlocks support many northern birds like Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, as well as a suite of warblers including Magnolia, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, and more. The old meadows and orchards host a real mix of birds from Eastern Bluebird to Nashville Warbler. All four nightingale-thrushes of Pennsylvania nest in the park: Wood, Hermit, Veery, and Swainson's. Ravens croak overhead and visit the park dumpsters. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is probably the most common woodpecker in the park. Not all of the park is northern hardwood and conifer forest. With a little walking you can find some oak forest birds like Worm-eating Warbler and Cerulean Warbler. Night-time visitors could hear Northern Saw-whet Owl, Barred Owl, and Eastern Whip-poor-will especially near the old village of Ricketts (at Mountain Springs Lake Road). Breeding raptors include Red-shouldered Hawk and Northern Harrier. Some small wet areas can attract bitterns and rails as well as some Wood Ducks and mergansers. This field trip will also visit the edge of SGL 13 and 57 which adds to the variety of bird

*(continued on page 14)*

# Ornithological Literature Notes

Significant ornithological studies in Pennsylvania often go unnoticed by many of us. An example is more than a decade of research investigating special Song Sparrow vocalizations. Many years of studies at the Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology in Linesville, Crawford County, have focused on one interesting and unfamiliar type of song.

The research deals with the vocal interaction between a male Song Sparrow and an aggressor in his territory. Either one may sing a special song that is extremely different from the loud territorial song we know so well. The Pymatuning studies led William A. Searcy and coauthors to find out that one particular song is an important signal of a male's aggressive intent to attack a rival.

Searcy, formerly an associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh, now at the University of Miami, is a prominent specialist in the study of animal "signaling systems." These are the methods animals use to communicate meaningfully with other members of their species.

In the Pennsylvania research, Searcy and his colleagues determined that a male Song Sparrow may sing a "soft warbling song" to threaten an intruding male who is trying

to usurp his territory. It also may be sung by the intruder in an effort to take over the territory. This song is so soft, audible only from a very short distance, and so limited in its use, that only a fortunate birder might ever hear it. In fact, it is so little known that we might not even know which the species is singing when we hear it for the first time.

Following up the Pennsylvania studies, other researchers have reported that the low-volume song is a strong signal predicting an upcoming challenge to a rival male—and it sends an effective message to the other male. The "warbling song" is so potent that it may even provoke a physical attack on the singer. Thus, in Song Sparrows' language, one male knows precisely what the other male is saying.

If you are a member of the American Birding Association, you can hear the odd soft song in recordings and learn more about it. The March/April 2013 issue of *Birding* magazine describes the vocalization and its purpose. The magazine's online supplement, available only to ABA members, features recordings of this strange song.

Paul Hess – [p Hess@salsgiver.com](mailto:p Hess@salsgiver.com)  
Natrona Heights, PA

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## Silent Auction Planned

Every year PSO holds a silent auction at our annual meeting. We plan to continue with the auction again this year in Wilkes-Barre. If you have any "birdy" items that you no longer want but think someone else would enjoy, please consider donating it/them to our auction. Please e-mail me describing the item and an estimated value. Also indicate if there is a minimum bid for the item you are donating.

You should then bring your item to the annual meeting at Lock Haven (or send it with someone who will be attending if you can not). I am looking forward to having a variety of items to fuel the bidding frenzy for the benefit of PSO.

Shonah Hunter [shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu); 570-893-2062

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## PSO Bird Quiz

1. In his classic volume *Living on the Wind*, Scott Weidensaul talks about a "grasshopper hawk" (*aguiluchos langosteros* in Spanish). What do we call this rare visitor in Pennsylvania?
2. Two of North America's three *Sialis* species are on the Pennsylvania list. Which one is missing?
3. If you see an *Empidonax* species with a conspicuously long primary extension, is it more likely an Acadian Flycatcher or a Least Flycatcher?
4. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, which two sparrow species are declining most severely in Pennsylvania?
5. In our second Breeding Bird Atlas, which raptor had the greatest decrease in confirmed breeding compared to the first atlas?

# The Raven Reporter

## Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

### Helping to Solve the Mystery of Rusty Blackbird Migration



Although Rusty Blackbirds do not nest in Pennsylvania and only a few regularly spend the winter, our state may play a critical role in its life cycle. This boreal forest and wetland songbird migrates south to the southern United States, especially the riparian forests and swamps of the Mississippi Valley and the Atlantic Coast. The states of the Mid-Atlantic and the Great Lakes region lie in between and serve as important flyway stops. Without the stopover locations in Pennsylvania and other points along the migration route, this bird could not make its journeys safely. Where does it go? Are there certain swampy areas, pond shores, river banks, or woods that are particularly important for Rusties? We know that many migrate through the state but do not know what areas are most important. An additional challenge is that they usually roost in a different place than where they forage. These foraging areas are probably the easiest locations to capture by weekend field work.

Have you heard the creaky rusty-hinge song of the Rusty Blackbird lately? Historical accounts paint pictures of an abundant species, easily observed in boreal forest wetlands during the breeding season. Any bird of swamps and bogs can be hard to find, but this “boreal oriole” is especially difficult to detect. Rusty Blackbirds have experienced one of the steepest population declines of any North American bird. Estimates from the last decade suggest that Rusty Blackbirds have experienced an 85-99% population drop over the past 40 years. For the past decade, scientists have been seeking to unlock the secrets of the enigmatic Rusty Blackbird population crash. Members of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (IRBWG) have studied this elusive species across the southeastern wintering grounds in areas of Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina, and in the breeding grounds in the northeastern US and through Canada into Alaska. They have studied Rusty Blackbird breeding and flocking behaviors, movement patterns, habitat use, and pressures from competing species and predators in order to gain insights that will yield conservation strategies.

From 2009-2011, birders throughout the southeastern U.S. tracked and reported Rusty Blackbird observations as part of the Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz, an annual two-week period of intensive Rusty surveys. Blitz volunteers reported more than 11,700 Rusty Blackbirds in 2010 and almost 9,500 Rusties in 2011. As a result of these efforts, the IRBWG identified Rusty Blackbird wintering hot spots in many southeastern states. Scientists are using this data to evaluate hotspot habitat to determine what environmental features support large numbers of Rusties during the winter. This represents an important step toward understanding what can be done to protect and conserve this species. Learn more about Winter Blitz results at: [http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty\\_blackbird/blitz\\_results.cfm](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty_blackbird/blitz_results.cfm).

Although scientists have made huge strides in understanding Rusty Blackbirds on their breeding and wintering grounds, little is known about the migratory requirements and habits of this species. Important questions include: Are there hot spots where many individuals congregate during migration? Are similar migratory stopover hotspots used by Rusties each year? Are important migratory stopovers protected, or might these areas be a limiting factor in Rusty Blackbird survival?

To address these questions, the IRBWG is revamping the Rusty Blackbird Blitz. To allow time for planning, the new and improved Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz will occur in March-April of 2014. However, biologists need your help this spring to guide efforts next year!

Please help provide information on Rusty Blackbird migration by searching for Rusties this March and April in any potentially suitable habitat and reporting those sightings to eBird. You can scout anywhere throughout the Rusty Blackbird’s range – across the eastern United States, throughout the Midwest, and into Canada ([http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rusty\\_Blackbird/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rusty_Blackbird/id)). This wetland-loving species can be found in some surprising places, so don’t be surprised if you catch a sighting or two in a place you wouldn’t consider a birding hot spot. Rusties can be found in many habitats from beautiful bottomland hardwood swamps to waterfowl management areas to flooded ditches by the side of the road, so feel free to get creative in your search for this bird!

Pennsylvania has hundreds of miles of river forests and hundreds of acres of wetlands that might be important to migrating Rusty Blackbirds. Many of these locations are in some of the most poorly covered counties for eBird. Rusties do not necessarily visit the birding hot-spots that attract other birds of interest. A good strategy might be to visit locations where you do not normally bird. I associate Rusty Blackbirds with some of the same places where I spot Solitary Sandpipers or Wilson’s Snipe. What about you?

Rusty Blackbird migration reports will help the IRBWG hone the timing and locations of the Spring 2014 Migration Blitz. It's easy! Bird as you normally do, but make special effort to record Rusty Blackbirds and report your sightings to eBird. We look forward to hearing where you spot this elusive bird!

(Much of the Rusty Blackbird story is taken from an article by Judith Scarl, New Hampshire Audubon, and the IRBWG blitz committee article.)

## **Some Birds Just Start Early – Breeding Season Starts in Winter**

Some birds just start early, really early. Breeding season has begun for a few species, even with a snowy landscape and frigid temperatures. Those deep “Morse code-type” hoots of Great Horned Owls echoing across the hollow are all about courtship and pair bonding. The deep hoots are the males and the slightly higher pitched hoots are the larger females. Another male Great Horned Owl might hoot back in exchange. Great Horned Owls start their breeding season as early as December. Barred Owls start announcing themselves with their deep “who cooks for you” hoots a few weeks later and are breeding by mid-January. A trip to your local birding hotspots at night could yield some hooting owls, increasing your site's species list, and adding a breeding bird report. Great Horned Owls often hoot just before the sun goes down.

Other birds can begin nesting early. Bald Eagles are rebuilding nests in winter and many will have incubating eggs by the end of February. Several resident songbirds begin singing in winter, already beginning to set up territories and attract mates.

It is easy to add breeding information to your eBird reports. New features for eBird data entry allow observers to add that interesting data for each species. Hooting owls are declaring territory (code X) or behave as a courting pair (P). Persistent hooting in an area could deserve a territory (T) code. Many other codes are possible as you observe different behaviors through the year. Anyone who has participated in a Breeding Bird Atlas has had experience using these standard breeding codes also adopted by eBird.

Although not as glamorous as owls and eagles, Rock Pigeons also are “in the mood” by January. By February 1, another established exotic—the House Sparrow—also can be counted among breeding species. They may not be glamorous, but it is interesting how these exotic species have adapted to North America, and provide urbanites with birds to watch.

Using safe dates from the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas, you also can count other breeding species in the coming months. Common Ravens are among the early nesters,

building large stick nests on cliffs and artificial structures such as transmission towers and football stadiums. Their loud croaks declare their presence from a long distance. Ravens once were exclusively birds of mountain forests but now nest in agricultural areas.

Several woodpeckers also are early starters. By mid-March, most woodpeckers are in breeding mode and are drumming to declare territory and attract mates. It is a challenge to learn to identify drumming woodpeckers to species but worth the effort. It is easier to see woodpeckers early in the season rather than after leaf-out. The displays and courtship of woodpeckers are a feature of the woodland birding in March and April. Woodpeckers do have vocalizations, but they usually announce their breeding territory by drumming. The loud, resonating drumming of the large Pileated Woodpecker can be heard from long distances. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers start early, too. With some practice a birder can pick out Hairy Woodpeckers from Downy drumming because it is much faster than the drumming of the smaller woodpecker. Of course, it is good to track down the suspected thumper to verify your drum identification. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker has even more distinctive tapping during the breeding season. Their drumming trails off at the end of the drumming sequence very distinctively. For me, this is a typical sound of spring in Pennsylvania's northern woods where Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are common breeders and in some woods, the most common breeding woodpecker. You can hear one drumming sapsucker answer its neighbor in territorial disputes. Sapsuckers also reveal themselves with “mewing” – not the sort of sound that you think of when you see a woodpecker.

Popular backyard and forest resident songbirds such as Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and Northern Cardinals also can be counted as breeding birds in mid-March. Black-capped Chickadees are a bit later, by mid-April if not earlier. Many males begin singing on brighter winter days. White-breasted Nuthatches announce their territories with a nasal “flicker” call note that is much less likely to be heard later in the season when birders are thinking about breeding season.

Ruffed Grouse are drumming and woodcock are “sky dancing” by early April. Both species are of great interest to the conservation community, and records of these species are very much appreciated in eBird. Each of these requires a different kind of approach. Grouse are best found by walking along trails or bushwacking in the woods, usually before dawn. Males drum most often in the early morning. Woodcock are more of an old field and thicket species. The males often do their aerial displays in more open areas at the edge of woods, sometimes in open fields. They usually perform these rituals in the early evening or just before dawn.

One of the state's enduring mysteries is its rare Long-eared Owl population. This enigmatic species can begin

its nesting season very early, as soon as March and certainly by April. It is perhaps the most nocturnal of our owls, not calling until well after dark. Males declare territory with a deep single “hoo” or “whoop” hoot repeated about every four seconds, not the patterned “Morse code” hooting of a Great Horned or the “who cooks” hoot of a Barred Owl. This hoot carries far and can be heard several hundred yards away. This species actually has a complex repertoire. The female gives a nasal “peh-ev.” or a higher toned “veeeees” somewhat like the sound of a toy trumpet, a bleating lamb, or the sound made by blowing through a paper and a comb. Males display with an irregular “zigzag flight” around the nest grove that includes deep wing beats, glides, and occasional wing claps. Long-eared owls also have a variety of other vocalizations including various moans and squeals, best heard at close distance but helpful for surveying and monitoring. The calls made by juveniles have been described as sounding like “a squeaky gate” or “rusty hinge.” We would appreciate any reports of Long-eared Owls be hidden in an eBird report to keep these locations from getting too much attention. Please send reports of roosting or nesting Long-eared Owls to Doug Gross or Wayne Laubscher.

By early April, even warblers get into the act. Louisiana Waterthrushes return to our state at about the same time that trout fishermen wet their lines in Pennsylvania’s mountain streams. Their loud songs announce that they start early in claiming territories and attracting mates. I think that they can sneak around streams for a few days before they really start declaring themselves with song, but you can find them by tracking down their distinctive loud chip note or finding their splay on rocks in the stream.

E-Birders are encouraged to enter breeding codes in each field trip where it is appropriate. With many eBirders having experience with breeding codes with the recent Atlas, they should have a great feel for using them. The new Atlas should inspire new eBird users to add that element to their reports.

### **Full Life Cycle Bird Monitoring through eBird**

It is not new to PSO members that Pennsylvania’s birds migrate. In fact, the majority of Pennsylvania’s nesting bird species travel south with many of them migrating to the Caribbean region, Mexico, Central America, and a few as far as northwestern South America. As “our birds” return north this spring, it is important where they were over the winter. Without adequate habitat on their wintering grounds, those bird species do not return in the kind of condition necessary for the very energy-demanding breeding season. After all, most species spend far more time off their breeding grounds than on them, either on the move or residing in a tropical forest or thicket. We cannot neglect “our birds” when they are away from us. For more about making connections

between North America and southern wintering grounds, check out the Partners in Flight section: <http://www.partnersinflight.org/pubs/ts/04-Connections/default.HTM>

There is increased recognition within the avian conservation community for the need for full life-cycle monitoring and conservation. That is, a need exists for gauging the health, threats, and survival rates of our bird populations during the entire year, identifying bottlenecks, and then taking action for conservation. In the western states, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) initiated a unique monitoring project to gather baseline data on our wintering grassland birds because of the great concern for that habitat group and the recognition of connectivity with Mexico. I recommend reading Saving our Shared Birds for a great overview of the subject: <http://www.savingoursharedbirds.org/overview>.

I have written previously about Wood Thrushes that nest in Pennsylvania and migrate to Central America (Raven Reporter, December 2011). Since then, the research on Wood Thrushes has continued with an important publication about Wood Thrush migration being published in PLOS One, based on research conducted in Pennsylvania and Central America: <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0040688>

For a really informative video about the bird connectivity, I recommend an on-line video of Dr. Kevin Fraser, a Post-doctoral Fellow in Bridget Stutchbury's York University Lab, giving an excellent presentation about migratory bird connectivity at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum's Lecture. Each fall, billions of songbirds leave North America (Canada and United States) on an epic journey to their distant wintering grounds in Central and South America and the Caribbean where many live in tropical forests. Some of Fraser’s research has been based at Hemlock Hill of Pennsylvania and at El Jaguar Reserve in Nicaragua, but it includes several other locations. Many bird species have experienced serious, long-term population declines that are driven in part by threats that these birds face while in transit and when they are in the tropics. The deforestation of the coastal areas and much of Mexico and Central America keep coming up in any analysis of threats to these birds. In this presentation, Fraser reveals surprising migration tracking results for Wood Thrushes, Purple Martins, and Red-eyed Vireos. Only by achieving a better understanding of these migrations and where our birds migrate to each winter, can we even begin to work on saving these songbirds. And, we must work with willing partners if we expect to achieve anything. It is very much an international effort with many people helping out. Please check out this video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bU5Ijs9hoA>.

Many Pennsylvania birders go to ecolodges or birding tours of these exotic countries, adding many species to

their personal lists and having many birding adventures. Yes, it is great to log in the local residents like toucans, woodcreepers, antbirds, and tropical tanagers, but a trip to the tropics also is an opportunity to register where you find those North American birds in their winter haunts. E-Bird is active in several Latin American countries, many with their own eBird portal and data editors. I have begun this process myself by visiting great birding places in Central America where our birds visit, most recently in Nicaragua. There I have found many of Pennsylvania's birds using the Nicaraguan forests, rivers, and shaded coffee plantations. As reported in an earlier column, Wood Thrushes and Golden-winged Warblers are common in El Jaguar reserve in northern Nicaragua. (I even found them in the lowlands near Rio San Juan!) Research by members of the Stutchbury Lab and its partners has shown that many Wood Thrushes migrate from Pennsylvania's forests to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Honduras. Banding and geolocator studies have revealed this connection quite decisively. I've also found many Wood Thrushes and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in

southern Nicaragua in lowland rainforest along the Rio San Juan by the Rio Bartola. I've seen other northern birds like Louisiana Waterthrush, Spotted Sandpiper, and Summer Tanagers in these places as well. It is quite a contrast to have macaws screaming as they fly overhead while hearing the "chuck" notes of a Wood Thrush and chip notes of a waterthrush. With the help of my cohorts, I have begun entering my Neotropical bird trips into eBird, and I am finding that it is a lot of fun to do. If nothing else, it forces me to organize my notes and reminds me of wonderful experiences I will never forget. I encourage others to log their wintering ground field trips into eBird, too.

Good Birding!

Douglas A. Gross, Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Wildlife Biologist, Non-game and Endangered Bird  
Supervisor, 106 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859  
Phone: 570-458-4109 (or 570-458-4564); E-mail:  
dogross@pa.gov or dagross144@verizon.net

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## 2013 PSO Annual Meeting Field Trips *(continued from page 9)*

habitats near Mehoopany and Bowman's creek. This area also includes some native spruce and other Canadian vegetation and accompanying fauna. Fishers, snowshoe hares, and river otters are among the animals that also live there. This field trip will include some short hikes along park and game land trails. There are public restrooms at the state park, especially accessible at the park office.

**Date: Sunday, June 2**  
**Destination: Bear Creek Game Lands**  
**Leader: Jim Hoyson**

Part of the rather expansive SGL 91, the Bear Creek Game Lands, are located on a high-elevation shrub-scrub barrens and forest area. This rather unique habitat has the potential to produce unique species along with typical high-elevation birds such as Prairie Warbler and Eastern Towhee. Canada Warblers have been known to nest in this area. In addition, Golden-winged Warblers have been found here, although sightings of that species have been sporadic over the years. Northern Waterthrush should be found at SGL 91. Wild Turkey is a possibility, and Whip-poor-will is possible if participants want to leave early enough to find them. Nashville Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Scarlet Tanager, Broad-winged Hawk, Alder Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Common Raven, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Field Sparrow are additional birds that are usually found at SGL91. The terrain along the several mile hike is primarily gently rolling hills, so walking should be relatively easy.

**Date: Sunday, June 2**  
**Destination: Susquehanna Warrior Trail/Union Boat Launch**  
**Leader: Jeff Hartman**

The Union Boat Launch, located just north of Shickshinny in Union Township, is a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission facility that provides anglers, canoeists, and kayakers with access to the Susquehanna River. A rails-to-trails project resulted in the creation of the Susquehanna Warrior Trail, which follows the River and U.S. Route 11 from the Susquehanna Riverlands to the south to the Garden Drive-In in Hunlock Township to the north. The Warrior Trail provides easy access along level terrain for birders to search the river, the riparian forest, and the old farm fields for Wood Ducks, Pileated Woodpeckers, Bald Eagles, Least Flycatchers, Brown Thrashers, Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow-throated Vireos, Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, and Cerulean Warblers. A short side trip to a nearby private property could also result in sightings of Blackburnian Warblers, Northern Parulas, and nesting Great Blue Herons. Restroom facilities are not available along the Warrior Trail or on the private property (the homeowner will be leading a different field trip).



# Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Annual Meeting Scholarship Program

In order to foster an interest in, and appreciation for birding and ornithology in Pennsylvania, each year the PSO will provide a scholarship for a person 18 years of age or younger OR an Undergraduate college student who wishes to attend the PSO annual meeting.

(You may not nominate someone without their knowledge or permission)

- ❖ The person must be nominated by a current PSO member.
- ❖ If the nominee is younger than 18, the nominating PSO member must be attending the meeting and must be responsible for transportation to/from the meeting and must be responsible for the youth during the meeting (see below) if a parent/guardian is not accompanying the youth.  
The youth's parent/guardian must sign below giving the youth permission to attend the PSO meeting with the sponsor.
- ❖ PSO will pay the recipient's meeting registration, food (banquet, lunch, 2 breakfasts) and lodging (up to 2 nights), and transportation costs incurred by the recipient.

In order to complete your nominations, please send this form to Shonah A. Hunter ([shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu)), or by land mail to: Dr. Shonah A. Hunter, Department of Biological Sciences, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745 by April 15, 2013. Selection will be conducted by a committee.

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Nominee's Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

If a college undergraduate student, College Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's Involvement with Birding (Please describe, providing as many details as possible. Attach a page, if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of nominating PSO Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship (if any) to Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

If the nominee is younger than 18, and a parent or guardian is not accompanying the youth, the nominating PSO member must sign the following statement.

In nominating this youth, I understand that I will be responsible for the youth at the annual meeting and for his/her transportation to and from the meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

If the nominee is younger than 18, the parent/guardian must sign the following statement.

In allowing my child to be nominated, I understand that PSO is providing the scholarship for my child to attend the annual meeting. The person nominating my child has my permission to transport him/her to and from the meeting and to be responsible for her/him during the annual meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

## PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. To renew your membership, pay online at [www.pabirds.org](http://www.pabirds.org) or send your check made payable to "PSO" to:

### Membership Categories:

PSO	Student	\$ 25
2469 Hammertown Road	Individual	\$ 30
Narvon, PA 17555-9730	Family	\$ 35
	Sustaining	\$ 45

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Geoff Malosh – PSO Editor [pomarine@earthlink.net](mailto:pomarine@earthlink.net)  
Margaret Higbee – Newsletter Editor [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net)  
Tom Kuehl – Past President [tjkuehl@comcast.net](mailto:tjkuehl@comcast.net)

Cory DeStein – [cdestein@gmail.com](mailto:cdestein@gmail.com)  
Mike Fialkovich – [mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net)  
Doug Gross – [dogross@pa.gov](mailto:dogross@pa.gov)  
Marjorie Howard – [birdwatcher108@comcast.net](mailto:birdwatcher108@comcast.net)  
Shonah Hunter – [shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu)  
Ramsay Koury – [rkoury123@aol.com](mailto:rkoury123@aol.com)  
Wayne Laubscher – [wlaubsch@kcnet.org](mailto:wlaubsch@kcnet.org)  
Sandy Lockerman – [lockerman@paonline.com](mailto:lockerman@paonline.com)  
Mark McConaughy – [timetraveler50@comcast.net](mailto:timetraveler50@comcast.net)  
Flo McGuire – [fmcguire1@verizon.net](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net)  
Carmen Santasania – [ctsantasania@comcast.net](mailto:ctsantasania@comcast.net)  
Scott Stoleson – [sstoleson@fs.fed.us](mailto:sstoleson@fs.fed.us)  
Emily Thomas – [cht5002@hotmail.com](mailto:cht5002@hotmail.com)  
Linda Wagner – [lwagner342@msn.com](mailto:lwagner342@msn.com)

## Answers to Bird Quiz (page 10)

1. Swainson's Hawk
2. Western Bluebird
3. Acadian Flycatcher
4. Vesper Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow
5. Broad-winged Hawk



Field Sparrows will soon be staking out their territories.

Photo by Roger Higbee

**Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology**

c/o R. V. Higbee  
3119 Creekside Road  
Indiana, PA 15701-7934

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