

The PSO Pileated



June 2017

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 28, Number 2

From the President's Desk.... *Upcoming Events*

Annual Meeting

I hope everyone enjoyed the spring migration and the beginning of the nesting season for the state's birds. This was the first spring without a meeting for many years, but the fall meeting registration will begin in the near future.

The annual meeting will feature some new activities as we continue to evolve and try different ways of making the meeting fun and meaningful.

First of all, everyone is welcome to attend the annual meeting, whether you are a member or not. If you are not, the meeting is a good opportunity to learn about PSO and meet other members, and join our group! The meeting is really a gathering of the state's birders to enjoy time in the field, socialize, and learn about bird research. The meeting location is moved around the state to provide opportunities to go birding in different parts of the state. Every location has something to offer.

If you are a beginning birder, don't feel intimidated about attending – experienced birders are always glad to assist you. The meeting will feature field trips, speakers, and awards presentations as usual. The silent auction will be suspended this year for several reasons, but alternative funding methods for the Youth Scholarship are being developed. We will have a memorial sale of items from a long-time member as one funding activity.



Will Red-breasted Nuthatches be found in unusual locations after the influx last winter?

Photo by Mike Fialkovich

We are excited to offer commemorative t-shirts this year! You will be able to order them when you register for the meeting. The design, color, and size choices will be available with the meeting registration information. We only offered meeting shirts once in the past at the Greene County meeting in 2000. You may ask why we don't have t-shirts every year. As with any activity particularly with a volunteer organization, we need someone who wants to take on the task and have the drive and motivation to do the work associated with it. Thanks to Vice President Vern Gauthier for working with a designer to develop a great looking shirt.

Please consider attending the meeting this year. Join us for a good time in Carlisle, Cumberland County, in September!

Membership Survey

Last year a PSO survey was sent to members asking for opinions concerning all of our major activities, our website, and our publications. We received 67 responses to the survey. Thank you to all who responded and provided comments. We learned a lot about what our members find meaningful (or not) regarding the organization. A few highlights follow.

Half the responders have been members for more than a decade, and having longtime members is gratifying.

Overall those who responded find the annual meeting, field trips, the newsletter, and the journal highly important. A lot of work goes into producing the activities and publications so we appreciate the high rating. Although the annual meeting rated high, most responders (45%) have never attended an annual meeting. Comments regarding lack of attending included scheduling conflicts, physical disabilities, and lack of interest. The field trips and banquet speaker at the annual meeting rated highest among the activities while the Friday social and silent auction were of moderate importance. As far as our publications, the majority of the journal features are important to members based on survey answers, and overall the newsletter rated very highly. Our editors should be proud of the publications they work so hard to produce.

The full results of the survey will be posted on the PSO website <www.pabirds.org> for your information, so please take a look at it and send us any thoughts you may have.

Breeding Bird Blitz

The now annual Breeding Bird Blitz is coming up fast in June. I hope many of you get out to enjoy the variety of breeding birds we have here in Pennsylvania and enter your data from the event into eBird. Will Red-breasted Nuthatches be found in unusual locations after the influx last winter? I am aware of a pair attempting to nest in Allegheny County this spring. How about Pine Siskins or the Evening Grosbeaks that have lingered in Forest County? A few Red Crossbills appeared this spring. Perhaps we will discover a breeding pair in the state. This event may shed some answers to these questions. Thank

you for your continued participation; we can always count on Pennsylvania birders stepping up to help map the distribution and population dynamics of birds in our commonwealth.

Field Trips

We are taking a break for the summer; however trips have been lined up for the fall. Our field trips have become popular among members. Check the website and Facebook pages for field trip information. If you are interested in leading one, please let us know. It can be to a local hotspot or a location you would like to share with others.

Board Meeting Minutes

The second installment of the PSO Board meeting minutes is in this newsletter. As I mentioned previously, we are including the minutes for your information and awareness regarding the business and operations of the organization. Please read them and let us know if you have any questions or comments.

Enjoy the summer, and I hope to see many of you at our annual meeting in September!

Good birding!

Mike Fialkovich
PSO President
Allegheny County
mpfial@verizon.net

Field Trip and Event Roster

Friday through Monday, June 16-19 – Breeding Bird Blitz

The Fourth Annual PA Breeding Bird Blitz (PAB3) will run June 16 to June 19, 2017. The PAB3 is a great time to get out during the peak of the breeding season. The blitz serves to gather data on an annual basis of the breeding bird populations in PA. What's in it for you? You get to go out to find birds! But most importantly, you help to add meaningful data about PA Breeding Birds! Click the link below for more information or contact Vern Gauthier at pabirder@gmail.com.
<http://www.pabirds.org/PABBB.php>

September 15-17 – PSO Annual Meeting in Carlisle,

Cumberland County. The great variety of field trips will include several that will cover the ridges along the Michaux and Tuscarora State Forests, hotspots for fall warbler migration. You will also have the opportunity to visit Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch, one of the best places in PA for fall raptor migration at the height of the Broad-winged Hawk season. See the entire list of field trips on page 4.

October 7-8 – The Big Sit, sponsored by *Bird Watcher's Digest*. You may join or create your own circle and count what you see in a 24-hour time frame.

November 4-5 – Allegheny Front Hawkwatch. This is usually the peak for migrating Golden Eagles.

Plan Now to Attend PSO's Annual Meeting in September



Birders are invited to Carlisle, Cumberland County, to attend the PSO Annual Meeting from September 15 through 17. This is a time of great birding, making and renewing friendships, and an opportunity to increase your knowledge about the birds we find so fascinating! There is something for everyone!

The meeting location will be the Comfort Suites, 10 S. Hanover St., Carlisle, PA 17013. If you wish to stay at Comfort Suites, call no later than August 16 for the special rate of \$99 per night plus \$4 for parking in the parking garage over the weekend. This includes Saturday and Sunday breakfast from 5:30 to 6:30 a.m. Make a reservation at (717) 960-1000. You may also choose to stay at one of the other nearby hotels; information is available online.

There is a 25% discount on Registration, Banquet Fees, and T-shirts for persons 18 years of age or younger, or college students of any age who are enrolled full time in an accredited college or university. Proof of age or college enrollment may be required at meeting check-in. All persons under 18 years of age who are registered for the annual meeting must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who is also registered and who must go with the youth on all field trips and activities.

Field trips will include birding the migrant rich Blue and Kittatinny ridges of the Michaux and Tuscarora State Forests, exploring the grounds of the former State Hospital and Wildwood Lake Park in Harrisburg, venturing to Miller's Gap and Lamb's Gap, Little Buffalo State Park, State Game Lands 169 and 230, along with a mix of history and birds on the battlefields of Gettysburg and the ever popular Audubon Hawkwatch at Waggoner's Gap at the height of the Broad-winged Hawk migration.

On Friday evening Ian Gardner will help us brush up on our Fall Warbler Identification. Saturday afternoon Andy Wilson will speak about the Use of Drones in Bird Research and Art McMorris, on Peregrine Falcons in PA. Saturday evening our banquet speaker will be Ted Floyd, the Editor of "Birding," the American Birding Association's flagship publication. Ted's topic will be "Birding in the 21st Century."

Scott Weidensaul will be recognized for his significant contributions to Pennsylvania Ornithology as the winner of the 2017 Earl Poole Award. The Conservation Award will be given to the Audubon Hawkwatch at Waggoner's Gap.

Online Registration for the gathering runs June 10 through August 25. You may register online at this link <https://pso.ticketspice.com/pennsylvania-society-for-ornithology-annual-meeting>. **Mailed registrations must be postmarked by August 20.** You can go to the PSO website to download registration forms. Forms are also available by contacting Margaret Higbee (724) 354-3493.

One registration form will be needed per person.

Please note:

- Field trips will be part of the registration process and filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so register early to get your first choices.
- T-shirts designed specifically for the meeting are available for purchase by all meeting registrants.
- ***there will be no late registration or walk-in registrations.***



Thanks to Rockjumper Birding Tours for their sponsorship of our Youth Scholarship and for helping to keep the meeting registration fee down. Rockjumper is offering a 5% discount to PSO members who register for a Rockjumper 2017 or 2018 tour by the end of 2017.

For more information visit: www.rockjumperbirding.com/
Or contact George Armistead at:
info@rockjumperbirding.com

I look forward to seeing you in September! Until then,

Good Birding!

Vern Gauthier

2017 Annual Meeting Field Trips

1. Field Trips are limited to 12 participants plus the leader and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
2. You must be a paid registrant or a PSO guest to sign up for a field trip.
3. All field trips run both Saturday and Sunday except two: The Big Spring trip is only on Saturday, and the Gettysburg trip is only on Sunday.
4. Trips on the ridges (The Blue Ridge/Michaux State Forrest to the South and The Kittatinny Ridge/Tuscarora State Forest to the north) provide woodland trips that on good days are rich in migrants.
5. Trips to the valley have a wider variety of habitat and potentially a wider diversity of species.
6. Waterproof footwear is advisable on all of the trips.
7. Carpooling in vehicles of 3 to 4 people is required. There will be no more than 4 vehicles on any trip.
8. Please do not choose the same trip both days.

BIG SPRING - Trip Leader - Bill Franz (Valley/Saturday Only)

This will be a nice and easy walk along three miles of the picturesque Big Spring Creek in the middle of the valley on a paved road. You will see lots of birds and the looks you will have will tend to be in brush and small trees rather than tall trees. Having good looks at Tennessee Warblers is almost guaranteed. Red-headed Woodpecker is a pretty sure bet, too. There are no bathrooms along the walk.

BIG FLAT / RIDGE ROAD / MILESBURN ROAD - Trip Leader - Ramsay Koury (Blue Ridge)

If you don't like to walk much, and like the idea of seeing a lot of migrants, this trip along the ridge in the Michaux State Forest might be for you. Drive, hear birds, get out of the car, look, and repeat as needed. This trip is a good candidate for producing the largest number of warblers and other migrants. There are no bathroom facilities on site.

COLONEL DENNING / ELK HILL / LAUREL RUN - Trip Leader - Annette Mathes (Kittatinny Ridge)

At Elk Hill we'll take a leisurely two mile walk downhill on a gravel road. The tree canopy on one side of the road isn't much above eye level which is helpful in dealing

with "warbler neck." Laurel Run Road in Perry County will be driving with stops. A fairly good amount of migrants should be found in this section of the Tuscarora State Forest including numerous Worm-eating Warblers which breed here and perhaps a leftover Kentucky Warbler or two which also breed here. There are basic bathroom facilities at Colonel Denning.

PINE GROVE FURNACE / CAMP MICHAUX - Trip Leader - Vern Gauthier (Blue Ridge)

This field trip will be a fairly easy to moderate hike of two miles or more at Camp Michaux (Michaux State Forest); some of it will be on the Appalachian Trail. Walking at Pine Grove Furnace is on flat terrain. This is a good spot for Hooded, Canada, and Wilson's Warblers. Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers have also been found here over the years. We might also spot a Common Nighthawk or two that are late turning in for the day. Bathrooms are located at Pine Grove.

STATE GAME LANDS 169 - Trip Leader - Andy Markel (Valley)

This trip will sample a large habitat diversity, including marshes, creeks, and ponds. This is one of the better locations for Connecticut, Mourning, and Wilson's Warblers and maybe even an Orange-crowned. Rails and Black-crowned Night-Heron are possible. The trip will mostly consist of short walks at various locations on the game lands. If any field birds or shorebirds of interest have been found in area fields, these stops will be added as well. There are no bathrooms at the game lands.

STATE GAME LANDS 230 - Trip Leader - Peter Lusardi (Valley)

This fairly flat walk of the game lands should yield a good number of migrants; some years Mourning and Connecticut Warblers are found. It is only a short drive to Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch, so you might want to pack a lunch and go to the hawkwatch after the outing. Rifle and Hand Gun Ranges will mean some noise. No bathroom facilities are on site.

HARRISBURG - FORMER STATE HOSPITAL GROUNDS / WILDWOOD PARK - Saturday Trip Leader - Ted Nichols; Sunday Trip Leader - Ian Gardner (Valley)

On the stately grounds of the former state hospital, you will see a wide variety of warblers and other migrants. At Wildwood these same woodland migrants are possible along with the addition of waterfowl, shorebirds, and herons. Bathrooms are available at Wildwood Park.

HEISEY ORCHARD / STILL HOUSE HOLLOW / MILESBURN ROAD - Trip Leader - Bill Oyler (Blue Ridge)

The trip begins in an old orchard that attracts a good number of migrants. Philadelphia Vireos seem to have a thing for the orchard. We will then drive along the gravel roads of the Michaux State Forest, hear birds, get out of the car, look, and repeat as needed. This trip is similar to the Big Flat / Ridge Road / Milesburn Road Trip. There are no bathrooms along the route.

LITTLE BUFFALO / WAGGONER'S GAP HAWKWATCH - Trip Leader - Chad Kauffman (Kittatinny Ridge)

We will spend some time at this picturesque park where you should encounter a fair number of migrants. Walks will be level to slightly inclined. The real draw on this trip is heading to Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch mid-morning during the peak dates of the Broad-winged Hawk migration. It is quite possible to see several hundred Broad-winged Hawks and double digit Bald Eagles among other species, including Osprey and Sharp-shinned. There are nice bathrooms at Little Buffalo and port-a-pots at the hawkwatch.

MILLER'S GAP / LAMB'S GAP / STATE GAME LANDS 170 Saturday Trip Leader - Ian Gardner; Sunday Trip Leader - Ted Nichols (Kittatinny Ridge)

Up on the ridge at Miller's and Lamb's Gaps there is

usually a pretty good flow of migrants. Just about anything could show up and often does. Down in the valley this trip covers productive parts of SGL 170. This is a trip that combines some walking with driving. No bathrooms are available at the locations.

GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD - Trip Leader - Deb Siefkend & Mike Bertram / (Valley/Sunday Only)

The group will meet the leaders at Gettysburg National War Memorial. Precise directions and GPS address will be provided. A little Civil War History with your birding? Well, a lot of Civil War History with your birding is more like it. Along with some migrants, you will see Red-headed Woodpeckers and field birds. This is something a little different for those who want to take the opportunity to visit Gettysburg while in the area. Bathrooms are available.

Welcome, New Members!

The following members have joined since March 2, 2017. We extend a warm welcome to each one.

Seth Ausubel, Washington Crossing, PA
Doris Brookens, Boiling Springs, PA
Scott Brookens, Enola, PA
John Carter, Port Matilda, PA
Robert L. Curry, Villanova, PA
Ron Ferry, Ephrata, PA
Randy Flament, Emporium, PA
Steve Fordyce, Mertzown, PA
Douglas Fowkes, Pittsburgh, PA
Bill Franz, Newville, PA
Albert Guarente, Media, PA
Joe Gyekis, State College, PA
Margret Hatch, Dunmore, PA
Sean Herrmann, Spring Mills, PA
John Hotvedt, Hallstead, PA
Ryan Johnson, Moscow, PA
Michelle Kienholz, Pittsburgh, PA
Barbara Madaus, Pittsburgh, PA
Joseph Majdan, Newtown, PA
Lynn Ramage, Ford City, PA
Brian Schmoke, Howard, PA
Susan Schmoyer, Kutztown, PA
Greg Smith, Mont Alto, PA
Richard L. Timm Jr., Lansdowne, PA
David Tolsma, Camp Hill, PA
Larry Usselman, Harrisburg, PA
Alan Warren, West Chester, PA
Tiffany Willow, Liverpool, PA
Katie Yelinek, Bloomsburg, PA

PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. The first North American record of which marsh bird was found in Pennsylvania in 1836?
2. A prehistoric record of which waterfowl species was found at an Indian rock shelter in Huntingdon County, dating from approximately 1500 A.D.?
3. Which sparrow was collected in 1892 in Montgomery County for the state's first record?
4. In his pioneering *Birds of Pennsylvania* in 1890, which warbler did B. J. Warren report was shot in 1885 but "the nest and eggs remain to be discovered"?
5. Before 1960, there was only one Pennsylvania record of a bird in the genus *Pheucticus*—an individual found in Montgomery County in 1952. Which species?

PSO ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Comfort Suites Carlisle

10 South Hanover Street, Carlisle, PA 17013

Friday, September 15, 2017

- 6:00 p.m. Registration and Social (Refreshments provided)
- 7:00 p.m. Members' Annual Business Meeting
- 7:30 p.m. Field Trip Review
- 8:00 p.m. Fall Warbler Review, presented by Ian Gardner
- 8:30 p.m. Evening Field Trip - Flight Calls with Andy Markel (Meet at the Newville Park and Ride)

Saturday, September 16, 2017

- 5:30 to 6:30 a.m. Free Breakfast for those staying at Comfort Suites
- 6:45 a.m. Outings Participants meet at designated area (Wal-mart or Post Office Parking Lots)
- 12:00 p.m. End of Morning Field Trips; lunch on your own
Visit to Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch on your own

- 2:00 p.m. "Use of Drones in Bird Research," presented by Andy Wilson
- 3:00 p.m. Afternoon Break (Refreshments provided; visit vendors)
- 3:20 p.m. "Peregrine Falcons in PA," presented by Art McMorris
- 4:20 p.m. End of Afternoon Sessions
- 6:00 p.m. Social (Cash bar available till 10:00 p.m.)
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet & Compilation of Bird List
"Birding the 21st Century," presented by Ted Floyd

Sunday, September 17, 2017

- 5:30 to 6:30 a.m. Free Breakfast for those staying at Comfort Suites
- 6:45 a.m. Outings Participants meet at designated area (Wal-mart or Post Office Parking Lots)
- 12:00 p.m. End of Morning Field Trips; lunch on your own
Visit to Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch on your own
End of Annual Meeting

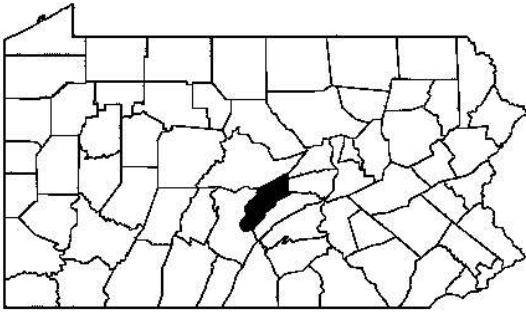
No Late Annual Meeting Registrations Will Be Accepted

No Walk-in Registrations Will Be Permitted

If you plan to attend the fall PSO meeting, you must register on-line before August 25. If you are registering via the US Postal Service, your registration must be postmarked by August 20.

Birding PA – Mifflin County

(Each edition of Birding PA highlights birding from one of our 67 counties.)



Are you up for a challenge? The birders of Mifflin County and their friends have taken up the challenge of

reporting at least 200 species on eBird for the year 2017. While in some counties this may not be much of a challenge, in a county that lacks habitat for shorebirds, is lightly birded by its residents, and is not a birding destination for other PA birders, it can be quite a daunting task.

On May 4, I met up with Rob Dickerson who along with Robert Hosler and Jay Zook form the triumvirate of Mifflin County Birders who regularly bird and report their findings on eBird. In speaking with Rob, he confirmed there are few experienced birders in Mifflin who regularly report their findings on eBird. He cited the absence of an Audubon Chapter in the county and no local birding club as two of the reasons for this lack. He did mention that a few birders from neighboring counties, like Chad Kauffman of Juniata County, along with Deb and Greg Grove and Jon Kauffman from Huntingdon County, who pitch in finding and reporting Mifflin birds.

Rob indicated that he was trying to increase the number of eBird hotspots in Mifflin County as a way to encourage others to bird the county. When Rob began birding five years ago, he said there were only about six hotspots; today there are more than 20. Even with this increased number of hotspots, Rob thinks the book, "BIRDS OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA" by Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, is still the single best resource for birding Mifflin County.

Rob first brought me to LINGLE VALLEY ROAD in ROTHROCK STATE FOREST. It was a great start – almost immediately after getting out of the car, we saw four **Veeries** on the forest road. This was a year bird for both Rob and me, and the first ones listed on eBird for Mifflin in 2017 (166 down, 34 to go). We also had 2017 county firsts of **Eastern Wood-Pewee**, **Worm-eating Warbler**, and **Blackpoll Warbler**, as well as 2 **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** which weren't first of years for us or the county but still nice to see. We also added 11 **Hooded**

Warblers and 3 **Blackburnian Warblers**. After our next stop at the very similar STONE CREEK ROAD where we added nothing new to our list, we then went to TREASTER VALLEY ROAD where we surprisingly spotted one very late **Pine Siskin** for our day's list along with 2 **Northern Parulas**.



This is just one of the ten Veeries we spotted along Lingle Valley Road.

Photo by Rob Dickerson

We left the state forest and continued into the Big Valley traveling along a meandering stream on BACK MOUNTAIN ROAD. This certainly different habitat provided additional species. The 31 species we listed in this riparian habitat included **Warbling Vireo**, **Vesper Sparrow**, **Field Sparrow**, **Eastern Meadowlark**, and **Baltimore Oriole**. Rob shared with me that a **Barn Owl** is currently nesting on a farm along Back Mountain Road and that the area is good for **Rough-legged Hawks** in winter.



Vesper Sparrow can be found along Back Mountain Road.

Photo by Rob Dickerson

The morning's final stop was at STATE GAME LANDS 107 WOODCOCK MANAGEMENT AREA.

We came here for winged-warblers and were not disappointed. A singing male **Blue-winged Warbler** greeted us in the parking area. As we walked a short distance into the management area, we were able to come up with 2 male **Golden-winged Warblers** and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**. The cuckoo was Mifflin County eBird species number 172 for 2017. While we did not see or hear one that day, Rob informed me that he had a **Yellow-breasted Chat** there a few days prior to our visit.

As I write this on May 7, Mifflin County lists 183 species on eBird for the year. You may think that they will easily reach 200 by the end of the year, but with most winter, migrant, and summer species in the books, they will need a good influx of vagrants and/or a lot more shorebirds than they usually get. You can help out by going to Mifflin County and adding your birding data to their eBird year list. One way to do this is to come and bird Mifflin County for yourself and help add to the data for 2017. You could make a stop by VICTORY PARK in LEWISTOWN, which includes a mile-long trail along the JUNIATA RIVER. Rob says that Victory Park is the single best, all-around, four-season birding hotspot in Mifflin County. Or you could stop at REED'S GAP STATE PARK where Rob says that a lot of people have had luck birding, but he is not one of them.



A great site for Golden-winged Warbler is the Woodcock Management Area of State Game Lands 107.

Photo by Rob Dickerson

During the recent BIRDING CUP which is a fundraiser for Penn State's SHAVER'S CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER, a team of birders not from Mifflin County participated in the count and listed 13 new eBird species for 2017. You can read more about their efforts and birding Mifflin County in the article by Ted Nichols II in this issue of *The Pileated*.

Good birding, PA!

Vern Gauthier

(Please contact me at pabirder@gmail.com if you would like your home county featured in a future edition of Birding PA.)

LINKS AND E-MAIL FOR MORE ON MIFFLIN COUNTY BIRDING

PSO Site Guide – <http://www.pabirds.org/SiteGuide/PACountyPage.php?CountyID=44>

PSO County Compiler / Jon Kauffman – gvk5019@gmail.com

eBird county page - <http://ebird.org/ebird/pa/subnational2/US-PA-087?yr=cur>

Juniata CBC Compiler / Chad Kauffman - chadkauffman@earthlink.net

Huntingdon CBC Compiler / Deb Grove - dsg4@psu.edu

Birding PA Culinary Tips

Bing's Diner - 101 S. Walnut St. Burnham, PA 17009 (With 1950s décor and good food, this is a good place for lunch or for a huge Ice Cream Sundae!)

Cora's Creekside Tavern – 206 W. Freedom Ave. Burnham PA 17009

<http://www.corascreeksidetavern.com/>



Order Your Meeting T-Shirt

For the first time since 2000 when we held our meeting in Greene County, we are offering meeting T-shirts for sale. You may order yours in either Irish green or iris blue when you register. On the front is the Pileated Woodpecker flying across the image of the state. The back depicts the outline of Cumberland County with a Dickcissel in the left corner.

Mifflin County Marathon

By Ted Nichols II, Annville, PA (Lebanon County)

Ahh, the Shaver's Creek Birding Cup – something you've certainly heard of if you actively bird in Pennsylvania. The event represents an esteemed fundraising centered around a competitive birding event that benefits Penn State's Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. The cup selects winning teams in four categories: The Birding Cup (most species in Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Mifflin, Juniata, Huntingdon, and Blair), The County Cup (most species overall in only one of the above counties), The Potter Mug (most species seen by a team with all members who have an average of less than two years of birding experience), and The Birding Boot (most species identified traveling by non-motorized means).

With Chad Kauffman setting one of his annual challenges this year to boost the eBird numbers for Mifflin County in 2017, early on in the year Deuane Hoffman (Dauphin County) had mentioned to me about putting together a team for The Birding Cup and competing in The County Cup by birding solely Mifflin County. It wasn't long before we recruited Vince Pantanella (Lancaster County) and Ian Gardner (Dauphin County) to join us to take part in the event this year. As craft beer geeks, we attempted to find a name for our team that honored that interest as well as birds, and we arrived on the name of Team Keg Chukar. (*Lagerhead Shrikes is another craft-beer-inspired name already taken by a World Series of Birding Team made up of Delaware Valley Ornithological Club members.*)

The weather for this year's event was borderline abysmal with heavy rain experienced for a good portion of the competition. Some roads were closed due to flooding, however we made the best of things. The competition started at 7 p.m. on May 5, and birds seen through 7 p.m. on May 6 could be counted. Rules for the competition also require that three-quarters of team members must see or hear the bird for it to count. We started trying to tick a few species of waterfowl and other birds on the Juniata River at Victory Park near Lewistown. As luck would have it, when we showed up before the count to get ready, we spotted a number of goodies, including a Common Merganser family, Ruddy Ducks, Cliff Swallows, Spotted Sandpipers cruising down the river on debris, a Green Heron, and a flyover Bald Eagle. We eagerly awaited ticking these when the clock started; but unfortunately, the Bald Eagle and Green Heron took off before the official start. We still picked up some good birds to start things off. We then left to take advantage of the remaining light to log shorebirds in the only suitable habitat we could find in the county – flooded fields along Barefoot Road

between Siglerville and Locke Mills. Here we added Killdeer, Spotted Sandpipers, and Solitary Sandpipers.

Our focus then shifted to try to log warblers in wooded habitat in Rothrock State Forest in the vicinity of Coopers Gap Road which was nearby an area that had been scouted the day before. We expected to find Great Horned Owl, American Woodcock, and Eastern Whip-poor-will after dusk. On the way there, we ticked Red-headed Woodpecker near Old 3 Cent Lane; this was a good pickup! We continued efforts until around midnight, attempting for rails in the county's only marshy area along Coffee Run outside Reedsville; but unfortunately, our efforts were not fruitful. Following that attempt, we did take a three-hour "nap" during the middle of the night when the very heavy rains fell. We needed to recharge for a full day of birding on May 6.

Around 3:30 a.m. we awakened to go out to tick thrushes at areas near the Kishacoquillas Valley/Rothrock State Forest near Siglerville. We felt that this location would be good for nocturnal flight calls, and we were successful in logging Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes during stops in these areas. Before we knew it, the sun was rising, and we headed to the Woodcock Management Area of State Game Lands 107 to look for second-growth bird specialties. Our target was Golden-winged Warbler, which had been spotted prior to the count in our scouting efforts, but we dipped. Goodies picked up here, however, included Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Purple Finch, and Blue-winged Warbler among other expected species.

We then headed to Bald Eagle State Forest along Red Ridge Road near Bannerville and Bear Gap and concentrated on forest birds; here we picked up Pine Warbler in an area of pines on the ridge. It was a slow day for Empids, but we did tick an Acadian Flycatcher near Bear Gap. From there, we spent the majority of the day running around to various habitats, attempting to fill in the gaps in our list. Rothrock State Forest, mostly along Licking Creek Road, allowed us to round out the warbler list. Grasslands outside Menno provided good views of Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink, Vesper Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. A worthwhile return to the flooded fields along Barefoot Road allowed us to add Least Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, and American Pipits which had arrived since our visit the night before. We tried again for Golden-winged Warbler at the Woodcock Management Area and dipped again; however we did add Ruby-throated Hummingbird to our list here. We ended our effort where we started, and we were finally able to

get the Green Heron that escaped us on Friday. Though it was present when we arrived, just like clockwork it took off at the same time as it had the day before. I'd say our most notable misses for the count were Eastern Screech-Owl and Hairy Woodpecker.

Due to renovations occurring at Shaver's Creek, the finish line and count-up location for this year was held at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center in State College. Upon arrival, it was great to see many PSO members also participating in this year's competition from near and far! As the results started to be announced for the county cup, it became clear with the third place announcement that our 20+ hour effort would put us in the top two positions for the county cup. With great fanfare (not really), it was then announced Team Keg Chukar was the winner of the 2017 Shaver's Creek Birding Cup County Cup with 129 species

logged in Mifflin County during the contest. Chad Kauffman's team, the Juniata Juncos, which focused on Juniata County, came in second with 125 species. In retrospect, we didn't do all that badly considering the team winning for all seven counties netted 142 species and benefited from great waterfowl present at Bald Eagle State Park. Next year, our team hopes to reassemble and choose another county that is normally neglected during the competition to see just what we can do to keep our winning streak going! In the end, it was also rewarding to know our fun and related fundraising efforts helped Shaver's Creek to net more than \$12,000. This amount, raised by all the teams for this year's fundraising goal, will help provide bird-safe windows at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

Learn more about the Shaver's Creek Birding Cup at <http://www.shaverscreek.org/public-programs-and-events/birding-cup/>.

PSO Board of Directors Held Spring Meeting

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Board of Directors met on April 8, 2017, with 14 directors present for their spring meeting.

Frank Haas gave the treasurer's report and said that the PSO finances have had a steady underlying growth over the years. The report showed that PSO is still in good financial shape.

After some discussion, it was decided that when Chad Kauffman completes his report of previous field trips, the information will be immediately posted to the website and then will also be incorporated into the next newsletter.

The fall issue of *Pennsylvania Birds* may be a little late due to the probable resignation of our photo editor, Ted Nichols. Ted has had an increased work load at his job and does not feel that he can spend the necessary time doing the photo editor's job.

The next annual meeting will be held in Cumberland County, September 15-17, 2017, at the Comfort Inn and Suites in downtown Carlisle. There will be 10 field trips per day with no more than 12 people on each trip. A meeting T-shirt will be sold with the profits supporting the youth scholarship program. Another possibility to raise funds is to ask businesses to sponsor the meeting. Also, it was voted to have a 50/50 raffle. Registration will be possible online again this year, beginning on June 10. A lower student registration fee was discussed.

The Audubon Hawkwatch at Waggoner's Gap was voted as the recipient of the conservation award for 2017 and Scott Weidensaul, as the Poole Award winner.

The membership survey was reviewed which led to a discussion of the annual meeting in general. The discussion centered around how more members can be attracted to the annual meeting. One of the outcomes of the discussion was that the annual meeting will probably be held in the fall for the next two or three years after which we will evaluate the response. Also, we need to publicize future meeting locations and dates as early as possible so members can plan ahead. Current plans are for the 2018 meeting to be in Crawford County and the 2019 meeting to be in northeastern Pennsylvania.

We discussed how the Conservation Committee can best serve the PSO membership. Some suggestions were to provide information on conservation issues, promote members' participation in bird census surveys, or possibly raise money for a specific issue.

The Education Committee has taken on the responsibility of selecting the youth scholarship winner and associated arrangements. They are also considering providing resources for educational tips, local workshops, and distributing young birder kits. Another consideration is establishing a Conservation Fund to provide scholarships for youth attending birding camps. The fund could initially be funded by renaming the Discretionary Fund the Conservation Fund. No action was taken.

PORC is using an expedited review process to help minimize any backlog. For the record to fit this process, it must include a photograph of the bird. A problem has developed with the PORC site becoming full and not

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The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



Whither Golden-winged Warblers? A Golden Opportunity to Help Out!



The Golden-winged Warbler is in a steady decline, especially in the Northeast.

Photo by Tony Bruno

It is well known that the Golden-winged Warbler is in a steady decline, especially in the Northeast. The very positive factor in Pennsylvania is that concerted young forest management is being conducted that certainly is creating opportunities for Golden-wings to expand their populations. Recent salvage and shelterwood cuts have created habitat blocks in places like Delaware State Forest and various game lands. And controlled burn projects are rejuvenating oak forests and scrub oak barrens in a variety of places. Active aspen management also is a standard silviculture technique that is often used for regeneration because that tree benefits a variety of wildlife species, including Ruffed Grouse and Golden-wings. Golden-wings benefit from disturbance activities in a forested landscape. So, their habitat is dynamic by nature. It just keeps moving around even if the birds or our eyes can't keep track.

Yet, we are losing Golden-winged Warbler populations. Through my own Golden-winged surveys, I have witnessed local extirpations of this species in Columbia

County locations near Berwick; cuttings in Loyalsock State Forest, Sullivan County; and the Weiser State Forest Penn Forest tract. Perhaps these populations were too small to be sustained and "winked out" due to stochastic effects. There may be other Golden-winged Warbler populations out there that are being missed because of a lack of coverage of newly created canopy gaps caused by various disturbances, including timbering and fire. It may take a few years after the event for the vegetation to meet conditions needed to attract Golden-wings. So, patience and persistence are necessary.

I wonder if there are any Golden-winged Warblers nesting in the large block of counties in the Upper Central Susquehanna region including Union, Northumberland, Montour, Columbia, Lycoming, Sullivan, and Bradford Counties. Know of any?

I invite birders to keep looking for Golden-winged Warblers and to enter these records into eBird. Please be as specific about locations as possible. This will allow us to better understand the moving map of Golden-winged Warblers and see the results of disturbance, either planned or unplanned. After all, the largest populations of Golden-wings are totally accidental. Now we can plan and respond to opportunities, not just wait for a "golden opportunity."

Goshawk Searches in Game Lands and Remote Locations

As reported previously in this column, PA eBird, the May issue of "Pennsylvania Game News," Hawk Mountain Sanctuary news, and through the Pennsylvania Goshawk Project, we are searching for breeding Northern Goshawks in Pennsylvania. This is a tough and delicate process requiring both diligence and discretion. One of the needs of our project is a few good birders who are willing to check out the few reports we have received of goshawks.

The Northern Goshawk is considered "Near Threatened" in the state by the Ornithological Technical Committee. It may be rare enough to be called Threatened. The state's birders have contributed a great deal to our knowledge about this bird especially through the two breeding bird atlas projects. But, more surveys are needed now with the apparent decline of this species and its need for protection. For more information about the OTC / Pennsylvania Goshawk Project visit

www.pabiologicalsurvey.org/goshawk.

Goshawk reports can be e-mailed to goshawk@psu.edu. Any goshawk observations on game lands should be sent to pccgoshawk@pa.gov. Reports to either the Pennsylvania Goshawk Project or the Game Commission will be treated as confidential. We are getting a few reports, but

the follow-up is needed to confirm the reports and better assess this species' status.

Looking for Boreal Forest Birds including the Big Boreal Pewee

I am partnering with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to conduct breeding bird surveys in the state's peatlands. David Yeany and I are planning several surveys this summer to add to the pile we did last year. As many of you know, I have studied Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler for many years. Our concerns extend to several other species that nest in the northern conifer forests and wooded wetlands of the state's headwaters. Despite challenges, we are optimistic of finding rare boreal bird species. Our discoveries have led us to wonder if more boreal rarities could be found if birders did more searching.

Olive-sided Flycatcher should be the target of birder searches in Pennsylvania. This "Peregrine of the Flycatchers" often perches prominently on a snag to declare itself as the local king and is willing to tangle with much larger birds to prove its moxie. When it nested in the state, the Olive-sided Flycatcher was found in higher elevation forests and wetlands usually over 1500 feet.

Last year, David had an Olive-sided Flycatcher singing in a remote boreal wetland in North-central Pennsylvania. We have no evidence of nesting, but the bird seemed intent on settling in our state. I and others have heard and seen this big boreal forest pewee proclaiming itself at other various locations in June. Olive-sided Flycatchers are a late migrant, often traveling north in early June, but a singing bird might be settling in. A singing bird may indicate either that it is still searching for a mate or that it has a mate unseen by the human observer. Not only do Olive-sided Flycatchers inhabit boreal bogs but also lake and pond sides, old cuttings, and burned-over areas. They are one of the few birds that will forage on wasps and bees. They also will fly out and snag big dragonflies. The loud song of the "boreal pewee" was once commonly heard in summer in places like Pymatuning Swamp, North Mountain, the Pocono Mountains, and what is now Allegheny National Forest and Cook Forest. Their territories invariably include conifers such as spruces, tamaracks, hemlocks, and firs but also includes deciduous trees such as maples aspens, and mountain ash. The first documented nesting in the state was near Hazleton, Luzerne County, in an area that has been converted from forest to strip mines. The last time it was documented

nesting in Pennsylvania was in 1932 when it was found in Pymatuning Swamp, a location that now is underwater in Pymatuning Lake.

Recently, Olive-sided Flycatchers have been found nesting in the mountains of West Virginia. Might they also find a home in Pennsylvania's remote forests and bogs? I am looking, and I invite others to join in the search.



This Olive-sided Flycatcher was photographed along the Five Bridges Trail, Jefferson Co., by Flo McGuire on 9/14/2016.

In addition, we are always interested in reports of Blackpoll Warblers and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in the breeding season. Both are easily overlooked. The locations that we have documented these species will be monitored again this year, but we wonder if they are being missed elsewhere due to lack of coverage. Birders should be looking for them in other spruce areas including the Poconos region where there is a lot of spruce and the big block of forest in the Northwest. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers not only breed in boreal conifer swamps, but also will nest along shady brooks where there is a lot of moss and

tip-ups. They do deserve the moniker of "moss tyrant" since they tend to nest in rich mats of sphagnum moss in shady conifer or mixed woods. Many Pocono wetlands remain unvisited by Pennsylvania birders. They offer many exciting finds.

Penn State student Eric Zawatski has been assisting my studies the last few years but is moving west this summer. His study of Blackpoll Warbler habitat last year found that Blackpolls not only are found in red spruce, but also nest in shrubby wetlands with few large trees. Several Blackpoll territories were dominated by blueberry and mountain holly shrubs with scattered black spruce and eastern tamarack. Almost all Blackpolls have been found where spruce are found in Pennsylvania.

The last Atlas shows that other boreal birds are in a decline. These include Northern Waterthrush and White-throated Sparrow. Recent declines in Blue-headed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler suggest that hemlock wooly adelgid mortality may be having an effect on these and other conifer-associated species.

Good Pennsylvania and World Birding!

Doug Gross, Endangered and Non-game Bird Section Supervisor
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Ornithological Literature Notes

Have you ever had trouble deciding whether you are looking at a Thayer's Gull or a "Kumlien's" Iceland Gull? It will soon no longer matter for making a species-level distinction.

The Iceland Gull and the Thayer's Gull are being lumped taxonomically into a single species named the Iceland Gull. This will not become "official" until the annual supplement to the former *American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds* is published in July by the American Ornithological Society (AOS). Nevertheless, I have learned in advance that the vote by the society's North American Classification Committee was unanimous, indicating that the ruling will not likely get a last-minute retraction.

The decision for the merger, made by the AOS North American Classification Committee, ends decades of disagreement about the taxonomic status of these two arctic gulls. Jon Dunn, coauthor of the prestigious reference *Gulls of the Americas*, and Van Rensen, professor of natural science at Louisiana State University, suggested the merger to the AOS committee in March of this year. Their proposal was based on an extensively detailed synthesis of two dozen publications dating back to the early 20th century.

Those publications have told a long and complicated taxonomic story. It has been a quandary about how Thayer's and Iceland – as well as Herring – gulls could be related to one another.

W. Sprague Brooks at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology first described Thayer's as a full species named *Larus thayeri* in 1915. He could scarcely have imagined the sometimes heated disputes among taxonomists that plagued his judgment ever since. At subsequent extremes, Thayer's has even been treated as a subspecies of Herring Gull and as a subspecies of Iceland Gull.

At the end in 1973, the *Check-list of North American Birds* officially designated it as *Larus thayeri*, a separate species, just as Brooks had originally done. That 1973 decision was based almost entirely on a controversial 1966 publication by Neal G. Smith, which purported to show



Geoff Malosh photographed this immature Thayer's Gull at the head of the Ohio River in Pittsburgh on March 3, 2010.

experimentally that Thayer's and Iceland do not interbreed. But Smith's entire study was later dismissed as questionable in its methods, its supposed results, and its conclusions.

No ornithologist since then has found evidence supporting Smith's findings. In fact, much evidence shows that Thayer's and Iceland *do* interbreed regularly. Until genetic studies might someday suggest reconsideration, the AOS committee agrees with Dunn and

Rensen that a merger of Thayer's and Iceland is warranted.

Perhaps that should not be a surprise for one of many reasons: the continuous range of variation from black to pale gray to white primaries in the Thayer's/Kumlien's/Iceland complex, complicating identification. As birders know, there are no consistently discrete divisions among those features.

Gull guru Steve N. G. Howell advised observers way back in a 1998 article in *Birder's Journal*, "Calling the largest and darkest birds Thayer's and the smallest and palest birds Iceland may be as good as anything for now, but one should realize that these definitions are tenuous, that the entities remain somewhat amorphous, and that some birds fall in the overlap zones and are thus even less identifiable in the field."

The American Birding Association's taxonomic placements automatically adhere to the AOS Checklist. Birders who have seen both Thayer's and Iceland and who base their life lists on the ABA Checklist will lose a species.

A footnote: The American Ornithologists' Union and the Cooper Ornithological Society recently joined together as the American Ornithological Society. According to the new organization's website, the former *AOU Check-list of North American Birds* is now the *AOS Checklist of North and Middle American Birds*.

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PSO Annual Meetings

On the recent PSO field trip to Presque Isle, someone asked at dinner where our previous meetings had been held. We thought it might be a good idea to include the information in this newsletter.

Date	Venue	Location	County
October 12-14, 1990	Sieg Conference Center	Lock Haven, PA	Clinton
September 13-15, 1991	Crystal Lake Camps	Hughesville, PA	Lycoming
May 15-17, 1992	Presque Isle State Park	Erie, PA	Erie
May 21-23, 1993	Millersville University	Millersville, PA	Lancaster
May 20-22, 1994	Powdermill Nature Reserve	Rector, PA	Westmoreland
May 19-21, 1995	Hazleton Campus, Penn State	Hazleton, PA	Luzerne
May 17-19, 1996	Slippery Rock University	Slippery Rock, PA	Butler
May 16-18, 1997	Mont Alto Campus, Penn State	Mont Alto, PA	Franklin
May 15-17, 1998	Mansfield State University	Mansfield, PA	Tioga
September 24-26, 1999	Holiday Inn	Morgantown, PA	Berks
May 19-21, 2000	Rohanna's Restaurant	Waynesburg, PA	Greene
May 18-20, 2001	Ramada Inn	State College, PA	Centre
May 17-19, 2002	East Stroudsburg University	East Stroudsburg, PA	Monroe
May 16-18, 2003	Holiday Inn	Indiana, PA	Indiana
May 14-16, 2004	Montour Preserve	Danville, PA	Montour
May 20-22, 2005	Holiday Inn	Clarion, PA	Clarion
May 19-21, 2006	Ramada Inn	Ligonier, PA	Westmoreland
May 18-20, 2007	Best Western Inn	Harrisburg, PA	Dauphin
May 16-18, 2008	Four Points by Sheraton	Mars, PA	Butler
May 15-17, 2009	Holiday Inn	Morgantown, PA	Berks
May 14-16, 2010	Bel-Aire Clarion Hotel	Erie, PA	Erie
May 20-22, 2011	Bedford Elks Country Club	Bedford, PA	Bedford
May 18-20, 2012	Sieg Conference Center	Lock Haven, PA	Clinton
May 31-June 2, 2013	Quality Inn	Wilkes-Barre, PA	Luzerne
June 6-8, 2014	Bradford Campus, Pitt	Bradford, PA	McKean
May 29-31, 2015	Days Inn	West Chester, PA	Chester
May 20-22, 2016	Quality Inn	Somerset, PA	Somerset
September 15-17, 2017	Comfort Suites	Carlisle, PA	Cumberland

PSO's May Trip to Northwestern PA

by Chad Kauffman

It is always great to think about a trip to the northwestern corner of PA, no matter what time of the year it is. I particularly like to go in May as I have had some of my best migration moments on Presque Isle. We noted the heavy migration the week before our trip, which was scheduled for the third weekend of May.

A few birders had already arrived at Presque Isle on Friday morning before we met with our group. Our first major surprise was seeing a lingering Eared Grebe. We saw it near the water's edge before we exited our car. I

first shouted "Pied-billed Grebe," then we thought it was a Horned Grebe. After everyone climbed out with bins and cameras, we all agreed it was an Eared Grebe. This was not a bird we expected to see in mid-May, and seeing one in breeding plumage was awesome.

We had heard about the report of a Black Scoter being seen early morning with Buffleheads at Beach 11. When we arrived at Beach 11 and scanned the water, we were again pleasantly surprised to see the flock on the water among a lot of fishing boats. This isn't an easy bird to

find in PA, so we added yet another odd bird to our list. While scanning and waving to Mary Birdsong who was at Gull Point, the birds there took flight, and we were able to see Great Egret, Caspian Tern, and Common Tern.

We found some small flocks of birds, but numbers were low, so we had to work for our birds a bit more than usual. The Yellow Warbler is always the bird of the area, but we got to see and hear a few others.

On Saturday, it seemed like the winds had emptied the isle of birds, so we had to find the newcomers that were still moving north. The high winds made the waters really choppy, so the waterfowl were almost nonexistent. We tried to find protected areas to do our birding. We did luck into some active Red-breasted Nuthatches on the north side of the isle near the pines, the only spot we saw them on the weekend. We ran into another birder who found a perched Common Nighthawk off Sidewalk Trail, so we explored that area and were fortunate to spot it loafing on a branch. Several of us obtained good pics.

On Sunday morning, we ventured south to visit Crawford County. There had been an exciting report of a King Rail at the Geneva Marsh, so we were looking forward to visiting a different habitat. We were able to hear Soras and Virginia Rails, but we weren't lucky to get the King Rail. We had some awesome, point blank views of Prothonotary Warblers, as well as a flyby Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.



Susan Braun photographed the resting Common Nighthawk just off the Sidewalk Trail.



We had some awesome point blank views of Prothonotary Warbler.

Photo by Roger Higbee

Overall, we had another great PSO trip, met more people, matched names to faces, and enjoyed some new dining areas. We also promoted birding to those locales. Our birding checklist reached more than 130 species which were seen and/or heard by someone in the group.

Special thanks to Chad Kauffman for leading yet another enjoyable birding trip!

PSO Board of Directors Held Spring Meeting

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accepting records for review. This will be fixed by incorporating the PORC database into the PSO database.

A new website is in the works and should be in place before the fall meeting.

– Roger Higbee, Secretary

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 5)

1. Black Rail
2. Trumpeter Swan
3. Saltmarsh Sparrow
4. Kirtland's Warbler
5. Black-headed Grosbeak



Tina Alianiello photographed this Blackburnian Warbler on our recent Presque Isle field trip.

PSO Newsletter

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

Membership Categories:

PSO	Individual	\$ 30.00
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