

May, 1991

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

May has arrived! The warblers are here! I've been rather busy with a new addition to our family, but I hope you're out in the field in your Special Area looking at birds.

Our Special Areas Project is well underway. Forms have been designed; packets have been sent to interested persons; and birders are already inventorying birds in at least nine state parks.

Plans have almost been finalized for our second annual fall meeting. Shonah Hunter has been working hard to organize the field trips, workshops, and meeting.

We have been having a few problems with our mail. This problem will soon be resolved. Please bear with us through our difficulties. Thanks!

PSO has come a long way since our beginning. We are an active society. I hope you share our enthusiasm and participate in the Special Areas Project and in our fall meeting. See you in September!

--Conrad Schmidt, President

SECOND ANNUAL PSO MEETING

Plans are being completed for the second annual PSO meeting. The meeting will be held September 13, 14, and 15, 1991, at Crystal Lake Camps, north of Hughesville in north-central Pennsylvania. Crystal Lake Camps is well known for its miles of cross country ski trails and hospitable accommodations. The camp's remote country setting includes 920 acres of

varied habitat--hemlocks, hardwood forest, wetlands, cranberry and blueberry bogs, and lakes.

Some interesting field trips are planned. On Saturday morning a beginning bird walk is planned on the camp property. Doug Gross, coordinator of the Breeding Bird Atlas Project in the Crystal Lake area, reports that we should find a variety of species, including Common Ravens, Swainson's Thrushes, and Mourning Warblers. Also on Saturday morning, Doug will be leading a SAP trip to World's End State Park and adjacent Wyoming State Forest.

Saturday afternoon we will have presentations on various ornithological topics. Last year's presentations were outstanding. Details on subjects to be covered will be sent to you with the registration information.

Saturday evening the annual business meeting will be conducted. Election of officers is scheduled, and we will discuss projects for the organization.

Additional field trips to nearby areas will be conducted on Sunday morning. Possibilities include Rose Valley Lake, Rickett's Glen, Montour Preserve, the Riverlands, and Loyalsock Creek.

Many recreational facilities are available for our use, free of charge, at Crystal Lake Camps, including swimming, boating, tennis, hiking, etc. These activities are available for your family's use while you bird and attend meetings, so this weekend would make a good family mini vacation. Rates are reasonable. Cost of accommodations for two nights, including meals is \$58 per

person. One night including meals (Friday supper through Saturday lunch) costs \$29. Meals may be purchased separately. Costs are as follows:

Breakfast	\$4
Lunch	\$5
Dinner	\$7

Other accommodation/meal combinations will be available if you cannot stay for the entire weekend.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend! Detailed registration and program information will be sent to you in early summer. If you have any questions, please contact Shonah A. Hunter, Department of Biological Sciences, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745. Phone (717) 893-2062.

PORC UPDATE

--by Ed Kwater

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) is now in its third calendar year. We have been receiving numerous rarity reports, and we welcome receiving as many as possible. The mechanisms are now in place to identify which species are classified as rarities within our state.

Pennsylvania Birds is the vehicle by which all PORC news is disseminated. The second annual report is currently being prepared for publication in Pennsylvania Birds Volume 5, No. 2. Reports will be published annually and will reflect PORC's decisions made on the documentation of rare birds reviewed during the past twelve months.

The official list of Pennsylvania birds has been published in Pennsylvania Birds as a direct result of the deliberations of PORC. This list will be reviewed and upgraded every five years.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

It has been shown that the minimal speed at which a bird can fly and still remain airborne is about 16.5 feet per second, or about 11 miles per hour.



THE RAVEN REPORTER

News of the Special Areas Project

My first experience with World's End State Park was as a Boy Scout, back-packing my way along the length of the Loyalsock Trail. So, like any true "ridgerunner," I entered the area on foot. I was burdened by an overly heavy pack, quite sweaty, and ready for an ice cream from the concession stand and a cool swim in the creek. Instead, we marched through the park, over a bridge, and hiked (or, perhaps, crawled) out of the Loyalsock Creek's deep glen to find camping further along the trail in Wyoming State Forest. I can still remember struggling up the steep grade, grabbing saplings and tree roots with muddy hands, and pulling my way up the slope to High Rock Lookout. There, we caught our breath and paused to admire the expansive forests of Sullivan County, interrupted only by the curves of Route 154 and Loyalsock Creek.

Even then, I wore a pair of binoculars when I hiked--a fledgling birder with a backpack. I was curious, but I had little guidance. Where could I find out what birds lived in Sullivan County, much less World's End State Park? What were the big, black birds soaring over the park? Or, at least, what would they most likely be? Were they crows? Vultures? Ravens? Could they be any or all of these? Do these birds nest in the park? Would I find them there in the winter? None of these questions could easily be answered by any literature offered. For this area and much of the state, there still is no literature easily accessible today.

Although some accomplished birders toured the area, there is very little

published about the area's birds, even at the much visited World's End State Park. As far as nesting birds, the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas will change this situation when it is published. Skip Conant and I are gathering data for the entire year in order to publish an annotated checklist of the birds of Sullivan County sometime in the future. However, most members of the public want something specific when they visit a park. They want something small and simple that addresses their interests. In short, people want a good, easy-to-understand checklist. Park personnel would also like more information in order to educate the public about the park's wildlife and to manage the park's resources. Although some park rangers are accomplished naturalists, their time is monopolized by providing many other services to the general public; they have no time to write checklists.

Our local group, the North Branch Bird Club, is adopting World's End State Park as our Special Area. We also plan to eventually inventory the adjacent Wyoming State Forest as a parallel project. Some members of our group will also inventory a small Natural Area in Columbia County named Jakey's Hollow. It holds a small stand of mature, virgin forest only a few miles from Bloomsburg. Several other clubs have expressed an interest in the project.

Our First Sponsors

The first club to sponsor the Special Areas Project was the Todd Bird Club of Indiana County. This group has already begun to survey birds at Yellow Creek State Park. It promises to be one of our largest inventories. Yellow Creek attracts many migrant water birds, including many vagrants. Many of the sightings have appeared in Pennsylvania Birds. The work of the Todd Bird Club will certainly highlight the importance of Yellow Creek as a stopover for migratory birds of many species.

It is particularly appropriate that

an organization which bears the name of the legendary W. E. Clyde Todd, author of Birds of Western Pennsylvania, is the first to join in this effort. The Special Areas Project shares much of the exploratory spirit held by Todd who was often the first ornithologist to walk into many places to study birds. It has been more than 50 years since the publication of that landmark book, yet much of Pennsylvania is poorly explored by naturalists. With the advent of the Atlas Project and now the Special Areas Project, perhaps this will change.

Several of the leading birders in Pennsylvania have expressed an interest in the project and have even selected Special Areas to work in. For instance, Lycoming Audubon Society became the second local sponsoring organization and will inventory birds at Susquehanna State Park near Williamsport. We will keep you informed of the progress made by these and other groups in this column.

How to Become Involved with the Special Areas Project

Special Areas Projects are being sponsored by small local clubs or chapters of larger organizations, usually a bird club or an Audubon Society. Each Special Area needs a Local Coordinator. This person must be a good organizer and communicator, as well as a good birder. We anticipate that many former Breeding Bird Atlas Regional Coordinators will fulfill this role. If you are interested in being the Local Coordinator for a Special Areas Project, please contact Douglas Gross, Chairman of the SAP Committee. His address is given below. Other members of the committee are Bob Martin, Margaret Brittingham, Margaret Higbee, and Daniel Brauning.

What can you do while you are waiting for your package of forms and instructions? Pick your Special Area. We offer a list of places that have been suggested for inventory by the PaDER, interested birders, and our own committee members. It is also important

to approach the administrator of the Special Area (the State Park Superintendent, District Forester) and talk with him about the project. We are asking for a \$25 donation from each sponsoring organization in order to fund expenses we expect to incur during the project. Please approach your group for these funds and send all proceeds to Bob Martin.

--Douglas A. Gross

For information, contact:

Douglas A. Gross
c/o Ecology III
R.R. 1
Berwick, PA 18603

Bob Martin
128 Elmwood Court
Emporium, PA 15834

STATE PARKS, NATURAL AREAS, AND FORESTS
TARGETED FOR
SPECIAL AREAS PROJECT INVENTORY

<u>State Parks</u>	<u>County</u>
Black Moshannon	Centre
Codorus Creek	York
Cook Forest	Clarion
Evansburg	Montgomery
French Creek	Berks
Hickory Run	Carbon
Keystone	Westmoreland
*King's Gap	Cumberland
Laurel Hill	Somerset
Little Pine	Lycoming
McConnell's Mill	Lawrence
Moraine	Butler
Ohiopyle	Fayette
Parker Dam	Clearfield
*Prince Gallitzin	Cambria
Pymatuning	Crawford
Raymond B. Winter	Union
Ridley Creek	Delaware
Rickett's Glen	Luzerne/Sullivan
Ryerson Station	Greene
Shawnee	Bedford
*Susquehanna	Lycoming
*Susquehannock	Lancaster
Swatara	Lebanon
Tuscarora	Schuylkill
White Clay Creek	Chester
*World's End	Sullivan
*Yellow Creek	Indiana

DER - Bureau of Forestry
Natural and Wild Areas

Alan Seeger	Huntingdon
Algerine Swamp	Lycoming
Bark Cabin	Lycoming
Bear Meadows	Centre
Bruce Lake	Pike
Detweiler Run	Huntingdon
Forrest H. Dutlinger	Clinton
*The Hemlocks	Perry
The Hook	Union
*Jakey's Hollow	Columbia
Johnson Run	Cameron
Joyce Kilmer	Union
Meeting of the Pines	Franklin
Mount Davis	Somerset
Mount Logan	Clinton
Pine Creek Gorge	Tioga
Pine Tree Trail	Elk
Rosecrans Bog	Clinton
Snyder-Middleswarth	Snyder
Sweet Root	Bedford
Tall Timbers	Snyder
Tamarack Swamp	Clinton
*Wycoff Run	Cameron

National Forests

Heart's Content	Warren
Scenic Area	
Tionesta Natural	Warren
and Scenic Area	

*Projects Started

FIELD TRIPS

The PSO has been invited to participate in the following field trips sponsored by the organizations noted in parentheses.

Saturday, May 11 (Appalachian Audubon Society)--King's Gap, Huntsdale Fish Hatchery, Opossum Lake, and environs, led by Jane Earle (717-486-7964). Meet at the King's Gap Pond parking lot at 7 a.m.

Sunday, May 12 through Tuesday, May 14 (Conococheague Audubon Society)--Presque Isle, led by Bill Hague (717-352-2647).

Friday, May 17 to Sunday, May 19 (York Audubon Society)--Presque Isle, led by Dick Humbert (717-266-1864).

Saturday, May 18 (Wyncote Audubon Society)--Bull's Island, led by Cliff Hence (215-438-1707). Migrant vireos and warblers are the targets of this outing.

Saturday, June 1 (Wyncote Audubon Society)--Ridley Creek State Park. Meet at 7 a.m. on Sycamore Mills Road. Call 215-572-1175 for further information.

A NOTE FROM YOUR TREASURER

Dues are to be paid on your anniversary renewal date. If you joined PSO before May 1, 1990, please remit your \$10 dues to:

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology
c/o Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
R.R. 2, Box 191
Kempton, PA 19529

NAMING OUR NEWSLETTER

You guessed it! We still haven't decided upon a name for our newsletter. At our second annual meeting in September, you, the members, will have the opportunity to vote for a name. So start thinking and send any of your ideas to PSO before the fall meeting.

FOR THE SHOREBIRDS

--by Scott Shalaway

It's not surprising that the shorebird project was one of the least popular in Pennsylvania's Volunteers for Wildlife program. It ranked ninth out of eleven projects, attracting less than 14 percent of the volunteers.

Maybe it's because most shorebirds are so drably colored. Or maybe it's because they frequent mud flats, a habitat that often sucks the shoes off

any human interloper who dares to intrude. More likely, though, it's because shorebirds are notoriously difficult to identify, so few people are really qualified to conduct such surveys.

In fact, it was these very negative qualities that attracted Jerry McWilliams, a member of the Presque Isle Audubon Society, to the project. "I like shorebirds because they're so difficult to identify," he says. "I like the challenge."

He proved equal to the challenge from the very beginning when he saw the project's original survey forms. He noticed immediately the list was incomplete and found errors regarding the status of several species on the list. Thanks to the work of McWilliams and 182 other volunteers around the state, those errors are being corrected.

Two or three times each week during the spring and fall migrations, McWilliams and several other volunteers from the Presque Isle Audubon Society census the shorebirds at Gull Point in Presque Isle State Park. On a good day, they may tally unusual species such as Whimbrels and Western and Baird's Sandpipers. Over the course of the year, as many as 22 species of shorebirds pass through Gull Point.

Jerry Book and two other volunteers from the Lancaster Bird Club conduct a similar survey on the Susquehanna River's Conejohela Flats. Book also enjoys the challenge of shorebird identification. He says he does it because, "It's fun."

Results from the Conejohela Flats project suggest that the Susquehanna may be more important to migrating shorebirds than anyone ever imagined. "We're finding birds listed as uncommon to rare statewide in much greater numbers than expected. This highlights the importance of the Susquehanna River as a migration route for shorebirds," he says.

Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits, Long-billed Dowitchers, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Buff-breasted Sandpipers are among the less common species found on the Flats' annual list that numbers 20 to 22 species per year.

Book's survey has had a tangible conservation payoff, too. Because of interest in the shorebird survey, Book reports that the Flats are now protected by the owners, the Safe Harbor Water Management Corporation. "Safe Harbor executives have been very cooperative and supportive of the project," he says with pride.

The value of volunteer projects should never be underestimated, according to Dr. Gordon Kirkland, professor of biology and Director of the Vertebrate Museum at Shippensburg University. He also advises the Pennsylvania Game Commission on conservation issues. "Population surveys by volunteers are especially valuable for less popular species such as shorebirds and bats," he states.

Because few people seek these critters out, they are poorly understood. Annual surveys by volunteers identify population trends that help alert biologists to ecological problems before they reach the crisis stage.

Though a paid professional, Kirkland also donates his time to state conservation projects. "We can't expect to be paid for everything we do," he says. "Perhaps that's why this volunteer program works. It attracts highly motivated volunteers who want to do what they're doing," says Kirkland. Volunteers like Jerry McWilliams and Jerry Book and the 1,327 people who volunteer for Pennsylvania's wildlife.

To learn more about shorebird identification, attend a local Audubon or bird club meeting and meet the resident shorebird expert. Every area has one. Then tag along on the next field trip he or she leads, and learn from the pro.

HOW TO GET A MAN TO PUT UP A BLUEBIRD BOX

--by Gloria Winger

I am a feminist. I really am. I know women are equal to men. I just happen to be married to a man who is good building, hammering, digging holes, you know, stuff I never got to do as a little girl. Not that I can't do it; just that I don't like to do it.

What happens when a feminist needs another bluebird box put up in the yard? First, she looks out the window and exclaims, "Oh, John, come and look! There are two pairs of bluebirds fighting over the same box! Isn't that heartbreaking? The poor little things!"

When he sees the four birds in action, a warning bell goes off in his head and he says, "Oh, well, that's nature."

The next day the feminist comes home with a bluebird box in the trunk of the car, praying that the four birds are still at it. She watches out the window carefully that afternoon and oohs and aahs loudly at every swoop of the wings. A lot of "poor little things" are necessary at this point.

After a mere two or three hours, the man says, "Maybe we ought to get another bluebird box sometime."

"Oh, Honey, I'm so glad you think so! I got one today," the feminist says. (There's some body language that goes with this that this newsletter can't convey. I'm sure you know it.)

The man says, "Some day we'll get a metal pole, and I'll put it up."

The next day, the feminist suggests a little shopping trip. Of course, a stop at a feed store is not out of the way. "Oh, John! Look at the metal poles! Isn't that just what we were talking about yesterday?"

"We'll have to come back for it some

other time," he says so sadly. "It's 6 1/2 feet tall. We'll have to bring the station wagon."

"Maybe it will fit!" Her excitement is strong. "I'll see if they'll let you take it out and try it before you buy it."

The cashier has other ideas. She suggests that if they can't take it today, they put the pole on lay-away. The feminist offers herself as a hostage until the man tries to get the pole in the car.

The man seems surprised at the conversation, looks at the twelve people in line behind him, who are all looking back at him, and resigns himself to fitting a 6 1/2 foot pole into the 5 foot interior of the car.

On the way home, the feminist insists that the car has to be locked while they stop for lunch.

"How could someone steal our pole?" the man asks. "We don't even know if we'll ever get it out."

At home the man seems determined to get the project completed. After two hours of labor, a little liquid refreshment, and a lot of sledging on the pole, the box is erected.

When the project is completed, the feminist watches out the window with anticipation. Will the second pair of bluebirds accept the new box? In my case, I never saw them again.

"Effects of Time of Day and Season on Winter Bird Counts." Brian F. Rolfinke and Richard H. Yahner, The Condor 92:215-219, The Cooper Ornithological Society, 1990.

Researchers examined the effects of time of day and season on counts of wintering birds in a central Pennsylvania forest. Black-capped

Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted Nuthatches were detected more often in the morning, whereas White-throated Sparrows were noted more often at midday (between 11 and 1:59 p.m.). Numbers of contacts of all species combined were relatively similar between morning and midday but were much lower in the afternoon (after 2:00 p.m.).

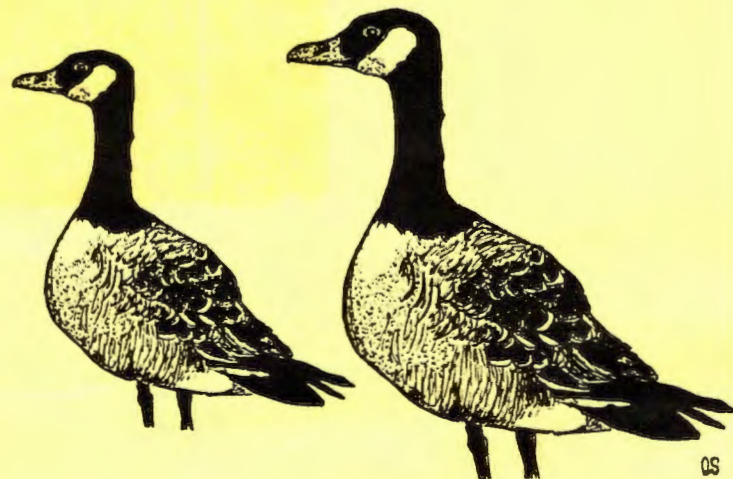
Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and White-throated Sparrows were observed more often in early winter (before 19 January) than later in the season. We conclude that winter bird counts can be conducted in both morning and midday hours with little or no qualitative loss of data. In addition, counts should be made in early winter to minimize the effects of food shortages later in winter that may influence avian mortality and movements to feeders.

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W07

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Dues are \$10 per year and are payable on or before your anniversary renewal date. Please make checks payable to "Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology" and mail with this form to:

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R.R. 2, Box 191
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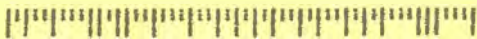
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