



November, 1992

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK....

Partners in Flight is an exciting new international effort by many different organizations and agencies to promote conservation of neotropical migratory birds. (See Margaret Brittingham's article on page 2 of this newsletter.) On November 21, the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania hosted a discussion on Partners in Flight at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in Camp Hill. The objectives of the meeting were to share information, build networks, and generate ideas to determine how we can most efficiently work together on the goal of neotropical migration conservation in Pennsylvania. The PSO Special Areas Project can be a vital link in this effort.

The meeting agenda included an overview and update of Partners in Flight by Charles Smith, Cornell University, Chairman of the Northeast Working Group; a telephone conference with Stan Senner, NAS, Boulder, Colorado, the Project Director of Birds in Balance, a companion NAS project; and a report from Dan Brauning, Ornithologist, PA Game Commission, on Population Dynamics of Neotropical Migrants in PA.

Attendees of the meeting represented NAS, PSO, DER, USFS, PGC, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Juniata College, International Paper Company, and The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. The group decided to form an open-ended Pennsylvania Working Group.

The success of Partners in Flight as an international conservation effort depends on the participation of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the corporate community. Even more important, however, is the participation and enthusiasm of the millions of people who enjoy birding. I am excited about our opportunity through PSO and other organizations to make a significant contribution to this effort. What is accomplished on the ground will determine our success.

The theme of PSO's 1993 annual meeting to be held at Millersville University of Pennsylvania is Partners in Flight. The Saturday afternoon sessions at our annual meeting will feature workshops and speakers on Partners in Flight. Field trips will include trips to Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Muddy Run Laboratory, and other Lancaster County hot spots. Although we had outstanding birding at Presque Isle State Park last year, we should have an interesting variety of migrants and breeding birds, including Blue Grosbeak, on our field trips this year. Accommodations will be available at the University.

More detailed information concerning the meeting will be in our next newsletter. Mark your calendar now for May 21-23!

Happy holidays!

--Bob Martin, President

PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Declines in Neotropical Migrants

Each spring birders are thrilled and inspired by the hoards of migrants that return to Pennsylvania's fields and forests. However, a disturbing trend is occurring. Using a variety of sources, including Breeding Bird Survey data, biologists have noted that many birds that migrate to Central and South America to spend the winter (neotropical migrants) have been declining in number. Each year, fewer and fewer migrants return. The causes of the declines are numerous, complex, and not entirely understood. Habitat loss and fragmentation negatively impact these birds on both the breeding grounds in Pennsylvania and also on the wintering grounds in Central and South America. During migration, these birds are faced with loss of habitat and exposed to a variety of hazards associated with urban sprawl.

Help is on the Way

Recognizing that reversing these declines would take a coordinated effort, international, federal, state, and private organizations joined together in 1990 to form PARTNERS IN FLIGHT, an international cooperative effort for neotropical bird conservation. Goals of the program are to determine the status and specific causes of neotropical migratory bird declines, to maintain stable populations of neotropical migrants, and to reverse declining population trends through habitat restoration and enhancement.

Birders Can Make a Difference

All of us can help reverse declines in Pennsylvania's neotropical migrants. One of the most important contributions we can make is to participate in ongoing surveys of Pennsylvania birds. These include

the annual breeding bird survey and PSO's own Special Areas Project. Birders can also contribute their time and enthusiasm to spread the word about birds and to get more people, particularly young people, interested and excited about birds. Finally, we can all contribute to organizations, such as Pennsylvania's Wild Resource Conservation Fund, that provide financial support for research, management, and education concerning birds.

Additional Information

For more information concerning PARTNERS IN FLIGHT and to receive their newsletter, write to Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036.

--Margaret Brittingham, Penn State University

WINDOW KILLED SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS NEEDED

As part of an investigation into a possible decline in northeastern Sharp-shinned Hawk populations, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary is seeking fresh window-killed specimens from throughout the East for contaminant analyses. Fresh or frozen birds can be used, but fresh are preferred. If you find a dead Sharp-shinned Hawk, please call Laurie Goodrich or Cathy Viverette immediately at (215) 756-6961. Mailing costs will be covered.

ANNUAL MEETING

May 21-23

Millersville University of PA



The Raven Reporter

The colorful Pennsylvania scenery has again become brown and drab. Birders are no longer watching for waves of warblers or waterfowl but instead await the winter birds. The period of November and early December is often an in-between time, a period for planning the Christmas bird count and impatiently checking the birdfeeders for new birds of the season. It is easy to fall into the doldrums of cold season birding. Sleeping in and enjoying the hot stove are much more tempting than tromping through the brown woods.

Dust Off the Cobwebs: This is a good time to get to know your SAP area better. Without the leaves and with fewer species to count, it is much easier to stretch your legs and hike a few trails that you have missed. Find a grove of conifers to check for owl pellets and crossbill cone flakes. You can really cover lots of ground in the fall when there are fewer distractions. Many hikers prefer the cooler weather for walking longer distances. You just do not get heated up as readily.

However, this advice is tinged with caution: remember to wear fluorescent orange in areas open to hunting during hunting season (especially deer season). Hunters may not expect you to be in the woods, so be careful if you are in an area that allows hunting. In my experience, birds are not really deterred by the color orange. If anything, curious birds are attracted to bright colors

and may allow closer viewing. I still birdwatch on State Game Lands during hunting season but visit them on Sundays when hunting is not allowed. We can share these lands with hunters if we use common sense and a good dose of caution. Please remember that hunters' dollars paid for some of the lands we use for birdwatching. Let's respect their use of it.

Be careful out there! Wear some blaze orange!

Involve Beginners: Winter is a good time to bring along some neophyte birders. Some beginners may have avoided the SAP trips because they were self-conscious or lacked confidence in making identifications. This time of year, there aren't as many bird species around to confuse the birders. And, without as much vegetation, it is much easier to show birds to your field trip companions and follow the birds until everyone gets a good look. In general, it is also easier to count birds, too. So, you can sharpen your skills in time for Christmas bird counts.

If beginners are really unsure of their field skills and still want to contribute, they can always help by acting as the field secretary for the group. This gives them the opportunity to get acquainted with the variety of bird names and their phylogenetic order. They can learn about the seasonality and abundance of birds in the local area by just being involved with the data management process.

SAP UPDATE

A big thanks to Jane Earle for serving as SAP Coordinator for the Appalachian Audubon Society Chapter. Appalachian Audubon has several SAP areas, including Pinchot and Swatara State Parks, Hemlocks Natural Area, and Huntsdale Fish Hatchery. Grace

Randolph is now assuming responsibility for collecting data for all of these SAP areas. She has already sent in batches of data. We are very grateful for your efforts. Thanks!

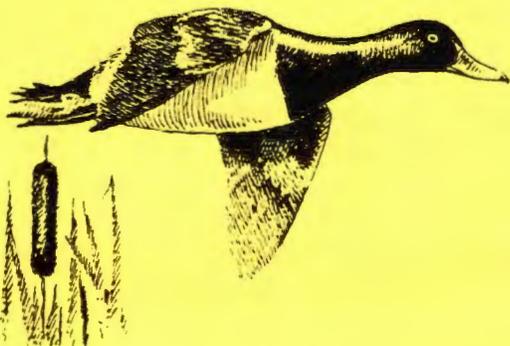
SAP data has poured in this quarter. Very notable are the efforts of the Todd Bird Club at Yellow Creek State Park. They visit Yellow Creek at least once each week, sometimes recording hundreds of birds. Joan Silagy's gang is doing a bang-up job at Blue Lake Marsh Recreation Area near Reading. Silagy's group visits Blue Marsh several times each month, sometimes in the evenings or late afternoons when they are more able to get away.

I would also like to give special thanks to Karen Lippy's efforts at Codorus Creek State Park. The field trips for that SAP are very well organized and result in lots of data. Of course, the real reward of this work is the many field experiences these groups get as a result of being in a good birding spot at all times of the year. Look for results of these SAPs in Pennsylvania Birds.

Several SAP coordinators sent in data this quarter. If you have not sent in any data lately, please send any data that you have collected.

A tip of the orange cap to all our volunteers!

--Doug Gross, PSO Special Areas Project, R.R. 1, Box 147, Orangeville, PA 17859. Phone 717-542-2191 (day) or 717-458-4564 (evenings).



THESE WOODS ARE OURS A REPORT ON PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE FOREST SYSTEM

--by Citizens Advisory Council

Council completed a two-year study of the issues and problems facing our state forests. These 2.1 million acres, considered nearly valueless when first acquired, are now an extraordinary resource. They have some of the most valuable hardwood timber in the world and are Pennsylvania's largest recreational asset. They are perhaps the most valuable state forest lands in the country and are unmatched in the number and size of designated natural and wild areas.

Based on visits to all 20 state forest districts and testimony from 100 groups and individuals, it was concluded that our state forests have inadequate budgets, problems regenerating timber on nearly half of the harvested stands, major new demands for recreational uses, and serious impacts from development which threaten their wild and open character. The report, widely distributed, has increased the debate about the future of these public lands. DER has launched a strategic planning effort to study Council's concerns and develop a consensus on the future direction of our forests.

The report is available upon request from Citizens' Advisory Council, 816 Executive House, P.O. Box 2357, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2357.

WHO ARE OUR OFFICERS?

President--Bob Martin

A native of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, Bob graduated from Penn State with a B.S. degree in Forest Management in 1961. After graduation, he was employed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a forester; since

July, 1974, he has served as district forester in the Elk Forest District in Emporium. He has been active in the Society of American Foresters, serving in many elected offices including Chairman of the Allegheny SAF (a five-state, 1200-member organization) in 1985-1986.

Birding has been Bob's hobby since high school, but his first formal birding project was the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project. As county coordinator, he saw the need to maintain a volunteer state-wide birding organization after the completion of the Atlas Project. Bob has been active in PSO, serving as our first Vice President from 1989 until he was elected President in 1991.

Vice President--Doug Gross

As a young hiker and bird-watcher, Doug walked the 50-mile Loyalsock Trail several times, always with binoculars. At Penn State he studied Brown Creepers as an independent project and went to Arizona with Dr. David Pearson to study tiger beetles. After encountering western birds, Doug viewed eastern birds with new appreciation. So, as part of his Master's degree work at Bloomsburg State, he researched Blue Jay ecology and banded over 100 jays. These experiences sparked a lifelong interest in bird ecology, especially corvids and forest passerines.

Since 1979, Doug has served as an environmental biologist at PP&L's Susquehanna Steam Electric Station near Berwick. In this capacity he has conducted hundreds of bird surveys, including Winter Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Censuses that have been published. Doug runs four BBS routes each summer and has participated in Christmas counts for over 20 years. He was PBBA Regional Coordinator for Columbia and Sullivan

Counties and wrote 17 species accounts for the Atlas. A member of the Ornithological Technical Committee, Doug has abiding interests in bird conservation and education. These interests are expressed in his study of Pennsylvania's threatened Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and chairmanship of PSO's Special Areas Project. Doug and his wife, Cindy Hose, live on a farmette near Orangeville with a friendly dog, a hungry horse, and an organic garden.

Secretary--Roy Ickes

Our secretary, Roy Ickes, is a professor of biology at Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania. Roy received his B.S. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, his M.S. from the University of Maryland, and his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh.

Roy has been an active birder for many years and has birded throughout the U.S., New Zealand, Malaysia, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. He has taught January ornithology courses in Maryland, Texas, California, the Virgin Islands, and Australia. He is the coordinator of the Washington Christmas Bird Count. During the Atlas Project, he served as the regional coordinator for Washington and Greene Counties. In addition, he authored 22 species accounts for the Atlas publication. Roy is also a member of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. Roy has been an active member of the PSO Board since 1989.

Treasurer--Eugene Zielinski

Eugene Zielinski, born in Buffalo, New York, became interested in nature as a child. He attended the State University of New York at Buffalo and received his B.S. in biology. In 1978, Gene left Buffalo for State College, where he intended to obtain his M.S.; instead he became

employed in a laboratory analyzing environmental, production, and air samples. He is currently contemplating a return to college for his M.S. in chemistry.

In his spare time, Gene can usually be found birding or working with plants. His latest project is an attempt to establish a patch of tallgrass prairie in his backyard. If he succeeds and happens to find a Dickcissel or a Greater Prairie Chicken among the grasses, he promises to write an article for this newsletter. He serves as secretary to both the Juniata Valley Audubon Society and the State College Bird Club. He credits both these organizations for turning him into a serious birder. Gene served as PSO's first secretary and held that position until he was elected Treasurer this year.

Board Member--Robert M. Ross

Bob Ross, born in Greenville, Pennsylvania, obtained his B.S. in biology from Thiel College, his M.S. in biology from the University of Guam, and his Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Hawaii. He worked as an assistant professor of zoology at the University of Hawaii from 1982-83 then as an adjunct professor of biology at Thiel College from 1983-88. In 1988 he accepted a position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Wellsboro, PA, as a Fishery Research Biologist. Since 1990, he has worked for U.S.F.W.S. as an Ecologist.

Bob's publications include "Communication Behavior in the White-breasted Nuthatch," "Saving a Heron Rookery" (*BirdWatcher's Digest* 12(6):62-67), and 18 articles on fishes.

During the Atlas Project, Bob served as a regional coordinator for Mercer, Butler, and Lawrence Coun-

ties. Since 1990, he has been the compiler for Tioga County for Pennsylvania Birds. Bob has been a life member of the AOU since 1968 and is a co-founder and director of the Bracka Great Blue Heron Sanctuary, Inc., since 1987. Bob was elected to the PSO Board at our 1992 spring meeting.

**OUR REMAINING FIVE BOARD MEMBERS
WILL BE FEATURED IN OUR NEXT
NEWSLETTER.**

IN MEMORY OF MERRILL WOOD

It was with shock and great sorrow that the birding community learned of the death of Merrill Wood on September 23 in State College.

Merrill Wood was born in Philadelphia in 1908. For many years he taught zoology and ornithology courses at Penn State. In 1973, he retired as Associate Professor of Zoology. His publications included *Birds of Pennsylvania*, *Birds of Central Pennsylvania*, and *Determining the Age and Sex of Birds*, a manual for banders.

Merrill was a member of the American Ornithological Union and the Wilson Ornithological Association; in addition, he was an honorary member of the Eastern Bird Banding Association. During his lifetime, he traveled throughout the United States and visited Mexico, Canada, Great Britain, and Africa, compiling a life list of 1163 species.

In 1939, Merrill married Helen Croll who preceded him in death after 48 years of marriage. He is survived by one son, Merrill, Jr., of Augusta, Georgia; one daughter, Emily Wood

Harpster, of Atlanta, Georgia; five grandchildren; and one great granddaughter.

RENEWAL NOTICE

Please check the date on your mailing label to see when your membership expires. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please remit your dues now. Checks should be made payable to "Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology" and mailed to Eugene Zielinski, Membership Chairperson, R.R. 2, Box 71, Bellefonte, PA 16823. Thanks for your cooperation!

NOVEMBER 1, 1992

--by Eugene Zielinski

The day did not look promising. At least that is what I thought when my alarm sounded at 7 a.m. that Sunday morning. The State College Bird Club had scheduled a field trip to Bald Eagle State Park, less than ten minutes from my home; but the bed was too warm, the house too cold, the weather too miserable, and the will too weak for me to get up. The existence of birders who are not morning people is living proof that Mother Nature is a practical joker.

I eventually did crawl out of bed and made it to the park by 10 a.m.; the field trip had begun at 8. After some searching, I found the group walking along the shore. They told me I had just missed a Sanderling at the beach, but I was just in time to see a large flock of Black Scoters. Despite the rain, we could see the scoters very well, particularly the orange on the males' bills. We counted 50 birds, an amazing number for a species that rarely shows up in Centre County.

We left the scoters and drove toward the breast of the dam. There

among flocks of Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, and Mallards, we located five Surf Scoters, including one adult male. Surf Scoters are perhaps even more unusual for Centre County than Black Scoters.

After spending time with the scoters, we decided to try our luck at the shallow end of the lake. Ted Floyd, an excellent birder disguised as a Penn State graduate student, found a small flock of Western Sandpipers. While the group was trying to find a better location from which to view these sandpipers, the search was cut short when someone noticed a large shorebird at the edge of small, muddy island near the shore. My immediate thought was "Greater Yellowlegs," and when Ted announced it was a godwit, I thought he was joking. But it was indeed a Hudsonian Godwit in winter plumage, feeding casually in the mud and shallow water. This species has been reported fewer than ten times in Centre County. While we were examining the godwit, a flock of Snow Buntings flew by, the first of the season.

The remainder of the field trip was unexceptional by comparison, but these sightings prompted me to visit the park almost every day that week. My efforts were rewarded, since I saw a flock of Snow Geese, unusual for Centre County, and a Brant, even more unusual for the county. I guess my mother was right--it doesn't pay to spend your mornings in bed!

THE MILLIONTH BIRD SOARS OVER HAWK MOUNTAIN

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Curator Jim Brett lifted his binoculars to the horizon and pointed to a distant speck in the haze above the valley.

"Sharp-shinned Hawk, flying low over Donat's Peak. The millionth,"

he shouted.

As the bird came closer, flapping its wings in a steady series of fast beats, the 150 birdwatchers who had gathered atop Hawk Mountain to watch its flight, erupted into cheers, tossing birdseed into the air and popping champagne corks. This event marked a milestone in Hawk Mountain's history.

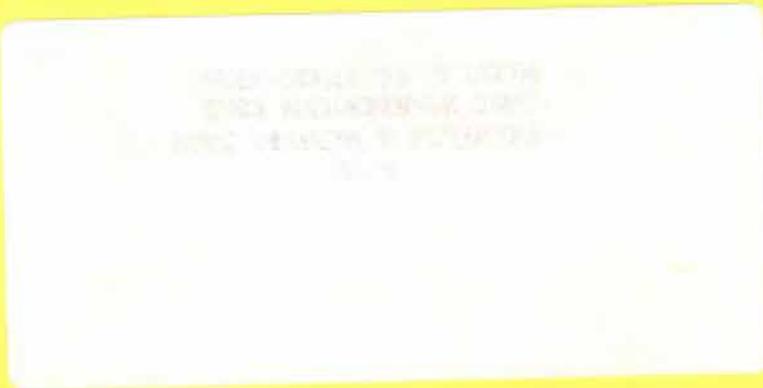
At 12:40 p.m. on October 8, this Sharp-shinned Hawk became the one millionth recorded raptor to soar past the sanctuary's North Lookout since Maurice Brown observed and charted the first, a Broad-winged

Hawk, on September 11, 1934.

According to Cynthia Lenhart, Hawk Mountain Executive Director, "Our millionth bird represents a conservation landmark in 55 years of monitoring hawk migration."

Further south on the migratory corridor a sanctuary in Vera Cruz, Mexico, has recorded a million migratory birds of prey in just two seasons.

"Today we are working with conservationists in Latin America to ensure raptors survive the other half of their journey," Lenhart said.



Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology
c/o Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
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Kempton, PA 19529