



March 1995

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

Start making your plans for our next annual meeting. It will be held in Hazleton this year. (See details elsewhere in this newsletter.) Did you know that Hazleton is the city with the highest elevation east of the Mississippi? (Just thought I'd throw that in.)

Doug Gross is coordinating the programs, and Alan and Monica Gregory are coordinating the accommodations and field trips. As usual, Shonah Hunter is handling the registration and organizational details. The meetings keep getting better, and we expect this one to be terrific. Please join us and meet some of the people you keep reading about in this newsletter and *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Many of the Christmas Counts held this year set new records due to the mild early winter so far. A number of warblers not normally found included Black-throated Green (Glenolden) and Northern Parula (Harrisburg). A Western Kingbird on the Southern Lancaster County count added to their impressive list of flycatchers, making this count the CBC flycatcher capital of Pennsylvania. The numbers also reflected the crash of the Carolina Wren population due to last winter's brutal weather. A comprehensive summary of the CBC will be in the next issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*. Why wait a year for Audubon Field Notes, when you can read about all of Pennsylvania's CBCs in March?

Don't forget to indicate on your renewal form whether you want your name and address published in the membership list. We will be publishing the list shortly after the annual meeting when most people have renewed.

--Franklin Haas, President

SIXTH ANNUAL PSO MEETING

Our sixth annual meeting will be held at the Hazleton Campus of Penn State University on May 19-21, 1995. The theme of this year's meeting is "Audubon's Pennsylvania."

Field trips will be led by members of the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society and North Branch Bird Club. Possible destinations include Hickory Run State Park, Lehigh Gorge, the Susquehanna Riverlands, the southern Poconos, Two-mile Run, Nescopeck State Park, and Beltsville State Park. Target species include nesting Alder Flycatchers; Winter Wrens; Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos; Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Nashville, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, and Canada Warblers; Northern Parula; and White-throated Sparrows.

On Friday evening we will hold our annual business meeting which will include the election of the board of directors and officers. In addition, we will have an opportunity to socialize with new and old friends. Prior to the business meeting, we will view a brief National Audubon Society program entitled "Audubon's America." John James Audubon spent time here, studying birds and drawing them. Saturday afternoon's sessions will include presentations including "Delaware Water Gap: Bird Population Trends and Distribution Patterns," by Dr. Terry Master, hawk identification by Franklin Haas, "Birds in Pennsylvania's Old Growth Forests," by Dr. Chris Haney, and the Special Areas Project by Douglas Gross. Another possible topic is the success of the osprey reintroduction program in Pennsylvania.

Our annual banquet will be held Saturday evening on campus. Our featured speaker will be Peter Stangel of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. His

slide presentation will deal with Partners in Flight.

Accommodations are available in the residence halls. In addition, there are various motels in the vicinity. These include:

Comfort Inn	717-455-9300
Route 93	
Hampton Inn	454-3449
Route 93 and I-81	
Holiday Inn	1-800-HOLIDAY or 455-2061
Route 309	

The first two listed above are the closer ones to the campus which is located on Route 93.

Details will appear in Pennsylvania Birds and in a special mailing to non-PA Birds subscribers.

If you have any questions concerning registration, please contact Dr. Shonah Hunter (717-893-2062).

BANQUET TO HOST PETER STANGEL

PSO's annual banquet is hosting Dr. Peter Stangel, Director of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. He received his Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, where he studied the population genetics of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. While at the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, Peter was also involved with research projects on the Snail Kite, Wood Stork, Wild Turkey, and amphibians. He did his undergraduate work at Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina. Dr. Stangel is currently serving as President of the Fairfax Audubon Society in Northern Virginia and as Director of Chapter Development for the North American Butterfly Association. An avid birder, he is a

frequent contributor to Wild Bird, Living Bird, and other publications.

The title of Dr. Stangel's presentation is *Voyage of the Wood Thrush--Winging Our Way to a New Era of Bird Conservation*. He will take us on the northward migration of a Wood Thrush from its wintering grounds in Costa Rica to a nesting site in the northern United States. This voyage will allow the audience to experience the challenges that Neotropical migratory birds face: changing habitats, predators, pesticides, etc.; however, the story has a happy ending. Recent declines in Neotropical migrants have resulted in the formation of Partners in Flight Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative--a proactive program to ensure that migrants and their habitats will always be a part of our springs. He will discuss how Partners in Flight is helping to conserve Neotropical migrants and their habitats and how birders can take charge of conservation efforts through Partners in Flight. We will also learn how to take a more active role in songbird conservation by sharing our passion for birds.

Partners in Flight was hatched by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative. This is a cooperative, coordinated program to promote conservation of Neotropical migratory birds and their habitats on the breeding and wintering grounds and migration routes. Partners in Flight, a proactive program, seeks to conserve migrants while they are still common. More than 120 federal and state agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, and organizations representing the forest products industry are working together on the Partners in Flight program.

FOREST NEOTROPICAL BIRD WORKSHOP

The Forest Neotropical Bird Workshop will be held at the Dubois Holiday Inn,

located on U.S. 219, .25 miles south of I-80, Exit 16, on 31 March 1995. This workshop is sponsored by the PA Steering Committee of Neotropical Partners in Flight and the PA Game Commission and endorsed by PSO.

Neotropical migrants are birds which breed in North America and migrate to the tropics for our winter. This group of species, numbering 70 breeders and 16 migrants in Pennsylvania, are the focus of a national conservation program known as Partners in Flight. They comprise a significant proportion of the insect-eating birds in Pennsylvania's forest during summer, providing significant services in forest health. As a group of species, neotropical migrants face remarkable challenges to their survival: annually traveling thousands of miles between breeding and winter homes, they face the loss of habitat at both ends, hazards en route, and have little time to replace failed nests. These species are highly sensitive to forest management actions, and some have declined significantly in recent decades. Neotropical migrants occupy a diversity of environments, so management is complex. The input from a wide range of interests and organizations is necessary to develop realistic management objectives.

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together parties from a wide spectrum of conservation and management organizations to provide information on neotropical migrant needs and status and to assess what practical steps can be taken in Pennsylvania to maintain populations of neotropical migratory birds that nest in forested areas.

The workshop will provide important input into a state management plan that will include specific actions for the conservation of neotropical migrant forest birds. These actions fall into the areas of monitoring, inventory, research, management, educational efforts, and informational needs. The plan will provide the framework for future efforts by state natural resource agencies and private conservation groups. The workshop will identify specific monitoring programs needed, provide priorities for

funding agencies and research, and make suggestions for land managers. Specific objectives include: issue development, consensus on priorities, and development of specific action strategies.

Space is limited. If you are interested in attending, contact Dan Brauning (717-547-6938) immediately.

1995 PSO ANNUAL MEETING

May 19-21, 1995

Hazleton Campus

Penn State
University

Luzerne County

(Details will follow in next newsletter and in Pennsylvania Birds.)

THE CONSERVATION PAGE

In reviewing the Congressional agenda for the first 100 days, I found a potentially disastrous provision in The Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act, H.R. 9. The provision, rightly called the "takings" provision, is Title IX of the proposed Act and essentially is a "pay off" system for those who do not want to comply with federal regulations that protect private property, community values, public health, public safety, civil rights and the environment. This "takings" provision,

often misrepresented as "private property rights" by proponents, will require taxpayer dollars to be used to "pay off" landowners such as big coal, oil, and gas companies, whenever any federal regulation limits the use of their land/water and affects market value by at least 10%. This requirement will apply regardless of what the landowner wants to do with the land/water and regardless of the impacts on neighboring property and/or the public health, the community, and the environment.

Further, it is clear that such a "pay off" will cost millions and even billions of taxpayer dollars which is fiscally irresponsible for a Congress that claims to be committed to controlling government spending and balancing the budget. In fact, two conservative Republican state legislators, one from Colorado and one from New Hampshire, in a 1993 letter to Congress stated, "As Republican state legislators, we are writing to urge you to oppose federal takings bills and amendments for the same reasons that we and our colleagues killed similar state legislation: takings legislation would increase taxes and create a new, unnecessary level of bureaucracy."

Action Needed

For these reasons, PSO members are encouraged to write their federal Representative and urge him/her to oppose "takings" proposals including the one in the Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act of 1995, H.R.9. Letters can be addressed to your Representative at the U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. Please write or we may all have to pay and pay and pay.

If you would like to comment or offer suggestions, please contact:

Mark S. Henry, PSO Conservation Editor,
P.O. Box 873, State College, Pa 16804.

DEER MANAGEMENT ISSUE

During February and early March, the Pennsylvania Game Commission held public meetings at nine locations within the state to discuss three items: a possible increase for hunting licenses, the Game Commission Strategic Plan, and deer management. These meetings were well attended by sportsmen with deer management being the main topic of discussion at each meeting. Many sportsmen desire that deer populations be increased in the forested areas of the state; but farmers, foresters, and some sportsmen want the Game Commission to continue to strive toward maintaining the herd at or near existing carrying capacity goals.

Birders need to be concerned about the outcome of this issue. Research conducted in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Michigan shows that once deer density exceeds 10-20 deer per square mile, losses of biodiversity occur. Plants and animals in Pennsylvania developed over thousands of years in the presence of deer densities of from 8-10 per square mile. Species and abundance of tree seedlings, shrubs, wildflowers, and songbirds decline when deer density exceeds 20 deer per square mile. Deer densities of more than 20 per square mile for more than 70 years in Pennsylvania have led to the losses of some plants.

The PA Game Commission established goal densities of deer related to estimated carrying capacity of forest land in each county. The statewide goal density for deer is 21 per square mile. Actual statewide deer density is now 29 per square mile.

The Commission's county deer density figures are disputed by many hunters. They claim there are few or no deer where they hunt. Pressure by these hunters to increase deer densities is strong. It is important that the Game Commission continues to strive toward meeting the

carrying capacity goals.

Much is at stake. Your viewpoint is important. I encourage you to contact your local Game Commissioner or write the Bureau of Wildlife Management, PA State Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

--Bob Martin



Raven Reporter

News of the PSO Special Areas Project

Identifying the Core Species

An important goal of the Special Areas Project is to identify the core species of each location inventoried. What are the core species? These are the birds that breed (nest) in, regularly migrate through, or winter in the Special Area. If we can identify these species, we will produce fine quality checklists for that location. For the sake of this project, it is not nearly as important to identify each rare vagrant that occasionally visits our project areas.

Our teams of birdwatchers can always add to the list and continue to make contributions to the knowledge of the park's natural history. It is important, however, to realize that we must move on to new Special Areas to achieve more thorough coverage of the state. Many of the biggest and most interesting state parks have not yet been adopted as Special Areas.

SA Project and the Important Bird Areas Project

There is some confusion between the Special Areas Project and the Audubon Society's new enterprise, the Important Bird Areas project. The National Audubon Society is using Pennsylvania as its model state in order to launch a national effort. Pennsylvania is a great state for the IBA project because of the recent success of the breeding bird atlas, its successful Breeding Bird Survey program, and the active birding community. The main objective of the IBA is to identify areas that are particularly important to sustain our bird populations. The IBA has already been successfully carried out in Europe and the Middle East.

Special Areas Project and the Important Bird Areas Project are two interlocking pieces of a complex puzzle. The SA Project gets data on public lands while the Important Bird Areas Project uses data from a variety of sources to identify sections of the state which should be designated as IBA's. Since many sources of bird data are not specific to locations, but are more general in nature, the Special Areas Project could be a crucial contribution to IBA.

As SA Project data are processed, I will send this information to the IBA Project office. SA Project data will be extremely valuable to IBA. It will fill many blanks and emphasize the importance of the areas where we regularly enjoy wild birds.

We SA Project volunteers focus on public lands which we know are important not only to birds, but to us as well. Our data are valuable and will be used in this very important project being managed by the National Audubon Society. If you have an area near you which should be considered an IBA, adopt it as a SA Project and generate the data to support your opinion.

Adopt More Special Areas!

Many birdwatchers have been collecting data in a Special Area since 1991 or 1992. All projects started in 1991 or

1992 have done a marvelous job of identifying the core species of that area. The field work of these projects is essentially completed. The volunteers who did a great job on these projects should consider adopting a new Special Area. It is especially impor-

tant to do this in 1995 since the Important Bird Areas project will be conducted in Pennsylvania this year. Run ten field trips in your local favorite birding area this year and send your data into us. Try to concentrate on the breeding season and the peak migratory periods in spring and fall. We will share this information with the National Audubon Society after we process it.

Please send your Special Areas Project data to:

Douglas A. Gross
PSO Special Areas Project
Susquehanna SES Environmental Laboratory
R. R. 1, Box 1795
Berwick, PA 18603



Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology
c/o R. U. Higbee
R. R. 2, Box 166
Indiana, PA 15701