

# PSO Newsletter



*The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*

July 1997

Volume 8, Number 2

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK....

May was the month of the greatest activity for both birds and birders in Pennsylvania over the past year: the annual spring migration and the annual birders' migration to the annual PSO meeting. The spring bird migration seemed unusually slow and late this year, perhaps due to the rather cold temperatures. On the other hand, many birds may have arrived at "normal" or "average" dates but simply did not sing or vocalize at all upon arrival. I noticed this effect with Eastern Towhee, Common Yellowthroat, Gray Catbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Baltimore Oriole around my home in Tioga County where temperatures average 5° to 15° F colder than Williamsport and the more southern parts of the state. Look for the seasonal summary in *Pennsylvania Birds* for a more comprehensive and systematic assessment of this phenomenon.

The Eighth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology was held in Mont Alto, Pennsylvania, on the Maryland border in conjunction with the spring meeting of the Ornithological Technical Committee (OTC) of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. Among the issues before the OTC is the development of a new list of species of special concern (SSC). Breeding information on many of these birds is needed. These species include Long-eared Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Barn Owl, Northern Harrier, Goshawk, Upland Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Pied-billed Grebe, and Least Bittern. In the future we will be focusing our attention on this effort, and help from the birding community will be requested. Several management issues were discussed as they relate to birds as well:

(1) failure to stay on track in the reduction of Pennsylvania's deer population to levels that allow proper forest regeneration, reduce auto collisions, and reduce crop depredation (due to "political interference" with scientifically based management plans), (2) state forest logging rate increases, and (3) failure to recognize old-growth forest values on our state game lands by exempting them from cutting. Gary Crossley updated the group on progress with Pennsylvania's Important Bird Area (IBA) project. Future nominations will still be accepted, so think about nominating your special area as an IBA.

Those of you who did not attend the PSO Annual Meeting in Mont Alto missed an outstanding program and field trips. At the members' meeting Friday evening two productive directors retired; two directors were elected to replace them; and the current officers were reelected. Many thanks to Laurie Goodrich and Mark Henry for three years of active service to the Society. Special thanks to Laurie especially for recruiting stimulating speakers and organizing annual meeting programs and to Mark for his regular reports and updates on conservation and legislative issues. Also, please welcome Arlene Koch and John Salvetti as new directors of the Society. Arlene is president of the Lehigh Valley Audubon, a columnist for the Easton local newspaper, and frequent writer (as well as Personality Profiles Editor) for *Pennsylvania Birds*. John, an active birder, was an invaluable contributor to the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas; in addition, he is a reporter for *Pennsylvania Birds* for Indiana and Cambria counties.

Members requested us to consider other dates or times of the year to hold our annual meeting. Problems include conflict with graduation weekends at

state colleges and lost time watching the spring migration. (We did pretty well, though, on our two mornings of field trips!) Constraints include Memorial Day holiday the following weekend, conflict with Breeding Bird Survey routes in June, personal family vacations in August, and a more diffuse migration in September.

Our Saturday afternoon/evening program was in my opinion the best ever. It included a summary of results thus far on PSO's Special Area Project by our own Doug Gross. Doug showed total number of birds quantified by participants in various categories, such as wetland birds, species of special concern, forest interior birds, etc. Rich Mellon, a consultant and wetland expert from Yardley, Pennsylvania, gave us a thorough "mini-course" on shorebird identification that sharpened our skills on this difficult group immensely. Greg Keller, a Penn State graduate student, spoke about bird communities of woodlots in an agricultural landscape. Speakers from our neighboring state of Maryland included Dave Brinker (Department of Forests, Parks, and Wildlife) on Saw-whet Owl migration and capture techniques; Jim Stasz (founder and compiler of the North American Migration Count) on the NAMC database and what it shows; and banquet speaker Rick Blom (columnist, *Bird Watcher's Digest*) on the new wave of "splitting" in avian taxonomy due to genetic analysis of populations and its impact on endangered species lists, environmental compliance, etc. The PSO gave special recognition to Frank and Barb Haas for completion of 10 years of publication of the journal *Pennsylvania Birds*. Winner of this year's annual Earl L. Poole Award for outstanding contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology was Dr. Paul W. Schwalbe, retired Professor at Lock Haven University. (See article below.)

Field trips were rewarding for those who got up early (5:30 a.m.!) and braved the cool, wet weather on Saturday. A total of 107 species were recorded from trips to ridge-top forests, agricultural fields, and riparian courses. The following morning the field trips included a trip to Deuane Hoffman's special island vista on the Susquehanna River. By the time the PSO meeting ended around noon on Sunday, an official 133 species of birds were tallied. Many thanks to Deuane, Ken Gabler, and the Conococheague Audubon Society for their leadership on field trips, making them enjoyable and productive ventures for all.

Make plans now to register for this event next year. There is no better way to see Pennsylvania bird life and important habitats in detail, as well as increase your knowledge by listening to authoritative speakers, than the annual PSO meetings.

Bob Ross, President

## WILD RESOURCE CONSERVATION FUND NEEDS SUPPORT

by Alan Gregory

Most people will agree that recycling is a good thing, but so is spending money on non-game wildlife programs. That's why conservationists across Pennsylvania urged our state Legislature to attach an extra 50 cents to the \$2 tipping fee that garbage haulers--many of them from out of state, including Canada--have paid for years before dumping trash at Pennsylvania landfills. Part of the extra 50 cents would have gone to the state's Wild Resource Conservation Fund (WRCF), the only pot of money around to fund the many non-game-related wildlife research and conservation projects underway across the state, including the PSO's Special Areas Project.

State Sen. Ray Musto, D-Luzerne, opposed amending his bill to reauthorize the \$2 fee because of the precedent he said it would have set. Musto feared that adding one amendment to the reauthorization legislation--the tipping fee program expires at the end of this year--would have led to a host of other amendments. Musto's fear might be well-founded. A look at recent federal-level legislation, like the ugly "Pave the National Parks" rider attached to an unrelated disaster relief bill, shows that some legislators will try any number of sneak attacks to benefit wealthy special interests at the expense of our natural heritage.

The dwindling WRCF still needs help, though, and our legislators should set aside their differences long enough to pass bipartisan legislation setting up a long-term and reliable source of funding for the WRCF. The Saw-whet Owl license plates rejuvenated the fund three years ago, but sales have long since flattened out.

It's time for conservationists to press hard for additional funding for the WRCF. And, getting that legislation passed would also be prime time to establish a statewide land acquisition program. As good as our state parks, forests, and game lands are, they are only fragments of larger ecosystems that need protection for game and non-game species alike.

Pennsylvania's natural heritage is being lost daily. In my corner of Luzerne County, for example, the recent clearing of forests along Interstate 81 and state Route 93 not far from our house is a nearby example. Conservationists should press hard to establish a reliable and comprehensive program to acquire wildlands from willing sellers.

We can look to Bucks County for an example of how to do it. Voters in Bucks passed on May 20--by a 79 percent majority--a \$59 million bond issue to finance the preservation of open space and wildlife habitat. A similar bond issue will be voted on in Monroe County this November.

Preserving our wildlife heritage requires preserving its habitat. Playing around with the number of doe permits or going through some other paperwork drill is not a long-term way to conserve wildlife. The key is preserving habitat--our natural heritage.

On a related front, state Rep. Howard Fargo, R-Mercer, at the urging of the Pennsylvania Landowners Association and others, wants to block all land acquisition by the Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission, and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources unless county commissioners say yes. This anti-wildlife bill, pushed by the "wise use (land abuse)" crowd, could block acquisition of critical habitat for endangered and threatened species and prevent establishment of new parks and natural areas, and recreational opportunities. The bill would even let counties block the rights of landowners who want to sell or donate their land to a state agency. The real beneficiaries of Fargo's bill are development, mining, and landfill interests. A small bunch of development-minded folks should not be able to veto the protection of wildlife. Conservationists should make sure this bill never gets to the governor's desk.

## Earl Poole Award Recipient

The Earl Poole Award for Outstanding Contributions to Ornithology in Pennsylvania was given to Dr. Paul Schwalbe following the PSO annual banquet on May 18, 1997. Paul has contributed to bird conservation and knowledge in many ways during his career. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and spent most of his career teaching ornithology, among other subjects, at Lock Haven University. More than 30 years ago, he laid out the Breeding Bird Survey routes in Pennsylvania and New Jersey for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and continued as state coordinator until 1997. During those years he ran a number of routes himself, totaling more runs than almost any other person in the state.

Paul is an excellent example of ornithology's tradition of blurred distinctions between professional and amateur. Although a professional, he has contributed in many ways that went beyond his immediate duties. He has compiled Christmas Bird Counts (and participated in more than 120 CBCs through the years), conducted Breeding and Wintering Bird Censuses, served as Regional Coordinator for the Breeding Bird Atlas and as Clinton County Compiler for *PA Birds*, banded birds, co-founded the West Branch Bird Club. He has been involved in almost every significant ornithological activity in Pennsylvania. Paul has contributed significantly to many publications, including authoring 15 species accounts for the Atlas, co-authored (with his wife Glenna) the "Annotated List of the Birds of Pennsylvania," and other regional publications. A significant, although largely unseen contribution, is his influence on many students of various subjects who learned to appreciate birds under his tutelage.

Ornithology in Pennsylvania would not be the same without Paul's contribution, and the Society for Ornithology is privileged to give this honor to him. He was awarded a plaque and a guide to the birds of Mexico as a gift.

# PSO Meeting Bird List

## May 16-18, 1997

Double-crested Cormorant	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	White-breasted Nuthatch	Black-and-white Warbler
Great Egret	Great Horned Owl	Brown Creeper	Am. Redstart
Green Heron	Barred Owl	Carolina Wren	Ovenbird
Yellow-cr. Night-Heron	Whip-poor-will	House Wren	Northern Waterthrush
Canada Goose	Chimney Swift	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Louisiana Waterthrush
Wood Duck	Ruby-thrtd. Hummingbird	Eastern Bluebird	Kentucky Warbler
Mallard	Belted Kingfisher	Veery	Common Yellowthroat
Oldsquaw	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's	Hooded Warbler
Common Merganser	Downy Woodpecker	Thrush	Canada Warbler
Black Vulture	Hairy Woodpecker	Swainson's Thrush	Yellow-breasted Chat
Turkey Vulture	Northern Flicker	Wood Thrush	Scarlet Tanager
Osprey	Pileated Woodpecker	American Robin	Northern Cardinal
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Gray Catbird	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-shouldered Hawk	Acadian Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	Indigo Bunting
Broad-winged Hawk	Willow Flycatcher	Brown Thrasher	Eastern Towhee
Red-tailed Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Chipping Sparrow
American Kestrel	Eastern Phoebe	European Starling	Field Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Great Crested Flycatcher	White-eyed Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	Eastern Kingbird	Solitary Vireo	Grasshopper Sparrow
Wild Turkey	Horned Lark	Yellow-throated Vireo	Song Sparrow
Killdeer	Purple Martin	Warbling Vireo	Swamp Sparrow
Lesser Yellowlegs	Tree Swallow	Red-eyed Vireo	White-throated Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	N Rough-winged Swallow	Blue-winged Warbler	Dark-eyed Junco
Short-billed Dowitcher	Bank Swallow	Tennessee Warbler	Bobolink
Bonaparte's Gull	Cliff Swallow	Nashville Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull	Barn Swallow	Yellow Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Herring Gull	Blue Jay	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Common Grackle
Great Black-backed Gull	American Crow	Magnolia Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Tern	Fish Crow	Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Black Tern	Common Raven	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Rock Dove	Black-capped Chickadee	Black-thr. Green Warbler	House Finch
Mourning Dove	Carolina Chickadee	Pine Warbler	Am. Goldfinch
Black-billed Cuckoo	Tufted Titmouse	Prairie Warbler	House Sparrow
		Blackpoll Warbler	

## 1997 PSO Meeting Participants

Alice Beatty	Jane Earle	Ruth Henry	Doreen Laubscher	Bob Ross
Gloria Bickle	Wes Egli	Roger Higbee	Barbara Malt	John Salvetti
Matthew Bickle	John Fedak	Margaret Higbee	Mark McConaughy	Paul Schwalbe
Rick Blom	Ken Gabler	Rob Hilton	Richard Mellon	Glenna Schwalbe
Nick Bolgiano	Laurie Goodrich	Deuane Hoffman	Mrs. Mellon	Debra Siefken
Joan Bowen	Alan Gregory	Shonah Hunter	Barry Myers	Lisa Shannon
Dan Brauning	Doug Gross	Roy Ickes	Patti Myers	Jim Stasz
David Brinker	Carol Guba	Greg Keller	Tom Pearson	Georgette Syster
Dick Byers	Barb Haas	Beth Keller	Jeff Pheasant	Genevieve Tvrdik
Fei-Wen Cheng	Frank Haas	Rudy Keller	Willis Ratzlaff	Linda Wagner
Bob Cook	Don Henise	Gloria Lamer	Michele Richards	Philip Walsh
Ruth Cook	Mark Henry	Wayne Laubscher	Peter Robinson	Mary Walsh

# PENNSYLVANIA SPECIAL CONCERN BIRD

# UPDATE FORM

**GUIDELINES:** This form is to be used to record the presence of Endangered and Threatened birds (see list). Please complete this form in detail with any sightings of these species. The information will be used to update the species' status and to protect these rare birds. An effort should be made to obtain confirmed breeding evidence. Breeding-season habitat information of target species and further instructions are found in the accompanying article. Please return this form to: **Dan Brauning, Special Species Update, PGC, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.**

**SPECIES:** \_\_\_\_\_

Species Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Processing Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**HISTORICAL SPECIES OCCURRENCE:** Previous year(s) species found here: \_\_\_\_\_

## SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Was the species detected in the	first visit?	Y	N	Visit dates (m/day)
	second visit?	Y	N	_____
	third visit?	Y	N	_____

(If yes, complete the form below. If no, return.)

**LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE** - All locations should be mapped on a photocopied 7.5 minute topographic sheet (provided for historical occurrences).

**COUNTY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **QUADRANGLE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BLOCK:** \_\_\_\_\_

Property Ownership: Private Public - Agency:

Describe the exact location (distance and direction from nearest mapped landmark): *Include a map.*

Habitat - Describe the general area and specific location:

Breeding Behavior Observed - Give details that indicate that this species is breeding:

Give highest Atlas breeding codes: \_\_\_\_\_

Description - Voice:  
Plumage:

Sighting Conditions - Lighting: Equipment used:  
Distance: Length of observation:

Sighting Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Max. No. seen/heard in safe-dates: \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER OBSERVER(S):**

**DOCUMENTATION OBTAINED:** Photos: \_\_\_\_\_ Voice recording: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** (Additional details may be recorded on the back or on another sheet)

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date form completed: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Anyone with information on recent nesting locations of the birds listed below is encouraged to complete the PA Special Concern Bird Update Form printed on the opposite side of this sheet. We request that you:

- \* Make at least three visits during the "safe-date" period,
- \* Make an effort to obtain confirmed breeding evidence.
- \* Report the species listed below, which include all of the state's Endangered and Threatened birds, and a selection of other "Candidates."

**Be careful:** While confirmations are desirable, nest sites should be disturbed for very brief periods or not at all. For secretive species (e.g. marsh birds), tape-playback may be used discretely to adequately survey suitable habitat. Nesting localities of Endangered and Threatened birds should not be widely disseminated and will not be disclosed as a result of this survey, except for official purposes (e.g., habitat protection).

If special concern birds are on private property, request permission of the landowner before entering the property.

#### TARGET SPECIES FOR 1994 SPECIAL CONCERN BIRD UPDATE

<u>Species</u>	<u>Safe Dates</u>	<u>Nesting Habitat</u>	<u>Legal Status</u>
Pied-billed Grebe	5/15 - 7/15	Wetlands	Candidate-Rare
American Bittern	5/20 - 8/15	Marshes	Threatened
Least Bittern	5/20 - 8/1	Marshes	Threatened
Great Egret*	5/20 - 6/20	River Island	Threatened
Snowy Egret*	5/20 - 7/1	River Island	Candidate-At Risk
Black-cr. Night-Heron	4/25 - 7/1	Woodlot	Special Concern
Yellow-cr. Night-Heron	4/25 - 7/1	Riverside trees	Threatened
Osprey*	6/1 - 8/30	Tree near water	Endangered
Bald Eagle*	4/15 - 8/5	Tree near water	Endangered
Peregrine Falcon	5/25 - 8/30	Cliffs, buildings	Endangered
King Rail	5/1 - 8/30	Marshes	Endangered
Upland Sandpiper	5/20 - 7/15	Pastures	Threatened
Common Snipe	6/1 - 8/15	Wetlands	Candidate At-Risk
Black Tern	6/1 - 7/20	Marsh	Endangered
Short-eared Owl	5/1 - 9/30	Old fields	Endangered
Olive-sided Flycatcher	6/15 - 8/5	Forested Wetlands	Extirpated
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	6/5 - 7/20	Forested Wetlands	Threatened
Bewick's Wren	5/5 - 8/15	Brushy habitat	Extirpated
Sedge Wren	6/10 - 9/20	Assorted Wetlands	Threatened
Marsh Wren	5/25 - 8/25	Marshes	Candidate-Rare
Swainson's Thrush	6/10 - 8/10	Mixed forest	Candidate-Rare
Loggerhead Shrike	4/25 - 7/20	Pastures w/ trees	Endangered
Prothonotary Warbler	5/25 - 7/20	Forested wetlands	Candidate-At Risk
Dickcissel	6/1 - 8/30	Grassland	Candidate-Rare
Red Crossbill	4/1 - 5/15	Conifer forest	Candidate-Undetermined

\* Nest-sites only are requested for marked species. These species range widely and known nesting areas are actively being monitored.

## Correction

In the March 1997 issue of the PSO Newsletter, President Bob Ross stated in his message on page 1, "We hear that the National Audubon Society dropped their opposition to the ridge route in exchange for funding of favored bird programs." However, Gary Crossley, Coordinator of the Pennsylvania IBA Program of the National Audubon Society (NAS), informs me that this statement is incorrect. Officially, the NAS was not involved with the Route 220 project, and the state Audubon Council as well as several local chapters have firmly opposed the ridge route.

--Bob Ross

## What's a Bird Worth?

In today's world, it seems that we must justify everything in terms of dollars and cents, even when protecting human health and the environment and preserving habitat for wildlife. Until recently, this has been difficult in that there has been little economic information on the worth of wildlife and the environment. Now, however, due to the efforts of several researchers, there is some information that shows that it makes good economic sense to protect wildlife.

In the current issue of *Bird Conservation*, hard economic numbers were published illustrating the impact of birding across the country. In 1991, birders spent \$5.2 billion on goods and services related to bird watching, travel and feeding. In Pennsylvania, it was reported that \$256.4 million in retail sales was spent on birding related activities and goods. The article goes on to point out that in 1985, the World Series of Birding had 13 teams, no corporate sponsors, and \$13,000 in contributions. Ten years later, the World Series had 55 teams, 27 corporate sponsors, and generated over \$450,000 in contributions.

In terms of employment, the above article reported that there were 6,040 jobs in Pennsylvania supported by just non-consumptive bird use. This doesn't include other jobs created by general wildlife watching as well as fishing and hunting. For example, in Elk County, in a publication issued by The Center for

Rural Pennsylvania, it was estimated that over \$102,000 is spent elk watching each year which translates into jobs for that rural area.

This economic impact is not going unnoticed. In communities such as Cape May, NJ, Harlingen, TX, and McAllen, TX, they plan for and rely on birders for income. In the publication issued by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, it was reported that there are over 90,000 visitors to Cape May each year, and they spend over \$10 million in the community. In *Bird Conservation*, Harlingen, TX held birding festivals in 1995 and 1996 that had an economic impact of \$1.6 million. Nearby McAllen, TX, is anticipating over \$650,000 from the first year of their nature festival.

Clearly, birding and wildlife watching are making an economic impact. As more and more communities realize the economic advantages of protecting vital habitat and improving opportunities for interaction between people and wildlife, not only will the wildlife benefit, but people will benefit economically.

Hopefully, as more and more people take advantage of this potential economic opportunity, they will also gain an appreciation of the natural world such that not everything needs to be expressed in terms of dollars and cents. However, until then, we as birders can spread the word about the economic importance of birds and other wildlife so that more people are willing to work toward their protection.

What can we as individuals do? In *Bird Conservation*, there are several actions listed that all of us can do. First, when we go birding, let people know. Tell business persons who you are and that you are there for the purpose of birding (while spending money). Spread the word to others about the economic advantages of wildlife and talk with local community leaders. If the community leaders are willing, take them out to local "hot spots" and show them the beauty of the area as well as discussing the economic impacts. Help with, or even better, organize a local bird/wildlife habitat enhancement project and get the local news media involved. Lastly, be active in environmental issues. Speak out for wildlife and environmental protection. Birds, as well as humans, depend on the environment for survival. Future birding depends on what we do or fail to do in the coming years in regards

to environmental protection. Let us use economics as one of our "tools" to help wildlife, the environment and people.

#### References

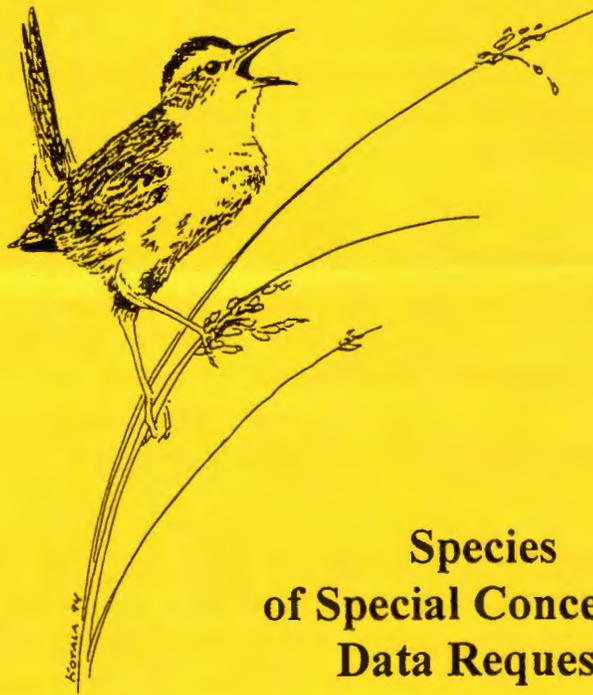
American Bird Conservancy. Bird Conservation, Spring Migration 1997. Washington, D.C. 16 pp.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Ecotourism. March, 1995. Harrisburg, PA. 47 pp.

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If you would like to comment or offer suggestions, contact Mark Henry, PSO Conservation Editor, P.O. Box 410, Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868.

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## Species of Special Concern Data Request

To: All Pennsylvania birders

From: The Ornithological Technical Committee of  
the Pennsylvania Biological Survey  
Douglas A. Gross, Chairman

The OTC is reviewing the PA Breeding Birds of Special Concern List in order to update and correct the status of species on that list or currently not listed that are good candidates to the SSC List.

The OTC requests that interested birders provide data on the status of some species under

consideration for listing or status change on the Pennsylvania Breeding Species of Special Concern List. The SSC List includes Pennsylvania Endangered and Threatened birds and Candidates to that list. The Candidate list is further broken down into the "At Risk," "Rare," and "Undetermined" categories. The SSC list includes only birds with a documented history of regular breeding (inferring nesting) in the state. For a complete SSC List, I refer you to *PA Birds*, Volume 9 (1): 7. The only changes to this list have been 1) the addition of Black-crowned Night-Heron as Candidate - At Risk, and 2.) Common Tern has been moved from Extirpated to Endangered.

We are using the Pennsylvania Special Concern Update form used in a PA Game Commission Survey conducted in 1994. A copy of the form is included in this newsletter. If you would like additional copies of the SSC Update Form, please inform either Dan Brauning or me. It is not necessary to use this form as long as the needed information is included in the report.

The OTC needs current and recent nesting data (since the Atlas ended in 1987) on any and all SSC species. The following list is a partial one with species of special interest for this round of nominations. Please send in information on the following species to Douglas Gross:

**Common Loon** - Not on list, but is there any evidence that it has nested in PA?

**Pied-billed Grebe** - Data needed especially outside northwestern counties.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** - Current colony status and size.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** - Current colony status and size. Any colonies in north?

**Northern Harrier** - Common as migrant, but elusive and rarely reported as breeder.

**Northern Goshawk** - Very elusive and secretive.

**Northern Bobwhite** - Are there any native breeding quail left in PA?

**King Rail** - One of the rarest of the rare. Anybody looking for it?

**Common Moorhen (Gallinule)** - Not on SSC list, but a rare breeder. How is it doing?

**American Coot** - A common migrant, but rare breeder. Recent records needed.

**Upland Sandpiper** - Where, oh where, have those "uppies" gone?

**Black Tern** - Going, going, gone? Any recent breeding

bird reports appreciated.

**Long-eared Owl** - Mystery bird number 1 for the state. Breeding (not winter) rarity?

**Short-eared Owl** - Rare, but somewhat opportunistic. If Imperial, where else?

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** - We know it winters and migrates here, but how 'bout nests?

**Red-headed Woodpecker** - Is one of our most striking birds going down the tubes?

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** - No documented nestings for over 60 years!!!!

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** - DAG's study needs collaboration in NE and NW counties.

**Sedge Wren** - Another big mystery. Very erratic. Sometimes nests as late as August.

**Marsh Wren** - Particular need in SE counties. All large marshes need checked.

**Swainson's Thrush** - Need confirmation of nesting, especially outside NW.

**Prothonotary Warbler** - Outside NW, there is not great coverage for this one.

**Swainson's Warbler** - Very difficult to find and confirm. Not on SSC list, but rare.

**Dickcissel** - Erratic nester. Is it a regular breeder anywhere in PA?

**Red Crossbill** - Any evidence of breeding would be appreciated (for any of 8 types).

OTC will consider the submitted information as CONFIDENTIAL and it will not make public details of the location if the observer requests or if the circumstances warrant. The OTC would like to add the information to the PNDI database and PGC Species of Special Concern database for tracking breeding populations of these species of scientific and conservation concern.

In addition, there are Colonial Waterbird Surveys and Barn Owl Surveys collected by PGC Biologist, Daniel Brauning. Grassland Bird Routes and Wetland Surveys will also add data for some of these species. Data from these projects should be sent to Dan Brauning, R.R. 2, Box 484, Montgomery, PA 17754, or Deb Siefken, 1494 Mountain Road, Orrtanna, PA 17353. They will supplement this survey.

As all readers know, the PSO Special Areas Project data can also be used for SSC birds. See the Raven Reporter columns for news of that project.



**Raven Reporter**

## News of the Special Areas Project

### Dusty Binoculars? Try Summer Birding

In the afterglow of May's Big Days and Migratory Bird Day, birders often put down their binoculars until fall migration brings the promise of more species to list. Those of you who let the dust gather on your binoculars in summer are missing some of Pennsylvania's best birding times. Summer birding offers many challenges and potential discoveries. Each area's breeding birds change their distribution slightly each year. The list of breeding birds of any area is quite static as a result. So, there are always new species moving into an area and perhaps others declining.

Summer is the best time of year to sharpen your auditory birding skills. By hearing a bird vocalize repeatedly, you can learn not only its primary song, but its secondary songs and call notes. PA has a healthy variety of warblers and vireos for practice.

Confirming nesting is one of the best ways to sharpen observational skills. In July, many species can be confirmed nesting by watching behavior. Has the male bird stopped singing? Perhaps this is because he is busy feeding the young. Is the female gathering nesting material for a second nesting? The caterpillar that warbler is carrying may be food for its young. Nest finding is one of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of birding. Outside of Atlas projects, it is an art that seems to have been sadly neglected. Don't let your bins gather dust this summer. Go out to your SAP and confirm some breeding birds.

### New Forms

At the PSO meeting, some new SAP forms, instructions, and guidelines were introduced. If you need any of these, please contact SAP Coordinator, Doug Gross. The Daily Survey Form added several more species and changed a few species names to conform to AOU list changes. A new Seasonal Report Form should be completed by the end of summer. With all the new and anticipated AOU checklist changes, field forms and checklists always seem out of date. Please bear with us and enjoy using the new forms.

### Species of Special Concern Worth the Extra Effort

At the sake of being somewhat redundant, I would like to emphasize that birds on the Species of Special Concern List are worth the extra effort to find in your SAP. Read over the list and think about which species are most likely to be found in your area. Then, go out and try to find them. Document your discoveries well.

### Natural Areas and Reserves

Pennsylvania's Natural Areas are very special places indeed. They usually include old growth forest, a swamp, a bog, or some unusual habitat. SAP is a great excuse to visit a Natural Area and inventory its birds. The SAP emphasis would be on breeding birds of Natural Areas and private reserves--at least, in most cases. So, fewer field trips would be necessary to do a good inventory of that SAP. Please adopt a natural area as a SAP. Organizations such as the Nature Conservancy or Western Pennsylvania Conservancy would also appreciate more data on their land holdings. Some of the larger and more significant Natural Areas have been designated as Important Bird Areas because they represent important PA ecosystems.

Please send SAP inquiries and data to:

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

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### *Welcome New Board Members!*

Congratulations and welcome to our two newest board members--Arlene Koch and John Salvetti--who were elected at our Annual Meeting in May.

Special thanks to Laurie Goodrich and Mark Henry for all their work during the years they have served on the board. We appreciate all you did!

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## **Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology**

c/o R. V. Higbee  
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