

# PSO PILEATED



September 2004

*The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*

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## From the President's Desk

The first field season of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas is essentially complete with only the task of data entry remaining for some. I hope all who participated had an enjoyable and productive time in the field. The Atlas provided an excuse, if one is needed, to continue birding after the tidal wave of the spring migration has receded and when the prospects for more "year birds" have dwindled after Memorial Day. Atlasing hopefully has convinced you that "breeding-bird birding" is fun and that it reveals to us much more of the lives of birds than what we observe by being afield only during migration.

I am fortunate that my job allowed me many days in the field this summer, with the morning's birding often stretching past lunchtime. Like many of you, some blocks I worked were close to home; I covered Rothrock State Forest where I have birded for years. There I knew where to go to quickly and efficiently record most of the local known and expected breeders.

However, I also surveyed blocks an hour's drive from my house on the Atlas page for which Nick Bolgiano and I share Regional Coordinator duties. Neither Nick nor I live on "page 48," much of which is comprised of Sproul State Forest. These blocks represented largely new territory for me, providing a chance to explore and learn.

There are notable differences in the two forests – Sproul and Rothrock. While Rothrock is in the Ridge and Valley region of Pennsylvania, Sproul on the Allegheny plateau has a bit more northerly character. Much of Sproul is less

mature than Rothrock. For example, Rothrock contains many Wood Thrushes and Worm-eating and Hooded Warblers; however, in Sproul, these two species are much harder to find if you can find them at all. In contrast, the situation is reversed for Yellow-rumped and Magnolia Warblers and Purple Finch.



And so now that the first Atlas field season is done, I imagine many first-time Atlasers are hooked. As you look ahead to Year 2, you will probably continue to add a few more species to your backyard block. But you may also want to think about other regions of the state where few birders live and where getting sufficient Atlas coverage may prove difficult. "Down-state" birders may want to consider adopting a block or two in a remote area of the state. In

addition to contributing to eventual 100% block coverage, this is a great excuse to get away and learn about a new (to you) part of Pennsylvania. With only a couple trips there in one season (or over a couple seasons), an impressive list of birds can be generated by visiting the right selection of habitats. An effective strategy for maximizing species records in a block can be determined by studying the topo map (available on the Atlas website) to identify a variety of different habitats as described by Doug Gross in the last newsletter.

The Atlas website shows regions where few blocks are owned, guiding you to areas that may eventually need "outside" help, especially in northern and south-central areas of the state. You could gather some birding friends together and head to your chosen block to do some "block-busting."

Six members of our local bird club chose an unowned block in a remote corner of Region 62 with few roads but good hiking trails that provided access to Moshannon State Forest. Working in three teams, we recorded nearly 60 species in four hours' birding on a morning in early July. As would any enthusiastic atlaser I can't resist telling of some of the "good" birds we found in that block, most of which is above 2000 feet. The hiking trails led through a variety of mostly wooded habitats including an open park-like deciduous forest with che-bek-ing Least Flycatchers and also through a hemlock ravine where we heard the songs of Canada Warblers and watched a fledgling Black-throated Blue Warbler pester an adult male while, from dark recesses, emanated the songs of Hermit Thrush. In a grassy, semi-open area where conifers have replaced oaks lost to disease some years ago, a Purple Finch surveyed his territory from the top of a 20-foot Norway Spruce. Cerulean Warblers were observed in one location, and elsewhere we found a promising series of remote beaver ponds that we will sample next year earlier in the season hoping perhaps for Alder Flycatcher and Northern Waterthrush.

We now have a long winter's wait before the next Atlas season (not counting, of course, those Great Horned Owls with a December 20 safe date). But in the meantime, the upcoming autumn is a good time to identify and visit remote blocks and explore their potential in anticipation of the next breeding season.

It was exciting to see the BBA reports this season on the PABirds listserv and to talk with other atlasers about their finds and their progress and what makes their blocks so special, and then finally to see the species' maps develop as data entry began. As I entered the Pennsylvania birding community in the late 80s, I heard how the first Breeding Bird Atlas "connected" birders across the state. The first Atlas led to much more than just a beautiful book with all of those wonderful breeding range maps as impressive an accomplishment as that was. The first Atlas solidified, maybe even created, a community. Birders became acquainted with like-minded folks across the state. Tangible results are your state organization, the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, and the high-quality quarterly publication *Pennsylvania Birds* as well as this newsletter, *The PSO Pileated*. The second Atlas will strengthen our community and bring to it many new converts, appreciative of birds and supportive of conservation ideals.

Good birding!

– Greg Grove, President

## IBA Program Update

From its start in 1996 the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program at Audubon Pennsylvania has grown to national stature. This was apparent recently at the National IBA Conference which was held in Sierra Vista, Arizona, and attended by two Audubon PA staff members, Paul Zeph and Kim Van Fleet. Pennsylvania's program is serving as a model to many other states where programs are in the early stages of development. This is a credit to Audubon PA as well as to its outstanding volunteer base throughout the state without whom none of this could have been achieved.

Recent transitions in the Audubon PA office staff have not deterred the program from moving forward. Certain aspects of the program have already been completed or are nearing completion. Landcover and watersheds of all 80 IBAs have been mapped in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and are available for public view on the Audubon PA website. Phase I Conservation Plans for each IBA should be completed by the end of the year and will also be available on the web in the near future. In the meantime, three more IBA nominations (possibly more) will be presented to the Ornithological Technical Committee (OTC) in early October.

Some of the near future plans include a focus on incorporating the IBA program with education in urban centers as well as the conservation and management of IBAs in the state, continuation of volunteer/citizen scientist workshops throughout the state, and a user friendly IBA GIS component on the Audubon PA website. So the IBA program is moving ahead and is starting to expand in some new and exciting directions.

– Kim Van Fleet



# Meeting Held to Decide Fate of Mt. Zion



Savannah Sparrow at Mt. Zion  
Photo by Mike Leahy

A meeting on the future of the Mt. Zion Important Bird Area (IBA) property (formerly called the Piney Tract) was held in Clarion on August 17, 2004. C & K Coal Company, the owner of the 2,358 acres in question, has declared bankruptcy.

Bill Kodrich, of the Clarion County Conservation District, was the moderator of this

meeting which was attended by all three Clarion County Commissioners. The PA Game Commission, the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife, Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, the Sportsmen's Federation of Clarion County, Trout Unlimited, the League of Women Voters, and PSO were represented. Members of the local birding community, Margaret Buckwalter and Walter Fye, were also present, in addition to the sports columnist from the local paper, John Street.

One of the attendees expressed concern that the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy had not been invited to the meeting. He was told that they had been invited but declined to attend.

Bernie Spozio, of the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife, explained that the PGC had considered purchasing this property in the past but then declined because of the liability of the acid mine drainage. The DEP has stepped in and would like to set up a trust fund of \$13 million to maintain the acid mine drainage treatment at all C & K sites in perpetuity. C & K Coal will be required to contribute \$6.8 million to this fund, in addition to the \$700,000 from the sale of the property.

Bob Gilford, representing the PA Game Commission, said that hunters as well as birders use Mt. Zion, and he expressed interest in "getting the land back to a prairie-type habitat for the birds." He indicated that the Game Commission has been focusing on species of special concern.

Margaret Buckwalter and Walter Fye explained the property's IBA status – that it is one of the top 500 IBA's in North America; they told of the nesting Henslow's, Vesper, and Savannah Sparrows, whose habitat in the plains states is down to 1% of its former range; they also discussed the discovery of Short-eared Owls and Northern

Harriers at this site. The subject of eco-tourism was brought up, and the commissioners seemed delighted to hear that we expect 85 people for our PSO weekend next May.

Mr. Spozio asked the County Commissioners for their approval to pursue the purchase of this property. He mentioned the Beaver Creek Nature Area, which was also a joint effort. It was purchased by the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife in 1980 and was developed in partnership with several local, state, and federal groups. This 800-acre wetland sanctuary is a local success story.

The commissioners gave their tentative approval to proceed with the purchase.

Each of the commissioners was given a short history of PSO and information about the economic impact of local birding opportunities. They were also provided a sample of what other states are doing to promote eco-tourism – "The birders are coming!" card from the Florida Birding Trail.

## PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Two ground-nesting raptors breed in our state. Can you name them?
2. Two far-western warbler species are almost as well known for hybridizing as Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. What are the species, and which of them is on the Pennsylvania list?
3. What severely declining species has been described as having "the most remarkable range of geographical variation of all galliformes"?
4. Seven Pennsylvania forest birds are listed in the Partners in Flight conservation plan as high-priority species of concern throughout their continental range. Can you guess which species?
5. Our mountains divide the breeding ranges of two abundant birds' subspecies. One bird has *melodia* in the east and *euphonia* in the west. The other has *versicolor* in the east and *stonei* in the west. What are the species?

See Answers on page 14.

# Ornithological Literature Notes

Note: This is the tenth in a series highlighting recent publications of special interest to Pennsylvania ornithologists and birders.

“Forest fragmentation” is a powerful byword in studies of bird populations in distress. Species that prefer large forest tracts have been shown in countless investigations to experience lower reproductive success as forest size decreases, and some species are missing altogether from small forest patches. Research in our state has made important contributions to the ecological literature about these effects — for example, a frequently cited report in 1993, “Reproductive performance of territorial ovenbirds occupying forest fragments and a contiguous forest in Pennsylvania” by P. Porneluzi, J. C. Bednarz, L. J. Goodrich, N. Zawada, and J. Hoover (*Conservation Biology* 7:618-622).

A related question is whether large, open, non-forested areas between fragmented patches of woodland create behavioral barriers that prevent forest-interior birds from traveling from one potential breeding location to another. Gail S. Fraser and Bridget J. M. Stutchbury sought to answer the question by tracking radio-tagged Scarlet Tanagers in a fragmented landscape in northwestern Pennsylvania. Their results were published this year in the journal *Biological Conservation* (118:377-387). All forest fragmentation at the study area in Crawford County was caused by agricultural activities. Some small woodland fragments were completely isolated by fields or roads, and others were connected by narrow wooded corridors. Male tanagers were found on 10 small isolated woodlots of less than 25 acres, two mid-sized forest fragments of approximately 109 and 185 acres, and two relatively large forest tracts of approximately 370 and 408 acres.

Among many findings, Fraser and Stutchbury saw several patterns consistent with negative effects of fragmentation. For example, the proportion of second-year tanagers was greater in fragments than in continuous forest, and most of the second-year males were unpaired. On the other hand, unpaired males were more likely to move extensively and frequently from fragment to fragment, which suggested that the primary motivation for their movements was to find a mate. The authors concluded, “We suggest that small fragments are more important to these forest birds than previously appreciated. In our study area, smaller forest patches located amongst larger forested areas appeared to allow second-year unpaired males to readily move around

and prospect for breeding sites or mates in different locations.”

The two authors cautioned that behavior observed in one area does not necessarily apply to other areas. Unlike their findings, another study less than 150 km away in upstate New York did not find Scarlet Tanagers in forest fragments of less than 25 acres. Fraser and Stutchbury added, however, that the Pennsylvania results indicated that small woodland patches may be particularly important to second-year males for finding mates in regions with high tanager population densities. Differences between the two studies’ results, they said, showed a need for further understanding of Scarlet Tanagers’ behavioral differences in response to forest fragmentation in various regions with different levels of forest cover and different population densities.

– Paul Hess

## New Atlas List Serve Instituted

Thanks to PSO board member, Carmen Santasania at Pennsylvania Audubon, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas list serve has been set up for volunteers. Please sign up and use this list serve for general announcements and for specific questions on procedures, processes, counts, data submission, or any other aspect of the Atlas.

Here are Carmen’s instructions for subscribing:

Send an e-mail message to:  
LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG with only the following text as your message (the message topic or subject does not matter nor do capital/lower case letters):

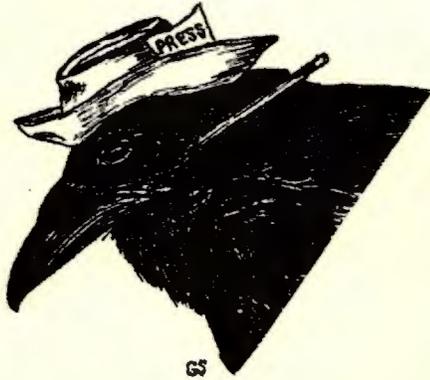
SUBSCRIBE PA-BREEDING-BIRD-ATLAS  
YOURFIRSTNAME YOURLASTNAME

VERY IMPORTANT! After typing the above, hit the ENTER key two times to be sure your e-mail software sees your subscribe command.

Your e-mail address, from which you sent the above message, will then be placed on the PA-BREEDING-BIRD-ATLAS subscription list. Any message sent to the following list address: PA-BREEDING-BIRD-ATLAS@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG is sent to all subscribers of this list.

This is a fast and simple way to reach many birders working on the 2<sup>nd</sup> PBBA through e-mail by sending only one message! Thank you, Carmen!

# The Raven Reporter



## Tales of Discovery from the Special Areas Project

### **SAP Update**

The Special Areas Project database was moved recently to a new portable computer. We have continued data entry in the new machine. The SAP database now includes 6772 field trips from 136 locations, but we still have several dozen field trips to add to the list.

Thanks to recent contributors for continuing to add to our collection of bird community information across the state. Bob Wasilewski, Marjorie Howard, Edith Parnum, and Nick Bolgiano have contributed SAP data in the last few months.

We are inputting these data before starting to work on new checklists for a few state parks and natural areas this winter.

### **Erie Bluffs Bioblitz**

Birders participated in a natural inventory of a new state park in Erie County. The PA DCNR conducted a very successful BioBlitz at the Coho site, the future location of Erie Bluffs State Park. The BioBlitz was a cooperative project between the PA DCNR, the PA Biological Survey, and the Western PA Conservancy (WPC). The Erie Bluffs were purchased by the WPC from Reliant Energy in December 2003. This site is west of Erie and Girard along the shore of the lake.

What is a BioBlitz? A BioBlitz is a well-coordinated rapid ecological inventory of a specific location. It is a 24-hour mass inventory of a site, a "snapshot in time" of a particular place. As Sally Just of DCNR pointed out in her thank-you note to participants, this blitz was "a truly collaborative effort that included over 20 state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations."

The future park is framed west to east by Duck Run and Elk Creek, respectively, and by Lake Erie on the north.

The Elk Creek Fish and Boat Commission Access area was included in the survey. One of the outstanding features of the park, its large bluffs facing the lake, gives the site its name. The goal of the bioblitz was to do a preliminary survey of the flora and fauna of the site so it can be better managed in a way to protect its natural resources.

The main event took place on July 16 and 17 near Girard, Erie County. I organized the group, an easy job considering how many of the participants were experienced with bird projects. Dick Nugent from Pittsburgh kept a species tally as we went. Deuane Hoffman shared his knowledge of the Erie County bird scene from his many trips to the state's Great Lake mecca. Our group also benefited from local birders of the Presque Isle Audubon. These were Pat Howell and Ben Coulter. Bud Sechler of the Nature Conservancy lent a hand, too. All in all, it was a great team.

The birders were only one of the many groups doing surveys. Each taxonomic group had its own dedicated set of inventory blitzers. We birders tended to hang out with the fungus guys, because (you know what's coming) we thought we were the "fun guys." Members of our team leaned over wildflowers, caught tiger beetles by hand, watched dragonflies with binoculars, got serious about lepidids, sneaked peeks at bats caught in nets, and generally had a good time. Local birder, Ben Coulter, was even identifying ants and a few damselflies. Bud Sechler found one of the rarest plants in the state at the site, the Sea Rocket (but I can't say where). During a break we watched Charles Bier scalding spiders for future identification. Well, we all have to do something to help out.

Most of us tented overnight. We camped among botanists and entomologists and somehow survived. A couple of us took a peek at the bat-netting project. (Note: they hang them upside down.) Some of us heard Great Horned Owls from our sleeping bags while we were trying to catch some shut-eye before the pre-dawn wake-up. Deuane heard a screech-owl while...well, I can't really say what he was doing.

The BioBlitz bird survey team found that the Erie Bluffs site has a rich and varied bird community. The team found 80 species in just a day and a half in mid-July. Not bad! I attribute our success to a good team effort and a divide-and-conquer scheme. This is a very good result given the lateness of the breeding season. Most of these species are local breeders.

Some highlights included two Bald Eagles, a Pennsylvania Endangered species, flying along the lakeshore and several spectacular-looking Red-headed Woodpeckers, a Watch List species and uncommon resident of PA. There were at

least three pairs of red-headed at the site, including one pair at the campground. Birders also observed a first-year Northern Harrier, a Candidate – Rare species, cruising over the fields. In the fragmented landscape of Erie County, it was gratifying to find many forest interior birds on this property. Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Hooded Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Scarlet Tanager were fairly common. The healthy understory in the forest helped the overall bird community diversity. Acadian Flycatchers were strongly associated with the presence of hemlocks. Locally rare species such as Mourning Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo were also found in the forest. Out in the agricultural fields, there were at least two pairs of Vesper Sparrows.

The most outstanding avian features of the Erie Bluffs are the large colonies of Bank Swallows, perhaps the largest in the state. Tim Hoppe, new Wildlife Diversity Biologist of Northwest Region, traversed the entire shoreline of the park and counted the nest holes. He counted more than 3000 holes in three different colonies all near Duck Run. There also were several holes undoubtedly used by nesting Belted Kingfishers. We also had fun doing comparison counts of one colony, each coming up with a different figure. So, let's say that the 3000 holes was a rough estimate.

The bird inventory team collected quantitative data for a better understanding of community structure and made notes of breeding behavior that will be used for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Breeding Bird Atlas. We used forms designed for the blitz, but used them essentially the same as SAP tally sheets keeping lists for each vegetation type in the park. Taking an ecological community approach, the site was divided into the following zones: A. the "Ancient Dune" where the lake deposited sand; B. the Lakeshore Bluff and associated forest; C. The Lake Plain west of Duck Run; D. Duck Run hollow (Great Lakes Region Scarp Complex); E. Elk Creek boat launch area with forest and creek.

The site includes parts of two Atlas blocks not claimed yet by volunteers, so these data will aid the local effort to inventory the state's breeding bird populations.

Prior to the main blitz in July, Jean and Toby Cunningham did a bird survey on May 14. The two efforts complement each other because the Cunninghams were able to find some passage migrants that were not present in mid-July. Their efforts added the following species to the list: Double-crested Cormorant, Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Greater Yellowlegs, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and White-crowned Sparrow. So, our total tally came to 89 species and still counting. Jean and Toby

have notes from past years that will add substantially to this total, too.

By comparison, the BioBlitzers found a total of 302 species of plants, 20 species of moss, 5 liverworts, 6 lichens, 94 fungi, 19 mammals, 11 amphibians, 3 reptiles, 15 fishes, and 35 land snails. I didn't get a report on the insects yet. But, I was delighted to be introduced to a Wandering Glider (*Pantala flavescens*) by blitzing odonatophiles. A truly elegant beast.

Thanks to all of the participants for making the BioBlitz a great success and a lot of fun.

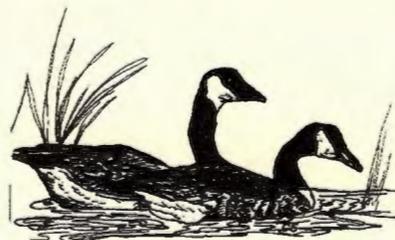
For more information about the PSO Special Areas Project, please contact:

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570-458-4564  
[dougross@sunlink.net](mailto:dougross@sunlink.net)

## AOU Check-list Changes

Each year the American Ornithologists' Union updates its *Check-list of North American Birds*, which is the standard authority for classifying and naming species. It is the "official" basis for state and other lists, as well as for the American Birding Association's checklist. The latest update, published in the AOU journal *The Auk* in July, includes a variety of changes involving Pennsylvania birds. By far the most important change is a split of the Canada Goose into two species:

- ★ Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*), the new species, includes five "small-bodied forms" previously treated as subspecies of the Canada Goose: Richardson's (*hutchinsii*), Cackling (*minima*), Aleutian (*leucopareia*), Taverner's (*taverneri*), and the extinct Bering (*asiatica*).
- ★ Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) is now limited to seven "large-bodied forms" that keep their past subspecies status: Atlantic (*canadensis*), Interior (*interior*), Giant (*maxima*), Moffitt's/Western (*moffitti*), Lesser (*parvipes*), Vancouver (*fulva*), and Dusky (*occidentalis*).



The AOU cited recent genetic studies, as well as previously described differences in voice, nesting behavior, habitat,

timing, color, and size, as evidence that the forms combined until now in *B. canadensis* actually constitute "at least" two species. "Additional analysis may result in further splitting," the committee said.

The split has caused consternation among birders about potential problems in identifying the two species, particularly the forms of Cackling and Canada that are most similar and overlap in size. Matt Sharp, chair of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee, sought to settle everyone down in a posting on the PABirds listserv July 26: "The 'new' species is not currently on the review list, but I would encourage anyone to try and figure out the status of the bird in the state even though field identification is complicated by interbreeding of the different groups and poorly defined species limits (at least between *parvipes* and *taverneri*). Thorny taxonomic/ identification issues should not be a reason to throw up one's arms in despair but rather an opportunity for birders to make a contribution to the understanding of bird distribution and status. Reviewing documentation by a state committee is what potentially turns 'amateur' field observations into useful data." The state records committee must still vote on adding the Cackling Goose to the official list of the birds of Pennsylvania. The decision will be based on whether adequate documentation shows that one of the small forms has occurred in our state.

The AOU also reported that each of the two separated species may be more closely related to other members of the *Branta* genus than to each other; for example, a recent study of mitochondrial DNA has shown that the Barnacle Goose is related closely to the small-bodied *hutchinsii* group. Therefore, the AOU rearranged the taxonomic sequence (the "official checklist order") of *Branta* species as follows: Brant, Barnacle Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, and Hawaiian Goose.

As usual in recent years, the AOU announced many changes in the suffixes of scientific names for Latin gender agreement between their generic and specific names, in conformance with the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. This time only two changes involve species on the Pennsylvania list: Spotted Sandpiper from *Actitis macularia* to *A. macularius* and Worm-eating Warbler, from *Helmitheros vermivorus* to *H. vermivorum*. Most of us are happy to learn that a suggestion to change the common name of Bank Swallow to Sand Martin (the British name of the same species) was rejected.

In a notable matter involving Pennsylvania, the AOU changed its mind about a bird filmed and initially identified as a Kermadec Petrel at Hawk Mountain in 1959, which would be the only North American record. The AOU had accepted the record in the 1998 edition of its *Check-list* but

announced this year that after further consideration, it no longer considers the identification definitive. The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee has never placed this species on the state list.

Meanwhile, the AOU reported that it is considering but has not yet accepted a variety of taxonomic "splits" and "lumps" involving birds on the Pennsylvania list. These included suggestions to merge Bicknell's Thrush and Gray-cheeked Thrush into a single species, and to split Yellow Warbler into two or more species, Seaside Sparrow into either two or four species, and Fox Sparrow into as many as four species. For any decisions on those, we will have to wait until July 2005 or later.

Important AOU decisions not involving Pennsylvania birds included the addition of five new species to the North American list: Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*) based on two California records, Greater Sand-Plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) based on one California occurrence, plus Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*), and Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), all based on records at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska.

The complete AOU update appears in *Auk* Vol. 121, No. 3, pages 985-995.

— Paul Hess



## Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Data-entry Tips

by Flo McGuire



### Entering Sightings

The easiest way to enter data is to use your Summary Field Card and enter the highest breeding code and date for each species found. After entering your block number and hitting "Enter Observations," choose

"Highest Breeding Bird Codes," "Multiple Days," and hit "Continue." Then, for each sighting, choose the breeding

code from the drop-down list and enter the date. (8/9/2004 will work, 08/09/2004 will work, but 08/09/04 will NOT work. You must enter the 2004 each time). At first, it is better to enter one or two sightings and hit SUBMIT. After that, a column at a time is a good rule. You need to remember the last bird you entered because once the data is accepted, all the sightings will be cleared from the input screen.

### Volunteers' Data

When entering a volunteer's data, you should log in as that person, using their password, or the system will intersperse their data with yours. This is not fatal, but it will be hard to find your own data when you want to double-check or edit it.

### Some Error Messages

If you coded a sighting as "Probable" or "Confirmed" outside of the safe dates, you will get a message to Confirm or Edit the entry. This is a warning – if you mis-typed the date, correct it; otherwise, just click on "Confirm," then "Submit" again.

### Avoid This Pitfall

After entering a group of birds and hitting "Submit," the screen may return a RED X because an asterisked bird needs the location and details. If you do not have the location and details available at that time, you need to DELETE THE ASTERISKED BIRD AND HIT SUBMIT AGAIN. If you exit the program, NONE of your birds will be saved. Don't exit the program until you get the message "Thank you. Your observations have been sent." You will have to re-enter the asterisked bird when you have the complete information.

### Entering Block Effort

As you enter your sightings, the system saves the dates. When you go into "Enter Block Effort," it will display, under the heading "Incomplete," a blank record for each date for which you had a sighting in that block. The dates are in descending order with the most recent date first. To get them in ascending order, to match your field card, click on the "Date" column. You only need to check the TIME OF DAY and enter the number of hours. Then you **must hit** SAVE after each record. Don't go down the list, entering all the hours, because when you hit SAVE, it only saves that one, and the rest of the hours you typed in are gone. When you save hours, that record will move down under the heading "All Effort."

Now we realize that it was a good idea to keep track of the time of day each time we atlased.

### To Correct Problems Created by Date Errors

If you mistyped a date when you entered your sightings, you need to edit the sighting, but also, the incorrect date will still be listed under "Block Effort" as "Incomplete." To get rid of it, you have to enter some hours. That will move it down under the heading "All Effort," and you can click the delete key to get rid of it. This erroneous date will also be listed under "Other Effort" as "Incomplete"; use the same method – enter some hours on that date to move it down under "All Effort." Then you can click on "Delete."

### To Add a Date

There will likely be some days that you atlased in a particular block and there is NO blank Effort record for that day/block. This could easily happen if all the birds seen that day were later upgraded. You will need to click on "Add New Effort" and enter the Block, Date, Time of Day, and length of Time.

### Entering Other Effort

To enter your mileage and travel time, click on "Other Effort." This is NOT block-specific, but there will be a blank record for each day you atlased. After entering the miles and total travel time for that day, hit "Save." If you worked on more than one block that day, you need to enter the total miles and total travel time. Don't forget to add the data-entry time.

### Before Entering Another Block's Sightings

You should enter your effort for each block before entering sightings for another block. This is not fatal, either, but – you will have a multitude of blank records, as described above, and it will be more difficult to enter your hours and time of day.

### Checking Your Data

As soon as you have entered any data, you can click on "My Home" to see your Total Block Hours, Other Hours, Miles, Total Submissions, and Total Species.

This screen may also have the message "You have Incomplete Block Effort" or "You have Incomplete Other Effort." This means that you reported a sighting for that day and did not enter any hours or miles for that day. Either enter the hours/miles for that date or see the section above, "Correcting Problems Created by Date Errors."

To check data for a particular block, enter that block number on the main screen. You can then click on "2004-2008 Results"; this will show a printable list of sightings for that block in taxonomical order, with the highest breeding code for each species. It does not show the sighting date, location, notes, or multiple records of the same species. You can access this data for any block, not just your own.

To check all of your data, from "My Home," click on "View or Modify My Observations." This will return every sighting that you have entered. To display just the sightings for a particular species or a particular block, you can enter the species name or the block number in the spaces provided. These lists can be sorted by clicking on the column heading. The default is All sightings, sorted in Ascending order by Block Number. To sort by species, click on either "Alphabetic" or Taxonomic"; you can also sort by Date or Breeding Evidence. To sort in the opposite order, click on the same column heading a second time. (e.g., clicking on "Breeding Evidence" will sort starting with Confirmed (NY) and ending with Observed (O); clicking on "Breeding Evidence" again will sort starting with O and ending with NY.)

If you need to edit or delete a sighting, click on "Edit" or "Delete" for the appropriate sighting on this listing, and follow the instructions.

### The Fun Part

By clicking on "View Results," you can enter any species, and a map of Pennsylvania will be displayed, showing that species' breeding status in each block that has so far been reported.

## 2005 Annual Meeting

Hosted by  
Seneca Rocks Audubon

Clarion, PA

May 15-17, 2005

Watch for details in the next *PSO Pileated*.

## The Conservation Corner

As birders, we are concerned about the population losses of a number of forest/grassland/wetland bird species; and we support sound conservation programs, participate in habitat restoration projects, etc. to reverse these negative trends. And, of course, this includes voting for environmentally responsible candidates. With this in mind, and with the upcoming presidential election, I think it is appropriate to compare the environmental records of the two major party candidates because federal policies can and do impact wild bird populations one way or another.

For those of you who have checked the environmental/conservation records of the two candidates, the one with the stronger environmental record is clear. But, I believe a quick review is in order for all PSO members and for the record, the information for the comparison below came from the League of Conservation Voters website – <http://www.lcv.org/>.

On the issue of "global warming," President Bush has rejected the Kyoto treaty and supports only minimal and voluntary reductions of carbon emissions. He also cut global warming discussion from a recent EPA report on the state of the environment. Senator Kerry supports re-engaging the international community to go beyond the Kyoto treaty and supports policies like increased fuel efficiency that would reduce greenhouse gases.

Regarding "clean air," President Bush has proposed a rollback of Clean Air Act requirements for older power plants and his "clear skies" proposal would not reduce carbon emissions from power plants. Senator Kerry supports reducing pollution, including carbon emissions from power plants, and supports the enforcement of Clean Air Act rules for older power plants.

For "public lands," President Bush wants to limit the amount of land eligible for wilderness protection while Senator Kerry supports wilderness protection and funding for federal land purchases. On "energy," President Bush has and continues to push for oil/gas drilling in the Arctic National Refuge and has supported the expansion of oil/gas drilling on BLM land in the west. Senator Kerry opposes the drilling in the Arctic National Refuge and supports the increase in fuel efficiency of cars and trucks.

And last but very important is "clean water." President Bush has proposed weakening some of the requirements of the Clean Water Act and even though he called for the creation of 3 million acres of wetlands, his policies have had the opposite effect. In fact, wetland losses continue and the Corps of Engineers and EPA continue to allow wetlands to be filled. Senator Kerry opposes the weakening

of the Clean Water Act and supports the protection of isolated wetlands as well as wetlands in general.

This quick review clearly shows which candidate has the better environmental record and policies. So, PSO members who are concerned about our country's conservation programs and environmental policies, let the candidates' records guide your vote this November.

PSO members who would like additional information on the candidates' environmental records can go to the website listed above for a more in-depth review. But most importantly, remember to vote this November – we owe it to all wildlife and ourselves to do so.

Another website of interest is  
[www.birdersunitedtodefeatbush.com/index.htm](http://www.birdersunitedtodefeatbush.com/index.htm).

– Mark Henry, Conservation Chairperson

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## PSO T-Shirts Are Now Available

PSO T-shirts are now available in all sizes. On the front is the round PSO logo depicted below:



On the back, our organization's name and a larger emblem:

"PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY"



T-shirts are available in either "bamboo green" or "natural." To order, use the form on page 15.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas: Website 101

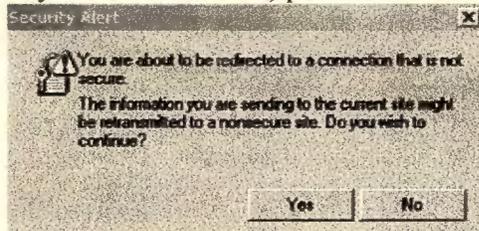
by Mike Lanzone and Robert Mulvihill

We hope that this tutorial will address some of the common questions about the atlas website since its launch in the beginning of June. For those of you who have not yet tried entering Atlas data on the website, the following provides step-by-step instructions that should help you get started and avoid some of the pitfalls the rest of us have fallen into while learning how to use the site! This article is not meant to replace the handbook, and, indeed many of the questions we get daily have already been addressed there. So, if you haven't read the Handbook yet, please do so!

### Registering as a new user

Before you can start entering atlas data, you must register as an atlas volunteer. Registering enables us to not only track the number of volunteers and hours that are logged for this project, but also allows us to attribute records to an individual and contact a volunteer if needed. To register simply click on the "click here" link in the top right hand corner of the website. This will go to a new screen asking you to pick a user name and password and e-mail address.

After you have entered this information and indicated whether or not you want the site to remember you when you come back (so you won't have to re-enter your password each time you come to the site) press "Submit." On the next page enter your name, address, and phone number and press continue.



When a prompt opens telling you that you are about to be redirected to a connection that is not secure, don't worry, just click "Yes." Now you are signed in and ready to go!

### Signing up for a block and printing maps

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas (2<sup>nd</sup> PBBA) is using the Delorme Atlas as a basis for the block ID's for this atlas. Please refer to the handbook or refer to <http://www.pabirdatlas.org> and click on "Atlasing Basics" for more information on this. To see a map of regions and the regional coordinators, please refer to "Contact US" on the same site and then click on Pennsylvania Delorme Atlas. Note: There has been some confusion about the websites as there are two 2<sup>nd</sup> PBBA websites, one that houses all of our information and materials and the other that is for data

entry and registration, however both can be accessed through [www.pabirdatlas.org](http://www.pabirdatlas.org).

To start enter the Delorme page number (region) in "Region ID" or "Block ID" in the proper format (i.e. 73C56) in the space provided near each. (Or you may use the topographic map name and the block number.) If you enter simply the region, you will be redirected to the **Region Profile** page which shows the owned, unowned, and completed blocks, as well as the name(s) of the Regional Coordinator(s). The map is "clickable," and by clicking on the map you can zoom to the "Block Profile" page. If you know your block ID and have entered it, you will be redirected to a page showing the Block Profile. On the "Block Profile" page you will see general information about that block including the status, owner, and Regional Coordinator for the region where the block is located. By clicking on the tabs along the top of the active box, you can view results from the previous atlas, the current atlas tally, and get your block maps. On either the region overview page or the Block Profile page you have the option to contact the Regional Coordinator(s).



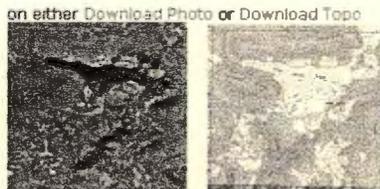
Jump To:

To sign up for an unowned block, click on "Request to own this block" on the block profile page. If you don't see this option, it is

- Request to own this block
- View Region 73
- Enter Observations
- View My Observations

because the block is already owned. If you don't care which block you are assigned or would like multiple blocks, you can click on "Request available block(s) be assigned to you" from the **Region Profile** page. You can then enter notes if you have a preference where you would like to work (i.e. I would like to own blocks near Bellefonte area). It is also a good idea if you don't know the Regional Coordinator, to let him/her know a little about yourself, more specifically your birding ability, in the notes (i.e. I have been birding for about 5 years, I know most species by sight and sound in my area, and could spend about 20 hours in the block over the next 2 years).

To get your block maps click on the tab, and then click on the aerial thumbnail or topo thumbnail and a new page will open with your map. If you would like to save the map on your computer, right mouse click and then click "Save Target As" and a new window will open allowing you to name the file and pick where on your computer you would like to save it. This is the fastest way to get your block maps and have them accessible. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer to view these files. It is a free



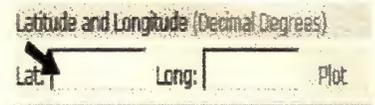
download; just follow the link from the block map page to download a copy.

## Entering Data

To enter data click on "Enter Observations" from the **Region Profile** page. On the next page you will see two options for entering data, "Highest Breeding Codes" and "All Breeding Observations." On each of these pages there will be a list of species expected in the block on the left side of the screen. There will also be an option to add a species you may have found in the block that isn't listed by entering all or part of the common name of the species in the space provided on the page and pressing "search." The species' names are all formatted to match their statewide or regional status. Species that have no formatting are common or widespread; regional rarities have an asterisk, species of special concern are bolded, and conservation interest species are italicized.

Please note that for statewide rarities or species of special concern you will need to either directly enter the GPS coordinates in the space provided, or plot the location of your observation on a map of your block using the plot tool and provide detailed notes. For regional rarities you will need to provide detailed notes to help your regional coordinator review or follow up on your observation, i.e. what did you see or hear and include driving directions to the location. We would also like you to plot the location of regional rarities on a map, but this is not required. For conservation interest species, we strongly encourage plotting of your observations, especially for those species that are confirmed.

Remember all GPS coordinates entered directly into the boxes shown above need to be in Decimal Degrees using NAD 83 Datum and the longitude must be preceded by a negative sign.



Latitude and Longitude (Decimal Degrees)  
Lat:  Long:  Plot

Note: If you do not have the required location information or details for statewide or regional rarities handy, you can always enter the other species and come back and enter data for those records requiring the additional information when you have it on hand. Importantly, **do not** exit out of the second data entry screen if you have inadvertently entered one of these species and don't have the information needed handy. If you do, your data entry session will not be completed and you will lose everything you have entered. To avoid this, press the "Edit" button and you will be taken back to the first data entry screen where you can remove the species whose required information you do not have on hand.

Occasionally you may be asked to confirm one or more of your records to make sure you didn't inadvertently enter

incorrect information. If this happens simply double check your entries (date and/or species) that are near the icon (below) and, if everything is correct, click in the yellow "Confirm" box, and press the "Submit" button again.

The "Highest Breeding Codes" option is for one or multiple days. Use "Single Day" if you are only going to enter one record per	Species	Safe Dates	Code	Sp
	Common Loon	01 Jun - 31 Jul	[ ]	Gr
	Green Heron	01 Jun - 15 Jul	[X]	Tl
	Canada Goose	01 May - 31 Jul	[ ]	Mt
	Wood Duck	01 May - 31 Jul	[ ]	M.
	Blue-winged Teal*	01 Jun - 31 Jul	[X]	Nt
	Sharp-shinned Hawk*	01 Jun - 31 Jul	[T]	Ct
	Red-shouldered Hawk*	01 May - 15 Aug	[C]	Br
	Red-tailed Hawk	01 May - 15 Jul	[U]	Ar
	Ring-necked Pheasant	15 Apr - 31 Jul	[A]	Rt
	Wild Turkey	15 Apr - 31 Jul	[CN]	Nt
	Virginia Rail*	15 May - 15 Aug	[PE]	Sr
	Common Moorhen	15 May - 31 Aug	[NB]	Ki

species per field day in a block. Use "Multiple Days" if you have only the highest breeding code and date for each species for the season in a block. For the single day entry method simply fill in the date on the top left of the screen and then go to each species you observed that day and just to the right of the safe dates scroll to the correct breeding code that you observed. The procedure for Multiple Days is exactly the same as entering Single Days, with the exception of the date—you will have to enter the date for each observation. Note: If a drop down list like the one shown to the right does not show up on your computer, then try entering your data using the "All Breeding Observations" described below.

The "All Breeding Observations" is used to enter multiple records for one or more species in your block (i.e. you saw 3 pairs of Golden-winged Warblers in your block and would like to enter all three); one form is used for each date you have observations in your block. (See below.) When you select this option, a new screen will open up with a list of all expected species in the block and little boxes below the breeding codes going from left to right across your screen. Simply enter the number of observations in these boxes, i.e. three Golden-winged Warblers, one nest building and two had a nest with eggs, you would put a 1 in the NB column and a 2 in the NE column. Once you have entered all of your information press "Submit" and a new page will appear, giving you the option to enter coordinates or plot the location of the sighting and enter notes about the sighting. If you have entered multiple records for a single species, there will be the same number of spaces on the second data entry screen to enter notes and locations; see top of the next column.

Species	Code and Date	Latitude and Longitude (Decimal Degrees)		
Golden-winged Warbler	NB - 06/03/2004	Lat: [ ]	Long: [ ]	Plot
	Notes: [ ]			
Golden-winged Warbler	NE - 06/03/2004	Lat: [ ]	Long: [ ]	Plot
	Notes: [ ]			
Golden-winged Warbler	NE - 06/03/2004	Lat: [ ]	Long: [ ]	Plot
	Notes: [ ]			

Important—If when you are entering data and press submit, you get receive the error message below, press the back button of your browser and press submit again. The general rule of thumb is NOT to spend longer than 60 minutes on the data entry screen, or it may time out. Try entering your data in smaller quantities if you think the amount you have for one day will take longer than that to enter.

My Home | Enter Observations | Enter Effort | View Regions & Blocks | View Results

**Your session has expired because it was inactive for too long. If you were in the middle of a task, you will have to begin again.**

### Habitat Data

For now, the habitat data from the field cards should be entered into the notes section for the record. The format is the habitat code preceded by a # sign, i.e. #H1. Type any relevant comments followed by the habitat code in the format described above.

Golden-winged Warbler	NE - 06/03/2004	Lat: [ ]	Long: [ ]	Plot
	Notes: [ ]			

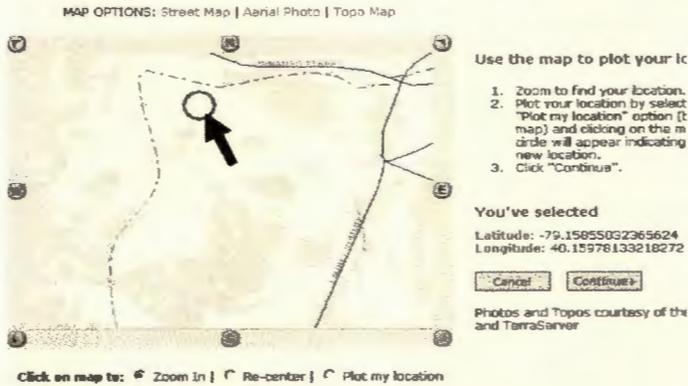
[ ] #H1

### Plotting your sighting

If you do not have access to a GPS unit, you can easily plot the location of your bird sightings if you remember where you made the observation. The easiest way to do this, as mentioned in the Handbook, is to carry a printed block map in the field and mark locations on it. To access the plot feature click on "plot" on the data entry review page. You will be taken to a new window where you will be able to zoom in and plot your location. First pick which type of map you would like to use to find your location from the top of the screen. The choices are Street Map (the default), Aerial Photo, or Topo Map. Click on the map to zoom in or re-center. By zooming in fully you will achieve the most precise plotting. At maximum zoom the tool automatically selects "Plot my Location," but if you are not fully zoomed after you find your location click "Plot my Location" under the map and then click your spot. A red confirmation circle will appear when you have selected your location. If the circle marks the

Species (SafeDates)	O	X	T	P	C	U	A	CN	PE	NB	FL	DD	CF	FY	NE	ON	NY
Golden-winged Warbler 25 May - 15 Jul	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[1]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[2]	[ ]	[ ]

**Find your Blue-winged Teal observation on the map:**



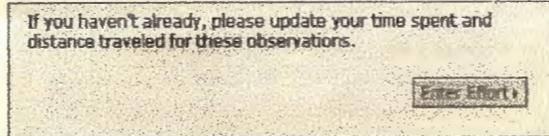
correct spot click "Continue;" if not, then re-plot your sighting using the controls as before. If you zoom in too far, you can always reset the map to full size by clicking the map reset button below the map.

**Entering Effort**

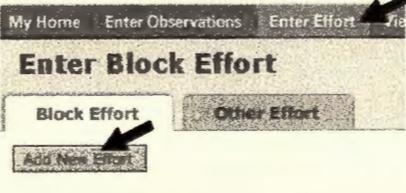
After you have submitted your records, you are given an opportunity to enter effort for that day. Simply press "Enter Effort." Once you are there, simply mark the time(s)



**Thank you: your observations have been sent.**



of day/night your effort fell within and the time spent in the block and press "save." **Important:** If you wait and enter effort for multiple days at the same time, these entries will have to be saved individually. If you fill in all at the same time and press "save" on the bottom one only, then only



**Incomplete**  
Please enter one effort at a time. "Save" will on  
Date ▾ Block Time Periods Help with T  
06/03/2004 73C46  Dawn  Mornin

that last effort information will be saved. We are trying to incorporate a "save all" button, but we do not have this functionality yet. If you decide to enter your effort later, just click the "Enter Effort" tab on the data entry website.

Common Loon ↑	06/03/2004	73C56	Confirmed (PE)	edit / delete
Mute Swan	06/03/2004	73C56	Confirmed (CN)	edit / delete
Blue-winged Teal*	06/03/2004	73C56	Confirmed (CN)	edit / delete

**Adding effort**

If you need to add non-birding related effort (i.e. data entry) or effort in which no birds were found (i.e. owling), you will need to click the "Add New Effort" button after clicking the "Enter Effort" tab on the website. The "Add New Effort" button is located on the top right of the effort screen. Simply click the button and proceed to enter all of the required information under "Block Effort" or "Other Effort."

**Editing Observations**

All records you submit are editable for up to 6 months. To edit your records click on the "Enter Observations" tab. On the page that opens, click "Edit my existing observations" at the end of the first paragraph. Then click on the edit or delete link. A new page appears either asking you to confirm the deletion or giving you the opportunity to edit your record. If you find errors or modifications after six months, please contact your RC or the main office.

**Records under review**

Many of you may have noticed the flag (🚩) symbol next to records. These simply mean that the records need to be reviewed by the Atlas Records Committee before they are incorporated into final atlas data. They will be shown until they are either accepted or rejected.

**Your stats**

From time to time you may wonder how many species you have logged for the atlas, how many miles or hours, or how many total records you have submitted. You can access all of these stats from the "My Home Tab" along the top bar. Statewide statistics are also accessible by clicking on the "View Results for the State" or simply clicking "View Results" tab on top.

We hope that you find this article useful. If any of you would like us to address in the next *PSO Pileated* anything you don't see here, be sure send us an e-mail at coordinators@pabirdatlas.org. As always, if you have questions, feel free to contact us by phone at the Atlas Headquarters 724-593-6022.

**Thanks!!!**

Special thanks to Dorothy Bordner, Stan Kotala, and Georgette Syster for contributing artwork for this newsletter. We appreciate your sharing your talent with PSO. Thank you!

## Reports from the Field

### Atlasing in Region 30

by Flo McGuire



One of the highlights from my atlasing experiences this summer occurred on a sunny June morning. We were driving slowly next to a farm field, hoping to confirm Bobolinks, when we saw two recently-fledged Barn Swallows perched side-by-side on a

wire fence. The two heads moved in unison as they watched their parents circle overhead, insect-catching. We watched for several minutes, and the young did not leave their perch. When the parents finally swooped down with tidbits for the kids, I don't know which was more phenomenal – their speed, their aim, or their brakes!

If you haven't joined this project, please plan to join for the 2005 breeding season. The directions for atlasing couldn't be simpler: Get a map, go birding, write down what you see. You're sure to discover new places to bird.

### Atlasing in Region 42

by Linda Wagner



Believe it or not, the first year of effort for the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project is nearly at an end. I have had the privilege of co-coordinating Region 42 with Randy Stringer, and it has been great fun. Region 42 includes 72 blocks. To stay on target we need to cover approximately 15 blocks

each year. Thanks to our terrific group of volunteers, we covered 16 blocks! Now if we can just keep up the pace for the next four years, we will be in good shape at the close of the Atlas!

Some bird highlights from this year include confirmation of numerous Red-shouldered Hawks (a flagged species for our region), Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Moorhen, Swamp Sparrow, Marsh Wren, Henslow's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, American Kestrel, N. Mockingbird,

Great Horned Owl, and Barred Owl. Sandhill Cranes were confirmed in nearby Region 43 by Barb and George Dean. We need to confirm them in Region 42. A Sedge Wren was a nice find and although nesting was not confirmed, there was a pair, and the male was singing on territory during the safe dates! Ospreys were confirmed by Suzanne Butcher, and I believe we will be seeing more nests in the years to come.

Of course, atlasing is never really finished for the year. Rock Pigeons are safe all year! And Great Horned Owls are safe again on December 20, just in time for some Christmas atlasing along with the Christmas Bird Count!

If you would like to volunteer to atlas a block in any region, please contact the regional coordinator via e-mail through the website at [www.pabirdatlas.org](http://www.pabirdatlas.org).

I am looking forward to "building our blocks" in Region 42 during the next four years. I am honored to be co-coordinating Region 42, but I can't cover the region alone! To complete a successful Atlas, we need all the help we can get. This is true in every region. Volunteers for any block are welcomed. Any level of birding skill is welcomed. Please join us in this worthwhile effort to "monitor PennsylvANIAN 65biodiversity"!



### Answers to PSO Quiz

on page 3

1. **Northern Harrier** and **Short-eared Owl**. (Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures have been known to nest on the ground, but strictly speaking, they are not raptors.)
2. **Townsend's Warbler** (on our state list) and **Hermit Warbler**.
3. **Northern Bobwhite**, with 19 subspecies from North America to Guatemala. It belongs to the taxonomic order named Galliformes.
4. **Red-headed Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Canada Warbler**.
5. **Song Sparrow** (*melodia* and *euphonia*) and **Common Grackle** (*versicolor* and *stonei*).

**PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY**  
**Order Form (June 2004)**

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*Did you know that in the past one of the colloquial names for the American Bittern was "Water Belcher"?*

## **The PSO Pileated**

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology.

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