

PSO PILEATED



October 2006

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 17, Number 3

From the President's Desk....

Kudos for Lancaster Bird Club

Crows became a hot button issue last winter in Lancaster County when several municipalities, driven by citizen complaints, contracted with USDA Wildlife Services to place poisoned bait in fields in an attempt to disperse a large winter roost of these birds. Despite strong local and statewide opposition from birders and others, including PSO, the poisoning went forward, killing some crows but failing to prevent the survivors from returning this year.

Very commendably, Lancaster Bird Club and its president, Ann Bodling, moved to forestall another polarized debate by teaming with Franklin and Marshall College to sponsor an informed discussion of crow behavior and management October 25, 2006. Led by a panel of scientific experts, the discussion included opportunity for community input through a question and answer session. A summary will appear in a future issue of *PSO Pileated*. This is an excellent example of how local birders can take the lead in framing discussion of an issue important to us.

It may be invasive, but birds love it!

That statement sums up the ambivalence felt by many birders I meet about the invasive exotic plant problem. Exotic berry bearing shrubs and vines like Asian honeysuckles, oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, and multiflora rose were once conservation staples of wildlife gardeners and land managers. Our native fruit eating birds, along with European Starlings, quickly accepted their fruits and became their disseminators. In disturbed



Multiflora rose hips

areas like the fragmented, urbanizing Piedmont, such plants now often replace ecologically equivalent natives, dominating old field and woodlot understory habitats. In fall when their colorful berries signal that the diner is open, they can be crowded with gorging waxwings, robins, and bluebirds. Many Christmas bird counters routinely pish their day's sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, catbird or Yellow-rumped Warbler from a thicket of these plants. Multiflora rose is often credited with abetting the northward range expansion of mockingbirds. If you love birds, where is the problem in this?



President Rudy Keller presided at a recent board meeting.

Part of the answer comes from the study of insects. Dr. Doug Tallamy, chairman of the University of Delaware Department of Entomology, studied insect diversity in a landscape invaded by exotic plants and found that the exotics hosted a much lower diversity of plant feeding insects than native plants of the same habitat. Since insects provide most of the protein needed by nesting passerines to raise their young, this low prey diversity may not allow more specialized insectivores to nest successfully. Thus, landscapes dominated by these exotics might please hordes of fruit eaters and a few adaptable nesters like

catbird and Song Sparrow, but would likely reduce bird diversity as they reduce plant and insect diversity. Large-scale invasive plant control may be beyond the control of the individual birder. But the growing number of us who are bird gardeners can choose to fill our patches of the planet with locally adapted natives and a few carefully chosen non-invasive exotics. Those prized warbler flocks passing through our gardens in fall just might linger long enough to be added to our yard lists if our plants provide the insects they need. Good birding!

– Rudy Keller, Boyertown, Berks County, PA

Improper Industrial Windplant Siting Threatens Pennsylvania Ridgetops

by Dr. Stan Kotala

Conservationists should be aware of the grave threat that a recklessly expanding wind power industry poses to Pennsylvania's forested ridgetops. Although wind is a source of renewable energy, the siting of industrial windplants along the Keystone State's forested ridges would have a severe negative impact on resident and migratory wildlife and preclude recreation, such as birding, hunting, and hiking, within several hundred yards of the wind turbines. A lack of environmental sensitivity regarding windplant siting threatens to destroy the green image of the wind power industry.

A hundred years ago, people who opposed the damming of the Hetch Hetchy were denounced by Gifford Pinchot, Teddy Roosevelt, and other nature-lovers as unrealistic preservationists, who failed to see the benefits to nature from sacrificing a few areas in order to save many others from the impacts of coal mining and burning. A century later, with the benefit of better science and more knowledge about aquatic ecosystems, we now know in detail just how devastating large hydroelectric dams can be. A similar scenario is unfolding with industrial windfarms.

The 400-foot tall wind turbines with 120-foot long blades have been shown to kill many birds and bats. Wind technology has certainly improved in the last twenty years; the



towers no longer act as massive cuisinarts for anything attempting to fly past. If sited off of direct migration routes, in non-forested areas such as abandoned strip mines or farm fields, they are unlikely to pose any greater threat to birds than any other manmade structures. On forested ridgetops, however, the massive towers will be harder for birds to avoid, especially in foggy or low-light conditions. Ridges such as the Allegheny Front, Tussey Mountain, Tuscarora Mountain, and Blue Mountain are

major migratory routes for Golden Eagles and Bald Eagles, as well as smaller raptors such as Broad-winged Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, and Sharp-shinned Hawks, and other migratory birds, including songbirds. Data gathered by the PA Game Commission last year in the Sproul State Forest showed how deadly even a low, two-story building could be if it happens to intersect with a migration route during atmospheric conditions that disorient birds. More than 140 migratory birds died in one foggy night due to collisions at that site.

The situation is a little more complicated with bats, which somehow become disoriented by the motion of the blades. Our



ridges, because they provide continuous forest cover in a north-south orientation, serve as travel corridors for migratory bats, such as the Silver-haired Bat and Red Bat. The 20 turbine wind energy facility in Meyersdale, Somerset County, is notorious for killing about a thousand bats each year. Other windplants on forested ridgetops have demonstrated an average kill rate of 100 bats per turbine per year. Wind projects integrated into the highest forested ridgelines in the region, unlike wind projects in the Midwest and West, devastate bat populations. A bat eats about 3,000 insects each night during the summer months, so bat losses of this magnitude will result in more mosquitoes and more forest damage from insect pests. Because bats are long lived and produce only one or two pups yearly, the death of an individual has significant effects on the population.

Because these gigantic turbines will require maintenance, new heavy-duty roads will need to be constructed to the ridgetops of mountains that now are largely roadless, resulting in fragmentation of forests, providing a pathway to exotic invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed, Ailanthus, Japanese stiltgrass, Russian olive, and Japanese barberry. In addition to the fragmentation caused by the construction of new, permanent roads, the three- to five-acre pads around each tower quickly add up.

This loss of intact ridgetop forest is the most devastating effect of locating "windfarms" on our mountains. At least one mile of 30-50 foot wide ridgetop roadway needs to be constructed to service every 8 wind turbines. **Thus, even if the problems with bird and bat deaths by direct collision can be solved, we would see a permanent loss of forest cover in the very places where wildlife most needs it.** In addition, in the central and southwestern portions of Pennsylvania, ridge systems serve as habitat islands for forest-dependent species, such as Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, the bobcat, and the fisher. Especially hard-hit would be ridgetop endemic species such as the PA Threatened Allegheny woodrat which is particularly sensitive to forest fragmentation.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service's guidance document regarding "windfarm" location states:

1. **Avoid placing turbines in areas where there are endangered species.**
2. **Avoid placing turbines in bird migration pathways.**

3. **Avoid placing turbines near known bat hibernation, breeding, and maternity colonies.**

4. **Avoid fragmenting large, contiguous tracts of wildlife habitat...**

As you can see, **siting industrial windplants on central Pennsylvania's forested ridges is in violation of the criteria for acceptable locations according to the US Fish & Wildlife Service.** It is especially troubling that wind power developers have targeted ridges such as Tussey Mountain, which has been designated as an Important Bird Area by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey because of its importance to migrating raptors, especially the Golden Eagle. As a matter of fact, Tussey Mountain has the highest number of Golden Eagles east of the Mississippi River during spring migration! Other disturbing signs include the targeting of Brush Mountain



in Blair County, part of the Canoe Creek Important Mammal Area, which is home to the Commonwealth's largest hibernaculum and summer colony of the federally endangered Indiana bat; and the targeting of Tuscarora, Jacks, Blacklog, Shade, and Canoe Mountains, which are homes to colonies of the Pennsylvania

Threatened Allegheny woodrat. Unfortunately, the US Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines listed above are voluntary and the wind industry is ignoring them.

Because of the danger posed by ice and broken parts being thrown from the 120-foot long 15,000-pound wind turbine blades, people will not be able to venture safely within several hundred yards of the towers. Ice from the rotating blades has been thrown hundreds of yards, putting people and property at risk. In addition, the noise from each 400-foot tower is the equivalent of a gas-powered generator (100 decibels) and can regularly be heard more than half a mile away. Residents living near wind turbines will confirm the problems of thumping and grinding noises often traveling up to a mile from the turbines, strobe effects, shadow flicker resulting from turbine blades crossing in front of the sun, and problems with ice throw, lightning strikes, and oil leaks from the 200 gallons of oil carried in each 60-ton turbine nacelle. Siting these massive industrial structures on our ridges would render large portions of these mountains unusable to sportsmen, hikers, and nature enthusiasts and ruin the recreational experience on an even larger portion of these lands

because of noise and aesthetic degradation.

Conservationists should seek a balanced approach to energy production. Industrial-scale wind complexes on forested ridgetops offer no real response to the threat of global warming and only token gestures for improving air quality. A much more meaningful action would redirect the substantial tax subsidies available for wind energy to fund conservation and efficiency incentives, for these would have a far greater impact in reducing the effects of fossil fuel combustion and toxic emissions responsible for endangering the world. Taking Pennsylvania as an example, it would require sacrificing 500 miles of ridgetop to place the 4,000 wind turbines that would be needed to provide the Keystone State with just 10% of its energy needs. To begin making a significant difference, the nation would require millions of wind turbines. However, the European experience with only a fraction of these kinds of numbers has been so problematic that many future windplants in Europe are planned far offshore and out of sight, especially in the Netherlands and Germany. Wind energy advocates also must keep in mind that 95% of the United States' wind energy potential exists west of the Mississippi River and that vast amounts of wind energy are available offshore.

In Pennsylvania the only regulatory oversight of windplants is at the local level (townships), so it's very important that residents express their concern to their township supervisors. Unless strict township ordinances controlling wind turbine placement are enacted, both people and wildlife will suffer the consequences. Pennsylvanians should also contact the Department of Environmental Protection and their state legislators to demand strict regulations governing the wind industry to ensure that our wild resources do not get shortchanged.

We must hold the wind power industry accountable, and demand a much greater sensitivity toward conservation concerns if it is to retain its green image. It is not unreasonable to recommend that areas of exceptional conservation value be off limits to industrial wind energy development. **On our forested ridges, the devastating effects of "windfarms" on wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation outweigh any environmental benefit of wind power.**

PSO Annual Meeting
Harrisburg, PA
Best Western Inn & Suites
May 18-20, 2007

Details will be provided in future newsletters.

Now Accepting Award Nominations

Do you know someone who has made a significant contribution to ornithology in Pennsylvania? Or a person or group whose project has resulted in significant bird conservation in Pennsylvania? It's not too early to be thinking about your nominations for the Earl L. Poole Award and the PSO Conservation Award! The deadline for nominees is January 15, 2007, but don't get caught in the Christmas rush. Nominations will be accepted at any time by the PSO vice-president, who chairs the awards committee. The PSO Awards Committee will select the best candidate for each award and present the nominees to the PSO board of directors for their approval at their February meeting.

The Earl L. Poole Award is presented at the PSO Annual Meeting, to an individual who has made **significant contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania**. This person may be a professional or an amateur. The award was first presented to Jean Stull Cunningham in 1995. Other winners were: Bob Leberman, Paul Schwalbe, Ralph Bell, Ed Fingerhood, Bill Reid, Frank and Barb Haas, Phillips B. Street, Paul Hess, Dan Brauning, Margaret Buckwalter, and Margaret Higbee.

The Conservation Award, established in 2005, is a monetary award to recognize an individual, individuals, or group for **projects that have resulted in significant bird conservation in Pennsylvania**. Seneca Rocks Audubon Society was the first recipient, for ongoing efforts in establishing and preserving the Piney Tract IBA. In 2006, Tom Dick received the Conservation Award for his work, which includes the creation and directorship of Dunnings Creek wetlands, and also the purchase of the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch site. This award will not necessarily be presented each year, depending on nominations.

Do you know a person or group deserving of one of the awards? Don't wait until January – send an email or letter to Flo McGuire telling why you think the nominee should receive the award – fmcguire1@verizon.net or HC 1 Box 6A, Tionesta, PA 16353.

– Flo McGuire



The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania's Birds



I am very glad to bring you up to date on the Bald Eagle nesting program. As of the end of the 2006 nesting season, we can account for 116 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles in the state. The nesting population continues to grow at approximately 15% a year. Bald Eagles now nest in at least 33 of our 67 counties. We've added Adams and Montour counties to the list since the last newsletter. Several of the new nests were reported by volunteers.

We are still pursuing information on the fates of several nests, but it looks like it was another successful nesting season. A few nests failed from storm damage to the nesting tree, but most nests seemed to have successfully fledged at least one young.

Once the leaves fall off the trees, it will be easier to find eagle nests obscured by foliage in spring and summer. I encourage you to attempt to locate nests where you have observed adult eagles in the summer or where you have heard reports of eagles. We suspect that there are several undiscovered nests in the wilds of Pennsylvania, especially on islands or mountainsides near larger streams. If you believe that you know of a nesting pair that is undocumented or unwatched by authorities, please feel free to contact me. We are glad to add more nests to our inventory. Not only is it important to our monitoring goals to find and report every nest, but we also have a basic need to protect nests that can be threatened by inappropriate development and other human activities. We cannot protect a nest unless we know where it is located.

PGC also will be coordinating the Mid-winter Bald Eagle count along the state's major rivers and reservoirs. This survey takes place each January. Please contact me (information below) if you are interested in participating in this survey.

PSO Special Areas Project Checklists

We are gradually making progress generating annotated checklists for locations surveyed by PSO volunteers. I understand that a draft for a checklist for Prince Gallitzen State Park has been submitted to the Bureau of State Parks.

Rory Bower of that park's staff has been very instrumental in achieving this goal. He has also used recent PBBA data to supplement the SAP data collected previously by the Todd Bird Club.

We also have engaged a few SAP participants as coordinators for checklists for these sites. For instance, Edie Parnum is going to help with Promised Land State Park and Bruce Lake Natural Area.

With the PBBA season taking a deep breath, now is a good time to dive into the data and help use the information to put together checklists for the various state parks, natural areas, and game lands where we have collected data. We also are very open to the use of newer data to supplement field data already collected. In most cases, these are just "tweaks" of what we have already. Please let me know if you would like to help. I have listed our SAP locations in past columns and avoid duplicating this list again. Contact me if you have questions.

Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Workshop

The first Northeast Coordinated Bird Workshop was held in September at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (CLO), Ithaca, New York. Almost 90 avian specialists, representing a wide diversity of organizations and backgrounds, participated. The goal is to develop a comprehensive framework that will assist states, federal agencies, and conservation-oriented non-government agencies to achieve their bird monitoring objectives.

The Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring partnership is a cooperative effort to align and strengthen bird monitoring projects in the Northeast. State, federal, and non-governmental organizations have teamed up to develop a coordinated approach to monitoring avian distribution, abundance, and demographics in the thirteen states of US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 5, which in addition to PA, includes CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI, VA, VT, WV. This initiative will help build the fundamental basis for science-based bird conservation in the Northeast. This initiative is administered by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) in collaboration with the CLO, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The project was developed by NE Partners In Flight, NE Shorebird Conservation Plan, and Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritimes Waterbird Conservation Plan in concert with the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative's Monitoring Subcommittee. It is made possible by a Multistate Conservation Grant awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with assistance from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The project acknowledges the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Programs of the US Fish

and Wildlife Service, which funds the Multistate Conservation Program.

The workshop was organized by Dan Lambert of the American Bird Conservancy who is based at the Vermont Institute of Natural Science in Woodstock, VT. Dan is known for his work with Bicknell's Thrush and Canada Warbler.

Pennsylvania was fairly well represented at the workshop, but not as well represented as some neighboring states. From Pennsylvania Audubon came Kim Van Fleet, Keith Russell, and Beth DeCelles. Jackie Speicher represented the Pocono Avian Research Center. I represented the PA Game Commission.

In a preliminary meeting, Dan Lambert met with several Pennsylvania biologists to better prepare for the September workshop and start a complete catalogue of bird monitoring projects for the state. At Dan's presentation, a good question-and-answer session informed us of this opportunity and clarified the goals of the effort. So, various biologists that represented Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the U.S. Geological Survey, the OTC, Penn State, and the National Park Service also contributed to the workshop by making suggestions and contributing the names of projects to the state's catalogue.

Population monitoring is a vital part of any effective conservation plan. Several ongoing conservation plans include monitoring as a key component. These include the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and Partners in Flight's (PIF) Continental Landbird Conservation Plan. Since Pennsylvania is primarily a forested state, the PIF plan is a major focus of our bird conservation initiatives. Other plans also are important because our state has a part to play in the conservation of these birds. Since resources are always in short supply, a great emphasis has been placed on collaboration between organizations. This spirit certainly exists in Pennsylvania as demonstrated through our All-Birds Workshop, the PA Audubon workshops, and various bird monitoring programs such as the PA Breeding Bird Atlas and IBA monitoring.

Bird population monitoring is a critical element in Pennsylvania's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (see the PGC website). We take an adaptive management approach, using bird monitoring as a means to measure the success of programs and be aware of trends in bird populations. According to the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) monitoring subcommittee, there is a need to improve the effectiveness, scope, value, utility, coordination, and efficiency of current monitoring efforts. It was one of the primary goals of the workshop to collaboratively address these issues.

The workshop was a busy three days of presentations, break-out groups, panel discussions, brainstorming sessions, and informal networking. The following presentations were given during the workshop:

- ★ Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership: background, context, and overall goals – Ken Rosenberg, CLO and PIF
- ★ Objectives of the NE Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership and Workshop – Dan Lambert, ABC
- ★ Avian Knowledge Network: Organizing the rich data resources of the bird-monitoring community - Steve Kelling, CLO
- ★ *eBird* as a Monitoring Tool – Chris Wood, CLO
- ★ Avian Knowledge Network: Exploratory tools for bird monitoring data – Daniel Fink, CLO
- ★ The Raptor Population Index Project as a model for coordinated bird monitoring – Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza, Hawk Migration Association of North America
- ★ Future Directions of the North American Breeding Bird Survey: 2006-2010 Strategic Plan – Keith Pardieck, USGS
- ★ PRISM: Efforts to Improve Shorebird Monitoring in the Northeast – Steven Brown, Stephanie Schmidt, and Brian Harrington, Manomet Center for Conservation Studies
- ★ Designing Surveys For Birds: A Few Issues To Consider Regarding Sample Frames, Detectability Estimation, and Analysis – John Sauer, USGS
- ★ Site Occupancy as a Useful Parameter for Monitoring Programs – Larissa Bailey, USGS.

There was a good panel discussion on designing bird surveys. We are trying to learn from past mistakes. The workshop also included break-out sessions for the various habitat/behavioral bird groups. These included sessions for forest birds, grassland birds, marsh birds, and water birds. I attended the nocturnal bird session and communicated to the group the success Pennsylvania has had with the saw-whet owl protocol (Project Toot Route) and the PBBA owl protocol. Maine has had excellent success with its volunteer-based owl breeding survey. Like the Pennsylvania approach, the Maine owl survey includes passive listening and "acoustic lure" components (tape – playback). New Hampshire Audubon has been developing and using a Whip-poor-will survey (a passive listening mini-route) in New England where this nightjar is much rarer and more localized than in Pennsylvania. Our challenge will be to find methods that will allow comparative analyses of these data. Surveys that collect data for a suite of species are more efficient than single-species surveys even if they may require return visits. The passive listening session is a common denominator that allows multi-species data collection even with "playback" as part of the protocol.

Since birds do not recognize political boundaries and cross many political boundaries when they migrate, we must take a larger view of bird conservation and population monitoring. Coordinated monitoring must be a mutual goal if wildlife managers and conservation organizations wish to create a regional scale perspective of bird populations. We cannot compare data sets that are not compatible. These regionally based data sets will allow us to better design and evaluate effective management decisions.

It is a commonly heard complaint that we do little to evaluate the effects of our management plans and actions. *Just because we mean well does not mean we do well.* We have taken great strides in addressing the gaps in species coverage in recent years, but there still are formidable gaps in our knowledge of bird populations. Some species and habitats are difficult to inventory and monitor in a systematic way.

I invite all of you to visit the NE Coordinated Bird Monitoring website at www.nebirdmonitor.org/. This website has incorporated many tools and resources that I believe you will find valuable. In addition, several of the presentations given at the workshop are available as Powerpoint presentations on the website. This collaboration has tremendous potential to better equip and organize our attempts to monitor bird populations through citizen scientists. I will report more about the developments of this collaborative effort in future columns.

Watching the Windbirds: Let's Monitor our Shorebirds

The restlessness of shorebirds, their kinship with the distance and swift seasons, the wistful signal of their voices down the long coastlines of the world made them, for me, the most affecting of wild creatures. I think of them as the birds of the wind, 'the wind birds.'

– Peter Matthiessen

The Wind Birds (and the Shorebirds of North America)

Pennsylvania may not qualify as a coastal state except for its fairly short intersection with Lake Erie, but we surely enjoy our opportunities to observe shorebird migration each spring and fall. Few things are more exciting than witnessing a flock of shorebirds swirling around overhead and landing on a spit of sand in front of you. For a landlubber like me, a flock of peeps and tattlers provides quite a thrill. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.

Each year birders flock to a few of the shorebird hotspots and post their findings on Pennsylvania Birds listserve, in *Pennsylvania Birds*, and elsewhere. Sanderlings at Presque Isle. A Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Marburg. American Golden-Plovers at Independence Marsh. A wistful Whimbrel on “the Flats.” I read the accounts with envy. It may not be the numbers experienced at the shore, but they are a credit to the diversity of our state’s habitats and the potential for Pennsylvania as stopover habitat. If you can get your hands on some of the historic accounts of shorebird migration in Pennsylvania, you will yearn for the “good old days.” The huge flocks of shorebirds took advantage of the shallows, sandbars, mudflats, rocky shoals, and islands along the Susquehanna and other rivers. The tidewaters of the Delaware were a particularly important stopover site for shore bound windbirds. This was before the huge slaughter of shorebirds from market-hunting of the last 19th and early 20th century. Naive sandpipers and plovers were easy prey for the guns of September and October. The Dunlin was known as “the simpleton,” an unflattering evaluation of its mental acuity.



Greater Yellowlegs is one of the more common shorebirds that migrate through Pennsylvania.

Photo by Roger Higbee

The Eskimo Curlew, now virtually extinct, was called “Doughbird” because its large fat reserves made it a delicacy among the public. The immense loss of birds by market hunters was one of the chief motivations for our modern bird protection regulations, often supported by the (former) hunters who witnessed the decline in their prey. Shorebird populations also were higher before many of our rivers were dammed for power generation and recreation, flooding good shorebird stopover habitat. Shallow waters revealed the muddy or rocky bottoms of rivers that are chock full of food for hungry wind birds.

Even today, shorebirds are particularly vulnerable. They pose many “conservation challenges” for managers. For one, they are among the most international of organisms. Shorebirds cross hemispheric boundaries when migrating between seasons. We must protect each link in the chain to ensure their safety. Since their migration trips often are so long, there must be concerted efforts to protect key stopover sites vital to their survival. Like many of our Neotropical songbirds, wind birds have a low reproductive potential. They spend precious little time on their nesting ground so there is little room for error due to predation, human intervention, or bad weather. They just cannot recover very quickly from past declines in population. They are also especially vulnerable because they concentrate at particular sites for resting and feeding on their long journeys north and south. Coastal development and climate change have exacerbated the already limited, dispersed, and often ephemeral habitat.



One of the more unusual shorebirds to appear in PA is the Red Phalarope. This bird visited Bald Knob in Allegheny Co. on September 6, 2005.

Photo by Geoff Malosh

Fortunately, many species have increased in population since the “bad old days” of market hunting. There is potential for shorebird conservation in Pennsylvania. With more emphasis and support for wildlife habitat on private lands, I believe that more shallow water feeding areas and mudflats could be created through partnerships. There certainly is an increase in interest in monitoring and conserving shorebird habitat on public lands, often in conjunction with other birds associated with wetlands such as waterfowl.

We need to plan and cooperate on an international scale. Therefore, a network of agencies and conservation organizations has sprung up in support of the wind birds. The United States shorebird conservation plan is available online at <http://shorebirdplan.fws.us>.

One of the challenges is to make better estimates of shorebird populations and to monitor these populations for signs of change. It could be said that “the more data, the better,” but it is critical that we collect data in a coordinated way that allows comparisons and collation of those data. Of course, proper identification of the shorebirds is essential to population data collection. Please consider helping with the International Shorebird Surveys (ISS). Surveys would be appreciated during the spring or autumn migration, and best of all, both! If your site is a good shorebird area in one, but not the other season, ISS would like to know and make adjustments accordingly. The best way is to give them counts for both seasons, but if you can't do that, a simple statement to that effect would be much better than nothing. Information about ISS and PRISM can be found at [www. Shorebird world.org](http://www.Shorebirdworld.org). The organizer for ISS surveys is Brian Harrington who can be reached at bharr@manomet.org. Only a handful of Pennsylvania sites were selected as Important Bird Areas because of their importance as shorebird stopover sites (with 100 shorebirds at a time as a

minimum for qualification). These include the Conejohela Flats, Presque Isle State Park, Shenango Reservoir, Erie National Wildlife Refuge, Pymatuning/ Hartstown wetland complex, Yellow Creek State Park, the Sheets Island archipelago near Harrisburg, Lake Ontelaunee, and Blue Marsh Lake as well as a few others. I advise anyone or any organization collecting data on shorebirds at these sites to coordinate their monitoring activities with Kim Van Fleet of PA Audubon in addition to ISS and the PGC's Wildlife Diversity section (that's Dan Brauning and me).

The list of ISS sites in Pennsylvania is very short. If your shorebird hotspot is not included on this short list, please consider adopting it as an ISS location and assist with shorebird monitoring. The wind birds will thank you.

[Please note that sections from All-Bird Bulletin report by Justin Schneider and Dan Lambert's notes were used extensively for that section of my column, and the PRISM and ISS websites were also quoted liberally.]

For participation in Pennsylvania's bird citizen science projects and checklists for our state's public lands, please contact:

Douglas A. Gross
Wildlife Biologist, Endangered Bird Specialist
Pennsylvania Game Commission
And Coordinator of the PSO Special Areas Project
144 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859
Phone: 570-458-4109 (or 458-4564)
E-mail: dogross@state.pa.us or dougross@sunlink.net

Great Lakes Restoration Conference

*November 4-5, Brookfield Zoo
Brookfield, IL (Chicago area)*

Join Audubon chapter leaders, volunteers, activists, invited speakers, and staff at the Great Lakes Regional Conference. Learn how federal, state and local restoration efforts can address the needs of Important Bird Areas, wildlife, habitat, wetlands, water quality, and more. Build skills, build confidence, get educated and enjoy Audubon camaraderie!

For more information, please contact Karen Orenstein, korenstein@audubon.org. The registration form for this event may be found at [http://www.audubon.org/campaign /greatlakes.php](http://www.audubon.org/campaign/greatlakes.php).

Ornithological Literature Notes

Birders who watch chickadees in parts of southern Pennsylvania are seeing a fascinating biological phenomenon: one of North America's most interesting avian hybrid zones. As most PSO members are aware, the breeding ranges of the Carolina Chickadee and Black-capped Chickadee meet and the two species hybridize along a narrow belt crossing southeastern and southwestern areas of the state. Studies in recent years by Robert L. Curry and his students at Villanova University have shed important light on chickadee ecology, genetics, and behavior in the hybrid zone. The research continues, primarily focusing on birds at the Nolde Forest near Reading, the Great Marsh in Chester County, and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

Among the most striking results so far has been a discovery that nearly all the chickadees within the contact zone at Nolde apparently are hybrids. Further, by mapping the genetic characteristics of individual birds, the studies confirm a striking geographic pattern that veteran birders have suspected for a quarter-century. Both the Carolina Chickadee range limit and the position of the entire hybrid zone are shifting northward.

The research took a notable step forward this year with publication of "Extrapair paternity and mate choice in a chickadee hybrid zone" by Matthew W. Reudink, Stephen G. Mech, and Robert L. Curry (*Behavioral Ecology* 17:56–62). Extrapair paternity results when a female is fertilized by a male who is not her social mate. An extensive body of literature deals with the causes and consequences of extrapair sexual behavior from various viewpoints; however, most research deals with behavior within a species. Extrapair sexual activity between different species adds another dimension.

The authors found several striking results at Nolde Forest, which is in the center of the hybrid zone. Genetic analysis showed extrapair offspring present in over half the nests of hybridizing Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees. Females socially paired with Black-capped-like males were more likely to have extrapair offspring in their broods.



Females of both the Carolina genotype and the Black-capped genotype tended to prefer Carolina-like males as extrapair partners.

A previous experimental study in Ohio (where the hybrid zone is similarly shifting northward) also had found that both Carolina and Black-capped females tended to favor Carolina males. Could female preference for Carolina-like males have a role in the Carolina Chickadee's expansion northward? Reudink and his coauthors cautioned that more work, particularly at the leading edge of the hybrid zone north of Nolde Forest, will be necessary to support an answer.

[Curry summarized many results of the hybrid-zone studies in two posts on the Pabirds e-mail list: one on 10 October 2004 and one on 16 December 2005. Read them on the list's archives at <http://list.audubon.org/archives/pabirds.html>]. The latter post contains a link to the new *Behavioral Ecology* paper online.]

– Paul Hess

Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania waterbirds?

1. Your heart stops when a godwit with a black tail and mostly-black underwings flies past. Have you discovered Pennsylvania's first Black-tailed Godwit?
2. You see a dark ibis standing in a marsh, and you notice that it has red eyes. How excited should you be?
3. It's late fall, and you can't decide whether the shorebird you're scoping is a Black-bellied Plover or an American Golden-Plover. The bird takes flight, and you can see a prominent wing stripe. Which species is it?
4. The immature night-heron you're watching has an all-dark bill. Is it a Yellow-crowned or a Black-crowned?
5. It's late fall again, and you wonder if this shorebird with plain grayish brown upperparts and a somewhat down-curved bill is a Stilt Sandpiper or – you're holding your breath – a Curlew Sandpiper. Its greenish legs tell you the answer. What is it?

See Answers on page 10.

Three Rivers Birding Club's Scholarship Winner Describes PSO Weekend

by Patrick Susoeff

From May 19-21, I attended the 2006 Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology meeting in Ligonier, near the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County. The conference is held every year in a different place and features lectures and bird outings. I was given a scholarship from the Three Rivers Birding Club to attend the meeting.

On Friday evening we checked into the Ligonier Ramada Inn, registered for the conference, and ate dinner. Then we attended the PSO social and annual meeting. We learned about the outings that were planned for Saturday and Sunday, and signed up for our choices.

On Saturday morning we chose the outing to the Roaring Run Natural Area. Located in Westmoreland County, the area has approximately 3,000 acres of second- and third-growth forest. Roaring Run is a tributary of Indian Creek, which empties into the Youghiogheny River. The weather was cold and misty. I wished that I had worn gloves. As we climbed in elevation, it grew even colder than the area near the hotel. In spite of the bad weather, the group of about 15 birders, led by Len Hess, saw 28 species.

Highlights included a Ruffed Grouse's nest with eggs on the side of the path, lots of Chestnut-sided Warblers, and many juncos which were, of course, already gone from the Fox Chapel area where I live. During this outing a Canada Warbler was a life bird for me.

When we returned to town, my mom bought us gloves at a local store! Then it was time for lunch and lectures at Powdermill Nature Reserve. After sitting in on a few talks, we decided to bird the preserve. Although we didn't see anything new, it was a nice walk in the woods.

Saturday night was the conference banquet with a guest speaker, Mike Lanzone, who went on the search to confirm the sightings of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker. I thought his experience in the Arkansas swamps was really cool. I liked how he talked about how the bird he saw was unlike anything else he had ever seen. The way he presented it, he made the bird seem really mysterious.

Sunday morning we went to Linn Run State Park, which has 612 acres and borders Forbes State Forest. It has a variety of areas, with mixed hardwood and evergreen forests. Grove Run and Rock Run join to make Linn Run, a stream with a waterfall, Adams Falls. The weather had improved that morning, although it did rain later. During

the drive to the meeting place, we saw a Ring-necked Pheasant along the road, which was another life bird for me. In total, we saw 35 species, with many warblers: Hooded, American Redstart, Cerulean, Black-throated Green, Canada, Black-throated Blue, Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, Common Yellowthroat, and Blackburnian. Some of the other outings looked really interesting, and I wish I could have gone on them, too. The total count for the meeting was 166 species. I hope I can go next year, because it was really fun. Thanks to the Three Rivers Birding Club for sponsoring my trip.

[Reprinted with permission from the 3 Rivers Birding Club's newsletter *The Peregrine*.]

Grassland Workshop

Unfortunately, habitat for Barn Owls, American Kestrels, neotropical grassland birds, gamebirds, butterflies, and many other grassland creatures is disappearing due to rapid development and loss of farmland, especially in the Lehigh Valley. If you are interested in preserving farmland and creating grassland habitat in the Lehigh Valley, the DCNR/Lehigh Valley Greenways Grassland Partnership is sponsoring a workshop, "Disappearing Grasslands" on Saturday, November 4, at the Martins Creek PPL plant from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Topics will include farmland preservation, grasslands and wildlife, PA Game Commission Barn Owl Initiative, warm-season grasses, Pheasants Forever, American Kestrel nesting box project, and a tour of the grassland initiative at Martins Creek PPL. This workshop is open to all those interested, but especially farmers and other landowners who would like to preserve land and enhance it with grassland habitat. Registration is required. Fee of \$10 includes lunch and materials. For more information and to register, contact Rick Wiltraut at 610-746-2810 or by e-mail at rwiltraut@state.pa.us.

Answers to Bird Quiz

on page 6

1. No, but you can't be too disappointed with a Hudsonian Godwit, can you?
2. Very excited. Grab your camera to confirm Pennsylvania's first White-faced Ibis.
3. Black-bellied Plover.
4. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.
5. "Just" a Stilt Sandpiper.

PORC News

by Nick Pulcinella

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee has been busy over the past 18 months. During that time 273 reports were reviewed. Seven new species were added to the Official State List: Band-rumped Storm-petrel, Long-billed Curlew, Curlew Sandpiper, Calliope Hummingbird, Gray Kingbird, Redwing, and MacGillivray's Warbler. The 14th and 15th PORC reports, which include the details of all the reports reviewed, are being drafted for publication in *Pennsylvania Birds*. One directive of the Records Committee's bylaws is to review the Official State List every five years. This has been completed and will also be published in *Pennsylvania Birds*.

The Committee is made up of seven voting members and a non-voting secretary. Current membership consists of J.Eric Witmer (*Lancaster*) chair, Jerry Stanley (*Venango*), Rick Wiltraut (*Northampton*), Al Guarente (*Delaware*), Jonathan Heller (*Lebanon*), Tom Johnson (*Dauphin*) and Geoff Malosh (*Allegheny*). Nick Pulcinella (*Chester*) is the non-voting secretary.

Now that the huge backlog of reports has been decided, the Committee hopes to tackle the project of collecting documentation on review list species that were reported prior to the inception of P.O.R.C. This long-term endeavor has been placed on the back burner for several years as the current workload was dealt with. A subcommittee including Witmer, Guarente and Pulcinella plan to review past publications dealing with Pennsylvania bird sightings in an attempt to gather documentation that can be reviewed. The goal of this project is to officially include many of these "old" reports into the historical record.

The Committee's newest members are Jonathan Heller, Geoff Malosh, and Tom Johnson.

Jonathan Heller

Jonathan is a resident of Lebanon. His fascination with birds started at age 12 and began with a desire to learn more about the wildlife on the family farm in Mount Joy where he grew up. His interest in birds continued to expand on family vacations to areas with different varieties of birds and really took wing, so to speak, under the guidance of Harold Morrin. Harold went out of his way to make sure that Jonathan got hooked on birds! During college he spent some time over the summers in Colorado helping to band birds and assisting on research projects. Currently he is working as a financial advisor at Morgan

Stanley, but he takes as much time as he can to search for birds locally and on vacations in the US and overseas. He is also active in the Lancaster County Bird Club where he works as treasurer, and he serves as the Lancaster County compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds*. Jonathan was elected to PORC in 2005.

Al Guarente

As Al explains, "I began birding at the ripe old age of thirteen when my friends and I put out a feeder. I was hooked when we were able to identify a White-breasted Nuthatch coming down the tree." He later joined the newly organized American Birding Association in 1970, and that inspired him to really get active in birding. He serves on the Tyler Arboretum Volunteers Board of Directors and was a founding member of the Birding Club of Delaware County. He has participated in the annual Audubon Christmas Counts for about 35 years and has worked on both Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlases. In addition, he served as the Delaware County compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* for ten years. He is an indefatigable leader of bird trips and local walks and has served as a mentor to many beginning birders. He estimates that he has led about 700 field trips in his career. He has extensive birding experience in North America, having birded all 50 states and several Canadian provinces. He has also extended his interest to Central America with excursions to Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama.

In 2005 Al agreed to fill in the remaining year of Dan Heathcote's term and was elected to a full three-year term on PORC in 2006. He currently resides in Media.

Geoff Malosh

A resident of Pittsburgh, Geoff was elected to PORC in 2006. He reports that he has been birding since he was eight but became officially "hooked" on May 12, 1984, on a trip to Presque Isle State Park during a stop at Ron Leberman's banding station. "I remember sitting silently at the picnic table where he was set up, almost afraid to talk, watching him pull warbler after dazzling warbler out of his rumpled paper bags like some kind of magician. He let me hold a few of the birds, including a male American Redstart that lost one of its tail feathers during the banding process. I still have the feather today." Geoff has traveled extensively in North America in search of birds, and has a

current ABA total of 701, and over 1000 worldwide. Since 2002, he has been focusing on digital photography, and his photos of uncommon and rare birds in Pennsylvania are regular features in *Pennsylvania Birds* and *North American Birds*. They have also appeared in *Birding*. He has photographed nearly 500 of North America's bird species.

Tom Johnson

Tom has been birding all over Pennsylvania since he was 10 years old. He works for the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas as a point counter and is currently a freshman at Cornell University, attending class when he isn't birding around the Cayuga Basin. His research interests include nocturnal flight calls and patterns of vagrancy. He likes most birds, but a very short list of favorites would include scoters, tubenoses, falcons, rails, shorebirds, jaegers, gulls, owls, trogons, Tyrannus kingbirds, thrushes, warblers, and Ammodramus sparrows.

Tom has had many interesting experiences birding in Pennsylvania, but the most memorable would involve swimming down the Susquehanna River chasing a renegade canoe that was lifted off a sandbar by rising water (while wearing binoculars, of course). Tom lives in Hummelstown and was elected to P.O.R.C. in 2006.

PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. To renew your membership, send your check made payable to "PSO" to:

	Membership Categories:	
PSO	Individual	\$ 28.50
2469 Hammertown Road	Family	\$ 32.50
Narvon, PA 17555-9730	Sustaining	\$ 42.50

PSO Officers and Directors

Rudy Keller – President rkeller@temple.edu
Flo McGuire – Vice President fmcguire1@verizon.net
Roger Higbee – Secretary rvhigbee@alltel.net
Frank Haas – Treasurer fchaas@pabirds.org

Nick Pulcinella – PSO Editor nickpulcinella@comcast.net
Margaret Higbee – Newsletter Editor bcoriole@alltel.net
Greg Grove – Past President gw2@psu.edu
Rob Blye – rblye@normandean.com
John Fedak – jlfedak@atlanticbb.net
Deuane Hoffman – corvuxcorax@comcast.net
Shonah Hunter – shunter@lhup.edu
Arlene Koch – davilene@verizon.net
Sandra Lockerman – lockerman@paonline.com
Mark McConaughy – TimeTraveler@email.msn.com
Carmen Santasania – ctsantasania@adelphia.net
Stacy Small
Linda Wagner – lwagner342@msn.com