

THE

# PSO PILEATED



March 2007

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 18, Number 1

## From the President's Desk....

In keeping with PSO's tradition of holding our annual meetings in a different region of PA each year, we return in 2007 to the southeastern quarter of the state. The landscape and hence the bird populations of this region have been profoundly influenced by its agricultural history and its commercial and industrial development. These manmade forces will be evident in the presentations of our speakers on Saturday afternoon, May 19.

The stronghold of Pennsylvania's Barn Owl population has historically been in the agricultural southeastern and south central parts of the state. After several decades of decline, partly due to changing agriculture and urbanization, the Barn Owl is now a species of concern ("Candidate at Risk") in the state. Jamie Zambo, a PA Game Commission Wildlife Diversity Biologist, will explain PGC's Barn Owl Conservation Initiative, showing how it will help involve landowners in the conservation and recovery of this species.

Pennsylvania's industrial past dramatically altered the 750-acre Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge and Nature Center on the Kittatinny Ridge. About half of the refuge was left a barren moonscape and Superfund site by pollution from 80 years of zinc smelting across the Lehigh River. Dan Kunkle, Director of Lehigh Gap Nature Center, will describe remediation efforts that have produced nearly 400 acres of warm-season grassland since 2003, and introduce us to the many other habitats, from wetlands to ridge top savanna, on the refuge.

The rapid urbanization of southeastern Pennsylvania has greatly increased the hazard to birds from window glass, estimated to kill millions of birds nationally each year. The leading authority in this field (and often a voice crying in the wilderness) has been Dr. Dan Klem, Sarkis Acopian Professor of Ornithology and Conservation Biology at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, who first

addressed PSO about this problem at our meeting in East Stroudsburg several years ago. Since this enormous hazard may finally be achieving greater public recognition, we invited Dan back to present a review and update on glass, including results of experiments with new materials and modifications of existing techniques.

Who knew that our warmest and fuzziest predator, the N. Saw-whet Owl, migrates through this region in significant numbers? Almost no one, until dedicated volunteers such as those from the Ned Smith Center began netting and banding them. What started more than 10 years ago as a simple banding project to learn more about the migration of Northern Saw-whet Owls has grown into a large, multi-faceted research program combining banding, telemetry and genetics, all run by a cadre of nearly 100 volunteers. Sandy Lockerman, one of the coordinators of the Ned Smith Center's owl research program, will provide an update on this fascinating citizen-science program.



Northern Saw-whet Owl  
Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath

Capping our day of interesting programs will be Scott Weidensaul, a familiar Pennsylvania figure and great favorite of PSO members. From the moment Europeans arrived in North America, they were awestruck by a continent awash with birds. Join naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul as he traces the unpredictable history of bird study in America, from frontier ornithologists to society matrons who organized the first effective conservation movement; from luminaries like Alexander Wilson (a convicted blackmailer) and Audubon (an accomplished liar) to modern geniuses like Roger Tory Peterson and David Sibley. Based on his new book *Of a Feather*, this whirlwind history shows how ornithology and birding grew into something so completely mainstream they're now (almost) cool.

See you in Harrisburg May 18-20!

– Rudy Keller, Boyertown, PA, Berks County

## Earl L. Poole Award Winner

We are happy to announce that Doug Gross is the 2007 winner of the Earl L. Poole Award.

Doug, a great birder and friend to many of us, was a County Coordinator for the first PA Breeding Bird Atlas and a founding board member of PSO. He served on the board continuously until 2006, including serving well as our president for two 2-year terms. He wrote several of the species accounts for the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, and has been a regular contributor to the *PSO Pileated* as the "Raven Reporter." Doug is presently a Regional Coordinator for the Second PA Breeding Bird Atlas.

Doug has been a field ornithologist and ecologist all of his adult life. Residing in Orangeville, Columbia County, he is presently a wildlife biologist with the PA Game Commission in the position of Endangered Birds Specialist. In this role, he coordinates and works with several projects for inventorying and monitoring the state's Endangered, Threatened, and other birds of conservation concern.

Doug devised the Special Areas Project, which became PSO's own citizen science project and now has two state park checklists to its credit. He created the protocol and initiated Pennsylvania's first state-wide night bird survey, the Northern Saw-whet Owl Surveys, known affectionately as "Toot Routes," which vastly increased knowledge of the breeding range of this species in PA.

Doug served on the Ornithological Technical Committee of the PA Biological Survey, an advisory group to the PA Game Commission. He served as chair of that committee for 12 years. The OTC oversees the state's Species of Special Concern list, including the Endangered and Threatened species list. The committee's work also allowed him to be involved with the PA Important Bird Area selection; he helped to guide several nominators through the acceptance process.

Doug is generally considered to be *the* expert on Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in the United States; he authored the *Birds of North America* account for this species. He has also done a considerable amount of field work on breeding Blackpoll Warblers and Olive-sided Flycatchers in Pennsylvania. In addition, he has conducted countless BBS routes and Breeding Bird Censuses.

Typically, Doug has a new project in the works – a Pennsylvania page on Cornell's eBird website, which will tie together all the data for the state, and also serve as "one-stop shopping" for bird enthusiasts, with links to the PABIRDS listserve and other birding websites.

Please join me in congratulating Doug Gross as the 2007 Earl L. Poole Award winner for his outstanding contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania.

– Flo McGuire, Awards Committee Chair

## Conservation Award 2007

It is a pleasure to report that Dan Kunkle, Director of the Lehigh Gap Nature Center, and its board have won the 2007 PSO Conservation Award. Located in Lehigh County, the center was formerly known as the Wildlife Information Center. This award is given to a person, persons, or group whose work has resulted in significant conservation in Pennsylvania.

The mission of the Lehigh Gap Nature Center is "to preserve wildlife and habitat through conservation, education, and research for the benefit of the earth and all its inhabitants." There are about 120 volunteers who keep the center's projects on track; about 75-80 of them are active year-round, while the others volunteer seasonally.

The organization began a Wildlife Refuge Land Fund in 1990, and in 2002 was able to purchase over 750 acres, now known as the Lehigh Gap Refuge. About 350 acres of the land had been very degraded by industrial pollution, and is in the Palmerton Superfund area. The Lehigh Gap Nature Center assisted in getting Brownfield Restoration Grant funds to reclaim portions of the surrounding area for contiguous property owners. The center was the catalyst for plantings of native, warm-season (prairie) grasses, both on the refuge and on private land, and got the Superfund process moving ahead in the area. The cooperation between the EPA, CBS Operations (the company which inherited responsibility for the property through a series of corporate mergers), and the Lehigh Gap Nature Center has resulted in green mountainsides where barren slopes were the rule for more than half a century. The Refuge also includes productive habitats such as ponds, bottomland wetlands, a 2.5-mile riparian zone, forested slopes, cliffs, and savannah at the higher elevations; thus it is home to a diversity of wildlife.

In 1992 the organization launched the Kittatinny Raptor Corridor Project along this 250-mile ridge in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. The Lehigh Gap Nature Center is monitoring the ecological vital signs of the entire mountain, recommending assistance where needed, developing pilot and widespread ecotourism information and programs, and preparing and distributing related educational materials. They have served several hundred children since 1996 with "The Wonderful World of Wildlife" educational programs at the Slatington Public Library. Programs are held weekly during the summer and monthly during the school year. Since 1998, they have provided a week-long day camp for Young Ecologists.

Lehigh Gap Nature Center's most notable research project is the Bake Oven Knob Hawk Count, which has monitored fall hawk migration since 1961. Other projects include a

(continued on page 5)

## Conservation Corner

The latest news from Washington regarding funding for conservation isn't good – but that shouldn't be surprising to anyone. And as part of the FY 2008 budget, the Administration is again trying to sell off public lands – even after failing to do so last year. In the FY 2008 budget, the President is proposing to sell off up to \$800 million worth of Forest Service lands and \$334 million of BLM land over the next 10 years. Fortunately, Congress is already balking at this proposal.

And the Land and Water Conservation Fund continues to be shortchanged. The FY 2008 request for the Fund is just under \$50 million out of a possible \$900 million derived from off-shore drilling receipts. This represents an almost \$85 million decrease from FY 2006.

Other conservation budgets are being cut. The Forest Legacy Program budget is proposed to be \$29 million – a cut by more than half from the FY 2007 budget. National Wildlife Refuges are budgeted at \$394 million, a \$13 million increase, but after adjusting for inflation, this amount is still below the FY 2004 budget. And it leaves a \$2.5 billion backlog in projects/improvements.

The US Department of Agriculture has stated that they will not sign up any more farmland this year for the Conservation Reserve Program except for buffer and other special practices. In past years, this program has been responsible for over 36 million acres of marginal farm land being untilled and restored for wildlife. There is also an effort to remove some of the land already enrolled in the Reserve Program so more corn can be grown – if this happens, wildlife will once again lose.

The Administration has touted a philosophy of collaborative conservation with emphasis on voluntary cooperation with private landowners. But the Administration has proposed to zero out all funding for both the Landowner Incentive Program and the Private Stewardship Grants. This proposal can't possibly be considered to promote collaborative conservation.

And of course, efforts to control global warming in this country continue to “wander in never, never land”. However, there is a bill in Congress, The Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007 that proposes multiple programs to curb emissions of greenhouse gases. Maybe, with a little help from all of us, Congress will pass this bill and then the pressure will be on the President to sign it. We will see.

However, in closing, there is a bit of good funding news. It is proposed in the FY 2008 budget to increase state wildlife grants to \$69.5 million. This money, if put to good use in the states, will help alleviate at least a little bit the funding shortages in some of the other conservation

programs. But overall, it's too little to fund all the needs of conservation programs.

The bottom line is conservation programs will take a big hit if the Administration's proposed FY 2008 budget is passed. PSO members, you can contact your federal legislators and tell them that you want adequate funding for the conservation programs listed above as well as all other conservation programs.

– Mark Henry  
Conservation Chairperson

## Injured Golden Eagle Rehabbed

(Pittsburgh - March 14, 2007) – A male Golden Eagle found caught in a leg trap in West Virginia is scheduled for release March 22 following nearly three months of rehabilitation that included surgery and intensive, round-the-clock treatment by National Aviary veterinary staff.

The bird will be fitted with a satellite telemetry device the day before its release as part of the study detailed on page 6 of this newsletter.

The research team learned of the eagle and its injuries on January 5, when team members received a call from wildlife officials in West Virginia. The bird had been caught in a leg trap, and its injuries were extensive. Staff from the Aviary made the trek to pick up the eagle, administered emergency fluids and antibiotics, and trucked the bird back to the National Aviary hospital.

“Both sides of his leg were cut down to the bone from the trap, and the bone was crushed on one side, though not broken completely,” says Dr. Pilar Fish, National Aviary Director of Veterinary Services and Animal Programs. “It was evident that he had been in the trap for several days. He was dehydrated, stressed and infection had set in. The damage was so severe we initially thought it likely that he would lose his foot.”

“Amazingly, he has regained full function of the injured foot, which is necessary to his survival and his ability to capture and eat his prey,” says Fish. “Without that capability, we would never have been able to return him to the wild.”

National Aviary and Powdermill Nature Reserve staff will fit the bird with a telemetry unit on March 21, at which point the bird will be loaded in a crate in preparation for the drive to West Virginia and release the morning of March 22.

The public is invited to track the bird's progress online at <http://www.aviary.org/csr/v/eaglePA.php>.

# The Raven Reporter



## Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

We continue to work with the Bureau of State Parks to build bird checklists for state parks where PA birders have collected data through the Special Areas Project. SAP coordinators and cooperating birders are now working on phenographs and site birding highlight descriptions for several locations. Charlie Miller of the Bureau of State Parks is the contact for the template.

I have seen near-final copies of checklists for Prince Gallitzen State Park and Marsh Creek State Park. Rory Bower of Prince Gallitzen has been instrumental in completing that checklist with style. He has used data collected by Todd Bird Club members, including John Salvetti, Dave Gobert, Gloria Lamer, and Georgette Syster.

Holly Mercker has been the driving force behind the Marsh Creek checklist. She has utilized the volunteer data collection by the Valley Forge Audubon and the West Chester Bird Club. Skip Conant and Tom Reeves collected most of the non-breeding season data. Thanks also are due to Barry Blust for his work in the park for the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas projects and birders John McNamara, Grier Saunders, Nick Pulcinella, Richard and Eleanor Wolfe, Chuck Chalfant, Jane and Rob Kirkland, and other members of the clubs already mentioned.

In the cases of both state park efforts, Atlas surveys complimented the data collected in SAP surveys. These checklists show real teamwork – local volunteers, DCNR, PGC, and bird organizations all contributing their part.

Those who would like to help produce checklists from the Special Areas Project data are invited to contact me. We are still accepting SAP data and especially seek data for Natural Areas, State Parks, and Game Lands for which there are no checklists.

## Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons: Witnessing Remarkable Recoveries

The PA Game Commission continues to monitor Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon nests. We seek information

on new nests and the status of established nests. The Bald Eagle population is exploding. We officially had 114 nesting pairs in the state in 2006. I suspect we missed a few along the more remote and hard-to-survey areas of the state. I hate to miss any nests. We cannot protect a nest or monitor its success unless we know where it is. It is good to locate the nests before leaf-out. So, now's the time to find new nest sites. Bald Eagles often establish new nests in winter or early spring. They will carry sticks to new nests or to repair old ones. Wind, bad weather, and rambunctious eaglets damage nests each season. Some pairs will build and use two different nests, alternating nests each year sometimes on opposite sides of the river. Many eagle pairs are incubating eggs in March. Bald Eagles are finding quiet nooks and crannies throughout the state to build their nests and raise their broods, even in the urban landscape. They are reclaiming the waters near Philadelphia and filling in gaps along most of our major watersheds. As large as they are, eagle nests are easy to overlook.

There are a few holes in our coverage of quality river corridors in the Bald Eagle program. I suspect that there are undocumented eagle nests along the upper North Branch Susquehanna River in Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wyoming, and Bradford counties. We get reports of adult eagles along that river, including islands, mountainsides, and creek mouths. Yet, we have few documented nests. Some field work, perhaps from canoes or kayaks might reveal more eagle nests. Despite reports of summering eagles, we have no confirmed eagle nests along the West Branch Susquehanna. There are many likely locations for eagle nests along this river. Oddly, we have more nests along the major tributary of the West Branch than the West Branch, itself – the Pine Creek population is doing well and expanding. A few of the islands and slopes along the West Branch Susquehanna need to be checked out.

I also suspect that there are eagle nests along the Clarion River upstream from Cook Forest State Park in the wilder areas of Jefferson, Forest, and Elk Counties. In the last few years, we have “uncovered” at least three Bald Eagle nests that were surely established two or more years before they were “discovered.” One nest was active for seven years before being reported. I think we can do better than that. These nests may have been lost without protection.

In recent decades, the Peregrine Falcon has been less a wilderness bird than a city bird. I believe that this reputation may change. Before the big decline in the DDT era, Peregrine Falcon pairs nested on many of the state's cliffs. Some pairs are reclaiming cliff sites. Be on the lookout for Peregrines visiting cliffs. It sometimes can be tough to see a dark raptor on a cliff, but a Peregrine cliff site would be a prize find for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PBBA. There might be some Peregrines nesting on cliffs that are not yet discovered and documented. It is important to know about these aeries so we can protect and manage the species.

As Art McMorris recently stated on the Pennsylvania Birds list serve: "Right now is a perfect time to observe the falcons. Nesting begins in late February or early March with the birds renewing the pair bond, performing display flights and defending their nesting territory. This is when they are most conspicuous, and give the most breathtaking aerial shows! By late March or early April the breeding birds will be on eggs and will be much less conspicuous. When the young birds fledge, usually early to mid-summer, they become more conspicuous again as the young take their flying lessons and mob Mom and Dad for food. Sightings any time during the breeding season (approximately late February until late summer) are meaningful."

Look for whitewash on a cliff's rocks. Ravens or Rock Pigeons might leave such signs, but this also is a sign of Peregrine occupation. If you do find a Peregrine site, please contact Art McMorris at [McMorris@mac.com](mailto:McMorris@mac.com). For Bald Eagles, please contact me (information below) and I will forward the information to people closer to the nest as appropriate.

### Forest Hawks in Pennsylvania

As top predators in our forested ecosystems, our diurnal forest raptors are important habitat quality indicators. They also are a challenge for bird surveyors because of their comparative rarity and elusiveness.

Several of these species are categorized as species of conservation priority in Pennsylvania or have other conservation status in neighboring states. An exploration of the literature reveals that most of these species may be well-known in migration but are little-studied on their breeding grounds.

One of the big secrets behind raptor surveys is to start early in the season. Most of our raptors establish their territories early, well before leaf-out. I've seen a Red-shouldered Hawk circling over its apparent territory in late February where other pairs had been present several years previously. The hawks were courting above the treetops at a conifer swamp over 2000 feet in elevation in late February, ignoring the snow cover and the date. Broad-wings can arrive well before their safe date in April. The same can be said for Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Northern Goshawks may spend the winter close to their nesting ground, returning to the nesting areas by March. Many gos pairs are incubating in March. A bird of mystery in June might have been fairly conspicuous a few weeks earlier – courtship displays and everything.

So, be there early and find them. Then, return to the spot within the safe dates to make sure you really have a breeder and upgrade the breeding code if possible.

Although shy and elusive, forest raptors often give themselves away by opening up their big beaks. All of

these species can be quite vocal on territory. They often are especially vocal during courtship, often preceding those Atlas safe-dates.

To know the calls is to know the birds. The broad-wing whistles, the male's call is higher pitched than his mate's. The red-shouldered's usual call is known best because it is imitated so frequently and expertly by Blue Jays. But, deep in the woods, especially a riparian forest or near a swamp, that might really be a red-shouldered and not its corvid imitator. It is easy to confuse any of the accipiter calls with a woodpecker vocalizations, especially the flicker or pileated. The sharpie's *kek-kek-kek* call generally is higher pitched and thinner sounding than the Cooper's "*cak-cak-cak*" call. The Goshawk's "*kak*" is quite loud, easily heard from 200 yards away. Both sexes also have a "wail" call that is less well-known, but useful to know because it acts as a contact call in some contexts and as a solicitation call by the female that initiates mating. You can often hear the state's fiercest hawk long before you see it. And, when you do see a goshawk in the nesting season it might be on the attack of any invaders of its nest tree. Look out!

Where to look for these prizes? They all have their preferences. Cooper's Hawk is probably the most cosmopolitan of the forest hawks; some nest in towns and near homes in the suburbs. This medium-sized accipiter has enjoyed a big resurgence in recent years. Its smaller cousin, the Sharp-shinned Hawk, is less likely to be found in fragmented forests and is more closely associated with larger oak-hickory forests or conifer stands. In the mountains of my area, I associate Sharp-shinned Hawks with dense stands of hemlocks or pines, whether native or exotic, way back in the woods. A consummate songbird predator, sharpies also occur primarily where there are higher densities of those birds. Both Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks are big woods bird, but the latter seem more closely associated with forests near streams or swamps, no matter what the elevation. I've also found Broad-wing Hawks fairly commonly in barrens. One of the biggest prizes for a Pennsylvania Atlas volunteer is the magnificent and elusive Northern Goshawk. The "gos" is not only our largest forest hawk and brawniest accipiter, but it is one of the rarest nesting species in the state. Although it can be found in secondary forest and near clearings, goshawks are deep forest creatures and perhaps our best indicator species of high quality large forest blocks. Except for the forested Northwest Region (mostly Allegheny National Forest) and North Mountain region, very few goshawks have been reported in this Atlas. It begs the question whether this is a reflection of its current rarity or that it is under-represented by data collection. Have any of these species suffered from West Nile Virus or other diseases? Landscape attributes may be a big, but not the only, factor in the range and abundance of our forest raptors. The first step is to find as many as we can.

Let's put our best talons forward and put these hawks on the map.

For more information on the PSO Special Areas Project or PGC volunteer bird projects, please contact:

Douglas A. Gross  
Wildlife Biologist, Endangered Bird Specialist  
Pennsylvania Game Commission  
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](mailto:dogross@state.pa.us) or [dougross@sunlink.net](mailto:dougross@sunlink.net)

## PSO Quiz – March 2007

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. In 1995 the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee did not accept a Curlew Sandpiper report because the documentation did not distinguish it from two other species. Can you guess which species?
2. You are trying to decide whether the bird is a LeConte's Sparrow or a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. It has a gray median crown stripe, so which is it?
3. If the International Ornithological Congress is successful with its "recommended English names," what would our Black-bellied Plover and Bank Swallow be called?
4. Which western quail species – at least 180 birds – did the Pennsylvania Game Commission release here experimentally in 1919 and 1920?
5. Birds in which avian family are known for building many "dummy" nests? A bonus if you can spell the family's taxonomic name. A double bonus if you know what the name means.

*(Answers on page 12.)*

## Thanks to Frank Haas

We extend our sincere thanks to Frank Haas who designed the pin for our 19<sup>th</sup> annual PSO meeting. This attractive pin depicts a Great Egret imposed on the shape of Dauphin County, the location of our meeting.

Thank you, Frank!

## Certificates of Appreciation

PSO has developed an initiative to foster support from residents and to promote birding and birding ethics in our communities. We have started issuing Certificates of Appreciation to residents who aid birders by allowing them to view rare birds on their properties. These persons who report rarities are important to the birding community and to individual birders. We appreciate their sharing with us. They have long been overlooked. We are hoping to redress this and to show our appreciation.

The first certificates were awarded last fall. So far the recipients have been:

- 🌿 Joe Shatzer for the Lark Sparrow in Franklin County.
- 🌿 Steve Wolfe for the Bullock's Oriole in Northampton.
- 🌿 Keith Spicher for the Mifflin County Snowy Owl.
- 🌿 Aden Troyer for the Juniata County Harris's Sparrow.
- 🌿 Joyce Sheaffer for Lancaster's Ash-throated Flycatcher.
- 🌿 Ray and Eydie Posel for the Washington County Rufous Hummingbird.
- 🌿 Wayne & Marie Schildt for the Lancaster County Western Kingbird.

There are others pending, and I am sure that there are some that we have missed.

The procedure for nominating a person(s) for a certificate is to contact John Fedak ([jlfedak@atlanticbb.net](mailto:jlfedak@atlanticbb.net)) or Arlene Koch ([davilene@verizon.net](mailto:davilene@verizon.net)) with the specifics – bird, county, person(s), dates present, and reason why you feel a Certificate of Appreciation is merited. We will take it from there and if approved will issue the certificate.



## Conservation Award 2007

*(continued from page 2)*

Red-tailed Hawk Migration Study, a Winter Bird Survey, Winter Feeder Watch, and a Bluebird Nest Survey.

According to the Lehigh Gap Nature Center website, "We believe concerned people working together can make a difference." According to their list of accomplishments, they are making quite a difference, and are well deserving of the 2007 PSO Conservation Award.

– Flo McGuire, Awards Committee Chair

# PA's First Scott's Oriole

by Arlene Koch

When the phone rang at 10 pm and Nick Pulcinella said, "There's an adult male Scott's Oriole near Harrisburg," I didn't know whether to laugh or drop the receiver. It was February in Pennsylvania, not summer in Arizona. But photos taken by Karen Atwood and verified by Tom Johnson said it all, so at 8:30 the next morning Kathy Sieminski and I headed toward Mechanicsburg.

At 10:15 we arrived at the residential area where the oriole was frequenting Candy Maneval's feeder and were immediately told by a smiling birder that we had just missed it by a few minutes. "Darn those bodily functions. We shouldn't have stopped at the rest area," I thought. After listening to other birders eloquently describe how great looking the oriole was, including neighbor Dave DeReamus who lives 2 miles from me, we positioned ourselves at the end of the Maneval's carport and began watching the feeder. Five oriole-less hours later we left, only to find out later that it came in 15 minutes after we drove away.

That was Wednesday. On Friday Kathy returned and saw the oriole after waiting less than an hour. By that time just about everyone who had gone for the oriole had seen it, except for me. I couldn't see my way clear until Saturday, by which time the oriole had made local papers and TV. Even my daughter-in-law, whose birding skills consist of knowing woodpeckers and hummingbirds aren't the same, knew about the "Arizona" oriole.

That Saturday there was a PSO Board of Directors meeting in Boalsburg, near State College, at 11:30 a.m., which meant I had a decision to make. Did I leave at 5:00 a.m. to get to the oriole spot at 7:00 and hope that I saw it before having to leave and drive an additional 1½ hours to the meeting? Or did I take my chances and wait until after the meeting and stop on the way home? I opted for the afternoon arrival but around 8:00, just as I was about to begin my three-hour trip to Boalsburg, Tom Johnson called and said, "The oriole's here, and John Fedak beat you to it." John who is also on the board opted to take his chances in the morning. At the meeting he couldn't resist a smile when he told me he had to wait only 15 minutes to see the bird. "Hey, I'll either see it or I won't," I calmly said. But inside I wasn't calm. I wanted this bird!

I arrived at the oriole spot around 3:00, by which time most of the morning's crowd was gone. Shortly afterwards fellow board members Margaret and Roger Higbee showed up, as did a local TV reporter. No one wanted to be on camera and neither did I, but eventually I grudgingly did a 10-minute interview, explaining about records committees, PORC, and the rarity of the oriole. Those 10 minutes were shaved to 10 seconds of air time

on which I was portrayed as an excited "local."

By 4:25 the oriole was still a no-show. We were giving up hope when someone pointed to a spruce tree in the next yard. Everyone ran, and the black and yellow bird flew out and landed on a bare maple branch. But just as we were beginning to "ooh" and "aah," a Cooper's hawk flew in and the oriole took off. I saw it well for about 30 seconds, but 30 seconds still counts.

## Bird Conservation on Non-native Grasslands: A Seminar

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society of Clarion, PA, has assembled some of the most qualified grassland experts in the region for this seminar, which will be held on Friday, June 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Clarion University's Health Science Education Center, 347 Main Street.

Dan Brauning, PGC Supervisor of the Wildlife Diversity Section, will speak on the history and future of Piney Tract. Speaker Danny Ingold, Ph.D., Biology Department Chairman at Muskingum College, has done four years of sparrow research at The Wilds in Ohio. Duane Diefenbach, Ph.D., Assistant Unit Leader of the PA Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, has been studying birds on non-native grasslands in Pennsylvania, including Piney Tract.

Guy Denny, Executive Director of the Ohio Biological Survey, and Nicole Cavender, Ph.D., Director of Restoration Ecology of The Wilds in Ohio, will speak on Grassland Management Techniques and Their Application: Lessons Learned on 10,000 Acres of Reclaimed Land.

A question-and-answer session will conclude the seminar. Snacks and lunch will be provided. The cost is \$25, or \$15 for SRAS members. Space is limited, so please register promptly. Please see [www.senecarocksaudubon.org/seminar.htm](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/seminar.htm) for more information and a printable registration form.

The public is also invited to the SRAS May 14 Chapter meeting, where members Ron Montgomery and Gary Edwards will present a "warm-up" for this conference, to provide attendees with a better understanding of the issues. They plan to review the conference program, define SGL 330, discuss the North American population status of some of the grassland birds found on the various reclaimed surface mines of Clarion County, and possibly discuss some grassland management options. All of our meetings are free and open to the public.

– Flo McGuire

## Golden Eagle Research Underway near Central City



Photo by Todd Katzner, Courtesy National Aviary

Hundreds of Golden Eagles migrate through Pennsylvania each spring and fall along the Appalachian ridges. Birders have been thrilled to see as many as 51 on a single day at the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch on the Bedford/Somerset County border.

The eagles face a dangerous problem: possible collision with giant turbine blades on “wind farms” atop the ridges. Hoping to minimize the danger, a team from the National Aviary and Powdermill Avian Research Center is tracking and mapping the eagles’ migration routes by satellite. The purpose is to provide the first detailed picture of the eagles’ timing and flight paths along the Appalachian flyway. The information will be shared with private interests and government officials for use when planning sites, issuing permits, and approving construction of wind farms in Pennsylvania.

“At present there is little science to guide the development of wind power on Appalachian ridges,” said Todd Katzner, director of conservation and field research at the National Aviary. “Our aim in conducting this research is to provide the scientific information necessary to allow decision-makers to pursue use of renewable energy sources with environmental benefits, while at the same time developing this technology in an eagle-friendly way.”

Besides Katzner, the team includes Powdermill scientists Robert Mulvihill, field ornithology projects coordinator; Mike Lanzone, assistant coordinator; and Trish Miller, GIS coordinator. Other team members are David Brandes, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Lafayette College, and Dan Ombalski, director of the Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch.

A crew from Powdermill designed and built the camouflaged trapping stations. Tracking began in November 2006 when the team trapped and tagged two migrating Golden Eagles at the Allegheny Front Hawk

Watch. The birds were outfitted with a telemetry device in a backpack attached with a Teflon harness. The device can obtain highly accurate location fixes and transmit the data via the ARGOS satellite system.

The goal is to identify critical migration bottlenecks where turbine development should proceed with caution. Besides mapping the eagles’ routes, the Powdermill team said, “We are already learning never-before-known information about wintering territories and over-winter behavior.”

The project is largely funded by the Aviary and Carnegie Museum of Natural History, with additional support from a State Wildlife Grant from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Dan Brauning, supervisor of the commission’s Wildlife Diversity Section, praises the project as a unique opportunity to explore a relatively uncharted conservation concern.



Mike Lanzone releases the tagged Golden Eagle.  
Photo by Todd Katzner, Courtesy of Powdermill Avian Research Center.

Three websites tell the story of the effort:

\* A live map tracks the progress of the tagged Golden Eagles on the Aviary’s site, [www.aviary.org/csr/eaglePA.php](http://www.aviary.org/csr/eaglePA.php)

\* Details of the project are explained on the Powdermill site, [www.westol.com/~banding/Fall2006\\_November.htm](http://www.westol.com/~banding/Fall2006_November.htm)

\* Pennsylvania Game Commission discusses its role at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us). Use the link to News Release # 013-07.

– Paul Hess

[Reprinted by permission from the Three Rivers Birding Club newsletter, *The Peregrine*]

## Help Needed with the Heron Colony Survey

Like clockwork, the PGC Wildlife Diversity Section coordinates a state-wide survey of all Great Blue Heron colonies in Pennsylvania every five years. Our goal is to check on all the colonies that were found in the 2002 survey, those found since that time, and find some new colonies.

Heron colonies are very organic, dynamic creatures. They grow larger and smaller, stay in one place for a long time, and sometimes they just “pick up and leave.” We have to keep on top of them.

This year’s survey comes at a critical time because it overlaps with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas (PBBA). Heron colonies can be tricky to find because they often are in remote spots. So, any survey of a colony can serve double-duty of updating our heron nest census and filling in some blanks for the PBBA. The PGC helps maintain the heron colony database for the PA Natural History Survey.

Hérons are among those birds that are important indicators of habitat quality. In the case of herons, this usually means wetland or riparian forest health. The colonies often reflect a local abundance of a food source and/or a quality nesting location. By establishing colonies, herons “put their eggs in one basket” ecologically. Each colony may represent the entire population of a township or county for that species. A flood or other natural disaster may wipe out an entire colony. Of course, human disturbances including development also cause “colony mortality.” So, it is important for us to monitor our heron colonies.

The PGC checks the Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron colonies each year. This is the year the focus is on Great Blue Herons, too. They are not “listed” species, but their colonies are considered vulnerable for the reasons stated above. Information on any colony of the other herons is also appreciated.

Deb Siefkin again will coordinate the survey. If you have participated in the survey in the past, she will contact you, asking you to survey the colony again. If you have changed either your mailing or e-mail address, please contact her to let her know. You can reach Deb at 717-677-4830. Her e-mail is [siefkend@cvn.net](mailto:siefkend@cvn.net).

– Doug Gross

## Help Save the Barn Owl and Other Grassland Wildlife in Southeastern PA

DCNR/Lehigh Valley Greenways  
Grasslands Partnership

Rapid land development in the Delaware River Drainage Basin area of eastern Pennsylvania, especially the Lehigh Valley, has greatly reduced the biodiversity of our fields and pastures. Probably the one creature that has suffered the most is the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Habitat loss and degradation (housing developments, loss of pastures), along with the decline of nest sites (old barns, silos), misuse of pesticides/herbicides, and traffic casualties have severely reduced Barn Owl populations.



Barn Owl  
Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath

According to data compiled during the first Breeding Bird Atlas in the mid 1980s, the main breeding range of the Barn Owl in Pennsylvania is the southeastern and south central regions of the state. To survive and reproduce, Barn Owls need large areas of grasslands and wet meadows that provide the necessary habitat requirements for their favorite prey, the Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). Unfortunately, habitat of this kind is becoming scarce in southeastern Pennsylvania, and many historic Barn Owl sites in that region no longer exist. What remains is a small and declining population, which desperately needs our help. The time is **now** to protect and enhance habitat for these beautiful, beneficial birds.

Farmland preservation along with grassland enhancement programs will benefit many other species of grassland birds including the American Kestrel, Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and the rare Upland Sandpiper. Butterflies and other animals will also benefit from this habitat. A working partnership with farmers and other private landowners, state and federal agencies, utility companies, landfills, airports, land conservancies, and other organizations is the key to a successful program that will benefit these birds and other animals.

If you are a farmer or private landowner interested in preserving your land and creating grassland for wildlife or if you would like to be involved with this effort, please contact Rick Wiltraut, DCNR/Lehigh Valley Greenways Grassland Partnership at 610-746-2810 or [rwiltraut@state.pa.us](mailto:rwiltraut@state.pa.us).

## Nominate a Youth

At our recent board meeting, we decided to continue the scholarship program, granting a scholarship to a student 18 years of age or younger, so that this young person can attend our annual meeting. PSO will pay for the student's food and lodging, but the person nominating the youth will be responsible for transporting him or her to the meeting and be responsible for him or her during the meeting. You may nominate the student of your choice by sending the following form to Shonah Hunter ([shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu)) by April 15, 2007.

Name of Student Being Nominated \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's Involvement with Birding (Please describe providing as many details as possible.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Nominating Youth \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship (if any) to Youth \_\_\_\_\_

In nominating this youth and signing below, I understand that I will be responsible for the youth and his or her transportation to and from the meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

## Silent Auction Planned

Four years ago when the annual meeting was held in Indiana, PSO held a spontaneous silent auction because a beautiful Wild Turkey print had been donated. Every year since, we have held an auction. We plan to continue with the auction again at our annual meeting in Harrisburg. If you have any "birdy" items that you no longer want but think someone else would enjoy, please consider donating it/them to our auction. Please e-mail me describing the item and an estimated value. Also indicate if there is a minimum bid for the item you are donating.

You should then bring your item to the annual meeting at Harrisburg (or send it with someone who will be attending if you can not). I am looking forward to having a variety of items to fuel the bidding frenzy for the benefit of PSO.

Shonah Hunter [shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu); 570-893-2062.

## For Sale

Get ready for spring! Now is the time to purchase your PSO T-shirts. PSO T-shirts are available in pale green, light blue, or off-white. Sizes range from small to XXL, but check with Linda Wagner for size availability ([lwagner342@msn.com](mailto:lwagner342@msn.com)).

The fabric is a blend of 50% cotton, 50% polyester. These shirts feature PSO's Pileated Woodpecker logo in a three-inch-diameter circle on the left front. On the back is an outline of the state with the counties outlined as well. Super-imposed on the state is the flying Pileated Woodpecker, complete with red crest. Bold letters above the state declare "Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology."



## Meeting Field Trips Now Finalized

### Friday, May 18

Thanks to Pennsylvania Audubon, a special reservations-only canoe float trip on the Susquehanna River will feature the famous Wade Island mixed rookery. Wade Island is home to nesting Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and the state's only Double-crested Cormorant nesting site. Leaders – Deuane Hoffman and Kim Van Fleet of PA Audubon.

### Saturday, May 19

**Stoney Creek Valley**, located 15 minutes north of the capitol, hosts a wide variety of nesting warblers and is also the gateway to the second largest roadless tract of forest in all of PA! With a vast amount of varied habitat almost any regularly occurring neotropical migrant is possible. A wide array of nesting species provides plenty of potential. Leaders – Ramsay Koury and Tom Smith.

**Wildwood Lake Sanctuary** and **Fort Hunter**, situated within Harrisburg city limits, these urban green spaces offer a vast array of potential sightings. The large lake provides a multitude of possibilities for aquatic species while the surrounding woodlands host migrants. Possibilities include Great Egret, American Bittern, Wood Duck, and maybe Prothonotary Warbler. A stop at nearby Fort Hunter Park will provide access for scanning the wide Susquehanna River from the boat launch. Leaders – Sandy Lockerman and Pam Parson.

**Conoy Creek Towpath Trail**, an easy three-mile walk along an abandoned canal towpath, offers mature riparian habitat and is home to nesting Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers. This walk parallels the Susquehanna River offering the potential for water related birds as well as nesting Osprey and Bald Eagle plus waders and Double-crested Cormorants. Leader – Deuane Hoffman.

**Chickies Rock and Breezyview Overlook** is a 400+ acre park located along the Susquehanna River. Opportunities exist for neotropical migrants and possibly Mississippi Kites, which have been seen multiple times from the overlook in late spring. Leader – to be announced.

**State Game Lands 246 (Middletown)** is a wonderful island of forested habitat surrounded by farmland and encroaching suburbia. This 500+ acre game land surrounds the prominence of Round Top which rises more than 400 feet from the valley floor. A variety of habitat provides stopover and nesting habitat for a wide variety of neotropical migrants. Breeders include Kentucky, Worm-eating, Hooded, Cerulean, Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers. Leaders – Pete Fox and Chuck Berthoud.

**Gifford Pinchot State Park** is located in York County. Common woodland species, as well as Blue-winged Warblers and Prairie Warblers, may be seen here. This is a good place in the spring for Cape May Warblers and occasionally Red-headed Woodpeckers. The large lake may produce various water birds. Leader – Pat Sabold.

### Sunday, May 20

**Stoney Creek Valley**. See description under Saturday's trips. Leader – Ramsay Koury

**Wildwood Lake Sanctuary**. See description under Saturday's trips. Leaders – Sandy Lockerman and Pam Parson.

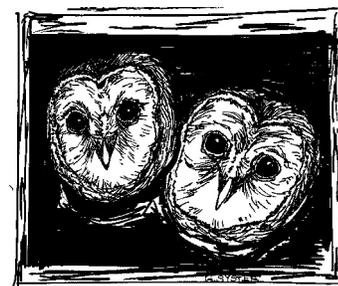
**State Game Lands 169 and Mud Level Road** comprise an excellent mix of fields, woodlands, and wetlands. SGL 169 has potential for nesting Least Bittern, rails, and Prothonotary Warbler. Nearby Mud Level Road contains quality farmland with nesting Barn Owl, Horned Larks, and grassland sparrows. Leader – Dan Snell and Andrew Markel.

**Conejohela Flats**, famous as a waterbird mecca, offers numerous possibilities. Late spring can be a good time for migrant shorebirds including state rarities like Piping Plover and Whimbrel. Sightings in past springs have included Long-tailed Jaeger and Arctic Tern! Leader – Deuane Hoffman.

**Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area**, well known for its annual waterfowl migration, is also good later in spring. Past May big days at Middle Creek have tallied 125+ species. This special tract has been set aside by the Pennsylvania Game Commission for the protection, propagation, management, preservation, and controlled harvest of wildlife. This area, containing more than 5,000 acres of habitat for waterfowl, forest wildlife, and farmland birds, includes a 400-acre shallow water lake and a 70-acre impoundment. Leader – Rosemary Spreha or Deuane Hoffman if Flats trip is cancelled.

**Juniata County Farm and Woodlands** in central Juniata County includes a wide variety of habitats which offer numerous breeding warblers – Golden-winged, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Prairie to Black-throated Blue, Worm-eating, and Hooded.

Excellent farmland habitat provides nesting for grassland sparrows, Northern Harrier, Bobolink and maybe a surprise Barn Owl nest! Leader – Chad Kauffman.



# PSO Annual Meeting Agenda

Harrisburg, PA

## Friday, May 18, 2007

Canoe Trip (Reservations only – limited number of participants)

- 5:00 p.m. Vendors set up at Best Western
- 6:00 p.m. Registration begins at Best Western in Harrisburg
- 7:00 p.m. Social at Best Western
- 8:00 p.m. Business Meeting at Best Western

## Saturday, May 19, 2007

- 5:30 a.m. Best Western open for breakfast only for those registered at Best Western
- 6:30 a.m. Outings depart from Best Western
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch on your own. Arrive at Best Western by 1:00 p.m. for afternoon sessions.
- 1:00-1:40 p.m. ***Barn Owl Conservation Initiative***, presented by Jamie Zambo, PGC, Wildlife Diversity Biologist.
- 1:45-2:25 p.m. ***Birds and Glass***, presented by Dan Klem.
- 2:30-3:00 p.m. Break. Visit the vendors and organizations represented.
- 3:05-3:45 p.m. ***Lehigh Valley Nature Center***, presented by Dan Kunkle, Lehigh Valley Nature Center.
- 3:50-4:30 p.m. ***A Decade of Saw-Whet Owl Banding by the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art***, presented by Sandy Lockerman, Project Volunteer.
- 6:00 p.m. Social at Best Western
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet at Best Western
- Presentation of Poole Award to Doug Gross
- Presentation of Conservation Award to Dan Kunkle, Director, Lehigh Gap Nature Center
- Banquet Speaker: Scott Weidensaul ***Birds of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding***

## Sunday, May 20, 2007

- 5:30 a.m. Best Western open for breakfast for those staying at the Best Western .
- 6:30 a.m. Outings depart from Best Western .



# Pennsylvania Bird Lists Report Form for 2006

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please print)

Report Totals as of December 31, 2006  
Send by **March 31** To:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

Peter Robinson [pabirder@hotmail.com](mailto:pabirder@hotmail.com)

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State ZIP

P. O. Box 482  
Hanover, PA 17331

PLEASE include *only* those species included in the Official List of the Birds of PA (see [www.pabirds.org](http://www.pabirds.org)) or *The Birds of Pennsylvania* (McWilliams & Brauning), unless you are *very* certain of the bird ID, and *very* confident that the bird is a wild one, not an escapee. Do not include Black Swan, Mandarin Duck, etc.

**PA Life List** \_\_\_\_\_ **PA Life List Unassisted** \_\_\_\_\_ (Species found on your own. Not "chased" birds.)

**PA 2006 Annual List** \_\_\_\_\_ **Highest PA Annual List** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year** \_\_\_\_\_

Total Ticks \_\_\_\_\_ (Total for all life lists for all counties. Blue Jay in all 67 counties = 67 ticks.)

**County Life Lists** ( 100 species or more)

Adams _____	Delaware _____	Monroe _____
Allegheny _____	Elk _____	Montgomery _____
Armstrong _____	Erie _____	Montour _____
Beaver _____	Fayette _____	Northampton _____
Bedford _____	Forest _____	Northumberland _____
Berks _____	Franklin _____	Perry _____
Blair _____	Fulton _____	Philadelphia _____
Bradford _____	Greene _____	Pike _____
Bucks _____	Huntingdon _____	Potter _____
Butler _____	Indiana _____	Schuylkill _____
Cambria _____	Jefferson _____	Snyder _____
Cameron _____	Juniata _____	Somerset _____
Carbon _____	Lackawanna _____	Sullivan _____
Centre _____	Lancaster _____	Susquehanna _____
Chester _____	Lawrence _____	Tioga _____
Clarion _____	Lebanon _____	Union _____
Clearfield _____	Lehigh _____	Venango _____
Clinton _____	Luzerne _____	Warren _____
Columbia _____	Lycoming _____	Washington _____
Crawford _____	McKean _____	Wayne _____
Cumberland _____	Mercer _____	Westmoreland _____
Dauphin _____	Mifflin _____	Wyoming _____
		York _____

**County Annual Lists** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 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](mailto:rkeller@temple.edu)  
Flo McGuire – Vice President [fmcguire1@verizon.net](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net)  
Roger Higbee – Secretary [rvhigbee@alltel.net](mailto:rvhigbee@alltel.net)  
Frank Haas – Treasurer [fchaas@pabirds.org](mailto:fchaas@pabirds.org)

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

## Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 6)

1. Stilt Sandpiper and Dunlin.
2. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.
3. Grey Plover and Sand Martin.
4. Gambel's Quail. "The experiment was a failure," according to Earl Poole in *Pennsylvania Birds: An Annotated List*."
5. Troglodytidae (the wrens). The name means "cave-dweller," which refers to nesting in cavities and crevices by many of the species.



***Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology***

c/o R. V. Higbee

3119 Creekside Road

Indiana, PA 15701-7934

***ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED***

