

PSO PILEATED



June 2007

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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From the President's Desk....

The 2007 annual meeting, summarized in this issue by Mark McConaughy, ran smoothly due to the efforts of organizers and volunteers. Sandy and Jack Lockerman and Shonah Hunter made sure the logistics worked well. Flo McGuire's awards presentations at the annual banquet were polished and succinct. Thanks to Arlene Koch for conducting PSO sales and to Deuane Hoffman and the volunteer field trip leaders for introducing us to many birdy and varied mid-state locations, and for getting everyone back on time for Saturday's talks.

It was a pleasure to personally introduce Geoff Malosh, incoming Chief Editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*, PSO's state journal of record, to our members. Geoff is an unusually good match for this demanding volunteer position, and PSO is fortunate to have him coming aboard. It is perhaps no coincidence that Geoff is a meticulous record keeper. He keeps his own bird records, dating back to 1983 when he started birding at age eight, on a computer database he wrote himself. He already subscribed to *Pennsylvania Birds* when he was in grade school. He has a passion and eye for bird photography, and his long-term goal is to make a living from his writing and photography. His work has been published in *Pennsylvania Birds*, *North American Birds*, *Birding*, and several smaller publications. And his dog is named Sibley! Nick Pulcinella, present Chief Editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*, will introduce Geoff to the magazine's readers at the appropriate time.

Thanks to the vast variety of member donations, including collectable books, bird feeders, bling, and plants, to name a few, the silent auction held at the annual meeting was again a success, netting \$552.

This money is used to fund scholarships which enable

young birders, age 18 and under, to attend our annual meeting. The fund is building because no one applied in 2007. Previous winners of this scholarship were Andrew McGann, Ross Gallardy, and Karina Gregg, a list that includes some of the most promising young birders in the state. Please identify and nominate the young birders in your club or region so that this money may be used for its intended purpose. Contact Shonah Hunter, who administers these funds, at shunter@lhup.edu.

See you at the 2008 annual meeting in Pittsburgh!

– Rudy Keller, Boyertown, PA
Berks County



President Rudy Keller opened Friday evening's business meeting.

2007 Annual Meeting Revisited

by Mark McConaughy

The 2007 PSO meeting was held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, May 18-20. Harrisburg and the surrounding areas are located along one of the main eastern flyways for migratory birds. The area is also characterized by a wide range of geographical and ecological zones that attract a wide variety of birds. Because of these features, the region is one of the better birding areas in our state.

The meeting started on Friday, May 18, with a canoe trip down the



Participants enjoyed their field trip to Stony Creek Valley, led by Ramsay Koury, far right.

Susquehanna River from Fort Hunter to Harrisburg. The canoe trip provided great views of the Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Double-crested Cormorants nesting on Wade Island, as well as many other birds along the river. Participants really enjoyed the trip.

Friday evening's social and short business meeting provided a chance to meet and talk to many of the persons who report on the PABIRDS list serve and to renew old acquaintances. The vendors arrived, including Aden Troyer with his variety of quality optics for birders from the Lost Creek Shoe Shop and Optical Supplies, Shedrick Sloane of Harrisburg whose wonderful photographs of birds awed the meeting's participants, David Hughes, a wildlife artist from Kempton, and Paul Gritis of Coopersburg, who was selling old and out-of-print books and other materials. In addition, Wildwood Lake Sanctuary brought a variety of books, jewelry, and other items for sale. And our own PSO table offered the new official PSO hat as well as T-shirts and other items.

The Saturday and Sunday morning birding trips included visits to Stony Creek Valley, Conoy Creek Towpath Trail, State Game Lands 246, State Game Lands 169 and Mud Level Road, Conejohela Flats (another canoe trip), Wildwood Lake, and Memorial Lake. I went on the Saturday tour of Stony Creek Valley led by Ramsay Koury. Stony Creek Valley is a narrow valley between mountain ridges east of the town of Dauphin.

This trip included a walk along power lines near Hahn Road and the Elizabeth Furnace area power lines at the east end of the road-accessible portion of Stony Creek Valley. We saw or heard a variety of birds including many Yellow-billed Cuckoos which seemed to be everywhere, Black-billed Cuckoos, Yellow Warblers, Prairie Warblers, Black-and-white Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers, Hooded Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and plenty of Baltimore Orioles.

The best and most problematic birds observed on the Stony Creek Valley outing were birds singing Golden-winged Warbler and Blue-winged Warbler songs. We saw at least two confirmed "Brewster's warblers," one at each power line cut.

The two Brewster's Warblers were easily identified by their white bellies and yellowish wing bars, the Blue-winged Warbler style eye-line, and yellowish head. Both called like Blue-winged Warblers. We saw other warblers that would have been classified as Blue-winged Warblers based only on appearance. Some were calling the

traditional Blue-winged Warbler "bee-buzz" while others, however, were giving either Golden-winged Warbler or unusual calls. Presumably, those making traditional Blue-winged calls were pure-bred Blue-wings. Those making the Golden-winged and non-traditional calls might have been pure-bred Blue-winged Warblers, but they also may have been second generation hybrids. Stony Creek Valley and the ridges on either side are areas noted for producing hybrids between Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers. Unfortunately, no Golden-winged Warblers were seen during Saturday's visit. When I lived in Harrisburg between 1986 and 1997, we usually found Golden-winged Warblers high on the surrounding ridges, while Blue-winged Warblers occupied the lower slopes and Stony Creek Valley.

I heard many trip participants comment that they enjoyed the outings. The complete list of the 170 species noted during our field trips is on page 5 of this newsletter.



Presenter Jamie Zambo thrilled us with photos of young Barn Owls.

Saturday afternoons at our meetings are devoted to papers about birds that are of interest to birders. You do not have to be a professional ornithologist to enjoy the papers that are presented. This year our first presenter, Jamie Zambo, discussed the "Barn Owl Conservation Initiative." She showed us photographs of "cute" Barn Owls and their young, drawing oohs and aaahs from the crowd. Jamie also

indicated that Barn Owl populations appear to be dwindling in Pennsylvania and are currently concentrated in the south central and southeastern portions of the state. The reduction in farm habitat, the tearing down or burning of old barns and silos, and the use of pesticides in farming have all contributed to the decline in Barn Owl populations. Jamie and her associates are currently installing Barn Owl boxes on or in barns in south central Pennsylvania to encourage Barn Owl nesting and propagation. Jamie also plans to conduct survey work in western Pennsylvania since there is very little current Barn Owl data in this region.

The second paper, "Birds and Glass," was presented by Dan Klem. Dan discussed the literal impact of glass on bird deaths. Dan showed us photographs of various glass buildings and homes with glass windows that were noted for killing birds. He has investigated the possible reasons for this. Birds see reflections of trees and attractive habitat in the windows or look through them at habitat on the opposite side. They try to fly to those attractive areas, striking the windows, killing themselves. Atria with plants and trees inside glass buildings also attract birds to those glass-enclosed areas with the same results. Dan has been trying to get office buildings, etc., with atria or reflective

glass to turn off lights at night, particularly during early morning hours when birds tend to come down to feed during migration. This reduces the reflectiveness of the glass and places atria in darkness so they do not attract birds. He is also experimenting with placing ultraviolet (UV) materials in glass that might warn birds of dangerous conditions and keep them from striking windows. Unfortunately, the UV glass is still in an early experimental stage and requires funding.

Dan Kunkle presented the next paper about the Lehigh Valley Nature Center which was developed and is run by a private, nonprofit organization. Located along the mountain ridge at the Lehigh Gap north of Allentown, this nature center was established on land that was contaminated and polluted by a zinc smelting plant that eventually was acquired by Viacom and CBS media. Nothing was growing on this property, one of the largest superfund project areas east of the Mississippi River. The Lehigh Nature Center worked to revegetate the land with the help and financial support of Viacom and CBS who are legally responsible for cleaning up the property. They have established native grasses on the devastated land using a variety of innovative methods. Invertebrates, birds, and other animals are now repopulating this land. The Lehigh Valley Nature Center's success and methodology are going to be copied by other groups dealing with superfund sites.

The last paper of the afternoon provided more photographs of "cute" owls. Sandy Lockerman detailed the results of "A Decade of Saw-whet Owl Banding by the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art." The Northern Saw-whet Owl bird banding project has provided good data demonstrating these owls tend to migrate in the fall between the last part of October and the early portion of November. More female birds tend to be trapped for banding than males (about a 20:1 ratio), and they are not certain why this occurs. Recovered banded birds show that some migrate over a wide region from Canada to the Carolinas. At least one bird moved on an east-west path, being recovered in Illinois. All of the afternoon papers presented were enjoyable and informative.

provide another chance for people to meet and talk to birders from other parts of the state. After dinner, the PSO awards are presented, and we enjoy a presentation by a dinner speaker. This year, the PSO Conservation Award was given to Dan Kunkle and the Lehigh Valley Nature Center for their work reclaiming the land polluted by zinc smelting.

Doug Gross received the Earl Poole Award for making significant contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania. Doug started PSO's Special Areas Project (SAP), and he founded the Northern Saw-whet Owl "toot" routes that have shown these owls are more common than previously believed.



Banquet speaker, Scott Weidensaul, traced the history of birding as we know it today.

The dinner speaker, Scott Weidensaul entitled his program "Birds of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding." This very interesting lecture was an overview of how bird identification began in North America during the colonial period and its development traced through the 19th and 20th centuries. Wilson, Audubon, Lewis and Clark, and many other famous and not so famous early naturalists contributed to the development of birding as we know it today. Their lives, how they became interested in the natural world around them, those that illustrated the birds,

animals, and plants, and the development of field guides up to the ones that we now use are very compelling stories that Scott has compiled in a book. We look forward to the publication of *Birds of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding* in September, 2007. It will be a most interesting book.

The annual PSO meeting is always great fun, and attendees get to see and bird different regions of the state. The lectures are informative and are not designed for just scholarly audiences. Everyone can enjoy them. The 2008 meeting will be sponsored by the Three Rivers Birding Club and will be at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Cranberry, Pennsylvania, just north of Pittsburgh. Make your plans now to attend the 2008 meeting the third weekend in May 2008!



Photo by Tom Fetterman

Dues Reminder

Has time run away from you? Please check your mailing label to ascertain whether your dues are due. If you have not renewed for 2007, this is your last newsletter.

Please use the enclosed form to renew your membership!

Earl L. Poole Award Winner

The Earl L. Poole Award was established by PSO in 1995 to recognize an individual for outstanding contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania. The winner receives a plaque and a gift certificate to ABA.



Doug Gross gave a brief acceptance speech upon receiving the Earl Poole Award.

In Harrisburg at the PSO Annual Meeting on May 19, Doug Gross was presented with the 2007 Earl Poole Award. Many of us know Doug, as he is a faithful attendee at PSO meetings, informative contributor to the *PSO Pileated*, especially as the Raven Reporter,

a founding board member, and past President of PSO. He served as a County Coordinator for the first PA Breeding Bird Atlas, and is presently a Regional Coordinator for the current Atlas project.

Among Doug's many ornithological accomplishments, he devised the Special Areas Project, is responsible for "Toot Routes," chaired the Ornithological Technical Committee for 12 years, and wrote the *Birds of North America* species account for Yellow-bellied Flycatchers. Doug spoke to PSO members on Friday evening about his new project, Pennsylvania eBird. Doug is also a tireless field trip leader and delights in sharing his knowledge. He has extensively studied Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and just this year completed his 100th Breeding Bird Survey route.

Not surprisingly, Doug received a standing ovation from the PSO crowd when he was presented with the Earl Poole Award. It is indeed a pleasure to honor Doug Gross for his many contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology.

– Flo McGuire, Awards Committee Chair

Conservation Award 2007

The PSO Conservation Award was established in 2005 and is presented to a person, persons, or group whose work has resulted in significant conservation in Pennsylvania. The winner receives a certificate and a check for \$100.

The 3rd annual PSO Conservation Award was won by Dan Kunkle and the Board of the Lehigh Gap Nature Center. It was presented to Dan Kunkle at the PSO annual meeting in Harrisburg on May 19, 2007.

Mr. Kunkle had given a presentation to PSO that afternoon and had eloquently described one of the center's projects in land restoration: how hundreds of acres of land which had been degraded by erosion and industrial pollution were restored with warm-season grasses; formerly barren, rocky slopes are now green.

The Lehigh Gap Nature Center has many other ongoing projects in research and education, including the Kittatinny Raptor Corridor Project, various educational programs, and the Bake Oven Knob Hawk Watch, which they have monitored since 1961.

Mr. Kunkle received a standing ovation from the PSO members when he accepted the Conservation Award Certificate and check. It is a pleasure to recognize such a deserving group for their work and their successes in conservation.

– Flo McGuire, Awards Committee Chair



Flo McGuire presents Dan Kunkle with PSO's Conservation Award.

Match Game

Can you match the person from birding history with the bird that bears his name?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. James Clark Ross | _____ a. thrush |
| 2. William Bullock | _____ b. sparrow |
| 3. John Henslow | _____ c. solitaire |
| 4. Eugene Bicknell | _____ d. oriole |
| 5. John Kirk Townsend | _____ e. warbler |
| 6. Alexander Wilson | _____ f. gull |
| 7. Jared P. Kirtland | _____ g. wren |
| 8. William Cooper | _____ h. hawk |
| 9. Thomas Bewick | _____ i. phalarope |

(See Answers on page 12.)

Birds Listed at 2007 PSO Meeting at Harrisburg

Snow Goose	Semipalmated Sandpiper	American Crow	Prairie Warbler
Canada Goose	Least Sandpiper	Fish Crow	Bay-breasted Warbler
Mute Swan	White-rumped Sandpiper	Common Raven	Blackpoll Warbler
Wood Duck	Dunlin	Horned Lark	Cerulean Warbler
American Wigeon	Short-billed Dowitcher	Purple Martin	Black-and-white Warbler
Mallard	American Woodcock	Tree Swallow	American Redstart
Blue-winged Teal	Wilson's Phalarope	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Prothonotary Warbler
Northern Pintail	Bonaparte's Gull	Bank Swallow	Worm-eating Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Ring-billed Gull	Cliff Swallow	Ovenbird
Lesser Scaup	Herring Gull	Barn Swallow	Northern Waterthrush
Hooded Merganser	Great Black-backed Gull	Carolina Chickadee	Louisiana Waterthrush
Common Merganser	Caspian Tern	Black-capped Chickadee	Kentucky Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Forster's Tern	Tufted Titmouse	Mourning Warbler
Ring-necked Pheasant	Rock Pigeon	White-breasted Nuthatch	Common Yellowthroat
Ruffed Grouse	Mourning Dove	Carolina Wren	Hooded Warbler
Wild Turkey	Black-billed Cuckoo	House Wren	Wilson's Warbler
Common Loon	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Canada Warbler
Horned Grebe	Barn Owl	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Yellow-breasted Chat
Double-crested Cormorant	Common Nighthawk	Eastern Bluebird	Scarlet Tanager
American Bittern	Chimney Swift	Veery	Eastern Towhee
Great Blue Heron	Ruby-thrted. Hummingbird	Swainson's Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Great Egret	Belted Kingfisher	Wood Thrush	Field Sparrow
Green Heron	Red-headed Woodpecker	American Robin	Vesper Sparrow
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Savannah Sparrow
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Mockingbird	Grasshopper Sparrow
Black Vulture	Hairy Woodpecker	Brown Thrasher	Song Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Northern Flicker	European Starling	Swamp Sparrow
Osprey	Pileated Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing	White-throated Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Blue-winged Warbler	Dark-eyed Junco
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Acadian Flycatcher	Golden-winged Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Cooper's Hawk	Alder Flycatcher	Tennessee Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-shouldered Hawk	Willow Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler	Blue Grosbeak
Broad-winged Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Northern Parula	Indigo Bunting
Red-tailed Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Yellow Warbler	Bobolink
American Kestrel	Great Crested Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Kingbird	Magnolia Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
American Coot	White-eyed Vireo	Cape May Warbler	Common Grackle
Semipalmated Plover	Yellow-throated Vireo	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Killdeer	Blue-headed Vireo	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Greater Yellowlegs	Warbling Vireo	Black-throated Green	Baltimore Oriole
Lesser Yellowlegs	Red-eyed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler	House Finch
Solitary Sandpiper	Blue Jay	Yellow-throated Warbler	American Goldfinch
Spotted Sandpiper			House Sparrow

**Total = 170 species +
Brewster's Warbler**

The list this year surpassed last year's by four species plus the hybrid. It can't get much better! What a great meeting and what fabulous field trips!!!

Special thanks to all the trip leaders for sharing their special spots and knowledge. We appreciate your Harrisburg hospitality.



Mark McConaughy photographed this Brewster's Warbler at Stony Creek.

Meeting Participants

Diane Allison
 Chuck Berthoud
 Gloria Bickel
 Carolyn Blatchley
 Barry Blust
 Carol Blye
 Rob Blye
 Nick Bolgiano
 Agnes Bolstrum
 Edward Bolstrum
 Sue Bolstrum
 Dan Brauning
 Brian Byrnes
 Mike Carey
 Carol Cash
 Daniel Cash
 *Susan Comfort
 Bob Cook
 Ruth Cook
 Jim Dennis
 Nancy Dennis
 Jane Earle
 Mike Fialkovich

Bruce Fortman
 Dianne Franco
 Kathie Goodblood
 Debra Grim
 Doug Gross
 Deb Grove
 Greg Grove
 Carol Guba
 Paul Hess
 Margaret Higbee
 Roger Higbee
 Deuane Hoffman
 Cindy Hose
 Jerry Howard
 Marjorie Howard
 Shonah Hunter
 Dory Jacobs
 *Jessica Jopp
 Chad Kauffman
 Rudy Keller
 Nick Kerlin
 Gary John Kinkley

Dan Klem
 Arlene Koch
 Ramsay Koury
 Janet Kuehl
 Tom Kuehl
 Dan Kunkle
 David Kyler
 Trudy Kyler
 Sherri LaBar
 Wayne Laubscher
 Gary Lockerman
 Sandy Lockerman
 Pat Lynch
 Sherron Lynch
 Richard Martin
 Mark McConaughy
 Flo McGuire
 Jim McGuire
 Dawn Osborne
 *Amy Randolph
 Carol Reigle
 Joan Renninger

Bob Ross
 Pat Sabold
 Sarah Sargent
 Carol Schaffer
 Jeff Schaffer
 Matt Schuchart
 Deb Siefken
 Jack Solomon
 Sue Solomon
 *Thyra Sperry
 Jerry Stanley
 Larry Usselman
 Kim Van Fleet
 Carole Vangrin
 Eric Vangrin
 Mary Walsh
 Phil Walsh
 *Larry Waltz
 Scott Weidensaul
 Steve Wildasin
 Patricia Williams
 Richard Williams
 Jamie Zambo

*New Member

Member Pics



Sandy and Gary Lockerman handled many of the meeting details, allowing for everything to run smoothly.



New member Thyra Sperry poses with Richard Martin.



Former board member Dan Brauning was responsible for getting the new PSO hats.



Ramsay Koury and Deuane Hoffman led productive field trips.



Marjorie and Jerry Howard enjoyed the banquet.



Member Dory Jacobs from Indiana, PA, is happy that she finally got her Mourning Warbler at Stony Creek.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



Peregrines, Eagles, and Herons

The PGC continues to monitor Peregrine Falcon eyries, Bald Eagle nests, and heron colonies. It has been a record-smashing year for Peregrines with 24 nests (so far). [See *Dan Brauning's article on page 15 for details.*] We still are open to more Peregrine Falcon sightings, especially around cliffs. At least one new cliff nesting pair seems to be nesting a bit later than the established pairs on "faux cliffs." Art McMorris is the contact for Peregrines. Reach him at McMorris@mac.com.

The Bald Eagle nesting season also is well along. With more than 120 nesting pairs, it is quite a challenge to get productivity information about each one, but that is what I am trying to do. Productivity is one of the best measures of the health of this population. We appreciate any reports of Bald Eagle nests and their fate. Do not assume that a nest has been reported, especially in the more rural counties and at inaccessible sites. Nests can be located well into June, especially by canoe or kayak. Please send any eagle reports to me at the address below.

Deb Siefken is still collecting heron colony information. Most colonies are well advanced by now, but some may not yet have been reported. Herons keep moving to new spots and expanding established colonies. If you have participated in the survey in the past or know of a colony that is new or remote, we would appreciate your report. It also would be good to get each colony in the PBBA database. With heron news, please contact Deb at 717-677-4830 or by e-mail at siefkend@cvn.net.

I have adopted a new theme that effectively expresses why we need your assistance with these projects: *We cannot protect it unless we know about it.*



SAP Update

I have heard that a draft of the Nescopeck State Park bird checklist was submitted by Alan Gregory before he was injured seriously in an accident in late April. Alan gathered bird data at Nescopeck when it was a new park and devotedly visited it regularly near his home in Conyngham. He and his friends in the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon and the North Branch Bird Club, including and especially his wife, Monica, completed more than 100 field trips to Nescopeck State Park. It is a rich birding area and deserves more visits by birders.

As many of you probably remember, Alan and Monica hosted the PSO meeting at the Hazleton campus of Penn State, and the meeting included field trips to that park.

Pat Sabold (the "Vireogirl") has agreed to help with the Gifford Pinchot State Park list using SAP data and other field trip data to which she has access. We'd appreciate editorial help with that checklist from the Harrisburg birders as the project advances. Pat has visited Gifford Pinchot several times.

We are also making progress with a few other park checklists which I will report in a future column. Summer is a good time to do both Atlas blocks and visits to SAP and IBA spots.

Thoughts on Hearing a Lincoln's Sparrow

In early May I was conducting a waterfowl survey in Ricketts Glen State Park. My study plot was deep in the woods at the headwaters of a stream that runs to a beaver pond and wetland. It is a place I have hiked to and birded near many times. There, I heard the rich warbling song of a Lincoln's Sparrow in the blueberry thicket and hemlock edge of the beaver wetland. A fine song that it is, too. The Lincoln's is one of the characteristic songs of the boreal forest. It is part of the sound track of the vast northern forests and muskegs now featured on conservation agendas.

Lincoln's Sparrows are elusive fellows. They skulk and hide in thickets and forest edges in migration. I have found them especially in old fields and scrub. They pop up, check you out, and disappear. To the casual eye, this sparrow resembles the more familiar Song Sparrow but its buffy coloring and fine streaking on its chest distinguishes it. I think it one of the most subtly beautiful birds of the continent. Its song is distinctive to those who know it.

But, I started thinking who else would recognize its song in Pennsylvania? I wonder if a Lincoln's Sparrow sang on territory in Pennsylvania, would anyone hear it or recognize its song even if they did hear it? The sparrow I heard was at least a mile and a half from any pavement and about two miles from a public road. I will return to check on it and other birds at this remote site that happens to be in one of my Atlas blocks. But, if I did not hear it that morning, would anyone else?

I am an old hand with bird surveys and even I had to think a few seconds before it registered that I was hearing a Lincoln's. Its song is almost wren-like in its bubbly qualities, but has a strong pattern that might remind many observers of the more commonly heard Song Sparrow or Purple Finch.

There are no records of Lincoln's Sparrow nesting in Pennsylvania, but it is one of those boreal forest birds that teases me into believing that sometime it might settle into one of our high elevation wetlands. After all, who would have thought that Blackpoll Warblers and Merlins would nest here someday? Why not Lincoln's Sparrow? The closest known nesting population is in New York's Adirondacks. It is found nesting in bogs and fens, burned over areas, old clearings, abandoned fields, and pond-side thickets. Some of that habitat exists in the high elevations of our northern counties where the birds are many but the birders are few.

A Merlin nesting in town is one thing, but a Lincoln's Sparrow singing deep in the woods is another. Merlin is a great discovery for the 2nd PBBA, but it does not require a remote location. Lincoln's Sparrow and a few other northern birds are not likely to be found in or near a town. They need to be pursued.

If we are to make discoveries of new nesting species in Pennsylvania, the skilled and experienced birders need to adopt blocks in remote areas. Most of the skilled "ear birders" live in towns. Most of the rare birds are out of town. Some are "way back in," and I invite the top field people to look at the big empty map of northern Pennsylvania and find some neat birds. Do not be content to inventory the blocks in your proverbial backyard. If you want to make new discoveries, get out there in new places.



Yellow-breasted Chats hide deep in a thicket.

"Chatology"

While on a PSO field trip in Stony Creek valley, our group had the good fortune to encounter a few neat birds. Thanks to Ramsay Koury's able leadership, we had good looks at Blue-winged, Brewster's, Prairie Warblers, and a few others. But, the bird of the morning was the Yellow-breasted Chat. Arlene Koch made sure that one of our group who had never seen one before got a look at this elusive skulker. Chats either hide deep in a thicket or proclaim their worth to the world from a high perch or by performing a mid-air flight display. Either way, they are special.

The chat has been long the subject of taxonomic speculation and controversy. Many ornithologists have questioned whether or not it belongs in the American Wood Warbler family (Parulidae or Parulinae, depending on the classification). In a 2002 publication, Lovette and

Bermingham asked, "What is a wood warbler?" using molecular data to characterize the Parulids. They found that the Yellow-breasted Chat is one of those warbler-like songbirds that does not really fit into that group. The chat is more likely in Icteridae, the family of orioles, black-birds, and meadowlarks. Its closest living relative might be the Bobolink! So, its genus name "Icterus" which roughly alludes to its jaundice-like yellow coloration links it with the Icterids. No matter how it fits taxonomically, our chat is a very distinctive and unusual bird.

I got to know chats a bit better by conducting Breeding Bird Censuses in old field plots near Berwick for many years. In one study plot one or two pairs nested each year. The males launched themselves from a sapling or transmission structure to give a spectacular flight display. With big legs dangling, tail pumping up and down, and wings beating slowly, male chats utter loud whistles, caws, and kooks. Their vocalizations are quite varied, differing from male to male, and they sometimes incorporate imitations of other species. They also have a tendency to leave "dramatic pauses" after their sequences of whistles and caws with an emphatic "kook!"

When I would walk through one chat's territory, it often would follow me to the end of its personal boundary. It was usually well-concealed in the blackberry and dogwood leaves. When I would turn, it would give an alarm note "kook!" before disappearing deeper into the brush – a flash of yellow, then gone! If you followed the female deep into the densest part of the thorniest thicket, you might be rewarded with a view of her nest tucked away about waist high in the tangle. I've been fortunate to find a few but paid a price in blood for the view from sharp thorns guarding the way.

Chats are one of those thicket birds that were once more common in our state, especially during the years following timbering when recovering forests had many acres of shrubs and saplings just to its liking. They tend to be found in larger tracts of scrub, at least five acres. In northern counties, they are more scattered in distribution, often in transmission corridor rights-of-way, old blow-downs, or clearcuts.

In at least one spot, I found a pair among a "colony" of Mourning Warblers on the mountain where tree diseases and elm spanworm took a toll on the forest. I wonder if they also can be found along ridgetop barrens and scrub. I have found them sparingly in the Pocono Mountains in scrub barrens. Where else might they be on the northern tier?

From where I sit, I now can hear a chat "cawing" and "kooking" in the brush. Two males have adopted our property for now. I have even heard them singing (if you can call it that) in synchrony – *kook-kook-kooking* in harmony, one echoing the other. We hope they stay. I

have watched one of them doing his flight display in the morning, at mid-day, and even in the moonlight near our house. My wife wonders if this fellow gets any sleep.

Winged Warbler Warning: Follow that Song!

Both of our “winged” warblers have decreased in recent years. The Golden-winged Warbler is a Watch List species and on the American Bird Conservancy’s Green List of Highest Continental Concern. It is not just a simple matter of Blue-winged Warblers replacing Golden-winged because Blue-winged Warbler also has declined in many locations. The decline in Golden-wings in PA has been downright alarming. This species will probably be “listed” in our state by the end of the decade.

While walking in Stony Creek Valley with Ramsay Koury on the PSO field trip, I never observed so many Blue-winged Warblers in one morning. But, not one legitimate Golden-winged was seen.

Some Blue-winged Warblers were singing perfectly good Golden-winged Warbler songs. Brewster’s Warblers, the cross between Blue-winged and Golden-winged, also will sing the Golden-winged’s “bee-bzzz-bzzz-bzzz” song. It is critical to track down each “winged warbler” to make sure you’ve nailed down its identity. They are completely untrustworthy these days.

Golden-winged can be found in swampy habitat and scrub barrens, not just in overgrown fields and rights-of-way corridors where most are reported.

A Rose Could be Better Named

All of us have a few shelves full of bird guides, many of exotic places that arouse either memories or inspire envy of those who have visited places like Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Trinidad, or wherever. Even if the birds are not particularly colorful, their remoteness somehow stirs a desire to find them. Names like *White-bellied Mountaingem*, *Golden-browed Chlorophonia*, *Emerald Toucanet*, and *Oleaginous Hemispingus* inspire thoughts of tropical and enticing places. They just sound interesting and exotic. If some of our birds had sexier names they might get more attention.

Besides, we all know that many of our bird species are poorly named, if not downright misnamed badly. Our warblers do not warble – not one of them. Louisiana Waterthrushes are not thrushes, and they aren’t any more likely to be seen in Louisiana than in any other state. We all have our candidates for “worst named bird.”

I propose that we rename some of our birds, at least informally, not only so their names are more appropriate, but also that they are more fun. I will accept nominations for name changes in this or another forum.

I have already proposed that the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher be renamed the “Moss Tyrant.” The yellow belly is not a diagnostic field mark for that Empid flycatcher. However, they almost always nest in beds of moss, and they have that feisty personality typical of the Tyrannids. If our Empids had more distinctive names, maybe they would be easier to learn.

My next proposed name change involves one of the worst named birds – the Worm-eating Warbler. Depending on your point of view or aesthetics, it is a bit “understated” in appearance or downright dull if you are unappreciative of subtlety. Whoever thought of that name? They don’t eat worms (yes, I know some people say “worms” instead of caterpillars). And they surely don’t warble; they trill even if they don’t look too “trilling.” And, it is not an especially special trill – about as dry as a trill can get.

I propose that we rename it something like “Stripe-headed Helmitheros” as a twist on its Latin name meaning that it pursues insects. That sounds more exotic. And, after all, this is one of the many songbirds that visits the tropics each winter like any sensible vertebrate would do. Or, we could play on its foraging habits and call it the “Long-billed Leaf-prober” or the “Trilling Bug-hunter.” Just hearing more descriptive names takes me back to the forest of Palenque, Mexico, where I watched one *Hermitheros* forage on hanging dead leaves, its mode of bug-hunting especially in winter. It was just as at home in the tropical forest as a toucanet or a trogon that day. Whatever its name, this bird deserves better. They have neat nests.

Now, I just need to revisit the last Atlas block to find a “Gummy-legged Brook-haunter.” One eluded me there the other day and I refuse to pay a guide to show me one.

Forest Hawks Revisited

Thanks for all of the feedback on forest hawks as a result of my last Raven Reporter column. I certainly am glad to hear of your experiences with various forest hawks, especially accipiters. You can spend a lot of time in a block before finding one.

I added a few more this year by following up on reports of nesting hawks from previous years. They may not nest in exactly the same place, but some raptors show fidelity to an area for a few years. I caught a goshawk in the neighborhood of a forest trail where a woodsman reported a nest a few years ago. Any gos is a good gos. That was a good morning!

It is good to remember that there is strong correlation between Red-shouldered Hawk and Barred Owl. If you found a Red-shouldered in a riparian forest, perhaps a nocturnal visit will yield a Barred.

I find that it helps to review the hawk vocalizations. A lot

of those “kep” calls sound a bit too much like an odd woodpecker and can be easily overlooked or mentally lumped into the pile of more familiar vocalizations.

Please keep checking for these forest raptors and submit them to the Atlas. Each one is a valuable piece of the puzzle.

Thanks

I am humbled and honored by the recent Poole award. I would like to thank the many people who have supported my various projects over the years and given good council through many hours in committee.

I especially would like to show my gratitude to those who have served on the PSO board, the many Special Areas Project leaders, the “Toot Route” runners, and the members of the Ornithological Technical Committee who contribute so much to our mutual understanding and study of birdlife. I also have benefited greatly from the support of Dan Brauning and other PGC staff over the years.

I am grateful that the PSO board allowed me to bring my wife, Cindy, to the banquet. She really enjoyed finally meeting some of the members whom I have spoken about for years. I keep telling her how nice the PA birders can be, and now she knows it is true.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute. I will keep doing stuff for PA birds and those who appreciate them.

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

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Pennsylvania Game Commission
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E-mail: dogross@state.pa.us or dougross@sunlink.net

Bill Reid Remembered

We lost one of the state’s most important and selfless birders this spring with the death of Bill Reid on March 27. The PSO honored Bill several years ago with the Earl Poole Award for his outstanding contributions to PA ornithology. Bill has been the Dean of Wyoming Valley birding for several decades.

Bill not only collected a ton of birding records but also coordinated bird data collection for various birding magazines and journals. He represented our state’s records in various versions of *American Birds*, diligently collecting

data from a variety of sources. Bill also ran the Wyoming Valley birding hotline for many years. For the northeastern region, he is irreplaceable.

Bill was a master at gentle persuasion. He nudged you to do a little bit more than you thought you could accomplish. Of course, one of the reasons he could convince others to contribute is that he was so productive himself. Bill set an excellent example of how a citizen can contribute more to our common knowledge of birds.

During the first Breeding Bird Atlas, Bill was a one-man wrecking crew for the region that included Luzerne, Wyoming, and Bradford counties. He contributed data to nearly 100 blocks and wrote several of the book’s species accounts, including many of his personal experiences in the field. Bill combined his trips while meeting his obligations as a minister with birding, knocking off an Atlas block on the way to visiting a hospital- or house-bound parishioner. If a member of his congregation was in a particularly good birding area, he may have received more attention from Bill, but I don’t want to start any rumors of favoritism at this point. Those of us involved with the first PBBA know that the northeast area of the state would not have been done without him.

For many decades Bill ran multiple BBS routes each summer, often six per year. He inspired others to make similar contributions. He continued running bird routes well into retirement because he claimed that his hearing was still fine for birding. Most remarkably, he was coordinator of Southeast Bradford County Christmas count since 1952, certainly the longest tenure of any PA coordinator.

The memorial service for Bill was a full house. There were a few birders in attendance, but mostly it was his many contacts from civic and religious duties that filled the pews. Bill was a United Methodist minister in the Wilkes-Barre region for 56 years and the Wilkes-Barre District Superintendent for six years, making many friends while serving. Bill was a mentor to many in his time including the three ministers who presided over his memorial service.

Bill also served his country in World War II as part of the medical corps, spending eight months as a prisoner of war in Europe. Bill served on City Council in Wilkes-Barre, 1972 –76, the critical years after the disastrous Agnes flood. In this capacity, he stoutly defended the needs of the poor and disenfranchised as that city rebuilt from disaster. He also served as Wyoming County Commissioner for eight years after he retired from the ministry. Many remembered Bill’s many contributions to the community, especially the neglected and the unfortunate. Of course, he thought many birds were neglected and unfortunate by not getting the conservation they deserved. He will be missed by many and replaced by none. We only can hope to imitate his best traits.

– Doug Gross

Conservation Corner

Our nation's national wildlife refuges are in jeopardy – funding jeopardy. In a recent report released by the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), it stated that the refuge system is operating at half the financial budget it really needs. The Alliance is comprised of conservation, sportsmen, recreation, and scientific organizations, and their report finds that the wildlife refuge system is threatened by crime, invasive species, habitat fragmentation, global warming, and a sharply reduced workforce. All of these issues are made worse by the chronic under-funding of the refuges.

Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) stated "Already, about a third of all wildlife refuges have no staff at all, and the Fish and Wildlife Service's regional workforce plans have identified scores of additional refuges that are going to close their gates or have on-site staff removed. Not only does this hurt the hunters and anglers who can no longer gain access to these areas, but lack of staffing can also cause biological operations to cease and invasive species to expand unchecked. We cannot allow our refuges, some of the last remaining areas of pristine wilderness in America, to deteriorate." And of course, this hurts the birding community.

Congressman Jim Saxton (R-NJ), a senior member of the House Natural Resources Committee said "Back in 1997 when we passed the bipartisan Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act, we envisioned a national network of refuges to protect and expand natural habitat for our wildlife in an era of unprecedented commercial and residential development. Only a decade later, that vision is in jeopardy. Congress needs to support sufficient maintenance and operation funding for the refuge system it helped build."

According to recently released regional workforce plans from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the refuge system is cutting 20 percent of its staff, a permanent loss of 565 positions. The report finds that without these jobs, visitors will encounter:

- * Shortened or eliminated visitor center hours;
- * Dilapidated viewing platforms and hiking trails;
- * Reduced or cancelled hunting and fishing events;
- * Outdated materials, maps, brochures, and websites.

Without further funding, habitat maintenance and law enforcement staff will be limited in their ability to:

- * Control invasive plant and animal species;
- * Enforce safety regulations and protect refuge visitors;
- * Manage habitat;
- * Implement necessary conservation measures for endangered or threatened species.

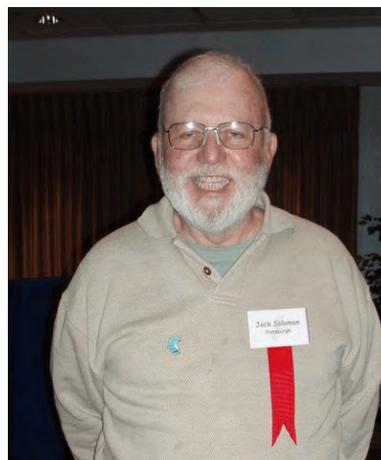
The report goes on to conclude that "Unless Congress increases the annual appropriations for the refuge system soon, the Fish and Wildlife Service will be unable to perform its Congressionally mandated duty to 'administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations.'"

The CARE report states that the refuge system needs an annual increase of \$15 million per year simply to keep up with inflation. CARE recommends a total budget of \$765 million per year by fiscal year 2013 based on a comprehensive analysis of refuge system funding needs. CARE recommends \$451.5, or about a \$55 million increase, for refuge operations and maintenance funding for the next fiscal year. The report can be found on line at www.fundrefuges.org/care/carehome.html.

The question now is, will Congress and the Administration do the right thing and adequately fund our nation's refuges or will the refuges continue their downward funding spiral? It's time to hold our elected officials responsible and demand that they adequately fund our refuges.

– Mark Henry
Conservation Chairperson

Welcome New Board Member



Jack Solomon was elected to the board at our recent annual meeting.

Born a few months before Pearl Harbor, Jack Solomon quickly developed a love of nature and science, then began his career in chemistry with a B.S. and M.S. from the University of Pittsburgh.

After a year as a development chemist for US Steel, he switched to teaching organic chemistry at Carlow University, and after a

few years, switched again, into law, winding up as Deputy Chief Counsel for the State System of Higher Education. Retiring from that position in 1999, he taught chemistry again for a year at Point Park University, then retired for good from gainful employment.

In the sixties and early seventies he participated actively in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, engaged

in politics as vice president of the 14th Ward Democratic Club, and ran for local office ("alas," he says, "unsuccessfully,") He was, however, more recently, an elected Democratic Party Committee Man. During the sixties he fell in love with Irish folk music, and sings, poorly, he acknowledges, while he drives to birding hotspots.

A member of many birding, environmental, and natural history groups, Jack served as a board member and vice president of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, board member of the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, is president and one of the founders of the Three Rivers Birding Club, for which he regularly leading outings. He is a recipient of ASWP's W. E. Clyde Todd Award for significant contributions to environmental conservation. A member of PSO for several years, Jack has attended several annual meetings and nominated two young birders for PSO scholarships.

With his wife Sue, and their dog, Sibley, Jack spends much of the year traveling, recently on an Irish music cruise to the Carribean and Central America, "birding furiously," he says "whenever we stopped in a port." In addition, they visit Texas, Arizona, and Canada every year. Jack resides in Pittsburgh, where he participates in the CBC, PA.Migration Count, and tries to find breeders in the city's Frick and Schenley parks, his blocks for the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas.

Certificates of Appreciation

The following persons have received Certificates of Appreciation from the PSO for allowing birders onto their property and into their homes to observe rare birds:

*Marilyn Snell - Dickcissel, Cumberland County from 1/16/07 to 3/12/07

*Norman and Jean Anderson, Townsend's Solitaire, Erie County from 12/31/06 to 3/25/07

*Karen Atwood, Scott's Oriole, Cumberland County from 2/20/07 to 4/8/07

*Doug and Candy Maneval, Scott's Oriole, Cumberland County from 2/20/07 to 4/8/07

*Ray Penick, Scott's Oriole, Cumberland County from 2/20/07 to 4/8/07

*Richard and Vicky Smith, Lark Sparrow, Bucks County from 10/14/06 to 5/1/07

The Board of Directors of PSO would like to extend our gratitude to these folks for helping to promote birdwatching in the state. Thank you very much!

The procedure for nominating a person(s) for a certificate is to contact John Fedak (jlfedak@atlanticbb.net) or Arlene Koch (davilene@verizon.net) with the specifics – bird, county, person(s), dates the bird was present, and reason why you feel a Certificate of Appreciation is merited.

Answers to Match Game

on page 4

1. Ross's Gull
2. Bullock's Oriole
3. Henslow's Sparrow
4. Bicknell's Thrush
5. Townsend's Solitaire
6. Wilson's Phalarope
7. Kirtland's Warbler
8. Cooper's Hawk
9. Bewick's Wren

Atlas Experiences

Birding is always interesting because of the unexpected. Just recently Carol Guba and I were atlasing in the Commodore quad, Indiana County, when I spotted a turkey at the far edge of a field. I was watching it through my binoculars when it suddenly appeared to fall over. I alerted Carol, jumped from the van, grabbed my scope, and couldn't believe my eyes. The turkey was on its back, feet straight up in the air, kicking its legs like a dog, taking a dust bath. I commented to Carol, "I've never seen a turkey roll before." Her reply was, "They sell them at the grocery store."



Last June Carol Guba and I were atlasing in the Punxsutawney quad, Jefferson County. As we were riding along to our next destination, she suddenly shouted, "Stop!" so I did. She pointed out her window to the right at a deer about 100 feet from the road. On its head was a male Red-winged Blackbird. We watched for several minutes with the deer staring at us as the red-wing, with its wings spread for balance, proceeded to pick insects from the deer's ears and head. It seemed like a scene from the African savannah.

– Margaret Higbee, Region 59

Ornithological Literature Notes

Two articles in the December 2006 issue of the *Journal of Raptor Research* are based on observations and research in Pennsylvania. The topics are an unusual Bald Eagle nest in Northampton County (4:306–307) and apparent predation on American Kestrels by Cooper’s Hawks in Berks and Lehigh counties (4:294–297).

Bald Eagles rarely nest on any human-made structure, but a pair did successfully in 2005 at the Reliant Resources power station along the Delaware River at Portland. Larry Rymon, Ed Henckel, and Judy Henckel documented the nesting in detail. It took place on a 27-meter pole erected as a nesting platform for Ospreys. An Osprey pair had fledged an average of two young per year on the pole from 2002 to 2004.

In 2005 a pair of Bald Eagles usurped the nest, reconstructed it to their liking, and fledged two young. The Ospreys, whose nest the eagles took, relocated to another pole in the area, and very little territorial aggression was noted between the two pairs.

The authors speculate that the Bald Eagles’ extraordinary use of a platform on a pole could reflect difficulty in finding sufficient natural nesting locations by the vastly increasing eagle population along the river. It will be worthwhile for birders to watch for future cases of eagles’ adaptation to artificial structures.

(Northampton County compiler Michael Schall reported the nesting in his Spring 2005 Local Notes in *Pennsylvania Birds*.)

Predation on American Kestrels by Cooper’s Hawks is suggested in a study by Gail C. Farmer, Kyle McCarty, Sue Robertson, Bob Robertson, and Keith L. Bildstein of the Acopian Center for Conservation Learning at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. During three winters, the authors monitored 19 kestrels by radiotelemetry in a 1500-square-kilometer area of farmlands, pastures, woodlots, and orchards north of Reading and west of Allentown.

Eight of the kestrels were found dead, their remains pinpointed when a transmitter signal came from the same location for several days. Five of the deaths were attributed to avian predators based on the condition of plucked feathers, a partially plucked body, and avian fecal material near the transmitter. Three other raptor species were observed within 100 meters of tracked kestrels during the study period. Red-tailed Hawks were seen 68 times, but only once did these species interact when a kestrel stooped on a Red-tail as it flew past. Sharp-shinned Hawks were

seen six times, but they never interacted with a kestrel. Cooper’s Hawks were seen 20 times and had six interactions with kestrels—three in which a kestrel chased a Cooper’s and three in which a Cooper’s was the chaser.

Though no predation was observed directly, there are several published reports of Cooper’s Hawks seen preying on kestrels elsewhere. In the present study, two results point to this accipiter as a suspect: the multiple interactions, as well as sightings of Cooper’s in wintering areas of 68% of the monitored kestrels. The authors interpret their findings as further evidence that avian predators can significantly affect kestrel mortality.

– Paul Hess

PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Four alcids are on our official state list. Which species are they, and which joined the list most recently?
2. Most birders know that Audubon’s and Myrtle forms of Yellow-rumped Warbler differ in throat color. What is the difference? For a bonus, which of these subspecies lacks a supercilium?
3. *Birds of North America Online* reports the following unusual behavior by a familiar species: “Unmated males [are] known to commit sexually selected infanticide, killing nestlings 1–4 days old, in apparent attempts to incite divorce in pair and establish pair bond with female.” What is the species?
4. B. H. Warren in *Birds of Pennsylvania* (1890) listed one of our state’s now-widespread woodpeckers as confirmed breeding only in Washington County. Which species?
5. Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow declined from 1980 to 2005 in North American Breeding Bird Survey data for Pennsylvania. Which of them showed the steepest trend downward?

(Answers on page 16.)



The Annual Meeting – Another Viewpoint

by Arlene Koch

The PSO's annual conference/meeting/bird outing in Harrisburg that was held May 18-20 was, as usual, enjoyable, enlightening, and instructional. There were, of course, the Friday night business meeting and the Saturday afternoon presentations, along with the Saturday night banquet, awards, and speaker. This year the speaker was Scott Weidensaul, and if he doesn't whet your appetite to find out more about birds and the natural world, no one will.

But the main reason I attend the annual meeting, other than the fact that I'm on the Board of Directors and to not go wouldn't look too good, is to bird new places and get reacquainted with some people I only see on a yearly basis. I also suspect that many other birders go for the same reasons even if they wouldn't admit it.

On Saturday morning I went with Linglestown dentist Ramsay Koury to bird an area north of the city called Stony Creek. Ramsay may use his eyes all day looking into people's mouths, but out of the office he has ears of gold. At one point on the long walk through habitat that produced better looks at Brewster's warblers than I've had for years, he suddenly stopped, looked up at the top of a stand of 40-foot hardwoods, and calmly announced that there was a Bay-breasted Warbler up there. Lest anyone think that's easy, it's not, even for people who've been birding a long time. The Bay-breasted's song, like a lot of other warbler songs, is very high pitched and soft. Differentiating between warbler songs, especially when they don't always sing the one they're supposed to according to the books and recordings, can be extremely frustrating. But Ramsay was right on the money with his call and everyone, except for me, got to see the Bay-breasted Warbler as it flitted from tree to tree.

Our PSO group was joined by David Arrow from York who often birds this place and just happened to be there when we were. At one point, while everyone else was looking for a close but secretive Worm-eating Warbler, he found a 3-inch-wide brown and white moth about 6 feet up on the trunk of an oak. He only found it, he said, because he noticed a lot of gypsy moth pupae on the tree's bark, and at first he wondered if that's what the moth could be before he realized this moth was way too big. Frankly, it was so camouflaged I don't know how he saw it in the first place. No one in the group knew what it was, but eventually, with the help of the web site "Butterflies and Moths of North America" and people on the Pennsylvania Leps/Odes web site who know far more about butterflies and moths than I could ever hope to, it was identified as a tulip-tree beauty (*Epimecis hortaria*). Ken Lebo, an

accomplished Berks County birder and butterflyer, told me that these moths are relatively common, although I personally had never before seen one.

On Friday night and at times Saturday afternoon I manned the PSO's table, selling bird checklists, Frank Haas's bird screens, copies of the *Annotated List of PA Birds*, PSO T-shirts, and the new PSO hats (which everyone should have). At one point a guy from Lycoming County (natives pronounce it Lycuming) told me that he has two large patches of pink lady's-slipper orchids on his property but that some of them are fading away. Apparently he knew of my love of flowers and he asked me if I knew what he could do to restore the patch to its previous beauty, but I couldn't help him. Wild orchids are so site specific that they're controlled by nature, not man. As the ground goes, so go the orchids. But I told him that perhaps he could get some information from the used birding and nature books one of the other vendors was selling, although I don't know if he had any success. Other vendors included an artist, a photographer, an optics dealer, and representative of the Audubon Society's Wildwood Lake Sanctuary. I came home with a book on lichens, a photo of a hummingbird, a woven basket, and a Lens Pen. The only reason I didn't buy from the artist was because I already have an order in to him.

The annual PSO meeting is more than just three days about birds. It's about forging friendships, birding new areas, and increasing your knowledge of all things nature related. There's a vast collective wealth of information, ability, and knowledge among PA's birding community, and attending the annual meeting is a way to avail yourself of some of it. I came back from the meeting having seen a moth I never before laid eyes on and knowing that lichens are made up of two organisms – a fungus and either a green algae or a cyanobacterium. So the next time I look at a Ruby-throated Hummingbird's nest covered with lichens, I'll know what they're made of.

Birding and Time: A Message for Beginners

by Gloria Sciulli

I spent a few hours birding along the Allegheny River and thinking about birding and time. Birding takes time. And so little of the time is actually spent in direct observation of birds.

It is sometimes disappointing to beginners that they will go birding and see so little. We've all watched the National Geographic specials on TV, getting to see birds a few feet from the camera for half an hour at a time. In reality, the everyday birder doesn't have the kind of equipment and the time to see that much action.

Those photographers could work for years preparing the footage for one show. We go birding for hours and catch glimpses of birds. Thirty seconds of seeing a Hooded Warbler is a good sighting. A minute of a Broad-winged Hawk soaring overhead usually allows enough time for you to identify it and enjoy the thrill of having done so. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are heard for minutes but seen for only seconds as they flit about in the tree tops. How long can the average person look straight up in the air through binoculars? Necks do not endure as long as elaborate camera equipment in expensive blinds.

Winter feeders give us the most viewing time. Even then, the cardinals are only there for a few minutes; a woodpecker for one or two. Ducks, shorebirds, and waders are better at standing still and being watched for longer periods of time.

The pace of birding is relaxing, yet it is so consuming that hours can pass before you think of the time again. Any good hobby is like that.

If you are a beginner, remember the real world does not happen in half hour segments. Birding takes time.



The Year of the Peregrine

by Dan Brauning

Something happened this year. It was unexpected, but could have been anticipated. This year will be marked as a year of significance for the Peregrine Falcon.

This species normally receives much attention from the general media. Nesting in the large urban areas of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the Peregrine gets front-page coverage in the big-city newspapers and still occasionally a spot on the evening news. In an age of environmental doom, when even the Common Grackle is declining, it is nice to have a success story to report, and certainly one with the drama of the world's fastest flying bird. So it has been for a number of years.

But the big story in 2007 may get little attention. This year is the year of recovery for the Peregrine Falcon. The setting is as follows: Peregrines nested on cliffs along the major rivers of eastern Pennsylvania, and possibly a site or two in the western counties, before their dramatic decline in the 1950s. Listed nationally as an endangered species, it was one of hallmarks of environmental decline, DDT contamination, and a poster bird for the Endangered Species Act. With considerable work, the species was reintroduced through releases of captive-bred birds – not a commonly successful technique. Pennsylvania was part of that recovery from the earliest years – 1975 and 1976. The first recovered nesting in this state was documented in 1987 on a bridge in Philadelphia. The recovery continued slowly with additional reintroductions through the 1990s, reaching a total of 10 nesting pairs in 2000.

A milestone of the recovery in Pennsylvania came in 2003 with the first successful nesting on a cliff. The cliff was an unassuming location in Lycoming County along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. Evidence suggests birds had nested there for several years prior. Still, the population continued to grow slowly, adding one or two new pairs per year at sites, including power plants, additional bridges, and activity at the Delaware Water Gap, one of the most impressive cliffs in Pennsylvania. It appeared that the Peregrine was destined to recover slowly, at about 7% per year – nothing like the dramatic expansion of the Bald Eagle with its 15% per year growth for the past 20 years. But something had changed in 2002 that evaded all of our attention. For no obvious reason, the number of young annually produced from our then 12 nesting pairs jumped to more than 30 per year, an increase of at least 50% over previous years, reaching a record production of 42 young in 2006.

With four years of substantial reproduction, the events of 2007 could well have been anticipated. Because in 2007, Pennsylvania experienced a major expansion in the nesting Peregrine population – at least 7 new sites were reported to us through the diverse contacts these birds have generated, bringing the total to 24 nesting pairs, a 60% increase in a single year.

These new sites include the full array of situations in which Peregrines now nest – bridges, buildings, and cliffs. They are widely distributed, including new bridge sites north of Pittsburgh, cliffs in central Pennsylvania, and buildings in the Reading area. Some of the new sites did not produce young this year, but they establish a new benchmark and pave the way for a new distribution and population of these dramatic birds. These new nests were found in: *Allegheny*, *Beaver*, *Berks*, *Lancaster*, *Luzerne*, *Montour*, and *Union* counties. Of course we are most excited about the return of Peregrines to Pennsylvania's cliffs, with young observed at "Council Cup" in *Luzerne*, and a pair active at the Shikellamy State Park. We are hopeful that this paves the way to the restoration of these dramatic birds to many of the 44 historic cliffs occupied in the early 20th century.

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:

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PSO	Individual	\$ 28.50
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Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 6)

1. Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, Black Guillemot, and Ancient Murrelet. The most recent addition was a Black Guillemot at Lake Ontelaunee, Berks County, in 1999.
2. Audubon's throat is yellow; Myrtle's is white. Audubon's lacks a supercilium.
3. Barn Swallow.
4. Red-bellied Woodpecker.
5. Grasshopper Sparrow, with a decrease averaging 6.8% per year. Vesper's decline was 3.1% per year, and Savannah's was 1.7% per year.



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