



From the President's Desk....

A close look at charismatic raptors will be one reward for attending the speaker sessions at PSO's annual meeting in Pittsburgh May 16-18. Webcams have made celebrities of Pittsburgh's nesting Peregrine Falcons, which will be target birds of two PSO field trips this year. Dan Brauning, who oversees Peregrine conservation as Supervisor of Pennsylvania Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Program, will update us on the remarkable recovery of the state's breeding Peregrines, which have recently spread from their original urban hacking sites to other cities and have even begun to recolonize traditional cliff eyries from which they had been absent for decades. The handsome 2008 annual meeting lapel pin presented to every registrant features a Peregrine superimposed on a map of Allegheny County.



Peregrine Falcons will be the target birds on two of our annual meeting field trips in Pittsburgh.

Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath

Golden Eagles are most likely to be seen by hawk watchers monitoring the Appalachian ridges, where placement of wind turbines could have a major impact on raptor migration across Pennsylvania. Dr. Todd Katzner, Director of the Department of Conservation and Field Research at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, will focus on research that is collecting data on where and how the unique eastern population of Golden Eagles migrates through Pennsylvania, and how to use these data to create statewide maps showing the relative risk to eagles of wind power development. These maps will provide a tool for managers and politicians to guide safer wind power development and thus prevent this at-risk species from becoming endangered. Todd's lively presentation of his eagle research in Kazakhstan was much enjoyed by members at PSO's 2006 meeting at Powdermill.

Barn Owl restoration efforts spearheaded by Pennsylvania Game Commission and private individuals through nestbox

placement have met with some success in southeastern Pennsylvania but have been less successful elsewhere. Brian Shema, Director of Conservation for Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, will speak of Barn Owl re-introduction in western Pennsylvania, reviewing what was known and what has been learned from past efforts, and will introduce new research which may lead to

successful conservation. Brian will be one of the busiest people at the meeting, as he is also leading field trips on two days.

Through voluntary monitoring and inventory efforts, birders have contributed immeasurably to knowledge and conservation of raptors and many other bird species in Pennsylvania. No one knows this better than Doug Gross, creator and coordinator of Project Toot Route, Pennsylvania's volunteer Northern Saw-whet Owl breeding survey (2000-2001), and PSO's Special Areas Project, through which birders

inventoried bird populations at many sites across the state.

Believing that such citizen science projects will in the future be internet based, Doug has been working with Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology to create a *Pennsylvania eBird* homepage, with PSO as a co-sponsor. Doug envisions *Pennsylvania eBird* as the platform on which to build future volunteer bird surveys, and will demonstrate its features. If internet access is available on site, registrants will get a real time look at *eBird* in the conference room.

As you read the roster of speakers and try hard to decide which of the many field trips you will select, please be aware that it would be impossible for PSO to offer such a rich menu of choices without the long, hard voluntary work of a host organization, in this case the Three Rivers Birding Club.

Jack Solomon, a member of PSO's board of directors, was an able liaison between PSO and the host committee, which included Sherron Lynch (logistics) and Jim Valimont (field trips). On behalf of PSO, I thank all members of 3RBC for their generous hospitality.

– Rudy Keller
Boyertown, PA
Berks County

Outings Scheduled for the PSO Meeting in Pittsburgh May 2008

Friday, May 16

National Aviary

The National Aviary houses more than 200 species of birds from around the world. Several large free-flight rooms give visitors the feeling of being in a tropical swamp, forests, and other habitats. A recent addition is a Rainbow Lorikeet exhibit where visitors can hand feed the birds. See www.aviary.org for more information. Registered PSO members are admitted at half price this afternoon and any time this weekend. Identification will be required.

State Game Lands #203

Located in Marshall Township, just minutes from the hotel, these 1240 acres contain many breeding species and are a good place to search for migrants. Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the hotel lobby.

Leader – Bob VanNewkirk

University of Pittsburgh in Oakland

This outing will feature the unique experience of viewing a collection of original Audubon prints at the University's Hillman Library. Eric Marchbein will lead this portion of the outing that starts at 2:00 p.m. at the Special Collections section on the third floor. The Cathedral of Learning on the campus is the site of Pittsburgh's second nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons, and we will have a good opportunity to observe this pair. Meet Kate St. John at 3:00 p.m. at the performance tent in the Schenley Park Plaza within sight of the Hillman Library.

Leaders – Eric Marchbein and Kate St. John

Whip-poor-wills at State Game Lands #203

Located in Marshall Township, just minutes from the hotel, Game Lands #203 is also the most reliable (and perhaps the only) location in Allegheny County for Whip-poor-will. This outing will follow the PSO business meeting. The birds are normally found near the parking area, so minimal walking is required.

Leader – Bob Machesney

Saturday, May 17

Breakfast with the Birds at the National Aviary

Have breakfast at the National Aviary, which houses more than 200 species of birds from around the world. The breakfast starts at 8:00 a.m. and registration is required. Cost is \$12 per person. A minimum of 12 people is needed to conduct this event.

Leaders – Aviary Staff

Beaver County Raptors

Several species of raptors nest in nearby Beaver County, and this tour will take visitors to view the nests (from a respectable distance), including Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, and perhaps others. This will be a driving tour with very little, if any, walking.

Leader – Scott Gregg

Frick Park

Frick is a large Pittsburgh city park that boasts an impressive list of birds. Many trails provide access to the birding hotspots including forest, clearings, and recently constructed wetlands as part of the restoration of Nine Mile Run. Neotropical migrants will be in full force, so expect a variety of warblers, vireos, and thrushes. Yellow-throated Warbler is a possibility at the wetlands. Red-tailed, Broad-winged, and Cooper's Hawks (including a nesting pair) are almost certain, and Acadian Flycatchers breed in the stream valleys. Last spring the wetlands attracted a passing Great Egret. Trails are well maintained and easy to walk.

Leaders – Jack and Sue Solomon

Settler's Cabin Park

This Allegheny County Park is an untapped resource located near the Pittsburgh Airport. Terribly under-birded, it is a great location for migrants and contains a large amount of good habitat. Last spring a Swainson's Warbler set up a territory for several weeks in a remote part of the park, and the migration count list contained almost all expected species of warblers including Cape May.

Leader – Scott Kinzey

Harrison Hills Park

Located in northeastern Allegheny County, Harrison Hills, a migrant hotspot with an impressive list of 180 species, is part of the Buffalo Creek IBA. Habitats include deciduous forest, a small pond, and adjacent wetland and meadow. A trail along a stream in a small ravine is the best place in the park to search for migrants. A trail along a ridge overlooking the Allegheny River can be good for migrants with Worm-eating Warbler a possibility. Yellow-throated Vireo, Cerulean Warbler, and Black-and-white Warblers nest along this ridge. Birds utilizing the river valley at this time may be added to the list including Osprey, Turkey

Vulture, waterfowl, or even a Caspian Tern. Kentucky Warblers also nest in the park. The stream trail may have wet grass and mud. See www.friendsofharrisonhills.org for more information.

Leaders – Jim Valimont and Paul Hess

Imperial Grasslands

The Imperial Grasslands are a vast expanse of reclaimed strip mine land in the western part of Allegheny County and adjacent Washington County. The area is well known for a long list of county and state rarities, so almost anything is possible. The open grassland habitat is home to Grasshopper, Savannah, Vesper, and Henslow's Sparrows, Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks, and a few Bobolinks. Shallow ponds attract shorebirds in migration, and the brushy roadsides are home to Brown Thrashers, Prairie Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Blue-winged Warblers, White-eyed Vireos, and Orchard Orioles. The surrounding woodlands are home to a variety of warblers including Kentucky, as well as Red-eyed, Yellow-throated, and Warbling Vireos. Willow Flycatchers and Swamp Sparrows nest in the wetlands. This will be a driving tour with stops and some hiking.

Leader – Chuck Tague

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

Headquarters for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Beechwood Farms is a 134-acre tract of natural habitat in the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Migrants can be found here in good numbers in the varied habitats that include meadows, brush, deciduous forest, a pine plantation, and a small pond. Eastern Bluebird, Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and American Redstart are just a few of the breeding species. Trails are well maintained and vary from level to moderate grade. The site also features numerous feeders, a nature store, environmental education facilities, a native plant nursery where plants are propagated and sold, and several raptors used for education programs. See www.aswp.org for more information about Beechwood and Todd Nature Reserve.

Leader – Brian Shema

Sewickley Heights Park

This borough park has a high density of birds and great habitat including woodland with many brushy clearings, wet thickets, and an old beaver pond and associated wetland. This is an excellent location for migrants, and Cerulean Warblers breed here in good numbers. Other breeding birds include Barred Owl, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Blue-winged Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Eastern Bluebird, and Brown Thrasher. In 2003 a Swainson's Warbler spent two weeks at the park. Trails are generally level, but can be muddy in spots.

Leaders – Geoff Malosh and Bob VanNewkirk

Raccoon Creek State Park

Located in eastern Beaver County, a mere 25 miles from Pittsburgh, this forested park is a good place to search for migrants, and the lake sometimes attracts waterfowl, but the best feature is a Wildflower Reserve that is the gem of this park. From trails at the top of the hills overlooking the Raccoon Creek valley, canopy species such as Cerulean Warblers and Yellow-throated Vireos can be observed at eye level. Northern Parulas, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and Acadian Flycatchers nest along the streams in the park.

Leader – Deuane Hoffman

Sunday, May 18

Schenley Park and the Cathedral of Learning

Schenley is a Pittsburgh city park that does not receive the attention or coverage that Frick Park does from birders. Nestled between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University, it provides green space for migrants in an urban area. Almost all the expected neotropical migrants can be found here, and a morning birding the park will result in a good variety of species. Acadian Flycatchers breed along the streams in the park. We will also visit the Peregrine Falcons nearby at the University of Pittsburgh. Trails are wide and level; however, access to the main birding area is down an extensive network of steps that are uneven in places but may be repaired before our meeting.

Leader – Mike Fialkovich

Boyce-Mayview Park

Located just south of the city of Pittsburgh in Upper St. Clair, this park began as mitigation for wetlands lost due to construction projects. The wetlands, woodlands, and fields attract a nice variety of local rarities, migrants, and breeding birds. Rare spring visitors have included Sandhill Crane, Dickcissel, American Bittern, and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

Leader – Neil Nodelman

Todd Nature Reserve

Located just over the border in southern Butler County, this reserve is owned and operated by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. The reserve has the look and feel of a mountain forest with rocky outcrops and deep ravines dense with Eastern Hemlocks and cut by roaring streams. This habitat attracts birds more typical farther north and in the mountains. There is also a small man-made pond surrounded by thickets. The reserve is home to breeding Barred Owls, Louisiana Waterthrushes, Kentucky Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, Ruffed Grouse, Acadian Flycatchers, and Blue-headed Vireos. A side trip to a nearby agricultural area will add a variety of grassland species to the list including good numbers of Bobolinks. Trails are generally level and a bit rocky in some places.

Leader – Brian Shema

Frick Park

This will be a second outing to this city park. See Saturday's outings for details.

Leaders – Jack and Sue Solomon

Harrison Hills Park

This will be a second outing to this county park. See Saturday's outings for details.

Leaders – Jim Valimont and Paul Hess

Afternoon Sessions Planned for Annual Meeting

"A Story of Recovery: Peregrine Falcons in Pittsburgh and Beyond"

Dan Brauning, one of PSO's founding members and winner of its Earl L. Poole Award, coordinated the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He is currently Supervisor of Pennsylvania Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Program.

"Migrating Eagles and Wind Power: Conflict Potential in an Information Void"

Dr. Todd Katzner, director of the Dept. of Conservation and Field Research of the National Aviary, also serves as Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and is a Research Associate at Powdermill Avian Research Center, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

"Pennsylvania eBird: New Frontiers in Pennsylvania Citizen Science"

Doug Gross, past PSO president and recipient of its Earl L. Poole Award, is Endangered Species Specialist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. He has served as member and chair of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Technical Committee.

"Developing Artificial Nest Site Fidelity in Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*)"

Brian Shema, Director of Conservation for Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, is administering a DCNR sanctioned Rivers Conservation Plan for a 120,000-acre watershed in Butler and Armstrong Counties and directs ASWP's Barn Owl research.

PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. The family Laridae contains gulls, terns, and one other species. What is that singular bird?
2. Of our five breeding *Empidonax* flycatchers, which builds its nest on the ground?
3. The Pennsylvania list has 13 species in the thrush family Turdidae. Which one does not breed in North America?
4. Nick Pulcinella asked birders to predict the state's next new species, and he reported the results in *Pennsylvania Birds* in 2003. What species was ranked as most likely, and has it joined the list?
5. "It is a popular opinion of the hunters of Monroe County that the vast flocks were blown out to sea and perished," Frank L. Burns wrote in the *Wilson Bulletin* in 1910. Which species?

(Answers on page 11.)

Meeting Directions

The Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North is located on the northern edge of Allegheny County at the intersection of Interstate 79 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

From Pittsburgh and points South:

Follow Interstate 279 North; it merges into Interstate 79 North. Follow Interstate 79 North to Exit 76 Cranberry (exit is on the left) and merge onto State Route 19 (Perry Highway) North. Proceed to the first traffic light and turn right onto Freeport Road. Continue 1 block and turn right onto Sheraton Drive. The hotel is straight ahead in less than ½ mile.

From the East or West:

Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Interstate 76) to Exit 28 (Cranberry). Turn toward Pittsburgh and take Route 19 South to the next traffic light. Turn left at the traffic light onto Freeport Road. Continue 1 block and turn right onto Sheraton Drive. The hotel is straight ahead in less than ½ mile.

From the North:

Take I-79 South to Exit 78. Exit to the right following each sign that leads to Route 19 South. At the traffic light at Route 228 turn right, still heading toward Route 19. Merge toward the left lanes and turn left at the Route 19 traffic light. Take Route 19 South and travel ½ mile to the 3rd light (at Sunoco). Turn left onto Freeport Road. Proceed one block and turn right onto Sheraton Drive. The hotel is straight ahead in less than ½ mile.

2008 Earl Poole Award Winner Announced

The Awards Committee is pleased to announce that Jack Holcomb of West Reading is the winner of the Earl Poole Award. Birding would not be the vibrant, growing hobby it is today in southeastern Pennsylvania were it not for Jack Holcomb.

Jack is well known in southeastern Pennsylvania among novice and backyard birdwatchers as the host of a radio talk show about birds. He was somewhat of a trailblazer (and not yet a birder!) when the show began in the 1960s. His enthusiasm carried his daily *Birdtalk* program to unexpected popularity on WEEU. For decades, every day at 11 a.m., people across eastern and central Pennsylvania would tune in to catch up on rare bird reports, tips on feeders and feeding, news of upcoming field trips (many of which he led), and phone calls from most of the top birders and ornithologists in the region. Now in semi-retirement, Jack is best known for his Saturday morning radio show called “Jack’s Backyard” where his call-in show focuses on birds and birdwatching.

Jack has also been active in educating people about birds through his volunteer work at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary where he serves on the board. His friendly, outgoing, and approachable nature allows people to feel comfortable asking him just about anything.

Jack has also been active with the local bird club, The Baird Club, served as their president for several years, and participates in several local Christmas bird counts regularly. During the 1980s and 1990s he often gave public talks at retail stores and civic clubs about birds, bird-feeding, bird identification, and other topics. He is best known for providing information on how to attract birds to your backyard.

Jack Holcomb is an institution in radio, and he made bird-watching and birds accessible and interesting to a wide and diverse public. The “ripple” effect from his educational outreach is undoubtedly greater than any of us can measure.

Please join us in congratulating Jack Holcomb as the winner of the 2008 Earl Poole Award for his outstanding contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania.

– Flo McGuire
Awards Committee Chair



Dr. Klem Wins 2008 Conservation Award

The Awards Committee is happy to announce that the winner of the 2008 PSO Conservation Award is Dr. Dan Klem in recognition of his decades of pioneering research regarding glass and avian mortality.

Dr. Klem is an ornithologist, educator, and researcher. Many of you may remember meeting him in 2007, when he presented “Birds and Glass” at our Harrisburg meeting. He has spent over 30 years researching avian mortality at man-made structures, specifically birds being killed at glass. Dr. Klem is a very modest man and did not call attention to the fact that he has single-handedly brought this to the forefront of many conservation efforts, locally, nationally, and worldwide. For many years he was considered a maverick, but his courage and perseverance finally resulted in many organizations now using his data. Dr. Klem is the world’s leading authority on the window kills of birds.

I would like to cite one of the many places on the internet where I found mention of Dr. Klem’s work. In the March 2004 issue of *Audubon* magazine, Frank Gill, Audubon's director of science, stated “Few people see the big picture” (regarding window-kills). The article continued, “That may be changing—in part owing to two decades of work by Klem, whom Gill calls ‘perhaps the only scientist to have gone at this problem systematically.’ Conservationists and architects interested in reducing glass's death toll are increasingly calling on Klem for help. His bird-friendly building ideas are being incorporated into construction projects and may also find their way into evolving guidelines for ‘green’ buildings.”

Advice that now seems to be common knowledge, such as “place your feeders within 3 feet of windows” came from Dr. Klem’s research. Unfortunately, people often forget or simply do not know to cite their references, and Dr. Klem’s work is so widely used that many don’t even know where this important data came from.

In addition to his pioneering research and conservation efforts, Dr. Klem has taught biology and ornithology at Muhlenberg College, as well as at Moravian College for 28 years. He has done a brilliant job introducing thousands of students to the joy of bird watching, ornithology, and biology. His students have nothing but glowing comments about his course and his enthusiasm for birds and teaching.

We are proud that Dr. Klem is a fellow Pennsylvanian and member of PSO, and we are delighted to have this opportunity to present him with the PSO Conservation Award.

– Flo McGuire, Awards Committee Chair

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

Exit the 'Burbs to Get the Birds!

Why are you reading this column when you could be birding in an Atlas block? I hope that the Pennsylvania birding community unites in focusing on filling the empty blocks of the state. A majority of the state's birders live in the 'burbs and go birding within about a half-hour of home. Of course, there are many exceptions, and the Atlas has given many a better excuse to hit the road to find new good birding spots. But, this last year of the Atlas will depend on considerable and well-organized exit from the 'burbs to the birds.

Those of you stuck in the 'burbs really need to look hard at the Atlas coverage maps and find holes in coverage that can give you a fun challenge. Many rural regions just lack the birding core that can cover it thoroughly. We need you to get out and find good birds in all corners of the state.

2008 Mid-winter and Nesting Bald Eagle Surveys

Thanks to everyone for their assistance with the 2008 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, held 2-16 January 2008. We enjoyed pretty good field conditions and very good participation. Thanks particularly to Phil Keener for covering the Juniata River for the first time. As of this writing in early February, we still are accepting data collected during the period. So, if you ran a route please send it in soon. I will report a summary of the results *in PSO Pileated or Pennsylvania Birds* later in the year.

Although we had great coverage, there were some gaps this January. Some locations that had been covered in years past have not yet reported. If you did get out to look for eagles during the survey period, please send your reports. We particularly lack survey coverage in the Philadelphia area (Delaware, Montgomery, Chester Counties). We also lack coverage of some birding hotspots like Moraine State Park and a few other lakes and rivers where eagles often are sighted in winter. (We do, however, have great coverage of those lakes created and maintained by the Army Corps).

Eagle nesting season is well upon us. Eagles carrying sticks and dramatic courting behavior have been seen by

many observers, some in new places. Many of the eagle volunteers had the pleasure of watching some known pairs near their nests. And, a few also had the pleasure of seeing nesting activity during their surveys. Our staff is checking out some reports of nests.

If you know of a new nesting pair of eagles or a new nest, please contact your local PGC Regional Office, Brenda Peebles (814-333-1653, bpeebles7@hotmail.com) in the Northwestern counties, or Doug Gross (contact info listed below) throughout the state.

New *eBird* Features Invite You to Contribute

The new *Pennsylvania eBird* website will be up by the time we meet in Pittsburgh this May. In the meantime, we are digging into our Atlas blocks and contributing data to a variety of projects. And, spring migration will bring lots of fun birding.

Many of us keep bird records, scattered in notebooks or tidily kept in computer files of some sort. Many PSO members and *eBird* users have bird records stored electronically in various forms on their personal computers. The new *eBird* import tool is designed to provide an interface through which these records can be imported to *eBird*. Like the PSO Special Areas Project, *eBird* is essentially a checklist project and the files organized as a checklist are most appropriate for conversion. With a little modification, your old records can now become part of the existing data archive at *eBird*!

The import tool has specific requirements in terms of the file type and format. The *eBird* data import tool allows a variety of file forms to be imported. Essentially, a spreadsheet style (like Microsoft Excel) works most easily. You can find more about this import feature at the *eBird* website. By adding your data to the *eBird* database, you will allow all of us to have a better idea of the historic changes in bird distribution and numbers. The cool visual tools of *eBird* give you the power to see seasonal occurrence of the species at your favorite spots. Your data will add to the commonly held database. Although this has some ability to see changes in our rare bird populations, I also think that *eBird*'s real power will lie with our more common birds. By adding some historic data, loss of Wood Thrush in woodlots and Golden-winged Warbler from some thickets will show as patterns.

When thinking about importing your existing records to *eBird*, you must first judge whether your data meet a few of its basic requirements. All records in *eBird* must have at minimum a specific date, location, and species list. Numbers for each species are preferable but not required. If you have records of birds with at least this much

information, then you can move forward with the import process. If your data lack any of these basic requirements, we're sorry but you cannot convert your data to *eBird*. It lacks the basic elements of good bird field data. Although it seems a lot like a checklist, *eBird* is not a listing program; it is a scientific database of bird records. As such, your data need to have real dates and locations to be included in *eBird*.

Boreal Bird Invasion

As many have noticed, it has been a good winter for northern invaders. We see posts about Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Red-breasted Nuthatches being seen this year. I have been sent photos of White-winged Crossbills at remote spots. Others have called me about Northern Shrikes in their backyard chasing songbirds and woodpeckers from the feeding area. More Northern Shrikes have been reported in my own area near Bloomsburg than in any past year.

The big flocks of redpolls are sometimes found at backyard feeders, but most visit the "natural feeders" of the big white woods. Birches are big redpoll and siskin feeders. As many redpolls as I've seen visiting a hanging feeder, I have seen many times as many hanging from limbs of birches deep in the woods. I have seen more redpolls while standing on my cross-county skis, snowshoes, or winter boots than in my yard despite full bird feeding stations. Some flocks are so large and lively that it is possible only to estimate the size of the swirling flock.

We even have had some reports of Bohemian Waxwings, a real prize for PA birders. Each time I hear of a good Bohemian report, I wonder why all of us don't plant a mountain ash in our yards. Those lovely berry-producing trees are magnets for waxwings. Closely related to the European Rowen, American mountain ashes are usually in high mountain forests and wetlands of the state. But, they do fine if planted in a yard and given some care.

Some of these boreal invaders might stay around for the nesting season or stop by when traveling back north. Some of the best years for Pine Siskin nesting have occurred after a big winter invasion. They will feast on dandelion seeds in lawns of early spring, often nesting in conifers nearby with no regard for their native status. A few Red Crossbills might sneak into an area. Don't look for big groups of crossbills. They are more likely to nest if there is a fairly small local population that has lingered in an area with a diversity of conifer seeds to sustain them through the spring months. Crossbills will forage on spruce, pine, and hemlock cones and mix and match these through the nesting season. I have not seen them forage much on Norway spruce. Red-breasted Nuthatches also will nest in a forest after finding a good cone crop over the winter. This

includes woods with Virginia and white pines as well as the spruce and fir with which they are usually associated.

Some Initial Pennsylvania *eBird* Targets

In my spare time I have been checking out the *eBird* coverage in Pennsylvania – as well as other volunteer bird survey coverage. There are some basic inequities in coverage that we hope to solve early on.

Few *eBird* "hotspots" are state game lands. This was not true of the PSO Special Areas Project which had very good coverage of many game lands including the big wetlands and the big woods parcels of remote counties. These are often the most sensitive areas that support populations of our marsh birds. It would be a great advantage for us to have bird data for these state properties so we can better manage them in the future. Some of these game lands may have high concentrations of high priority bird species like Worm-eating Warbler, Wood Thrush, or Louisiana Waterthrush, but the agency may not have records to show that this is true.

We also hope to get more data from our more remote forest and ridgetop scrub and barren areas. These are being targeted for development, and knowledge about the bird communities of high elevation spots often is lacking. The northwestern counties have been really neglected by *eBird* participants. These NW counties have some of our largest and most significant wetlands that support (or, at least they should support) important populations of our wetland birds. Where are our American Coots and American Bitterns nesting? Like the Atlas, *PA eBird* also has the power to help us understand where these species are and where they are not – so we know where and how to target management on their behalf.

As many Important Bird Areas that have been covered by *eBird*, many areas are lacking regular visits by birders. We intend to build support for these areas and the bird species they support.

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 or
dougross@sunlink.net

Ornithological Literature Notes

From a human observer's viewpoint, a nest placed in dense understory might seem to be safer from predation than a nest placed higher and in more open vegetation. This is not necessarily so, according to the evidence from a recent study of Wood Thrush nesting ecology in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Felicity L. Newell and Mary S. Kostalos monitored 44 Wood Thrush nests in 2003 and 85 in 2004 in fragmented woodlands at six parks in northern Allegheny County and in a large forested tract at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County. The sites in Allegheny County are Schenley Park, Frick Park, Gyasuta Camp, North Park, Hartwood Acres, and Deer Lakes Park.

The study's results, published in 2007, show significantly better success for nests placed more than three meters above ground than for lower nests in dense vegetation (*Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 119:693–702). Only 31% of nests below three meters fledged young, whereas 53% of higher nests were successful. The question is why.

First, Newell and Kostalos speculate that nests in low, dense vegetation may be especially vulnerable to predators because of their accessibility to ground-foraging mammals and snakes. Suspected predators observed at the study sites included raccoons, snakes, and crows.

Secondly, the authors hypothesize that nests placed higher and farther out on small branches in trees might be more difficult for predators to access. Nests in more open vegetation also might offer a better opportunity for birds to defend their nest aggressively by attacking a predator.

Newell and Kostalos note that they cannot identify a particular causal mechanism for the association between nesting success, height above ground, and density of vegetation. They recommend study of specific predators' foraging behavior as a method that might explain the relationship.

Research culminating in this study originated as Newell's senior tutorial at Chatham College. As described in the *PSO Pileated* in 2005, the initial project compared Wood Thrush and American Robin nest success in various habitats. It led to the Hall/Mayfield Award from the Wilson Ornithological Society – which, she says in the *Wilson Journal* paper's acknowledgments, “provided motivation and funding to continue field work.”

She is currently working toward a master's degree at Ohio

State University. Her research is examining the effects of tree canopy openness on canopy-nesting bird species in southeastern Ohio.

– Paul Hess

Is It a Boy or a Girl?

by Arlene Koch

On a miserable snowy February day I decided that it was time to clean and organize the shelves in my office. My first task was to move the Bent series of bird books to a more amenable spot. If you don't know what these books are, don't feel bad. Neither did I when I first picked up binoculars. But after I had been birding for a while, a friend, to whom I am greatly indebted, gave me the entire 21 volumes of *Life Histories of North American Birds* by Arthur Cleveland Bent. I'd like to say that my friend saw something in me that I didn't know was there, but in reality he was moving and just didn't have room in his new place for all his books.

Now, many years later, I can honestly say that I have used those books to increase my knowledge of bird behavior many times. Although the first volume was written in 1910, many bird names have been changed, and species have been separated or lumped together, the behavior of most birds is still basically the same.

Something else I didn't have a clue about when I first started looking at birds was sexual dimorphism. My college degree is in English/Education, not ornithology, so I can only explain it in basic terms. Simply put, dimorphism means that you can tell the difference between the male and female of a species either by plumage, size difference, or both. In most bird species the males are bigger and more brightly colored than are the females, but not in all of them. In some species, especially raptors, both juvenile and adult males and females look alike. Even after more than 30 years of doing raptor counts at various hawk watches, I still can't tell if a Red-tailed Hawk perched in a tree is a male or a female. Nor do I care.

There are circumstances, however, when you can make an educated guess at the sex of look-alike birds if there are two of them present. With raptors, the females are usually larger than the males. So if two of the same species, like two adult Cooper's Hawks, are close enough together to make a good visual comparison, you can probably make an educated guess as to which one is the male and which one is the female. What I see many times, though, is that a lot of birders assume their size perception is correct even when they see just one bird. This is especially true when it involves the accipiters – specifically Cooper's and Sharp-

shinned Hawks. I admit to cringing when I read a post from someone saying that they have a “young male Cooper’s hawk” in their yard. My automatic reaction is always, “How do you know that for sure?” I guess by nature birders want to assign a bird a sex because it looks more factual.

Even when someone doesn’t say a bird is male or female, they usually refer to it as a “he.” Seldom do I see a raptor referred to as an “it” or a “she.” This, too, is probably just instinctual if not accurate. The purpose of this article, which I wrote by request and not because I consider myself an expert on sexual dimorphism in raptors, is to urge birders to get and use raptor books written by raptor experts. Don’t listen to me or the guy sitting next to you at the hawkwatch unless it’s Jerry Liguori or Bill Clark. Learn for yourself. You don’t need to assign a sex to every raptor you see. Many times it can’t be done and sometimes not at all. Don’t worry about whether or not the sharpie sitting in your back yard is male or female. Just be glad you know which species it is.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Requests Great Blue Heron Colony Information

Every five years, the Wildlife Diversity Section of the Pennsylvania Game Commission organizes a statewide survey of Great Blue Heron colonies to evaluate which sites are still active, to learn how many nests are present at each active site, and to identify new nesting locations. Although Great Blue Herons are relatively abundant, they are protected under various wildlife laws and serve as environmental indicators. Once the Game Commission knows of these important breeding locations, we can protect them. These surveys are mostly conducted by dedicated volunteers to whom we offer our sincere gratitude. Without your help, this effort would not be possible.

The 2007 survey is almost complete; however, there are several sites for which we do not have updated information. The table on page 10 identifies these locations. Please contact me if you have information about these Great Blue Heron colonies, know of other nesting sites, or would be willing to help with field surveys. Surveys are conducted before leaf-out (late April – early May). A standardized survey form will be sent for your use.

See pages 9-10. Many thanks and good birding!

Catherine D. Haffner
PGC Colonial Waterbird Survey Coordinator
cdhaffner@yahoo.com Phone: 570-271-1244

Conservation Corner

Recently, there has been some positive news for birds around the country. In North Carolina, the Navy has announced that it was abandoning plans to build a jet landing field near the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. This controversy has raged for five years with conservationists objecting to the field because the refuge hosts over 100,000 waterfowl each winter and the jets would have negatively affected the birds.

Another victory for wildlife was when the Environmental Protection Agency blocked a \$220 million Army Corps of Engineers flood-control boondoggle in the Mississippi Delta known as Yazoo Pump. For EPA to block any project is a very rare occurrence, but the project would have severely impacted tens of thousands of acres of wetlands and aquatic habitat, so EPA finally showed some “backbone” and blocked the proposal.

And one last piece of good news. In California, the California Coastal Commission denied a key permit that would have allowed the controversial extension of an Orange County toll road. This road would have imperiled more than 20 sensitive species of birds and wildlife as well as destroy many acres of irreplaceable natural landscape.

Unfortunately, not all the news is good. As many of you are already aware, the federal government is building a fence along several hundred miles of the Rio Grande ostensibly to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. Sadly, the government has waived environmental laws so the fence can be built, and at this point little can be done to stop it. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has said, “Serious, and likely irreparable, wildlife and habitat loss and damage, such as severing genetic exchange and blocking access to water, is likely to result ...” A sad day for birders everywhere.

And, one final note. New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council has voted to lift the moratorium on the taking of horseshoe crabs even though the state’s Department of Environmental Protection recommended extending the moratorium. This is not good news for the Red Knot which continues to see its population decline. This lifting of the moratorium will allow the taking of up to 150,000 male crabs and as a result, several conservation organizations and others have raised an “alarm.” The result is that the New Jersey legislature is now considering a bill that would restore the moratorium but the question is, will New Jersey act quickly enough to stop the taking of crabs this spring? For the good of the Red Knot, let’s hope so.

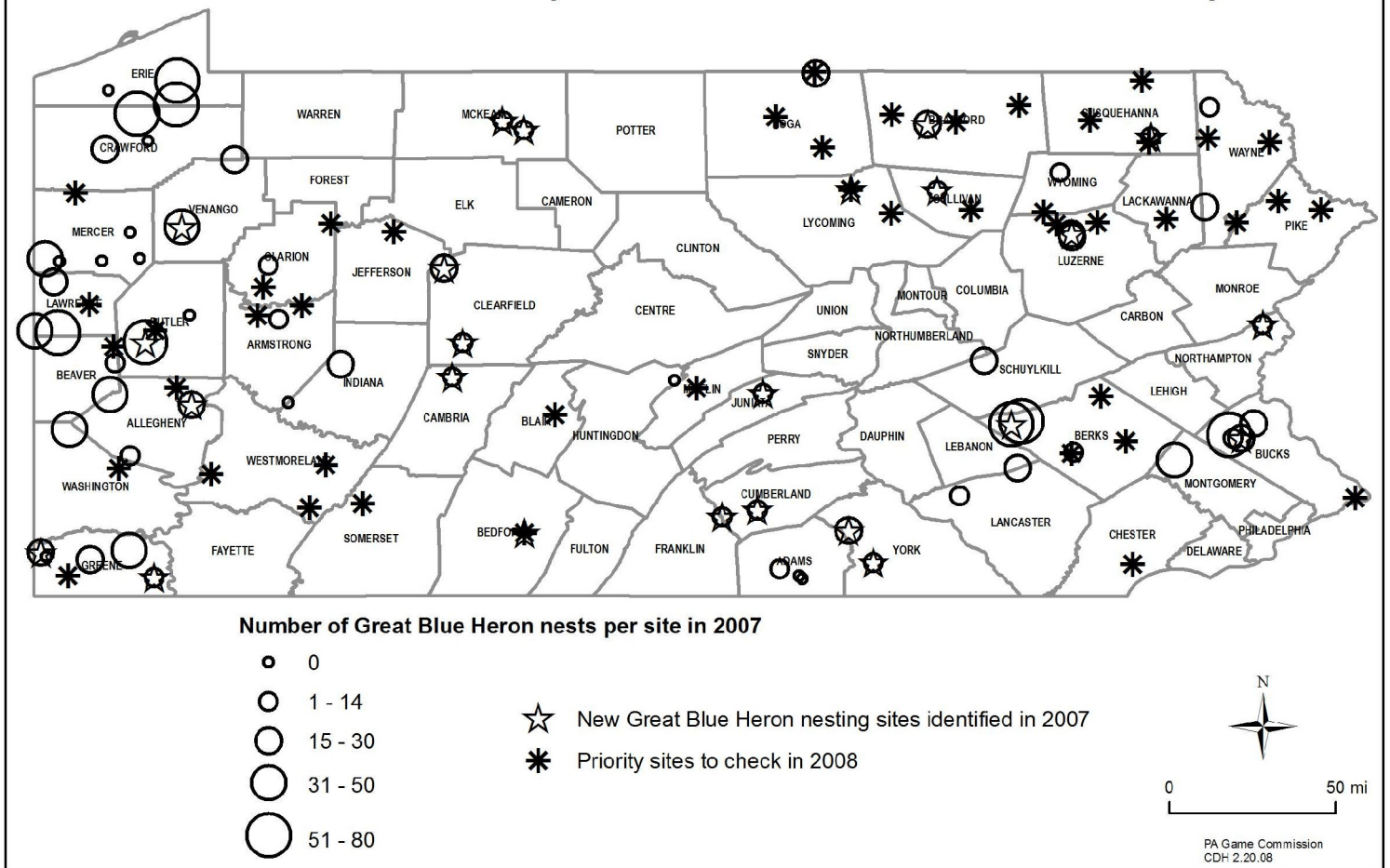
– Mark Henry
Conservation Chairperson

Information Needed for the Following Known Great Blue Heron Colonies:

County	Colony Name	Latitude	Longitude
<i>Allegheny</i>	West Deer Twp.	40.627778	-79.899167
<i>Armstrong</i>	Cosmus	40.943056	-79.548611
	State Game Lands 137	40.984444	-79.355833
<i>Beaver</i>	Hereford Manor	40.808056	-80.172222
<i>Bedford</i>	State Game Lands 97***	39.997500	-78.388333
<i>Berks</i>	Sinking Spring	40.343056	-76.015278
	Lenhartsville	40.591944	-75.887778
	Oley	40.396389	-75.780000
<i>Blair</i>	Canoe Creek	40.511389	-78.256944
<i>Bradford</i>	Sugar Creek	41.781389	-76.517222
	Northeast Bradford	41.855556	-76.243056
	Troy	41.815278	-76.794722
<i>Bucks</i>	Van Sciver Lake	40.150000	-74.783333
<i>Butler</i>	S. Ragan Road	40.875833	-79.992778
<i>Chester</i>	Wyndmere Estates	39.861944	-75.747778
<i>Clarion</i>	Cherry Run Rd.	41.065278	-79.523056
	Ridge Camp	41.340833	-79.228889
<i>Greene</i>	Delphene	39.811944	-80.369444
<i>Jefferson</i>	Munderf Area	41.305556	-78.955278
<i>Lackawanna</i>	Hazard Pond***	41.361111	-75.602778
<i>Lawrence</i>	New Castle S.	40.988889	-80.278611
<i>Luzerne</i>	Bear Hollow	41.339444	-76.080833
	Francis Slocum	41.345556	-75.901944
<i>Lycoming</i>	Barbours	41.386389	-76.798333
	Lycoming Creek***	41.488611	-76.971667
<i>Mercer</i>	Barrows	41.474167	-80.337778
<i>Mifflin</i>	Jack's Mountain	40.627361	-77.641722
<i>Pike</i>	Greentown	41.346389	-75.298333
	Walker Lake	41.400833	-74.931389
	Decker Creek/BG H&F Club North	41.439167	-75.118333
<i>Somerset</i>	S. Gray	40.124167	-79.092222
<i>Susquehanna</i>	Lenox	41.694250	-75.679250
	High Bridge	41.961833	-75.709361
	Dr. Lutz Woods	41.788639	-75.933453
<i>Tioga</i>	Shinglemill	41.671389	-77.095833
	Rt. 49	41.999444	-77.131389
	Hogback	41.805556	-77.298889
<i>Washington</i>	Murry Hill	40.277611	-80.150583
<i>Wayne</i>	Pleasant Mt.	41.711111	-75.423889
	West Damascus	41.695278	-75.155000
<i>Westmoreland</i>	Camp Run	40.106389	-79.323056
	Latrobe Reservoir	40.293611	-79.251667
	Little Sewickley Creek	40.252222	-79.748611
<i>Wyoming</i>	Cider Run	41.392278	-76.134528

*** Colonies were reported to be active in 2007, however nest count data are needed.

2007 Great Blue Heron Colony Distribution and Nest Abundance in Pennsylvania



Announcing “FREE” back issues of *Pennsylvania Birds*!

As announced on the PABIRDS list serve recently, back issues of *Pennsylvania Birds* are now available online at www.pabirds.org. The policy is that each issue is posted online when it becomes two years old. We are therefore making (for a limited time only) hard copies of those issues that have been posted online available for “free.” The only catch is you have to pay the postage.

Not all back issues are available. Some of the early issues are out-of-stock. To order any copies, send an email to fchaas@pabirds.org or send a letter to PSO, 2469 Hammertown Road, Narvon, PA 17555 listing the issues that you want and I will send the issues to you. Once you receive the issues, you will then send a check for the postage (which you will see on the package).

– Frank Haas, Treasurer

Silent Auction Planned

Five 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 Pittsburgh (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; 570-893-2062.



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PSO Annual Meeting Itinerary

Pittsburgh, PA

Friday, May 16, 2008

- 1:00 p.m. Field Trip to SGL 203; meet in lobby of Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North.
- 2:00 p.m. Tour of University of Pittsburgh's Hillman Library to view Audubon's Prints; meet at the Special Collections section on the third floor.
- 3:00 p.m. Peregrine Falcon Outing; meet at the performance tent in Schenley Park Plaza.
- 6:00 p.m. Registration begins at Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North.
- 7:00 p.m. Social at Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North
- 7:30 p.m. Business Meeting at Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North
- 8:30 p.m. Whip-poor-will Outing to SGL 203

Saturday, May 17, 2008

- 5:45 a.m. Sheraton open for breakfast; free for those registered at Sheraton.
- 6:00 a.m. Raccoon Creek State Park Outing Departure
- 6:30 a.m. All Other Outings depart from Sheraton
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch on your own. Arrive at Sheraton by 1:00 p.m. for afternoon sessions.
- 1:00-1:40 p.m. ***A Story of Recovery: Peregrine Falcons in Pittsburgh and Beyond***, presented by Dan Brauning, Supervisor of PGC's Wildlife Diversity Program.
- 1:45-2:25 p.m. ***Pennsylvania eBird: New Frontiers in Pennsylvania Citizen Science***, presented by Doug Gross, PGC's Endangered Species Specialist.
- 2:25-3:15 p.m. Break. Visit the vendors and organizations represented.
- 3:15-3:55 p.m. ***Migrating Eagles and Wind Power: Conflict Potential in an Information Void***, presented by Todd Katzner, director of the Department of Conservation and Field Research of the National Aviary.
- 4:00-4:40 p.m. ***Developing Artificial Nest Site Fidelity in Barn Owls (Tyto alba)***, presented by Brian Shema, Director of Conservation for Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.
- 6:00 p.m. Social at Legends Sports Pub in Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet at Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North
- Presentation of Poole Award to Jack Holcomb
- Presentation of Conservation Award to Dan Klem

Sunday, May 18, 2008

- 5:45 a.m. Sheraton open for breakfast; free for those staying at the Sheraton
- 6:30 a.m. Outings depart from Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North

Annual Meeting Youth Scholarship Program

To foster an interest in and appreciation for birding and ornithology in Pennsylvania, each year the PSO provides a scholarship for a person 18 years of age or younger who wishes to attend the PSO annual meeting. (You may not nominate someone without his/her knowledge and permission).

The person must be nominated by a current PSO member who will be attending the meeting and who will be responsible for transporting him/her to the meeting and be responsible for him or her during the meeting (see below) if

a parent/guardian does not accompany the youth. A parent or guardian must sign below giving the youth permission to attend the PSO meeting with the sponsor. PSO will pay the youth's meeting registration, food (banquet, lunch, 2 breakfasts) and lodging (up to 2 nights).

To nominate the youth of your choice send this form to Shonah A. Hunter (shunter@lhup.edu), or by land mail to: Dr. Shonah A. Hunter, Department of Biological Sciences, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745 by April 15, 2008. Selection will be conducted by a committee.

Youth Scholarship Nomination Form

Name of Youth Being Nominated: _____

Address: _____

Age _____ Birth Date _____ Youth's Phone No. _____

Youth's Involvement with Birding (Please describe, providing as many details as possible. Attach a page, if necessary.)

Name of Person Nominating Youth _____ Phone No. _____

Relationship (if any) to Youth _____

In nominating this youth, I understand that I will be responsible for the youth at the annual meeting and for his/her transportation to and from the meeting.

(Signature)

(Date)

In allowing my child to be nominated, I understand that PSO is providing the scholarship for my child to attend the annual meeting. The person nominating my child has my permission to transport him/her to and from the meeting and to be responsible for her/him during the annual meeting.

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Date)

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

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Coming Soon – New PSO Long-sleeved T-Shirts!

PSO will soon be selling all-cotton, light blue, long-sleeved T-shirts. Short-sleeved T-shirts, made of a blend (50% cotton, 50% polyester) are still available for sale in pale green and light blue. Just a few off-white are left. Sizes range from small to XXL, but check with Linda Wagner for size availability (lwagner342@msn.com).

All shirts feature the PSO Pileated 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."

Answers to Bird Quiz

(Quiz on page 4)

1. Black Skimmer
2. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
3. Redwing
4. White-faced Ibis, which remains unlisted
5. Passenger Pigeon



Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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