

The

PSO Pileated



March 2010

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 21, Number 1

From the President's Desk....

It's snowy, icy, and rainy outside as I'm writing this; but I'm pretending that the junco sitting on a bare branch outside the office window is really a male Indigo Bunting flashing bright blue through a bunch of leaves. It will be more than a month before the first serious push of Neotropical migrants makes its way into Pennsylvania; but I, like most birders, am more than ready for them. I want to smell cherry blossoms and see clouds of insects hovering in their midst. I'm really looking forward to this year's annual meeting May 14-16 at Presque Isle in Erie County.

Located on the shores of Lake Erie, Presque Isle State Park is one of Pennsylvania's most coveted birding destinations. We will be there smack in the middle of spring migration, and I can already envision waves of warblers, vireos, orioles, grosbeaks, and countless other species in the trees, scrub, or on the ground. And that doesn't even take into account the gulls, shorebirds, and other species that the water attracts or raptors passing overhead.

There will be the usual Friday night social and business meeting and the silent auction of donated items that runs through most of Saturday. However, because Presque Isle is normally such an incredibly birdy place and one that a lot of our members don't get to visit often, we will forego the Saturday afternoon speakers this time around. Speakers have always been and will continue to be an important informational part of the annual meeting, but different locations warrant different arrangements.

There will be field trips to multiple locations on Saturday and also on Sunday morning. The social hour, compilation of species seen, and banquet on Saturday night will be followed and highlighted by banquet speaker Jerry McWilliams' presentation. Jerry's name is synonymous

with Erie County and should be recognized by everyone in the state. Among other things he's the co-author with Dan Brauning of *The Birds of Pennsylvania*. Jerry will tell us about the many bird projects he's involved with at Presque Isle State Park; these include teaching birding classes, the waterbird count, the International Shorebird Survey, and the new Presque Isle hawk watch. He will also lead one of the Sunday morning field trips.



Presque Isle is home to Least Bitterns and a myriad of other marsh birds.

Photo by Jerry McWilliams

Annual meetings are as much about rekindling relationships with birding friends seldom seen and meeting new ones as they are about the birds.

They're a place where birding stories and experiences are exchanged and that, in turn, creates a hunger to go to even more unvisited places. They whet your appetite and make you dream about faraway places and the birds found there. They let you put faces to names. They make you aware of conservation issues in parts of the state you're not familiar with. They inform, enlighten, and lift up your spirit. And, most of all, they make it easier to return to and deal with the realities of the everyday world.

Barring any last minute problems, this will be my last meeting as president. It's been an honor. I hope to see you at Presque Isle in May.

Arlene Koch, President
Easton, PA – Northampton County

Someone Else's Books

by Arlene Koch

About a month ago I received a phone call in which I was offered the library of a long-time birder in her last stages of life. She and her birding friends used to visit my place regularly, but they have all passed away except for her. And in all honesty I didn't think she was still alive either.

I, of course, accepted the offer, and a few days later I had nine boxes of nature books, most of which I expected to be bird guides or bird oriented in some way. And most of them were, but there were also quite a few plant books. So, as I found time, I began systematically looking through them, and soon I found myself transported to a completely different birding world than the one we live in today.

The books, all of which are in good to excellent condition, go back as far as B. H. Warren's *Birds of Pennsylvania*, the 1890 publication for the state department of agriculture that focused on birds' food habits based on the examination of the contents of more than 4000 stomachs. I found both volumes of Witmer Stone's *Bird Studies of Old Cape May* with parchment paper still intact. I found books autographed decades ago by noted ornithologists of the past, including Roger Tory Peterson, but also one signed by both Olin Sewall Pettingill and George Miksch Sutton. In short, I was overwhelmed by this gift.

But the things that meant the most to me because of my long time association with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Kempton, PA, were an original signed copy of Maurice Broun's *Hawks Aloft*, into whose pages was stuck an old postcard with a photo on it taken by Maurice, and the anniversary edition of the same book published 25 years later and after Maurice's death signed by his wife Irma. And I also found myself holding a hard cover copy of a book I never knew existed, Maurice's *Index to North American Ferns*, published in 1938.

In this day of iPods, digital cameras, and expected instant answers to birding questions that go along with these tools, I couldn't at times put down the book in hand. I'm not so old-fashioned that I don't see the value in all the new technology, but neither am I not so naïve as to think that birding list serves, facebook pages, and flicker photo sites have all the answers, or at times even the correct ones, because they don't. Books like these and the information they contain are the foundation upon which modern day birding was built. If we don't know where we came from, we'll never know where we're going or why.

Some of these books are extremely entertaining. One published in 1946 by the Pennsylvania German Society is about bird names and the bird lore of the Pennsylvania Dutch. I'm married to a man from a PA Dutch family, but

he's far removed from both the language and the lifestyle, so I knew nothing of the old stories in this book. Leafing through it I learned that there are ten different German names for the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, my favorite being "Der Hunnicksuckler." And did you know that you can cure rheumatism by rubbing your limbs with the dripping fat of a freshly killed vulture or that the number of birds you see on your wedding day is the number of children you will have?

Silent Auction Planned

Six 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 Erie. 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 Erie (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

PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Of the three "wing-barred warblers" – Pine, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll – which has the most white in its tail?
2. A bird banded at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County in 1969 was killed by a boy with a slingshot in Mexico in 1970. It was the first banded bird of its species to be recovered south of the U.S. What species?
3. Which introduced bird was reported before the other in Pennsylvania: European Starling or House Sparrow?
4. The Upland Sandpiper had two previous English names since the first American Ornithologists' Union Check-list in 1886. What were the names?
5. Which of our three nightjar species occasionally captures small birds and swallows them whole?

Jerry McWilliams Is 2010 Earl Poole Award Winner

The 2010 Earl Poole Award winner is Jerry McWilliams of Erie County. Of his many contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology, one of the most significant is the 2000 publication of *The Birds of Pennsylvania* which Jerry co-authored with Dan Brauning. *The Birds of Pennsylvania* is the definitive reference book on all the birds of Pennsylvania and makes an interesting connection with Earl Poole, who completed a comprehensive manuscript of similar content; but whose work was never published. Other publication credits for Jerry include co-author of the *Birds of Erie County, Pennsylvania*, co-author of the book *Birding the Great Lakes Seaway Trail*, and co-author of the *Checklist of Birds Recorded in Erie County, Pennsylvania, Including Presque Isle State Park*.

Jerry has also contributed to our magazine *Pennsylvania Birds* as a regional editor in addition to his many photographs and articles. And of course it is impossible to think of Presque Isle without thinking of Jerry, as we all read his postings on the PA birds list serve of the fall Waterbird Count and his frequent notices of Erie County rarities. Jerry has made countless contributions to bird conservation; he serves as the Coordinator for the Special Management Area Shorebird Survey on Gull Point at Presque Isle State Park and as the Bird Records Chairman for the Presque Isle Audubon Society. In addition since 1978 he has been a cooperater for the International Shorebird Survey. As a recent addition to his effort, in 2008 Jerry established a spring hawk watch site on the south shore of Lake Erie at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center. Jerry will touch on much of this work as our banquet speaker at the 2010 annual meeting.

Before his busy retirement, which includes leading tours, Jerry's other life work included 33 years of service as a Fish Culturist (which he had to explain to me that it meant he was a fish farmer) with the PA Fish Commission. And as many of us know, his wide-eyed interest in nature goes well beyond birds and fish. His pictures of butterflies have been well published, including those in the Kaufman Focus Guide to the Butterflies of North America. Jerry is presently working to complete a book on a 2006 bike trip from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Portal, Arizona. The tentative title for this wildlife survey adventure is *Life and Carnage along U.S. Highways, a Wildlife Survey by Bicycle*, which Jerry says will be self-published and will soon be available to the public.

Please join me at the May meeting to thank Jerry for his tremendous contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology and to honor a very deserving Poole Award winner.

– Tom Kuehl, Awards Committee Chairperson

Annual Meeting Field Trips

Presque Isle State Park is a sandspit of land that extends seven miles into the water with Lake Erie on its outer boundaries and the bay to the south. Its varied habitats include sandy beaches, scrubby thickets, grassy areas, willows, cottonwoods, and marshes. The peninsula is studied by naturalists and geologists, and its inner portion is an ecological reservation. To date 324 species of birds have been recorded there, some of which are seldom or never seen in other parts of the state.

The field trips will visit various spots at Presque Isle. One of the best known is Gull Point, first established as a bird sanctuary in 1927. It's famous as a viewing area for migrant waterbirds and shorebirds and a nesting area for Piping Plovers. Other places include Lily Pond, Leo's with its view of the lagoon and cattail marsh, the Sidewalk Trail where Red-headed Woodpeckers nest, Fry's Landing, Thompson Circle at the beginning of Dead Pond Trail and a viewing area for spring migrating raptors, Pine Tree Trail with its large stand of mostly Scots pines, Sunset Point, the Coast Guard jetty, and Beach 11.

Another possible destination outside the park in Crawford County is Pymatuning State Park on the Pennsylvania-Ohio border to the south with its 16-mile long lake. East Avenue in the city of Erie itself is a good waterside viewing area, and there's the newly established Erie Bluffs State Park southwest of the city. Located as a gateway entrance to Presque Isle is the recently completed and highly acclaimed Tom Ridge Environmental Center, a research and teaching facility. So there will be many choices. On Friday evening a sign-up sheet will be available for each of the field trips.



Presque Isle is one of the best places to find shorebirds like this Black-bellied Plover.

Photo by Jerry McWilliams

Audubon at Home – Birdscaping

by Carole Winslow

As bird and nature lovers and Audubon members, hopefully we all know that good habitat and seeing the birds and the wildlife we enjoy go hand in hand. As Stephen Kress, Audubon biologist states, “Improving the quality of land for wildlife is the single most constructive step we can take to assist wild bird populations.” This may often seem like something too big for us to play a part in, but that is not the case. Even in small ways, changes to property we own or care for can add up to positive effects that, taken cumulatively, do make a difference to the birds around us. To encourage people to think about their yards and communities this way the Audubon at Home Bird Habitat Recognition Program offers us a way to make a commitment to certain changes, suggestions on ways to do this, information on birdscaping both small and large properties, and even a property “assessment” based on what you report, along with a star rating and individualized suggestions. A small sign to post on the property even gives you a chance to share the fact that your area is recognized and that you have made an agreement to keep it a safe haven for birds and wildlife. As part of the program, when registering you are asked to agree to a “Healthy Yard Pledge,” which includes planting native species, both natural and added food and cover, nesting sites, managing water run-off, and minimizing or eliminating use of pesticides.

I was pleased to register our 68 acre farm in southern Clarion County with this program and get some feedback from Steven Saffier, the coordinator of the program at Audubon Pennsylvania. Through the program there is access to many materials on plants, trees and shrubs, teaching both native and invasive species. This has spurred me to learn much more about what is present here and because of that, I've learned we have many great bird plantings I had not been aware of before, such as silky, gray, and flowering dogwood, red mulberry, black gum, Virginia creeper, and American bittersweet. Some of the property also includes reclaimed strip mine grasslands which we try to manage for grassland species such as Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows. We provide feeders in three seasons, 15 bluebird and swallow nest boxes and one kestrel box that housed a successful kestrel pair this year with 4 young.

We have what I call sometimes a “messy” approach to property management which is to leave fallen and standing dead trees for food and nest sites, overgrown borders and edges, and mowing of fields only once a year or on rotation with only late season haying done. Some of the best birding here is in the tangled and overgrown areas along the edges! In short, though I could add more about what we do here, everyone has some area, whether large

or small where some changes can be made. Even \$3 planter saucers can make great inexpensive bird baths as I have found. Poison ivy growing up a tree can either seem a nuisance to get rid of, or can be let go so you can watch the fall birds enjoy the berries! If you've already made changes and practice birdscaping, then register your place and get some recognition for it; it just might encourage others around you to do the same.

On a last note, consider starting to record and track birds on your property using the online site eBird through Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It's easy to use and you can track the birds year to year, hopefully allowing you to see the positive changes. This type of project would also make a great idea for high school students to use for school projects as well. Links for both Audubon and eBird are: <http://pa.audubon.org> and <http://ebird.org/content/pa>



PSO Annual Meeting Itinerary Erie, PA

Friday, May 14, 2010

6:00 p.m. Registration begins at Bel-Aire Clarion
7:00 p.m. Social at Bel-Aire Clarion
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting at Bel-Aire Clarion

Saturday, May 15, 2010

5:30 a.m. Bel-Aire Clarion open for breakfast
6:30 a.m. Field trips depart from Bel-Aire Clarion
12:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
1:00 p.m. Wildlife Artist Workshop – David Hughes
1:00 p.m. Afternoon field trips
5:00 p.m. Social at Bel-Aire Clarion
7:00 p.m. Banquet
Compilation of bird list
Presentation of Poole Award to Jerry McWilliams
Banquet Speaker: Jerry McWilliams,
Migratory Bird Surveys at Presque Isle State Park

[Jerry will discuss the long term results of the International Shorebird Survey at Gull Point and the Waterbird Count at Sunset Point. He will also talk about the newly established Presque Isle Hawk Watch at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center.]

Sunday, May 16, 2010

5:30 a.m. Bel-Aire Clarion open for breakfast
6:30 a.m. Field trips depart from Bel-Aire Clarion

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



Bald Eagle Population Continues to Climb Past 170 Nests

In 2009, the Bald Eagle nesting population continued to grow, passing another milestone. There were 174 territorial nesting pairs observed in Pennsylvania in 2009; this number was determined by documentation of a nest. This is 18 more than in 2008 when 156 were recorded, a healthy 12% increase. This continues the steady population increase of approximately 15% per year for the last two decades. The nesting population has now exceeded 100 pairs for four consecutive years.

The Bald Eagle nesting population is expanding not only in numbers but in geographical distribution with nesting pairs now in 48 of our 67 counties. Four more Pennsylvania counties were added to the list with eagle nests: Beaver, Bedford, Clinton, and Mifflin. The Beaver County nest was a late addition, not reported until after the nesting season. New nesting territories were found in 20 different counties in 2009, 5 counties with multiple new nesting territories. The counties with the most eagle nests in 2009 were Crawford (17), Pike (14), Lancaster (12), York (12), and Mercer (11).

The 2009 nests produced a record number of eaglets, a total of at least 244 young. This was the first time the state's nests produced more than 200 eaglets. This represents the sixth consecutive year that more than 100 eaglets were produced from Pennsylvania nests. Amazingly, Pennsylvania Bald Eagle nests have produced more than 1,400 eaglets in the last two decades. For nests with known results in 2009, there were 1.6 eaglets produced per nest. For those nests known to be successful, there was a productivity of 1.8 eaglets per nest. The Pennsylvania nesting success is similar to neighboring states in the Northeast, exceeding the mark of 50% nest success and 0.7 young per nest used as the measuring stick for stable populations. Success rates were high for all regions of the state, even in the northwest and extreme northeast where snowfall has been a factor affecting nest success in many years.

Bald Eagles continue to expand their range into areas where they are encountering humans and their activities

with greater regularity. Bald Eagles have even colonized the City of Philadelphia where pairs have had successful nests for at least three years. Each pair may not succeed in nesting each year in this landscape, but the overall pattern of success by eagles is unprecedented and remarkable. According to historic records, there are no records of Bald Eagles nesting in Philadelphia for more than 200 years although a pair apparently nested in Delaware County in the 1940s. Some nesting pairs are in suburbs or on the edges of municipalities, often in areas with minimal human activity. Other pairs are demonstrating remarkable tolerance of human activities including boat and aircraft traffic, earth moving, and road-construction near their nests but seem sensitive to other human activities. Eagles tend to tolerate human activities that do not seem to threaten their nest or are on-going before the nesting season began.

By occupying the green zones of such urban and suburban areas, these Bald Eagles are acting as “ambassadors for wildlife” to the urban human population in the state who normally consider wildlife either as being pests or a novelty to be enjoyed after a long trip out of town. Our agency suggests a 1000-foot buffer around each active nest with limited human visitation and activities within that circle that would cause the eagles to abandon the nest or to fail nesting. More activities are allowed outside the nesting season. With more eagles nesting in suburban and agricultural areas, eagles have become increasingly tolerant of many human activities, automobile traffic, and farm animals near their nest as long as those conditions existed before the nest was built.

In addition to the official count of active Bald Eagle nests, we had reports of at least three sets of adults with young where we do not have a documented nest. Reports like these are frustrating because they probably represent a nest for which we lack location information. The agency cannot protect a nest that it does not know about. We also believe that we had partial nest-building or attempted nest building at sites in Bucks and Lawrence counties near human activity centers. We anxiously await news of whether these pairs return to these locations to try again.

The return of Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania is a multi-level success. Eagles have large territories, often flying a mile or two from their nest, but usually forage within a half-mile of it. They require a healthy fish population because that is their principal diet during the nesting season. So, a healthy watershed is critical for eagle occupation of an area. They need many good perching sites, usually trees or snags within a short glide of the water where they fish. They like quiet areas, but they can be remarkably tolerant of human “background noise” of highways or air traffic in urban areas.

What can birders do to help with Bald Eagle nest surveys and protection? Some suggestions:

- ! Report any new Bald Eagle nests and results of those nests to PGC (see my contact information below).
- ! Avoid disturbing eagle nests by getting too close (1000 feet is a good rule of thumb) or advancing directly toward a nest. Overly eager photographers are often the cause of eagles flushing from nests.
- ! From a proper distance, show eagle nests or foraging eagles to people who have not experienced the excitement of watching eagles. This is a great way to introduce birds to youngsters and beginners.
- ! Advocate for Bald Eagle conservation locally. Eagles need clean water, open space, and good forests along streams. That sounds like good habitat for humans, too.

Bald Eagle Mid-winter Survey – Big Success

We are still tallying the data collected during the mid-winter Bald Eagle survey. It looks like this was a record year for wintering eagles despite snow cover in places where we usually do not have it. Several new routes were run, especially in the southeastern counties where there is more open water at that time of year. The final tally will appear in the next PSO newsletter. Several routes run in past years were not submitted this year. We still are accepting winter eagle data as long it was collected in the period of 30 December 2009 to 13 January 2010.

Osprey Nesting Survey in 2010

The PA Game Commission will conduct a statewide survey of all Osprey nests this year. With many nests located during the recent Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, we have a good start for a complete census of Osprey nests. From an auspicious beginning of a very few nests in northeastern counties introduced by Professor Larry Ryman and his students at East Stroudsburg University, the population of the “fish hawk” has exploded across the state. Not only will we attempt to tally all of the nests but we also will try to learn about the water body where each Osprey pair fishes and the type of structure they use for their nest. Ospreys tend to nest much later than Bald Eagles, mostly in June and July, so the survey will take place in that season. Stayed tuned!

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

Ornithological Literature Notes

A wealth of worthwhile research by Pennsylvania ornithologists and ecologists, much of it conducted within our state, was reported at the 127th annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in Philadelphia last August. Here and in coming issues of *The PSO Pileated*, I will highlight reports involving research by Pennsylvanians.

Not surprisingly, avian response to climate change was a significant topic. Two examples:

* Terry L. Master of East Stroudsburg University assessed potential effects of warming climate on colonial nesters that depend upon riparian ecosystems for foraging and nesting habitat in the northeastern United States.

* Susan B. Smith of Villanova University and Peter Paton of the University of Rhode Island described changes in the timing of passerine migration at a southern New England stopover site – changes that may be linked to warmer autumns.

Master noted that approximately 40 bird species in the northeastern U.S. depend upon riparian ecosystems for foraging and nesting habitat. Warming climate will mean warmer water temperatures and changes in flow of headwater streams and large rivers. Along headwaters, some birds will need to alter their foraging and nesting habitats. On larger waterways, colonial nesters will face challenges in finding adequate foraging habitat. For example, data from the Susquehanna River and elsewhere suggest that Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Egrets, and other species on large rivers will need to forage off-river to a greater extent during severe alterations in flow.

Smith and Paton investigated long-term trends in mean autumn capture dates for 11 long-distance migrants and eight short-distance migrants between 1960 and 2007 at a banding station in Kingston, Rhode Island. They found that the mean capture dates of seven species were significantly later by an average of 3.03 days per decade. The authors consider mean autumn temperature as an important factor in explaining the trends in eight species. “Our analysis suggests that many migratory bird species are now departing the region much later than in the 1960s. However, important differences among species, such as long-term population trends or local breeding status, may influence species-specific responses to changes in climate patterns,” Smith and Paton said.

– Paul Hess
phess@salsgiver.com

There's No Such Thing as Free Wind

I had a chance to photograph a Golden Eagle up close and personal a few years ago, when Mike Lanzone and Trish Miller captured one in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, just below the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. It was a thrilling encounter with a most majestic bird. The raw power of the Golden Eagle was barely contained, as researchers attached a tracking device to its back. Trish is the head of a joint research project between Powdermill and the National Aviary, in charge of mapping the migration and wintering behavior of Golden Eagles in the eastern United States. Part of the project also involves documenting Golden Eagles that spend the winter in Bedford County, feeding on road-killed deer.

I've lived in Bedford County for most of my life, but never realized until recently that Bedford County provides both a wintering habitat and an important migratory flyway for golden eagles. The eastern population of Golden Eagles, numbering only 1,000 – 2,000, migrates above the ridge and valley area of Pennsylvania both spring and fall. Our ridges, running mostly north and south, create an uplift of air that allows migrating birds of prey to soar for miles, thus saving precious energy. This wind also provides the resource needed by a relatively new industry – industrial wind energy development.

The Golden Eagle is just one of many wildlife species impacted by wind development in Pennsylvania. No doubt you have heard about the tragedy at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Project in California, where hundreds of many species of birds are killed each year including Golden Eagles. Researchers have concluded that the rate of birds killed at Altamont is the same as at most other wind projects. Their research shows that bird kills at Altamont are not an anomaly.¹

The concern over bird mortality caused by industrial wind turbines has been downplayed by the wind industry. The American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) fails to recognize that the direct mortality to less common birds like hawks and eagles is much more significant than common feeder birds being killed by house cats. Furthermore, bird mortality at industrial wind projects is quite likely under-reported. It doesn't take very long for scavengers to learn that a new restaurant has opened in town, all around the turbines.

If you live in the eastern part of Pennsylvania, you may not be aware that our ridges and high plateaus in Pennsylvania are targeted for thousands of wind turbines. The environmental impacts may be more subtle than water pollution caused by fracking in the Marcellus shale, or habitat destruction by coal mining, but wind creates another set of environmental issues, and they are of great

concern to biologists, conservationists, birders, and anyone who cares about wildlife and wild places.

Perhaps industrial wind's biggest impact on wildlife is forest fragmentation. Most of the industrial wind projects are built on forested ridges, not reclaimed strip mines (strip mines are less stable and require more expensive turbine foundations). These forested ridges are largely intact forests, critical habitats for birds like Scarlet Tanagers and Black-throated Blue Warblers, which require large tracts of unbroken forests for successful nesting. Wind facilities may stretch for many miles along the top of a ridge. Each turbine is connected to another by a permanent wide clearing, 50 – 60 feet wide, often reaching widths of 100 feet. These permanent openings in the forest create a suite of "edge effects," which can extend 900 feet into the forest. The microclimate and the structure of the forest community is permanently altered. Increased light intensity, altered insect and plant abundance, fewer macroinvertebrates, and a reduced leaf litter layer will affect energy and nutrient recycling. A number of studies show that nesting success of songbirds is lower near forest edges due to the increased number of predators and parasites.

The turbine road may be reduced to a width of 16 feet when construction is over, but the actual clearing is permanent. In the Allegheny Ridge Wind Project, located in Blair and Cambria County on the Allegheny Front (an IBA), a largely intact forest has been reduced to a patchwork of small, isolated woodlots surrounded by dirt roads that are used by security and maintenance trucks, and joyriding ATVs. These vehicles transport not only people, but seeds of invasive species like Japanese stilt grass, Japanese barberry, and mile-a-minute vine.

We all know that pollution from fossil fuel power plants is a great concern. Wood Thrush have been found with high levels of mercury, quite likely due to pollution from coal-burning power plants. Ironically, fossil fuel reliance may actually increase when large amounts of wind energy are introduced into electric grids. Choosing wind over coal is a false choice. Wind energy cannot replace fossil fuel power plants. Wind is too volatile and unreliable, so fossil fuel plants have to run in reserve, ready to ramp up when the wind stops blowing. Wind doesn't deliver when we need it the most. Americans use the most electricity in the summer, when winds are calm, and very little electricity is produced from wind turbines. Furthermore, our wind facilities in Pennsylvania don't live up to their capacity. If a wind project ran 24/7, it would have a capacity of 100%. In Pennsylvania, due to limited wind resources, the industrial wind projects deliver only about 30% of their rated capacity. Most of you probably have

seen the turbines along the turnpike, in Somerset. In 2008, they delivered 25% of their capacity, and in 2009 their capacity was only 24%.³ Contrast that with nuclear, which has a capacity of 95-98%.

Doesn't every little bit of renewable energy help? Wind is a little bit when it comes to electricity production. But it comes with a big price tag. In 2007, the average subsidy for wind and solar was \$23.86 per MWh, while natural gas received \$0.25, coal \$0.44, and nuclear \$1.59 per MWh.⁴ Can we afford to destroy our wildlife habitats and degrade our migratory flyways with an industry that doesn't deliver? It will take over four thousand 2.0-MW turbines to generate just 10% of Pennsylvania's projected demand for electricity in 2030. This will require 500 miles of turbines in our state, mostly on forested ridges.⁵ Another way to understand the footprint of wind energy is to determine the number of turbines needed to replace the Limerock nuclear power plant: about 3,650 wind turbines, which will require about 526 miles of ridgetop, with about 7 turbines per mile.⁵ But wind projects don't shut down coal or nuclear, so adding wind energy to the mix results in even more habitat destruction. Rooftop solar, an alternative energy that does make sense, could help each homeowner reduce their dependence on fossil fuel.

If we don't act soon, we will lose many of our wild places in Pennsylvania to industrial wind and gas development. We need to pressure our legislators for siting regulations. We need to *conserve, conserve, conserve*. Wind energy will not stop global warming, or significantly reduce carbon dioxide levels. Let your legislators know that money spent on conservation methods will be good for us and the wildlife that we cherish in Pennsylvania. Let's not waste taxpayer money on an industry that doesn't deliver.

Laura Jackson, President
Save Our Allegheny Ridges
www.saveouralleghenyridges.org

1. http://www.altamontsrc.org/alt_doc/cec_final_report_08_11_04.pdf
2. http://www.awea.org/pubs/factsheets/Wind_Energy_and_Wildlife_Mar09.pdf
3. Contact the author for more information on capacity factors determined from FERC data
4. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/energy_in_brief/energy_subsidies.cfm
5. Dan Boone, personal communication



Certificates of Appreciation

Since early 2007 the PSO has awarded Certificates of Appreciation to persons who allow birdwatchers on their properties to view a reported and confirmed rare bird. To date at least 40 certificates have been awarded. See the list below.

If you would like to nominate someone for a certificate, please email John Fedak at jlfedak@atlanticbb.net. He needs the first and last dates that the bird was present, the full name of the host, and their US postal mailing address.

1. Scott's Oriole – Karen Atwood
2. Scott's Oriole – Candy Maneval
3. Scott's Oriole – Ray Penick
4. Lark Sparrow – the Smiths
5. Townsend's Solitaire – Norman & Jean Anderson
6. Dickcissel – Marilyn Snell
7. Lark Sparrow – Joe Shatzer
8. Bullock's Oriole – Steve Wolfe
9. Snowy Owl – Keith Spicher
10. Harris's Sparrow – Aden and Mary Troyer
11. Ash-throated Flycatcher – Joyce Sheaffer
12. Rufous Hummingbird – Ray and Eydie Posel
13. Western Kingbird – the Schildts
14. Sora and Virginia Rail – Jim and Joan Moore
15. Lark Sparrow – Stephen and Mary Ann Belin
16. Red Crossbill – Stephen and Mary Ann Belin
17. Rufous Hummingbird – Sondra and Donald Cannon
18. Western Tanager – Jean Stull and Toby Cunningham
19. Bullock's Oriole – David Troyer
20. Harris's Sparrow – Leslie Ducharme
21. Yellow-headed Blackbird – Leslie Ducharme
22. Snowy Owl – Fred Hite
23. Bullock's Oriole – Leroy Troyer
24. Rufous Hummingbird – Ray and Eydie Posel
25. Varied Thrush – Peter and Denise Reinhart
26. Rufous Hummingbird – Melvin and Armetta Rhoads
27. Western Grebe – Senator Pat Vance
28. Rufous Hummingbird – Joan Wagner
29. Western Meadowlark – Stephen Zook
30. Saw-whet Owl – Birmingham Lafayette Cemetery
31. Snowy Owl – Aden Miller
32. Snowy Owl – John Miller
33. Brewer's Blackbird – Marylea Klauder
34. Allen's Hummingbird – Debra Raudenbush
35. Rufous Hummingbird – Chris Stamper
36. Rufous Hummingbird – Denise Shaffer
37. Rufous Hummingbird – Harold Lebo
38. Eurasian Collared-Dove – Lennia Hamsher
39. Bullock's Oriole – Aden and Mary Troyer
40. Bullock's Oriole – David Troyer

Conservation Corner

Having recently made a trip to Texas, I had the opportunity to see not only a few Mexican specialties but the endangered Whooping Crane. It is encouraging to learn that the crane is slowly increasing in numbers and hopefully some day it can be removed from the endangered species list. Which brings to mind another species that is in trouble, but there are now efforts to help this bird recover in the state of Wyoming.

The species is the Greater Sage-Grouse. The grouse eat sage, nest under it, and hide within it to escape predators. In the past decade these imperiled birds have been hit by drought and West Nile virus, but nothing has been so devastating as habitat loss, diminishing their numbers to the point where they are under consideration for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Previous energy development was a major factor in reducing Greater Sage-Grouse populations to between 10 and 20 percent of their historic levels. Other sagebrush birds, including Sage Thrasher, Sage Sparrow, and Brewer's Sparrow, have suffered similar declines.

Many other plants and animals also depend on the sagebrush ecosystem, including elk and moose that draw thousands of visitors to Wyoming. These magnificent species share habitat with pronghorn antelope, who participate in the longest migration of any land mammal in the lower 48 states – traveling from high mountain summer ranges to lowland sagebrush winter ranges. Other wildlife dependent on the sagebrush ecosystem include 60 species of concern, among them Long-billed Curlew and pygmy rabbit.

However, in a landmark victory, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which manages nearly one third of Wyoming's land and is responsible for mineral rights on nearly two-thirds, announced this month that it is making major changes in its leasing policies. This change, largely based on work done by Audubon Wyoming and the Wyoming governor, offers fresh hope for the survival of Greater Sage-Grouse, enhanced protection for other wildlife that share the western sagebrush ecosystem, and an innovative model to advance wildlife-friendly energy development nationwide.

The new protocol embraced recommendations developed by a broad stakeholder task force convened by the

Wyoming governor. Audubon helped shape the group's science-based approach by mapping Greater Sage-Grouse habitat and contributing expertise on the species' natural history and life cycle. The resulting protections limit energy development in the 20 percent of Wyoming land designated as "sage-grouse core areas," which contain some of the last, best remaining breeding habitat for the Greater Sage-Grouse. These new rules protect habitat vital to 54 percent of the world's remaining population, offer greater predictability in land use planning, and will likely help to avoid the necessity of an Endangered Species Act listing to save the iconic bird.

This balanced approach also addresses our nation's energy needs. Inside Wyoming's designated core sage-grouse habitat areas, oil or gas drilling will be limited to one pad per section (one square mile) while wind energy development will be effectively precluded due to the scale of habitat disruption it requires. However, in the 80 percent of Wyoming outside of these core areas as many as 60 well pads per square mile may be permitted. Audubon expects the new rules to redirect wind development activity toward the more appropriate land outside the core areas. This will minimize negative impacts on wildlife and habitats and reduce potential hurdles for much-needed renewable energy.



Greater Sage-Grouse are dependent upon the sagebrush ecosystem.

Photo by Roger Higbee

Personally, I would have preferred to have no development within the core sage grouse habitat, and the 60 well pads per square mile will certainly have a negative impact on wildlife in these areas. But this plan is at least a step toward protecting the Greater Sage-Grouse, their habitat, and the other species that depend on sage habitat. Continuing to monitor the population of this species will tell us whether a plan such as this one will help depressed populations recover. Let's hope so.

– Mark Henry

Electronic Newsletter Available

If you prefer to receive the electronic version rather than the printed newsletter, please e-mail Frank Haas at fchaas@pabirds.org.

Peregrine Sightings Sought

I am looking for information on Peregrine Falcons sighted in Pennsylvania during the months of March through August. This information is very important for aiding the recovery of the Peregrine Falcon population in PA. Peregrines are still recovering after having been completely wiped out in eastern North America by DDT and other pesticides.

Right now Peregrines are at their most conspicuous as they re-establish their pair bonds and advertise their territory, and as single birds advertise for mates. Displays include wailing and high soaring, high-speed aerial maneuvers, power-dives (stoops), either singly or as pairs; and males catching bird prey in flight and presenting it to their mate as a gift. The birds also act aggressively towards other birds: Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Bald Eagles, other Peregrines; sometimes even small airplanes!

It's a great time to watch these birds. All sightings are important. Don't assume we already know about the birds you're seeing; I'd rather hear about birds we already know about than miss birds that we don't know about.

Very importantly, there are very few known nests known at natural (cliff) nest sites in Pennsylvania. If you see Peregrines near cliffs, or areas of whitewash on cliff ledges, please let us know.

Many thanks!

F. Arthur McMorris, Ph.D.
Peregrine Falcon coordinator
Pennsylvania Game Commission
405 Bryn Mawr Ave.
Bala-Cynwyd, PA 19004
610-664-2174
610-220-6566 cell



This Peregrine Falcon was photographed near Tarentum by Steve Gosser.

Did You Know That?

Each Friday afternoon at the Academy of Natural Sciences in the Ewell Sale Stewart Library's Reading Room, a member of the library staff turns a page of Audubon's historic *The Birds of America*. This ritual takes place at 3:00 pm, and museum visitors are invited to see the turning of the page and ask any questions they may have.

It takes 8½ years to page through the 435 plates, one week at a time!

The Academy of Natural Sciences was an original subscriber to the publication, as John James Audubon became a member of the Academy in 1831. This work, published as a subscription with five plates at a time, was released over a period of eleven years between 1827 and 1838. The Academy eventually bound the plates into five volumes. *The Birds of America* was published in the "double elephant folio" format to allow Audubon to depict the birds as close to life-size as possible.

So the next time you're in Philadelphia, stop by the Academy of Natural Sciences, located at the corner of 19th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Have You Checked Out the PSO Website Lately?

If you haven't looked at our website (www.pabirds.org) lately, you should! Can't decide where to go birding? Frank Haas now has 360 site guides for you to peruse. Under "Birding Resources," just click on "Birding Locations" and choose the county you want.

While you're on the website, look at Dave DeReamus's "What's Hot!" where he has uploaded photos of the most recent rarities found in our state.

The website contains a wealth of information. Be sure to check it periodically.

The Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity for our lives. The world is invited to take action in 2010 to safeguard the variety of life on earth: biodiversity.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Annual Meeting Scholarship Program

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

- ★ The person must be nominated by a current PSO member.
- ★ If the nominee is younger than 18, the nominating PSO member must be attending the meeting and must be responsible for transportation to/from the meeting and must be responsible for the youth during the meeting (see below) if a parent/guardian is not accompanying the youth.
- ★ The youth's parent/guardian must sign below giving the youth permission to attend the PSO meeting with the sponsor.
- ★ PSO will pay the recipient's meeting registration, food (banquet, lunch, 2 breakfasts), and lodging (up to 2 nights), and transportation costs incurred by the recipient.

In order to complete your nomination, please 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, 2010. Selection will be conducted by a committee.

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

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

Email address: _____

If a college Undergraduate student, College Attending: _____

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

Name of nominating PSO Member: _____ Phone No. _____

Email address: _____ Relationship (if any) to Nominee _____

If the nominee is younger than 18, the nominating PSO member must sign the following statement: 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)

If the nominee is younger than 18, the parent/guardian must sign the following statement: 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/Guardian)

(Date)

Answers to Bird Quiz

page 2

1. Pine Warbler
2. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (He must have been a slingshot expert!)
3. House Sparrow
4. Bartramian Sandpiper and Upland Plover
5. Chuck-will's-widow



Presque Isle offers the chance of seeing a variety of gulls like this Little Gull photographed by Jerry McWilliams.

PSO Newsletter

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

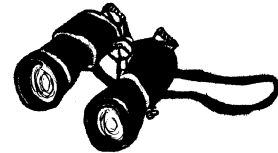
Membership Categories:

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

PSO Officers and Directors

Arlene Koch – President davilene@verizon.net
Tom Kuehl – Vice President tjkuehl@comcast.net
Roger Higbee – Secretary rvhigbee@windstream.net
Frank Haas – Treasurer fchaas@pabirds.org

Geoff Malosh – PSO Editor pomarine@earthlink.net
Margaret Higbee – Newsletter Editor bcorirole@windstream.net
Rudy Keller – Past President rckeller@dejazzd.com
Rob Blye – rblye@normandean.com
John Fedak – jlfedak@atlanticbb.net
Deuane Hoffman – corvuxcorax@comcast.net
Shonah Hunter – shunter@lhup.edu
Sandra Lockerman – lockerman@paonline.com
Mark McConaughy – TimeTraveler50@comcast.net
Carmen Santasania – ctsantasania@comcast.net
Jack Solomon – snaggle719@yahoo.com
Linda Wagner – lwagner342@msn.com



Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

c/o R. V. Higbee
3119 Creekside Road
Indiana, PA 15701-7934

**Non-profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Creekside, PA 15732
PERMIT NO. 2**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED