



From the President's Desk....

Birding with a Purpose –Again!

Having just spent the last six years as a Regional Coordinator for the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, I was looking forward to a break from the birding-with-a-purpose mode. Maybe my wife Janet and I would get our fishing licenses again. Or perhaps the summer would be free to strap the bikes onto the back of the SUV and get back onto the rails-to-trails. Or more unlikely, I would finally take the time to make the effort to get my golf game respectable again!

But duty was calling. The legendary Bob Leberman, the man who brought bird banding to Powdermill Nature Reserve almost 50 years ago and was the second Earl Poole winner, (yes I am kissing up to make sure I can get him to sign a first print edition of the upcoming update to the *Birds of the Ligonier Valley*), had resigned as Westmoreland County compiler. Geoff Malosh had put out feelers for a replacement, but nobody had stepped up. I checked with several capable and logical replacements, but they didn't want the work. Yikes, I am on the Board of PSO and now I'm the president. Several issues of *PA Birds* had been printed, and I have stared painfully at the "No Report" for Westmoreland County. Earlier this year I contacted Geoff to inquire about the compiler's responsibilities, and in May I took the job.

It's not overwhelming, but it requires a bit more work than the narratives that appear in the four seasonal issues of *PA Birds*. Data tables must also be compiled for both spring and fall migration and for the breeding season as well. For

the applicable species, first and last dates are entered on the migration tables. Just as the Atlas required a code, so does the breeding table. I now work on the tables daily and have really enjoyed what it has done for my birding. I have never been much of a lister, nor thought much about when the Hooded Warblers stopped singing around the house. Now I am bent out of shape because I haven't observed a Red-winged Blackbird since July 31 – what's with that? I am now looking forward to charting the arrivals and departures over the years ahead and being able to make somewhat intelligent comments in the narrative. I now find myself with many more questions for which I would love to have answers– like "What happened to our Carolina Wrens this past tough winter?"



This female Hooded Warbler carrying food is a confirmation any county compiler can appreciate.

Photo by Bob Moul

So I am more than OK with "birding with a purpose" again. I lurk the PA list serve for reports of Westmoreland County observations, thinking how I will need to hit birding spots to pick up those missing species for the tables. So here is my plug: If your county is without a compiler, consider taking the job. Check the latest issue of *PA Birds* and/or contact Geoff Malosh for the latest on counties without compilers. If your County is covered and you are not sharing your observations, then contact your compiler and ask how you can help the effort.

And by the way, Janet and I are back on our bikes, and I have been pedaling around the outskirts of Murrysville all summer trying to pick up breeding species and see if the Barn Swallows are still hanging around. But still no fishing licenses, and the golf game still stinks.

– Tom Kuehl, President
Westmoreland County

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

Osprey Update

As has been announced in the last Raven Reporter, on PA eBird website, and on the PGC website, we are doing a full survey of Osprey nests this year. Of course, the nesting season is long over for our wandering fish hawks, but we are not finished counting the nests. So far, we have received records for more than 70 Osprey nests across the state—from Philadelphia ports to Lake Erie. It is looking pretty good.

If you do know of any Osprey nests, please fill out a form that can be found on the Game Commission's Endangered Birds website section. A few of you have done this, and we appreciate it very much. Even our PSO president pitched in!

A quick look through the reports is revealing. Although it is too early to make any real analysis, a few patterns are intriguing and some a bit surprising. It does look like many of the nests are clustered around still waters, mostly reservoirs. Some of these still waters are dammed rivers, too. But, Ospreys, unlike Bald Eagles, do not seem to be occupying many locations along flowing water. They nest in some unusual places including some in the framework of bridges—some are not easy to see except by boat. One pair reacted to a supersized Canada Goose model on top of a tower by nesting right next to the fake goose. This might be the funniest raptor nest we have ever seen in the state. Thanks to Tony Piccolin for that one! Another pattern that observers have noted is that some pairs apparently move around, abandoning what looks like a good nest site and adopting another one within sight of the first.

Please send any records of Osprey nests to me at the address below. We are proud to announce that Cathy Haffner, former colonial water bird and Osprey project coordinator, has moved up in the organization to another position. So, I am finishing the great job that she did with this project.

New PGC "Endangered and Threatened Species" Section

I would like to reiterate that there is a new section on the PGC website with information about our state's endangered and threatened bird species. These pages will help educators, students, birders, naturalists, contractors, environmental planners, writers, and interested residents learn more about these species of greatest conservation need. With school recently reconvening, any educational outreach on rare birds bears repeating.

The species selected for this list have been chosen because of their nesting status in the state. Some of these statuses will surely change in the future after a full analysis of the changes observed in the Breeding Bird Atlas have been studied.

We are working to improve our web pages about birding as recreation and as a conservation and science-oriented activity. We are interested in your comments about the kinds of features we should develop.

Bald Eagle Nesting Season Keeps Rolling

The Bald Eagle nesting season also is over, but we continue to collect more information about the state's eagle nests. Even in August we learned of two and possibly three new nests. At least one new nest was found through our Osprey surveys. So far, we have more than 192 nesting pairs accounted for in the 2010 nesting survey. For many nests, we are still seeking news of their productivity. It can be a challenge to find out if a nest produced any young once leaves hide the entire nest from view.

The new management plan for Bald Eagles has been drafted and has undergone an internal review. It should be ready for public review this winter. The scene for eagles seems to be constantly changing, but the theme of recent decades is one of success. One of the main reasons for that success is the support and cooperation we receive from the birding and conservation public.

If you have news of any eagle nests, please let us know by contacting me.

Loggerhead Shrikes, Anyone?

After some remarkable finds of Loggerhead Shrikes nesting in Adams County, the nesting population of this Endangered Pennsylvania bird seems to have disappeared. Or has it? In the last few years, there were reports of Loggerhead Shrikes around old and new haunts. If anyone has any news of these birds, please contact either Dan Brauning or me. We eagerly seek information about this species which may now be Extirpated as a breeder in the state – or, maybe not.

Golden-winged Warbler – Grave Concerns

One of the birds emerging as a really high priority for conservation is the Golden-winged Warbler. Its nesting population during the second Atlas was about half of what it was in the first Atlas of the 1980s.

The Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA) is an early-successional species that requires a mosaic of features in its habitat. It is a forest species, but a bird that reacts favorably to disturbances in the forest that create a mosaic of sparse trees and shrubs with an herbaceous understory of grasses and forbs. Golden-wings can nest in either uplands or wetlands. Their populations are declining throughout all of their range as early-succession habitats revert to forest and as upland and wetland habitats are lost to human development.

In Pennsylvania, various groups have been working in cooperation. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has been coordinating a range-wide survey (a follow-up of the GOWAP project). The American Bird Conservancy and Indiana University of Pennsylvania are conducting a Best Management Practices project in Pennsylvania and Maryland so we can learn what works best for Golden-wings. Jeff Larkin and Marja Bakermans are coordinating this project with several technicians working in Sprout State Forest and other areas. The Game Commission is cooperating with both of these projects and also conducting some of its own studies and management. There is concern about Golden-wings losing competitively to its close cousin, the Blue-winged Warbler through genetic introgression and perhaps direct competition. There is an accumulation of evidence that Golden-wings are holding their own in areas where forest is the dominant landcover, generally at higher elevations in our state. In New York, they are doing best in forested wetlands. We have some records of GWWA in Pocono wetlands, so the story might be similar there as in southeastern New York. The Breeding Bird Atlas data are valuable for better understanding Golden-winged Warblers in the state. Your data are a big help! From this, our team has established a basic strategy of concentrating management in three general areas of the state: The Pocono northeast counties, The Northcentral Highlands, especially Sprout State Forest, and The Berks Highlands of south-central and southwestern counties. We also have found that although Golden-wings have the reputation as a shrub species, they invariably establish territories where this is some tree canopy as well as shrub cover and perennial herb growth. So, cutting down every tree does not work for this shrub bird. Golden-wings have been founding new populations in recently timbered areas. Atlas data show where some of these new hotspots are located. In the future, we will be asking for more help from the birding community. As the story unfolds, we will need to work together to figure out this puzzle.

Please submit your Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Endangered/Threatened species observations and comments to:

Douglas A. Gross
Wildlife Biologist, Endangered Bird Specialist
Pennsylvania Game Commission
PA eBird and PSO Special Areas Project
106 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859
Phone: 570-458-4109 (or 570-458-4564)
E-mail: dogross@state.pa.us or dagross144@verizon.net

PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. You see a drab Common Loon on a local lake in July. Is it more likely an adult in basic plumage or a year-old subadult bird?
2. You're watching a small tern perched on a sand bar in late fall, and it has a dark bar on its "shoulder." Is it more likely a Forster's or a Common?
3. You get a good look at a spring male Yellow-rumped Warbler, and you see that it has a white throat. Should you grab the camera to document a rare sighting?
4. You're trying to decide whether an adult accipiter perched in your backyard is a small male Cooper's Hawk or a large female Sharp-shinned Hawk. You notice that its crown and its nape are the same color, so which species is more likely?
5. A warbler mostly hidden in the foliage has a tail that's nearly all white below. Is it most likely a Hooded, a Wilson's, or a Canada?

Paul Hess



(See Answers on page 12.)

Spotlight on Members—Paul Hess

by Jack Solomon

[Jack Solomon has served on the PSO board of directors, is the founder and was the first president of the Pittsburgh-based Three Rivers Birding Club, and has for many decades actively birded western Pennsylvania and beyond. —Editor]



Paul Hess, center, leads a field trip to Harrison Hills, one of his favorite birding locales.

Photo by Tom Moller

increased our knowledge and understanding of the birdlife in Pennsylvania. Paul Hess is a heavy hitter with regard to every one of these criteria, and then some.

Hess has also received the W. E. Clyde Todd Award, given by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. The Todd Award annually recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to conservation in western Pennsylvania. As most Pennsylvania birders and field ornithologists know, Todd was one of the giants of professional ornithology in western Pennsylvania and beyond. Hess deserved the Todd Award outright, but I note here that there is a particular convergence between the lives of the two men. Like Todd before him, Hess has advanced our understanding of field ornithology in western Pennsylvania;

Having birded with Paul Hess a great deal these past several decades, I've long admired him for his companionableness, enviable field skills, and remarkable diversity of interests. How could I not have?—Anyone who's birded with Paul will affirm that he's affable, engaging, and a really good birder. That much is obvious after only ten minutes in the field with Paul Hess. Spend an entire morning with him, though, and you'll start to realize that there's so much more. The man has an encyclopedic knowledge of ornithological history, avian status and distribution, and current research on bird biology. And there's something else, something even more important: Paul Hess delights in sharing his knowledge with others, and he does so in a manner that is always patient, never condescending, and forever full of wonder.

Paul Hess received the Earl Poole Award at the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's annual meeting in 2003 in Indiana County, and he got it for good reason – in fact, a lot of good reasons. The award, named for one of the state's foremost ornithologists, is presented annually to someone who has made outstanding contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania. These contributions may take various forms – research, volunteer efforts, publications, fieldwork, or any other pursuit that has

and, also like Todd, Hess's achievements are borne of intellectual integrity, quickness of wit, and an almost unnatural attention to detail. Neither of them "came up through the system," so to speak: Hess's professional training is in journalism, and Todd more or less bypassed the higher education establishment altogether. But both of them are forces to be reckoned with in terms of their ornithological legacies.

There are many reasons Hess has received such prestigious awards. He has devoted himself, energetically and tirelessly, to identifying, studying, researching, and documenting birds, as well as to recording, analyzing, and publishing his results. Like the people the awards are named for, he has contributed significantly – and in a scholarly fashion – to our understanding of birds. Hess entered college intending to major in the sciences at Carnegie Mellon University, then the Carnegie Institute of Technology. After just one year, however, and based on what he refers to as the memorable and extremely rewarding experience of a summer job in journalism, he switched from science to journalism. While retaining considerably more than a passing interest in math and science, Hess fell in love with journalism and enjoyed a long and successful career in the newspaper business. He started out in 1962 as a reporter with the *Valley News*

Dispatch, a community newspaper in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. Then he received promotions to successively more responsibility as City Editor, Managing Editor, and eventually Executive Editor of the *Dispatch*. In 1987, Hess became Editor of the *Niagara Gazette*, a newspaper serving Niagara Falls and the Buffalo, New York, region.

Hess's records of birds observed at Harrison Hills Park in Allegheny County, near his Natrona Heights home, go back continuously to 1970. For many years, his biannual outings to Harrison Hills were eagerly looked forward to by birders all across the Pittsburgh region. Away from his beloved Harrison Hills, Hess has birded pretty much all of western Pennsylvania and indeed a fair bit of North America. He loves "citizen science" projects, and he is a regular participant in such efforts as the Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Survey, Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, and many more. Hess enjoys all forms of birding – from working his local patch most weekends to pelagic birding off the Southeast coast (usually multiple trips per year). He delights in observing and understanding bird behavior, bird population changes, and the identification of subspecies.

Yes, Paul Hess is a great birder. But where he distinguishes himself as more than just a good birder is that he also publishes numerous, reasoned, well-written, thoroughly researched essays, using his own data as well as material from the scientific literature. By parlaying a broad knowledge of science with exceptional skills and experience as a writer and editor, he contributes to our understanding of bird identification, distribution, and ecology far beyond that of the ordinary "citizen scientist." Hess has always exemplified what I think PSO is all about: Birding is fun, it's fun to do it with others, and it's important to read and write about it. Maybe we can't all be like Paul Hess, but we can take inspiration from his demonstration that, with record keeping and a lot of study, one can make important contributions to the understanding of birds.

Here is just a partial list of Paul Hess's accomplishments:

"News and Notes" editor and writer for *Birding*, the premier magazine of the American Birding Association (ABA), a job that requires him to scour the scientific literature for the latest, most noteworthy publications and translate the information into laymen's terms.

Author of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to Pennsylvania Birds*, a general reference for beginners.

Regional contributor to *North American Birds*, the ABA's quarterly journal of ornithological record.

Coeditor of the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, published by HarperCollins and written by one of Hess's protégés, Ted Floyd.

Contributing author of several family and species accounts in the National Geographic Society's *Complete Birds of North America*.

Author of 17 articles in *Pennsylvania Birds*, our journal – more than any other individual. In addition, Hess authors the bird quiz and the "Ornithological Literature Notes" column for the *PSO Pileated* on a regular basis.

Former chairman of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee and a regional coordinator for the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.

Former compiler of Butler County and Allegheny County bird reports for *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Former chief editor, and then bird reports editor, of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's newsletter, *The Bulletin*, in the late 1970s and into the mid-1980s.

Contributing author for *Birding in Western Pennsylvania* (1996), published by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Creator of annotated checklists of the birds of Butler County and for Allegheny County's Harrison Hills Park.

Editor of *The Peregrine*, the newsletter of the Three Rivers Birding Club, from its inception in 2001 to the present.

Paul Hess is widely read all across the U.S. and Canada, he edits local and national books and periodicals, and he is regarded as one of the most capable, helpful, and friendly people around. As I finish, I'll add two things as postscripts: a few comments from some other people and a very long list (as complete as I can compile, but I'm sure I missed a few things) of Hess's accomplishments. The length and quality of the list is the message. He has made a huge contribution to birding and ornithology. Here's what a few well known people say:

*Ted Floyd, editor of *Birding* magazine, and author of, among many other things, the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America* notes:

Paul Hess's "News and Notes" column in *Birding* magazine regularly receives the highest praise from our readers. Some of the top birders and field ornithologists in North America say that "News and Notes" is simply the best. I mean, the absolute best – the best writing, in any magazine or any venue, for a general audience about modern ornithological research.

Hess is a delight to work with. His subject matter is often sophisticated, but his submissions (4 per issue of *Birding* magazine, 24 per year) are always clean, timely, and highly interesting. The technical reviewers and other editors at *Birding* magazine routinely convey to me their gratitude for Hess's professionalism, intellect, and overall excellence. I note that Hess's contributions to the American Birding Association go beyond his work for *Birding* magazine. He has generously served as a judge in the ABA's Young Birder of the Year Contest; he carefully edited the ABA's beginner birding booklet (*Let's Go Birding!*), and he is a go-to man for questions of style, usage, and formatting at *Birding* magazine and beyond.

*Nick Pulcinella: Fellow of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club 1999; Witmer Stone Award 1997; Julian K. Potter Award; and 2009 Poole Award recipient adds:

I had the pleasure of working with Paul Hess for several years on the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC). Paul was diligent in trying to make the PORC process more "user-friendly" to observers submitting reports. Under Paul's unique leadership, PORC improved its efforts to connect with the general PA birding community by developing a program that was presented to various bird clubs throughout the state, explaining how PORC assesses and reaches decisions and a post-card program to keep those who submitted reports abreast of the committee's work.

Paul also stressed the importance to committee members in maintaining and improving the standards and framework in which the committee functioned. These ideas and processes that Paul established improved relations between PORC and the birding community, which continues to reap benefits today. I've always admired his ability to see through complex issues and break them down into workable issues.

Jerry McWilliams, who conducts and analyzes the Waterbird Count at Presque Isle State Park and the Shorebird Survey at Gull Point received PSO's Earl Poole Award this year. An author and extremely highly regarded birder, Jerry comments:

I have never met a kinder and more knowledgeable birder in all of my 45 or so years of birding. Paul is especially skilled in educating not only adults, but young birders, about birds and bird behavior. I always enjoy birding with Paul when he comes to Presque Isle and never fail to learn something about

birds that I didn't know before. I always look forward to reading his "News and Notes" in *Birding* magazine.

*Bill Pranty who serves as the ABA Checklist Committee chair and is a *Birding* technical reviewer and one of the most respected and most productive regional field ornithologists of our time, is also the author of *Birds of Florida* He states:

Although it was not until the late 1990s that I finally met Paul Hess, his name was familiar to me since 1976, when we occasionally chatted over the telephone. I was a 14-year-old beginning birder living in Penn Hills, reading about birds in the Pittsburgh region that I could not see because I was too young to drive (I absolutely anguished over not being able to see the Lesser White-fronted Goose at North Park). Paul was one of two patient experts who improved my birding skills.

Today, I am unceasingly impressed by Paul's encyclopedic knowledge of bird distribution, behavior, and taxonomy, as well as his ability to succinctly explain the at-times complicated ornithological terminology, using language that all birders can understand. Paul must read a library's worth of material every month to present such a wide-ranging summary of field and laboratory ornithology in his "News and Notes" column that is one of the highlights of each issue of *Birding*.

*Geoff Malosh, the editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*, a physicist, and one of the most knowledgeable and scientifically capable birders in Pennsylvania writes:

Paul has described himself to me as a ridiculous fanatic about extensive research which is his modest way of admitting that he is among the most well-read and knowledgeable amateur ornithologists out there. The depth of his knowledge, and the extensive research he does, is a tremendously important factor in our current understanding of the recent and historical distribution of Pennsylvania avifauna. As a reader of *Pennsylvania Birds* since the publication of Volume 1, Number 1, back in 1987, I can't even begin to guess the number of articles that have cited Paul in the acknowledgments over the years, and for good reason: authors are aware that he is indispensable when it comes to peer review on matters of identification, distribution, history, and current ideas and theory in ornithology.

Now as editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*, I can say from personal experience how invaluable Paul's advice and coaching have been as I found my way

in this role, both as a willing anonymous technical reviewer any time I needed him, and as a professional journalist and editor willing to help. I never asked a question of him that has gone unanswered or sought advice that I ended up rejecting. In other words, my tenure as editor would have been much more rocky and mistake-riddled so far, without Paul's insight and willingness to share his experience and expertise. I, and indeed anyone interested in Pennsylvania birds, have much to thank Paul for.

*Jon Dunn, one of the primary experts on field identification in North America, professional bird tour leader, and prolific author, writes:

I know Paul primarily through his participation on a few Wings tours to California and his attendance at a few ABA Conferences, most recently in Minot, North Dakota. Paul is one of those ideal participants who really gets involved in what he's studying. Not only is he enthusiastic, but he looks carefully and asks lots of questions about identification, about behavior, about distribution, and whether there are any taxonomic issues involved. And he always

enjoys what he sees rather than worry about what was missed, or what might be missed.

Through these events we became friends, and during that time I reviewed his column for *Birding* magazine. I always look forward to receiving Paul's drafts, and I always learn something from them, usually a great deal. And Paul is always receptive to changing parts, if needed, and if nothing else, we have a great conversation on the subjects he's writing about. He's a true intellectual and what matters most is his getting it right! His column is in my view the most important feature of *Birding* magazine these days.

In addition to all of the above, Paul doesn't take himself that seriously and has a wicked sense of humor. In short he's a terrific companion, whether in the field or discussing the intricacies of a taxonomic problem. I'm greatly honored to be his friend.

For a complete listing of Paul Hess's publications, check our website, <http://pabirds.org>, for the link.

Wing-Tagged Vultures

10/10/10

This spring and summer staff and interns at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton, PA, have been color marking Turkey and Black Vultures to learn more about their local and long-distance movements. Turkey Vultures are marked with light blue wing tags and Black Vultures have been marked with yellow tags. Each tag has a 2- or 3-digit number on it. We need your help spotting and reporting these birds. Please report all sightings of wing-tagged vultures with the following information: the wing that is tagged (right or left), number (if possible), location, time of day, date, whether the bird was perched or flying, and whether it was alone or with other vultures (note number). Please send all reports to barber@hawkmtn.org.

Thanks for all your help!

David Barber
Research Biologist
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

Is that an easy date to remember? We hope it is as it's this year's date for the Big Sit which is always the second Sunday in October. Hosted by *Birdwatcher's Digest*, it was founded in Connecticut by the New Haven Bird Club. The object is to tally as many species as possible from one spot.

So grab a chair and select your 17-foot-diameter circle. Have a picnic or a barbecue. The count begins at 12:00 a.m. midnight and ends 24 hours later. Groups of people can come and go. Big Sit participants can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there for the whole Big Sit! The area can be left and returned to frequently, but the exact 17-foot diameter circle must be used for counting birds each time.

For more information check the website at:
<http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/big_sit/index.php>

Did You Know?

Woodpeckers have extremely long tongues relative to their size. Their tongues can be extended far beyond the tips of their bills and are capable of moving laterally. They have elongated hyoid horns which support their extremely long tongues. The Hairy Woodpecker's tongue is so long that it is wrapped up around its right eye.

Ornithological Literature Notes

Study after study has demonstrated catastrophic damage to Eastern Hemlock forests by the hemlock woolly adelgid, and research is increasingly showing grave threats to the forests' birds.

Potential danger was predicted for populations of the Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Blackburnian Warbler in a 2004 study of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in northeastern Pennsylvania and northwestern New Jersey (*Natural Areas Journal* 24:307-315). Robert M. Ross, a former PSO president, and coauthors Lori A. Redell, Randy M. Bennett, and John A. Young reported that those species have a high affinity for hemlock forests and have greater numbers of territories in hemlock than in hardwood sites.

“Unchecked expansion of the exotic adelgid and subsequent hemlock decline could negatively impact 3,600 pairs from the park and several million pairs from northeastern United States hemlock forests due to elimination of preferred habitat,” the authors said.

A study published in 2009 supports that assessment for the Acadian Flycatcher in heavily infested areas (*Auk* 126:543-553). Michael C. Allen, James Sheehan Jr., Terry L. Master, and Robert S. Mulvihill analyzed the flycatcher's abundance at 11 sites in and around the Delaware Water Gap and the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County.

Their findings were particularly worrisome at northeastern sites where the adelgid had been active for a long time. As defoliation increased, the density of Acadian Flycatcher breeding pairs decreased. At the most heavily infested sites, the pair density was approximately 70 percent lower than at uninfested sites.

By contrast, infestation at Powdermill began recently and the habitat was not yet affected so severely. At the southwestern Pennsylvania sites, pair densities were comparable to those in relatively less-infested portions of the Delaware Water Gap.

Interestingly, nest survival rates were not significantly related to degrees of defoliation, but the authors commented that even if nesting success is not directly impaired, the flycatcher's population may decrease and its range may contract as the species' preferred hemlock habitat disappears.

“The mechanism of decline appears to be habitat avoidance in response to defoliation, whether because of a lack of nest sites, a lack of insect prey, or some other factor. This warrants further study, and it may be relevant to other bird species or other forest pathogens,” Allen and his coauthors said.

– Paul Hess
phess@salsgiver.com

T-Shirt Art Wanted

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is looking for colorful bird art for its t-shirts.

I am sure most of you have seen t-shirts from other bird clubs, nature centers, etc. with colorful, accurate paintings of birds representative of the location. We would like to follow suit.

The current PSO t-shirts have the PSO logo on them. We would like to produce another t-shirt with paintings of native Pennsylvania species.

The painting or drawing may be something newly created by the artist or artwork that he or she has already finished. We would just need permission to use one of their existing pieces.

We cannot pay for the art but will include the artist's signature on the graphic on the t-shirt and acknowledge the artist in our advertisements for the t-shirts.

The PSO Board of Directors will review any artwork submitted and select the ones that will be used.

The bird(s) depicted should be native to Pennsylvania, preferably breeding species. Accurate depictions are preferred, but modernistic impressions will also be considered. The art will be judged on its accuracy and aesthetic appearance.

Please send a digital photo or scan of any artwork you would like us to consider to Frank Haas at fchaas@pabirds.org.

Dr. Kenneth C. Parkes Honored Posthumously

by Paul Hess

In the two-century-old footsteps of William Bartram, Thomas Say, and Alexander Wilson, another eminent Pennsylvania ornithologist has been honored with his name on an avian genus. He is Kenneth C. Parkes, late curator of birds at Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, and the new genus is *Parkesia* (“PARKS-ee-uh”) for the two waterthrushes.

Dr. Parkes had long believed that the Northern Waterthrush and Louisiana Waterthrush warranted a genus separate from the Ovenbird for a number of reasons. The waterthrushes not only differ conspicuously from the Ovenbird in structure, behavior, locomotion, and vocalizations, but also are evolutionarily distinct from the Ovenbird in juvenal plumage and how long they retain it.

This year, the official gatekeeper of our taxonomy – the North American Classification Committee of American Ornithologists’ Union (the “check-list committee”) – agreed. The committee kept the Ovenbird in the genus *Seiurus* and created *Parkesia* for the waterthrushes.

The change resulted from a recommendation by George Sangster, a Ph.D. student in the Molecular Systematics Laboratory at the Swedish Museum of Natural History in Stockholm. He emphasized an even more conclusive, distinction: Several genetic analyses have demonstrated that the waterthrushes differ significantly from the Ovenbird in mitochondrial DNA. In fact, in terms of evolutionary divergence, the Ovenbird is only distantly related to the waterthrushes.

Sangster’s recommendation was published in 2008 in a prominent scientific journal, the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists’ Club* (128:212–215). He concluded the paper, “It is a great pleasure to name this taxon for the late Kenneth C. Parkes, former curator at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, to honor his lasting contributions to avian taxonomy, molt terminology, hybridization and faunistics.”



The Louisiana Waterthrush, now *Parkesia motacilla*, is one of two species in the new genus *Parkesia*.

Photo by Bob Moul



The other species named in honor of Dr. Parkes is the Northern Waterthrush, *Parkesia noveboracensis*

Photo by Bobby Greene

In an e-mail note to me, Sangster described his reasons in more detail for PSO members:

“I never had the privilege of meeting or even corresponding with Ken Parkes, but it is hard to overlook his enormous influence on ornithology. He was one of those rare ‘global’ taxonomists: He seemed to be as familiar with Asian, Australian, and African birds as with those from North and South America. In fact, he has described new subspecies (more than 100 in total) from all continents except Antarctica. I doubt that this accomplishment will ever be matched by any living or future ornithologist.

“For me, it seemed only logical to attach his name to a genus of parulids, given his many important contributions to our understanding of this group, which span a period of no less than 50 years. It will be a real pleasure to see the name *Parkesia* printed in future field guides and other popular ornithological works, so that many years from today birders will still ask who Ken Parkes was.”

Then, Sangster added a very poignant comment: “After my manuscript was completed in late July 2007, I had

hoped to inform Dr. Parkes about my intention of naming a genus after him. It was when I looked on the Internet for a contacting address that I found out that he had passed away only a week before.”

Bob Mulvihill, a close associate of Dr. Parkes at the Carnegie Museum’s Powdermill Avian Research Center, discussed Ken’s opinion in Powdermill’s online banding report in June 2004. Bob noted that Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett cited Ken’s view in their authoritative *Field Guide to Warblers of North America*.

Bob has his own personal enthusiasm for the taxonomic decision: “It means that I have spent much of my professional career studying a species that is now named

(continued on page 10)

Margaret Buckwalter

1920 – 2010

Margaret Buckwalter, one of the founding members of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, passed away on Wednesday, August 25.

Margaret was among the group of people who saw the need for an Audubon chapter in Clarion County and helped organize the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society in the early 1980s. She served on the Board for most of the years that Seneca Rocks has been in existence and at one time or another held each officer post – president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer – besides working on a variety of committees.

For years she led the Birdathon for Seneca Rocks and achieved first place in the Regional and State competitions from 1988 through 1999. In 1998 she attended the National Audubon Convention and, in her words, “was totally surprised” when SRAS won second place nationally for chapters with fewer than 300 members. Seneca Rocks won again in 2002. Margaret enjoyed the competition for most species seen, most money raised, and most sponsors signed on. The highest total amount pledged was in 2003 when \$5220 was raised, the last year that she led the Birdathon.

Margaret and Walter Fye led the Christmas Bird Count from 1987 through the mid 2000s. She was diligent in reporting the results and became adept at sending the reports electronically.

She was an enthusiastic participant in field trips and in developing an interest in birding in others, especially the elementary school students to whom she talked about birds. Margaret was one of a group who worked for

many years to establish State Game Lands 330 (Piney Tract), and she was proud of this achievement. The Beaver Creek project was also on which she participated and enjoyed. Margaret led many field trips to Cook Forest State Park, gathering and entering data for the creation of the Bird checklist for the park.

Margaret served as a coordinator for the first PA Breeding Bird Atlas, and also as the Clarion County compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* until a few years ago. In 2005, Margaret was presented with PSO’s Earl Poole Award for her contributions to ornithology and conservation.

SRAS members always looked forward to the slides that Margaret shared at the annual Members’ Night. She was an award winning photographer and often had exceptional photos which everyone enjoyed.

Browsing through over two decades of issues of *The Drummer*, the publication of Seneca Rocks Audubon, I found articles that she has written in almost every issue. In addition to articles about the CBC and Birdathon there are those on field trips, both Breeding Bird Atlas counts, and bird sightings and identification. Margaret has also contributed to Seneca Rocks website.

Margaret’s numerous talents and contributions to Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and to the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology will be difficult to replicate. We will keep her memory alive through conservation and education projects.

– Janice Horn

Kenneth C. Parkes Honored Posthumously

(continued from page 9)

in honor of a man who has strongly influenced my professional career. I like the serendipity of that – i.e., the Louisiana Waterthrush is my favorite bird, and Ken is my favorite ornithologist!”

So, Pennsylvania now has four genera in its ornithological legacy: *Bartramia* for the Upland Sandpiper; *Sayornis* for the Black Phoebe, Eastern Phoebe, and Say’s Phoebe; *Wilsonia* for the Hooded Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler, and Canada Warbler; and *Parkesia* for the Northern Waterthrush and Louisiana Waterthrush.

PSO Annual Meeting 2011

Next year’s PSO meeting falls a little later than usual although it is still the third complete weekend in May. Some confusion has arisen since May 1 falls on a Sunday. The second Saturday of May, May 14, 2011, will be the Pennsylvania Migration Count.

Our meeting will be held Friday, May 20, through Sunday, May 22, at the Quality Inn in Bedford.

Details will be forthcoming in future newsletters. Mark your calendars now. We hope to see you in Bedford!

PBBA Reminiscing

by John Fedak

Now that atlasing has concluded and enough time has passed to gather my breath, I have been thinking about the intriguing and unusual things that happened to me during the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas. I birded much of the state, but I concentrated on Region 32. As I think back, some of what I did now seems obsessive. Maybe it was, but it was fun! In the next few newsletters, I hope to show you that without boring you. I want to give you some ideas of how it felt so that in another 15 years, you can experience it for yourselves, or for some of you, again!

For example, I had the uncontrollable compulsion to try to find certain species of bird in each block in the region. For some, like Black-capped Chickadees and Chipping Sparrows, that really was not a problem as they were easy to find. American Robins seemed a given. But I was obsessed with finding a Common Raven in every block of the region. I almost succeeded, but I missed raven in only a few blocks; but to make matters worse, I have seen them in those blocks since the Atlas has ended!

The same holds true for Winter Wren and American Woodcock – partial coverage. I remember dreaming of light green, dark green, and black during the atlas. I almost hated the color white. To me white means surrender, which during the atlas was the same as failure, failing to find what I knew should be there.

One of my obvious successes when looking at the species maps was Northern Saw-whet Owl. I have to confess, I wanted complete coverage; but in reality, I really was not obsessed by it. The Northern Saw-whet Owl coverage was a form of serendipity. My children were at the age that required both parents' attention. I did not want my loving wife to feel that I was shortchanging her. So, I tried my best to fulfill my duties as a dad and to fulfill my duties as the regional coordinator as well. That meant I had to bird during my free time when the rest of the family was sleeping.

I would start at dusk, sometimes hearing woodcock, most times not. I would play the audio for saw-whets first. I would estimate that birds responded about 50 percent of the time. Then I would move up the owl scale to screech, barred, and great-horned. Sometimes I recorded all four at the same spot, and sometimes I even recorded some of them at the same time!

I spent a lot of time out at night alone. Sometimes, I got more than birds to come in. Once, I was chased by a mother raccoon. I heard lots of deer, lots of coyotes, and even foxes came onto the road.

My worst scare came in the form of a black bear, a very large, noisy, and persistent black bear. It took my getting into the car quickly, turning on the headlights, and blowing the horn repeatedly to get it to leave. There was a full moon and I was in the middle of the Allegheny National Forest. And, as much of a nature lover that I am, I remember that adrenalin kept me awake the rest of the night.

Of course, there were plenty of times I was not alone. I happily showed a non-birding friend his first saw-whet as it swooped down and over his head. My son and wife accompanied me once and we found these little owls at most of the stops. I went out with a WCO on State Game Lands that would have been impossible to access without his help and his truck!

But it was not an obsession – it was being practical. Of course, when you look at the maps, you probably won't believe it was not an obsession. Region 32 is very, very green. The regions around 32 could be as well if their coordinators had small children and could only bird at night for most of a few seasons! So, it really was serendipity.

PSO Members Publish *Birds of Central Pennsylvania*

Members Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, two of our top birders and field ornithologists, have published a book that has revised and expanded Merrill Wood's book by the same title, which was first published in 1958 and last updated in 1983. It covers a 25-mile radius circle around Penn State University. The original book contained species accounts with abundance, seasonal occurrence, and habitat information; but Nick and Greg have expanded upon this adding chapters on the bird study and ecology of numerous locations. They have also updated and expanded the species accounts and added bar graphs of occurrence and abundance.

Of special note are chapters on hawk watching, the Golden Eagle migration, and Christmas bird counts. Other chapters cover the various birding sites, complete with the history and landscape, bird studies on the site, and directions for each in a box entitled "If You Go."

To purchase this worthwhile book, contact Nick at nbolgiano@pennswoods.net. Cost is \$20, including tax, plus \$3.50 for shipping for PA residents.

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 3)

1. Year-old loons frequently spend the summer south of the breeding range.
2. Common Tern
3. No, because it's our usual "Myrtle" subspecies, not the yellow-throated "Audubon's." You could study its face to find out whether it's an interesting "Myrtle" x "Audubon's" hybrid—but who wants to spend time with a white-throated yellow-rump when an Orange-crowned Warbler might be just up the trail?
4. Sharp-shinned Hawk
5. Hooded Warbler

PSO Newsletter

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