



From the President's Desk....

“Stop! Stop!!! You never stop when I tell you to! Never mind, it was just a broken off branch doing a good imitation of a perched Red-tail.”

Does this sound like the in-car banter you get on your Winter Raptor Survey? I get it from both my wife Janet and from our birding friend Ken Byerly. No appreciation for the driver! There was actually a car behind me, something the driver has to pay attention to, but not an issue that they are concerned with. It was much better to hear their shouts of joy – “It’s a Roughie.” But then “Stop, let me out, let me out!” As many of you probably know, the Winter Raptor Survey provides an occasional rush of adrenalin as well as a welcome relief from cabin fever for the participants in what lately have become the harsh winters of Pennsylvania.



The most alarming trend in the Winter Raptor Survey data is the continuing decline in the number of American Kestrels.

Photo by Bob Moul

According to Greg Grove, Winter Raptor Survey creator and coordinator, Pennsylvania is the only state with an organized and on-going Winter Raptor Survey. A recent *PA Birds* editorial meeting gave me a chance to talk with Greg about the history and particulars of the Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey. He could not recall the person’s name who initiated this winter raptor survey effort, but the Lake Champlain Valley area of New York had provided him the inspiration to devise the concept of searching for raptors in the winter. This is a reversal of the hawk watch approach to viewing raptors; instead of a stationary place from which to observe raptors, travel a route in search of stationary raptors. Greg’s recollection is that 60 to 70 routes were completed in Pennsylvania in 2001, the first

year of the survey. In 2011 he expects that almost 200 routes were run.

In quizzing Greg about outside interest in his project, he indicated that the biggest interest has been from HMANA (the Hawk Migration Association of North America). The

HMANA website does indicate a Winter Raptor Survey program and a committee which includes Greg; however, as far as Greg knows, efforts to conduct surveys in Illinois and Vermont are not continuing. Greg’s explanation is that the popularity of hawk watching in Pennsylvania continues into the winter season with the Winter Raptor Survey. Our many hawkwatchers suffering withdrawal (you know who you are!) are prime candidates for running Winter Raptor Survey Routes. He noted that HMANA looked into complicating the data collection – GPS locations, etc.; however, the simplicity that Greg has maintained is, in my mind,

very much a part of the attraction and continued popularity of the project.

As is often the case with scientific studies, the analysis of the data only leads to more questions. According to Greg, the most alarming trend of the data is the continuing decline in the numbers of American Kestrels, most specifically in the southeastern corner of the Commonwealth. There is no obvious reason for this decline – perhaps Cooper’s Hawk predation. While these issues are often tied to habitat destruction, this just doesn’t seem to be the case in Pennsylvania.

The Winter Raptor Survey results are published annually in the *Pennsylvania Birds* journal. Also, the book, *Avian*

(Continued on page 2)

Winter Tomato Cages

by Arlene Koch

It was snowing for the umpteenth time when I sat down to write this article in the last week of February. I hate the snow and ice because it makes me feel like a prisoner in my own home. But I especially hate the month of February because it's my birthday month, making the most miserable time of the year even more depressing, especially when there are what seem to be never-ending snow and ice storms like we've had here in the eastern part of the state this winter.

What keeps my spirits up when the deck is covered with a foot of snow are the birds feeding there on the millet that I throw out. In the summer the deck is filled with pots of flowers for hummingbirds and butterflies and chairs in which to sit and watch them, but when it snows the deck becomes a giant bird feeder.

The deck is an "opportunity" feeder because I can just open the door and throw seeds out when it's not safe to walk through ice and snow. But the staples of my winter feeding setup are just like everyone else's – hanging Nyjer and black oil sunflower feeders, platform millet/black oil sunflower feeders, and several suet feeders 10-30 feet away from doors and walkways. However, I often wonder if other people use metal tomato cages near or around the feeders like I do.

I don't put feeders inside these cages although I probably could in some of the bigger ones. But rather I set the cages up near the feeders or areas of seed on the ground because birds love to perch on the cages to check out the feeders before they land in them or before they fly down onto the seed on the ground.

I started using tomato cages away from the vegetable garden years ago when I began establishing hummingbird feeders and flower areas. But it wasn't something I thought of myself. I first saw metal cages used like this while making the rounds of birders hosting winter hummingbirds in Louisiana with Nancy Newfield ten years ago. Some of the cages were used to support plants inside them, but just as many were placed apart from but near the planting areas. They looked odd at first until I saw how often hummingbirds landed on them before or after feeding.

I began stealing tomato cages from my husband's stash in the spring of that year, and now I'm at the point where I'd rather let the tomato plants sprawl on the ground and just pick the good ones on top rather than give up my bird perches. And I've expanded to unapologetically pulling out political signs left to rot along roadways so I can use the metal frames inside them. They're not tall and don't have a bunch of crossbars like regular cages do, but they work if you place them crosswise.

Obviously, I have long since expanded from just using cages for hummingbirds because birds of all kinds will use them if they're strategically placed. After a snowfall in the winter they're especially busy because so many of the winter birds are natural ground feeders. I just need to remember to move some of the cages before the ground freezes.

I personally believe that more people should use bird perches whether they're tomato cages, large rocks, or big dead tree stumps erected in propitious places. They may not always be aesthetically pleasing, but they'll sure bring in the birds!



Red-tailed Hawk is the most frequently recorded raptor on the raptor surveys.

Photo by Tom Kuehl

From the President's Desk.... *(continued from page 1)*

Ecology and Conservation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Science, includes a chapter on the Winter Raptor Survey.

A new twist this year is that PSO's treasurer and webmaster, Frank Haas, has added submitted survey route maps to the PSO website. Check it out, and look for uncovered areas there. Next year when Greg makes his annual call to run routes, maybe you can fill one of the gaps. In closing, Greg, thanks for the winter diversion!

– Tom Kuehl, President
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The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

Bald Eagle Successes and Progress

By the time you read this note, the public comment period for the Game Commission's Bald Eagle Management Plan will have ended on March 3. Thanks very much to all of you who made comments. They are very much appreciated. By commenting, you help us better manage Bald Eagles. Most comments I have seen, more than 75, are positive and support our plan. Several comments include suggestions, corrections, edits, and additions to the plan's content. All of this is extremely welcome. Any wildlife plan is out of date and incomplete by the time it reaches the public's eye. Any large document of that type has its errors and inconsistencies, so the editorial comments are very helpful to the goal of making the management plan a better and more effective document. We will be making changes to the plan after the comment period for approval by the Board of Commissioners.

The 2010 Bald Eagle nesting season was a record success. There were 197 active territorial nesting pairs observed in Pennsylvania in 2010. This is 23 more than in 2009 when 174 active nests were recorded, a healthy 13% increase. For the last two decades, there has been a steady population increase of 10 - 15% per year. The nesting population has now exceeded 100 pairs for five consecutive years. Most Pennsylvania eagle nests (108) were found in the Appalachian Mountain Bird Conservation Region (BCR). Bald Eagle nesting distribution also is expanding steadily with nesting pairs now in 49 counties (73% of the total counties). The counties with the most eagle nests in 2010 were Crawford (21), Lancaster (19), Pike (18), Mercer (12), and York (10). The increase was very broad in 2010 with increases in 20 counties, but only Indiana was added to the list of counties with eagle nests. Seven counties added multiple nesting territories. The 2010 nests produced a record number of eaglets, a total of at least 293 young, exceeding 200 eaglets for the second consecutive year. This represents the seventh consecutive year that more than 100 eaglets were produced in Pennsylvania nests. Since 1980, Pennsylvania Bald Eagle nests have produced more than 1,800 eaglets. This massive production of eagles from Pennsylvania is fueling the recovery.

We now have so many eagle nests that it is challenging our resources to monitor all nests. It is relatively easy to find a nest and keep an eye on it in winter and early spring, but it becomes much harder once the leaves emerge and hide nests from view. It is hard to imagine that a stick nest the size of a compact car can be hard to see, but this is true in many cases. Eagle pairs usually mate for life, but when one member dies, there may be changes in nesting location or pattern. Many pairs adopt an "alternate" nest at a location that is harder to see than the original one. All of these factors make nest-monitoring a challenge, especially for monitoring success rate or productivity.

How can birders help? Please let us know if you find any new eagle nests. Giving us "driving directions" and coordinates of the nest site, even if estimated, are very helpful. Often we know about a nest and its activity but do not have productivity information because of access or viewing issues. Perhaps a canoe ride or hike up a mountainside can give views of a nest or branches around it that reveal the young eaglets or "branchers." Information about nest success or failure is appreciated. Please note my contact information below.

Northern Goshawks in PA

Perhaps the ultimate forest interior bird in the Appalachians is the Northern Goshawk. It also is one of the most elusive and furtive raptors of the continent. Sometimes it seems as if you are chasing ghosts when trying to find goshawks.

Currently, the goshawk is considered "Vulnerable" as a breeding bird in PA by the Ornithological Technical Committee (formerly "Candidate - Rare" status under the PA Biological Survey classification). We are looking at this status with healthy skepticism. Does N. Goshawk deserve to be ranked as "Near Threatened" or "Threatened"? The recent Atlas data are being reviewed for patterns. Some parts of the goshawk range documented in the first Atlas seem to have been abandoned. Some territories occupied for many years have not been used in recent years. Does this suggest a pattern of decline or just part of the dynamics of a predator population adjusting to prey availability and habitat changes? The low detection rate for goshawk complicates the issue. Some new nesting pairs are found, but they often seem to involve young females. Several nests have been predated in recent years, perhaps by Great Horned Owls, fishers, or other predators. Other confounding issues are West Nile virus and site disturbances by humans. The incredibly rapid development of wind energy and Marcellus shale in the state is a potential threat to this forest raptor and other deep woods species.

Despite advances in birding skills and increased knowledge of our rare nesting birds, we know that many

areas that could support goshawks are virtually unexplored by birders or field biologists. We have much to learn about goshawks. (But, really, we are not clueless.)

We are interested not only in your observations of goshawks but your opinion about its status. We also welcome dissenting views. No decisions have been made. I know that some PA birders have been very helpful to goshawk inventory and Dave Brinker's research. Your contributions are very much appreciated.

The Value of Jays

The value of wildlife and wildlife watchers is a subject of many articles recently. We could gladly have the discussion about the value of birding activities as an industry. I would instead like to quickly discuss the value of a very common and unappreciated bird, the Blue Jay.

Bold and beautiful, Blue Jays bring a brassy brightness to any backyard or woods where they are found. They do much more than scream "jay!" and declare their presence to the feeding station. Jays are very important dispersers of "fagaceous" trees; that is, the oaks, beeches, and chestnuts of the northern hemisphere. In particular, our Blue Jay picks up acorns and beech nuts and caches hundreds of these seeds for future use. Since jays are mortal and somewhat forgetful, many of the nuts they cache are not retrieved and grow into trees. Jays are especially valuable as dispersers because they carry their cached prizes more than a quarter mile from the tree, often in clearings or recently disturbed areas. So, jays truly put wings on seeds and plant them where they need to be.

Thus, the common and taken-for-granted Blue Jay is a keystone species of the eastern deciduous and mixed forest of North America. Indeed, I would argue that when it comes to reclaiming forest in a fragmented landscape, the Blue Jay is the most important animal in the state, both ecologically and economically. Oak trees are especially very valuable for timber products. Their mast is essential food for many species of wildlife including game species such as white-tailed deer, Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, tree squirrels, and many others.

How do you put a price tag on that service? It is an almost impossible task. This has been done in Sweden with the related but larger European Jay. In an article published in *Ecological Economics*, a team of Cajsa Hougner, Johan Colding, and Tore Soderqvist determined that the approximate "replacement value" of a pair of

European Jays to the Stockholm National Urban Park is \$2100 USA, measured in a complicated formula that allows for how much humans would be paid for similar "labor" and the value of the trees produced. It is admittedly a ballpark figure but an eye-opening one.

So, let's take a wide eyed guess on the value of our Blue Jays. Since they perform a similar function, let us just approximate that the American version is about half the size of the European one. So let's say that each pair only is worth about \$500 a pair or merely \$250 a bird, probably a conservative underestimate. The PBBA point counts estimated that there are about 590,000 birds nesting in the state. The Atlas coordination folks and I believe that this



Jays are very important dispersers of "fagaceous" trees.

Photo by Steve Gosser

is probably an underestimation of the population because Blue Jays are actually more difficult to detect than most "songbirds" on a point count because they don't sing! And, this underestimates the population that may be migrating through the state and using our forest trees to forage. Now, with these two numbers, let's multiply \$250 X 590,000 to get \$147,500,000. That's right, about \$147 million. And, I think that is probably an underestimation.

Is your jaw still in place? Even if I am off by a couple of zeros, this is an impressive and awesome subject for contemplation. My calculations are admittedly really rough and preliminary. A true ecological economic study would be enlightening and necessary to come to a really accurate measure of jay value in our state, but this is a rough start.

As more tree pests and diseases and energy development take their toll on our forests, there may be increased interest in replanting trees. And there should be more appreciation for this flamboyant but valuable "airlifter of the oaks" to our forest ecosystems, their wildlife, and basic economic value.

Watch a Blue Jay and thank it for what it has done. I welcome other ideas about this fascinating subject.

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Ornithological Literature Notes

A tremendous amount of significant ornithological research is being conducted by Pennsylvania scientists and university students.

Researchers from our state had a strong presence at the 91st annual meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society last year in Geneva, New York. Their studies cover a wide variety of species, and many are notable efforts in behalf of bird conservation.

The Alexander Wilson Prize for best student paper went to Stephanie G. Wright of Villanova University for “Hybrid chickadee vocalizations change as the hybrid zone moves northward in southeastern Pennsylvania.”

Anne Lugg of Kutztown University won the Nancy Klamm Best Undergraduate Student Poster Award for “Aging House Wren nestlings based on feather tract development, wing chord, and head length.”

Stephanie and Anne also won Wilson Society Travel Awards to support further research. Other Travel Award winners included Ashley Rathman of Kutztown University for “The effect of Wood Thrush hosts on the survival of Brown-headed Cowbird eggs and nestlings” and Emily Thomas of Penn State University for “Effects of oil and gas development on songbirds.”

A symposium on the effects of energy development on birds included the following papers with Pennsylvanians among the authors:

*“Threats to migrating Golden Eagles from development of wind energy” by Todd Katzner, National Aviary; Trish Miller and Michael Lanzone, Powdermill Nature Reserve; David Brandes, Lafayette College, and Robert Brooks, Pennsylvania State University.

* “Developing guidelines for the creation of Golden-winged Warbler breeding habitat on reclaimed surface mines in southeastern Kentucky” by Jeff Larkin, Joseph Grata, and Joe Duchamp, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; and Laura Patton, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

* “Energy development and fragmentation effects” by Kim Van Fleet, Audubon Pennsylvania.

* Emily Thomas’s award-winning paper on effects of oil and gas development.

In a separate symposium on migratory birds’ physiology

and energetics, Robert J. Smith, University of Scranton, presented a paper titled “Arrival and transition into the breeding period: the fitness consequences of timing and condition for a landbird migrant.”

Authors of papers presented in the general session were:

* Robert L. Curry, Villanova University – “Variation in chickadee morphology through time in a moving hybrid zone.”

* Doug Gross, Pennsylvania Game Commission – “Pennsylvania boreal conifer forests and their bird communities: past, present, and future potential.”

* Sarah E. Pabian and Margaret C. Brittingham, Penn State University – “Complex relationships between forest songbirds and soil conditions.”

* Scott H. Stoleson, U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, Irvine, PA – “Does habitat choice in the post-breeding season affect physiological condition of forest-interior songbirds?”

* Stephanie Wright and Robert Curry – the paper on chickadee vocalizations for which Stephanie won the Alexander Wilson Prize.

Four poster presentations featured Pennsylvanians among the authors:

* Margret I. Hatch, Penn State Worthington-Scranton, and Robert J. Smith, University of Scranton – “Annual variation in arrival of long-distance migrants and a comparison of first capture dates and condition between verified breeders and presumed migrants.”

* Anne Lugg, W. Brown, D. Alexander, M. Zuefle, and T. Underwood, Kutztown University – the House Wren study for which Anne won the student award.

* Ashley Rathman and William P. Brown, Kutztown University, and Roland R. Roth, University of Delaware – the Wood Thrush paper for which Ashley won a Travel Award.

* Susan B. Smith, Villanova University – “An assessment of refueling rates and diet of songbirds during migratory stopover at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory.”

—Paul Hess
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Annual Meeting in Bedford – An Overview

In the last PSO newsletter we wrote, “Plans are underway for our 2011 meeting at the Quality Inn in Bedford, May 20-22.” Well, the bad luck we had last year has followed us to Bedford, but thanks to Shonah Hunter, everything has been handled well and we’re back on track.

In mid-February we received the news that the Quality Inn in Bedford, where we had planned to hold our meeting and banquet, had closed its restaurant. With some quick work, Shonah Hunter got the meeting rescheduled at a new location. Friday’s business meeting, the afternoon presentations on Saturday, and our evening banquet will be held at the Bedford County Elks Country Club. Our host organizations are the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society and the Bedford County Bird and Nature Club. See the enclosed registration form for suggested overnight accommodations in the Bedford area.

The heights of the Allegheny Front, often overlooked as the Eastern Continental Divide through Pennsylvania, will provide the backdrop for our Bedford County annual meeting. Outings will target a wide variety of habitats. The Front itself includes forested and bog habitats that provide a niche for a wide variety of wood warblers and thrushes. The Bedford Valley below encompasses edge, wetland, and grassland habitat. The large reservoir at

Shawnee State Park and the Juniata River support additional biodiversity.

One of the highlights of the field trips will be Dunning’s Creek Wetlands. Meeting participants will be allowed access to this remarkable private wetland, which includes a wildlife preserve established by our 2006 PSO Conservation Award winner Tom Dick. Other field trip locations will include Shawnee State Park, Blue Knob State Park, Living Waters Conference Center, Bedford Springs Resort, and the Juniata River Walk. Because of the remarkable biodiversity, these outings should yield high species counts.

The Golden Eagle research work of our 2011 Conservation Award winners, the story of Dunning’s Creek Wetlands, and conservation research efforts regarding the Allegheny Front, led by Kim Van Fleet, will be the subjects covered in the afternoon and banquet presentations.

Does your spouse or significant other have interests other than birding? Bring him or her along to enjoy a variety of activities which are available in the Bedford area. The newly restored Bedford Springs Omni Resort and Old Bedford Village are nearby. Check out the website www.BedfordCounty.net for additional ideas.

Annual Meeting Field Trips Planned

Dunnings Creek Wetlands and White-tail Wetlands

A restored wetland with two private parcels totaling 465 acres, the Dunning’s Creek Wetland complex includes forests, hawthorn thickets, grasslands, marshes, streams, and ponds. This area should yield at least 100 species, although shorebirds can be wild cards as they can come through anytime from the beginning of May to the first week in June. The variety of habitat is good for waterfowl, rails, flycatchers, warblers, and sparrows. With luck, expect to find Golden-winged and Worm-eating Warblers as they are nesters. Barn Owl is another possibility. Possible raptors include Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Am. Kestrel, and Bald Eagle. The terrain is mainly flat. Participants on this outings should be prepared for a long walk and wet conditions.

Blue Knob State Park

High atop the Allegheny Front with the peak at the ski

resort at 3,146 feet, is the second highest elevation in Pennsylvania. An extensive trail system through ridgetop forest habitat also provides scenic views. Wood warblers and vireos will be the dominant targets. Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers abound. At times we’ll be looking down at birds in the canopy. We’ll hope for coveted looks at the bird depicted on our pin, the Cerulean Warbler. This outing offers the best chance for a Black Bear sighting. Sturdy footwear is necessary.

Shawnee State Park

We will explore a variety of habitats at this 3,983 acre multi-purpose state park. In addition to the 451-acre reservoir that may support a pair of nesting Bald Eagles, the park has substantial woodlands, a wetland, streams, and some small parcels of grassland. Expect a large variety of nesting and migrating passerines. While we will drive to the various habitat locations, also plan to walk on mostly flat terrain.

Living Waters Camp and Conference Center

Our outing will begin at the Pioneer Camping area, located on a wooded hillside above a scenic valley, home to Shawnee Creek. The hiking trails are moderate in difficulty and traverse a variety of habitats. The valley and hillsides are great locations for migrating and nesting warblers, with Northern Parula a specialty of the area. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers, Ovenbirds, and Wood Thrush are common nesters. Wildflower enthusiasts should consider this outing. Also, as time allows we'll visit the nearby Buffalo farm to look for nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers. For further information, click on the Google Map Link on the right side of <http://www.livingwaterscamp.org/about.html>

Omni Bedford Springs

"Birdies" abound on the golf course, but we will stick to easy and moderate trails to bird the wilder aspects of the resort. The wooded hillsides above Shober's Run and forested areas behind the resort are good habitats for migrating songbirds. We will search for Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Worm-eating Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. Belted Kingfishers, Great Blue Herons, Louisiana Waterthrush, and an occasional Osprey

can be seen along Shober's Run.

<http://www.omnihotels.com/FindAHotel/BedfordSprings/MeetingFacilities/ResortMap.aspx>

Raystown Branch of the Juniata River at Lutzville

We will park at the historic Woolen Mill and follow an interpretive trail along the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River, keeping an eye out for Bald Eagles, Osprey, Northern Parulas, and Louisiana Waterthrush. After crossing the river via a bridge to an abandoned railroad bed, we will take an easy walk along the scenic river to an area that attracts Yellow-breasted Chats and Golden-winged Warblers, as well as other warblers and flycatchers. We should also find the flashy American Redstart and brightly colored Baltimore Oriole as we retrace our steps along the river's edge. See photo at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Juniata_Woolen_Mill_and_Newry_Manor.jpg

Bedford County Driving Tour

Pre-meeting scouting will determine whether we need to visit other locations to maximize our species count. Details will be provided at our business meeting Friday evening.

Gary Edwards to Receive Poole Award

The 2011 Earl Poole Award will be given to Gary Edwards. Gary's passion for ornithology spans nearly three decades! The list of his accomplishments is large; some of the accomplishments are detailed below.

Gary was a founding member of the Seneca Rocks chapter of the Audubon Society in 1983 and became its first president. He has served in many other capacities in the organization. He also acts as a liaison with Bartramian Audubon.

He has led many birding field trips and conducts many ornithological surveys (Raptors, Nighthawks, Grassland Birds, Bald Eagles, and Chimney Swifts). He compiled bird lists for both Oil Creek State Park and Two Mile Run County Park. He was a coordinator for both the 1st and 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas Projects. He has been the compiler for Venango County bird reports since the first Atlas Project.

Gary has conducted research with Clarion University and is co-author of an article on grassland habitat and birds which will be published this year. He also is the web-master for the Venango County Birds website.

He was instrumental in planning the Oil Region Bird Festival and has given many presentations on birds to various groups including community organizations, school classes from elementary up to and including college, and other bird clubs.

Gary was also a leader in converting the grassland at Piney Tract in Clarion County into SGL 330. He continues to meet with habitat managers and other parties to ensure that the habitat needs for grassland birds are met.

For further information:

<http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/>

<http://www.csonline.net/gedwards/>

Please join us at the May meeting in Bedford to thank Gary for his tremendous contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology and to honor a very deserving Poole Award winner.

– John Fedak, Awards Committee Chairperson
PSO Vice President

Golden Eagle Project to Be Recognized at PSO Meeting

The Conservation Award for 2011 will be presented to the Golden Eagle Project, a joint venture between Powdermill Avian Research Center and its GIS Lab, Pennsylvania State University, and West Virginia University.

The project's goals are to monitor the migratory movements of eastern Golden Eagles along the migration corridors through selected Pennsylvania mountain ridges. The birds are fitted with GPS telemetry devices to allow remote monitoring of their movements in great detail. The highly precise information gathered over time can then be used to make scientific recommendations on the development of wind power to reduce the risk it poses to

Golden Eagles and other soaring migratory birds of prey.

Accepting the award for Powdermill Avian Research Center and its GIS Lab will be Mike Lanzone and Trish Miller, also of Penn State. Accepting the award for West Virginia University will be Dr. Todd Katzner.

We hope you'll join us at the May meeting in Bedford where these awards will be given.

– John Fedak, Awards Committee Chairman
PSO Vice President

PSO's 22nd Annual Meeting

Bedford Elks Country Club

937 South Richard St.
Bedford , PA 15522

Friday, May 20, 2011

6:00 p.m. Registration begins at Bedford Elks Country Club
6:00 p.m. Social
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

Saturday, May 21, 2011

5:30 a.m. Breakfast on your own
6:30 a.m. All outings depart from Elks
12:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
1:30 p.m. Golden Eagle Presentation by Mike Lanzone and Trish Miller at Bedford Elks
2:30 p.m. Break
3:00 p.m. Cerulean Warbler Research Project at Allegheny Front and Blue Knob by Kim Van Fleet, PA Audubon
6:00 p.m. Social at Bedford Elks Country Club
7:00 p.m. Banquet
Compilation of Bird List
Presentation of Poole Award
Presentation of Conservation Award

Silent Auction Winners

Speaker: Tom Dick, A Story of Restoration Biology That Enabled an Agricultural System to Return to What It Once Was: A Productive Wetlands

Sunday, May 22, 2011

5:30 a.m. Breakfast on your own.
6:30 a.m. Field Trips depart from Bedford Elks

It Sounds Like a What?

by Nick Kerlin

Sleigh bells. A squeaky wheelbarrow. A leaky facet. Common analogies like these have been used to help birders differentiate and identify birds by songs and calls. But are they still relevant in today's world?

Some descriptions of song examples are dated. The Northern Saw-whet Owl is a good example. Virtually every book I have read on bird identification describes the monotonous "tooting" as a saw being whetted or sharpened. How many people today have ever heard a saw being sharpened? Motorized sharpening machines now take care of that, and they sound nothing like the owl. If anyone has never experienced such a sound, how can it possibly have any meaning?

The American Bittern call is likened to that of working an old hand pump. When was the last time you cranked one of those? For that matter when did you even last see one? My most recent recollection was one that wasn't even capable of producing a sound. It was being used as a lawn ornament and had petunias growing from it!

"Clicking of keys on a manual typewriter" supposedly describes the call of the Virginia Rail. Boy, is that ancient history! I remember such machines and sounds, but I'm sure younger birders do not.

Some analogies try to relate human conditions to that of birds. Field guides tell us that Scarlet Tanagers sound "like a robin with a sore throat." Let's get real! Have you ever heard a robin with a sore throat? Do robins ever get sore throats? How would we know?

I suppose there are still places where one can experience the tinkling sound of sleigh bells and match it to the call of Horned Larks. Or that distant barking dog really is a Barred Owl calling. Some memory devices though can be downright awful. Please don't try to convince me that the

"whit" call note of one of our most beautiful singing thrushes, the Veery, sounds like a dripping facet. Let's show some respect.

Some birds seem to have simply overwhelmed any human attempt to use this comparison method. Mockingbird does best describe all the calls and sounds of this talented songster. Analogy users met their match with the Brown Thrasher, however, with some researchers reporting these birds utilizing more than 1100 song types! No wonder no comparison is attempted. I once searched a field trying to find a Northern Bobwhite that was calling, only to discover a Starling doing a perfect bobwhite imitation. As I was leaving the area, a real bobwhite flushed near my feet. Since that day I continue to wonder about trusting any calls I hear without seeing the singer.

Reverse logic can enter into all this confusion. It seems that perhaps some species should have been named because of their vocalizations but were not. If a Black-and-white Warbler sounds like a "squeaky wheelbarrow," why was it not named the Squeaky Wheelbarrow Warbler? It would be easier to remember. If Evening Grosbeak (Remember them?) calls are likened to a "chorus of amplified House Sparrows," can House Sparrows be described as making the calls of "de-amplified Evening Grosbeaks"?

I thought it was time to update all this and eliminate the confusion, but it just doesn't seem to work. I'm glad the old descriptions are still around. Modern sound analogies just don't have the same quality of appeal. I'd hate to have someone liken a call note to that of the "ping" on their incoming e-mail notification or the mishmash of ringing tones from their cell phone. Maybe some day these descriptions will change, but at least the traditional analogies are colorful enough to generate interest in another segment of birding.

Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

Including the list from the spring PSO board meeting, more than 57 Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded to persons who have allowed birders to view rare or unusual birds on their property.

The PSO Board of Directors has voted to send out the following Certificates of Appreciation for the following species:

Cattle Egret, Oliver Griswold, *Allegheny*.

Cattle Egret, Curry and Denise Wagner, *Dauphin*

Anna's Hummingbird, Renee Gery, Steve Fisher, *Berks*

Rufous Hummingbird, Gale Rosenman, *Montgomery*

(continued on page 11)

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Membership List

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PSO Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania waterfowl?

1. What is a Brewer's Duck?
2. Which of these two averages a longer bill: Blue-winged Teal or Cinnamon Teal?
3. Two ducks on our state list are members of the "stiff-tailed" group. Which species?
4. Which species is scientifically named "Theatrical theatrical"?
5. Which are our two common cavity-nesting waterfowl?

And just for fun:

6. What species is Donald Duck?

Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

(Continued from page 9)

Selasphorus sp. Hummingbird, Barbara Sullivan, *Bucks*

Bullock's Oriole, The Davies Family, *Montgomery*

Townsend's Warbler, Cobbs Creek Environmental Education Center, *Delaware*

Summer Tanager, The Landis Family, *Crawford*

White-winged Crossbill, Andy Troyer, *Crawford*

I would like to remind all county compilers and other interested parties that PSO is still awarding Certificates of Appreciation to those who allow birdwatchers on their properties to view a reported and confirmed rare bird. Please email me the dates the bird was present (first day, last day), the full name of the host, and the postal mail address.

– John Fedak
jlfedak@atlanticbb.net

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, 2011. 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)

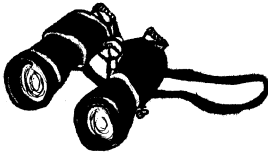
If the nominee is younger than 18, the parent/guardian must sign the following statement: In allowing my child to be nominated, I understand that PSO is providing the scholarship for my child to attend the annual meeting. The person nominating my child has my permission to transport him/her to and from the meeting and to be responsible for her/him during the annual meeting.

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 9)

1. Mallard x Gadwall hybrid (named by Audubon, who thought it was a distinct species)
2. Cinnamon Teal (although there is overlap)
3. Masked Duck and Ruddy Duck
4. Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)
5. Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser
6. Mallard. (His creator Dick Lundy didn't tell us, but an obvious candidate is the Mallard's domestic breed, a barnyard Pekin Duck.)



PSO Newsletter

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

Membership Categories:

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

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Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

c/o R. V. Higbee

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

22nd Annual Meeting: 20 - 22 May, 2011
 Bedford Elks Country Club
 937 S. Richard St., Bedford, PA 15522

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: May 6, 2011
 Name(s) for name tag (include all persons registering) _____

No. persons

Friday Social (indicate if attending) _____ No Charge

We need a fairly accurate count because of catering arrangements

Your email for an electronic receipt (please print): _____

No. persons X Cost Total \$

MEALS

Breakfast ON YOUR OWN

Lunch ON YOUR OWN

Dinner Buffet _____ \$30.00 \$_____

	No. of Persons	X	Cost =	Total \$
Registration	_____		\$30.00	_____
Spouse or guest	_____		\$25.00	_____
Children under 18	_____		\$15.00	_____
After Deadline, May 6, 2011	_____	additional	\$ 5.00	_____
Subtotal (from this side)				_____

Please Check this box if you wish a vegetarian entrée

Subtotal of meals \$_____

Subtotal from registration (other column) \$_____

GRAND TOTAL \$_____

There is no "official" hotel for this meeting but these are hotels in the area.

Please DO NOT renew your annual membership with this form.

Quality Inn Bedford. 814-623-5188
 4407 Business Route 220, Bedford, PA 15522

Check out field trip descriptions in the newsletter and on the web site
www.pabirds.org.

Hampton Inn Bedford 814-624-0101
 4235 Business Route 220, Bedford, PA 15522

Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Bedford 814-623-3444
 4436 Business Route 220, Bedford, PA 15522

Please make checks or money orders payable to PSO and mail to:
 Shonah A. Hunter, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Lock Haven University,
 Lock Haven, PA 17745

Best Western Bedford Inn 814-623-9006
 4517 Business 220, Exit 146, Pa Tpk, Bedford, PA 15522

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS: May 6, 2011.

Whitetail Wetlands Bed & Breakfast 814-839-2622
 Dunning's Creek Wetlands whitetailwetlands.com

Cancellations by you must occur before May 13, 2011. After this date,
 registration fees may be refunded, but meal costs cannot be because of catering concerns.