

PSO Pileated



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From the President's Desk.... Migration Thoughts

The breeding birds have stopped singing on the golf course; the evening bike ride has gotten quiet; and the Eastern Kingbird is gone from its perch on the telephone wire that parallels the hayfield. We just had our first cold night, and the Carolina Wrens loudly announced their return to their nightly ritual of stuffing themselves into the wicker basket on our porch. I've heard a few meows from the catbirds as I passed the multi-flora rose thicket just down the road, but most of the familiar summer sounds have suddenly quit. When did that Red-eyed Vireo finally stop its constant singing at the top of the driveway? I am getting this feeling that the grass, the trees, and all the plants are getting a bit tired. I find great pleasure in these signals that the seasons are changing as it means it's time for fall migration.

There are so many ways to enjoy the fall migration. I enjoy those PA list serve postings on watching the birds passing by the full moon and on taking in the sounds of the pre-dawn flight calls. Some day I'll give those methods more than a few minutes as I walk from the house to the garage for my morning commute to work. Also, while our house in the woods has just a small opening to the sky, I need to remember to look up for nighthawks in early September. We had them last year, so why don't we see them every year?

For some reason I always feel like the spring migration is an uphill rush that, for the birds, takes a lot of effort while the fall migration has a lazy feeling – an easy downhill coast. No rush, no frantic race to get to their wintering

grounds. For me, spring migration is a joy and a bit of easy birding. If you miss a Cape May Warbler, you don't care all that much when you have a male Scarlet Tanager singing from his perch in the snag behind the house. In the fall, however, birding requires a bit more effort as it's necessary to travel to those special spots to observe the passing migrants.

Since I'm still working for a living, my routine is to follow the weather forecast for the weekends and use that as a guide to decide whether I go to the local warbler hot spot or the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. With east winds (best condition for close views and high counts), I'm off to the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Give me a northwest flow following a cold front or an overnight rain, and I have visions of warblers dripping from the trees; so I'll stay near home to see if my dreams of another Connecticut Warbler come true.



A good look at a "gray ghost" made up for a lot.
Photo by Steve Gosser

those kettles with hundreds of raptors rising on the thermals. The weather held, but the kettles were modest. I was happy with 2,000 Broad-winged Hawks for the weekend. In addition, we did not see the flow of Bald Eagles and Ospreys that I envisioned, but a good look at a "gray ghost" made up for a lot. That weekend took me

(continued on page 4)

Featured Bird: Olive-sided Flycatcher

Contopus cooperi

by Doug Gross

CURRENT STATUS: Pennsylvania, extirpated as a breeding bird, uncommon as a passage migrant, protected under the PA Game and Wildlife Code. Federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

REASONS FOR BEING LISTED: Presently extirpated as a breeding bird, but regular migrant in the state. Listed as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird of Conservation Concern in the Northeast; Classified as *Near Threatened* by the IUCN. It also is a priority conservation species for the Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture. Loss of habitat on the wintering grounds and declines in conifer forests are among the reasons thought to be responsible for the decline. The loss of bees, wasps, and other pollinating insects that are common prey of this species may also be a factor.

POPULATION TREND: Across its range, the Olive-sided Flycatcher has experienced a significant decrease of approximately 74% from 1966 to 2005; this converts to about 3.5% per year decrease. It has declined to the extreme in Pennsylvania because it has not been documented nesting here since the 1930s, so it is considered extirpated as a breeding species in the state. It once was fairly widespread in the higher elevation forests and wetlands of Pennsylvania. This flycatcher is a regular migrant in spring and fall throughout the state.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS: The Olive-sided Flycatcher is a big boreal pewee that is larger (18-20 cm. length) and bulkier (32 - 37 grams) than the more common Eastern Wood-Pewee (*C. virens*, 15 cm. in length, 14 grams). Among the dull-colored flycatchers, it has a distinctive appearance with a tapered profile, looking bull-headed, long-winged, and short-tailed. The plumage is brownish olive with a dull white throat and belly that are framed by dark flanks, making it seem as if it is wearing a dark vest over a white shirt. When relaxed, the bird shows small white silky tufts poking out from beneath its wings. One of the best field marks is its loud ringing whistled song (quick-THREE-BEERS!) that is a characteristic sound of the boreal conifer forest. In migration they nervously call “pip-pip-pip” from their perches. Where they nest, Olive-sided Flycatchers are very persistent singers that often are the first bird heard in the morning and the last one heard at night.

BIOLOGY-NATURAL HISTORY: Described as “the Peregrine of flycatchers,” the Olive-sided Flycatcher has a commanding presence and a stereotypic way of attacking prey from a prominent perch like the larger falcon. According to Dr. George Miksch Sutton, former state ornithologist, the Olive-sided often perches prominently from “the topmost twig” where it sits in a “dignified, upright manner.” From this prominent perch, it sallies out to snatch its prey mid-air and returns to its perch. They primarily forage in the forest canopy on a variety of flying insects. It is among the few birds that regularly catch and consume members of the wasp and bee family (Hymenoptera). Decreases in the numbers of bees and wasps may be a factor in its decline. The Olive-sided Flycatcher is one of the feistiest and most tyrannical of the Tyrannidae (American flycatcher family). They are particularly intolerant of raptors or any potential nest predators such as a squirrels, jays, or crows.



Olive-sided Flycatchers often perch prominently from a branch or snag at the edge of the woods.

Photo by Brian Sullivan

The feistiness of the Olive-sided Flycatcher continues in migration when they often call loudly from tree branches and chase other birds including hawks away from their favorite perches. The long-winged Olive-sided Flycatcher migrates long distances from its northern breeding ground to its wintering ground in southern Central America and northwestern South America. Most birds spend the winter in the northern Andes Mountains. It has the longest migration of any tyrant flycatcher. Spring migration may begin in Pennsylvania in the first week of May, but more regularly occurs in late May and early June, sometimes as late as the second week of June. Some may even be migrating in mid-June, lingering in good habitat for nesting. The nesting season begins later than most species, many still migrating in early to mid-June (McWilliams and Brauning 2000). Fall migration starts early with some observed in the last week of July, but it is more likely to be observed in the last week of August and in September. A few can travel through as late as early October. Migrants are most frequently observed at ridge-top hawk-watching sites but can be found in a variety of places where there are trees. At one time, fairly large flocks could be observed in migration at Pymatuning, but now most observations are of single birds.

Like most tyrant flycatchers, the Olive-sided Flycatcher is

monogamous. For a bird of its size, pairs occupy a large territory – up to 40 to 45 hectares (100 – 111 acres) and generally around 25 – 50 acres. Females arrive on the nesting ground later than males and tend to forage closer to the nest than their mates. The female primarily, if not exclusively, builds a loosely-formed, cup-shaped nest generally out on a limb of a conifer tree, far off the ground. The nests are generally well-hidden in a cluster of live needles and twigs. Pairs nest only once but will re-nest if the first attempt fails. The female usually lays three eggs, but sometimes two, four, or five. The pair divides up the parental duties. Only the female broods the nestlings, but the males help feed the nestlings and fledglings. Both incubation and nestling period last 15 – 19 days, but 16 days is the norm according to some observers. Nesting period may vary according to local temperatures that can be variable in the far north or at high elevations. The young apparently depend on the adults for food for about a week after leaving the nest. Its rigorous nest defense certainly helps to avoid the cowbird parasitism that affects other forest songbirds.

PREFERRED HABITAT: Many Olive-sided Flycatchers migrate through Pennsylvania on their way to their wintering grounds in the fall and on the way to their northern breeding grounds in the spring. They often perch prominently from a branch or snag at the edge of the woods or in a fence row, sometimes at the edge of a pond or cutting.

When it nested in the state, the Olive-sided Flycatcher was found in higher elevation forests and wetlands usually over 1500 feet. A characteristic member of the North American boreal conifer forest bird community, it is most strongly associated with the northern conifer forests that extend into Pennsylvania and down the Appalachian Mountains at higher elevations. Its loud song was commonly heard in summer in places like Pymatuning Swamp, North Mountain, the Pocono Mountains, and what is now known as Allegheny National Forest. Olive-sided Flycatchers nest in both mature forests and forest edge or burned over areas. They are often found in bogs, semi-open forest, and at the edges of wetlands, ponds, and forest. Territories invariably include conifers such as spruces, tamaracks, hemlocks, and firs, but also include deciduous trees such as maples, aspens, and mountain ash. The first documented nesting in the state was near Hazelton, Luzerne County, in an area that has been converted from forest to strip mines. The last time it was documented nesting in Pennsylvania was in 1932 when it was found in Pymatuning Swamp, a location that now is under water in Pymatuning Lake.

In recent decades there have been scattered reports of Olive-sided Flycatchers at various locations during the summer but no confirmed nesting. Recent summer observations of singing Olive-sided Flycatchers have

occurred in a tornado blow-down in an old growth forest, in burned over mountain forests, in black spruce swamps, and at pond edges. The recently occupied locations are consistent with the former breeding range in the state including Pike, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Tioga, McKean, and Warren counties. A particularly intriguing report of a territorial Olive-sided Flycatcher came from the old growth hemlock – beech forest in Tionesta Scenic Area of Allegheny National Forest in 1993. The mature forest was more open than usual because of the damage done by a storm and by the defoliation caused by a caterpillar outbreak. The loss of conifers from parts of its range has been linked to declines in population in parts of its range, but there seems to be adequate habitat in Pennsylvania for some nesting to occur. The closest locations where this species has nested recently are within 100 miles (160 km) of the state boundary in the Catskill Mountains. It also nests in New York's Adirondack Mountains and Tug Hill region and formerly in the Taconic Mountains. The Olive-sided Flycatcher has declined in New York in recent decades. Like Pennsylvania, there is unoccupied habitat in New York leading us to believe that the greatest challenges for this species are on its wintering grounds.

(Please contact Doug Gross for the complete bibliography as it is too lengthy to print here.)

Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. In the most recent report in *Pennsylvania Birds*, our Ornithological Records Committee singled out one raptor species for a high non-acceptance rate because of poor documentation. Which species?
2. Among the Indigo Bunting, Lark Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, Painted Bunting, and Snow Bunting, which is actually classified as a sparrow?
3. According to annual Breeding Bird Survey results, which two woodpeckers have increased most greatly in Pennsylvania since 1966?
4. Of our usual Green-winged Teal and its rare vagrant subspecies from Eurasia, which male has a more prominent pale border around its green face patch?
5. In his 2010-2011 winter summary, Berks County compiler Rudy Keller told how birders helped an unusual wintering bird by donating jars of peanut butter to feed it. What species?

(Answers on page 7)

Feathered Tales

by John Fedak

The other day one of my students asked why I like birds. The question seems simple, but I have found that my answer to that question has changed, depending upon when I was asked, what I was doing, and/or who was asking. When I began birding, it was just for fun; then it became a challenge and a listing competition of listing. When I was teaching at Redbank Valley, my answer always was “I bird, therefore I am!” During the Breeding Bird Atlas, my excuse was that I was responsible for such a large area, and I needed to bird to add to the data collected for the atlas.

Lately, I have thought about it quite a bit. Up in the snow covered hinterlands of the northern tier of Pennsylvania (a slight exaggeration), we recently formed the Allegheny Highlands Bird Club. It is a local group drawing members from the surrounding counties and from two states. Before the club formed, I noticed that although my interest in birds was still very strong, my motivation to do anything about it was lacking. Since my children have been born, I can count the number of “chases” I have gone on with both hands, and I don’t need any hands at all to count the number of trips planned with the specific purpose of birding to see life birds. Please do not think I am blaming my children – I am not. But when you have a family, it cannot be about the self, and you do need to prioritize! I have managed to increase my lists, county, state and North American, but at a fraction of the pace of a snail. Since we all at least come from families, I think you can see, birds were not on the top of any lists of things that needed to be done.

I was almost starting to see the point of people who couldn’t understand how you can go to see the same species of birds, day after day, year after year.

Then, I took my children to the first meeting of the new Allegheny Highlands Bird Club. I have to admit, even for my children, they were as well-behaved as any 9 and 10 year old can be. After the meeting, my daughter asked me to take her birding, so we went to see the local Osprey. Then, my son wanted to go! He came along and provided entertainment while we had a slow banding day in the Allegheny National Forest. Then my daughter wanted to go again, and then my son, and so forth.... I began to see the birds through the eyes of my children.

Not only that, but I began to feel the urge, the need, the overwhelming desire to be more involved in birding again. Recently, we took a trip across the state line to Randolph, New York. While looking for a very shy (on that day) Black-bellied Whistling Duck, I pointed out the Pied-billed Grebes, the Common Gallinules, the Wood Ducks, the Belted Kingfisher, and so many other birds to my family. When my son located an Osprey carrying a fish, his excitement was intoxicating! We did see the duck...and it was not as anticlimactic for him as the Anna’s Hummingbird was last winter or the mile distant Snowy Owl the winter before. But the Osprey was all he could talk about.

So, I have found another reason, to add to the many I have, to bird. I can now say that I bird for my children. I bird with my children. I bird to teach my children. I bird because of my children. It is a legacy that I would like to see them continue if they choose. I bird both through my eyes and through theirs. I bird because I am addicted to their energy, their enthusiasm, and their joy. Maybe now I should say “I bird because I am a father, a teacher, and a nature lover.” Maybe, more simply, I should say, “I bird because I want to!”

From the President’s Desk

Migration Thoughts *(continued from page 1)*

back to Bedford County and the great memories of the 2011 PSO annual meeting. Driving to the hawk watch on Sunday morning, I was diverted by the sound of a Common Yellowthroat’s raspy chip note. I



“I couldn’t resist pishing for a good look and a picture.”

Photo by Tom Kuehl

couldn’t resist pishing for a good look and a picture. A few Ruby-throated Hummingbirds joined them. I am easy to please!

Best wishes for your fall migration birding.

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A Whole Lot of Broad-wings

by Arlene Koch

On a recent mid-September morning I squired a group of what turned out to be novice birders around our property. Before they arrived, I didn't know anything about their birding abilities, although the woman who scheduled them said that she and her husband had gone to Chincoteague in August and saw some "incredible" birds. So I figured that the group at least knew birding basics and I could just tell them where to walk and to check in with me before they left so that I would know what they saw. But was I ever wrong.

I found that I'd have to spend the next three hours pointing out birds and answering questions when I rhetorically asked the aforementioned woman if she wanted me to walk around with them and she answered "Yes" when I thought she would say "No." She explained that they were all beginners, which was blatantly obvious later when a bird was spotted perched in a small tree, and most of them didn't know what it was. When I told them it was a mockingbird, everyone's binoculars were immediately raised, and someone said she thought mockingbirds were bigger because they looked bigger in the book.

I resisted asking "Bigger than what?" or "In what book?" because I didn't want to make any of them feel uncomfortable. And I tried to make myself remember when I, too, knew almost nothing about birds. I only began looking at birds to take my mind off a crying, colicky six-month-old and the task of milking cows twice a day.

As we walked the fields, the sky above was clear and cloudless. It was prime Broad-winged Hawk migration time, but finding Broad-wings in a sky like that is almost impossible. So I focused my attention on what we could

see – a kettle of Turkey and Black Vultures. Almost all birders with any kind of experience know that there are two kinds of vultures in Pennsylvania, but these people didn't. So I started pointing out the differences and said that the tail of a Black Vulture looks like it was cut off with a big pair of scissors. And it was right then that I spotted a few Broad-winged Hawks next to the vultures, so I followed them a bit and found a kettle forming.

The Broad-wings in this kettle were low enough for everyone to see – a good thing because most of them in the group had binoculars that were small and, frankly put, not very good. But the kettle kept getting bigger and bigger, making it easier to see, and eventually I estimated it to contain around 1000 birds.



Steve Gosser
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The Broad-wings were low enough for everyone to see.

Gosser

Photo by Steve
Steve stood motionless in the field watching the hawk spectacle, it felt like time was

standing still along with us. No one moved, everyone's head was pointed up, and no one said a word.

When finally the last Broad-wings set their wings and broke out of the hot air thermal, everyone began talking at the same time. One man said, "I've never seen anything like that in my life," and I replied that perhaps he never would again.

Witnessing the excitement of people who never dreamed that things like this took place was enormously gratifying. But later after they all left, I realized that the person in the group who benefited the most was me. Sometimes those of us who've been birding for a long time get blasé, and it takes fresh, unadulterated eyes to reopen our own. And in retrospect I now know that every Song Sparrow I had to identify that day was more than worth it.

Did You Know That?

Our small flycatchers are in the genus *Empidonax*. What does it mean? According to *10,001 Titillating Tidbits of Avian Trivia*, it's Greek for "king of the gnats" or "king of the small insects." Some authorities believed the members of this genus fed extensively on mosquitoes and that *Empidonax* was derived from the Greek word for mosquito.

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

Pennsylvania Strong in State of the Birds 2011

The latest State of the Birds Report features the public lands and waters that support birds. This report is readily available on the internet and has reached a large and varied audience through its partnerships across the continent. Each State of the Birds report not only keeps everyone up to date with conservation issues and developments and has a focus for looking at current issues that threaten birds, but it also reveals opportunities and some successes.

One of the featured sections of the State of the Birds is a section on the initiative to public lands. These managed or protected properties are the key for habitat-based conservation. Most of the large and important bird habitats are on public properties. Private properties are also keys to success, but the public properties usually form the heart of the important bird habitat, setting a tone for a region.

Pennsylvania is highlighted in the state lands section as part of the Golden-winged Warbler recovery in the Appalachian Mountains. This Neotropical migrant has declined dramatically, probably as a result of a lack of disturbance regime in the forested landscape. Much of the early successional and thicket habitat has either grown in by natural succession or has been replaced by development. Fortunately, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Department of Conservation of Natural Resources have cooperated with initiatives to study and monitor this species. State land offers many opportunities for the intense kinds of management necessary to recover species that need disturbed habitats. Golden-wings live in the same kind of scrubby woods preferred by game species including Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, rabbits, and snowshoe hares. Because of this, it is fairly easy to find partners with other wildlife advocates. Many of the basic silviculture practices used by state agencies include shelterwood cuts that remove much but not all of the tree canopy.

With the Breeding Bird Atlas data fresh for review, we have plenty of evidence and personal experience with the Golden-winged Warbler's decline, not only in numbers but in range. With our mandate to recover the Golden-winged Warbler, we must be aggressive in making the forest look young and "messed up" a bit. With new Best Management Practices developed by Indiana University of Pennsylvania and American Bird Conservancy, we can now be more confident about how we create this habitat. The mosaic of vegetation that produces a good Golden-winged Warbler neighborhood takes some commitment and some artistry to create. With the Game Commission owning more than 700,000 acres of forest that could be managed for Golden-wings, we have great potential to make a big difference. To read more about the story, see page 43 of the 2011 report. To read and download the State of the Birds report, go to <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>

Birds of North America Update

The huge volume of the *Birds of North America* is being gradually updated, revised, and modernized into a web-based format. These accounts for more than 716 species that occur in North America are now a standard reference on the continent's avifauna. The website includes easy-to-use features, making it quicker to find the information you seek more efficiently. It also has more of a multimedia approach with many more images, sounds, and video recordings available.

As part of this publication update, I have revised and updated the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher account of the *Birds of North America* on-line reference. The courtesy review site is:

<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/566/articles/introduction>

I was inspired to work on this publication by spending many days afield searching for and studying the "moss tyrant" in Pennsylvania's mountains. It is still one of the most poorly studied and understood species in North America. The first Breeding Bird Atlas discoveries of this very rare nesting bird snagged my interest, and I have continued to learn more about this fascinating and understudied bird ever since.

The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is a particularly important bird to study for our agency because it is a state Endangered species. All nesting populations in the state are on public property. I used some of my research results and experience with the birds in PA to improve the account. Also, my visits to its wintering range helped me better understand issues there, and I added to the account more about its Central America wintering grounds and

migration. For fun and research, I have found Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at several Mayan archeological zones including Tikal, Palenque, Bonampak, Yaxchilan, Bonampak, Copan, Caracol, Lubaantun, and Nim Li Punit. These archeological zones are often ecological parks and birding hotspots. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are pretty common in northern Honduras and the Lacandon rainforest of Chiapas and Guatemala, part of the “Mayan World.”

For the years of study, I have mostly worked alone but have benefited from the assistance of a few birders and ornithologists. I listed many of these in the acknowledgments of the BNA account. Support by the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and PA Game Commission have been instrumental in keep the study going. And, I also have benefited from the energy and enthusiasm of the birding community in its support of the Breeding Bird Atlases, eBird, the Special Areas Project, and all the other birding “citizen science” projects that have blossomed over the last few decades. Thanks to all of you who have contributed information about the northern birds that live part of their lives in our state. I get my subscription to BNA through my AOU membership, but others subscribe to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology or the BNA. I have also noticed that the Gray Catbird account was revised in May by Pennsylvania ornithologists Robert J. Smith and Margret I. Hatch. Pennsylvania is very involved with this ambitious and evolving resource.

Good Birding!

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Answers to Bird Quiz (page 3)

1. Mississippi Kite
2. Lark Bunting
3. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-bellied Woodpecker
4. The Eurasian *crecca* subspecies
5. Yellow-throated Warbler



This Yellow-bellied Flycatcher nest was found in Sullivan County.

Photo by Doug Gross



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher nestlings were photographed in Sullivan County.

Photo by Doug Gross



This fledgling Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was at Coalbed Swamp in Wyoming County.

Photo by Doug Gross

Ornithological Literature Notes

Pennsylvania's pioneering Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) is a decade old now, and it is well known not only to participating birders but also to any PSO member who reads Greg Grove's annual reports of WRS results in *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Greg's latest report for winter 2010-2011 mentions an important link between our WRS counts and raptor conservation. On WRS routes from 2001 to 2008, the data show that Northern Harrier increases were strongly associated with expansion of farmland acreage set aside in the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

The link is shown in a paper by Andrew Wilson, Margaret Brittingham, and Greg, published in 2010 in the *Journal of Field Ornithology* (81:361-372). Funding for the study came from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Penn State University's Intercollege Graduate Degree Program in Ecology, and Penn State's School of Forest Resources.

A description of CREP may interest those unfamiliar with the program. It is administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency in partnership with state governments and sometimes also with private groups. The program provides farmers with financial incentives to set aside rather than conduct farming on environmentally sensitive acreage. Among the conservation benefits are restoration of grassland, woodland, and wetland habitats for wildlife, control of soil erosion, and protection of streams, lakes, and rivers from sedimentation and agricultural runoff.

Pennsylvania's program focuses particularly on maintaining habitat for ground-nesting birds associated with farmlands and susceptible to nest destruction by haying and mowing during the breeding season. Many of these species have been declining drastically—for example, Upland Sandpiper; Savannah, Grasshopper, Vesper, and Henslow's Sparrows; Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark.

The Northern Harrier belongs to that worrisome list as well, not only as a nester but also as a winterer. In the winter, vegetation on CREP lands may improve the numbers of small mammals that are crucial to the harrier's diet. Wilson and his coauthors found a weaker, though still statistically significant relationship, between CREP lands and numbers of Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, and American Kestrels—species also relying heavily on small mammals in winter.

The authors recognize that other factors could influence these trends including variations in weather, population cycles of prey, and shifts in the raptors' winter ranges. Greg notes in his *Pennsylvania Birds* article that a downturn in harriers on WRS routes since 2008 might reflect the recent cold and snowy winters. In any case, the statistics offer evidence that CREP lands have a significant role in raptor ecology—and we can take pride that our WRS efforts have an essential role in obtaining the necessary data.

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Annual PSO Meeting

Plans are underway for next year's meeting which will be held in the Lock Haven area. The meeting will begin on Friday, May 18, 2012, with a social hour followed by a business meeting where we elect officers.

On Saturday morning, the 19th, a great variety of field trips will begin at 6:30 and last till lunch time. We'll return to our meeting place after lunch for several afternoon sessions. The topics are always interesting and educational.

Saturday evening, we'll hold our annual banquet followed by a presentation and the compilation of the bird list.

Sunday morning after an early breakfast, we'll have another opportunity to attend field trips. The meeting will end after the Sunday morning field trip.

Our annual meetings are always a lot of fun. It's an opportunity to meet other birders, make new friends, and learn more about the birds. Please consider joining us!

Kids Talk on Birds

by Nick Kerlin

Anyone else remember Art Linkletter from the 1950s TV show – *House Party*? He also wrote a series of books entitled *Kids Say the Darndest Things*. Based on my birding/banding presentations to school groups, he was right. They can really come up with some great comments. I'd like to share some of the best ones with you. Many of them relate directly to our own birding ideas. Some are just plain “all kid.” Take note that the spelling is as copied from the obligatory thank you notes all the students had to write.

“... the female gray catbird was so soft. It felt like a cat, all soft and smooth....I love the birds. Even though I love the cats, too.”
OK, this is manageable.

“Don't worry about the cardenal. I have a paraket at home, and boy do they nip!”
Thanks, but it still hurt!

“My favorite bird was the blackcap (chickadee) It was so tiny and presious, just by looking at it I felt it's bones would break!”
Hope not, but you are right, their size is more evident when seen up close.

“I don't think I've ever seen any bird up that close. It was an amazing expeirience.”
Birds do that to us all.

“I think I might be a bird bander sometime. I love animals, but birds aren't my favorite.”
Huh?

“My eyes lit up when I saw the brightly colored goldfinch.”
I'll bet everyone remembers the first bird they saw that made the same impression.

“My dad set up a couple bird feeders..and he looks for birds with banacklers. One day he saw a couple squirrels.”

He'd do better with binoculars. Those banacklers were invented by squirrels.

“... we're researching birds ...was so cool because the black-capped chickadee is the bird I'm researching and it was so awesome to see one.”

Yep, birds are everywhere, if only everyone would take the time to look and enjoy.

“I also get to see a lot of birds on Sunday, because my grandma is a bird lover.”

Yeah, grandma! She's leading this kid the right way to birding – by example.

“I wasn't here when you presented the birds. I think I would like it if I had been here.”

What can I say? This kid has great manners.

“I used to keep a list of birds I saw, but my room sucked it up.”

Yep, rooms are like that. So are vehicles, computers, age, etc.

“I can't believe you know what kind of bird (you see). I don't know what kind of bird I see all the time.”

Neither do I, but sometimes I get lucky.

“The sparrow was cute and very pretty. I really liked learning about birds.”

An interest that you can have all your life.

These were some of the most humorous ones, but many more expounded upon their recollection of other bird topics we had talked about. I am always amazed by how much kids seem to remember, even weeks later when some of the letters were written. Seems to me that the birding community will be well represented in future years.



“My eyes lit up when I saw the brightly colored goldfinch.”

Photo by Margaret Higbee

Two Pennsylvanians Appointed to *Birding* Magazine

Two Pennsylvanians have been appointed to editing positions at the American Birding Association's *Birding* magazine. Amy Davis is the new editor of the "Sightings" column, in which rare and unusual reports are summarized for Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. Tom Johnson is the new editor of the "Photo Quiz," in which birders are challenged to make difficult identifications.

Ted Floyd, the *Birding* editor (a Pennsylvania native), announced the appointments online on the ABA blog <<http://blog.aba.org>>, and most of the following information is taken from his announcement.

Amy, who studied comparative literature at the University of Pennsylvania, calls herself "an adventurous birder with an obsessive passion for observing and documenting rarities." She and her husband, Jeff, maintain a Flickr site devoted to their photos of rare birds, which have appeared in many print and online birding publications, including *Birding* and *BirdWatching*.

A resident of Chester County, Amy collects data for bird surveys locally and throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Some of the surveys in which Davis has participated include the Western Chester County and West Chester Christmas Bird Counts, the New Jersey Audubon Society's Piedmont and Migratory Shorebird surveys, and breeding bird atlases in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and West Virginia.

In addition to finding, chasing, counting, photographing, and writing about birds, she enjoys drawing and painting them with her students. She works for the Devereux Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides services to people with special needs.

Tom is a recent graduate of Cornell University, is a member of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (as well as the New York State Avian Records Committee), and has written a number of major articles in *Pennsylvania Birds* on bird identification and distribution.

Recently, he has enjoyed surveying birds on U.S. National Park Service lands in Arizona, counting seabirds and mammals on a U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration cruise in the Gulf Stream, and monitoring songbird migration for New Jersey's Cape May Bird Observatory.

Two of Tom's recent articles on *eBird* describe seabirds on the Gulf Stream cruise and summarize the seabirds that visited our mid-Atlantic coast in Hurricane Irene's passage:

http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/noaa_tbj_201107
<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/hurricane-irene-redux>

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Jon Dunn Scheduled to Speak in PA

Jon Dunn, Chief Consultant/Editor for all six editions of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, is scheduled to speak in Indiana at the Todd Bird Club meeting on Tuesday, December 6, and in Pittsburgh at the Three Rivers Birding Club on Wednesday, December 7. The topic in Indiana is shorebird identification; in Pittsburgh, sparrow ID. Meetings at both locations are free and open to the public. The sixth edition of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* will be published next month.

The Todd Bird Club meetings are held at Blue Spruce County Park Lodge, 1128 Blue Spruce Road, just off Route 110 near the town of Ernest. Three Rivers Birding Club meets at the Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue, in Shadyside. Both meetings begin at 7:30, but

attendees are invited to come early to socialize.

Jon Dunn is the co-writer and host of the two-video set *Large and Small Gulls of North America*, as well as coauthor (with Kimball Garrett) of *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* and the Peterson series' *Field Guide to Warblers*. In addition, he coauthored *National Geographic Birding Essentials* (with Jonathan Alderfer) and *Gulls of the Americas* in the Peterson Reference Guide series (with Steve N. G. Howell).

Jon is a member of the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union and the ABA Checklist Committee and has served more than 20 years on the California Bird Records Committee.

Close Encounter with a Kinglet

by Mike Fialkovich

On October 4, 2011, after arriving home from work, I noticed some bird activity, so I took a few minutes to see if any migrants were among the Carolina Chickadees working to extract seeds from the cones of several Eastern Hemlocks in my yard.

I saw what I thought may have been a warbler moving around the trees but had a difficult time getting a good view. It called and I realized it was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Certainly this was not the first kinglet to visit my yard, but they are always welcome visitors. The bird eventually came into view for very brief moments but then flew across the yard into my crab apple tree, which was almost leafless. This tree loses leaves all summer long, so it's nearly bare by October.

Standing on the edge of the porch I enjoyed close views of the bird hopping around the branches, picking off unseen morsels of food, hovering and going about its business.

It caught sight of a white moth and gave chase—right towards me! I flinched as the bird pursued the moth, just missing my left arm by about two inches. I felt the rush of air made by the tiny bird's wings as it flew past. It landed on the lattice on the side of the porch and flew to a nearby shrub to continue searching for food.

In all the excitement of this split second encounter, I don't know if the bird caught the moth.

A Fishing Crow, Not a Fish Crow

by Lee Carnahan

I was on the north shore of Yellow Creek Lake near the boat launch at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 24. While scanning the lake, I noticed an American Crow flying very low to the water. That seemed a tad odd, so I followed the crow in my binoculars. As it entered the nearby inlet, it spread its wings, slowed, and appeared to be planning to

land on the surface of the water. That really got my attention; however, only its head and beak touched the water. When it raised its head, I spotted a 1"- 1.5" silvery minnow in its bill. The crow then gained altitude and flew into the trees out of sight.

Powdermill Nature Reserve Receives Gold LEED Certification

Carnegie Museum of Natural History's environmental research center, Powdermill Nature Reserve, has just recently received Gold level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for the 2006 renovation and expansion to its Nature Center. The certification is granted by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). According to USGBC, an organization's participation in the voluntary and technically rigorous LEED process demonstrates leadership, innovation, and environmental stewardship.

The museum worked to incorporate sustainable materials into the building plans and to recycle and reduce construction waste.

The \$5-million-dollar Nature Center project added 10,300 square feet to the existing 3,200 square-foot-building while including a number of eco-technologies. The centerpiece of the renovation is western Pennsylvania's first Marsh Machine, an ecological wastewater treatment system that uses plants and bacteria to purify and recycle wastewater from the toilets and sinks for non-potable uses. Other technologies include: special HVAC and lighting systems to reduce the amount of electricity generated by fossil fuels; renewable or recycled materials utilized throughout the building, such as insulation, walls, carpets, and sinks; and a permeable parking lot that allows rainwater to return to the soil.

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