

PSO Pileated



From the President's Desk....

Another annual meeting weekend is over. It is weird when you consider that we have been through the process of planning it for more than a year and all that hard work is finished. You would think that we could kick back and relax, right? Not really. Plans are already in the works for the annual meeting for 2014. More information will be provided soon.

I extend special thanks to all the PSO members, and Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon members for making the weekend so memorable. The meeting included interesting presentations, delicious food, awesome awards, great friends, and fabulous birding. There were also excellent vendors and many silent auction items.

I had a great time. It's strange. Every time I have attended an annual meeting, I think to myself how wonderful it was. Then the next time I go, I think to myself how wonderful it was. I honestly have never been to an annual meeting that I didn't enjoy.

I have been to meetings in both rural and in urban areas, but no matter where they are, they are always wonderful!

One of the emphases of the last meeting was getting our youth involved and out birding. The youth scholarship winner was a tremendous plus to the meeting, Jarrett Groshek, was knowledgeable, polite, and a joy to bird with.

Next year's meeting will be June 6, 7, and 8. Make plans now to attend while the dates are fresh in your mind. Write it on your calendars, put a reminder on your phone or computer, write yourself a note; just plan to attend. It will be held in Bradford – McKean County, about as far north in the state that you can go without entering New York!

Field trips are already being planned. Help has been enlisted from the Allegheny Highlands Bird Club. Accommodations are being arranged. Target birds are being staked out. In a few words, it will be wonderful.

I would like to make everyone aware of the ABA Birding Rally in San Diego this coming October. PSO members have the opportunity to participate in a great birding event and support PSO at the same time. For each member who attends the rally, ABA will donate \$100 to the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology to be used for our

Youth and Conservation programs. This is a great way to see another part of the country and to help PSO at the same time! For details check the link <http://events.aba.org/aba-birding-rally-san-diego-ca/>. If you are interested in attending, please message me privately and I will put you in touch with the event coordinator. Spaces for the rally are filling up quickly, so time is of the essence. Don't miss out on this terrific opportunity.

– John Fedak
President



PSO 2013 Meeting Attendees

Chuck Berthoud	Ed Groshek	Ramsay Koury	Joan Renninger
Barry Blust	Jarrett Groshek	Kathy Kuchwara	Kevin Ripka
Carol Blye	Doug Gross	Janet Kuehl	Bob Ross
Rob Blye	Deb Grove	Tom Kuehl	Carmen Santasania
Susan Braun	Greg Grove	Sherri LaBar	Jacob Shoemaker
Dan Brauning	Carol Guba	Mike Lanzone	Jim Shoemaker
Brian Burnes	Margaret Hatch	Wayne Laubscher	Jack Solomon
Lisa Chapman	Margaret Higbee	Paul Lumia	Susie Solomon
Ryan Coker	Roger Higbee	Pat Lynch	Darryl Speicher
Amy Davis	Bob Houck	Sherron Lynch	Jackie Speicher
Jeff Davis	Nancy Houck	Diane Madl	Scott Stoleson
Jonathan DeBalko	Marjorie Howard	Bob Martin	David Trently
Deb Escalet	Jim Hoyson	Sally Master	Kim Van Fleet
John Fedak	Shonah Hunter	Terry Master	Joe Verica
Joseph Fedak	Bonnie Ingram	Annette Mathes	Linda Wagner
Pam Ferkett	Laura Jackson	Flo McGuire	Drew Weber
Mike Fialkovich	Mike Jackson	Jim McGuire	Andy Wilson
Dianne Franco	Chad Kauffman	John Meise	Alan Winslow
Trudy Gerlach	Rudy Keller	Trish Miller	Carol Winslow
Sandy Goodwin	Kathy Kern	Bob Mulivihill	

ABA Birding Rally: San Diego, California

When: October 12-16, 2013

Where: San Diego, California

How Much: \$1195

Hosts: Gary Nunn, Jon Dunn, Forrest Rowland, Jeff Bouton, George Armistead, Jeff & Liz Gordon, Bill Stewart, John Puschock, and more. Pelagic leaders include: Paul Lehman & Guy McCaskie.

Extension: October 17-18 to the Salton Sea Extension (\$495)

It's time to head for SoCal, and there is no better time to do it than October. Join the ABA staff and local experts as they explore one of the birdiest cities in the world in search of migrants and regional specialties. We'll be joined by Eagle Optics and Rockjumper Worldwide Birding Adventures, each of which will bring their own brand of expertise. In and around San Diego there is an incredibly diverse range of habitats hosting a great variety of birds. Our field trips during the rally will visit four major areas, and those that opt for the extension will visit the Salton Sea as well, where vast numbers of migrants are encountered and there is always the chance to see the Yellow-footed Gull. See the president's article on page 1 for details.

PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?
In this case, how well did you read the latest issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*?

1. Which owl species set a new Christmas Bird Count record for our state in the 2012-2013 CBC? For a bonus, what was the total?
2. In his book review, Gene Wilhelm comments that "Their messy nests do not follow building codes." Which species?
3. Thanks to detective work by August Mirabella, the record of a bird found dead in Montgomery County in 1976 is newly accepted by PORC. Which species?
4. Subspecies do not often merit special attention in bird reports. Which four are included in this issue's "Birds of Note"?
5. Which species in "Photographic Highlights" has visited the same lawn in Butler County four times?

Birds Listed at 2013 PSO Meeting at Wilkes-Barre

Canada Goose	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Cliff Swallow	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck	Black-billed Cuckoo	Black-capped Chickadee	Blackburnian Warbler
Mallard	*Barn Owl	Tufted Titmouse	Yellow Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Barred Owl	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Common Nighthawk	White-breasted Nuthatch	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Common Merganser	Eastern Whip-poor-will	Brown Creeper	Pine Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Chimney Swift	Carolina Wren	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Wild Turkey	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	House Wren	Prairie Warbler
*Common Loon	Belted Kingfisher	Winter Wren	Black-throated Green
*Pied-billed Grebe	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Canada Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Wilson's Warbler
American Bittern	Downy Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Eastern Towhee
Great Blue Heron	Hairy Woodpecker	Veery	Chipping Sparrow
Green Heron	Northern Flicker	Hermit Thrush	Field Sparrow
*Black Vulture	Pileated Woodpecker	Swainson's Thrush	Savannah Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Wood Thrush	Grasshopper Sparrow
Osprey	Acadian Flycatcher	American Robin	Song Sparrow
*Bald Eagle	Alder Flycatcher	Gray Catbird	Swamp Sparrow
Northern Harrier	*Willow Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	White-throated Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Brown Thrasher	Dark-eyed Junco
*Cooper's Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	European Starling	Scarlet Tanager
Red-shouldered Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Northern Cardinal
Broad-winged Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Ovenbird	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-tailed Hawk	Yellow-throated Vireo	Worm-eating Warbler	Indigo Bunting
American Kestrel	Blue-headed Vireo	Louisiana Waterthrush	*Bobolink
Peregrine Falcon	Warbling Vireo	Northern Waterthrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Killdeer	Red-eyed Vireo	*Golden-winged Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Spotted Sandpiper	Blue Jay	Blue-winged Warbler	Common Grackle
American Woodcock	American Crow	Black-and-white Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
*Ring-billed Gull	Fish Crow	Nashville Warbler	*Orchard Oriole
*Caspian Tern	Common Raven	Common Yellowthroat	Baltimore Oriole
Rock Pigeon	Purple Martin	Hooded Warbler	Purple Finch
Mourning Dove	Tree Swallow	American Redstart	House Finch
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Cerulean Warbler	Red Crossbill
Black-billed Cuckoo	Barn Swallow	Northern Parula	American Goldfinch
Mourning Dove			House Sparrow

Total = 142 species; 130 at the meeting site

*birds spotted en route to or from PSO (i.e. not in the immediate area)

Upcoming PSO Field Trips

For more information concerning the field trips, please contact Chad Kauffman

September 15 – Hawk watching Trip to Jacks Mountain in Mifflin County

October 6 – Another hawk watch is planned. Check the Facebook page for details.

October 18 -19 – Cape Cod, led by Vern Gauthier

November 3 – Hawk watching at the Allegheny Front near Central City on the Bedford-Somerset line

Spring 2014 – Hawk watching at Tussey Mountain

Spring 2014 – Hawk watching at Derby Hill, New York; this will probably be a two- or three-day weekend trip.

PSO Annual Meeting Reviewed

by Flo McGuire

The annual meeting, held in Wilkes-Barre, May 31 through June 2, was well attended and received. Field trips were a lot of fun and the five afternoon presentations on Saturday were interesting.

Brian Byrnes, eBird

Brian Byrnes of PA Audubon gave an introduction to eBird, particularly Pennsylvania eBird. Initiated in 2002, eBird is an online checklist program that enables birders to keep track of their own sightings and to view other observations from all over the world. Pennsylvania began its own eBird page in 2008 at ebird.org/content/pa/. At this portal you will see information pertinent to birding in PA.

Brian explained how the “Range and Point Maps” selection on the “Explore Data” page can be used to view sightings and checklists by species, date, and/or location. The “Bar Charts” page shows a chart of abundance by week for each species for a location. This chart, generated by our own data, turns out in a very similar fashion to the bird checklists available at National Parks and can be invaluable to a birder visiting a new area. Brian stressed that more data make the charts more meaningful, so please enter your sightings in eBird. Note that only “complete checklists” are included in the bar charts.

Brian also described how a user can enter “Alerts” requesting to receive an email when a rare bird is seen or simply when a particular bird is found in a certain region. For those with smart phone technology, the BirdsEye app uses the eBird database to show you locations of recent sightings in your area, rare and notable sightings, target species, or birding hotspots. Also, the BirdLog app is available to allow eBird data entry “on the fly.”

Dr. Margaret Hatch, Migration Ecology

Dr. Margaret Hatch of Penn State Worthington Scranton, told of the research she has done into the ecology of migrating birds, primarily through netting and banding them. Her studies compared insect abundance at different times and on varying substrates, to determine how much food would be available for the earliest arriving migrants. Dr. Hatch analyzed the hematocrit, the ratio of red blood cells to total volume of blood, in captured birds, and found that it was higher in earlier-arriving migrants. The older birds of both sexes arrive earlier than younger birds. By studying the white blood cell count, she found that the earlier-arriving birds are in better condition but are

dealing with more stress. Her studies also compared the white blood cell count of breeding birds to migrating birds and found that it was higher in breeding birds.

Diane Madl - Junior Birding

Diane Madl and Megan Taylor, Environmental Education Specialists for DCNR, told of their work, in particular the Nescopeck State Park Junior Bird Club, which they launched in 2009. This bird club helped to initiate our Youth Scholarship winner, Jarrett Groshek. When these junior birders were asked to contribute artwork and vote on their favorite for the Junior Bird Club logo, the American Bittern drawn by Jarrett was selected.

The club, sponsored by Audubon PA and the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society, is open to children ages 9 and up, and meets monthly. There is a one-time \$5 fee per member, and each member receives a t-shirt. Their many activities include guided bird walks, hawkwatch trips, butterfly tagging, building bird feeders, and visiting bird banding demonstrations.

We are urged to “pledge to fledge” – take a young birder along.

Darryl & Jackie Speicher - Pocono Avian Research Center

Darryl Speicher gave this lively presentation about his and his family’s unconventional life and their establishment of the non-profit Pocono Avian Research Center on their 166-acre wildlife sanctuary. Darryl and Jackie are involved in Project OwlNet, whereby they net and band Northern Saw-whet Owls each fall from October 1 through mid-November. In their best season, they netted 136 owls. Another of their activities is MAPS, Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship, which is part of a continent-wide network of hundreds of constant-effort mist netting stations. Darryl and Jackie do studies of feeder fidelity and support a bluebird nest-box project as well. Read more about their work at www.poconoavianresearch.org.

Golden Eagle and Wind Farm Updates - Dr. Trish Miller

Dr. Miller of West Virginia University gave a presentation on her studies of the potential risk of wind farm development to the Golden Eagle population. She

and her associates began “camera trapping” Golden Eagles about 2008, and there are now 170 traps from Maine to Florida.

Eleven satellite telemetry units have been placed on Golden Eagles, generating 80,000 points since 2006. Since 2009, Dr. Miller and her colleagues have been using cell phone technology to follow the birds. Location data is sent every 30 seconds for 10 days; the database now has half a million data points. Her studies have found that Golden Eagles are extremely secretive in winter, spending most of their time in forests. Their range size decreases with increasing forest size. The maximum distance any of the followed eagles have traveled in one day is 528 km, or 328 miles.

Dr. Miller’s recent studies have been comparing the flight paths of the Golden Eagles to suitable areas for wind turbines in Pennsylvania. Although Golden Eagles fly lower over ridgetops and cliffs, she did find areas of good wind and low risk, suitable areas for wind turbines that would be low impact for the eastern Golden Eagles. There have been no reported Golden Eagle fatalities attributed to wind turbines in the east, although this is a problem in California.

Importance of the Eastern Hemlock – Dr. Terry Master

Dr. Master of East Stroudsburg University gave a presentation on “The Redwood of the East: Biodiversity and the Eastern Hemlock.” The Eastern Hemlock reached its present range about 2,000 years ago, covering 19 million acres, at elevations from 600 to 1600 meters. It was named the Pennsylvania state tree in 1931. Ninety-six bird species and 47 mammals are associated with hemlocks. In Pennsylvania, 15 bird species are characteristic of hemlock forests. These include Blackburnian Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher. There are two kinds of hemlock habitats, ravine and bench. The ravines have steep sides and fast-flowing streams, where birds nest in the banks or in root overturns. The benches consist of a wider valley with a wider, slower stream, where birds nest always in root overturns. The benches are more productive for birds.

The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) attacks eastern hemlocks, which are often damaged and killed within a few years. It first arrived in California, where western hemlocks were found to be immune to this pest. The HWA arrived in the eastern United States in 1951; in PA in 1967. Dr. Master displayed maps of counties currently infected, showing that the HWA has spread significantly in the last few years, including being found this year in old-growth hemlock stands at Cook Forest State Park. He

stated that our hemlocks may disappear in the next 30 years.

There are three methods of prevention: non-biological, biological, and enhancement of genetic resistance. None of these methods is feasible on a large scale.

Award Presentations

PSO Vice President and Awards Chair Mike Lanzone presented the following awards:

Youth Scholarship



Vice President Mike Lanzone presents Jarrett with his Youth Scholarship Certificate.

Jarrett Groshek, winner of our 2013 Youth Scholarship to the PSO meeting, was awarded a certificate. Jarrett is 12 years old and belongs to the Nescopeck Junior Bird Club. He has been birding since 2008 and now has 283 birds on his life list.

Conservation Award



Paul Lumia and Ryan Coker accept the Conservation Award and pose with Mike Lanzone.

The North Branch Land Trust was given the PSO 2013 Conservation Award. Paul Lumia, Executive Director, and Ryan Coker accepted the award. The Land Trust has acquired or preserved over

12,500 acres in northeastern PA. They also offer community outreach events to educate landowners about conserving their property and to help communities develop smart growth strategies.

Earl Poole Award



Dr. Terry Master of East Stroudsburg University was given the 2013 Earl Poole Award in recognition of his many research projects as well as mentoring 25 graduate students.

We were pleased to present Dr. Terry Master with the Earl Poole Award this year.

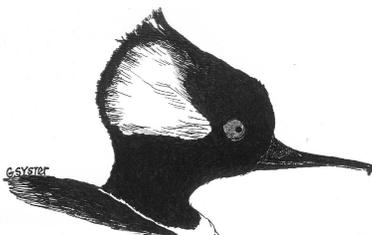
Dr. Master's research projects focus on three areas including: ecology and behavior of riparian songbirds; foraging dynamics of mixed-species of wading bird flocks; habitat use, foraging behavior, and competitive interactions of a mixed-species heronry on Wade Island.

Golden Pileated Award



This award was established this year to recognize a large project which made a significant contribution to research and conservation in Pennsylvania.

It was awarded to Andy Wilson, Bob Mulvihill, and Dan Brauning, editors of the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*. The main effort of this book was the field work done in 2004 through 2008 by 1,800 volunteers. There were 83 regional coordinators, and all 4,694 blocks in the state have data. This book has set a new bar and is the most comprehensive, most sophisticated bird atlas ever published. We are very proud of it.



Welcome, New Board Members!

At our business meeting on May 31, we elected three new board members, Amy Davis, Chad Kauffman, and Andrew McGann. We thank Rob Blye for his many years of service as he leaves the board. We have also lost board member Cory DeStein who has accepted a new position in Missoula, Montana. We wish both Rob and Cory the best in their new endeavors!

Included in this newsletter are short biographies for our new board members. We appreciate their willingness to bring their individual talents to PSO. Welcome aboard!!!

Chad Kauffman



Chad Kauffman from Mifflintown in Juniata County, PA, has always been a lover of nature, as he enjoyed feeding birds, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, etc. In 2004 a friend introduced him to birding and the concept of listing and succeeded in getting him hooked. It wasn't long until the listing bug bit him, giving him a sense of accomplishment and reason to his birding.

A self-employed insurance agent who works from his home, he enjoys getting outside as much as possible and birding allows him to enjoy his hobby anytime he can be outside or even look out the window.

Chad's interest in birds has had a domino effect. Within his first year of birding, he started taking on blocks for the 2nd PBBA and began co-compiling the county reports for *PA Birds*. In addition, he has participated in both the Christmas Bird Count and the PA Migration Count, both of which he now co-compiles. Since then, he has adopted a Breeding Bird Survey as well.

He has collected all the available field guides, and as new ones are printed, he is one of the first to place his order. His listing addiction has been enhanced by eBird because now he can list birds at the county level.

Chad also enjoys birding on Facebook. He originated the Pa Birders page several years ago, and now with the help

of a few friends, it has really taken off. This has led to both the PA photographer's page and the bird ID page on Facebook. He has also offered his help on the PSO Facebook page. Chad, with the help of Aden Troyer at Lost Creek Shoe Shop, created another project, the Fall for Hummingbirds contest that ran over the winter months. This project encouraged people to keep their feeders filled longer into the cooler months, promoting awareness of western hummingbird species that migrate through our state. This resulted in the sighting and banding of more western hummingbirds. Prizes were awarded this past year, and the project will continue annually in their four-county area.

With one year under his belt helping with the Field Trip Committee, Chad now looks forward to serving as the chairperson of that group. The PSO board and its members extend a sincere welcome to Chad Kauffman.

Amy Davis



As Sightings Department Editor for American Birding Association's flagship publication, *Birding*, Amy Davis reports on rare bird sightings from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. She is also a technical reviewer for ABA's upcoming *Birder's Guide*, and photo editor for PSO's *Pennsylvania Birds*. Amy has collected data for bird surveys locally and throughout the mid-Atlantic region,

most recently volunteering for breeding bird atlases in West Virginia and Delaware. She is eBird reviewer and compiler for Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. In addition to finding, counting, and writing about birds, Amy loves teaching her students about them at the Devereux Foundation.



Andrew McGann



Andy McGann grew up in York County, where he began watching birds around age 11. By the age of 14, he had found excellent birding mentors who opened his eyes to the greater birding community. His favorite

Christmas Bird Counts include the Harrisburg, Southern Lancaster, and New Bloomfield counts, and he has participated in these for a long time.

In high school, he worked for Audubon PA during the dawn of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program, where his proudest accomplishment was lobbying his bosses to use this new (at the time) system called eBird for IBA survey data. After high school, Andy attended Villanova University, where he studied biology under the direction of Dr. Robert L. Curry. He conducted research on Black-capped and Carolina Chickadee hybridization, and a

potentially-extinct, island endemic species, the Cozumel Thrasher. Summers were spent working field survey jobs, including projects on Canada Warblers in Vermont, Northern Goshawks in Idaho, and three summers on the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas Project point count crew. After college, Andy interned for the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding program at the Ned Smith Center for Nature & Art. Then, he moved to Virginia to earn an M.S. in biology at the College of William and Mary, under the direction of Dr. Dan Cristol. His thesis research looked at the winter foraging ecology of Rusty Blackbirds in the coastal plain of Virginia. Other graduate work included studies of toxic mercury moving through the food web along a polluted river in the Shenandoah Valley.

After graduate school, he spent some time working for environmental consulting firms in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Nebraska. Andy is currently employed at Cellular Tracking Technologies, LLC, which is located in Somerset, PA. At CTT, Andy enjoys applying his unique combination of biological expertise, love of technology, and appreciation for geography to help wildlife researchers and organizations around the world obtain the information they need through customized GPS tracking solutions. His favorite new birding patches include Somerset Lake, Laurel Ridge, and his own backyard.

Welcome aboard, Andy!

Pictorial Highlights from the Annual Meeting



Our youth scholarship recipient Jarrett Groshek was often the first to spot a bird.



Jarrett Groshek spoke briefly at the banquet meeting.



Sherron Lynch baked a beautiful and delicious cake for the meeting.



Sherron Lynch captured this photo of a Barred Owl on one of the outings.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



The Joys of Mid-Summer Birding

There is much to enjoy in the “dog days of summer” if you take the right trail. The summer cicadas are already singing, and it seems that many birds are hardly singing at all. But, it still is a great time to make interesting discoveries and learn new things about birds. Recent discoveries like Dickcissels, Blue Grosbeaks, and Swainson’s Thrushes demonstrate what can be found in mid-summer. The nesting season is extended for different reasons. Some species just start nesting later because of their migration or diet while others nest a second time and produce more young. And a few species like Cedar Waxwings and American Goldfinches regularly nest in late July and August. Dispersing young birds can be a challenge to identify. Many take advantage of plentiful wild fruits and berries, so the best birding can be in a shrubby berry patch or forest edge. While some species are still in nesting mode, many shorebirds are winging their way south to their wintering ground and many herons are dispersing from their colonies to a variety of watery locations. The mix makes for interesting birding.

Many Pennsylvanians, birders included, take to the mountains in the heat of the summer. That is a good place to find birds that are still in their breeding season. Many birds start nesting later in the mountains. On a cool, shaded trail, Blue-headed Vireos, Black-throated Blue Warblers, and Canada Warblers can be heard singing when hotter places are quiet. Young, begging fledglings can make a lot of noise and bring some fun to the birding.

Many species seem to have a second round of nesting. Some of these are well-known to have a second or even a third brood, while it is less clear what other species are doing. Double-brooded species have another round of singing in summer to re-establish territory and begin the nesting season anew. Some later nesting activity may be a result of renesting after failed attempts. Waxwings can nest in a second location after a successful first attempt. They respond to abundant wild fruits and berries that they forage on in addition to a diet of flying insects.

Other species just seem to get a later start nesting. As already mentioned, waxwings and goldfinches are among the late nesters, but there are others. Mourning Doves have several broods each year, nesting sometimes in late August and early September. From my own front porch I can observe Field and Song Sparrows defending territories in mid-summer with Indigo Buntings also singing vigorously. Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds are among the double-brooded thicket birds. Fruiting viburnums, dogwoods, blueberries, and honeysuckles attract birds in abundance. It can be a challenge to identify the young plumages of foraging songbirds that are attracted to these food sources. In the woods, Eastern Wood-Pewees continue to sing when other birds have become silent. In the mountains, Hermit Thrushes and Dark-eyed Juncos often nest a second time and feed their new broods well into August. A second round of robust singing by Purple Finches means a second brood occurs almost every year where I live. And some late-arriving species like Swainson’s Thrush not only start late but also stay longer on territory, singing in late afternoons and evenings for those who have ventured into the deep woods to listen to their upward spiraling ethereal song.

2013 Osprey and Bald Eagle Surveys Need Your Help

The Osprey is one of the most recognizable and popular raptors. Like the Bald Eagle, it is a charismatic raptor of conservation concern. Yet often it is found near humans. Unique in appearance, it is truly the “people’s fish hawk.” This year, the Game Commission is performing an extensive survey of osprey nests statewide. It’s an initiative that’s not possible without the help of volunteers. Those who are interested in taking part can find out more at the Game Commission’s website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Information on the nest survey is available on the Endangered Species page under the Wildlife tab. Just download the [Osprey Nest Survey Form](#) along with the [Nest Observation Protocol](#), and submit it to Don Detwiler, project coordinator at ospreypa@gmail.com.

The survey seeks to uncover the location of each active nest, and, if possible, the number of chicks in each nest, along with basic information about what the nest was built on and what type of water body the nest is near. If you know about a pair of Ospreys, we’d appreciate hearing from you. Please do not assume that a nest that you know about is covered by somebody else. We did a survey in 2010 and found at least 115 nests but missed several nests that were known to the birding community but were not reported. The information will be used to update the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program database and also enable us to better understand the status of this state-

threatened species and its management potential. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help us with this important survey.

The Osprey population has grown steadily since its reintroduction in the 1980s. We do not know if Ospreys are consistently using all sites, but we suspect that they are. In the 2010 survey, there was a clustered distribution with the top four counties accounting for 66% of the total number of nests. Ospreys also seemed to be clustered near reservoirs as well as flowing water and, unlike Bald Eagles, tend to use artificial structures for nesting and benefit opportunistically from some human activities and habitat modifications.

We also would appreciate information on the success and productivity of Bald Eagle nests. With more than 250 active nesting pairs of eagles, the agency is challenged to keep tabs on all nests. As you know, it is much more difficult to see the contents of a nest after full leaf-out. So, as easy as it is to find an eagle nest and watch it in the spring, it can be difficult to get information on its fate. Did that nest produce young or did it fail? If it did produce young, how many? Many nests are much more easily seen at this phase from a boat than on foot. Do not assume that we know how a nest did this year. We may not have that data. In fact, at this point we do not know the productivity of more than half of the state's eagle nests.

Of course, the places where you can find Ospreys and Bald Eagles are often good birding spots worth eBirding. We appreciate good bird records reported for these many locations.

American Bitterns at "The Meadows" in Luzerne County



The PSO field trip to Ricketts Glen State Park offered a taste of one of the state's biggest state parks and the largest forest block in the Northeast. Ricketts Glen State

Park comprises 13,050 acres, but is adjacent to state game lands that are even larger. The park offers great bird habitat, but the game lands have even more good spots including some small wetlands right along Mountain Springs Lake. So, on the way to my "super secret spot" which is a nice hemlock grove with a few Swainson's Thrushes and many other northern forest birds, the group was surprised by an American Bittern seen at "the Meadows" right along the road. This shallow pond and emergent wetland is a good spot to find Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Alder Flycatchers, many warblers, and Swamp Sparrows. But, bitterns are a bit special even for this North Mountain hotspot.

Everyone who was on the field trip there knows the story. The bitterns gave us a show that we all enjoyed lined up on the dirt road. Then, later in the afternoon another contingent of PSO birders was treated to an even better show of bitterns flying and displaying. Chad Kauffman and Mike Lanzone took pictures and added their observations to eBird for the site. American Bitterns have been observed in this general area for several years. Nesting was confirmed at the Splashdam Pond wetlands (a mile to the West in SGL 13, Sullivan County) a few years ago, but only once that we know of. Local birders have noted American Bitterns at the Meadows in the last few years, but no nesting was confirmed. This marsh is near the headwaters of Bowman's Creek, a popular trout stream that flows northeast through extensive forest by the village of Noxen on its way to the Susquehanna River. It comprises a small shallow pond surrounded by emergent wetland vegetation and shrubs. Mountain Springs Lake Road follows the west boundary of the wetland. Birders also have spotted Northern Harriers flying during the nesting season in these scattered small wetlands. It is one of the few places where Green-winged Teal have been confirmed nesting in the state with the sighting of fledged ducklings.

A few birders visited the Meadows to view the bitterns, some with luck and some without. The bitterns, it seemed, were elusive on occasion but could be amazingly visible at other times. On 26 June, I visited the nearby Splashdam Pond to check for bitterns there. Perhaps the bitterns were only visiting the Meadows from a nest there or elsewhere? My trip to Splashdam Pond was in vain, no bitterns found. When I did get to the Meadows, the bitterns were fairly easy to find with only a few minutes of waiting. A look through the scope confirmed that at least two bitterns on the far shore were young birds. The fuzzy heads of two fledgling bitterns poked above the grass and leatherleaf shrubs that lined the eastern shore. Then, an adult hidden in emergent vegetation on the south end of the marsh flew over the open water right in front of me to a spot near the youngsters. It apparently had been

foraging out of sight along the pond's edge. The downy fledglings ran through the vegetation like two furry puppies so they could be fed by their parent. It was a comically laughable sight. There may have been a third fledgling hidden behind the others, but I could not be sure. With a little persistence, this record became a confirmed nesting of a Pennsylvania Endangered species. I hope that they return to the Meadows and more bitterns can be found in other out-of-the way wetlands.

Swainson's Thrush: the Mountain Minstrel

One of the state's characteristic mountain forest birds is the Swainson's Thrush, or should I say the "Olive-backed Thrush" which is the older name for the species and the name given to the subspecies group found in "continental North America" east of the Pacific Coast where it is replaced by the subspecies group known as the "Russet-backed Thrush."

Swainson's Thrush is one of the rarest breeding birds in the state, considered "Vulnerable" by the Ornithological Technical Committee. It is found in extensive forests, generally at high elevations in northern hardwoods, mixed woods, and conifers. In northeastern counties, they are mostly associated with shady, moist hemlock groves, often near small streams and seeps. Although primarily associated with spruce and fir forests over most of its range, it is primarily found where hemlocks are dominant in Pennsylvania. But, it is found more often in mixed forests in the northwestern counties than in the north-central or northeastern regions. One of the old nicknames for this thrush is "mosquito thrush" because of its habit of catching small flying insects on the wing. It is much more likely to flycatch or upward strike flying insects than our other spotted thrushes. Like other thrushes, they also eat wild fruits and berries. They often forage on blueberries during their post-nesting dispersal and fledgling care phase as well as on their southward migration.

Swainson's are highly associated with old growth conifer forest and woods that share the attributes of old growth. Some populations, although small and isolated, seem to persist for many years. This suggests nest site fidelity of the adults.

I find its song one of the most enchanting sounds of the forest. It is an ethereal, fluty whistle that spirals up the scale. This sometimes has been rendered as *whip-poor-will-o-will-e-zee-zee-zee!* It sounds a bit like a Veery singing backwards. The call note is an easily imitated, whistled "wit" that sounds like dripping water. It is said that they will give this call note to lure likely predators (like me and you) from the nest. I've experienced this behavior myself and traced my path backwards to find the nest placed on a limb, usually next to the trunk of a

conifer. Others have found nests more often in shrubs. The flight song is a "peep" that sounds much like the call of a spring peeper. You are more likely to hear the call notes than the song, especially at close quarters. I have walked through territories only to hear an occasional quiet "wit" and only heard the song after there was some distance between the bird and me. Like many thrushes, Swainson's Thrushes can be very secretive and quiet especially on their nesting grounds. They sing more frequently in the late mornings and evenings.

In Pennsylvania, Swainson's Thrush is near the southern edge of its breeding grounds, but there are breeding populations in the mountains of the Central Appalachians including West Virginia, Virginia, and a very few in North Carolina. The Pennsylvania nesting population of Swainson's Thrush are disjunct from other populations. There are three clusters of Swainson's Thrushes in the state: the northwest counties in and around Allegheny National Forest, the "Black Forest Area" of Potter and adjacent north-central counties, and the North Mountain region that stretches from Northwestern Lycoming County across Sullivan County into Wyoming and Luzerne Counties. The PSO meeting trip to Ricketts Glen was close to a population near Mountain Springs Lake Road, but there are others in the park and game lands nearby that are more difficult to access. There are some hints of Swainson's Thrush expanding into the Pocono Northeast. The population in McKean County does continue into neighboring western New York. With the great powers of flight (they do migrate to South America!), this species is quite capable of colonizing new areas and expanding its range as opportunities occur. But, deep forest habitat is not made overnight and the recovery of this forest thrush from the timbering era probably has been a very slow, steady climb. Good forest management and watershed protection should help this species. This is a bird that bears watching and searching for by birders and anyone interested in forest conservation in the state.

Some bird taxonomists (see the 2nd PBBA account, pages 324-325), have suggested that the Appalachian Mountain population deserves subspecies status, *Catharus ustulatus appalachiensis*. This claim has been echoed by the Sixth Edition of the National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America which maps the subspecies of this and other species in the back, page 554. I do not know the basis for the field guide's shown range of this subspecies, but the claim does highlight the isolated mountain populations of forest songbirds and their uniqueness. That's another reason to focus some of our attention to finding more Swainson's Thrushes and protecting the forests on which they depend.

Dickcissel Redux

(Thanks to Kathy Korber)

There is another summer invasion of Dickcissels in 2013, although not as dramatic and as widespread as the one in 2012. Yet, this influx may be more telling of “real Dickcissel” populations in the state with some returning to locations occupied in 2012 or prior years. The consistent return of this somewhat nomadic grassland bird makes it a “keeper” for conservation efforts.

We thank the many birders who have entered Dickcissel sightings into eBird and posted their sightings to the PA Birds listserve. Thanks, too, for the great photos by Nick Pulcinella at a Berks County location and by Shawn Collins and Jeff McDonald at a Clarion County grasslands.

There are fewer sightings in 2013, but the fact that Dickcissels have returned to some locations suggests some breeding site fidelity that implies good nesting habitat. Last year the many sightings by multiple birders failed to generate any breeding confirmation. Was this because the Dickcissels failed to nest or because birders failed to observe or report breeding behavior? This Pennsylvania-Threatened species is one of several grassland birds that concern conservationists. The pattern of colonization and possible site fidelity brings hope for localized successful nesting and establishment of stable populations. Or, did roadside vegetation management, mowing, or other factors prevent any nesting success?

We are requesting additional reports of Dickcissel sightings and encouraging return visits to locations where Dickcissels have been found earlier this season as well as last year. Dickcissels may nest multiple times and into late summer, so there is still time to find these rare breeding birds in a grassy meadow, uncut hayfield, weedy pasture or in the reclaimed grasslands of surface mines. Just a reminder, in 2012 Dickcissels were recorded in 19 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.

Thorough accounts are most valuable and include the following information: sighting date; precise location (coordinates are best); number and sex of individual Dickcissels found at a site; a habitat description, noting land use and private or public ownership if known; and description of behavior observed, particularly in the form of Atlas Breeding Codes. Confirmation of a nesting pair may be as subtle as an adult carrying an insect in its bill. Dickcissel observations submitted via PA eBird provide this needed information when the above details are entered in The “Breeding Codes” and “Comments” fields. PA eBird: <http://ebird.org/content/pa>

You may also submit your Dickcissel observations directly to Kathy Korber, a biological aide of our Wildlife Diversity section, at: kkorber@embarqmail.com

For more information on Dickcissel and other endangered species please visit the PGC website: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=621014&mode=2>

Shorebird Resighting Project: The *bandedbirds.org* Website

Shorebirding is a popular activity among Pennsylvania birders even if the state is not a hot shorebird stopover area. Shorebirds are fascinating creatures that have hemispheric-wide migration patterns. The “windbirds” as they have been called are among the most romantic of birds, bringing us memories of beach walks and marshes with their wistful calls. These really are birds of the entire world. They are poking their beaks into mud or sand at one place on one day and, then only a few days later, they are hundreds of miles away, often in a different state, country, or continent. So any project that involves shorebirds must encompass this huge geographic scope and embrace multiple willing partners.

Shorebirds need our help. They were already threatened by the many natural and human-induced stresses on their habitat, but there is growing evidence that this group of birds is especially vulnerable to the threats of climate change. Coastal wildlife communities are not only threatened by sea level rise but also by tidal surges and increased violence and frequency of storms. It takes only an hour or a few minutes of high water to wipe out a fragile habitat or the foraging ground or nesting attempts of any bird. So, we need to keep a close eye on shorebirds as species, as populations, and, if possible, as individuals.

Not only can observers identify and count the “windbirds” but they also contribute valuable data on the positions of individually marked birds. This is because many researchers are marking shorebirds with individual tags. Bird scientists have banded tens of thousands of shorebirds in the last two decades. Most of these birds are Red Knots, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Sanderlings, and Ruddy Turnstones. More projects are targeting other species, including the American Oystercatcher. Almost all shorebirds, even regularly seen species, are being considered higher priority subjects for conservation-based research. With thousands of color-banded individuals being available for viewing, a database of sightings along the Atlantic Flyway has grown in size and value that describes the migration routes, nesting and winter areas,

and critical areas for conservation attention.

Bandedbirds.org is a data management solution for shorebird projects in the Western Hemisphere. This project is hosted by the New Jersey Audubon and New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. Other organizations such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife also are providing support. More organizations throughout the flyway are joining because they see the need for this project and the value of its data. Of course, most of these observations are along the Atlantic beaches, marshes, and backwaters where most congregations of shorebirds are found. However, as many birders can attest, there are many places where shorebirds visit that are off the main birding trails, and the data from these locations can also be valuable. It is amazing to see how much data can be collected at one location in a short time with some coordination and cooperation among birders. The shorebirds do tend to cluster and provide opportunity for observation and data gathering.

Bandedbirds.org gives a platform for observers to easily report their sightings of shorebirds with bands and tags.

The website includes instructions and illustrations on how anyone who has seen a marked shorebird can enter data on the band or other marker including the body parts marked, the color, the letters and numbers on the flag, and information about the bird, its behavior, the site, and environmental conditions. Not only can the observer report sightings, but he/she may also find out where the bird was banded and where else it was observed. The observer becomes part of its journey!

Please visit the website and participate:
<http://www.bandedbirds.org/>

Thanks to everyone for making contributions to our birding and bird conservation network!

Doug Gross
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PA eBird: <http://ebird.org/content/pa>

More Meeting Highlights



Terry Master explains the spread and distribution of the hemlock woolly adelgid at our banquet meeting. He forecasts that our Eastern Hemlocks may be gone in 30 years.



This Blue-headed Vireo was photographed on Tannery Road by Jeff Davis.



Jeff Davis found this American Redstart at the Susquehanna Wetlands.



This cooperative Blackburnian Warbler was spotted on Tannery Road by Jeff Davis.



Ornithological Literature Notes

Those who recognize the name Witmer Stone will know about his enormous contributions to ornithology in New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania. Exactly a hundred years ago, he published an important account of early 19th-century bird records kept by William Bartram near Philadelphia.

Stone's 1913 article (*Auk* 30:325–358) summarized Bartram's hand-written journal penned from 1802 to 1822 at the old Bartram homestead, part of a farmland in that era and now protected as Bartram's Garden in the city of Philadelphia. Stone described the journal as "a mine of information ... and the data on bird migration constitute, we believe, the oldest record, covering a series of years, that we have for any part of North America."

It was essentially a diary, which included the dates of species' first arrival at the farm each spring. Stone wondered how Bartram's arrival dates compared with those of a century later, as recorded in surveys by the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club in the same area from 1901 to 1912.

The comparisons for 26 species showed no consistent trend. For 16, there was no change in the time of arrival between Bartram's and the DVOC's data—indicating to Stone that "there has been no change in the time of arrival during a century." The remainder of species were split evenly: some arrival dates averaged earlier in Bartram's records than in the DVOC's; other dates averaged later in Bartram's data than in the DVOC's data.

Stone was not surprised. He called attention to the difficulty of comparing migration records taken by individual observers. For example, one instance may represent a very early arrival and in another instance may truly reflect the beginning of the main flight. He emphasized that these records "are really not comparable

at all." In addition, he noted that arrival records of equally good observers only a few miles apart might differ simply because the first migrants may arrive in one neighborhood earlier than in another nearby locality.

For another perspective, Stone made comparisons with arrival dates in the Philadelphia vicinity given by Benjamin Smith Barton in a 1799 report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The pattern was just the opposite of the Bartram-DVOC comparison. In Barton's case, only one species showed arrival dates similar to DVOC's, while half of Barton's other species arrived earlier and half arrived later than in the DVOC data.

Stone concluded, "These facts seem to demonstrate pretty conclusively the futility of figuring closely on comparisons of observations of single individuals or upon 'first arrival' records of any sort. At the same time I think ... we are justified in saying that no appreciable change in the time of arrival of these birds has taken place in the past century."

Judge the detailed arrival data for yourself in Stone's 1913 paper in *Auk*, which is handily available online at <tinyurl.com/WitmerStone>. It will be hard to disagree with his futility.

A similar difficulty arises in the wide disparity of first arrival dates listed for different counties in the PSO website's spring occurrence tables <tinyurl.com/PSO-tables>. For some species, average arrival dates among counties cluster somewhat well. For most species, however, the dates are all over the board. You may find that valid statistical comparison of these kinds of data will be as futile as Stone found in his day.

– Paul Hess
phess@salsgiver.com

PSO Signs Greater Sage Grouse Initiative

PSO recently signed a letter to the Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewel discussing the Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Initiative which has the potential to leave a legacy of conserved landscapes and sustainable land management across a vast area of 57 million acres of public lands in the West.

Sage-grouse are a landscape species that require large expanses of intact sagebrush steppe to survive.

Approximately 70 percent of sage-grouse current range is on federal land, most of it managed by the BLM and the Forest Service. The national planning strategy will amend more than 100 BLM and Forest Service management plans with new conservation measures to protect and recover sage-grouse populations across their range.

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PSO Newsletter

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Answers to Bird Quiz (page 9)

1. Northern Saw-whet Owl, with a total of 53
2. House Sparrow
3. Clapper Rail
4. Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal, Herring (Vega) Gull, "Yellow" Palm Warbler, and "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler
5. Black-headed Gull



Steve Gosser found this Canada Warbler at Clear Creek State Park, Jefferson County, this past spring.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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