

PSO Pileated



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PSO 2015 Annual Meeting a Grand Success

By Mark A. McConaughy

The 2015 Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology was held May 29 - 31 in the southeastern part of the state centering on West Chester in Chester County. Attendees also were invited to visit the Shorebird, Nighthawk, and Kite Watch at Bucktoe Creek Preserve, located on private property in southern Chester County. I stopped at this lovely area that usually is not open to the public on my way to the meeting on Friday afternoon. I did not see any shorebirds (two Whimbrels were reported while I was there, but I did not see them) or Mississippi Kites. However, I was there for only a short time prior to heading to the PSO evening business meeting.

Friday evening began with a social and setup for the vendors who were at the meeting. People were able to check out PSO clothing and items, Nikon Optics, digiscoping supplies, and items for the silent auction prior to the PSO business meeting. PSO president Mike Lanzone quickly conducted the meeting that lasted less than 20 minutes – undoubtedly a record time! Then Chad Kauffman introduced the Saturday and Sunday morning birding field trip leaders who summarized what birds and terrain we might encounter on their trips.



The Blue Grosbeak was the “pin bird” for the 2015 meeting. Mike Jackson photographed this Blue Grosbeak at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

We left on the Saturday morning field trips at 6:30 after a continental breakfast at the conference Days Inn motel. The trips included visits to Ridley Creek State Park (Al Guarente, leader), Grasslands of the Laurels, King Ranch and Stroud IBA (Brian Byrnes, leader), Nottingham County Park (Holly Merker, leader), Longwood Gardens (Carol Majors, leader), the Great Marsh (Barry Blust, leader), Westtown School and Exton Park (Brian Quindlen, leader) and John Heinz NWR/Tinicum (George Armistead, leader).

The leaders also had smart phone connections so they could notify folks of any rare birds seen during their trips. These notifications would permit any members who wished to search for those rarities to leave and head to those sites. However, I don't know if anyone actually did so.

I had signed up for the Great Marsh trip with Barry Blust. The Great Marsh, the largest marsh area in southeastern Pennsylvania, is on private property and not generally open to the public. We heard a Virginia Rail calling but were unable to actually see it due to the thick swamp vegetation. An Alder Flycatcher was also heard calling but was too far away to actually be seen. We did see two adult Bald Eagles flying overhead, and there is a Bald Eagle nest in the marsh. The adult Bald Eagles were out hunting for food for their young. A Green Heron nest and

several other Green Herons were another highlight. Veeries were present all around the marsh. It was a fruitful visit with more than 50 species of birds seen or heard.

Nevertheless, we were a little jealous of some sightings from other trips that sent out notifications. An Anhinga and Snowy Egret were found on the John Heinz/Tinicum trip. A Mississippi Kite was seen on the Nottingham County Park trip. Dickcissels were observed on the Laurels, King Ranch, and Stroud IBA trip. I am sure all the trips resulted in good birds for those who went on them. The Saturday morning weather turned out to be great.

Saturday afternoon was devoted to papers about various birds, projects, or birding equipment. Brian Quindlen led off with a talk about developing youth birder groups while urging adult participation. He presented examples of several groups he had developed through his local YMCA, named the School of Birding. They take monthly birding trips and participate in the World Series of Birding in New Jersey. The high school group won the World Series of Birding with the most species seen or heard in 2013. Brian also talked about the challenges in developing these programs.

Tim Schreckengost then presented a talk titled *Digiscoping 1.0* taking folks through the basics of digital photography through spotting scopes. He talked about the types of cameras, optics, camera adapters, tripods, and various accessories that can be used to take distant photographs of birds through spotting scopes. Tim is involved with the development of a digital phone attachment that allows for good digiscope photographs using smart phones. Digital phone attachments are produced for specific makes of phones or spotting scopes. There also is a universal scope attachment that still requires a smart phone specific holder. These are marketed by PhoneSkope.

Mike Lanzone gave a shortened talk, due to time constraints, titled *Advanced Birding in the Digital Age*. He indicated there now are miniaturized boom microphones that can be attached to your smart phone and

used with available software to record bird song and flight calls at night. They sure beat roaming around with large parabolic microphones and tape machines that formerly were needed to record bird song! Mike also talked about various types of software that are available to birders to identify unknown birds and for general reference.

George Armistead then talked about the ethics of “tape” (now in a number of formats besides tape) playback of calls to get birds to respond and show themselves. The American Birding Association Code of Ethics indicates you should avoid stressing the birds by using playback. It should always be avoided when many birding groups visit the same area. Conversely, studies of playback have not demonstrated any negative impacts to birds when there is not an overload of playback. George just urged judicious

use of playbacks and noted it is one method used by researchers studying individual species.

Tricia Miller then gave a greatly anticipated presentation about the Golden Eagles in Winter in Pennsylvania. They have been satellite tracking various Golden Eagles since 2006. Many of the Golden Eagles migrate through Pennsylvania in the Valley and Ridge province. However,

another corridor was found to go through Michigan. Golden Eagle wintering sites stretch along the Appalachian Mountain chain from Pennsylvania down to Florida and over to Arkansas. Golden Eagles tend to stay in forested habitat along high ridges during the winter. Remote camera sites often catch them feeding on road killed deer and even hunting Wild Turkey. The radio transmitters on the satellite-tracked birds also have demonstrated that Golden Eagles spend some of their time flying below the height of wind turbines that are being built on many ridges favored by Golden Eagles during migration.

The afternoon’s last presentation, made by Paul Guris, detailed *Winter Pelagic Discoveries* that have been made off the Atlantic coasts of New York and New Jersey. Paul showed photographic evidence of the four- to five-year change in plumages of Northern Gannets as they mature from fledged young to adulthood. He also presented photographs showing the differences between Manx and



Trish Miller and daughter Phoebe present *Golden Eagles in Winter*.

Photo by Mark McConaughy



Our banquet speaker, Dr. Robert Curry, discusses chickadee hybridization.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

Great Shearwaters, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls (and related variants), and Razorbill and Common Murres. Lastly he discussed viewing Dovekies.

All of the Saturday afternoon presentations were interesting and geared toward amateur birders. I think everyone enjoyed the papers and found something useful to take away from the presentations.

For Saturday evening's annual banquet, the Days Hotel cooks provided a great meal of salad, mixed vegetables, chicken, beef, vegetarian lasagna, and rice with various cakes for desert. After dinner Mike Fialkovich presented awards including the youth scholarships, the conservation award, and the Poole Award. (The recipients are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.) The tabulation of bird species seen up to that time was then conducted. The full list through Sunday is listed on page 4 of this newsletter. Dr. Robert Curry, the Poole Award winner, discussed his work on Chickadee hybridization. It is often difficult to determine if an individual chickadee is a Carolina, Black-capped, or hybrid. Many chickadees in hybrid zones are "multilingual," singing both Carolina and Black-capped calls. He did find that it was rare for a Black-capped male to mate with a Carolina female, but a Black-capped female will mate with a Carolina male. This study has been conducted over many years and full lifetimes of the birds. During this time and the period between the two Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Projects, the hybridization zone has moved northward by about 20 km in eastern Pennsylvania. The movement north appears to be correlated with climate change. As the warmer average winter temperatures have moved northward, so has the hybridization zone. It was found that Black-capped Chickadees prefer areas where the average winter temperatures were -8°C or lower; Carolina Chickadees prefer areas that are above -4°C on average. The

hybridization zone averages around -6°C . It was a very interesting talk.

The last item of business after the dinner was the announcement of silent auction winners who then paid and picked up their items. The silent auction supports the PSO's youth scholarship program.

The Sunday morning birding trips began again at 6:30. Most of the same trips offered on Saturday were repeated on Sunday with participants going on different trips from those they attended on Saturday. The primary differences were that Rob Blye led the Great Marsh trip and Debbie Beer, the John Heinz/Tinicum trip. I chose the Laurels, King Ranch, and Stroud IBA with Brian Byrnes the leader. The first area we visited is known as the Runnymede Sanctuary, another private property opened for the PSO tour. The owners of the Runnymede Sanctuary even provided the group with snacks prior to entering the sanctuary and sandwiches and a salad when we returned! We sincerely thank them for their hospitality (as we do all those who permitted us to have access to their private lands on the other trips). At Runnymede the grassland birds seen were Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, and a distant Dickcissel.

We then stopped at a pond along Wilson Road with the hope of seeing some shorebirds, but none were present. Canada Geese and a Mallard were at the pond. After that quick stop we proceeded to go to the ChesLen Preserve which is open to the public. The best birds seen at ChesLen were the two male Blue Grosbeaks, the species depicted on the PSO meeting pin. So we did get to see the pin's target species. Here also was an Eastern Wood-Pewee nest in a tree along the trail. The other trips reported seeing the Anhinga and Mississippi Kites at the same locations as noted on Saturday. Some of the PSO



Mark McConaughy photographed this Grasshopper Sparrow at Runnymede Sanctuary.

participants remained and looked for these rarities on Sunday afternoon. However, since I live in western PA, I headed home after the ChesLen Preserve visit. I had a great time even if I did not see an Anhinga or a Mississippi Kite!

The 2016 PSO meeting will be held in Somerset on the third weekend in May. I hope to see all of you there!



Birds Listed by 2015 PSO Meeting Attendants

Friday, May 29, through Sunday, May 31

The rules now allow that every bird, as long as it was seen somewhere in PA en route to PSO, may be added to the list. Asterisked birds were listed on one of the many scheduled field trips.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| *Canada Goose | *Ring-billed Gull | *Purple Martin | Northern Parula |
| *Mute Swan | *Forster's Tern | *Tree Swallow | Magnolia Warbler |
| *Wood Duck | *Rock Pigeon | *N. Rough-winged Swallow | *Yellow Warbler |
| American Black Duck | Eurasian Collared-Dove | *Barn Swallow | *Chestnut-sided Warbler |
| *Mallard | *Mourning Dove | *Carolina Chickadee | Black-throated Blue Warbler |
| Ring-necked Duck | *Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Black-capped Chickadee | *Pine Warbler |
| Hooded Merganser | Black-billed Cuckoo | *Tufted Titmouse | *Prairie Warbler |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | *Barred Owl | *Red-breasted Nuthatch | Black-throated Green Warbler |
| Ruffed Grouse | Chuck-will's-widow | *White-breasted Nuthatch | Canada Warbler |
| Wild Turkey | Eastern Whip-poor-will | *Carolina Wren | *Yellow-breasted Chat |
| *Double-crested Cormorant | *Chimney Swift | *House Wren | *Eastern Towhee |
| *Anhinga | *Ruby-throated Hummingbird | *Marsh Wren | *Chipping Sparrow |
| *Least Bittern | Belted Kingfisher | *Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | *Field Sparrow |
| *Great Blue Heron | *Red-bellied Woodpecker | *Eastern Bluebird | *Savannah Sparrow |
| *Great Egret | *Downy Woodpecker | *Veery | *Grasshopper Sparrow |
| *Snowy Egret | *Hairy Woodpecker | *Wood Thrush | *Song Sparrow |
| *Green Heron | *Northern Flicker | *American Robin | *Swamp Sparrow |
| *Black Vulture | *Pileated Woodpecker | *Gray Catbird | *Scarlet Tanager |
| *Turkey Vulture | *American Kestrel | *Northern Mockingbird | *Northern Cardinal |
| Osprey | *Eastern Wood-Pewee | *Brown Thrasher | Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| *Mississippi Kite | *Acadian Flycatcher | *European Starling | *Blue Grosbeak |
| *Bald Eagle | *Alder Flycatcher | *Cedar Waxwing | *Indigo Bunting |
| Northern Harrier | *Willow Flycatcher | *Ovenbird | *Dickcissel |
| *Cooper's Hawk | Least Flycatcher | Worm-eating Warbler | *Bobolink |
| *Red-shouldered Hawk | *Eastern Phoebe | Louisiana Waterthrush | *Red-winged Blackbird |
| *Red-tailed Hawk | *Great Crested Flycatcher | Northern Waterthrush | *Eastern Meadowlark |
| *Virginia Rail | *Eastern Kingbird | Golden-winged Warbler | *Common Grackle |
| American Coot | *White-eyed Vireo | Blue-winged Warbler | *Brown-headed Cowbird |
| Sandhill Crane | Yellow-throated Vireo | Black-and-white Warbler | *Orchard Oriole |
| *Semipalmated Plover | Warbling Vireo | Mourning Warbler | *Baltimore Oriole |
| *Killdeer | *Red-eyed Vireo | Kentucky Warbler | House Finch |
| Upland Sandpiper | *Blue Jay | *Common Yellowthroat | Purple Finch |
| Ruddy Turnstone | *American Crow | *Hooded Warbler | Pine Siskin |
| Red Knot | *Fish Crow | *American Redstart | *American Goldfinch |
| *Semipalmated Sandpiper | Common Raven | Cerulean Warbler | House Sparrow |
| American Woodcock | Horned Lark | | |

Total = 142 species seen in the state
98 species listed on the field trips

2015 PSO Meeting Participants

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Diane Allison | Phyllis Fleck | Lisa Kiviuk | Trish Miller |
| George Armistead | Rebecca Frola | Kathy Kuckwara | Ted Nichols |
| Debbie Beer | Ian Gardner | Janet Kuehl | Aidan Place |
| Chuck Berthoud | Vern Gauthier | Tom Kuehl | Andrew Place |
| Nick Biss | Louise Gensemer | Carol Kuniholm | Nick Pulcinella |
| Barry Blust | Blake Goll | Sherri LaBar | Brian Quindlen |
| Carol Blye | Debra Grim | Mike Lanzone | Debbie Rabin |
| Rob Blye | Deb Grove | Phoebe Lanzone | Brian Raicich |
| Susan Braun | Greg Grove | Wayne Laubscher | Ann Reeves |
| Dan Brauning | Al Guarente | Gary Lockerman | Joan Renninger |
| Brian Byrnes | Carol Guba | Sandy Lockerman | Kevin Rieker |
| Bob Curry | Paul Guris | Dave Luning | Patricia Rieker |
| Susie Curry | Frank Haas | Sarah MacLellan | Margie Rutbell |
| Molly Daly | Denice Hardtmann | Carol Majors | Tim Schreckengost |
| Mike Defina | Jen Harned | Dick Martin | Sam Sinderson |
| Jarrold Derr | Michael Hartshorne | Tom Mason | Thyra Sperry |
| Tyler DiAndrea | Margaret Higbee | Annette Mathes | Scott Stoleson |
| Edie Dondero | Roger Higbee | Mark McConaughy | Sue Strassner |
| Jane Earle | Jerry Howard | Andrew McGann | Lisa Tull |
| Deb Escalet | Marjorie Howard | Doris McGovern | Linda Wagner |
| Sherri Evans-Stanton | Shonah Hunter | Flo McGuire | R.J. Wagner |
| John Fedak | Chad Hutchinson | Jim McGuire | Drew Weber |
| Alison Fetterman | Laura Jackson | Holly Merker | Carole Winslow |
| Mike Fialkovich | Mike Jackson | Craig Miller | Ellie Wolf |
| Chris Fischer | Chad Kauffman | Jean Miller | Rick Wolf |

Welcome, New Board Members!

At our annual business meeting on Friday, May 29, we elected four new board members: Jarrod Derr, Annette Mathes, Holly Merker, and Brian Quindlen. Reelected to the board were Wayne Laubscher, Flo McGuire, Emily Thomas, and Linda Wagner. Leaving the board were Marjorie Howard, who served from 2012-2015, and Carmen Santasania who was on the board from 2001-2015. We thank them for their many contributions and their dedicated service!

JARROD DERR

For most of his life Jarrod Derr has been interested in the outdoors. He graduated from Messiah College in 2008 with a degree in Environmental Science. During a desert ecology trip to the southwestern United States while in his sophomore year, he was introduced to "birding." In 2007 he took an ornithology course and that, combined with learning from a few great birders, has turned him into the birder he is today.

Since the beginning he has had a strong interest in wildlife photography and now more than ever, bird photography. Jarrod, equipped with his camera, can often be spotted at several local hotspots in Lebanon County where he lives. He has attended several PSO field trips including



both trips to Canada and has enjoyed every minute and looks forward to being a more integral part of that. In 2009 he took an intern biologist position at Fort Indiantown Gap and since then has gained a permanent position there as part of a crew of biologists who manage the military land for the rare Regal Fritillary. Although grassland habitat management is the focus of his job, he also conducts a good deal of bird related studies and monitoring projects. He also works on many amphibian and reptile projects – an interest that was sparked when he was a child.

Jarrold looks forward to working with PSO in any way that he can help.

ANNETTE MATHES



Although a backyard bird watcher for as long as she can remember, Annette Mathes did not become a “birder” until she discovered the Appalachian Audubon Society

in 2007. She was immediately drawn to the friendly members and board of Appalachian Audubon and began volunteering for nearly every activity and joining in all of the field trips. She was amazed by the skill, knowledge, and passion of the many birders she was meeting and astonished by the ability of birders who could identify the faintest call or chip note. It was a wonderful discovery for her that birds like the Scarlet Tanager and Hooded Warbler, which she had thought she would probably never see in her lifetime, were present in the woods just a few miles from her home.

Annette became treasurer of Appalachian Audubon in 2010, automating the bookkeeping system and introducing credit cards and online ordering for the annual birdseed sale. In 2012 she began a two-year term as president of the 1,200-member organization, focusing on birding and the importance of creating habitat with native plants.

Christmas Bird Counts are one of Annette’s favorite birding activities, and she participates in the Harrisburg, New Bloomfield, York Springs, and Newville counts every year. In 2014, Annette enjoyed a fifth CBC when a visit to friends in Manhattan coincided with the Central Park CBC. Annette also has participated in every PAMC since 2008, and she hasn’t missed an annual meeting since joining PSO in 2011. She has joined in many of the recent PSO field trips, including the Ontario trips in 2013 and 2015.

A lifelong resident of Harrisburg, Annette is a Certified Public Accountant and has been the Controller for Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education since 2004. She has served on the board of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation and has volunteered for the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Manada Conservancy. Now addicted to native plants, Annette has been gradually replacing her lawn with native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers and is thrilled to see the new and increasing bird activity that native habitat brings.

HOLLY MERKER



An avid birder in the South-eastern Pennsylvania region, Holly Merker has a strong interest in understanding bird distributions, and migration patterns in Pennsylvania.

Since childhood, Holly has been intrigued by every experience in the natural world. She spent countless hours as a child exploring local streams and environs searching for crayfish,

birds, snakes, and any other living creature she could find in her suburban Baltimore neighborhood. She regrets that she did not meet a birding mentor as a child, or know how to connect with the very active local bird club in her hometown. This is one reason Holly feels strongly about promoting birding mentors and opportunities for young birders.

Fascinated, with birds and especially owls from a young age, one of Holly’s first volunteer jobs involving birds was working as a Junior Keeper for the Baltimore/ Maryland Zoo, where she often helped in the wading birds exhibit and got a thrill from making a carrot infused diet to feed to the resident American Flamingos.

Today, she continues her volunteer work with wild birds through various projects, including: the role of Lead Reviewer, Reviewer Coordinator, and Hotspot Administrator for Pennsylvania eBird, as site compiler and a volunteer hawk counter and educator for Rose Tree Park Hawkwatch in Media, Delaware County, as PSO compiler for Chester County, and volunteer hawk counter for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, plus she is involved with several other bird census projects around the Commonwealth.

Holly is passionate about her job as an environmental educator, where she has the opportunity to connect thousands of school students, annually, to the natural world through hands-on outdoor ecology classes. In addition, she has felt privileged to be a full-time/live-in staff member for the American Birding Association’s Camp Avocet in Lewes, Delaware, since it began in 2013. In this role, she is able to share her love and knowledge of coastal birds with teens who come from various areas of the country.

Holly is hoping to share her love for education (especially working with young birders) and understanding of birds, and bird habitats, in her new role as a PSO Board Member.

Holly lives in Downingtown, Chester County, with her husband, two sons, and two dogs. When she's not working, birding, or spending time with her family, she loves to listen to live music – and finally discovered that using earplugs was a smart decision if she wants to continue to bird by ear!

BRIAN QUINDLEN



Brian “BQ” Quindlen is an elementary school teacher in Garnet Valley School District and the Coordinator of the Upper Main Line YMCA Earth Service Corps, an organization that engages teens in birding and environmental service learning. Through the Y, BQ has been the head

coach for the World Series of Birding youth teams since 2008.

BQ's interest in birding stemmed from his participation in YMCA Earth Service Corps as a high school student. He competed in the Y's first four years of the World Series of Birding. During that time, he was exposed to hot spots throughout New Jersey such as Barnegat Inlet and Cape May Point State Park. This love of birding in New Jersey developed into a strong interest in birding his home state of Pennsylvania during the last few years. BQ's favorite counties to bird in PA are Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia.

PSO Pileated Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Six vireo species are on our state list. A seventh has been reported twice in Erie County, but it has never been confirmed in the state. Which vireo?
2. A cluster of small feathers at the bend of the wing, sometimes called the “thumb,” aids a bird in maneuvering at slow speeds and when landing. What's the name of this group of feathers?
3. The House Sparrow is not related to North American species we call sparrows. What is its taxonomic family, and what are members of this family often called?
4. On his way to the PSO annual meeting last month, scholarship winner Aidan Place heard two goatsucker species calling at the same location. Which species and where?
5. In their 2005 book *Birds of Pennsylvania*, Frank Haas and Roger Burrows say birds of this species “are definitely cold-weather songbirds, often bathing in snow in early spring, and burrowing into it during bitter cold snaps to stay warm.” What species?

(Answers on page 16)



On Saturday George Armistead led the outing to John Heinz NWR,

**Don't miss
next year's PSO meeting!**

May 20-22, 2016

Somerset, PA

The Second Annual Pa Breeding Bird Blitz (PAB3)

What is the PA Breeding Bird Blitz?

The PAB3 is a great time to get out during the peak of the breeding season.

The PAB3 is a means of gathering data on an annual basis of the breeding bird population in PA.

When is the PAB3?

The PAB3 runs from Friday, June 19, through Monday, June 22.

What's in it for you?

You get to go out and find birds! There are prizes too! But most importantly you help to add some meaningful data about PA Breeding Birds!

Sponsors and Prizes

American Birding Association (ABA) <http://aba.org>

A one year gift American Birding Association Membership that includes receiving Birding Magazine and an ABA hat.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO)

www.pabirds.org/Index.html

A One year gift membership which includes the quarterly Journal PA Birds. PSO will also be providing a copy of The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania.

Bird Watchers General Store (Orleans MA)

www.birdwatchersgeneralstore.com

BWGS is providing a cool hat and a \$30 gift certificate which can be used on their website.

The Lost Creek Shoe Shop (Mifflintown PA)

\$25 Gift Certificate

Phone Skope www.phoneskope.com

A custom Digiscoping set up for your phone and spotting scope

Nemesis Bird www.nemesisbird.com

Three Ways to Participate

Basic - E-mail one of your daily eBird checklists* each day of the PAB3 to breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com with the subject line, "Basic."

*Prize-eligible eBird checklists will meet the following criteria:

1. Checklists will be either traveling or stationary counts (no incidental counts).
2. Checklists will be complete checklists ("Yes" to reporting all birds identified).

3. Only the person sending in the checklist from a group will be the prize winner. All members of a group can enter by sending in a copy of a shared checklist or of another checklist submitted to eBird by the group that day.

Breeding Codes – In addition to following the eligibility criteria of the Basic lists these lists will also include breeding codes for each species. These can be found on eBird by clicking the "Add Details" button after the species name on each eBird checklist.

More information about these codes can be found at <http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/1006850-breeding-codes-behavior-codes>.

E-mail your daily entries to breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com with the subject line, "Codes."

The Almost Forgotten 14 – A Basic or Breeding Code list that comes from one of the 14 PA counties that had fewer than 30 eBird checklists submitted in June of 2014 as follows:

Northeast – Bradford - Sullivan - Wayne

North Central – Cameron - Clinton - Potter

Central – Montour - Snyder - Union

South Central – Fulton - Perry

Northwest – Venango

West – Lawrence

Southwest – Fayette

E-mail your daily entries to breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com with the subject line, "14."

Prizes by category and how awarded

The winner from each category will be drawn from checklists received by 7:00 a.m. on June 23.

Winners for each category will be notified by email. You may enter once daily in each of the three categories.

Basic Prize – One year Gift ABA Membership and ABA hat

along with cool birding stuff from Nemesis Bird

Breeding Codes Prize – One Year Gift PSO Membership and 2nd PBBA Book

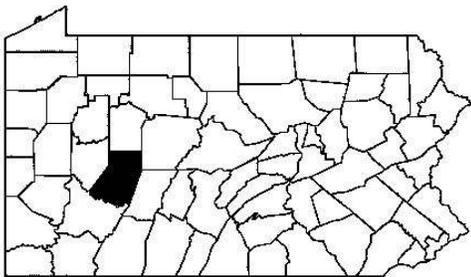
along with \$25 gift certificate to the Lost Creek Shoe Shop

Forgotten 14 Prize – Phone Skope set up, \$30 Gift Certificate and hat from Bird Watchers General Store.

Any Questions? Contact Vern Gauthier at pabirder@gmail.com

Birding PA – Indiana County

(Each edition of Birding PA highlights birding from one of our 67 counties.)



Not that I am that young but I decided to follow the advice of Horace Greely and “go west” for this next installment of Birding PA to Indiana County.

On my arrival I met with Roger and Margaret Higbee and a few other members of the TODD BIRD CLUB (TBC) at YELLOW CREEK STATE PARK (YCSP), the premier birding location in Indiana County. Roger and Marg were the ones who invited me to check out their home county and graciously agreed to act as my hosts for the two days I spent there. The other folks who met me were regular participants of the weekly field trip that the TBC holds every Tuesday morning except when the weather is at its worst.

The TBC, named after the noted Western Pennsylvania ornithologist W. E. Clyde Todd, was organized in 1982 in Indiana to promote the appreciation and conservation of birds in Indiana, Armstrong, and Cambria counties. Todd has grown to a membership of more than 80 members, of all ages. Besides the Tuesday morning walks, the TBC holds a wide variety of outings throughout the year. Members have worked extensively with the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project (1983-88) as well as the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas Project (2004-2009). The club has also participated in the Special Areas Project sponsored by the PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY. The goal of this project is to establish a top-quality bird list for every state park and other worthwhile areas within the state. Todd’s efforts have included Yellow Creek and Prince Gallitzin State Parks, Crooked Creek Park, as well as Blue Spruce, Pine Ridge, and Hemlock Lake County Parks and the Blacklick Valley Natural Area. They sponsor the Indiana Christmas Bird Count and also

participate in the Pennsylvania Migration Count the second Saturday of May.

YCSP is a wonderful place for birding. It is great for waterfowl migration in the spring and fall as well as warblers, too. It’s the type of place where you never know what is going to show up. I was told by my hosts that birds such as **Leach’s Storm-Petrel**, **Hudsonian Godwit**, **Sabine’s Gull**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Mississippi Kite**, **White Ibis**, and all three **phalaropes** among others have shown up over the years.

There was nothing quite as exotic as those in my two hours there, but we did have a **Virginia Rail** sounding out with its “grunt” call, 3 **Caspian Terns**, and an interesting **European Starling** dubbed, “D.Q.” for building its nest in the end of a windmill. I’ll let you figure out what the D.Q. stands for, but it’s not Dairy Queen.



This Caspian Tern was photographed by Roger Higbee.

Tom Glover was one of the members of TBC present that morning. He shared with me the story of the “spark bird” which really hooked him into birding. He gave an account of a female **Baltimore Oriole** he came upon and witnessed tearing apart a nest of tent caterpillars. He was fascinated how she threw aside the smaller ones and chose only the plumpest, juiciest caterpillars which she took to a branch and gutted, leaving a row of caterpillar carcasses behind. He must have been impressed as he could tell me how long ago to the year, month, and day he had witnessed the sight and had become a birder.



Northern Rough-winged Swallows nest in the drainage holes under the bridge at Yellow Creek.

Photo by Roger Higbee

I was also told by one member of our group that Marg Higbee is a “walking Sibley’s.” All I can say is that by my observation, she is a very determined and thorough birder for which any bird skulking in the brush stands very little chance of escaping identification.

We next made a quick stop at the WATER WORKS CONSERVATION AREA, a 10-acre site that includes an acid mine discharge treatment system and a small wetland. Last year **Virginia Rail** and **Spotted Sandpiper** both bred

there. While there, we witnessed a male Spotted Sandpiper displaying. I thought for a moment that it had to be some larger species of shorebird as the bird looked so much bigger standing erect and spreading out its wings. It was pretty awesome. What is pretty awesome, too, is I was told that the water quality has improved to the point at this location that **Louisiana Waterthrush** and **Common Merganser** now breed there.

We then moved on to BLUE SPRUCE COUNTY PARK which is noted for its excellent passerine migration. Early spring and fall mornings may yield a nice variety of vireos, warblers, and thrushes especially along GETTY RUN TRAIL (GRT) and is the most consistent Indiana location for finding **Philadelphia Vireo**, **Connecticut Warbler**, **Mourning Warbler**, and **Gray-cheeked Thrush** in the fall.

What was of most interest on the GRT that day however were the **Black-capped Chickadees** which along with two **Tufted Titmice** and one **White-breasted Nuthatch** have been painstakingly trained by TBC member Ray Winstead to feed from human hands. Marg demonstrated this for me when we ran into a chickadee and she held out her hand with some sunflower seeds in it. The bird lighted on her hand, took a seed, and flew to a nearby branch to extract the prize inside.

Our final stop of the day was at the CONEMAUGH DAM. It is an excellent place to find **Yellow-throated Warblers** nesting among the sycamores which line the river. It is also a good place to find breeding **Kentucky Warblers** along the WOODCHUCK TRAIL. **Purple Martins** also nested there last year, but they had not returned yet when we stopped by. It is a place where you can bird in two counties at once by standing on the WEST PENN TRAIL as it crosses the river from Indiana into Westmoreland County.

The next morning we were greeted by rain and more rain, yet undeterred we headed out to TWO LICK RESERVOIR which can be a great place for spring migrants. Yet in the rain which was pouring down at the time we didn't find much of anything.

We moved on from there for a quick stop at HEMLOCK LAKE which true to its name is surrounded by hemlocks. It is a place where **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Winter Wren**, and **Common Raven** breed. Yet this day we saw a bunch of swallows searching for food in the cool rain along with two **Red-breasted Mergansers**, a **Horned Grebe**, and **Pied-billed Grebe** on the water.



Vern Gauthier photographed this Black-capped Chickadee being hand-fed at Blue Spruce.



The ethereal song of the Hermit Thrush is often heard at SGL 174.

Photo by Roger Higbee

As the rain started to let up, we arrived at STATE GAME LANDS 174. We stepped out of the car to the melodic sounds of a singing **Hermit Thrush**. While there, we also caught a brief snippet of a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak's** song along with other woodland birds including **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Black-throated Green Warbler**, and **Scarlet Tanager**. It is a good place to find migrating **Olive-sided Flycatchers** during migration.

On our way to the GIPSY STRIPS we had a real treat on FIRE TOWER ROAD near UREY CEMETERY as we were treated to a **Golden Eagle** soaring high along the distant ridge. We also had a much closer **Northern Harrier** which in its graceful, undulating glide, crossed the road from one field to another. The icing on the cake? It was no longer raining!

At the Gipsy Strips we took a hike hoping to find **Henslow's Sparrow** which used to breed there on a regular basis. We were not that fortunate. We did have an "alleged" Henslow's, but after several minutes of investigation it turned out to be some kind of vole or other small mammal making sounds similar to the Henslow hiccup that serves as its "song." As an historic side note, the Henslow's Sparrow is named after British clergyman and botanist John Henslow who was a mentor and friend to Charles Darwin. He was also a friend of John Audubon who named the sparrow after him.

What we did find among other things at Gipsy Strips were lots of **Field Sparrows**. Have I mentioned yet that one of my lasting impressions of Indiana County is that it is a haven for this little sparrow with the rusty crest, white eye-ring, and pink bill? They seemed to serenade us at most places we visited with its bouncing ping pong ball songs being heard even through the rain.

Good Birding, PA!

Vern Gauthier

(Please contact me at pabirder@gmail.com if you would like your home county featured in a future edition of Birding PA.)

Links and e-mail for more on Indiana County Birding

PSO Site Guide – www.pabirds.org/SiteGuide/PACountyPage.php?CountyID=32

Todd Bird Club - <http://toddbirdclub.org/>

PSO County Compilers / Margaret and Roger Higbee - bcoriolle@windstream.net

Indiana CBC Compiler / Margaret Higbee - bcoriolle@windstream.net

Conemaugh - <http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Lakes/ConemaughRiverLake.aspx>

West Penn Rail Trail - <http://conemaughvalleyconservancy.org/recreation/recreation.html>

Birding PA Culinary Tip / Fortune Buffet – In Townfair Plaza near Indiana (Includes a Buffet, Sushi Bar & Hibachi Grill) - <http://fortunebuffetinc.com/>

Field Trip and Event Roster

Friday through Monday, June 19- 22 - Breeding Bird Blitz. This is our second annual Blitz, scheduled one week earlier than last year's so that we may include safe breeding dates and data.

September 19-20 – Bake Oven Knob Hawkwatch. Come, join us with the hope of getting large numbers of Broad-winged Hawks, as well as other early migrants. If the winds and weather do not cooperate, we will bird other nearby locations.

Saturday & Sunday, October 10-11 – *Birdwatcher's Digest's* Big Sit. Create your own 17-foot-diameter circle then count all the birds you see, or find a pre-existing

circle to join. Our state has led the whole world with the most circles.

Saturday & Sunday, October 17-18 – Stone Mountain Hawkwatch.– Join us as we sit at the platform for the 20th year. This watch splits the county lines of Mifflin & Huntingdon. More details will follow.

Saturday & Sunday, November 7-8 – Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch. This year we will visit this popular hawkwatch looking for the larger raptors, Golden Eagles and Northern Goshawks. Good parking lot and portajohn facilities. More details will follow.

Congratulations to Our Award Recipients!

Vice President Mike Fialkovich presented the award recipients with their plaques after the banquet. Receiving the Conservation Award for the Brandywine Conservancy were Sherri Evans-Stanton and Edie Dondero. The Poole Award was given to Dr. Robert L. Curry, who also presented the very informative and interesting banquet

talk about chickadee hybridization. The final recipients were our two youth scholarship winners, Tyler DiAndrea and Aiden Place.

Congratulations to all our very deserving award winners!

Conservation Chat Room



There was ample evidence at the PSO conference in West Chester that members are excited about birds! The sightings of an Anhinga and Mississippi Kites created quite a buzz. I missed both of those species, but at least I got to see a Blue Grosbeak

(our pin bird for the conference) singing its heart out at Goat Hill Preserve.

I'd like to bring two conservation items to your attention:

1. **Pennsylvania Wildlife updates:** The Pennsylvania Game Commission is holding its quarterly meeting on June 29, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at its office in Harrisburg.

From the PGC Website:

"The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners will hold its third quarterly meeting of 2015 in the agency's Harrisburg headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, just off the Progress Avenue exit of Interstate 81 in Harrisburg, Dauphin County. A link to a live stream of the meeting will be available following public comments. An agenda will be posted on the website."

This is the meeting when staff biologists give reports on wildlife across the state. Mike and I try to attend each year as we really learn a lot: the latest research on Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, Barn Owls, and Northern Bobwhite have been topics of past reports. I'm sure this year's presentations will be just as interesting.

2. **Action Alert** – email or write to the US Fish and Wildlife Service telling them that you support their plan to strengthen the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Deadline for comments is July 27, 2015.

There would be far fewer birds if it weren't for the MBTA – the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The MBTA is almost 100 years old and serves as the cornerstone for protecting migratory birds. It was enacted in 1918 to prohibit the killing or harming of more than 1,000 bird species. For a full list of birds that are protected by the MBTA see: <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/RegulationsPolicies/mbta/MBTANDX.HTML> The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which enforces the MBTA, has been rather lax in prosecuting renewable energy industries whose projects have unintentionally killed millions of birds (no one really knows exactly how many). The FWS

did a haphazard job of enforcing MBTA but the courts have made it clear. In 2010, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, "wind farms, power lines and other energy projects can be prosecuted even for accidentally killing birds." The accidental killing of birds is referred to as "incidental take."

FWS plans to develop a permit system that authorizes and limits incidental take by industries that chronically kill significant numbers of birds – but only after the agency has worked with the industry to reduce bird kills. The details of the plan are described in the Federal Register: www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/05/26/2015-12666/migratory-bird-permits-programmatic-environmental-impact-statement

The above site includes a link where you can submit comments either on-line, or by U.S. mail. Your comments will be part of the public record. You can also email your comments to Dan Ashe, the FWS director, at dan_ashe@fws.gov.

Tell Mr. Ashe that you support strengthening the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Your email will become part of the public record and will help the world become a safer place for birds. Do it for our birds!!!

Here are some talking points from National Audubon that you may want to include in your letter:

- Americans have a long tradition of protecting and enjoying birds here in the United States because we know that their health reveals the health of our own communities.
- Today birds are facing many new threats – threats like oil, electrocution, and midair collisions.
- Many companies are already working with conservationists to find solutions that keep birds safe. Solutions are often inexpensive and very practical.
- It's time to take those good ideas to scale and make sure everyone is playing by the same rules – it's the least we can do for the birds and for ourselves.
- It's time to end the free pass we're giving bad actors. There's no excuse for needlessly killing birds.

Laura Jackson
mljackson2@embarqmail.com
Bedford Co.

Lake Erie Bird Migration Symposium

June 20, 2015 Erie, PA

Lake Erie and the shores of northwestern Pennsylvania are among the most important regions in North America for observing millions of birds and bats. Local, regional, and international researchers have collected significant data on waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and song birds migrating over and around Lake Erie.

The Wildlife Committee of the Pennsylvania chapter of the Sierra Club is sponsoring the Lake Erie Bird Migration Symposium, a day-long event in which researchers will present their findings and discuss migrating species, their line of travel, and the role of stopovers such as Presque Isle State Park.

The symposium will be held June 20, 2015, at Erie's Blasco Library from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.. This free event is open to the public. Register online at www.goo.gl/forms/dRjdhtfgTr or contact David Sublette at 814-397-4121 or davidsublette@aol.com.

Presenters

Gerald M. McWilliams, co-author of *Birds of Pennsylvania*, Coordinator for the International Shorebird Society.

Daniel W. Brauning, co-author of *Birds of Pennsylvania*, Supervisor of Wildlife Diversity Program, PGC.

Frank A. La Sorte, PhD, Researcher, passerine migratory patterns, Cornell Ornithology Lab.

Sarah Sargent, PhD, Important Bird Area Coordinator, Audubon Pennsylvania.

Jeff Gosse, PhD, Regional Energy Coordinator, Project Leader for Avian Radar Study. USFWS.

Joe Siegrist, Research and Outreach Manager, Purple Martin Conservation Association.

Patrick Kramer, PhD candidate. York University, survey of swallow roosts across North America.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of
Discovery about
Pennsylvania
Birds



Searching for Loggerhead Shrikes (with Kathy Korber, PGC)

The so-called “Butcher-bird” – the Loggerhead Shrike – is a state Endangered species with a checkered history in Pennsylvania. This raptorial songbird is essentially extirpated as a breeding species. Not only are the recent reports very few, but they are limited to a small section of southern tier counties. Is it gone from the state? Or is it a matter of birders and biologists not looking in the right places? There does seem to be a glimmer of hope with

recent nesting season activity reported in neighboring states along Pennsylvania’s southern border. Just across the Mason-Dixon line, not only are there Loggerhead Shrike nesting records, but research is being conducted on these birds. The reports from West Virginia and Virginia are encouraging and should entice birders to conduct searches for this peculiar songbird in spring and summer. Small populations persist in northern Virginia, primarily in the Blue Ridge, the Valley and Ridge provinces of the state, and in the southeast. During West Virginia’s recent atlas efforts, 2009-2014, provisional reports confirmed Loggerhead Shrike in seven atlas blocks in the southeastern and northeastern parts of the state. This is a relatively short distance from the Mason-Dixon line as a shrike flies, with the potential for shrikes to show up in Pennsylvania. The shrike’s occurrence in those same areas of West Virginia is further supported by eBird reports, some of which include breeding behavior observations.

Volunteers in the 2nd *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* found Loggerhead Shrikes in only two blocks of Adams County. The one nesting shrike pair in the state was practically within walking distance of Maryland, so that record barely made the cut geographically. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has designated Loggerhead Shrike as a migratory bird of conservation

concern in the Northeast. It is now extirpated in most northeastern states. For more information about the Loggerhead Shrike distribution and decline, we invite the readers to check out the two excellent accounts in the PA breeding bird atlases.

Reasons for the persistent population declines are not clear; and while habitat loss and fragmentation are believed to be contributing factors, the Loggerhead Shrike continues to disappear in areas where there is suitable habitat. Pesticide use on breeding and wintering grounds may be another cause, both as a contaminant in the food chain and because of its influence on the availability of food. Another factor – collisions with vehicles – may have a significant effect on populations in some areas. Shrikes often nest in shrubby areas along roads, making them vulnerable to such collisions.

We invite the state's birders to search for Loggerhead Shrikes and report these observations to the Pennsylvania Game Commission as well as to eBird. **If birders encounter Loggerhead Shrikes nesting in Pennsylvania, we urge them to contact the Wildlife Diversity section's Kathy Korber at her e-mail address (kkorber@embarqmail.com).**

The best places to search for Loggerhead Shrikes are in open areas of low-growing vegetation with scattered trees. Some agricultural areas may hold these main elements, especially small farm landscapes including hayfields, pastures, or old orchards. Loggerhead Shrikes prefer open habitats with short grasses, ample perch sites, and thorny trees or shrubs in which they often nest. Thorny trees and shrubs, like hawthorns, osage orange, multiflora rose, and red cedar, provide protective sites for their open-cup nests. They have also been associated with barbed wire fences because of their habit of impaling prey on the barbs. Where habitat is suitable, Loggerhead Shrikes may be found in riparian areas, savanna-like settings, reclaimed surface mines, golf courses, cemeteries, and historic battlefields.

Loggerhead Shrikes can be early nesters for songbirds in the Northeast, sometimes nesting as early as March or April. They can nest a second or third time where they are established. Some may show up in late winter and stay where they had not been noticed previously. Their territories are fairly large for a songbird of its size – 6 to 9 hectares (15 to 22 acres) in size.

Elevated perches are key habitat components, and Loggerhead Shrikes are often spotted on conspicuous perches adjacent to rural roadways. They use utility poles, road signs, fence posts, tree tops, snags, wires, and lines. The shrike feeds on large and small insects, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and small birds, although it is known to kill birds of its own size as well.

Shrikes often tend to perch high on lookout posts (a tree, shrub, wire or pole) and then swoop in a low arc to the next perch. This behavior is a good clue, even at a distance. The Loggerhead Shrike's curious habit of caching prey on thorns or barbs may provide telltale signs of its presence in suitable habitat. It is also known to wedge prey tightly into forked branches.

More information about Loggerhead Shrikes may be found on the Game Commission website in the Endangered Species section:

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=621014&mode=2>

We wrote a complete story about the Loggerhead Shrike's absence and the need for data in a PA eBird story with great photos and references:

<http://ebird.org/content/pa/news/in-search-of-pennsylvanias-butcher-bird-the-loggerhead-shrike/>

Osprey Nest Reports Always Appreciated

The PA Game Commission does not conduct statewide Osprey nest surveys every year. This year is one of the "off years," so the agency is not doing a full-scale survey. However, this charismatic fish-eating raptor is a state Threatened species, and nest information is always appreciated. Data concerning many of the currently known nests were submitted to the agency by the general public.

There is an Osprey nest survey web page on the PGC website that has more information about this survey, including a link to the survey form. Please see:

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=721226&mode=2>

There also is a comprehensive description of the species in the agency's Wildlife Section:

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=621014&mode=2>

The PGC has written a recovery and management plan for the Pennsylvania Osprey breeding population which will be presented to the PGC Board of Commissioners at the June public meeting. There are at least 100 nesting pairs in the state. Most of these nests can be found in five distinct geographic clusters: the Lower Delaware River basin, the Upper Delaware/Poconos region, the Lower Susquehanna River, the Tioga-Hammond Reservoirs, and the Western Wetlands, Lakes, and Rivers. With the exception of the Delaware River, the majority of the state's Osprey nests are at reservoirs or impounded sections of rivers. Most Osprey nests in Pennsylvania are built on human-made structures such as communication towers, transmission towers, or Osprey nest platforms.

The Wildlife Diversity staff considers the Osprey to be essentially recovered as a breeding species in the state, worthy of upgrading from Threatened to Secure status. Even after upgrading, we intend to monitor the Osprey populations with the help of volunteers. Birders and other conservationists are welcome to attend the public meeting. There will be a public comment period after the plan has been presented to the board.

Wetland Bird Surveys – Thanks for the Help!

Many PA birders are assisting the PGC with Wetland Breeding Bird Surveys. We appreciate all of the great help! In addition to the official surveys being conducted in the largest and best wetlands, additional data submitted to eBird are also welcome. Essentially all wetland birds have declined in Pennsylvania as witnessed in the 2nd PA *Breeding Bird Atlas*. A visit to a wetland is always a good way to cap off a day afield and add a few species to the daily trip list.

We asked for assistance in a PA eBird story:

<http://ebird.org/content/pa/news/birders-are-needed-to-monitor-wetland-birds/>

It is too late in the season to join in the 2015 official PGC wetland bird surveys, but birders also can help the cause by confirming nesting of wetland birds. As any Atlas volunteer knows, confirmation of nesting can be accomplished by finding adults feeding young or seeing dependent young in the right habitat.

Rusty Blackbird Spring Blitz a Big Success!

The 2015 blitz was a huge success! Pennsylvania contributed more than 800 checklists with Rusty Blackbirds. As of May 6, New York (1329), Ohio (1055), Pennsylvania (834), and Michigan (821) were the leaders in the U.S. with the number of checklists reporting Rusties. That Pennsylvania was third on the list is a testament to the great contributions by the state's birding corps that took up the Rusty challenge.

Conneaut Marsh was by far the best spot in the state to find large flocks of Rusties. However, other locations, like Riverfront Park, Harrisburg, Independence Marsh, and Curtin Marsh, also yielded large flocks. A more complete review will be given in the next column.

The only bad news is the Jude Scarl, who so ably coordinated the Rusty Blackbird blitz, has moved to another position with AFWA in Washington D.C. We will miss her creative energy and intelligent leadership with Rusties but look forward to working with her on other projects.

Those Crazy Cuckoos Are Back!

Two of the most unusual birds in the state are the two cuckoos, the Yellow-billed and the Black-billed Cuckoos. Cuckoos are just really odd birds – stealthy and reptilian in their movements, yet graceful fliers, and elegantly plumaged birds. This year may be a particularly crazy one for cuckoos with the increase in gypsy moth infestations. I've noticed hillsides of barren trees caused by gypsy moth caterpillar damage, and the summer is still young.

Cuckoos really respond to these outbreaks because they feed on hairy caterpillars. We have also experienced how they respond to cicada outbreaks with the same resounding flurry of activity. They not only gobble up gypsy moth caterpillars but also tent caterpillars and fall webworms, species avoided by most other birds. They provide both an ecological service and an economical one.

Cuckoos have peculiar breeding behavior. They build their own flimsy stick nests where they lay their eggs, but they will also lay their eggs in the nests of other cuckoos, both their own species and the "other cuckoo" as well as in the nests of similarly sized birds, such as American Robins, Wood Thrushes, and Gray Catbirds. At least 11 species of birds have been recorded as parasitized by Yellow-billed Cuckoos, despite that many cuckoos build their own nests and tend many of their own young. If the food is plentiful, they also will nest consecutively (double-brooded), unusual for a Neotropical migrant; they will also move to another area where caterpillars are abundant, essentially acting nomadic.

For a bird of its size, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo has a remarkably accelerated breeding cycle. They can take only 19 days from nest-building to fledging. These are boom-and-bust caterpillar consumers!

With the insect outbreaks we are seeing in the state this summer, it may be a big year for cuckoos. Although Yellow-billed Cuckoos are reputed to have a more southerly distribution and tend to be found at lower elevations than the Black-billed Cuckoo, there is a lot of overlap between these species. Their similar vocalizations make identification challenging sometimes. I reteach myself their vocabularies every year and recheck them through the season by listening to authoritative recordings and watching birds vocalize.

I find the crazy cuckoos fascinating and peculiarly beautiful birds. I hope that you do, too.

Good Birding!

Doug Gross, Endangered and Non-game Bird Section Supervisor, 106 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859; 570-458-4109; dogross@pa.gov. PA eBird: <http://ebird.org/content/pa/>

PSO Newsletter

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

Membership Categories:

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------|
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Shonah Hunter – shunter@lhup.edu
Chad Kauffman – chadkauffman@earthlink.net
Wayne Laubscher – wnlaubscher@comcast.net
Sandra Lockerman – lockerman@paonline.com
Annette Mathes – amathes19@verizon.net
Mark McConaughy – TimeTraveler50@comcast.net
Andrew McGann – andrew.mcgann@gmail.com
Flo McGuire – fmcguire1@verizon.net
Holly Merker – hcybelle@gmail.com
Brian Quindlen – Brian.Quindlen@gmail.com
Scott Stoleson – sstoleson@fs.fed.us
Emily Thomas – eht5002@hotmail.com
Linda Wagner – lwagner342@msn.com

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 7)

1. Bell's Vireo
2. The alula
3. Family Passeridae, the "weaver finches"
4. Chuck-will's-widow and Eastern Whip-poor-will at Fort Indiantown Gap
5. Snow Bunting



Holly Merker led Sunday's field trip to Nottingham County Park.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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

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