

The

# PSO Pileated



---

March 2016

*The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*

Volume 27, Number 1

---

## From the President's Desk....

I love this time of year with winter nearly gone and spring becoming more real every day. Woodcocks start peenting, and Great Horned Owls begin calling, Songbirds begin to sing, and we're only weeks away from the warblers' arrival! I think spring migration is one of the best times of the year to be out birding, too. Partially, it's because of all the new migrants, but I think it's also because we are all so happy with the warmer weather again after a long winter! Spring migration is the time for many birding festivals, field trips, the PA migration count, and other opportunities statewide to get out to meet fellow birders. Check PSO's website and Facebook for the latest field trip offerings as well as the closest bird club or Audubon chapter near you that may be offering outings. I also encourage everyone to get involved in the Pennsylvania Migration Count on May 14. Instructions for the count are on the PSO's website. It's a fun way to see how many species you can tally in a county all while collecting data that may be used for bird conservation.

PSO's annual meeting in Somerset is scheduled for May 20-22. Somerset is one of the best birding locations in the state. Somerset Lake is a rarity magnet and one of the best shorebird spots in the state. This will be a great meeting! There is a treat for us in the schedule this year,

in addition to the normal talks, we will host a screening of *The Messenger*, a full-length feature documentary! *The Messenger* is a visually thrilling ode to the beauty and importance of songbirds and what it means to all of us on both a global and human level if we lose them. You can read more about the documentary and watch trailers at <http://songbirdsos.com/about/messenger/>. Additional details concerning the meeting are on page 15 and also online. Register early to get the best rate at the hotel.

Lastly, we have been talking about the creation of PSO's new website for a while, and I am happy to say that we are now quickly moving toward a spring launch. We will be adding a lot of new and expanded content in a visually stunning site, which will also be much easier to use on any device. We are excited and welcome your input on anything you would like to see included or changed. If you have photos taken in PA (including from field trips or an annual meeting) that you would like to be considered for the site, please send them to us! I hope that everyone has a great spring and that we will see you in Somerset for the annual meeting!

Good birding!

Mike Lanzone, President

---

## Bob Mulvihill to Speak at PSO Banquet

The National Aviary in Pittsburgh started as the City of Allegheny's Phipps Conservatory in the late 1800s. National Aviary Ornithologist, Bob Mulvihill, will tell the story of how it became the National Aviary and how, over the past 65 years, it has grown from a local attraction to an international leader in avian husbandry, veterinary care, education, conservation, and field research. Bob will highlight the National Aviary's important contributions to

our understanding of the impacts of energy development on birds, long-term bird monitoring and environmental capacity-building in Latin America, captive breeding and reintroduction of endangered species like the Andean Condor, Guam Rail, and Bridled White-eye, and citizen-science based research and monitoring of migrant and resident birds in urban landscapes.

# Somerset Annual Meeting – May 20-22

Start making plans now to attend our 27th annual PSO meeting at the Quality Inn and Conference Center in Somerset, a premier birding location as well as one of the state's rarity magnets. A diverse bird list is possible because of the variety of habitats ranging from high elevation to grasslands. PSO has a superb line-up of field trip destinations, including Somerset Lake Nature and Wildlife Park, Quemahoning Reservoir, North Fork Reservoir and Sammy Swamp, Flight 93 Memorial and game lands, the southern grasslands/farmlands, Confluence area, Kimberly Run Natural Area, and Mount Davis area. Be sure to check our website ([www.pabirds.org](http://www.pabirds.org)) for updates and to sign up for these trips. Just a few of the meeting's many target species include Sora, Virginia Rail, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Henslow's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, and many more. This meeting date has coincided with decent spring migration in the past given its high elevation. As always, we expect to see a great variety of birds, and we have a tremendous amount of fun on these field trips.

Once again this year Shonah Hunter is doing a fantastic job organizing the meeting and handling registrations. Be sure to make your hotel registrations before April 15 to obtain the conference rate. Many others are working behind the scenes to make sure that this meeting is one of our best!

We have a great afternoon program planned. Matt Webb will be speaking about BirdSafe Pittsburgh and the Allegheny Bird Conservation Alliance. Our president Mike Lanzone will tell us about his Somerset County Big Year and birding in the county. The entire list of speakers and their topics will soon be available on our website. We are also fortunate to have Robert Mulvihill, this year's Earl Poole Award recipient, as our banquet speaker.

Shonah Hunter is organizing the silent auction. If you have any birdy items you would like to donate for the auction, please notify her at [shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu). Proceeds will benefit our youth scholarship program.

If you know any youth who might be interested in attending our meeting, think about nominating him or her for our scholarship program. Details are available online via the nomination form.

The annual meeting is a great opportunity to meet birders from across the state. We see many names on the listserv and on eBird, and our annual meeting gives us a chance to put faces with those names. It's fun meeting other birders, and birders of all calibers are welcome. So, send in your reservations. We look forward to seeing you in Somerset!

**Note:** *If you need a hard copy of either the registration or the scholarship form,, please notify Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) and she will mail one to you.*

---

## Matt Webb to Speak at Annual Meeting

BirdSafe Pittsburgh was created in the spring of 2013 as a partnership between the American Bird Conservancy and several local organizations to research and address the issue of bird-window collisions throughout the Pittsburgh region. This partnership has resulted in Pittsburgh being designated in 2015 as an Urban Bird Treaty city by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The original partnership has expanded to become the Allegheny Bird Conservation Alliance (ABCA), which has formed to encompass any collaborative work done in the Western Pennsylvania region that aims to conserve birds or their habitats.

Over the past two years, BirdSafe Pittsburgh volunteers have been able to save roughly 150 birds that had suffered collisions with windows, taking them to the Animal Rescue League's Wildlife Center to be rehabbed and released. Volunteers have also collected several hundred dead bird specimens, depositing these into the collection

at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History to be available for scientific research in the future.

In 2016 and 2017, ABCA partners will undertake land restoration projects on properties owned by the Allegheny Land Trust, utilizing the expertise of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. Partners will also raise awareness of our region's migratory birds through celebrations of the centennial of the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916, which protects and preserves our avifauna.

ABCA partners include the American Bird Conservancy, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the National Aviary, the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Animal Rescue League, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Green Building Alliance, and the Allegheny Land Trust.

## Bob Mulvihill to Receive Earl Poole Award

The Poole Award is presented to an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania. This year's recipient of the Earl Poole Award is Robert S. Mulvihill, the National Aviary's Ornithologist.

Bob grew up in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood, where he developed an early interest in bird watching. He has been an active member of the birding and bird conservation community in western Pennsylvania for more than forty years.

Bob began his ornithological career in 1978 as a volunteer helping Robert Leberman at Powdermill Nature Reserve, the biological field station of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. He was subsequently hired as a bird-banding assistant and education specialist there in 1983. During his nearly 30-year tenure at Powdermill, Bob banded several hundred thousand birds and conducted long-term field research on the Dark-eyed Junco, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Bob has authored more than thirty scientific articles, edited volumes on the conservation of Pennsylvania's birds, written dozens of popular articles for newspapers and magazines (including the popular "Let's Talk About Birds" series in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*), and given hundreds of talks about birds and bird-banding research throughout the United States, as well as Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Bob served as a regional coordinator and species account



author for the first *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* from 1983-1988. More recently, he was statewide project coordinator and co-editor for the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*. Bob joined the staff of the National Aviary in 2011, and in 2013, he brought *Neighborhood Nest-watch*, a citizen-science project developed by the Smithsonian Institution, to the Greater Pittsburgh area. That year Bob also established one of very few urban Northern Saw-whet Owl migration banding sites near downtown Pittsburgh for the collaborative "Project OwlNet." Bob also participates in the collaborative Hummer/ Bird Study Group, answering the call to band any and all "winter" hummingbirds reported in western Pennsylvania and surrounding states. He annually takes part in a half dozen area Christmas Bird Counts, and he established and compiles the new Imperial CBC. Bob regularly leads bird walks throughout the Pittsburgh area, and he conducts birding tours for the National Aviary across Pennsylvania. Bob has served on the Ornithological Technical Committee of the PA Biological Survey for more than 20 years.

During his career, Bob has trained and mentored about a hundred students, many of whom have gone on to pursue graduate degrees and to have productive careers in ornithology and related fields. He has received awards in recognition of outstanding efforts on behalf of bird conservation from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (W.E. Clyde Todd Award) and the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (Golden Pileated Award).

---

## Somerset County Conservancy to Receive Conservation Award

The PSO Conservation Award is presented to an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to the preservation of birds in Pennsylvania. The 2016 Conservation Award winner is the Somerset County Conservancy. The conservancy's mission includes preserving areas of natural and historical significance, as well as remediating damaged habitats. The organization has worked on five acid mine drainage treatment projects that are currently removing hundreds of tons of waste from aquatic systems, resulting in restoration of the fishery and improved bird habitat. These systems have positively impacted water courses far beyond the county, including the Monongahela River.

At the Kimberly Run Natural Area, the conservancy preserved and maintains a wide array of habitats that

include grasslands, hemlock forest, a bog, and other wetlands.

The Conservancy's Somerset Lake Action Committee was formed to increase public awareness of the importance of the lake, not only to migrating birds but to the residents of Somerset and beyond. The committee expended great effort to save the lake by obtaining funds to repair the dam. Somerset Lake attracts numerous waterfowl and shorebirds during migration. The lake is now part of a county park due to the efforts of this committee.

To learn more about the conservancy, their numerous projects, membership and to read their newsletters, visit their website at [www.somersetconservancy.org](http://www.somersetconservancy.org).

# 2016 Birding Trips, Excursions, Surveys, and More

More field trips may be added later or at the last minute. We continue to work with local groups and clubs to bird with them in their favorite spots by joining their existing field trips or by creating new ones. Please contact any PSO board member for more information.

**March 18-20:** Weather and ice depending, our PSO field trip will take us to the northwestern corner of the state with the hope of having some nice waterfowl and gulls, as well as a possible Snowy Owl or other northern species. Mary Birdsong and Chad Kauffman are co-leading this trip. A hotel, where we have stayed in the past, is willing to give us discounts on rooms. Members only for this trip, and we will limit the number of attendees. Please email Chad E. Kauffman ([chadkauffman@earthlink.net](mailto:chadkauffman@earthlink.net)) to register and for more information.

**May 5-7:** Shaver's Creek Birding Cup, Shaver's Creek's annual fund-raising tournament, is a contest among teams of birders to identify the most bird species in a 24-hour period in the central Pennsylvania region (Huntingdon, Centre, and adjoining counties). Teams must compete based on a set of Birding Cup rules, and the winning teams are awarded their prizes immediately following the contest at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center in Petersburg, Pennsylvania. For more information, see <http://www.shaverscreek.org/public-programs-and-events/birding-cup/>.

**May 14:** PA Migration Count (PAMC)

**May 20-22:** PSO Annual Meeting in Somerset County. See other articles in this newsletter for details.

**June 3-5:** Bucktoe Shorebird and Kite Watch, led by Larry Lewis and Chad Kauffman. Join us as we look for kites and shorebirds at Bucktoe. During the days we will be birding in surrounding areas including John Heinz NWR. The watch location is open to anyone, but bonus birding will be for PSO members only.

**June 12:** Swatara State Park, led by Dave McNaughton. Meet at 8:30 at Swopes Valley Trailhead. We'll head east along the rail trail (late-comers can catch up to us on the trail). Swopes Valley Trailhead is located at the intersection of Swopes Valley Road and what used to be Old State Road (now Bear Hole Trail). The GPS coordinates are 40.522189, -76.469334. We'll have opportunities to view Suedberg Swamp, some of the grasslands in the area, and some forests that are usually good for flycatchers (including Alder) and thrushes. We may also bounce down to a few other locations in the park if people want to keep going. Other interesting species we may get to see include breeding Red-shouldered Hawks, mergansers, Wood Ducks, and several native turtle species.

**June 17-20:** Breeding Bird Blitz. The Third Annual PA Breeding Bird Blitz (PAB3) will run June 17 to June 20, 2016. The PAB3 is a great time to get out during the peak of the breeding season and is a means of gathering data on an annual basis of the breeding bird population in PA. What's in it for you? You get to go out to find birds! There are prizes, too! But most importantly you help to add some meaningful data about PA breeding birds! See page 4 for more information.

**October 8-9:** *The Big Sit!* is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest and founded by the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club. Every team that observes the year's "Golden Bird" has a chance to win \$500. Every year, birdwatchers from around the globe unite on this special day by participating in this free event, open to any person and club in any country! Sponsored by Swarovski Optik, *The Big Sit!* is like a Big Day or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The difference lies in the area limitation from which you may observe. Some people have called it a "tailgate party for birders." Find a good spot for birdwatching—preferably one with good views of a variety of habitats and lots of birds. Next, create a real or imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours, counting all the bird species you see or hear. That's it. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun. Then submit your findings. Participants are allowed to come and go from the circle—especially for the purpose of bringing food back into the circle—and the circle need not be occupied for the entire 24 hours. See <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/big-sit/about-the-big-sit.php>.

**November 5-6:** Hawk Mountain, led by Chad Kauffman. This return to Hawk Mt. for a hawkwatch trip is scheduled with the hope of being there for Golden Eagles and other large raptors. Details will follow.

Website: Check out PSO's website for any additions or changes:

<http://www.pabirds.org/Events/PSOFieldTrips.php>

or our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/upcoming>

# The Third Annual Breeding Bird Blitz (PAB3)

The third annual PA Breeding Bird Blitz will be taking place Friday, June 17, through Monday, June 20. This is another opportunity to add some great PA breeding bird data to eBird and to win prizes for yourself! One eBird checklist per contestant per category may be entered daily. This means you can enter up to 4 checklists daily for a chance to win a prize. The prize categories this year will include the following:

**1. Basic** - E-mail ONE of your daily eBird checklists for the PAB3 to [breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com](mailto:breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com) **with the subject line, Basic.**

**All prize-eligible eBird checklists will meet the following criteria:**

- Checklists will be complete checklists with NO INCIDENTAL COUNTS and “Yes” to reporting all birds identified.
- There will be no use of the dreaded X - each species reported must have the number seen or heard, either counted or estimated.
- 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.
- DO NOT SHARE a checklist with the PAB3 but send a copy of your checklist. You do this by having eBird send you a copy of your checklist via e-mail then forwarding a copy to the given PAB3 email address.

**2. Breeding Codes** – E-mail ONE of your daily eBird checklists of the PAB3 to [breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com](mailto:breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com) **with the subject line, Codes.**

- In addition to following the eligibility criteria of the Basic Lists, these lists will also include breeding codes for ALL species reported. 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>

**3. Nocturnal** – E-mail ONE of your daily eBird checklists for the PAB3 to [breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com](mailto:breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com) **with the subject line, Nocturnal.**

- A Basic or Breeding Code list that ends by 5:30 a.m. or begins at 9:00 p.m. or later.
- This new category is to encourage you to find and report Eastern Whip-poor-wills, rails, woodcock, owls, and other birds that may be active mainly at night. They must meet all the criteria of the Basic List with the addition of the time guidelines given here.

**4. Registered** – E-mail ONE of your daily entries to [breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com](mailto:breedingbirdblitz@gmail.com) **with the subject line, Registered,** along with the name of the sponsoring Local Bird Club (LBC) or Audubon Chapter (AC) of which you are a member, or if you are a member of PSO.

- If your LBC or AC becomes a registered supporter of the PAB3, you may send in one additional checklist daily. Do this by having an officer of the group send an email to [pabirder@gmail.com](mailto:pabirder@gmail.com) no later than May 17 indicating that they are officially promoting the PAB3 among their members.
- If you are a member of PSO (PA Society for Ornithology) or Susquehanna County Birders, you are already covered.

Specific sponsors and prizes will be announced at a later date. For now, circle the dates on your calendar, and encourage your LBC or AC to become a registered supporter.

## DO THE BLITZ!

For more information contact Vern Gauthier at [pabirder@gmail.com](mailto:pabirder@gmail.com).

---

---

## Do You eBird?

If not, you might consider checking out eBird. It’s a great way to keep track of your bird lists, and it also allows you to contribute to bird conservation and science!

# PSO Field Trip to the New Jersey Coast Revisited

February 20-21, 2016

By Mike Fialkovich

A group of 16 PA birders explored the coast of New Jersey from Sandy Hook south to Barnegat Lighthouse State Park for two days. We had great weather for February, mild with sunny to cloudy skies which made for comfortable conditions.

Starting at Sandy Hook National Monument, we explored the bays, ocean, and small areas of woodland.

The bays offered abundant Brant with some ducks scattered among them, including American Black Ducks, a Ruddy Duck, and a Green-winged Teal. The woods were filled with American Robins and a flock of Cedar Waxwings. Carolina Wrens were singing. A group of Harbor Seals had hauled out and were resting on a small island. Moving to the beach and oceanfront with the New York skyline in the distance, we had a very close adult Northern Gannet just a few yards offshore. Rafts of all three scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were riding the waves.

Working south we checked various locations. Common and Red-throated Loons, Long-tailed Ducks, and all three scoter species were in almost every place we looked, some very close. Manasquan Inlet was quite productive for loons with 51 Common Loons tallied along with several Red-throated Loons. The inlet was also good for Purple Sandpiper with a flock of 35 as well as two more Northern Gannets.

A real surprise was a Western Grebe close to shore at Monmouth Beach. It was difficult to obtain prolonged views or photos due to the surf and the constant diving as the bird was actively feeding.

A quick lunch stop in Neptune was the only place we



picked up Laughing Gulls which are not numerous in winter. Two were attracted to our activity in the parking lot, hoping for a handout.

A male Eurasian Wigeon at the Shark River in Neptune was associating with at least 100 American Wigeons very close to shore, so we had great views.

Lake Takanassee and nearby ponds produced a Cackling Goose among the Canadas as well as a

Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Pintail, and Gadwall.

An Orange-crowned Warbler was visiting a feeding station at the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center. Shortly after we arrived, it appeared at the suet feeder right outside the window and made one more appearance while we were there.

Our final stop was Barnegat Lighthouse State Park, one of the most reliable locations for Harlequin Ducks. The birds here were very close, so we had stunning views of several Harlequin Ducks, numerous Long-tailed Ducks, Black Scoters, a few Common Eiders, and many Brant. A hike along the jetty also produced close views of several Ruddy Turnstones. A Great Cormorant flew by, and three were perched on a tower at the mouth of the channel. A Razorbill worked the jetty but spent brief moments on the surface as it was actively feeding. After a dive, it would appear some distance from where it started. A few Harbor Seals were swimming through the channel, a real treat for us landlubbers.

Some participants were thrilled to add life birds while others were more than happy to see birds we don't often have a chance to enjoy inland. All were tired after the long day's birding and traveling.

# Ornithological Literature Notes

Have you seen the terms “wing-flashing,” “tail-flicking,” and “flush-pursuit”? They refer to methods used by birds of many species to find and capture flying insects.

These birds suddenly flash white and other brightly colored patches of plumage to startle resting aerial insects into flight. Tail-flicking has been studied intensively and found to be effective for wood-warblers such as the American Redstart, the Painted Redstart, and the Slate-throated Redstart. Experiments have shown that flicks of bright patches on tails spark a stronger escape response than flicks of tails with experimentally darkened patches.

Ronald L. Mumme, Professor of Biology at Allegheny College in Meadville, demonstrated the effect in his studies of the Slate-throated Redstart’s behavior, and he wondered whether the Hooded Warbler’s white tail spots serve the same function. Indeed they do, judging by evidence Mumme reported in a 2014 paper in *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* ([tinyurl.com/Hooded-foraging](http://tinyurl.com/Hooded-foraging)).

Mumme conducted his research during four nesting seasons from 2010 to 2013 at the Hemlock Hill Field Station in Crawford County. The site is famous for studies by ornithologists and students that have revealed many Hooded Warbler mating, nesting, social, and ecological behaviors for the first time. Across his four-year study of tail-flicking, Mumme monitored more than 400 nests and color-banded 175 breeding adults.

To determine what effects the white tail patches might have on foraging activities and success rates in prey captures, he darkened the patches with brown marking

pens in experimental groups and compared their differences in behavior with those of control groups that retained the normal white areas. The results, Mumme says, “provide three compelling lines of evidence that the white tail spots and tail-flicking behavior of Hooded Warblers enhance foraging performance and capture of aerial prey.”

First, adults with experimentally darkened tails achieved significantly fewer prey attacks per minute. Second, darkened females (but not males) delivered fewer flying insects and proportionally more nonflying insect larvae to their nestlings—although the amounts of food ultimately taken to nestlings by darkened and normal birds were nearly identical. Third, observations of juveniles’ behavior showed that tail-flicking developed in parallel with the development of foraging behavior, and by the time juveniles became nutritionally independent, their rates of tail-flicking and prey-attacks were comparable to those of adults.

Mumme noted that his results raised two questions: Why did females with darkened tail spots change the proportions of flying and nonflying insects they captured but males did not? Why didn’t fewer prey attacks by birds with darkened tails ultimately decrease the overall amounts of food they brought to nestlings? As in just about all research, results lead to more questions.

Paul Hess  
Natrona Heights  
Allegheny Co.  
[phess@salsgiver.com](mailto:phess@salsgiver.com)

---

---

## Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

PSO issues certificates of appreciation to individuals and organizations who have allowed birders access to their properties to view rare or unusual birds. The total number issued is now 126. The full list can be found on the PSO’s website. Since November, the following Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded to:

- Rufous Hummingbird, Ruth Cook, Chester Co.
- Rufous Hummingbird, Vicky McGinnis, Jefferson Co.
- Rufous Hummingbird, Deb & Ralph Siefken, Adams Co.
- Rufous Hummingbird, Ethel & Terry Sherman, Dauphin Co.
- Western Tanager, Dick & Darla Snyder, Centre Co.
- Mountain Bluebird, Margaret and Matt Balitsaris, Bucks Co.
- Mountain Bluebird, Laure Duval, Bucks Co.

# The Raven Reporter

Tales of  
Discovery about  
Pennsylvania  
Birds



## PA eBird Website Available for Promoting Birding Events

Not every state has an eBird portal. Pennsylvania is one of the few that does, and we are committed to maintaining a lively, informative, helpful, and fun site for the state's birders. As part of our partnership with the PSO, Audubon Pennsylvania, and all of the birders in the state, we are glad to make announcements about birding events and projects. So, we have posted announcements for the annual PSO meeting, PSO field trips, the Breeding Bird Blitz, and the Bird Festival at Presque Isle State Park. Perhaps you knew about these events, but it might be news to others who have just discovered birding and organized bird organizations. We would be glad to post more events if we get appropriate text with enough lead time to make the story relevant. Some photos of the event also are a very helpful and make it more interesting for everybody.

We also plan to post stories about county birding and out-of-the-way birding spots. We appreciate any contributions to that cause.

Please send your birding announcements to Doug Gross at the e-mail address provided below.

## The Strange El Nino Winter

Normally, Pennsylvania birders are talking winter finches, Snow Buntings, and Snowy Owls at this time of year. At least that is what we want to remember about our winter birding. In reality, winters are quite variable, and none are quite alike. For me, this has been an odd winter of robins and vultures. Yes, I know that there have been those very rare oddities of flycatchers, tanagers, and other vagrants; but I have had lots of robins in my own backyard and get calls about vultures in places just down the road. What? This is supposed to be winter! It has been mild, so American Robins, Hermit Thrushes, and other frugivorous, semi-hardy species have been “short-

stopping” in Pennsylvania, eating their way across the state. Robins love wild fruits and berries, so they can spend time farther north than usual if the winter weather stays away and there are lots of sumac, cedar, and holly berries around. There also have been reports of Gray Catbirds which also eat a lot of wild fruits and can skulk in protected areas in brush and along streambanks in cold times. It has been so mild that many vultures and other raptors have stayed a bit farther north than usual.

This winter has seen more than its share of unusual visitors, perhaps due to the curious weather patterns. Flycatchers, tanagers, and western oddities! The features of eBird allow users to see these records and even photographic evidence and sound recordings of the unusual findings. With the longer days of February and March, more opportunities may present themselves for locating some of the El Nino birds.

The odd vagrants have really put on a show this winter in Pennsylvania. These reports have received the most attention in the Pennsylvania Birder posts and social media. A lot of excitement was generated by an *Empidonax* flycatcher at Gettysburg College, which was probably a Least Flycatcher, but posed a big identification challenge. Any *Empidonax* found this far north that late in the season is exceptional. Then, there was that Pacific-slope Flycatcher in Reading. The persistent and cooperative Western Tanager in State College was perhaps the biggest star of the winter, regularly visiting a backyard feeder and providing a show for dozens of visitors. And for an added bonus there was a wonderful Mountain Bluebird in Bucks County! Also a Yellow-headed Blackbird joined a flock of Lancaster County Red-winged Blackbirds.

A number of “berry birds” have been reported this winter. Flocks of robins are the obvious ones, but there also is a scattering of Gray Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, and Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers. They take advantage of the staghorn sumac patches, red cedar groves, winterberries, and dried up grapes, pokeberries, and dogwood berries. They also will dive deep into a red cedar and forage for those little blue berries out of sight and well-protected from the wind in that tight foliage. Several scattered reports of Gray Catbirds have been submitted. These long-distance insect and fruit-eating migrants should be in Florida, the West Indies, or Central America by now. Instead they have hunkered down in some sheltered areas and pop up occasionally in view. And, then there are the vultures! As winters warm and more carrion covers the roadsides, there are ample reasons for vultures to hang around Pennsylvania in wintery months. Why go south when it is so good here? Deer season provides gut piles and farm butchery produces

even more vulture food. Not only has Pennsylvania experienced mild temperatures, but we've also been free of heavy snow cover over the northern part of the state. A scavenging bird can still find food in odd places without the snow cover normally hiding the food source. It would be useful to register winter vulture sightings and vulture roost records in eBird so we can see how their behavior is changing with different weather patterns and snow cover. These vultures tend to establish roosts that persist from year to year. Finding these roosts and documenting these spots can provide interesting history of vulture population and phenological shifts.

Mild weather also allows some mucky areas to remain unfrozen for at least part of the day. This attracts a variety of birds including American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, and thrushes you did not know were around until they showed up in a winter seep. Fox Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, and other seed-eating brush and grassy habitat birds are lurking in a variety of protected areas, too. The open, wind-swept fields attract Horned Larks, American Pipits, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings whether or not there is snow, but the snowless areas allow foraging that only a manure-spread otherwise provides these songbirds. Horned Larks start nesting remarkably early in spring which may be even earlier than usual. Yes, we all enjoy the open field raptors like Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, and Short-eared Owl. It takes a little more looking to find those winter birds in the "frozen tundra" of Pennsylvania. It also helps to get out of your vehicle and listen for their high pitched call notes. Keep those winter bird records coming in!

### **eBird Provides A Public Photo Repository**

Many bird rarity photos grace the Pennsylvania eBird Rarities Pool. By posting photo files with eBird checklists, any record becomes better documented evidence for rarities or changes in bird distribution. E-Bird allows anyone to upload either photographs or audio files to eBird checklists. These images support the bird records. They also provide information for the regional data-quality eBird record reviewers. The reviewers have a tough job without good documentation of odd records. It also paves the way for acceptance by Pennsylvania Birds county records and the state records.

These photographs also make eBird records more enjoyable for the entire community of eBird participants. This option is particularly rewarding for the Pennsylvania eBird site because the rare bird photos are highlighted on the right side of the website page. Below the host organization logos, please look for the features labeled as

"eBird Rarities" and the "Pennsylvania eBird Rarities Pool."

There are guidelines and instructions for "Adding Photos and Audio to eBird Checklists" under the Help dropdown. An audio upload guide also is provided in these instructions. The first steps are to take the digital photos, upload these images to your computer, and save these photos in an area where you can find them. Years from now we will be grateful for the documented evidence of rarities and "unseasonal" records. And, we will all enjoy the challenge of identifying those difficult birds and sharing our opinions about their identity with others.

### **Another Rusty Blackbird Spring**

Pennsylvania is on the boreal songbird highway. One of the most declined songbirds of the continent is the enigmatic Rusty Blackbird which I think would be better named the "Boreal Oriole" or something a bit more romantic. The International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (IRBWG) continues to seek more information on the limiting factors for this songbird. With research conducted by several teams, we are learning more about Rusty Blackbirds on their breeding grounds. But are these declines by this wetland bird due to climate change in various forms? Has this species just not adapted to the changing mosaic of habitats wrought by humans? Volunteer birders can help just by registering their observations of wintering and migrating Rusty Blackbirds.

The pathway of northbound Rusty Blackbirds from the southern swamps to the northern conifer forests and muskeg goes right up several streams we know. Note that the Delaware, the Susquehanna, and the Allegheny have roughly a north-south path. For a north-bound songbird that likes to keep its feet wet, these must seem like very tempting pathways with good foraging in mud along the way. We wonder which are the most important places for Rusty Blackbirds to either forage or to roost at night. These often are not the same places. Past records are showing that wet areas like the Toftrees in Centre County and various spots along the banks of the Susquehanna River and several of its tributaries can be hotspots for Rusties.

With the mild winter and potentially early summer, we may see an early northward wave of Rusty Blackbirds this spring. Like American Woodcocks, Wilson's Snipe, and Wood Ducks, they seek the shallow moist areas along streams, ponds, and seeps. A trick is to separate them from the flush of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. They may not be glamorous birds, but they do present interesting challenges and puzzles for curious birders.

The official time for the Pennsylvania Rusty Blackbird blitz is mid-March through the end of April. But, this winter has been so mild that we anticipate even earlier records. Invite others to get involved and “get Rusty!”

### **Osprey On Verge of Upgrading – Nest Reports Really Appreciated**

The Osprey has staged a remarkable recovery over the last few decades. We have reviewed the history of this recovery in previous columns and on the PGC website. The Osprey management plan was accepted by the PGC Board of Commissioners last fall, and we intend to move ahead in upgrading this species to Protected or Secure from its present Threatened status. We have five clusters of at least 10 nesting pairs across the state and probably have more than 100 active nesting pairs statewide.

The PA Game Commission invites the state’s birders to contribute to the Osprey nest inventory. We have provided instructions and a form on our website to easily contribute to the project. Please look under “Wildlife” and then “Endangered Species” and “What You Can Do to Help.” The Comprehensive Pennsylvania Osprey Nest Survey provides forms and background information about the project.

### **Celebrating Some Longevity**

I am not absolutely sure, but I believe that this may be the 100<sup>th</sup> Raven Reporter column. I think I will celebrate by going birding somewhere. Thanks to everyone who is contributing to the cause of Pennsylvania ornithology and to the community of birding. I especially appreciate Margaret Higbee and everyone else who have contributed so much to keeping this newsletter such a treasure for the Pennsylvania birding family.

In future editions of this column, I intend to discuss our bird connections with Nicaragua, Wood Thrush conservation initiatives, and boreal forest bird projects and conservation. I always invite ideas for subject matter from the PSO membership.

Good Birding!

Doug Gross, Endangered and Non-game Bird Section Supervisor, Pennsylvania Game Commission, 106 Winters Road, Orangeville, PA 17859; 570-458-4109; [dogross@pa.gov](mailto:dogross@pa.gov).

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

---

---

## **Birding the Donut Hole Trail**

By Linda Widdop

Pennsylvania is an interesting state for birds. I live in Rydal, in the southeastern part of Montgomery County where we have the usual birds including Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse, a variety of woodpeckers, etc. Some of our birds are at the northern limits of their range such as Carolina Chickadee and Carolina Wren. The changing seasons give us brief glimpses of birds migrating in both spring and fall. When the spring migration is complete, we are left with an additional set of breeding birds – Scarlet Tanager, Yellow Warbler, Wood Thrush, Veery, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and more; but most birds have continued northward. Other birds, such as Dark-eyed Junco and White-throated Sparrow, have left us after spending the winter here.

We have a family camp in Wharton, in the southern part



Frank Eppinger and Linda Widdop rest briefly along the Donut Hole Trail.

of Potter County where we enjoy a different set of birds in each season. Potter County is located on the other side of the mountains that dissect Pennsylvania diagonally. There, the resident and breeding birds are different. For instance, the resident birds include Ruffed Grouse, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, and many others. The number of species in this area explodes when the summer breeders show up. Birding this area in May and June is truly a birder’s dream and allows us south-easterners to become acquainted with birds that we normally see for only a few days before they disappear on their migrations. We also get to see our winter birds again, this time on their breeding territories.

There are many terrific birding locations in Potter, Cameron, and Clinton Counties where you can find and study these breeding birds. We have spent more than 20 years birding this area on day trips to various state

parks – Sinnemahoning, Cherry Spring, Lyman Run, and Ole Bull State Parks – or along the many logging roads in the Susquehannock State Forest where we have taken short hikes in search of birds and wildlife. That changed four years ago when our friend and camp neighbor Frank Eppinger asked me to join a day hike on the Donut Hole Trail.

The Donut Hole Trail is a 90-mile point-to-point trail with its western terminus at Jericho and the eastern terminus at Farrandville, just outside of Lock Haven. The trail follows the West Branch of the Susquehanna River through Sproul State Forest and is described by the Keystone Trails Association as “one of the most remote and challenging of the state’s backpack- ing trails and is for seasoned hikers only, with numerous steep climbs and unbridged stream crossings,” and they aren’t kidding.

Frank had started the trail in 2010 at Jericho and finished at Kettle Creek State Park, which is where we began in 2011. I had never really hiked for a whole day before and found myself in over my head. My standard hiking “pack” includes binoculars, Canon 7D with 100-400mm telephoto lens, a bottle of water, and the dog. By lunch-time, I was hot and hungry, and the dog was giving me dirty looks. Even so, I managed to get some birding in along the way. Black-throated Blue Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, American Redstarts, Hermit Thrushes, and Cedar Waxwings sang and perched along the trail. I quickly realized that the binoculars and camera were useless (and really heavy) in this setting. Birding by ear is the best method to identify the birds and keep up the pace set by Frank. We did stop briefly to rest. One of our rest stops yielded a Timber Rattlesnake that crossed our path! Year one ended with my drinking cool water from a rusty pipe along Route 144 and vowing to get into better shape.

I didn’t realize that my participation in 2011 would turn into a yearly hike in pursuit of completing the circuit. The next three years involved overnight packs complete with tents, cooking equipment, food, etc. Frank meticulously planned each year’s hike to coincide with the summer solstice to give us the maximum amount of daylight. Our friend Barbara Nevin joined us in 2012. We started the hike where we had left off at Route 144 and covered 60 miles or so over the next three years.



Chestnut-sided Warblers were found in pipeline cuts.



Blue-headed Vireos made occasional appearances along the Donut Hole Trail.

The steep climbs that constitute the majority of the trail actually provide diversity of habitat and therefore birds. Birding by ear proved once again to be the best way to bird along the trail. The deep woods and ravines are filled with Ovenbirds calling “teacher, teacher, teacher”, the distinct “buzz-bee, buzzbuzz-bee” of Black-throated Green Warblers, the “squeaky wheel” of Black-and-white Warblers and the “chebek” of the Least Flycatcher. One sound that we heard in thick under-story caught our attention – a pair of Mourning Warblers chipping presumably near their nest. We didn’t hang around to get a look at the birds since they seemed agitated (and we had to reach a campsite before dark).

Of course, many birds were visible along the way, including Pileated and Downy Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkeys, Magnolia Warblers, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Blue-headed and Yellow-throated Vireos made appearances, too. Along the creeks we encountered Common Mergansers, Belted Kingfishers, and Louisiana Waterthrushes. We kicked up an American Woodcock at dusk near

Rattlesnake Creek.

Non-avian sightings included a quick glimpse of a coyote, several white-tailed deer, porcupines, red and gray squirrels, and chipmunks. We saw signs of black bear in several areas including scat, paw prints, and broken trees but thankfully, no encounters.

The Donut Hole Trail is difficult to follow in some spots due to relocation that hasn’t been reflected on the maps, missing blazes due to fallen trees, and lack of maintenance which allows stinging nettle to cover the most slippery parts of the ravines. No birding occurred during those sections while we tried to stay on pace. The trail crosses several pipeline cuts which offered open habitat species such as Chestnut-sided Warblers, Field Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, and Indigo Buntings. The openings also provided views of the few raptors that we encountered including Red-tailed and Broad-winged Hawks.

Over the four years that we have hiked the Donut Hole Trail, we have tallied 68 species and have the possibility to add to that list in 2016 when we complete the final section from Kettle Creek to Jericho. I highly recommend hiking any of the Keystone Trails if you want to immerse yourself in Pennsylvania’s forests, birds, and wildlife.

# A Golden Season at the Allegheny Front

By Janet Kuehl

October 24, 2015, was a cloudy, rather dreary day as I drove to the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. It had been a rather disappointing fall season for the Allegheny Front. Despite many days of favorable east winds, Broad-winged Hawk numbers were the lowest since 1998. So on this day, though everyone anticipated some Golden Eagles, I don't think anyone was remotely prepared for what we were about to witness. I had been present the day before when we had a respectable 193 birds but just one Goldie. So when I arrived a little after 9 a.m., I was pleased to have the strong southeast wind that had been forecast but surprised that I had already missed two Golden Eagles. That disappointment was short-lived as I was treated to a Golden about five minutes later. So for me, the golden day began.



This Golden Eagle was photographed at the Allegheny Front by Roger Higbee.

As the majority of the hawk watchers began to arrive around 10 a.m., they thought we were kidding when informed that we were already up to 10 Golden Eagles. But you could feel everyone's excitement with the thought that we were going to have a really good day! Then at 11:02 am the big push of eagles began. Hawk watchers often describe a big eagle flight as a parade of eagles. I can only describe this avian event as a stampede of eagles! One after another the eagles came, often just within minutes of the last one. Our counter that day was my friend Deb Bodenschatz, who must be commended, for not only recording the number of eagles, their times, and ages, but also for the delicious hot lunches that she always provides for everyone on her count days! The other amazing thing about this flight was the way the eagles powered through, determined and intent on their destination. With few exceptions the birds all graced us with the close/spectacular looks for which the Allegheny Front is famous. As the noon hour dawned, we had tallied 26 Golden Eagles, and we weren't done yet!

One by one the eagles continued to push through with the count climbing to 42 eagles by 1:00 p.m. and 52 eagles by 2:00. The only thing that had us worried was the forecast of rain. Indeed, as the day progressed, the conditions deteriorated. But to our amazement, as the sky grew

darker and more ominous, still the eagles came! The previous record for the Front was of 61 Golden Eagles on November 1, 2011. At 2:42 we tied it! Then one minute later the 62<sup>nd</sup> Golden Eagle passed to our delight! Moments later, closing out the 3:00 hour, four more came through, bringing us to a whopping 66 Golden Eagles, a new daily record for Pennsylvania hawk watches for both spring and fall.

At about 3:00 a light rain began, but to our amazement still the eagles came. When the rain began in earnest, the flight

finally ended; but we had recorded a remarkable 74 Golden Eagles, a new Eastern Flyway hawk watch record, with two Bald Eagles joining the party. I think that I speak for all who were there that day that we were truly blessed to have witnessed these magical, majestic birds!

October 24 was a very early date for such a flight. We all pondered what was in store for the rest of the month and for November. Were the majority of Golden Eagles through, or would there be another magical day? As October waned and November began, we recorded days of 14, 19, 23, 10, 14, 27, 13, and 17 respectively. Then came November 21, with a good/strong southeast wind, but it was a very cold day, that did nothing to dampen the spirits of the many eager hawk watchers present that day. We needed 10 Golden Eagles to break the season record of 279 set in 2011. There was great anticipation and we were rewarded at 2:48 with the record Golden Eagle. I wonder if he or she wondered what all the fuss was about. This ethereal day ended with a count of 32 Golden Eagles, fifteen passing through after 4:00 and four after 5:00 in darkness! As Allegheny Front Compiler Bob Stewart described in his seasonal recap, "The last hour the eagles were flying against a backdrop of stars." The counter for the day was the enthusiastic Brian Wargo, who described it as a day of camaraderie, friendship, expertise, teamwork, and magic. One hawk watcher aptly described it as a day "that you will never forget." I can't agree more.



# 2016 Great Backyard Bird Count a Huge Success

by Holly Merker

Pennsylvanians love to watch birds. At least, this is what the data reflect when you look at the national totals for the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

This year, Pennsylvania ranked No. 2 nationally (and globally) in the number of checklists submitted during the 2016 GBBC. This is an impressive feat considering we follow only California, which is a much larger state, has far greater bird diversity, and a lot more people. But, this second-place ranking is no surprise, as it has been the trend for Pennsylvania in this count each year.

State	Number of Species	Number of Checklists
California	366	10,627
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>8,562</b>
New York	165	7,299
Florida	320	7,147
Texas	353	6,703

This year's GBBC was held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15. Traditionally, this count is always held on Presidents' Day Weekend, and this year marked the 19<sup>th</sup> year that the count was held.

The count was originally started as a project of the National Audubon Society, but in 2013, the GBBC merged with Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird Project ([eBird.org](http://eBird.org)). When this happened, it allowed the GBBC data to go global through eBird, which was a win for the GBBC, adding new locales and participants. As a bonus to eBird, this new integration invited a larger audience exposure to eBird and the many tools it provides to birders. Currently, the GBBC project is in partnership with Audubon, Bird Studies Canada, and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Overall, the eBird-GBBC merger has been highly successful; and this year, on Sunday, February 14, GBBC collected over 50,000 incoming checklists, globally, representing a single-day world record for eBird!

The GBBC has its own customized data entry portal ([gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org)) only available for data collection during that four-day window. However, all data collected through the eBird portal during this window also adds to the overall GBBC stats. The grand totals of the GBBC reflect a collective effort on the part of both eBirders and GBBC'ers. Despite being combined for a cumulative

count, the two data sets are used differently in research analyses, segregating the data based on portal used by observer. *Birders already using eBird are encouraged to continue to enter their data during this period through eBird, rather than GBBC, since the eBird data set can be used for a wider research audience.*

If you are an eBirder, you might have noticed some changes in which species didn't appear in your "likely" menu during this window. Perhaps even locally common species, such as White-crowned Sparrows, Winter Wren, or Field Sparrows prompted a flag for review. And, you might've seen a marked uptick in flagged records for Black-capped Chickadees and Purple Finches, showing up on the alerts in your region as well. When eBird merged with the GBBC, this also meant that the data would go through the eBird review process, which is a bit more rigorous. Initially, we discovered that in order to capture incoming data for best accuracy in identifications, we needed to "tighten" our filters for the GBBC window (Feb. 12-21 Feb), especially for species that present ID challenges for novice bird identifiers. This tightening represents the noticeable changes in the "likely" menu for your species' entries. The PA eBird Review Team would like to thank you for your patience and understanding with the tightened filters and flagged records during this time!

Sixty-six of our 67 counties in the Commonwealth contributed checklists during the GBBC. (Forest, where were you?) Participation this year skyrocketed over last year with over 1,300 more checklists submitted (7160 in 2015 and 8,534 in 2016)! This is impressive, especially since during the entire count period the Commonwealth was under the grip of a Polar Vortex. The resulting sub-freezing temps and dangerously cold conditions potentially made some birders hesitant to carry on outdoors with a typical birding routine and certainly canceled various field trips around the state. During this time, 135 species were reported to the GBBC from the Commonwealth.

This year southeastern PA's Montgomery County was at the top of the leader board for most of the duration of the GBBC, pulling in a total of 824 checklists (at the time of this writing). This exceeded the record for any county in PA since the eBird merger!

Chester came second with 763, followed by Allegheny at 656. If you notice a pattern here, it's that these counties have higher populations than most in the Commonwealth, so naturally could have more participants. But, to put this

in a larger perspective, Montgomery County ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, globally, for the number of checklists submitted, following Los Angeles County, first at 1,198, and King County, Washington, home of Seattle, second place with 973. Chester County was ranked in 4<sup>th</sup> place, making Pennsylvania the only state in the US to have two counties in the top five for participation.

Pennsylvania's eBirders were unstoppable in the frigid conditions and expended commendable effort toward contributions to our state's grand total of 135 species.

Pennsylvania County	Number of Checklists Submitted
Montgomery	824
Chester	763
Allegheny	656
Schuylkill	516
Bucks	374

Pennsylvania County	Number of Species Tallied
Lancaster	91
Berks	89
Allegheny	85
Chester	85
Bucks	82

Here's a list of the top ten contributors for the GBBC in PA by species and checklists:

### Checklists Submitted

Alex Lamoreaux – 142	Chad Kauffman – 43
Ian Gardner – 128	Dave McNaughton – 35
Elora Grahame – 100	Ted Nichols II --33
Frank Dickman – 78	Richard Nugent – 33
Josh Lefever – 49	Bruce Carl – 25

### Total Species

Bruce Carl – 80	Ian Gardner – 53
Ted Nichols II – 72	Peter Montgomery – 53
Alex Lamoreaux – 59	Elora Grahame – 52
Peter Morgan – 59	Frank Dickman – 52
Mike Epler – 56	Anna Mindel – 52

Species highlights during the GBBC were: a pair **Barnacle Geese** discovered in Philadelphia 2/12; multiple **Greater White-fronted Geese** found around the Commonwealth; a **White-winged Dove** discovered in the yard of Ann Pettigrew in York County, 2/1; an **Orange-crowned Warbler** in Lancaster County; a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Montgomery County; multiple **Baltimore Orioles** in Bucks and Montgomery Counties; and a **Painted Bunting** (location requested to be kept private).

The statistics above suggest that while we don't have the widest diversity of birdlife in winter here in PA, we demonstrate interest that exceeds that of most states in the US in identifying and reporting the birds we see. This is something for which we Pennsylvanians should be proud.

To further view results, or to learn more about how you can participate next year, go to:  
<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>.

## PSO Quiz

- Seven species on the official state list were formerly present here but are now extirpated from Pennsylvania or extinct.. Which species?
- Which one of these flycatchers is not accepted on the state list: Vermilion, Ash-throated, Scissor-tailed, Dusky, Pacific-slope, or Fork-tailed?
- Two of these species are not classified taxonomically as true "buntings": Lazuli Bunting, Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting, Snow Bunting, Lark Bunting. Which two?
- Three owl species on the state list are classified only as accidental vagrants. Which species?
- The Pennsylvania Game Commission released about 180 non-native game birds for hunting in 1919-1920. "The experiment was a failure," Earl L. Poole said bluntly in his *Pennsylvania Birds: An Annotated List*. Which species?

(See Answers on page 20)

# Conservation Chat Room

## Don't Forget To Buy A Duck Stamp!



Every time I visit my local post office, I walk by a poster asking me to buy a Duck Stamp. Duck Stamps are not the typical postal stamps that allow us to mail

letters. Purchasing a Duck Stamp will allow me to HUNT ducks – it isn't even used for mail. Moreover, it costs \$25 for just one Duck Stamp.

I'm not a hunter, so why would I want to buy a Duck Stamp? Because I want to support the Duck Stamp Program; 98% of the money collected from the purchase of Duck Stamps goes directly to "help acquire and protect wetland habitat and purchase conservation easements for the National Wildlife System." It's actually a very successful federal conservation program that was started in 1934 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt when he signed into law the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, often shortened to the "Duck Stamp Act" or just the "Duck Stamp." The Duck Stamp Act was the result of many contentious years of debate among hunters, conservationists, and legislators. While all that dithering dragged on for more than a dozen years, wetland habitat and numbers of waterfowl continued to decline. So did the economy – the Great Depression hit soon after the stock market crashed in October 1929. Congress had just passed one of the most important bird protection acts before the stock market crash, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (MBCA), but there was no funding to implement this new law. That's when talk of the Duck Stamp became more focused. In 1934, President Roosevelt appointed three notable conservation-ists – Thomas Beck, Ding Darling, and Aldo Leopold – to promote bird conservation. The trio was dubbed the "Beck Commission." They identified projects that would protect 5 million acres for waterfowl

and other birds, some of which would be purchased with money from the Duck Stamp Act.

Ding Darling was not only a famous conservationist, he was also a noted cartoonist. He designed the first Duck Stamp in just about an hour: a pair of Mallards about to



Although Ruddy Ducks don't breed in Pennsylvania, they visit wetlands and ponds in Pennsylvania during migration and in the winter. This photo of a male Ruddy Duck in breeding coloration was taken by Laura Jackson near Benton NWR in Montana.

land in a wetland. Hunters bought 635,001 stamps the very first year at \$1.00 per stamp. I'll let you do the math to figure out the proceeds for the first year of sales. Of course, Congress immediately began planning other uses for this revenue, but Darling enlisted other conservation groups and sportsmen's clubs to support land acquisition programs. Proceeds from the Duck Stamp sales led to the creation of our National Wildlife Refuge System. The Duck Stamp is also a free pass into any of the national wildlife refuges scattered across the country. The John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge near Philadelphia was established or expanded using Duck Stamp dollars.



Female Ruddy Ducks can act just as frenzied as the males during breeding season. Photographed by Laura Jackson.

In addition to the federal duck stamp program, some states also have a duck stamp contest. The Pennsylvania Game Commission sponsors the contest in our state. Residents of Pennsylvania may submit artwork following the guidelines listed on the web by searching, "Waterfowl Management Stamp Design Contest Procedures." Specific bird images are listed and rules are posted for the 2016 and 2017 contests. Gerald Putt, an artist who lives in Boiling Springs, is one of my favorite wildlife artists. He has won the Pennsylvania contest 10 times. The Pennsylvania

Waterfowl Management Stamps are on sale through the PGC's "The Outdoor Shop." You can order a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Poster for only \$12, as well as prize winning stamps dating back to 2010. Unsigned stamps are only \$5.50. The Game Commission uses the proceeds to acquire and manage wetlands for migratory bird conservation. To date, this program manages more than 5,000 acres.

*(continued on page 17)*

# Citizen Science and Students

by John Fedak

What is Citizen Science? According to *Wikipedia*, Citizen Science is scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur or nonprofessional scientists. According to me, it is getting anyone involved in doing science and science research. That means anyone – all ages and all experience levels.

I have been doing Citizen Science with my students from Kindergarten through high school for almost three decades. I have been blessed with wonderful students. Over the years, they have been involved in various projects, including the Crayfish Atlas; conducting Biotic Indices of Stream Health; Trout in the Classroom; Amphibian Counts; Breeding Bird Atlas; PAMC; Christmas Bird Counts; Tagging Monarchs; Milkweed Gardens (tied in with tagging Monarchs); Banding Passerines and Northern Saw-whet Owls, and now, this year, a Bluebird Trail.

Sometimes more than one project is done at a time. This year, my students convinced me to write a grant to get supplies for construction of a bluebird trail on the school property (which was tied to the upkeep of our milkweed beds for tagging monarchs). With the monies, we purchased wire and fence posts. The PA Game Commission donated 25 bluebird nest box kits.

One hour a week through the winter was spent constructing the nest boxes. The boxes were also numbered. Now, we can keep records of which boxes were used by what species. Using the internet, my 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students researched Eastern Bluebirds and found the habitats that they prefer – especially for nesting. We then used Google Earth to map where we are placing the nest boxes. Not all of the available area is “perfect” breeding territory, so the students will be able to determine site preference for the species.

We are currently in the process of placing the boxes outside if the weather ever cooperates! This should be completed by the time you read this article. Then it is all up to the birds. My students are hoping for bluebirds, but they will be excited to get Tree Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, or House Wrens (as well as any other cavity nesters). They will record any information we can gather from this breeding season, and we will then use the data in class next school year. We may even use it to alter the trail!

On rainy/snowy days like today, my students are creating a pamphlet that describes the Eastern Bluebird. It includes discussion of its current population, its historic population, the invasive species that affect bluebirds, and other important details. It also contains a map so other students/teachers can detect whether the boxes are being used or not. All along, we will submit the information of bird species' presence, as well as breeding data of all identified species to eBird.

Yes, everyone can be a citizen scientist. What is Citizen Science? It is fun. That is what it is. That is what it should be. And, I think, that is what my students will tell you.



Megan McGuinness numbers a bluebird box while Bryce Blair, Lyndsey Dippold, and Graham Carr put the finishing touches on some in the background.



Ellie Strausser shows off the nest boxes the Citizen Science class constructed for their Bluebird Trail.

# Western Tanager Visits State College

by Wayne Laubscher

Since late November, a stunning male Western Tanager has been visiting a rural neighborhood just outside State College in Centre County. The bird has been seen primarily at 1810 Walnut Grove Drive, a few miles east of Penn State University. On the morning of November 21, 2015, Dick and Darla Snyder, who were participating in Cornell's Project Feeder Watch, noticed a very strange bird at their feeders which they could not identify. It was a brightly colored yellow and black bird, noticeably larger than a goldfinch. The bird was feeding on sunflower seed and juniper fruit off their back porch.



bright yellow body, pitch-black tail and wings, with white-and-yellow wingbars, and a small amount of red above and below its pale bill. The reduced red on the head is typical of the males in fall and winter plumage, but the fresh, dark-black wings suggest this is an adult.

They posted the sighting with photos on eBird and asked for help in identifying it. Birders quickly realized the bird in question was a textbook male Western Tanager. Over the next few days, local birder Joe Verica obtained permission from the Snyders for birders to visit. Since then, the Snyders have been graciously welcoming birders into their yard to see the tanager – more than 200 people! Most have been from across Pennsylvania, and several have visited from out-of-state. Most chasers were able to view the bird well, and some have even heard it calling!

This vagrant is very much out of its normal winter range, which is typically southern Mexico and the west coast of Central America, down to Panama. During the breeding season, Western Tanagers are the northernmost nesting species of tanager in North America, breeding as far north as southern Alaska but strictly in western North America. This is about the 7<sup>th</sup> record for Western Tanager in Pennsylvania since 1989. Most of PA's records have been female type birds. The State College tanager sports a

Single birds were reported recently in New York, New Jersey, and Ohio. Also a female Western Tanager returned this winter to the same

location in Virginia Beach, Virginia, for the seventh year in a row. The fall of 2015 and winter of 2016 have seen an unusually high number of typically southwestern birds popping up along the East Coast. Particularly prevalent vagrants have been Pacific-slope/"Western" Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Bullock's Oriole, Ash-throated and Vermilion Flycatchers, Mountain Bluebird, and Pacific Loons.

The tanager has been seen virtually every day since its initial sighting in late November. The timing of the bird's visits to the Snyder's yard had been random and infrequent at first, but as the winter has progressed, it is visiting more regularly. The tanager foraged at a nearby apple tree when it wasn't at the feeders. Thankfully the tanager was also able to make it through the snowstorm of January 23, returning seemingly no worse for wear that morning and happily foraging at the feeders. Perhaps he'd been holding out for that prognostication from a certain marmot in Punxsutawney. As of this writing, the tanager has been seen as recently as March 10. It has been feeding heartily on dried mealworms, suet, raisins, sunflower seed, and apples.

---

---

## Conservation Corner *(continued from page 16)*

One final point that might help you decide to buy a Federal Duck Stamp: it isn't just ducks that benefit. Duck Stamp dollars help Least Bitterns and Black Terns; shorebirds, like the American Avocet; and raptors, such as Swainson's Hawks and Golden Eagles. Wetland-associated songbirds like the Vermilion Flycatcher and Tricolored Blackbird also benefit.

The current Federal Duck Stamp, 2015-2016, features one of my favorite ducks, the Ruddy Duck. I could buy the stamp online at [usps.com](http://usps.com), but I'd have to pay an extra

\$1.30 for S&H. Your local post office should also have copies for sale for \$25. A Ruddy Duck was also on the prize-winning stamp in Pennsylvania's 2012 Waterfowl Management Stamp contest. I might just have to buy both.

Do it for the ducks!

Laura Jackson  
[mljackson2@embarqmail.com](mailto:mljackson2@embarqmail.com)  
Bedford Co.

## PSO Membership List - February 2016

Charles E. Alexander, MD	Sandy & Bill Cline	Doris Foster	Bill Hendrickson
Diane C. Allison	Michelle Cohen	Evelyn and Mike Fowles	Mark Henry
Matthew Anderson	Skip Conant	Robert Fowles	John Herman
George Armistead	Ruth Cook	Mack Frantz	Paul D. Hess
Mary Assenat	Paul Cooper	Lewis Frederick	Mary Jo Hicks
Brent Bacon	Kay Cramer	Norwood Frederick	Margaret & Roger Higbee
Charles Baird	Kevin F. Crilley	Ronald R. Freed	Lee Higinbotham
Nancy Baker	Elaine & Chuck Crunkleton	Linda Freedman	Carol Hildebrand
Brendyn Baptiste	Robert L. Curry	John F. Freiberg	Maureen Hobma
James Barcaskey	Peter Dalby	Ronald French	Donna Hocker
Richard Beck	Jon Dale	Robert P. Friedermann	Rob Hodgson
Tim Becker	Stephen Dale	Richard Fritsky	Deuane Hoffman &
David K. Bell	Molly Daly	Roy F. Frock Jr.	Carolyn Blatchley
Robert Bergstresser	Sheree Daugherty	Veryl & Linda Frye	Elizabeth Hoffmann
Chuck Berthoud	Michael David	Mark Gallagher	Pam Holmes
Diane K. Bierly	Donald Davis	Ian Gardner	Michael Homel
Keith L. Bildstein	Vincent W. Deantonis	Carl L. Garner	Todd Hooe
Scott Bills	John Debalko	Tom Garner	Janice Horn
Mary Birdsong	Jonathan Debalko	Vernon Gauthier	John Hotvedt
Nick Biss	Karyn Delaney	Dale L. Gearhart	Robert & Nancy Houck
Barry E. Blust	Joseph Demarco, Jr.	Trudy Gerlach	Marjorie & Jerry Howard
Robert W. Blye	Paul G. Denit	Sarah H. Gerrish	James P. Hoyson
Nick Bolgiano	David C. Dereamus	Thomas Glover	Barbara Hunsberger
Sue Bolstrum	Jarrod Derr	David A. Gobert	Dr. Shonah Hunter
Gerry & Jeanne Boltz	Betty J. Devling	Scott Godshall	Patricia J. Hutcheson
Marcia Bonta	Gerard Dewaghe	Sandra Goodwin	Roy A. Ickes, Ph.D.
Doug Bostich	Tom Dick	Barbara Granger	Bonnie & Galen Ingram
Dustin Brace	Rob Dickerson	James Gray	Eis Ipswich
Al Bratkovich	Susan Dickson	Joseph L. Greco Jr	Michael & Laura Jackson
Susan Braun	Gordon Dimmig	Barry Grimm	Allen Janis
Daniel Brauning	Lynne Doolan	Doug Gross	Ken Januski
Mary & Randy Brenner	Jane Downing	Gregory & Deborah Grove	Bruce Johnson
David Brinker	Paul Driver	Kim Gruener	Mark & Kathy Johnson
Margaret Brittingham Brant	Kenneth H. Dubke	Franklin C. Haas	Sheryl Johnson
Frederic H. Brock	Maddi Dunlap	Catherine Haffner	Joshua Jones
Bobby Brown	James Dunn	Lou Hahn	Robert Jones
David Brown	Jon L. Dunn	Cris Hamilton	Fred Kachmarik
Paul Brown	Richard R. Eakin	Susan Hannon	Stephen Kacir
Ted Buckwalter	Jane Earle	Cecelia Hard	Georgia Kagle
Thomas Burger	Carol Easter	Brian S. Hardiman	Deborah Kalbfleisch
Suzanne Butcher	David & Kathy Ebeling	Denice Hardtmann	Robert W. Kaltenbaugh
Nancy Butkovich	David Eberly	Jen Harned	Chad Kauffman
Ken Byerly	Gary E. Edwards	Tami Harnish	Jon Kauffman
C. Richard Byers	Wesley Egli	Brian Harris	Phil Keener
Brian Byrnes	Mike Epler	Liz Hart	William Keim
Michael Carey	Adam Erb	Eric Hartshaw	Andrew Keister
Bruce A. Carl	Deborah Escalet	Margret Hatch	Allan R. Keith
Lee Carnahan	Lynne Falterbauer	David Hauber	Rudolph Keller
Daniel & Carol Cash	Gerben & Kaspar Family	David R. Hawk	Sandra Keller
Elizabeth Cates	Andrew Fayer	Molly A. Heath	Nick T. Kerlin &
Chuck Chalfant	John G. Fedak	Fritz Heilman	Donna Queeney
William Chambers	Ron Ferry	Janet Heintz	Kathy Kern
Rachel Check	Michael P. Fialkovich	Jonathan Heller	Dave Kerr
Ed Chubb	Chris & Ronnie Fischer	Cliff Hence	Nancy-Ellen Kiernan
Frederick & Nina Clark	Pamela Fisher	Brian Henderson	Gary John Kinkley
Richard L. Cleary	John Flannigan	Harry W. Henderson	Scott Kinzey
John Clickner	Joe & Vicki Flood	Raymond R. Hendrick	Lisa Kiziuk

Dr. Daniel Klem, Jr.  
Arlene Koch  
Mary Alice Koeneke &  
Glenn Koppel  
Dave Kubitsky  
Kathy Kuchwara  
Tom & Janet Kuehl  
Carol Kuniholm  
David & Trudy Kyler  
Sherri Labar  
Lillie Langlois  
Trish Miller & Mike Lanzone  
Wayne & Karen Lattuca  
Wayne Laubscher  
Ronald F. Leberman  
Harold H. Lebo  
James Lenhard, Jr.  
Jon Levin  
Michael Line  
Melissa Little  
Sandy & Gary Lockerman  
David B. Long  
John Lower  
Kevin Lutz  
Patrick & Sherron Lynch  
Alan Maceachren  
Bob Machesney  
Sarah MacLellan  
Barbara Madaus  
Bill Malone  
Geoff Malosh  
Evan Mann  
Wendy Margolis  
Tony Marich  
Susan Marshall  
Robert W. Martin, Jr.  
Terry L. Master  
Annette Mathes  
Carolyn Mathur  
Paul Mauss  
John O. Mayes, D.M.D.  
Mark A. McConaughy  
Carol & Fred McCullough  
Andrew McGann  
Doris McGovern  
Brendan McGrath  
Florence & James McGuire  
F. Arthur McMorris  
Bruce McNaught  
David McNaughton  
Jerry McWilliams  
Robert Megraw  
Mary Anne Mekosh

Tab Merkel  
Holly Merker  
Bradford Merritt  
Elizabeth Mescavage  
Gary Metzger  
Patrick Millar  
Zachary Millen  
Douglas Miller  
Jean Miller  
Oscar Miller  
Randy C. Miller  
August Mirabella  
Thomas & Nancy Moeller  
James Moffett  
Valerie Monroe-Myers  
Ronald E. Montgomery  
Mark Moore  
David Neimeyer  
Dean Newhouse  
Ted Nichols II  
Thomas Nicolls  
Richard Nugent  
June Obrien  
Patrick Odonnell  
John Oshlick  
Bill Oyler  
Martin Page  
Kevin Parsons  
Karol Pasquinelli  
Jeff Payne  
Jeff Pheasant  
Randy A. Phillips  
Wendell Plumlee  
Julia Plummer  
Kevin Porter  
Keith Portka  
Rick & Peggy Price  
Larry E. Pritt  
Nicholas J. Pulcinella  
Brian Quindlen  
Harry Quinque  
James Ramage  
Tom Raub  
Nate Reagle  
Ann Reeves  
Thomas A. Reeves  
Richard Rehrig  
Denise & Peter Reinhart  
Joan Renninger  
Robert a Reyda  
Dave Rieger  
Kenneth C. Rieker

Raymond Rife  
Barbara Ritzheimer  
Peter Robinson  
Frank Rohrbacher  
Dieter Rollfinke  
Travis Rosenberry  
Robert M. Ross  
Patricia Rossi  
David R. Rothrock  
Dan & Gina Rubino  
Diana Rudloff  
Margie Rutbell  
Peter G. Saenger  
John L. Salvetti  
Stephen Sanford  
Steven J. Santner  
Hugh A. A. Sargent  
Sarah Sargent  
Michael L. Schall  
Terence Lee Schiefer  
Lauren Schneider  
Kenneth Schoener  
Timothy Schreckengost  
Kurt Schwarz  
Allen R. Schweinsberg  
Joe Sebastiani  
Lauren Shaffer  
James Shoemaker  
Debra A. Siefken  
Brad S. Silfies  
Lee Simpson  
Marcus Simpson  
Sam W. Sinderson, Jr.  
Dr. Jerry Skinner  
Greg Smith  
James & Rita Smith  
John Smith  
Richard & Vicky Smith  
John Snarey  
Jack E. & Susan Solomon  
Judith Sopko  
Matthew J. Spence  
Thyra Sperry  
Rosemary Spreha  
Katherine St. John  
Stan Stahl  
Russell M. States  
Donald Stevens  
Robert W Stewart  
Fred Stiner  
Scott H. Stoleson  
Barbara Stollsteimer

Roger Stone  
Susan Strassner  
Jeffrey Territo  
Emily Thomas  
Nathan Thomas  
Stephen Thomas  
Drew Thompson  
Shannon Thompson  
Richard L. Timm, Jr.  
Stephen Tirone  
David Trently  
Aden A. Troyer  
Andy Troyer  
Neil Troyer  
Linda Tucker  
Genevieve Tvrdik  
Todd Underwood  
Penn State University  
Larry Usselman  
James L. Valimont  
Bob Van Newkirk  
Nancy Vancott  
Marjorie Van Tassel  
Mark Vass  
Linda Wagner  
Jeff Wahl  
Scott Walker  
Mary Ellen Walter  
Brian Wargo  
Jo Wargo  
Robert Wasilewski  
Todd Watkins  
William H. Welsh Jr.  
Amber Wiewel  
Gene Wilhelm, Ph.D.  
John & Frances Williams  
Richard & Patricia Williams  
Andrew Wilson  
Carole Winslow  
Samuel A. Wissinger  
Eric Witmer  
Jan Witmer  
Philip Witmer  
Matt Wlasniewski  
Eleanor & Richard Wolf  
Richard T. Wood  
Lauren Yaich  
David Yeany  
Joseph S. Yoder  
Ronald C. Young  
Arthur Zdanceewic  
Dr. David Zegers





Linda Widdop photographed this Ovenbird along the Donut Hole Trail.

## Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 13)

1. Greater Prairie-Chicken, Eskimo Curlew, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, Bewick's Wren, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow
2. Dusky Flycatcher
3. Snow Bunting and Lark Bunting
4. Northern Hawk Owl, Great Gray Owl, Boreal Owl
5. Gambel's Quail

## 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:

PSO	Individual	\$ 30.00
2469 Hammertown Road	Family	\$ 35.00
Narvon, PA 17555-9730	Sustaining	\$ 45.00
	Student	\$ 25.00
	Electronic Student	\$ 10.00

## PSO Officers and Directors

Mike Lanzone – President [mlanzone@gmail.com](mailto:mlanzone@gmail.com)  
 Mike Fialkovich – Vice President [mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net)  
 Roger Higbee – Secretary [rvhigbee@windstream.net](mailto:rvhigbee@windstream.net)  
 Frank Haas – Treasurer [fchaas@pabirds.org](mailto:fchaas@pabirds.org)  
 Geoff Malosh – PSO Editor [pomarine@earthlink.net](mailto:pomarine@earthlink.net)  
 Margaret Higbee – Newsletter Editor [bcorirole@windstream.net](mailto:bcorirole@windstream.net)  
 John Fedak – Past President [jlfedak@atlanticbbs.net](mailto:jlfedak@atlanticbbs.net)

Chuck Berthoud – [cnberthoud@gmail.com](mailto:cnberthoud@gmail.com)  
 Jarrod Derr – [jmderr17@gmail.com](mailto:jmderr17@gmail.com)  
 Vernon Gauthier – [pabirder@gmail.com](mailto:pabirder@gmail.com)  
 Doug Gross - [dogross@pa.gov](mailto:dogross@pa.gov)  
 Shonah Hunter – [shunter@lhup.edu](mailto:shunter@lhup.edu)  
 Chad Kauffman – [chadkauffman@earthlink.net](mailto:chadkauffman@earthlink.net)  
 Wayne Laubscher – [wnlaubscher@comcast.net](mailto:wnlaubscher@comcast.net)  
 Sandra Lockerman – [sandylockerman@yahoo.com](mailto:sandylockerman@yahoo.com)  
 Annette Mathes – [amathes19@verizon.net](mailto:amathes19@verizon.net)  
 Mark McConaughy – [TimeTraveler50@comcast.net](mailto:TimeTraveler50@comcast.net)  
 Andrew McGann – [andrew.mcgann@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.mcgann@gmail.com)  
 Flo McGuire – [fmcguire1@verizon.net](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net)  
 Holly Merker – [hcybelle@gmail.com](mailto:hcybelle@gmail.com)  
 Brian Quindlen – [Brian.Quindlen@gmail.com](mailto:Brian.Quindlen@gmail.com)  
 Scott Stoleson – [sstoleson@fs.fed.us](mailto:sstoleson@fs.fed.us)  
 Emily Thomas – [eht5002@hotmail.com](mailto:eht5002@hotmail.com)  
 Linda Wagner – [lwagner342@msn.com](mailto:lwagner342@msn.com)

**PSO Annual Meeting**  
**Quality Inn and Conference Center**  
**215 Ramada Road**  
**Somerset, PA 15501**

**Agenda**

Friday, May 20, 2016

6:00 p.m.	Registration and Vendors
7:00 p.m.	Social and Vendors
7:30 p.m.	Annual Members' Business Meeting
7:45 p.m.	Field Trips Review
8:30 p.m.	Field Trip for Eastern Whip-poor-will and Northern Saw-whet Owl

Saturday, May 21, 2016

5:30 a.m.	Breakfast
6:30 a.m.	Field Trips
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch on your own
1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	Vendors
1:30 - 1:55 p.m.	<i>Avian Conservation Efforts in Southwestern Pennsylvania,</i> presented by Matt Webb
1:55 - 2:30 p.m.	<i>Somerset County Big Year, Birding in Somerset,</i> presented by Mike Lanzone
2:30 - 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 - 4:15 p.m.	Showing of <i>The Messenger</i>
4:15 - 4:30 p.m.	Multimedia and Digiscoping Showcase (Slides Show)
6:00 - 6:30 p.m.	Social
6:30 p.m.	Banquet Presentation of Poole Award to Bob Mulvihill Presentation of Conservation Award to Somerset County Conservancy Compilation of Bird List Silent Auction Winners <i>Why Is the National Aviary in Pittsburgh,</i> presented by Bob Mulvihill

# Somerset Annual Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

## **Somerset Lake Nature and Wildlife Park**

Somerset Lake, an Important Bird Area hosting incredible waterfowl and shorebirds during migration, is known statewide as a rarity magnet. Located at 2,000 ft. elevation, this 250-acre lake and the surrounding 200-acre nature and wildlife park have a bird list of over 250 species including an extensive list of state and regional rarities. In 2012 alone, 30 species of shorebirds were seen with an outstanding 242 total species for the year! This field trip will loop around the lake looking for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migrants.

## **Quemahoning Reservoir**

The "Que," as it is referred to locally, is known for its migrant waterfowl; in spring sometimes huge fallouts can occur. The surrounding forests can also be great for migrants and breeding birds. Species you may see include loons, three possible grebes, and most duck species including many divers and the occasional scoter. Additionally, many passerine species including spring migrants and a very nice suite of breeders – Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

## **North Fork Reservoir and Sammy Swamp**

This tour will start at North Fork Reservoir and work its way south into Sammy Swamp. North Fork can also get very large fallouts of water birds and is often also very good for spring migrants. As we work southward into the large wetland complex called Sammy Swamp, we will hopefully find a few more wetland species including Virginia Rail, Wilson's Snipe, and Alder and Willow Flycatcher.

## **Flight 93 Memorial and Game Lands**

The Flight 93 Memorial and adjacent game lands is located where United Flight 93 was brought down by passengers to avoid a terrorist attack on DC on September 11, 2001. The location is an old strip mine covered in grassland and wetland habitat. The 2,000+ acre site includes early successional grasses, scattered shrubs, and planted evergreens as well as a large wetland complex. This is a good nesting area for grassland birds, including Grasshopper, Vesper, Savannah, and Henslow's Sparrows; Bobolink; Eastern Meadowlark; Horned

Lark; and possibly the occasional Northern Harrier and Upland Sandpiper. The game lands will produce more potential wetland and woodland species.

## **Southern Grasslands & Farmlands**

Southern Somerset County is known for its extensive mix of agriculture and grasslands but also has a fair number of wetland areas. This trip will start just south of Somerset and head southeast through the county in search of a mixture of species. A few of the species possible include Virginia Rail, Sora, Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Sandhill Crane, Northern Harrier, and Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows!

## **Confluence Area**

Confluence, located in southern Somerset County, is a great area for a mix of southern species. This tour will visit many hotspots in various wooded and river habitats. Potential species include Common Merganser, Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Golden-winged, Kentucky, Yellow-throated, and Cerulean Warblers.

## **Kimberly Run Natural Area**

Kimberly Run Natural Area, approximately 360 acres of habitat ranging from warm season grasses to older growth hemlock woods, includes many types of wetlands and even a bog. This property is a gem in the center of the county. A few of the bird species at the site include several species of waterfowl, Willow and Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Black-and-white Warbler. This trip will involve hiking about 1.5 miles.

## **Mount Davis and Environs**

This field trip will visit the highest peak in Pennsylvania. It hosts some very beautiful scenery and will produce a very diverse bird list! Habitats include mostly pine/spruce forests and mixed forests with several bogs and wetland areas. Species will include many high-elevation breeding species – Yellow-breasted Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Magnolia Warbler, Canada Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and many more.

***Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology***

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

**Non-profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Creekside, PA 15732  
PERMIT NO. 2**

***ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED***