

# PSO Pileated



June 2016

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology  
www.pabirds.org

Volume 27, Number 2

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

As I sit on my back porch writing this message, I can hear a distant Scarlet Tanager singing. Another migration season is winding down. At the recent PSO Annual Meeting I was elected president as Mike Lanzone has completed his term. Many thanks to Mike for his service the past two years. When I joined the organization, I never thought I'd be president.

First a little background about me and my involvement with the organization. I became a county compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* in October 1994 for Fayette, then in July 1995 for Allegheny County. After joining PSO in 2000, I volunteered to serve as the fall Seasonal Editor in 2001. I joined the board in 2011 and was elected Vice President in June 2014. My first annual meeting was in 2001 at State College, and I have attended every meeting since then with the exception of one.

As a resident of the Pittsburgh area, I have been a member of the Three Rivers Birding Club and the Audubon Society of Western PA for many years, leading outings and working on projects for both organizations. My degree is in Environmental Biology, and I have a Certificate in Conservation Ecology. I spent two summers at the Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology and loved being in the field every day. I was an instructor for the conservation ecology certificate program at Chatham College in Pittsburgh but apart from that, have never,



President Mike Fialkovich (center) poses with Bob Mulvihill (left), our 2016 Poole Award recipient, and outgoing president Mike Lanzone (right) at our annual meeting in Somerset.

Photo by Pam Ferkett

unfortunately, had the opportunity to work professionally in the field. By taking advantage of the many volunteer opportunities available in bird and wildlife monitoring projects, I have been able to contribute, as many of you have also done. My interests include reptiles and amphibians, mammals, plants, insects, and ecology.

I hope everyone who attended the annual meeting enjoyed the activities as well as connecting with birders from across the state. The weather was terrible, but it didn't seem to affect our enthusiasm on the field trips.

I look forward to continue working with the good people on our Board of Directors and thank them and the past members I've worked with for all that they have done. It takes a team to keep the organization going.

Look for some exciting developments coming soon – our new website, the Breeding Bird Blitz, and future field trips. Also note that our next annual meeting will be in September 2017 in Carlisle. We wanted to try something different; however, this is not the first fall meeting in the organization's history.

Enjoy summer birding. June is my favorite time of year.

Mike Fialkovich, PSO President  
Allegheny County

# PSO 2016 Annual Meeting a Great Success

By Mark A. McConaughy

It was a dark and stormy night . . . (my apologies to Charles Schulz and Snoopy). That really summarizes the first rainy weekend for the PSO Annual Meeting in a long while. It rained for a large part of the weekend, and I took few outdoor photographs during the field trips so I would not ruin my cameras. However, rain is not necessarily a bad thing. Birds take to ground when there are storms, and migrant fallouts can occur when there is rain. So bad weather can often lead to finding good birds.

The meeting started on Friday night at the Somerset Quality Inn with a social and the election of a few PSO members to the board of directors. It is always fun to see old friends and meet new ones at the social. The various scheduled outings were also described for Saturday and Sunday mornings. The evening ended with approximately 25 of us going to Mount Davis to see if we could find any calling Eastern Whip-poor-wills and perhaps a Northern Saw-whet Owl. At least three, and possibly more, Whip-poor-wills were cooperative and were heard calling. These were life birds for some of the folks on the outing. Unfortunately, with the wind and drizzle, no owls of any species were heard.

Saturday morning began at 5:30 with breakfast and coffee. The various outings were scheduled to leave the Quality Inn at 6:30 a.m. The outings included trips to Somerset Lake Nature and Wildlife Park, Quemahoning Reservoir, the North Fork Reservoir and Sammy Swamp, Flight 93 Memorial and Game Lands, the Confluence Area, Kimberly Run Natural Area, Mount Davis and Environs, and the Southern Somerset County Grasslands and Farmlands.

I joined the Southern Somerset County Grasslands and Farmlands outing. It rained most of Saturday morning with a brief respite midmorning. Our first stop was in heavy rain at a wetlands that produced Bobolinks in the adjacent field, a Canada Goose on her nest, Killdeer with young, and a Spotted Sandpiper, as well as Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows. A stop along Buffalo Creek produced a lot of good birds; the best were a calling Virginia Rail, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, singing Willow Flycatchers, and several cooperative singing Orchard Orioles which were out in easy viewing areas. A leucistic (i.e., partially white) American Robin was perched in a tree. We also traveled to several other wetlands and were rewarded with sightings of Wilson's Snipe, one of which called and made a display flight. That was the first time I had seen a Wilson's Snipe in a display flight.

On Saturday afternoon, members could either go birding on their own, looking for more birds, or return to the Quality Inn for several scheduled presentations and a movie. Two lectures preceded the movie. Matthew Webb from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History gave a presentation on Bird Safe Pittsburgh, a number of diverse groups organized into a consortium devoted to the preservation of birds in the Pittsburgh area. They have conducted and are continuing studies of bird strikes at windows and how these affect migrating birds. They also are interested in other adverse affects on birds and their prevention.

Mike Lanzone followed the first presentation with a talk about his 2012 big year at one chosen location, Somerset Lake. He showed slides of some of the rarer birds he encountered during this year-long study including Greater White-fronted Geese, Bald Eagles, American Avocets, Willets, and most other sandpiper and warbler species and perhaps rarest of all, a Parasitic Jaeger. Mike ended up sighting 241 bird species at Somerset Lake and 264 species in Somerset County for 2012.

The movie shown, titled "The Messenger" and directed by Su Rynard, was a documentary about how humans have impacted bird life. The comparison was to the canary in a coal mine used to warn miners of carbon monoxide and other potentially fatal gases. It showed people recording flight calls at night of migrating species to determine various species' populations and the large drop in numbers of various songbirds over the years. It examined the impact of skyscrapers with reflective windows causing bird strikes because all the birds see are clear sky, pet cat predation of birds, human drilling and mining causing loss of habitat for birds, and the effects of climate change on species' migration patterns. The message that folks were to get from the movie was that people need to start listening to the "canary in the coal mine" – i.e., depletion of song bird numbers – because the ills that are causing it will eventually affect humans as well.

The annual meeting dinner on Saturday night was a pleasant get-together over roast beef, chicken, and vegetarian lasagna. After dinner we tallied the species seen on Saturday with more to be added after the Sunday outings (see page 4 for the full list). Next it was time for the awards which PSO grants each year. Robert Mulvihill from the National Aviary received the Earl Poole Award for his work over the years banding birds at Powdermill Nature Preserve, his publications, work on

the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, and his encouragement of many birders throughout the years. The Somerset County Conservancy was awarded the PSO Conservation Award for their work at Lake Somerset and other preserves in the county. Jaimee Buehl received the youth scholarship so she could attend the PSO meeting. The award is made to young birders to encourage their enjoyment and study of birds. Geoff Malosh was presented the first PSO Service award for his work over the last ten years as editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*. Publishing the four issues a year on time has been a labor of love by Geoff. (Greg Grove will take over as editor with the next issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*.) The last award was another PSO Service award given to Shonah Hunter for all her work organizing the PSO meetings that we have all enjoyed over the years. She has been the driving force behind all the negotiations with the motels/hotels where the meetings have been held, getting the Saturday and Sunday morning breakfasts set up on time for early rising birders, and the Saturday dinner menus and caterers. After the awards, Wayne Laubscher then gave a short presentation about the Western Tanager that was seen in Centre County this winter showing PowerPoint slides of how it changed as it molted through time. Laura Jackson followed with a brief presentation about the Golden-winged Warbler Project.

Robert Mulvihill was also the main Saturday dinner speaker. Bob, as many of us know him, talked about the history and development of the National Aviary and why it is located in Pittsburgh. Before it was the National Aviary, there was an aviary on the North Side of Pittsburgh, originally begun with the original Phipps Conservatory. The old Phipps Conservatory was converted into the Pittsburgh Aviary in 1952. Additional rooms and exhibits were added to the original building through time. It became the National Aviary by a declaration by the U.S. Congress, signed into law in 1993 by President Bill

Clinton. It continued to expand and add exhibits and now is the foremost aviary in the United States. It currently is participating in various breeding programs for endangered species including the Andean Condor. Bob is conducting bird surveys in the backyards of many people in Pittsburgh and vicinity as part of his work with the aviary and is looking for volunteers who would let him continue his work on their properties. After Bob Mulvihill's talk, Shonah announced the winners of the PSO silent auction, ending the activities for Saturday.



Mike Lanzone presents the first PSO Service Awards to Shonah Hunter and Geoff Malosh.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

Sunday morning began much the same as Saturday with breakfast at 5:30 a.m.

The outings scheduled for the day were the same as those listed above for Saturday. I went on the Mt. Davis and vicinity trip. Of course when we arrived, it was foggy and raining on the highest point in Pennsylvania at an elevation of 3,212 feet. Nevertheless, we did stop so we could all say we'd been there. Good birds found on this outing included numerous Chestnut-sided Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers and Canada Warblers at locations around Mt. Davis as well as two Forster's Terns at High Point Lake. I left the group at High Point Lake since that was the easiest point from which I could leave and not have to backtrack to get home. I did not take any photographs during this outing due to the rain.

In spite of all the rain, it was a good weekend to spend birding in Somerset County. Many of the people attending got to see and/or hear life birds. The next PSO annual meeting will be held on the third weekend in September 2017 in Cumberland County. That should be a good time to see migrating hawks, grassland species, migrating warblers, and late shorebirds. There is something for all birders on the tours. You do not have to be an experienced birder to enjoy the outings. There are plenty of helpful people who will identify the birds and help you find them if you are an inexperienced birder. The PSO board hopes to see you at next year's meeting!

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*Plan now to attend our 2017 Annual Meeting - September 15-17  
in Cumberland County!*

# Birds Listed by 2016 PSO Meeting Attendants

Friday, May 20, through Sunday, May 21

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	*Bank Swallow	Bay-breasted Warbler
Mute Swan	*Forster's Tern	*Cliff Swallow	*Blackburnian Warbler
*Wood Duck	*Rock Pigeon	*Barn Swallow	*Yellow Warbler
American Black Duck	Eurasian Collared-Dove	*Black-capped Chickadee	*Chestnut-sided Warbler
*Mallard	*Mourning Dove	*Tufted Titmouse	*Blackpoll Warbler
*Blue-winged Teal	*Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Black-throated Blue Warbler
*Ring-necked Duck	*Black-billed Cuckoo	*White-breasted Nuthatch	*Pine Warbler
*Bufflehead	Barn Owl	Brown Creeper	*Yellow-rumped Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Eastern Screech-Owl	*House Wren	*Yellow-throated Warbler
*Common Merganser	Great Horned Owl	*Winter Wren	*Prairie Warbler
Red-breasted Merganser	*Barred Owl	*Carolina Wren	*Black-throated Green Warbler
*Ruddy Duck	*Common Nighthawk	*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	*Canada Warbler
*Ring-necked Pheasant	*Eastern Whip-poor-will	*Golden-crowned Kinglet	*Wilson's Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	*Chimney Swift	*Eastern Bluebird	*Yellow-breasted Chat
*Wild Turkey	*Ruby-throated Hummingbird	*Veery	*Eastern Towhee
*Common Loon	*Belted Kingfisher	Gray-cheeked Thrush	*Chipping Sparrow
*Double-crested Cormorant	Red-headed Woodpecker	*Swainson's Thrush	*Field Sparrow
*Great Blue Heron	*Red-bellied Woodpecker	Hermit Thrush	*Vesper Sparrow
*Green Heron	*Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	*Wood Thrush	*Savannah Sparrow
Black Vulture	*Downy Woodpecker	*American Robin	*Grasshopper Sparrow
*Turkey Vulture	*Hairy Woodpecker	*Gray Catbird	*Henslow's Sparrow
*Osprey	*Northern Flicker	*Northern Mockingbird	*Song Sparrow
*Bald Eagle	*Pileated Woodpecker	*Brown Thrasher	*Swamp Sparrow
*Northern Harrier	*American Kestrel	*European Starling	*White-throated Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*Eastern Wood-Pewee	*Cedar Waxwing	*White-crowned Sparrow
*Cooper's Hawk	*Acadian Flycatcher	*Ovenbird	*Dark-eyed Junco
*Red-shouldered Hawk	*Alder Flycatcher	Worm-eating Warbler	*Scarlet Tanager
*Red-tailed Hawk	*Willow Flycatcher	Louisiana Waterthrush	*Northern Cardinal
Golden Eagle	*Least Flycatcher	*Northern Waterthrush	*Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Virginia Rail	*Eastern Phoebe	Golden-winged Warbler	Blue Grosbeak
*Sora	*Great Crested Flycatcher	*Blue-winged Warbler	*Indigo Bunting
American Coot	*Eastern Kingbird	*Black-and-white Warbler	*Bobolink
*Semipalmated Plover	*White-eyed Vireo	*Tennessee Warbler	*Red-winged Blackbird
*Killdeer	*Yellow-throated Vireo	Nashville Warbler	*Eastern Meadowlark
*Greater Yellowlegs	*Blue-headed Vireo	*Mourning Warbler	*Common Grackle
*Lesser Yellowlegs	Warbling Vireo	*Kentucky Warbler	*Brown-headed Cowbird
*Spotted Sandpiper	*Red-eyed Vireo	*Common Yellowthroat	*Orchard Oriole
*Solitary Sandpiper	*Blue Jay	*Hooded Warbler	*Baltimore Oriole
Upland Sandpiper	*American Crow	*American Redstart	*House Finch
*Least Sandpiper	*Common Raven	Cape May Warbler	*Purple Finch
*Pectoral Sandpiper	*Horned Lark	*Cerulean Warbler	Pine Siskin
*Semipalmated Sandpiper	*Purple Martin	*Northern Parula	*American Goldfinch
*Wilson's Snipe	*Tree Swallow	*Magnolia Warbler	*House Sparrow
American Woodcock			

Total = 173 species seen in the state  
144 species listed on the field trips

## 2016 PSO Meeting Participants

Chuck Berthoud  
Diane Bierly  
Carolyn Blatchley  
Barry Blust  
Carol Blye  
Rob Blye  
Dan Brauning  
Marcia Brauning  
Lester Brunell  
Jaimee Buehl  
Tom Buehl  
Brian Byrnes  
Gail Carns  
Mary Paulone Carns  
Lisa Chapman  
Sandy Cline  
William Cline  
Sheree Daugherty  
Michael David  
Deborah Escalet  
Pam Ferkett  
Mike Fialkovich  
Chris Fischer

Ronnie Fischer  
Patience Fisher  
Diane Franco  
Ian Gardner  
Vern Gauthier  
Lynn Graham  
Doug Gross  
Deb Grove  
Greg Grove  
Carol Guba  
Liz Hart  
Mike Harvell  
Margaret Higbee  
Roger Higbee  
Deuane Hoffman  
Bob Hook  
Shonah Hunter  
Laura Jackson  
Mike Jackson  
Chad Kauffman  
Rudy Keller  
Aiden Kern  
Kathy Kern

Kathy Kuckwara  
Janet Kuehl  
Tom Kuehl  
Sherri LaBar  
Alex Lamoreaux  
Mike Lanzone  
Willow Lanzone  
Wayne Laubscher  
Pat Lynch  
Sherron Lynch  
Geoff Malosh  
Tony Marich  
Dick Martin  
Annette Mathes  
Mark McConaughy  
Andrew McGann  
Flo McGuire  
Jim McGuire  
Holly Merker  
Craig Miller  
Jean Miller  
Trish Miller  
Frank Moone

Bob Mulvihill  
Richard Nugent  
Carol Payne  
Chris Payne  
Jeff Payne  
Joan Renninger  
Margie Rutbell  
Sam Sinderson  
Nancy Smith  
Thyra Sperry  
Sue Strassner  
Shannon Thompson  
Lisa Tull  
Kim Van Fleet  
Linda Wagner  
Carol Walker  
Scott Walker  
Matt Webb  
Dave Wilton  
Carole Winslow  
David Yeany II  
Ronald Young  
Art Zdancewic

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## Congratulations to Our 2016 PSO Scholarship Award Winner

Jaimee Buehl, an up-and-coming Pennsylvania birder and photographer, is a very deserving recipient of the 2016 PSO Youth Scholarship Award.

Jaimee, 17, who is from Frackville, Schuylkill County, devotes much of her free-time searching for birds to study, learn, and photograph. Her careful attention to each bird encountered has paid off in her ability to become an astute birder, and talented photographer. In addition to capturing bird images through photography, Jaimee is also a skilled fine artist and enjoys drawing the birds she encounters in order to learn and take a closer look at a species.

During the PSO Conference, Jaimee and her dad, Tom (who is also an avid birder), were thrilled to have the



Mike Fialkovich presents the 2016 Scholarship Award to Jaimee Buehl at our May meeting.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

opportunity to make their first visit to Somerset County and the Laurel Highlands. During the weekend, they enjoyed the beautiful landscapes of the region despite the rain. Jaimee encountered six new species to add to her growing life list, including Black Tern, Cliff Swallow, Bank Swallow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, and Henslow's Sparrow.

Jaimee was very grateful to the PSO community for providing her with the opportunity to attend this year's conference, meet new PA birders, and see another area of her state.

To view some of Jaimee's fine bird photography, check out her signature photos on this Flickr page: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/123656349@N02/with/17554214049/>

# Bucktoe Kite and Shorebird Watch 2016

by Chad Kauffman

Since PSO visited this site last year during our Annual Meeting in West Chester, many in our crew talked about returning; and Larry Lewis, who maintains the watch, encouraged us to come back. We wanted to visit earlier in the season, but the first weekend of June, the last weekend of the official watch, is when we decided to go. This ended up being a special weekend for me, as it was the first long weekend that my six-year-old son Noah joined me. My girlfriend has been telling me that Noah has been more bothered by my occasional trips, so I thought it was time to take him along.

Several of us met in the Harrisburg area and birded on Prescott Road, Lancaster County, with the hope of finding some special warblers. As soon as we got to the location, I was able to hear Yellow-throated Warblers singing right over our cars, and before long we heard Prothonotary Warbler singing as well. We walked along the canal trail for a bit and then decided to move to Lake Redman, where two Little Blue Herons had been reported just the day before. This was another new spot for some in our traveling caravan. When we got to the boardwalk section, two local birders were already there and told us the herons had left the night before. We walked out the boardwalk and enjoyed the views and got some nice day birds. After exploring the Birdseye app, we saw that the next lake over, Lake Williams, had harbored a Black-crowned Night-Heron recently. As soon as we pulled into that parking lot, we heard Pine Warbler, and then we scanned the lake. It didn't take too long for Joan to spot an adult Black-crowned Night-Heron flying across the lake, and we all got good looks. A perched Bald Eagle and a pair of Cooper's Hawks were other highlights of that visit.

From there we returned to the river and had a wonderful lunch at the John Wright Restaurant while enjoying a view of the river at Wrightsville. We all love birding that section of the river, but none of us had eaten there before. I am sure we weren't the first ones to take bins and ask to sit outside.

We got to Bucktoe around 3:00 p.m. and were greeted by a smiling Larry Lewis, who is always welcoming to birders and visitors. For those who haven't been there before, some chairs are provided; but you should bring your own so you can sit in the sun or under the shade of the pavilion. Snacks and beverages are also provided. We all had high hopes of seeing shorebirds and kites, but Friday didn't provide those birds. The weather was nice and the winds were ideal. We did enjoy hearing birds in

the nearby woods, as well as getting some close looks at a pair of Blue Grosbeaks, Field Sparrows, and both orioles.

We were able to contact members of the West Chester Bird Club and tagged along with Martin Page and a few others on Saturday morning. This promised to be the nicest day, but the sky still looked somewhat threatening. We had a wonderful walk at the Stroud Preserve and got to see several types of habitat on the walk. We didn't spot the meadowlark or Bobolink that we'd hoped for, but a nice surprise was seeing a Blue-winged Warbler and hearing at least two. We took Martin's suggestion for lunch at Four Dogs Tavern, a wonderful choice, where we were able to sit outside with our birding crew of eleven.

Saturday afternoon started a bit earlier at Bucktoe, and at one point the winds picked up and brought more raptors and soaring birds. Larry was able to find a perched Olive-sided Flycatcher, always a great bird in PA and even more so for the first week of June in Chester County. Many of us were surprised at how many Yellow-billed Cuckoos we heard during our visit there. It's a great bird, certainly heard much more than seen. Several Osprey flew past while we were there.

Sunday morning we had planned to bird John Heinz NWR, and we were fortunate to get Holly Merker to lead us. She invited Annie Bird to co-lead, and the weather ended up being very nice for several hours. Shortly after we started our walk and came across the walking bridge, we saw a Least Bittern in flight. On one of the side trails along the creek, we found an American Robin that was tangled in fishing line high up in a tree, and with teamwork we were able to get it down and cut it free from the line. We all hoped it was able to survive. Another big surprise for our group was a low flyover of a Common Loon. We saw and heard an abundance of Marsh Wrens, a special treat for those of us who live away from this species' habitat. We even saw some on the nest as well as entering the nest.

After a nice lunch at a nearby Ruby Tuesday's, we all decided to call it a trip, especially with the impending storm that was coming our way, and we headed for home. Larry is already inviting us back, making this possibly a yearly trip. I know I will be back as I still am haunted by not having a Mississippi Kite in my optics yet, but the location is easy to get to. You can relax there and just

*(continued on page 14)*

# Hiking the Redbank Valley Trail

by Flo McGuire

Last spring on a Todd Bird Club outing, Margaret and Roger Higbee mentioned that they had been hiking and birding sections of trails in the Rails-to-Trails System. Jim and I thought that sounded like fun — we joined them on part of the Armstrong Trail one day, walking along the Allegheny River toward East Brady, until we thought we were halfway to lunchtime and turned around. So, we went 4.2 miles (according to our pedometers) but covered only 2.1 miles of the trail. This got us to thinking, we could walk twice as far if we had one vehicle at the other end.



Flo and Jim McGuire and Roger Higbee hike the Redbank Valley Trail just prior to their bear sighting.

Then Jim and I went to the website [TrailLink.org](http://TrailLink.org), where we could browse the trail map for trails between our respective homes at Creekside and Tionesta. We found a real gem -- the Redbank Valley Trail, from Brookville to the Allegheny River (41 miles), and a spur which goes from Lawsonham to Sligo (9 miles). This trail was awarded the 2014 Trail of the Year by Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. The trail is well-maintained with a crushed limestone surface, except for the spur, where improvements are underway.

We started on June 29 at Brookville, Milepost 41, and soon had a routine – we would meet at 8:00 a.m. at the endpoint of the day's journey, leave one car and travel in the other car to the beginning point. We were equipped with water, snacks, cameras, and of course binoculars. That first day we walked 4.5 miles in about 5 hours, then went to Subway for lunch. It was a good birding day — we tallied 47 species, and confirmed 10. These included a Northern Rough-winged Swallow feeding young, a Blue-headed Vireo nest building, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher feeding young, and a Dark-eyed Junco carrying food.

Our second hike on July 3 was the birdiest day we had, with 50 species. Highlights here were an Ovenbird fledgling, Eastern Towhees copulating, and a Cooper's Hawk carrying food. Again we ended the day with lunch at Subway.

On all of these treks, Margaret was both birding and "mothing" — whenever she saw a moth, she would adjust her camera to get proper lighting for a macro photo, to

verify the species. She added several moths to the county lists for Jefferson, Clarion, and Armstrong for the BAMONA website, [www.butterfliesandmoths.org](http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org).

July 10 was another good day, with 38 species, including seven confirmed breeding. We noted our only Willow Flycatcher, our only Black-and-white Warbler, and four Warbling Vireos. At one point on this hike Margaret walked over to a pretty yellow wildflower and exclaimed

"Evening Primrose, and here's a Primrose Moth!" There was indeed a pink and yellow moth on the yellow primrose. Margaret said that she has been checking every evening primrose she's seen for several years in the hopes of finding this moth. I know I have a lot to learn about lepidoptera, but this one is easy even for me to remember!

One major town along our route (besides Brookville, large enough to have a Subway) was New Bethlehem, which is approximately centered on the main part of the trail. On this more developed section we encountered the most other hikers, but the variety of birds was not diminished; we tallied 38 species, including two Warbling Vireos, a Purple Finch and an Osprey. As we got farther away from the towns, we would sometimes see only a few other hikers or bikers all morning, sometimes none! As our foursome hiked through the summer and fall, each day as lunchtime approached, we all seemed to start craving a sub from Subway. Luckily there are enough Subways situated near the trail.

We traveled one of the longest and most remote sections of the trail on July 20 — it was 6 miles between parking areas. We birded three counties that day — as we crossed from Jefferson into Clarion County, the Redbank Creek became the boundary with Armstrong County, so any birds seen or heard across the creek would be counted for Armstrong. We kept all this data straight for our eBird reporting. This was another good day for birds, also a white-striped black moth, but all of these were forgotten when we looked up ahead and saw a black bear ambling down the trail barely 200 feet in front of us! He must have sensed our presence, and quickly disappeared into the woods below.

On September 2 we heard “babies” in the vegetation on the bank next to the trail; they proved to be a brood of Ruffed Grouse which must have recently fledged. September 23 was another long stretch, 6.8 miles; although we had only 33 species that day, these included our only Red-shouldered Hawk, Tennessee Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler.



The Redbank Valley Trail passes through various habitats including cut banks with rhododendron, hemlock forest, ravines, deciduous woods, reclaimed strip mine property, and, of course, the Redbank Creek itself.

Photo by Flo McGuire

On our eighth hike, October 16, we got to the Allegheny River, Milepost 0! This was another good birding day, with our only Swainson’s Thrush and Winter Wren, and 30 Yellow-rumped Warblers. But we had traversed only 40 of the 41 miles, because a one-mile section near Mayport had been under construction. We scheduled our last walk of the year on October 30 to finish this mile. (We actually traveled five miles that day, or it would have been too early for lunch.) This was the day I got to see one of my favorite birds, a Brown Creeper. We also had an interesting side-trip after this hike, going to a private home near Brookville where a Rufous Hummingbird had been reported. We were fortunate to see and photograph this beautiful western bird.

The pleasant weather in March 2016 prompted us to go back to do the spur, a nine-mile section perpendicular to

the main section, going from Lawsonham to Sligo. We would split it into two days. Unfortunately, the pleasant weather was gone when we got there. On the first day, one of us who was not prepared, was freezing! On April 7, the very last day of our 50-mile trek, I was glad to be wearing my warmest winter clothes and hiking boots. This was probably our most challenging day, with the rough surface, cold temperatures, intermittent rain, and 3% grade (up!), but the birding was wonderful — we listed 39 species, adding American Kestrel, Field Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown-headed

Cowbird, Fox Sparrow, and Brown Thrasher to the trail list, and we also saw an American Crow sitting on a nest, for another confirmation of breeding.

Our 50-mile journey included stunning scenery, with waterfalls, historical bridges, a stone tunnel, rhododendron-covered ravines, deciduous woods, reclaimed strip mine property, and, of course, the Redbank Creek itself. Over eleven hikes, I tallied 439 bird sightings of 92 different species. The Redbank Valley Trail was a lot of fun to hike — it provided new habitats and new birds every day, plus a nice sense of accomplishment at the end.

## PSO Pileated Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. The song of this ground-nesting bird is described in *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* as onomatopoeical. What species is this?
2. What accidental goose was first documented in Lehigh County in 1997?
3. During the last Atlas, which two counties boasted the most northerly nesting Yellow-throated Warblers?
4. Which of the following Murrelets is not on the PA state list: Long-billed Murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, or Ancient Murrelet?
5. With which unrelated species is the song of the Warbling Vireo often confused? With what other species is it visually confused?

(Answers on page 16)



# Ornithological Literature Notes

“Ornithological Literature Notes” has often called attention to Pennsylvania’s international prominence in research on Golden Eagle and Louisiana Waterthrush biology, ecology, and behavior. Now, two research papers in 2016 expand our knowledge of these further.

The Golden Eagle is addressed in “Limitations and mechanisms influencing the migratory performance of soaring birds,” which appears in the British Ornithologists’

Union journal *Ibis* ([tinyurl.com/Eagle-migration](http://tinyurl.com/Eagle-migration)). Tricia Miller, Robert Brooks, Michael Lanzone, David Brandes, Jeff Cooper, Junior Tremblay, Jay Wilhelm, Adam Duerr, and Todd Katzner studied how Golden Eagles’ migratory behavior balances the sometimes conflicting requirements of time, energy, and safety.

They used GPS telemetry to track 18 adult, 13 sub-adult, and 15 juvenile Golden Eagles in their migratory movements in the U.S. and Canada from November 2006 to March 2013. Their data include 174 daily migration tracks along the mid-Atlantic Appalachian Mountains, and their extensive findings show that the migratory behavior is far from one-size-fits-all.

For example, during spring, adult eagles departed northward earlier, took a more direct path, and spent less time migrating northward to their breeding grounds than younger birds. During autumn migration southward, the eagles of all age classes were primarily “energy-minimizers,” taking longer stopovers, less direct routes, and a slower pace than in spring.

In general, during both seasons, juveniles had the lowest performance, sub-adults intermediate performance, and adults the highest performance. At the same time, Miller and her colleagues emphasize that many variations occur within those overall averages: “A complex suite of factors



The Louisiana Waterthrush is known primarily for its reliance on aquatic insects.

Photo by Tony Bruno

including weather, experience, and navigation ability, influences migratory performance and decision-making.”

A familiar eastern wood-warbler is examined in “Molecular analysis of nestling diet in a long-distance Neotropical migrant, the Louisiana Waterthrush” by Brian Trevelline, Steven Latta, Leesia Marshall, Tim Nuttle, and Brady Porter. It is published in the American Ornithologists’ Union journal *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* ([tinyurl.com/Waterthrush-diet](http://tinyurl.com/Waterthrush-diet)).

Trevelline and his coauthors analyzed the waterthrush diet in terms of ecology, noting that understanding that dietary quality is an essential pointer toward effective conservation action—particularly the abundance of aquatic insects. Using advanced techniques of DNA analysis, the team determined the diet of waterthrush nestlings in Arkansas and Pennsylvania differed notably.

This species is known primarily for its reliance on aquatic insects, and previous studies have shown that stream pollution in its nesting habitat depletes these essential resources for survival of young. The authors documented an important role for terrestrial insect food as an adjunct to relying on aquatic insects in Pennsylvania’s polluted streams (although not necessarily in the waterways of Arkansas).

Those of us who have watched Louisiana Waterthrushes foraging along Pennsylvania’s waterways may not realize how important terrestrial insects away from the streams may be as a food resource, especially along polluted streams. Intensive research tells us what we have been missing.

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## Reminder

If you haven’t yet submitted your PAMC data, please do so before the end of June. Data may be sent to either Frank Haas or to eBird. Compiler Chuck Berthoud comments that the preferred format is a spreadsheet.

# The Raven Reporter

Tales of  
Discovery about  
Pennsylvania  
Birds



## Osprey Survey 2016 Reminder

The Game Commission is performing an extensive state-wide survey of Osprey nests this year. This initiative is not possible without the help of volunteers. Those who are interested in taking part can find out more at the Game Commission's website, ([www.pgc.pa.gov](http://www.pgc.pa.gov)). Information on the nest survey is available on the Birding page in the Birding section under the Wildlife tab. We also provide a comprehensive description of the species and its history in the state as another page in the Endangered species section. Just download the [Osprey Nest Survey Form](#) along with the [Nest Observation Protocol](#), and submit it [osprey@pa.gov](mailto:osprey@pa.gov) or to Doug Gross, the project coordinator.

The survey seeks to determine the location of each active Osprey nest. If you know about a pair of Ospreys, we'd appreciate hearing from you. Please do not assume that a nest has been reported by someone else. One of our biggest fears is that several nests will go unreported due to this factor. The information will be used to update the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program database and also enable us to better understand the status of this state-threatened species and its management potential. Including the coordinates of the nest support structure is very important in any report. For us to better understand Osprey management, it also is very helpful to know the kind of structure the nest is built on and what type of water body is nearby and used by the Ospreys for foraging. And, if possible, please indicate the number of chicks in each nest, but it is most critical to know whether the nest is active. Please submit an Osprey nest report when you observe it, then update the productivity information later in the season.

We did a statewide Osprey survey in 2010 and found at least 115 nests, but we missed several unreported nests that were known to the birding community especially in northern counties. Since then, Ospreys have continued to expand slightly into new areas and have been recorded in a few more places. We would like to learn of these new nests.

The PGC has changed its emphasis with Osprey management to watershed-based clusters rather than the Breeding Bird Atlas regions, so information about the known watershed also is appreciated. We intend to find at least 10 active nesting pairs in at least four different watershed clusters. We are confident that we can achieve this modest goal with your assistance. Most of these nests can be found in six distinct geographic clusters based on watersheds: the Upper Delaware River basin including the Poconos region; the Lower Delaware River basin; the Lower Susquehanna River Basin; the Upper North Branch Susquehanna Basin, mostly the Tioga-Hammond Reservoirs; the Upper Ohio – Beaver Watershed including Lake Arthur and the Northwestern wetlands; and the Allegheny River watershed including Kinzua Reservoir and Lake Wilhelm. There also are some Osprey nests in the following watersheds, the West Branch Susquehanna River and the Monongahela River. With the exception of the lower Delaware River, the majority of the state's Osprey nests are near reservoirs or impounded sections of rivers and are built on human-made structures such as communication towers, transmission towers, or nest platforms. And many of the Osprey clusters are near power stations where there is an abundance of artificial perching and nest sites. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help us with this important survey.

## Blackpoll Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in Pennsylvania: Request for Observations

As part of a long-term project to monitor and protect the breeding habitat of two PA Endangered species, I have been conducting surveys of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler. Northeastern Pennsylvania is the southern outpost for the breeding range of both species at the moment. This project has resulted in publications about these birds and the forest that supports them. For the last two years Eric Zawatski, a Penn State biology student, has been assisting with this project and contributing significantly to these challenging surveys. Last summer, we found only two territories of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, but we found at least 21 territories of Blackpoll Warbler. All of these were in boreal conifer swamps of Dutch Mountain in SGL 57. It is good news that the Blackpoll Warbler population may be expanding into more conifer-dominated and headwater swamps.

We made some interesting observations last year that add to our understanding of these species in the state. For the first time in more than 25 years, I found a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher territory overlapping with another tyrant flycatcher. The territory of a pair of Yellow-bellieds overlapped at the edge of a boreal swamp with a pair of Eastern Wood-Pewees nesting in a tree. I did not see the

flycatchers interact at all. The pewees evidently were tending young in the nest while the Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were still maintaining their own territory only a few feet away.

Eric has been doing more Blackpoll Warbler searches in boreal swamps than I could afford to do, adding to the overall survey coverage. We have been finding that Blackpoll Warblers will nest in more open situations than Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, sometimes with very little canopy. They will occupy territories where black spruce and eastern larch are dominant, not just red spruce. In these swamps, the dominant woody vegetation includes highbush blueberry, mountain holly (*Nemopanthus mucronata*), swamp azalea, Labrador tea, mountain laurel, and rosebay (*Rhododendron*), as well as other shrubs, cinnamon fern, boreal ground plants like goldthread, and sphagnum moss. Other birds common in this habitat include Blue-headed Vireo; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Northern Waterthrush; Nashville, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Magnolia, and Canada Warblers; White-throated Sparrow; and Purple Finch. We keep hoping for Olive-sided Flycatcher, Red Crossbill, and Bicknell's Thrush, but we have not yet observed these nesting at these locations.

This year and next, we are combining forces with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's David Yeany in a statewide "peatland" bird survey project that has a wide application for conservation and management of headwater forested areas. In addition to the species already mentioned, we also are targeting Swainson's Thrush populations and bird species associated with boreal forests.

We wonder if Blackpoll Warblers are being overlooked in northern Pennsylvania, especially in the Pocono Mountains where birders are a pretty rare species. Many headwater swamps and spruce forests offer great birding experiences even in July yet are rarely visited by birders. If you want a real birding challenge, try exploring these locations and let us know if you find any boreal forest birds, especially Blackpoll Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Observations of rare breeding species will be kept confidential. Additional observations of these species will help us protect and manage their few nesting locations.

## **State of the Birds 2016**

The State of the Birds (SOTB) report for 2016 has been released and is building bridges between countries on which birds are dependent. Significantly, the SOTB 2016 summary concerning the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) was announced at a meeting of the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and

Ecosystem Conservation and Management in Ottawa, Canada. This meeting includes Mexico, the United States, and Canada that share the lives of millions of migratory birds.

The report contains dire warnings. More than a third (37%) of our North American bird species are listed as of high conservation concern. Without significant conservation action, several are at risk of extinction. Yet, the report is a wonderful acclamation of the power of birds to span national boundaries and embrace peoples across the boundaries and over many miles. With their amazing ability to migrate long distances and their appeal to many people, birds unite us and demonstrate the need to take better care of our environment. Most knowledge of bird populations, their ranges, and trends is derived from "citizen science" ornithological records such as eBird, Christmas Bird Counts, and wildlife agency projects. For that we are extremely grateful to the legions of citizen scientists who contribute to various monitoring programs and share their own passion for birds and nature. Please check out the new report and the related stories at [www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org).

For Pennsylvania, the birds of the eastern forest are the biggest responsibility in terms of continental conservation. Since much eastern forest still exists, this habitat guild does not get quite the high concern that coastal and oceanic habitats are receiving due to climate change and other threats. Yet, we have challenges such as the decline of early successional and disturbance-dependent forest species like Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, American Woodcock, and others. Concern for mature forest species such as Cerulean Warbler has been expressed before and continues in this report. Fortunately, the states in the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture are taking steps to improve management of these habitats throughout the region. Pennsylvania is taking a lead in managing for young forest species and is now conducting controlled burns and various kinds of silviculture (mostly shelterwood cuts) to increase the acreage of good habitat. There also is the insidious slow decline of the iconic Wood Thrush and almost any species that needs a diversely vegetative and well-structured forest.

Although Pennsylvania is only at the edge of the boreal forests that serve as the nursery for millions of birds, it is a major corridor for the vast numbers of songbirds that inhabit the great boreal forests of Canada, Alaska, and the northern tier of the lower United States. So, Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow are a few of the species that may still be common but are threatened by the decline of these forests. Threats to wintering grounds which are much more compact than the summer ranges of these species are of greater concern

because any loss of habitat there is magnified for the species.

Another consideration brought to light with this report is the dire condition of the tropical forests of Mexico. Traveling birders are probably aware of these threats from their own personal trips to Mexico, the West Indies, and Central America. These forests are of various types such as the high elevation oak and pine forests and the moister cloud forests. Thus, the Resplendent Quetzal, Long-billed Hermit, Azure-rumped Tanager, and Ornate Hawk-Eagle rise to the top of the list and overlap with our concerns for our birds that winter in those forests. I also noticed that several of the Yucatan endemics like the Yucatan Jay, Wren, and Woodpecker are of high conservation concern. Our own Hooded Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, and Summer Tanager spend time with them in winter months.

Continent-wide, wetland birds have been doing fairly well and looking good compared to other habitat guilds. This qualified success has been credited to the protections given to wetlands through regulation and to the support they receive through the Duck Stamp funding, largely financially supported by waterfowl hunters. Besides waterfowl, a hodge-podge of bird species are the beneficiaries of this funding, including herons, bitterns, and rails. Contrary to the continental trend, the state's wetland birds have undergone significant decline over the last few decades; and over half of the state's endangered and threatened bird species depend on wetlands. This is emerging as one of the biggest conservation challenges facing our own state which has lost more than half of its wetlands through destruction and development. The remaining wetlands are threatened by many factors such as pollution including pesticides and siltation, fragmentation, and invasive plants. Nationwide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states that wetland loss has accelerated by 140% since 2004. The prognosis is not good, as the report states that there has been "an erosion of government funding for wetland conservation."

A success is also worth noting. Notable by their absence of mention are the Bald Eagle and Osprey as conservation concerns. Both species have made great strides in recovery, thanks to the actions of several states on their behalf. These successes are examples for us to follow with other less charismatic species.

Much of the concern for bird conservation has been directed toward game species, especially those migratory species that are dependent on wetlands. Duck hunters have certainly risen to the challenge with funding on an international basis. In general, migratory species are a greater concern than permanent residents because they are

vulnerable to negative factors on each step of their journey. Although there is a model of funding on behalf of wetlands through the "Duck Stamp" and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), such funding does not exist for the many nongame land birds. Most of these land birds are migratory, and many have international migratory routes. The lack of consistent and reliable funding directed toward nongame species prevents more action from being taken on behalf of these birds.

Even basic monitoring of endangered and threatened species is difficult without the budgeted staff to meet the challenges. At present, the future effectiveness of the nongame wildlife program in Pennsylvania is in doubt without an increase in hunting license fees and other financial support for the wildlife diversity program. There are great plans for improvements through the state's Wildlife Action Plan, but without funding they are only plans. A proposal for a possible new funding source for the conservation of nongame birds comes from a recent proposal to dedicate \$1.3 billion of federal energy and minerals development revenue to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program. Without this kind of funding the ability of wildlife agencies to make any kind of concerted action toward state, national, or international bird conservation will be greatly limited.

As I write this on my front porch, a pair of Prairie Warblers visits flowers and fibrous plants that might provide them with nesting material only a few feet away. Our shrubby field with pines and blackberry thickets hosts a few pairs of these beautiful and inquisitive songbirds. Each morning I am greeted with the upward climbing whistle of Prairie Warblers in or at the edge of our yard. This is one of the most welcome sounds in my life, and I would miss it greatly if it were gone. I wonder where they go for the winter and how their seasonal visits are affected by land practices in this unknown faraway place. A beachfront woodlot in Jamaica or Puerto Rico? A mountain forest in the Dominican Republic? Tropical scrub forest near Tulum, Quintana Roo? I don't know, but a bulldozer, herd of cattle, or a matchstick on the winter grounds habitat could be changing their future outlook right now. Without international cooperation and prioritization on behalf of nature, their future is uncertain.

### **A Visit to El Jaguar Reserve Showed Progress**

In February, I visited the El Jaguar Reserve in Jinotega Province, northern Nicaragua. My wife and I incorporated our visit into a vacation to Nicaragua and were guided ably by Georges Durieaux, one of the

reserve's owners. We had visited there in November 2012, so it was very interesting to make a comparison. A lot has changed in that short time, including improvements in the facilities, the addition of new partners, and a broadening of the research conducted at El Jaguar.

Since that time one of the owners, Liliana Chavarria-Duriaux, co-authored the first field guide to the birds of Nicaragua with Juan Carlos Martinez-Sanchez and Francisco Jose Munoz. This is an innovative guide because it is bilingual and compact, making it ideal for local guides to use and for the Nicaraguans to learn about their own avifauna. Now, Lili is working on another more advanced field guide for Nicaragua birds. I am excited at the possibilities!

El Jaguar is a shade-grown coffee plantation with a cloud forest on the property. It is a fairly small *finca* or coffee farm, but figures largely when it comes to Nicaraguan ornithology and conservation. This is the site of two bird-banding stations for both the migrants and the resident species. Birds are banded in both the coffee grove and the forest where birds are abundant. It was in the coffee station ("Café") that a Wood Thrush was caught and color-banded, later to be found in Bucks County a few months later, making a tangible link between Nicaragua and Pennsylvania in the Wood Thrush's full life cycle. Several researchers cooperate with Liliana and Georges in studies conducted at El Jaguar and the rest of the country. These include North Carolina Audubon (Curtis Smalling), North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (John Gerwin), Ruth Bennett of Cornell University, and Amber Roth, formerly in Michigan but now based in Maine. To add to power and effectiveness of the studies, our own Jeff Larkin of Indiana University of Pennsylvania and the American Bird Conservancy is working with El Jaguar Reserve and in the Volcan de Yali Reserve. I am very glad to have Jeff as a partner in another project.

A big focus of the bird surveys and management at El Jaguar is its Golden-winged Warblers. This is a hotspot for Golden-wings with many of them counted during surveys and banded by the team of cooperators. Not only is research conducted at the preserve, but workshops are offered to landowners so they can better apply sustainable agricultural methods that will assist not only birds but also their own farm's economic viability and reduce pollution and erosion in the rural setting. By converting sun coffee to shade coffee, fencing cattle out of forests, and planting



Doug Gross photographed this striking Golden-winged in a coffee grove at El Jaguar Reserve.

living fences, the landscape will be friendlier to birds, bees (those important pollinators), and people. We visited a local birding spot in the pine forest called "Pinares San Rafael del Norte" in eBird. Not only did we see some rarities like Golden-cheeked Warbler in our visits there, but I also was tickled to see Eastern Bluebirds, American Kestrels, and Red Crossbills in the pines. The crossbills are probably of a call type unique to the pine forests of northern Central America.

I saw that the nursery had not only expanded but improved. Native trees are being planted among coffee bushes throughout the Volcan de Yali valley corridor. We also saw the amazing growth of both the native trees and coffee bushes in the new Golden-winged Warbler preserve that was added to the *finca* just before our first visit. Knee-high bushes that we saw during our first visit now tower above our heads. I also saw Golden-winged Warblers and Wood Thrushes in these planted areas as well as other migrants and resident bird species. Right where it is easy to find Golden-winged Warblers at El Jaguar is also one of the best places to see Highland Guans come to feed. Highland Guans are Vulnerable in the BirdLife/IUCN Red List of globally threatened birds. Several colorful tanagers are easily seen right at the dining area. And, there's nothing like a flock of Montezuma Oropendulas to make your day go better!

The project has been growing quite literally with over 50,000 seedlings grown in nurseries. American Bird Conservancy, El Jaguar Reserve, and its partners are expanding the project to include other highland areas deserving conservation. The project is now expanding into areas called Penas Blancas and Datanli-El Diablo reserves. These are in the area known to be important to Pennsylvania's Wood Thrushes on their wintering grounds. It also hosts many other migrants including Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Ovenbird, Northern Parula, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. It was fun for me to see and photograph the Yellowish Flycatcher at close quarters in the El Jaguar woods not far from our cabin. I could hear Wood Thrushes and Golden-winged Warblers from our porch. So, I felt even more satisfied with the decision to support the Nicaraguan efforts through the Southern Wings program and American Bird Conservancy. The teamwork has been successful and continues to grow with new partners and new successes.

El Jaguar is a fairly remote and rustic ecolodge, but that does not keep it from being very comfortable and welcoming. We enjoyed our cabin overlooking one of the coffee fields and forest, but we needed blankets to keep warm at night. There is a new dining area and kitchen with good views of the oropendula colony. This has become a regular meeting place for Nicaraguan birders and also for international bird conservationists. Indiana University of Pennsylvania was there a couple weeks before us, and a group of Neotropical bird conservationists met there the week after us. And, everyone enjoyed the homemade farm cheese for breakfast!

It also is very gratifying to see that we are implementing some of the strategies for success in bird conservation as

outlined in our own State Wildlife Action Plan that emphasizes full life cycle stewardship of our migratory birds. This can only be achieved through persistence and through teamwork. We take small steps but are moving ahead.

Good Birding!

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

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## Upcoming Events

**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/bigsit/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>

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## Bucktoe Kite and Shorebird Watch 2016 (continued from page 6)

scan the skies. Don't hesitate to join us in future years, as the walk from the parking area to the watch site isn't far at all.

And how did a six-year-old survive all of this stuffy birding and long hikes? Noah was such a trooper. He made friends with new people, and



many who met him for the first time felt that they already knew him from seeing so many pics of him on my Facebook page. He enjoyed talking with almost everyone in our group, and he seemed to have a lot to say as well. Several people have asked him what his favorite bird is, and it is still the "Great Bald Eagle."

# Conservation Chat Room – An Editorial

## ***Please Comment on the 30-Year Eagle Take Permits Before July 5, 2016***



The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is once again proposing 30-year eagle take permits. Based on my research, it appears that the proposed 30-year eagle take permits are NOT based primarily on science, but are an effort to concede to the demands of industrial wind developers. Why

do these corporations have so much power over the federal government?

The American Bird Conservancy did win a recent court battle that required FWS to follow NEPA: the National Environmental Policy Act. But the new FWS plan will still allow the killing of thousands of eagles. It almost appears that this new plan is a potentially deadly experiment to see if the proposed mitigation techniques really do work.

An inherent weakness is the fact that eagle mortality is not monitored by independent biologists, or the data made available to the public. Any industry involved in a study that hires its own researchers to collect the data, then sits on the data to keep it from public scrutiny, should be suspect. It's the old story of the fox guarding the hen house.

It is sad that states such as Pennsylvania, through the dedicated efforts of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, spent decades to reestablish Bald Eagle populations in our state. We are blessed with nesting eagles in almost every county. That didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of money, time, and work to bring back the Bald Eagles. Even though they are protected under the Eagle Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Lacey Act, the FWS wants to give companies permits to kill eagles for 30 years without knowing if the mitigation techniques will even work. Even though permits cover 30 years, there is a recurring five-year review process on all permits.

National Audubon is also 100% opposed to the 30-year incidental take permits for Bald Eagles. The rule increases the take limits for Bald Eagles from 1,000 to 4,000 nationwide per year. There is no allowed take on Golden Eagles east of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian. However, in the

western US, take permits may be applied for. Once a take permit is obtained, companies must comply with compensatory mitigation procedures. Current proposed changes will open up take in the eastern US as well. This mitigation is also experimental, so no one knows if it will really work.

One bit of good news: The unit of analysis for take of Bald Eagles will be at the local population level and take of only 5% at the local population will be allowed. This makes the protection stronger since impact on local populations was not included in the first rule.

If you are concerned about the 30-year take permit, please send your comments to the FWS by July 5, 2016. Click for more details:

[www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/eagle-management.php](http://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/eagle-management.php)

You'll find a link to the new rule and a link to send your comments.

Or, go directly to the comment page:

[www.regulations.gov#!documentDetail;D=FWS-R9-MB-2011-0094-1052](http://www.regulations.gov#!documentDetail;D=FWS-R9-MB-2011-0094-1052)

Base your comments on scientific concerns, not emotion.

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



Second year Bald Eagle  
Digitized by Margaret Higbee

## Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 13)

1. Eastern Whip-poor-will
2. Pink-footed Goose
3. Warren and Tioga
4. Marbled Murrelet
5. Purple Finch; Tennessee Warbler



Chad Kauffman photographed a few members of the PSO group at the kite watch in June.

Photo by Chad Kauffman

## 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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