

PSO Pileated



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From the President's Desk....

This past July, I made an effort to finally take one of the Regal Fritillary Wildlife Tours at Fort Indiantown Gap near Harrisburg.

I have always wanted to take a tour to learn about the conservation efforts underway at this military installation. Tours are offered in late June/early July and are free. Many monitoring studies are in progress at the site covering just about everything living there, something I was unaware of.

Upon my arrival, I was quite struck by the number of familiar faces I saw all around. They were familiar because they were not only birders, but they were PSO members, serving in various capacities that included registration, directing traffic, providing transportation for those with mobility challenges, assisting the biologists leading the tour, etc. I also met some county compilers and contributors whom I have known only by name.

We have a great history of dedicated volunteers in Pennsylvania. A quick look through both Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlases reveals an enormous list of volunteers including observers, regional coordinators, authors, project leaders, etc. Birders constantly step up to assist with various projects.

We have an active eBird community submitting observations throughout the year. Birders also contribute to various projects now connected with eBird, including The Great Backyard Bird Count (with Pennsylvania ranking high nationwide on the number of checklists submitted) and The Global Big Day (the Pennsylvania Migration Count now contributes to this project) where Pennsylvania ranked third in the total number of checklists submitted according to the eBird website (http://ebird.org/ebird/country/US/regions?yr=BIGDAY_2016a).



The Regal Fritillary Wildlife Tour is rather popular.
Photo by Mike Fialkovich

Pennsylvania Birders also contribute their time to Breeding Bird Surveys; Hawkwatch Surveys; Northern Saw-whet Owl banding; hummingbird banding; Great Blue Heron rookery surveys; Osprey, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon nest surveys and monitoring; and more.

According to the USGS Breeding Bird Survey Summer 2016 Memorandum, Pennsylvania is one of 18 states with 76-100% route participation. Out of 108 routes in Pennsylvania in 2015, 103 were surveyed, a completion rate of 95%!

We have accomplished a lot in this state and continue to do so. Thanks to all of you across Pennsylvania for working so hard on all of these projects. It's important for bird conservation, and we can be proud that we are making significant contributions.

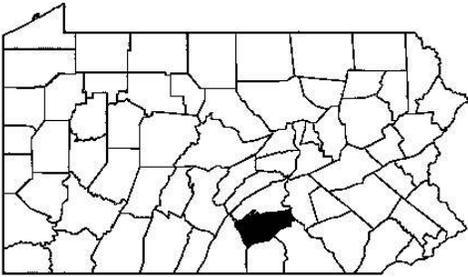
Besides seeing the volunteers in action at Fort Indiantown Gap, I enjoyed visiting a new location, something I find rewarding on a personal level. As you have read in these pages recently, Vice President Vern Gauthier has been visiting various counties across the state, meeting with birders to learn firsthand what the area has to offer, and writing an excellent summary of each county visited. These are useful references for all of us as we plan trips around the state.

Back to my visit to a new location. I saw several Regal Fritillaries and only my second Zebra Swallowtail as well as plants I was unaware grew in the state (many only at this location due to habitat management and preservation).

(continued on page 6)

Birding PA – Cumberland County

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



In the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy got it exactly right when she said, “There’s no place like home.” When it comes to bird-

ing, there is no place like my home county of Cumberland, at least to me. I know that there are counties that have more birds, but in this edition of PA Birding Cumberland is worth a birding visit, especially during the PSO ANNUAL MEETING that will be held here September 15 through 17, 2017.

On the morning of Friday, the 16th of September, I met with Appalachian Audubon (AAS) President and PSO member Kathy Kuchwara and PSO member and Cumberland County birder Dave Kerr in the very eastern portion of the county at WEST FAIRVIEW BOAT LAUNCH which sits on the Susquehanna River across from Harrisburg. Of course, even though the birds on or over the river itself are officially Dauphin County birds (something, as the county compiler, I wish folks would remember when submitting eBird checklists), you can still see them with your feet on Cumberland County soil.

We began by scanning the river. Morning really isn’t the best time of day to do this as the sun is rising across the opposite bank. While **Caspian Tern** and **Great Black-backed Gull** had recently been reported there, nothing unusual was there this morning with 9 **Great Egrets** and 5 **Greater Yellowlegs** being of most interest. So we tried our luck on the trail that follows the CONODUINET CREEK which can be very good for migrants this time of year, but we did not come up with a whole lot. This has been a strange fall migration season with the wind rarely coming from the north or northeast; and when it does, very little or no rain accompanies it, meaning very little in the way of a fallout of migrants. Birds are still filtering through the area, but they are harder than usual to find in good numbers.

Our next stop proved that there is always something to learn. I had never birded the PINE HILL ARBORETUM and was interested to give it a try. When I arrived, I soon realized that the picture I had in my mind of an expansive open setting with groups of trees planted around the grounds was totally wrong. Instead what I found was a wooded gulch or ravine with a trickle of water in it. It actually seemed like it could be a decent place to bird, but the only migrants that morning were **Black-and-white**,

Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green Warblers, along with a **Northern Parula** and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**.

At his point Kathy had to leave us, but she shared the following information about AAS whose membership area includes the eastern part of the county:

AAS places a strong emphasis on education. We offer scholarships for youth, providing them with experiences that help them appreciate birds and other wildlife and the habitats they need to survive. We have awarded scholarships to several different camps: Wildwood Park, Goddard Legacy Leadership Institute, Wildlife Leadership Academy, and Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine. Notably our last two Hog Island Recipients are already paying it forward: Eli De Paulis, our 2015 recipient, is currently serving as Chairperson of our Youth Committee (this had been inactive for several years), and the 2016 award winner, Dominic Mirachi, has started a birding/conservation club at his high school.

Programs and field trips are an important part of the educational work of the chapter, with a focus on birds and beyond. Conservation is another focus of our chapter. In addition to the educational programs we offer, we have partnered with other groups in land acquisition for protection of important bird/wildlife habitat. Our members have been involved in projects to prevent spread of invasive plants and habitat restoration. Several of our members participate in the Harrisburg Peregrine Falcon Fledge Watch which promotes continued recovery of this species.”

Dave Kerr and I then headed to STATE GAME LANDS (SGL) 230, where we found the trend of the day continuing, adding only **Blackburnian Warbler** to the day’s list of migrants.

Dave had to leave, so I decided to head to the WAGGONER’S GAP HAWKWATCH (WGHW), where I found veteran counters Dave Grove and Ron Freed on the job with about another dozen others. When I got there, Ron told me that they had 218 birds in the morning, 178 of which had been **Broad-winged Hawks**. Just as he said that, a kettle of 59 Broad-wings was sighted, followed soon after by one of 30 plus. In my half hour there, approximately 120 Broad-wings had made their way past. The end count that day was 943 raptors with 841 Broad-wings, 50 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, and 31 **Ospreys**.

The next day I met PSO members Annette Mathes, Ian Gardner, and Chad Kauffman with his son Noah. We headed to the very southwest end of the county in the MICHAUX STATE FOREST (MSF). We continued up from the valley along the BIG FLAT, RIDGE ROAD, AND MILES BURN ROAD to what is considered the best fall migrant trap in the county, hoping that the birds would show up in greater numbers than the previous day. I was not disappointed.

Between Big Flat and the five-mile stretch of Milesburn Road we spotted 14 species of warblers including 5 **Tennessee Warblers**, 4 **Cape May Warblers**, 8 **Bay-breasted Warblers**, and 5 **Black-throated Blue Warblers**. In addition, we had two adult and two juvenile **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at a clear cut. A little farther down the road at an old burn area, we found a female **Merlin** being harassed by a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and 2 **Cooper's Hawks**. The interaction of these 4 raptors was pretty amazing to watch and was one of the day's highlights. We actually had



"This Merlin was minding its business when a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew in and perched on the same snag. The Merlin immediately launched off its perch to chase off the Sharpie, only to be then pursued by 2 immature Cooper's Hawks! But in true Merlin fashion, it chased off all other raptors and returned to its perch. This photo depicts the victorious moment when the Merlin returned to its perch, pugnacious as always."

– Ian Gardner

quite a raptor day totaling 10 species adding **Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, and American Kestrel** to those already mentioned. We continued to encounter a good number of migrants on Milesburn Road, adding 5 **Hooded Warblers**, one **Blackpoll Warbler**, and 5 **Swainson's Thrushes** to our list. And before I forget, we had 16 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** on that day, which is a good haul of these fun little birds any time of the year.

It was now noon, so we headed down into the valley to Shipensburg for a quick lunch and then off to the Cabin Road area of SGL 169, a good place to find **Mourning and Connecticut Warblers**. Maybe it was the



Dave Kerr photographed one of the two Caspian Terns present at Opossum Lake on April 21, 2016.



This Veery was on territory along Milesburn Road this past spring when Dave Kerr photographed it.

time of day, or maybe there just weren't many migrants in the valley, but the place was pretty slow. So we decided to run back up the ridge to the MSF to CAMP MICHAUX (CM) which is an old Civilian Conservation Corps site that was a Prisoner of War Camp during WWII. Now it is just a great place to bird. At CM we walked a 2.5-mile loop that includes a section of the Appalachian Trail. The birding there was pretty decent, and we were able to see a fair number of warblers and other migrants including **Blue-headed Vireo** and **Philadelphia Vireo**. The best bird, however, was the last new bird of the day – an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** perched on the very top of a fir tree. What a nice way to end the day! For the day we had listed 74 species including 17 species of warblers.

Late Sunday afternoon I was able to get out one more time. This time I met Bill Oyler at the SGL 169 MOUNTAIN ROAD MARSH, which can be a pretty productive place any time of year. My target bird for this afternoon (or maybe better, my hoped-for bird) was a **Wilson's Warbler**, the only PA warbler I'm missing for 2016. Bill is a PSO member and the compiler for

Franklin County. He is also a member of the Conococheague Audubon Society (CAS) which has a membership area that includes western Cumberland County.

CAS President Val Barnes gave me this information to share about CAS:

"The Conococheague Naturalists organized as a birding group in 1961. By 1977 the group became the Conococheague Audubon Society; active current CAS members from the founding group include Carl Garner and Joan Bowen. Former record-keeper and local school administrator Ken Gabler played a key part in organizing the groups. PSO member Dale Gearhart has been a long-term leader and chronicler of CAS activities and birds. The chapter takes its name from the Conococheague Creek which winds throughout Franklin County. CAS conducts approximately 15 field trips every season, shows nature films, maintains a bluebird trail, participates in the Pennsylvania Migration Count, and hosts a Beginning Birder Workshop each June at Caledonia State Park. The Chambersburg Christmas Bird Count, with a circle centered near the headwaters of the Falling

Spring, has been conducted for 56 years. CAS established and maintains a Native Plants Garden at Norlo Park near Fayetteville in Guilford Township; more than 60 native plant species grace the garden. CAS members and friends enjoy birding the variety of habitats in Franklin and nearby counties, including forests, wetlands, streams, ponds, and open fields.”



In late April Dave Kerr found this Prairie Warbler at SGL 230.

While I did not get my Wilson’s Warbler, I did get a first- of-the-season **Palm Warbler** along with 2 first-of-the-year **Lincoln’s Sparrows** and one **Savannah Sparrow**. We also had one that got away, as we had a raptor flying away from us that had flat wings; it was the right size and shape for a possible **Mississippi Kite**, but alas we could not bring ourselves to pull the

trigger on an ID of what would have been such a great bird to end the weekend!

So there you have a brief overview of some of the fall birding in my home county of Cumberland. Come experience it yourself at the 2017 PSO Annual Meeting which will be held in Carlisle the 15th through 17th of September. Mark it on your calendar now and look for more information in the coming months here, on the PA Birds listserv, and the PSO website [www.pabirds.org/ Index.html](http://www.pabirds.org/Index.html).

Good birding PA!

– Vern Gauthier

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

LINKS AND E-MAIL FOR MORE ON CUMBERLAND COUNTY BIRDING

Appalachian Audubon Society - www.appalachianaudubon.org

Conococheague Audubon Society - www.conococheagueaudubon.org

PSO Site Guide – www.pabirds.org/SiteGuide/PACountyPage.php?CountyID=21

PSO County Compiler / Vern Gauthier – pabirder@gmail.com

Harrisburg CBC Compiler / Deuane Hoffman - deuane.hoffman@gmail.com

Newville CBC Compiler / Vern Gauthier – pabirder@gmail.com

York Springs CBC Compiler / Vern Gauthier – pabirder@gmail.com

Wagonner’s Gap Hawk Watch - www.waggap.com/Index.html

King’s Gap Environmental Center - <http://friendsofkingsgap.org/home/>

Camp Michaux - www.schaeffersite.com/michaux/

Birding PA Culinary Tip / Market Cross Pub www.marketcrosspub.com (Centrally located in the county in Carlisle, also right next door to our 2017 PSO Annual Meeting location.)

Welcome, New Board Members!

At our annual business meeting on Friday, May 20, we elected two new board members: Greg and Deb Grove. Reelected to the board was Chad Kauffman. Andy McGann continues on the board as Chairperson of PORC.

Leaving the board was Geoff Malosh, who has served as the editor of our magazine since 2008 – Vol. 21, No.3, through Vol. 29, No. 4. We thank him for his many contributions and his dedicated service in making *PA Birds* the top notch publication that it is! We welcome Greg Grove as our new editor, beginning with Vol 30, No. 1.



Deb and Greg Grove with granddaughter Amelia whose life list is still growing.

GREG GROVE

Greg Grove of Stone Creek Ridge Road, Henderson Township, Huntingdon County, received the Juniata Valley Audubon Society Conservation Award. The award was presented by President Laura Jackson at the annual banquet on April 19. Grove has been an avid birder since grad school in the 70s.

One of his most significant contributions to the county was establishing the Stone Mountain Hawkwatch on Allensville Road in 1991. In 1995 Dave Kyler of Huntingdon and Greg built the hawkwatch platform that provides one of the best views in Pennsylvania, overlooking Stone and Kishacoquillas Valleys. The hawkwatch is especially known for the number of Golden Eagles that migrate over in the late fall.

Another achievement was the book *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* written by Greg and friend Nick Bolgiano. The book describes details of birds in Huntingdon, Blair, Centre, Clinton, Mifflin, and Juniata counties.

In 2001 Greg started the Winter Raptor Survey. This

survey has routes in every county in Pennsylvania. Participants drive the 20- to 80-mile routes in January and February counting all hawks and other raptors that they see. The survey is very popular, and there are waiting lists for participation. That data collected over the last 17 years provides valuable insight into these important species.

Greg participated in both Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project Surveys (1984-1988 and 2004- 2008) and was a Regional Coordinator in the second. His region in the second comprised mostly Clinton county and Sprout State Forest.

He has run Breeding Bird Surveys for the USGS. The Williamsburg route through Blair County he's run for 25 years; the Pine Grove Mills route, that traverses Stone Valley into the town of Huntingdon, for 15 years. He also designed two BBS routes in the northern part of Huntingdon county in Rothrock State Forest. He is assisted with these by his wife Deb.

You may see him driving around the county around Christmas time when he is participating in Audubon Christmas Bird Counts. He has done 80; mainly three, with two in Huntingdon county, one of which he designed, the Lake Raystown count, another in Huntingdon County, and the Lewistown count. He also has run Northern Saw-whet Owl surveys and nightjar (Eastern Whip-poor-will) surveys in the county.

Greg was president of the State College Bird Club for four years and PSO president for two years. He has recently accepted the position of Editor-in-chief of *Pennsylvania Birds*, our quarterly journal. He will be assisted by his wife Deb.

Greg retired from Penn State in June after 31 years, first employed as an instructor in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department and more recently as a research associate in the Genomics Core Facility. Retirement will give him more time to pursue his interests. He and his wife Deb, son Lewis, daughter Laurie, son-in-law Dennis, and grandchild Amelia all enjoy birding. They have participated as the "Huntingdon Hawkeyes" in the Shavers Creek Birding Cup that is held in May.

DEB GROVE

Deb Grove's birding began while she was in grad school at Ohio State in the 70s, and she and Greg started carrying a bird book and a set of old binoculars when they went hiking. The Columbus area had great sites, including an old cemetery in the south. One of the first birds that she got a thrill identifying was a Blue-winged Warbler. They were at Highbanks Park, where, for the first time, she heard the "bee buzz" and realized it was actually a bird. Another bird that they saw close up that day was an Ovenbird walking silently in the woods close to them.

They finished biochemistry degrees at Ohio State and moved to post-doctoral positions at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia in the summer of 1980. They quickly became acquainted with Tinicum, Bombay Hook, and Brigantine. But with the jobs and a couple of children (Laurie and Lewis, born there), birding time was very limited for the next several years. In 1984, they took research and teaching jobs at Penn State where they worked until they both retired this past spring.

Her birding pursuits certainly stemmed from Greg's involvement in birding projects. However, she was the one who stayed home while Greg wandered and did various bird surveys including his early ones in Detweiler and Big Flat and then the Stone Mountain Hawkwatch. Once the kids were older, she became more involved and took the kids along on bird walks. They went to Chincoteague eight summers in a row. The kids especially enjoyed the wading birds when they were young. They also visited Acadia to see birds, Machias Seal Island to see puffins, and took boat trips from Grand Manan and Cape Breton for sea birds.

The first CBC she participated in was Lewistown with Greg. He had been doing it alone for a while, but it was easier with two people. Eventually, they helped with the Huntingdon CBC, and Deb took over as coordinator a few years ago. These two plus Lake Raystown CBC that Greg designed are the main three in which they participate, but they have also done the State College CBC (when it doesn't coincide with one of theirs). In addition, they have participated in the Lock Haven, Emporium, Muskingum (Ohio), Chandlersville (Ohio), and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park (Texas) CBCs on single occasions.

She also accompanied Greg on "Toot Routes" and his two BBS routes that have now expanded to four. Now she has five of her own, including one that Greg set up in the Broad Mountain area of Rothrock State Forest; Naginey, that starts near Milroy in Mifflin County and crosses into Snyder County; Hop Bottom, that starts in Susquehanna County and ends near Lockville in Wyoming, County; and two new ones this year in southeastern Ohio, not far from where Deb grew up.

She participated in the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas and loved it, working on some blocks of her own and helping Greg with page 48. She was sorry when it ended. They couldn't get enough atlassing, so they helped two seasons in Nebraska and two in Ohio. She will be ready for the 3rd PA BBA!

Deb served as President of the State College Bird Club for four years and was also on the Penn State Arboretum Board and now serves on the Arboretum Avian Education Committee.

Her first PSO meeting was at State College, and she loves attending these annual meetings. Besides enjoying the field trips and talks, the people she has met are special, too.

Their next venture, taking over the production of *Pennsylvania Birds*, comes at a great time in their lives, coinciding with retirement. She will be assisting Greg, mainly with layout, as she enjoys working on the "puzzle" of putting things together.

At Penn State Deb was a Research Associate in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department for 12 years; for 19 years she was Director for Genetic Analysis in the Genomics Core Facility, formerly the DNA facility. One of her favorite research projects was with Duane Diefenbach in Wildlife Biology at Penn State in which she developed assays to differentiate Eastern Cottontail, Appalachian Cottontail, and Snowshoe Hare using DNA extracted from pellets.

Deb and Greg enjoy birding with their son Lewis, daughter Laurie, son-in-law Dennis, and grandchild Amelia who just turned three. They all participated as the "Huntingdon Hawkeyes" in the Shavers Creek Birding Cup that is held the first weekend of May. Greg and Deb have participated since the 90s and are happy to continue it as a family event.

From the President's Desk (continued from page 1)

Grassland species such as Grasshopper Sparrows were present, and for someone from the southwestern part of the state, a pair of Blue Grosbeaks was a treat.

Enjoy the fall migration.

Mike Fialkovich, President
Allegheny County

Doug Gross Receives Award from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania

By Mike Fialkovich

Past PSO President and founding board member Doug Gross was awarded the 2016 W.E. Clyde Todd Award by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.

The award is presented annually to recognize an individual who has made outstanding contributions to conservation in western Pennsylvania.

Doug's work on an amazing variety of research projects, including the Breeding Bird Atlas, Toot Routes, the Special Areas Project, and



Brian Shema, Operations Director of the Audubon Society, presents the Todd Award to Doug Gross at the awards ceremony, held in Pittsburgh on July 14, 2016.

Photo by Mike Fialkovich

various Pennsylvania Game Commission projects earned him this well-deserved recognition. He also was Chair of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Technical Committee for 12 years. Doug's regular Raven Reporter articles in *The PSO Pileated* contain a wealth of information that keeps us aware of all the interesting and important work on bird research conducted in the state.

Congratulations, Doug!

Breeding Bird Blitz a Success

Another Breeding Bird Blitz is in the books! It was held June 17-20. The winners for our four categories are as follows:

Basic Prize – One year gift ABA Membership and ABA hat to Peter Burns of Erdenheim (Montgomery County). What are the odds that Peter would win the same category again as last year? But he did!

Breeding Codes Prize – One year gift PSO membership and 2nd PBBA book to Jonathan DeBalko of Drums (Luzerne County).

Nocturnal Prize – \$30 Gift Certificate and hat from Bird Watcher's General Store and a Phone Skope setup to Diane Bierly of State College (Center County).

Registered Prize – A copy of *Birds of Central Pennsylvania*, along with a gift certificate to the Lost Creek Shoe Shop and an Eagle Optics Harness Strap and Vortex Lens Cleaning Kit to Bobby Brown of Montoursville (Lycoming County). We may have to outlaw Bobby from future contests as last year he won 2 of the 4 prizes, and this year one of the 4 prizes!

Now for some stories and pictures from the field. First,

from Pamela Fisher of Lancaster County –

“This morning before church, I went to Wissler Road in Ephrata to try for the Dickcissel which Bruce Carl had heard a few days ago. Mike Epler was there, and we talked and listened and watched. There were plenty of Grasshopper Sparrows around, along with Horned Larks, but no Dickcissel. We then went to Lime Rock Road, and listened there. We did have a Red-headed Woodpecker in a distant tree line, but no Dickcissel. I was hearing some nearby Horned Larks, and started looking for them. I soon found them in a field, very close to us. It was a pair foraging. I noticed that the one seemed to have a lot of vegetation in its mouth and was gathering more, so I said something to Mike. He started watching, and it wasn't long before he exclaimed that there was a nest in the grass! We watched the pair, and soon saw them feeding young Horned Larks! There were three babies in the nest. You could only see them when they put their heads up to beg for food. Even with a scope, they were completely hidden! It was such an awesome sight to watch this pair feed their young.”

Next out west to Westmoreland County, to the home of Tom and Janet Kuehl. Tom writes,

“After many weeks of hearing a variety of Barred Owl

vocalization at our home in Murrysville, Westmoreland County, we first heard the calls, and then saw two juveniles at dusk on June 15. We were rained out on the first day of the Breeding Bird Blitz by severe thunderstorms, so we were very anxious to see if they would return on Day Two. From our side porch at 8:15 p.m., I briefly observed the movement of a tan/brown-colored bird that was appropriately sized for a Barred Owl in a bird-popular mulberry tree behind our garage. With camera in hand I went around the other side of the garage, found one downy Barred Owl in the mulberry, and then was thrilled to get some pictures when a second juvenile joined the first owl on the bare branch of a black cherry tree. We enjoyed the owls' hissing and a variety of contact hoots. Our nesting Gray Catbirds, Tufted Titmice, Northern Cardinals, and House Wrens voiced their complaints with the nearby owls; and as dusk settled, the Eastern Towhee "drank his tea," and the Wood Thrush sang his fluty song in the distance. There were two happy birders at the Kuehl residence that night!

under her. It was a very rewarding experience to watch them."



Jan Kuehl was thrilled to photograph the two juvenile Barred Owls on a bare branch of a black cherry.

Finally, next door to Armstrong County where Marge Van Tassel tells this heartwarming tale.

"This happened last Thursday rather than Friday, just before the BBB, but I thought you may enjoy it. I live near a small industrial park named Parks Bend Farms as years ago it was part of the Parks Dairy Farm. There is a small pond at the beginning and there are a few small companies including this company near the end of the road called Toolex.



Marge Van Tassel was largely responsible for the success of a Killdeer's nest in Armstrong County. Here she photographed one of the young Killdeer.

"A female Killdeer decided to nest in front of a crescent shaped "turnaround" directly in front of Toolex and near a short walkway to their front door. I saw her, and after a few days I ascertained that she was truly sitting on eggs – I actually did spy four eggs when she got up briefly and sat right back down while I was parked on the road, not real close but not too far to watch. So, I made a sign which read "Please be kind and respect this little mother bird sitting on 4 eggs – before too long they will hatch and all move on," placed it on the top of a shoebox, and positioned it upright with a rock holding it, not too close but not too far away from her. I was afraid their mowers or a delivery man would run over her, but a woman at the company saw my sign and the bird and asked her boss to place an orange cone near her also. I took goodies to the woman and her boss with a few photos in appreciation.

"This past Thursday there were four little chicks running all around the turnaround and the road, but the parents quickly corralled them over to a large parking lot across from where they had hatched. If they got too far from her, she would cry and they would run to hide

Thank you once again to our sponsors:

- ✿ The American Birding Association (ABA) - www.aba.org
- ✿ The Bird Watchers General Store - <http://birdwatchersgeneralstore.com>
- ✿ Birds of Central Pennsylvania - www.buteobooks.com
- ✿ Eagle Optics - www.eagleoptics.com
- ✿ Lost Creek Shoe & Optic Shop, 643 Oakland Road, Mifflintown, PA 17059
- ✿ PA Society for Ornithology (PSO) -

Finally, a very special word of thanks to all who participated by submitting data on PA Breeding Birds to

eBird whether or not you submitted a checklist in the contest. In 2017 the PA Breeding Bird Blitz will be June 16 - 19. Until then, keep on birding and entering data in eBird on our PA Breeding Birds.....DO THE BLITZ!

– Vern Gauthier

“Never Kayak Alone”

by Melissa Steigerwalt

I have always had a love of the outdoors and photography – something I inherited from my dad. Until recently, the only time I was afforded time to do both was after 5 p.m. or on weekends. Not very long ago, I started my own business, therefore, making my own hours to fit not only my business but my passions and hobbies. I’ve been kayaking a few years now, but mostly on the river with a group of friends. And since I am not one for “working out,” I started kayaking this year as part of a new exercise routine.



Their thanks and comments made me look forward to my morning routine that had now extended to a lot of night trips as well when I was joined by my husband. There were lots of concerns of my kayaking alone in the mornings, but I reassured everyone I was just fine. I never felt scared, nervous, or concerned...always content.

Being an early riser has its benefits, so I made a point of being on the water in my kayak just before the sun rose, and never once did I not bring along a few cameras. These kayaking sessions were not just about exercise but about capturing the beautiful outdoors from a lower level, being able to see and capture nature from a place other than from land! I was truly amazed at how peaceful my morning obsession had become. I could not believe my eyes at all the beautiful nature I had been missing for years. Most mornings, I was the only human to frequent my new favorite place, which was only three miles from my home – a peaceful, small river that empties into a silting dam. I especially loved kayaking in the morning when the fog was still on the water. Though it was a little creepy, it was beautiful.

I couldn’t see much around me, but the sounds of all the birds that frequented this lovely place were mesmerizing. I’ve recorded the sounds and took many photos to share with my friends, family, and followers on Facebook. I wanted to give others the opportunity to see what they were missing as well. I had posted pictures of eagles, Osprey, turtles, geese, herons, cranes, deer, butterflies, frogs, kingfishers, ducks, sunrises and sunsets, and countless other species of birds I had been encountering. And each new day brought a new photo opportunity. To my delight, all my Facebook followers were now enthralled by the photos I was taking and sharing with them. Most of them live locally, too, and could not believe I was capturing all this beauty so close to home!

Then, on July 21, 2016, something uniquely strange happened to me. I unloaded my kayak at the launch and went to park my Jeep. When I returned, a duck was sitting on my kayak...yes, a duck!

After about 45 minutes, the duck hopped off and found a fallen tree where it perched and groomed itself. So I kept paddling, taking pictures of my surroundings, mostly birds, for another hour and a half. When I came back down off the river, the duck hopped off the log and proceeded to paddle along with me. Had I just made a new friend?

I had taken along a small bag of Cheerios with me that morning to snack on, and I had to share them with my new kayaking buddy! I couldn’t wait until my husband got home from work to show him the photos. He was just as shocked as I was with a face full of smiles as well. And I couldn’t wait to share this with my friends on Facebook, and I certainly couldn’t wait until the next morning to see if my friend was waiting for me again. Sure enough, there it was waiting at the same spot as the day before! I couldn’t believe it! This is crazy! It walked around while I unloaded my kayak and when I got in to set off, it jumped aboard and off we went. This morning, a couple were fishing from the shore. When they saw me coming with a duck on the front of my kayak, they were laughing and asked me “Is that your pet duck?” “No,” I replied, “just a stray I picked up! Crazy, right?” They continued to laugh and smile as we paddled by! I named the duck Clarence until a friend of mine pointed out to me it was a female, so I changed the name to Clarise.

(continued on page 10)

Ornithological Literature Notes

The Vulture Chronicles. This title might sound like second-rate fiction, but it describes first-rate science.

It is a blog written by Keith Bildstein, Sarkis Acopian Director of Conservation Science at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (hawkmountain.wordpress.com). Bildstein describes the Sanctuary's far-ranging studies of New World vultures. Far-ranging means as far south as the Falkland Islands, where he tells of rescuing a Red-backed Hawk from an attack by Striated Caracaras.

Not every posting is so exotic. Bildstein also writes extensively about a species we commonly see: the Turkey Vulture. For example, in a 2016 entry, he summarizes a recent research article published by Julie Mallon, Bildstein, and Todd Katzner in *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* (tinyurl.com/vulture-flight).

The article explains something we often watch with fascination: the up-curved, V-shaped dihedral of a Turkey Vulture's wings as the bird tilts subtly from one side to the other in a rocking motion. The dihedral combined with the rocking movements serve exquisite aerodynamics, enabling these big, heavy birds to soar with almost no expenditure of energy. When the wings tilt back and forth, the result is a self-correcting adjustment of airflow that automatically does the work to keep the vulture on an even keel without flapping.

Aerodynamic engineers have long understood how this mechanism works while vultures use high-rising thermals and other updrafts to stay comfortably aloft. But Mallon,

Bildstein, and Katzner discovered an even more specialized aerodynamic feature of vultures' dihedral that had not previously been described.

What happens when high-elevation updrafts are not what the vultures need—that is, when they require low elevations? In the 2016 paper, Mallon and her coauthors explain how scavenging Turkey Vultures have a “key innovation” that enhances their ability to find food when flying closer to the ground. The authors call it “contorted soaring.” The birds are able to soar at low levels while saving energy without a flap. In this case, the dihedral takes advantage of small-scale air turbulence near the surface.

The authors note that Black Vultures, which typically soar on nearly flat wings at high elevations, adjust their wings into a slight dihedral when hunting carrion near the ground. Turkey Vultures can smell a rotting carcass from a distance. Black Vultures apparently cannot; they need to see it. Perhaps, energy-saving flight near the ground is even more important to them than to the Turkey Vultures.

If those aerodynamic discoveries seem arcane, there is much of broader interest to appreciate in “The Vulture Chronicles.” We cannot help but share Bildstein's enthusiasm for his topics. He entertains and educates us at the same time.

Paul Hess
Natrona Heights, PA
phess@salsgiver.com

Never Kayak Alone (continued from page 9)

This morning ritual continued for six days in a row. What an amazing, wonderful, cherished experience, one that I will never forget! One that I am grateful to capture with my camera and share with others!

After that sixth day, I had left to head south to visit my family, and when I returned two weeks later, my friend had made new friends and wanted me to meet them! Now this was getting crazier! They took turns jumping on my kayak and always swam alongside me when I kayaked!

Then, about a week later, they were gone! I was devastated. I looked forward to this every morning. And now, I was kayaking alone, disappointed, but grateful



for each day!

A friend commented on one of my photos, “They say a passed loved one is trying to get your attention when you see a feather....he got your attention with this bunch of feathers,” and I immediately thought, this was my dad, who had passed away at the young age of 55. He loved the outdoors and photography as I do. I had spent a lot of time with my dad

enjoying the things we loved, and now it made sense. He was enjoying these moments with me in spirit! I thought about my friends' and family's concerns of my kayaking alone, and at that moment I knew, I never am alone!

Butler County Migration Notes

by Gene Wilhelm

Although living and birding in Slippery Rock community, Butler County, Pennsylvania, for thirty-four years, no one to my knowledge ever has recorded Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) in spring migration in such numbers as on March 25-26, 2015, when kettles of 325-375 vultures descended into a two-acre forest of tall, 50-year old black spruces in my backyard as recorded in *Pennsylvania Birds* (Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 113).



Roger Higbee photographed this soaring Turkey Vulture.

physically broken, open conditions of upper branches due to repeated, severe storms. The majority of deciduous forests in the community have been eradicated by new home and fracking development. Actually, vultures prefer tall, dead trees for overnight roosting but as a substitute quickly occupied the one and only human-made structure taller than the trees: a 65-foot high communication tower atop a hill at the south end of the borough that harbored 79 vultures for the night.

About a dozen people simultaneously witnessed that event from the Giant Eagle grocery store parking lot one-half block away. At least a total of 511 vultures were counted before dark. Was this natural happening a one-time event, or would it be repeated in the future?

March 23-24, 2016, proved that it was the latter. Favorable sunshine, conducive for forming kettles, and steady southwestern 25-30 mph winds allowed vultures to move at an appreciable pace. "Good" kettles (100-300 birds in a kettle) started boiling over the Slippery Rock community between 1530-1600 hours, followed by "Small" kettles (301-500 birds in a kettle) between 1600-1800 hours, all birds landing in tall, old coniferous trees like black, red, and blue spruces, white and red pines, firs, and hemlocks. Several telephone calls confirmed that the vultures were roosting only in conifers and were more dispersed over the two-square-mile community than last year. One late, "Large" kettle (501-1,000 birds in a kettle) landed about 1900 hours as both daylight and winds subsided. (Kettle names and numbers were borrowed terminology from the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Alamo, Texas, annual spring hawkwatch.)

It was obvious that the vultures preferred conifers over deciduous trees because of their superior heights and

Normally vultures are slow in getting up in the morning, waiting for rising bubbles of warm air called thermals to gain high altitude for long distance travel and to conserve energy. Thermals can form anywhere over land by a difference in temperature as slight as a few degrees. This is one major reason why hawks avoid large bodies of water like the Gulf of Mexico, because open sea surfaces are more uniform in temperature, thus making it more difficult for thermals to form. Suddenly a vulture scout leaps into the air from its arboreal perch, flies over a nearby field, feels the updraft of warmer air (or even sees it), and starts spiraling upward. Other alert, perched vultures see the scout going higher and quickly join the venture. Again, the migrants are on their way, destinations known only by them. Since an accurate count of vultures is impossible without more hawkwatch controls, a probable estimate was that nearly 2,500 birds used Slippery Rock community for their overnight roost.

Will the overnight visitors continue increasing annually or bypass our community altogether next year? Nevertheless, the welcome mat is ready.



Coming Events

October 8-9: The Big Sit. See details in June 2016 *Pileated*.

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>

Chat Room for Conservation

Birding for Conservation in Honduras

As many of you know, a few PSO and Audubon members visited Honduras in February, 2016. Dr. Mark Bonta organized and led the 12-day trip. We saw a wonderful diversity of birds (almost 300 species), as well as many examples of how Hondurans are developing sustainable habitats that will protect birds. We also helped to fund a Migratory Bird Festival at the National Agricultural University in Catacamas, which we attended. It was very exciting to see so many students learning about birds.



The Keel-billed Toucan was one of the most flamboyant birds that we saw in Honduras.
Photo by Mike Jackson

Ian Gardner, who participated in the trip, was inspired to expand our initial efforts by planning another trip and conservation project in Honduras. I asked Ian to write the article below about this new project. I

hope you are motivated to help fund this important endeavor.

The last part of our trip included a visit to the Garcia family's high altitude coffee farms in the Marcala Region of Honduras, where we toured shade-grown, organic coffee plantings that help to sustain many species of Neotropical migrants. We were thrilled to see a variety of warblers, including Golden-winged Warblers. Emilio Garcia lives near York, Pennsylvania, and imports the coffee directly through Sustainable Harvest. You can help support our birds if you order delicious Lenca Coffee from

the Ragged Edge Roasting Company:
www.raggededgerc.com. Be sure to click on Honduran Coffee.

Cooperative Avian Conservation And Outreach (CACAO) in Honduras

By Ian Gardner

Cacao is the Honduran colloquial name for the threatened Red-throated Caracara, a species of raptor that has nearly disappeared from Central America in the past few decades. It is also the acronym for a small, but passionate cooperative of American and Honduran conservationists. We plan to spend 17 days this December in Honduras, leading a research expedition to the remote eastern portion of the country, specifically the Mabita Research Station in La Moskitia and Parque Nacional Botaderos in Olancho department. We will work with local conservation pioneers and preserves to survey and promote the wide diversity of bird life in this very special yet threatened region.

Please help support our conservation project in one of the most threatened regions of Central America. Visit www.gofundme.com/cacao to learn more or to donate to our cause.

Honduras is roughly the size of Pennsylvania, but contains twice the diversity of birds. While it is rich in biodiversity, it is also rife with social turmoil. This past winter I accompanied Mark Bonta and the Juniata Valley Audubon Society on their inaugural Birding for Conservation study tour to Honduras. Over the course of 12 days, we watched

Golden-winged Warblers glean insects from coffee farm shade trees, interviewed several local conservationists and toured their bird-laden properties, immersed ourselves in a migratory bird festival at the national agricultural university, and eBird documented as many species as possible. At the end of the 12 days, I said good-bye to the JVAS group and joined Ruth Bennett, PhD candidate at Cornell University, for another 8 days as she concluded her fieldwork with Blue- and Golden-winged Warblers in the department of Yoro. We lived on a coffee farm in the shade of Pico Pijol, the tallest peak in Yoro at over 7,600 feet. Each day we drove out a steep dirt road to our field sites where I think I attracted every fire ant, seed tick, and chigger available. The little running water available at the field house was non-potable. And the electricity was provided for three hours each day by a droning gasoline generator. Yet, for some reason, my thoughts kept returning to the cloud-capped Pico Pijol. What biotic treasures exist on the biogeographic island and the other remote Honduran landscapes? This mountain is the apex of Parque Nacional Pico Pijol; but, as is common in Honduras, the land is protected by title only. Logging and mining companies, cattle ranchers, and hydroelectric contractors frequently exploit these lands for their natural

resources at the expense of the unique flora and fauna that exist there and the local conservationists trying to protect them. That is why we founded CACAO, the first research venture of the Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation. Our cooperative is made up of Alex Lamoreaux and Drew Weber (both of Nemesis Bird Nature Tours), Gilberto Flores-Walter (Tour Guide for Feathers Eco-Birding Tours), Carlos Funes (Researcher at Universidad Zamorano), Isidro Zuniga (Founder of Las Orquideas Nature Preserve), and me (Wildlife Technician at Fort Indiantown Gap).

Visit www.gofundme.com/cacao to learn more or to donate to our cause.

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



Osprey 2016 Survey: Recovered Species

With a considerable amount of support from the birding community, we have successfully conducted a statewide survey of Osprey nests for the first time since 2010. At least 149 active nests were counted this year. The tally includes at least 10 nests in six different sub-watersheds (HUC6 areas). This is certainly an underestimation of the total active number of Osprey nests. We had reports of intact nests at former locations where the observer did not see an Osprey in a short visit, but perhaps the nests were occupied by birds that were absent at the time. We also did not get reports about a few nests that were previously occupied.

The Osprey now meets all criteria for upgrading (down-listing) from Threatened to Secure as a recovered species. Osprey no longer meet the definition of Threatened. Not only are they fairly widespread and common for a raptor that size, but the Osprey is demonstrating a great deal of tolerance for human activities. Over 90 percent of the nests in the state are built on human-made structures like nest towers, communication towers, power structures, docks, buoys, grain elevators, old factories, and almost anything sturdy enough to support a nest. They are

PSO Pileated Quiz

1. David Sibley describes a species' vocalization this way in his field guide: *ge ge gadum gadum gadum gaum gaom gwaaaaaow gaom*. What species?
2. Based on the number of blocks where found, which oriole species nearly doubled its occurrence between our two atlas periods?
3. After a major overhaul of the American Ornithologists' Union and American Birding Association checklists in 2016, loons are now most closely connected to which of these groups: grebes, tropicbirds, or pelicans?
4. Which members of the family *Bombycillidae* have occurred in Pennsylvania?
5. Two closely related warblers in the genus *Geothlypis* usually feed on the ground. Which species? For a bonus, which one typically hops along the ground?

Answers on page 16

colonizing industrial areas around Pittsburgh and busy docks of Philadelphia. Ospreys also are seeking out remote bodies of water and building at waterfowl ponds or along rivers near reservoirs, branching out from established clusters.

Ospreys have more than 10 nests in six different sub-watersheds (HUC6 drainages) in the state: Allegheny River, Upper Ohio-Beaver, Upper Susquehanna, Lower Susquehanna, Upper Delaware, and Lower Delaware. The largest cluster of Osprey nests are in the Upper Delaware, including the Poconos with at least 46 known active nests. Over 90 percent of the nests in Pennsylvania are built on human-made structures. Most clusters of Osprey nests are associated with impounded bodies of water. Two of the river-associated nest clusters, the lower Delaware and the lower Susquehanna, are extensions of salt-water bay populations around the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays. The other clusters are associated with hacking reintroduction projects in the Poconos, at the Tioga-Hammond Lakes, and Lake Marburg of Moraine State Park. Several nests were found on human-made structures in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas. This "fish hawk" seems to be very habituated to the human landscape so it does not seem to fit the concept of a "threatened" species.

The 149 nest total is the best result ever for our state's Osprey survey. In 2010, a PGC state-wide survey found

115 nests, with more than 10 nests in 5 watersheds. Given the limited distribution of this species in pre-settlement days, we may now be enjoying the largest nesting Osprey population in history. Since over half of the nests are associated with reservoirs, this species is reacting well to human-created aquatic habitats. Most nests are not found along wild streams as are most Bald Eagle's nests.

The 2016 survey built on the success of the 2010 survey, the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, other PGC surveys, and independent surveys conducted by Dr. Terry Master of East Stroudsburg University, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Allegheny National Forest. The PGC Osprey survey benefited from generous contributions of several Pennsylvania birders. Among the contributors were Chuck Berthold, Roy Birder, David Brandes, Paul Brown, Ed Chubb, Carl Erb, Bill Etter, Barbara Fogel, Rick Gaeta, Ian Gereg, Sue Hannon, Alyssa Karmann, Tom and Janet Kuht, Arlene Koch, Jerry McWilliams, Oscar Miller, Dick Nugent, Anthony Piccolin, Susan Schmoyer, Bob Van Newkirk, and Mark Vass. A great representation by our birdy citizen scientists!

The PGC will continue to protect Osprey nests as much as possible. We will give advice and support for anyone interested in putting up or repairing an Osprey platform. We also will promote Osprey-watching as a recreational activity in the state for this charismatic symbol of clean water and healthy watersheds.

Big Red-breasted Nuthatch Irruption Year

Sounding like a tiny tin horn, the Red-breasted Nuthatch is not large in size but very big in personality. Red-breasted Nuthatches often irrupt south when their conifer seed sources decline, often in alternative years reflecting cone production (or lack of it) by northern spruces and firs. These diminutive fellows will forage not only on our native conifers but also planted exotics like Norway spruce and scots pine. I find them in stands of eastern hemlock, red spruce, black spruce, eastern tamarack, and eastern white pine usually at higher elevations, but also in a variety of ornamental, wind-break, or erosion-control conifer plantations comprised of Norway spruce, white fir, scots pine. Some of the best islands of tall conifers are old Civil Conservation Corps plantings or at old timber towns. Cemeteries and parks also are places with the odd conifer planting that attracts these and other northern birds. They regularly nest in an old Christmas tree planting behind my house comprised of scots pine and a variety of firs, spruces, and Douglas fir. This helps explain how they can be found in a variety of locations far from their northern homes.

Red-breasted Nuthatches can do a “carry-through nesting.” That is that they will nest in a location that they irrupted into if the conifer seed supply lasts. I observed

this phenomenon early in my career when a few pairs found a very productive grove of Virginia or scrub pine in the Council Cup woods of lower Luzerne County. The seed crop was so abundant that the nuthatches stayed through spring establishing an outlying breeding population. Can we anticipate this phenomenon in the spring and summer of 2017? It would be worth watching for Red-breasted Nuthatches staying on through spring.

Another boreal bird that I have observed in good numbers lately is the Purple Finch. I have a small breeding population locally, but I have heard many more flying overhead recently. They may take advantage, not only of conifers and feeding stations, but also the seeds of maples, birches, and ashes.

EBird records of Red-breasted Nuthatches would nicely document this latest invasion year and also the follow-up nesting. I would not be surprised to see them nesting at some isolated lower elevation woodlots. It might be helpful to add some notes on their feeding behavior and landscape context. I am hearing Red-breasted Nuthatches in places far from a large conifer stand or “northern forest.”

Partners in Flight Conservation Plan Revision

Partners in Flight is a long-established coalition of diverse partners “that collaborates to protect landbirds through strategic monitoring and assessment tools, and development of priority species lists, conservation plans, maps, and databases that facilitate cross-border cooperation among the United States, Canada, and Mexico.” It has published several documents that have advanced progress in bird conservation and cooperation across the continent. PIF has just released its latest revision of its *Landbird Conservation Plan*. Each plan is an improvement on the past, building on a solid foundation of information and strategic planning. Its website also has been greatly revised and can be found at the following: <http://www.partnersinflight.org/> There you can download the plan and other documents. One of the many fine features of this plan is that the digital version of the document allows you to link directly to a full page of digital resources.

In order to foster proactive conservation, the plan identifies 86 species of highest continental conservation concern on its Watch List. And, in an effort to “keep common birds common” as has been coined in Pennsylvania by Rosalie Edge, they list an additional 24 species as “Common Birds in Steep Decline.” The PIF web page states that “the two most pervasive threats to landbirds in the U.S. and Canada are habitat loss due to urbanization and habitat degradation due to changing forest conditions.” This is certainly very true in Pennsylvania where we have the combination of urban area sprawl and also fairly large

tracts of forest that host many birds. It is important to maintain abundance of these species for healthy habitats and functioning ecosystems. Our own state has responsibility for certain species, mostly songbirds of the eastern deciduous forest.

This plan really emphasizes how conservation implementation can take place on a regional basis through the Migratory Bird Joint Venture (JV) in the U.S. and Habitat Joint Ventures and Bird Conservation Regions in Canada. Our own state is in two Joint Ventures: the Appalachian Mountain JV and the Atlantic Coast JV. You can learn more about these JVs through their websites. The emphasis of the Appalachian Mountain JV is appropriately placed on forest songbirds with declining trends, especially Golden-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Canada Warbler. The emphasis of the Atlantic Coast JV is primarily on the threats to coastal bird habitats, especially beaches and salt marshes, but also includes the Wood Thrush which is representative of healthy deciduous forest.

Another aspect of the Newest Landbird Conservation Plan is full lifecycle stewardship. Our birds connect to several other countries in the hemisphere. Successful conservation strategies absolutely require greater knowledge of the limiting factors and connections of these traveling songsters as well as expanded and deepened international cooperation. Even bird field guides are demonstrating a growing commitment to cooperation including public education. eBird is increasingly used on an international basis to present and explore new metrics of abundance and geographical distribution and area importance for Watch List species. For instance, it is important to know that most Pennsylvania Wood Thrushes spend the winter in Honduras and Nicaragua. We need to find and commit to partners in those countries if we want success for the Wood Thrush so that future generations may hear its angelic song.

The latest Landbird Conservation Plan has an interesting subplot of boreal bird conservation. The stunning but declining Evening Grosbeak graces the cover of the plan. Yes, this is an international bird migrant because thousands migrate to the U.S. from Canada – or, at least, they used to. Pennsylvania has a limited amount of boreal forest for breeding species, so it is not particularly important to those species, but it is a very important passageway for boreal bird migration. So, conserving quality forest, shrubland, wetland, and fields is important, not only for our breeding birds, but for the millions of birds that fly through our state in migration twice each year. Another boreal species, the Snowy Owl, is also featured in the plan including an increased prioritization for this enigmatic, nomadic predator. The Blackpoll Warbler, which reaches its southernmost breeding ground in Pennsylvania, is highlighted as a boreal songbird in decline, accounting for about half of the 1.5 billion breeding landbirds lost since 1970. The concern for Rusty

Blackbird which travels through Pennsylvania each spring and fall continues in this report as the second highest scoring “Common Birds in Steep Decline,” only behind Blackpoll.

Pennsylvanians are featured in the PIF conservation plan. I am glad to point out that our own Mike Jackson is pictured on page 37 of the plan as a landowner supporting Golden-winged Warbler habitat management. Many of the ideas and implementations discussed in the “Conservation in Action” insert on page 36 are Pennsylvania-based. We are embracing a “dynamic forest landscape” concept of managing for a mosaic of forest structure and age classes in areas. I would add that forests also need to be healthy with a good diversity of vegetation structure and species diversity. Tree pests and diseases, fragmentation, invasive species, and deer browse pressure are among the contributing factors to the decline in forest health.

Among the groups of birds featured in this report are the aerial insectivores. These species are well represented in our state – Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Bank Swallow, Purple Martin. These species also appear on the state Wildlife Action Plan’s priority species list called the “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.”

Thanks for Recognition

I am grateful for the recognition of the W. E. Clyde Todd Award I have received from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP). I was especially pleased to see many of my Pittsburgh area birding friends there, including our PSO President Mike Fialkovich. The Todd award is presented to the individual in recognition of outstanding effort to further the cause of conservation in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I am honored and humbled by the award. Any accomplishment I have made could not be possible without the support of the state’s birding and conservation communities, including the many PSO members who have supported the crazy projects that I have started or coordinated. Without your help, I would not get much done that’s worthwhile. Past recipients of the award include the PGC’s own Dan Brauning as well as Mike Fialkovich, Paul Hess, Bob Leberman, Bob Mulvihill, Jack Solomon, and Scott Shalaway.

This award is particularly meaningful to me since it is named after the inimitable W.E. Clyde Todd who was an extremely important figure in the history of Pennsylvania and American ornithology. His books, the *Birds of Western Pennsylvania* and *Birds of the Labrador Peninsula* are classics. Both sit in my bookcase and I’ve read and used these references many times. His interest in Pennsylvania bird distribution and boreal birds precedes my own and provides inspiration to my own work.

Good Pennsylvania and World Birding!

Doug Gross, Endangered and Non-game Bird
Section Supervisor, PA Game Commission

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 9)

1. Pied-billed Grebe
2. Orchard Oriole
3. Tropicbirds
4. Bohemian Waxwing and Cedar Waxwing
5. Mourning Warbler and Kentucky Warbler
Mourning Warbler is the hopper.



This Pied-billed Grebe was photographed at Yellow Creek State Park in Indiana Co. on a very calm November day.

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:

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	Student	\$ 25.00
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PSO Membership Survey 2016

How long have you been a PSO Member?

0 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, over 10 years

On a scale of 1 to 5 with one being the lowest and 5 the highest, please indicate for each of the following items the value you place on them as a member of PSO.

_____ Annual Meeting _____ Field Trips

_____ Journal _____ Newsletter

_____ Special Projects (Winter Raptor Survey, Migration Count, Breeding Bird Blitz, etc)

_____ Other, If other, please list

Please list an activity or program that the PSO does not currently offer that you would like to see initiated and would most likely take part in if begun:

Annual Meeting

About how often do you attend the Annual Meeting?

_____ Never _____ Once

_____ 25% to 50% of the time

_____ 75% to 100% of the time

If never, why not?

If you have attended, on a scale of 1 to 5 with one being the lowest and 5 the highest, please indicate for each of the following items the value you place on them.

_____ Friday Social _____ Field Trip

_____ Saturday Afternoon Speakers _____ Banquet

_____ Banquet Speaker _____ Awards

_____ Silent Auction _____ Vendors

If you have attended, how could they be improved?

Field Trips

How many PSO sponsored Field Trips have you attended?

_____ None _____ 1 to 3 _____ 4 or more

If you have attended, what did you like most about it/them? _____

If you have attended, what did you like least about it/them? _____

Please list, if any, a suggestion for a future field trip you would most likely attend?

Journal and Newsletter

On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being the lowest and 5 the highest, please indicate for each of the following items the value you place on them when it comes to the PA Birds Journal.

_____ Letter from the Editor, _____ Scholarly Articles, _____ County Reports, _____ Photos

_____ Seasonal Summaries, _____ Summaries on CBCs, Raptor Surveys, Migration Count etc.

_____ Stories from the field

What is your preference for the format of the Journal?

_____ Online _____ Printed _____ Both printed and Online

How could the journal be improved?

On a scale of 1 to 5 with one being the lowest and 5 the highest, please indicate for each of the following items the value you place on them when it comes to the *Pileated* Newsletter.

_____ Letter from the President, _____ Information about upcoming PSO events and field trips

_____ The Bird Quiz, _____ The Raven Reporter, _____ Conservation Chat Room,

_____ Ornithological Literature Notes, _____ PA Birding Series

What is your preference for the format of the Newsletter?

_____ Online _____ Printed _____ Both printed and Online

How could the newsletter be improved?

Website

How many times per month do you visit the PSO website?

_____ None _____ 1 to 4 _____ 5 to 9 _____ 10 or more

If none why not?

Please list up to 5 pages besides the home page that you most often visit on the website from most (on top) to least (bottom).

_____ **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the hardest and 5 the easiest, how easy do you find it to navigate? Is it easy to find what you want?**

_____ **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least helpful and 5 the most helpful, how helpful do you find the information on the website?**

How could the website be improved?

Please share with us anything else you would like us to know about PSO.

Please return survey by October 22 to:

*PSO
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555*

Thanks for your participation!