

The

PSO Pileated



March 2019

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 30, Number 1

From the President's Desk.... So What Does the PSO Board Do?

I'm sure members have questions regarding the function of the PSO Board of Directors and their activities. So in this President's Message, I would like to provide a general overview of the board's activities.

Do you ever wonder who is on the board? It's easy to find out. Just go to the PSO Website at www.pabirds.org and click on **About Us** on the right side of the homepage headers. There are several items to choose from under that main topic that include Bylaws, Organization, Awards, Contact Us, Board Meetings, Treasurer's Reports, and a PSO Brochure. The Organization section lists the members of the board. A number of board members are also in attendance at our annual meetings where we try to be available to members. Usually the people greeting you at the registration desk are board members.

The board meets face to face twice a year, usually in the fall (October or November) and again in late winter/early spring (February or March). We meet on a Saturday afternoon in Boalsburg near State College where we conduct our meeting over lunch. Board meetings last a few hours, depending on the number of items that need to be discussed. Fairly recently, we began to post board meeting minutes on the PSO Website under the Board



Another responsibility of the board is the planning of our annual meeting with the hope that everyone has a great time. This photo was taken at our Crawford County meeting in September 2018.

Meetings item mentioned above. Most organizations post meeting minutes, and one of our board members suggested we start doing that to provide information to members regarding topics of our discussions.

Our meetings have standard agenda items, put together by the president with contributions from board members. These are typically a Treasurer's Report, Committee Reports, Newsletter Items, and the Pennsylvania Birds Journal items. Other topics include various activities that require discussion

including the annual meeting planning, feedback from members that needs to be addressed, as well as any other ideas or suggestions from board members regarding the organization and its activities.

Recently we decided that two meetings are not enough to keep up to date with various topics, so we tried setting up teleconferencing meetings. This reduces downtime between discussions, so that we can stay on top of activities, suggestions, etc.; and it eliminates travel to a centralized location for meetings, reducing personal cost for travel (time, gasoline, tolls, and lunch). Fortunately the room we reserve at the restaurant is free of cost. Teleconferencing allows us to meet face to face, albeit virtually and from the comfort of our own homes. We also have regular email exchanges and sometimes we vote via

email on various proposals. PSO's various committees include both board members as well as other members. Any PSO member may join a committee if he or she is interested, including a leadership role as chair of a committee. Committees are listed under the About Us Tab <https://pabirds.org/index.php/about-us/organization>. Please note that the committee lists are in the process of being updated as members have changed over the years.

A current project taken on by some of our board members is a rewrite and update of the organization's bylaws, which have not been updated for many years. We often refer to them with respect to changes in the operation of the organization, so we decided that they need to be brought up to date to match current procedures. That project is in the initial stages, so it will be some time before the updates are complete.

Another major task is planning the annual meeting that many of us attend. This is no longer the responsibility of a single person as it had been in the past; however a "point person" communicates with hotels and other facilities that we hope to reserve for our meeting. A single point person makes communication easier for all involved. Annual meeting planning is now handled by a team of board members. Recently, the member who suggests the decided-upon location serves as the point person because he or she is familiar with the proposed meeting location, allowing easy access to attend to the numerous details that go into the preparation for the meeting.

Our field trip committee organizes and announces field trips around the state during the year, and members are often the leaders of the trips. For the annual meeting, the field trip committee reaches out to the local bird clubs that are indispensable in planning locations for outings during the annual meeting.

We often receive questions regarding the process of choosing the location of the annual meeting. The location is usually suggested by a PSO member or a board

member. We consider several important things when we choose the location of the annual meeting. First, we try to move it around as evenly as possible, so if it's in the western part of the state one year, we look to the east the following year, then central, etc. The other important consideration is the availability of hotels that can accommodate a meeting of our size. For example, none of the hotels in Meadville had meeting facilities for a group our size; some didn't have any meeting rooms at all, so we had to use another facility. We are aware that members prefer to have the meeting in a hotel for the obvious convenience. Another factor to consider is local knowledge of the birds and places to visit. We rely on local bird clubs to help us with field trip choices, and we try to arrange outings to the most diverse locations so we visit a variety of habitats that yield a number of species. If there isn't a local club that can assist us, it's difficult to plan field trips in an unfamiliar location.

The board also serves as the approval for the various awards given at the annual meeting. The awards committee makes the choice, and the board gives the final approval. The board also is the approval authority regarding adding any new committee members.

And then there is membership. Frank Haas has been the point person for membership renewal and new members since the initiation of PSO. He handles the logistics with membership, collects dues, maintains the membership list, prints the labels for the newsletter, etc. Frank has also been the webmaster since the beginning, keeping the website up to date and running smoothly.

I hope this is somewhat informative about the work that the PSO Board of Directors does to keep the organization running. The board's organization and activities are generally the same as any non-profit group.

Good birding!

Mike Fialkovich, President
Allegheny County

Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

Since 2007, PSO has issued certificates of appreciation to individuals and organizations who have graciously allowed access to their properties to view rare or unusual birds. The total number issued is now 156. The full list can be found on the PSO's website. The following Certificates of Appreciation have recently been awarded to:

Dickcissel, Alvin Wenger and Family, Snyder Co.
Harris's Sparrow, Chester Zook and Family, Dauphin Co.
Evening Grosbeak, Flo and Jim McGuire, Forest Co.

Juniata County eBird 200 Challenge for 2018 Revisited

by Chad Kauffman

Juniata was our third county of four in the central part of the state where birders had never listed 200 species in one year. We challenged birders to hit the 200 mark in one year. When you target a county and get more eyes and ears on the ground, you are bound to find new species, find extraordinary birds, and cover new areas. This was my personal favorite challenge so far since it is my home turf, giving me an excuse to get out and bird more. Looking for waterfowl is my favorite thing to do, so constantly checking the river, ponds, creeks, flooded fields, etc. made it all that much better for me. We were able to add seven new county birds to the eBird Juniata all-time list.

The first month produced 77 species with the highlights being Common Yellowthroat, Common Goldeneye, Golden Eagle, Red-breasted Merganser, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. We added other out-of-season birds with the Eastern Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Phoebe.

In February we found 82 species for the month, increasing our yearly total to 99. Highlights included my first Carolina Chickadee in the county, Eastern Meadowlark singing on top of a tall tree, three flyover Greater White-fronted Geese, and two Sandhill Cranes. The geese were seen flying over the home of David Troyer when he and his son Paul were scoping out the pond near their home, and he was able to get his double Swarovski scopes on them. The cranes were heard flying behind the Lost Creek Shoe Shop in Oakland Mills, and Stevie Troyer got the word out quickly to his family who called me. I was there within a few minutes to get pics of this county bird. The cranes fed in the corn stubble for a few hours, and a friend of ours got photos of them lifting up, circling, and leaving to not be seen again.

March yielded 96 species and increased our total to 120. A winter float trip on the Juniata from the Mifflintown River access to Muskrat Springs added our only Canvasback for the year. It was also the first time I was able to view a new Bald Eagle nest near the town of Mexico.



Common Loon is not a regular visitor to *Juniata*, but sometimes it appears and remains for a day or two.

Photo by Chad Kauffman

In April we found 139 birds for the month, taking our total to 162. Highlights included a wonderful sighting of an immature Northern Goshawk that cleared the area of all birds, letting me know that something was coming. A pair of singing Yellow-throated Warblers, for which we were able to get pictures and audio, was a real treat for a group of birders. Sora was a pleasant surprise. Spotting a Red-throated Loon loafing for a couple of days near the walking bridge of Mifflintown and pulling up to a grounded Short-eared Owl that had just caught dinner rounded out the month for us.

May produced 169 species and took us to 209 for the year. We hit our challenge in the fifth month! We all had to ask ourselves how many can we find. We had our normal migrating birds come through with highlights of a Peregrine Falcon doing a flyby along the Juniata River and another on the PAMC. A Red-necked Phalarope was found on a small pond by some young Amish birders. Word got out and many were able to come to enjoy this odd, swimming shorebird. We were also lucky to get an Olive-sided Flycatcher and a Prothonotary Warbler report.

June yielded 94 birds during the month but nothing new for the year. The phalarope continued into June, but nothing else of note was recorded.

In July we listed 76 birds and added two more, bringing our total to 211 for the year. A single Caspian Tern was flying along the Juniata River, and I was able to get pictures for documentation purposes.

August produced 77 birds and added one more for 212 in 2018. A single report of Cattle Egret was added on eBird and was the only one found all year. This is not a common species here by any means.

Birders in September found 87 species and added two for our total of 214. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, a rare visitor to most counties in the state, was a good find. An extremely early Red-breasted Nuthatch was tallied as well.

October yielded 73 birds and added a late Canada Warbler at the shoe shop bringing us to 215. An early report of Pine Siskin was another highlight.

In November we found 62 species and added 2 more for 217. An Evening Grosbeak returned again to Deb Brackbill's home in Licking Creek Valley as it has for the last few years, and I had a Common Redpoll for a few days prior to Thanksgiving due to that snowstorm.

December produced 62 species, and we added 2 more – American Coot and Northern Saw-whet Owl. We ended our challenge at 219. Amos Renno saw and heard quite a racket and was able to count 49 Sandhill Cranes flying over his farm early in the month.

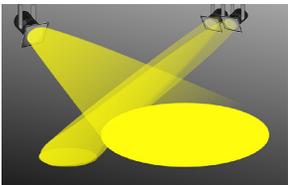


A Common Redpoll visited Chad's feeder for a few days before Thanksgiving, adding another species to the county's list.

Photo by Chad Kauffman

It was quite a treat to have so many Amish birders and people who aren't online or on eBird reporting local birds to me. I personally ended the year at 198 and was a bit frustrated at some "easy" ones that I wasn't able to find all year. It was certainly my all-time high for the county, but I really did think I could hit 200 myself. For some counties that number isn't hard to do, but it certainly is here at home.

I now look forward to doing the last challenge in 2019 in Snyder County, and I hope others can join in or take this type of challenge themselves in their own counties.



Young Birders Spotlight Save the Date!

The PSO Education Committee and the Board of Directors are proud to announce "Frontiers in Ornithology: A Symposium for Youth."

This new, unprecedented symposium will be held on Saturday, September 28, 2019, in Hockessin, Delaware, at the Ashland Nature Center, located just a few miles from the Pennsylvania state line. On Sunday, the 29th, field trips will be offered in the region, for those interested.

This one-day symposium will bring the opportunity to hear from over a dozen presenters with the goal of

providing the opportunities for young people to hear from experts in cutting-edge avian technology, science, and academia while providing connections and answering questions of how to take a passion for birds to the next level in their future.

The event is brought to you in part, by the PSO. So, stay tuned for registration information and more in various media outlets in the near future!

Questions? Contact Holly Merker, PSO Education Committee Chair, HCybell@gmail.com.

What You Can Do on the PSO Website pabirds.org

By Frank Haas

The PSO website has a bunch of resources for birders in Pennsylvania. In the next few newsletters, I will highlight some of the features of the website.

Today's topic is the Birds of Pennsylvania.

This is a wonderful and quick way to find information about any species of bird that occurs (or has occurred) in

Pennsylvania. It lists all of the birds on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania (which is also available on the website).

In this section, you can find out the status and abundance of a species, look up records, see photos, get life history information, download a list of the birds, and more!

For instance, one day last May, my wife and I were out birding locally and came upon a mixed blackbird flock of red-wings, cowbirds, and grackles. I started thinking about the Yellow-headed Blackbirds that we occasionally find in winter flocks like these. I wondered how late into the spring they occur. So I got out my phone, opened the PSO web page, went to Birding/Birds of PA and selected Yellow-headed Blackbird. I quickly saw on the bar graph that they occur well into mid-June. So we spent a little more time perusing the flock! We did not find any... however, it shows how handy this feature is.

When the Birds of PA page comes up, simply select a species to look at by scrolling down the list (which is alphabetical). You can navigate the list even more quickly by typing the name of the bird, or just typing the first letter takes you down to that section of the list from where you can scroll down to the desired species (i.e. Typing "N" takes you to all of the species beginning with "N" (remember, Mockingbird is Northern Mockingbird). Either way is still pretty fast.

Once you select a species, you are presented with the following information about that species:

1. The common and scientific name
 2. Abundance - how many can typically be seen in a day in proper habitat and season.
 3. Occurrence - How frequently the bird is seen (every year, every few years, etc.)
 4. Seasonal Status - Migrant, breeder, winter visitor, etc.
 5. Official List Status - Accepted, Pending, Provisional, etc.
 6. PORC Review Species - Whether this species requires review by the PA Ornithological Records Committee.
 7. Species of Special Concern Classification - Whether this species is listed by the PA Game Commission as a species in trouble in the Commonwealth.
 8. Notes - Miscellaneous notes (for instance - Sooty Tern records are all from hurricanes).
 9. More Info - A link to the Handbook of the Birds of the World website with more information about the species' life history, identification, taxonomy, and more.
 10. A photo (taken in Pennsylvania).
 11. A map showing the species' distribution in the Commonwealth.
 12. Seasonal Abundance Graph - A bar-graph showing the occurrence and abundance of this species over a calendar year.
- Placing your cursor over these various items pops-up a list of definitions for those. For instance, if you put your cursor over the Abundance line, a popup displays the following Abundance definitions:

Abundant: 100 + per day
 Fairly Common: 26 to 99 per day
 Common: 6 to 25 per day
 Uncommon: up to 5 per day, up to 25 per season
 Rare: 1 to 5 per day, up to 5 per season

This is just one of the features of this application. Here is how to use it.

On the PSO Home Page, select Birding, and then Birds of PA.

Birds of Pennsylvania
 an Annotated List

Download List | Return to PSO | Help | Send Corrections to | Notable Records | More Photos

Select Species (Alphabetical order):
 Acadian Flycatcher

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

Abundance: **Rare**
 Occurrence: **Regular**
 Seasonal Status: **Migrant and Winter Resident**
 Official List Status: **Accepted**
 PORC Review Species: **No**
 Species of Special Concern Classification: **None**

Notes: Most records from large winter blackbird flocks in southeast and at feeders in winter.
[More Info](#)

April - Northampton County - Jim Hight

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Seasonal Abundance Graph

Yellow-headed Blackbird	Abundant	Fairly Common	Common	Uncommon	Rare
Statewide					

On the top menu, there are the following additional options.

1. Download List – This will download the Birds of Pennsylvania List in comma-delimited (CSV) format, which can be opened with any spreadsheet software (Excel, Quattro, etc.). This can be used for creating your own checklists, importing to any other digital media, etc.

The following fields are included:

- ID - a number that links the species to the AOS list
- Common Name
- Scientific Name
- Breeds - 1 = Yes, 0 = No
- Abundance
- Occurrence
- Seasonal Status
- List Status - Accepted, Provisional, or Pending
- AOS Order - Current American Ornithological Society taxonomic order
- AOS Supplement - The latest AOS supplement incorporated into this list (name changes, taxonomic order, etc.) This is so you can determine how up-to-date the list is.

2. Return to PSO - takes you back to the PSO Home Page

3. Help - gives information about Birds of PA, including definitions, etc.

4. Send Corrections to - a link to send in corrections (*We ain't perfect!*).

5. Notable Records - lists all of the records for this species that were printed in the *Birds of Note* (not the County Notes) section of *Pennsylvania Birds* since 1992. This would include rarities, but also birds out of season, etc. So a Black-and-white Warbler in January would be listed, but not the same species in June. Records from before 1992 for species with 10 or fewer records are also listed. The list includes the Year, Species, Season, County, and Notes (which usually include the date and observer). It also lists subspecies and hybrids as well. This list can be printed by clicking on the Gear icon in the upper right corner.

6. More Photos - More photos of this species (taken in PA). NOTE: This section's goal is to have photos of each species in different plumages (adult, immature, molting, winter, etc.) to provide the user with a comprehensive reference to what these birds look like *in Pennsylvania*. We require that the photos be taken in the state so that any geographical and seasonal differences are displayed. So, if you have good photos of a bird taken in Pennsylvania (regardless of plumage) that you would like to add to this site, please let me know. You can contact me at ps0@pabirds.org.

As you can see, this reference is easy to use and quite comprehensive. Be sure to use it and let your birding friends know about it as well.

Coming up next: Publications

Recap of PSO Board of Directors' November Meeting

The PSO Board of Directors met with 14 members present via teleconference on November 27, 2018.

A question arose concerning the funding of our student scholarships to the PSO meeting. Various options for fund raising were explored.

Holly Merker explained her proposal to involve the PSO in the symposium "Frontiers in Ornithology: A Symposium for Youth." This event aims to connect youth in the mid-Atlantic region who are interested in birding. The Symposium will be held at Ashland Nature Center in Hockessin, Delaware, the weekend of September 27-29, 2019. Board members agreed that this is a project that PSO should support.

Holly thanked Andy McGann for the time he served on the PORC committee as both a member and as the chairperson. Frank Haas congratulated Holly for getting PORC running more smoothly.

Frank reported that finances are fairly stable and that our membership has increased slightly. He also said that he needs a better program for the site guides for the website. More site guides need to be added as not all areas are well covered. Frank will also write an article for each newsletter issue to include a highlight of a section of the website to make members aware of everything that the website can do.

Greg Grove needs articles for the journal as this issue has only one article. Student written articles were discussed again. The mechanism for PSO grants to students to do research and then write articles for *PA Birds* is in place. Evan Mann said that he, Vern Gauthier, and Holly looked at the bylaws and will revise and rewrite them in time for the 2019 annual meeting.

Wayne Laubscher informed us that the 2019 annual meeting will be held in Williamsport on September 13,

14, and 15 at the Holiday Inn Express. The Merlin will be depicted on the meeting pin. He already has a good list of possible field trips. Registration will continue to be on line and will be handled by Vern.

Laura Jackson said that, besides herself, the only other member on the conservation committee is possibly Holly. The procedure for taking action on conservation issues was discussed. A comment was made that some people think that PSO is not as responsive as we could be. We

also need to be careful about which issues we choose to promote.

The board agreed on a procedure to conduct email votes until the bylaws are changed to allow email votes.

Emily Thomas reminded us that the board agreed to conduct their teleconference meetings on the fourth Tuesday of every odd month at 6:00 p.m.

Roger Higbee, Secretary

Recap of PSO Board of Directors' January Meeting

The PSO Board of Directors met with 14 members present via teleconference on January 22.

Mike Fialkovich discussed with Frank Haas the possibility of PSO's accepting ads in our publications. Frank said that we have accepted ads in the past and have charged for them.

Emily Thomas would like the student scholarship announcement to be distributed to as many possible applicants as feasible.

Wayne Laubscher said that the preparations for the 2019 meeting are going well.

Holly Merker explained that she would like to get financial support from PSO for the symposium, "Frontiers

in Ornithology: A Symposium for Youth." A motion was made to support the symposium both financially and with volunteer hours. The motion passed.

There was a discussion of where to hold the 2020 Annual Meeting. Fall locations included the northeast corner of Pennsylvania, Lancaster, State College, and Jacobsburg. A June meeting in the Poconos was another suggestion.

Chad Kauffman brought up the possibility of adding new people to the board. It was decided that background birding and conservation information would be requested of any potential board member. We need to decide if we want to add new members and how many.

Roger Higbee, Secretary
Indiana, PA

The full content of the minutes is available on the PSO website (pabirds.org); click on "About Us."

PSO Pileated Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania bird names?

1. Hunters and trappers in the far north called this species the "scabby-nosed wavey." Which species?
2. The "yellowhammer" is the state bird of Alabama. What do we call it?
3. In a 1918 issue of *The Auk*, Boyd Rothrock reported finding a "Willow Thrush" in Harrisburg in 1913. What do we call it?
4. *Coccyzus* is the genus name for which group of birds?
5. You'll find the name Great Northern Diver regularly in some earlier British field guides. What do we call it?

See Answers on page 9.



Call for Applications

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Student Research Grant Deadline: March 31

Awardees will be notified by May 1

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is sponsoring up to two \$500 student research grants in support of research on Pennsylvania's avifauna. We invite anyone to pass this news along to any students involved in research, as well as any professors who could share this announcement with their students.

If selected, the student must travel to the PSO Annual Meeting to give a talk (~30 minutes) about their work, AND/OR the student must submit an article to the Pennsylvania Birds journal, not more than two years after the award of the grant, describing their study and findings to the PSO membership. The recipient will also be awarded a one-year membership in the PSO.

Eligibility:

The award is designed to provide support to either graduate or undergraduate students in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate. The research should be conducted in support of a thesis or dissertation and eventually published. The student's academic institution does not need to be in Pennsylvania. The field work does not need to occur in the Commonwealth, however, there is a preference for projects with a Pennsylvania field work component.

Criteria:

Proposals will be judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of Pennsylvania avifauna. Submissions must include the name of the student's academic institution, the corresponding department at the institution, the degree the student is pursuing, and the name of their academic or research advisor.

Research Proposal Document:

The body of the proposal should be a condensed version of the student's thesis/dissertation proposal, not to exceed 5 pages in length (not including any figures or tables). Please note whether Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval has been or will be obtained. Each proposal should include a section on how the results of the proposed study will be helpful to future scientific understanding, conservation efforts, and/or land management implications.

Signed Letter indicating Student's Advisor's Approval:

In addition to the proposal document, each submission should include a brief, signed letter from the student's academic advisor verifying that the applicant is a student in good standing, and that they are receiving the advisor's support for the proposed project.

Submissions will be evaluated by a PSO committee. Submissions must be sent as pdf email attachments by March 31. Please send submissions or questions to Deb Grove at dsg4@psu.edu.

Ornithological Literature Notes

Pennsylvania's pioneering studies of Louisiana Waterthrush biology took a notable step forward in 2018. A research team from East Stroudsburg University compared this species' abundance and nest productivity along two types of stream environments in Pike County. Differences in both the density in number of pairs and the pairs' nesting success were significant.



David Brooke photographed this striking Louisiana Waterthrush in Allegheny Co. on April 10, 2018.

Katie B. Barnes, Nicholas Ernst, Michael Allen, Terry Master, and Rabecca Lausch published the findings in the journal *Northeastern Naturalist* (25: 587-598).

They studied waterthrush pairs along four headwater streams dominated by hemlocks representing two distinct environmental features. One ecological setting was characterized by high-gradient, fast-flowing streams confined between steep banks. The second setting was a feature called "benches," where braided streams meander across a relatively wide, flat floodplain.

Four results were significantly different, all pointing to better success for waterthrushes on the benches:

*Average density was 3.1 pairs on bench sites but only 1.8 pairs on ravine sites.

*Nest-survival estimates also favored the bench sites – 69% at bench sites and only 33% at ravine sites.

*The ultimate result came in nest productivity (fledglings produced per kilometer of stream reach per year). Productivity was 13.1 at benches but only 5.7 at ravine sites.

*In addition, 29% of bench pairs raised double broods compared to only 4% of ravine pairs.

The authors emphasize that their sample size was small, and more research is needed to determine the causes of higher densities on benches. Perhaps benches offer more food resources compared to ravines, and/or perhaps ecological features offer nest predators easier access to nest sites concentrated in the narrow confines of ravines.

If those features can be pinned down, the Louisiana Waterthrush might serve as a "surrogate" or "indicator" species for discovering differences in habitat quality important to other organisms in hemlock-dominated habitats. Stay tuned!

Paul Hess
Natrona Heights, PA
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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:

PSO
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555-9730

Membership Categories

Individual	\$ 30	Student	\$ 25
Family	\$ 35	Electronic Student	\$ 10
Sustaining	\$ 45		

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Answers to Bird Quiz (page 7)

1. Ross's Goose
2. Northern Flicker (Civil War soldiers from Alabama were nicknamed "yellowhammers" because their gray-and-yellow uniforms resembled the bird's colors. Some of the soldiers wore yellow flicker feathers in their hats.)
3. Veery
4. cuckoos
5. Common Loon

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

What's Up with American Tree Sparrow?

As the days grow longer and the intermittent snows melt faster, I search for memories of what most impressed me about winter birds in Pennsylvania. The answer is not obvious especially for younger birders without long memories of past bird populations. For me, it is the gradual and puzzling decline and disappearance of the American Tree Sparrow (*Spizelloides arborea*) from my haunts in rural counties. I know that this is not the most glamorous or charismatic winter bird, but it may be the best example in Pennsylvania of a common wintering boreal bird in decline. It is often described as “a familiar migrant and winter visitor” (BNA account) that is common and widespread. I would say that this is much less true than years ago when I routinely found over a hundred during any morning of birding in the state’s countryside. They often were found around houses and feeding stations much less the wilder habitats.

The bird conservation organization alarms have not gone off even when studies declare that “using BBS data, the American Tree Sparrow population was estimated to have declined by 53% between 1970 and 2014” (Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plan 2016 revision), but perhaps they should. Since the breeding ground of this species is in the vast, mostly roadless tundra of Canada and Alaska, any estimate of population size and trends are pretty rough. It is one of the 24 bird species in steep decline in the latest PIF continental plan. When the population is estimated at the amazingly high “22,000,000 individuals within Canada and Alaska” (PIF LCP 2106), the lack of a high concern for the species is understandable. It is a fairly easy bird to survey in its large wintering ground that encompasses much of southern Canada and northern United States where Christmas Bird Count circles and bird feeders are abundant.

There is an unfortunate tendency for birders to dismiss species’ declines by noting that, “I can find it if I look for it.” Yes, perhaps you can find an American Tree Sparrow for your Christmas Count, your Great Backyard Bird Count, feeder count, or another survey but not in the

numbers found in past decades. My concern is not for your list but for the bird and its habitat. Once it was among the most abundant winter birds rivaling Dark-eyed Junco with which it often flocked. Not anymore. In the 1970s and 1980s I would find more than 100 of them during each CBC, especially if I took the time to walk through an “old field” of goldenrods and blackberry thickets where they were formerly abundant. I often had difficulty counting them due to their abundance and the heavy cover. These sparrows forage on small seeds including the diminutive seeds of goldenrods and asters. Once I could stand at the edge of any overgrown field including the one in front of our house and hear the electric, musical two-note “teel-whit” calls even in the predawn darkness. I rarely hear these call notes while birding in winter anymore, and it is not because they are beyond my hearing range.

I am not the first to voice concern over this species in Pennsylvania. To his credit, Paul Hess wrote two articles for Pennsylvania Birds in 1989 (Volume 3, Numbers 3, 4) looking at CBC data including wide fluctuations in counts over the years 1973 – 1987. Paul used the term “mystery” to describe the fluctuations and that word is as true today as then. Snow cover may be a confounding influence on numbers with sparrows staying farther north when snow cover is less in the Mid-Atlantic states. These little sparrows regularly travel over 1,000 miles from their summer to their winter grounds. Much can befall them along the way. The decline in this species may also be limited to eastern states, but such analyses seem lacking. The perceived decline may be a shift westward or northward, not a measurable decline. However, with changes in habitat quality on the tundra, there could be real declines in American Tree Sparrow populations that are not well measured or appreciated.

Considering the natural history of this species might shed some light on reasons for changes in its populations and distribution. Since its breeding range is such a remote area of North America, little is actually known about its breeding biology. In migration and on their wintering grounds, American Tree Sparrows forage on a wide range of perennial and annual herbaceous and grass seeds as well as the fruits of shrubs and trees. When I have handled these sparrows as part of a banding operation, they often had millet, goldenrod seeds, or rose hips in their beaks. Little is known about their breeding ground philopatry, but their tendency to return to feeding stations and banding sites is well-known and documented. When I banded winter birds in my backyard, Montour Preserve, and the Susquehanna Riverlands, I often handled recaptured tree sparrows that returned from previous years. I often caught birds several times per session. As I walked away from traps, I could hear the trap doors

closing on more tree sparrows caught because they were so abundant and easy to capture. I am sure that other bird banders have had the same kind of experiences.

In my own case, all those locations are still great tree sparrow habitat with lots of goldenrod, aster, and other herbaceous and brushy cover but few American Tree Sparrows.

There are a few theories about the perceived decline of this “winter Chippy.” A prevailing one was expressed in the revised BNA account: “widespread change in land-use in recent decades (e.g., agricultural intensification and forest maturation) across much of the wintering range has likely resulted in extensive habitat loss for overwintering birds.” Considering the widespread loss of weedy fields and young forest habitat, this is a credible explanation. Yet, the data collected by birders makes me suspect that this is only part of the explanation. A lot of great habitat for American Tree Sparrows still exists along roadsides and in farmland, great places where flocks of this species were formerly found. Now I find juncos and other sparrows but not this species in the large numbers formerly found.

Taught to me as “the winter chippy” as Roger Tory Peterson and others called it because of its superficial similarity to the Chipping Sparrow, this sparrow is not particularly closely related to the Chipping Sparrow but rather more closely related to the Fox Sparrow despite the differences in appearances. Its name is, of course, a misnomer since it is a denizen of the tundra and overgrown brushy fields, young woodlands, and wetlands with few trees. Perhaps “Brush Sparrow” would be a better name that better identifies its home in summer and winter. This name was suggested by A. Marguerite Baumgartner in her species account in the *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies* (A.C. Bent, compiled by O.L. Austin). Dr. Amelia Marguerite (Heydweiller) Baumgartner was the wife of the more recognized Oklahoma ornithologist Fred Baumgartner but she was an accomplished scientist in her own right. She earned her Ph.D. at Cornell University and studied this species in northern Manitoba, publishing several scientific journal articles about it before and after her marriage. It is easy to overlook the women pioneers of science, and I tip my field cap to her excellent studies and publications about this species and others.

With the abundance of CBC, Feederwatch, and Great Backyard Bird Count data, there seems to be a lot of



American Tree Sparrows have undergone a steep population decline in recent years.

Photo by Moses Martin

potential for investigating these perceived changes in distribution and population. With new tools at our disposal, the questions of linkage between summer and winter grounds and stopover locations can be explored.

Even common birds can decline and can be interesting to study. I urge birders to go back to follow Baumgartner’s example and study this charming little songbird.

Please go through your old records and submit field trips to eBird where you once found this species

and to search for it at those locations when you can. Walk the brushy fields and listen for that twittering call. This added information could help us better understand the patterns of this and other boreal birds that visit our state in the winter. I propose that this species should be a candidate for the state’s “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” (the Wildlife Action Plan list). It overlaps in habitat with many species already on that list that are considered “early succession” or “young forest” species as well as popular game animals like cottontail rabbit and American Woodcock. It also would be an interesting research subject for a graduate student looking for a species with good questions that is easy to capture and for which there are large stores of “citizen science” and climate data ready to be analyzed. Rusty Blackbird, Snowy Owl, and American Tree Sparrow are among the boreal species to keep an eye on right here in the Keystone state.

Evening Grosbeak: Keep an Eye and Ear Out for Breeding Events

By the time you read this, the light irruptive event of Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) in Pennsylvania and other eastern states has petered out. Some of us had a few grosbeak sightings, but this irruption paled compared to former irruptions. For those of us who remember Evening Grosbeaks covering our home-made wooden bird feeders in years past, current “irruptions” are a bit underwhelming and disappointing. Yet, it may not be over for the 2018-2019 Evening Grosbeak irruption event. As grosbeak that wandered south, even south of U.S. Route 80 and the Mason-Dixon Line, return north to their natal grounds, they may visit Pennsylvania locations again. Some may even stop to breed if adequate food resources are beckoning and potential mating partners available. In spring and summer, Evening Grosbeaks turn into caterpillar predators and react to outbreaks of various immature

lepidopterans within or outside the sight of backyard bird feeders supplied with sunflower seeds. I know that I will be pausing to listen to any finch song in the woods and wood edges to detect a vocal Evening Grosbeak this spring and summer. Past events mentioned in my December 2018 column suggest that this species could nest in June and July where it sees fit. I also will be looking and listening for Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and other boreal visitors while exploring the state's northern forest.

Ricketts Glen State Park Bird Project Continues

As I have mentioned in a previous column, I am continuing my studies of northern forest birds and concentrating on Ricketts Glen State Park which may be popular with hikers and photographers but mostly ignored by birders. This state park is an integral part of the North Mountain forest that includes State Game Lands 13, 57, and 66 and Loyalsock State Forest in Sullivan, Luzerne, and Wyoming counties. I will be leading at least five field trips to the park in 2019 for the public, including the PSO annual meeting and state park events. Birders are invited to search back into their old field notes and recover field trips there to add to the eBird database for the park and adjacent areas. It has not been an exciting winter for birding, but that changes dramatically in spring migration.

Anyone interested in trips to the park is invited to contact me and coordinate field activities.

Independent trips are very welcome – the more, the merrier. I would especially welcome nocturnal and crepuscular field trips since those species are under represented in the eBird and Breeding Bird Atlas data sets. You probably do not need to go deep into the woods to find species like Eastern Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock, Great Horned Owl, and Northern Saw-whet Owl there. Barred Owls can be heard hooting in the park at mid-day, but the other owls are poorly documented.

I have reached out to local bird clubs for support and have found that few local birders visit the park despite its status as a state Important Bird Area. We will try to change that. See this column and social media for more details on planned events. I am delighted to see other PSO members initiate birding events to other under-reported locations. There are many blanks on the state birding map that can be happily filled by the adventurous. Think big and be bold!

Good birding!

Doug Gross, Dagross144@verizon.net

A Count to Remember – The Solitaire Saga

By John F. Taylor

Our spirits buoyed up by a forecast of relatively warm temperatures and very light winds, Ed Donley and I drove east from Indiana to Yellow Creek State Park to fulfill our annual obligation as members of the Todd Bird Club's "North Shore Crew" for the Indiana Christmas Bird Count. We were feeling good about our chances of delivering a respectable tally of the birds from our assigned territory along the north shore of the lake, given the decent weather conditions and a larger crew than we normally field on the count. My brother Wil, and our nephew Scott Simms, both visiting for the holidays, would join us, at least for the morning. My good friend of many years, Mark Strittmatter, was also able to arrange his schedule to help out for most of the day. That meant not only three additional, experienced birders in our crew, but three pairs of *exceptionally* sharp eyes to find whatever was hanging out in our territory this year. Perhaps 2018 would be the year that we turn up something really unusual to report when the species are tallied over dinner the evening of the count. To keep the optimism from running unchecked, however, I pointed something out to

the group shortly after we convened at the north park boundary: We've been doing this for about thirty years now, and that rarity hasn't shown up yet!

Mark was already there when Ed and I arrived. In fact, he'd been out for over an hour already and had been rewarded for his early start with some good birds: a Brown Creeper in the woods and some Buffleheads and a Belted Kingfisher at the lake. Scott and Wil arrived just after we did, also with something noteworthy to report. They'd spied a Merlin before joining us. Ed and I fired back feebly that we'd seen some crows and starlings on the drive out. Welcoming the opportunity to slink away and find something to prove that we had, you know, actually birded before, Ed and I followed the tree line that marks the park boundary down into the valley and made our way through the woods where we'd done well in previous years. By the time we reconvened, Ed and I were able to hold our heads higher having turned up a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers, a few Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and many of the unremarkable but nonetheless

welcome “usual suspects” (cardinals, juncos, titmice, chickadees, etc.). Other spots along the lake yielded a pair of Ring-billed Gulls, several Eastern Bluebirds, a small flock of Hooded Mergansers, and a larger raft of Common Mergansers. We also spotted several Downy Woodpeckers and a Hairy Woodpecker, leaving only the Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker to complete a sweep of the local woodpeckers. The sapsucker is a particularly critical target species for our crew because the north shore territory includes the best habitat for that species that exists in the count circle. Failure to deliver the sapsucker guarantees us an accusatory glare and/or a verbal reprimand from Margaret Higbee at the tally dinner.

By mid-afternoon we’d reached my favorite location in the park, an area of the Seph Mack Boy Scout Camp with small patches of trees whose fruits attract species that can be tough to find on the CBC. It’s also where we have most frequently succeeded in our search for the elusive sapsucker. To our dismay, we found the usually reliable groves completely devoid of birds – at least on our first trip through. Wil and Scott had already received a call that they were expecting, bringing an end to their day in the field. As they were leaving, I told them that we would probably find something really special after they left. If not, I assured them that we would think of something sufficiently exotic to claim that we’d seen to make them regret their early departure. Little did I know! As we usually do in the camp area, we split up to cover more territory. Mark had taken the upper road while Ed and I followed the road along the lakeshore into the camp. Ed and I parted company briefly once we’d reached the prime territory near the fruit trees. He took the road that led up to the shooting range (fortunately inactive at the time) while I hiked down the path that leads to a small, outdoor chapel where I’ve turned up the sapsucker on previous counts by standing quietly and watching the trees for a while. That trick didn’t produce a sapsucker this time, but it did pay off when I found a mixed flock of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings sitting idly in the trees just off the trail. Some of them flew down the hill toward the lake as I retraced my steps up the path.

As I emerged from the entrance to the chapel trail, I found Ed standing there, looking down the hill. I filled him in on what I’d seen near the chapel, and he informed me that he’d also had a good sighting. “I think I got us a mockingbird,” he said. This was good news, because the



The Townsend's Solitaire remained at Yellow Creek through 1/11/19.

Photo by Roger Higbee

places in Indiana that we had relied upon for a mockingbird in previous years had not delivered one in the two months prior to the 2018 count. When I asked about the implied uncertainty in his statement, he said the bird he’d seen had the correct color of gray, but not the mockingbird’s usual color patterns, and the tail seemed too short. So down the hill we went in the direction the bird had flown toward a stand of fruit trees lower on the slope, probably the same destination of the robins and waxwings I’d flushed earlier. This time that lower grove of fruit trees was alive with birds. It was mostly the robins and waxwings, but I soon spotted a bird off by itself, perched at the edge of the woods. Seeing the uniformly gray plumage with some white markings, I told Ed, “I think I’ve got your mockingbird.” It was difficult, however, to make out the details with the bird partially concealed by branches and the sun shining in at a low angle behind it. Nonetheless, it wasn’t long before it registered that the proportions weren’t right. The bill was too short, the head more rounded, and the body too compact overall. It was then that we saw the prominent white eye ring, which laid to rest the possibility that we simply had a poorly illuminated mockingbird. “Ed, we might have a *really* good bird here,” I said. “It looks like a solitaire!”

Having spent quite a bit of time doing geologic field work in the mountains out West, I’d seen Townsend’s Solitaires before. But it had been a while, so I pulled out my field guide and Ed called up images on his phone. (Not hard to tell which of us is the Luddite, is it?) Both sources singled out the buff wing patches as the species’ most diagnostic feature. Needing a better vantage, with the sun somewhere other than behind the bird, we worked our way slowly through the tangle of branches between us and the open field beyond it. Unfortunately, it took exception to the two large, over-accessorized bipeds slinking through the brush below it, and it flew off into the woods. Mark arrived as we emerged from the brush, so we filled him in on what we’d seen to that point. I was fairly certain that I’d made out the fairly inconspicuous buffy wing patch while the bird was perched, but I really wanted a better look to lock down the identification. Fortunately, the bird had not flown far. We found it a short distance into the woods, feeding on the fruits and sparring a bit with the robins and waxwings. With the sun now behind us and the bird fluttering as it fed and interacted with the other species, the wing patches were

conspicuous, and the identification unequivocal. At other times, as it sat looking toward the small flock of wax-wings nearby, it fluttered its wings and bobbed its tail. At Mark's prompting, Ed used his phone to pull up some on-line videos that showed Townsend's Solitaires displaying that distinctive behavior. To our amusement, the bird responded to the video by looking in our direction and moved a bit closer to us.

We now had another decision to make. I'd often wondered what we would or should do if we turned up a rarity during the CBC. Should we notify our fellow birders immediately to afford them the opportunity to modify their schedules to swing by and see the bird before it disappears? Or should we hold off on notification so we don't disrupt the count by pulling participants off their assigned territories? We decided to do the latter, in part because the solitaire had been fairly easy to approach, and it seemed likely to stay put where it had settled in with food and cover in abundance. The three of us completed our scheduled hike to the breast of the dam, searching intently but in vain for a sapsucker. It really stung to miss that species this year because we had found a Northern Flicker near the solitaire spot, so the sapsucker would have given us all six woodpeckers for the day, something we've never accomplished on the CBC. We checked on the solitaire on the return trip to confirm that it was indeed still present as we left the area, and we headed home to Indiana for the post-count tally dinner at Hoss's restaurant over which Margaret and Roger Higbee dutifully preside as the count compilers.

Ed graciously suggested that I read off the species for the North Shore Crew, so I looked forward to dropping the bomb at the end after all species previously sighted had been tallied, and Margaret asked whether any birds new to the count had been found. Except for Mark, who had a family commitment, the entire North Shore Crew made it to the dinner. To my surprise, Scott and Wil didn't accuse us of fabricating a rarity when we informed them of the solitaire sighting. I suspect Wil might have had a beer or two before he came to the dinner. I spoke briefly with Margaret when we arrived and simply told her that we'd had a really good day. It turns out we weren't the only ones. Quite a few good sightings were reported as Margaret called out the species while Roger, the long-suffering scribe, struggled to keep pace with the numbers flying at him. Ken and Beth Marshall had added a new species to the count, having spotted three Black Vultures at the southwestern edge of the count circle. As a species not previously seen on any of our previous CBCs, this almost certainly would be voted "best bird of the count" for 2018. In recent years, we have referred to this as the Dearing Award, in honor of James Dearing, who had consistently and enthusiastically participated in the CBC for many years as a member of the North Shore Crew

prior to his passing in 2010. The Higbees always provide a stuffed bird (no, not a real one!) that is given to the awardee(s) at the dinner. Other candidates for the Dearing Award surfaced as the tally continued, among them Trumpeter Swans that Dennis Lauffer and Lee Carnahan had found in their territory. When Margaret called for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker sightings, we got not only the expected glare but a pointed comment, "I thought you said you had a good day!" After Margaret had gone through the list of species, she called for nominations for the Dearing Award, inadvertently skipping the request for species new to the count. This omission was promptly pointed out to her, and as she asked for any such sightings, I raised my hand and told her. "You're about to find out why I told you we had a really good day. One more species to add...Townsend's Solitaire!" To which she exclaimed, "You're kidding!" Which, of course, we weren't.

Fittingly, Ed Donley received the Dearing Award for finding the best bird of the count, and I am sure that he's found a suitable perch for it at his place as a reminder of both a remarkable bird and a departed good friend of many years. Ed cheerfully complied with numerous requests for directions to the solitaire spot as the group disbanded, and he later posted information to eBird to notify the broader birding community of the find. I took Wil to Yellow Creek the next morning to see the solitaire, which had indeed stayed put as we had hoped. The Higbees and Gloria Lamer were there when we arrived. Roger had gotten some splendid pictures, and Gloria lent a hand, relocating the bird for Wil, who needed it as a lifer...and as proof that we didn't make the whole thing up.

Ornithological records for Pennsylvania indicate that the Townsend's Solitaire has been seen fewer than 20 times in the state, and only once previously on a CBC, on the Butler count in 1993. Our guy was quite cooperative and afforded splendid views and photo opportunities for a steady flow of birders who visited Yellow Creek over the next few weeks. The last sighting reported on eBird was by Jeff McDonald on January 11. Attempts to find the bird on the regular Tuesday morning Todd Bird Club outings at Yellow Creek since then have proven unsuccessful. Hopefully the solitaire's faulty internal compass is working in reverse, taking it back to the coniferous slopes in the mountains out West. We'll never know, of course, but that's the scenario I choose to envision. I sent a nice photo of our solitaire that my Biology Department colleague Tom Simmons sent me to one of my good friends who'd asked how our count went. His response was..."Let me get this straight. I'm supposed to get excited about a little, lost, gray bird that doesn't know East from South?" He's a darned good friend, but he's obviously not a birder.

Welcome New PSO Members

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members who have joined PSO since June 2, 2018.

Connie Alexander, Shinglehouse, PA
Katie Andrews, Leesport, PA
George Armistead, Philadelphia, PA
Anne Bekker, Philadelphia, PA
Mary Ann Bogert, Wilkes Barre, PA
Elizabeth Brensinger, New Tripoli, PA
Deb Brown, Montoursville, PA
Sara Busch, Havertown, PA
Isaac Byler, Huntingdon, PA
Clay Corbin, Bloomsburg, PA
Ronald Crandall, State College, PA
William Delgrande, Titusville, PA
Cindy Dunn, Camp Hill, PA
Steve Eisenhauer, Ocean View, NJ
Dawn Ekdahl, East Earl, PA
Steven B. Feldstein, State College, PA
Patience Fisher, Murrysville, PA
Steve Fordyce, Mertztown, PA
Jacquelynn Formosa, Bloomsburg, PA
Martha Franklin, Kingsley, PA
Scott Fraser, Doylestown, PA
Dan Gomola, Renfrew, PA
Ken Goody, New York, NY
Barbara Griffith, Wexford, PA
John Griffiths, Wexford, PA
Tami Harnish, Mechanicsburg, PA
Jim Hill, Airville, PA

James Hill, Waterford, PA
James Jackson, Glen Rock, PA
John Jakoby, Mountain Top, PA
Peggy Keating-Butler, Gettysburg, PA
Meg Kolodick, Oil City, PA
Steven Latta, Pittsburgh, PA
Kerry Loux, Langhorne, PA
Justin Mann, Endwell, NY
Michele Mannella, Bethel Park, PA
Steve Manns, Export, PA
Nate McKelvie, Palmyra, PA
Patrick Millar, Oxford, PA
Dennis Miranda, Lansdale, PA
Tomas Nonnenmacher, Meadville, PA
Joe Perez, Elizabeth, PA
Joyce Perrone, Apollo, PA
James Phillips, Pittsburgh, PA
Victoria Roper, Northumberland, PA
David Saylor, Washington, DC
Alan Schreck, Arlington, VA
Beth Signorini, Mcdonald, PA
Susan Smith, State College, PA
Scott Stollery, Pottstown, PA
Lisa Tull, Phoenixville, PA
Betty Vermeire, College Station, TX
Eric Zawatski, Dallas, PA

Pennsylvania 2018 Bird Lists Report

Compiled by Andy Keister

This is my first year taking over the compilation of the yearly PA Bird Lists for Peter Robinson. I would like to start by thanking Peter for his years of service to the PSO and for helping me get up to speed with the list for 2018.

It's important to understand that the lists contained within this report have been tracked and updated for many years but are still very incomplete. Many birders choose not to report numbers to the PSO or use other means such as eBird to maintain their lists. Some birders are probably unaware that these records even exist. All birders are expected to abide by the honor system. As compiler of this list, I am merely reporting numbers, not cross-checking and verifying the authenticity of bird sightings.

For 2018, 93 birders have reported PA Life Lists of 300 species or greater. The number of birders with PA Life Lists of 350 species or greater now stands at 27, up two from the previous year. The leader is now Devich

Farbotnik with an impressive 396 species. The total number of birders with unassisted Life Lists of 300 species or greater remains at 11. For 2018, the year's high Annual List was reported by Devich Farbotnik with 269 species followed closely by Zach Millen with 267 species. Devich Farbotnik also holds the highest county Life List with 344 species recorded in Bucks County. In annual county birding, the following birders set a new high total for the indicated county: Carol Hildebrand with 192 species in Clinton County; Chad Kauffman with 198 species in Juniata County; Bobby Brown with 230 species for Lycoming County; Karol Pasquinelli with 184 species in Northumberland County; and Roy Ickes with 202 species in Washington County. Also of note, Bobby Brown set the new high mark for a Life List in Lycoming County with 255 species.

A few birders mentioned that they have added Black-backed Oriole and White-winged Tern to their PA Life

Lists now that they have been officially added to the state checklist. Anyone who has not yet done so should update their numbers at the end of 2019.

A total of 48 individuals submitted list information or Bird of the Year votes for 2018. They include: Chuck Berthoud, Scott Bills, Gerry Boltz, Bobby Brown, Bryan Byrnes, Bruce Carl, Dick Cleary, Michael David, David DeReamus, Mike Epler, Devich Farbotnik, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Carl Garner, Tom Garner, Deb Grove, Greg Grove, Al Guarante, Barb Haas, Frank Haas, Jeffrey Hall, David Hawk, Jonathan Heller, Carol Hildebrand, Evan Houston, Roy Ickes, Bruce Johnson, Ryan Johnson, Ken Lebo, Chad Kauffman, Andy Keister, Arlene Koch, Wayne Laubscher, Ron Leberman, Geoff Malosh, Peter Mauss, Jerry McWilliams, Zach Millen, Richard Nugent, Karol Pasquinelli, Thomas Reeves, Peter Robinson, Michael Schall, Kurt Schwarz, John Snarey, Russ States, Mark Vass, and Eric Witmer.

The Bird of the Year 2018

Twenty-five birders voted for 16 different species as Bird of the Year for 2018. A total of three points were awarded for a first place vote, two points were awarded for a second place vote, and one point for a third place vote. Competition was tight this year and **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** (34 points) edged out **Rock Wren** (32 points) and **Varied Bunting** (30 points) as Bird of the Year. Voting is always impacted by several factors. This year the length of stay and ease of access most likely pushed Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and Rock Wren past Varied Bunting. The remaining votes included Townsend's Solitaire (7 points); Sandhill Crane and Gyrfalcon (6 points); Wood Stork (5 points); Roseate Spoonbill and Black-throated Gray Warbler (4 points); Red-breasted Nuthatch (3 points); Barrow's Goldeneye, Gull-billed Tern, and Golden Eagle (2 points); and Lapland Longspur, Little Gull, and Brant (1 point).

PA Life Lists

1	396	Devich Farbotnik	2018	43	334	Wayne Laubscher	2018	87	302	Sam Stull	1985
2	393	Barbara Haas	2018	45	333	David Kyler	2016	87	302	Edward Pederson	1998
3	392	Franklin Haas	2018	45	333	Andy Keister	2018	87	302	Rick Koval	2004
4	389	Dave DeReamus	2018	45	333	Chad Kauffman	2018	90	301	Mark McConaughy	2015
5	386	Peter Robinson	2018	48	332	William Murphy	2000	90	301	David Hawk	2018
6	384	Eric Witmer	2018	49	330	Billy Weber	2011	92	300	Larry Lewis	1988
7	381	Tom Garner	2018	49	330	Greg Grove	2018	92	300	Dave Rieger	2012
8	378	Al Guarante	2018	51	329	Paul Schwalbe	1998	94	299	Keith Richards	1982
9	376	Ken Lebo	2018	51	329	Ian Gardner	2017	95	298	George Malosh	2003
10	375	Ronald Leberman	2018	53	328	Margaret Higbee	2013	95	298	Allen Schweinsberg	2014
11	373	Geoff Malosh	2018	54	327	Glenna Schwalbe	1998	95	298	Richard Nugent	2017
12	371	Jason Horn	2002	54	327	Steve Santner	1999	98	297	Allan Keith	1998
12	371	Arlene Koch	2018	56	326	Russ States	2015	98	297	Jim Dunn	2014
14	370	Rick Wiltraut	2006	57	324	Harry Franzen	1996	98	297	Dan Richards	2017
15	369	Randy C. Miller	2016	57	324	Aden Troyer	2013	101	296	Ed Kwater	1996
15	369	Jonathan Heller	2018	57	324	Timothy Becker	2017	101	296	Bill Keim	2013
17	362	Nick Pulcinella	2013	60	322	Tom Clauser	2012	101	296	Joseph Verica	2017
18	361	Robert Schutsky	2011	61	321	Bill Oyler	2017	104	295	Frank Windfelder	1998
18	361	Harold Lebo	2012	62	320	Deborah Grove	2018	104	295	J. Kenneth Gabler	2002
20	360	Bernard Morris	2011	63	319	John Ginaven	1998	106	294	James Baxter	1986
20	360	Chuck Chalfant	2016	63	319	Trudy Kyler	2016	106	294	Terence Schiefer	1999
20	360	Bruce Carl	2018	65	318	Phillips Street	1999	106	294	William Reid	2001
20	360	Michael Schall	2018	66	317	Matthew Spence	2013	106	294	Gary Edwards	2014
24	358	Steve Farbotnik	2006	67	316	Alex Lamoreaux	2014	110	293	John Peplinski	1994
25	356	Michael David	2018	68	315	Evelyn Kopf	1995	111	291	Thomas Reeves	2017
26	354	John Fedak	2006	68	315	Drew Weber	2011	112	290	David Abbott	1998
27	353	Mike Fialkovich	2018	70	314	Walter Shaffer	1999	112	290	Chuck Tague	1999
28	349	Fritz Brock	2013	71	313	Harold Morrin	1996	114	289	Kevin Crilley	1998
29	346	Jerry Book	2000	71	313	David McNaughton	2013	115	288	Ross Gallardy	2006
29	346	Joyce Hoffmann	2004	71	313	Ted Nichols II	2017	116	287	Dustin Welch	2011
29	346	Shannon Thompson	2015	74	312	John Salvetti	2011	116	287	Brian Byrnes	2018
32	345	Bill Etter	2017	74	312	Skip Conant	2013	118	285	Armas Hill	1996
33	340	Richard Timm	2011	76	311	Dana Shaffer	1999	118	285	Neal Thorpe	1997
33	340	Jerry McWilliams	2018	76	311	Don Henise	2000	120	284	James Gray	1983
35	338	Jan Witmer	1997	78	309	Richard Rehrig	2016	121	283	Kerry Grim	1998
35	338	Richard Colyer	2000	78	309	Carl Garner	2017	121	283	Scott Bills	2018
37	337	John Miller	1997	80	308	Robyn Henise	2000	123	282	John Billings	1998
37	337	Mike Epler	2018	80	308	Mike Weible	2007	123	282	Dick Byers	2002
39	336	William Stocku	1997	80	308	Roger Higbee	2008	125	278	James Baird	1981
39	336	Dick Cleary	2018	83	307	Ernest Schiefer	2000	125	278	Merrill Wood	1991
41	335	Matt Wlasniewski	2012	84	306	David Yeany II	2016	125	278	Gerry Boltz	2018
41	335	Mark Vass	2018	85	305	Gene Wilhelm	1992	128	277	Bonnie Baird	1981
43	334	Chuck Berthoud	2018	86	304	Zachary Millen	2018	129	276	Randi Gerrish	2009

130	274	Gloria Lamer	1992	161	255	Sandy Lockerman	2014	197	227	Mike Ward	2010
130	274	Sarah Gerrish	2009	161	255	Bruce Johnson	2018	197	227	David Trently	2013
130	274	Neil Troyer	2013	165	254	Roy Ickes	2018	199	226	Eli Troyer	1999
133	273	Katrina Knight	1999	166	253	Scott Bastian	1999	199	226	Stan Kotala	2001
134	272	Scott Kinzey	1999	166	253	Thomas Ford-Hutch	2006	199	226	Leonard Hess	2003
134	272	Bob Machesney	2005	166	253	Kevin Fryberger	2010	202	224	Arlene Brown	1998
134	272	Pamela Fisher	2009	169	252	Evan Houston	2017	203	223	Pamela Woodman	1993
134	272	Nathan Fronk	2012	170	251	Brendyn Baptiste	2017	203	223	Jim McVoy	2007
138	271	James Flynn	1997	171	250	Stanley Glowacki	2002	205	222	Linda Hess	2003
139	270	Barry Reed	2010	172	247	Andy Wilson	2014	205	222	Joseph Greco	2008
140	268	Sam Sinderson	2005	173	245	Bill Reddinger	1999	207	220	Jon Dunn	2004
140	268	Bobby Brown	2018	173	245	Robert Frantz	2000	208	219	Ann Pettigrew	1996
140	268	Carol Hildebrand	2018	173	245	Paul Mauss	2018	208	219	Daniel Snell	2000
143	267	Harry Hendersen	1991	176	244	Harvey Troyer	1999	210	218	Helena Kotala	2007
143	267	Brian Quindlen	2015	177	243	Grant Stevenson	2012	211	213	Richard Murphy	1999
145	266	Joe Meloney	1994	178	242	Walter Fye	1997	212	211	Frank Izaguirre	2013
145	266	Lewis Grove	2010	178	242	Jerry Troyer	1999	213	210	Gregg Gorton	2001
147	265	Marjorie Howard	2008	178	242	Marvin Byler	2005	213	210	Ryan Tomazin	2009
147	265	John Carter	2017	178	242	Gordon Dimmig	2012	213	210	Chad Hutchinson	2015
149	262	Theodore Drozdowski	2005	182	241	Anthony Ford-Hutch	2012	216	206	Benjamin Israel	2000
149	262	Jeff Payne	2008	183	240	Dale Gearhart	2000	216	206	Dennis Weaver	2000
151	260	Dennis Miller	1999	184	239	Adam Miller	2000	218	205	Jeff Michaels	2005
151	260	Retta Payne	2008	185	237	Jerry Skinner	2007	219	200	Fred Crowley	1995
151	260	Martin Page	2014	185	237	Michael Defina	2015	220	199	Candy Krenzer	1999
154	259	Linda McWilliams	1992	185	237	John Flannigan	2017	221	197	Patrick O'Donnell	2008
154	259	Eugene Zielinski	2000	188	235	Glenn Czulada	2005	222	186	John Snarey	2018
154	259	Jeffrey Hall	2018	189	234	Christopher Payne	2008	223	180	Thomas Mason	1999
157	258	Steve Graff	2000	190	232	Joe Strasser	1994	224	171	Ryan Johnson	2018
157	258	Jeffrey Wentz	2002	190	232	Voni Strasser	1994	225	170	Jim Ridolfi	2016
159	257	Russell Ryan	1993	192	231	Larry Brown	1998	226	168	Elmer Brenneman	2010
160	256	Ted Grisez	1996	192	231	Jim Mountjoy	2000	227	153	Douglas Anderson	2003
161	255	Nick Kerlin	2010	194	230	Brian Raicich	2013	228	106	Rachael Shapiro	2011
161	255	Flo McGuire	2014	194	230	Karol Pasquinelli	2018	229	89	Michael Hartshorne	2014
				196	229	Kurt Schwarz	2018				

PA Annual Lists 2018

269	Devich Farbotnik	233	Al Guarente	215	Chad Kauffman
267	Zach Millen	231	Bobby Brown	208	Karol Pasquinelli
256	Andy Keister	230	Ron Leberman	202	Roy Ickes
256	Michael Schall	225	Roger Higbee	193	Carol Hildebrand
245	Bruce Carl	225	Margaret Higbee	192	Bruce Johnson
239	Michael David	216	Jerry McWilliams	164	Carl Garner
237	Jonathan Heller			154	Ryan Johnson

Total Ticks (Total of all County Life Lists)

10,122	John Fedak	2006	3,709	Russ States	2015	1,879	Richard Rehrig	2016
6,965	Deborah Grove	2018	3,589	Ted Nichols II	2017	1,786	Bill Keim	2014
6,654	Greg Grove	2018	3,549	Michael Schall	2018	1,732	Sam Sinderson	2005
5,630	Andy Keister	2018	3,548	Andy Wilson	2014	1,691	Brendyn Baptiste	2017
5,610	Michael David	2018	3,504	Nick Pulcinella	2013	1,272	Joseph Verica	2014
5,603	Al Guarente	2018	3,475	Chuck Berthoud	2018	1,030	Pamela Fisher	2009
5,271	Chad Kauffman	2018	3,421	Geoff Malosh	2009	989	Bobby Brown	2018
5,127	Ian Gardner	2017	3,092	Brian Byrnes	2018	889	Thomas Reeves	2012
5,079	Richard Nugent	2018	2,518	David McNaughton	2013	520	Ryan Johnson	2017
4,909	Randy C. Miller	2016	2,505	David Yeany II	2016	437	Michael Defina	2014
4,525	Drew Weber	2011	2,008	Timothy Becker	2016	376	Chad Hutchinson	2015
4,381	Jim Dunn	2014	2,005	Nathan Fronk	2012	257	Brian Raicich	2013
4,040	Devich Farbotnik	2018	1,890	Zachary Millen	2018	106	Rachael Shapiro	2011
3,947	Alex Lamoreaux	2014				105	Jim Ridolfi	2017

See the PSO website for the remaining lists.

SAVE THE DATE ~ ~ Mark Your Calendars!

SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

Frontiers in Ornithology
A Symposium for Youth

ASHLAND NATURE CENTER - HOCKESSIN, DE
SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

**FEATURING PRESENTATIONS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS BY RENOWNED EXPERTS IN
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Scott Weidensaul ~ Keynote

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Frontiers in Ornithology
Talking about tomorrow with the youth of today



Conservation Chat Room

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

Birders get around. Our enjoyment of birds pulls us outside. Unlike armchair travelers, content to sit at home and read National Geographic, we hit

the road, hoping to see new species or birds that are, themselves, far out of their home range. Some of us set lofty goals, ticking off birds seen in our backyard, in each Pennsylvania county, in each of the 50 states, and in many exotic countries. Some of us plan for the “big year” when the list includes not 200 species, but maybe 400! The year ends all too soon, and the same challenge begins: first of the year, first of the season, spring migration, fall migration.

As we search for birds, we know that a diversity of habitats attracts different birds. Birding, more than any other recreational activity that I can think of, makes us experience – and appreciate – a wide range of habitats, from wetlands to streams to grasslands to young forests to old forests, and so many others. Sure, runners and walkers will use those paths around a pond or wetlands, or through a city park, but they don’t stop to appreciate the song of a Swamp Sparrow in the cattails or the flash of a Yellow Warbler in a willow.

Many Pennsylvania birders think nothing of chasing rare birds that show up in unexpected places, or flying to Costa Rica to see the Resplendent Quetzal, or even to Australia to revel in a sighting of a Kookaburra. For me, the ultimate would be a trip to Papua New Guinea to watch the Birds of Paradise perform their courtship displays.

Along with the many miles we rack up in our birding adventures, we also contribute a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In fact, according to the EPA, 27% of US greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) is from transportation. Transportation is the second leading source of GHG emissions in the U.S. (electricity is #1). What’s worse, GHG emissions from transportation have increased more than any other cause. I know some birders who can afford

to drive a Prius, but most of us would rather spend our money on binoculars, spotting scopes, and air fare.

Unfortunately, as we pump more carbon into the atmosphere, both bird numbers and biodiversity are plummeting. The predictions are dire. Audubon has found that nearly half of all North American birds are severely threatened by global warming. Populations of many native bird species are severely threatened by habitat loss and climate change.

Now for the good news:

Birders can offset their carbon footprint by planting trees. A new study released by Dr. Thomas Crowther, a member of the Global Forest Biodiversity Institute, states that scientists have been under-valuing the importance of trees in combating climate change. There is room for an additional 1.2 trillion trees to grow in parks, woods, and abandoned areas around the world. Dr. Crowther believes that planting trees is more effective in combating climate change than using onshore wind power. Project Drawdown claims that onshore wind turbines will be the second best way to address global warming, second only to refrigeration. Drawdown ranks growing forests as only fifteenth place in carbon solutions, but Crowther’s research shows replenishing forests should be our goal.

I highly recommend reading the book, *Drawdown*, and exploring the website: www.drawdown.org. Drawdown is an on-going project to reverse climate change.

This spring is the perfect time to plant trees. Not only do trees counteract climate change by storing carbon, but native trees also reduce loss of biodiversity. More trees also mean more birds – especially in your backyard. Greater tree biodiversity means more bird biodiversity, too. A highly simplistic example: Blackburnian Warblers nest in evergreen trees, while Wood Thrushes nest in deciduous trees. We also know that more native trees produce more bugs for birds. A native tree provides cover, housing, and food for many bird species.

If you don’t have room in your backyard to plant more native trees, consider joining a tree planting effort near you. The Keystone 10 Million Trees Partnership hopes to plant 10 million trees in Pennsylvania by 2025. There is an interactive map on their website where you can see that the 2018 effort resulted in 24,218 trees planted in Penn-



Blackburnian Warblers nest in evergreens, but they often feed in deciduous trees during migration.

Photo by Mike Jackson

sylania. You can also join this effort – just fill out the form and you’ll be contacted. www.tenmilliontrees.org

The amazing thing about offsetting carbon by planting trees are all the added benefits. We know that trees

purify the water and the air, stabilize stream banks, and reduce floods. Trees provide food, shelter, and water to a host of wildlife, especially birds.

Dr. Doug Tallamy’s research shows that white oak trees are the #1 tree to plant for insect diversity, which means more food for birds. Let’s all try to plant at least one tree this spring and make the world a better place for birds

PSO Tree Conservation Challenge

Please email me if you plant any native trees this spring, and I’ll chart our efforts. Your name will be confidential, but I will compile how many trees were planted and where. Details on any group projects will be appreciated, too. Results will be shared in a later newsletter.

Laura Jackson
Conservation Chairperson
Bedford County
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PSO Annual Meeting
13-15 September 2019
Williamsport Holiday Inn Express



Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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