

The

PSO Pileated



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The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology
pabirds.org

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From the President's Desk...

In the past week, the fall's first snow has occurred, ushering in winter. The changing seasons can unfold dramatically here in the Mid-Atlantic region. Temperatures can drop dramatically with a passing cold front as our landscape transforms from the near-tropical lush green of summer to the inside of a freezer we call winter. Am I suggesting a disdain for the cold? Not really! Because as birders, we know that with the annual cycle of day length and temperature comes a corresponding cycle of birds.



Matt Young's excellent Annual Meeting Presentation highlighted the ID challenges presented by Red Crossbills. This Red Crossbill was photographed by Dave Brooke in Washington State.

The changing seasons contribute to the diversity of birdlife here in Pennsylvania. Species dependent on insect food or open water must flee our lovely summer hills and valleys as temperatures drop and the foliage transforms from green to brown (with some bright colors along the way). Only species able to survive on seeds and dormant insects buried in tree bark can find sustenance as the temperatures drop. A friend recently asked me if there is a month in which migration is not happening. Most simply stated: No! Even the depths of wintery February see movements of birds in response to closing water sources. As the Summer Season editor, I generate more ink describing the movements of shorebirds in June and July, or post-breeding northern dispersal of herons and egrets, than on resident breeding birds. The point here is, bird populations are constantly changing, and those changes provide endless interest and curiosity for birders for which we are all very grateful.

The winter season provides unique opportunities to see birds that come south from the Arctic or boreal regions of Canada. Modern communications now pique that interest with reports of southward movements of winter finches, a winter highlight. The excellent presentation at our September Annual Meeting by Matthew Young, President and Founder of the Finch Research Network (FiRN), highlighted this group with his research on Red Crossbill identification challenges.

That presentation is provided on our website (pabirds.org) under the Annual Meetings. And, an unprecedented southbound movement of White-winged Crossbills has been seen in Quebec this fall, with observations as far south as New York's Adirondacks in early November. Might this species, at least, visit us this winter? Seems hopeful!

A major highlight of the "winter" season is the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which is "the nation's longest-running community science bird project," having begun on Christmas Day in 1900. What a great tradition and one well supported by PSO in this issue of the *Pileated*. The CBC provides a great opportunity to join with birding friends to enjoy birds during the early-winter season! In January, PSO's own "Winter Raptor Survey" (WRS) focuses on birds of prey during the core of the winter season. Check out the website to participate in this annual survey. Community science projects, like these, are at the heart of PSO's identity. We are "for

ornithology" (the study of birds) after all. Community science engages public participation in scientific research. Four common features of citizen and community science practice are: (a) anyone can participate, (b) participants use the same protocols so that data can be combined and is of high quality, (c) data can help real scientists come to real conclusions, and (d) a wide community of scientists and volunteers work together and share data (from the North American Association of Environmental Education, naaee.org). Cornell's eBird tools have taken this to new heights. If you participate in a CBC just

because it's fun or you like birding with local friends, that's okay! Your observations are collected to build a record of bird life that helps build our knowledge and contributes to conservation.

So, embrace winter's blasts by participating in the CBC and WRS, or just bundle up and check neighborhood pines for winter finches!

Dan Brauning, President
Lycoming County

2021-22 Counts & Surveys

Special thanks to Chad Kauffman and Tony DeSantis for organizing our trips and events. If you have any questions, please contact Chad at chadkauffman@earthlink.net or Tony at tgdesantis@yahoo.com.

More trips may be added later or at the last minute. We will continue to work with local groups and clubs to bird with them in their favorite spots by joining their existing field trips or creating new ones when COVID-19 allows. Please contact any PSO board member for information.

December 14 - January 5 – Christmas Bird Counts.

January 12 - February 8 – Winter Raptor Surveys. Contact Greg Grove (gwg2@psu.edu) for more information.

February 14-17 – Great Backyard Bird Count. Our state's birders have been actively participating in this count. It's a good time to encourage others to start birding and using eBird.

Other Outings – See page 5 for Quittapahilla Audubon trips that are open to PSO members and the public as well.

PSO Pileated Quiz

How well do you know your rare Pennsylvania birds? See Answers on page 9.

1. Which owl species has been confirmed only twice in PA, once in 1896 and next in 2001.
 2. Which eider species has occurred more often in our state: King or Common?
 3. A gull rarely seen in PA is now split into two species. Which species?
 4. Which vireo species has been reported twice in PA but has never been confirmed?
 5. Are you seeing a female Brewer's Blackbird or a female Rusty Blackbird that has a completely dark eye?
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Christmas Bird Count for Kids in York County

York County Parks and York Audubon sponsor a Christmas Bird Count for Kids at Nixon County Park from 10 to 12 on December 30. This is an opportunity to take in nature and learn about our bird life with naturalists and Audubon guides. For further information or to register, please call Nixon Park at 717-428-1961.

Welcome, New Board Members!

Our President, Dan Brauning

Dan Brauning was born in Philadelphia, educated at Geneva College (Beaver Falls) and Penn State, and worked his whole life in Pennsylvania. He moved his family to the Williamsport area in 1990 while editing the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* (1992) to start his career with the Pennsylvania Game Commission as an Ornithologist. During his tenure with the PGC, he co-authored *The Birds of Pennsylvania* with Gerald McWilliams (2000) and co-edited *The Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas* (2012) with Andy Wilson.



Dan Brauning with his lovely wife Marcia enjoys time at the beach.

At the Game Commission he helped with recovery of Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcons, purchased the Piney Tract (SGL 330), and sponsored studies on species ranging from Henslow's Sparrow to Wood Thrush.

In July 2021, Dan retired from the PGC and was very glad to take a new role with the PSO.

He is active in his church, happily married to Marcia, and father of three sons who have given them four grandchildren.

Sean Murphy, PGC Liaison



Sean Murphy enjoys hiking and birding.

Sean joined the Wildlife Diversity Division of the Pennsylvania Game Commission in January 2019 and leads the Endangered and Nongame Birds Section. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Penn State University and a Ph.D. in Biology from the City University of New York in 2010. His graduate work focused on the population biology of the American Oystercatcher near the northern limits of its range.

Following graduate school, Sean worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey in Corvallis, Oregon, focusing on the interactions between avian populations and their environment—leading multiple studies on the population dynamics, life-history, and habitat use for a variety of avian species of conservation concern, including marshbirds, shorebirds, and seabirds. Prior to joining the Game Commission, Sean worked for Conservation InSight where he helped develop a spatially-explicit population estimator for the federally-endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and implement new survey protocols to improve current data collection methods.

Sean is a member of PSO, as well as the Wildlife Society, American Ornithological Society, Association of Field Ornithologists, International Wader Study Group, Waterbird Society, Wilson Ornithological Society, and the Pennsylvania Biological Survey - Ornithological Technical Committee. He is a past president of the Ornithological Societies of North America (OSNA) and currently serves as co-chair of the Waterbird Society's Conservation Committee.

Sean currently lives in Camp Hill and spends most of his free time with his wife and two young daughters. He enjoys hiking and birding.

Tony DeSantis, Board Member



Tony DeSantis is the Environmental Education Specialist at Lackawanna State Park

Tony DeSantis is an avid birder and interested in all life found in the natural world. A native of Scranton, Pennsylvania,, Tony was introduced to the world of birds in Patagonia, Arizona, as an intern at Sonoita Creek State Natural Area where he took part in Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-billed Cuckoo breeding surveys. However, it wasn't until after moving back to northeastern PA in 2007 that his interest in birding developed.

Tony has worked in a handful of state park systems (Arizona, Connecticut, North Carolina) in various positions and today continues with Pennsylvania State Parks as the Environmental Education Specialist at Lackawanna State Park and its satellite park units. While working in these protected natural areas, he has always promoted birding and bird conservation and is eager to introduce more people to the beauty of birds.

Today, Tony resides in Scranton with his fiancée Lydia and their rescued cat Mooch, and is often birding within and around Lackawanna County.



Julia Plummer, Board Member

Julia Plummer has served as eBird reviewer for Centre County since 2018. She is currently a member of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. One of her personal areas of focus is audio recording, including detecting, recording, and identifying Nocturnal Flight Calls. She has audio recorded fifty percent of the species she has observed (with that ratio standing at seventy-five percent for Pennsylvania species).

She was a volunteer with the Macaulay Library Sound Annotation project where she helped annotate spectrograms of bird songs and calls to be used for machine learning to create the Merlin Sound ID app. One of her Pennsylvania recordings appears in the “Cornell Guide to Bird Sounds: United States and Canada.”

She has participated in the Christmas Bird Count since 2015, run a route on the PA Breeding Bird Survey since 2018, and conducted surveys for the Audubon Climate Watch since 2018. She is an active member of the State College Bird Club. When not birding, she is a Professor of Science Education at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park.



Julia Plummer enjoys audio recording

Brian Byrnes, Board Member



Brian Byrnes and his son Scott enjoy kayaking.

Brian Byrnes is a lifelong Delaware County resident and birder. Brian joined PSO in 2005 after attending his first Annual Meeting in Clarion, where he added Henslow's Sparrow to his life list.

He has spent his career in the nonprofit and conservation worlds. Currently he serves as Grant Writer at Delaware County Community College. He previously served as Executive Director of the Chester Ridley Crum Watersheds Association, lifting the organization's profile through large riparian restoration projects and redesigning their water quality monitoring program.

During his seven years as Important Bird Area Coordinator for Audubon Pennsylvania, he forged partnerships across the Piedmont region of the state to expand bird conservation efforts. Brian started his career at the Brandywine Conservancy, where he managed and wrote conservation easements to protect open space and wildlife habitats.

He holds a Master of Environmental Studies degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Swarthmore College. Brian lives in Glen Mills with his wife, Katie Tarr, and their three boys: Jack (12), Kevin (10), and Scott (10).

Quittapahilla Audubon Society Field Trips

QAS has graciously shared their field trips with PSO members. There is no need to be a member of QAS to participate in the following field trips. Group size varies from a half dozen to a baker's dozen... or so... time to watch, ask, learn, enjoy. Free. All are welcome! No need to call in advance except for the Barnegat & Brigantine trip. More information about QAS can be found at their website, <http://www.qasaudubon.org>.

Saturday, January 1 – Lebanon Valley Rail Trail, led by Jim Fiorentino (717-269-0675). Kick off the new year with a winter bird walk. Meet at 10 a.m. at the Lebanon Valley Expo Center parking lot next to the trail.

Saturday, January 29 – Barnegat Lighthouse & Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, led by Jim Fiorentino (717-269-0675). Since this trip is limited to 8 individuals, please contact Jim for details. This is an all day, weather permitting, trip.

Sunday, February 20 – Union Canal Tunnel Park, led by Fritz Heilman (717-273-0487). This walk will focus on the observation of flora and fauna (including data collecting for the 25th annual "Great Backyard Bird Count"). Meet at 2 p.m. at the park's 25th Street parking lot.

Sunday, February 27 – Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, led by Jim Fiorentino (717-269-0675). We'll be observing Snow Geese and other migrating birds. Meet at 10 a.m. at the visitor center parking lot.

Saturday, March 19 – Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, led by Fritz Heilman (717-273-0487). We will be observing migrating waterfowl and resident birds. Meet at 9 a.m. at the visitor center parking lot.

The Screech-Owls of Maple Glen

By Carole Winslow

Until gathering the information to start this story, I don't believe I fully appreciated the joy I have been fortunate to experience while studying and observing the population of Eastern Screech-Owls that have made my 64-acre farm their home over the years. I moved to southern Clarion County in 1994, and the farm, named Maple Glen, is a mix of hardwood and pine forest, pasture and overgrown strip fields, a rural area that is perfect habitat for screech-owls. This is my effort to compose a summary of sorts of everything that I have learned.

I have found notes from most of my years here of the various times I had seen or heard screech-owls on the property, but starting in 2009 the sightings became a regular occurrence. That summer I found a pair with one gray and one red adult near the house with three fledged young ones. Through the winter of 2009-2010, I discovered a gray adult roosting daily in the barn rafters, and in late March 2010, a red and gray pair roosted together until April. In spring 2011, a red adult appeared in the barn 3/22 and stayed through 3/27 and did not return to the barn until 8/12. Three young ones were found nearby on 7/7 that summer, and one on 7/19. From that fall of 2011 until present, a red adult has made the barn home, roosting in the same locations and providing a glimpse into the yearly cycles and habits of this species. As she would leave in spring and then return after breeding, I was able to determine that she was a female. She was photographed beautifully by friends that first year, and while I know that I don't have definitive proof that this is the same owl currently present, I believe that to be the case. In photographs over the years she appears the same. She has followed the same patterns, and at some point between 2012-2013 (unfortunately not recorded), I discovered she had been injured, and her left ear was damaged. Since that time, the change to her ear has been permanent, making



This red morph Eastern Screech-Owl was distinctive because of her injured ear.
Photo by Carole Winslow



Josie and her mate perch side-by-side on May 25, 2021.
Photo by Carole Winslow



Now there are five! These are Josie's three fledglings on July 6, 2021.
Photo by Carole Winslow

her appearance distinctive, more or less visible depending on her posture being alert or relaxed.

In 2011 and 2012, no mate was seen with her, but in 2013 and 2014 a red male was seen roosting with her. In 2015 her mate was gray, seen with five fledged young in the barn all roosting together, the fledglings a mix of gray and red. Since that year her mate has been gray, and while again I can't be sure, I suspect it is the same bird through these years. I checked through notes and eBird records to come up with the date ranges for the start of pairing in spring and then return to the barn roost, fledging of young, and molting, as well as nesting success. Through 11 breeding seasons, there were only four years with no evidence of young, despite her absence during the breeding season and presumably nesting. Most years have shown from one to three fledglings, with the most being five, a varied mix of gray and red. As a pair they have started roosting together before breeding, most commonly in February, but dates have varied from 2/4 to as late as 3/22. Generally they roost together for several weeks to a month before she leaves to nest, with the last date being between 3/16 and 3/30. Other than in years when there is apparent nest failure, she usually returns to the barn roost after fledging, between 6/30-7/14. Until 2020, her nest site was unknown, but for the last two years she

has nested in a box behind the barn, about 20 feet up in a black walnut tree. With the nest site visible, young were seen earlier than normal this year, with fledging occurring 6/3. Typically young had been first seen from early July through 7/26. In 2020 after an apparent nest failure, the nest box had been erected around the time of their return to the barn, and they took to it readily and nested later, with fledging not occurring until about 7/9. Two young

(continued on page 8)

2021 Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch Revisited

By Chad Kauffman

On a three-year rotation, this year brought us back to the Perry/Cumberland County line for a few days of sitting on the rocks, seeing some old friends, and meeting new ones.

Saturday morning, November 6, wasn't ideal, as the meteorologists were calling for little or no winds out of the east which would have brought the birds to the Cumberland County side of the mountain. My son Noah and I arrived about 8:30 and saw Ron and Pat Freed manning the watch at first. It was quiet, so we were counting only non-raptor species before our first countable bird of the day came through – a male Northern Harrier. As the day went on, more birds were coming through. We started getting pairs of Red-shoulders, and Red-tails were moving in nice numbers. Before we knew it, our seventh Golden Eagle came through right before 5:00 p.m. We saw a pair of young Bald Eagles sparring for a while on the top of the watch. The seventh Golden of the day offered some extra excitement because it was being pushed through by a local Common Raven. Eventually another raven came from the west to harass the eagle which had a full crop. Counter Dave Grove said that the ravens make a special three-note sound in moments like this, and they both pushed the Golden back to the east and out of sight. We guessed that it might just roost for the night as it had a meal to enjoy. The day's official count was 140 raptors. We were also able to tabulate 31 species overall.

With the time changing back to standard time very early Sunday morning, we decided to arrive earlier as the birds didn't know the time had changed; they can only feel and see daylight. Paul Fritz was the opening counter with one other newbie from NJ, Debbie who hadn't yet seen a Golden Eagle there by the time Noah and I arrived at 7:00 a.m. The birds seemed to have slept in as it was very quiet on the raptor front for a few hours.



Golden Eagles were the main targets of the hawkwatch trip.
Photo by Deb Schnur Rittelmann



The bonus bird was an adult Northern Goshawk.
Photo by Deb Schnur Rittelmann

Hundreds of American Robins were flying from the south side heading north, not really taking the migration route one would expect. We were fortunate to see and hear some notable birds – Horned Lark, Purple Finch, American Pipit.

At 9:44 a.m. we had a very close Golden Eagle on the south side right at the treetops. It was a juvenile which made us ponder if it could have been the one that the ravens ran off the evening before. It was a lifer for several on the mountain, and the watchers got a boost of energy in the cold.

This year's official counter Brandon Brogle came to join us on his off-day with the hope that the better winds coming from the predicted north-northwest might offer raptors. As the day passed, the number of visitors and field trip attendees grew, but the hawk numbers were just trickling in as there was little wind. Especially before lunch, it was almost perfectly still, and after that a light breeze occurred. Again, pairs

of Red-shouldered Hawks came through. Many in the crowd started to peel off, but at 2:44 p.m., Dave Grove pointed out a bird on the Cumberland County side that came up over the top, and several shouted that it was a Northern Goshawk. Everyone on the watch got to see this bird, noticed it was an adult, and that it was missing some feathers in its left wing. It came across the whole rock top platform on the Perry County side and flew out of sight. It was a lifer for many on the mountain including Brandon. As the excitement built, Ian Gardner even removed his jacket to show off his Northern Goshawk t-shirt. Thankfully many on the site got some pics and even some video. This was truly a memorable moment as their numbers have slacked off to almost nothing at the watches, and they just aren't seen much at all anywhere in this part of the state. The past few I have personally seen have been young ones at hawkwatches. This was also the first one for 2021 at this site.

Shortly after this adventure, a pair of Golden Eagles came through on the north side at fairly close range providing great looks and more photo opportunities. We even saw a single Monarch butterfly, the fourth one in November, after huge numbers in the prior months.

The theme of the day on the mountain also seemed to be baked goods. Several of our group and others shared cookies and birthday cupcakes. The friendship, conversation, and camaraderie were at the top of their game for those who attended. The young kids were playing on the rocks while first-time visitors came from various states. I also heard several different languages on both Saturday and Sunday. When it comes to enjoying mother nature, it

can come from so many points on the earth from all ages. We learned train knowledge from Karena and Tim's boys, bad jokes from some of the regulars, and possibly song from Dave Grove. You just can't buy this type of entertainment, Folks. Noah was joined by Joe and Henry Gyekis in garbage cleanup. We were able to tabulate 33 species on Sunday as well.

Next year's Golden Eagle field trip will not be the first weekend in November which has been the norm for several years. It will be either the weekend prior or the weekend after that due to conflicting schedules on my part. Those plans will be announced at a later date, and 2022 will return us to Hawk Mountain.

The Screech-Owls of Maple Glen (continued from page 6)

remained visible often at dusk around the barnyard area until 8/15. Generally after the young ones are no longer seen, one or sometimes both of the adults return to roosting in the barn, and can be observed going through molt. I found fewer notes on this, but the earliest I have documented this was 7/18, and more generally in August, with end dates ranging from 8/19 through 9/8.

On many occasions over the years I have watched the adults perching at dusk, and sometimes early morning, on the barn loft door looking out over the field. During most days except breeding season the female makes the barn her home, using one of three perches in the rafters. She appears accustomed to interruptions and noise from the workshop below her and is not deterred from her perch. Before the nest box was placed, I had learned over the years when to find the young in summer by just following the bird noise at dusk, as the fledglings would be regularly mobbed by the smaller birds. Last year by virtue of a trail cam on the box, we were able to watch the male making regular nightly trips to the box, most frequently at dusk and right after, every 20-40 minutes, taking prey to the entrance then leaving. He would regularly perch on the back of the barn facing the nest box, one morning holding a freshly killed chipmunk. In mid August last year I watched two young birds learning to hunt, and then fighting and bill snapping over prey, while the female watched from near the house. This year I was witness to the tail end of a Great Horned Owl attack, coming home

in the morning to find a Cooper's Hawk with a nearby nest harassing the larger owl next to the barn, and finding some bloody feathers of a young screech owl nearby. Several days later, one of the young birds was noted in photographs with a puncture wound in its wing, and I suspect that it was lucky enough to survive an attack. These are just a few of the many different scenes I have been privileged to witness over the years. My only regret is that I didn't keep better notes and eBird records earlier, and now I make an effort to remedy that, trying to capture arrival and departure dates as well as individual birds, color morphs, and other details for future reference.

Other than providing a nest box, I have tried my best to not interfere in any of the activities of the owls, merely observing and enjoying them. But while I understand that they are wild and independent creatures, I will admit to having developed an affection for the red female that is here most days and call her Josey. As the years go by, I realize that one day when I see her, it may be the last time, and that at some point she will be gone, as it seems that she is approaching the expected lifespan for a screech-owl. On the day when I know she is gone, I will feel sorrow and loss. Hopefully it is still some years away, but when the time comes, I will try to focus on the years of pleasure and learning she has brought to me, and celebrate that rather than mourn the loss. The barn will remain, and maybe one of her many young will find her way back here to continue the cycle of screech-owls at Maple Glen.

Did you know that the Pileated Woodpecker is "the bird of the year 2021" for the American Birding Association?

PA Ornithological Records Committee Requesting Candidates for Nomination

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) is a special committee of the PSO responsible for reviewing rare bird observations for acceptance into the state's official ornithological record. Currently, we need to fill **three member vacancies** for upcoming three-year terms beginning in January (2022-2024). We request interested candidates to contact me or any other current PORC member or PSO Director for nomination for inclusion in this year's election, which will be held in late December. Per PORC bylaws, members are nominated by PORC Chair, current PORC members, or PSO Directors, and candidates are encouraged to contact one of these members at the time of their submission for candidacy.

See PSO Directors on page 20 of this newsletter or here: <https://pabirds.org/index.php/about-us/organization> and PORC members listed below.

Candidates, please send via email a one-page biography describing qualifications: 1) expertise in bird identification, 2) knowledge of Pennsylvania birds, and 3) familiarity with Pennsylvania geography. Please also include name, county of residence, contact information, and your nominating PSO Director or PORC member (optional). Please submit biographies by 18 Dec 2021 to dyeany@paconserve.org.

More about PORC

The committee consists of seven voting members with the above-mentioned qualifications. We strive to maintain a geographical balance to the committee as much as possible. PORC elects its Chair and non-voting Secretary on an annual basis, and new members as terms expire. All voting members serve for a three-year term and can be re-elected for one consecutive three-year term. PORC reviews rare bird observations submitted both directly to the PORC database online and through eBird as

qualifying observations in an expedited review process. PORC serves four primary purposes:

- 1) To determine the authenticity of rare or unusual bird sightings in the state of Pennsylvania.
- 2) To maintain the official checklist of the birds of Pennsylvania.
- 3) To maintain permanent original bird records and all PORC voting results and comments for use by present and future ornithological students and researchers.
- 4) To publish all records receiving a decision on inclusion in Pennsylvania's official ornithological record.

Please visit the PORC website for official bylaws and more details on the committee:

<https://pabirds.org/records/>

Current PORC Members

George Armistead
Devich Farbotnik (term ending)
Mike Fialkovich (term ending)
Julia Plummer
Tessa Rhinehart (non-voting Secretary)
Scott Stoleson
Billy Weber (term ending)
David Yeany II (voting member Chair)

David Yeany, PORC Chair
Allegheny County

Answers to PSO Bird Quiz (page 2)

1. Boreal Owl
2. King Eider
3. Mew Gull, now split into Short-billed Gull of northwestern North America and Common Gull of the Old World. (Now we must wonder which one or whether both can be confirmed for PA. Both former subspecies have been reported here.)
4. Bell's Vireo
5. Brewer's Blackbird

The Raven Reporter

Tales of
Discovery about
Pennsylvania
Birds



Ricketts Glen State Park Bird Walks in 2021

In a quest to increase the appreciation and knowledge of Pennsylvania's big woods as important bird habitat, I have been working with DCNR Bureau of State Parks in educational programs at Ricketts Glen State Park. This state park is part of a large PA Important Bird Area that includes much of the public lands on North Mountain. Unlike many parks, it is mostly forested and includes a large tract of old growth forest and hundreds of acres of mature forest. There are several walking trails that make access into these forests rather easy. Although the park has a reputation of difficult access due to its popular Falls Trail with its windy path up the mountainside, most trails are on fairly level ground and are not difficult walking. We usually choose the easy trails for birding and for any public walk. Although Ricketts Glen is well-known, it also is relatively remote – "30 miles from anywhere." So, attracting attendees is more challenging than you might think.

We had a very successful series of public educational bird walks in 2021 at Ricketts Glen State Park. I extend a big thanks to Rhiannon Summers, the park's Environmental Education Specialist (Naturalist), for coordinating our walks, helping to lead them, and teaching so many people about birds at the park. She also teaches beginning birdwatching in other programs. Ranger Sarah Derr also assisted with two walks. I am fortunate to receive so much encouragement and support in the park for bird study and education.

Our team offered 14 bird walks in 2021. We held 12 walks with a total of 76 participants. Twice we had no one attending the walk when tenuous weather was predicted, but we went birding anyway. All of the walks were conducted on weekdays. Most attendees were from nearby Columbia, Sullivan, and Lycoming counties. The state park is mostly in Luzerne, but includes some of Sullivan and a sliver of Columbia. Fourteen other counties were

represented including some distant ones: Allegheny, Berks, Bradford, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Crawford, Erie, Lancaster, Lehigh, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Montour, and Montgomery. In addition, we had participants from New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Indiana this year. Many attendees were camping or staying in the cabins in the park. Several new birders saw their first Cerulean Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, or Scarlet Tanager on the walks.

"Ear birding" is emphasized as part of the experience so we can advance the skills of attendees. It also is in the set of educational priorities to talk about the challenges of climate change, an easy subject to quietly observe as we study some of the birds of the boreal forest that are declining. We also mention the wintering grounds of many of the birds observed. It is amazing to many participants that the birds of the park travel to Central America, the Andes Mountains, and the West Indies. Birds surely tie us together.

We plan more walks next year! Plan to attend or lead your own walks in the local birding hotspot.

Penn State Wood Thrush Research Results

Dr. Margaret Brittingham has been a leader in bird research for several years, especially when it comes to the ecology of forest birds. One of the many subjects that she has tackled with graduate students is the Wood Thrush, one of the most charismatic of the state's forest birds. This year marks the last of her research projects at Penn State since she is planning to retire at the end of 2021. She leaves a tremendous legacy of first-class bird research. Her two last research students were Eric Zawatski and Scott Parkhill. Their research projects should help guide a great deal of wildlife-based forest management in the future.

Most recently, the Pennsylvania Game Commission initiated a research project in Central Pennsylvania to study Wood Thrush ecology in the state's oak forest. The main reason for this research is the high responsibility that this state has for the future of Wood Thrush. The state's forests support approximately 12% of the total breeding population of this songster. The 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas point count project estimated the total Wood Thrush breeding population as 660,000 singing males. Although Wood Thrush is a common breeding bird in the state, it has declined precipitously over the last 50 years, probably losing about 55% of its population in that same time frame. Learning about the

factors influencing Wood Thrush nesting area selection and nest success should help guide management decisions and planning. It would be beneficial if we can learn how to manage our forests in a way that can slow, stop, or reverse this tragic decline. The oak forests were chosen as the focus of research since so much of the publicly owned forests where Wood Thrushes live are oak-dominated, and the state agencies can prioritize Wood Thrushes for management due to the state's prioritization of that Species of Greatest Conservation Need (from the state's Wildlife Action Plan).



Pennsylvania's forests support approximately 12 percent of the total breeding population of Wood Thrushes.

Photo by Doug Gross

Despite that Wood Thrushes are common in the state's oak forests, they do not often nest in oak trees. In this Central Pennsylvania study, Scott Parkhill found that Witch Hazel was the most commonly used woody plant as a nest substrate (34.1%). After Witch Hazel, Wood Thrushes picked Eastern Hemlock (12.8%), American Beech (8.5%), and Red Maple (7.3%). Wood Thrushes seemed to be attracted to woods where there is a rich understory of saplings and shrubs. They just seem more common in woods with Witch Hazel, Striped Maple, and other woody plants with similar structures. This finding, which I find very credible, will create some challenges for management since these woody plants are not favored in commercial forestry. If we are going to manage forests for Wood Thrushes, there will need to be a forestry that is ecosystem-focused rather than based on commercial interests.

The project led by Eric Zawatski focused on Wood Thrush nest success. Research by the Smithsonian Institute indicates that although wintering ground losses contribute to Wood Thrush declines, the breeding ground is a stronger influence on the decline. So, if we are to enhance the chances that Wood Thrush population trends improve, the nesting success needs to improve. The PSU team looked at many factors that could influence their nest success. It has been well known that Wood Thrushes tend to be more successful in larger forests than smaller patches of forests so typical of the more populated sections of our state. Eric's study considered the ecological factors that drive nesting success in contiguous Pennsylvania forests. This Penn State study is significant that it was conducted in larger scale forests rather than more fragmented patches of forest where edge effects are

more obviously a factor. And there are management issues such as timbering that influence nest success. The study also considered prey of the forest-floor-foraging Wood Thrush, namely the invertebrate and other calcium-rich prey like snails that they consume and how their biomass influences brood productivity.

As part of this study, the PSU Wood Thrush team found 248 active nests, quantified the vegetation around all nests, and measured land cover attributes at three special scales (0.5 km, 1 km, and 2.5 km). To understand the influence of invertebrate biomass on reproduction, the team monitored 98 thrush nests at five field sites. The availability of macroinvertebrate prey influences the nest success of other songbirds on the eastern forest, so it would seem likely that this is also the case with the ground-foraging Wood Thrush that is known to prefer calcium-rich prey like snails.

The results of Eric's study are intriguing and informative, but a bit surprising. Study results showed that the most important factor for nest success was the amount of developed cover in the landscape at all three scales considered. Basically, even with the many parameters measured by this team, its results showed that patterns in land cover were most influential over nest success, and the amount of developed cover in the landscape around a nest was the most influential predictor. At all three spatial scales (0.5 km, 1 km, and 2.5 km), developed cover was included in the best fitting model predicting nest success, with developed cover having a strongly negative relationship with nest success at all three spatial scales. Even an increase of 100 hectares (247 acres) in the landscape 2.5 km (1.55 mile) around a nest can reduce the chance of nest success by 35%. This is about the size of the average housing development. Most nests fail due to predation. Brown-headed Cowbird nest parasitism was found to be a very minor factor. Nest success declined with increased timbering within one km of the nest, but there was not a detectable effect at a half-km or 2 km from the nest. A lesson from this study is that bigger forests are better for Wood Thrushes and that some timbering within a large forest block may not be a negative factor for productivity when considered on a larger scale. Even this study tells us that the size of forests really matters for Wood Thrushes.

The second part of the study concentrated on the role of invertebrate and snail availability on Wood Thrush productivity. The results of this thorough study are that neither the overall macroinvertebrate biomass or the calcium-rich prey, snails, significantly influenced nest success or productivity at these forest sites. It appears that in these forests, the Wood Thrushes chose areas where enough ample prey items were present to support nesting. The biggest factor seemed to be the distance to forest edge even in these larger forest blocks.

Future planning for forest songbirds should emphasize minimizing development within the larger forest blocks. Timbering is a local factor but not a factor on a larger scale. I believe that is probably especially true when the silviculture are shelterwood cuts where a lot of standing

timber are retained; this also supports young forest species that are in decline.

We congratulate Dr. Brittingham on her pending retirement from Penn State and thank her for her incredible contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology. We are all in her debt.

Good birding!

Doug Gross
Pennsylvania Boreal Bird Project
Rickett Glen State Park Bird Project
dagross144@verizon.net

Conservation Chat Room

Are You a Conservation Birder?



Birds bring so much joy to people, but does the act of birdwatching, or birding, help birds? We've lost three billion birds in North America over the last 50 years.¹ We know birds are in trouble due to climate change, habitat loss, and a host of other threats, so let's combine the excitement of birdwatching with ways we

can help birds. After all, there are about 45 million birders in the U.S., so if even a small percentage of birders become "conservation birders," we could really make a difference.²

1. **Use eBird.** Enter your bird sightings and observations into eBird.org on a regular, if not daily, basis. Even a 15-minute eBird checklist while you eat breakfast can brighten the rest of your day, and it provides important data to biologists to help us understand basic bird biology. The free mobile app makes it easy to enter your sightings, plus you will have a journal of your birding experiences.
2. **Do Citizen Science.** Participate in other citizen science projects like Christmas Bird Counts or

PSO's Winter Raptor Survey. Participate in Audubon's Climate Watch or the Eastern Whip-poor-will Project, part of a nation-wide project of the Center for Conservation and Biology at the College of William and Mary (www.nightjars.org). The Pennsylvania Game Commission asks birders to help with various avian surveys, such as marsh birds and Sandhill Cranes. Watch for those requests on the PABIRDS listserv and consider volunteering.

3. **Make your property bird-friendly.** Offer natural food and cover by planting a variety of native plants. Provide clean water. Fruit-producing shrubs and trees benefit birds, but baby birds need soft, juicy caterpillars more likely to be found on native trees like white oaks. Enroll in the Homegrown National Park by joining the "largest cooperative conservation project ever conceived or attempted." <https://homegrownnationalpark.org>

You can find native plants for your area by going to www.audubon.org/native-plants and entering your email and zip code. Information on where to buy native plants is also provided.

4. **Make your dwelling bird-safe.** Window collisions are one of the most frequent causes of bird mortality. Dr. Doug Tallamy, the leading proponent of native plants, cautions that a bird-

friendly property must begin by removing what is killing birds in the yard – unprotected windows and free roaming cats. Keep your cats inside!

After much trial and error, we found that garden netting stretched tight in front of – and out from – our kitchen windows is effective in preventing window kills. The netting is attached to rods below and above the window and pulled tight. Birds see the netting and avoid the window or bounce off the netting if they do fly into it. There are various other solutions – pick one that fits your budget and is effective:

Acopian Bird Savers:

<https://www.birdsavers.com>

The Bird Screen Company:

<https://www.birdscreen.com>

Collidescape:

<https://www.collidescape.org>

5. **Slow down!** Millions of birds die each year from colliding with cars and trucks. Drive more slowly, especially on country roads, and you'll be less likely to hit a bird. I've collided with Wild Turkey, Canada Goose, Lark Bunting, and American Robin. The Lark Bunting was a casualty when driving at high speed on the Wyoming interstate. The American Robin was luckier – we found the fledgling hopping inside our garage the morning after we attended a June picnic in Rothrock State Forest in Huntingdon County. Close inspection of the car showed a few tiny feathers still stuck to the grill, but the robin was unharmed. We had a rehab permit at the time, so we raised it until it could survive on its own.
6. **Buy bird-friendly food.** Your dollars help to preserve bird habitat when you buy shade-grown coffee and chocolate. Coffee sold in grocery stores is most often sun coffee, grown like corn in huge fields after the forested habitat is cut down. Shade-grown coffee, though, is grown below the forest canopy so the habitat that birds need is still there. Research shows that many of our neotropical birds spend the winter in shade-grown coffee plantations in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. The **Smithsonian Bird-friendly coffee** is the Gold

Standard for shade-grown coffee and can be purchased online or locally.

Where to buy:

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/where-buy-bird-friendly-coffee>

Alter Eco is one company that sells shade-grown chocolate – just google “Alter Eco” to find a retailer near you.

7. **Save boreal forest habitat.** I'm not making this up: 80% of North American waterfowl, 63% of finches, and 53% of warbler species, representing three to five billion birds, depend on the boreal forest. For nearly 100 species, over 50% of their entire breeding population occurs in the boreal forest and for 35 species, more than 80% of their entire breeding populations occurs in this habitat. See more astounding facts at BorealBirds.org.

So how can we help these birds? Easy – buy toilet paper that is NOT made from logging the boreal forest. I switched to bamboo toilet paper a few years ago made by **Who Gives A Crap** (WGAC), which gets the highest environmental rating (A+) from the Natural Resources Defense Council while Charmin, Quilted Northern, Scott, Angel Soft, Cottonelle, and Kirkland all get an F because their products contain wood pulp from the boreal forest.³

Place your order today:

www.us.whogivesacrap.com

8. **Buy the Duck Stamp each year.** This is not a postage stamp, it's a winning combination of waterfowl artwork teamed with conservation that costs \$25 and is obtained from your local post office. A whopping 98% of the stamp's face value protects the 95 million acres of public land in the National Wildlife Refuge system. The stamp also serves as a pass to more than 500 refuges. In contrast to boreal birds, waterfowl have increased by 56% over the past 50 years due to wetland protection and restoration tied with conservation investments like the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, aka the Duck Stamp.⁴
9. **Renew or join PSO.** Next, join other conservation groups like Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, your local land conservancy, etc. Volunteer to lead bird

walks at state parks. Contact me to become a member of the PSO Conservation Committee.

Get a team together for the June 17- 20, 2022, for the 2nd Annual PSO Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation. You don't have to blitz all four days. Teams will raise funds for conservation partners as they contribute to eBird. More details will follow in the March issue of *The PSO Pileated*.

10. **Introduce birds to kids.** Forge a brighter future for birds and kids when you help kids get excited about birds. Even very young kids enjoy the challenge of learning bird names using cards or bingo boards. There's a bird bingo game online for \$25 through Amazon, or you can email me for a free copy of the bingo board that I made for kids.

Sign out a Bird Backpack from your local library and use it with your kids or grandkids. If your library doesn't have a Bird Backpack, email me and I'll share how Juniata Valley Audubon Society partnered with six libraries in south-central Pennsylvania to provide a Bird Backpack for each community.

I recently heard a presentation by Ron Rohrbaugh, Director of Conservation Science/Forest Programs for

Audubon. He pointed out that many of the forest birds will reach the tipping point in 25 to 30 years, when it might be too late to save them from extinction. He mentioned Wood Thrush, Golden-winged Warblers, Canada Warblers, Cerulean Warblers, Ruffed Grouse, and Northern Goshawks as examples of species that may be gone if we don't take action to stop climate change and reduce habitat loss. Their lives are in our hands.

1. https://abcbirds.org/3-billion-birds/?gclid=CjwKCAiAs92MBhAXEiwAXTi255tx7KqSKZ58KSGPOW_f4vTgHvxd_ftCGo-i3jcRNKcE-LQ2Wo-DSRoCtKsQAvD_BwE

2. <https://www.10000birds.com/how-manybirders-are-there-really-updated.htm>

3. www.nrdc.org/experts/jennifer-skene/toiletpaper-driving-climate-crisis-every-flush

4. <https://www.3billionbirds.org/findings>

Laura Jackson
Conservation Chair
Bedford County
mljackson2@embarqmail.com

Field Trip and Education Committees

Have you been missing our organized outings? Then keep an eye out for upcoming trips being put together now by the PSO! Besides chasing birds, these get-togethers allow you to hone your identification skills, learn more about avian biology, and take in the natural beauty of Pennsylvania. Plus, you'll get to know fellow members as more than a name you see on the rare bird alerts! Whether you're a new birder looking to increase your knowledge or an expert willing to share your insight, all are welcome.

Educational webinars are also being planned. Various topics will be presented – everything ranging from current ornithological research to demystifying confusing bird groups to general natural history.

Spring and Fall Migration Round-Ups, held by the PA Bureau of State Parks, continue to increase the number of

participating parks. This spring, the PSO will lend its support to the Bureau. We'll keep you posted on the week-long event scheduled in early May of 2022.

If you are interested in joining these committees, leading a trip, or presenting a topic, we encourage you to reach out to us.

All events will be posted on the PSO website and on the PSO Facebook pages.

Tony DeSantis
Field Trip & Education Committees
Lackawanna County



Christmas Bird Counts Held in Pennsylvania*

	Name of Count	County	Compiler	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Date
1	Allentown	Lehigh/Berks	Brandon Swayser	610-965-4397 X 136	bws76@yahoo.com	12/18/21
2	Audubon	Montgomery Delaware Chester	Vincent Smith	484-410-1157	Nyctea34@aol.com	12/26/21
3	Bald Eagle	Centre	Bob Snyder	814-753-2629	rhs2@psu.edu	12/28/21
4	Beaver	Beaver	Rick Mason	724-847-0909	richarddmason@gmail.com	12/18/21
5	Bedford	Bedford	Laura & Mike Jackson	814-652-9268	jacksonlaura73@gmail.com	1/01/22
6	Belsano	Indiana Cambria	Robert Gordon	814-418-8412	rhgiii@robertgordoniiiiviolinmaker.com	12/18/21
7	Benezette	Clearfield, Elk	Mark Johnson	814-546-2886	luckybirder@gmail.com	1/02/22
8	Bernville	Berks	Ed Barrell	610-926-2962	ed.barrell@comcast.net	1/01/22
9	Bethlehem-Easton	Northampton	Elaine & Donald Mease	610-346-7754	measede@enter.net	1/02/22
10	Bloomsburg	Columbia	Karol Pasquinelli	570-351-5120	karol2@ptd.net northbranchbirders@gmail.com	12/19/21
11	Buchanan Trail	Franklin Fulton	Vern Gauthier	717-385-9526	verngauthier14@gmail.com	12/14/21
12	Buffalo Creek	Washington	Larry Helgerman	412-508-0321	bobolink1989@gmail.com	12/19/21
13	Buffalo Creek Valley	Butler Armstrong	George Reese	724-353-9649	g.reese@gaiconsultants.com	12/18/21
14	Bushy Run	Westmoreland	Steve Manns	724-516-2244	psuloon@yahoo.com	1/01/22
15	Butler	Butler Lawrence Mercer	Chris Kubiak	412-963-6100	ckubiak@aswp.org	12/18/21
16	Central Bucks	Bucks	Diane Allison	267-733-3868	dalliso@mail.ptd.net	12/26/21
17	Chambersburg	Franklin	Valerie Barnes	717-352-4397	barnesva4@comcast.net	12/18/21
18	Clarion	Clarion	Mal Hays Flo McGuire	814-764-5645 814-755-3672	malhays54@gmail.com fmcguire1@verizon.net	12/18/21
19	Clarksville	Greene	Terry Dayton	724-627-9665	tdayton@windstream.net	12/18/21
20	Cowanessque Lake	Tioga	Sean Minnick		minnickjk@yahoo.com	12/18/21
21	Culp	Blair	Laura Jackson John Carter	814-652-9268	mljackson2@embarqmail.com carter0206@aol.com	12/18/21
22	Curtin	Dauphin	Scott Bills	717-896-8859	srb24@comcast.net	12/28/21

23	Dallas Area	Luzerne	Rick Koval	570-991-0580	unibirder@yahoo.com	12/18/21
24	Dingman's Ferry	Pike	Derek Scott	570-828-2310 x234	dscott@peec.org	12/26/21
25	DuBois	Clearfield Jefferson	Marianne Atkinson, Joc Smrekar		marianne5@windstream.net	12/18/21
26	Elverson	Chester	Jim Cook	610-587-7545	escjim@windstream.net	12/20/21
27	Emporium	Cameron	Bob Martin	814-486-1990	bmartin@zitomedia.net	12/19/21
28	Erie	Erie	Michele Franz		isomorphun@roadrunner.com	12/18/21
29	Gettysburg	Adams	Mike Bertram	717-352-7936	the2nomads@centurylink.net	12/18/21
30	Glenolden	Delaware	David Eberly	610-543-3499	david.eberly@gmail.com	12/18/21
31	Grove City	Butler Mercer Lawrence Venango	Brendyn Baptiste	724-496-4856	brendynbaptiste@yahoo.com	12/26/21
32	Hamburg	Berks Schuylkill	Laurie Goodrich	610-756-6961 570-943-3411 x106	goodrich@hawkmtn.org	12/26/21
33	Harrisburg	Dauphin	Annette Mathes	717-514-4512	amathes19@verizon.net	12/18/21
34	Huntingdon	Huntingdon	Deb Grove	814-643-3295	dsg4@psu.edu	12/19/21
35	Imperial	Allegheny Washington	Bob Mulvihill	412-522-5729	robert.mulvihill@aviary.org	12/14/21
36	Indiana	Indiana	Roger & Marg Higbee	724-354-3493 412-309-3538	bcoriole@windstream.net rvhigbee@windstream.net	12/27/21
37	Johnstown	Cambria	Jeff Payne	814-279-8142	paynemt@gmail.com	12/19/21
38	Juniata - Lewistown	Juniata	Abram Troyer Chad Kauffman	717-994-6715	chadkauffman@earthlink.net	12/18/21
39	Lake Raystown	Huntingdon Blair	Jon Kauffman	717-413-5522	jvk5019@psu.edu	12/28/21
40	Lancaster	Lancaster	Barbara Hunsberger Roger Stoner	717-393-4091	phunsberger@comcast.net	1/02/22
41	Lebanon	Lebanon Dauphin	Fritz Heilman	717-273-0487	volks5@verizon.net	12/18/21
42	Lewisburg	Union,Snyder, Northumberland	Allen Schweinsberg	570-524-0432	aschwein@bucknell.edu	12/18/21
43	Linesville	Crawford	Clare Nicolls	814-587-6395	tcnicolls@windstream.net	12/19/21
44	Lititz	Lancaster Lebanon	Ted Nichols	717-856-3851	tanicholsii@gmail.com	12/26/21
45	Lock Haven- Jersey Shore	Clinton Lycoming	Wayne Laubscher	570-748-7511	wnlaubscher@comcast.net	12/18/21

46	Mansfield-Wellsboro	Tioga	Gary Tyson	570-724-5789	gnats3@ptd.net	1/01/22
47	Montrose	Susquehanna	Evan Mann	570-663-2621	7evanmann@gmail.com	12/14/21
48	New Bloomfield	Perry	Betsy Riter		rriter@pa.net	12/27/21
49	Newville	Cumberland	Vern Gauthier	717-385-9526	verngauthier14@gmail.com	1/01/22
50	Ohiopyle	Fayette Somerset	Matt Juskowich	412-831-0898	jusko88@yahoo.com	1/02/22
51	Northern Lycoming	Lycoming	David Brown	570-772-9262	davidebrownpa@gmail.com	1/02/22
	Ohiopyle		Matthew Juskowich		jusko88@yahoo.com	1/02/22
52	Penns Creek	Centre	Cathy Pierce		winghaven.nursery@gmail.com	12/18/21
53	Pennypack Valley	Philadelphia	Peter Kurtz	215-342-3638 215-685-0470	peter.kurtz@phila.gov	12/18/21
54	Philipsburg	Centre Clearfield	Greg Kojadinovich	814-237-5964	gsak40@gmail.com	
55	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	Brian Shema	412-963-6100	bshema@aswp.org	1/01/22
56	Pittsburgh South Hills	Allegheny Washington	Nancy Page Gigi Gerben	412-221-4795	nanpaul@verizon.net birdersx5@gmail.com	12/18/21
57	Pleasantville	Venango	Russ States	814-676-6320	pelagics202@gmail.com	1/02/22
58	Pocono Mt.	Monroe	Darryl Speicher		poconoavian@hotmail.com	12/19/21
59	Potter County	Potter	Dave Hauber	814-274-8946	haubers3@penn.com	12/19/21
60	Reading	Berks	Lucy Cairns	610-223-4501		12/19/21
61	Rector	Westmoreland	Annie Lindsay	724-593-7521	LindsayA@carnegiemnh.org	12/18/21
62	Ryerson	Greene	Marjorie Howard	724-852-3155	birdwatcher108@comcast.net	1/01/22
63	Scranton	Lackawanna	Mark Catalano	570-760-6556	mwc.2473@gmail.com	12/18/21
64	South Butler	Butler	Chris Kubiak	412-963-6100	ckubiak@aswp.org	1/02/22
65	Southeastern Bradford	Bradford	Rebecca Lesko	570-592-2629	EMNCinfo@yahoo.com	
66	Southern Bucks	Bucks	Mark Gallagher	215-378-8162	mgallagher@princetonhydro.com	12/18/21
67	Southern Lancaster County	Lancaster	Bob Schutsky	717-572-0771 (10 a.m. to 9 p.m.)	info@birdtreks.com	12/19/21
68	State College	Centre	Bob Fowles	814-238-1990	rbf@psu.edu	12/19/21
69	Tamaqua	Schuykill Carbon	Jonathan DeBalko		jonathan.debalko@wilkes.edu	12/30/21
70	Tunkhannock	Wyoming	Rick Koval	570-991-0580	unibirder@yahoo.com	12/19/21

71	Upper Bucks	Bucks, Lehigh Montgomery	Bill Etter	215-964-3613	billetter01@gmail.com	12/19/21
72	Warren	Warren	Michael Toole	814-723-4714	m_t_toole@verizon.net	12/18/21
73	Washington	Washington	Tom Contreras	724-223-6118	tcontreras@washjeff.edu	12/18/21
74	West Chester	Chester	Barry Blust Anthony Fernandes	610-458-5616	BarryBlust@comcast.net jets741@verizon.net	12/18/21
75	Western Chester	Chester	Larry Lewis	484-340-7672	earlybirdtours@comcast.net	1/02/22
76	Western Schuylkill	Schuylkill	Dave Kruel	570-622-3704	dkruel300@comcast.net	12/19/21
77	White Mills	Wayne	Barb Leo	570-253-2364	barbaraaleo@earthlink.net	12/18/21
78	Wild Creek– Little Gap	Carbon Monroe	Corey Husic	570-269-7509	coreyhusic@gmail.com	12/26/21
79	Williamsport	Lycoming	David Brown	570-772-9262	davidebrownpa@gmail.com	12/18/21
80	Wyncote	Montgomery	Kristy Morley	215-646-8866	kristy@wwwa.org	12/18/21
81	York	York	Bernie Frick	717-843-6675	bernardfrick@alum.lehigh.edu	12/18/21
82	York Springs	Adams, York, Cumberland	Tim Johnson	717-409-4805	tj359@sbcglobal.net	12/29/21

Everyone Loves Zinnias

By Linda Wagner

On a warm late July afternoon, iced tea in hand, I parked myself on the porch to enjoy a summer afternoon and watch the traffic in the backyard. This summer the garden is a profusion of zinnias in full bloom all standing three to four feet tall. The flowers are all sizes and a riot of color, and they are attracting a wide variety of "zinnia lovers."

The hummingbirds are loving them along with the hummingbird clearwing moth, various butterflies, and a variety of other pollinators.

In competition for the flowers is the local American Goldfinch crew. They seem to love the zinnia seeds. Some of the flowers have been reduced to nubs as a result of the finches methodically picking off the petals one at a time and chowing down the attached seed.

The finches were enjoying an afternoon snack, and I was loving the show. One male goldfinch landed on a particularly slim flower stem. Every time he tried to reach the flower and seeds, the stem would arch down putting

the flower out of his reach. Now keep in mind that there are PLENTY of other zinnias to munch, but he seemed intent on this one small flower.

As I watched, he slid sideways on the stem until it started to bend. Then he pinched the thin stem in his beak, not breaking it but crimping it. Next he grabbed the stem just beyond the crimped spot and worked at bending it back and folding it against the stronger end of the stem. With his little goldfinch "feet" clenched firmly around both stems, he held them together and inched his way back to where the flower was and enjoyed his snack! With both stems together to make a stronger perch, he didn't have any trouble getting the seeds.

I was amazed! This particular goldfinch must be an Einstein among goldfinches! How did he figure the puzzle out? Where did he learn to bend a stem for his benefit? It almost seemed like rudimentary tool usage. Where there's a will there's a way as the saying goes. Will wonders never cease?!?

Recap of Board of Directors' Meeting

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's Board of Directors met on November 17, 2021, with 14 directors present for the teleconference meeting.

The minutes of the September 15, 2021, board meeting were approved. The treasurer's report was given, and it was noted that PSO is solvent and in good financial shape.

It was agreed that the Earl Poole and Conservation Awards and Student Research Grants should be awarded annually whether or not an annual meeting is held.

A third Breeding Bird Atlas is planned, and this will present an educational opportunity for PSO to promote bird ID and atlas procedures.

The Anthracite Ridge Wind Project was discussed, and it was decided that PSO should support the

efforts to question the environmental impacts of the project.

The virtual Annual Meeting was reviewed and considered a success. The Field Trip breakout room yielded a number of ideas for field trips across the state and beyond. A waiver of liability form may be required for field trip participants to sign.

A face-to-face annual meeting was proposed for fall 2022 along with a number of variations including a virtual meeting with regional field trips. The possibility of PSO's presenting webinars was discussed.

A complete transcript of the meeting minutes may be found on the PSO website, pabirds.org.

Roger Higbee, Secretary
Indiana County

Articles Needed for "The PSO Pileated"

Do you have a birding story to tell? What was your "spark bird"? Do you have a favorite bird? Did you observe an unusual bird behavior? Did you participate in a Christmas Bird Count? Did you do a Winter Raptor Survey? Did you get a life bird? Did you have a memorable experience that you're willing to share? Or did you take an enjoyable walk through field or forest?

These are only a few ideas for subjects for articles for this newsletter. You probably have better ideas.

PSO is *your* state bird club. We want to hear about *your* experiences. A variety of voices and experiences would add some spice to the newsletter.

Please send your articles to bcoriole@windstream.net or marghigbee@gmail.com before February 20 for consideration for inclusion in the March issue of "The Pileated."

Thanks for your help!!!

We're looking forward to hearing from *you*!

Margaret Higbee
Indiana County

Pennsylvania Birds Needs Articles!

If you have an idea but are not sure it is appropriate, just ask me ([gwg2 @ psu.edu](mailto:gwg2@psu.edu)). If you are unsure about whether you can write well enough – no problem, that's what editors are for!

Topic possibilities are many: your discovery of a state rarity or a first (or second) record for your county, nesting records of note, big events (like fallouts), irruptions, Big Day report, review of occurrence of rare birds in the state

(or maybe just your part of the state), and a hundred other ideas I haven't thought of.

One specific suggestion – I have been looking for someone to write a summary of the invasion of the last few years of southern waders, headlined of course by Roseate Spoonbills but also Wood Stork and White Ibises.

Greg Grove, *PA Birds* Editor
Huntingdon County



The Baltimore Oriole is perhaps the most recognized neotropical migratory bird that favors shade-grown coffee and cacao plantations. See Conservation Chat Room, page 12.

Photo by Mike Jackson

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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