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# PSO Pileated



June 2022

*The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*

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## From the President's Desk... Why Bird?

A few weeks ago I received (by my tabulation) the 140<sup>th</sup> issue of our journal, *Pennsylvania Birds*, containing several interesting articles as well as our regular seasonal county-based summary of birdlife! PSO has quite a history! This newsletter provides details of an important annual event, missed for the past two years, but restored this fall. We are bringing back to the birding community one of the important services of the PSO, our Annual Meeting! This newsletter is packed with details about that gathering, planned for September 16-18. Check out the field trips, consider the speakers listed, and make your arrangements to get together with friends to share your love of birds. Join us in Lancaster this fall!

This month, PSO is sponsoring the second annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C), a fun competition to list birds and raise funds during the breeding season. If you have not formed a team, you can make a donation. This year, funds will be directed to three worthy causes in Pennsylvania: the Erie Bird Observatory, Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, and Willistown Conservation Trust.

Our Annual Meeting and the B4C are very different events, but they illustrate good reasons to go birding: Birding with friends in (what may be) unfamiliar territory or birding to help raise funds around your familiar stomping grounds. The subject of our motives may be murky water; sometimes it is difficult to decipher the reasons we do things. Or, a deep dive into what drives us



When we pause for a good look at an Eastern Bluebird, we appreciate something beautiful that can add joy to our lives.

may enter uncomfortable territory. But, there are many good reasons to pursue the avocation to which this organization is dedicated. In fact, PSO is dedicated to promoting all of the good reasons for birding.

The topic of "why we bird" has been broached several times in the now sadly defunct magazine, *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Bill Thompson III once listed 10 reasons! These are great, and I'll repeat a few, but I want to propose a simple thought: for the joy of it! We

are wired to appreciate beauty, to be thrilled at discovering something new, and to order and name things. Birds provide that for us. When we pause for a good look at a bluebird or ponder the almost shocking color of a Northern Cardinal, we appreciate something beautiful that can add joy to our lives. Our natural world is full of wonder, and enjoying that world points us to wonders beyond ourselves, simply because it is beautiful. There is something healthy about that!

I can posit other reasons that are a bit more practical. With Medicare supplement ads pouring into my news feed these days, I'm regularly encouraged to pursue things that maintain cognitive capacity. Birding, even after decades, continues to provide this in spades. Birds have the seemingly endless capacity to challenge and humble. We hear an unclear call note, a variation of an unfamiliar song, or view a bewildering juvenile plumage. A bird may appear in an unexpected habitat or not be where expected. Subtle behaviors require an interpretation I've watched a House Sparrow singing his heart out for the past month,

but as yet the nest has no eggs! Why? The wonderful world of birds provides us endless challenges and discoveries. Here's a little-considered birding detail to pursue this summer: distinct species-specific juvenile food-begging calls. Do you know them? But I digress. The point here is, that thousands of nearly-forgotten details from migrants not seen for eight months arrive in my neighborhood each spring, recharging those dormant gray cells, providing an opportunity to sharpen my mind and ward off dementia!

Another of the frequently identified reasons to watch birds is at the core of the PSO, even listed among our purpose statements: "monitoring and studies that lead to conservation." This is a clarion call that I employed my whole career. Whether it be atlases, Christmas Bird Counts, or any other survey, we join together to share our knowledge, to document the bird world in order to value and protect it. At the heart of this is a motivation to protect what we

love. Bird studies are at the core of the PSO. Our website lists at least 8 projects in which we can engage. Birders are motivated to translate the information they possess into knowledge and that, into conservation. This is often accomplished through structured surveys, but I've heard birders refer to an eBird checklist as a contribution to science. And so it is, if you've seen what they do with all those checklists! This can simply be by submitting a checklist or through a complex structured survey, such as the Game Commission's wetland bird surveys a few years ago that opened a window into poorly-known populations of wetland birds. Our collective knowledge is power.

Other reasons could be articulated, but this is more than sufficient to encourage us to observe, study, know, enjoy, and "go birding."

Dan Brauning, President  
Lycoming County

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## Join us for a Volunteer Tree Planting at the PSO Annual Meeting

PSO is proud to partner with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to give back to the Lebanon/ Lancaster area, the gracious hosts of our 2022 Annual Meeting. On Friday, September 16, 2022, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., we hope you will join us for a streamside tree planting project. The Annual Meeting will commence at Middle Creek later that evening. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay works with landowners throughout the watershed to establish new streamside forests which decrease erosion, filter pollutants, and provide wonderful habitat for Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo, and other riparian species.

The exact location of the event is yet to be determined, but the site will be within a 30-minute drive of Middle Creek. All registrants will receive specific instructions by email concerning where to meet prior to the event.

If you are attending the PSO Annual Meeting, please check the box on your registration form to indicate that you will attend the volunteer event. For those who wish to attend the volunteer event, but are not attending the Annual Meeting, please email Brian Byrnes at [brianjbyrnes79@gmail.com](mailto:brianjbyrnes79@gmail.com) to register.

– Brian Byrnes

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## PSO Annual Meeting Field Trips

### **Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area - Kleinfeltersville, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Ted Nichols II, Lancaster County Bird Club President ([tanicholsii@gmail.com](mailto:tanicholsii@gmail.com))  
717-856-3851

One of the most well-known birding locations in Pennsylvania, the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area is a 6,000-acre Wildlife Management Area located in Lancaster and Lebanon counties, managed by the PGC. The area has a 1,700-acre oak-hickory forest ridge; a 400-acre shallow lake; 70 acres of potholes, ponds, and

smaller impoundments; and 1,300 acres of cultivated farmland. The trip will cover a mixture of various habitats from field to forest to a lake and everything in between. Bathrooms are available at the Visitors' Center.

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### **Conoy Canal Trail - Bainbridge, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Warren Wolf, Lancaster County Bird Club Member ([wolfers@aol.com](mailto:wolfers@aol.com)) 717-471-3515  
**Co-Leader:** Nina Wolf, Lancaster Co. Bird Club Treasurer

We will bird along a section of the Northwest Lancaster County River Trail that runs for 3.75 miles along the Conewago Canal from Bainbridge to Falmouth. The canal was opened in 1797 and originally built to bypass the Conewago Falls on the Susquehanna River back in the eighteenth century. The canal is part of the original Mainline Canal, which ran from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh. The Conoy section of the canal ran as part of the eastern division of the mainline system. Ruins of the canal may still be seen along its route, including the restored lock at Falmouth. Stone walls that separate the trail from the river and the ditch, which are all that remain of the old waterway, are found between the towpath and railroad line. Some of the birds that you might find here include Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Indigo Bunting, American Redstart, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Bald Eagle. The path is level and paved for a very easy walk. You may expect some insects, so please plan accordingly. We will meet at the Prescott Road parking lot which is just off Route 441 about 0.5 mile north of Bainbridge. The walk will be approximately 2 miles. A porta-potty is located at the parking lot.

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### **Noel Dorwart Park and the Farmingdale Trail – East Hempfield Township outside of Lancaster, PA**

**Trip Leaders:** Dan & Sammy Keener  
(dwkeener57@icloud.com) 717-669-4966

The Farmingdale Trail is actually a small network of trails that wind around the largely undeveloped Noel Dorwart Park. With the exception of a walking path mowed through a grassy meadow, the network consists of crushed-stone paved, multi-use trails suited for hiking, bicycling, and parents pushing baby strollers. The trails are best accessed from the parking lot off Good Drive, and feature a variety of natural environments, including wetlands (which are crossed by boardwalks), the aforementioned meadow, and woodlands. Most of this area was once used as a landfill and brickyard, yet little trace of either remains. The trip will explore this popular park, which has hosted several migrant warbler rarities including Black-throated Gray Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Connecticut Warbler. Length of walk is 2-3 miles. A porta-potty is in the parking lot at the trail entrance.

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### **Lancaster County Central Park – Lancaster, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Derek Stoner, Lancaster County Bird Club Board Member (derekstoner@hotmail.com) 484-723-3348  
**Co-Leader:** Roger Stoner, Lancaster County Bird Club Member

Lancaster County Central Park, named for its centralized location in the county, is the largest of the county's parks, covering 544 acres. Central Park is located on the southern edge of Lancaster City in West Lampeter Township. The park combines spacious lawns and rolling weedy fields with wooded hillsides. Two waterways wind their way through the park. The woodlands are mainly mixed hardwoods with a few stands of evergreens. The trip will explore various areas of this popular park easily accessible to residents and visitors to the city of Lancaster. Trip includes approximately one mile of walking. Public bathrooms are available at the park.

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### **Chestnut Grove Natural Area - Conestoga, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Jeff Musser, Lancaster County Bird Club Board Member ([jmusser1956@gmail.com](mailto:jmusser1956@gmail.com)) 717-464-5273

The 170-acre Chestnut Grove Natural Area was established in 2015 by the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority. The area's network of 13 trails showcases different features of the property, including wetlands, meadows, and woods. Interpretive panels and a wetland boardwalk at this site allow visitors to experience and learn about nature and the environment. We will thoroughly bird this popular hotspot that is a must stop for anyone birding in the county.

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### **State Game Lands 156 - Pumping Station Road - Elizabeth Township outside Brickerville and Lititz, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Bruce Carl, Lancaster County Bird Club Member (hrdabrd@gmail.com) 717-368-4824

Located in the Furnace Hills in northern Lancaster County, Pumping Station Road works its way along the Hammer Creek through SGL 156. Pumping Station Road is one of the more popular spots for warblers and fall migrants in Lancaster County. This section follows a gravel/stone road through mixed wooded areas along the creek. In one section we will pass through a clear-cut area for power lines. A wide variety of birds is possible, and we will pay special attention to the warblers that use this area as a brief stop-over during migration. Other target birds will include thrushes, flycatchers, tanagers, orioles, sparrows, grosbeaks, and hopefully a surprise or two along the way! If time permits, the trip will also explore the Fire Tower Road area of State Game Lands 156, located about two miles from Pumping Station Rd. There is also a gravel parking area here as well. At this location we will walk along a Game Lands gravel/grass road in search of migrants. We also will keep an eye to the sky for

migrating raptors as this was Lancaster County's official Hawk Watch location for many years from the mid 70s until sometime in the 90s.

Regular hiking shoes/boots will be fine for this trip as the bulk of the walking will be on mostly level gravel/grass covered roads. Total walking distance would be about 2 miles for Pumping Station Rd and 1-2 miles at the Fire Tower Area.

Please meet at the gravel parking area on the north side of Rt 322 at 7 a.m. No restroom facilities or porta-potties are available at this location. Closest restroom facilities are in Brickerville at one of the gas stations at the main intersection with Rt 501. Cell phone reception is also poor at this location.

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### **State Game Lands 156 - Dead End Road - Elizabeth Township outside of Brickerville and Lititz, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Dan Mummert, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, PGC (dmummert@pa.gov) 717-823-3401

Located in the Furnace Hills, the Dead End Road area of SGL 156 is one of several popular spots and noted for warblers and fall migrants as well as a diversity of upland forest birds. This trip will pass along a dirt access road through mixed wooded areas that occasionally open up into clear-cuts. We'll be hiking at a leisurely pace, mostly on single-track paths through upland forested habitat with a few small creek crossings. The topography is gentle to moderately inclined. This is one of the more popular spots in Lancaster County for fall migrant birding. Other than the isolated forest environment, there are no bathroom facilities at this location.

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### **Susquehannock State Park – outside Drumore, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Tom Amico, Lancaster County Bird Club Member (tamico@comcast.net) 717-419-4208

This 224-acre park in Lancaster County provides a variety of activities and an amazing view over the Lower Susquehanna River. The park is home to 11 hiking trails varying in difficulty. Totalling over five miles, the trails showcase a variety of flowers and trees, as well as opportunities for birdwatching. Several trails lead to the overlooks, which offer stunning views of the Susquehanna River. The trip will offer ample opportunities for exploring a variety of mixed habitats adjacent to the Susquehanna River. This trip will include visits to two

overlooks along the Susquehanna with mostly easy walking, but a little uphill grade will be encountered returning from the second overlook. We will bird the overlooks and woodland edges and meadow along the Park Road which is level. Hiking shoes are suggested as the grass is often wet, so sneakers do not do well. Typical eastern woodland birds with various water birds along the river are expected. The timing is very good for high numbers of Great Egrets as well as a few Bald Eagles moving along the river. Pileated Woodpeckers are common in the park. Walking distance will be one to 2 miles. Bathrooms and a porta-potty are available at the park. Meeting time is 7:00 a.m.

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### **Muddy Run – outside Holtwood, PA**

**Trip Leader:** John Lahr, Lancaster Co. Bird Club 2nd Vice President (johnlahr324@gmail.com) 717-284-3497

**Saturday Co-Leader:** Pam Fisher, Lancaster County Bird Club Member

Muddy Run Reservoir is a pumped-storage (hydroelectric) generating facility. It is located on the east shore of the lower Susquehanna River. It derived its name from the original Muddy Run, a small tributary of the Susquehanna that ran through a valley which was flooded to create a 985-acre storage reservoir. The area includes a recreation lake, a park, and 1,900 acres of old fields, woodland, cultivated fields, and plantings by the PGC and the Soil Conservation Service. The trip will explore the reservoir area and mixed habitats of Muddy Run Park. This walk will be at least 1.5 miles; and if the group decides, the loop may be enlarged to a 3.5-mile walk through a weedy field for extra sparrow habitat. Porta-potty on site.

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### **Safe Harbor Park and Arboretum & Safe Harbor Dam - Conestoga, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Joshua Houck (montejosh102@gmail.com) 717-826-4602

Along the quiet waters of the Conestoga River, wooded hillsides line this route and comprise some of the best woodland habitat in the central Susquehanna area. The shaded woods, often with a lush carpet of wildflowers and peaceful riverbanks, make a pleasant setting for very good birding. The Conestoga River ends its trip through Lancaster County at Safe Harbor. Land birding in this vicinity can be very rewarding. There are extensive woodlands, both deciduous and coniferous (planted), and several large areas are maintained as public parks. The Susquehanna River in the Safe Harbor Dam area is attractive to large numbers of gulls and at times to

concentrations of waterfowl. An extensive area above the dam at the Observation Point provides good birding opportunities year round.

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**Riverfront Park and Northwest Lancaster County River Trail (Saturday Only) - Marietta, PA**

**Trip Leader:** Emily Broich, Lancaster Co. Bird Club 1st Vice President (emilybroich@gmail.com) 717-333-9146  
**Co-Leader:** Laura Kemmick, Lancaster County Bird Club Member

Located north of the town of Marietta, East Donegal Township's Riverfront Park boasts numerous recreational options and is an access point for the Northwest Lancaster County River Trail that features a great viewing area for the Susquehanna River. The park and access are also part of the 53-mile Susquehanna River Water Trail – Lower Section, managed by Susquehanna Heritage. The Susquehanna River Water Trail – Lower Section is designated as a National Recreation Trail. The trip will explore the park's habitat and adjoining river corridor as well as mixed habitat along the River Trail to include a few different wetland areas. The terrain is basically level, and we will stay mostly on the gravel/paved trail, with some walking on fairly level grassy areas. Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes to walk up to 2-3 miles around the park and along the trail. Porta-potty is available at the site.

We will meet at the river viewing area at the Rivertrail Pavilion in Marietta, PA, at the main parking area at 7:00 a.m. This is convenient if you prefer to bring your own scope.

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**Swatara State Park and Second Mountain Hawk Watch (Sunday Only) - outside Annville, PA (Lebanon Co.)**

**Trip Leader:** Jonathan Heller, Lancaster Co. Bird Club Member (jonathan.heller@comcast.net) 717-940-6067

The 3,520-acre Swatara State Park consists of rolling fields and woodlands situated in the Swatara Valley between Second and Blue mountains. The scenic Swatara Creek meanders the length of the park and is surrounded

by forests and wetlands that support a diversity of wildlife. This area can be a productive area for Connecticut Warbler. Conditions permitting (sometimes the vegetation is too thick and not conducive to group birding), the focus of the first part of the trip will be looking for this species. To maximize our chances, the group will meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Trout Run Parking area in Swatara State Park and drive a few miles to a nearby location. After spending some time checking hedgerows and small woodland patches, we will return to the Trout Run area and walk a couple of miles (easy conditions) to look for migrant songbirds. After the approximate 2-mile walk concludes, we will drive to Second Mountain later in the morning to observe migrating raptors. Second Mountain Hawk Watch is open to the public and located on Second Mountain Ridge in Lebanon County, PA. The hawk watch sits on the border of Fort Indiantown Gap and State Game Lands 211. The operation of the Hawk Watch is an all-volunteer effort administered by the Second Mountain Hawk Watch Association. A porta-potty is available right at the watch and parking area.

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**Conejohela Flats (Sunday Only) -** Departing from Blue Rock Road Boat Launch, Washington Boro, PA \*Kayak or canoe required or arrange rental with local outfitter\*

**Trip Leader:** Eric Witmer, Lancaster County Bird Club Member (flatbirder@gmail.com) 717-314-0623  
**Co-Leader:** Mike Epler, Lancaster County Bird Club Member

If you want shorebirds, this is the trip for you! The "Flats" are a combination of small brushy islands and adjacent mud flats on the Susquehanna River. The mud flats are produced when Safe Harbor Dam lowers the Lake Clarke area of the Susquehanna for electricity generation. A mixture of shrubs, some deciduous trees, grasses and sedges cover the islands. The flats are exposed and flooded weekdays by the operation of the dam. When exposed in spring and fall, they provide habitat for migrating shorebirds. There are also some larger islands with deciduous growth. Shorebird numbers will be influenced by the weather and especially the water level of Lake Clarke that is regulated by Safe Harbor Dam. Gulls and terns would also be target species. There is a porta-potty at the Blue Rock Road Boat Launch.

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***For lodging suggestions for the PSO Annual Meeting, please see page 11.***

# PSO Annual Meeting September 16-18, 2022 Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area

## Friday, September 16, 2022

- 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.      Streamside Tree Planting Project
- 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.      Registration
- 7:00 p.m.              Business Meeting
- 7:30 p.m.              Bird Trivia

## Saturday, September 17, 2022

- 6:30 a.m.?              Departure for Various Field Trips at Designated Locations; see pages 2-5 of this newsletter. Meeting times vary, so check the particular field trip you have chosen on line at the PSO website (pabirds.org).

### *Lunch on your own following field trips*

- 1:00 p.m.              How citizen science has advanced the study of avian reproduction, presented by Robyn Bailey, NestWatch Project Leader (In person)
- 2:00 p.m.              She sings, too! Female bird songs in North America and beyond, presented by Lauryn Benedict, Professor of Biological Services at the University of Northern Colorado (Remote)
- 3:00 p.m.              Habitat happenings at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, presented by Brant Porter, PGC (In person)
- 3:40 p.m.              Awards Presentations
- 4:00 p.m.              Bird List Wrap-up
- 4:30 p.m.              A world on the wing: The global odyssey of migratory birds, presented by Scott Weidensaul (Remote)
- 6:00 p.m.              Wrap-up

## Sunday, September 18, 2022

- 7:00 a.m.              Gathering for Field Trips at Designated Locations. Meeting times vary, so check the particular field trip you have chosen.

**Registration Forms will be available on-line after July 1. If you need a paper copy, please contact Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493 or [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net)) with your name and address.**

# Afternoon Speakers at Our Annual PSO Meeting

## Robyn Bailey – Project Leader, NestWatch

**Presentation Description:** NestWatch is Cornell Lab of Ornithology's citizen science project focused on nesting birds. This nationwide monitoring program is designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, the number of eggs that hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. This database is intended to be used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals.

**Speaker Bio:** As the Project Leader for NestWatch, Robyn Bailey manages the research, education, and communication initiatives with her expertise being nesting biology. The Cornell Lab has been monitoring nesting birds' reproductive success since the 1960s, and this long-term database is the nation's richest source of information on avian reproductive biology. A large focal area of the project is nest boxes, and how best to provide them and support the birds which use them. Her interests also include habitat management, historical data, and student mentoring. Robyn has a B.A. in Field Biology from Huntingdon College and an M.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University.

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## Lauryn Benedict - Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Northern Colorado

**Presentation Description:** Do female birds sing? They certainly do. Female bird song is more common and widespread than is generally appreciated. This presentation will offer an overview of the diversity of female songs, including many from North America and a few used in spectacular partner duets. It will discuss what can be learned from studying the songs of female birds and explain how birders can help advance the field by looking for singing females in their own backyards.

**Speaker Bio:** Lauryn Benedict is fascinated by the social lives of birds. She has spent the last 20+ years researching birds to figure out how they use sounds to signal meaning and coordinate behaviors. Her recent work examines song in both male and female birds. Lauryn holds a B.A. from Cornell University and a Ph.D. from the

University of California Berkeley. She is a Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Northern Colorado, where she teaches ornithology, animal behavior, and animal diversity.

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## Brant Porter, PA Game Commission

### Middle Creek's Habitat Happenings

**Presentation Description:** Did you know that more than 300 species of birds and mammals call Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area home? Come join us to learn more about the wildlife habitat management that occurs on one of the most uniquely managed 6,000+ acre State Game Lands in Pennsylvania. Brant will be discussing the various habitats that occur at Middle Creek WMA such as grasslands, savannahs, wetlands, and forests; as well as the various tools used to create diverse conditions throughout the year such as timber sales, water draw-downs, and prescribed fire. Diverse habitat = diverse wildlife. Attendees will catch a glimpse of what attracts Middle Creek's year round residents and long distant migrants!

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## Keynote Address: Scott Weidensaul

**Presentation Description:** The talk will provide an exhilarating exploration of the science and wonder of global bird migration as described in his recent best-selling book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds*. In the past two decades, our understanding of the navigational and physiological feats that enable birds to cross immense oceans, fly above the highest mountains, or remain in unbroken flight for months at a stretch has exploded. What we've learned of these key migrations—how billions of birds circumnavigate the globe, flying tens of thousands of miles between hemispheres on an annual basis—is nothing short of extraordinary.

Bird migration entails almost unfathomable endurance, like a sparrow-sized sandpiper that will fly nonstop from Canada to Venezuela—the equivalent of running 126 consecutive marathons without food, water, or rest—avoiding dehydration by "drinking" moisture from its own muscles and organs, while orienting itself using the earth's magnetic field through a form of quantum

entanglement that made Einstein queasy. Crossing the Pacific Ocean in nine days of nonstop flight, as some birds do, leaves little time for sleep, but migrants can put half their brains to sleep for a few seconds at a time, alternating sides—and their reaction time actually improves.

These and other revelations convey both the wonder of bird migration and its global sweep, from the mudflats of the Yellow Sea in China to the remote mountains of northeastern India to the dusty hills of southern Cyprus. This breathtaking work of nature writing from Pulitzer Prize finalist Scott Weidensaul also introduces readers to those scientists, researchers, and bird lovers trying to preserve global migratory patterns in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges.

### Speaker Bio:

Born in 1959, Scott Weidensaul has lived almost all of his life among the long ridges and endless valleys of the Appalachian Mountains, a landscape that has defined much of his work. His writing career began in 1978 with a weekly natural history column in the local newspaper, the Pottsville *Republican* in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, where he grew up. In later years he wrote long-running columns for the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and Harrisburg *Patriot-News*.

Weidensaul has written more than 30 books, including his widely acclaimed *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds* (North Point 1999),

which was a finalist for the 2000 Pulitzer Prize. His newest book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds* (W.W. Norton, U.S.; Picador, U.K.) is a *New York Times* bestseller. Weidensaul's writing has appeared in dozens of publications, including *Audubon*, *Living Bird*, *Bird Watcher's Digest* and *National Wildlife*, among many others. He lectures widely on conservation and nature and directs ornithological programs for National Audubon's famed Hog Island Center on the coast of Maine.

In addition to writing about wildlife, Weidensaul is an active field researcher whose work focuses on bird migration. He is a co-director of Project OwlNet, a collaborative effort among nearly 125 banding and research stations across North America studying owl migration, and for more than 25 years he has directed a major effort to study the movements of Northern Saw-whet Owls, one of the smallest and least-understood raptors in North America. Scott co-founded Project SNOWstorm, which uses cutting-edge tracking technology to study Snowy Owls, and is a founder of the Critical Connections project, which is tracking the migration of birds that breed on National Park lands in Alaska. He co-founded the Northeast Motus Collaboration, which is creating a network of nearly 150 automated telemetry receivers across the mid-Atlantic region and New England to track the movements of bats, insects, and small birds. Scott Weidensaul is a Fellow of the American Ornithological Society. He and his wife Amy now live in the northern Appalachians of New Hampshire.

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## PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds – from past seasonal summaries in *Pennsylvania Birds*?

1. “The bird mentioned in every report was (xxx). It certainly was a single species winter invasion.” January-March 1987
2. “Bad news: the wanton despicable destruction of a (xxx) heronry in *Bradford*.” April-June 1992
3. “But the highlight of the quarter’s honker extravaganza was a (xxx) in *Berks*.” January-March 1997
4. “There has not been an accepted record of (xxx) in the state since they stopped breeding here back in the mid-1970s.” April-June 2000
5. “The last confirmed breeding of (xxx) in PA goes back to 1999, although summering individuals were reported as recently as 2007.” June-July 2010

(Answers on page 20)

## 2022 Spring Migration Round-Up

Another Migration Round-Up has come and gone. This May, the Spring Migration Round-Up was held the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>. What started in the fall of 2020 with just two parks asking birders to come out to tally as many species as possible within a nine-day period, has grown to eighteen state parks taking part. The parks and their species tallies were: Bald Eagle (103), Black Moshannon (105), Canoe Creek (114), Codorus (96), French Creek (74), Lackawanna (115), Little Buffalo (124), Little Pine (60), Locust Lake (92), Marsh Creek (88), Mt. Pisgah (64), Nescopeck (107), Poe Valley (66), Prince Gallitzin (116), Ricketts Glen (101), Sinnemahoning (111), Tuscarora (59), and Yellow Creek (111). Little Buffalo (**Perry**) put in a great effort and finished way out in front with 124 species after holding a solid lead the entire duration.

These Migration Round-Ups, advertised as competitions between the parks, have goals that reach much deeper for park staff, specifically our park educators (granted, we do enjoy those bragging rights!). Since each park differs in ecological composition, from the mudflats found at Yellow Creek (**Indiana**) to the 1,275-acre Lake Marburg at Codorus (**York**) to the primarily forested environment of Poe Valley (**Centre**), there is no level playing field since some parks have an ecological advantage for bird diversity over others. We realize this and is why we view the competition aspect of the event as superficial.

So, if it's not about winning, what are we hoping for?

For starters, we hope to showcase how valuable PA State Parks are for conservation, in this case for birds. Whether certain species are finding their preferred breeding habitat or transient individuals are dropping in to build up fat reserves before continuing, park staff are always interested in learning more about what is happening within each respective park. According to eBird data, Lackawanna (**Lackawanna**) added three species to its park list, most notably an Eastern Whip-poor-will, while Mt. Pisgah (**Bradford**) added three neotropical migrants, including a Prairie Warbler. A Mourning Warbler was added to Canoe Creek's (**Blair**) already extensive list. Ricketts Glen (**Luzerne, Sullivan & Columbia**) had the notable find of an American Bittern, and straggling migrants were encountered at Little Pine (**Lycoming**) where a Horned Grebe was reported and at Bald Eagle (**Centre**), which boasted a White-winged Scoter.

Other finds may have a more significant impact, such as a county first record of a Swainson's Warbler found in Black Moshannon (**Centre**) in the 2021 Spring Migration Round-Up or Marsh Creek (**Chester**) getting in on the

action of the recent influx of Arctic Terns (another county first according to eBird data). Prince Gallitzin (**Cambria**) had a Common Gallinule that allowed itself to be seen by a number of folks, while a handful of parks, including Nescopeck (**Luzerne**), had reports of Blue-winged x Golden-winged Warblers, a subject of much research looking into the genetics of these two parental species.

Of course, we want the event to go towards something bigger, so we encourage the use of eBird to share sightings. Using eBird allows access to the data by anyone interested, much like me, as I look at these records to write this.

The other goal of this event is to take advantage of birds being a readily viewable taxon of wildlife, allowing park educators to better connect people with nature. The simple promotion of the event with photographs and updated checklists on social media may allow a non-outdoorsy person to realize we have Yellow Warblers with their vivid plumage or American Woodcocks that look *all* around with their large, buggy eyes. Of course, to truly pique the interest of the public and spark a new passion for birds in someone, park educators present interpretive programs that tie in with the Round-Up. Sinnemahoning (**Potter & Cameron**) utilized their pontoon boat to take park visitors around G.B. Stevenson Reservoir specifically to scan for birds, while a guided bird walk at Locust Lake (**Schuylkill**) treated attendees to a memorable experience with not one, but two Barred Owls. Poe Valley (**Centre**) held a Bird Walk Bingo catered to a younger audience and their families.

By taking full advantage of a 9-day stretch focused on birds and offering related educational programs, park educators can introduce non-birders to the beauty, roles, and importance of birds. We can even take it a step further and use avian examples to help drive home environmental issues such as: climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, and biodiversity. By introducing young people to birds, we hope to develop the next generation of birders, naturalists, and biologists, and increase the appreciation of the natural world in all people.

So, we thank all of you who made it out to our parks to help add to our tallies, knowledge base, and experiences. Moving forward, we look to include additional parks and continue the event's growth.

Tony DeSantis  
Environmental Education Specialist  
PA DCNR, Lackawanna State Park

# THE SECOND ANNUAL BREEDING BIRD BLITZ FOR CONSERVATION

June 17-20, 2022



Grab your bins for the 2022 Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C). The Ruffed Grouse, our state bird, is the B4C logo.

One of the most important PSO conservation projects for members and friends is rapidly approaching: the 2022 Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C). Scheduled over four days, starting Friday, June 17, and ending Monday, June 20, birders can use one, two, three, or all four days to explore Penn's Woods – listening and watching for birds, then entering their observations into eBird (hopefully).

So far, 15 teams have registered. The deadline is **June 12**. If you haven't registered, it's easy: Go to [breedingbirdblitz.org](http://breedingbirdblitz.org) and click on the **Registration tab** at the top menu. You'll need to have a roster of team members, a name for your team, designated captain, and the captain's phone number and email. You may also want to register as a Youth Team or Low Carbon Team. After you've registered, email a photo or logo that's about 300 x 300 pixels to [blitz4conservation@gmail.com](mailto:blitz4conservation@gmail.com), so the photo will be added to your team's page.

We know that some of you want to donate instead of doing the team thing. That's fine! Just make a donation to your favorite team or make a general donation. Details here: [www.breedingbirdblitz.org/donate-teams](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/donate-teams)

New for this year:

- ✿ Let's raise \$15,000 this year (2021: \$10,645 was raised).
- ✿ Let's have more teams and more birders this year (2021: 22 teams with 89 participants).
- ✿ Each team has their own page now so donations go directly to PSO on behalf of a team, or

you can make a general donation directly to PSO. Click on the **Donate/Teams** tab to see how.

- ✿ New Partners – New Projects: 100% of the donations will be split evenly between these organizations:
  - ✿ Willistown Conservation Trust: early successional habitat work to provide native plants for birds
  - ✿ The Ned Smith Center for Art and Nature: replace invasive plants with native plants
  - ✿ Erie Bird Observatory: Fund a summer intern in Field Ornithology
- ✿ New Flagship Birds: Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Golden-winged Warbler, Piping Plover.

**Note there are no prizes awarded for finding these birds during the Blitz.**

- ✿ We're aiming for more than the 152 species recorded in 2021.

Don't forget to read the rules, review the contest categories, and solicit donations. You can ask friends and relatives to donate directly to your team page: PayPal, credit card, or by check. It's that easy!!

Remember, birds are in big trouble due to habitat loss and degradation, pesticides and other toxins, invasive species, collisions with glass and tall structures, climate change, and the pet trade. The Blitz is a chance for PSO members and friends to make a positive impact for birds!

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

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## Field Trip – Hawk Mountain

November 12-13

Tag along to enjoy raptor watching at this famous landmark! Golden Eagles will be the target species, but we expect other hawks, falcons, and Bald Eagles. This is a great way to study these birds. More details will be announced soon.

# PSO Partnering with Hillstar Nature to Provide Trip to Virginia's Eastern Shore

In addition to PSO's in-state field trip calendar, we are pleased to begin once again offering field trip options farther afield. With the complexities of planning and delivering high-quality out-of-state travel experiences, this will be done in coordination with professional guides and travel companies. We are excited to announce that the first of these opportunities will take place this fall and will be led by George Armistead and his company, Hillstar Nature. George is a PSO member from Philadelphia and well-known to birders across Pennsylvania and the nation. The Eastern Shore of Virginia trip described below is a Hillstar Nature trip being offered exclusively to PSO members. Each registration will include a donation from Hillstar to PSO's Youth Scholarship Fund.

**October 6-9, 2022** - Classic Delmarva: Join PSO friends, George, and local Virginia birders for a long weekend of birding Cape Charles/Kiptopeke at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and the tip of the Delmarva Peninsula. At peak season for Peregrine Falcon migration, songbirds, and Monarch butterflies, we'll enjoy visiting an array of fabulous well-known birding spots, from Chincoteague and the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuges, to Kiptopeke State Park, the new Ned Brinkley Preserve, and the saltmarshes and farmlands where shorebirds and raptors move through in force. Willis Wharf often harbors several hundred Marbled

Godwits, while White Ibis continue to swell in numbers throughout the region. Brown-headed Nuthatches squeak away like rubber duckies in the pine woodlands, and October is a good time to search for marsh sparrows and is prime vagrant season as well. There will be plenty of great seafood options around, with a variety of places for folks to stay (including camping), as we pursue birds in the Spartina saltmarsh grasses, the meadows of seaside goldenrod, and the loblolly pine forest.

Contact George Armistead at [info@hillstarnature.com](mailto:info@hillstarnature.com) for more info.

This is a self-drive event. Hillstar Nature will provide a list of places to stay, but guests will choose and book their own accommodations. We will meet at birding locations each day for our field outings and then meet for a social event one evening and a lecture by a local naturalist on another evening. We have included some time and flexibility during our time here, too, for folks to relax, hang at the hawk watch, chase butterflies, or examine the town of Cape Charles.

We hope many members will take advantage of this opportunity for a spectacular birding adventure, and we hope to offer additional excursions for PSO members with Hillstar and other partners in the coming years.

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## PSO Educational Series: Birds of Ricketts Glen State Park

Monday, July 25, 2022 – 7 p.m.- 8 p.m.

Join us online to hear Doug Gross (PA Game Commission wildlife biologist, retired) discuss the habitats found in and around Ricketts Glen State Park and how they contribute to the area's designation as an official

Pennsylvania Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society.

In addition to reviewing the natural history of breeding birds found in the park, the history of ornithological studies on nearby North Mountain will be discussed.

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## Lodging for PSO Annual Meeting

Lodging: On your own. Hotels within 25 minutes of Middle Creek WMA include:

Hampton Inn – Lebanon (20 min, \$\$); Hampton Inn & Suites – Ephrata (20 min, \$\$); Roadway Inn & Suites - Myerstown (formerly Lantern Lodge) (20 min, \$); Lititz Inn/Suites (19 min, \$); Comfort Inn Suites Manheim – Lebanon (27 min, \$\$\$); Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Lebanon (20 min, \$\$\$) Fairfield Inn & Suites Marriot Lebanon (21 min, \$\$\$). There are also numerous B&Bs in the Lancaster area.

# Recap of PSO Board of Directors' Meeting

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Board of Directors met on March 16, 2022, with 14 directors present for the teleconference meeting. The minutes of the January 25, 2022, board meeting were approved. No treasurer's report was given, but it was noted that PSO is in good shape financially.

It was announced that the venue for the 2022 annual meeting will be Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area to be held September 16-18. There will be no formal banquet. Three speakers will be scheduled on Saturday afternoon in addition to the keynote speaker. All afternoon activities will be concluded by 6:00. Field trips will be led by the Lancaster County Bird Club. T-shirts and mugs will be available directly from the printer and ordered on line. A motion was made to purchase pins in the shape of Lancaster County with a Barn Owl on it. Vendors will be invited to attend the meeting. It was suggested that attendees may want to come early on Friday afternoon to help plant trees.

The current editor of *Pennsylvania Birds* plans to resign, so a new editor must be found by early 2023.

The Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation will be held June 17 through 20. The three organizations with which PSO will be partnering are the Erie Bird Observatory, Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, and the Willistown Conservation Trust. The species of special concern are the Piping Plover, Golden-winged Warbler, and Northern Saw-whet Owl. This year's goal is \$15,000.

The first webinar had 240 viewers. They will continue every other month. All annual meeting speakers will be recorded.

The Cambria County turnout for the "county spotlight" was a success. The next county will be Adams County from April 22-25. Progress has been made setting up out of state field trips through a tour guide.

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

Roger V. Higbee, Secretary

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## Attention, Listers!

Pennsylvania Birdlists is now fully online. You can now search the lists to look at everybody's numbers or just one birder's numbers. Statewide or by County. Life or Annual. And Big Days.

Just go to pabirds.org and click on Birding, then Birdlists.

From the Birdlists page, you can read the rules, Annual Reports, and look at the numbers (Search).

Because there are now no space limitations (as was the case when all of the numbers were printed in *Pennsylvania Birds*) there are no minimums for reporting. If you only have 22 birds in Cameron County, that's okay.

And, because you can enter all of your county totals, the Totals Ticks listings will be based on those numbers. Please update your county lists (see below).

In transferring the data from old records into the new online database, there were a lot of name variations. I was not sure which name to use in some cases (Andrew, Andy, Drew – Deborah, Deb, Debbie – you get the idea).

I would appreciate if everyone would go to the list and look up your records and let me know what name you prefer.

Also, PSO members can now enter their numbers directly. However, they must first set up a Birdlists account. To do so, send me your name as you would like it to appear in the listings, your email address, and a password of your choosing. I will verify your PSO membership and set up an account and then send you the login information. You will then be able to login and enter/edit your numbers.

Send your information to fhaasbirds@gmail.com.

Non-PSO members can still submit numbers by filling out the annual report form and mailing it to Andy Keister or by emailing their numbers to him.

Andy will still be monitoring the numbers (looking for typos, etc.) and soliciting comments on the year gone by, Bird of the Year, etc., and will write up an annual report which will be published in *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Frank Haas

# Cambria County Birding Spotlight

By Chad Kauffman

PSO decided to start a new birding adventure by spotlighting various counties across the state. We selected Cambria as our first for March 4-7, 2022. We were fortunate to have Tony DeSantis involved as he worked at Prince Gallitzin as the Environmental Education Specialist for several years. Many of his old friends were glad to see him back, and I am sure he was glad to visit again.

We hope to promote hotspots, bird as much as we can, lead some walks, get groups to hit various locations, and see what we could put on the eBird map during the challenge. We had everyone share their checklists with PSO Birding Data, and we also created a Trip Report list to share with anyone who wished to see our results.

My son Noah and I arrived in the evening, and we hoped to see a few birds before it got dark. We lucked out and spotted some waterfowl on the little bit of water that was open. As dusk kicked in, we heard American Woodcocks peenting on Long Road. We worked the evergreens by the parking area by doing an Eastern Screech-Owl call, and lo and behold across the lake one or two Barred Owls returned a call. I was able to record on the Merlin App and add the recording on the eBird checklist.

We were joined by Joe Gyekis and his son Henry for the weekend, and we got up early to do some birding on our own before we met the crew for Tony's official field trip at 8 a.m. We worked our way to Long Road again and found large flocks of American Goldfinches, probably a few hundred; and in that flock we picked out some Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatch. We also noted the frog sound that the Hooded Mergansers were making and the noisy Tundra Swans as well.

We were to meet at 8 a.m. with Tony and the crew at the marina where we were surprised to see a lot more people than we'd expected. They were ready to be led around to bird, almost giving us a sense of normalcy. We ended up with 22 people throughout the day until afternoon with some coming and others going. We were glad to see two younger kids who came along with adults; they had their bins with them, too. It was nice to see them asking questions and noting birds on our stops. We did get a glimpse of Julia Plummer who was doing birding on her own so she could avoid the crowds and get sound recordings to add to our bird checklists.

With more than 95% of the lake frozen, the waterfowl that were there were concentrated until spooked by ice

fisherman or the Bald Eagles flying around. Birds, including gulls, gathered on the ice at times.

When we parked at McDermott Trail to walk down to the water's edge to get close to the waterfowl, it was well worth the walk. We were able to scope the ducks as well as getting much closer bin looks. We hit several more areas on the north side of the lake where the highlight was the special cookies that Susan Braun broke out for the crew. All of a sudden Susan became the favorite person in the group.

Raptors were busy with nice winds and lifts. We had great looks at many Red-tails, Red-shoulders, Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, Cooper's Hawks, and Turkey Vultures.

As noon approached, many in the group started peeling off, so we finished the group trip at the ranger's station looking at the feeders and visiting the restrooms.

It was now time to expand our search area outside the park, so we went searching for field birds. We found some Horned Lark flocks, some blackbirds, and many raptors out and about.

Another spot we looked forward to visiting was Slate Lick Run which provided more waterfowl species and our first good looks at American Tree Sparrow. We tried our hardest to push up a Swamp Sparrow here and at a few other places, but it seemed they just weren't around yet.

On a tip from our friend Tina Alianiello, we visited SGL 108 - Killbuck Run Habitat Restoration Area. We parked at the gate, split up, and walked back the roads. As many as five Fox Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, Purple Finch, Golden-crowned Kinglet and others were tallied. We also heard a mobbing Blue Jay flock that kicked up an Eastern Screech-Owl calling. We didn't have to walk far past the gate, probably less than 100 yards, but this certainly is a spot worth checking in various seasons.

We decided to end the day at dusk at Dugan's Marsh past the ranger's station. We hoped to see Short-eared Owls, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, etc. Tony and Joe walked around the property while I stayed with the scope. No owls came, but they got some great birds with almost a dozen American Woodcocks, Eastern Towhee, a close-flying Hooded Merganser, and Wood Duck.

We got another early start on Sunday for Day 3 of the spotlight. We hit Long Road first, then beelined down to Slate Lick Run again before the rain which had started to drizzle. We were pleased to find American Tree Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Gadwall, among the other waterfowl. The Tree Swallows came in with the warm southern winds right on cue.

Heading back to the marina, Tony let us know that he had seen Eastern Meadowlarks, and we counted five of them as well as more Killdeer. I spotted a larger gull on the ice with the Ring-billed Gulls, so we were able to call our only Herring Gull of the weekend as well as adding Northern Pintail. Joe was also able to snag a photo of a Wilson's Snipe as it flew over his head – not an easy thing to do!

We ended with 76 species on the four-day spotlight, 131 checklists, 47 species with pictures, and 8 species with audio recording.

Vern Gauthier was joined by Bill Oyler hitting hotspots in the southern part of the county. Roger and Marg Higbee birded all four days. Tina Alianiello, Pam & Winnie Illig, John Carter, and Court Harding all participated and added checklists.

We were pleased at how nice Mother Nature treated us with the weather. Even with frozen lake conditions, we still listed a nice selection of waterfowl as well as some seasonal birds for early March.

Joe and I were able to add many county birds to our eBird lists and year birds as well.

– Chad Kauffman, Mifflintown, PA

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## Adams County Birding Spotlight Revisited

by Chad Kauffman

For our second county spotlight, we picked Adams, located in the southern tier. We decided to schedule the spotlight at the end of April, the 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> – giving us more options for spring migrants than a county farther north.

The wonderful people of South Mountain Audubon Society were amazing from the get-go. When we approached them, Debra Siefken and Linette Mansberger had lined up official field trips for each day of the challenge.

On Friday, nine people attended the field trip to Long Pine Reservoir in the Michaux State Forest. Mike Bertram led the field trip, and 38 species were recorded. The big surprise was a Peregrine Falcon. Also on Friday, Julia Plummer took part of the weekend doing her audio recordings while birding and was able to get 14 species on sound which is a great addition to birding challenges like this. Julia visited a few places on her own to add her data to our challenge. When she does her recordings, it is best to be solo to eliminate noise from other birders talking, moving, etc. We thank her for helping on both of the spotlights so far.

I had to work until noon before I could head down to meet with Vern Gauthier who started a bit earlier in the day than I did. Work does get in the way of birding many times. On the way to meet Vern, I was excited to cross the

Adams County line and start my own checklist. Broad-winged Hawk and Eastern Meadowlark were nice additions. I jumped in with Vern who led me around on a route that was close to some routes he had run on a Christmas Bird Count. We were saddened to realize a really nice spot he had enjoyed and had received permission to bird near Biglerville had been sold, and many “no trespassing” signs had been erected. We birded along the road and still picked up a few goodies for the day. After completing a number of checklists in the afternoon, we had a quick dinner at Tommy's Pizza and went back out to do late afternoon/dusk birding. We ended the day at Michaux, where we tried really hard to kick up American Woodcock, Eastern Whip-poor-will, and maybe some owls. We did get an Eastern Screech-Owl to respond, but none of the others would show themselves. We did have a larger owl-like response on the powerline cut at the eastern end of the forest before the campgrounds. Although we leaned towards Barred Owl, we decided to not officially mark the checklist. Sometimes you have to consider dogs or people and just can't make the call.

Saturday morning, Vern and I started with a lap around Lake Heritage, a gated community where we stayed. We added Common Loon, Osprey, Bufflehead, and Ring-billed Gull.

We joined the fine people at Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve before the 8 a.m. start time. We started seeing and hearing birds all around the parking lot. We had several Blue-headed Vireos right by our cars, several raptors overhead, and the bushes were busy. Etienne Kingsley did a great job leading a line of 20 birders around trails while we tallied 42 species. Our biggest highlight was seeing and hearing possibly two Hooded Warblers which was the first in the county according to eBird. We also enjoyed seeing a pair of Louisiana Waterthrushes hopping around the creek and hearing them a few times on our walk. A single drake Wood Duck on the small pond and a Broad-winged Hawk carrying food that landed on a few perches gave us great looks and pictures.

After a fine lunch at the Thirsty Farmer, we set out for wetlands on Crooked Creek Road where we added many new species for the day and the weekend. Etienne had suggested this as a wonderful location to bird. From there we went back up to Michaux. As we were pulling into the reservoir, Vern pulled off and was pointing into the woods' edge. I couldn't see what he was pointing at because I was in the car behind him, so he crept out and said there was an American Woodcock bopping its way up the bank. The girls following us were able to get into the woods to see it, hear it, and then saw it fly off across the road in front of me. It is always a treat to see one of these birds in daylight.

At this point in the afternoon, Vern, Annette Mathes, and Tiffany Willow were heading home, and I was joined by Brian Byrnes, who had helped us pick Adams County because his son had Scout adventures in the county that weekend. We soon realized his campsite was near Crooked Creek, so we went back there while awaiting Joe Gyekis to join us. Three laps past those wetlands just kept giving us good looks and new birds for the day. We were able to add both teal species as well as five species of shorebirds. Brian also tallied Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Greater Yellowlegs from the campsite, and he found a Peregrine Falcon and Red-headed Woodpecker while hiking the battlefield with the scout group.

Sunday morning Joe left the rental early to charge his Tesla, and I closed it up and made one final lap of Lake



One of the highlights for Roger Higbee was a cooperative Vesper Sparrow during the Adams County Spotlight.

Photo by Roger Higbee

Heritage, adding Bonaparte's Gull for the weekend. Before I met with Joe, he was able to add many field birds for the weekend including Vesper Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow.

The official field trip to SGL 249 was led by Don Gilbert and some of the regulars from the first two days. Evan Vaeth volunteered to keep the eBird checklist again as he did on Saturday. Twelve birders joined us, and we ended up with 67 species on that walk. It was

a wonderful place to visit and walk on dirt and stone roads. We had so many Brown Thrashers moving around us. It seemed like Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were everywhere. The day warmed up, and the raptors started getting nice lifts, giving us several species during the walk as well as a perched Broad-winged Hawk. Six warbler species were great to add on top of three vireo species. Joe and I lasted until just after noon, having a birders' picnic at the parking lot and deciding to call it a day as both of us had some miles to drive to get home.

On Monday, Deb Siefken led a group of five birders in the southern Adams County grasslands. They looked at various places for a Bobolink, but none were to be found, but they tallied 48 species.

So, thanks to all the people who participated; some on their own, some with various field trips, and some birding while at home or work. We ended up with 121 species from 130 checklists. We also were able to provide photos of 57 species and audio for 14 species in the county. Here is the link for the trip report to see how we fared:

<https://ebird.org/pa/tripreport/48743>.

It seemed like the locals really enjoyed others invading their locale, and we really felt welcomed and enjoyed the birding camaraderie you get on birding ventures like this. Many people have shared their emails, phones, joined as Facebook friends, etc. If you want to be social in birding, it is so easy in today's age. If you want to be on your own, you can do that, too. No one judges these things.

I tend to get to Adams County a time or two a year and now will enjoy some of the new spots and possibly hook up with some new birding friends.

Plan to come to Cameron County for our next hotspot adventure.

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**See page 17 for the upcoming Cameron County Spotlight.**

# The Raven Reporter

Tales of  
Discovery about  
Pennsylvania  
Birds



## The Power of Volunteer Ornithology

Pennsylvania is one of the top states in the nation for participation in “citizen science.” Now the big measure of that is eBird participation. Pennsylvania has it in spades with over 2 million checklists (field trips) contributed by more than 40,000 eBirders over the history of that project. These observations include a total of 4112 “hotspots” as of May 19, 2022. The PA eBirders have observed 447 bird species in the state so far. On the eBird website, anyone can find bar charts on the eBird site for the seasonal occurrences of any of these species and get site lists, for not only the “hotspots” but game lands, state forests, natural areas, county parks, and municipal parks in the state. This is very useful information, not only for recreational birding, but also for anyone who wants to educate the public about birds found at a location (a checklist) or manage a property for birds. Volunteer bird data is the greatest source of information for managing birds and habitat in the state.

*The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* (2PBBA) was an enormous volunteer birding project with many great successes. The volunteer effort was very organized across the entire state with the goal of covering each of the 2PBBA’s blocks thoroughly. Over the entire project there were 72,576 block visits which took 106,953 hours. The point counts were conducted by a paid team of field observers who added another 34,719 hours to the entire project. This point count data added a quantitative element to the Atlas that expanded and deepened the range maps created by the Atlas block surveys. As a regional coordinator who spent a lot of time conducting surveys and tracking effort, I feel that all measures of effort are probably under-represented. We volunteers were having so much fun that we surely did not count all the time we spent doing Atlas surveys. Atlasing became routine and ordinary behavior, so it was hard keeping track of all hours spent. We were driven to find as many species in each block as possible and to represent “our” areas as well as we could. A key part of any success with this kind of

project is the sense of ownership of the geographical areas covered and the birds supported there. We wanted it to be the best it could be. In current lingo, these blocks became our local birding patches. We all need to adopt more. What did the 2PBBA give us? It certainly gave us a great bird book with maps of each breeding species and changes in the distribution of these species since the first PBBA conducted in the 1980s. By determining which species had declined since the PBBA, we also faced our potential conservation priority species. Many of these species became our “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” (SGCN) for the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan. Even fairly common species can be determined to be SGCN if they seem to be suffering declines and are vulnerable to more factors that cause more declines and range limitations. Management of these fairly common species are more likely to be successful than attempts to save species at the edge of extirpation. For that reason, Wood Thrush and Cerulean Warbler have become management priorities in the state.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas* showed us that many bird species changed appreciably since the prior Atlas conducted in the 1980s. Some of these changes were so extreme that they prompted status changes for species in the state. Long-eared Owl and Northern Harrier were added to the state’s Threatened species list. Eventually after further species-specific surveys and review, the Northern Goshawk was added to the Endangered list in 2021. The 2PBBA results seemed to indicate not only a reduction in population size but also a contraction in breeding range, a key element for assessing decline and imperilment. Other species have increased over the last few decades. The Atlas data did not directly lead to their delisting, but Atlas data did document the increase in numbers and range of Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcon. These are three tremendous successes of wildlife management in the state, reflecting national efforts as well. The monitoring and protection of all three of these success-story raptors depended on volunteer observers for the PGC’s Endangered and Threatened species program. None of this could have happened without volunteers! The birding volunteers of PSO are essential to the state’s monitoring programs.

### Head for the Hills!

Pennsylvania’s great contribution to the world of birds is its big forests where thousands of warblers, vireos, tanagers, flycatchers, and many other songbirds live. A walk along any trail with hemlocks will yield many Black-throated Green, Magnolia, and fire-throated Blackburnian Warblers. In the glens and log-covered old forests, you will hear the tumbling tumult of a Winter Wren’s song and quick “pitz-ah!” of the Acadian Flycatcher.

It may help to understand where Pennsylvania lacks bird monitoring to look at the counties with the least coverage by eBird, the most commonly used bird observation reporting project. Here are the bottom 12 counties for eBird coverage in the state (number of checklists), starting at the bottom: 67. Cameron; 66. Jefferson; 65. Sullivan; 64. Greene; 63. Venango; 62. Warren; 61. Snyder; 60. Potter; 59. Wyoming; 58. Union; 57. Columbia; 56. Warren. And dishonorable mention of the next poor-coverage counties goes to Forest, Elk, Bradford, Montour, Northumberland, and Mifflin with fewer than 4000 checklists for the six counties. Birders should target these counties for coverage this summer to fill in the blanks of Pennsylvania's "birdscape." Most of these are rural, mostly forested counties. There are plans for a Breeding Bird Blitz this year on June 17- 20, but the gaps in coverage will take more than one weekend to fill, and not everyone is motivated by competitive bird listing. I spend time in a few of these counties and am determined to add more data to their totals

Why is it important to cover these more rural and remote counties? The short answer is that this is where there are a lot of birds. Many bird species of limited distribution occur in these counties. In the mountain forests, there are Sharp-shinned Hawks, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Swainson's Thrushes, Northern Waterthrushes, Nashville Warblers, and White-throated Sparrows. When I lead bird walks at Ricketts Glen, we often show participants their first fiery-throated Blackburnian Warbler or brilliant Magnolia Warbler. These warblers do not live in the suburbs where most birders reside. Often these populations are clustered, delineated by particular habitats such

as coniferous forests. In wetlands you might find Hooded Merganser, Green-winged Teal, American Bittern, Sandhill Crane, and Marsh Wren for example. The distribution of some forest birds like Cerulean Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler are quite patchy and constantly changing. Not only are some local populations "winking out" and disappearing, but others are expanding into new territories as habitats are changing. I have observed where tree pests and storm-damage have contributed to a more diverse understory so species like Hooded Warbler and Black-throated Blue Warbler have colonized. Young forest species continually look for more locations to nest. Some forests are growing older, taller, and more attractive to other species. Another factor is that pro-active management for young forests and scrub barrens by silviculture and controlled burning may have created more habitat for bird species that prefer that habitat. Birds of scrub and young forest patches ebb and flow across the landscape. Farming practice changes and conservation initiatives have affected the occurrence of many open field and grassland species. The rural counties have many surprises in store for those who look. Where have range extensions and contractions occurred that few have noticed for lack of coverage in the mountains and hills of the state's rural counties? Let's head for the hills to find out!

Good birding!

Doug Gross  
Pennsylvania Boreal Bird Project  
Ricketts Glen State Park Bird Project  
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## Cameron County Spotlight October 14-18, 2022

The PSO is highlighting counties across the state to explore its hotspots and find as many birds as we can. As a group, we want to document as many birds as possible during these extended weekends. Birders are invited to tag along with trip leaders or explore that county's hotspots on their own terms.

*Birders of all skill levels are invited to join in and contribute!* If you just want to learn more about birds or you can help others and our challenge, we want you to be involved! We look forward to seeing you in Cameron in October!

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***Fun fact: Small radio tags being deployed across the continent are revealing secrets of bird migration. Many species have been tagged in Pennsylvania. Find out more at [Motus.org](http://Motus.org).***

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Research

## Do Ivory-billed Woodpeckers still exist?

Steven C. Latta, widely respected internationally as an authoritative ornithologist at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, and nine coauthors offer a new line of findings suggesting that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers may still be present in their traditional but almost inaccessible habitat in southern U.S. swamps.

Their search for the iconic and mysterious species spanned 10 years at a site in Louisiana. In a pre-publication draft of a scientific paper, the authors offer results including some photographs that the iconic species has survived.

The paper is not ready for formal publication, and the authors have posted a draft on “bioRxiv,” a preprint server asking for scientific comment before a formal submission. See the draft at:

[www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.06.487399v1.full](http://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.06.487399v1.full).

The paper’s abstract summarizes the research this way:

“The history of decline of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is long, complex, and controversial. The last widely accepted sighting of this species in continental North America was 1944. Reports of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers have continued, yet in 2021 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed declaring the species extinct.

“We draw on 10 years of search effort, and provide trail camera photos and drone videos suggesting the consistent presence of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers at our study site. Data indicate repeated re-use of foraging sites and core habitat.

“We offer insights into behaviors of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker that contribute to difficulty in finding this species.

“We discuss results with regard to the value of accumulated evidence, and what repeated observations may indicate for continued survival of this iconic species.”

Mary Ann Thomas, a western Pennsylvania birder and environmental reporting specialist for TribLive, interviewed Latta and received interesting comments about the draft paper. Read her report at <https://tinyurl.com/bdw794xa>.

He noted that this large woodpecker should be hard to miss, but the problem is that it lives in remote, wet bottomland forests where exploration and investigation are difficult. Latta emphasized that his or anybody’s single sighting may not stop the current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proceedings to declare the woodpecker extinct.

But the team’s goal is one more effort to determine whether Ivory-billed Woodpeckers may still survive and need to be protected. All we can do is hope.

Paul Hess  
Natrona Heights, PA  
phess@salsgiver.com



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## Earl Poole Awards and Conservation Awards

The Earl Poole Awards for 2021 and 2022, as well as the two Conservation Awards, will be announced online sometime before our Annual Meeting. These awards will be given at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 17, 2022.

Be sure to check our website, [pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org) for more information concerning the awards as well as the annual meeting.

# PSO Student Research Awards Announced

Three Student research awards of \$500 were given in May 2022 to students who submitted proposals for research. “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 Common-

wealth; however, there is a preference for projects with a Pennsylvania field work component. 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.”

Upon receiving the awards, each student will be requested to give a talk about his or her work, and/or the student will submit an article to the *Pennsylvania Birds* journal.

**Titles of the proposals** are listed below with the student’s name and advisor(s).

- “Nashville warbler playback study in Pennsylvania”      Lan-Nhi Phung      Advisor: Dr. David Toews  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Biology  
The Pennsylvania State  
University
  
- “The interplay between intraguild predation, habitat loss, prey abundance, and contaminant load on reproduction and survival of a declining raptor species”      Mercy Melo      Advisors: Dr. David King  
Adjunct Associate Professor  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst  
  
Dr. Jean-François Therrien  
Senior Scientist and Graduate  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
  
- “Identifying Seasonal Habitat Use and Survival of Juvenile Eastern Towhees Throughout Their First Year”      Michelle Eshleman      Advisor: Jeffrey J. Buler, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Wildlife  
Ecology  
Department of Entomology and  
Wildlife Ecology  
University of Delaware



David Yeany captured this image of a Blue-winged Warbler in Allegheny Co. at Tom’s Run Nature Reserve.



The Lower Trail yielded this Cerulean Warbler for Tom Kuehl on May 18.



Tina Alianiello photographed this Nashville Warbler at Prince Gallitzin on May 8, 2022.

# Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 8)

1. Common Redpoll
2. Great Blue Heron
3. Pink-footed Goose
4. Bewick's Wren
5. Loggerhead Shrike



Mark McConaughy photographed this first-year male Red-winged Blackbird on June 3 in Murrysville Community Park.

## 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
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