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PSO Pileated



December 2022

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 33, Number 4

From the President's Desk...

This newsletter again features the Christmas Bird Count, the largest community science project on earth. Launched in 1900, the CBC is, by far, the longest-running of such projects. Pennsylvania birders played a key role from the beginning. Five of the 25 original count circles were in PA! Among those listed was Wyncote, Pennsylvania, where a count is still active even if the specifics of the count circle have changed! The CBC effort, organized and coordinated by the National Audubon Society, is probably the largest community science effort, with over 2,500 circles completed by more than 70,000 people across the US, Canada, and Latin America in recent years. For more details on Pennsylvania's history of CBCs, check out Nick Bolgiano's excellent article published in the 1997 issue of *Pennsylvania Birds* (Vol 11, No 2). With such broad participation, the CBC has attained a central place in the birding community because it's fun and easy for any birder to participate. This year, it doesn't hurt to have an irruption of Evening Grosbeaks appearing at feeders across the state, the first in many years! So, participate in one of the 123rd Christmas Bird Counts listed in this issue.

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology had its origins in another community science project, a breeding bird atlas. This society formed from the collaboration of birders who organized the state's first bird atlas in the 1980s. The state-based organization of bird atlases in the United States brought together like-minded birders for the first time to complete the then-novel project of atlasing the state's breeding birds. As that successful project was



Christmas bird counters will be on the lookout this year for Evening Grosbeaks.

Photo by Geoff Malosh

winding down, many key players moved to continue the collaboration by forming the PSO. A few of our current Board members were part of that effort! So, it is notable that the third iteration of bird atlases is scheduled to launch in 2024, and PSO is helping with that effort. Atlas projects are completed at 20-year intervals and traditionally take five years to complete, but like Christmas Bird Counts they depend on the community of birders to conduct the surveys. Over the next few months,

the PSO Board will be sponsoring a contest to select the logo artwork for Pennsylvania's third Bird Atlas project! See page 15.

It's natural for PSO to promote bird atlases and Christmas Bird Counts, in addition to projects that we established and continue to coordinate, including the Breeding Bird Blitz and the Winter Raptor Survey. We are "for ornithology," the study and appreciation of birds. Check out our website (www.pabirds.org), with more information under the "Projects" tab.

In addition to looking forward to the next CBC or bird atlas, the society is making plans for its 2023 annual meeting. A festival of birding is planned during the third weekend of May in the State College area, with a full slate of weekend field trips, presentations, and birding camaraderie. Hold that date and watch for more details in the months ahead.

Dan Brauning, President
Lycoming County

2022-23 Counts & Surveys

Special thanks to Chad Kauffman for organizing our trips and events. If you have any questions, please contact Chad at chadkauffman@earthlink.net. 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. See pages 12-15.

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

February 17-23 – 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.

March 17-20 – Columbia County Birding Spotlight

Certificates of Appreciation Awarded

Since 2007, PSO has issued certificates of appreciation to individuals and organizations who have graciously allowed access to their properties to view rare or unusual birds. The total number issued is now 170. The full list can be found on the PSO’s website. Hummingbirds were in the spotlight this time with Certificates of Appreciation recently awarded to:

Greg Tomb, Seward, Indiana County, for Rufous Hummingbird – October - November 2022

Lucy Heggenstaller, Loganton, Clinton County, for Rufous Hummingbird – October - November 2022

Chichester Baptist Church, Upper Chichester, Delaware County, for Hermit Warbler– November 2022

PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Two flycatchers from the Western U.S. are considered distinguishable only by different “position note” calls. Which one has been identified vocally in Pennsylvania?
2. Which Atlantic seabird was identified only by measurements of its corpse found on an Erie County beach in 1998?
3. Which colorful bird was colloquially called the “golden robin” long ago?
4. Which is our most frequently banded owl migrant?
5. In their 2005 book *Birds of Pennsylvania*, Frank Haas and Roger Burrows described a species’ soft cooing as “often confused with the muted sounds of a hooting owl.”



Don’t Miss Our Columbia County Birding Spotlight!



PA Ornithological Records Committee: Requesting Candidates for 2022 Nominations

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) is a special committee of the PA Society for Ornithology (PSO) responsible for reviewing rare bird observations for acceptance into the state's official ornithological record. Currently, we need to fill an upcoming vacancy for **one voting member** for a three-year term beginning in January (2023-2025) and **non-voting Secretary** for a one-year term decided annually. We request interested candidates to contact me or any other current PORC member or PSO Director to be nominated for inclusion in this year's election, to be held in late December. Per PORC bylaws, members are nominated by 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 here: <https://pabirds.org/index.php/about-us/organization> and on page 16 of this newsletter and PORC members listed below.

PORC Member Candidates

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.

PORC Secretary Candidates

PORC Secretary will hold the position for a term of one year, in which they will receive a \$1,500 stipend from the PSO. They will be responsible for maintaining the PORC database of rare bird records and website in coordination with the PSO Webmaster, collecting and distributing rare bird records in batches to the committee for voting, recording notes at each PORC meeting, and communicating regularly with PORC members and the birding community. Necessary skills include: proficiency in Excel/Google Sheets, ability to use queries and formulas to subset and filter large datasets, familiarity and ability to use bird occurrence data (e.g. eBird or other rare bird observations), proficiency in using and building data management algorithms in Python, R, and/or Excel Macros. In addition to the above information for PORC Member Candidates, interested persons should describe qualifications pertaining to the specific role of PORC Secretary.

Please submit all biographies by 15 Dec 2022 to dyeany@paconserve.org.

More about PORC

The committee consists of 7 voting members with the abovementioned 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 (term ending 2022), Amy Davis (2022-2024), Corey Husic (2022-2024), Annie Lindsay (2022-2024), Julia Plummer (2021-2023), Tessa Rhinehart (non-voting Secretary, term ending 2022), Scott Stoleson (2021-2023), David Yeany II (voting Chair, 2020-2022)

Thank you for your interest in maintaining high quality bird records for Pennsylvania!

David Yeany II, PORC Chair (dyeany@paconserve.org)
Avian Ecologist, PA Natural Heritage Program

2022 Fall Migration Round-Up

Another Migration Round-Up has come and gone.

This year's Fall Migration Round-Up was held from September 24 to October 2. What started in the fall of 2020 with just two parks asking birders to tally as many species as possible over a weekend, has grown to 21 state parks taking part over a nine-day stretch.



One of the highlights for Susan Petty was a trio of Sandhill Cranes at Lackawanna State Park on the last day of the round-up.

The parks and their final species tallies were: Bald Eagle (72), Black Moshannon (32), Canoe Creek (75), Codorus (93), French Creek (41), Kettle Creek (61), Lackawanna (82), Little Buffalo (80), Little Pine (29), Locust Lake (65), Mt. Pisgah (46), Nescopeck (74), Nolde Forest (19), Poe Valley (29), Prince Gallitzin (80), Ricketts Glen (46), Ridley Creek (64), Sinnemahoning (43), and White Clay Creek (31). Yellow Creek (*Indiana*) put in an awesome effort and finished out in front with 99 species, with some great birds observed including a Red-throated Loon, a White-winged Scoter, and a Ruffed Grouse, the latter notably absent from the park for several years.

Other highlights observed include a trio of Sandhill Cranes flying over Lackawanna (*Lackawanna*), a thrush-packed day at Nescopeck (*Luzerne*), with Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Hermit, and a lingering Wood picked up, and Lincoln's Sparrows recorded in the forested park of King's Gap (*Cumberland*) and over in Sinnemahoning (*Potter & Cameron*).

These Migration Round-Ups, advertised as competitions between the parks, have goals that reach much more deeply 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 or wintering habitats, or transient individuals are dropping in to build up fat reserves before continuing, park staff are interested in learning more about what is happening within each respective park. Of course, we want the event to go toward something bigger, so we encourage the use of eBird to share sightings.

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 someone 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. Little Pine (*Lycoming*) and Poe Valley (*Centre*) offered bird walks to help introduce people to birds. An evening bird walk at Ricketts Glen (*Columbia, Luzerne, & Sullivan*) treated attendees to the calls of a Barred Owl before they caught sight of a SpaceX rocket flying over!

By taking full advantage of a nine-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 and helped to 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

Eastern Shore Trip Revisited

by Brian Byrnes

Thousands of shorebirds, hundreds of raptors, and a bounty of 135 total species were highlights of an October 6-9 trip by 16 PSO members to the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The trip was run by Hillstar Nature and led by owner George Armistead, a PSO member from Philadelphia.

The group's findings and photographic highlights can be seen at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/79395>.

On Thursday afternoon, participants came from across Pennsylvania to meet at the hawkwatch platform at Kiptopeke State Park near Cape Charles, Virginia. As group members trickled in, an impressive stream of falcons and accipiters streamed by overhead. Four Peregrine Falcons, 5 American Kestrels, and 18 Merlins were tallied before the group ventured to the water's edge. A target bird for many on the trip, a pair of Brown-headed Nuthatches, gave great looks nearby and entertained with their squeaky calls. The waterfront at the state park hosted an impressive collection of Brown Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, and Double-crested Cormorants. The group adjourned and met for dinner at the Cape Charles Brewery.

Friday and Saturday mornings brought the group to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge was brimming with birds, including flocks of Black Skimmers, White Ibis, and other waterbirds. A highlight was witnessing a stunning concentration of Seaside Sparrows, which were being pushed from the marsh by the rising tide, leading to a buildup along the edge, and a constant stream of birds flushing and crossing the water towards our group. On Saturday an estimated 200 Seaside



A rare treat for birders in Pennsylvania, dozens of Royal Terns were found during the long weekend trip, including this one from a back bays boat trip from Wachapreague.

Sparrows flushed from the marsh, more than most participants had previously seen in their entire lives.

Friday afternoon brought our birders to Wachapreague for a boat tour of the back bays. Timed to take advantage of the second high tide of the day, which pushed shorebirds onto smaller areas of mudflats, the boat trip was a highlight for most participants. Divided among three skiffs, the PSO crew was treated to triple-digit counts of Marbled Godwits, American Oystercatchers,

Dunlin, Willets, and Short-billed Dowitchers. Rare finds included several Whimbrels, and a single Red Knot, a White-rumped Sandpiper, and one Gull-billed Tern.

Saturday afternoon included exploration of the Cape Charles Natural Area Preserve, which yielded migrant warblers, including Cape May, Pine, and Black-throated Green.

The last outing of the weekend was at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Sunday morning. The refuge featured shorebirds, terns, and gulls, and some sought-after songbirds – Philadelphia Vireo and Saltmarsh Sparrow.

Given the complexities of organizing multi-day, out-of-state trips, PSO was excited to lean on the expertise of Hillstar Nature in designing the itinerary. This trip was our first attempt to work with a professional tour company to offer our members exclusive travel opportunities. We hope to be able to offer similar opportunities in the future and will communicate these plans directly to members.



Both photos on this page by Brian Byrnes

Cameron County Spotlight

by Chad Kauffman

Our latest edition of the county spotlight took us into the northwestern part of the state near the lands of the mighty elk. We were reminded that not all locations in the state have cell service, so we had to wait to upload many checklists until we could get to wifi or little islands of reception on mountain vistas or in small towns. I can personally thank my vehicle GPS for getting me to and fro in my travels. Even my satellite radio faded in and out in some of the valleys while trying to keep up with PSU football and then baseball playoff scores. Some of my cohorts weren't so lucky at times with their phone GPS. But in the long run, getting lost in mother nature isn't the worst thing to happen to someone when you can enjoy the fall foliage, wildlife, and fresh air. Not many places exist where you can go and not see the golden arches or the big box stores for several days while putting many miles on gravel and dirt roads. I felt blessed to enjoy another spot in the PA Wilds.

Once again, we were welcomed with open arms by local birders and state park and forest employees who gave up their time and knowledge to help create and lead field trips for this birding challenge. We enjoyed three days of field trips lined up during the four-day challenge. We have created these birding adventures to explore new hotspots for many of us, see what kind of numbers we can get in a snapshot in four days, add species to participants' county lists, and in some cases, life birds for the attendees. The field trip leaders or helpers enter the checklists on eBird and ask anyone who birded in the area during the time frame to share with PSO Birding Data. Thirty-nine eBird checklists produced 68 species of birds. Some birders were out multiple days, and we tallied 26 people over the four-day spotlight. Our trip report can be seen here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/77407>

Friday, October 14, Barbara Gee led five women birders – one of whom was recruited from the parking lot while her husband grilled lunch – completed a 2.5-mile birding walk in Sinnemahoning State Park. They started on the Lowlands Trail at the 40 Maples Day Use Area. Kimberly Lott, Sinnemahoning State Park Educator, gave them a brief history of the park and was a wealth of information regarding the habitats through which they walked and the effects of invasive plants on our native birds. The group tallied 14 species, starting with a Bald Eagle soaring down the creek, and ending with an Eastern Towhee calling from the brush.

Roger and Marg Higbee came in and did some exploring on their own, visiting a state game land, various hotspots,

and exploring new roads to help add to the challenge. Several of us who stayed together near Austin were arriving Friday evening and after dark. Andy Keister and Joe Gyekis joined me in some owling. We ran down to the George Stevenson Dam to do some owl calls and almost immediately we had at least two and possibly three Eastern Screech-Owls responding to us. The screech-owls caused one or two Northern Saw-whet Owls to respond with the toot call and the catlike response. None of the larger owls responded there, but this location seems like such a great spot with so many hills and valleys as well as the lake. We did have a Mallard humor me with my bigger owl calls I was doing by mouth. From the dam we headed down to the boat launch area in pitch black for most of the road going up to the campground and visitors' center. We just couldn't get any Great Horned or Barred Owls to respond, but we did hear another screech-owl, several flying squirrels, as well as several sparrow seeps but that was it. A couple of fat raccoons did scurry across the road near 40 Oaks.

Saturday morning, October 15, we arrived at the park's visitors' center to meet Kimberly Lott for the first time and see the Higbees as well as trip leader Mark Johnson for the first time in a long while. He led our group of a dozen birders around the trails, and we were able to enjoy the morning fog birding and get some really nice species to add to the challenge. It was nice to meet Mark's wife, daughter, and son-in-law who are all active birders in the area. Our birding focus did take a detour when we saw an Eastern Phoebe land near a young white-tailed deer feeding in the field. Before long, the phoebe kept flying and hitting it before eventually landing on the deer's head to pick off tidbits, maybe ticks, from its ears. Some in our group got pictures of all of this unfolding.

From there several of us headed up to Sterling Run to visit the strip-mines. Mark could only lead us part of the way due to prior commitments, but we found the place after one mishap of directions. The place was quite windy, but the views were killer. We were able to add Savannah Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark, which for this 90% forested county, are good additions to our spotlight challenge. We had to get Andy back to the visitors' center where we were able to meet back up with Mark and his wife to visit other areas. We hit Hicks Run, got to meet Andy Sidelinger, who did some birding of his own for the spotlight, and then finished the day at Top of the World, where we had spectacular views at sunset. Again, it was windy at these places, but we did get lucky enough to see others kick up a Ruffed Grouse that flew past us and up

over the ridge grasslands. During this trip, we added three or four sightings of our state bird, a treat for those of us from farther south. I think that is about how many I have had in the last 10 years. I am told their numbers are up this year in some areas, which is great news.

Sunday morning, October 16, brought us colder temps while we packed out of our rental. While loading my car just south of Austin, I was able to hear Great Horned Owl calling which I was able to add to my Potter County list, but we didn't have it for the Cameron list yet. We zipped down to the boat launch at the park, careful to avoid Wild Turkeys and any large mammals as well as the smaller ones like skunk, opossum, and raccoon that I had to avoid while driving around over the weekend.

We pulled into the launch, saw a few vehicles, soon found out that it was just too cold to do the pontoon boat tour to bird as we had hoped. Almost a dozen showed up for the walk. Kimberly was just beside herself apologizing, but we all said it wasn't her fault and we would bird elsewhere. In the meantime, Kim had told us that she had seen 27 ducks come in by the dam the night before. While things were still being discussed, I zipped down to scope the water. Many of those ducks had left, but I was able to hear Great Horned Owl calling at dawn, a nice addition to the trip list. Once I returned to the launch, Joe Gyekis had already taken a few people on a lap around the trails. He had jumped a potentially rare sparrow so, being soaked, he came back to get better waterproof footwear and pants. He then led the official trip back around the trails, and before too long we heard a different chip in the area where he had seen the sparrow before. The Nelson's Sparrow hopped up for great looks by all. This ended up being a new county eBird record as well. It was certainly a lifer for many of us. This had been my nemesis bird for many years. I was always away or

had just missed it, or it was too windy so I would catch only a flash of possible orange. I really didn't think I would be getting a lifer or state bird on this trip, but that is how it happens sometimes. While standing at that same location, we heard another chip and a Lincoln's Sparrow showed up in the same grass stand, and everyone got to see it as well.

After that walk, we headed back to the top of the dam to walk across it and down around to the water again. We found some more birds and were able to add White-crowned Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, and Pied-billed Grebe for our own lists or for the spotlight overall list. After this trip, we decided to hit the Willows for lunch and then head home. Sarah Lindgren and her two boys joined us for lunch as well. They were spunky and entertaining as they joined us on the walks. I was impressed with their Barred Owl calls and some other bird noises. Sarah is doing a good job raising them for nature adventures. On Monday, October 17, several friends from the State College Bird Club and PSO were coming to do a day trip to help finish the spotlight. Deb Grove, Susan Braun, and Ro Fuller explored the area. They were following the trip checklists as the weekend unfolded and were hoping to find some of the highlights as well as new additions for the list. They didn't refind the Nelson's Sparrow but replaced it with a Fox Sparrow. Dave Brooke and his wife Kathy were able to see and photograph a late Tennessee Warbler, adding it for the weekend.

So that concluded our county spotlight for Cameron, and it was enjoyable to meet new people we have known from Facebook, eBird, birding chats, texts, and emails over the years. These spotlights have been so successful because of the locals stepping up to help the cause. We have Columbia set for mid-March 2023 and we're discussing possibilities for April and later in the year.

Finch Research Network Establishes New FeederCam

The Finch Research Network has recently set up a feederCam in Woodland, Maine, to help educate the general public about healthy bird-feeding practices and with the probable result of healthier birds.

The cam may be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/@FinchResearchNetwork>. This feederCam just began streaming on November 27, 2022.



A few lucky Pennsylvania birders have had sightings of Evening Grosbeaks at their feeders already this year.

Photo by Geoff Malosh

The Raven Reporter

Tales of
Discovery about
Pennsylvania
Birds



Practice Saying “American Goshawk”

The first specimen of the “Slate-colored Hawk” (now “Northern Goshawk”) was collected by Alexander Wilson near Philadelphia. He gave it the scientific name of *Falco atricapillus* (now *Accipiter gentilis atricapillus*). Then, it was named “Ash-colored, or Black-cap Hawk” in Wilson’s sixth volume of *American Ornithology* (Wilson 1812). The term “atricapillus” means “black-capped” as in the scientific name of Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*).

The precise type locality of *Accipiter gentilis atricapillus* was “within a few miles of Philadelphia” (Wilson, 1812), evidently purchased at a market in New Jersey and collected by somebody other than Wilson, but may have been collected in Pennsylvania (Halley 2022). Wilson deposited this important specimen and others in the Peale Museum of Philadelphia. The Peale collection was originally organized and displayed by the famous artist, Charles Willson Peale, but were auctioned off after Peale’s death and subsequent failure of the museum. The Peale Museum closed in 1846 and the specimens were sold at auction in 1848 and dispersed to a variety of locations with many specimens lost in a fire at the American Museum of Natural History. Fortunately, one curator of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (ANSP), John Cassin, rescued this type specimen and a few others from the dispersed collection (part of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University). Later, another ANSP curator, Meyer de Schauensee, labeled the specimen. It was lost for many years until it was found many years later in the ANSP bird collection by Matthew Halley. Cassin also apparently rescued Wilson’s type specimens of three other American raptor species, the Mississippi Kite, *Ictinia mississippiensis*; the Broad-winged Hawk, *Falco pennsylvanicus* (now *Buteo platypterus*); and Rough-legged Hawk, *Falco niger* (now *Buteo lagopus*). Halley recently described this discovery of the “American Goshawk” original specimen and its meaning in an ANSP publication (Halley 2022) where he states that “a

taxonomic review of this complex is warranted.” The comment was prompted by recent ANSP studies that revealed Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*, is actually a complex of species including cryptic species in the Caribbean islands.

There have been questions about the taxonomic status of the North American and Eurasian populations of Northern Goshawk in recent years. Henst’s Goshawk (*A. henstii*) of Madagascar and Meyer’s Goshawk, *A. meyerianus*, of New Guinea are considered to form a superspecies with Northern Goshawk (*A. gentilis*). There are ten “weakly-differentiated” subspecies of Northern Goshawk across the Northern Hemisphere with three of these in North America (Stresemann and Amadon 1979, Kenward 2006), but some authorities list only eight or nine sub-species world-wide with only two subspecies on our continent (Ferguson-Lee and Christie 2001). Most North American goshawk populations, including those of the Appalachians, are considered *A. gentilis atricapillus* while there is a darker plumaged subspecies on Queen Charlotte Islands known as *A. gentilis laingi* and a larger, darker subspecies in southern New Mexico, Arizona, and northwestern Mexico known as *A. gentilis apache*.

In recent mitochondrial studies of Northern Goshawks across three continents, the American goshawk populations looked quite separated from those of Europe and Asia (Kunz et al. 2019). They are not closely related to either the European race, *A. gentilis gentilis*, or the race that lives in eastern Siberia, *A. gentilis albidus*, the two Eurasian subspecies closest to our continent. From the molecular studies it looks like the various subspecies of goshawk in Europe and Asia are each other’s closest relatives and the same can be said of the three American subspecies (Kunz et al. 2019). The researchers found “a deep split within *A. gentilis* into two monophyletic groups” – the Nearctic (North American) clade of three subspecies and the Palearctic (Eurasian) clade of seven subspecies. Indeed, they are not even sister groups with the *gentilis* group of subspecies more closely linked to Meyer’s goshawk, Henst’s goshawk, and the Great Sparrowhawk, *A. melanoleucus*, of Africa, than to the *atricapillus* goshawks of North America. Results of the molecular studies called for more studies of the taxonomy of goshawks (Kunz et al. 2019).

Following the research of Kunz and others, there was a recently published study conducted on the vocalizations of goshawk subspecies as it relates to their taxonomy (Sangster 2022). The chattering call is used by Northern Goshawks in advertising and in pair-contact. The chattering is a series of “kek” calls given by either sex and is innate, not learned, behavior. This makes it an

appropriate basis for studying taxonomy since any differences would lead to separation of populations by mate selection. The results of this study show very distinct differences between the North American *atricapillus* goshawks and the Eurasian *gentilis* goshawks. The sonograms of the chatter notes are very different with the *atricapillus* goshawks having slower chatter with notes that are longer in duration. This paper directly recommends a separation of the species into a North American species, American Goshawk, *Accipiter atricapillus*, and Eurasian Goshawk, *A. gentilis*. Other studies show a deep division between these two populations.

There are physical differences between the American and Eurasian goshawks. In adult males, the upperparts and upper wings of Eurasian (*gentilis*) goshawks are brownish-gray while they are pure gray or blue-gray in North American (*atricapillus*) goshawks. The American goshawk's head pattern is more contrasting than in the Eurasian goshawks with generally blacker crown as the term "atricapillus" indicates. The eyes of adult North American goshawks are a deep red to mahogany while Eurasian goshawks have more orange coloring in their eyes. The head pattern is more contrasting in the atricapillus-group than in the gentilis-group. The most obvious plumage difference is that the Eurasian goshawks have very contrasting barred dark brown underparts while the American goshawks have a much lighter gray underparts that are indistinctly vermiculated, a much paler look. These differences are much more obvious in a side-by-side comparison. These differences have been illustrated in good field guides for many years. Juveniles are almost identical to each other between the continents and newly designated species.

The separation of the American goshawks from the Eurasian goshawks will certainly elevate the conservation concern for the American goshawk population status. BirdLife International estimated the world population of Northern Goshawk as 900,000-1,460,000 with 234,000-380,000 mature individuals in Europe and 210,000 mature individuals estimated in North America (BirdLife International 2022, Partners in Flight 2020). The American goshawk population is considerably smaller (about one-fifth) than the Northern Goshawk's trans-hemispheric population. With declines occurring, we may see the American Goshawk getting more attention for its status internationally in addition to recognition by the PA-Endangered status.

To bring things full-circle and back to Pennsylvania, the ANSP had a part to play in the first documentation of nesting goshawks in our state. Otto Behr, of Lopez,

Sullivan County, wrote to Dr. Witmer Stone of ANSP that he and his brother, Herman, found the nest of a goshawk on Dutch Mountain near Lopez in 1896 (Stone 1897). Otto and his brother Herman cut the nest with two eggs out of the tree where they found it as evidence which they sent in to ANSP. Dr. Stone wrote back and was impressed by their relationship with Dr. B. H. Warren, an important ornithologist of the day, and the direct evidence of the nest. They reported that they had found another nest the following year and a total of eight nests in the last ten years with most in beech trees. That incident began a lasting friendship between Witmer Stone and the Behr brothers that led to 37 years of correspondence and visits by Dr. Stone to Dutch Mountain. This resulted in a publication about the summer (breeding) birds of the area (Stone 1900, Conant 1990). The old Behr homestead is now in SGL 66, close to SGL 13, SGL 57, and Ricketts Glen State Park where goshawks have been documented breeding until recently and goshawk habitat still exists. The precise location of the goshawk nest was probably close by. We still search for goshawks breeding in the region and hope that we can have the same good results as the Behr brothers long ago.

We should practice saying "American Goshawk" and searching for nesting pairs of this endangered raptor in our state.

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(continued on page 10 bottom)

Pennsylvania Ornithological Research

We can imagine how taxing it is for North American birds to migrate in the fall to wintering grounds as distant as Central and South America.

What we may not fully appreciate is the birds' difficult preparation for that journey. During the post-breeding season they must replace their worn wing and tail feathers with fresh, strong flight feathers before departing on their long journeys.

But a bird molting its wing and tail feathers is unable to fly, which severely limits its ability to seek food and leaves it vulnerable to predators. At the same time, the molting process consumes a tremendous expenditure of energy to produce those feathers. It would seem essential to restore energy quickly to enable the long journey.

Indeed, a research team in Pennsylvania has documented how quickly wing and tail feathers are replaced. Team members are Ronald L. Mumme, professor of biology at Allegheny College in Meadville, Robert S. Mulvihill, ornithologist at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, and David Norman, an honorary Carnegie Museum of Natural History research associate from England.

They analyzed an immense database of fall molt records at the Powdermill Avian Research Center in Westmoreland County to learn how swiftly this molt takes place. This database spanned records of 1,289 warblers of 13 species captured at Powdermill's banding station during post-breeding seasons from 1986 to 2000.

Their report titled "High-intensity flight feather molt and comparative molt ecology of warblers of eastern North

America" was published in 2021 in the American Ornithological Society's journal *Ornithology* (vol. 138, pp. 1-16).

The authors describe the molt period as "extraordinarily intense." Nearly all individuals were growing 50-67% of their 48 flight feathers within two-week to three-week periods. Such simultaneous replacement, the authors tell us, "is likely to compromise flight capabilities, foraging performance, and predator avoidance while also imposing significant energetic and nutritional burdens to support a large number of growing feathers."

Mumme and his colleagues conclude their work as describing "an unusually demanding phase of the annual cycle of migratory warblers, one that merits increased attention from ornithologists seeking a more thorough understanding of that cycle."

Their paper's acknowledgments include bits of background worth PSO members' attention: "The expertise and enthusiasm of the late K. C. Parkes in all matters of avian molt were instrumental in making this study possible. We thank R. C. Leberman, A. Leppold, M. Niedermeier, and many volunteer banding assistants at Powdermill Avian Research Center for help with collecting and coding the data used in this study."

There's a point worth emphasizing: Not only professionals but also volunteers can contribute important ornithological information.

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The Raven Reporter (Literature Cited) *continued from page 9*

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Conservation Chat Room



A recent survey in Pennsylvania queried residents to see if they understood the plight of birds and how conservation support on private lands might help bird populations. The findings were recently published in the journal, **Forests**, and summarized misconceptions about the status of bird populations.¹

While the vast majority of Pennsylvanians strongly support bird conservation and government funding to help birds, many of the respondents' answers showed they had incorrect or limited understanding of the dire situation faced by many of the bird species found in our state.

This is very troubling, since a lack of understanding that birds are in deep trouble means birds are more likely to continue their rapid decline. The 2022 report, **State of the Birds**,² is clear:

- Three billion birds have been lost from the U.S. and Canada in the past 50 years.
- Seventy “tipping point” bird species in the U.S. have lost two-thirds of their populations in the past 50 years. A few examples of tipping point birds that breed in our state are Cerulean Warbler, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Wood Thrush, Bobolink, Chimney Swift, Golden-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler.
- Birds all across the U.S. show downward trends in every habitat except wetlands, where concerted efforts in conservation supported by hunting funds have produced increased populations of geese, swans, ducks, and waterbirds.

What does this mean for birds in Pennsylvania? Let's take a look at grassland birds, since that's the biggest land bird decline of any habitat.

Grassland Birds: Our state is over 60% forested, as well as being heavily industrialized, but there are some remnants of prairie left in the western counties. However, Pennsylvania does have 15 breeding bird species that are grassland-obligate species, which means they require access to large grasslands, meadows, or savannas (GMS). According to a study on Pennsylvania grasslands by Latham and Thorne,³ 100 to 250 acres of contiguous GMS are needed to support multiple species, although a smaller

patch of 12 to 25 acres could support small numbers of a single species.

Fortunately, some state park and state game lands are managed for grassland species where birds like the Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark find refuge and some nesting success. The state-endangered Short-eared Owl and state-threatened Northern Harrier would benefit from establishing large blocks of grassland on reclaimed strip mines.

A large portion of State Game Land 198 in Blair and Cambria is reclaimed strip mine and is managed for grassland birds like Grasshopper Sparrow.

What can PSO members and other birders do to help grassland birds?

If you own fields:

Private landowners can play a key role in grassland conservation. If you own land and want to restore or create grassland habitat on your property, there are resource professionals available to help.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission offers a free Landowner Assistance Program through the Wildlife Diversity Biologists. Contact the regional office or the biologist for your area. Just Google “PA Wildlife Diversity Biologist.”

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is also active in grassland habitat projects. Call the office toll-free: 1-866-564-6972.

Around your home:

Keep your cats indoors since cats – even well-fed and loved cats – kill millions of songbirds each year.

Prevent window collisions with screening, reflective dots or lines, or parachute cords.

Use eBird to document bird sightings.

Plant native flowers, shrubs, and trees.

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2. <https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2022/>
3. http://m.continentalconservation.us/Roger%20Latham%20publications_files/Latham%20Thorne%20Keystone%20grasslands.pdf

Christmas Bird Counts Held in Pennsylvania*

	Name of Count	County	Compiler	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Date
1	Allentown	Lehigh/Berks	Brandon Swayer	610-965-4397 X 136	bsw76@yahoo.com	12/17/22
2	Audubon	Montgomery Delaware Chester	Vincent Smith	484-410-1157	Nyctea34@aol.com	12/24/22
3	Bald Eagle	Centre	Bob Snyder	814-753-2629	rhs2@psu.edu	12/29/22
4	Beaver	Beaver	Rick Mason	724-847-0909	richarddmason@gmail.com	12/17/22
5	Bedford	Bedford	Laura & Mike Jackson	814-652-9268	jacksonlaura73@gmail.com	12/31/22
6	Belsano	Indiana Cambria	Robert Gordon	814-418-8412	rhgiii@robertgordoniiiiviolinmake r.com	12/21/22
7	Benezette	Clearfield, Elk	Mark Johnson	814-546-2886	luckybirder@gmail.com	1/1/23
8	Bernville	Berks	Ed Barrell	610-926-2962	ed.barrell@comcast.net	1/5/23
9	Bethlehem- Easton	Northampton	Elaine & Donald Mease	610-346-7754	measede@enter.net	12/31/22
10	Bloomsburg	Columbia	Karol Pasquinelli	570-351-5120	karol2@ptd.net northbranchbirders@gmail.com	12/18/22
11	Buchanan Trail	Franklin Fulton	Vern Gauthier	717-385-9526	verngauthier14@gmail.com	12/14/22
12	Buffalo Creek	Washington	Larry Helgerman	412-508-0321	bobolink1989@gmail.com	12/18/22
13	Buffalo Creek Valley	Butler Armstrong	George Reese	724-353-9649	g.reese@gaiconsultants.com	12/17/22
14	Bushy Run	Westmoreland	Steve Manns	724-516-2244	psuloon@yahoo.com	12/31/22
15	Butler	Butler Lawrence Mercer	Chris Kubiak	412-963-6100	ckubiak@aswp.org	12/17/22
16	Central Bucks	Bucks	Diane Allison	267-733-3868	dalliso@mail.ptd.net	1/01/23
17	Chambersburg	Franklin	Valerie Barnes	717-352-4397	barnesva4@comcast.net	12/17/22
18	Clarion	Clarion	Jim McGuire	814-657-0875	jrmcguire@verizon.net	12/17/22
19	Clarksville	Greene	Terry Dayton	724-627-9665	tdayton@windstream.net	12/30/22
20	Cowanesque Lake	Tioga	Sean Minnick		minnickjk@yahoo.com	12/17/22
21	Culp	Blair	Laura Jackson John Carter	814-652-9268	mljackson2@embarqmail.com carter0206@aol.com	12/17/22
22	Curtin	Dauphin	Scott Bills	717-896-8859	srb24@comcast.net	12/27/22
23	Dallas Area	Luzerne	Rick Koval	570-991-0580	unibirder@yahoo.com	12/17/22

24	Dingman's Ferry	Pike	Derek Scott	570-828-2310 x234	dscott@peec.org	1/1/23
25	DuBois	Clearfield Jefferson	Marianne Atkinson, Joc Smrekar		marianne5@windstream.net	12/17/22
26	Elverson	Chester	Jim Cook	610-587-7545	escjim@windstream.net	12/23/22
27	Emporium	Cameron	Andrew Sidelinger		asidelinger@pa.gov	12/18/22
28	Erie	Erie	Michele Franz		isomorphun@roadrunner.com	12/17/22
29	Gettysburg	Adams	Evan Vaeth		nexevan@gmail	12/17/22
30	Glenolden	Delaware	David Eberly	610-543-3499	david.eberly@gmail.com	12/17/22
31	Grove City	Butler Mercer Lawrence Venango	Brendyn Baptiste	724-496-4856	brendynbaptiste@yahoo.com	12/26/22
32	Hamburg	Berks Schuylkill	Laurie Goodrich	610-756-6961 570-943-3411 x106	goodrich@hawkmtn.org	12/30/22
33	Harrisburg	Dauphin	Annette Mathes	717-514-4512	amathes19@verizon.net	12/17/22
34	Huntingdon	Huntingdon	Deb Grove	814-643-3295	dsg4@psu.edu	12/18/22
35	Imperial	Allegheny Washington	Bob Mulvihill	412-522-5729	robert.mulvihill@aviary.org	12/18/22
36	Indiana	Indiana	Roger & Marg Higbee	724-354-3493 412-309-3538	bcoriole@windstream.net rvhigbee@windstream.net	12/26/22
37	Johnstown	Cambria	Jeff Payne	814-279-8142	paynemt@gmail.com	12/18/22
38	Juniata - Lewistown	Juniata	Abram Troyer Chad Kauffman	717-994-6715	chadkauffman@earthlink.net	12/17/22
39	Lake Raystown	Huntingdon Blair	Jon Kauffman	717-413-5522	jvk5019@psu.edu	12/27/22
40	Lancaster	Lancaster	Barbara Hunsberger Roger Stoner	717-393-4091	phunsberger@comcast.net	12/31/22
41	Lebanon	Lebanon Dauphin	Fritz Heilman	717-273-0487	volks5@verizon.net	12/17/22
42	Lewisburg	Union, Snyder, Northumberland	Judith Peeler		judypeeler6@ptd.net	
43	Linesville	Crawford	Clare Nicolls	814-587-6395	tcnicolls@windstream.net	12/18/22
44	Lititz	Lancaster Lebanon	Ted Nichols	717-856-3851	tanicholsii@gmail.com	12/17/22
45	Lock Haven- Jersey Shore	Clinton Lycoming	Wayne Laubscher	570-748-7511	wnlaubscher@comcast.net	12/17/22

46	Mansfield-Wellsboro	Tioga	Gary Tyson	570-724-5789	gnats3@ptd.net	1/1/23
47	Montrose	Susquehanna	Barb Beavan Stone	570-499-8018	barbstn@yahoo.com	12/14/22
48	New Bloomfield	Perry	Betsy Riter		rriter@pa.net	12/27/22
49	Newville	Cumberland	Vern Gauthier	717-385-9526	verngauthier14@gmail.com	12/31/22
50	Northern Lycoming	Lycoming	David Brown	570-772-9262	davidebrownpa@gmail.com	12/31/22
51	Ohiopyle	Fayette Somerset	Matthew Juskowich	412-831-0898	jusko88@yahoo.com	1/1/23
52	Penns Creek	Centre	Cathy Pierce		winghaven.nursery@gmail.com	12/17/22
53	Pennypack Valley	Philadelphia	Peter Kurtz	215-342-3638 215-685-0470	peter.kurtz@phila.gov	
54	Philipsburg	Centre Clearfield	Greg Kojadinovich	814-237-5964	gsak40@gmail.com	
55	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	Brian Shema	412-963-6100	bshema@aswp.org	12/31/22
56	Pittsburgh South Hills	Allegheny Washington	Gigi Gerben		kagerb@yahoo.com	12/17/22
57	Pleasantville	Venango	Russ States	814-676-6320	pelagics202@gmail.com	1/1/23
58	Pocono Mt.	Monroe	Darryl Speicher		poconoavian@hotmail.com	12/18/22
59	Potter County	Potter	Dave Hauber	814-274-8946	davidwhauber@gmail.com	12/17/22
20	Reading	Berks	Lucy Cairns	610-223-4501		12/18/22
61	Rector	Westmoreland	Annie Lindsay	724-593-7521	LindsayA@carnegiemnh.org	12/17/22
62	Ryerson	Greene	Marjorie Howard	724-852-3155	birdwatcher108@comcast.net	12/28/22
63	Scranton	Lackawanna	Mark Catalano	570-760-6556	mwc.2473@gmail.com	12/17/22
64	South Butler	Butler	Chris Kubiak	412-963-6100	ckubiak@aswp.org	1/1/23
65	Southeastern Bradford	Bradford	Rebecca Lesko	570-592-2629	EMNCinfo@yahoo.com	
66	Southern Bucks	Bucks	Mark Gallagher	215-378-8162	mgallagher@princetonhydro.com	12/17/22
67	Southern Lancaster County	Lancaster	Derek Stoner	484-723-3348	derekstoner@hotmail.com	12/18/22
68	State College	Centre	Jen Lee Bob Fowles	814-238-1990	rbf@psu.edu	12/18/22
69	Tamaqua	Schuykill Carbon	Jonathan DeBalko		jonathan.debalko@wilkes.edu	12/28/22
70	Tunkhannock	Wyoming	Rick Koval	570-991-0580	unibirder@yahoo.com	12/18/22
71	Upper Bucks	Bucks, Lehigh Montgomery	Bill Etter	215-964-3613	billetter01@gmail.com	12/18/22

72	Warren	Warren	Michael Toole	814-723-4714	m_t_toole@verizon.net	12/17/22
73	Washington	Washington	Tom Contreras	724-223-6118	tcontreras@washjeff.edu	12/17/22
74	West Chester	Chester	Barry Blust Anthony Fernandes	610-458-5616	BarryBlust@comcast.net jets741@verizon.net	12/17/22
75	Western Chester	Chester	Larry Lewis	484-340-7672	earlybirdtours@comcast.net	1/1/23
76	Western Schuylkill	Schuylkill	Dave Kruel	570-622-3704	dkrue1300@comcast.net	12/18/22
77	White Mills	Wayne	Barb Leo	570-253-2364	barbaraaleo@earthlink.net	12/17/22
78	Wild Creek– Little Gap	Carbon Monroe	Corey Husic	570-269-7509	coreyhusic@gmail.com	12/26/22
79	Williamsport	Lycoming	David Brown	570-772-9262	davidebrownpa@gmail.com	12/17/22
80	Wyncote	Montgomery	Kristy Morley	215-646-8866	kristy@wvwa.org	12/17/22
81	York	York	Bernie Frick	717-843-6675	bernardfrick@alum.lehigh.edu	12/17/22
82	York Springs	Adams, York, Cumberland	Tim Johnson	717-409-4805	tj359@sbcglobal.net	12/28/22

Logo Needed for 2024 PBA3

Pennsylvania is planning to launch our third bird atlas (PBA3) in 2024 when birders throughout the state will document birds with breeding evidence, and winter distribution, in a custom-designed eBird portal. (see an example: <https://ebird.org/atlasme/home>). Our new bird atlas will incorporate both breeding birds and a winter atlas effort! (See page 1 for more details).

A logo is needed for this project to provide a visual identity. This is where you come in! We invite everyone to create and submit a logo for the PBA3! The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology is sponsoring the contest with an award of \$300 for the winning design. The logo will be widely used, from 50x50px online displays to large-format printing, in websites, letterhead, apparel, and other print and electronic communications over the next six years. Guidelines and samples of other atlas logos can be viewed here

https://pabirds.org/pdf/Logo_Guidelines_Pennsylvania_Bird_Atlas.pdf.

Submissions can be attached, as a PNG file with a transparent background, by email to PAAtlasLogo@gmail.com until January 31, 2023.

Questions may be sent there as well. We look forward to seeing your creative logo designs! The winner will be notified in March.

Thank you for your interest.

– PSO Board of Directors

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 2)

1. Pacific-slope Flycatcher (Incidentally, some ornithologists are considering whether it and the Cordilleran Flycatcher should be lumped together again as the former Western Flycatcher.)
2. Band-rumped Storm Petrel
3. Baltimore Oriole
4. Northern Saw-whet Owl
5. Mourning Dove





A large portion of State Game Land 198 in Blair and Cambria is reclaimed strip mine and is managed for grassland birds like this Grasshopper Sparrow. See article on page 11.

Photo by Laura 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:

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