

The

PSO Pileated



October 2023

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 34, Number 3

From the President's Desk...

A popular feature of this newsletter is the "PSO Pileated Quiz." It provides a fun challenge to test your knowledge of the birds of Pennsylvania. Paul Hess has done a great job with these; they're not too easy or too hard. A rich history of past ornithology events in Pennsylvania and a broad spectrum of bird facts provide a seemingly endless list of trivia questions.

Questions related to geography and phenology (timing) have always piqued my interest. When or where a bird (or group of birds) is likely to be found relates directly to our field experience. What am I likely to encounter here, today? Might I find something unexpected? Without attempting to compete with this issue's quiz, here are a couple of examples of this style:

Where and when would you expect to find:

1. White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Great Cormorant, and Bufflehead
2. Eastern Bluebird, Winter Wren, Golden Eagle, and Golden-crowned Kinglet
3. Barn Swallow, Brown Booby, Common Raven, American Flamingo

Hold on – wait! Booby and flamingo!?!

Of course, by now, flamingo fever swept across not only our community, but the eastern United States, reaching into mass media to draw new attention to birding. Of course, by the time you get this newsletter (and maybe today, as it was missing on 9/20), the flamingo will likely be gone and the booby was just a fly-by, so it doesn't quite fit in this quiz, but bear with me as I reflect on this



Birders flock to Long Lane, Franklin County, to see the flamingos

Photo by Jerry McWilliams

remarkable birding event. The flamingo in Pennsylvania has been grist for a lot of ink since Hurricane Idalia apparently carried the species into the eastern US. That said, my interest here is the social phenomena associated with this remarkable discovery.

Long Lane Pond will forever be marked in birding circles as the flamingo pond. As of this writing, it just surpassed a thousand "completed checklists," of which 861 included a flamingo since John Carter came across this bird on 7 September. That tally does not come close to the number of people who came to see this bird, some who don't use eBird and others who aren't birders at all. More than one thousand people stood on Long Lane in Franklin County to see a bird. Sure, a pink bird! A friend visiting the site on Day 2 encountered a young local couple that stopped by to see the "Florida birds." They were among the 90+ people coming and going that day. The photo, taken by Jerry McWilliams, gives a hint of what Long Lane Pond has been like. A local property owner circulating through the crowd reportedly was so happy that everyone was there and enjoying themselves. I concur with the thought: "Perfect hostess!"

The Long Lane Pond hot spot recorded 25 additional species since the flamingo was reported, including, of all things, a fly-by Brown Booby! Spotting a Brown Booby while watching a flamingo in Pennsylvania defies expectations. You may recall my curiosity about whether rare bird stake-outs generate other rare bird sightings. Well, the 11th record in PA's history (Brown Booby) just happened to fly by a group of birders watching the state's

first-ever flamingo! Wow. Well, that seems to establish the rule, that birders attract rarities! Well, not exactly, but the ability to detect a passing rarity is increased when you add dozens of eyes that may, after a while, wander from the pink wonder before them. We're all capable of being distracted, I guess.

But my interest in the flamingo is more on the public sensation. Again, someone mentioned that the chatter in a local tavern, miles away from Long Lane, was a buzz about the flamingo. The establishment benefited from this influx of birding tourism. And the media, which we may at times be somewhat skeptical about, fueled the curiosity of the public. A Google search listed dozens of articles from CNN, NPR, USA Today, and many other media outlets covering the broader phenomenon, and Pennsylvania's birds. The flamingo, and by extension our avocation, received incredible attention. Of course, headlines were sometimes misguided. For example, a headline said flamingos were "spotted where they've been extinct for years," referring to Florida. Well, extinction is forever, but we understand they mean "extirpated." But despite deviations from the facts, we generally celebrate a positive story about birds and those who enjoy them. Or, maybe we'd rather be left alone, I'm not sure. Part of the marvel of this situation is the fidelity of at least one of the flamingos to Franklin County! Few of us would have predicted a duration of two weeks, particularly after the injury and rescue of one of the two. News headlines ask,

"How long will it stay?" and appropriately answer, "No one knows." A single flamingo was first reported in northwestern Kentucky on 9/7 and persisted until 9/20, when I wrote this.

The two birds, also an adult and immature, that appeared in Ohio seem to have been one-day wonders. So Long Pond has apparently provided something right for the flamingo, at least for now. But we all understand that the bird's only hope of survival is a long southward flight to warmer climates as the first fall frost could happen any time in October; that can't be good for a flamingo! So, with best wishes, we will soon bid our Florida (or probably Cuban or Yucatanian) bird adieu.

The list of state "first records" in 2023 is pretty astonishing, including Limpkin in *Lancaster*, another in *Butler*, a one-day documented Broad-billed Hummingbird in *Allegheny* in July, Mottled Duck in *Washington* for months, and others! The pursuit of rarities is part of what we enjoy about birding. There's an aspect of "treasure hunting" to our birding pursuits. Most of the time, those treasures can be as routine as a Black-throated Green Warbler in fading fall plumage on a September morning. But once in a rare while, it'll be a "Florida bird" of some stripe, that throws us off-kilter and reminds us that birds fly, after all, and anything seems possible.

Dan Brauning, President
Lycoming County

PSO Webinar – Building a Future for Chimney Swifts

Join PSO for a live webinar as Brian Shema shares with us some of his experience with Chimney Swifts on Monday, October 23, at 7:00 p.m. For more than a decade, Brian has served on a multi-agency committee to investigate and discuss Chimney Swift conservation. His team is actively monitoring and collecting information pertaining to nesting success in a network of towers with the intention of being able to guide continued efforts toward the conservation of this watch list species. Brian will share some of this data and make recommendations on building a future for Chimney Swifts. Registration for the webinar will soon be opened, so check pabirds.org and our Facebook page as well.

Brian Shema has been with the Audubon Society of Western PA for more than two decades. Over this time, he has led the stewardship team, conservation team, and he now serves as Operations Director. With a background in ornithology, Brian's interests have always aligned well

with the organization's mission to connect people to birds and nature. For example, in 2005 he developed ASWP's eco-tour program aimed at providing birding experiences for area birders. Since then, Brian has been organizing and guiding birding trips throughout the country and has also traveled through Central and South America. To help the organization engage people in nature, he has been involved in a number of conservation and stewardship efforts, ranging from watershed conservation planning to ADA and regional trail connectivity studies. Brian is a Toyota Conservation Leadership Fellow and was named a 40 Under 40 Conservation Leader by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

Because We Care:

PSO is Involved in Bird Conservation Issues

In Memoriam – Tom Johnson

Pennsylvania – and the wider birding world – lost one of its most important young and rising leaders July 23, 2023, with the untimely and unexpected death of Thomas Brodie Johnson, 35, from a pulmonary embolism at his home in Cape May, N.J.

Tom got his start as an enthusiastic and unusually gifted birder growing up in Hummelstown, Dauphin County, where his parents, Jan Getgood and Ernie Johnson, had moved from Washington D.C. with Tom and his older sister Jen. While Tom also excelled at sports and music in middle school and high school, birds became his driving passion, which he developed both from time spent with adult mentors at Appalachian Audubon like Ramsey Koury and others, and doing raptor rehabilitation with John and Beth Carricato at Dauphin County Wildlife Rescue. He also formed close birding friendships with teenaged peers including Cameron Rutt, Drew Weber, and Ross Gallardy, all of whom have also pursued lives deeply connected to birds.

I got to know Tom and his family in 1999, when they became volunteers on the saw-whet owl banding crew I oversee for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. Tom was only 11 at the time, but within a few years he was as completely adept at all the banding skills as any adult on the team. It was also the beginning of a very close, almost familial friendship with Tom, Jen, Jan and Ernie ever since.

At 17, Tom was hired by PSO as part of the professional field team for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, conducting point counts across the commonwealth that provided an unprecedented level of detail on the state's nesting birds over the next five years. He attended Cornell University, graduating in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in biology, while haunting the halls of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, honing his twin interests in birds and bird science. He spent the following four years working on ornithological research projects around the continent, and developed a particular expertise in pelagic seabirds while serving as on-board ornithologist on NOAA research vessels in the North Atlantic and Pacific.

Tom found his adult birding community working for the Cape May Bird Observatory starting in 2010 as morning flight counter, responsible for identifying and tallying the astounding numbers of migrant passerines, where his extraordinary ID skills (by eye and ear) were put to great use. It's also where Tom met the love of his life, Melissa Roach, who was CMBO's hawk-counter. They were together for the next 13 years, and eventually made Cape

May their home, where they were planning to marry in September of this year.

In 2014, Tom began working for Field Guides Inc., a career that brought all of Tom's talents -- not only his impressive field skills but his warm, generous and friendly personality -- into perfect alignment as he guided birding tours in North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, Australia and Antarctica. When the pandemic hit and shut down in-person bird tours, Tom jump-started the company's "OutBirding with Field Guides" video series, which highlighted his equally impressive talents in videography and photography. Tom was constantly finding new ways to engage people with birds, such as his popular Instagram bird videos set to pop music. (I was always grateful when Tom made time to serve with me as an instructor at Audubon's Hog Island camp on the coast of Maine, where years before he had been part of the camp's first teen ornithology program. Those are especially treasured memories now.)

Tom's reputation at the national and international level rose steadily through the years, with his work on a variety of state records committees and the American Birding Association's prestigious checklist committee only one example of the ways in which he contributed his expertise to the wider birding community. His writing and photography were both widely published, including a new column he started last year in *BWD* magazine, and frequent contributions to *Birding*, where he was the longtime "Featured Photo" editor.

The shock waves from Tom's death reverberated worldwide. Jan reached me with the news while I was in eastern Europe, but to my surprise the following day my hosts with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds had also heard and shared their condolences. Tributes have poured in from across the birding spectrum, along with the anguished realization that Tom's abilities were only growing; he had so much more to share. His stature went far beyond his towering yet gentle physical presence at 6' 6", and all of us who were privileged to know him share in the grief and disbelief his fiancée Melissa and his family are feeling. It still seems unreal to those of us who knew and loved him.

If you knew Tom and wish to honor him, share a bird with someone who has never taken the time to really see one. At his core, that's what Tom loved more than almost anything else, besides Melissa, their dog Raven, and his family.

Scott Weidensaul

The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds



Big Cone Crop

With all the interest in finches and other conifer birds, it is great news that the cone crop looks good for fall and winter 2023. In my neck of the woods the Eastern White Pines are loaded with their long cones. Many limbs are weighed down by the heavy, sap-covered cones. Some spruce forests have a good crop of red spruce cones, especially in the taller trees.

This bodes well for many seed-eating birds. Reports of Red Crossbills continue in the "usual places" such as Minnesota and Ontario, but they also have been observed in Warren County, New York, and at Sinnemehoning State Park, Cameron County, PA. I observed Red Crossbill flyovers this last summer. A flock went over SGL 13 in June and another flock, over SGL 57 and Ricketts Glen State Park on August 1. There were hemlocks and red spruce near each spot, but I suspect that the red spruce cones were the more likely attractant. The red spruce cones are usually seen in the very top branches of the tree, so they are easily seen from a distance.

White pine cones are fairly large, five to ten inches long, and not all the Red Crossbill types feed readily on the large-scaled cones. These big white pine cone crops occur every three to five years. I have seen both Type 1 and Type 10 forage on the cones of white pines in Pennsylvania. Since Type 1 is the Appalachian Red Crossbill, it especially fits this scenario. When I last watched the Type 10 Red Crossbills, they were clearly calling back and forth between trees with cones and guiding the rest of the flock to seed trees. Large clusters of cones can hang from the tallest branches, easily seen at a distance by keen-eyed finches. Type 4 and perhaps Type 7 crossbills also may visit white pines. Many other species will cling to a white pine cone and pry out its seeds. The cones are also attractive when they fall to the ground. I've often seen nuthatches hopping on the ground to get at a freshly fallen pine cone. It is a bit odd to see a Red-breasted Nuthatch hopping around on the forest path, but they are very opportunistic in their foraging. You may need to look high into a pine tree to count chickadees this winter.

With the Third Atlas beginning in 2024, it is good to be aware that a large cone crop could keep conifer birds

foraging into the breeding season next spring. Red Crossbills will stay in one area if the crop is sufficient, perhaps with multiple tree species supplying cones, and then nest. Red Crossbills are known to nest at almost any time of year, but they are more likely to nest as the days get longer in spring. This may occur as early as March. Red-breasted Nuthatches also will respond to a big cone crop by irrupting into an area and nesting the next spring. With the decline in some bird species' populations, a big cone crop is welcome to help out some of those species like Black-capped Chickadees that are not as common as they once were in Penn's Woods due to their vulnerability to West Nile Virus. This big cone crop could be a real positive for birds and birders in the next months.

Our Last Hurrah?!?

For some of us, the next Pennsylvania Atlas will be our third Atlas. Who would have guessed that we would have so much fun doing Atlas birding?

Some of the Regional Coordinators of the first Atlas are still involved with Pennsylvania ornithology and participate in the PSO. I was reminded of this when I ran into Allen Schweinsberger in Lewisburg and every time I send a column to Margaret Higbee. The PSO was born during that Atlas effort which united the state's birders for the first time. I am glad to see that several of us have survived for this Atlas and are eager to make some contributions. In the past we not only did Atlas blocks and conducted many other bird surveys, but mentored younger birders and contributed our time and energies to this and other organizations. The dedication of these Thrice Atlas volunteers has been impressive. Volunteer birding has been absolutely essential to the success of bird science in the state.

In the coming weeks and months, there will be a lot of news about the Third Pennsylvania Bird Atlas, its new coordinator, the newest data entry methods, the connection to eBird and other new technologies. All of this is very exciting and increases the prospects of success and inclusion of many people as volunteers. I wish the best for the new project and will participate enthusiastically. I can remember explaining to prospective volunteers what a breeding atlas was and why we needed to do one. The first Pennsylvania Atlas was one of the first ones in the country. Even after a few minutes of explanation, I often was looking at a blank face that did not quite get what an Atlas was and why it was helpful. Once the excellent book that resulted from the first Atlas came out in print, they saw that it was a very worthwhile project. The learning curve of the ornithological

community was probably the greatest during that Atlas than any period in modern history. We learned a great deal, not only as a joint project and community – a very important aspect – but, also as individuals. One of the most important aspects of participating in ambitious projects like an Atlas is the personal growth by the participants. We explored many new areas and became acquainted with birds we really did not know previously.

For many of us, it still gets down to basic field surveys and the challenge of making your own discoveries out there in the wild. The first Atlas might now be called the “analog” Atlas with the paper USGS topographic maps and paper forms used in the field. My maps were marked up into six blocks, each block numbered, with marks indicating good spots to visit. I remember focusing on any sort of wetland I could find – as indicated on the topo map – and searching for habitat that was unusual for the block which might yield an uncommon species. The methods are now more electronic, and the phone in your pocket has more computing power than Dan Brauning had available at the home office. But, many of the approaches we learned then still are valuable.

So, cheers to all of the new Atlas participants and especially to the Thrice Atlasers who are thrilled to have their last hurrah.

2023 PA Boreal Breeding Bird Report

I continue to study the rarest breeding boreal birds in the state especially in the northeastern region where there are many spruce and other conifer forests. Two of the species studied are PA Endangered birds, the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler.

My initiation into boreal birds was during the first PA Breeding Bird Atlas when I found a pair of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers feeding young in a small forested wetland in Lycoming County after Dan Brauning detected the species there. Unfortunately, the long successes of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers at a few wetlands seems to be near or at an end, for now. I found no Yellow-bellied Flycatchers on territory, much less nesting, in the wetlands where I have studied them for several years. I did not even find a male singing on territory, much less a pair. They were very consistent in Coalbed Swamp and other nearby conifer forest wetlands. Not only that, they had strong persistence at particular locations. I could walk right to the spot where I found them the year before and find them again in the same territory, the male singing from the same prominent limbs.

Blackpoll Warblers were not quite as rare this summer, but I did not find any evidence of breeding pairs. In early

June, I found at least two males singing in Tamarack Swamp, Wyoming County, but not afterwards. I found them at locations where I have observed them for almost twenty years. As part of my surveys, I checked several territories that had been occupied in the last ten years. Blackpolls also have been remarkably loyal, not only to particular swamps but also to the same sections. That did not continue this year.

Another boreal forest bird species that was a highlight of the first two breeding bird atlases is the Swainson’s Thrush. The first Atlas was a period of discovery for many of us when we found Swainson’s Thrushes in some northeastern counties, especially on North Mountain. Most Swainson’s Thrush territories were associated with mature hemlock woods, often with beech and blueberry bushes. Many of the Swainson’s Thrushes found were not single territories but clusters of thrush territories that strung along streams or paths. Each year the number of territories have differed, but the cluster would persist. One after the other, these clusters have “winked out.” I found none this year in Loyalsock State Forest, SGL 13, or Ricketts Glen State Park where they have been found for a decade or three.

The only cluster of Swainson’s Thrushes that persisted in 2023 was in SGL 57 in a high elevation spruce and hemlock forest around the headwaters of Somer Brook. There were at least five pairs and probably more. One territory was over a quarter mile west of the others, perhaps indicating that more Swainson’s Thrushes can be found in conifers there. At least three of the territories produced young.

My friends who check on Swainson’s Thrushes in northwestern Pennsylvania have not observed the declines that I’ve documented on North Mountain. It may be that there is a larger core population in the northwest region that is more stable due to its size. But I find these “wink outs” disconcerting, especially since the habitat looks very good and the conifer evergreen forests look healthy and are protected. Another good sign is that the PGC is doing some timbering nearby that should increase the coverage of the evergreen conifers by selectively cutting the large deciduous trees around them (mostly beech and red maple). We hope for more boreal forest birds in these management areas in the future.

Good birding!

Doug Gross
Pennsylvania Boreal Bird Project
Ricketts Glen State Park Project
Dagross144@verizon.net

Conservation Chat Room

The 2023 Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation Was a Huge Success



PSO's 2023 Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (Blitz) was wildly successful on many fronts. Thanks to all who generously contributed to the \$19,311.00 total – almost double what was raised in 2021 and significantly exceeding our original goal. Not only did the 214

donations from birders, bird clubs, and PSO raise significant dollars for bird conservation projects, but the Blitz also inspired 80 birders to form 21 teams to fundraise and document bird observations by submitting 637 checklists to eBird. Birders found more species this year, too: a total of 175, surpassing 152 in 2021 and 169 in 2022.

The Blitz incorporated a sense of competition by recognizing top teams in fundraising, species counts, and low carbon birding (bird counts done on foot or by bike, etc.), but also encouraged teams to submit their findings to eBird. There was also a category for “Least Birded,” encouraging teams to explore counties where few eBird reports are submitted. The eBird data are invaluable to our understanding of bird dynamics. Since the Blitz occurred in mid-June, many participants documented breeding birds and made some surprising discoveries (see species list at the end).

The County Champs in the Northeast Region were the “**Day and Night Hawks**,” recording 84 species in Susquehanna County. Team members were Kelly Finan, Michele Morningstar, Julia Mann, Evan Mann, Tom Norville, Nancy Van Cott, Gary Stone, and Barb Stone (captain). The **Day and Night Hawks** also won the Low Carbon competition, recording 60 species in Susquehanna County.

The “**Lyco Dendroicas**” were County Champs in the Northcentral Region, recording 59 species in Lycoming County. Team members were Dan Brauning (captain), Bruce Buckle, Fred Stiner, and Dave Ferry. The “**Teatime Towhees**” won the Least Birded category. Julia Plummer (captain), Susan Smith, and Karen Kottlowski recorded 52 species.

The County Champs in the Northwest Region were the “**PA Plovers**,” led by captain Katie Anderson. She and teammates Ripley Kindervater, Ron Mumme, and Ruth Swaney found 122 species in Erie County. The Low Carbon award went to a new team called “**LumBIRD-jacks**,” led by Steven Latta. His team consisted of Shaina Kenny, Nancy Ransom, Oliver Jankosky, Cassie Ziegler, and Robert Mulvihill. They recorded 31 species in Erie County.

The Southwest Region County Champs were the “**Todd Towhees**.” Team captain was Roger Higbee and included Carol Guba, Marg Higbee, and Gloria Lamer. They found 103 species in Indiana County. The “**Bondi Birders**,” comprised of Dick Bondi (captain), and Trip Bondi, captured the Low Carbon recognition in Washington County with 6 species.

County Champs in the Southcentral Region were the “**Crazed Cuckoos**.” Vern Gauthier (captain), Tracy Mosebey, Erika Bowman, Tiffany Willow, Steve Schmit, Bill Oyler, and Kathy Kuchwarwa. They found 105 species in Perry County and also earned the Least Birded designation in Fulton County, finding 101 species. The “**Raven Lunatics**.” Doris (captain), Steve, and Gavin Brookens, captured the Low Carbon Award by documenting 57 species in Cumberland County.

The “**Kingfishers**” were County Champs in the Southeast Region, recording 113 species in Dauphin County. Team members were Scott Bills (captain), Stephanie Bills, Andy Brought, and Steve Schmit.

“**Rosalie’s Raptors**” won the Regional Count after finding 100 species in Berks, Schuylkill, and Lehigh Counties. Mary Therese Grob led the team of Laurie Goodrich, David Barber, and Bracken Brown.

This region also had the top Youth Team, the “**Garnet Valley Vireos**,” recording 88 species in Delaware County. This team included Ethan Kang (captain), Christian Scheibe, Xavier Schwartz, Braydon Leary, and Aaron Knight.



Congratulations to the PA Champs

The top two teams were the PA Plovers for recording the most species (122) and the Todd Towhees for raising the most money (\$4,155).

Other teams that participated, even though they didn't qualify for any of the special recognitions are:

- Black Valley Buzzards: Laura Jackson (captain), and Mike Jackson
- Brandywine Breeding Bird Blitzers: Brian Byrnes (captain), Barry Blust, Jessica Shahan, and Alison Fetterman
- Gator Birders: Tomas Nonnenmacher (captain), Rob Hodgson, Ken Pinnow, Michael Williams, and Brian Miller
- Hendricks Hawkwatchers: Carolyn Hendricks (captain) and Steve Hendricks
- Manada Bird-brains: Sally Zaino (Captain)
- Quittie Audubon: Jim Fiorentino (Captain)
- Reelly Kid-Icking Good Birders: Andrew Dapkins (Captain)
- South Mountain Audubon: Linette Mansberger (Captain)
- Stork Raven Mad: Susan Braun (captain), Roana Fuller, Jen Lee, Nora Serotkin

All of the teams should be proud of the money raised that was donated to our three partners:

Hawk Mountain, which will use their donation to help fund the Third Breeding Bird Atlas in Pennsylvania, which starts in 2024. The **Foundation for Sustainable Forests**, another partner, will use their funds for two projects: invasive species management in the Floraroz Forest in Erie County, and a video production that will highlight ecological forestry and ongoing bird research on their property. Our third partner, **South Middleton Township**, will use their funds to restore habitat for marshland species like the Virginia Rail, which breeds along Yellow Breeches Creek on township property.

We owe the success of the 2023 Blitz to Vern Gauthier (mastermind of the website and the Blitz protocol) and Brian Byrnes (publicity chair), as well as Frank Haas, PSO Treasurer. In addition to Vern and Brian, other Conservation Committee members who helped with the Blitz were Carolyn Hendricks, David Barber, and Laura Jackson.

Please mark your calendar for PSO's 4th Annual Blitz, to be held starting Friday, June 7 through Monday, June 17, 2024. Share this article with fellow birders if they aren't PSO members and encourage them to join in the challenge for the 4th Blitz.

Taxonomic Order of Reported Species in the 2023 PSO Blitz

1	Snow Goose	17	Eurasian Collared-Dove	33	Spotted Sandpiper
2	Canada Goose	18	Mourning Dove	34	Greater Yellowlegs
3	Mute Swan	19	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	35	Ring-billed Gull
4	Wood Duck	20	Black-billed Cuckoo	36	Herring Gull
5	Blue-winged Teal	21	Common Nighthawk	37	Great Black-backed Gull
6	Mallard	22	Eastern Whip-poor-will	38	Gull-billed Tern
7	Mottled Duck	23	Chimney Swift	39	Caspian Tern
8	Northern Pintail	24	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	40	Common Tern
9	Redhead	25	Virginia Rail	41	Double-crested Cormorant
10	Hooded Merganser	26	Common Gallinule	42	Neotropic Cormorant
11	Common Merganser	27	Sandhill Crane	43	Least Bittern
12	Red-breasted Merganser	28	Semipalmated Plover	44	Great Blue Heron
13	Ruddy Duck	29	Piping Plover	45	Great Egret
14	Wild Turkey	30	Killdeer	46	Green Heron
15	Ruffed Grouse	31	Semipalmated Sandpiper	47	Black-crowned Night-Heron
16	Rock Pigeon	32	American Woodcock	48	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Just recently, the PSO Board agreed to join almost 300 other organizations to sign on as a signatory to a letter sent to President Biden regarding the biodiversity crisis. The letter was entitled, “Meeting the Challenges of the Biodiversity and Extinction Crisis Over the Next 50 Years” and spearheaded by the Center for Biological Diversity.

In the letter, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, “one of the most successful conservation laws ever enacted by any nation.” Although the Act has prevented the extinction of most of the species under its protection, the natural world is now facing an existential crisis of species extinction across the globe.

The signers of the letter asked President Biden to:

1. Implement a national biodiversity strategy.
2. Increase funding and engage a broad spectrum of government agencies to boost recovery of endangered species.
3. Develop an Ecosystem-based Framework to rebuild American’s wildlife populations.

Contact Laura if you’d like a copy of the letter that was sent to President Biden.

Laura Jackson, PSO Conservation Chair
Bedford County
jacksonlaura73@gmail.com



PSO donated funds from the 2022 Breeding Bird Blitz to help Erie Bird Observatory, which monitors and helps to protect the federally-endangered Piping Plovers in Pennsylvania.
Photo courtesy of Grigory Heaton/iNaturalist CC BY-NC, toned

Bird Quiz

(Answers on page 12)

1. What do the following PA birds have in common – Black-crowned Night-Heron, Bank Swallow, and Eastern Kingbird?
2. Which species showed up for the first time in PA in 2023?
3. What warbler has two distinctly different habitats in which it nests?
4. What warbler has a tubular tongue and why?
5. Which PA-nesting vireo prefers conifers?

JOIN US FOR KEYNOTES, SPEAKERS, NETWORKING, WORKSHOPS, AND NEW FRIENDS

FRONTIERS IN ORNITHOLOGY

Youth Symposium

November 4, 2023, Ashland Nature Center, Hockessin, DE

An event for **youth ages 13-22** and their mentors with a focus on ornithology, conservation science, and related academic pursuits.

Learn more, make a donation, or sponsor the symposium online.



frontiersinornithology.com



Three Union County Outings Have Been Organized for the October Birding Spotlight



Spruce Run Road in Bald Eagle State Forest

Friday, October 13, 2023, 8:00 to about 10:00, depending on birdiness

Trip Leader: Brent Bacon
Drive and stop to get out to bird

stop by stop in the fall foliage, looking for migrant forest birds.

Start on Spruce Run Road, as it enters the state forest at the small parking area at the first point here:

Route link: <https://goo.gl/maps/dvGLYSqraX3HcPkUA>

Coordinates of starting point: 41.032199, -77.009983

Link for starting point:

<https://goo.gl/maps/Ehq9ZCj6TDUxB9wG9>

No bathroom facilities available.

R. B. Winter Bird Walk

Saturday, October 14, 2023, 8:00 to about 10:00 a.m.

Trip Co-Leaders: Kay Cramer and Joe Gyekis
Meet at the larger parking lot by the Nature Center at R.B. Winter State Park at 8 a.m.

<https://goo.gl/maps/oNsPf7guqMbd1D6>

We will walk in the main park area and along Rapid Run Nature Trail, which is at most a fairly flat 1.3-mile loop, but if the birds keep us busy, we might not go that far. <https://www.alltrails.com/.../penn.../rapid-run-nature-trail>.

We hope to find fall migrants, forest specialties, and generally enjoy the peaceful environs. Bathroom facilities are available at the parking area.

Dale's Ridge Trail

Sunday, October 15, 2023, 9:00 a.m. to about 11:00 a.m., depending on birdiness

Trip Co-Leaders: Deepak Iyer and Joe Gyekis

Meet at the main parking lot at Dale's Ridge beside the bridge and walk along Buffalo Creek and up the side of the bluff, looking for fall migrants. Walking speed will be slow, birder speed, but one part is fairly steep. It's OK if people just join for the easy part along the creek, and if birding is busy, we might not scale the slope at all. However, if we're ambitious and conditions encourage it, the hawkwatching can be good from the powerline cut as the day warms.

<https://linnconservancy.org/trails/dales-ridge-trail/>

Allegheny Front Hawkwatch Outing

November 11-12

This watch is located on the Somerset/Bedford Co. line four miles east of Central City. With an elevation of 2700 feet, this may be the highest watch in PA. Expect great views of Golden Eagles this time of year if the wind is right. Winds out of the east, southeast, and south produce the best flights, with raptors often at eye level!!

For those from the west, you can go from the intersection at Rt 160 and Rt 30 across from the Subway (near Central City, PA) and then take 160 north which is Rock Cut Rd, turn right on Lambert St, to Shaffer Mt Rd, then turn right onto Lambert Mt Rd, turning on 2nd right at the gate opening for the hawkwatch. For those coming from the

east, take route 30 past Schellsburg 7.3 miles and turn right on Fleagle Road, T817. Follow it for 4.5 miles to the intersection with Lambert Mtn. Road, T658, and turn right. Go 0.3 miles and take the first right at the gate to the parking area. For directions, contact us or use this link <https://goo.gl/maps/CbTDbCLCJJtmYrv26>. Here is the official link for the hawkwatch - <http://hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=111>. There is no charge for this field trip. PSO members and anyone may come to this field trip. As with most hawkwatches, you may come and go as you please as there is no real agenda other than scanning the skies. Dress warmly and bring something to sit on.

PENNSYLVANIA BIRD ATLAS 3 QUICK GUIDE



WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA BIRD ATLAS (PBA3)?

The PBA3 is a 5-year long project that will give us a snapshot of the distribution, abundance, and breeding status of the birds of PA. It's the most comprehensive study of birds across the state, and most bird observations for the Atlas are made by volunteers! This will be PA's 3rd Atlas. Our 1st and 2nd Atlases were conducted from 1983-1989 and 2004-2009, respectively. The 2nd Atlas documented distributions and changes in status for 190 species, and abundance estimates for 115 species. Now, 20 years later, the PBA3 will update this information and help us better identify population trends, distribution changes, at-risk species, and important areas for conservation.

WHO IS LEADING THE PROJECT?

The PBA3 is made possible by a partnership between the PA Game Commission and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, along with sponsorship and participation from the PA Society for Ornithology, PA Audubon Chapters, and other birding organizations from around the state.

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE 3RD ATLAS?

One key update will be the use of eBird for data collection. Many birders are already familiar with eBird, and updates in eBird will allow volunteers to easily follow along with results. We will also conduct a Winter Atlas for the first time. Winter is a critical period for birds, but we know relatively little about birds wintering in PA. The Winter Atlas will provide us with baseline data on the distribution and abundance of these species.

WHEN WILL THE PBA3 TAKE PLACE?

The Breeding Atlas begins in early 2024 and the Winter Atlas will begin the winter of 2024-25. Each will take place for five consecutive seasons, concluding in early 2029.

HOW CAN BIRDERS PARTICIPATE?

Birders of any skill level can participate in the PBA3! The Atlas eBird portal, where birders will submit observations, will open in early 2024. An Atlas Handbook and other resources will be available to guide volunteers in being effective Atlasers. We are also currently filling Regional and County Coordinator volunteer positions. These experienced and welcoming birders will help promote the Atlas, recruit and train birders, track goals, and monitor incoming data.

Keep up to date with us on the 'PA Bird Atlas' Facebook page or @pabirdatlas on Instagram.
Our new website is: www.pgc.pa.gov/Wildlife/Birding/Pages/PA-Bird-Atlas.aspx.
You may also reach the Atlas Coordinator, Amber Wiewel, at pabirdatlas@hawkmountain.org.

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 9)

1. They're tautonyms; their binomial scientific names are the same except for capitalization: *Nycticorax nycticorax*, *Riparia riparia*, *Tyrannus tyrannus*
2. Mottled Duck, American Flamingo, Limpkin, Audubon's Shearwater, Ferruginous Hawk.
3. Swainson's Warbler nests in lowland swamps, riparian thickets, and canebreaks with dense understory in the southeast while in the Appalachians, it nests in laurel and rhododendron thickets.
4. Cape May Warbler as it feeds in winter on nectar and the juice of berries.
5. Blue-headed Vireo

Are you moving?

Don't miss the next issue of "The PSO Pileated" or *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Please let us know your new address. Log in to your account in pabirds.org and update your address there or email it to us at psop@pabirds.org or use the USPS and send a letter to:

PSO, 2469 Hammertown Road, Narvon, PA 17555-9730

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

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