



## The Biweekly Newsletter for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Thursday, April 2nd, 2026

With the warmer weather comes the PSO's most anticipated event of the year-- our Birding Festival!

While many of our members will be focusing on registering for the festival, please don't forget to review our other important updates as well, including information about the Blitz!

If you have photos to share or any questions or comments about the newsletter, email me at: [kaitlynstouch@gmail.com](mailto:kaitlynstouch@gmail.com).

Happy birding!

-Kaitlyn Stouch

The PSO Pileated Editor

This edition's banner photo is courtesy of Michael Fialkovich.

## Coming Soon - Registration for the 2026 PSO Birding Festival!

# Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

## 2026 Birding Festival

(and Annual Meeting)

June 19 – 21, 2026

Blair County Convention Center  
Altoona, Pennsylvania



Registration for PSO's 2026 Birding Festival opens **TOMORROW, Friday, April 3rd**. We hope you will join us in Altoona for the Festival's first-ever visit to Blair County.

The Festival features an incredible schedule of field trips, presentations, vendors, and chances to socialize. Scheduled during the height of nesting season, field trips will include observing nesting behaviors and contributing to the Pennsylvania Bird Atlas. The Saturday evening banquet will include a keynote from Ross and Melissa Gallardy on a record-breaking Pennsylvania big year.

Blair County and the surrounding region are home to a wonderful variety of nesting birds. Festival field trips will visit wetlands, grasslands, and streamside and upland forests. So whether you want to search for Henslow's Sparrows, Cerulean Warblers, Osprey, or the Worm-eating Warbler featured in this year's logo, there is a trip for you.

Visit <https://pabirds.org/2026-overview/> to register.

**The deadline to register for the banquet is June 9 and the deadline for all registrations is June 14.** Some field trips will fill, so early registration is recommended. Information on lodging and dining is available on the Festival website.

## Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Announces Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) proudly announces that its Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation will occur from June 5-15, 2026 and support multiple conservation projects across the Commonwealth.

Birders are invited to join the Blitz by forming a team, raising funds, and competing in either the “cumulative count” or “big day” categories to document birds during nesting season. Teams enlist their friends to support their efforts with a donation; all donations are split among the conservation projects. Bird-lovers of all ages and skill levels are invited to visit [www.breedingbirdblitz.org](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org) to learn more about the event, to form and register a team, or to make a donation. **Registration opened yesterday, April 1st.**

We are adding new features to the Blitz this year while continuing some of our favorite traditions. One returning initiative is “Blitz without Boundaries,” which allows teams to be registered by participants birding outside of Pennsylvania—teams only need one member to apply. In addition to supporting two conservation projects within the state, we are excited to introduce Mini Grants. Important bird conservation work is happening across Pennsylvania, often led by small, local organizations that make a big difference for birds and the habitats they depend on. To support this work, we are launching B4C Mini Grants.

When teams register for the Blitz, they will have the opportunity to nominate a local organization to receive one of these \$1,500 Mini Grants. This is a great opportunity to form a team while supporting local bird clubs and conservation-focused organizations in your area. Grants will be distributed based on the amount of funds raised, with recipients selected at random from among the nominees. More information can be found at <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/post/b4c-mini-grants>.

The 2026 Blitz aims to raise \$22,000 to support the following bird conservation projects:

- **3rd Pennsylvania Bird Atlas:** The 3PBA is a statewide research and conservation initiative designed to document the distribution and abundance of birds breeding and wintering across the Commonwealth from 2024 through early 2029. Led through a collaboration between Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, PA Game Commission, conservation organizations, state agencies, and the birding community, the Atlas will provide critical information that supports bird conservation, scientific research, and public education for decades. A key component of the Atlas is a series of standardized point count surveys conducted across the state during each breeding season. These surveys allow researchers to directly compare bird abundance with data collected during Pennsylvania’s Second Breeding Bird Atlas (2004–2009). By revisiting approximately 30,000 established survey points, scientists will be able to update distribution maps and population estimates for nearly 200 breeding bird species. The B4C will support the amount of survey points visited in the 2026 field season by contributing funds to be used in hiring a point count technician.

- **Schuylkill County Conservancy:** The Local Avian Conservation Education Project aims to build awareness and appreciation for birds in Schuylkill County through a mix of educational programs and hands-on experiences for people of all ages. Activities include classroom presentations with live bird demonstrations, field-based learning opportunities such as observing nesting birds and exploring wetland habitats, and community engagement through a pledge-based fundraising campaign tied to the Breeding Bird Blitz. By combining education, direct observation, and public participation, the project encourages understanding of birds’ ecological importance and promotes conservation action, supporting long-term protection of key species and habitats across Pennsylvania.

Since 2021, the PSO Breeding Bird Blitz, together with our conservation partners, has raised **\$92,318** to help fund 15 conservation initiatives across the Commonwealth. In 2025 alone, we awarded a total of **\$25,000** to our three Conservation Partners. For 2026, we aim to raise \$22,000 dollars to support two conservation partners and three mini grants.

We are excited to be organizing this event for its fifth year and are proud of the conservation projects we help fund. We hope you will consider registering a team April 1st, and will join us for the Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation!

Visit [www.breedingbirdblitz.org](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org) for updates on the event and all the details and stories from the event's history.

Questions about creating a team can be directed to [blitz4conservation@gmail.com](mailto:blitz4conservation@gmail.com) where a member of the PSO Conservation Committee will be excited to answer. Conservation Committee members are Laura Jackson, chair; Brian Byrnes; Vern Gauthier; Carolyn Hendricks; David Barber; Mary Alice Koeneke; Rich Rieger; and Karter Witmer.

-Karter Witmer



Red shouldered hawk, Lawrence County. Photo by Jeanette Green.

## This Week's Avian Action Alerts



### **1. HELP PROTECT ENDANGERED CONDORS**

North America's largest flying bird, the critically endangered California Condor, was on the verge of extinction in 1982 with only 22 condors surviving in the wild. Thanks to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service intervention, the total wild free-flying California condor population has grown to more than 300 condors. Now, their habitat is at risk because some members of Congress want to remove protections for crucial habitat across the almost 2 million acres of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Tell Congress to vote 'NO' on overturning protections for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Those protections safeguard wildlife, water supplies, and significant Indigenous sites.

#### **[TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT CONDOR HABITAT](#)**

### **2. STOP BP'S DEEP OIL DRILLING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

BP's Kaskida deep oil drilling project comes amid a push by the Trump administration for a dramatic expansion of oil and gas development in the Gulf and across public lands, even as the U.S. produces more oil than any nation in history and has become the world's largest producer of gas. In the Gulf of Mexico, the oil industry has been moving steadily into deeper ocean waters where the greatest remaining reserves are found. This risky trend of ultra-deepwater drilling is both reckless and unnecessary – given the millions of untapped acres industry already leases in federal waters.

#### **[TAKE A DEEP DIVE TO PROTECT BIRDS](#)**

### **3. PROTECT YOUR WINDOWS TO STOP BIRD STRIKES**

Now is the perfect time to make sure your home is safe and ready to welcome our feathered friends back to the neighborhood. More than 1 billion birds in the U.S. are killed from collisions with windows every year and nearly half of all collisions occur at residential buildings (not high rises). Making your windows more visible to birds is one of the most effective ways to protect birds at your

home year-round. Fortunately, a range of affordable and evidence-based collision deterrents are available.

### [WATCH VIDEO AND TAKE ACTION](#)

#### 4. CAN YOU NAME THE TOP 5 DRIVERS OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS?

According to the Defenders of Wildlife, the unprecedented decline in biodiversity loss is mainly driven by human-related activities. Their 2023 report showed that 99% of species listed under the Endangered Species Act are threatened by at least one of the five drivers of this global crisis. Nearly half of areas of highest biodiversity importance in the contiguous U.S. face the greatest threats. Right now, the first National Nature Assessment is underway to create a more comprehensive understanding of our nation's biodiversity. The top drivers of biodiversity loss are climate change, land- and sea-use change, pollution, invasive species, and over exploitation.

### [LEARN MORE](#)

Submitted by Laura Jackson, Conservation Chair

## Call for Board Directors



Photo by Jeanette Green

At our annual business meeting in June, PSO's members will elect new Directors to the board. We are seeking enthusiastic members to help PSO continue and grow its work to improve birding and bird conservation across the state.

Directors serve a renewable three-year term, participate in six board meetings annually and assist in the activities of one or more committees. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about serving on the board, please contact [Carolyn Hendricks](#), [PSO Vice President](#).

# STILL Seeking Compilers for Pennsylvania Birds

PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS, the quarterly magazine publication of the PSO, is still looking for compilers in four counties to take on the task of highlighting notable birds that have been sighted in their counties. These sightings are listed in the "Local Notes" section of the magazine.

**Compilers are STILL needed for Lancaster, Luzerne, Schuylkill and Wyoming Counties.**

Compiler instructions and deadlines are available at <https://pabirds.org/pennsylvania-birds/> (scroll down); you can contact the chief editor directly at [markabonta@yahoo.com](mailto:markabonta@yahoo.com) if you are interested or have more questions. Brief county reports that summarize the most notable sightings of the season are sufficient (eBird is a prime resource for this), but more detailed summaries are also very welcome! To get an idea of different types of summaries that compilers write, please have a look at back issues of Pennsylvania Birds on the website.

Thanks everyone,  
Rich



Photo by Jeanette Green

# 2026 County Spotlights



Our County Spotlights are PSO-organized weekend field trips to lesser-birded counties in Pennsylvania. Be sure to save the dates for our 2026 County Spotlights! Fayette County is fast approaching!!

Graphics by Tony Desantis.

## Organization Information

To email a PSO officer or Board Member, click on the name below.

### Officers

**President** – [Brian Byrnes](#) (Delaware)

**Vice-President** – [Carolyn Hendricks](#) (Bedford)

**Secretary** – [Sheree Daugherty](#) (Allegheny)

**Treasurer** – [Franklin Haas](#) (Lancaster)

### Board Members

[David Barber](#) (Schuylkill), [Chelsea Beck](#) (Elk), [Joseph Gyekis](#) (Centre), [Laura Jackson](#) (Bedford), [Jeff Kenney](#) (Chester), [Mary Alice Koeneke](#) (Butler), [Wayne Laubscher](#) (Clinton), [Richard Rieger](#) (Schuylkill), [Brian Shema](#) (Allegheny), [Doug Wentzel](#) (Huntingdon), [Karter Witmer](#) (Tioga)

### Newsletter Editor

[Kaitlyn Stouch](#) (Centre)

### Pennsylvania Birds Editor

[Mark Bonta](#) (Blair)

### Mailing Address

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[View more info on our organization members here](#)



## Did you Know...

We are on social media! We have a Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and even a Discord server for our members and friends. Make sure you join us on whatever your preferred platform is to get daily updates and chat with other birders around the state.



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