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The Biweekly Newsletter for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Friday, October 17th, 2026

As the autumn leaves reach their peak in color, we start winding down on the peak of fall migration. We hope you are having an enjoyable season. Let's dive into this week's updates.

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

Happy birding!
-Kaitlyn Stouch
The PSO Pileated Editor

This edition's banner photo is courtesy of Alan MacEachren.

Exciting News in Pennsylvania Bird Conservation

The American Ornithological Society presented their 2026 Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award to Dr. Jeffrey L. Larkin, Ph.D. who is a Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). “The award honors extraordinary conservation-related scientific contributions by an individual or small team.”

In addition to being a professor at IUP, Dr. Larkin has served as the American Bird Conservancy’s Forest Birds Habitat advisor and the National Resource Conservation Service’s Working Lands for Wildlife, Golden-winged Warbler Science Advisor since 2012. The Working Lands for Wildlife program assists private land owners with creating and maintaining breeding habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler (Vermivora chrysoptera) within and adjacent to their current range. Since 2024 he has been the external lead for the NRCS’ Deciduous Forest Framework of Conservation.

Dr. Larkin’s current research focuses on a comprehensive approach to forest practices that can improve forest structural complexity and forest resilience, which in turn assists the recovery of eastern forest birds. This research and conservation effort, known as Dynamic Forest Restoration (DFR) is a collaborative effort including private and public lands. DFR practices that increase the diversity of canopy height and successional complexity creates a landscape mosaic rather than a homogenous one. Forest landscape variation has shown promise for increasing biodiversity of birds and wildlife including several bird species of conservation concern such as Wood Thrush (Hylochichla mustelina) and the Golden-winged Warbler. The research was conducted in the (Northeast, Northcentral, and Southwest) of Pennsylvania (PA) from 2019 to 2023. Congratulations

to Dr. Larkin for his award and the work he is doing to conserve Pennsylvania's birdlife!

https://americanornithology.org/aos-announces-2026-award-winners-for-research-service-conservation-publication/

Fiss, C.J., J.B Cohen, T.J. Hodges, D.R. Shaffer, D.J. McNeil, and J.L. Larkin. 2025. Landscape-level canopy heterogeneity improves avian conservation value in Appalachian forests: implications for dynamic forest restoration. Forest Ecology and Management 597:123124

Submitted by Mary Alice Koeneke, PSO Conservation Committee

Photo submitted by Gerald & Lucille Williams

This Week's Avian Action Alerts

1.The Problem with Data Centers and "Bring Your Own Power"

Many municipalities are requiring AI Data Centers to supply their own power, in order to reduce strain on the electric grid and to reduce increases in electric rates. As a result, most of the proposed large data centers are relying on dozens of gas-powered generators (including diesel) to provide power, putting nearby communities at risk due to increased air pollution. Please contact your municipality and explain that gas-powered Data Centers are putting birds and people at risk; Data Centers should be powered from the grid or clean energy.

Learn more at The AI Gas Rush

2. Help Grassland Birds

Grassland birds like Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Henslow's Sparrows, have suffered the biggest decline of any group of birds since 1970, since there has been a dramatic loss of native grasslands in the U.S. The RANCH Act, if passed, will help reverse that decline. This new bipartisan legislation would help our farmers and ranchers plant native grasses and perennials in less-productive cropland, which would support critical nesting and foraging habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Ask your U.S. Senators to pass the RANCH ACT to help our grassland birds.

3. PENNSYLVANIA is the 4th largest Climate Polluter in the U.S.

On October 7, the Environmental Protection Agency announced plans to weaken protections against harmful air pollution and global warming emissions from oil and gas production across our country. However, our state Department of Environmental Protection will be proposing statewide protections to REDUCE methane pollution from oil, gas, and fracking. While the Trump administration is moving backward, Pennsylvania is moving forward to reduce air pollution. Now that's a good thing!

Learn more HERE

4. More Threats to ARCTIC BIRDS

The Trump administration is seeking comments for a plan to fast-track approvals for new oil and gas drilling in the Western Arctic. This is part of the administration's all-out assault in the Arctic — exploiting some of our nation's most ecologically-important public lands in Alaska for the benefit of the oil industry and billionaires. Tell the Trump administration that the Western Arctic needs protection, not shortcuts for oil and gas companies.

Take action HERE

2027 County Spotlight Dates...

Mark your calendars in 2027 for our county spotlights!

They will be:

March 12-15th Clearfield county

April 23-26 Franklin county

October - Potter County dates TBA

More information will be coming soon.

Short eared owl- Lawrence county, Volant.
Photo by Jeanette Green

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