

PSO PILEATED



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PSO 2006 Meeting Revisited

by Mark A. McConaughy

The 2006 PSO meeting, hosted by Powdermill Nature Preserve in honor of its 50th anniversary, was held Friday, May 19, through Sunday, May 21, in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. The meeting highlighted the birds of the Ligonier Valley and surrounding areas.

Bird banding demonstrations at Powdermill attracted early PSO arrivals on Friday afternoon. Registration and an evening social were held at the Ramada Inn in Ligonier. It was a great way to renew acquaintances and meet new birding friends.

A PSO business meeting was held after the social on Friday. The new officers elected at the meeting were Rudy Keller, president, Flo McGuire, vice president, Frank Haas, treasurer, and Roger Higbee, secretary. Board of Director members elected included Linda Wagner, Deuane Hoffman, Rob Blye, and Stacy Small. The field trips planned for Saturday and Sunday were described, and folks had a chance to sign up for those they wished to attend.

We awakened to a cool, wet morning on Saturday, May 20. Fortunately, most of the rain had cleared the area by 6:30, and the field trips were not affected by the rain. Field trip destinations included Keystone State Park, the Route 981 reclaimed strip mine area, Linn Run State Park, the Laurelville reclaimed strip mines, Roaring Run Natural Area, the New Alexander-Loyalhanna Game Lands, bird banding demonstrations at Powdermill Nature Preserve, and the Spruce Flats Bog and Wolf Rocks Trail. I led the last of these field trips to Spruce Flats Bog and Wolf Rocks Trail.

Spruce Flats Bog is located on top of Laurel Ridge in Laurel Summit State Park. The bog was just emerging from its winter dormancy, and few insect-eating plants were in bloom. Nevertheless, these plants were starting to grow and the environmental setting, unusual for the region, can attract Alder Flycatcher and usually has Hermit Thrushes singing around the bog. Unfortunately, neither of these species was seen or heard at the bog during the outing. Hermit Thrushes were later heard singing along

Wolf Rocks Trail, making up for our missing them at the bog.

The hike to Wolf Rocks is 1.75 miles one way, and the hardy souls who went on Saturday made it all the way there while birding the trail. Some of the more interesting species seen or heard along the trail were Blue-headed Vireo, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Chestnut-sided Warbler (very common), Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Hooded

Warbler, and Canada Warbler.

Wolf Rocks Trail provides an interesting view of several different ecological niches on top of Laurel Ridge. The trail passes through mixed deciduous forest, coniferous forest, deciduous forest with mountain laurel and rhododendron understory, and some open areas. Many different habitats exist along the trail, so it attracts a wide variety of bird species. For example, the areas with rhododendron understory produced large numbers of Black-throated Blue Warblers. The folks who walked all the way to Wolf Rocks were treated to a wonderful view of the upland forests along Laurel Ridge. Wolf Rocks overlook only has a few man-made towers that break up the pristine view of the surrounding countryside. We were able to observe Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks



Meeting attendee Bob Ross (left) discusses one of the outings with trip leader Len Hess (right).

flying along the ridge and into the narrow valley from Wolf Rocks.

After the morning's outings were completed, we headed to Powdermill Nature Preserve for the afternoon sessions in the Florence Lockhart Nimick Nature Center. The first paper, presented by Kim VanFleet, dealt with the possible impact of wind turbines on birds found along ridge tops. There currently are plans for the installation of more than 200 new wind turbines along ridges in Pennsylvania, and these towers, most over 300 feet tall including the wind vanes, will become obstacles to bird migration along the ridges. They will be particularly dangerous when the ridges are fogged in, and birds are unable to see the towers.

Terry Master presented the second paper about the impact of the woody adelgid on hemlocks and birds. The woody adelgid eventually kills hemlocks that provide important habitat for many avian species. The woody adelgid is impacting hemlock forests in eastern and central Pennsylvania and will soon spread into western Pennsylvania.

Todd Katzner presented an interesting paper about non-invasive population studies of eagles and other raptors in the Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan and Georgia. Todd is retrieving molted feathers from beneath the nests of eagles. The feathers are processed to provide an identifying DNA signature – or an ID tag – for each bird and fledgling. These tags show that many more birds were present than would have been estimated based only on capture and banding counts. The technique they used can be applied to many other bird species, including those in the United States.

Next Trish Miller discussed the reasons why the second breeding bird atlas was set up as a high tech project. Basically, it was done because we can! The second breeding bird atlas marriage of computers and geographical information system databases will provide a very detailed view of bird behavior across the Commonwealth.

Annie Lindsay demonstrated how bioacoustic monitoring – i.e., audio taping of birdcalls as they fly overhead at night – greatly enhances our ability to determine bird population sizes. Powdermill Nature Preserve has developed a method of recording nighttime bird flight calls and matching them with known calls made by birds captured during banding operations. A computer program scans the audiotapes made at night and sorts out the calls by number of calls per identifiable species. These data were compared to the

results of bird banding in the same areas to see if species are being captured by banding operations in the same percentages as those determined from the bioacoustic information. Results of these studies show that some species that are heard flying over the site at night are not regularly captured by the mist nets at Powdermill and vice versa. Thus, combined bioacoustic and bird banding monitoring provide better population estimates of migrating bird populations than either does on its own.

Bob Mulvihill concluded the afternoon program by providing a 50-year historic overview of avian studies conducted by Carnegie Museum of Natural History and Powdermill Nature Preserve. The presentation showed that Powdermill has been in the forefront of many different studies concerning age and sex determination of birds based on molt patterns (and a new book on these will be coming out shortly) as well as many of the more “high tech” studies currently being undertaken, as per the papers by Trish Miller and Annie Lindsay that preceded Bob's talk. Powdermill has every right to be proud of the work that has been conducted at the nature preserve through the years.

After the afternoon presentations, we returned to the Ramada Inn for the evening's banquet program. A great dinner was followed by an equally fine program including presentation of various PSO awards. The Poole award was presented to Margaret Higbee for her work concerning birds of Pennsylvania. Tom Dick was given the Conservation award for his work developing Dunning's Creek Wetlands and the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Karena Gregg from Beaver Falls was the Youth Scholarship winner for 2006 based on her interest in illustrating raptors and other birds.



This Black-throated Blue Warbler was just one of the warblers spotted along Wolf Rocks Trail at our recent meeting.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

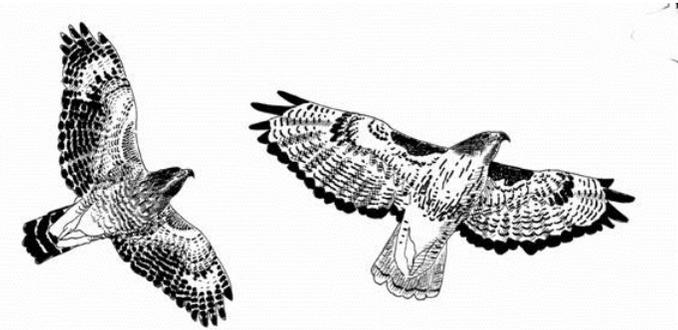


PSO Members hiked to Wolf Rocks on Mark McConaughy's field trip.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

After the banquet, Mike Lanzone talked about his participation in the investigation into the sighting of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Big Woods, Arkansas. It was an emotional talk about his own sighting of the bird during the search and the subsequent public and professional discussion about the videotape made of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker that was released as part of this investigation. Mike's talk topped off a long day of birding so we all headed to bed after the banquet.

Sunday arrived with a bright, sunny morning. However, a threat of morning rain moving in from the northwest hurried us on our respective outings. Most of the field trips held on Saturday morning were repeated on Sunday, but an additional trip to Whitetail/Dunning's Creek Wetlands was added. It was a wonderful weekend, and I am looking forward to the PSO meeting in Harrisburg next year.



Karena Gregg Awarded 2006 PSO Youth Scholarship

Karena Gregg is a sophomore at Beaver Falls High School near Pittsburgh. Her interest in bird watching and pen and ink drawings was sparked by her father Scott Gregg, a 20-year veteran hawk watcher, who had hounded Karena for years to take an interest in his hobby. Finally, three years ago he succeeded, and Karena was hooked.

Karena is particularly interested in drawing diurnal birds of prey. She began drawing hawks by studying the work of Floyd Scholz, a world-class bird carver and instructor. His drawing tips, attention to detail, and explanations about the subtleties of drawing members of this alluring family of birds, captivated Karena and inspired her to pursue her drawing career. In addition to other fine art classes, Karena studied with Carol Begley, an artist specializing in still life, which she feels has enhanced her aesthetic ability to depict birds. Studying bird life for drawings has motivated Karena to improve her bird identification skills and to make detailed observations so that she can portray birds as realistically as possible.

Karena began attending bird-related events including the Three Rivers Birding Club's monthly meetings. Dr. Tony Bledsoe, a biologist and ornithologist from the University of Pittsburgh, and Jack Solomon, president of the Three Rivers Birding Club, have encouraged her to pursue drawing and have provided opportunities for her to share her artistic talents with the birding community. On more than one occasion, her illustrations have appeared in *The Peregrine*, the newsletter of the Three Rivers Birding Club, and our own *PSO Pileated*. She has shown her drawings at the Pymatuning Pioneer and Arts Festival. For her senior project, she is considering developing a bird identification display at one of the area's recently renovated river-front parks. In 2005, Jack Solomon arranged for Karena to attend the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology meeting at Clarion to exhibit and sell her drawings. Her work was well-received by many meeting participants.

In addition to her artistic talents, Karena has numerous academic achievements. In 8th grade, she was awarded the English and Art Award, and in 9th grade she received the Academic Excellence Award and was ranked 2nd in her class. This year, (10th grade) she was inducted into the Beaver Falls chapter of the National Honor Society and was elected treasurer of the Student Art League. She has also managed to maintain a 4.00 gpa so far in her high school career.

By selecting Karena Gregg as the 2006 Annual Meeting Youth Scholarship winner, the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology recognizes her accomplishments and encourages her to continue pursuing her interest in ornithology and developing her talents for drawing birds.

Thank You!

As the recipient of the Earl L. Poole Award at the PSO meeting in May, I want to thank the PSO board for honoring me. My husband Roger and I have been active in PSO since the organization's inception after the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project. This honor is as much Roger's as it is mine as he has been beside me every step of the way.

PSO has been an important part of our lives, and we hope it will continue to grow, including birders of all skill levels and from all walks of life. You are a great group of people. We're looking forward to seeing you at next year's meeting in Harrisburg!

Sincerely,

Margaret Higbee

Ned Smith Center Plans Show

Scott Weidensaul, chair of the exhibitions committee for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg, Dauphin County, has announced an upcoming show that birders from across the state – and the region – won't want to miss. This is the largest retrospective ever of the art of David Allen Sibley, author of the acclaimed *Sibley Guide to the Birds* and other books. This is the most ambitious and exciting show ever mounted by the center.

Scott Weidensaul writes, “The exhibition opens July 21 in the center's Olewine Galley, and runs through December 30. We'll be showing more than 75 original drawings, field sketches, gouache paintings, inks and scratchboards that trace Sibley's development from childhood through the publication of his groundbreaking guide, right up to his most recent work. One fascinating aspect of the show is the way it chronicles how Sibley was wrestling with different approaches to creating a field guide, through the 1980s and '90s. A major aspect of the show are nearly three dozen plates from his historic field guide, as well as illustrations from *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, but it also includes work from such earlier projects as *Hawks in Flight* and *The Wind Masters*.”

The last weekend of July is the center's annual Nature and Arts Festival beginning on Friday evening, July 28, and continuing all day Saturday, the 29th.

In the fall, David Sibley will be at the Ned Smith Center for a series of events, including a gala dinner on Friday, November 3, during which two of his originals will be auctioned. The following day will include a bird walk, an art class, gallery talk, and book-signing. Details of these events will be forthcoming, and some will obviously require advance registration.

The Ned Smith Center is located on 500 acres of woodland open for birding, off Rt. 209 just east of Millersburg. For directions, check the website at www.nedsmithcenter.org.

Bird Trivia

Did you know that the American Woodcock is the only bird with an upside down brain? The woodcock's brain is angled back 117° from the line of its bill. The brain's position allows the woodcock to have its extremely large eyes, positioned high in the skull and to the rear so that it can see both above as well as behind it while it is probing to feed in the mud.

Conservation Corner

With the current Administration in Washington continuously attacking environmental/conservation programs, the U.S. House recently finally gave those of us in the conservation community some good news. In May, four amendments passed in the House that will increase protection for our nation's wetlands, waters, forests, and coasts – assuming they become law.

The first is the Rep. Hinchey's “Royalty Relief” amendment that will remove subsidies to oil and gas companies who hold leases for off-shore drilling. This could save the U.S. government (that's taxpayers) up to \$10 billion. A second amendment was to restore a moratorium on new off-shore gas drilling. This amendment came after Rep. Peterson's (PA) attempt to have the 20-year-old moratorium on gas drilling lifted. This is the second time Rep. Peterson tried this, and for any PSO members so inclined, you are welcome to contact him and express your dismay over his attempts to lift this moratorium as well as his poor environmental record.

Chabot Tongass amendment is the third amendment that was passed, and it stopped federal tax dollars from funding logging roads in the Tongass National Forest. Rep. Chabot, one of the main sponsors of the amendment, stated that the logging program has lost \$850 million since 1982 – almost \$40 million per year. And the last amendment is the Oberstar Clean Water amendment. This amendment will overturn EPA guidelines that would have left it to the states to regulate isolated wetlands that lie solely within one state's borders. Hopefully both EPA and the Corps of Engineers will comply with the intent of Congress and improve their record on wetland protection.

And one final positive note. The House passed a non-binding provision similar to the “sense-of-the-Senate” regarding global warming. The language called for a “national program of mandatory, market-based limits and incentives” to halt the growth of and eventually reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. Now, it's about time for the Administration to “get their heads out of the sand” and take positive steps to reduce greenhouse gases.

But, even with this good news, there is some bad. The House has also recently included a provision in a bill that would allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. So, once again, PSO members are encouraged to contact Senator Specter and Senator Santorum and urge them to oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge. You can contact them through their websites – <http://specter.senate.gov/> and <http://santorum.senate.gov/public/>

– Mark Henry, Conservation Chairperson

Ornithological Literature Notes

An immense spruce budworm outbreak in eastern Canada in the 1970s is well known for the dramatic explosions it caused in songbird populations by increasing the birds' food resources. In two recent publications, Nick Bolgiano of State College added further dimensions to the outbreak's possible effects on avian distribution and abundance.

This year he suggested that a rise and fall of eastern Sharp-shinned Hawk migration counts during the 1970s and 1980s was related to the budworm infestation (*Hawk Migration Studies* 31(2):9-14). His data came from hawkwatches at Hawk Mountain and Waggoner's Gap in Pennsylvania, Cape May in New Jersey, and Kiptopeke in Virginia.

Trends in Sharp-shin counts at the sites correlated strongly with timing of the budworm outbreak, which peaked in 1975 and ended suddenly in the mid-1980s. The infestation resulted in tremendous increases in populations of Tennessee, Cape May, and Bay-breasted Warblers, known as the "spruce budworm warblers." Their reproductive success rose with greater availability of the larvae as food for their young. Besides those budworm specialists, Blackpoll Warblers, Evening Grosbeaks, and Purple Finches also showed population patterns that coincided with the outbreak, Nick said. After the budworms had eaten themselves out of food by destroying the region's forests, the outbreak collapsed. When it did, the eastern Canadian songbird populations crashed as well.

What is the connection with Sharp-shins? They feed mainly on songbirds in the boreal forest. When the birds' populations exploded, Sharp-shin counts at the hawkwatches increased sharply; when the populations crashed, Sharp-shin counts declined at the same time. Nick wrote: "[I]t is logical that one of the main predators of those songbirds would also show the link. The confluence of spruce budworm, boreal songbird and Sharp-shinned Hawk migration count trends provides strong circumstantial evidence for a cause-and-effect linkage."

He noted that the rise in Sharp-shin migration counts in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the rapid recovery of the species after DDT was banned, which was certainly also a factor in the hawk population increase. Nevertheless, Nick believes that the weight of evidence supports an effect of the budworm explosion on Sharp-shin dynamics in the 1970s and 1980s. Another budworm outbreak and a similar response in Sharp-shin counts could confirm the hypothesis, he said.

Nick, who is familiar to PSO members as the Christmas Bird Count editor for *Pennsylvania Birds*, used CBC data to suggest in 2004 that the outbreak changed patterns of boreal birds' winter irruptions in eastern North America (*American Birds* 58:26-33). The patterns he found were corroborated by data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

Huge invasions southward by seven traditionally irruptive species took place during the budworm outbreak, presumably reflecting population increases so large that even great budworm abundance was not enough to feed all of them in the North. The former large-scale invaders were Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak. Many of us witnessed those irruptions with excitement and awe in Pennsylvania until the mid-1980s.

Since then, such irruptions (except for one huge crossbill influx) have been minor or nonexistent. Perhaps this reflects the boreal region's extensive forest destruction by logging as much or more than it reflects the collapse in food resources, according to Nick. Whatever the cause, for the last 20 years Pennsylvania birders have been lamenting the loss of those wonderful visitors. Nick noted that irruption patterns in Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, and Common Redpolls did not show similar changes, and we are still accustomed to seeing incursions of these in some years.

Nick put it all into perspective in his conclusion: "Did a golden age of irruptions end during the mid-1980s; will it recur when the forest matures? We may need to wait until that time, or for another budworm outbreak, before this question can be addressed."

– Paul Hess



Welcome New Officers, Board Members

Succeeding outgoing president Greg Grove is the very capable and charismatic Rudy Keller. Detail-oriented Flo McGuire of Tionesta was elected vice president. Respectively re-elected as secretary and treasurer were Roger Higbee and Frank Haas.

New to the board this year is Stacy Small from PA Audubon. Other reelected board members include Rob Blye, Deuane Hoffman, and Linda Wagner.

The Raven Reporter



Tales of Discovery from the Special Areas Project and Other State Citizen Science Bird Projects

Bald Eagle Nests Reach the Century Mark in Pennsylvania

The Bald Eagle, as symbolic of American freedom as the Fourth of July and Old Glory itself, is nesting in more than 100 locations across the Commonwealth for the first time in more than a century. We intend to add to this total this summer.

The Game Commission started Pennsylvania's seven-year Bald Eagle reintroduction program in 1983 when three nesting pairs remained in the state, all in the northwestern part of the state. The agency sent employees to Saskatchewan to obtain 12 eaglets from wilderness nests in the first year. With financial assistance from the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh and the federal Endangered Species Fund, the project spurred the release of 88 eagles into the wilds of Pennsylvania at Haldeman Island in Dauphin County and Shohola Falls in Pike County.

It is a time to celebrate. Break out the champagne and join the fun. We believe that the Bald Eagle's comeback will continue because of the support it receives from the public and the remaining unoccupied nesting habitat. This is "truly America's first bird."

The Game Commission, partnering with other states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), helped to bring Bald Eagles back from the brink of extinction with reintroductions throughout the Northeast in the 1980s. The effort dovetailed with important gains in improving water quality, which led to increases in the quality and quantity of freshwater fish, a staple in the eagle's diet. Pennsylvania's eagle resurgence also was likely stimulated by young eagles dispersing from the Chesapeake Bay, which now has more than 600 nesting pairs, and our neighboring states that also reintroduced eagles.

Bald Eagles are nesting in at least 31 of the state's 67 counties by our preliminary census of nests. There are at

least 106 active nesting pairs (99 confirmed in 2005), and an additional 20 pairs appear to have established territories, typically a prerequisite to nest-building. New nests have been confirmed in Bucks, Columbia, Fulton, and Sullivan counties. Field staff also is looking into reports of new nests in Adams, Lawrence, Luzerne, Mercer, Montour, and Wayne counties.

I fully expect to add more eagle nests to our preliminary total, because there are plenty of unanswered questions about a substantial number of nests and observed adults. PGC Wildlife Conservation Officers are following up reports from birders, many participating in the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, about eagle nests, but their ability to confirm eagle nesting is compromised by the camouflage of leaf-out and the rugged, hard-to-reach areas used by nesting eagles.

The Bald Eagle is listed as a "threatened species" by the federal government and Pennsylvania. Bald Eagles were upgraded from "endangered" to "threatened" nationally in 1995; Pennsylvania upgraded them in 2005 following the recommendation of the Ornithological Technical Committee which has been monitoring the Bald Eagle's progress. The USFWS recently closed a public comment period to remove the Bald Eagle from the federal threatened species list. It would still be protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and other federal and state laws, even if it is delisted.

"The best available scientific and commercial data available indicates that the Bald Eagle has recovered," the USFWS reported in the Feb. 16, 2006 edition of the *Federal Register*. "The Bald Eagle population in the lower 48 States has increased from approximately 487 active nests in 1963, to an estimated minimum 7,066 breeding pairs today."

The return of the Bald Eagle in both Pennsylvania and the contiguous United States is directly related to reintroductions and nest site protection. But the species' future hinged on the banning of DDT and other organochlorine pesticides. Eagles, as well Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons and a multitude of songbirds, were rendered reproductively incapable by DDT and the like, because the birds were bioaccumulating the contaminants the pesticides contained through prey consumption. DDT – banned nationally in 1972 – rendered the shells of birds eggs so brittle, they broke when sat upon.

Rachel Carson wrote in *Silent Spring*, "The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings." She referred to the interdependencies – that often aren't easy to identify or interpret – of organisms on each other and the environment. When America was sprayed and dusted repeatedly for decades with DDT, the environment was slowly loaded

with toxins that eventually devastated the very existence of eagles and many other creatures that had thrived for centuries. Without emergency and sustained special assistance from wildlife conservation agencies, Bald Eagles would have been goners.

Given their plight, magnificent appearance, and historical significance, Bald Eagles have certainly captured the hearts and imaginations of Pennsylvanians. Some observers have adopted nests for watching, keeping an eye on the eagles and for any threats to the nest. We frequently receive phone calls and e-mails from excited individuals who just saw their first Bald Eagle in the wild. We also hear from anglers, canoeists, and birders who are taking the time to report what they believe is a new Bald Eagle nest or active nesting pair. We sincerely appreciate this assistance. After all, we cannot provide eagles with the special attention they sometimes require if we don't know where their nests are located.

Eagles still are not nesting on some of their more historic nesting grounds, such as Presque Isle and the Susquehanna River's West Branch, but they surely have experienced a resurgence that has filled a long, noticeable void in Pennsylvania's wildlife community. If their progress continues, Bald Eagles will one day likely inhabit the quieter sections of every major waterway and impoundment in the Commonwealth. There are, however, reports of pairs along the Lake Erie shore and sections of the West Branch Susquehanna and other rivers that suggest that there are unreported nests in these areas.

Bald Eagles are moving into a lot of new places, particularly along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River and other remote riparian forests. I believe we're missing some established nests there and at remote municipal reservoirs, along steep mountainsides, on river banks, and on islands elsewhere in the state. In fact, I suspect we're missing one on Susquehanna River Island near Harrisburg and perhaps near Sunbury as well as along the Clarion River near Ridgway.

Last year, 118 eaglets were fledged from 99 known Pennsylvania nests. The state's eagle nests are expected to produce as many or more in 2006 with good weather and minimal damage from flooding. High water events can erode the security of a nest tree and heavy rains can weaken a nest to the point where it collapses under the weight and movement of the growing and restless eaglets. The upward trend illustrates the Bald Eagle is back in the Commonwealth and their future looks brighter than it has for many decades.

The state's largest concentrations of Bald Eagles are found in three geographic areas: the expansive wetlands of Crawford, Mercer, and Erie counties; along the lower Susquehanna River in Chester, Lancaster, and York

counties (an expansion of the Chesapeake Bay population); and the Poconos and Upper Delaware River region. For years, Crawford County – particularly the Pymatuning region – had represented the state's last stand and largest concentration of Bald Eagles. This year, Crawford has at least 14 active nests (14 in 2005); lower Susquehanna River, 20 (16). In the Poconos, there are at least 21 nests (15). We lack information about a few nests that were monitored last year, but have not been reported this year.

Birders, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts like to collect commemorative patches. To commemorate Pennsylvania's 100-nest milestone in Bald Eagle conservation, the Game Commission is currently developing a special-edition embroidered wildlife patch. Depicting a pair of nesting eagles and designed by award-winning artist Bob Sopchick, the patch is six inches in size and will sell for \$20. There will be a one-time production run of 3,000 patches.

Each year, about 20 percent of Pennsylvania's eagle nests fail for reasons such as disturbances, predators, or harsh weather. This year was no exception, at least four nests have fallen down, three with fatal consequences to the eaglets. In the remaining nest collapse, a dedicated volunteer observer noticed a nest was down in Berks County in late May and immediately alerted the PGC biologists who contacted the Southeast Regional Office. SERO personnel rescued one of the nest's two eaglets that had fallen to the ground. The eaglet was not large enough to be able to fly, but its slightly older, larger sibling was able to navigate to a higher limb from where the nest fell and keep out of harm's way. The rescued eaglet was placed in the care of a wild rehabilitator until it could fly and was subsequently released at the nest site about two weeks later.

“When we released the young eagle, it hopped up on the debris from its downed nest,” explained John Morgan, Southeast Region wildlife biologist supervisor. “It stayed there a few minutes and then took off, flying about 100 feet and landing on a branch about 20 feet off the ground. The other juvenile was in a nearby tree, perched about 40 feet off the ground. It joined the parents when they began to circle the nest site.”

This incident is just one of many that exemplifies the unselfish teamwork and cooperation found in the ranks of the volunteers and professionals who partner with or work for the Game Commission to advance Bald Eagle conservation in Pennsylvania. These partners play an integral role in the future of Pennsylvania's Bald Eagles, and we're grateful for their cooperation. PSO members are among the most important members of our network of eagle nest watchers and caretakers. Thanks to all of you for your help. Also, each observation of an eagle, Osprey, or other

nesting “Species of Special Concern” helps the PGC protect these sites.

To learn more about Bald Eagles and other threatened and endangered species, visit the Game Commission’s website at www.pgc.state.pa.us. Click on “Wildlife” in the left column, and then select “Endangered and Threatened Species.”

If you know of an eagle nest that is not being monitored, please report this to Doug Gross at the contact info below.

[Taken in part from a News Release written by Joe Kosack of the PGC with assistance from D. Gross.]

Special Areas Project Checklist Request

It is a tough time of year to think about “desk work” for volunteer birders, but we do have some unfinished projects to take care of in the next months. This is a reminder that we have a great opportunity to provide the public with educational information about our state’s birds by producing site checklists for various lands surveyed by the Special Areas Project. The next step is to convert the data collected on SAP trips to the checklist format provided by the Bureau of State Parks. The Bureau has provided a template that we can fill in with our “ease of finding” codes achieved from our field surveys. We have volunteers for several locations but lack assistance with just a few. Here are some locations for which we have SAP data, but for which we lack people to do the conversion. Please let me know if you are interested in helping out. It is a shame that we have the hard-earned data but cannot follow through with checklists.

Bruce Lake Natural Area, Pike Co.
Gifford Pinchot State Park, York Co.
Keystone State Park, Westmoreland Co.
Little Buffalo State Park, Perry Co.
Promised Land State Park, Pike Co.

Pennsylvania’s Boreal Heritage

The International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) celebrates our Boreal Forests in 2006. The one-day bird count has come and gone, but fortunately many of the boreal birds have not left the state. Many of these so-called “northern” birds are regularly nesting species in the state. Although the impression left by the one-day birdathon event in May is that you had better catch the migrants before they all fly north, many of those species are happily nesting across the Pennsylvania countryside. They may not be in the city parks and migration bottleneck hot spots, but they are in the mountain forests and the scrub out in the country.

“Boreal” means northern. In an ecological sense, the boreal forest circles the North Pole and includes the vast forest regions of Canada, Alaska, Siberia, and northern Europe. Our state certainly does not qualify as part of the great circumpolar boreal forest, but it surely supports good habitat for several of the species considered “northern” or “boreal” denizens.

The theme of the IMBD rings true. Our boreal forests really are America’s bird nurseries. According to information provided by Partners in Flight, the Boreal Songbird Initiative, and the Canadian Boreal Initiative, about 30% of the continent’s breeding landbirds nest in the boreal forest, 38% of the waterfowl, and 30% of the shorebirds. These forests are absolutely critical to the healthy future of our continent’s bird populations.

The boreal forest is huge. It includes 1.5 billion acres, enough to swallow up 14 Californias. It accounts for 25% of the world’s intact forests. The sheer size and relative coldness of the boreal forest help it to regulate the earth’s temperature and buffer the dangerous effects of any climate change. It stores enormous amounts of carbon, more than any other terrestrial ecosystem on our green planet. The northern forest indeed is an important place for all of us on this planet.

The continent’s boreal forests are dominated by spruce, aspen, birches, larch, pines, and maples. It just isn’t forest, but it includes bogs, marshes, and fens that sprinkle a bit of diversity into a day of birding in the “northern woods.” Some of the most important components of these forests are the ponds and bogs that provide nesting habitat for a majority of our waterfowl that migrate through the state each year.

The Canada Warbler spotted on an IMBD Big Day or migration count in a park one day, may migrate north to a bog in Labrador, the Adirondacks, or Maine on the subsequent day. Or, it could on its way north stop to nest in the Poconos, on North Mountain, or in a rhododendron glen in north-central Pennsylvania. Our own state has a small, but significant share of the northern bird population. Its mountains and plateaus “bring the north down south” all the way to North Carolina and northern Georgia in the Appalachians. If you want to find elements of the northern fringe, you just need to travel to the shady north side of the mountain or in a forested glen on the eastern or western side of a hilly area. Even at relatively low elevations, you can find nesting juncos and Canada Warblers in cool, shady hemlocks or rhododendron thickets along streams. Boreal-style conifer forests span across parts of the high mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. Fraser fir, spruce, and hemlock provide islands of conifer forest that extend the range of several species pretty far south. There have been two distinct types of Red Crossbills found in the southern Appalachians that may constitute separate

species. With acid deposition, forest fragmentation, and other human-derived changes, the boreal type forests of the Appalachians are threatened along with their bird populations. Some species are listed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as “Birds of Conservation Concern” in Region 28, the Appalachian Mountains due to the declining boreal conifer forests in that region. The southern population of Northern Saw-whet Owl, the southern subspecies of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, the Blue Ridge population of Black-capped Chickadee, and the Red Crossbill (Types 1 and 2 nesting in the southern Appalachians) are so designated. Not very long ago, there were nesting populations of Olive-sided Flycatcher and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina mountains. Some recent events really brought out the excitement of finding boreal habitats and birds in Pennsylvania. I was enlivened by our visits to the Spruce Flats Bog and Wildlife Area of Forbes State Forest. The pitcher plants, cranberries, and sundews seemed a bit out of place in southern Pennsylvania, but there is a history of boggy areas down the Appalachian peaks. The spruce-fir forest of Mount Rogers and the famous Glades are much more extensive and farther south. These sky islands of habitat are isolated from each and are growing increasingly isolated with deforestation and habitat degradation. So, then follow the bird populations that are dependent on the habitat.

Our own boreal “poster children” are our populations of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler. Pennsylvania hosts the southern outposts for both species in North America. The Olive-sided Flycatcher also once nested in our state. It was not isolated in corners of our highlands, but was rather widespread in the mountains. The first nest found of the “quick three beers” flycatcher was near Hazleton! They nested down the Appalachians to West Virginian and beyond the Maxon-Dixon line. Dr. Witmer Stone remarked that its familiar whistle was one of the most commonly heard sounds of summer on North Mountain at the turn of the last century. Yet, we have not confirmed nesting by this boreal pewee for over 75 years! It is time we did!

A key to boreal birds is conifer cover. Not only are hemlocks important to northern birds, but spruces, pines, and larches (tamaracks) are also found in the state’s mountains. There are an alarming number of spruce in parts of the Pocono Mountains, often on private property, that may harbor rarities but are not visited often by naturalists. I wonder if there are other Blackpoll Warblers nesting somewhere in a neglected corner of the Poconos or in a conifer forest of our north-central counties.

The second recent event that brought boreal birds to our collective conscience was the discovery of Merlins nesting in Pennsylvania. John Fedak’s video was an exciting documentation of this boreal raptor moving into our own

state. It reminded all of us of the great possibilities achieved with field work and following through on an incredible report. If we can find Merlins in Pennsylvania, what is next? I hope we find more Merlins, but almost anything seems possible.

One of the best ways to protect boreal birds and their habitats is to get involved with field projects. By finding the birds and documenting their locations, you can put each boreal bird on the map. Once there, conservationists will be more aware of “boreal bird hotspots” (a sort of contradiction in terms) and act accordingly.

For more information about these possibilities of recording rare nesting birds, please get involved with the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas. Please look at the website for the Atlas, <http://www.pabirdatlas.org>. Let me know if you find any breeding Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Olive-sided Flycatchers, or Blackpoll Warblers.

For more information about volunteer bird projects, please contact:

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Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Our first Atlas listed Christmas tree plantations among the preferred habitats of two species. Which species?
2. What species got a full-page “WANTED!!” poster in the current issue of the *Pennsylvania Monitor*? Of course, you’ll need to know what the *Monitor* is.
3. Which member of the cardinal family was confirmed in 20 blocks for the first Atlas, but not a single nest was found?
4. Two birds attacking a Sharp-shinned Hawk enabled Dick Byers to confirm what species? You can find out in the *Pennsylvania Monitor*.
5. Which species earned applause in the first Atlas for hatching eggs on the rear axle of a car that was used daily?

Answers on page 12

Birds Listed at 2006 PSO Meeting at Ligonier

Canada Goose	Rock Pigeon	Tufted Titmouse	American Redstart
Wood Duck	Mourning Dove	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Ovenbird
Am. Wigeon	Black-billed Cuckoo	White-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Waterthrush
Mallard	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Brown Creeper	Louisiana Waterthrush
Green-winged Teal	Chimney Swift	Carolina Wren	Kentucky Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Ruby-throated	House Wren	Connecticut Warbler
Ring-necked Pheasant	Hummingbird	Winter Wren	Mourning Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Belted Kingfisher	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Common Yellowthroat
Wild Turkey	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Hooded Warbler
Am. Bittern	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Wilson's Warbler
Least Bittern	Downy Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Canada Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Hairy Woodpecker	Veery	Yellow-breasted Chat
Great Egret	Northern Flicker	Swainson's Thrush	Scarlet Tanager
Green Heron	Pileated Woodpecker	Hermit Thrush	Eastern Towhee
Turkey Vulture	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Wood Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Osprey	Eastern Wood-Pewee	American Robin	Clay-colored Sparrow
Mississippi Kite	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Gray Catbird	Field Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Acadian Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	Vesper Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Alder Flycatcher	Brown Thrasher	Savannah Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	Willow Flycatcher	European Starling	Grasshopper Sparrow
Broad-winged Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Henslow's Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Blue-winged Warbler	Song Sparrow
American Kestrel	Great Crested Flycatcher	Golden-winged Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Eastern Kingbird	Tennessee Warbler	Swamp Sparrow
Sora	White-eyed Vireo	Nashville Warbler	White-throated Sparrow
Am. Coot	Yellow-throated Vireo	Northern Parula	White-crowned Sparrow
Semipalmated Plover	Blue-headed Vireo	Yellow Warbler	Dark-eyed Junco
Killdeer	Warbling Vireo	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Greater Yellowlegs	Philadelphia Vireo	Magnolia Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Lesser Yellowlegs	Red-eyed Vireo	Cape May Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Solitary Sandpiper	Blue Jay	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Bobolink
Spotted Sandpiper	American Crow	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Upland Sandpiper	Common Raven	Black-throated Green	Eastern Meadowlark
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Purple Martin	Blackburnian Warbler	Common Grackle
Least Sandpiper	Tree Swallow	Yellow-throated Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
White-rumped Sandpiper	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Pine Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Short-billed Dowitcher	Bank Swallow	Prairie Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Wilson's Snipe	Cliff Swallow	Bay-breasted Warbler	Purple Finch
Am. Woodcock	Barn Swallow	Blackpoll Warbler	House Finch
Caspian Tern	Carolina Chickadee	Cerulean Warbler	Pine Siskin
Common Tern	Black-capped Chickadee	Black-and-white Warbler	American Goldfinch
Forster's Tern			House Sparrow

Total = 166 species

Highlights included the two Mississippi Kites spotted by Barb Haas, an orange variant Scarlet Tanager on Tony Pegnato's outing, as well as sightings of Connecticut Warbler and Mourning Warbler. What a great bird list!!!

Meeting Participants

Janice Andrews
Carolyn Blatchley
Margaret Buckwalter
Gene Butcher
Suzanne Butcher
Dick Byers
Brian Byrnes
Bob Cook
Ruth Cook
Jim Dennis
Nancy Dennis
Sally Dick
Tom Dick
John Fedak
Pam Ferkett
Mike Fialkovich
Joan Galli
Shirley Glessner
Kathie Goodblood
Karena Gregg
Debra Grim
Doug Gross
Deb Grove
Greg Grove

Carol Guba
Barbara Haas
Frank Haas
Cathy Haffner
Len Hess
Linda Hess
Paul Hess
Margaret Higbee
Roger Higbee
Deuane Hoffman
Jerry Howard
Marjorie Howard
Shonah Hunter
Bonnie Ingram
Galen Ingram
Patricia Johner
Todd Katzner

Chad Kauffman
Rudy Keller
Michael Kiernan
Nancy Ellen Kiernan
Arlene Koch
Ramsay Koury
Janet Kuehl

Tom Kuehl
Trudy Kyler
Sherri LaBar
Gloria Lamer
Mike Lanzone
Annie Lindsay
Gary Lockerman
Sandy Lockerman
Patrick Lynch
Sherron Lynch
Eric Marchbein
Tony Marich
Terry Master
Mark McConaughy
Carol McCullough
Fred McCullough
Flo McGuire
Jim McGuire
Betsy Mescavage
Trish Miller
Bob Mulvihill
Tom Raub
Regina Reeder
Carol Reigle

Bob Ross
John Salvetti
Allen Schweinsberg
Joanne Schweinsberg
Sam Sinderson
Stacy Small
Jim Smith
Rita Smith
Daniel Snell
Jack Solomon
Sue Solomon
Jerry Stanley
Claire Staples
Bob Stewart
Joanne Scheier Susoeff
Patrick Susoeff
John Tautin
Chris Turn
Kim Van Fleet
Kristen Vitkauskas
Linda Wagner
Mary Walsh
Phil Walsh
Larry Waltz

Special thanks to Mark McConaughy for providing the photos of the PSO meeting and to Karena Gregg, our 2006 youth scholarship recipient, for the wonderful artwork.



Patrick Susoeff Is Three Rivers Birding Club's Scholarship Recipient

The Three Rivers Birding Club awarded a scholarship to enable a deserving youth's attendance at the recent PSO meeting. The scholarship recipient was young birder Patrick Susoeff from Pittsburgh. Congratulations, Patrick! We were happy that you joined us at the meeting.

PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. To renew your membership, send your check made payable to "PSO" to:

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Answers to PSO Bird Quiz on page 11

1. Prairie Warbler and Field Sparrow. (This habitat was also mentioned for Clay-colored Sparrow, citing a study in Minnesota.)
2. Barn Owl. The Monitor is the official publication of our second Atlas. Read it at www.carnegiemn.org/atlas/home.htm.
3. Blue Grosbeak. It's a member of the family Cardinalidae, not the finch family.
4. Eastern Kingbird.
5. House Wren.

