

The

PSO Pileated



December 2014

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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From the President's Desk....

Looking outside I see snow! Wow, how summer and now fall have flown by! In a few weeks Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) will be starting up. In fact this year CBC will be celebrating its 115th year, making it the longest running citizen science project! CBCs provide critical data in tracking population trends of our wintering birds. I really hope all of you have signed up to participate in at least one count this year, and I know that some of you are already signed up for three or four. I find that amazing!

A few weeks ago the Board of Directors met in Boalsburg, PA, where we discussed the previous year and PSO's future.. We are lucky as an organization to have such a great group of people on our Board. I want to highlight a few of the things we talked about at the meeting and at the same time tell you about some of our board members.

PSO field trips have really taken off during the last several years with increased participation and excitement. In fact, during the recent trip to the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch many expressed how much they look forward to upcoming trips! Chad Kauffman, chair of the field trip committee, has done an excellent job designing and planning great trips. He has really energized the committee.

Research and Conservation is an important component to PSO's mission. In the coming months you will hear more from Scott Stoleson, the committee chair. One of the research and conservation projects that we are very excited about is the PA Breeding Bird Blitz (PAB3), started by board member Vern Gauthier last June. It was such a great success that we hope to make this an annual event. Projects like the PAB3 are important tools to gather information on the state's breeding birds. With analyses of these data, we will be able to understand annual population trends of our breeding birds.

We also discussed next year's annual meeting that will be held May 29–31 at the Days Hotel West Chester where we will celebrate PSO's 25th year! Shonah Hunter has

worked tirelessly behind the scenes, organizing and planning our annual meetings for years, and this year is no exception. Without her incredible commitment and organization, these meeting would not be as successful as they have been.

One of the other discussion points was the newsletter and journal. We are always trying to improve all aspects of the organization, and publications are no exception. Keeping publications fresh and up-to-date is no easy task. Two board members work hard behind the scenes to make these excellent publications possible. They are Margaret Higbee, editor of *The PSO Pileated*, and Geoff Malosh, editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Finally, we decided to update the website to give it a new look and to improve functionality on smart phones. Frank Haas, our webmaster, has worked alone to meticulously build and manage the website since its inception. Frank, one of the founding members of PSO, serves in many capacities, including Chair of the Finance Committee, Manager of Membership and Pennsylvania Birds Subscriptions, and webmaster. After all these years he is stepping down as webmaster but will serve on the newly formed website committee. Please send Frank a personal note of thanks for his tremendous dedication to PSO for more than 25 years.

The commitment and dedication of board members like Frank and all of the others that I have mentioned above (and many others) make our organization thrive and grow. So many current and past members have been driving forces in shaping PSO into a great organization.

As always, we want to hear from you! As members we value your ideas and opinions. Have something you would like to see us undertake? Interested in becoming more involved in PSO? Drop us a line; we want to do everything we can to make PSO the best it can be. Thanks!

Michael Lanzone, President
mlanzone@gmail.com

Birding Trips, Excursions, Surveys, Adventures, and More

by Chad Kauffman & Committee

Below are some of the field trips we have planned through mid-June. Please consider helping with any you can, suggest others, or even lead your own. We would be happy to discuss having joint outings with any birding group or club; it's all about having fun birding, getting people together for birding, going to new places, etc. Field trips may vary in length from single locations or partial day trips, full day trips to notable spots, and multiple day or out-of-state trips. Do you have a good place or places in your county that you enjoy? Others might enjoy them as well; contact us about scheduling a possible field trip.

It's early yet, so everything has not been worked out. Details will follow in the March edition of *The PSO Pileated*, on our website, and on the PSO Facebook page.

December 14, 2014, through January 5, 2015 is this year's **Christmas Bird Count** season. If you aren't already helping with a count or if you're thinking about doing another, please check pages 11-14 in this newsletter to find a circle near you.

January 10 through February 8 are the dates available for the **Winter Raptor Survey**. For more information about this survey, check out PSO's link at <http://www.pabirds.org/WRS.html>.

The 2015 **Great Backyard Bird Count** will take place Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16. Please join us for the 18th count! The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. See <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html>.

Spring Hawkwatch Trips to Tussey Mt. and another possible location are in the works. More information will be available soon.

Spring waterfowl and gull trips to the Susquehanna River, Middle Creek, and possibly Erie are being planned. Watch for updates.

May 2-3, 2015 – Shavers Creek Birding Cup. Check out their website to determine the areas covered and to help with the fundraising for Penn State's nature center. <http://shaverscreek.org/public-programs-and-events/birding-cup>

May 9, 2015 – Our 24th annual Pennsylvania Migration Count is an all day snapshot of birds that takes place in almost all 67 counties. We should be very proud of our participation. Our state is one of the few that still uphold this tradition that used to be known as the North American Migration Count. For more information, check out PSO's site, <http://www.pabirds.org/PAMC/Index.html>

May 16 or 23 – Possible Erie trip.

May 29-31, 2015 – Our annual PSO meeting will be held at the Days Hotel West Chester- Brandywine Valley in Chester County. For more information, visit PSO's website at <http://www.pabirds.org/>.

June 19-22, 2015 – Second Annual Birding Blitz. This is scheduled one week earlier this year to make sure that all sightings are within the safe dates.

PSO's Annual Meeting 2015

Our annual PSO meeting will be held at the Days Hotel West Chester- Brandywine Valley in Chester County the weekend of May 29 through the 31st. Field trip plans are well underway, and destinations include Longwood Gardens and John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition we've already scheduled our banquet speaker, Dr. Robert Curry from Villanova. Dr. Curry is the expert on chickadee hybridization. This will be an excellent meeting. Don't miss it!

PSO Field Trip to the Allegheny Front

By Ted Nichols II, Annville, PA
(Photos by Chad Kauffman)

As a new PSO member, I was looking forward to the opportunity to join PSO on one of their field trips this fall. As luck would have it, I was able to make plans to spend the weekend in Bedford County for the November 8- 9 field trip to the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch.

For those unfamiliar with the this particular hawkwatch, the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society described it “as a privately-owned mountaintop watch site on the border of Shade Twp., Somerset County, and Napier Twp., Bedford County. It offers a 180-degree view to the east, off the Allegheny Mountains. From the hawkwatch site the valley drops 800 feet into Central Bedford County and can provide stunning vistas of up to 20 miles.”

I set out for Bedford County from my home in Lebanon County late Friday afternoon and joined PSO field trip organizer Chad Kauffman for dinner at the revered Jean Bonnet Tavern in Bedford to discuss plans for the weekend and to make sure everything was set for members to gather there the next evening for dinner. Following dinner, we did some owling near Shawnee State Park, but we didn't uncover anything. We had plenty of great conversation though!

At the crack of dawn the next morning, Chad and I birded the Whitetail/Dunnings Creek Wetlands where Chad was staying. Despite what was the coldest morning I had

encountered so far while birding this fall, we came up with 35 different species in our two-hour adventure. We had some great looks at a Northern Harrier that was scouting the area, and we saw our first American Tree Sparrows of the season.

After climbing into Chad's car, we made a quick stop at Shawnee State Park where we had an immature Red-necked Grebe and several Horned Grebes before meeting Chuck Berthoud at one of the park's parking areas. We were treated to a nice showing of other waterfowl representative of the season as well as a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks playing around, before we took off for the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch.

Upon arrival, I clearly realized that the Allegheny crew meant business when it came to providing a spread of food for those coming to the hawkwatch. Two tables were full of baked goods, cheeses, meats, hot soups, and hot drinks that kept people going throughout the day. Despite a forecast that didn't seem to predict easterly winds favorable to this particular site, we were happy to find that the winds did in fact have an easterly component for the first half of the day. Birds of prey observed that day, before I departed, included: 3 Golden Eagles, 2 Bald Eagles, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Some noisy Common Ravens also visited, and we spotted several flocks of Pine Siskins flying over. It was a busy



Past and present PSO board members at the Allegheny Front: Chad Kauffman, John Fedak, Mike Lanzone, Mike Fialkovich, Margaret Higbee, Tom Kuehl, Roger Higbee, Andy McGann, and Chuck Berthoud.

day on the mountain with dozens of PSO members in attendance as well as a bus trip from the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. That evening approximately 15 members enjoyed each other's company and a good meal at the Jean Bonnet Tavern in Bedford.

Following the meal, Chuck Berthoud, Chad Kauffman, and I returned to Whitetail/Dunnings Creek Wetlands to do some owling where we were treated to vocalizations from a young Barn Owl begging for food and two Eastern Screech-Owls that also came to investigate our calls.

The next morning Chuck Berthoud and I left the hotel where we were both staying to join Chad and the gang from Militia Hill Hawkwatch for some more birding at Whitetail Wetlands. The three-hour session started with some nice views of a Barn Owl in flight, but the highlight of the 40-species session was a Northern Shrike spotted by Chuck Berthoud just as we were about to leave. We had some great side-by-side sightings of the Northern Shrike and a Northern Mockingbird and plenty of views as



Chuck Berthoud spotted the highlight of the Whitetail Wetlands trip, a Northern Shrike, photographed by Chad Kauffman.



Maybe you were part of the PSO group at the Allegheny Front.

the shrike flew around chasing other birds.

A few PSO members made it up the mountain for Day 2 at the hawkwatch, but due to unfavorable winds, the stay was fairly short. However, we did see 2 Tundra Swans fly over as well as 2 Red-tailed Hawks and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. From there, some said their goodbyes, while a few others and I decided to check out the current waterfowl situation at Shawnee State Park again.

It was a great weekend for sharing camaraderie with fellow PSO members and birders in Bedford County, and I anxiously am looking forward to joining Chad on one of his future PSO-sponsored trips. If you haven't yet taken advantage of this great membership benefit and opportunity to get out with fellow members, I highly recommend that you make a New Year's resolution for 2015 to attend a PSO field trip!



Friday Side Note from Shawnee State Park

by Chad Kauffman

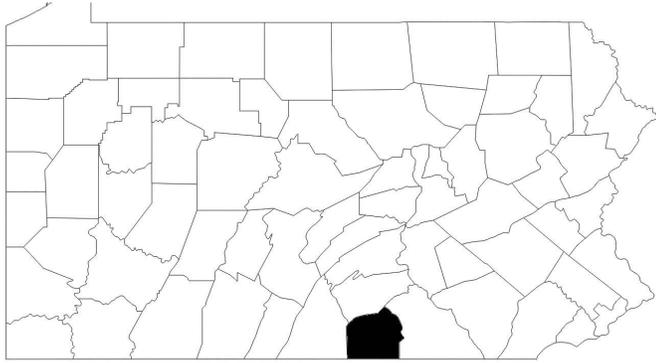
I went to Shawnee Friday afternoon to see what was on the water as well as to check in early at the bed & breakfast at Whitetail Wetlands. At the southwest corner of the lake on the road running south of Schellsburg, I got to see my first murmuration of blackbirds in the tens of thousands. I put my bins up and saw what I thought was a Peregrine Falcon tearing into the flock in a bit of a spiral, and I could see some of the birds that had been struck and flung away. I also saw what looked like a Sharpie coming in from another angle shortly afterwards. I caught some of this on video that I shared online on the PSO Facebook page, but I don't think any of the raptors were visible in the video. It was quite an experience, one that I will never forget.

Another note I wanted to add about the trip was that some of us were lucky enough to see the Great Egret that had been reported in the area; this bird was late moving through PA.

I also want to thank Ted for helping so much on the trip and for writing the previous article.

BIRDING PA - ADAMS COUNTY

(Each edition of *Birding PA* highlights birding hot spots from one of our 67 counties.)



Why Adams County? Why not? It is the first county alphabetically in PA, and it is close to my home county of Cumberland in south central PA. On the morning of October 13, Chad Kauffman, Aden Troyer, Gideon Renno, and I met up with veteran Adams County birder, Mike O'Brien at STATE GAME LANDS 249 (SGL 249) just west of Heidlersburg. Mike is a long-time member and current field trip leader of South Mountain Audubon and the compiler for the Gettysburg Christmas Bird Count (CBC). He graciously agreed to meet us to show us around what he says is, "hands down the best all around place in Adams County to bird."

We met at the parking lot just as Game Lands Road enters the SGL 249 and from there set out on foot. The first section of Game Lands Road is a 0.3 mile stretch with fields and hedgerows on either side. Being October it was not surprising to find **American Robins** in large numbers. There were also a good number of **Red-winged Black-birds** with a few **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and **Common Grackles** mixed in. Some of the other species we picked up along this stretch were **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Field Sparrow**, **Common Yellowthroat**, **Palm Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Purple Finch**, and a less expected **Blackpoll Warbler**. Mike told us that in the spring there are many **Willow Flycatchers** calling from the hedgerows and that he has found **Rusty Blackbirds** here. It also seemed like great habitat for **White-eyed Vireos** to breed and possibly for a wintering **Northern Shrike**.

We continued walking with hedgerows giving way to riparian woodlands along the Conewago Creek, an area

that Mike told us teems with **Warbling Vireos** in the spring. Just as we entered this area, we picked up the first of the few **Blue-headed Vireos** we would have this day and the first of our **White-crowned Sparrows**, along with a late **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**. During the course of walking this section, we ran into a couple of chickadee flocks adding **Cape May Warbler**, **Bay-breasted Warbler**, **Blackburnian Warbler**, and **Black-throated Green Warbler**, not a bad warbler day at all for mid October! Also included in this section was a small wetlands area in which we found a couple of **Swamp Sparrows**, a **Great Blue Heron**, and the first of our **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** which was one of the 6 species of woodpeckers we had at SGL 249; we only missed **Red-headed Woodpecker** (which is possible here) for a full woodpecker sweep. One thing that was pretty cool or gross depending on your point of view was to come upon a **Red-tailed Hawk** as it was finishing up an apparent breakfast of muskrat. The bird flew and all that remained were some fur, entrails, and a tail. We also saw and heard a couple **Red-shouldered Hawks** in the area.



Photo by Chad Kauffman

We then drove about three miles east to a 65-acre wet-lands, part of SGL 249 located off Gun Club Road. There we walked a 0.6 mile trail along the wetlands. There were a countless number of robins, with many blackbirds and sparrows along with a few **Palm Warblers** and **Common Yellowthroats**. New species we picked up here included about a dozen **Tree Swallows**, a couple of **Chipping Sparrows**, and a **Pine Warbler**. I could certainly see this place as a haven for winter sparrows and a place where puddle ducks might hang out in the fall as long as the water remains open. This is also great-looking habitat for **Rusty Blackbirds**. In speaking to PSO county compiler Phil Keener afterwards, he adds, "The wetland pond is a reliable spot in August/early September for waders. Double-digit **Green Heron** counts are routine while also seeing **Great Blue Heron** and **Great Egret**. **Glossy Ibis** and **Little Blue Heron** have been reported as well in past years." The one downside for birding in this location is that a large part of it is closed off from March to mid June as a propagation area.

In our four hours at SGL 249 we came up with a very

respectable 58 species, especially for an overcast and dreary morning. We parted ways with Mike and after lunch kicked around a part of my section of the York Springs CBC area where we picked up a **Lincoln's Sparrow**.

We then headed to the northwest corner of Adams County to Michaux State Forest and Long Pine Run Reservoir, a 150-acre impoundment that serves as a reservoir for Chambersburg. I had been there on a few previous occasions and had found a **Cackling Goose** along with **Common Loons** and **Tundra Swans**, and I had noticed on eBird that **Surf Scoter** had also been found there. A couple of other great birds that had been reported there were a **Mississippi Kite** in 2011 and an **American Avocet** in 2003 and again in 2014. I must admit, however, I wasn't planning to find a whole lot here due to the timing of the season; it was a little too late to find many migrants on the ridge and a little too early for waterfowl or so I thought. Still the Michaux State Forest was alive with color; the oranges, yellows, and reds of the maples and other hardwoods popped against a dark green canvas of evergreens. This picturesque lake was worth visiting for the scenery alone.

We pulled into the main parking area for the boat launch off Milesburn Road and scanned the waters but came up empty. On a second scan, however, Chad spotted two dark diving ducks. When we zoomed in, we were able to make out the head markings that indicated that they were two



Another duck in the water at Long Pine Run Reservoir was a lone male Ring-necked Duck.

Photo by Chad Kauffman

male **Ring-necked Duck**. Not in the class of a scoter but still unexpected. Other birds of note we encountered were a **Common Raven** croaking its harsh, gravelly call; one lone **Tree Swallow**; 3 **Blue-headed Vireos**; 6-8 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**; one very pale **Pine Warbler**; and a couple flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos, my first of the season.

Even though it was an overcast and dreary day we still identified 63 species in Adams County and took in some beautiful scenery. SGL 249 and Long Pine Run Reservoir are two places I would not hesitate to bird again.

Good Birding, PA!

– Vern Gauthier

(Please contact me at pabirder@gmail.com if you have a birding hotspot or two you feel other PA Birders might like to hear about from your home county in future editions of Birding PA.)

Links and e-mail for more on Adams County Birding:

PSO Site Guide - www.pabirds.org/SiteGuide/PACountyPage.php?CountyID=1

South Mountain Audubon Society - <http://southmountainaudubon.org>

Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve - <http://strawberryhill.org/about-us/facilities>

Adams County eBird sightings - <http://tinyurl.com/qejdvk>

Gettysburg CBC Compiler / Mike O'Brien - maddogobrien@gmail.com

York Springs CBC Compiler / Vern Gauthier – pabirder@gmail.com

PSO County Compiler / Phil Keener - pittche74@yahoo.com

Birding PA Culinary Tip – Rocco's Pizza in nearby York Springs., where we had lunch, is the official home of the York Springs CBC count up! www.roccosyorksprings.com

The Raven Reporter



Tales of
Discovery about
Pennsylvania
Birds

2nd Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania Is Still Available At Discount

One of the very best Pennsylvania bird books is still available for sale! The 2nd Atlas is a masterpiece and a “must-own” reference book for any Pennsylvania birder or ornithologist. With the holidays coming up, it is time to consider getting a copy of this invaluable book for a friend, a library, or yourself. The 2nd Atlas was published 20 years after the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. It brought our knowledge of the state’s bird populations up to date, documented current breeding distribution, abundance, and changes since the previous project. This publication has been given very favorable reviews including one in the June 2014 edition of the *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* which stated that, “Any birder visiting Pennsylvania should be sure to have a copy of this book at home or in the car.” It is called a “masterful and successful example” of a breeding bird atlas.

A remarkable feature of this project was its strong support from citizen scientists with 2,000 dedicated birders contributing to the project. That kind of passion and dedication in PA also extends to eBird and projects promoted by the PA Game Commission and its partners. This dedication resulted in a fine book published by Penn State Press as well as a coalition of volunteers eager to do more field work for conservation. This valuable resource is still available for purchase at <http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-05630-2.html> and a discount will be applied with the code WS14 during check-out.

Bird clubs and Audubon chapters should consider donating a copy of this reference book to local libraries and other institutions so that it will be available to a wide audience. Why not school libraries? With the holidays, this is an excellent gift for new birders and conservationists. The book is much more than a series of maps. I find myself constantly going to the book for the various tables and species write-ups. Don’t let this book gather dust! Get more copies out there to spread the good words about birds.

Winter Finch and Other Boreal Bird Forecast – Are We Missing Great Birds?

Well before the snow flies, state birders stick their heads out their windows to listen for the wheezy call notes of flying Pine Siskins and other “winter finches.” Some have already been reported far south in the state. When they move into the state, they really move!

So far this season, Pine Siskins are the most reported “winter finch,” but more may be coming. It would be a good idea to check out many hemlock and pine stands to see if any of these siskins hang around into the spring months to nest. Feeders help to attract them but are not absolutely necessary.

The famous Ron Pittaway’s Winter Finch Forecast is often cited for good reason. Every birder should check it out at <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2014/forecast14.htm>. But, there is nothing like checking out the local cone and other natural food crops to inform yourself of the possibilities this winter. Few people actually walk into and check the natural spruce stands in Pennsylvania. Many Norway spruce and planted pine stands are accessible by roads, especially dirt roads in the mountains. These are worth checking for a variety of birds.

Purple Finches are not only breeders in our state, but many also move into areas in fall and winter where they are not common nesters. Besides being found in deep forests, they may also frequent fragmented forests and varied landscapes. Males like to perch on conspicuous perches to sing, sometimes skylarking overhead.

Pennsylvania birders should take note of the results of the West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. Red Crossbills are found in many locations through the seasons. They are probably foraging on white pine and red spruce cones there. In New York, Red Crossbills regularly forage in groves of Norway spruce and stay for months where these trees are present. Why not in Pennsylvania? Check out the WV Atlas maps at: <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/WV/Main?viewResults=1>

Although not a finch, Red-breasted Nuthatches can be very irruptive, popping up in conifer groves once they begin post-nesting dispersal. Some have been “yanking” around our conifers for the last few weeks. They often forage on the seeds of pines and spruces including exotics. If the cone crop is big enough, they will stay and nest in the spring.

Although not generally considered “winter finches,” the Fox Sparrows and White-throated Sparrows add some boisterous activity in the brush this time of year. The loud “smack” of a Fox Sparrow is a clue that one of these big

red sparrows is out there somewhere. Some are so reddish that they suggest a female cardinal when they zip by to bury themselves in a bush. I find White-throated Sparrows to be welcome companions in our yard and field each year. Their loud chips can be heard well before dawn and after dusk. These fellows roost in trees and shrubs right around the house after foraging on seeds and fruits in the field all year. I find them gobbling up dogwood and viburnum berries as well as rose hips in the fall and remaining as long as the berries last into winter. As a breeding species, the White-throated Sparrow has declined since the first Atlas. I wonder if this is one of the early warnings of the effects of global climate change. There are lots of songbirds that originated in the boreal forest that are not considered “winter finches.” Bohemian Waxwings are real authentic boreal birds, but they are only occasionally found in our state. However, Cedar Waxwings really move into the state when the winds blow colder. I’ve been enjoying small flocks that forage on barberries, cherries, and sumac berries where they find

them in our farmette. A small pond and waterfall also are attractive to waxwings.

I encourage birders to not only follow the reports of “winter finches” but to seek out-of-the-way places where these birds may be taking advantage of locally abundant food sources. Cones anyone?

Good birding!

–Doug

P.S. I think that I’ve lost track, but I believe that this marks the 24th year of this column. Thanks for reading and making your contributions to Pennsylvania birding and bird conservation. Every bit counts!

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Golden Eagle Days on Jacks and Stone Mountains

By Laura Jackson, Bedford County

As many of you know, Jacks and Stone Mountains in Mifflin and Huntingdon Counties are proposed sites for up to 112 industrial wind turbines, strung along the tops of the two mountains for many miles. Since the summits of Jacks and Stone are very narrow, steep, and rocky, the two wind companies, E.ON and Volkswind, will have to blast and bulldoze the bedrock in order to create a wide, flat area for roads and turbines. This major excavation will degrade high quality watersheds, and the turbines will pose a major threat to migrating birds and bats. Fortunately, thanks to the educational outreach of Friends of Jacks Mountain, the wind companies have not been able to procure many wind development leases, and they recently withdrew their applications on the PJM Grid. We hope that the companies will terminate the leases in the near future.



Trish Miller and Mike Lanzone outfitted Golden Eagle #40 with a transmitter on November 25, 2006, in order to follow its migration after being released at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Its telemetry track is available at <http://katznerlab.com/golden-eagle-tracking-maps#/fullscreen/6030695>.

Photo by Laura Jackson

Meanwhile, hawkwatchers on Jacks and Stone Mountains have experienced outstanding Golden Eagle migrations this fall. In the fall, Golden Eagles fly south, using the winds blowing from the northwest and west. Winds from this direction produce good raptor flight days on Stone Mountain. When these winds have pushed Golden Eagles far enough south, they may use Jacks Mountain as the winds change direction to southeast and east.

Greg Grove and Nick Bolgiano, regular counters at Stone Mountain, report that they have a shot at their biggest Golden Eagle year. They had two great days with 22 Golden Eagles each on November 2 and the 12th – these rank in the top ten days ever. Their record high is 25 for one day, which they’ve experienced 4 times since 1995. Bald Eagles are also getting close to a record high this year.

Counters on Jacks Mountain have already experienced a record-breaking year for the Golden Eagle migration. They've counted 134 Golden Eagles as of November 18, 2014, which is an all-time yearly record – and the migration isn't over yet. Just one day this fall, on October 31, counters saw 56 Golden Eagles fly over Jacks. The number counted so far this year sets 2014 as a record year.

The next highest counts were 63 Golden Eagles counted in 1995 and 69 in 2012.

Darrell Smith, a long-time counter, was on Jacks on October 31 when he experienced the historic Golden Eagle flight. His account follows below.

A Historic Day on Jacks Mountain Hawkwatch

By Darrell Smith

It was around 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time when I asked Craig Kochel whether he was going to stick around or head back home, which is a little more than a two-hour drive for him. He said that he was trying to make up his mind but hadn't decided yet. We talked about the lack of raptors flying even though we had a good southeast wind.

But don't let me get ahead of myself. It was around 9:05 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, October 31, 2014, when I pulled into the parking lot at the Jacks Mountain Hawkwatch. I saw that Craig Kochel, a professor from Bucknell University, was already on watch. Craig and I have spent many days together on Jacks, and I enjoy his company very much. I said hello and asked him if he had seen anything yet. He replied that he had seen a female Northern Harrier and a Red-tailed Hawk. I spent a few minutes getting some things together and proceeded to start my observation sheet. The wind was from the southeast at around 6 to 11 miles per hour. I could see approximately 22 kilometers with 100% overcast skies and no precipitation. I wrote down the harrier and the red-tail and watched toward the north with Craig, hoping to have a good day.

Fast forward to about 12:50 p.m. since we had not seen a single raptor the rest of the morning. Craig and I remarked how unusual it was that we were not seeing any raptors with a good southeast wind, but we know the birds do what they want when they want. As I said previously, we were both wondering if it was worth spending any more time on watch, and then it happened. We saw a large bird coming from the north which turned out to be an adult Golden Eagle at 12:55. That bird started a parade of Golden Eagles that would last for more than 2½ hours. I will now list the times and identification of Golden Eagles. Codes include A for adult, Imm for immature, and U for unknown maturity. It was extremely dark at times and overcast all day, making it hard to identify the maturity of many. Here are the times and what we saw: Although many of the eagles were at the limit of unaided vision, many were much lower and some at eye level. At

12:55 A	1:26 A	2:10 A
2 at 1:02 U	1:28 A	2:13 A
2 at 1:03 U,	1:33 A	2 at 2:19 A
1:07 A	4 at 1:38 A	3 at 2:19 U
1:10 A	4 at 1:38 U	2 at 2:23 A
1:11 A	2 at 1:40 U	2 at 2:31 U
1:14 U	2 at 1:43 U	2:59 A
2 at 1:17 A	2 at 1:46 U	3 at 3:07A
1:17 U	2 at 1:50 U	3:15 Imm,
2 at 1:22 U	1:52 A	3:31 A
1:24 A	1:53 U	3:35 Imm.
	2 at 2:05 U	

1:38 we had 8 Golden Eagles in a kettle on the west side of Jacks and at 2:19 we had a kettle of 5 Golden Eagles on the east side. It was also interesting to note that many eagles came in pairs - not necessarily mated pairs, but they appeared to be traveling together. It was one of those days that come once in a lifetime for raptor watchers during the migration.

After we counted about 26 Golden Eagles, I told Craig I was going to look up the all-time one-day record for Jacks Mountain. I found it in my records. In 1995, 31 Golden Eagles were recorded on Jacks Mountain Hawkwatch. I said it would be great if we could break the record. In the next 15 minutes we surpassed the old record of 31 and were well on our way to 40. The next time I checked our numbers we were at 49, and I commented that it would be great to get 50. We continued past 50 to the grand total of 56 Golden Eagles.

I thank God that Craig was there that day to observe with me, for I would never have seen all 56. You all know, the more eyes the better. Craig picked up many that I would have missed. What happened that day on Jacks will be forever, something that Craig and I will share and never forget.



Ornithological Literature Notes

For adequate conservation, much needs to be learned about the effects of Marcellus shale drilling on Pennsylvania's forests and wildlife. That's the theme of an article in the fall 2014 issue of *The Wildlife Professional* by three researchers at the Penn State University's Department of Ecosystem Science and Management.

Margaret Brittingham, Lillie Langlois, and Patrick Drohan explain that major scientific efforts will be needed to uncover the potential ecological impacts of shale gas extraction. The drilling platforms themselves are just one part of the entire drilling and fracking infrastructure. The authors note that the overall footprint includes wider and more permanent roads than those needed for conventional drilling; increased truck traffic; wider and longer pipelines and right-of-ways; and large compressor stations to move the gas along the pipelines. Each of those aspects has its own distinct set of concerns.

Research is already in progress in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the Appalachian region, although no studies of the effects on forest ecosystems have yet been completed. Brittingham and her colleagues report that current studies at Penn State are designed to collect baseline data and to measure whether and how abundance, distribution, and species composition are changing with proximity to pads and pipelines and with the density of gas infrastructure.

One study underway is a survey of birds near pads and comparing the abundance and composition of species with those at reference sites in interior forests. Preliminary

results suggest that American Robins and Brown-headed Cowbirds are benefiting from forest fragmentation while forest specialists such as Black-throated Green Warblers are losing their habitat.

A second study compares bird abundance before shale gas development and three years after the development began. Researchers say their results do not indicate that large-scale shifts in bird communities have occurred thus far.

Another project used camera monitoring at eight sites to compare wildlife use of habitat along pipeline corridors and in nearby forest interior habitat. Along the pipelines, White-tailed Deer have been the most common species, and Wild Turkey and Black Bear next most. Others included Coyote, Gray Fox, Raccoon, and domestic cat. Species in that last group are nest predators and might increase predation on birds nesting near the corridors.

The article, available at tinyurl.com/PA-shale-gas, describes a tremendous array of research underway in the U.S. and Canada focusing on potential effects of shale gas industry operations on wildlife habitat. Brittingham, Langlois, and Drohan emphasize a basic question: "How do we balance shale gas development with the other important values of our public lands? ... Development must be done in a way that protects the integrity of this priceless ecosystem."

Paul Hess
Natrona Heights, PA
phess@salsgiver.com

PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Exactly 10 years ago in December, two first-records for Pennsylvania were discovered and then enjoyed by many birders. Do you remember the species?
2. In our second breeding bird atlas, Andy Wilson noted that this is "one of the very few species adapted to nesting in intensively farmed fields." What species?
3. As long as any of us can remember, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, and MacGillivray's Warbler were all placed taxonomically together in the genus *Oporornis*. Now only one remains. Which one? For a bonus, where did the other three go?
4. Which vireo species has increased most notably in Pennsylvania during the past two decades, based on data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey and our two breeding bird atlases?
5. A familiar member of the Icteridae family has two subspecies whose breeding ranges are primarily separated by the Appalachian Mountains. Which species? For a bonus, what are the subspecies' English and scientific names?

(Answers on page 12.)

Christmas Bird Counts Held in Pennsylvania

	Name of Count	County	Compiler	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Date
1	Audubon	Montgomery Delaware Chester	Vincent Smith	610-983-8539 484-410-1157	Nyctea34@aol.com	12/20/14
2	Bald Eagle	Centre	Bob Snyder	814-863-6168	rhs2@psu.edu	1/04/15
3	Beaver	Beaver	Rick Mason	724-847-0909	richarddmason@gmail.com	12/20/14
4	Bedford	Bedford	Laura & Mike Jackson	814-652-9268	mljackson2@embarqmail.com	12/27/14
5	Benezette	Clearfield, Elk	Mark Johnson	814-546-2886	kathyandmarkj@yahoo.com	12/28/14
6	Bernville	Berks	Ed Barrell	610-926-2962	ebarrell@comcast.net	12/27/14
7	Bethlehem- Easton	Northampton	Elaine & Donald Mease	610-346-7754	measede@enter.net	12/27/14
8	Bloomsburg	Columbia	Cathy Haffner	570-275-3934	northbranchbirdclub@gmail.com	12/14/14
9	Buffalo Creek	Washington	Larry Helgerman	412-508-0321	bobolink1@earthlink.net	12/14/14
10	Buffalo Creek Valley	Butler Armstrong	George Reese	724-353-9649	g.reese@gaiconsultants.com	12/20/14
11	Bushy Run	Westmoreland	Dick Byers	724-593-3543	otusasio@lhtot.com	12/28/14
12	Butler	Butler Lawrence Mercer	Suzanne Butcher	330-759-1945 724-794-3534	sarbird@hotmail.com	12/20/14
13	Central Bucks	Bucks	Diane Allison	610-847-2085	dalliso@mail.ptd.net	12/28/14
14	Chambersburg	Franklin	Valerie Barnes	717-352-4397	BarnesVa4@comcast.net	12/20/14
15	Clarion	Clarion	Gary Edwards Michael Leahy	814-671-1273 814-229-1648	gedwards@csonline.net leahym@windstream.net	12/27/14
16	Clarksville	Greene	Terry Dayton	724-627-9665	tdayton@windstream.net	12/27/14
17	Culp	Blair	Steve Bonta	814-684-1175	stevebonta@yahoo.com	12/20/14
18	Curtin	Dauphin	Scott Bills	717-896-8859	sbills@pa.gov	12/29/14
19	Dallas Area	Luzerne	Jim Hoyson	570-696-4925 570-371-6581 (w)	birdder@aol.com	12/20/14
20	Dingman's Ferry	Pike	Derek Scott	570-828-2310 x 234	dscott@pecc.org	1/04/15
21	DuBois	Clearfield	Marianne Atkin- son, Joc Smrekar		marianne5@windstream.net	12/20/14

22	Elverson	Chester	Robert Cook	610-286-9919	dunlin@dejazzd.com	12/21/14
23	Emporium	Cameron	Bob Martin	814-486-1990	bmartin@zitomedia.net	12/21/14
24	Erie	Erie	Michelle Franz		isomorphun@roadrunner.com	12/20/14
25	Gettysburg	Adams	Mike O'Brien	717-642-6676	maddogobrien@gmail.com	12/20/14
26	Glenolden	Delaware	David Eberly	610-543-3499	david.eberly@gmail.com	12/20/14
27	Hamburg	Berks Schuylkill	Laurie Goodrich	610-756-6961 570-943-3411 x106	goodrich@hawkmtn.org	12/28/14
28	Harrisburg	Dauphin	Deuane Hoffman	717-564-7475	corvuscorax@comcast.net	12/20/14
29	Huntingdon	Huntingdon	Deb Grove	814-667-2305	dsg4@psu.edu	12/14/14
30	Indiana	Indiana	Roger & Margaret Higbee	724-354-3493	bcorirole@windstream.net	12/26/14
31	Johnstown	Cambria	Jeff Payne	814-279-8142	paynemt@gmail.com	12/14/14
32	Lake Raystown	Huntingdon Blair	Greg Grove	814-667-2305	gwg2@psu.edu	1/03/15
33	Lancaster	Lancaster	Barbara Hunsberger Roger Stoner	717-393-4091	phunsberger@comcast.net	1/04/15
34	Lebanon	Lebanon, Dauphin	Fritz Heilman	717-273-0487	volks5@verizon.net	12/20/14
35	Lehigh Valley	Lehigh/Berks	Stephen Kloiber	610-863-3889	skloiber@frontier.com	12/20/14
36	Lewisburg	Union, Snyder, Northumber- land	Allen Schweinsberg	570-524-0432	aschwein@bucknell.edu	12/14/14
37	Lewistown	Juniata	Elmer Petersheim Chad Kauffman	717-535-5926 717-994- 6715	chadkauffman@earthlink.net	12/20/14
38	Linesville	Crawford	Clare Nicolls	814-587-6395	tcnicolls@windstream.net	12/14/14
39	Lititz	Lancaster, Lebanon	Bruce Carl	717-368-4824	carls94@ptd.net	12/28/14
40	Lock Haven- Jersey Shore	Clinton Lycoming	Wayne Laubscher	570-748-7511	wnlaubsch@comcast.net	1/03/15
41	Mansfield- Wellsboro	Tioga	Gary Tyson	570-724-5789	gnats3@ptd.net	1/01/15
42	New Bloomfield	Perry	Ramsay Koury	717-761-1871	rkoury123@aol.com	12/27/14

43	Newville	Cumberland	Bill and Linda Franz	717-776-4463	wlf Franz1@yahoo.com	1/04/15
44	Northern Lycoming	Lycoming	Nate Fronk	570-916-1406	mnrf5017@psu.edu	12/27/14
45	Pennypack Valley	Philadelphia	Peter Kurtz	215-342-3638 215-685-0470	peter.kurtz@phila.gov	12/20/14
46	Philipsburg	Centre Clearfield	Greg Kojadinovich	814-237-5964		
47	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	Brian Shema	412-963-6100	bshema@aswp.org	12/27/14
48	Pittsburgh South Hills	Allegheny Washington	Nancy Page	412-221-4795		12/20/14
49	Pleasantville	Venango	Russ States	814-676-6320	pabirder@verizon.net	12/28/14
50	Pocono Mt.	Monroe	Brian Hardiman	570-629-3061	bhmccd@ptd.net	12/14/14
51	Potter County	Potter	Dave Hauber	814-274-8946	haubers3@penn.com	
52	Reading	Berks	Ken Lebo	610-856-1413	klebo@dejazzd.com	12/14/14
53	Rector	Westmoreland	Larry Long	724 593-6105	longl@carnegiennh.org	12/27/14
54	Ryerson	Greene	Marjorie Howard	724-852-3155	birdwatcher108@comcast.net	12/20/14
55	Scranton	Lackawanna	Paul or Lisa Mundy	570-941-9851	Pmraptors@aol.com	12/20/14
56	Southeastern Bradford	Bradford	Trudy Gerlach	570-746-9270	tgswoods@epix.net	12/27/14
57	Southern Bucks	Bucks	Robert Mercer	215-785-1177		12/20/14
58	Southern Lancaster County	Lancaster	Bob Schutsky	717-548-3303 (10 a.m. to 9 p.m.)	info@birdtreks.com	12/14/14
59	State College	Centre	Jim Dunn Bob Fowles	814-863-8625 814-238-1990	jwd6@psu.edu rbf@psu.edu	12/14/14
60	Tamaqua	Schuykill Carbon	Jonathan DeBalko		jonathan.debalko@wilkes.edu	12/30/14
61	Thompson	Susquehanna	Stuart Slocum		slocumsw95@yahoo.com	
62	Tunkhannock	Wyoming	Rick Koval	570-829-4381 570-696-1691	pocononaturalist@yahoo.com	12/14/14
63	Upper Bucks	Bucks Montgomery Lehigh	Bill Etter	215-964-3613	billetter01@gmail.com	12/14/14
64	Valley Forge		Edie Parnum	610-964-8331	eparnum2@verizon.net	12/20/14

65	Warren	Warren	Michael Toole	814-723-4714	m_t_toole@verizon.net	12/20/14
66	Washington	Washington	Tom Contreras	724-223-6118	tcontreras@washjeff.edu	12/20/14
67	West Chester	Chester	Barry Blust	610-458-5616	BarryBlust@comcast.net	12/20/14
68	Western Chester	Chester	Larry Lewis	484-340-7672	earlybirdtours@comcast.net	1/04/15
69	Western Schuylkill	Schuylkill	Dave Kruel	570-622-3704	dkruel300@comcast.net	12/14/14
70	White Mills	Wayne	Barb Leo	570-253-2364	barbaraaleo@earthlink.net	12/20/14
71	Wild Creek– Little Gap	Carbon Monroe	Joshua Nemeth Dustin Welch	610-573-8577	allroy1313@rcn.com	12/21/14
72	Williamsport	Lycoming	Nate Fronk	570-916-1406	natefronk@gmail.com	12/20/14
73	Wyncote	Montgomery	Andy Fayer		AndyFayer@aol.com	12/20/14
74	York	York	Bernie Frick	717-843-6675	blf268@lehigh.edu	12/20/14
75	York Springs	Adams, Cumberland, York	Vern Gauthier	717-385-9526	pabirder@gmail.com	12/29/14

Twas the Night before the First CBC

by Vern Gauthier

Twas the night before the first CBC,
The alarm clock was set at four thirty-three.

And while they were sleeping all snug in their beds,
Visions of rarities danced in their heads.

With clothes laid out along with their gear,
The clock ticked closer to the day drawing near.

They awoke with a start and then with a fright,
Realizing that soon, it would be first light!

Washing their faces with hot wet towels,
They wondered aloud, if they'd get any owls?

Stumbling around on creaking boards old,
They dressed in layers, so they would not be too cold.

With a quick final glance, they knew they were set,
And left in anticipation of the best CBC yet!

Of the birds seen or heard, they would make a list,
Ruining the ones that they would just barely miss.

And when they completely, their area gone round,
Stories of the day would surely abound!

Then heading for home both chilly and tired,
They'll pull out the list for it to admire.

After counting each bird from common to not,
"What a good day," will be each their thought!

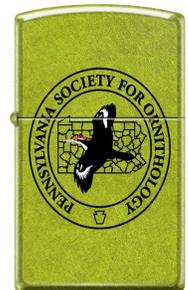
Then when back home with hot cocoa, coffee or tea,
(or with something stronger maybe!)
They will say to a person, "How fortunate a birder
to be."

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Why Do Our Members Participate in Christmas Bird Counts?

"I have been participating in CBCs for probably 20 years or more. I participate in them because I feel I am contributing some data that is useful and because it gives me a reason to go birding in the middle of winter. I don't have any one specific memory, but, what is fun is that you never know what you might see and it is that anticipation of seeing an unusual or uncommon bird that keeps me trudging through the cold!"

– Ann Pettigrew

"When I first started birding in 2004, I wanted to bird anywhere, with other birders and learn as much as I could. There just weren't that many field trips around me that I knew about, so when I learned about Christmas bird counts and that there was one in my county, it was like Christmas. I jumped in headfirst, signing up for as many as I could for the first several years, doing them both days of the weekends, etc. I was doing five a year for a couple of years, but then I settled down to two permanent and once in a while a third now. While it is a push to get to as many spots and as many birds as you can, you still get to relax a bit more than other counts and surveys. You aren't under a three-minute limit, so you can stay and find something if needed."

– Chad Kauffman

"I love it. I study birds year round. One of the best sightings I ever had was in December 2009 in the Pymatuning restricted area during a CBC where I saw a Northern Shrike perched during a wild snowstorm What a photo op !!!

– Bill Drolsbaugh

"CBCs are very social birding experiences for me. I usually prefer to discover birds alone. But CBCs are group efforts. Larry Lewis's was my first adventure CBC and was a blast. The dinners after are always fun, too. A long distance CBC is a great way to put faces to names."

– Shannon Thompson

"Jack S's bad jokes! ☺ Seriously, the first one I attended was gloriously snowy- a wonderland. It's nice to meet other folks, learn some birding lore and info, and enjoy a walk in the woods to see what birds can be found."

– Barb Kostella

"Why do I participate in CBCs? Tradition - Three of us continue to do the CBC route done by State College birder Alice Fuller who can no longer bird with us. We remember our great finds (Merlin two consecutive years in the same place) and poor choices (I said could we drive down a snow covered forest road; no place to turn around and all we saw was a Hairy Woodpecker; I backed out for a mile). We do need to stop early because two of our group (I am not naming names) need to get to Lady Lion basketball games."

– Susan Braun

"I like figuring out how to bird an area, the strategy, and the minor changes each year that bring in new counts and new species. There's a thrill to examining and exploring at the microscale and seeing what's there, especially in the dead of winter when nature seems its bleakest."

– David McNaughton

"I love taking a break from the holiday craziness and instead going out and experiencing the beauty of a winter day. I also like the excitement of finding one more species, especially at the end of the day when the sun is starting to set. And I love hearing the compiler call out the list. I could go on and on!"

– Annette Mathes

There's always one comedian in the group:

"Christmas Bird Counts? What are they? ☺ Does it have something to do with the song and the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me?"

– Anonymous

PSO Newsletter

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

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Did You Know...



Did you know that it was at one time believed that a cold or rheumatism could be cured by keeping a Red Crossbill nearby in a cage? A bird with the upper mandible crossing to the right could cure men while one with the mandible crossing to the left could cure women.

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 10)

1. Gray Kingbird and MacGillivray's Warbler
2. Horned Lark
3. Only Connecticut remains. In 2010, the American Ornithologists' Union moved the others to the yellowthroat genus *Geothlypis* based on these species' close genetic relationships.
4. Warbling Vireo
5. Common Grackle ("Purple" *stonei* in the east, "Bronzed" *versicolor* in the west)

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

c/o R. V. Higbee

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