

... from the Editor

Crossbills, still

They're still making news in these pages, and are still being talked about in birding circles and clubs around the state. The buzz created by the White-winged Crossbill invasion is not something many of Pennsylvania's birders will not soon forget.

In this issue, I am thrilled to be able to include two important reviews of the invasion—superb documentation of a significant and memorable event. The first is a review of the scope of the invasion itself, written by Mike Fialkovich, who doubles as the Spring Season Editor for this journal (and of course, this is also the Spring issue). Many thanks are owed to Mike for his continued dedication of his time and energy to making my job easy.

Reading over his review of this year's invasion inevitably recalls (for those readers that have been members of PSO since the late 90's, that is) a similar article that appeared in the pages of *Pennsylvania Birds* Volume 12, Number 1 (1998) by Paul Hess, Michael Leahy, and Robert Ross, in which the crossbill invasion of 1997-98 was similarly reviewed. What stuck with me when I reread that 1998 article, after I got past the obligatory stroll down memory lane, was the authors' acknowledgment of the value added to their data in the form of sightings reported to the PABIRDS listserv, then still very much in its infancy. They considered the reporting on PABIRDS to be "unusually detailed". They drew a contrast between the 1997-98 invasion and previous invasions by noting that the extent of invasions previous to 1997-98 were never really widely known until well after the fact; in other words, reporting on state listservs like PABIRDS, in conjunction with a fledgling and "innovative" website called BirdSource, allowed the 1997-98 invasion to come into focus on a continent-wide basis in real time, for the first time. It was yet another reminder to me exactly how quickly and radically birding has changed in just 10 years, when today the same

instantaneous information exchange that was so innovative and perhaps even a bit shocking in the late 1990s is ordinary rote today.

Along those same lines, the second crossbill article in this issue, a comprehensive review of the food choices of the crossbills that visited this winter by Rudy Keller, relied almost completely on PABIRDS as a data-gathering mechanism. Imagine trying to produce an article like Keller's without the benefit of a system like PABIRDS. Before PABIRDS and widespread consumer usage of the internet came along, birders had a hard time simply finding out that an invasion was underway, to say nothing of coordinating an ad-hoc, "citizen science" study of what food plants they were drawn to while they were present. Keller, on the other hand, was able to broadcast a message to thousands of birders at once, right as the invasion was peaking, which resulted in the data needed to do something never quite possible before: create a comprehensive review of White-winged Crossbill food choices during a major irruption, across a massive geographic region. We take the mechanisms that allow us to do these things for granted today, and easily forget how something like this was close to impossible to pull off just a decade ago.

Two Years

Speaking of decades, or rather, of one-fifth of a decade, this issue marks the end of my second year as chief editor. This is where you might expect me to say "time sure flies" or some such thing, but I have to say it's actually quite the opposite. *Pennsylvania Birds* is quite a lot of work, perhaps more than I had really anticipated when I first took over from Nick Pulcinella (despite his repeated warnings!). I can say that two years feels just about right. It's been a lot of evenings spent with a laptop keeping up an unrelenting workload, but it's surely worth it. Thanks to all of you who have offered suggestions and words of encouragement. But your thanks must

also necessarily extend to everyone else who makes this journal what it is, particularly the seasonal editors (I'd be sunk without them) and the county compilers. I know most readers don't read all the county notes, but I would encourage those that don't—at least every once in awhile—to read some of the reports from counties that don't list you the reader as an observer. The depth of knowledge contained in these reports over time is truly remarkable. On my second anniversary as editor, it's quite appropriate for me to extend my thanks to all of the compilers and editors too. Without them there wouldn't be a *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Compiler News

I've been lax in announcing compiler news recently, but that's because there hasn't been much turnover lately. **Bill Etter** has volunteered to compile for *Lehigh* beginning with summer 2009. (So, as you read this, if you have reports from June or July for *Lehigh* that you are just sitting on, email them to Bill at billletter01@gmail.com).

Of course the downside of stability among the compiler ranks is the continued vacancy of several counties. Randy Stringer has officially resigned from his post as *Lawrence* compiler, and that county is now vacant. You might have noticed that Mike Fialkovich and I have been writing ad-hoc reports for *Lawrence* in the meantime, since it's so close to our home county of Allegheny and we bird there often, but make no mistake, it's still a vacant county! Neither of us is eager to take on a third compilership. If you are interested in compiling for *Lawrence* or any other compilerless county (i.e., *Blair*, *Cameron*, *Elk*, *Lycoming*, *McKean*, *Northumberland*, *Pike*, *Warren*, or *Wayne*), please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Geoff Malosh
Editor-in-Chief

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