

The

PSO Pileated



June 2018

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 29, Number 2

From the President's Desk....

Final Message

This is my last message as president of PSO. My term will be coming to an end at the conclusion of the annual meeting in September.

The vice president and president terms last two years; however with the change in our annual meeting from May to September, my term was extended by four months, so I'm not out the door yet.

I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve as president, a position I never would have considered holding when I joined the organization in 2000. John Fedak, who was president at the time, called me in February 2014 and asked if I would be willing to serve as vice president. When he called, I was in a hotel room in Cleveland on a business trip. I remember that he said something to the effect that it's a several year commitment, so it was something that required consideration. His encouragement helped me during my decision process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank past and present PSO board members for all of their hard work, dedication to the organization, suggestions, thoughts, and ideas brought to the table during our board discussions. Everyone made contributions and provided guidance and support in many ways. It's been a pleasure working with a great team. We've made several changes to the organization during my terms as vice president and president which we hope improved the organization. The board has



PSO President Mike Fialkovich points to a Snowy Owl in St. Catharines, Ontario, during a PSO field trip to Canada, February 18, 2013.

Photo by Chad Kauffman

been extremely interested in becoming a user friendly organization with improved communication and outreach to members of Pennsylvania's birding community. I hope we made improvements in that regard. We started running field trips to various locations which have been quite successful. I've been on several and have enjoyed them. Sometimes they can be exhausting, but the birds and people are rewarding. Thanks to all of the field trip leaders who are so generous with their time and expertise. We also tried shifting our annual meetings from the very busy spring to the less hectic fall season.

Besides the reduction in scheduling conflicts, the fall provided opportunities to enjoy hawkwatching and shorebirds along with the fall warbler migration.

I would also like to thank the members of PSO for your continued support of the organization. You played an important role in what we do by responding to our recent membership survey and last year's annual meeting survey and by offering suggestions personally to us. We take your suggestions into consideration during our decision making discussions.

As our bylaws govern, I will continue on the Board of Directors as past president for a year, then I can choose to leave the board or enter into the election process if I decide to stay. That decision will be made when the time comes. For now, I am in the planning process of our next annual meeting. I will continue as a member of the PORC

and the spring seasonal editor and county compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds*.

News regarding our next annual meeting is in this newsletter and on the PSO website. Check the website as additional details may be announced on the annual meeting page. This fall's meeting will be in Meadville, Crawford County, in the Pymatuning area, a region that features wetlands including the extensive Conneaut Marsh (also called Geneva Marsh). Pymatuning was the epicenter of Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania long before they spread across the state. They are still numerous in the area, and we will be sure to see them during our field trips around the county.

Pymatuning holds memories for me; I spent two summers at the University of Pittsburgh's Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology on the shores of the lake when I was a biology student. I loved exploring the marshes, fields, and forests, looking for birds, plants, reptiles, and amphibians. I saw many life birds during those summers, including Bobolink, Marsh Wren, Common Gallinule, Black Tern, and many more.

I hope to see many of you at our next annual meeting, the next rare bird chase, or somewhere in the field!

Enjoy the summer.

Mike Fialkovich, PSO President
Allegheny County
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2018 Birding Trips, Excursions, Surveys, and More

More trips may be added later or at the last minute. We continue to work with local groups and clubs to bird with them in their favorite spots by joining their existing field trips or creating new ones. Please contact any PSO board member for more information. Details will follow in the June newsletter and on line.

June 15 - 18 – Breeding Bird Blitz. This will be the fourth year of this organized count, with the goal of getting reports of breeding birds entered on eBird. Do the Blitz! See article on page 12 of the March edition of this newsletter.

September 14-16 – PSO Annual Meeting in Meadville, Crawford County. A great variety of field trips are in the planning stages.

October 13-14 – The Big Sit, sponsored by *Bird Watcher's Digest*. You may join an existing circle or create your own circle and count what you see in a 24-hour time frame.

November 3-4 – Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch. This is usually the peak for migrating Golden Eagles.

Order Your Meeting T-Shirt

Once again this year we are ordering meeting T-shirts. The PSO logo will be on the front and an adult Bald Eagle on the back. The logo will have "2018" on the top and "Crawford County" on the bottom. Choice of colors are light blue or sport gray. Cost is \$16.95 for adults; \$12.71 for youth or students.

Proceeds will help support the Youth Scholarship Fund. As last year they come in both men's and women's cuts.



The Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery about Pennsylvania Birds

Wood Thrushes in Pennsylvania



The Wood Thrush, one of the most iconic birds of the eastern deciduous forest, is in trouble. Because it is still common, it is fairly easy to find a Wood Thrush in Pennsylvania, but this species is undergoing a steep decline in population. There are reasons for alarm, but there are great opportunities to manage Wood Thrush and increase its numbers in the state.

The Wood Thrush has been identified by Pennsylvania, as well as by most states within its range, as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in its Wildlife Action Plan. In the latest Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plan (published in 2016), the Wood Thrush was placed on the “D” Yellow Watch List on the Species of Continental Concern list with a declining population and moderate to high threats. Eastern United States populations have declined by approximately 50% since the mid-1960s including a -1.59% annual decline measured by the USGS Breeding Bird Census in Pennsylvania. Approximately half as many nesting Wood Thrushes now are present than when the BBS started in 1966. One way to look at declines is to consider the time it takes for a population to decline by half, the so-called “half-life” of the species. The half-life of the beloved Wood Thrush is only 31 years with a loss of 59% between 1970 and 2014. Several other SGCN also live in these forests, and some also are experiencing declines.

The Wood Thrush is a classic Neotropical migratory songbird that breeds in deciduous and mixed forests of the eastern United States and southeastern Canada. Wood Thrushes winter in lowland tropical forests from southern Mexico to Panama. This songbird breeds in large tracts of intermediate-aged to mature forests with mostly closed canopies and rich, structurally diverse understories. Pairs nest in tall shrubs and small trees and forage for arthropods in moist leaf litter. They can be found in a variety of landscapes but often inhabit areas that are a bit hilly with topographical relief that creates an uneven canopy. In my own experiences with this species, I have found higher densities where a dense shrub layer accompanies access to water including small forest ponds, seeps, and streams.

Although they usually nest where there is high canopy cover, most nests are built in small trees, saplings, and shrubs. Although Wood Thrushes generally live in intermediate-aged to older forests, they also use young forests and disturbed (timbered) sections of mature forests, especially in the post-fledging dispersal phase. The biggest threat to nesting Wood Thrushes seems to be nest predation with many “villains” to blame for nest failure including snakes, squirrels, chipmunks, and other birds. This suggests that nest concealment may be an important factor for nesting success productivity. Fortunately, Wood Thrushes are often double-brooded giving them some advantages compared to other Neotropical migrants.

A study by Clark Rushing and others associated with the Smithsonian found that habitat quality loss on the breeding grounds, resulting in poor breeding productivity, is a primary driver of Wood Thrush declines. Other studies point to loss of wintering ground habitat as important. Their full annual cycle modeling revealed that the relative impact of breeding habitat loss is three to six times greater than the impact of equivalent non-breeding habitat loss, suggesting that the steepest regional declines have been driven by the loss of breeding habitat.

The Wood Thrush serves fairly well as a representative of an umbrella species for many birds of conservation concern in the eastern deciduous and mixed forests. It particularly represents quality forests with higher vegetative species and structural diversity. The upper canopy height of Wood Thrush forests tend to be over 50 feet high with a canopy cover of 45 to 75 percent. There usually is a sub-canopy (midstory) of trees, saplings, and shrubs between 10 and 20 feet high with coverage of 55 to 80 percent. The trees are usually of mixed ages and sizes with many soft and hard mast-producing individuals. This is the kind of forest that often supports populations of other conservation concern forest birds such as Louisiana Waterthrush, Cerulean Warbler, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager. Their populations may be affected by some of the same factors limiting thrushes. All of these are species found in larger forest blocks often with patches of younger forest and shrubland mixed in. None of these songbirds mentioned are as recognized or embraced by the public as the iconic Wood Thrush. The popular upland game birds, Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkeys, are often nearby, and their presence links sporting interests with those of the bird conservation community.

The actual effectiveness of management for Wood Thrush habitat on either its breeding or wintering grounds is poorly known but is of great interest. Since Pennsylvania has high responsibility for this species and many public

lands that support good Wood Thrush populations, there are many opportunities to effectively manage for higher populations and increased nest success here. If you visit the pages about Wood Thrush in the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas, you will find that many of the higher population density pockets are in lower elevation forests not far from human population centers. The larger Wood Thrush densities are in the lowlands and foothills, not high in the mountains where Hermit Thrushes and Veeries are more common. Soil and atmospheric acid deposition also probably play a role in Wood Thrush habitat quality. Pennsylvania is a part of an International Wood Thrush Conservation Alliance (IWOTHCA; www.woodthrushalliance.org) that was formed to better organize efforts on behalf of this species. The Alliance and its partners seek to protect and enhance Wood Thrush breeding habitat through projects focused on limiting forest loss and fragmentation, especially in the Appalachian Mountains region where more than 70 percent of the global population breeds. They also aim to improve existing habitat by implementing sound silvicultural practices, by working with private landowners, where 85 percent of Wood Thrushes breed, and by conducting and supporting research focused on the threats and breeding season requirements of global Wood Thrush populations. For more details of this approach, please see organization's website and the "*Guidelines for Managing Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager Habitat in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions*" at <http://highbranchconservation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Guidelines-for-Managing-Wood-Thrush-and-Scarlet-Tanager-Habitat-in-the-Northeast-and-Mid-Atlantic-Regions-2017.pdf> by Dan Lambert and others.

The PGC and Penn State are cooperating in a study that will consider application of these guidelines to the state's forests with the intent of improving Wood Thrush habitat. Margaret Brittingham of Penn State has experience doing research on forest birds including Wood Thrush, so this research is in good hands. Justin Vreeland of the Southcentral region is an important contributor to the project as are foresters who are also contributing. Emphasis is being placed on employing the management guidelines in oak forests which are so widespread in the state. Other studies are being conducted in Pennsylvania which has a history of Wood Thrush research.

A meeting of Wood Thrush enthusiasts was held at Cape May, NJ, on March 1 and 2 to discuss the next steps toward conservation. This IWOTHCA meeting followed the Atlantic Flyway technical committee meeting in order to involve ornithologists from several states in the Wood Thrush breeding range. It was an important meeting because it expanded the conversation outside the core of the IWOTHCA membership. Some of the attendees work in urban and suburban areas where Wood Thrushes can be

locally common yet declining and may have significant challenges with nest productivity in those environments. The interest in advancing Wood Thrush management and conservation is high across the state.

Conservation In the Land of "El Tigre"

Central America's largest country is Nicaragua which also has arguably the most poorly known avifauna. Because of the diligent work of American ornithologists including the late Thomas Howell and USFWS biologist Tom Will and the exploratory work of several Nicaraguan ornithologists, especially Liliana Chavarria-Dureaux, this is rapidly changing. Fortunately, many Central Americans have acquired the interest, passion, and the skills necessary to advance the causes of science and of conservation. Without them, there is no hope for the abundant bird habitat that supports the wintering populations of many Pennsylvanian migrant birds including the Wood Thrush. Deforestation in many shapes causes a major bird habitat reduction in Central America. Slowing down or reversing deforestation is a major strategy to conserve migrant songbirds as well as the resident tropical avifauna and wildlife. Another advantage to a forest conservation strategy is protecting the integrity of watersheds and preservation of water quality there.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has been a leader in bird conservation efforts in Nicaragua in recent years. One of their Neotropical projects has been a partnership supporting bird habitat in the Jinotega Province of northern Nicaragua around El Jaguar Reserva, a coffee farm and cloud forest reserve. There, the owners have established native woody plant nurseries to provide shade and vegetation structure to coffee farms in the area as well as "living fences" of shrubs. Workshops have educated many about the potential of shade-grown coffee as a profitable cash crop grown with fewer pesticides and less pollution. This project extended from one "finca" to the valley around San Rafael del Norte up to Volcan Yali a few miles away. As ABC and its partners took a more comprehensive look at the long-term conservation of Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA) and other migrants, it became apparent that Nicaraguan forest is very important.

After a GWWA Wintering Grounds Conservation Plan was developed with Focal Areas of interest identified through survey work and mapping, the Nicaragua plan expanded to include Peñas Blancas, Datanli-El Diablo, Kilambe, and Saslaya parks. I welcomed these changes and continued to support the ABC Nicaragua project through some PA Game Commission funding. The GWWA Wintering Grounds Conservation Plan has modest goals for increasing protection of forest cover in the region and converting some sun coffee to shaded

coffee. These goals also protect wintering habitat for Wood Thrush and several other Nearctic migrants. We know that a high percentage of the Wood Thrush population overwinters in Nicaragua and Honduras. In fact, most Pennsylvania Wood Thrushes migrate to this region.

The newest expansion of this Nicaragua project is so important that it is featured in the Spring 2018 volume of ABC's magazine, *Bird Conservation*. ABC has expanded its Nicaraguan project even further by including the Indigenous Territories of Bosawas Biosphere Reserve on the Atlantic coast which are even closer to the Honduran border. As such, it compliments conservation efforts in that neighboring country which also is losing forest. Andrew Rothman, the project coordinator, has wisely found partners in this venture, taking advantage of the on-the-ground work of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) which has been very committed to conserving forest in this landscape for the jaguar, the Western Hemisphere's largest wild cat, and other indigenous animals that require large tracts of tropical forests. Wood Thrushes thrive where you can also find giant anteaters, sloths, toucans, Harpy Eagles, and Great Curassows. Jaguars are known in much of Latin America as "el tigre" and are especially prone to extirpation in smaller forest blocks rather than extensive areas. WCS had already been working with indigenous peoples of the region, a critically important strategy. Many of the important forested areas of the tropics are inhabited by the indigenous, so the futures of forests and the indigenous peoples are strongly linked.

An element of the expanded project is to take a good idea to a new place. In the lower elevations, it is not coffee, but cacao --- the chocolate-producing small tree -- that has the potential to provide landowners profit from agriculture yet allow a forest canopy to persist. The sustainable forest agriculture extends to the cultivation of cardamom, cinnamon, and black pepper in a forested landscape. These are lucrative crops for a forest-living farmer. In the ancient history of Central America, many lowland forests were planted with cacao for the trade market up north in Mexico where cacao was sold to Aztecs and other tribes that desired this precious crop. So, there has been a very old tradition within the indigenous communities of growing cacao in an intact forest that has been modified for cultivation. It is better to have a working, sustainable forest than no forest at all.

One of my last acts as a wildlife biologist for the PGC was to support this project financially. I hope that it continues and inspires others to contribute to the protection of Central American forests critical not only to birds and animals but also the humans who live there in harmony with nature.

Retirement from PA Game Commission

After 14 years, I have retired from the state's wildlife agency, the PA Game Commission. It is a bittersweet decision since I have enjoyed the challenges and opportunities that the agency has offered, but I felt that it was time to move ahead in other directions for personal reasons. I would like to thank the many birders and conservationists who have lent their expertise and their time to the various projects that I have led or promoted the last several years. Without you, we would not have been able to accomplish nearly as much as we have and would not be successful in some of our projects in any way. I am sure that your contributions to various Wildlife Diversity section projects are not only needed but very much appreciated. I also would like to publicly thank the many people in the PGC who provided support and encouragement for several projects over the years, particularly Dan Brauning, Cal DuBrock, Patti Barber, Cathy Haffner, Wayne Laubscher, Kathy Korber, Alison Fetterman, and Art McMorris. Actually, the list of agency people who have made my job easier is too long to include here. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to many professionals like Terry Master, Laurie Goodrich, Margaret Brittingham, Scott Stoleson, Aura Stauffer, and David Yeany --- to name a few ---- who have partnered with me in various projects. It will be fun for me to continue to contribute to these projects as a volunteer. (Right now, I am monitoring a Peregrine nest).

I am not retiring from bird study and conservation. I fully expect to continue the study of boreal forest and peatland birds -- rare breeding species such as Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Blackpoll Warbler, and Swainson's Thrush. I plan to cooperate with the PA Goshawk Project; work with the Ornithological Technical Committee and the Partners in Flight conservation network, and work with others on international challenges like Wood Thrush and Golden-winged Warbler conservation. One of my areas of focus will continue to be "North Mountain" and the avifauna and ecosystems of northern Pennsylvania including its spruce forest. I have written this column since 1991 and expect to continue that and other writings in the foreseeable future. My state e-mail no longer functions, but you can contact me with my personal e-mail listed below. I hope to see you sometime at a PSO meeting or somewhere out on the trail.

Good birding!

Doug Gross
dagross144@verizon.net

PSO Annual Meeting

Lodging

Everyone is invited to Meadville, Crawford County, to attend our annual meeting September 14-16. This is a time of great birding, making new friends, renewing old friendships, and an opportunity to increase your knowledge about the birds we find so fascinating!

We have no “official” hotel for this meeting as our festivities will take place at the Italian Civic Club. Lodging possibilities are listed below:

Econolodge, Meadville, 11237 Shaw Ave., located two miles from the Italian Civic Club. (814-724-6366) Thirty rooms blocked at \$71.99. Continental breakfast 5 a.m. Make reservations by September 1 to receive rate.

Quality Inn, Meadville, 17259 Conneaut Lake Road, located three miles from the Italian Civic Club. (814-333-8883 or 814-333-1998). Thirty rooms blocked at \$99.99 Breakfast 5:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Make reservations by September 3 to receive rate.

Hampton Inn, Meadville, 11446 N. Dawn Drive, located three miles from the Italian Civic Club. (814-807-1446). Sixty rooms blocked at \$139. Continental breakfast at 5:30 a.m.; full breakfast at 6 a.m. Make reservations by August 24 to receive rate.

Banquet Menu

Roast Beef, Stuffed Chicken Breast, and Vegetable Lasagna (vegetarian option). Side vegetables are Green Beans Almondine, along with Rice Pilaf.

Youth and Student Discounts

Youth and students will receive a 25% discount on Registration, Banquet Fees, and T-shirts for persons 18 years of age or younger, or college students of any age who are enrolled full time in an accredited college or university. Proof of age or college enrollment may be required at meeting check-in.

Unless other arrangements are made, all persons under 18 years of age who are registered for the annual meeting must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who is also registered and who must accompany the youth at all field trips and activities.

Registration

Please either register on-line at <https://PSO.ticketspice.com/2018-pennsylvania-society-for-ornithology-annual-meeting> or mail the completed paper form to: Vern Gauthier, 111 W. Big Spring Ave., Newville, PA 17241.

If you register on-line, please note that you must fill out a form for each person attending.

Paper forms can be printed from the PSO website <https://pabirds.org/index.php/annual-meeting> or by notifying Margaret Higbee (724) 354-3493 if you need a form to be mailed to you.

Refunds

If you miss the meeting, your Registration Fee will be refunded upon request.

If you attend any part of the meeting, no Registration Fee Refund will be given.

The Banquet fee will be refunded if you notify verngauthier14@gmail.com by 9/6/2017.

T-Shirt Orders will be refunded if you notify verngauthier14@gmail.com by 8/26/2017.

PSO ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

Italian Civic Club

869 Water Street, Meadville, PA

Friday, September 14, 2018

5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Registration
6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Social with Cash Bar (Vendors)
7:00 p.m. Business Meeting
7:30 p.m. Bird Trivia with Emily Thomas

Saturday, September 15, 2018

7:00 a.m. Departure for Field Trips

Lunch on your own following the field trips

2:00 - 2:45 p.m. "Bald Eagles in the Pymatuning Area" presented by Brenda Peebles, Pennsylvania Game Commission:
2:45 - 3:15 p.m. Afternoon Break (Refreshments provided; opportunity to visit vendors)
3:15 - 4:00 p.m. Joe Siegrist, Purple Martin Conservation Association
6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Social with Cash Bar, Vendors
7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Dinner and Compilation of Bird List
8:00 p.m. Awards Presentation
Banquet Speaker: "The Tradeoff between Molt and Parental Care in Hooded Warblers" presented by Dr. Ronald Mummy, Allegheny College

Sunday, September 16, 2018

7:00 a.m. Departure for Field Trips

No late annual meeting registrations will be accepted.

No walk-in registrations will be permitted.

If you plan to attend the fall PSO meeting, you must register on-line before noon on August 26. If you are registering via the US Postal Service, your registration must be postmarked by August 21.

2018 Annual Meeting Field Trips

1. Field Trips are limited in the number of participants. The limit is set depending on the trip. If you see a trip you like, register early before it fills up!
2. You must pay the Annual Meeting Registration Fee or be a PSO guest to sign up for a field trip.
3. All field trips will be run on both Saturday and Sunday. Please do not sign up for the same trip both days.
4. Check the PSO website for Field Trip Updates <https://pabirds.org/index.php/annual-meeting>

CUSTARDS ACCESS AND THE WELLS ACCESS, GENEVA MARSH

This birding-by-road area with the open marsh and wet forests provides good habitat for a variety of species. We may also bird along Mud Pike where flooded forests offer possibilities for migrants. The Wells area will require a walk down a hill along a dirt game lands road that deadends at the marsh. The road is forested. There are no restrooms at this site; however, there is a nearby gas station. The trip leader is to be announced.

ERIE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Only one of two National Wildlife Refuges in the state, this area offers a wide variety of habitat including forest, brushy areas, and marshes. A variety of migrants may be found here, and most birding is done from the road or on short walks. The website for more info can be found at the following link: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Erie/wildlife_and_habitat/index.html The trip leader is to be announced.

HARTSTOWN MARSH

This is one of many extensive and impressive wetlands in Crawford County. The marsh is home to breeding rails, American Bitterns, Bald Eagles, Wood Ducks, Common Gallinules, Willow and Alder Flycatchers, Swamp Sparrows, and formerly Black Terns. Occasionally Red-headed Woodpeckers are spotted among the snags. This shallow, aquatic habitat is rich with emergent vegetation, providing habitat for marsh birds. Woodlands border the marsh providing habitat where migrants may be found. Also present are various waterfowl and perhaps a few shorebirds. The marsh is part of State Game Lands 214. Birding will be by car with short walks along a dike. No restrooms. Trip leader to be announced.

HELEN B. KATZ NATURAL AREA

The combination of floodplain, wetland, upland forest, and old field provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Wood Ducks frequent the wetlands and Cussewago Creek. There's also abundant beaver activity. As part of an Audubon Society Important Bird Area, habitat exists for a variety of birds, including Cerulean Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Marsh Wren, Green-winged Teal, and Pied-billed Grebe. This should be a good place to get a variety of migrants. The website for more info can be found at <https://waterlandlife.org/land-conservation/explore-our-properties/helen-b-katz-natural-area/>. This trip will be led by David Yeany II.

MCMICHAEL ROAD AND WATSON RUN ROAD – GENEVA MARSH

One of several access points to the extensive marsh offers resident Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Brown Creepers, Purple Finches, and Red-headed Woodpeckers in the wet forest. The road crosses open marsh where rails, bitterns, and other marsh birds nest. Early waterfowl migrants and warblers are possible in the wooded section of the road. Birding will be from the roads as there are no trails. There are no restrooms at this location. This trip is being led by Adam & Andy Troyer on Saturday with the Sunday leader to be announced.

THE MILLER PONDS (WMA), PYMATUNING SPILLWAY, FORD ISLAND, AND LINESVILLE FISH HATCHERY

This tour will visit all locations and can be started at either end with plenty of parking at all sites. The Miller Ponds area consists of open fields and two small ponds that are attractive to migrant shorebirds. Rare migrants over the years include Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, and American Golden-Plover. Some waterfowl may be present including Blue-winged Teal. A new pond that was under construction this year may be ready by our meeting time, so if possible we will check it as well.

The Spillway is a roadside attraction where numerous carp are fed by visitors. Looking through the gulls may turn up something unusual. This was the site of a beautiful Sabine's Gull several years ago at this time of year. Laughing Gull was another rarity at this location. Bald Eagles should be visible almost anywhere.

Ford Island is the site of the former Wildlife Museum that was torn down a few years ago (it's slated to be rebuilt at some point in the future). A 0.25 mile nature trail through lakeside forest may yield migrant warblers, vireos, and

thrushes. We will also check the brushy edges around the parking lot for migrants.

The Linesville Fish Hatchery is a good place to search for early waterfowl, shorebirds, and migrant warblers. We can walk around the ponds to search for various species. The Miller Ponds and Spillway do not require walking. The trail at Ford Island is easy to walk as are the areas around the fish hatchery. The fish hatchery and spillway have restrooms. This trip is being led by Mike Fialkovich.

TUTTLE POINT AND PYMATUNING CAUSEWAY

This swimming area at Pymatuning State Park features brush and woods where we can search for migrants. Red-headed Woodpeckers are resident. Walking will be easy around the parking lots. We can drive to the causeway and park in the middle of the lake to scan for any waterfowl, gulls, or cormorants that may be present. This trip is being led by Bob Van Newkirk.

WOODCOCK LAKE

Woodcock Lake is a good shorebird site. Notable shorebirds seen here last year included Red Knot, Red-necked Phalarope, American Golden Plover, Ruddy

Turnstone, Sanderling, Stilt Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, and Baird's Sandpiper, among others. We will likely start birding the causeway area where we will park along the causeway and scope the mudflats for migrant shorebirds, assuming they have begun draining the lake as they usually have this time of year. From there we will drive to the head of the Abandoned Road Trail. This is a paved trail which goes through a variety of wooded, marsh, and field habitat. Migrant warblers and sparrows are good possibilities. At the end of the trail we will arrive at the mudflats viewed from the causeway where we will get better view of any migrant shorebirds. We can also check the lake for migrant waterfowl and bird a number of game land paths along the lake.

The Abandoned Road Trail is a one-way, paved trail about ¾ of a mile in length. The last part of it often floods, so mud boots are recommended. A scope will be useful for the shorebirds and waterfowl. A lightweight tripod would be useful, and some of us may want to bring scopes to the end of the trail where we will be able to view the mudflats. There are restrooms available at Woodcock Lake. The website for more info can be found at <http://www.woodcocklakepark.com/>. This trip is being led by Rob Hodgson.

How Well Do You Know Your Pennsylvania Birds?

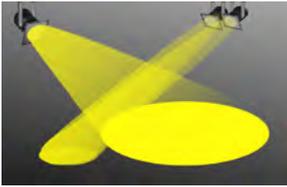
1. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in February and a Varied Bunting in May this year were first PA records. Which species is more closely related to the Hawaii Akepa?
2. Which *Empidonax* flycatcher is known for long dried grasses hanging one to two feet below its nest?
3. George Miksch Sutton in his 1928 *Introduction to the Birds of Pennsylvania* described a bird this way: "It is given to capturing insects flycatcher-fashion and is an accomplished acrobat in the air." Which species?
4. Which bird has more records in our state: Ash-throated Flycatcher or Western Kingbird?
5. Which species that vanished long ago from Pennsylvania is known in the southern U.S. as the Pine-woods Sparrow?

(Answers on page 16)

Welcome New Members

The following members have joined since February 22:

Gavin Anderson, Waynesboro, PA
Richard C. Bell, Furlong, PA
Mark Boas, Pottstown, PA
John Debalko, McAdoo, PA
Dallas Dileo, Pittsburgh, PA
Jennifer Ferrick, Erie, PA
Jeffrey Hall, Franklin, PA
John Harvey, Bethany, PA
Kate Hastings, Watsontown, PA
Paul Hough, Glen Rock, PA
Amanda Lovely, South Park, PA
Ayyappan Nair, North Wales, PA
Dr. Ann C. Pettigrew, York, PA
David Taylor, Dover, PA
Billy Weber, Nazareth, PA
Ted Weller, Wexford, PA



Young PA Birder Spotlight

The PSO Education Committee is pleased to announce a Young PA Birder Spotlight! This feature article will be a recurring column in "The Pileated." In an effort to recognize the many contributions to ornithology, birding, and conservation that many of our PA young birders are making, we will spotlight a young birder from the Commonwealth in this newsletter. If you know a young PA birder you think should be spotlighted, please send an email to the email address below!

The seed for the love of birds was planted early in life for Butler County's Brendyn Baptiste. At age six, his great grandparents sparked his avian interest with the gift of Audubon "plush birds" (<https://www.audubon.org/audubon-plush-birds>). The collection of these plush birds sparked intrigue into learning about wild birds around his home. Brendyn, who is graduating from high school this spring, will be attending Unity College in Maine where he plans to pursue a degree in wildlife biology with the ultimate goal of attaining a Ph.D in wildlife ecology. He is hoping to spend a career studying birds and other wildlife. The passion for ornithology was sparked with a simple gift that lit a fire in this young man who has demonstrated a devotion to ornithology.

Brendyn's love for birds was fostered by mentors along his journey as a birder, but one in particular provided him special opportunities and inspiration. In 2014 he met Dr. Gene Wilhelm, a former ecology professor at Slippery Rock University who has a keen interest in birds. Dr. Wilhelm inspired Brendyn to remain passionate about birds and birding and helped further his knowledge, encouraging him to "always be on the lookout for birds no matter where you are or when it is." Dr. Wilhelm and his wife Joanne wished to provide the opportunity for a young birder to explore birds beyond Pennsylvania and generously offered a young birder scholarship to National Audubon's Hog Island Camp in coastal Maine. As the first recipient of this incredible opportunity, Brendyn attended the Coastal Maine Bird Studies program in 2015. During his time there, he met other birders around his age for the first time and learned that there are potential career opportunities awaiting him involving the study of birds. This experience with Hog Island Camp was life-changing enough that it inspired Brendyn to seek out a college to attend in Maine.



Brendyn donates his interests and talents to various avian citizen science projects including: The Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), PAMC, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), Project Feederwatch, Nest Watch, Jennings Environmental Education Center (bird censusing project), and eBird. Brendyn recently helped create the eBird filter for Elk County, a county where he spends a lot of time birding and surveying bird populations. Additionally, he is the compiler for the Grove City CBC and participates annually in the Butler County and Pleasantville CBCs. And, last, but certainly not least, given how time-tedious the role can be, Brendyn is the Elk County Compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds*. From all of these endeavors, it's clear that Brendyn is dedicated to bird conservation and willingly volunteers for leadership roles in projects in the birding community!

When asked what his favorite bird might be, he acknowledges that this is a hard question! He concedes, though, that warblers and finches are probably his favorite groups of birds, and Evening Grosbeak is probably his top pick. The "winter finches" hold a special appeal to Brendyn, and he states that he hopes to someday be involved with research on Red Crossbills. The fact that this species is difficult to study due to their nomadic and capricious nature of geographical movement is one of the reasons Brendyn is excited by the species and hopes to research them further.

The PSO is proud to have young birders like Brendyn, who actively participate in our birding community but take it a step further by giving back so much to bird conservation. Thank you, Brendyn, for your many contributions to bird life here in Pennsylvania! We are

excited for what the future holds for you and proud of what you have already accomplished!

Good birding!

Holly Merker,
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Owl Here and Owl There

by Chad Kauffman

During the first weekend of May for the last few years, my friends and I have participated in the Shavers Creek Birding Cup, which serves as a fundraiser and an excuse for us to go birding. We try to see how many species we can tally in 24 hours from Friday evening to Saturday evening, then we head to the roundup at Shavers Creek. On Friday, we always start scouting around noon. We then start that evening, birding until dark, trying for the nocturnal species. A storm was coming through our area around 9:00 p.m., and we heard one single Eastern Screech-Owl after getting American Woodcock and Whip-poor-wills for the night.

Getting up at 3:00 a.m. and after getting some coffee in me, I put out a Facebook post stating how we had done the night before and reporting that we were going to try for some owls in the morning. We started shortly after 4:00, but we heard only a few morning Whips amid the dawn chorus of birds. We ran up Licking Creek Valley which also put us out of cell phone range. I missed a call from a friend who said that they were doing work at our Red-headed Woodpecker spot where they found young Great Horned Owls sitting around on various branches. When we pulled in, some tree cutting was being done, so we had to wait. When we could enter, we saw the fuzzy body of the Great Horned Owl sitting in the branches. That was enough for us to tally the species on our list, and we easily added a Red-headed Woodpecker, too.

Later in the day, when we went back to the mountain hoping for more species, we came upon another young



All three adorable baby Barred Owl photos were taken by Dawn Osborne.

owl sitting on a branch above the trail. The dark eyes told us that it was a Barred Owl. On our return trip, we saw another, much smaller Barred Owl on the trail giving us two in sight at one time. As we walked farther away, we heard the adult doing its “Who Cooks For You” call.

The next day I thought it would be fun to take my girlfriend Dawn and son Noah to see if we could get some pictures. There was too much activity around the Great Horned Owl site; I’m not sure what happened to the young one I saw the day before, so we headed into the deep woods, hoping for the other species. As we got out of the vehicle and started walking up the trail, we heard the Barred Owl calling again. We soon found the two youngsters. Dawn was able to get some great pics that I shared online and want to share with our PSO membership in this article. Dawn humors me with my birding, but she does take much better pics than I usually do. She also does notice when there is a different bird around.

Noah has been fortunate to see or hear many owls this year. His sightings include the Snowy Owl in Crawford County that we saw when we chased the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, this Barred Owl adventure, and the Barn Owl. He has heard Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned as well. I have been getting him to write down the full names of the birds when we run around, and I am hoping that this gets him into birding even more.



Ornithological Literature Notes

Light-level geolocators – miniature devices attached to birds that enable ornithologists to track the birds’ travels year-round – have taught us aspects of breeding, migratory, and winter behavior that would once have been impossible to know.

For ornithology, they were first engineered in the 1990s by the British Antarctic Survey and used to track movements of Wandering Albatrosses across their vast oceanic journeys. These devices, attached to birds by small harnesses, were relatively heavy at first – hardly suitable for species lighter than an albatross. As the decades passed, smaller and smaller versions of the devices enabled tracking smaller and smaller birds.

Now scientists can use them to follow long-distance movements of birds as small as a Cerulean Warbler. This ecologically troubled species can be tracked from its breeding grounds, along its migration routes and stopover locations, to its wintering grounds, and back again. The result is a technological treasure helping ornithologists to learn how and where to prioritize conservation efforts for the Cerulean Warbler and other small species.

A nagging question has bothered researchers: When geolocators are attached to very small birds, could the extra weight harm the birds’ ability to migrate long distances and perhaps even drain the energy required every day when seeking food for their young?

Douglas Raybuck and Than Boves at Arkansas State University, Jeffery Larkin of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Scott Stoleson at the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station in Irvine, Pennsylvania, sought an answer for the Cerulean Warbler. They reported their findings in 2017 in *The Condor: Ornithological Applications* (vol. 119, pp. 289-297).

The authors evaluated possible effects on adults’ within-season survival, rate of feeding nestlings, overall nest survival, and return rates to the breeding range after wintering in the tropics. Geolocators were attached to 19 adult male Ceruleans at breeding sites on the Allegheny Plateau in northwestern Pennsylvania and 20 males on the Ozark Plateau in Missouri and Arkansas. As “control” individuals for comparison, similar numbers of adult male Ceruleans were not fitted with the devices.



Scientists now use geolocators to follow long-distance movements of birds as small as this Cerulean Warbler.

Photo by Tony Bruno

Geocator and harness weight totaled 0.36 grams, 4% of the birds’ body weight. The results showed no significant effects on adults’ within-season survival, nest survival, and rates of feeding young. But the findings also indicated that geocator-tagged birds were less likely to return to breeding sites in the year after capture. The return rate averaged 35% for the untagged controls but only 16% for the tagged birds. The authors call this a “cause for some concern.”

There are many other reasons, of course, why birds could have been affected negatively by factors unrelated to the geolocators’ weight, such as differences in weather and habitat quality during migration, winter, and/or spring migration.

From that viewpoint, the authors conclude: “Although the potential for increased mortality during the nonbreeding season, or alterations to migratory timing or pathways, is of some concern, the fact that reproduction does not appear to be hampered is encouraging...Spatial and temporal data acquired from the use of geolocators has enormous conservation potential, and these benefits likely outweigh the potential cost of a relatively small number of individuals being negatively affected by carrying geolocators.”

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Conservation Chat Room

Wild Creek Watershed under Threat in Penn Forest Township, Carbon County



We are walking in a special forest in the Poconos, a habitat that shelters rare plants and animals. It's a muggy day in June, but the narrow road is shaded from the closed canopy overhead. A few yards from the road are large clumps of cinnamon fern nestled in the beds of sphagnum moss.

Between the road and the ferns is just enough room for a splash of pink – the sheep laurel is blooming. Even though it's muggy, the trees provide enough dappled shade to make it a pleasant walk. After all, we're birding, so it's a leisurely pace. Ovenbirds sing on both sides of the road, joined by the softer song of Common Yellowthroats. The forest is alive with more bird song. Black-and-white Warblers creep along the scrub oak trunks while Red-eyed Vireos sing higher in the trees. A flock of Cedar Waxwings disappears overhead emitting their high-pitched calls. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cedar Waxwings don't sing since they aren't territorial like many other birds.

The 12,000 acre, mostly forested watershed is the primary source of water for more than 116,000 people and 1,315 commercial and industrial customers in the Bethlehem area. The forest does the heavy work of slowing rain, preventing storm runoff, and filtering the rain after it falls on Penn Forest Township, Carbon County, before it is stored in large reservoirs and piped to cities and municipalities after being filtered and treated for drinking water.



Pennsylvania serves as a keystone state for the striking Scarlet Tanager, which depends on large tracts of intact forest. More than 19 percent of the global population breeds in our forests.²

Photo by Mike Jackson.



Black-and-white Warbler populations declined by 33 percent between 1966 and 2014.¹ The main concern for these forest interior species is forest fragmentation and collision with tall structures like wind turbines.

Photo by Laura Jackson

We're exploring Wild Creek Watershed, an Exceptional Value watershed that produces wonderfully clean water.

Later in the morning, in another part of the forest, even more Ovenbirds are singing, along with Eastern Towhees, numerous Scarlet Tanagers, and even a Hermit Thrush. Then, just by chance, we encounter a biologist we know. She was walking toward us, doing a bird survey. She was hired by a consulting firm because the owner of this forest, Bethlehem Authority, has leased the property to Atlantic Wind, LLC, a company that hopes to build as many as 37 industrial wind turbines in the very area where we are walking.

Bethlehem Authority's property is a green sanctuary in the midst of heavily developed eastern Pennsylvania. Since the Authority practices sustainable logging, the forest does have narrow logging roads, but they are not open to the public except by permission, which we obtained before our walk. Illegal ATV traffic is a problem, though, as are mountain bikers. Hunting is allowed, since the Authority

is part of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Hunter Access Program. Many residents cherish this relatively undisturbed area as if it were their own backyard. They hike, hunt, explore, and find solace in this beautiful natural area that also harbors timber rattlesnakes and the northern long-eared bat. Some hikers have even found Native American artifacts that show a long history of human habitation.

The Wild Creek watershed includes three forested mountains: Call Mountain in the south, Pohopoco Mountain in the middle, and Stony Mountain in the north. Steep slopes and rocky terrain give relief to the many forested acres that contain numerous natural areas that harbor species of concern like the bog bluegrass that grows in small seeps along Wild Creek.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) identified the Yellow Run Barrens, in the northern part of the watershed, as a "unique natural community" with "few occurrences across the state." TNC listed disturbances by roads, intensive land management, exotic species, and fire suppression as the biggest threats to the persistence of the barrens. While we did see some small patches of the invasive Japanese stilt grass during our walk, there appeared to be very few invasive species.



Adult Male Golden-winged Warbler
Photo by D.J. McNeil

The Golden-winged Warbler is on the 2014 State of the Birds Watch List; populations are perilously low. ³
Photo courtesy of D. J. McNeil

Breeding Bird Species of Conservation Concern found in Penn Forest Township include the **Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, and Golden-winged Warbler.** This watershed is located in the **Appalachian Raptor Migration Corridor** and partly within the **Kittatinny-Shawangunk National Raptor Migration Corridor.** In addition to serving as an important breeding area for many birds, the forest serves as important stop-over habitat when raptors are migrating.

While the Bethlehem Authority (BA) holds a conservation

easement with TNC on some of its property in Monroe County, unfortunately BA insisted that the forest in Penn Forest Township, Carbon County, be kept out of the easement, so they could develop a wind project. Currently, Atlantic Wind, LLC, a subsidiary of Iberdrola/Avangrid, is promoting two versions of a wind project. Their first application is being fought by the community in the courts, and their second application (a modification of the first) is before Penn Forest Township's Zoning Hearing Board. The communities surrounding the watershed have spent almost \$100,000 out of their own pockets trying to stop the wind project, and they are working hard to raise more money as legal bills continue.

In addition to direct mortality by the spinning wind turbine blades, birds are impacted by all the clearings for roads and wind turbine pads. We measured the road width and openings as we walked through the forest: the section where vehicles traveled was about 9 feet wide with a total opening being 15 feet wide, but in most places the canopy was closed above us. Based on our experience exploring other wind turbine projects on forested mountains, we know that wind project roads will not have a closed canopy above them. It's likely that the many miles of turbine roads will be clearings anywhere from 60 to 100 feet wide and that the openings for the 37 turbine pads and turbines will pockmark the forest with openings of about 2 acres each.

3,300 Acre Edge Effect

Representatives for Atlantic Wind state that "only 292 acres of forest" will be removed, but a biologist who spoke as an avian expert for the first round of hearings testified that the edge effect of all these openings will impact about 3,300 acres of forest - almost 25% of the habitat.

Research shows that the edge effect may extend for over 100 meters into the forest, resulting in drier soil, more nest predation, more nest parasitism, more invasive species, and degradation of habitat. ⁴

Here are some salient points from the testimony to show how wind turbines degrade forest habitats for wildlife:

Industrial Wind Turbine Project's DIRECT IMPACTS on Bird Populations

1. Wildlife is disturbed, displaced, and tends to avoid industrial areas due to habitat unsuitability
2. These modified habitats may be ecological sinks (wildlife populations decrease)
3. There are fewer birds that nest
4. The population of birds loses vigor and density
5. Birds leave the area

Industrial Wind Turbine Projects' INDIRECT

IMPACTS on Bird Populations

1. These impacts tend to exist for a long time
2. Forest fragmentation causes large forest blocks to be broken into smaller patches
3. There is much more edge habitat
4. More soil erosion occurs
5. Changes occur in the local microclimate – usually drier
6. More invasive plants and animals occur
7. Loss of refugia and possible long-term changes in plant and animal communities may occur



Aerial view of Wild Creek Watershed as it exists today - largely unfragmented and home to many rare plants and animals.

Photo by Laura Jackson

Wild Creek Watershed Coalition - How YOU Can Help

The Wild Creek Watershed Coalition (WCWC) has been formed to show Atlantic Wind and the residents of Bethlehem that concern over impacts to the Wild Creek Watershed are not confined to a few thousand residents

who live adjacent to the BA property. We are asking people, organizations, and businesses located throughout Pennsylvania to write letters of concern or opposition to the proposed wind turbine project. WCWC is a chapter of Save Our Allegheny Ridges, a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization that works to protect forested ridges in Pennsylvania from industrial wind development.

Will you please take a few minutes to express your concerns about the impact of the proposed wind project to the Wild Creek Watershed? Email your letter to Laura Jackson at jacksonlaura73@gmail.com. Laura is the president of Save Our Allegheny Ridges and is helping with the Coalition's outreach. You can also send your letter to: **Wild Creek Watershed Coalition, P. O. Box 1384, Albrightsville, PA 18210**. If you represent an organization, please use the organization's letterhead.

A few minutes of your time will mean a big difference to the many birds that depend on the Wild Creek Watershed. We hope a chorus of voices showing concern about this project will make a difference. We won't know unless we try.

¹ www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-and-white_Warbler/lifehistory

² www.marcellusfieldguide.org/index.php/guide/ecological_concepts/habitat_fragmentation/

³ www.stateofthebirds.org/2014/extinctions/watchlist.pdf

⁴ <https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/journals/wilson/v096n03/p0426-p0436.pdf>

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Sincere Thanks to ASWP!

Special thanks to the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania for donating copies of "The Western Pennsylvania Birding Trail Guide" to PSO for our Annual

Meeting. Each registered participant will receive a copy of this helpful guide. What a great gift!

Moving?

Please let us know so we don't incur charges from the post office for address changes. The Post Office does not forward periodicals (ie. *Pennsylvania Birds*), so when your address is no longer valid, they return the back page of the issue to us with a new address label attached (and charge us for doing so!). We then have to send a new copy

to the member for full cost (plus the cost of the extra copy!).

So please... do one of the following: Log in to the PSO website and update your address, send an email to psop@pabirds.org or send a postcard or letter to PSO, 2469 Hammertown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555. Thank you!

Answers to Bird Quiz

(page 8)

1. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch; both are in the family Fringillidae
2. Acadian Flycatcher
3. Red-headed Woodpecker
4. Western Kingbird
5. Bachman's Sparrow



Frank Haas photographed the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in Crawford County on February 9, 2018. This was a first state record.

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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