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# PSO Pileated



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## From the President's Desk...

A walk at the nearby county conservation trail provided a nice outing today, the Saturday of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The trail traverses a narrow ravine that provides shelter from the cold wind. The little valley was full of juncos, not surprisingly, searching the shrubby undergrowth for seeds missed by forays that had been going on all winter. It is comforting to see birds thriving in this small woodlot.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a huge effort that promotes participation in the eBird website and database. More than 500,000 birders participated worldwide during the four-day event this past February. Juncos are the perfect birds for a checklist as they are common and familiar across the state; the flash of white tail feathers aids in quick identification for novices who are encouraged to dip their toes into the world of online bird reporting. My list also included singing House Finches, a very familiar backyard bird hinting at spring weather, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk that perched briefly before darting through the canopy. The GBBC provides an introduction to eBird from the comfort of our backyards, growing the ranks of birders who have made eBird into a powerful bird-monitoring program to track population changes.

We are regularly reminded that not all birds are thriving. Greg Grove's article, in the newly-arrived *Pennsylvania Birds*, highlights a range of species that have experienced long-term declines, as documented by breeding bird atlases and monitoring projects to which many of us PSO members contribute. Dramatic declines in the 20 years between bird atlas projects are noted in Greg's article: Common Nighthawks were reported in 71% fewer blocks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Atlas effort (the 2000s) than the first (1980s); Yellow-breasted Chats declined by 35%; and others

followed the broad-scale loss in bird populations documented over the past few decades. These monitoring programs are essential to understanding what's happening to bird populations and the environment more generally. Community science efforts are invaluable, and the third bird atlas in Pennsylvania will provide another important installment in this comprehensive tracking program with your help.

Pennsylvania's third Bird Atlas will get a lot of attention in the coming year. The 20-year cycle of breeding bird atlas projects sets next year as the launch, triggering a five-year effort to survey all of the state's 10-square-mile "blocks." This grid helps distinguish the atlas from ongoing eBird checklists, in which reports tend to be concentrated around human populations. Statewide atlas coverage encourages birders to go into the state's less-traveled areas and, as a result, provides more uniform and finer-scaled bird distributions than any other bird monitoring effort. For example, a Christmas Bird Count circle covers about 176 mi<sup>2</sup>, and an Atlas block is about 10 mi<sup>2</sup>. The third Atlas will launch a winter survey in 2024-25, a new effort here that has been piloted in Maine, Ohio, and other areas. Winter bird populations vary from year to year more than do breeding populations, as has been demonstrated by the mild winter wrapping up this year. PSO members will be at the heart of this effort coordinated by Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Watch for more details coming later this year.

Details of PSO's upcoming Birding Festival are included in this newsletter. Based in State College, this event offers field trips in Huntingdon, Blair, and Centre counties during migration season. It's an exciting time of year as long-distance migrants are passing through and many

local breeders are setting up territories. Everyone is welcome. This will be a festival, to broaden our engagement with anyone interested in birds. This year's annual gathering includes art and photography sessions and beginner bird walks. Field trips to the best local birding hotspots are still on tap!

Check out the great website and register soon at <https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF>. This will be a great opportunity to see friends and enjoy birding experiences with others. Invite your friends.

Dan Brauning, President  
Lycoming County

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## Rushton Woods Preserve Scrub-Shrub Restoration, Funded by PSO's Birding Blitz, Off to a Great Start

By Mike Cranney, WCT Preserve Manager

For 13 years, Willistown Conservation Trust's (WCT) Bird Conservation program has been researching migratory and breeding bird populations at Rushton Woods Preserve. A trained team of staff and volunteers utilizes mist nets placed strategically throughout the preserve's hedgerows to monitor species, collect data, and band individual birds so they can be tracked throughout North and South America. This research has helped contribute to the understanding of what birds need to survive, while highlighting the importance of places like Rushton Woods Preserve for migrating species to use as a respite where they can rest and refuel during their long journeys each spring and fall.

Simply preserving open space, however, is not sufficient for their survival; birds require certain types of plants for adequate food and shelter. They are especially attracted to what is known as "scrub-shrub" habitat, which consists of robust thickets of shrubs and small trees that provide essential cover from both predators and the elements. This habitat is also an important source of food, but sadly our ecosystems have become overrun with non-native, invasive plants whose fruit do not have the nutritional value that birds need. For example, one of the most common shrubs in the modern landscape is the Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera mackii*), whose abundant berries are regularly eaten by fruit-loving bird species. However, these berries contain more sugar than fat and therefore do not provide the fuel necessary to sustain migration. Birds depend on the insects and fruit found on the native plants that have evolved in the landscape alongside them. In order to fully support bird populations, both the habitat structure and species composition need to be considered.

Unfortunately, the hedgerows at Rushton Woods Preserve have become heavily invaded by non-native species over the years. Both breeding and migrating birds still flock there, but they are not getting the nourishment that they need. A recent study conducted by a University of Pennsylvania graduate student found that birds stopping at the preserve during migration were not gaining any fat,

likely due to that fact that they were primarily eating fruit from Japanese honeysuckle shrubs. The structure of the habitat is beneficial, but the plant species encompassing it are not.

Now, thanks to a generous grant from the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO), WCT has begun the process of restoring the expansive hedgerow to native scrub-shrub habitat. These funds were raised by birders across the state as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation, held in June 2022. In the fall of 2022, a roughly 5,000 square ft. area of invasive thicket was removed and replanted with over 150 native shrubs and trees representing 25 different species. Bird friendly varieties such as viburnums and chokeberries were emphasized and placed closely together to ensure that they grow into dense habitat. Moving forward, the goal is to repeat this process in a different section of the hedgerow each year until it is entirely restored with beneficial native plants. By working piece by piece, the overall structure of the habitat can be maintained for the birds while the new plants mature.

The existing groups within the organization uniquely position WCT to make the best of this restoration project. The stewardship team will handle the management of the planting site, while the Bird Conservation program's ongoing research will be an excellent way to monitor the effect the improvements have on breeding and migratory birds. Additionally, the organization's outreach and education departments will be able to capitalize on this endeavor as an opportunity for landowners to learn about the ecological value of habitat that is too often considered merely an eye-sore. Above all, projects such as these are made possible through partnerships with groups like PSO that care about the environment and are dedicated to conservation.

# PSO 2023 Birding Festival Schedule

(and Annual Meeting)

May 19-21, 2023

Ramada Hotel and Conference Center  
State College, Pennsylvania

<b>Friday, May 19</b>	1:00 p.m.	Conservation Project at Shaver's Creek, led by Brian Byrnes
	5:00 p.m.	Registration opens; vendors and non-profits set up tables
	6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Bar open
	7:00 p.m.	Business Meeting
	8:30 p.m.	Nocturnal Birding Trip for those who have signed up
<b>Saturday, May 20</b>	6:30 a.m.	Breakfast at Ramada for those staying at the Ramada
	7:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Field Trips and other activities
	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Vendors and non-profits at tables
	11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on your own
	1:00 - 1:35 p.m.	Mercy Melo presenting <i>The Continental Decline of American Kestrels: An Investigation of Possible Drivers and Future Management Strategies</i>
	1:35 - 2:15 p.m.	Dr. Lauri Green presenting <i>The Thermoregulatory Effects of Tree Swallow (<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>) Nests and Nest Boxes. Implications for Reproductive Success and Climate Change</i>
	2:15 - 2:35 p.m.	Break
	2:35 - 3:15 p.m.	Scott Parkhill presenting <i>Mature Forest Management: Wood Thrush Habitat and Opportunities for Carbon Forestry</i>
	3:15 - 4:00 p.m.	Andy Wilson presenting <i>Looking Forward to a Third Pennsylvania Bird Atlas</i>
	4:00 p.m.	Vendors and non-profits pack up
	5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	Bar open
	6:00 p.m.	Banquet area open
	6:30 p.m.	Buffet
	7:00 p.m.	George Armistead, Keynote Speaker
9:00 p.m. - 10 p.m.	Nocturnal Bird Outing for those who have signed up	
<b>Sunday, May 21</b>	7:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Field Trips and Other Activities

[https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF\\_schedule.php](https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF_schedule.php)

# Field Trips

All *day-time field trips* are limited to 12 participants. Please note the code for the Field Trip (Sat2, Sun5, etc.). Use these codes to quickly identify the trips you want on the registration page. See [https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF\\_fieldtrips.php](https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF_fieldtrips.php).

## **Alan Seeger Natural Area (Sat1 and Sun1) Saturday and Sunday, 7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Trip Leader: Jon Kauffman**

Join Jon Kauffman for a walk at Alan Seeger Natural Area. This natural area sits in a deep and narrow valley that is best known for its old-growth hemlocks, tall white pines, tulip poplars, oaks, and a thick growth of rhododendron along the Standing Stone Creek. Participants will be led on a paved road to an easy one-mile loop trail that meanders through a thicket of rhododendron. This trail is often wet and soft, so sturdy boots are recommended.

Jon will meet the group at the Ramada at 7:00 a.m. to caravan to the Alan Seeger Picnic Area for the 30-minute drive.

Noteworthy breeding birds can be Acadian Flycatchers; Blue-headed Vireo; Winter Wren; Veery; Wood Thrush; Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Worm-eating, Hooded, and Canada warblers; and Louisiana Waterthrush. If time permits, the group will spend time at Bear Meadows Natural Area on the return trip back to State College. Bathroom facilities are nearby at the picnic area.

## **The Arboretum at Penn State (Sat2 and Sun2) Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Trip Leaders: Margaret Brittingham, Kevin Brant**

Meet at the Overlook Pavilion at 8:00 a.m. Plan to leave the Ramada between 7:30 and 7:40 for a one-minute drive. Parking is available in the Lewis Katz Building lot, just across Bigler Road from the Arboretum for a fee of \$1/hour.

The walk will start at the Overlook Pavilion in the Arboretum. The 370-acre Arboretum includes approximately 10 acres of formal gardens including the Pollinator and Bird Garden (opened in July 2021 and 90 species recorded) as well as a restored prairie, mature forest, old fields, and forest-field edge (171 species). We will start the walk in the gardens and then continue down through the field and prairie and along a rails-to-trails path. Expected species in and near the gardens include Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, as well as a variety of resident species. Breeding and migrating warblers including Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow

Warbler and American Redstart that are often found at this time of year. In the prairie and along the rails to trails we should find Field Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, and possibly Orchard Orioles.

The walk will be easy to moderate with an opportunity to stay in the gardens for those not interested in an extended walk. There will be time after the walk to explore the many formal gardens including the Pollinator and Bird Garden, Children's Garden, and Rose Garden. Bathrooms are available at the Overlook Pavilion.

## **Bald Eagle Valley Wetlands (Sat3 and Sun3) Saturday & Sunday, 5:15 a.m. or 7 a.m.- 9:00 a.m. Trip Leaders: Joe Gyekis (Saturday and Sunday) and Nash Turley (Saturday)**

This trip has an optional early segment for dawn chorus, so there will be two different meet-up points. Meet at 5:15 a.m. at the gravel parking lot where Underwood Rd. intersects Beaver Road (40.883196, -78.021460) in Moshannon State Forest. We will go east along Underwood Road to listen to and watch for the Eastern Whip-poor-wills, cuckoos, and various songbirds, especially the nesting Chestnut-sided Warblers, in the mature oak forests and regenerating clearcuts nearby. If you arrive later than 5:15, find us along that first half-mile segment of Underwood Road east of the parking lot. We plan to stay on the main gravel road, which is fairly flat in this section. By 6:45 we will drive the 11 minutes into Bald Eagle Valley to meet the well-rested folk. A Cerulean Warbler might be heard out the window along Steele Hollow Road as we descend off the Allegheny Front, although there are no good pull-off spots on the steep hillside that is the best area for them.

The second meet-up option is at 7:00 am at Soaring Eagle Wetland. We will walk a half mile loop around the cattail wetland and riparian corridor of Bald Eagle Creek. This loop is a wide path, partly gravel, partly grass, but it is generally well mowed. If there is heavy rain immediately before our outing, some parts can be puddly/squelchy, so this is the one segment that might merit puddle boots. Next we will drive to Dreibelbis Birding Area. This area has nice gravel trails and covered blinds to observe the marsh, with less than a half mile of walking here. Both of these wetlands are spring migratory stopping spots for rails and other marsh birds as well as breeding habitat for

Willow Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, and Yellow Warblers. We will likely be finished by 9:00 a.m.

No bathroom facilities. Walking is easy, but the hours do add up. Maybe bring a folding chair for some of the darker parts of the early morning.

**Bald Eagle State Park (Sun7)**  
**Sunday only, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Trip Leader: Bob Snyder**

Meet at the Swimming Beach parking lot at 8:00 a.m. We will caravan to several locations in the main park area and take a short walk from the war memorial at the dam to Hunters Run Cove and the spillway marsh.

The habitat includes a large lake that we will check from several observation areas, looking for migrating waterfowl, wandering gulls and terns, migrating shorebirds, and warblers, as well as local breeding birds. Bald Eagles (3 pairs) nested within or very close to the park in 2022, and there were several Osprey nesting sites on cell towers within 2-10 miles of the park in Bald Eagle Valley in 2022. Osprey may be seen diving for fish throughout the park from late April through October.

Bald Eagle SP is a “magnet” for accidental rarities that may be pushed into the area by major storm systems. Some rarities seen in recent years at the park include Laughing Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, Forster’s Tern, Eared Grebe, Harlequin Duck, American White Pelican, Willet, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, and American Avocet.

For the walking part of the trip near the spillway marsh, we may explore a grassy swath that runs through secondary growth as we look for migrating warblers. Hiking boots, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, a hat, and insect repellent are recommended. Bring binoculars and, for the lake portion of the trip, bring a spotting scope if you have one. Photographers are welcome to bring their cameras.

Modern restrooms are at the visitor’s center and the swimming beach while several primitive restrooms are located around the park at the boat launches. No restroom facilities at the dam.

**Black Moshannon State Park (Sat4 and Sun4)**  
**Saturday and Sunday, 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Field Trip Leaders: Julia Plummer, Susan Smith, Karen Kottowski**

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot by the beach at Black Moshannon State Park (40.915958, -78.058984). The parking lot is located on Black Moshannon Road; Beaver Road turns into Black Moshannon Road where it

intersects Rattlesnake Pike (PA-504). The parking lot is 35 minutes (23 miles) from the Ramada Inn. From there, we will travel together to other locations in the park.

Our approximate three-mile hike will take us through landscapes dominated by oaks, black cherry, and red maple and bog areas featuring thickets of alder, Eastern hemlock, rhododendron, and highbush blueberry. Moshannon is said to be derived from moose stream or elk stream in the Seneca language. The trails can be wet, so waterproof shoes are recommended. While most of the hike will be relatively level, many sections are uneven. The noteworthy breeding birds we may find include Broad-winged Hawk; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Pileated Woodpecker; Blue-headed and Red-eyed vireos; Alder Flycatcher; Veery; Hermit Thrush; Canada, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, and Blackburnian warblers; Ovenbird; Northern Waterthrush; and Scarlet Tanager.

Bathroom facilities are located at the parking lot

**Canoe Creek State Park #1 Blair County Birding Hotspot! (Sun8)**  
**Sunday only, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Field Trip Leader: John Carter**

Plan to leave the Ramada Inn about 7 a.m. for the drive of about 35 miles which will take about 50 minutes. Enter from Turkey Valley Road, passing the park office, and park in the large parking lot near the lake on the far left. 40.484851, -78.283068

The walking distance will be 2 to 4 miles on pavement, boardwalk, and grass terrain. You should wear suitable hiking shoes and always need to be cautious of ticks.

Canoe Creek SP features a 155-acre lake, wetlands, grasslands, and mature forests, which provide critical habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife. During the peak spring migrating season at Canoe Creek SP there is potential for people to see between 60-90 species within a single day. These include many warbler gems like the Blackburnian, Magnolia, Worm-eating warblers; Northern Parula; and many others. Other notable birds in recent years include Marsh Wren, White-eyed Vireo, Wilson’s Snipe. The park has many Osprey and Bald Eagles fishing over the lake which make for great opportunities for photography and viewing.

Bathroom facilities: Yes

**Meeting Logo**



**Detweiler Run Natural Area, Rothrock Forest (Sat7) Saturday only, 7:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Trip Leaders: Greg and Deb Grove**

Plan to leave the Ramada at 7:15 a.m. to follow a designated person to the site. This 35 to 40-minute drive on forest roads is about 12 miles from the Ramada Inn. There is a parking area just down the road from the gated road. Please do not park in front of the gate.

The approximate three-mile hike follows Detweiler Run that cascades down a narrow valley between Thickhead and Grass Mountains from 2400 feet to 1100 feet, and we will start at 1350 feet. We will follow a rocky trail that may be difficult for some. The trail becomes a stream in wet years, so waterproof hiking boots are very helpful. Trekking poles can be very useful while traversing the rocks in the trail. We will return to the cars following a gated forest road.

Towering hemlocks and white pines above the rhododendrons flank the stream. Noteworthy breeding birds can be Broad-winged Hawk; Barred Owl; Downy, Hairy, and Pileated woodpeckers; Northern Flicker; Acadian Flycatcher; Blue-headed and Red-eyed vireos; Winter Wren; Veery; Wood Thrush; Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Worm-eating, Hooded, and Canada warblers; Ovenbird; Louisiana Waterthrush.

No bathroom facilities

**Lower Trail (Huntingdon County) (Sat8) Saturday only, 7:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Trip Leader: Nick Bolgiano**

Meet at the Water Street Flea Market (4598 William Penn Highway) at 7:45 a.m. It takes 35-40 minutes of driving time from the Ramada Inn; Route 45 is the best way to get there. At the end of Route 45, turn left on Route 453. At the stoplight (1 mi.), turn left on Route 22; the flea market is on the right (0.25 mi). The walk will be 1.5 miles out-and-back on flat ground. If you walk into the brushy edges, there could be a few ticks.

The Lower Trail is one of Pennsylvania's best riparian forest sites. It is a rail-trail that follows the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River as it flows north between Tussey Mountain east of the river and a small ridge west of the river. We will walk between where these two ridges pinch in along the river. The Lower Trail is known for its high Cerulean Warbler density, although the American Redstart density is higher.

Birds that we may encounter include Common Merganser; Bald Eagle; Acadian Flycatcher; Yellow-throated, Warbling, and Red-eyed vireos; Wood Thrush; Baltimore

Oriole; Louisiana Waterthrush; American Redstart; Northern Parula; Cerulean and Yellow-throated warblers; and Scarlet Tanager.

A rest room is located at the northern end of the Lower Trail, one mi from the Flea Market at Alfarata Trailhead. Continue 0.5 mi past the flea market, turn left on Route 4014, and right into the Lower Trail parking lot (0.25 mi).

**Lower Trail (Mt Etna, Blair County) (Sun9) Sunday only, 7:55 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Trip Leader: Nick Bolgiano**

This field trip will start from the Mt. Etna trailhead (Catherine Twp.) of the Lower Trail. It takes 40-45 minutes of driving time from the Ramada Inn. Whitehall Road and Route 45 are the best way to get there. At the end of Route 45, turn left on Route 453. At the stoplight (1 mi), turn right onto Route 22. Travel 3.3 mi and just after the westbound turns into 2 lanes, turn left onto Fox Run Rd (be in the left lane when the passing lane begins). Stay right with the river on your left to reach the Mt. Etna trailhead (2.2 mi). This parking lot often has numerous vehicles in this season, so please minimize gaps between vehicles.

We plan to start walking upstream (to the right) around 7:55 am. The walk will be 1-1.5 mile out-and-back on flat ground. If you walk into the brushy edges, there could be a few ticks.

The Lower Trail is one of Pennsylvania's best riparian forest sites. It is a rail trail that follows the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River as it flows north between Tussey Mountain east of the river and a small ridge west of the river. This walk is where riparian habitat spreads out along the river, with high densities of Cerulean Warblers and other riparian birds.

Birds that we may encounter include Common Merganser; Bald Eagle; Acadian Flycatcher; Yellow-throated, Warbling, and Red-eyed vireos; Wood Thrush; Orchard and Baltimore orioles; Louisiana Waterthrush; American Redstart; Northern Parula; Cerulean and Yellow-throated warblers; and Scarlet Tanager.

There is a rest room at the parking area.

**Plummer's Hollow Nature Reserve (Sun10) Sunday only, 5:30 a.m. or 7:30 a.m.**  
**Trip Leader: Mark Bonta**

Early Bird and Leisurely options available. For Early Birds, plan to leave the Ramada at 4:30 a.m. for a 5:30 a.m. start time; the drive to Tyrone is 35 minutes, and it is another 15-minutes' drive up the Hollow. Hot drinks and snacks will be provided for an Early Bird breakfast. We will be birding in and around First Field until the

Leisurely crowd shows up by 7:30 a.m., at which point we will begin the first leg of a longer hike that will include sections of deep woods, but not very strenuous terrain. Be sure to bring sturdy walking gear, a water bottle, and tick repellent. The hike will end by 11:00 a.m., but participants will be able to leave earlier, as needed.

Plummer's Hollow is particularly good for warbler numbers and diversity. Breeding warbler species to look for, on top of passage migrants, include Cerulean, Blackburnian, Hooded, Worm-eating, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, and sometimes Kentucky warblers; and Northern Parula. Other breeders of note include Yellow-throated Vireo, American Woodcock, Cooper's Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will (for the early birds), both cuckoos, Barred Owl, and the odd Ruffed Grouse. Overall, 173 of the 210+ species recorded in the Plummer's Hollow eBird hotspot (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3330516>) have been found there in May.

Bathroom facilities are available.

**SGL 112 Huntingdon County for Golden-winged Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chat (Sun11)  
Old Crow Wetlands afterwards for those interested**

**Sunday only, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**

**Trip Leaders: Deb and Greg Grove**

Plan to leave the Ramada at 7:15 am to follow the designated person to a parking lot at SGL 112 on Mill Creek Hollow Road, a 35- to 40-minute drive. This is not the site where we will be walking, but we will meet here before driving to the Field Trip site.

The out and back walk will be  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile out and requires walking through grass. Ticks are a very strong possibility here. Tick spray, long pants, and high boots are good measures to avoid picking them up on your clothes.

The habitat is at a double powerline area that itself is open, but it is flanked by middle succession shrubby fields with patches of dense, woody stems under 20 feet. Noteworthy warblers are Golden-winged (and occasional hybrids), Prairie, Black-and-white, Hooded, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green warblers; American Redstart; Common Yellowthroat; and Ovenbird. As many as 4 to 5 Yellow-breasted Chats may be found in the area. Other birds in the tree line can include woodpeckers, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed vireos, Corvids, Mimids, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting.

No bathroom facilities are at powerline.

**Old Crow Wetlands** can be reached from a parking area off US 22 near Hoss's Steak House in Huntingdon.

Bathroom facilities may be accessed before the walk at the nearby Sheetz store at the intersection of 4th Street and US 22. An amazing 221 species have been found here, and the mitigated area provides not only a location for breeding birds but also a stopover for migrating birds such as Marsh Wren, American and Least bitterns, shorebirds, herons and egrets, warblers, and flycatchers. Breeding birds include at least two species of swallows; Willow Flycatcher (Acadian and Alder in migration); House and Carolina wrens; mimids; Field, Song, and possibly Grasshopper sparrows; Baltimore and Orchard orioles; Common Yellowthroat; and Yellow Warbler. Chimney Swift and Fish Crow can be seen overhead. Rare species have included Ruff, Cattle Egret, Sandhill Crane, Trumpeter Swan, Virginia Rail, Common Gallinule, various shorebirds, Little Blue Heron, and Snowy Egret.

Bathroom facilities are available near Old Crow.

**Scotia Barrens (Sat5 and Sun5)  
Saturday & Sunday, 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.  
Trip Leaders: Kurt Engstrom, Chad Kauffman**

Meet in front of Ramada Inn, and plan to leave by 7:30 a.m. We will carpool a short 15 minutes to SGL 176 (Scotia Barrens) to ease parking as we will be parking at various spots and taking short walks along the Scotia Range Road from each spot.

Scotia Barrens is a pitch pine/scrub oak barrens, the largest in Pennsylvania, best known for its migrating and breeding warbler diversity. An amazing 35 warbler species have been recorded at this hotspot with more than 15 species that are known to breed here as well. Golden-winged Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-billed Cuckoo, Alder Flycatcher, and Ruffed Grouse are some of the specialty breeders at the Barrens. If there has been sufficiently wet weather and 10 Acre Pond has water, multiple wetland species are possible – American Bittern, Green Heron, Wood Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe have all bred here in recent years.

Port-a-Johns may be available at the firearms range.

**Shaver's Creek Environmental Center Beginners' Walk (Sat9)  
Saturday only, 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.  
Trip Leader: Doug Wentzel**

Meet on the lawn outside the visitor center at 8:30 a.m. for a walk focused on bird watching basics. Allow 20 minutes to drive 12 miles from the Ramada over Pine Grove Mountain on Rt. 26. Please park in the designated parking area.

We'll cover tips on identification, resources, materials, and techniques to help you learn about the birds in your

backyard. Our leisurely walk will take us to the boardwalk area to view Lake Perez and upstream Shaver's Creek. The trail features a variety of habitats from mature mixed forest to stream and lake edge, and we will find a diversity of breeding birds including Ovenbird, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Scarlet Tanager. Visitor parking, restrooms, and a bookstore are available.

**Shaver's Creek Environmental Center (Sat6 and Sun6)**

**Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.**

**Trip Leader: Dan Brauning**

**Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.**

**Trip Leader: Doug Wentzel**

On Saturday leave with Dan Brauning from the Ramada at 7:00 a.m. to caravan to Shaver's Creek where we'll meet in

the designated parking about 7:30. Sunday participants: Allow 20 minutes to drive 12 miles from the Ramada over Pine Grove Mountain on Rt. 26. Please park in the designated parking area.

We will bird along the well-established trails in the vicinity of the Environmental Education Center. Comfortable walking shoes will be adequate on these easy trails.

The forested and shrubby habitats will provide opportunities to see the typical breeding and migrant birds of central Pennsylvania. The boardwalk trail provides access to wetlands at the edge of Lake Perez. We'll see or hear local breeders including Hooded and Pine warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Wood Thrush and will look for a variety of passage migrants.

Bathroom facilities are available. You may visit the Environmental Ed Center after the bird walk.

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## Evening Field Trips

**Scotia Barrens (IBA) Evening (Fri1)**

**Friday only, 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

**Field Trip Leaders: Julia Plummer, Diane Bierly**

**Capacity: 15**

We will meet at 8:30 p.m. about 1.8 miles down Scotia Range Road in Scotia Barrens from where it intersects with Scotia Road in an open gravel parking area (40.785170, -77.950175). This is about a 20-minute (10 miles) drive from the Ramada Inn. Scotia Barrens is state game lands so consider wearing blaze orange if you arrive earlier in the day.

Our initial focus will be on observing and listening to the display flights of the American Woodcock. Later into the night, we will listen for Eastern Whip-poor-wills and Barred Owls. Ticks can be an issue at Scotia Barrens if we leave the road to observe American Woodcocks along the mown paths; wear appropriate protection (e.g., long pants tucked into socks, spraying clothing for ticks). A flashlight is also recommended.

**Night Noises of Harry's Valley Evening (Sat11)**

**Saturday only May 20, 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.**

**Field Trip Leader: Diane Bierly**

**Capacity: 10**

We will meet at 9:00 p.m. at Jo Hayes Vista along Rt. 26 (directions will be sent to participants). This is about a 15-minute (7.5 miles) drive from the Ramada Inn. Participants will be asked to carpool to reduce the number of cars.

We will make multiple stops along Harry's Valley Road and Tram Road to listen for Eastern Whip-poor-wills, Barred Owls, and Black-billed Cuckoos in the Rothrock State Forest. This will be a listening activity which requires standing for up to 10 minutes at a time. Binoculars are not necessary, but participants might want to bring a flashlight

No bathroom facilities at this location.

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## T-shirts with the Festival Logo Available for Pre-order

Festival T-shirts, depicting the meeting logo picture on page 5, must be ordered and paid for on the meeting registration page before May 1. They may be picked up at the meeting. They will be mailed to non-attendees in early June.

Cost of shirts being picked up at the meeting:

S, M, L, XL = \$21  
2XL = \$23  
3XL = \$24

Cost of shirts being shipped to you:

S, M, L, XL = \$25  
2XL = \$27  
3XL = \$28

(See meeting logo on bottom of page 5 or [https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF\\_schedule.php](https://pabirds.org/BirdingFestival/BF_schedule.php).)



## Other Festival Activities

**Photography session at Bald Eagle SP (Sun12)**  
**Sunday only, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**  
**Trip Leaders: Bob Snyder**  
**Capacity: 8**

A photo outing is a new concept for the PSO meetings. The objective is to give photographers a chance to see new birds and improve their photography skills in the field.

We will meet at the small gravel parking lot (40.994, -77.699), just off Route 150 north of the I-80 interchange (If coming from State College, turn right at the Bald Eagle SP sign for the Upper Green's Run boat launch). The walk will follow an approximately 1.5-mile circuit from the gravel parking lot to the Bullit Run Bridge or perhaps continue a short distance to Bullit Run Marsh.

The first leg of the walk will follow a grassy game swath through a secondary growth habitat as we look for Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers as well as migrating warblers and other birds to photograph. The area is GWWA habitat, and GWWA, BWWA, and their hybrids may be found in this area in the spring.

Because we will walk through areas of an old overgrown meadow and along a game swath with grass and some boggy soil, we will need to take precautions for deer ticks/mosquitoes. Sturdy hiking boots, long pants and gaiters (or tuck your pant legs into the tops of your socks), long-sleeved shirts (or a net bug shirt, if you have one), and a hat. We also recommend having insect repellent along and also recommend spraying Deet on one's trousers. If you have pyrethrin-treated clothing that would be a good alternative. Bringing a water bottle is recommended, especially if you can attach it to a fanny pack or put it in a small day pack.

Binoculars and a camera are suggested. Those with a long telephoto lens, interchangeable lenses or, an all-in-one zoom digital camera would be helpful. Beginners who want to learn more about what cameras to purchase may be interested in this trip. Tripods are not recommended as they will just be another thing to carry and are not necessary.

**Bathroom Facilities:** There are no restrooms at the trailhead, but there are commercial places just after the I-80 overpass, at the Milesburg McDonald's or the TA Travel Center truck stop, or a primitive rest area at the Lower Green's Run boat launch. There are also modern restrooms at the main park visitor's center (2.3- 4.0 miles west on Rte. 150).

**Photography session at Canoe Creek SP (Sun13)**  
**Sunday only, 8:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m.**  
**Trip Leaders: Mike and Susan Croyle**  
**Capacity: 8**

We will meet at 8:00 am at the Canoe Creek State Park parking lot on the east side of the lake just off U.S. 22 at

the intersection of Beaver Dam Road and Bass Court (this is the main parking lot for fishing and the boat launch). (40°29.0771'N 78°16.2386'W)

The objective is twofold: Discuss bird photography gear needs and camera settings/skills, for the best photos. Participants will have the opportunity to try out their photography skills in the field.

No camera? That's OK. You will find the informational section of the program helpful, but do remember to bring your binoculars.

The morning will be a combination of discussion and photographic opportunities. The walking portion will be approximately 1.1 miles total from the parking lot and around the beaver ponds. The pathway is grass with potential for soft and muddy spots at this time of the year. We should be able to spot several birds some of which may be: Green Heron, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin.

Dress appropriately for the weather as well as any additional activities you may decide to pursue at the park after the session. Please bring bottled water and any snacks you may need. There are no food or water services at the park.

Discussion Topics as they relate to bird photography vs. photo documentation.

Hardware:

- Cameras: number of pixels, advantages of shooting RAW, handheld; monopod/tripod.
- Lenses: focal length; light gathering ability; cost vs. quality

Understanding your camera:

Camera settings; exposure, depth of field, light, focusing

Getting focused, sharp, well-lit photos

Exposure/shutter speed/ISO;

Focus point settings, using your offset, camera's light setting

Note: The area surrounding Canoe Creek SP consists of varied habitats from old growth forests, a rolling landscape of previous farm fields now growing in combinations of trees, brush, marshlands, and grasses. The beaver ponds are a series of small ponds adjacent to the lake.

**NOTE: *WE DO NOT RECOMMEND USING DEET*** as the substance is harmful to the materials used in the manufacture of cameras and lens bodies. Pyrethrin-treated clothing would be a good alternative as would non-DEET insect repellants.

To get the most out of bird photography, one will probably want to carry a camera with a long telephoto lens such as an interchangeable lens camera with a prime lens 300-600 mm or a 100-600 mm telephoto zoom, both of which are typically used with today's digital camera bodies. Monopods will be helpful. Tripods are not recommended as the pathway is quite narrow.

Bathrooms are located 0.2 mile walk in the opposite direction from the parking lot.

**Drawing Birds at Shaver's Creek (Sat10)**  
**Saturday only, 9 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**  
**Leader: Elody Gyekis**  
**Capacity: 12**

Meet at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, 3400 Discovery Rd, Petersburg, PA 16669, in the Hamer classroom. Allow 20 minutes to drive 12 miles from the Ramada over Pine Grove Mountain on Rt. 26. Please park in the designated parking area. Walking distance is easy. The activity will mostly be seated in the classroom and walking around the bird enclosures.

Local Artist Elody Gyekis will lead a bird-drawing activity beginning indoors in the Hamer Classroom and moving outside to draw the live birds within the enclosures if the weather permits. The activity will start with a brief lecture on the aspects of bird skeletal structure that will help us figure out how to draw the birds, followed by a demonstration of strategies for gesture drawing. We will then practice gesture drawing together from projected reference images. Strategies will be demonstrated for drawing from life using mounts and then the group will draw from either the mounts or live birds in the enclosures with occasional feedback and guidance from Elody.

**Additional Information/Instructions about What Sketching Supplies to Bring**

Participants should bring a sketchbook or a drawing board and several sheets of paper. Any kind of paper will do as long as it is suited to the drawing supplies you bring (e.g. if you bring watercolors, bring watercolor paper!) We will be doing some short gesture drawing and some longer drawings, if you wish to bring some cheaper paper and some nicer paper.

Participants should bring whatever drawing/sketching supplies they already own and are comfortable with. Charcoals and charcoal pencils are recommended, but graphite pencils, pens, markers, pastels, watercolors, or inks would all be fine. Just make sure that whatever you bring, you have the ability to make a wide mark and a fine line, and the ability to make a light mark and a dark mark. For example, if you have watercolors/inks bring both a fine brush and a wider brush, or if you like to sketch in markers, have a lighter color as well as black so you can

start with some lighter sketch marks to find the proportions.

Demonstrations will mostly be done in charcoals, and some charcoal supplies will be available for participants to try out. Elody will demonstrate with soft vine charcoal, compressed charcoal sticks, soft and medium charcoal pencils, wide and narrow erasers, and paper towels to blend and smear.

Wear appropriate attire for the weather and for working with your art supplies. Activity will take place rain or shine. Beginners are Welcome!

Bathroom facilities are available.

**American Kestrel Banding (Sun14)**  
**Tentative Sunday, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Leader: Steve Eisenhauer**  
**Capacity: 15**

Steve Eisenhauer is hoping to invite Birding Festival participants to join him in banding American Kestrel nestlings in one of his local boxes. Due to the hectic schedule associated with checking his 300 nest boxes this spring, the event is on a tentative status. If interested, please sign up and Steve will contact you in the week before the festival if this event can be finalized.

Steve and his daughter Elizabeth wrote an article about the program that can be found in the spring issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*, Vol 36, Issue 2. This American Kestrel nest box program was started in New Jersey in 2014 and expanded to central Pennsylvania through initial sponsorship of Penn State's Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

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## County Spotlights

The **Columbia County spotlight** is scheduled for March 17-20. Chad Kauffman has organized at least three field trips. If you're planning to participate, please contact Chad ([chadkauffman@earthlink.net](mailto:chadkauffman@earthlink.net)). You are welcome to join the field trips or bird on your own. Please share your data with PSO Birding Data if you're birding Columbia. For more information, go to <https://fb.me/e/2t7RnV4zu> <<https://fb.me/e/2t7RnV4zu>>.



The next spotlight will feature Greene County April 28 to May1. Marjorie Howard is helping Chad to pull everything together. More information will be provided later.

# Columbia County Birding Hotspots

The PSO is scheduled to have a Birding Spotlight (a blitz) in Columbia County, March 17–20, 2023. Columbia County is one of the less birded counties in the state with only a few of its residents using eBird. A few well-known hotspots are just outside of the county including Montour Preserve (Montour), Susquehanna Riverlands (Luzerne), and Ricketts Glen State Park (Luzerne/ Sullivan / Columbia). There are lots of good places to go birding in the county that may not be as well known but are worth visiting. Here are a few suggestions:

**Berwick Riverfront** – The Berwick Test Track Park provides access to riparian forest and a view of the Susquehanna River. The bridge to Nescopeck and the Berwick Brewery’s biergarten have great views of the confluence of Nescopeck Creek with the Susquehanna River where Bald Eagles, Common Mergansers, and other waterfowl can be spotted.

**Bloomsburg Town Park, Airport, and Fishing Creek Confluence with the Susquehanna River** – Great views of the river and creek. The town park has extensive access to the river. East of the park there is a PA Fish and Boat Commission boat launch with good views. You can walk from the park to Rupert on the other side of the creek. The flooded fields and ponds are among the only places to find shorebirds in the county. Some possibilities here include Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Eastern Screech-Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and waterfowl in winter and early spring.

**Briar Creek Lake** – This county park is near Evansville and northwest of Berwick. The lake often hosts waterfowl, gulls, and other water birds. The farmland around the lake is a good place to find open field birds such as Eastern Meadowlark and Northern Harrier. There also are wetlands and other good habitat near Fowlersville.

**Catawissa** – On the south bank of the Susquehanna River and at the mouth of Catawissa Creek, this little borough offers good birding from the river bridge to a covered bridge across the creek south of town. A good place to observe river raptors and riparian songbirds.

**Espy Park** – Along Old Berwick Road, this tiny recreational park gives you access to views of the Susquehanna River. Columbia Park also gives access to the river near Route 80 bridge.

**Fishing Creek** – There are several spots between Bloomsburg and Central that give access to this popular trout stream where there are Common Mergansers, Bald Eagles, and Belted Kingfishers.

**Hoffman Natural Area** – Accessed from Route 42, this small county property is adjacent to Fishing Creek for access to the creek and riparian woods.

**Jakey Hollow Natural Area, Weiser State Forest** – A small old growth forest tract (59 acres) has large specimens of eastern hemlock, white pine, and hardwoods. It can be found near Mordansville from Route 42 on the east side of Fishing Creek. A place to find Brown Creepers and Pileated Woodpeckers.

**Lightstreet** – Small village north of Bloomsburg along Route 487 that has some good birding locations. Kocher Park is a small park along Fishing Creek just north of Route 80. It makes it easy to visit the creek and riparian woods there. West of the village, Back Branch Road also gives access to the creek, a quarry pond, and adjacent woods. South of Route 80, Paper Mill Road leads to an old quarry that is only observable with a scope.

**SGL 13 Near Central and Jamison City** – At the northern tip of the county next to Sullivan County, you can access hemlock woods and northern birds not easily found elsewhere in the county. A tiny part of Ricketts Glen State Park is in Columbia County west of Rte 487.

**SGL 226 near Millville and Jerseytown** – An easily accessed game lands that lies between Millville and Jerseytown comprising mostly forest and food plots on its 4,335 acres. They are accessible on several roads including Spruce Run, Dodson Hill, Ridge, Teaberry, and Ant Hill. There are several old roads and trails that make this an easy place to go birding. In these woods, there are many warblers including Hooded and Worm-eating as well as Louisiana Waterthrush. There are good hemlock woods along Spruce Run.

**SGL 55 Near Jonestown** – Much of this game land is on Knob Mountain covered with deciduous forest on its 2,576.5 acres. A small population of Cerulean Warblers thrives along the main access road near the towers.

**SGL 58 Near Catawissa** – Extensive forest (12,646 acres) on Catawissa and Nescopeck Mountains accessible from Catawissa, Mainville, and Shumans.

**Waller / Divide area** – Open farmland and grassy areas around the villages of Waller and Divide, west of Benton and north of Orangeville. Green Creek and Waller – Talmer roads also have hemlock woods. There are whip-poor-wills along the dirt roads in the hills.

**Weiser State Forest Roaring Creek Tract** – Just North of Aristes, this tract is accessible from Route 42. Most people take advantage of the easy walking and

biking road that goes west by two small lakes. There are a lot of planted conifers along the lake shores that attract a variety of songbirds. The best part of the property for birding is east of Rt 42 where there are quality woods, thickets, and peaty areas.

**Welliversville and Greenwood farmland** – Along Millertown Road and Welliversville Road in Mount Pleasant Township north of Bloomsburg, there are extensive open farmland and grassland where there are

many sparrows, Horned Larks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and occasionally Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers. Farther north in Greenwood Township there is more farmland where American Kestrels are fairly common.

Good birding!

Doug Gross  
[Dagross144@verizon.net](mailto:Dagross144@verizon.net)

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## Pennsylvania Ornithological Research

How many of us are aware that White-breasted Nuthatches breeding to our north make a biennial irruption southward into the mid-Atlantic region – including Pennsylvania?

Evidently many of these nuthatches move south into our state in approximately two-year intervals, according to an extensive collaboration of researchers who analyzed many types of data from many locations that include Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, eBird, Project FeederWatch, and bird-banding numbers.

Their findings were published in the *Journal of Field Ornithology* in 2022 (<https://doi.org/10.5751/JFO-00091-930202>). The authors include Laurie Goodrich at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Paul Heveran at DeSales University in Center Valley, and Joseph Gyekis in the Department of Biological Health at Penn State University. Research published by Nick Bolgiano in 2004 is referenced as well, noting that Red-breasted Nuthatches also tend to occur in high numbers every other year in Pennsylvania, judging by Christmas Bird Count data (*Pennsylvania Birds* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp 8-23).

The research team found that the biennial pattern was negatively correlated with levels of “soft mast,” the production of seeds and fruits by plant species monitored across southern and central Ontario. The less mast, the

more the nuthatches must travel south to find enough to eat.

On the other hand, Red-breasted Nuthatch irruptions are usually well evident to Pennsylvania birders. The team reported that these may sometimes be correlated with White-breasted movements. Nevertheless, the Red-breasted movements seem more likely to occur when the Red-breasted breeding population is high. No such relation to breeding population size was found in the White-breasted. So, two closely related species may have diverged along notably different pathways.

Authors always recommend further research, and this team has suggestions: “Our results suggest fruitful areas for additional research. Finer geographic analysis of eBird and Project FeederWatch data and radio-tracking of individuals could help determine whether White-breasted Nuthatch movements are restricted to individuals from northern and high-elevation regions, document the directions and distances they travel, and determine the proportion of emigrants that return to their original breeding areas.”

Good topic for someone’s doctoral research?

Paul Hess  
Natrona Heights, PA  
[phess@salsgiver.com](mailto:phess@salsgiver.com)

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## PSO Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania rarities?

1. An extraordinary hummingbird visited a feeder in Lancaster County in 2013. Which species?
2. Only one pelagic skua species is listed in Pennsylvania waters. Which one?
3. Very few wild hybrid waterfowl have been reported convincingly in Pennsylvania. Can you name three?
4. Which western warbler subspecies is rarely seen in PA but readily identifiable if you know what to look for?

5. How many godwit species are on the Pennsylvania list?  
Answers on page 16.

### ***Are you moving?***

Don't miss the next issue of “The PSO Pileated” or *Pennsylvania Birds*!

Please let us know your new address. Log in to your account at Pabirds.org and update your address there or email it to [psop@pabirds.org](mailto:psop@pabirds.org) or use the USPS and send a letter to:

PSO, 2469 Hammertown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555-9730

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C) is Back and Bigger than Ever!!!

**When:** June 9 - 19, 2023 (You can bird any or all of these dates.)

**Goal:** Raise **\$16,000** to be distributed equally to 3 non-profits (our partners) that protect bird habitats or conduct avian conservation research in Pennsylvania. Our 3 partners will be announced soon.

**How:** 1. Team Registration will open April 1, 2023. Form your birding team and register no later than Monday, June 12, 2023, at <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/register>

2. Ask friends and family to donate to this wonderful conservation cause. They can donate online so funds go directly to your team, or they can write a check payable to PSO and mail to PSO, 2469 Hammertown Rd., Narvon, PA 17555. On the check's memo line: write "B4C" and team name. Donations will be received through July 15.

**Contest Categories:** Just a friendly competition to inspire us to do the best we can!

### Fund Raising

Fab Fundraisers - For the team in **each region** that raises the most funds entered on the B4C website by 5:00 p.m. on June 21

Monetary Monsters - For the team in **the state** that raises the most funds entered on the B4C website by 5:00 p.m. on June 21

### Least Birded Counties

Data Demons - For the team in each region with the highest number of species on a daily county list from one of the 14 least reported PA counties on eBird. They are by region:

Northwest (4) Jefferson, Venango, Warren, Forest  
Southwest (1) Greene  
Northcentral (5) Cameron, Snyder, Potter, Union, Elk  
Southcentral (1) Fulton  
Northeast (3) Sullivan, Wyoming, Columbia  
Southeast (0)

### Low Carbon

Carbon Conservers - For the team in **each region** with the highest number of species on a daily list (County or Regional) that bird by a non-motorized means.

### Numeric

County Champs - For the team in **each region** with the highest number of species on a daily County List over the course of the B4C.

Regional Royalty - For the team in **each region** with the highest number of species on a daily Regional List over the course of the B4C.

PA Peerless - For the team **in the State** with the highest number of species on a daily list (County or Regional)

### Youth Focus

Just Awesome Juveniles - For the team in **each region** with the highest number of species on a daily list (County or Regional) and at least 2 of its members inclusive of the ages of 6 through 17.

Please review the Rules and More Details at the B4C Website: [www.breedingbirdblitz.org](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org)

*Have a wonderful and safe B4C experience in 2023!*



# Conservation Chat Room

## A Cautionary Tale of Poison, Death, and Greed



Do you remember Lorne Greene's New Wilderness series that was popular on TV way back in the 1980s? When I taught Environmental Science at Bedford High School, I showed a 1982 video every year from that series called, "A Love Story: the Canada Goose."<sup>1</sup> Canada Geese are common

now, but this film explained how over-hunting and habitat loss led to the near extinction of different goose species. The program credited hunting groups like Ducks Unlimited with restoring habitat like wetlands and supporting hunting seasons, which led to the conservation success story today for many species of waterfowl, including Canada Geese. Some would argue that restoration efforts were too successful, since Canada Geese are now a problem in many areas, and huge numbers of Snow Geese threaten delicate tundra habitat.

Another environmental issue that was poignantly shown in the 1982 film was the problem with lead toxicity in birds. As bottom feeders, Canada Geese accidentally ingest lead fishing weights.

The painful, debilitating death of a female Canada Goose due to lead poisoning was hard to watch and inspired some students to switch to non-lead ammo.

It's hard to know how many of my former students no longer use lead ammunition, but my hunter husband switched to copper ammo at my request. Unfortunately, it's very hard to find non-lead ammo locally, but it can be purchased from [cheaperthandirt.com](http://cheaperthandirt.com). If you know of any other places to buy non-lead ammo, please let me know the name and location. Email me: [jacksonlaura73@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlaura73@gmail.com)

On September 23, 2022, Centre Wildlife Care posted this photo of a Bald Eagle that was brought to the rehab facility near Port Matilda, Pennsylvania. The Bald Eagle was lethargic with a drooping head and in extremely "rough shape."

A blood-lead test was conducted on the sick Bald Eagle with the results shown below.



Centre Wildlife Care photo used with permission.

According to guidelines published in the Wildlife Society Bulletin,<sup>2</sup> raptors with blood-lead levels between 40 – 60 µg/dL may not be lethally poisoned, but this Bald Eagle died the next day. Cause of death: lead toxicity.

Lead toxicity in raptors and waterfowl results in a number of symptoms (to name a few): weakness, inability to fly, and leg paralysis. Consequently, many birds suffer from emaciation, blindness, and seizures – a prolonged period of suffering that could be avoided if lead ammo and lead fishing weights were banned.<sup>3</sup>



Centre Wildlife Care posted this photo of a Bald Eagle that was brought to their rehab center. (Photo used with permission.)

Since Bald Eagles aren't bottom feeders, why would they get lead poisoning? According to Robyn Graboski, Director of Centre Wildlife Care and Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator, "Most birds of prey, such as eagles and hawks, as well as ravens and gulls, get lead poisoning through leftover gut piles, un-retrieved carcasses and varmint carcasses left in the field. Many raptors will ingest lead ammunition fragments left in the tissue of carcasses. They can also ingest lead tackle left behind in fish."

You might be wondering if lead poisoning is a widespread problem. Many people think it only affects a few birds, but recent research shows that's not the case at all. A first of its kind, 8-year ground-breaking study was released last year in the journal *Science*.<sup>4</sup> Many of us know and admire Todd Katzner (he's the lead USGS author), and two of his partners/cooperators who helped with the research: Mike Lanzone and Trish Miller. Their study, "Demographic Implications of Lead Poisoning for Eagles Across North America," not only found that lead poisoning is both widespread and frequent in Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles, but it also negatively impacts the population of both species. Bald Eagle populations growth is slowed by

3.8 percent and Golden Eagles by 0.8 percent each year. This is especially bad news for Golden Eagles, since their population isn't stable due to other mortality events like wind turbine hits. Bald Eagle populations are growing at 10 percent each year, so lead does not have the same impact on populations of this majestic bird, but it's still cause for concern.

When Californians learned that the California Condor was close to extinction mainly due to lead poisoning, a huge outcry led the state to ban lead ammo. That law went into full effect on July 1, 2019, making it illegal to hunt game anywhere in the state using lead ammo.

Unfortunately, many hunters, trappers, and anglers oppose a ban on lead ammo and fishing tackle, pitting the health of birds and other wildlife against the added cost of non-lead ammo. If you are a hunter or angler, please do your part to stop the widespread lead poisoning of our wildlife. Spend a few dollars more to make the environment safer for birds and other wildlife. After all, lead was banned in

paint, toys, furniture, and gasoline because it's toxic to humans. Let's use non-lead ammo and fishing weights to protect wildlife from lead toxicity.

Laura Jackson  
PSO Conservation Chair  
Bedford County

## References

1. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKOtyziDRNM>
2. <https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/wsb.762>
3. [https://www.hsvma.org/lead\\_toxicity\\_in\\_wild\\_birds#\\_Y\\_PwpC-B1bA](https://www.hsvma.org/lead_toxicity_in_wild_birds#_Y_PwpC-B1bA)
4. <https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/groundbreaking-study-finds-widespread-lead-poisoning-bald-and-golden>

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## PSO Golden Eagle Trip to Hawk Mountain Revisited

November 11-13, 2022

This year's edition for the Golden Eagles trip took us once again to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary near Kempton November 11-13, 2022.

With nearly constant rain and high winds, Friday, the first day of the trip, turned out to be a wash. My son Noah and I decided to travel east to visit some water related spots in the hopes of getting "stormbirds" that may have been brought north due to the hurricane related weather pushing up from the south.

Our first stop was Landingville Dam and Marsh. We went to the Auburn Silt area to scan the lake but didn't see much except for a lone female Ruddy Duck which was certainly a highlight to start the day. We were able to get ahead of the weather but still felt some sprinkles coming down. From Landingville we headed to Leaser Lake where an Orange-crowned Warbler had been found the day before we got there. Prior to our arrival the wind & rain were pretty heavy so consequently not much was happening there. Our last water spot stop was Beltzville State Park, a known "storm fall-out" area, to check the lake for any waterfowl, but we found only a few dozen Common Mergansers. After enjoying a nice dinner with birding friends Friday night, we rested up for an early start the next morning.

We got to the parking lot at The Hawk Mountain Sanctuary early and were met there by Evan Mann and his friend Tom. We made our way up the trail toward the North Outlook. The south lookout isn't too far from the parking area and is easy to visit (and wheelchair-accessible) for those who aren't up for the longer walk to the North Lookout.

The wind prediction was great, so we were hopeful for a good raptor migration flight. It didn't take long for Golden Eagles to start coming through. Good numbers of Red-tailed Hawks were on the move and some small passerines came through also. As the day passed, the winds died off, and it became a beautifully sunny bluebird day but without the bluebirds. We heard Red Crossbills flying over and received word that Evening Grosbeaks had gone by the south overlook shortly after we had walked through there.

In the afternoon, the Turkey Vultures started kettling in various places along the ridge but quickly moved away when a pair of Golden Eagles came over the knuckles of the ridge in front of us and worked their way to our right towards Pinnacle. As the day was coming to a close, we had high hopes for Sunday's very promising weather and wind forecast. After another nice dinner with Michael David and Michael Leahy, we again got rested up in anticipation for the next day.

Sunday morning had a brisk feel to it with favorable winds predicted. We got an even earlier start from the parking lot but Michael David was already there. We were glad that we had packed extra layers, gloves, etc. It didn't take long for birds to lift off and start on the move, and we spotted an early Golden Eagle. Before too long, we had our first Northern Goshawk, a juvenile. That was quite the treat for the decently sized group of birders on the mountain. More eagles were making their way past the count site, then we had a single calling Red Crossbill come across the watch and everyone got excited to see and hear that.

We had a Common Raven and watched a Red-tailed Hawk attack a Bald Eagle as well as a Golden Eagle at times. Birds kept trickling through for us to enjoy, and just before we decided to call it a day, a few potential Northern Goshawks were spotted. Many of us saw a possible juvenile goshawk, however photos taken of the bird confirmed it to be a large Cooper's Hawk. At the same time, the counters saw another bird come through that was reported to be an adult goshawk that had been missed by most of the rest of the crowd. This isn't the first time at a hawkwatch where these long-tailed raptors can fool and trick people to lean one way or another.

It is always a fun time to visit a hawkwatch, enjoy mother nature, get fresh air, and look at the river of sky ahead to see what might be coming down the pike. For me, it is always enjoyable to put names and faces together and meet new people who enjoy the love of birding and hawkwatching. Next year's Golden Eagle field trip heads to Allegheny Front Hawkwatch sitting between Somerset and Bedford counties. It will be on November 11 - 12, 2023.

### ***Answers to Bird Quiz***

1. Bahama Woodstar
2. South Polar Skua
3. Snow Goose x Ross's Goose, American x Eurasian Wigeon, and Redhead x Ring-necked Duck
4. "Audubon's" subspecies of the Yellow-rumped Warbler. (Ours in the East is the "Myrtle" subspecies.)
5. Hudsonian and Marbled (plus Black-tailed on the "provisional list" without photos)

## **PSO Newsletter**

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