



The Biweekly Newsletter for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Thursday, December 18th, 2025

One week to Christmas, and wow, do we have many updates to share, so let's dive in.

If you have photos to share or any questions or comments about the newsletter, email me at: kaitlynstouch@gmail.com.

Happy birding!

-Kaitlyn Stouch

The PSO Pileated Editor

This edition's banner photo is courtesy of Rick Carlson.

Award and Scholarship Nominations OPEN

Nominations for PSO's 2026 awards are due by February 15. We appreciate your consideration and nomination of deserving individuals and/or organizations.



Photo by Doug Baird

The **Earl Poole Award** is presented annually to a person or persons who have made significant contributions to Pennsylvania's ornithology. This may be in the form of research, volunteer efforts, publications, field work, or any other pursuit that has increased our knowledge and understanding of the birdlife in Pennsylvania. To nominate someone for this award, please visit [this webpage](#). Past winners of the award can be found [here](#).

The **Conservation Award** is presented periodically to an individual or organization that has had a positive impact on bird conservation in Pennsylvania. To make a nomination for this award, [click here](#). Past winners of the award can be found [here](#).

[Email any questions to Carolyn Hendricks.](#)

Youth Scholarships are available to attend the 2026 PSO Festival in Blair County, June 19-21, 2026. The scholarships cover transportation, lodging, and meals for a child and parent/guardian. Please note that a parent/guardian or an adult designated by the youth's parent guardian must attend the festival with the scholarship recipient. To nominate someone for a youth scholarship, [please visit this link](#) to fill out the brief application form.

[Email any questions to Joe Gyekis.](#)

Avian Action Alerts



1. OPPOSE THE SPEED ACT:

The House of Representatives is quickly advancing the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act, H.R. 4776 – a bill that would severely undermine environmental and legal protections, putting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats at grave risk. By rewriting the landmark National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the bill would eliminate essential public participation that gives YOU a voice in influencing decisions for the species, habitats, and communities you care about.

[TAKE ACTION NOW](#)

2. KEEP THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STRONG:

The federal government has announced four proposed rules that would weaken the Endangered Species Act, one of the most effective laws ever enacted to prevent extinctions. Described as a means to increase resource development and economic growth, the proposed rules erode keystone sections of the ESA.

As revealed in the 2025 State of the Birds report, many of our bird populations are in decline. Without strong protections, some of today's threatened species may face extinction.

[TAKE ACTION NOW](#)

3. HELP PROTECT NORTHWEST OLD-GROWTH FORESTS AND THEIR IMPERILED BIRDS:

The U.S. Senate is expected to vote soon on a measure that would greenlight huge increases in logging in our national forests. After the Senate vote, the bill will head back to the House for another approval. The Fix Our Forests Act (S. 1462 and H.R. 471) would weaken the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act, exempt scientific review of logging projects on millions of acres of federal land, limit community input, and reduce federal accountability to the public.

[TAKE ACTION NOW](#)

4. GOOD NEWS FOR BIRDS AND FORESTS IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Audubon staff in Pennsylvania trained and endorsed 14 foresters who were then connected with funding to create bird-friendly forest management plans for 9,394 acres of private forests, with another 2,564 acres implemented for improved habitat management.

5. SMITHSONIAN BIRD FRIENDLY COFFEE IS GOOD FOR YOU AND THE BIRDS:

Help the birds you care about by drinking shade-grown, organic coffee that is Smithsonian certified – the gold standard of coffee since growers don't cut down forests to grow the coffee. Research shows that bird friendly coffee farms provide food (insects) and safety, so birds are healthier. Lenca Coffee Roasters was recently certified by the Smithsonian and now sells Honduran Bird Friendly Los Robles coffee. If you aren't a coffee drinker, consider ordering some for Christmas gifts.

[ORDER NOW](#)

-Laura Jackson

2026 Birding Field Trips Announcement

Spread your wings with Audubon this winter! Two exciting birding trips have just launched. Join in on the fun by discovering wintering boreal birds in northern Minnesota. Or witness some of the nation's most iconic conservation initiatives by visiting Atwater's Prairie Chicken NWR and Aransas NWR in southeast Texas.

These experiences have been designed by ASWP's veteran guide, Brian Shema. He will be joined by emerging superstars, Dan Mendenhall and Nick Stahlman.

For more information and complete trip details, please visit: <https://www.aswp.org/our-programs/eco-tours/>

-Brian Shema



You've Heard of Elf on a Shelf...

**You've heard of Elf on a Shelf...
but have you heard of...**



or, how about...



Have you heard about...



what about...



**OK, if you've heard of all of those,
I bet you haven't heard of...**



Did we stump you on any of these? Answer key is below:

Swift on a gift, Finch on a grinch, Eider in the cider, Kites on lights, Thick knee on a Christmas tree.

~Memes courtesy of Brian Shema

Certificate of Appreciation

Did you know that when a homeowner/property owner allows visitors to see a rare or unusual bird on their property, they can be nominated for a Certificate of Appreciation from PSO? A beautiful certificate is sent to them with their name, the bird species, and the observation dates printed on it.

To date, PSO has issued 202 Certificates of Appreciation to these gracious birding hosts throughout Pennsylvania.

The nomination can be made on PSO's website at this link: <https://pabirds.org/certificates-of-appreciation/>

-Sandy Lockerman

Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count takes place from December 14th through January 5th every year. Have you participated in yours yet? While many have passed, there are still some counts left!

To find your local bird count date and information, visit the [map on Audubon's website](#). Green and yellow circles are open for new participants. Be sure to contact your compiler in advance of the count to participate.

Audubon also offers a [CBC image-sharing webpage](#)! Whether you're a photographer looking to showcase your shots or someone who wants to experience the excitement of others' counts from afar, it's a wonderful way to join in and celebrate the Christmas Bird Count.



Tufted Titmouse. Photo: Michele Black/Great Backyard Bird Count

December Webinar - On Demand Now!

Dr. Sarah Sargent recently gave her presentation, "Erie Bird Observatory: keeping tabs on birds in northwestern Pennsylvania", which was recorded and posted to the PSO YouTube account here:

<https://youtu.be/G3SA2OwrwWQ>

In that link you can learn the answers to many interesting questions, such as

- Who is the new director of Erie Bird Observatory?
- Which bird is the most abundant migrant identified flying north past the TREC tower in the spring?
- How long ago did bird banding begin at Presque Isle State Park?
- Is the beach at Gull Point growing or shrinking under the current erosion regime?
- What's the date of the Plover Nest Fest this coming summer?
 - if you want a cheat sheet, the answers are Holley Short, 1960, Red-winged Blackbird, growing, and July 18!



To view a full list of all our upcoming Webinars, visit [our events page on our website](#).

2026 County Spotlights-Save the Date

 Huntingdon County Birding Spotlight March 13-16, 2026	 Fayette County Birding Spotlight April 24-27, 2026	 Potter County Birding Spotlight October 16-19, 2026
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Our County Spotlights are PSO-organized weekend field trips to lesser-birded counties in Pennsylvania. Be sure to save the dates for our 2026 County Spotlights! Graphics by Tony Desantis.



Did you Know...

We are on social media! We have a Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and even a Discord server for our members and friends. Make sure you join us on whatever your preferred platform is to get daily updates and chat with other birders around the state.



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