

The PSO Pileated



May 2025

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

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From the President's Desk

Early spring provided me with a few birding opportunities that varied greatly in location, pace, and focus, giving me the chance to compare some of the many choices we now have as birders.

I was thrilled to have the chance to tag along for one day of the recent PSO Northumberland County Spotlight weekend (pg 11). These events allow birders to meet up at predetermined spots each morning and explore a variety of locations throughout the target county. Having done precious little prior birding in Northumberland County - and none in spring - I had no idea what to expect. Our crew of locals and visitors weaved through the county, stopping in state parks, county parks, and game lands, with each stop adding to my mental picture of what late March looks like along the Susquehanna River. Observing Merlin courtship was an avian highlight of the day, but it was just as interesting to see common species in locations that were new to me - kestrel, snipe, phoebe, junco, and so on.

I took on a different birding challenge when traveling to Florida for work. I was able to arrive several hours before my work event started, leaving just enough time to hop in a rental car and search out a few birds. With the ubiquity of eBird and local, state, and regional rare bird alerts, it is easier than ever to plot out birding trips that add to your life list or provide the highest diversity.

At the top of my wish list was Florida Scrub-Jay, a potential lifer, and as many of those big, photogenic wading birds as I could find. With a little bit of eBird exploration, I was able to plot a course to a handful of hotspots and create a map that would lead me as quickly as possible to each spot. It was a fast-paced spin through central Florida, but I was able to get great looks at a scrub-jay and immerse myself in spoonbill and stork colonies. I also recorded my first-ever three ibis day thanks to a White-faced Ibis discovered a few days before my arrival that kept popping up on the county eBird alerts, in addition to the expected White and Glossy Ibis. It was an exhausting day, but great fun.

A week later I found myself on a spring break camping trip with my sons at Cape Henlopen State Park in Delaware, a great birding spot that I've explored several times. We filled our time with bike rides, campfires, and cooking, always with binoculars nearby. Of course, even when you let the birds come to you, there are great birds to be found, starting with the bickering Brown-headed Nuthatches that set up shop outside our tent around 6 am. Our biking took us past Gordon's Pond and into a variety of wooded, wetland, and urban habitats. I spent an afternoon at our campsite reading with a soundtrack of Pine Warbler, Fish Crow, and several others. It was glorious and every bit as rewarding as my carefully-planned dash the week prior.

PSO has plenty of opportunities to try out different approaches to birding this year. Our Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (pg 3) is a great chance to either pick a good spot and

see what you find or use all the tools at your disposal to design an epic big day in your county or region (all while supporting bird conservation projects). The PSO Birding Festival (pg 5) will feature plenty of chances to be guided through great birding locations by local experts. Finally, this fall will feature another County Spotlight in Susquehanna (pg 14), where you can explore an underbirded area of the state and make discoveries with a group.

However you prefer to do your birding, I hope you have a chance to enjoy this glorious season. I'm glad to have so many options and will continue to take advantage of them all. As long as you are having fun, there is no wrong way to go birding.

Brian Byrnes

President

Atlasing Together in Underbirded Areas

Are you interested in helping document common breeding birds in an under-visited part of the state, but prefer to do it as part of a group instead of alone? If so, review the list of counties and dates below. Send an email to the event organizers listed to receive detailed information about meetup times and exact locations. All levels of expertise welcome, from skilled ear birders to beginning atlasers, or even people who focus less on birds and more on helping shuttle walkers from spot to spot and share cookies.

For each of these outings, the goal will be to confirm as many breeding species as possible. Since many of the areas selected have little public land, some of the effort will

be based on road cruising and some will be based on walking on quiet rural roads. Also, visiting cemeteries, bridges, powerline cuts, and country stores can be important places to help fill out the variety of habitats that these blocks provide.

Most of the locations for these "blockboosting" activities are selected by Amber Wiewel as clusters of atlas blocks that got little attention in the first year of the atlas. Just about every singing vireo, cawing crow, and begging baby robin will be an important contribution to our knowledge of the avifauna of each area! The only way to know which species have gotten more or less common in the decades since the last atlases is to

check, and these are spots where not many birders live and participate, so it will fill in gaps in our knowledge.

Again, all birders are invited – no prior experience with atlasing is necessary. Pay attention to the PA Bird Atlas webpage (<https://ebird.org/atlaspa/home>) for updates on these events and contact the event lead for more information. Some meetup points and other plans will need to change depending on if 3 people are coming or 15 people, so please reach out. Also, if you are not an email user and need phone numbers for any of these coordinators, Amber (wiewel@hawkmountain.org) can help you get in touch.

- **Bedford:** June 20-22 (Tracy Mosebey, PBA3.Fulton@gmail.com)
- **Bradford:** June 28-29 (Michele Morningstar, mmorning1@gmail.com)
- **Butler:** July 11-13 (Oscar Miller, aoscarmiller3@gmail.com)
- **Clearfield:** June 28-29 (Joe Gyekis, gyekis9@gmail.com)
- **Fayette:** June 14-15 (Alex Busato, PBA3.Fayette@gmail.com)
- **Greene:** June 9-14 (Marjorie Howard, rkbbirdclub@yahoo.com)
- **Lancaster:** June 6-9 (Cammy Freed, birdscammy@gmail.com; Nina Wolf, PBA3.Lancaster@gmail.com)
- **Lycoming/Tioga:** June 21-22 (Bobby Brown, PBA3.Lycoming@gmail.com; Bob Ross, rmross4@gmail.com)
- **McKean:** June 9-13 (John Fedak, 814-366-2500 – text preferred)
- **Pike:** June 14-15 (Bradley White, PBA3.Pike@gmail.com)
- **Schuylkill/Columbia:** June 21-22 (Dave Kruel and Rich Rieger, davekruel300@gmail.com)

Amber Wiewel & Joe Gyekis

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Announces Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) proudly announces that its Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation will occur from June 6-16, 2025, and support three projects across the Commonwealth.

Birders are invited to join the Blitz by forming a team, raising funds, and competing in various competition categories to document birds wherever they are during the Blitz period. Teams enlist their friends to support

their efforts with a donation; all donations are distributed to conservation partners based on the needs of their projects. Bird-lovers of all ages and skill levels are invited to visit www.breedingbirdblitz.org to learn more about the event, to form and register a team, or to make a donation. **Registration is open now!**

We are adding a new feature to the Blitz this year! If your roots are in PA but are living out

of state, on vacation during the Blitz, or if you are just passionate about bird conservation, you can now participate in the “**Blitzing Without Boundaries**” category! Form a team of one person or more, fundraise for our conservation partners, and bird during the Blitz period anywhere in the world to compete against other teams across the globe! This new category is in conjunction with our returning, “Cumulative Count,” “Big Day,” and “Block Boosting” options. More information about these competition categories can be found at

<https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/contest>.

The 2025 Blitz aims to raise \$25,000 to support the following bird conservation projects:

- **Manada Conservancy**, Dauphin County: Swatara Creek Preserve expansion and Bird Habitat Enhancement project. The Conservancy owns a 6.5 acre preserve containing woodland, meadow, and wetland habitat. The preserve provides public parking for access to recreation on Swatara Creek including ample birding opportunities and nature walks. Funds received from the Blitz will help cover acquisition costs of land, and will support fall planting of native trees and shrubs to restore the property’s riparian buffer. Through this project, the preserve will be an accessible space, rich in biodiversity, and enjoyable for the local community
- **Pymatuning Lake Association**, Crawford County: Invasive plant removal, visitor education, and fishing

line receptacles. The Pymatuning Lake Association is a volunteer driven association in partnership with the Pennsylvania and Ohio Pymatuning State Park. The park is home to Pymatuning Lake, which is an Important Bird Area for many waterfowl species, including the 7 state endangered bird species. Funds from the blitz will go toward ongoing efforts of reducing invasive species in the lake, including European Frog-bit and Hydrilla. Pymatuning State Park is the second most visited Pennsylvania State Park, seeing heavy fishing traffic and overall recreational activity. Funds from the blitz will also go towards implementing more fishing line receptacles, and training sessions for volunteers who rehabilitate waterfowl and raptors.

- **Lycoming Audubon Society**, Lycoming County: Purchasing native plant species, mitigating invasive species, and implementing educational signs. Lycoming Audubon serves Lycoming and Clinton County and has roughly 350 members. They host bird field trips, provide educational programming in schools, and facilitate habitat restoration projects in multiple locations within their counties. Funds from this year’s Blitz will support the ecological restoration of the Robert Porter Allen Natural Area. Here, invasive plants will be removed and replaced with native plants to increase the native plant biodiversity along the riparian edges of wetlands. In addition to purchasing native plant species, and

controlling invasives the Blitz funds will provide for educational signs that highlight the value of healthy habitats to birds and other wildlife.

In its first four years, the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation has raised more than \$67,000 in support of 12 projects. The 2024 Blitz featured more than 100 birders competing on over 20 teams. Those birders raised \$22,290 for bird conservation. This year we aim to raise **25,000 dollars for 2025!**

We are excited to organize this event for its fifth year and are proud of the conservation projects we help fund. We hope you will consider **registering a team**, and will join us

for the Fifth Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation!

Visit www.breedingbirdblitz.org for updates on the event and all the details and stories from the event's history. Questions about creating a team can be directed to blitz4conservation@gmail.com where a member of the PSO Conservation Committee will be excited to answer. Conservation Committee members are Laura Jackson, chair; Brian Byrnes; Vern Gauthier; Carolyn Hendricks; David Barber; Mary Alice Koeneke; and Karter Witmer.

Karter Witmer

5 Reasons You Shouldn't Miss the 2025 PSO Birding Festival

September 26–28, 2025 • Lehigh County, PA

Whether you're a lifelong birder or just starting out, the PSO Birding Festival is the can't-miss birding event of the year. Here's why:

1. Field Trips for Every Interest

From the rugged ridges of the Kittatinny Ridge and the forests of the Pocono Plateau to the rolling farmland of western Lehigh County, explore a variety of habitats across eight counties. Led by local experts, our field trips offer something for every birder.

2. Expert Speakers

Our lineup of speakers will cover a range of fascinating topics—from how birding can improve your personal well being to local conservation wins. You'll leave inspired and more informed.

3. A Vibrant Vendor Hall

Browse art, optics, field gear, bird-friendly

apparel, and connect with regional conservation organizations doing great work for birds and habitats.

4. A Welcoming Community

Meet fellow bird lovers from across Pennsylvania. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned birder, you'll find your flock here.

5. Support Bird Conservation

Your attendance helps advance PSO's mission to protect birds and promote birding across the state.

Registration opens July 1 at 8 a.m.—mark your calendar! This year's festival will be our first in Lehigh County, based at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Allentown. Let's make our 34th gathering the best yet.

Sheree Daugherty

Summary of Board Meeting Minutes

April 3, 2025

President Brian Byrnes called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Ten board members were present, with seven absent. The February minutes were approved unanimously.

Key board updates included the resignation of Val Dunn as Secretary, though she will remain on the board. Sheree Daugherty was unanimously

approved to complete Val's term as Secretary through the 2026 annual meeting. Brian Miller is on hiatus and will re-engage with the board as soon as possible. Nathan Weyandt has resigned as director, and Sean Murphy's *ex officio* role was discussed.

Several motions were approved: up to \$1,500 was allocated to support the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C), with PSO's funds to be used only if the \$25,000 goal is not met. A \$750 scholarship for one student to attend the Frontiers in Ornithology event

Conservation Chat Room:



Join the Bird Conservation Community!

Conservation in the best of times is a challenge, but now in the era of "Damage, Destroy, and Deceive," it's even harder to protect birds and the habitats they need. However, we can support local

was approved, with the recipient expected to provide follow-up content.

Award budgets were set at \$1,000–\$1,500 for Student Research Grants, \$1,000 for the Conservation Award, and \$250 for the Poole Award. PSO will have a table at the Middle Creek Expo (June 28, 2025). New rack cards will be printed by mid-April for outreach efforts.

An Executive Committee will be formed to guide governance and strategic direction. Email voting protocols will be established.

Outreach strategies include partnering with bird and conservation groups, media outreach, and expanded promotion.

Treasurer Frank Haas reported no decline in membership following the fee increase and a rise in online-only renewals. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Sheree Daugherty

organizations that work tirelessly to protect bird habitat, and we can make sure that the land we own is a good place for birds.

If you are reading this, you are most likely a member of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and that's a wonderful group to be involved with, since your membership supports bird conservation, research, and education. But maybe you are willing to increase your commitment to birds by joining a community of non-profits that work hard to protect and restore bird habitat? If so, here are a few suggestions:

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) owns 15,000 acres of preserves in Pennsylvania that provide habitat for birds to nest, forage, breed and thrive. Two groups of birds that really need that protection are forest birds and grassland birds. A study in 2019 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and American Bird Conservancy found that forest bird populations have dropped by one billion birds and grassland birds have declined by 720 million.



Elusive, yes, but the sound of our bubbling boulder attracted this Kentucky Warbler to our backyard. Check out the long toes and claws that make them successful ground foragers.

downtown Pittsburgh, but its 369 acres of undeveloped forest are like a bird magnet, so protecting and enhancing the habitat for birds is critical, especially in an urban environment like Allegheny County. This reserve also attracts people – there’s a 3.2 mile trail loop that allows birders to see a number of birds, like the stunning scarlet tanager, or the beautiful, but elusive Kentucky Warbler.

Please consider joining WPC to support this amazing bird conservation effort!

Just Google “Western Pennsylvania Conservancy” and click on the red DONATE button at the top

WPC is working hard to reverse the decline of forest birds at their preserves – David Yeany II, an avian ecologist, and Ephraim Zimmerman, the science director for the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program science just finished a four-year project in five sites across Allegheny County.¹

In the report from the WPC Spring 2025 “Perspectives,” David explains how they worked with Allegheny Bird Conservation Alliance to conduct bird surveys in 2022 at five different WPC properties to determine bird populations and how habitat type and condition contributed to the birds observed. The habitat at Tom’s Run Nature Reserve was also enhanced when WPC staff planted 400 native trees to support more forest bird habitat.

What’s amazing is that WPC’s Toms Run Nature Reserve is only 10 miles south of

of the page to join.

If you live in the eastern part of Pennsylvania, you might know that **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** is one of the top conservation non-profits working to protect bird habitats near you. In 2012, TNC completed a study of all the forests on the East Coast. Their research showed that the Central Appalachian region is not only one of the world’s, “most biologically rich regions,” but it is also the most likely to be “resilient to the long-term effects of climate change and other stresses.”

More recently, in 2024, TNC assisted the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Pennsylvania Game Commission with the

purchase of the 2,386-acre Goetz Summit property which was a high priority due to its critical habitat and resiliency. The property, located in the Pennsylvania Wilds, is undeveloped and contains mostly northern hardwoods and conifer forests with deep valleys and rocky cliffs. It is a designated Important Bird Area and the state's free-roaming elk herd maintains a stronghold nearby.

TNC also increased conifer cover on over 200 acres across TNC's Long Pond Preserve and Bethlehem Authority conserved lands this year while creating 50 acres of new Cerulean Warbler habitat at a Capital Region Water site near Harrisburg. Plus, staff and volunteers planted nearly 1,500 trees to promote species diversity at TNC's properties in the Poconos.

One of TNC's conservation priorities is the Kittatinny Ridge, which includes Hawk Mountain Sanctuary - world famous for its migrating raptors. Just search "The Nature Conservancy in PA" for more online information.

Are you a member of an **Audubon** chapter? Audubon chapters are scattered across Pennsylvania, forming a network of advocacy and education that focuses on bird conservation. If you'd like to learn more about birds while birding with others, join an Audubon field trip, or volunteer for the Christmas Bird Count, held from mid-

December to early January. Check out the map and a list of chapters in Pennsylvania at

www.audubon.org/audubon-near-you?state=PA

I've described just a few groups that work hard to protect habitats and birds in Pennsylvania - there are many more. State agencies like the Pennsylvania Game Commission are responsible for the spectacular return of the Bald Eagle and they are working hard to help many other bird species. Federal agencies, like the Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, also provide funding for bird habitats and conserve land in Pennsylvania.

And don't forget about **PSO's Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation!** Hopefully Karter's article in this newsletter will inspire you to have a good time birding, even possibly documenting breeding birds, while at the same time fundraising for our three partners' conservation projects.

Are you part of the conservation community to protect Penn's Woods and its birds? If not, I encourage you to get involved.

1. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's newsletter, "Perspectives," Issue 9, Spring 2025

Laura Jackson, PSO Conservation Chair
Bedford County

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Invites Youth to Apply for 2025 Frontiers in Ornithology Travel Award

In order to support the development of ornithologists from Pennsylvania, PSO supports student travel to the 2025 Frontiers in Ornithology Student Symposium in Seattle, Washington on October 4th, 2025 (details here: <https://frontiersinornithology.com/>).

Applicants ages 13-23 are eligible for up to \$750 to help cover costs of travel, lodging, and food. Further nomination details are available on the PSO website and via the PSO email list, and information is due to Joe Gyekis and the PSO Education Committee by May 31, 2025 (<https://pabirds.org/contact-frontiers-symposium/>)

Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery About Pennsylvania Birds

Bridges

I live in a county full of bridges. Pennsylvania is absolutely full of bridges with thousands dotting the landscape, enabling us to get over streams without getting wet. Where we live, there are still many covered bridges. These are old style wooden bridges with roofs built mostly in the 19th century along the backroads of rural counties. Many have met their demise to progress, floods, or vandalism. Yet, there are 213 still remaining in the Keystone state. There are covered bridges in 37 of the state’s counties. According to a Wikipedia article, the counties with the most bridges are Lancaster, Washington, and Columbia. Chester,



Bedford, Bucks, Perry, Greene, and Somerset counties also can claim to have ten or more covered bridges in their borders. Little Columbia County has 21 covered bridges. That might be more than the number of birders who have contributed to the Atlas so far in that county.

Covered bridges are tourist attractions. Calendars and magazines feature them. Columbia County has its own annual festival celebrating these bridges. People drive many miles to visit covered bridges and take

photos, ticking them off their hit list. It’s a thing! There are many different styles of covered bridges that make a study in themselves. Some are Queen post truss while others are Burr arch truss, or Kingpost --- as some examples. There are organizations that protect and promote tourism at covered bridges. Covered bridges are historic and folkloric!



Kramer Bridge over Mud Run in Greenwood Township, Columbia County

Why are covered bridges so cool for birding? There are lots of good reasons. They are often along low trafficked rural roads way back in the country where there are few birders, but lots of birds. They cross streams that are small and interestingly clean and well-shaded. The ones in Columbia County get very little car traffic and often near farms and woodlots. Hardly anyone visits them and they are still on the landscape because that particular road gets little traffic that cannot tolerate the low ceilings of trussed wooden bridges. You could stand in the middle of a covered bridge and not be bothered by anyone for hours. Busy bridges have been removed.

Covered bridges often have windows so you can stand on the bridge and look out over the water from mid-stream. There you might spot the nest of an Eastern Phoebe, Barn Swallow, or American Robin right on the structure or underneath on a support beam. Tree Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Bank Swallows, and Cliff Swallows might fly by. Cliff Swallows often nest in farm buildings while Rough-wings and Banks excavate a burrow nest in embankments. Streams are where you want to search for these swallows. Who knows? Maybe a Chimney Swift

nesting in a farmhouse nearby might show up. These are quiet places where you might hear an Eastern Screech-Owl or a Great Horned Owl at night. I have found Eastern Whip-poor-wills near covered bridges.

I have begun making covered bridges into eBird Hotspots. I urge you to do the same. They turn up in Atlas blocks with few observers, but lots of slow rural roads where you can walk around and find birds even on private property without bothering anyone. Those farm country streams often host Common Mergansers, Wood Ducks, and

Belted Kingfishers. The elevated view from a bridge makes their discovery easier. Any rural stream often has brushy areas along its banks. This is irritating to anglers trying to get near the water, but good habitat for birds. That is where you would find Common Yellowthroats,

Song Sparrows, Willow Flycatchers, and Yellow Warblers. Cold water streams also feature Louisiana Waterthrushes which like to forage for aquatic insects and perch on rocks in the middle of streams. Spotted Sandpipers teeter on the same rocks, more easily seen from the bridge than a shoreline covered with woods. Baltimore Orioles build their



North Branch Bird Club at Hollinghead Bridge over Roaring Creek near Catawissa, Columbia County



hanging nests on limbs hanging over the water. If there are tall sycamores and maples, perhaps you can find Northern Parulas and Cerulean Warblers as well as the more predictable Warbling Vireos and Yellow-throated Vireos that inevitably populate riparian woods. If you are lucky enough to have hemlocks along the stream, there are a few conifer birds such as Magnolia Warbler to be found there. The hemlocks sometimes shade the stream so well that brook trout lurk there and attract anglers to the shoreline. There are lots of birding and fishing possibilities at covered bridges and the roads leading up to them.

Birders in Columbia County connect covered bridges with birding. The Rupert covered bridge that crosses Fishing Creek near its confluence with the Susquehanna River was a walking destination of mine when I was only in grade school. It was one of my first birding spots. We include it in bird walks to the Bloomsburg Town Park and it gets covered in the Christmas Bird Count. John Slotterback leads a bird walk in Catawissa each February that includes the Hollingshead bridge over Catawissa Creek. When our Christmas Bird

Count team covers the Greenwood Township area, we go birding at the Kramer covered bridge over Mud Run and the Patterson covered bridge over Green Creek. Good places to find birds.

Of course, other kinds of bridges offer good birding opportunities. I've spent some time checking them out for water birds. They are great places to include in a rural bird walk. Please consider visiting a few bridges during the Third Pennsylvania Atlas. You could add a few species to your block and have fun doing it. Meet up with birding friends and walk the quiet rural roads that connect to the bridges and enjoy finding birds along them. Please note that my name is on each one. "Gross Weight" should remind you where you got this silly idea. I would recommend including the name of the bridge in the eBird Hotspot name. These names are unique and easily found on a sign on the bridge. You may need to be more creative with other bridge types that might be just as good for "bridge-birding."

Good Birding,

Doug Gross, Dagross144@verizon.net

Northumberland County Birding Spotlight March 28-31, 2025

This year's first of 3 spotlights took us up the Susquehanna river to the oddly shaped county of Northumberland. It is always nice to get gulls and waterfowl for the March spotlights and this county offered quite a bit of the river, so it was a nice destination to attempt that.

The planning committee asked some birding friends we knew from the area and Court

Harding, Karol Pasquinelli and Andy Keister came through with some great locations and field trips for the attendees.

On Friday day 1, I lured Amber Wiewel down from Centre county and we picked up Jessie Sauder from Snyder county along the way. We met at Weiser State Forest for some birding in the woods, it had a really nice parking lot as well as a bathroom, always a bonus for those

who have long drives to get there or after the walks. We had Chuck Berthoud from York, Tim Grover from Monroe and others who traveled a few counties to join us. Karol and Court led the day for us. Sadly the lake was drawn down so no waterfowl was to be had, but we did see a Bald Eagle and a probable eagle nest in an attempt to get some breeding data. A few Killdeer were around the water and visible mud. We were all thrilled to push out a Fox Sparrow and saw several Brown Creepers, many of the expected birds of that habitat.

Karol took us back the scenic way towards the reservoir at Sunbury. From there we were finally able to see some waterfowl including Pied-billed Grebe, Ring-necked Duck and American Wigeon. With a quick lunch break at the world famous Squeeze In hotdog stand, we were off to the Adam Bower dam on the Sunbury side as our next destination and we set up the line of scopes to scan. We got our first Wood Duck of the trip, Greater



Photo by Paul Nale

Scaup, Long-tailed Duck and distant Red-breasted Mergansers. After Court discovered a crow building a nest on the Selinsgrove side, we crossed the river to hit that side and confirmed Fish Crow for breeding data as well as a previously undiscovered Peregrine Falcon. We added our first Bonaparte's Gull. My crew ended our day at the Isle of Que and were able to add Bufflehead on the river and confirm nesting Bald Eagle across the river from the boat launch. Some of the group kept going that evening and went to the Natalie

Trails which includes a large field surrounded by overgrown coal strippings. The group was entertained by 15 to 20 Woodcocks. The owls kept their silence. Trip list up to 65 after day 1. Saturday morning for day 2, I wasn't able to join as I had my son's wrestling tournament to attend but our spotlight crew started off the day at SGL 84 on Dornsife Mountain Road. Court led the group of eleven including the Higbees, Dan Brauning and friends from the North, around the perimeter of the grassy fields and then to other locations in the same Gameland. Other notable birds were a Wilson's Snipe, lots of field birds and raptors, and a Common Raven carrying a chicken egg, a new confirmation. Others birding along the

river that day including Chuck Berthoud, Jessie Sauder, Joe Gyekis and Loanne Snively saw a sub adult female at one of the Peregrine nests and got to see a migrating flock of Ring-necked Ducks get attacked by a falcon.

Saturday evening some of the group along with some Easterners went for owls

again and a couple of Woodcock peented and displayed. The group then traveled to another location on Creek Road to see and hear an Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl and an enthusiastic Northern Saw-whet Owl. They awoke a flock of Turkeys roosting in the trees along the trail. The trip list was 89 at the end of day 2.

Sunday morning for day 3, was our official river day and I met Joe Gyekis at the Isle of Que early. We were able to add Tundra Swan

to the spotlight as well as a Scaup species. We just weren't able to ID from a distant scope view. We met the crew on the Sunbury side of the Adam Bower dam and started scoping. Brian Byrnes came from the Philly area and Paul Nale came from Monroe county, along with more long distance travelers. We were able to get several nice species of waterfowl there including American Black Duck, Bufflehead, Wood Duck and the lingering Long-tailed Duck. Three gull species showed themselves as well as a flyover pair of northbound Eastern Meadowlarks. Traveling to Shikellamy State Park gave us quite a thrill in seeing and hearing a pair of Merlin making a ruckus and we were able to see passing of a Dark-eyed Junco between the two and the female ended up having her meal. The whole group got great bin and scope looks as well as many pictures. Moving up the river, we were able to see a Peregrine Falcon carrying food. At Chillisquaque Access we found Brown Creeper and Hermit Thrush. At Warriors Run wetlands, we jumped some Wilson's Snipe, saw Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser and Field Sparrow. Old Swamp wetlands gave us Red-headed Woodpeckers, a pair of loving American Kestrels and a Northern Harrier. The Amish pond gave us more snipe and Horned Larks in the nearby fields. Trip list is up to 101 at the end of day 3. Monday morning for day 4, I was able to get Aden Troyer to join me for a run. We decided



Photo by Amber Wiewel

not to join the planned walk and just hit water spots and maybe some hotspots to do some cleanup on species we had missed on the prior 3 days. We decided to hit the Susquehanna river at the closest spot we could that offered Northumberland county river spots, so Liverpool it was, where rt 104 crossed over from rt 35 to 11/15. We got into Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Shoveler and American Black Duck. As we were pulling off 11/15 on the exit ramp, we saw a large white bird that I first considered being an egret but it ended up being the probable Tundra Swan we saw the day before with a large group of Ring-billed Gulls. We met with

Jessie Sauder on the Isle of Que and were able to refind or find the scaup species much closer and put an ID on it for a Lesser Scaup, a new species on the weekend. We found Court was already at the Bower dam as the morning walk got cancelled and was on a Tundra Swan which may have been the one we saw earlier in the

morning from the Isle and this one was above the dam as well as a Horned Grebe. Court then joined us for the rest of the day. We came upon a large vulture flock that was feeding on a carcass in the field and counted 18 Black Vultures loafing and feeding. After hitting several small streams, we finally got a singing Louisiana Waterthrush to our delight and new addition on the weekend. We thought we had a Red-shouldered Hawk laying low on a nest, took pics, scanned with scope, added it, but then after the spotlight,

Court went back and confirmed it as a Red-tailed Hawk on a nest. We removed it from our list but thankfully Karol P got one late Monday and kept our tally the same. In the end, we were able to find 108 species of birds, using 207 eBird checklists that had 44 species with pictures and 13 species with audio. Julia Plummer usually comes on these and goes solo so she can get recordings and needs quiet. She was able to get 13 of the species for audio, with Jessie, Court and Karol each providing 1. We were almost able to get the complete sweep of obtainable Owls on the spotlight, only missing Short-eared Owl. That was a huge thrill for those who were along and helping find them. It was by far our best March spotlight yet, but the river really helped. Once again, we had so many great local birders helping as well as our traveling posse of birders providing more eyes and ears. There were several of our usual travelers

involved, but many newbies joined for the first time too. Here is the link to the trip report if you want to check it out:

(<https://ebird.org/tripreport/286448>)

PSO has really had great success at these spotlights and they are becoming more popular each time. If you aren't already a member of PSO, please consider it as we do these types of things for free. A membership for friends makes a great gift for someone else as well.

The last Spotlight for 2025 will be in Susquehanna County during October 17-20. More plans for that one to be announced later as details are being worked on. I want to thank Joe, Court, Karol and Jessie for helping me create this writeup and correcting my errors.

Chad Kauffman

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