

The PSO Pileated



August 2025

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Volume 36, Number 3

pabirds.org

From the President's Desk

With the time constraints of work and family commitments, I do most of my birding solo in the bits and pieces of time that I can carve out of a busy schedule. Sometimes it is a quick scan of a lake in between dropping off one child and picking up another, a half-hour walk at lunch, or waking up early to get in some birding before running errands. These short birding efforts keep me attuned to the comings and goings of migrants and the timing of nesting behaviors, and only occasionally will I stumble into a notable or rare sighting.



Kite Enjoying the Cicadas. Photo by Barry Blust

This makes logical sense to me: the chances of a single birder bumping into a single out-of-range bird ought to be quite low. The chances of finding something rare ought to go up with

multiple single birders each covering a different patch of ground. Group birding feels like it should not drastically increase the odds of finding a rarity; there are more eyes and ears, but they are still covering the same

amount of ground as a single birder. However, I believe there is a certain amount of birding serendipity that occurs when a group gathers.

This June, for the fifth straight year, I participated in PSO's

Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (____) by joining a team of birders for a "big day" in Chester

County. We spent all day zigzagging through the county

(<https://ebird.org/tripreport/379980>) to find as many species as possible and raise funds for bird conservation projects through pledges

from friends. On June 7, 2025, somehow, somehow, we were in the right place at the right time to make the kind of discovery that gets birders from around the county to drop what they are doing and grab their binoculars and keys.

The forecast called for showers, heavy at times, to occur throughout the day. With the morning off to a clear start, we decided to skip one spot to ensure we could explore State Game Lands 43 before rain hit. SGL 43 is a jewel of a birding location, a big block of woodlands that is the most reliable spot in the county to find Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers. After ticking the expected species for the site, we began our hike back to the parking lot and I got a quick glimpse of two birds just above the treeline; a raptor being chased by a grackle. The raptor seemed slender, but I had barely a look and enough time to gesture in its direction before it disappeared. I was hopeful the bird had stopped. Fifty yards down the path, we came around a bend and I got a clear look at the raptor perched in a dead tree. A Mississippi Kite! After processing the shock for a second, I turned to excitedly whisper “kite” to my teammates, trailing me by just a few steps. Luckily, the bird stayed put and we all got fantastic looks. We had to pry ourselves away from the kite because we still had to stay on schedule and get to dozens of additional sites. By the time we were pulling out of the parking lot, the first of many birders who saw

our Discord post about the kite was pulling in. Remarkably, by that afternoon birders had located up to three kites at the site and sightings of one to three birds would continue for more than two weeks.

Incredibly, this kind of experience is not new to our team, nor is it unique. Our team previously had jaw-dropping moments in 2022, when a completely unexpected American Woodcock became our 100th species just after dark, and 2024, when an unscheduled stop turned up a late migrant Black Tern in stunning breeding plumage. Other teams had similar luck this spring. The Williamsport Warblers turned up a new county record for Lycoming, an Arctic Tern. Others found scarce breeders like Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, and Golden-winged Warbler, along with late migrants like Cape May Warbler. You can explore many of the teams’ checklists at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/385812>.

I hope you have similar luck the next time you go birding with a group. Our next chance to gather as PSO members will be this fall in Allentown for the 2025 PSO Birding Festival (___). With a schedule full of outings to birding hotspots and a little bit of the serendipity that group birding brings, we are sure to make some incredible discoveries.

Brian Byrnes
President

York County Birding Spotlight April 25-28th, 2025

PSO continued its tradition of holding a spotlight at the end of April in a southern tier county and we seem to have hit the jackpot on this year's adventure. York is 11th for the most checklists of all time on eBird and 22nd for all-time in species with 294. Each year will be dependent on mother nature with weather, we had some rain Saturday morning and some high winds the rest of the day which continued into Sunday morning.

We reached out to a former PSO board member and current member Chuck Berthoud, who has joined us on a few spotlights to help us canvas his home county of York. He brought in some locals to help him including David Arrow, Evan Vaeth, and Jady Conroy.

They did a fantastic job lining up some trips as well as creating a long list of spots with links for self-birding locations. As usual, we had many join the main group but some came and went and others just did their own thing all while helping the cause by sharing their eBird lists with PSO Birding Data on their checklists.

Friday morning led us to Codorus State Park for a walk around the Rummel Farm and Mary Ann Furnace trail. Spring migrants were upon us as soon as we pulled into the parking lot hearing some Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Eastern Phoebes, Grasshopper Sparrows and many more. We had a nice level trail walk up through the fields, through some woods and were greeted by many Ovenbirds, flyover Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler and more. Evan had scouted the area prior and knew Pine Warbler was around and we ended up hearing several on the walk as well as White-eyed Vireo. Getting

to the water's edge we were lucky to find some other new birds in Killdeer, Bonaparte's Gull, American Herring Gull, Blue Winged Teal and Great Egret.

From there we headed to Hoff Rd Launch & Smith Point Area which had a wonderful feeding station that we could have sat there for hours watching. We got excited when we heard Wild Turkey calling but soon realized over the cove, there was some caged poultry and turkeys keep calling during our visit. We had to remove it from the day list. Next stop was West Manheim Township Rec Park, it was just starting to spit rain a bit but we saw Purple Martin hotels and at first only saw House Sparrow which was new for the day but soon were able to see almost a dozen Purple Martin.

Long Arm Reservoir was our next stop and the fields were alive with Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Eastern Kingbird. Spring Grove Paper Mill Pond got us excited when we saw Gadwall and Ring-necked Duck as well as Belted Kingfisher. Chuck was able to get us permission to try and see the Trumpeter Swans, and he was told there were 4 that day. We searched the area but weren't able to find any large white birds. Just as we were about to leave, we saw an immature Trumpeter come down the creek, then a 2nd one joined it. We never saw the adults, but that was okay. We also got to see over 30 Great Blue Herons on their rookery which was a treat.

Chuck did hit a spot to add Green Heron for the weekend as well as Eastern Screech Owl. I called it a night to recharge for the full weekend. Warren & Nina Wolf joined us for the weekend and did a good bit of solo birding on their own adding to the spotlights

tally several days. We ended up with 103 species on day 1.

Joe Gyekis and his family joined me in our AirBnB near Wrightsville and he was up before dawn for the 2nd day, getting some good birds like Yellow-throated Warbler, and while I was getting ready I heard a Wild Turkey gobbling several times. We left a bit early to hit the river and lucked out by seeing a Hooded Merganser come up river above us. We headed to meet the crew at the York Galleria mall and it just started to rain lightly which was the theme until after lunch. We saw nesting Canada Goose right in the parking lot, heard a Green Heron nearby and the day was off.

We started at the Robert A. Kinsley property owned by the Lancaster Nature Conservancy and were ready to find out what the heavy wooded areas were going to offer on the wonderful trail. We soon found some warblers with the most notable being Worm-eating and Nashville. A small flock of Common Loon seen flying overhead was a thrill for all of us. As the rain was picking up a bit some of us turned back and tried for some owls in the thick evergreen stands while others kept going a bit further and got into a really nice warbler flock which offered Blue-winged, Tennessee, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Blue among the swarms of Myrtle and handfuls of Black-throated Green and

Black-and-white Warblers, plus Northern Parula, Ovenbird and Red-eyed Vireo in the mix. Jeff Kenney and Joe laughed at how intently some of us were focused on trying to observe breeding behaviors of a Downy Woodpecker pair in the midst of this first big mixed species flock of the season--atlasing can be addictive!



Mark your calendars for the next county spotlight! For more information, go to: pabirds.org/events-pso

Next stop was Wizard Ranch Nature Preserve which offered quite a mix of habitat. Just out of the parking lot, we heard a song and debated Orchard Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak--oops there it is, actually a Blue Grosbeak! A Swamp sparrow was also a new one for our list, the views on some of this walk were incredible, some streams, open fields and nice woods. Lunch was on everyone's mind, so we went to the John Wright restaurant right on the river at Wrightsville.

We got to sit outside on the patio and enjoy the birds while relaxing. Joe was able to find us a Bank Swallow which was a new one for the spotlight and after eating, a few of us were able to hear and tally the Yellow-throated Warbler. The big surprise came during lunch when some alerts and phone calls were letting us know that a Western Cattle Egret was found at Lake Redman by Bob Reiter. This was a lifer, state bird or county bird, etc. for many of us. We all zipped over there and some of us actually drove past

it as it was in the field across from the parking lot in Sparton Rd. If someone under age 25 actually calls you on the phone instead of texting, it might be because you just drove past the rarity. After some nice birding over on the boardwalk, some of us split up or peeled off for the day. Chuck went for the Black-crowned Night Heron; Joe and I went to the river to see the super choppy water as the wind picked up in the afternoon. We ended day 2 with 128 species.

Sunday morning had most of us traveling to Gifford Pinchot State Park. The winds were still pretty strong coming off the water but we were happy to find 2 Ruddy Duck on the far edge, as well as Gadwall and American Wigeon. Court Harding's sharp eyes found us a roosting Barred Owl in a wood duck box in the middle of the woods on a trail. After lunch, more people peeled off and smaller groups rounded out the day. We ended day 3 with 140 species.

Monday morning was mostly locals who were able to get out and about to hit some things and try to find some missing species. Chuck was able to find several flycatchers but since they were silent, he wasn't able to put an official name on them, calling them only Traill's which is the name that was split into the Alder and Willow Flycatcher.

So, our 4-day county spotlight ended with 149 species, 176 checklists with 39 pictures and 3 with audio. Here is the eBird trip report to see how we did York County Birding Spotlight

- eBird Trip Report

(<https://ebird.org/tripreport/323662>)

We knew this county was more populated than most we pick, but it was a southern tier county and being along the Susquehanna River was a high attraction for the end of April. We thank all those who spent time planning and organizing as well as those who traveled to be part of these things and help bird with purpose for the spotlight as well as so many atlas codes that were in many of the eBird checklists. This was the highest species count for any spotlight yet and it was enjoyable to have so many new year birds being added to our personal lists. Our next 2025 spotlight takes us up to the NEPA area of Susquehanna County in October, which I have zero birds in, so I am looking forward to that one a bit more than usual. If I can sneak at least 1 checklist into bordering Bradford County, I will have finally gotten birds in all 67 counties which is a fun thing to do. If you enjoy doing these spotlights or reading about them, please consider joining PSO or if already a member, consider a gift membership to someone who would enjoy these types of things we do for free for our state birding community.

I would also like to thank Chuck Berthoud, Joe Gyekis and Jessie Sauder for helping me with this writeup summary.

Chad Kauffman

Golden Eagle Hawkwatch Trip

Keep your eyes out for the date announcement for the Golden Eagle Hawkwatch Trip this fall. While dates are yet to be finalized, keep an eye out at pabirds.org/events-pso so you don't miss out!

Highlights of the PSO Festival Field Trips for 2025

The PSO Festival Planning Committee is pleased to announce the following field trips for our upcoming Festival. These trips have been coordinated by our Lehigh-based committee members Terry Master and Brandon Swayser. These trips promise to provide our attendees with opportunities to bird with local experts in a wide range of habitats in Lehigh Valley. You can review additional information about each of the trips including time of departure, trip leader, distance from the hotel, parking and facilities at pabirds.org and sign up for when you register on-line for the Festival. We are looking forward to having you join us!

Friday, September 26, 2025

South Mountain Arrival Trip (Lehigh County)

Location: South Mountain Preserve – 101 Klines Lane, Emmaus, PA

Join us at this forested mountain preserve, rich with history, where we hope to see warblers, thrushes, and other migrants, and should encounter resident Pileated Woodpeckers and other interior forest birds.

This 400-acre property is owned by Wildlands Conservancy and is the first nature preserve they ever acquired. It features upland deciduous forest, some early succession, scrubby areas, forested pools, and rocky trails with impressive rock formations, mountain springs, and small waterfalls.

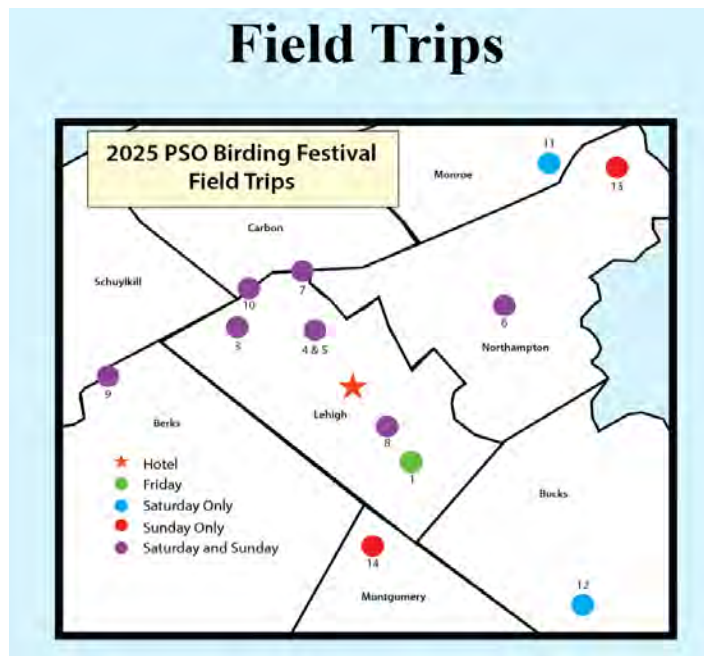
Saturday, Sept 27, 2025 and Sunday September 28, 2025

Leaser Lake (Lehigh County)

Location: Leaser Lake North Ramp - Ontelaunee Rd, New Tripoli, PA

This 540-acre Lehigh County Park and surrounding protected areas contain the highest bird species diversity of any hotspot in Lehigh County. Varied habitats at this site

include open water, vegetated lakeshore, grasslands, and elevational forest. Migratory warblers, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors are all targets here.



North Range - Trexler Nature Preserve

(Lehigh County)

Location: Trexler Nature Preserve MTB Access - N Range Utility Rd, Schnecksville, PA

Trexler Preserve is an expansive, 1500 acre preserve system managed by Lehigh County, and contains an impressive variety of habitats and bird species. At the North Range our target is a resident colony of Red-headed Woodpeckers, as well as American Kestrels, and other grassland/meadow habitat specialists.

Covered Bridge Trail - Trexler Nature Preserve (Lehigh County)

Location: Lehigh Valley Zoo parking lot - 5150 Game Preserve Rd, Schnecksville, PA

Trexler Nature Preserve is an expansive, 1500 acre preserve system managed by Lehigh County, and contains an impressive variety of habitats and bird species. The Covered Bridge Trail is an ADA Accessible trail that circles the Jordan Creek. Migratory warbler, sparrows, and riparian birds are targets here.

Jacobsburg State Park Environmental Education Center (Northampton County)

Location: 400 Belfast Rd, Nazareth, PA 18064

Jacobsburg State Park features varied habitats including meadows, a large native plant garden, the beautiful Bushkill Creek, and an old growth Hemlock Forest. Species targets include warblers, sparrows, and other migrants.

Lehigh Gap Nature Center (Lehigh and Carbon Counties)

Location: 8844 Paint Mill Rd, Slatington, PA

Lehigh Gap Nature Center, located at where the Lehigh River cuts through the Kittatinny Ridge, is the country's only Nature Center built on a superfund site. Learn from the Nature Center's founder how this polluted wasteland was transformed into an oasis for wildlife. Migratory passerines and raptors are expected here.

Allentown - Little Lehigh Parkway and Muhlenberg College (Lehigh County)

Location: Little Lehigh Parkway - 2901 Fish Hatchery Road, Allentown, PA 18104

The Little Lehigh Parkway is a 629-acre park surrounding the Little Lehigh River in Allentown. Habitats include upland deciduous forest, riparian forest, small wetlands and open fields. Target birds include Bald Eagle, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher as well as migrating songbirds including warblers and thrushes. After visiting the park, we will take a short drive to Muhlenberg College, where Ornithologist Peter Saenger will give you a tour of the impressive specimen museum at the school's Acopian Center for Ornithology.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (Berks and Schuylkill Counties)

Location: Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Visitor Center - 1700 Hawk Mountain Rd, Kempton, PA 19529

Hawk Mountain is 2600 acre mountain-top bird sanctuary, globally recognized for its world-class raptor migrations and impressive body of conservation work. The staff will show us the facility and we'll hike to the North Lookout for hawk-watching.

Bake Oven Knob (Lehigh and Carbon counties)

Location: 375 Bake Oven Rd, Germansville, PA 18053

Bake Oven Knob is located along the Appalachian Trail and is the highest point in Lehigh County. Lehigh Gap Nature Center runs an annual hawkwatch here, and good looks at migratory raptors can be expected with Northwest winds.

Saturday, September 27, 2025 only

Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Monroe County)

Location: 2138 Croasdale Rd, Stroudsburg, PA 18360

We will explore the varied habitats of Cherry Valley NWR's headquarters tract, located on a restored golf course at the foothills of the Pocono Plateau. Migratory warblers, sparrows, and riparian birds are expected.

Peace Valley Park and Nature Center (Bucks County)

Location: 170 N Chapman Rd, Doylestown, PA 18901

Located around the perimeter of Lake Galena in Bucks County, Peace Valley Park is a top regional birding destination. The Nature Center contains a productive bird blind, many trails, and a nature store. Migrant passerines, waterfowl, waders, and more can be found here.

Sunday, September 28, 2025 only

Minsi Lake Greenway (Northampton County)

Location: 49 Blue Mountain Drive, Bangor, PA 18013

The Minsi Lake Greenway is an impressive system of parks managed as wildlife habitat by Northampton County. Wetland and aquatic species like Barred Owl, migratory ducks, waders, Swamp Sparrow, Rusty Blackbirds, and rails are often found here. Other migratory passerines and raptors can also be found. Trip includes Minsi Lake, Bear Swamp Park, and if time allows, Tott's Gap Conservation Area.

Green Lane Reservoir (Montgomery County)

Location: Walt Road Boat Launch 1051 Walt Road, Pennsburg, PA 18073

The Green Lane Reservoir and County Park complex consists of 3400 acres of land and 870 acres of water, and contains various habitats, including grasslands, wetlands, and several forest types. We will meet at the Walt Road Boat Launch lot, bird here, and then carpool to several other spots in the park, including Church Road Bird Sanctuary- a good spot for rare shorebirds to show up on mudflats in the fall. Waterfowl, grassland/field species, and migrant passerines are also expected.

Carolyn Hendricks

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

2025 Birding Festival Schedule



Friday September 26	1:00 pm to 2:30 pm	Conservation Project at Black River Preserve
Nature		
	1:00 pm	Vendors set up tables
	3:30 pm	First Field Trip departs
	4:00 pm	Registration opens
	5:30 pm to 8:00 pm	Social (cash bar and snacks)
	6:00 pm	Annual Business Meeting
	8:30 pm	Nocturnal Birding Trip
Saturday September 27		Breakfast on your own
	6:30 am to 11:30 am	Field Trips (times vary)
	12:00 am to 6:30 pm	Vendors at tables
		Lunch on your own
	1:00 pm to 1:45 pm	Shelly Eshleman <i>Traveling with Towhees</i>
	1:45 pm to 2:30 pm	Daniel Klem, Jr. <i>Bird-window Collisions: an Updated Review</i>
	2:30 pm to 3:15 pm	Break and vendor time (snacks and drinks)
	3:15 pm to 4:00 pm	Paul Guris <i>Mid-Atlantic Pelagics: Where? When? What?</i>
	4:00 pm	Break and vendor time
	5:30 pm to 6:00 pm	Social (cash bar and snacks)
	6:30 pm	Buffet dinner begins
	7:00 pm	Presentation of the 2025 Poole and Conservation Awards
	7:00 pm	Holly Merker, Keynote Speaker, <i>Ornithotherapy: the Power of Birding</i>
Sunday September 28	6:30 am to 11:00 am	Field Trips (times vary)

The PSO Festival Awards

The 2025 PSO Annual Meeting and Festival will be held Friday, September 26, 2025 through Sunday, September 28, 2025 in Lehigh County at the Delta Marriott Lehigh Valley. During the Banquet on Saturday, September 27, 2025, the Earl Poole Award and PSO Conservation Awards will be presented.

The **Earl Poole Award** is presented annually to a person or persons who have made significant contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania. 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 birdlife in Pennsylvania.

Lisa Kuzick of the Willistown Conservation Trust (WCT) is the recipient of PSO's Earl Poole Award for 2025. Since 2011, Lisa has been the Director of the Bird Conservation Program at WCT based in Chester County. She oversees a three-season bird banding station at the Rushton Woods Preserve which was established in 2009. As a result of her leadership, WCT's banding station now hosts hundreds of visitors of all ages each year. She has led WCT's partnership in the Motus Wildlife Tracking System managed by Birds Canada. She is cofounder of the Northeast Motus Collaboration (NEMC) which is now the largest Motus working group in the US hosting more than 150 telemetry stations throughout the northeastern US. The data collected has contributed to our knowledge of the movements of 139 species and numerous research projects helping to identify areas of greatest conservation need. Lisa is an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania where she teaches a uniquely

designed graduate level course Gateways to Conservation which pairs her lectures with field trips with working professionals in local conservation organizations and hands-on site visits. She advises master's students on conservation projects. She has led banding training workshops in the US, Canada and the Caribbean. Based on these significant contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology, the PSO feels she is well deserving of the 2025 Earl Poole Award.

The **PSO Conservation Award** is presented periodically to individuals or organizations that have had a positive impact on bird conservation in Pennsylvania.

Jim Dunn and Brian Auman will receive the PSO Conservation Award for 2025 based on their work to protect and restore the Robert Porter Allen Natural Area (RPANA) in Lycoming County, PA. Jim and Brian have had the vision and determination to transform a combination of corn fields and degraded wetland into 70 acres of emergent wetlands and 100 acres of native grasslands and riparian woodlands. Starting in 2017, using their combined expertise in county planning and landscape conservation, they obtained funding from multiple state and federal partners and placed the property into the hands of the Parks Department of Armstrong Township. They have continued their efforts to restore the area to its natural potential including acquisition of a historic grant from the North American Wetland Conservation Act with support from Ducks Unlimited and the property has expanded to include a total of 250 acres of wetlands. The area is now being overseen by the South Side Recreational Authority and managed in

cooperation with Lycoming Audubon and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The RPANA is now a major birding destination of substantial ecological value, primarily because of Jim and Brian's vision. For these reasons, the PSO feels that both are highly deserving of the PSO Conservation Award for 2025.

Wildlands Conservancy will also receive the PSO Conservation Award for 2025. Since 1973, the Conservancy has permanently protected more than 60,000 acres of land in the Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe, Carbon and Lackawanna counties. Wildlands Conservancy's fourteen preserves total more than 2,800 acres and provide public access to exceptional birding areas including the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary and the South Mountain Preserve. Through strong partnerships with state and federal agencies, the Conservancy has acquired and transferred more than 30,000 acres of land to establish and expand opportunities for wildlife habitat enhancement and public

recreation including conservation of the forested habitat of the Kittatinny Ridge. The addition of thousands of acres to state game lands and forests in that landscape provides nesting habitat to interior forest birds and safe passage to tens of thousands of migrant raptors annually. Wildlands Conservancy is also dedicated to raising the next generation of conservationists through school and scouting programs that engage more than 20,000 students a year. Their preserves promote responsible land stewardship and accessibility including the recent opening of a new ADA-accessible boardwalk at the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary. Because of their substantial contributions to the protection of important bird habitats in Pennsylvania, the PSO feels the organization is worthy of PSO Conservation Award for 2025.

Please join the PSO this September as we gather for our Annual Meeting and Festival in Lehigh Valley to celebrate our Poole and Conservation Award winners for 2025.

Carolyn Hendricks

Raven Reporter

Tales of Discovery About Pennsylvania Birds

Backroads

I am a backroad birder. Anyone who does many Atlas field surveys and Breeding Bird Surveys is acquainted with the back roads. I prefer the large public lands for birding off-road and even off-trail, but for the



kind of coverage we desire with the Atlas, the back roads offer our best bet for birding.

Even where there are private lands, there is an abundance of good bird habitat along the back roads. The dirt roads are especially rich for birding opportunities. There are lots of woods, fields and thickets.

Check out the topographic map (now various electronic and online maps) to preview your route. Green areas indicate wooded areas which also include thickets. The wet thickets often yield Willow or Alder Flycatchers, Yellow Warblers, and perhaps Swamp Sparrows. Wetlands also are indicated on good maps. Some wetlands and ponds may have been created since the last map was printed. Any wetland can be a birding hotspot, adding species to a block.

The dirt roads often have little car traffic except for rush hour, that is when folks are going to work. I have spent hours walking along dirt roads without meeting a vehicle. I am more likely to meet a fisherman, dog-walker, or a jogger. There are lots of “Posted” and “No

Trespassing” signs, but many birds can be heard or seen from a road with no need for crossing that line. It helps to be an “ear birder” when birding the backroads. When I have encountered a landowner, the conversation usually went well when I mentioned that I was looking for birds. A pair of binoculars and a clipboard or notebook give credibility. After an initial inquiry, I have sometimes been invited to private posted land once a common bond of birds was established. Just don’t try to go deer hunting there.

Bridges as boons for birding stream sides. Country roads often have newer concrete bridges that really give clear and open views of the stream and vegetation along it. The limbs hanging over the stream could support a hanging Acadian Flycatcher nest. Phoebes often nest on the struts underneath. If you are really lucky, you might find a covered bridge or an old metal girder. Tall trees along a stream are often homes to orioles and Great Crested Flycatchers. Since the first Atlas, I have found that mergansers and Wood Ducks are easier to find

along our backroad streams. I have had a few fly over my head while standing on a back country bridge.

Conifer plantings can often be found along backroads. There were often intended as ornamental plantings, windbreaks, or erosion control plantings. Some of the best ones are old CC Camps, often with tall Norway spruces and Red Pines. This is a place to find Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Blackburnian Warblers, and Pine Warblers. You often can find big old trees along the backroads, relicts of old yards and farms. Lilac bushes indicate the site of an old latrine. I have found many abandoned houses, sheds, and barns along roads as well as old stone walls. Old apple trees are full of cavities.



Belted Kingfisher, Little Fishing Creek, Columbia County. Photo by Doug Gross

These are good places for wrens to hide.

As habitats go, backroads often offer the opposite of woods. Many of the best big fields that I know are along old dirt roads, often around hilltops. Savannah Sparrows like to sing from old posts. Eastern Meadowlarks often perch on haybales. American Kestrels will nest in silos as well as active barns.

Many roads are short, easy to make into an eBird hotspot. Crossroads are often good spots for making hotspots. They are easy to find on a map. Even small dirt roads are usually named now, not like old maps. I write the new names on my old USGS topographic maps for reference. For the first breeding bird atlas, many backroads only had a bureaucratic number name, often preceded by “TR” for “Township Road.” A real name is

much more fun and easy to remember. The township that I live in has named many roads after birds. They are sometimes not very appropriate choices, but a bird name is better than a number.

I have had a few adventures along Pennsylvania's backroads. I enjoy meeting bruins along the road. They usually quickly run off the road and into the woods out of sight. Daylit backroads are sometimes used as a sunning area by rattlesnakes or black rat snakes. Rattlers often cross dirt roads so you need to watch for them while driving or walking along. I remain far enough away to avoid the ratter from buzzing at me or curling into a defensive coil.

Another great adventure to have on the backroads is to search for night birds. Eastern Whip-poor-wills will sit on



Barred Owl perched in daylight , Sullivan County. Photo by Doug Gross

a dirt road and sing. Eastern Screech-Owls often perch along a lonely road which is a convenient place to find a crossing mouse.

I am driving and walking many of the same back roads that I visited during the first and second Atlases. There have been many changes to familiar places, but it is comforting to find many of the same sweet birding spots. It is a great experience to revisit the backroad birding spots, finding many of the same birds. It is my experience that we are finding some

Southern species found at higher elevations than previously. If you feel a little uneasy about backroad birding, bring along a friend and make it a birding party.

Good Birding,

Doug Gross, Dagross144@verizon.net

Board Meeting Summary 6/3/25

The PSO Board of Directors met on June 3, 2025, via Zoom, with President Brian Byrnes presiding. Key discussions included the 2025 Conservation Award budget, leading to a unanimous decision to grant two awards of \$1,000 each: one to Jim Dunn and Brian Auman of the Robert Porter Allen Natural Area, and the second to the Wildlands Conservancy. Additionally, Lisa Kiziuk accepted the nomination for the Poole Award.

The board also unanimously approved a new procedure for email voting, establishing guidelines for urgent decisions between scheduled meetings, including a 48-hour discussion period and a 48-hour voting window requiring a majority quorum.

An ad hoc newsletter committee will be formed to explore new strategies for timely announcements and broader audience engagement, considering platforms for weekly or monthly electronic updates and diverse content ideas.

Finally, PSO directors and the membership are asked to submit nominations for new directors to be instated at the 2025 Annual Meeting and Birding Festival.

Sheree Daugherty



Conservation Crossroads:

2025 Breeding Bird Blitz For Conservation Update

-Laura Jackson, with data provided by Vern Gauthier

Donations to date:

We received a total of \$23,895 donations so far, a bit short of our goal of \$25,000, but we topped the \$22,290 raised in 2024 with a new high. The total raised to date in the five years of the Blitz is over \$90,000. Since we did not reach our \$25,000 goal, our partners will receive the following amounts: **Manada Conservancy** will receive 38% of the \$23,895 for a total of \$9,080; **Lycoming Audubon Society** will also receive 38% of the \$23,830 for a total of \$9,080; while **Pymatuning Lake Association** will receive 24% of the \$23,830 for a total of \$5,735.

Details about our partners and how they plan to spend their funds to help birds and bird habitats will be in the next newsletter.

Donation Champs:

Todd Towhees - \$4,205

Recognition of Teams that raised \$700 or more:

Manada Bird Brains \$2,824.00
Brandywine \$2,815.00
Crazed Cuckoos \$2,470.00
Butler County Catbirders \$1,040.00
Hendricks Hawkwatchers \$1,025.00
Black Valley Buzzards \$885.00
General \$815.00
Rosalie's Raptors \$804.00
Piping Hot Plovers \$760.00
Raven Lunatics \$730.00
Quittie Audubon \$725.00
The Ladybirds \$715.00

Contest Results:

PA Champs Piping Hot Plovers 127 Species (Erie)

North Central

Big Day/County - Williamsport Warblers 89 Species (Lycoming)
Big Day/Regional - Tea Time Towhees 56 Species (Centre & Clearfield)
Cumulative/Regional/Block Boosting - Crazed Cuckoos 97 Species (McKean & Snyder)

North East-No Teams

North West

Big Day/County - Piping Hot Plovers 127 Species (Erie)
Cumulative/Regional - Butler Catbirders 102 Species (Butler, Lawrence, Mercer)

South Central

Big Day/County - Cumberland Crossbills 112 Species (Cumberland)
Big Day/County/Low Carbon - Raven Lunatics 56 Species (Cumberland)
Cumulative/County - Chambersburg Chats 92 Species (Franklin)
Cumulative/County/Low Carbon - Hendrick's Hawkwatchers 70 Species (Bedford)
Cumulative/Regional - Black Valley Buzzards 80 Species (Bedford, Franklin)
Cumulative/Regional/Block Boosting - Crazed Cuckoos 106 Species (Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Perry)

South East

Big Day/County - The Kingfishers (Dauphin) 108 Species
Cumulative/County - Quittie Audubon 97 Species (Lebanon)
Cumulative/Regional - Quittie Audubon 100 Species (Lancaster, Lebanon)
Big Day/County/Youth - The Loonatics 89 Species (Chester)
Cumulative/Regional/Block Boosting - Rosalie's Raptors 87 Species (Berks, Schuylkill)

South West

Big Day/County - Flock Around and Find Out 67 Species (Beaver)
Cumulative/County - Todd Towhees 104 Species (Indiana)
Cumulative/Regional/Block Boosting - Honey Nut Vireos 79 Species (Fayette, Somerset)

Blitzing Without Boundaries

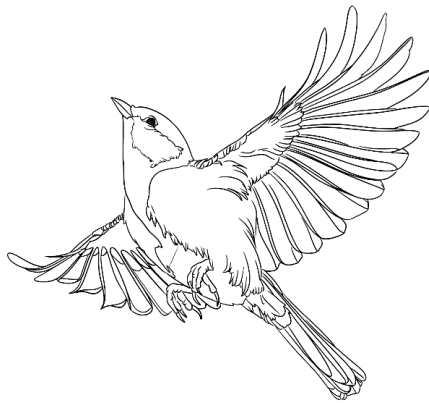
Migrating CANG (Youth Team) 142 Species (Hong Kong, Taiwan, US)
Gobble Till We Wobble 100 Species (South Carolina & Georgia)

With your help, the Blitz continues to reach new heights in donations and effort.

This was the first year we included Blitzing without Boundaries, which inspired two teams that helped us gather eBird data from two more states and two foreign countries.

Many thanks to everyone who supported the 2025 Blitz!!

Laura Jackson



Are you Moving?

Don't miss out on the next issue of the "PSO Pileated" or Pennsylvania Birds. Log into your account in pabirds.org and update your address there, or email it to psop@pabird.org. Alternatively you can send a note to:

PSO, 2469 Hammertown Road, Narvon, PA 17555-9730.

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

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