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The

PSO Pileated



## The Biweekly Newsletter for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

Thursday, February 19th, 2026

As we finally get a taste of spring, you may find yourself itching for warmer days and excited for the start of the spring migration. Grab your preferred beverage and dream of longer days of birding with us.

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

Happy birding!  
-Kaitlyn Stouch  
The PSO Pileated Editor

This edition's banner photo is courtesy of Debra Rittelmann.

## February Webinar Recap



Sarah Isgate recently gave her presentation, "Problem-solving in a Changing World: How do Eastern Bluebirds respond to Noise Disturbance?", which was recorded and posted to the PSO YouTube account here: <https://youtu.be/eECZtnb1ZgU>

A fun quiz for you:

**1. Who sponsored Sara's research?**

PSO, Penn State, NSF, Indiana University, or All of the Above?

**2. Which of the following techniques to study behavioral flexibility have been used with wild birds outside the laboratory?**

button-press food dispensers, position-specific lever-activated nest hole openers, or ping pong games?

**3. Long term exposure to loud noises from gas compressors caused bluebirds to spend \_\_\_\_\_ (more or less) time incubating?**

**4. Bluebirds with more \_\_\_\_\_ (neophilic or neophobic) tendencies were quicker to solve the nest box entry challenge?**

5. (Male or female) \_\_\_\_\_ bluebirds were quicker to solve the nest box entry challenge.

**6. Tree Swallows are \_\_\_\_\_ (more or less) likely to use perches for entry to their nest boxes than bluebirds.**

**7. House Sparrows have the \_\_\_\_\_ (highest or lowest) success at quickly figuring out how to enter nest boxes with tricky trap doors among the three species studied.**

**8. Outside of scientific studies, wild birds are constantly demonstrating which of the following new behavioral innovations to take advantage of opportunities in the human-dominated environments?**

opening milk bottles, proactively triggering sensors on automatic doors to get into convenience stores, dropping nuts on roadways to crack them, or all of the above?

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**Answers:** 1. All of the above, 2. Button press food dispensers + Position-specific lever- activated nest hole openers 3. Less time 4. Neophilic 5. Female bluebirds 6. Less likely 7. Highest success 8. All of the above

-Joe Gyekis

## Teen Ornithology Camp

The third annual Ornithology Camp at Saint Vincent College will be held June 14-17, 2026. The camp is restricted to students aged 13-18. The camp features four days of hands-on activities that teach students how ornithological research is conducted. They will participate in bird banding, nest monitoring, surveying, radio-tracking, and song identification. There are classroom lessons on nesting behavior, migration, raptor identification, and bird anatomy. The camp director is Dr. Jim Kellam, Professor of Biological Sciences and published expert on woodpeckers, Tree Swallows, and Tufted Titmice. Enrollment is capped at 12 students to ensure close learning experiences. Tuition is \$200, which helps cover the cost of lodging in single-occupancy air-conditioned rooms, food, and supplies. We are thankful that the remaining camp costs are underwritten by a private donor. Financial aid is available for those with need. More information is available at [www.svcornithology.wordpress.com](http://www.svcornithology.wordpress.com), or email [james.kellam@stvincent.edu](mailto:james.kellam@stvincent.edu). This is one of only a few

ornithology camps in the country that is designed for a teenaged audience. We want these young people to develop a deep love of birds, which will provide them with social, physical, and mental health benefits throughout their lives.

-Dr. Jim Kellam



Bald Eagle in Mercer County by Jeanette Green.

## This Week's Avian Action Alerts



### 1. PROTECT THE COASTAL PLAIN OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Arctic faces unprecedented threats from aggressive oil and gas drilling proposals that endanger fragile ecosystems, indigenous communities, and the many millions of shorebirds that nest there. Among them are Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, and Red Phalarope. Please tell the

administration that the Arctic should be protected – not drilled for oil and gas.

### [TAKE ACTION](#)

#### 2. 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. If you didn't comment earlier, please do so now.

### [TAKE ACTION](#)

#### 3. ABC WEBINAR: The AFROFUTURISM COLLECTIVE on Wednesday, February 25 at 4 pm ET

Effectively and ethically addressing threats to birds requires many creative solutions, deriving from varied sources of inspiration, put into practice by people with equally varied backgrounds and perspectives.

The Afrofuturism Collective, launched as a partnership between American Bird Conservancy and Rewild in 2024, examines how stories, lifeways, technologies, and concepts from the African diaspora might influence biodiversity conservation and habitat stewardship.

### [REGISTER](#)

#### 4. 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 friends and relatives.

### [ORDER HERE](#)

## Call for Applications- Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Student Research Grant

#### **Deadline: March 10**

Awardees will be notified by March 31

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is sponsoring up to two \$500 student research grants in support of research on Pennsylvania's avifauna. We invite anyone to pass this news along to any students involved in research, as well as any professors who could share this announcement with their students.

If selected, the student will travel to the PSO Annual Meeting to give a talk (~30 minutes) about their work, AND/OR the student will submit an article to the Pennsylvania Birds journal, not more than two years after the award of the grant, describing their study and findings to the PSO membership. The recipient will also be awarded a one-year membership in the PSO.

**Eligibility:**

The award is designed to provide support to either graduate or undergraduate students in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate. The research should be conducted in support of a thesis or dissertation and eventually published. The student's academic institution does not need to be in Pennsylvania. The field work does not need to occur in the Commonwealth, however, there is a preference for projects with a Pennsylvania field work component.

**Criteria:**

Proposals will be judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of Pennsylvania avifauna. Submissions must include the name of the student's academic institution, the corresponding department at the institution, the degree the student is pursuing, and the name of their academic or research advisor.

**Research Proposal Document:**

The body of the proposal should be a condensed version of the student's thesis/dissertation proposal, not to exceed 5 pages in length (not including any figures or tables). Please note whether Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval has been or will be obtained. Each proposal should include a section on how the results of the proposed study will be helpful to future scientific understanding, conservation efforts, and/or land management implications.

**Signed Letter indicating Student's Advisor's Approval:**

In addition to the proposal document, each submission should include a brief, signed letter from the student's academic advisor verifying that the applicant is a student in good standing, and that they are receiving the advisor's support for the proposed project.

Submissions will be evaluated by a PSO committee. Submissions must be sent as pdf email attachments by March 10. Please send submissions or questions to Deb Grove at [dsg4@psu.edu](mailto:dsg4@psu.edu).

## Scholarship Nominations Due March 15th



Photo by Doug Baird

**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.

**Deadline for nominations is March 15, 2026.**

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

## 2026 PSO Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation: Applications Open for Conservation Partners- Due March 1st



Osprey Butler Co Moraine by Jeanette Green

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is excited to announce that applications are now open for organizations interested in becoming 2026 Conservation Partners through this year's Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation. We are thrilled to continue this annual tradition of raising funds for bird conservation and are eager to collaborate with nonprofit organizations dedicated to conserving Pennsylvania's Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Since 2021, the PSO Breeding Bird Blitz, together with our conservation partners, has raised \$92,318 to help fund 15 conservation initiatives across the Commonwealth. In 2025 alone, we awarded a total of \$25,000 to our three Conservation Partners. For 2026, we will consider applications for projects requesting up to \$10,000 in funding. We are excited to offer this much support to impactful, on-the-ground conservation projects for Pennsylvania's birds through the Breeding Bird Blitz.

To learn more about the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation, visit our website at <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org>. If your organization is interested in applying to become a Conservation Partner, please complete the application available at <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/b4c-application>.

Even if you personally do not plan to apply, you may know an organization that would be a perfect fit. We encourage you to share this opportunity with local bird clubs, conservation groups, and nonprofit partners in your local community. Your help ensures this funding reaches projects that will make a real difference for bird species in need.

And don't forget—team registration for the Breeding Bird Blitz opens in April! In addition to our Conservation Partners, we rely on volunteer teams to participate, raise funds, and enjoy a great week of birding. If you are not a part of a project to apply to be a partner, you can always support bird conservation by forming a team! More information about the Blitz and the team competitions can be found on our website.

-Karter Witmer

## Festival Sponsorship Opportunity Reminder

The 2026 PSO Birding Festival will take place June 19-21, 2026 at the Blair County Conventions Center. This year marks the 35th PSO Festival and its first visit to Blair County, an area rich in summer birding opportunities and ornithological history. The event will feature field trips led by local experts, speakers, and vendors with everything a birder needs: optics, books, art, and more. Sponsorship opportunities are available as detailed [on our website](#). Sponsorships may be paid through the PSO website at <https://pabirds.org/festival-sponsors/>. Or send a check to PSO, 2469 Hammertown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555-9730

**Sponsorship payments must be received by March 31, 2026** to ensure inclusion on Festival materials.

For more details about sponsorship levels and more, [click here](#) or contact PSO President Brian Byrnes at [brianjbyrnes79@gmail.com](mailto:brianjbyrnes79@gmail.com).

## 2026 County Spotlights



**We are quickly approaching the March Huntingdon County Spotlight. Have you made your plans yet?** 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.

## Organization Information

To email a PSO officer or Board Member, click on the name below.

### Officers

**President** – [Brian Byrnes](#) (Delaware)

**Vice-President** – [Carolyn Hendricks](#) (Bedford)

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### Newsletter Editor

[Kaitlyn Stouch](#) (Centre)

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Mark Bonta (Blair)

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Narvon PA 17555-9730

[View more info on our organization members here](#)



**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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