



# The DISTELFINK

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
[BAIRD ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB](#)

**Fall 2019**

**Contents (with links):**

- Page 1 [Presidents Message](#) – Tony Grimm
- Page 2 [The Future Status of the Distelfink](#) – Mike Slater
- Field Trip Report: [MiddleCreek WMA, June 2019](#) – Katrina Knight
- [Lebo Tribute](#) - Deb Doaty
- Page 4 [Kestrel Box Update](#) - Art Zdancewic
- Page 5 [SUMMER 2019 at "WOLFE MOUNTAIN"](#) – Jane Wolfe
- Page 6 [Grebe Quest](#) - Sheila Martin
- Page 7 [Reading peregrine falcon fitted with tag to track movement](#) - Bill Uhrich
- Page 8 [Reading's Peregrine Fledglings](#) – Where Do They Go? - Bill Uhrich
- Page 9 [BOC Program Schedule 2019-2020](#)
- Page 13 [Upcoming FIELD TRIPS](#)
- Page 16 [Berks County Birds: June – July, 2019](#) - Rudy Keller
- Page 19 [Don't Miss Out - You'll be the First to Know!](#)
- [BOC Officers](#)
- Page 20 [Membership Renewal Form](#)

## President's Message

**By Tony Grimm**

It is an honor to serve as president of the BOC. We have a dedicated group of people who make up the board of directors and without them, our programs and walks wouldn't exist. I also want to acknowledge our many members throughout Berks County for your continued support and engagement.

BOC strives to produce quality programs on birding and related subjects. We hope you take advantage of our walks. This year I am going to try to attend them all and I hope that you will join me. Its an opportunity to make new friends, spend an hour or two in the outdoors, clear your mind, relax and see great birds.

As you know, fall is migration time. In keeping with that, I would like to recommend an insightful book by Scott Weidensaul called ["Living on the Wind, Across the Hemisphere with Migrating Birds"](#). It was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction. Weidensaul translates difficult scientific concepts into understandable language. It's a wonderful book, published in 1999 and you can find a copy online. See you in September.

PS - A little history: The name "Distelfink" was adopted as a permanent title for the club's publication at the regular monthly meeting on Friday, November 12, 1948. The word [Distelfink](#) is from Pennsylvania Dutch meaning thistle finch or as we know the bird, goldfinch. You might enjoy knowing that BOC's annual dues at that time were \$1.00.

# The future status of the DISTELFINK

by Mike Slater [paplanting@gmail.com](mailto:paplanting@gmail.com)

Katrina Knight has retired after over 10 years of producing this newsletter. Katrina has all of our thanks for doing this job so well and for so long! Meanwhile, no one has stepped forward to take the position of Newsletter Editor, so at the recent BOC Board of Director's meeting, Rudy Keller, Linda Ingram and I volunteered to produce the newsletter for the next year as an interim newsletter committee.

We have agreed to produce a digital version of The Distelfink and we will be printing and mailing a hard copy of this version to all dues paying members this fall and next spring. You can opt out (and save us money) by electing to receive only the digital version of the spring issue of the newsletter. Tell us your preferences by marking them on your membership renewal form on the last page of this newsletter.

A digital version gives us greater flexibility in content and scheduling and allows us to add color pictures! To allow access, we'll email a link will to everyone who has given us an email address. Since The Distelfink is for dues paying BOC members, it won't be linked from the club's homepage. You will have to use the link we send you.

What happens in the future is up in the air. The Board of Directors is considering several options, but it seems unlikely we will ever go back to non-digital and mailed newsletters unless volunteers come forward to produce them. We will be bringing this subject up at the fall meetings, so please chime in and tell us your thoughts and feelings. This is your club and The Distelfink has for decades been the medium through which we communicate with all our members. The current format, created in the 1980's by Pam and Bill Munroe, was a big step up in professionalism from the mimeographed sheets and postcard meeting notices that preceded it. The digital age is demanding another major change.

## Field Trip Report:

## June 8, 2019 Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area



### By Katrina Knight

June 8 was sunny and bright but unfortunately also windy enough to make finding our target grassland birds at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area difficult. Still, we heard Grasshopper Sparrows and saw an Eastern Meadowlark along with plenty of other birds. Highlights included a couple of very cooperative Willow Flycatchers that gave us close looks, American Kestrels at three different nest boxes, and a variety of species including Orchard Oriole and Brown Thrasher feeding in a mulberry tree. Our list for the morning ended up with 47 species.

*Orchard Oriole - Photo by Peter Wolfe*

## Lebo Tribute

### By Deb Doaty

I am already rattled, because a part of my identity, which is my love of nature, is shaken. It is bad enough that I have seen no titmice or chickadees at my place. The news that not one Lebo family but two are moving away has made it that much worse and another big loss to me.

I first met Harold while working at The Reading Institute of Rehabilitation (that was the name at that time) in the early 1970's. Harold worked as a physical therapist and his wife, Opal, was a nurse there. Their boys were very young then, and you would often see them in the mansion. Harold soon came to

know that I was interested in the birds. He and Opal took me to Hawk Mountain for the first time along with Marie Amole, another birder. Soon they christened me with the nickname "Birdy". Most everyone has heard that Harold was responsible for the first bluebird trail near his home around Plowville. He invited me to go along to check boxes on Cocalico Road. My father had told me that when he was a child, there were bluebirds but you didn't see them any more. Well, I saw my first bluebirds that day and also was shown the tree swallow nests with their lovely feather parasol. I never forgot that day. Back when, there were walks lead by Jack Holcomb at the Birdsboro Reservoir. Again, because of Harold, I started to attend them, and learned so much.



When I started going to BOC and Mengel Society meetings in the 1990's, Ken was all grown up with a family of his own. He is now an expert in several fields, always sharing his often new found knowledge from his trips, by graciously giving programs at both meetings. Harold and Opal must be so proud of him! Harold opened his beautiful property and home (more like a sanctuary), which I am pretty sure Ken and his family would help with, for years to anybody interested to come and see and learn at his butterfly garden. A few years back I was talking to Harold at a meeting and I told him that I'd better get his plans for a pileated feeder because someone I knew was seeing them in their yard. At the next meeting, Harold had one of his famous feeders in hand with a bag of suet to give to me.



These two Lebos and their families certainly embody the best in people. They are giving, kind and helpful and with all their knowledge, never elitist. It can't be adequately expressed what a big loss this is to the BOC, the Mengel Society and everyone that they have touched in Berks Co. and beyond. Here's wishing the best to you in all that is in your future!

*The pictures of Pileated woodpecker on a "Lebo Suet Feeder" and of Ken Lebo - by Mike Slater*

*Opal and Harold Lebo - Photo by Ken Lebo*



# Kestrel Box Update

By Art Zdancewic

I spend winter days building bird boxes. They are designed for several species and up till two years back



*Male American Kestrel photo by Mike Slater*

were mostly for smaller birds like bluebirds. That changed when I discovered that the Pennsylvania Game Commission employed a number of people to monitor and encourage non game species. Berks County is assigned to Dan Mummert. He and I have been acquainted for a number of years. He told that he was in need of barn owl boxes. This is a rather large box with interior baffles to allow the chicks to hide from predators. The version I used was made from plywood. I built five and gave them to him and to the Natural Lands Trust.

Last fall Dan said that he was monitoring kestrels. He is a licensed bander and was monitoring kestrels mostly in Lancaster County. He covers 12 southeastern counties. He also said that he would erect boxes in Berks County provided I would build them. I

asked how many and he thought that 50 would do the trick. To that end, I started thinking about the cost of the boxes and found that each would cost about \$22.00. The cost varies a bit depending on the cost of an 8-ft. one-by-twelve board. This one board is 95% of the cost. The price varies by as much as \$4.00 with local suppliers and their cost and availability. The entire project would cost around \$1200.

To sum things up, I've completed and donated 35 kestrel boxes. Dan Mummert is doing another presentation this fall and has asked that any speakers fee be donated to Baird to building more boxes. I intend to make another 15 boxes to reach the 50 that were requested.

A few more dollars may be required. I will ask for donations to purchase the materials for the kestrel boxes. All are to be put up in Berks County.

# SUMMER 2019 at “WOLFE MOUNTAIN”



*Northern Cardinal photos by Peter Wolfe*

then decided to try it for himself. Four young spotted American Robins visited our neighbor's lawn in early August. We never saw them again.

But our most conspicuous and loudest breeders were the House Wrens. They loved their two bluebird houses, diligently stuffing both of them with sticks while singing their loud bubbly song of joy and territory. Eventually, they picked one house to lay their eggs and raise their chicks. Soon we heard little chirps and squeaks. We saw the parents fly in with bugs and out with fecal sacs. One day, babies' heads appeared at the entrance. By June 16, we were convinced that the kids were gone. Peter cleaned the birdhouse. Within two days the House Wrens returned, stuffing the freshly cleaned box and singing, ready to do the whole process again. By July 30, the second batch of babies were peeking out of the house. When these fledged, Peter again cleaned the bird house. The very next day a House Wren inspected the spotless box. We wondered; will they have three broods this year? No more sticks, no more singing, they had enough. Now our yard is quiet. There are House Wrens down the hill probably feeding to prepare for their trip south.

## By Jane Wolfe

This has been a summer of baby birds here on “Wolfe Mt.”. A year of much chattering, begging, and feeding of young Northern Cardinals, House Finches, Chipping Sparrows, and Tufted Titmice. A mature Gray Catbird splashed in our bird bath while a youngster watched from nearby bushes,



*Baby House Wrens begging for food - Photo by Peter Wolfe*

# Grebe Quest

By Sheila Martin

After five years of birding generally, and with Baird Ornithological Club specifically, I can say with humble satisfaction that I've advanced from beginner/novice to Journeyman Birder, with appreciation to many club members now become friends! I've also been so inspired in the pursuit that I've been wrapping significant travel around birding far & wide, with tremendously satisfying results!

For over a year, still in the "Take-Me/Show-Me/Tell-Me" class of birding, I've quizzed many of you: "Where can I find Clark's & Western Grebes doing their distinctive courtship dance?" – even posing the question to my Canadian guide in May '18 at Point Pelee National Park, ONT during spring migration there. His reply: "Not certain, I'm Canadian, but "*Klamath*" maybe?" – with a hopefully helpful shrug. Tony nailed it – and I was on my way researching!

With internet trolling & tons of calls speaking directly with Boro of Klamath Falls, Oregon; national & state wildlife refuge rangers; even dropping my search down across state lines into far northern California (hearing of good chance of my target bird at Tule Lake NWR & Lava Beds National Monument), I moved on with confidence to booking lodging regionally for prime-springtime birding in May '19. Sounded like a super hot spot to me! Lonesome Duck Fishing Lodge & Resort kept popping up, but, thinking I'd rattle around plus overspend in a remote cabin/lodge, I asked, as a single traveler hoping to stay centrally in town at a mid-grade hotel, how could I find a trustworthy birding guide of some stripes being way east here in PA? That's how, by remarkable chance & good luck, I found my totally stellar field guide!

Mr. Marshal Moser – manager-naturalist at Lonesome Duck Fishing Lodge, Chiloquin, OR, was available for hire as an independent guide, offering tours for birders, nature photographers and nature enthusiasts, negotiating his own fee. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist, consultant, and old-time field naturalist. Hearing Marshal's daily rate, I figured I could afford two days with him. Marshal said that would be fine and certainly productive. (If I had a third day, we'd go way up into Crater Lake National Park. Dale & I had been there hiking & touring in '07 - though not birding. It's my travel rule not to repeat locales). I decided that I could afford, and reasonably expect, two solid days of exciting western species birding.

What Money's Worth! In addition to professional, learned, gentlemanly, intuitive, personality-plus local guiding, I got chauffeur service, full lunch, ample snacks & beverages, gas, nice hikes, clear summerlike weather, 12-hour/daylight-savings "woods-warrior" intensity daily – and 99 species overall, of which 26 were life birds. In two days! *Bullock's Oriole*, *Calliope Hummingbird*, *Lazuli Bunting* and *Western Tanager* – **in two hours!** Plus, an organic, hand-sketched diagram of *Perched Western Buteos* dated 02/2003 from one of Marshal's own ornithology mentors!

**Balance of my 26 Life Birds.** Greater Klamath Falls NWR/Tule Lake NWR/ "huge two-day, two-state Figure 8 circuit": *American Bittern*, *Black-headed Grosbeak*, *Brewer's Blackbird*, *Bushtit*, *California Scrub Jay*, *California Quail*, *Eared Grebe*, *Golden-crowned Sparrow*, *Mountain Bluebird*, *Mountain Chickadee*, *Oregon Junco*, *Prairie Falcon*, *Red-breasted Sapsucker*, *Tri-colored Blackbird*, *Violet-green Swallow*, *Western Wood Pewee*, *White-throated Swift*. We worked very hard for *Acorn Woodpecker*, *McGillivray's Warbler* and *Oak Titmouse*, but that's part of birding's fun! Plus mammals: *Belding's Ground Squirrel*, *Bobcat*, *Black-tailed Jack Rabbit*, *California Ground Squirrel*, *Mule Deer*, *Western Gray Squirrel*, *Yellow-bellied marmot*.

Again, what Money's Worth! I was positively thrilled with my experience, enjoyed Klamath Falls town, think maybe Marshal & I had some intervention From Above, and am truly glad I went out on a travel/discovery limb – cashing in some premium air miles, even! - to achieve so many keen, beautiful and cool western U.S. species! Oh, yes; we did see both *Clark's* and *Western Grebes* in various nuptial

behaviors, from very preliminary sidling-up to bill-clicking and head-bob action, to full-on “weed-rushing”, as their unique dance is called.

## **Reading peregrine falcon fitted with tag to track movement - New technology allows the Pennsylvania Game Commission to use lighter devices on birds. By Bill Uhrich, courtesy of Bill and the Reading Eagle.**

When one of the four downtown Reading peregrine falcon young embarked on her maiden flight from the nest site and dropped into a center city parking lot June 13th, a unique opportunity fluttered to earth with her.

Grounded peregrines have been catching the attention of Patti Barber, endangered species biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, who has been crisscrossing the state the past few weeks responding to these earthbound peregrines to equip those birds with a new tracking technology.

The Reading peregrine, which was retrieved by a passerby and taken to Red Creek Wildlife Center near Schuylkill Haven, is the eighth statewide and the first from Reading to be fitted with the Motus (Latin for “movement”) nanotag, a small, light, relatively inexpensive radio frequency device that can track the movements of the bird.

Barber of Orwigsburg, Schuylkill County, picked up the bird from Red Creek, fitted it with a nanotag and returned it to the nest site in Reading on June 16th.

This is the first year the Game Commission is using this technology to track peregrine movements. “What we’re really trying to understand is what these birds do between the time they leave the nest and when they show up a couple years later, hopefully on a breeding territory somewhere,” Barber said. “That’s really a data void. It’s difficult to follow a young bird, and we don’t know a lot about what they do.”

The nanotag is different from the GPS units that have recently been employed on larger bird species, such as the snowy owl, to track their movements. “These are smaller units, 3 grams or less,” Barber said. “There’s a rule with flighted birds that you can’t put 3 percent of their body weight on their backs, and we’re much below that. But the nice things about these nanotags is that they’re much lighter and less costly. They are more limited in that the bird must pass near to the data receiver in order for the transmitter to talk to the receiver.”

The Motus system, geared specifically to tracking wildlife, has been expanding. Scott Weidensaul, a naturalist formerly from Schuylkill County now living in Maine, has helped start a group called the Northeast Motus Collaboration. The group has put up more than 40 Motus receiver towers in Pennsylvania since 2017, Weidensaul said, including one on Neversink Mountain and another at Blue Marsh.

The Blue Marsh tower has already yielded good results. “The Blue Marsh site picked up a couple dozen tagged red knots from Delaware Bay in the past two weeks, heading northwest to the Arctic,” Weidensaul said.

The group received a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant last year to expand that inland network across New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

“The advantage of nanotags and the Motus network is that scientists can track animals far too small for conventional satellite or GPS transmitters,” Weidensaul said. “So why use nanotags? Because they’re cheap — a couple hundred bucks each versus many thousands for each satellite or GPS tag — and they’re small enough to pose no extra burden on, say, a young, recently fledged bird.”

Barber said some of the smallest nanotag units are being used to track dragonfly movements.

"There are two small button batteries on the peregrine's nanotag that should last about 500 days," Barber said. "We tried to build obsolescence into the harness. The harness material is Teflon ribbon, but it's sewn with a thread that degrades. It'll come apart, and the bird will be able to get the harness off."

Barber is optimistic that the nanotags will offer new insights into the urban-raised peregrines, like the one in Reading, and the hazards they face after leaving the nest.

"The peregrines that are raised in a city environment don't seem to show up as readily as breeders down the road as birds that have been raised on natural cliff faces," she said. "What's different? We would like to understand that better. We can quote statistics like every bird that shows up as a breeder that was reared in a human environment — its natal nest site was on a bridge or a building — they were all rescued as fledglings. So presumably, they needed human intervention in order to survive that human landscape." And the Reading bird is just such an example of a falcon that needed human intervention.

"Peregrines have been doing really well since the crash (in their numbers) following (the harmful pesticide) DDT, but as their numbers continue to increase, it highlights some of the challenges the birds have in human-dominated landscapes," Barber said. "So with this project, what we're trying to do is gain a better understanding of those challenges and figure out ways for the birds to compensate for those."

With that, Barber stepped out onto the roof of a center city building above the nest site, reached inside a pet carrier and removed the bird. After disengaging the falcon's talons gripping her gloved hands, she set the peregrine down onto the roof. The falcon looked around for a moment, hopped twice, took off and disappeared below the roofline.

Barber is hoping she'll be hearing from this falcon again — on the radio.

## Reading's Peregrine Fledglings — *Where Do They Go?*

By Bill Uhrich, courtesy of Bill and the Reading Eagle.

Including this season, a total of 43 peregrine falcons have fledged from downtown Reading since the first nesting in 2007, according to Art McMorris, the Pennsylvania Game Commission's peregrine falcon specialist.

- All but four of these birds were banded, and PA Game Commission records indicate several have been identified over the years outside of Reading through information obtained from the bands.
- A male that fledged in 2012 was found dead at the Philadelphia International Airport on Aug. 28 of that year after a collision with a plane.
- A female from that nest was captured and released at Hawk Cliff on the north shore of Lake Erie, Ontario, Canada, on Sept. 13, 2012. Researchers at the site noted that the bird was in very good health, weighing in at 996 grams (nearly 2.2 pounds), which was one of the heaviest peregrines they had ever caught. This bird was later found dead in Stinesville, Ind., on Jan. 18, 2013.
- A female from the 2013 nesting was found injured in Eastham, Mass., on Aug. 1, 2013. That bird is now kept in captivity.
- Another female from the 2013 nest was seen in Lyndhurst, N.J., on Aug. 9, 2013.
- A female peregrine from the 2015 nest was first seen on Oct. 22 of that year in Holgate, N.J., and entertained many bird watchers throughout the fall with its aggressive defense of its beach territory. It was later seen on May 2, 2016, in the vicinity of Barnegat Light, Ocean County, N.J.



- A second female from that nesting was seen on Parsonage Island in Long Island Sound, Nassau County, N.Y., on May 24, 2018.
- A female fledgling that was hit by a car near the nest site and suffered a broken ulna on July 11, 2011, was rehabilitated at Red Creek Wildlife Center but was unable to be released back into the wild. It is now an education bird at the Carbon County Environmental Education Center.

## BOC Program Schedule 2019-2020

*All Meetings are held at Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center in the C.H. McConnell Hall except for the Annual Banquet which will be held at the Berkshire Country Club.*

### Sep 13, 2019 at 7:30 pm

**“Birds Among the Modern and Ancient Maya” - Rob Fergus**



This presentation provides a glimpse into fascinating cultural worlds, where birds are community members that bring important messages, warnings, and healing to the lives of their human neighbors. How did the Turkey Vulture get its red head? Into which bird did the ancient Mayan creator god transform himself to bring messages to people? Which bird eggs have magical powers among the Chontal Maya of Tabasco, Mexico? What bird warns Lacandon Maya farmers if a dangerous snake may be nearby? What messages do owls bring to modern Chol, Ch’orti’, Mopan, and other Mayan speakers?

Ancient and modern Maya communities have over 2000 years of extensive cultural interactions with birds. Since 2006 Rob Fergus has been working with linguist Kerry Hull (BYU) and native Mayan speakers to document and study bird names and folklore among nine Mayan language communities in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.

*Quetzal, male -photo by Mike Slater*



*Black-backed Oriole - photo by Mike Slater*

### Oct 11, 2019 at 7:30 pm

**“My Big Year in the Delaware Valley”**

**- Debbie Beer**

From Black-backed Oriole to MacGillivray's Warbler, White-winged Tern to Common Greenshank, my Big Year in the Delaware Valley yielded a whirlwind of exciting birds and unexpected adventures. Sparked by a New Year's Day Rock Wren in northern New Jersey, I embarked on the quest to tick as many species as possible in a regional competition, driving more than 20,000 miles, going on two pelagic birding trips, meeting great people, and learning a ton!



**Nov 8, 2019 at 7:30 pm**

**“Winter Birding” - Ruth Pfeffer**

Birds, birds, birds, along with lighthouses, whales, dolphins and natural history are the basis of this program. Ruth has traveled for many years and the highlights of many trips are included. Join Ruth Pfeffer for a fun and informative program on winter birding along the east coast.



**Dec 13, 2019 at 7:30 pm**

**“Master Watershed Stewards”**

**- Joint meeting with Mengel Natural History Society**

Master Watershed Stewards are volunteers trained to become citizen scientists. They educate the public about water and perform "boots on the ground" projects to help improve the water quality in Berks County.

Individuals with an interest in the environment, a willingness to learn more and a strong desire to make a difference in the community are excellent candidates for this program. Mengel Natural History Society President Kathy Grim will share her experiences as a Master Watershed Steward.



*Morning in the Southern Andes*

*- Photo by Mike Slater*

**Jan 10, 2020 at 7:30 pm**

**“Birding in Southern Ecuador, plus flowers and insects too!”**

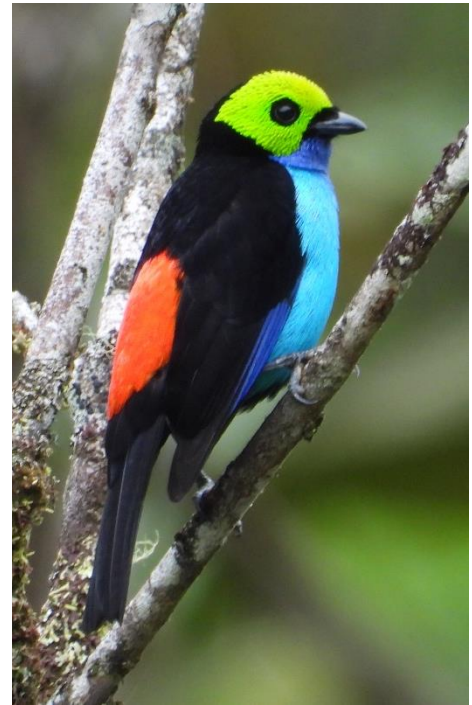
**- Mike Slater**



*Showy Mistletoe - photo by Mike Slater*

Last January (2019) Mike and Jan Slater traveled with Linda Ingram and 4 other people on a birding and nature tour to Ecuador to visit some of the Jocotoco Foundation's nature preserves in the southern part of the country. We also went east from Quito over Papallacta Pass and down to several lodges in the Amazonian foothills of the Andes for more birds and insects. We saw many wonderful & fascinating birds, plus butterflies, moths, tree frogs, lizards and more. Then there were the beautiful and intriguing flowers! Having sorted through about 10,000 pictures, Mike will be sharing highlights of the trip with us.

*Paradise Tanager - photo by Mike Slater*



*Ovenbird - photo by Russ Hoffman*

## **Feb 14, 2020 at 7:30 pm**

### **“Birds in the Lower 48 States: New birds, Old birds, and a few Odd Birds” - Russ Hoffman**

Russ Hoffman is a long time BOC member whose bird photography has been entertaining us at members' nights for the past several years. He's been traveling around the country even more recently and has a lot of new photos to share with us.





*Broad-winged Hawk in Ecuador -  
photo by Mike Slater*

## **Mar 13, 2020 at 7:30 pm** **“Broad-winged Hawk Migration Ecology: Flying from Pennsylvania to Peru” - *Laurie***

***Goodrich*** Sarkis Acopian Director of Conservation Science at Hawk Mt. Sanctuary

Hawk Mountain has tracked adult and juvenile Broad-winged Hawks throughout their life cycle from 2014 through 2019. Broad-winged Hawks have declined in southeastern Pennsylvania but remain common in more heavily forested regions. Hawk Mountain's study is only the second study to use satellite-telemetry with Broad-winged Hawks and the first to tag males. The talk will detail some of the key findings on range, migration ecology, stopover and wintering sites as well as emerging conservation threats.



*White-throated Sparrow – photo by  
Mike Slater*

## **Apr 10, 2020 7:30 pm** **“The State of Pennsylvania's Boreal Conifer Forest Birds” - *Doug Gross***

Pennsylvania mountain conifer forests, found primarily on glaciated parts of the Allegheny Plateau, are dominated by spruce and hemlock, but are diminished from pre-settlement forest. Unlike other Appalachian spruce forests, some of those in Pennsylvania harbor Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler (both PA Endangered). Other species of state conservation concern in this habitat include Swainson's Thrush, Northern Waterthrush, Canada Warbler, Red Crossbill, White-throated Sparrow and formerly Olive-sided Flycatcher. These boreal conifer forests also host numerous other northern species

having high continental conservation priorities and PA Species of Greatest Conservation Need status. Doug Gross, a biologist recently retired from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, will introduce us to some of these species and speak of management plans for this threatened ecosystem.



*Andean Condor - Photo by Mike Slater*

## **May 8, 2020** **BOC Annual Banquet** **“Life in the Avian Slow Lane” - *Keith***

***Bildstein***, PhD, retired Director of Acopian Center of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, is the author of several volumes on raptor migration ecology. Keith is presently working on his next book presently titled “The Secret Ecology of the World's 23 Species of Vultures and Condors”. This presentation will be a review of his work with vultures and condors.



# Upcoming FIELD TRIPS

## SECOND & FOURTH TUESDAY Bird Walks

### September-November and March-June

Location, time and leader to be announced approximately one week beforehand on the [Flash Bird Walks Page](#) and/or sign up to get e-mail or check with Art Zdancewic, 610-858-3315 or Katrina Knight, 610-372-3671 for details.

### SEPTEMBER 21, 2019 (Saturday)

#### Mount Penn Hawk Watch 9 AM - 2 PM

Watch migrating hawks from the top of the William Penn Memorial Fire Tower.  
Coordinator: Bill Uhrich 610-373-8109

### OCTOBER 19, 2019 (Sunday)

#### Arlene Koch's property

Sparrows and fall migrants, 8 AM

The Koch property attracts an amazing variety of birds. Lincoln's Sparrows are among the target birds for this trip. Meet at the Lake Ontelaunee dam breast.

Coordinator: Matt Wlasniewski, 610-463-8845

### OCTOBER 20, 2019 (Saturday)

#### Mount Penn Hawk Watch 9 AM - 2 PM

Watch migrating hawks from the top of the William Penn Memorial Fire Tower.  
Coordinator: Bill Uhrich 610-373-8109

### DECEMBER 15, 2019 (Sunday)

#### Reading Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Lucy Cairns 610-223-4501

### DECEMBER 21, 2019 (Saturday)

#### Elverson Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Jim Cook, 610-587-7545

### DECEMBER 28, 2019 (Saturday)

#### Bernville Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Ed Barrell, 610-926-2962

### DECEMBER 29, 2019 (Sunday)

#### Hamburg Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Laurie Goodrich, 570-943-3411 ext 106

### JANUARY 1, 2020 (Wednesday)

#### New Year's Day Walk -8 AM

Start your year off with a visit to various Berks County birding locations, beginning at Brenneman's Quarry.

Meet at the Cacoosing Meadows Park parking lot on Reedy Rd. Coordinators: Peter & Jane Wolfe, 610 -944-0985

**JANUARY 19, 2020 (Sunday)**

**Lake Ontelaunee, 8 AM**

Shake off the winter blues and cabin fever with some winter birding. Meet at the dam breast (along Rte 73.)  
Coordinator: Katrina Knight, 610-372-3671

**Winter 2019 (date to be announced** approximately one week beforehand on the [Flash Bird Walks Page](#) and/or sign up to get e-mail announcements.)

**Barneгат, New Jersey**

Common Eiders, scoters, Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers and more.  
Coordinator: Mike Slater 610-698-4031

**Late Winter 2019 (date to be announced** approximately one week beforehand on the [Flash Bird Walks Page](#) and/or sign up to get e-mail announcements.)

**Lake Ontelaunee waterfowl - 8 AM**

Meet at the dam breast (along Rte 73.)  
Coordinator: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310

**MARCH 21, 2020 (Saturday)**

**Green Hills Preserve - 8 AM**

Check out spring birds at one of the newer birding spots in the county.  
From Rte 10, go west on Rte 568 (Kurtz Mill Rd.) Turn right onto Gunhart Rd. Parking lot is on the right.  
Coordinator: Art Zdancewic, 610-858-3315

**MARCH 22, 2020 (Sunday)**

**French Creek State Park - woodcocks - 7 PM**

Look for American Woodcocks doing their evening courtship dance.  
Meet in the park headquarters parking area on Park Rd  
Coordinator: Art Zdancewic, 610-858-3315

**APRIL 11, 2020 (Saturday)**

**Tulpehocken Creek - 8 AM**

Look for early spring migrants  
Meet at the Berks County Heritage Center side of the Red Bridge Coordinator: Katrina Knight, 610-372-3671

**APRIL 25, 2020 (Saturday)**

**Birds, Butterflies & Botany, Neversink Mountain, 10 AM**

**(In conjunction with Mengel NHS)**

Some butterflies fly only in early spring and this is one of the few Berks County locations to see them.  
Meet at S 10th & South Sts, Rdg. (Park on South St.)  
Coordinators: Karl Gardner, 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine, 610-777-2333.

**April 26, 2020 (Sunday)**

**Union Meadows - Beginner Bird Walk - 8 AM**

An easy walk on wide flat trail through wooded and open field habitats. Binoculars available.  
Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, the Union Township Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte. 724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. Gather at the kiosk  
Coordinator: Linda Ingram, 610-326-9531

**MAY 3, 2020 (Sunday)****Pine Swamp - 7 AM – Spring Migrants**

This is a great location for migrants as well as uncommon local birds like Ruffed Grouse, and Kentucky Warblers. Meet in the parking lot on the (right) west side of Pine Swamp Rd about 1/2 mile south of Hawk Mountain Rd. Coordinator: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310

**MAY 9, 2020 (Saturday)****Hamburg Reservoir, 7 AM – Spring Migrants**

Meet in the parking lot at the end of Reservoir Rd. Go east on Old Rte 22 out of Hamburg, turn left on Reservoir Rd after going through Edinburgh. (Lenhartsville is too far). Take Reservoir Rd. to end. Coordinator: Matt Wlasniewski, 610-463-8845

**MAY 10, 2020 (Sunday)****Spring Migrants, (Location to be Announced) – We'll see where the hot spots seem to be and announce about a week in advance and announce the meeting place on the [Flash Bird Walks](#) Page**

Get out in the fresh spring air and see what is passing through. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484 794-7053

**MAY 19, 2020 (Tuesday)****Bombay Hook - 6:30 AM**

Spend a day at Bombay Hook – It's only an hour and a half drive to see wonderful shore birds. Past day trips yielded over 80 species. Meet in the Target parking lot, off of Perkiomen Avenue, Exeter. Coordinator: Art Zdanczewic, 610-858-3315

**JUNE 6, 2020 (Saturday)****Grassland Breeding Birds, 8 AM**

Target birds during this exploration of Berks County's fields include Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Meet at the Lake Ontelaunee Dam Breast for car-pooling. Coordinator: Sarah Hungerford, 484-955-1121

**JUNE 13, 2020 (Saturday)****Green Hills Preserve - Butterflies, 10 AM**

(In conjunction with Mengel NHS)  
From Rte 10, go west on Rte 568 (Kurtz Mill Rd.) Turn right onto Gunhart Rd. Parking lot is on the right. Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333.

**JUNE 20, 2020 (Saturday)****Moth Night - Nolde Forest EEC - 7:30 PM**

(In conjunction with Mengel NHS)  
Enjoy the Katydid with friends and family as leaders bait trees and hang sheets to bring in the night insects. Jim Eckert will present "Introduction to Moths" in McConnell Hall at 7:30 PM followed by walk. Bring flashlight. Meet at main parking lot. Coordinators: Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333, Jim Eckert 610-373-1064, and Karl Gardner 610-987-3281.

**JULY 25, 2020 (Saturday)**

### **Blue Marsh Butterflies-10 AM**

(In conjunction with Mengel NHS)

Meet at the Blue Marsh Visitor's Center off of Palisades Drive. Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333

### **AUGUST 1, 2020 (Saturday)**

#### **Dragonflies & Damselflies - 10 AM**

##### **Bartram Trail/Kernsville Recreation Area**

( In conjunction with Mengel NHS)

Rte 61 north, right on Jetson Dr (across from Cabelas), right on Industrial Dr, left on Kernsville Dam Rd. The parking area is on the right.

Coordinators: Mike Slater 610-775-3757 and Rudy Keller 610 845-7310.

### **AUGUST 22, 2020 (Saturday)**

#### **Butterflies - Angelica Park- 10 AM**

( In conjunction with Mengel NHS)

Meet in the parking lot off of Rte 10 (the entrance is at the big sign for Alvernia University) Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333

### **FLASH BIRD WALKS**

**Additional field trips may be scheduled at short notice any time that it appears that conditions are right for an interesting outing. Sign up to get e-mail or check the website for announcements.**

## **Berks County Birds: June – July, 2019**

**Compiled by Rudy Keller [rkeller@fastmail.com](mailto:rkeller@fastmail.com)**

Abbreviations: Blue Marsh L. (BML), French Creek State Park (FCSP), Hamburg Reservoir (HRes), Kittatinny Ridge (KR), Kernsville Dam & Recreation Area, Hamburg (KDRA), L. Ontelaunee (LO), State Game Lands (SGL).

June and July had much higher rainfall than normal and the year ending July 31 was the wettest on record.

A flock of 11 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks visited a pond at the edge of a residential development near Leesport 7/4 and left the same day (DR – photo). It is not known if these were the birds (12) seen at nearby E. J. Breneman Quarry in May. Injured Snow Geese incapable of migrating are seen annually. This year one was in Perry Twp. 6/18 (KG) and one was near Moselem Springs all summer (RK). That Common Mergansers have become firmly established breeders was confirmed by reports of a family of 13 at LO 7/10 (DH), a family of 4 at KDRA 7/26 (KG) and a female with 5 young on the Tulpehocken Cr. at BML 8/16 (JS). A Pied-billed Grebe was photographed on Hopewell L., FCSP 6/29 (JD). This species was a prominent breeder at Glen Morgan L. ( now long closed to public access) in the 1990's (e.g., 118 adults and chicks counted 7/4/96 by KL), but it is now mostly seen as a migrant and winter resident.

Since the colony of Eurasian Collared-Doves at Shartlesville was discovered in 2012, breeding confirmation has been elusive. That changed when photos of a group of 5 taken 7/20 (RH) showed that at least one or 2 were hatch year birds. Six Whip-poor-wills were heard 6/11 at SGL 110, Northkill Gap on the KR, their only known breeding area in this century. Virginia Rails, usually reported as spring migrants if at all, apparently settled in to breed at the small KDRA marsh this year. One or 2 birds (3 on 5/14) were regularly reported starting 4/30 (mobs.). On 7/18, a bird giving calls typical of an immature was seen walking in the open (KG), providing the first breeding confirmation since 1939. These rails



were amazingly tolerant of human proximity. The marsh is bisected by a popular walking/biking trail and was for months disturbed by earthmoving on an adjacent wetland mitigation site. A Common Gallinule was seen at the Lowland Rd. pond, Hamburg 7/18 (KG, M-TG). This species bred at LO in 1960 and 1971, and at Glen Morgan L. in the 1990's, but has mostly been recorded as a rare and irregular migrant. An American Coot was seen at LO 7/23 (JSp), 2 were seen there 7/27 (TU), and one of these continued into Aug (mobs.). This aquatic chicken bred at LO in 1968 and at Glen Morgan L. in the 1990's, but unlike the gallinule, it has been a fairly common migrant and winter resident. Due to lack of muddy field pools (mostly overgrown) and pond margins, southbound shorebirds were few. Just 2 Least Sandpipers were seen near Topton 7/6, 10 (JH, RK) and Bowers 7/22 (RH). One or 2 Solitary Sandpipers were near Robesonia 7/6, 10 (DP) and 2 near Bowers 7/22 (RH). Two American Woodcocks, seldom reported after early spring, were bonuses on an evening Whip-poor-will search at SGL 110, Northkill Gap 6/11 (KG). As is expected, a few Ring-billed Gulls cruised BML for picnic scraps all summer (JS). A few nonbreeding Double-crested Cormorants were reported at several watery venues, most commonly at LO, where 10 (a normal summer number) were counted 7/4 (MSch).

Summer's first Great Egret was reported at Leesport 7/4 (DR), quickly followed by 1-4 others on various ponds through the period. An immature Little Blue Heron first seen at Lowland Rd. pond, Hamburg 7/13 (KG) stayed well into Aug. This species has visited annually for the last five years. An adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at Shillington Park 6/29 (NW). Though reported in each of the last three years, this species has historically been rare and irregular. Black-crowned Night-Herons were reported more than 20 times at BML and LO 6/6-8/16, with high counts of 4 at LO 6/6 (JSp), 4 at BML 7/28 (JS), and 5 at LO 8/16 (JSp). Of greatest interest are reports of juveniles, which give the only indication that breeding has probably continued since the destruction of the last known nesting colony by a hailstorm in 2014. Juveniles were reported on nine dates with high counts of 3 at BML 7/28 (JS) and 2 at LO 8/16 JSp).

Summering Ospreys were occasionally reported at several waterways through the period. Despite assumptions by nonbirders and some casual birders that they must be nesting because they're here, they are not breeders. Red-shouldered Hawks fledged young from at least two nests near the Schuylkill R. in southern Berks, where this hawk is most regularly found in summer. Of six Berks nests monitored by Hawk Mt. Sanctuary's Broad-winged Hawk Project, five fledged at least one young each (LG). In addition to those, a pair in District Twp. fledged 2 young (CE) and a Pike Twp. pair fledged at least one (RK).

The news about Barn Owls is grim. According to Dan Mummert, this was their worst breeding season of the fourteen years he has worked on PA Game Commission's Barn Owl recovery project. Only six sites in southeastern PA fledged young, compared to about 20 in a normal year. Of the two Berks sites that produced eggs, none hatched. Three of four sites monitored in Berks by Rich Bonnett were unoccupied due to habitat changes or site problems, and one had infertile eggs.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were not well monitored. Pairs occupied traditional territories on Kauffman Rd., Oley Twp. and Allendale Rd., Perry Twp. and a few singletons were reported elsewhere. Breeding was not confirmed. Reading's Peregrine Falcons fledged 4 young, all of which were treated for trichomoniasis, a disease they get from being fed infected pigeons. A female fledgling that grounded itself on a city street was taken to Red Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, where it was found to be uninjured. It was fitted with a Motus nanotag to track its future movements and successfully returned to Reading (fide BU). One of the county's densest populations of Acadian Flycatchers persists despite hemlock decline in the cool hemlock/rhododendron ravine along Furnace Cr. above HRes, where 12 singing males were counted 6/6 (KG) and 9 on 7/6 (RK). Just one Blue-headed Vireo, which shares this locally uncommon habitat, was heard there this summer on 6/15 (RK). A few Horned Larks were heard singing in the hayfields along Monument Rd. and Mountain Rd. east of Hamburg in June (KG, PH). Purple Martin colonies in Centreport and on Mennonite farms in the Great Valley between Fleetwood

and Tipton were active but uncensused (RK). About 15 Bank Swallows were seen entering burrows in the hills of sand 7/4 (P&JWo) at the Haines & Kibblehouse quarry near Birdsboro, their only known nesting site. Forty adult and fledgling Cliff Swallows were counted at the State St. bridge colony in Hamburg 6/27 (KG). About 33 Cliff Swallows were counted at the two LO colonies 6/17 (RK). The LO colonies have been occupied for 53 consecutive years.

The county's largest population of Veeries is in the extensive Piedmont forest around FCSP, where 21 were heard along Sixpenny Cr. 6/8 (RK). The first Veery nest discovered in Berks was found there in 1950, when Veery was considered an uncommon and irregular breeder. Wood Thrush has a similar concentration point in the 400-acre Piedmont forest at Monocacy Hill Conservation & Recreation Area in Amity Twp., where 33, most in glorious song, were found 7/14 (RK). Two late migrating thrushes were a Swainson's Thrush singing at HRes 6/6 (KG) and a Hermit Thrush at Earl L. Poole Preserve in central Berks 6/1 (NW). Breeding Hermits were found 6/1 and 6/4 (KG) at two places on top of the KR, the only place they nest in Berks.

There have been several records over the years of White-throated Sparrows lingering into June, but a singing male at KDRA 6/27 and 7/4 (KG) was unusually late. The suite of grassland sparrows and icterids was well reported. The seasonal high counts of 7 Grasshopper Sparrows 6/24 (KG) and 5 Vesper Sparrows 6/23 (KG) were made in the hayfields east of Hamburg before extensive mowing had begun. Up to 5 Savannah Sparrows, including fledglings, were found at Rodale Experimental Farm, Maxatawny Twp. by Dickcissel seekers in Jun-Jul (mobs.). At the largest known Bobolink colony along Grist Mill Rd., Douglass Twp., 17 birds were seen 6/17 and 10 on 6/26 (RK). On both visits, females were seen carrying insects into the grass. Wet weather delayed mowing until early Jul, so some young may have fledged. Eastern Meadowlarks are apparently holding on in very small numbers. A few sites reported one to 3 birds in Jun before hay cutting, and the seasonal high count of 5 was made in Albany Twp. 7/11 (DH). There were no reported breeding confirmations.

Birders reported sixteen breeding warbler species, mostly in expected numbers at known locations. Five Worm-eating Warblers made a good count at SGL 110, Stony Cr. 6/1 (TB). A Prothonotary Warbler sang in a swampy backwater along the Schuylkill R. at Union Meadows Park 6/16, 22 (P&JW, P&TN, JA). The habitat is right for breeding, but this was probably a spring overshoot male that soon left, as is most often the case. A Kentucky Warbler was at Sixpenny Cr., FCSP 6/8 (RK) and another at SGL 106, Pine Swamp Rd. 6/22 (P&JWo). These are the only two locations where it has usually been found in recent years. The only reported Cerulean Warbler was at HRes on the KR 6/3 (KG), where it has previously been found. A Magnolia Warbler in District Twp. 7/21 (RK) was an early fall migrant and a Blackpoll Warbler at Bowers 6/3 (TU) was a late spring migrant. A Black-throated Blue Warbler, a rare breeder on the KR, was at HRes 7/13 (JT) and another at SGL 110, Stony Cr. 6/1 (TB). Five Black-throated Green Warblers were heard on the KR at SGL 106 and one to 4 at HRes in Jun-Jul (mobs.), good numbers considering the species' very limited KR range in Berks.

Blue Grosbeaks were reported at six places and were confirmed breeding at one of them, Gethsemane Cemetery in Laureldale, where fledged young were seen in Jul (JB). Dickcissels returned for the fourth consecutive year to previously occupied territories in the grass pastures at Rodale. Most birders reported one or 2 males that sang tirelessly from utility wires 5/22-7/9. The only evidence of probable breeding was noted 7/3, when a male flew after an adult female accompanied by a plainer bird, probably a fledgling, all 3 of them quickly disappearing into the grass (LI, RK).

OBSERVERS: Rudy Keller, [rkeller@dejazzd.com](mailto:rkeller@dejazzd.com), Jean Akers, Joe Beatrice, Tom Buehl, John Daniel, Bob Duncan, Catherine Elwell, Laurie Goodrich, Kerry Grim, M-T Grob, Paul Heveran, Dan Hinnebusch, Russ Hoffman, Jason Horn, Linda Ingram, Ken Lebo, Pat & Tony Nastase, Derek Price, David Robson, Mike Schall, Joan Silagy, Jo Spilde, Jaime Thomas, Bill Uhrich, Todd Underwood, Nelson Weber, Patty & John Werth, Peter & Jane Wolfe, Matt Wlasniewski, Art Zdancewic.

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  - plus, program announcements and updates*
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*BOC website [www.bairdornithological.club](http://www.bairdornithological.club)*

*BOC Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BairdOC/>*

## **BOC Officers 2019-2020**

### **BOC Officers 2019-2020**

**President - Tony Grimm** 1148 Old Mill Lane, Wyomissing, PA 19610 610-780-0340 - [afgrimm@aol.com](mailto:afgrimm@aol.com)

**Vice-President – Lucy Cairns** 20 Wyomissing Ct, Wyomissing, PA 19610, 610-223-4501 - [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)

**Treasurer – Charles Coleman**, 129 Grecian Terrace, Sinking Spring, PA 19608  
610-763-2548 - [coleman1801@comcast.net](mailto:coleman1801@comcast.net)

**Secretary – Sheila Martin** 554 Mullen Hollow Road, Birdsboro PA 19508 610-858-6005 - [sheilamartin554@gmail.com](mailto:sheilamartin554@gmail.com)

**Past President - Art Zdancewic** 331 Sell Road, Mohnton, PA 19540, 610-858-3315 - [art.zdancewic@gmail.com](mailto:art.zdancewic@gmail.com)

### **Elected Members of the Board of Directors**

**Linda Ingram\*** 29 Unionville Road, Douglassville, PA 19518 - 610-326-9531 - [lindamingram29@gmail.com](mailto:lindamingram29@gmail.com)

**Rudy Keller\*** 71 Lutz Road, Boyertown, PA 19510, 610-845-7310 [rckeller@fastmail.com](mailto:rckeller@fastmail.com)

**Joanne Kintner** 441 Township Line Rd., Bechtelsville, PA 19505 - 610-369-1585- [jrkestrel@msn.com](mailto:jrkestrel@msn.com)

**Mike Slater\*** 4411 New Holland Road, Mohnton, PA 19540 home: 610-775-3757 – cell: 610-698-4031  
[paplanting@gmail.com](mailto:paplanting@gmail.com)

**\* Newsletter Committee**

**BOC MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Dues \$15/year (make check payable to B.O.C.)

Payment is due in September for the year running from September through August.

Dues may also be paid at meetings, but please bring the completed form to keep our records straight.

Please print out this form.

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**Name:**

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By supplying my eMail address I give my permission for BOC to contact me by email for club related announcements and newsletters.

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Future Preference Poll:

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Send this form **with payment** to the BOC Treasurer:  
(Or bring them to one of the early fall meetings.)

**Charles Coleman**  
**129 Grecian Terrace**  
**Sinking Spring, PA 19608-1164**

Contact: [membership@bairdornithological.club](mailto:membership@bairdornithological.club)