

The Pennsylvanian Avian Monitor

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News of the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas

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From the Project Director and Project Coordinator Dan Brauning and Bob Mulvihill

We are off to a great start on a grand experiment. The state's leading birders were unequivocal at meetings in 2002 and 2003; they were ready to atlas the state's nesting birds again! The first summer of fieldwork has confirmed that you, too, Pennsylvania many bird watchers, are highly motivated and skilled – ready to tackle the challenging task of surveying every atlas block. The 2nd Pennsylvania's Breeding Bird Atlas (2nd PBBA) project is underway with resounding success.

To tell the truth, however, we are somewhat in denial. It just does not seem possible that we are repeating an effort that feels like it was completed only a “few” years ago. It was 1983 that the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas conducted its trial year. The resulting publication of the “Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania” in 1992 brings that history closer to today. Nonetheless, twenty years elapsed since the beginning of the first full-scale atlasing, which made it necessary for us to face the fact that the years had indeed passed rapidly and that it already was time to undertake the experiment again. In fact, our neighbors in Maryland, New York, and Ontario already have initiated their 2nd generation atlases. So, planning was put into place almost twenty years after the start of the first PBBA to repeat the effort still fondly remembered by many of us who participated in it.

Much has changed since that time, of course, in the bird world and in our personal and professional lives, while some things remain the same. Friends have come and gone, but many of the first crew of regional coordinators (at least 15) are again taking on the familiar responsibility. Remember, the Coordinator for the 1st PBBA warned you—“it's regional coordinator for life!” Many volunteers working on the 2nd PBBA are doing fieldwork in the same blocks they completed 20 years ago. Thankfully, many of you new birders are joining the ranks, serving in key roles as Regional Coordinators and helping with the huge job of making and carefully recording your bird observations everywhere in the state. We are gratified to renew friendships started with the first Atlas and very glad for the chance to meet and get to know a whole new generation of bird enthusiasts. Success in the 2nd PBBA, as in the first, will only be achieved through support and involvement of the whole birding community, from the most seasoned expert birders to the beginning “backyard” bird watchers. So, whether volunteers contribute one record or one thousand, everyone who participates will contribute measurably to the very important goal of **Monitoring Pennsylvanian Biodiversity!**

The 2nd PBBA will provide a critical second look at the occurrence and distribution of the state's breeding birds and, for the first time, at their abundance and habitat associations. We know of species, like the Sandhill Crane, which now nest in the state but which were not even imagined as Pennsylvania breeding birds during the first Atlas. Does Pennsylvania host other nesting species not found in the 1980s? What of the Grasshopper Sparrow, declining on BBS routes by 80% since 1980? Will its distribution be similarly affected? Confirmed nesting by Loggerhead Shrikes apparently has come and gone since the last Atlas. Are other of our state's endangered species, like Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, still present in areas where they were found during the first PBBA? Will they be found in new locations? These and many other questions remain. Change certainly is to be expected—some species have expanded while others have declined. Your extensive and the intensive statewide efforts on behalf of the 2nd PBBA will help us to answer many of these questions, all for the very good and very important cause of bird conservation in Pennsylvania.

We hope that during the first summer of the 2nd PBBA many of you discovered the rewards and enjoyment of atlasing—discoveries of unknown places; birds not expected; behaviors not noticed before. The Atlas project has restored a measure of satisfaction in birding for us. While doing blocks this summer, Dan found birds that he was unaware nested nearby singing boisterously just a few miles from his home and species thought to be rare proved fairly common in special spots just beyond his regular travels. If you have not yet taken ownership of a block, much remains to be done and your participation is needed. When you do, you, too, will find that there is a surprising diversity of bird life within your own 10 square-miles!



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

MIKE LANZONE

Meet the Project Leaders

Daniel Brauning Project Director

Project Coordinator and editor for Pennsylvania's first breeding bird atlas, Dan serves as Project Director of the 2nd PBBA. His job as the Wildlife Diversity Section Supervisor for the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Management encompasses the very important tasks of managing and monitoring protected birds in Pennsylvania, especially endangered and threatened species. Dan serves as the Pennsylvania coordinator of the USFWS Breeding Bird Survey and as State Coordinator for Partners in Flight. Dan is very well known to many of you for his work and dedication to the state's Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle recovery programs (both of which the 2nd PBBA undoubtedly will show have been extraordinarily successful!).



Dan received a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Geneva College, where he graduated cum laude. He went on to receive an M.S. from the Interdisciplinary Program in Ecology at Penn State University. His thesis was on nest site selection strategies of the American Kestrel.

Besides completing and editing the first *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, Dan co-authored *The Birds of Pennsylvania* with Gerald McWilliams in 2000. Dan is a member of the Wilson Ornithological Society, the Nature Conservancy, and is a current member and has served on the boards of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. Dan's seasoned professionalism sets a very high standard for the current atlas project, and we are extremely fortunate to have him serving in the role of Project Director for the 2nd PBBA. His experience as Project Coordinator for the first PBBA, and his overall ornithological and administrative expertise, uniquely qualify him for this leadership role in the 2nd PBBA, and we are all very fortunate to have the benefit of his support and guidance.

Bob Mulvihill Project Coordinator

Bob Mulvihill is the Project Coordinator for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. With a 25-year career in ornithological research, he needs no introduction to many of you. Hired by Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CMNH) in 1983 to assist with the renowned bird-banding program begun by Robert C. Leberman in 1961, Bob has conducted and directed a wide variety of avian research projects at Powdermill Nature Reserve. As



a co-Regional Coordinator (with Bob Leberman) of the first PBBA, he authored more than twenty species accounts for the Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania. During his career with CMNH at Powdermill, he has also published dozens of articles on topics ranging from wing shape to molt patterns, body mass dynamics, breeding biology, and migration timing in a variety of ornithological journals including *Wilson Bulletin*, *Auk*, *Oecologia*, *Ornis Scandinavica*, *Ornitologia Neotropical*, *North American Bird Bander*, *Condor*, and *Journal of Field Ornithology*. A project Bob began at Powdermill in 1996 investigating the Louisiana Waterthrush as a bioindicator of stream water quality, became a nationally recognized collaborative study with colleagues from Penn State and East Stroudsburg universities. Along with Dr. Terry Master (Region 54/55 Coordinator for the 2nd PBBA), Bob has traveled to Costa Rica to study the winter ecology of this breeding bird of general conservation interest for the 2nd PBBA.

Bob received his B.S. in Education, with secondary teaching certification in Biology, from the University of Pittsburgh. He holds a Master's degree in Biology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He serves on the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey and is Field Ornithology Projects Coordinator at the Powdermill Avian Research Center (PARC), a job that encompasses the 2nd PBBA, long-term banding studies, species-specific nesting studies, acoustical monitoring of migrating birds, and more.

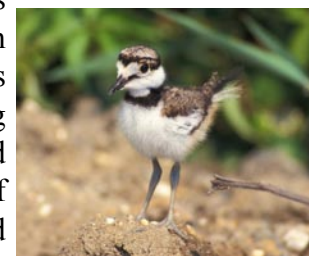
Mike Lanzone Assistant Project Coordinator

As the Assistant Project Coordinator for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, Mike Lanzone has been involved in ornithology from a young age. He began his field training at Braddock Bay Raptor Research and Bird Observatory in New York. For over ten years, he worked for various state, Federal, and nonprofit agencies, traveling extensively throughout the United States and Mexico to study birds and their environments. He was a part of the 2nd PBBA design team headed by Rob Brooks and Tim O'Connell at the Pennsylvania State University's Cooperative Wetlands Center.



For several years before becoming the Assistant Coordinator, Mike wrote a regular column for *Wild Bird* magazine. Besides his involvement in the Atlas, Mike is currently collaborating with Bob Mulvihill on a series of books entitled *Photographic Guide to Ageing and Sexing North American Birds*. His award-winning photographs have appeared in several publications including Thayer's Birding CD-ROM.

At Powdermill's Avian Research Center (PARC), Mike has been putting to good use his amazing talent in identifying birds not only by sight but by song. He has been making groundbreaking strides in bioacoustic research, specifically during birds' nocturnal migrations. Analysis of the digital recording data he collects will be used in PARC studies to assess population trends and migration timing and pathways. Mike is experimenting with similar technologies for use in assessing the presence and abundance of secretive wetland bird species during the 2nd PBBA.



Killdeer MIKE LANZONE

Making History Online with the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas

By Miyoko Chu

What are the advantages of conducting a Breeding Bird Atlas online? Ask Steve Kelling, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's director of Information Technologies, and he'll tell you there are a hundred reasons or more. Now online, the second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas is about to make those advantages a reality.

From requesting atlas blocks online to entering data and exploring results, atlas volunteers will be making historic strides when they log on to <http://bird.atlasing.org/PA>. The Internet application, created by the Lab of Ornithology's Information Technologies group, is expected to streamline management of the Breeding Bird Atlas, reduce personnel costs, speed up data entry, provide instantaneous results, and facilitate combining the data with those from

the atlas blocks where the warblers were observed or determined to be possibly, probably, or confirmed breeding during the first year of the atlas project. In the past, bird watchers, conservationists, and land planners would have had to wait for years before such maps were published and sold in books. "Now you get the results instantly—and they're free," says programmer Jeff Gerbracht.

Another tremendous advantage is that the data are automatically archived in a standardized format that will make it easier for scientists to access and combine data from different atlases and organizations. By entering their data online, atlas volunteers ensure that their data will be preserved and widely used. "As researchers bring all the data together," Kelling says, "they'll be able to go beyond geopolitical borders and examine the issues that are so crucial for actual bird conservation across regional habitats and even larger scales." It's a vision that might not be too far off in the future, when other states soon take the lead of the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.



A team of programmers and Web designers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology created the Internet application for the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. From left to right: Steve Kelling, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Information Technologies group, Jake Cressman, Greg Delisle, Roger Slothower, Jeff Gerbracht, Tom Fredericks, Tim Levatich, Paul Allen. Diane L. Tessaglia-Hymes photo

other regions.

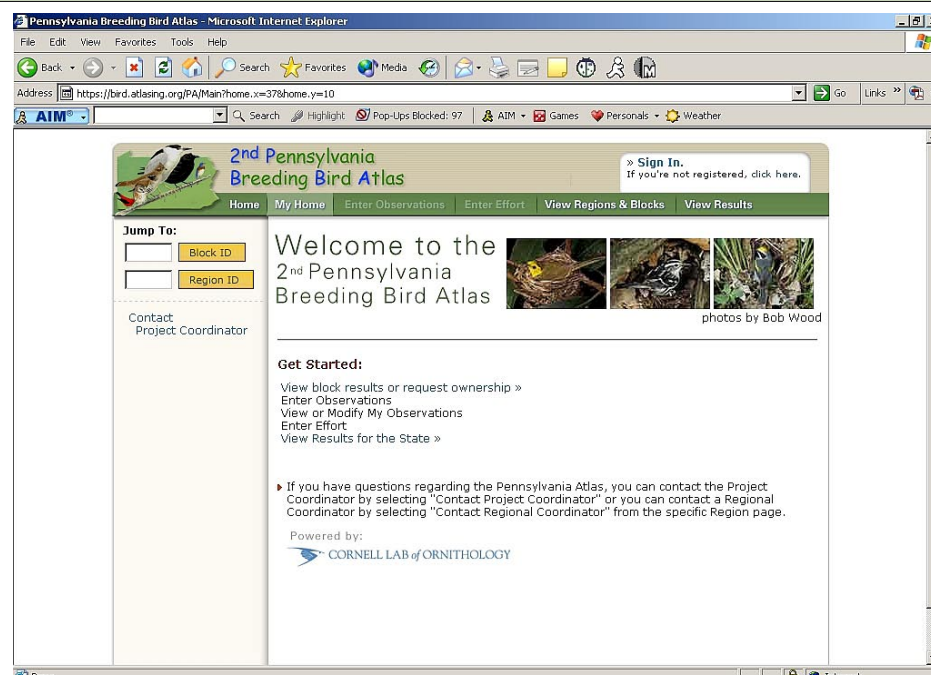
Now when volunteers return from the field, they can enter their own data online. "You can see the results of your efforts right away," Kelling says. "You can view statewide summaries or select a species and hit 'go'—the map will show every block where the species has been reported up to the minute, color-coded so that breeding code can be determined. We wouldn't be able to do that without this application."

To demonstrate, Kelling turns to his computer and uses the mouse to select "Black-throated Blue Warbler" from the drop-down menu. A sprinkling of green, gray, and black dots show all

To explore other citizen-science projects online, including eBird, Urban Bird Studies, Project FeederWatch, The Birdhouse Network, House Finch Disease Survey, Birds in Forested Landscapes, and Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's web site at www.birds.cornell.edu.

General Results for data entered through January 6, 2005

Blocks Owned	1762
Blocks Complete	0
Block Effort Hours	10472
Other Effort Hours	2329
Total Submissions	53394
Registered Participants	1147
Species Reported	183
Species Confirmed	162



Home page of 2nd PBBA data entry website designed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Website Tips and Tricks

- Did you forget your username or password? To be sent a password or username reminder click "Sign In" at the top of the page. When the new window opens up click on "Get Username" or "Get Password" (it doesn't matter which one as they both go to the same place). Fill in your e-mail address on the page that opens up and press "Submit" and a reminder will be sent to your email box.
- Did you find species in your block that don't show up on the data entry list? To add multiple species to the list at the same time simply click the "Search" button on the top of the data entry page below where it says "Enter a common name to add a species that is not listed below." If you leave the space blank the whole list of possible species will come up and you can then check as many as you wish and click "Add" at the top of the page.

Would you like to learn more about the website including tips and a general tutorial? Go to www.pabirdatlas.org and download the Website Tutorial from our "Materials" page. By spending some time navigating the tutorial, the task of data entry will become less daunting and perhaps even enjoyable!



Black Tern, one of the rarest breeding birds in Pennsylvania, found in just eleven blocks in northwestern Pennsylvania in the first atlas

BOB WOOD

Atlassing in the Doldrums of Winter

Mike Lanzone

When you think of atlassing tasks in the winter, the first thought to pop into your mind (we hope!) is that stack of field cards waiting to be entered into the website database! True, winter is a good time to enter your backlog of data and effort, however, there are many field opportunities that will help you confirm birds in your block(s) for the upcoming season or even in the previous atlassing season.

Winter is the best time to look for raptor nests. Often stick nests that are obscured by leaves and other vegetation during the summer months are highly visible. A quick drive or hike around your block may yield one or many raptor species nests that can be revisited for confirmation during the next field season. Keep detailed notes on your block map or bring along a GPS to get precise locations of all stick nests found throughout your blocks. In late winter and early spring some of the larger stick nests should be revisited for Great Horned Owls, and mid to late spring for Red-tailed Hawks. In the early summer stick nests of all sizes can be revisited for the presence of other species of hawks and owls.

While on the look out for raptor nests, keep an eye out for potential cavity nests and other, distinctive used nests. Some species make and/or utilize unique looking cavities, e.g., Black-capped Chickadee. I have often identified potential cavities, taken GPS readings for them in the winter and returned to the spot in the breeding season to find species ranging from Red-breasted Nuthatch to Barred Owl. Used nests, breeding code "U", is likely one of the least used codes, however, if used properly, can confirm many species. If you atlas some or all of your blocks early in the season you may have missed confirming later nesting species like American Goldfinch. In the winter months Goldfinches are often very easy to confirm at this time of year by simply by finding one of their used nest. Some other species with distinctive looking nests, in order of ease of identification, include Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Eastern Phoebe, Baltimore Oriole, American Robin, Chipping Sparrow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Wood Thrush, Acadian Flycatcher, and Louisiana Waterthrush. However, keep in mind that some of these species nests are built out of mud or other substances that harden like rock. Hence, during the first year of the atlas, used nest codes should be used with caution, as these durable nests may have been left over from the previous year (before the atlas began). However if the nest is in excellent shape and some nest lining is present, the nest was most likely built in the 2004 breeding season.

If you are a very experienced observer there are more nests that can be identified to species, however



Barred Owl
MIKE LANZONE

one should err on the side of caution when confirming species in this way. Less experienced observers should use this code on only a handful of species. It is best not to rely completely on photographs or illustrations in nest field guides, as they can often be misleading.

While on your winter forays, this is also a good time to make atlas contacts, get permission to enter private property, and solicit help from people that live within your atlas blocks. Don't underestimate the power of many "casual observers" in your block—it will make your job a lot easier, increase the number of people involved with the 2nd PBBA and, in the process, possibly encourage people in your area to become more interested in birds and the habitats they need for nesting. During winter, when leaves are off the trees, it may be easier to spot interesting habitats, like small wetlands or ponds, that may be hidden from view when you're driving along roads in your block in spring and summer.

Lastly, there are a few species that actually have "safe dates" for breeding that fall during the winter months of December, January, and February. Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Rock Pigeon, and House Sparrow. Common Raven, our resident woodpeckers, and common feeder birds like the chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Cardinal are not far behind, becoming "safe" by the middle of March. As always, remember that if you observe behaviors consistent with one of the higher (probable or confirmed) breeding codes, then those records can be added to the Atlas database regardless of date. Simply confirm when you enter the record that the date is correct, and give notes giving some more details of the breeding behavior you observed.

So whether you are out looking for raptor nests, used nests, scouting your block, or just out for a winter hike, winter atlassing for the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas can still be fun, rewarding, and productive. So, bundle up and get outdoors this winter to help monitor Penn's Woods for the 2nd PBBA!

The Purpose of the Breeding Bird Atlas Project

Most states have completed at least one breeding bird atlas and some, including Pennsylvania, are working on their second. All atlases have certain objectives in common. The most obvious is to provide a complete picture of the occurrence and distribution of breeding birds in a defined area in as short a period of time as possible (usually five years for large scale atlases). When an atlas survey is repeated twenty or more years later, any changes can be documented and related to environmental (including human-caused change) and biological factors. In some cases, even relationships between bird populations and small scale habitat changes can be assessed, as we are trying to do during the 2nd PBBA by documenting which birds are associated with eastern hemlock, a native tree that is under siege from an introduced insect pest, the hemlock woolly adelgid. Given their magnitude, all atlases have another very important connection to each other: they all depend on the skills and dedicated effort of hundreds of volunteers! More than 1,000 of you already have signed up to help with the 2nd PBBA. As we enter into our second season of atlassing in 2005, let's do everything we can to push that number many times higher by continuing to spread the word about the 2nd PBBA and by encouraging everyone we know or meet who has more than a passing interest and knowledge of birds to play a part, whether small or large!

The results of the 2nd PBBA promise to benefit all of us through a greater understanding of bird populations and how they are impacted by the changing environment which we share with all wildlife. For 2nd PBBA volunteers, **Monitoring Pennsylvania Biodiversity** combines the fun of bird watching with the important goal of conserving birds and the habitats and places they depend upon in Pennsylvania.



2nd PBBA Field Staff and Coordinators: Andy Wilson, Ben Israel, Lewis Grove, Will Faux, Bryant Ward, Beth Swartzentruber, Bob Mulvihill, Mike Lanzone, Paul Sweet

2nd PBBA Abundance Surveys

There's a good chance that one of our field crew was in your neck of the woods this year. You may have seen them stopped briefly (for six minutes and fifteen seconds, but who's counting!) along a back road or city street intently listening for and carefully counting all singing birds. Over the next five years the 2nd PBBA field crews will be conducting abundance mini-routes in all non-border blocks in the state. This past summer was the pilot for this ambitious component to the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, and the first time ever in North America that a true (rather than relative) abundance measure for a Breeding Bird Atlas project has been attempted. This season our field crew consisted of seven highly skilled field ornithologists: Will Faux, Lewis Grove, Ben Israel, Beth Swartzentruber, Paul Sweet, Bryant Ward, and Andy Wilson. Four of these positions were funded by a Wild Resource Conservation Fund (WRCF) grant, two by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and one by the National Park Service. Collectively, the crew members completed abundance routes in almost 700 blocks and tallied over 80,000 birds of over 150 species statewide. The 700 blocks surveyed were about 300 shy of our goal for 2004, however, it is a very good start. Next season, thanks to increased funding from WRCF, we will be able to add two more field crew members, and this should put us close to reaching our original abundance point count goal through 2005.

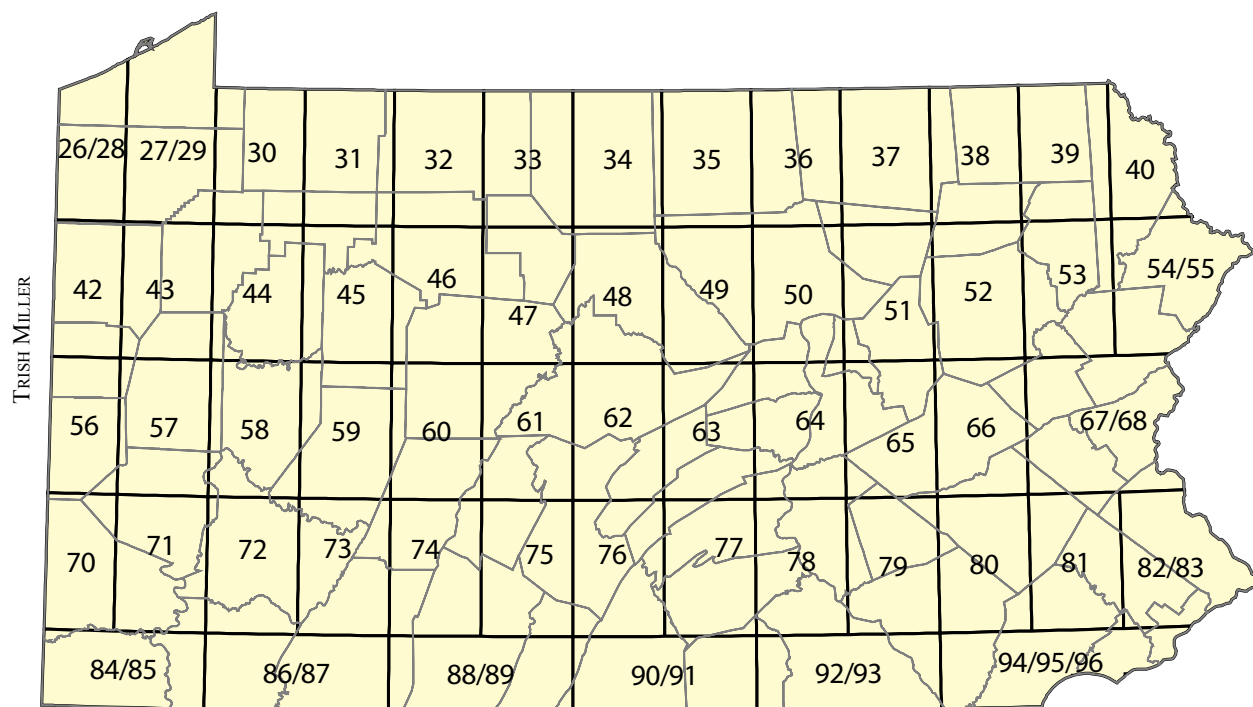
Briefly, the abundance routes will be run in some 4,700 blocks statewide (all non-border blocks). Staff at the Cooperative Wetland Center at Penn State University used a computer algorithm to randomly select 16 survey points in each of these blocks. Each point was then moved to the closest secondary road. The points were then numbered and blocks were randomly chosen for coverage in each year of the 2nd PBBA. Each morning from the last week in May through early July, our crew members conducted surveys at the first eight accessible points within each block, completing up to 24 point counts each day. In addition to giving us unparalleled information on the abundance of Pennsylvania birds, these records also will help to fill in some areas where volunteer Atlas fieldwork may not end up being as extensive.

Abundance Surveys continued on page 5

Your Regional Coordinators

26/28	John Tautin	814.763.6461	50	Dan Brauning	570.547.6938	74	Neil Woffinden	814.269.2910
27/29	Chuck Gehringer	814.796.6299	51	Doug Gross	570.458.4564	75	David and Trudy Kyler	814.643.6030
30	Florence McGuire	814.755.3672	52	vacant		76	Mike Lanzone	724.593.6022
31	Don Watts	814.723.9125	53	Glenn Czulada	570.842.8804		Dan Ombalski	814.466.9731
	Ted Grisez	814.723.9464		Jim Hoyson	570.696.4925	77	Ramsay Koury	717.761.1871
32	John Fedak	570.362.1052	54/55	Terry Master	570.422.3709	78	Sandy & Gary Lockerman	717.657.0509
33	David Hauber	814.274.8946	56	Jim Bonner	412.963.6100	79	Randy Miller	717.664.3778
34	Mary and Larry Hirst	814.435.2218	57	Brian Shema	412.963.6100		Rosemary Spreha	717.657.0271
35	Robert Ross	570.376.5394		JoAnn Albert		80	Steve and Sue Fordyce	610.682.1743
	Philip Krajewski		58	Mark McConaughy	724.733.5299	81	Art McMorris	610.664.2174
36	Jeff Holbrook	607.936.5059	59	Margaret & Roger Higbee	724.354.3493	82/83	Bill Etter	215.964.3613
37	Robert Fowles	814.238.1990	60	Robert Mulvihill	724.593.6022	84/85	Terry Dayton	724.627.9665
38	Robert Daniels	570.836.2846	61	Margaret Brittingham	814.863.8442	86/87	Mark Bowers	724.872.5232
39	Jerry Skinner	570.278.3384	62	James Dunn	814.238.2122		Retta and Jeff Payne	814.267.5718
	Nancy Wottrich	570.278.4087		Roana Fuller	814.867.5944	88/89	Dan Snell	717.530.8313
40	Barbara Leo	570.253.2364	63	Mark Henry	814/349/5774		Regina Reeder	717.530.1698
42	Randy Stringer	724.458.0446	64	Allen Schweinsberg	570.524.0432	90/91	Kim Van Fleet	717.243.4819
	Linda Wagner	724.657.0867	65	Deuane Hoffman	717.319.6359	92/93	Chris Cunningham	410.436.2490
	Suzanne Butcher		66	Mike Ward	570.628.5571	94/95/96	Doris McGovern	610.565.8484
43	Gary Edwards	814.676.3011	67/68	Arlene Koch	610.253.6377			
	Russ States			Bernie Morris	610.967.0257			
44	Michael Leahy	814.797.2287	70	Roy Ickes	724.228.3532			
45	Patricia Conway		71	Mike Fialkovich	412.731.3581			
46	vacant		72	Dick Byers	724.593.3543			
47	Bob Martin	814.486.1990	73	Janet and Tom Kuehl	724.325.1918			
48	Greg Grove	814.234.2746						
	Nick Bolgiano	814.667.2305						
49	Wayne Laubscher	570.748.7511						

Regional Coordinators can also be contacted by email. Their email addresses are region#@pabirdatlas.org (i.e. region48@pabirdatlas.org). Note in cases where there is a co-coordinator the e-mail will be go to both coordinators. Thanks to these RCs who helped us get started but who were unable to continue as coordinators: JoAnn Davis, Barbara McGlaughlin, Karen Lippy, Mark Blauer.



The map above shows the relationship between county boundaries and atlas regions.

~~WANTED!~~ **NEEDED!**

We have several Regional Coordinator positions available which we would like to have filled before the next field season begins. The areas with vacancies are in the Clearfield/Elk Counties area (46) and the region that includes Wilkes-Barre (52). In addition, we are looking for replacements for coordinators in regions 38 and 60. If you are interested in taking on a very rewarding task for the next four years, we would be happy to talk with you about it. Please apply by calling (724.593.6022) or sending an email (mulvihill@pabirdatlas.org) to our Project Coordinator, Bob Mulvihill.

Abundance Surveys from page 4

If you happen to bump into one of our point counters during your own Atlas travels and they look busy, please remember to wait until they complete their count before approaching or talking with them. Once they're done with their count, they should have a few minutes to say "Hello" before they have to rush off to their next point! But, there is a way you could discuss the project with them at greater length...

If any of you is willing to host an Atlas point counter when he or she is surveying in your neighborhood, please contact the main office. We'll take your contact information and provide this to our crew, who usually must simply camp in state parks or on state forest lands while doing their surveys. An occasional overnight stay in a warm bed, a

hot shower, and a hearty, home-cooked meal from a generous Atlas volunteer or Regional Coordinator would surely be appreciated!



Laser rangefinders were used in training point counters to estimate distances for abundance surveys. This Chestnut-sided Warbler is 67 meters from the observer

PLEASE enter (or send us) your Data AND your Effort!

You've spent hours and hours collecting your data, but until you enter it (or send it to us), we don't know about it! So, if you haven't already done so, please submit any and all of your records from the first season of the 2nd PBBA (2004)—we don't want to miss counting a single record you've made, or a single hour or mile of your effort. All these things, and every one of you, are important to the success of this project.

To enter your records and effort, the best and most efficient way is on the website developed for us by Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <http://bird.atlasing.org/PA>. If website data entry is not an option for you (or isn't

working for you), don't worry—just send a complete and legible copy of your data to your Regional Coordinator or to the main office at Powdermill, and someone will gladly enter the data for you. Mr. Carl Garner, a block owner in region 90/91, made our day at headquarters by mailing us his most meticulous, well-organized field cards shortly after the field season ended! And, don't forget to report your EFFORT, as well! Effort is very important to the 2nd PBBA for several reasons, including helping to determine the level of completeness of effort in each block and enabling us to give an estimate of the dollar value of the very substantial contribution that all of you are making, individually and collectively, to this project.

Sightings and Stories *from our Volunteers . . .*

Osprey Sighting

by Deborah Danila



Osprey MIKE LANZONE

On July 17, 2004, while surveying Evansburg State Park for the PBBA, I was very surprised to see an Osprey on Skippack creek. On the east side of the park, not far from Germantown Pike, Water Street borders the creek for a little bit. I was on Water Street when I thought I saw an Osprey drop from a tree in front of me and fly upstream. Where Water Street turns back toward Grange Avenue, the trail continues straight into the park, and I followed the trail into the woods and saw the Osprey again very clearly in a large snag on the opposite side stretching and bobbing its head in an odd way (swallowing something?). It sat on the branch for a short time, then flew back down stream. Unfortunately, I never saw it again. This was an unexpected sighting, and I wondered if recent storms had brought the Osprey to the park temporarily.

Sandhill Cranes

by Charles Gehringer

On June 24, 2004, I received an email from the editor of the Presque Isle Audubon Society newsletter. He had received a report of some nesting sand hill cranes in northern Crawford County. He asked if I could check it out as it was a less than five miles from my house. I grabbed my scope, binoculars, and my camera then headed out.

I drove to the house I had been given directions to. I got out of the car and met Scott and Amy Anderson. Scott showed me where the cranes were foraging in the soybean field across the road from his house.

I set up my scope and we were able to see both adult, the cranes were feeding in a depression in the field so we were not able to see the chicks. Scott showed me some digital images he took of both adults and their chicks. Although I took this route many times on my way to and from work, I never saw any of the birds again until October 6th when I received a call from Scott and Amy.

Again, I grabbed my gear and headed out. Upon arriving, I set up my scope and found the cranes in the same spot, where we saw them in June. We were now looking at four sand hill cranes, two adults and two immatures. We watched them feed and then all four flew off out of sight over the trees.

They all appeared to be healthy. I have seen all four of them together two more times, once in late October and once again in early November. I have taken some photos of my own showing all four cranes.

None of this would have been possible without the help of Scott and Amy. Fortunately, they took the time to contact people that they thought would be interested in seeing the birds and also had the forethought to take the pictures that confirmed that the sand hills had indeed nested and raised two nestlings. The best part was they nested in one of my atlas blocks, block #29B54.

Charles Gehringer is our Regional Coordinator for Region 27/29 in Northwestern Pennsylvania.



Sandhill Crane ADRIENNE LEPPOLD

Of interest from the National news media...

In paging through the December 27 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, alert reader Annie Lindsay called our attention to a feature in the cover story, "50 Ways to Improve Your Life in 2005." Among the old standards (getting more exercise, reading more books, and quitting smoking) emerges another method of self-improvement: **BECOME A BIRDER!** Birdwatching, it's pointed out, is not just for "old ladies wearing tennis shoes and squinting through binoculars." There are an estimated 46 million active birders of all ages in the United States (2.7 million in Pennsylvania alone), and many of them regularly report their findings to scientists who track avian populations. How does this improve your life? Birding gets us off the couch and out of doors, "it reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and improves concentration." And in the case of our volunteer atlassers, it contributes to one of the most important tools for bird conservation: The 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.

[Editor's Note: Annie Lindsay conducted research for the 2nd PBBA funded by the Rea Internship in Applied Ecology at Powdermill. She authored the report, "Ground Truthing GIS-Generated Habitat Models for Use During the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas," which shortly will be available on the 2nd PBBA website. Her work is helping project coordinators to refine and improve these models for eventual use by 2nd PBBA volunteers].

by Paul Sweet

It's 5:15 AM, June 2004, downtown Pittsburgh. There's a man sleeping on the sidewalk, and I'm surrounded by steel and glass. What a spot for a bird census! Five minutes, a handful of House Sparrows and Starlings, and another data sheet later, I hop back in the car and head out, towards the courthouse, and yet more House Sparrows. Four hours later, the GPS claims that I need to be standing outside the prison for my last point of the day – I compromise and stand across the street. Alas, no Eurasian Jackdaws at this facility. [Editor's note: *Eurasian Jackdaws nesting at Lewisburg Penitentiary was one of the extraordinary surprises of the first PBBA*] Was this what I signed up for? Oh, well, there are birds everywhere, I guess, and someone has to count them. May as well be me.

It's 6:30 AM, outside of Ohiopyle State Park – a beautiful spot to stay, I must say. I'm standing in a little valley, with State Game Lands to each side, and an archetypal little Pennsylvania stream keeping the road company. Acadian Flycatchers, Scarlet Tanagers, Red-eyed Vireos, and ... Waterthrush? There it goes again Too many early notes, and a short staccato ending. Whatever it is, it's singing way up on the hill, not along the creek. Not where one would expect a Louisiana Waterthrush, but exactly where one might find a Swainson's Warbler!! [Editor's note: *Atlas volunteers*



should keep a close eye out for this species, pictured at left, especially in rich woods with a dense understory

in southern Fayette County, where it was probable but never confirmed as a breeding bird during or prior to the first PBBA].

5:20 AM, the sun has just broken over a beautiful hillside hayfield. My data sheet is rapidly filling with Bobolinks – their magical song tumbling through the breeze like a set of bells cast upon the wind. Red-winged Blackbirds conduct the various sections, and the little piccolos of a couple of Grasshopper Sparrows round things out. Finally, in the last few seconds, I finally manage to find the proudest musician of the bunch – a little Henslow's Sparrow, one of my all-time favorite birds. A wonderful reminder – many rewards don't come in a paycheck.

8:30, July, the middle of a huge old strip mine in Clarion County, and I've just gotten back into the block I'm supposed to be "busting," with modest success so far. I stop the car, deciding to walk out into the grass in hopes of flushing one of the many sparrows I've been hearing, or maybe attracting the attention of one of the Northern Harriers I just spotted to the north. No luck with those, but a sudden three-note call catches my ear. I manage to spot the bird flying my direction, but what is it? American Kestrel? No, definitely not. Killdeer? No, I know those sounds far too well. Then the bird turns, shows a long neck and a short bill – Upland Sandpiper! I spend another hour trying unsuccessfully to find a nest.

6:30 PM, same day. Beth heard a Clay-colored Sparrow calling in this field, but we aren't managing to find him. As long

as we're here, may as well head up the road and see what else is around. A local farmer on an ATV hails us, and when we explain we're working on the Atlas, he insists we come up to his porch and see his hummingbirds. We end up spending an hour watching hummers and talking about the county and its history, from someone who's watched it grow. We may be counting birds on this job, but some of the best finds of the summer are the people we encounter.

Over the course of two months, I stayed in six state parks and a national forest campground, encountered 145 species of birds, and met who knows how many fascinating people across western Pennsylvania. My itinerary took me from the Maryland state line north to the New York state line, with stops for nesting Acadian Flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe, and Cerulean Warblers along the way. In the process, I got to know a section of the state better than I could have imagined just last spring. Helping in the 2nd PBBA, even if it's just "owning" one block during the five years, is an opportunity to get to know an area and its birdlife more intimately than you could ever imagine—I can't wait for next year, to do it all over again!

[Editor's note: *The project coordinators sincerely thank Mr. Roger Fickes and Mr. Keith Taylor, of the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks, for generously permitting free camping to volunteers and point counters conducting field work for the 2nd PBBA in many parts of the state*].

by Ben Israel

I really enjoyed the first season of field work as a PBBA field ornithologist. Many of the rural areas were very peaceful and quite beautiful. It was wonderful getting out and exploring corners of the state that otherwise I may never have gotten to. The more area I covered, the more I appreciated all of the beautiful land that is what we know as Pennsylvania. One of the neat things about the first season was getting to see what species were present where. Some of the highlights from this first season include getting to see a wide variety of birds, including grassland birds, finding a Worm-eating Warbler that was very agitated with my presence,



Worm-eating Warbler ADRIENNE LEPPOLD

and hearing a White-throated Sparrow singing from someone's backyard. It was great to get out and explore the state while helping to collect important data for 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.

A short story: One morning, I set out to start doing point counts as usual. One of my first points of the day was alongside a hayfield

...continued from page 6

Beth Swartzentruber

in a rural area, away from any houses. As I stood beside my car and counted birds, I noticed a man standing on his porch about 300 yards from where I was listening. After several minutes, he got in his car and drove over. As I expected, he asked me what I was doing. I went through the usual routine and informed him about the atlas and what I was doing. He said that it was ok for me to count birds along his property. He informed me that he had come over to see what I was doing because there had been several robberies in that area within the previous few days. He told me, "I didn't want to shoot you without a good reason!" He drove back to his house and I finished the point count.



Clay-colored Sparrow BOB MULVIHILL

This year's field season began with a training session to perfect our point-counting technique as a team. It was challenging at first as we learned to keep track of individuals across time intervals. After training I headed to the Northeast, I worked my way from Delaware Water Gap to Scranton and then farther north. I visited numerous state parks in the region including Lackawanna and Promised Land. I often encountered local residents during my point count routes. Folks would often stop sometimes to ask what I was doing but more often to ask if I needed any help.

One such encounter sticks out in my mind. I was just finishing my point and I saw a truck pulling over along side of me expecting to see a farmer and his wife I was surprised to find that his passenger was not his wife but an enormous tom turkey! After conducting hundreds of point counts, I have developed a greater appreciation for our state, its beautiful landscapes and, of course, its avian diversity.

Breeding Codes Simplified

Baffled by the distinction between breeding codes? Here's a simple way to help interpret and remember the codes. These are the four main categories:

- I. Observed (O)
- II. Possible (X)
- III. Probable (T, P, C, U, A)
- IV. Confirmed (CN, PE, NB, DD, FL, CF, FY, NE, ON, NY)

In the first category, OBSERVED (O), a bird would be seen or heard within the safe breeding dates, but not in the correct habitat, or otherwise assumed to not be a breeding bird. The second category, POSSIBLE (X) would be used if you see or hear a bird within the safe dates AND in suitable habitat. You would use X as the code if you observed no behavior consistent with one of the "higher" (PROBABLE or CONFIRMED) breeding categories.

The third category, PROBABLE, has five possible codes. Each of these codes can be associated with the letter that stands for the behavior that you observe, e.g., T = Territorial behavior, P = Pair (male and female) of a species seen together, C = Courtship behavior, U = Used nest found, and A = Agitated behavior.

The fourth group of breeding codes, CONFIRMED, is also related to the first letters of key words in the descriptions and are arranged in roughly increasing order of strength of evidence for breeding. CN = Carrying Nest materials, PE = Physical Evidence (use by banders only), NB = Nest Building observed, DD = Distraction Display, FL = Fledged Young, CF = Carrying Food or Fecal sac, FY = adult seen Feeding Young, NE = Nest with Eggs, ON = Occupied Nest, NY = Nest containing Young.

**Not involved with the 2nd PBBA, but want to be?
It's as easy as...**

- 1. **Register** on our website (www.pabirdatlas.org) **OR** **Mail** your contact information to us using the form below.
- 2. **Use** the "View Regions and Blocks" link on the website to determine which Atlas block you live or bird watch in. **OR** **Provide** us with a description of your bird watching location on the form below, and we'll notify you what block it is.
- 3. **Record** any breeding bird observations (one or 100!) on a field card (downloadable from the "Atlas Materials" link on the website) and enter them on the website for your block one by one as you make them or all at once at the end of the season **OR** **Record** any breeding bird observations (one or 100!) on the field card we send you and send a copy of your card to your Regional Coordinator or the headquarters and someone will enter them for you.



Virginia Rail BOB WOOD

Yes, I want to help with the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project, but I don't have a computer or an internet connection. Please register me and send me the materials I need to get started.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

County: _____

(Where will you be doing your bird watching? If different from your mailing address, please list locations separately, with estimated distance and direction from a landmark that we can find on a map, and we will tell you which atlas block it is; enclose additional pages if needed).

Order your official 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas T-shirt today!

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We are looking for a few thousand birders!

To join the ranks of the
2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas
survey volunteers, please log on to our website,
www.pabirdatlas.org, where you can register,
or call headquarters at 724.593.6022.



Northern Goshawk
Bob Muirmill

Want to own a block?

Of 4,937 blocks in the state, 1,760 are "owned"
which means that 3,177 are up for grabs.
If you consider yourself an experienced birder
and you can commit to spending at least
25 birding hours in the coming four years,
we need your help! If you are a less seasoned
birder, you may also request block ownership, as
long as you're open to learning and improving
your bird identification skills.

Please call the atlas main office, or the
Regional Coordinator for your area,
listed on page 5.

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