

Breeding bird atlas survey documents important changes

More than 1,400 volunteers have already signed up to participate in the most extensive nesting bird survey ever attempted in the state, the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas (PBBA), a five-year project being directed and coordinated jointly by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

The coordinators of the state's largest and most important breeding bird survey in 15 years still are looking for volunteers to help record information about the myriad species that nest in the Commonwealth's forests, fields and wetlands.

The first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas was conducted from 1983 to 1989 and more than 2,000 people participated in the undertaking.

The second Atlas started last spring and will continue through summer 2008. Participants sign up to search for or report on nesting birds in specific 10-square mile geographic grids of Pennsylvania's nearly 45,000 square miles. Every individual who decides to help with the survey can choose his or her level of involvement.

"Truly, anyone can help; birdwatchers of all age, skill and experience levels are welcome," noted Bob Mulvihill, a field ornithologist at Carnegie Museum's Powdermill Nature Preserve, who is serving as the Atlas project coordinator. Added help is most urgently needed in the state's rural areas, especially in the northern counties.

Since second Atlas survey work started one year ago, more than 70,000 bird sightings — representing 189 species — have been logged on the Atlas website at www.carnegiemnh.org/atlas/home.htm and more than 165 species have been confirmed nesting in the state. In the first Atlas, 210 species were observed and 180 were confirmed to be nesting at the end of the six-year project.

Two new species documented in new Atlas surveys that weren't recorded in the 1980s effort are the Sandhill crane and the Eurasian collared dove. Atlas workers also have reported some 30 "species of special concern" including least bittern, sedge wren, black tern, Swainson's thrush, dickcissel, yellow-bellied flycatcher, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, osprey and black-crowned night heron.

The second Atlas includes a new, specialized statewide owl and whip-poor-will survey component that is being implemented this year. Experienced volunteer birders will be using a pre-recorded saw-whet owl call to document the presence, status and distribution of this secretive species.

Wetland birds also will receive special attention because they are typically overlooked in fieldwork for nesting in relatively secretive and hard-to-reach places. Wetland species monitoring is particularly important because they predominantly comprise Pennsylvania's lists of endangered and threatened species. The survey work will focus on species such as Virginia and Sora rails, least and American bitterns, and marsh wren.

Every single breeding bird observation, whether a common species, such as a robin, mourning dove or house sparrow seen by beginning "backyard" birdwatchers or a real rarity, such as a sandpiper or loggerhead shrike, documented by an expert and avid birder, will improve the Atlas and measurably add to knowledge of the occurrence, status and distribution of Pennsylvania's birdlife.

When completed in 2008, the second Atlas will show changes in the occurrence and distribution of the state's nearly 200 species of nesting birds, and promises to provide much additional information.



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

United Water Pennsylvania set up portable water tanks on Center Hill Road and on Marywood Drive for use by residents affected by shortages last week. A new well has alleviated the shortages.

WATER

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Pack said a nearly five-inch deficit in rainfall wasn't noticed in May. But May wasn't hot. "You ended up with dry and hot in June. We had excessive demand for four or five weeks in a row."

The new well will allow the company to discontinue sending 40,000 to 50,000 gallons per day from its Shavertown wells to Dallas customers. The connection will be maintained for use when necessary. Next, United Water will improve its ability to transfer water between the Stonehedge and high school tanks by installing a larger line.

There may be more to come. "We are at this moment exploring additional supply," Pack said, which may include more wells or surface supply. The goal is to have 150 percent of average daily demand in storage

TANKS ARE KEY

United Water Pennsylvania has 11 wells and three storage tanks serving its Dallas and Shavertown customers. Here are the tank locations and capacities:

- Stonehedge, 313,000 gallons
- Near Dallas High School, 250,000 gallons
- Off Mount Airy Road, 286,000 gallons

The combined total is more than one and one-half days' normal demand. The systems are interconnected. New lines will soon be installed between the two Dallas tanks to make transfer easier.

while being able to pump that much to customers.

The company now has 11 wells in operation. Pack said the new well will allow them to be used less intensely.

Meadows seeks volunteers

The Volunteer Department at the Meadows Nursing Center, Dallas, is seeking volunteers to fill the following positions:

To escort residents in wheelchairs to the Meadows in-house beauty shop and be on call as needed, morning and afternoon hours, Monday through Friday, or regular schedule for weekday afternoons from 1:30 to 4 p.m. Training is provided.

To help the Activities Department escort residents in wheelchairs to and from daily activities, 10 a.m. to noon and 2 to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Assignments include coffee hour, manicures, bingo, etc. Weekend and evening hours are also available. Training is provided.

Also, groups or individuals are invited to share their musical or other talents to entertain residents. Day, evening, and weekend hours are available.

For more information, call 675-8600, ext. 195.

Harveys Lake Lions invite new members

The Harveys Lake Lions Club is accepting applications for new members. Meetings are held twice monthly. Applications can be obtained by calling J. Peter Farrell at 639-1235 or Jeff Smith at 696-5026.

Low-interest loans available to buy and repair homes

USDA Rural Development offers a subsidized government program designed to assist low-income, credit-worthy families and individuals in purchasing or building homes in rural areas.

To qualify, applicants must have a household income less than 80 percent of the county median, have an acceptable credit history and meet certain debt to income ratios. Annual income limits in Luzerne and Wyoming counties are \$28,750 for a single person and \$41,050 for a family of four. The home purchased must be modest, in good repair and in an eligible rural area.

The loan limit is \$149,300 to \$181,900, depending on the county. No down payment is required, and funds for repairs (and sometimes

closing costs) may be included in the loan. Payments may be subsidized, or reduced, based on the applicant's income.

Applications also are being taken for home repairs. To qualify, applicants must have a household income less than 50 percent of the county median and own and occupy the property. The interest rate is 1 percent.

Call the Wyoming office at 836-4157, ext. 4, for more information.

USDA Rural Development does not compete with other lenders, and will participate in a joint loan where another lender contributes part of the money as a first mortgage, and USDA Rural Development contributes the balance as a second mortgage.

For more information, visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa.

GARDEN

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reach and pick the weeds out easily," says Schuler. A quick glance around while walking the handmade paths makes you want to roam around and see more. Schuler has planned it that way. "I try to arrange the flowers so that it keeps your eyes moving, you want to see more," he says.

Though his garden is somewhat planned, Schuler does not ignore the creative virtue of serendipity. "I'll sometimes just let them (flowers) pop up wherever they want, because you're never really in control in a garden. Some days you can't count

on anything going right. There are always insects, weather and water problems."

To arrange to see this and other interesting gardens and share the gardeners' experiences and knowledge, purchase a ticket for \$15 from the Pa Environmental Council office, Main St., Luzerne, the Back Mountain Memorial Library, Dallas, or from the Bloomers Garden Show, P. O. Box 125, Dallas, PA 18612. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. For more information call 675-9016.



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Combinations of color and texture draw the eye in and make you want to see more. This garden will be included in the Back Mountain Bloomers garden tour July 16th.

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NEWS

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The Post (ISSN - 1551-1650)

Published weekly by Cypress Media, LLC. \$26 per year, in Luzerne and Wyoming counties (PA). Call 829-7141 for rates to other areas. Periodicals postage paid at Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-9998
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Post, 15 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre PA 18711

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