

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Announces
Inaugural Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation**

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is turning the passion of Pennsylvanians for watching and counting birds into funding for bird conservation with the launch of the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation. Teams of birders across the state – following strict COVID protocols – will compete to identify as many species as possible on one day between June 18th and June 21st, 2021. Teams will enlist their friends to support their efforts with a donation to support three critical bird conservation projects. Bird-lovers of all ages and skill levels are invited to visit www.breedingbirdblitz.org to form or join a team, or to make a donation.

Birds in Pennsylvania and across the nation urgently need help. A well-publicized study in 2019 estimated that 25% of birds have disappeared from the North America since 1970, a loss of nearly three billion birds.* The Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (or the B4C) will direct its efforts at conserving two priority species whose populations are declining in Pennsylvania: Northern Harrier and Wood Thrush. Both species are listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan. The Northern Harrier is state-listed as “threatened” since its numbers are declining so rapidly. Funds raised for the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation will be used to protect habitat that these species need: extensive grassy fields for the Northern Harrier and unfragmented forest for the Wood Thrush.

PSO will be partnering with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and Manada Conservancy. All three organizations protect natural habitats through land purchases, donations, and conservation easements and have identified projects that will utilize the donations from the B4C to protect bird habitat. Hawk Mountain will earmark the B4C funds for Northern Harrier habitat protection, while Manada Conservancy and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will protect Wood Thrush habitat. Funds raised by the B4C will be split equally between Hawk Mountain, the Manada Conservancy, and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Every penny of donations received will support these projects, as PSO is covering all administrative costs associated with the program.

So how does the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation work? Teams of two or more birders register through the website and decide whether they will cover a single county or a region of the state. While drawing up the plans for their “Big Day,” the team members will reach out to friends to tell them what they are doing and ask for their support with a donation. All donations are made through www.breedingbirdblitz.org, where a donor can select a team to support. After the event, teams will submit their results, primarily through the eBird website. The teams that raise the most funds and document the most species will receive special recognition.

*Source: Kenneth V. Rosenberg, Adriaan M. Dokter, Peter J. Blancher, John R. Sauer, Adam C. Smith, Paul A. Smith, Jessica C. Stanton, Arvind Panjabi, Laura Helft, Michael Parr and Peter P. Marra. Decline of the North American avifauna. *Science* 366 (6461), 120-124.

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1990 to foster the study and appreciation of the wild birds of Pennsylvania and to

promote the conservation of birds and their habitats. PSO organizes and supports several bird monitoring projects, hosts field trips, an annual meeting, and publishes the quarterly journal *Pennsylvania Birds*. More information about PSO can be found at www.pabirds.org.

Media inquiries about the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation should be directed to Brian Byrnes, brianjbyrnes79@gmail.com, 610-420-2264.