

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN PENNSYLVANIA



Definitions

An Important Bird Area (“IBA”) is a site of special significance to breeding or non-breeding birds, which, on some basis, can be distinguished from surrounding areas. (Boundaries may be natural, such as watersheds, or man-made, such as roads and property boundaries.) In general, an IBA should exist as an actual or potential protected area, or it should have the potential to be managed in some way for the benefit of birds and other wildlife. There is no minimum or maximum size for an IBA, but whenever possible, an IBA should be large enough to supply all or most of the requirements of the birds during the season for which it is important. (Not all IBAs, such as fly-over sites for raptors, can or will meet this last definition.)

Criteria

A site meeting any one of the criteria in the following five categories

may qualify as an Important Bird Area. Many sites will meet several criteria. These criteria should not be considered absolute, and other factors, such as relative importance to other sites, may be weighed in making final site selections.

Categories:

IBA sites were assigned category numbers that reflect their importance as bird habitat. Category designation is interpreted as follows:

Category “PA-1”

PA-1 sites are those sites where birds concentrate in significant numbers when breeding, in winter, or during migration.

Criteria for this Designation:

- (1a) The site regularly supports at least 2,000 waterfowl (at one time) during some part of the year.
- (1b) The site regularly supports at least 100 shore birds (at one time) during some part of the year.
- (1c) The site regularly supports at least 50 pairs of wading birds during the breeding season.
- (1d) The site is a “bottleneck” for at least 10,000 raptors (seasonal total) during spring or fall migration.
- (1e) The site is recognized within Pennsylvania as having an exceptional concentration and/or diversity of birdlife.

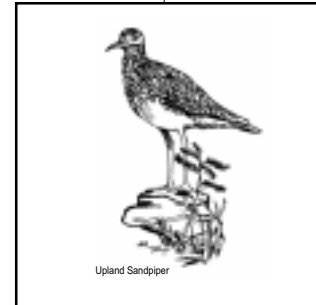
This category is meant to cover sites of importance for dense populations of breeding birds (such as a heronry), high concentrations of waterfowl or shore birds in any season, and migratory “bottlenecks” where geographical features (such as ridges) concentrate large numbers of migratory birds. The numerical criteria (1a-1e) are guidelines only, and other factors (quality and location of habitat, distribution and importance of species, etc.) may be considered. Criterion (1a) should exclude sedentary Canada Geese and Mallards. Criterion (1b) applies to sandpipers, plovers, *et al.*; criterion (1c) to herons and egrets. Criterion (1e) is meant to cover exceptional sites to which numerical criteria may not be easily applied, such as breeding areas or migrant “traps” for land birds.

Category “PA-2”

PA-2 sites are those sites where endangered and threatened species have been found.

Criterion for this designation:

- (2) The site supports a significant population of a species that is endangered or threatened.



See list (p.169) for covered species. This category includes species listed as endangered or threatened in Pennsylvania and federally listed species. Sites should be those where the species occurs or potentially occurs with some regularity, not areas of infrequent occurrence. Ideally, these same sites will benefit many species.

Category “PA-3”

PA-3 sites are those sites where Pennsylvania species of concern were found.

Criterion for this designation:

- (3) A site of major importance, supporting a significant population of a species on the Pennsylvania “special concern” list, but not currently endangered or threatened.

See list (p. 169) for covered species. This list includes four categories of Pennsylvania’s “special concern” list: Candidate-At Risk, Candidate-Rare, Candidate-Undetermined, and Extirpated. Sites should be those where the species occurs or potentially occurs with some regularity, not areas of infrequent occurrence. Ideally, these same sites will benefit many species.

Category “PA-4”

PA-4 sites are those sites containing representative, rare, threatened, or unique habitats, with birds characteristic of those habitats.

Criteria for this designation:

The site contains a habitat type that is

- (4a) rare, threatened, or unusual within the state or region.
- (4b) an exceptional representative of a characteristic natural or near-natural habitat within its physiographic province. See *Physiographic Provinces of Pennsylvania Map*, p. 93. This category is mainly meant to cover relatively large areas capable of supporting significant bird populations, especially of species with particular habitat requirements such as grassland or primary forest-nesting birds (for example, Henslow’s and Grasshopper sparrow, Cerulean Warbler). Small remnants of an exceptional habitat type may be included, however. Whenever possible, characteristic species of birds (and other wildlife) indicative of the habitat type should be identified and quantified.

Category “PA-5”

PA-5 sites are those sites where long-term avian research or monitoring is in process.

Criterion for this designation:

- (5) The site is a natural area where a long-term research and/or monitoring project is based that contributes substantially to ornithology and bird conservation.

An indicator of such a site will often be a long record of data collection resulting in publication in ornithological journals, such as *The Auk*, *Condor*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Journal of Field Ornithology*, *American Birds* (*Audubon Field Notes*), *Pennsylvania Birds*, or an in-house publication series.





Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Breeding Status Code Key:

- B: Breeding behavior or evidence noted
FM: Observed as a fall migrant
M: Observed in migration; specific season not noted
SM: Observed as a spring migrant
W: Observed on wintering grounds

E.g.: “Least Bittern (B-8=+)” indicates that approximately 8 individual Least Bitterns were observed in breeding habitat during the breeding season, and/or breeding behavior or evidence was noted.

Standard Abbreviations:

- ANF- Allegheny National Forest
BBS- Breeding Bird Survey
CTY- County
DCNR- Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
MUN- Municipal
NA- Natural Area
NPS- National Park Service
PFBC- PA Fish and Boat Commission
PGC- PA Game Commission
PNDI- PA Natural Diversity Inventory
PSO- PA Society of Ornithology
SAP- Special Areas Project
SF- State Forest
SGL- State Game Land
SP- State Park
USACE- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFS- U.S. Forest Service
USFWS- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service