

PENNSYLVANIA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

SITE NAME MOUNT ZION (PINEY TRACT)

COUNTY CLARION

SITE # 21

APPROX. SIZE 2,300 ACRES

OWNERSHIP PRIVATE

LAT. 41°08' **LONG.** 79°30'

DESCRIPTION

An area of reclaimed strip mines in central Clarion County, south of the Clarion River. The high, rolling hills, stripmined in the 1970s, have been revegetated with grasses and trees (locust and pine). Grassland habitat occupies the hilltops, transected by brushy or forested stream bottoms. Surface ponds provide some wetland habitat. At various places, small surface streams are diverted to acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment with chemicals and/or ponds and artificial wetlands. Some of the lower ponds are pollution-free and full of wildlife, including insects and amphibians.

Directions: Rt. US 81 to exit 7, go south on SR 3007 to first dirt road to left (TR425). Bear left at Y.

BIRDS - SUMMARY

The large size of this area, particularly the contiguous fields, is a significant component to its importance to grassland birds. Bird surveys have documented a notable diversity and remarkable numbers of grassland birds. At present, this is the only regular and reliable breeding site in Pennsylvania for Short-eared Owl (B - 2+ pair). Piney Tract supports the largest Henslow's Sparrow breeding colony in Pennsylvania (approx. 1,000 pairs) and exceptionally high numbers of Grasshopper Sparrow (1,000 pairs) and Savannah Sparrow (1,000 pairs).

REPRESENTATIVE BIRDS - BY CRITERIA

- 1e High numbers and diversity of grassland birds breeding.
- 2 Short-eared Owl (B - 2+ pair, W - 8±), Upland Sandpiper (B - 2± pair), Dickcissel (B - hist.).
- 3 Northern Harrier (B - 2+ pair, W - 4+)
- 4a Extensive grassland habitat. See summary.
- 5 PA Game Commission Grassland Breeding Bird Survey 1991-present. Ornithological Technical Committee - Special Areas Project with Seneca Rocks Audubon Society.

CONSERVATION / ADDITIONAL NOTES

Fragmentation of the area in the future is likely if no effort is made to keep the entire tract. Natural succession will eventually increase shrub and brush components making the area unsuitable for grassland birds. Periodic burning of patches of habitat will be necessary to maintain grassland state. Acid mine drainage is still a problem in some areas. The PSO has joined an effort by Clarion County Federation of Sportsmen, Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and several other groups to help conserve this area for birds.

LOCAL CONTACTS

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SUBMITTED BY:

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