

From: owner-pabiodiv@webmail.upb.pitt.edu On Behalf Of Wiltraut, Richard E
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2006 3:32 PM
Subject: PABIODIV: Grasslands meeting

Hi to all,

As many of you are aware, rapid development in eastern Pennsylvania, especially here in the Lehigh Valley, has greatly reduced the biodiversity of our fields and pastures. Probably the one creature that has suffered the most is the Barn Owl. Habitat loss and degradation, along with destruction of nest sites (i.e. old barns), pesticides, and traffic casualties have severely decimated Barn Owl populations. Barn Owls need large areas of grasslands and wet meadows which provide the necessary habitat requirements for their favorite prey, the Meadow Vole. Unfortunately habitat of this kind is becoming scarce in the Lehigh Valley and in many areas of Pennsylvania and neighboring counties of western New Jersey. Farmland preservation along with grassland habitat enhancement programs, placement of nesting boxes and a Barn Owl reintroduction program may bring the Barn Owl back in the Lehigh Valley and in other areas of Pennsylvania and western New Jersey. Grassland enhancement will also benefit many other species of birds like the American Kestrel, Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and Grasshopper Sparrow, as well as butterflies and other animals.

On Tuesday, April 25th at 1:00-4:00 p.m. there will be a meeting at the Martins Creek PPL power plant to discuss ideas to help the Barn Owl in Pennsylvania/New Jersey and form a partnership for creating grassland habitat in the Lehigh Valley. Host John Drabic will give a tour of open land around the plant property and talk about future habitat improvements to help the Barn Owl and other grassland species. Wildlife Diversity Biologist Jamie Zambo will be presenting a Powerpoint on the PA Game Commission's Barn Owl Initiative and Bill Sweeney from Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center will give an overview of the Lehigh Valley Greenways Initiative. Paul Karner will show us where some new Barn Owl boxes have been erected and local EAC chairpersons Judy Henckel and John Mauser will take us to some farms in the area that have been preserved and have potential for grassland enhancement.

If you think of anyone else that would be interested in attending the meeting, please let them know. Let's work together to help give the Barn Owl and other grassland creatures a chance in the Lehigh Valley and throughout Pennsylvania. Hope to see you all there.

Sincerely,

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Note from moderator Contact Mr. Wiltraut for directions to the Martins Creek PPL power plant

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