We Preserved it ... and They Came
Our Continuing Efforts to Encourage a Diversity of Birds at Brightside Farm Park

When the two parcels of the 75-acre Brightside Farm were purchased and permanently preserved by the Township more than fifteen years ago, we recognized the value of this picturesque natural resource for our community.

This spring, Planning Commissioner Andy Motel arranged for a Bird Watching Walk at Brightside led by Patti and John Werth of the Valley Forge Audubon Society on June 24th. Prior to this walk, they spotted many varieties of bird, including a pair of Kestrels, which are not so common in Southeastern PA. They were actively courting, and we were delighted to learn through a follow up visit by Dan Mummert, Wildlife Diversity Biologist for the PA Game Commission, that 4 Kestrel eggs were discovered! (During our 2019 Earth Day event, Planning Commissioner Dan Walker had installed the kestrel box on a utility pole, along with two owl boxes in the wooded areas.)

The Kestrel is declining in Pennsylvania due to habitat loss (areas converted to large areas of grassland), so this was good news! The Kestrel is the smallest member of the falcon family.

Dan Mummert and his volunteers monitored the nest and when the chicks were 10-24 days old in June he banded them for the Game Commission's tracking program. Mummert works with landowners to promote habitat for these and other species and offered to visit Brightside through the Game Commission’s “Private Landowner Assistance Program.” Via this free-of-charge program, the PGC offers guidance to landowners with not less than 10 acres how to enhance their land for wildlife.

Here’s a link to a video of Dan and his work with Kestrels and Barn Owls (suggestion: skip to 4:15). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkUleRL-amU. Video of banding starts at 40:00.

After the visit, we received a report of findings that will be used to decide which measures are compatible with current use and Township objectives for Brightside.

Other birds sighted this year include the Eastern Meadowlark, which is quite rare in PA, as well as orchard orioles and bobolinks, all species that nest on the ground in high grasses. While bobolinks aren’t rare, we are at the edge of their normal range. The Brightside Farm has now been listed as a birding hotspot through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

*At right: Eastern Bluebird*