



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

<http://www.3rbc.org>

Vol. 14, No. 1, January/February 2015

Take a Photographic Birding Journey with Steve Gosser

The Three Rivers Birding Club's program on Wednesday, February 4, will be a sure-to-be-dazzling show by one of our club's favorite photographers, Steve Gosser.

The meeting will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue in Shadyside. Doors will open at 6:30 PM for socializing, a business meeting will begin at 7:30, and the program will start at 8.

In his presentation titled "Steve's Journey into Birding," he will share his favorite photos and experiences since he began what Steve calls "my wonderful hobby of birding" nearly 10 years ago. Here is how Steve describes himself:

"I've only been to the eastern states that include Pennsylvania, Ohio, Delaware, Maryland, and Florida. So far, I have photographed 314 different species.

"I work in an insurance company claims department in Pittsburgh, but I'm a weekend warrior for birding adventures. I try to fit in at least one day to get out, enjoy nature, and see what kind of birds I can photograph. I've had gallery exhibits and have been published in *Birding* magazine, the *Post-Gazette*, the *Valley News Dispatch*, several Audubon publications, and many local newsletters, journals, and websites.

"About 10 years ago I got my first decent DSLR camera and quickly gravitated towards nature photography. Before that, in the 1990s I was an art/design major at Edinboro University and took tons of art classes which helped develop an 'artist's eye' for composition, light, tonal balances,



AVIAN DELIGHT—Steve Gosser found this Canada Warbler in Jefferson County.

contrasts, spatial relationships, etc. I am mostly a self-taught photographer, but having all that art background definitely gave me an edge with taking nice pictures.

"Around 2005, I started taking pictures of birds (mostly out the window at the birds at the backyard feeder), and for the first time started paying attention to birds and trying to identify them.

"About a year later, I fell hook, line, and sinker into birding. In January 2006 I went to Glade Dam Lake in Butler County and laid eyes on my first pair of Bald Eagles. I never knew that eagles could be found in this part of the country and never imagined I would ever see them. Seeing them that day was a euphoric moment and made me realize just how incredibly exhilarating, fun and enjoyable birding could be. After that I was hooked!

"I discovered the more I got into birding and photographing birds, the more I became addicted to it. Now, whenever I schedule time off from work, it's always based on the good birding times, and when I go on vacation, it's all about trying to see as many birds as possible. It has become part of my entire lifestyle!

"I grew up in Lower Burrell and currently live in New Kensington. I like to bird many places nearby including Harrison Hills Park and Crooked Creek Lake, but you can find me anywhere in western Pennsylvania wherever good birds can be found."



Happy Birthday to Us!

She did it again! Sherron Lynch, our club's *boulangere extraordinaire* honored 3RBC's 13th birthday with another of her annual luscious cakes. She deserves our praise in classy French instead of the mundane English "extraordinary baker."

See a full picnic report by Debbie Kalbfleisch in Outings Revisited and more photos on page 5. This year's event tied an all-time record with a total of 38 participants whose potluck lunch specialties were a great climax to a morning of birding and fellowship at Moraine State Park. (photograph by Tom Moeller)

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President's Message

A Look Back to See the Future

By Bob VanNewkirk

January has become the traditional time when people turn introspective by looking back at their pasts, see what they liked and what they would like to change, and then try to resolve to make their lives better for the year ahead.

As the Three Rivers Birding Club begins its 14th year, I thought it would be a good time to look back at the club's beginning, see how it has grown, reflect on the goals that its founders established, and to imagine what its future may hold.

Fifty-four people attended the inaugural meeting at the Frick Nature Center on July 29, 2001. Word of this meeting was spread by club organizers and announced through the *Nature Observer News*' owner and editor, Chuck Tague. Participants gave the club its current name and elected officers Jack Solomon (president), Jim Valimont (vice-president/ outings coordinator), Mike Fialkovich (bird reporting), and Bob Machesney (treasurer). Paul Hess became the newsletter's editor with production assistance by Joan Tague and mail distribution by Randi and Sarah Gerrish. Volunteering to head the hospitality committee were Mabel Matteson and Becky Byerly. Julia Pahountis-Opacic was in charge of the website. Following the business meeting, Mike Fialkovich gave a memorable color slide show featuring his bird photographs. The club was now off and running!

The club's founders had the forethought and desire to shape the club around some core principles: embolden experienced birders to share their knowledge with less experienced birders, demonstrate bird watching etiquette, invite people to share their observations and knowledge, provide outings for members of all skill levels, suggest good birding locations, and encourage beginners and non-birders to join the fun. Look what happened when like-minded people got together to act on a good idea, develop a plan, and expect the best! Currently membership consists of about 250 memberships including 100 family memberships.

Members and guests attend meetings at the Phipps Garden Center where they can meet with friends and maybe make new ones, sample delicious treats, and of course, the main draw, be educated and entertained by outstanding presenters. Past speakers have included nationally known ornithologists and noted authors such as Scott Weidensaul, Ted Floyd, Todd Katzner, Jon Dunn, Jean Iron, Julie Zickefoose, Kimberly and Kenn Kaufman, and two Pittsburgh favorites, Chuck Tague and Paul Hess.

It is equally fascinating to learn about the work of ornithological field researchers who informed us about their findings regarding topics like bird banding, genetics, shorebird nesting, raptors and wind turbine problems, recording flight calls, preserving warbler habitat, and breeding bird atlasing to name a few. Our own members have routinely taken us vicariously on their birding excursions by sharing their wonderful photos. Some of our best-attended programs involved live birds that were especially appealing to families with children. Handlers gave us wonderful close-up looks of an African Penguin, a Golden Eagle, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Red-tailed Hawk.

The club's officers were the first to schedule and lead outings to popular state parks such as Moraine, Pymatuning, and Presque Isle. Birders also visited local parks such as Frick Park, Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, and Harrison Hills County Park. Leaders showed their participants many places to watch birds that were new to most of them, and shared their avian knowledge, spotting

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Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter
Published bimonthly:
January, March, May, July, September, November

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Letter from the Editor

By Paul Hess

Bob VanNewkirk's "President's Message" in the last issue of *The Peregrine* was a gem. It told of his five most memorable bird sightings: a Connecticut Warbler, a Ross's Goose, a mass of Snow Geese, a Western Grebe, and a Great Gray Owl.

His experiences were notable for different reasons such as rarity, great numbers, and amazing behavior. They were a pleasure to read, and they gave me an idea. Our members would love to read about other members' best-ever birding experience.

The next issue will include what I hope will become a regular feature in *The Peregrine*: "My Favorite Bird Sighting."

Send a short note to me at p Hess@salsgiver.com telling us about your most memorable sighting. Just as Bob's, your favorite might be finding a lifer, seeing a marvelous spectacle, watching a bit of unusual behavior, or anything else that struck you strongly.

Please keep your note to 100 words or less. And please don't labor to make it a classic of writing. Just be conversational and chatty. Pretend you're passing along your excitement to a friend.

Outings to Come

Let's Look at Birds Indoors and Out

Saturday, February 14 – Sewickley Heights Park: The 3RBC and the Fern Hollow Nature Center will team up again to participate in the 18th annual Great Backyard Bird Count at Sewickley Heights Park. We will meet in the upper parking lot at Sewickley Heights Park at 9AM and bird to 12 PM. Besides birding in the park, we will also visit Walker Park along Little Sewickley Creek Road. Following the outing, we will have a potluck luncheon at the Fern Hollow Nature Center. Birders who attend the luncheon are asked to bring a dish that can be shared with about six other people. Directions to Sewickley Heights Park are posted on the 3RBC website.

Saturday, February 21 – National Aviary: Bob Mulvihill, (412-258-1148; Robert.mulvihill@aviary.org), ornithologist at the National Aviary, will lead us on tour of the Aviary. We will meet at the Aviary at 10 AM. Participants will be responsible for a \$10 entrance fee. RSVP to Steve Thomas (thomassj22@verizon.net; 412-782-4696) by Friday, February 20, so we can know how many will be attending. The Aviary is located at 700 Arch Street on Pittsburgh's North Side.

President's Message

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scopes, and identification expertise. Because of the leaders' efforts, everyone also shared in finding good birds, new birding buddies, and wonderful memories.

Gradually over time, as some birders developed their identification skills and confidence, they offered to lead people to their personal favorite birding locations. As a result, more outings were scheduled and more life birds were recorded, which elevated the club's fun meter to new heights. As of this writing, a total of 63 different outing leaders with various skill levels have taken us to 51 separate destinations to look for birds. Many locations are obviously repeated because, well, that's where the birds are, depending on the season and the species being sought. What outings have provided you with unforgettable moments?

Club members have demonstrated their interest and passion for birds in many ways, through involvement with citizen-science projects such as Project FeederWatch and Neighborhood NestWatch, the PA Migration Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Surveys, Winter Raptor Surveys, posting sighting reports on eBird, surveying Important Bird Areas, co-hosting a Birding Festival at Frick Park in June 2003, hosting the 2008 meeting of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, and sponsoring club member Ross Gallardy and his World Series of Birding Team in the youth division in May 2006. (His team won two years in a row.)

It is no wonder that the club continues to grow in membership. Members have come to appreciate the quality of its programs and outings as well as keeping informed through its website and newsletter. For 2015 and beyond, consider how you can contribute to the success of the club. Perhaps this will be the year you choose to lead an outing or co-lead one, suggest a new outing location at one of your favorite places, invite a friend to attend a meeting, introduce your child or grandchild to bird watching, participate in a citizen-science project, and continue to renew your membership. The future is now.



RULING THE ROOST – This is Allegheny County's newest nesting pair of Bald Eagles. Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has bought their nest location in Harmar Township and is seeking funds for its preservation. (photograph by Brian Shema)

Harmar Bald Eagles Can Use Your Help

The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has acquired the Harmar Bald Eagle nesting site in Harmar Township – one of the species' three nesting locations in Allegheny County. The property, located on a hillside above Route 28, will now be preserved and protected from any development that could keep the eagles from using the nest again. The eagles have been at the nest site for the past two years, successfully raising one eaglet in 2014.

To help offset the cost of the property purchase and associated management, Audubon has kicked off a fund-raising campaign called "Home Is Where the Nest Is." The goal is to raise \$35,000.

"The opportunity to purchase this land came up very quickly and we could not pass it up," said Jim Bonner, ASWP's Executive Director. "We went out on a limb to purchase this property and we need the public's support to help us cover the cost."

To contribute, see the ASWP website, aswp.org.

It became too late in the season to place a streaming webcam at the nest, but Audubon plans to document this year's activity through still photography that will be made available to the public. "The greater Pittsburgh community has truly embraced the Bald Eagles and we hope that they will continue to support the eagles' growth and success in our area by donating to our funding campaign. If the thousands of people who support the eagles donate \$25 each, we will quickly reach our goal," Bonner said.

Outings Revisited

We Enjoyed Our Picnic and Many Late Fall Birds

Pymatuning State Park –October 12: October is a transitional month at Pymatuning. Permanent resident birds, those found in the area throughout the year, “join” the winter visitants. These are species which breed in regions to the north and migrate southward, to spend part or the entire winter season here. Then, there are summer residents who may breed here, but migrate southward for the winter. So the 17 participants, including three who were new to the park, gathered at the Wildlife Learning Center parking lot, expecting to find a diversity of resident and migratory species.

The 36° F morning temperature did not dampen anyone’s enthusiasm. As one birder stated, “When I’m seeing birds, I don’t even think about the cold.” Before we even introduced ourselves, we heard the incessant and unmistakable trumpet-like vocalizations of Sandhill Cranes coming from across the marsh, but we never did locate their position.

Scanning the waters bordering the center revealed large numbers of adult and juvenile Double-crested Cormorants. Two immature and two adult Bald Eagles were also seen. A pair of male Eastern Bluebirds was in constant motion while looking for a meal. Because Canada Geese were the only waterfowl present, we turned our attention to look for other species in the woodlots.

Our first sparrows, White-crowned and White-throated, were found in a bushy edge along the trail. Cedar Waxwings, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Northern Flickers, and Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers provided us with constant action as they pin-balled their way through the trees. Along the fence line of the parking lot, two female Purple Finches were perched atop a conifer. A Lincoln’s Sparrow, a Swainson’s Thrush, and a singing Winter Wren gave us more thrills. Twenty-seven species were noted here at the outing’s beginning. What cold?

We made a quick stop at the Spillway, where we added Ruddy Duck, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Mallards to our list. We scanned the lake hoping for sightings of a loon or other waterfowl, but none were present.

When our caravan pulled up to the Hartstown Propagation Pond, there didn’t appear at first glance to be any birds present in the fields or in the pond. That soon changed as a flock of Greater Yellowlegs flew into view. An immature Bald Eagle flew over the tree line and was immediately mobbed by a flock of 50 or more crows. Changing our position for a better look at the pond revealed six Great Egrets perched in a willow tree. A Belted Kingfisher and Hooded Mergansers also came into our view. An Eastern Meadowlark revealed its position from the other side of Hartstown Road. A Horned Lark was heard calling but was not observed.

We headed to the Miller Ponds by way of Wilson Road. A Cooper’s Hawk and a Northern Harrier were spotted flying over the corn fields. This was the beginning of an exciting raptor preview. While we were checking out the larger pond, two adult Bald Eagles flew into view from behind us. As we watched them fly parallel to the tree line, an immature Bald Eagle soared into view as did a pair of adult Red-tailed Hawks that may have been hunting the fields. Suddenly, an immature Red-tailed Hawk appeared flying high above the eagle, and then proceeded to dive

directly at it. The eagle veered its course and flew off. This action caused a flock of starlings to rise out of a corn field and “escort” the eagle as they followed behind. Perhaps this was the starlings’ way of mobbing the large raptor, but the eagle was not bothered or interested, and the chase was cut off. The final scene to all this drama was provided by a pair of Sandhill Cranes as they flew overhead. Some Lesser Yellowlegs and a Pectoral Sandpiper were found in the smaller pond.

After a relaxing lunch at the Spillway Inn, we headed to the Fish Hatchery. Here we observed Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, and Common Merganser. We then took a short walk along the edge of the marsh, flushing a Green Heron and several Wood Ducks hiding in a weed bed. We next searched for shorebirds in the drainage channels in the middle of the field. These channels funnel water from the retention ponds and drain into the marsh. Two Solitary Sandpipers were located, one each in its own channel. Since it was mid-afternoon, some in our group headed back home.

Our next birding location was the Tuttle Beach parking lot. We birded along the road to the campground with no new sightings. Eventually we came to an area that is a swampy inlet between the lake and the woods beside the road. This spot was the main reason I led the group here. After a brief time of scanning the many dead trees for movement, our target bird was discovered, Red-headed Woodpeckers –two adults and two juveniles.

Our small group drove back to the Miller Ponds to give the area another look. There was nothing new. But a pair of adult Bald Eagles suddenly seemed to appear out of the blue sky. They circled together, one slightly behind and lower than the other as they coursed on their way. We no sooner got back into our cars when we noticed a small flock of Sandhill Cranes heading toward us. We watched eight cranes land in the field between the two ponds. At first they seemed to be wary of the surroundings, but then they all began preening. Searching the sky revealed that another flock of seven cranes was heading here to join the others.

Heading home, we decided to make a final stop at Geneva Marsh. Perhaps we would find a Marsh Wren or Rusty Blackbirds. We didn’t, but we did see an Eastern Phoebe. The phoebe was species number 63. It was a wonderful day that brought good sightings and warm smiles. –by leader **Bob VanNewkirk**

Moraine State Park – October 26: A light-hearted group of 38 gathered on the South Shore for the 13th Annual Three Rivers Birding Club outing and picnic, beating previous records set in 2001 and 2010 with 33 people. We are still growing!

Bob VanNewkirk welcomed everyone and announced that early birders had seen quite a few species already, including Canada Geese, Mallards, a pair of Hooded Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks, two Cooper’s Hawks, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, a Great Blue Heron, American Coot, and a Wild Turkey that flew across the lake. Almost everyone got a good look at a Pileated Woodpecker skimming over the tree line. As we walked along the parking lot, someone took a closer look at the Red-winged Blackbirds and European Starlings sitting in the trees and discovered a Rusty Blackbird in their midst. A few people were able to get good looks at it through scopes before it flew.

On the Sunken Garden Trail, we noted Red-bellied, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Song Sparrow. People in the front of the group got quick looks at a Winter Wren and a Swamp Sparrow. Not to be outdone, people in

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Outings Revisited

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the rear shouted out for everyone to look up to see three Tundra Swans passing high overhead! Two Common Mergansers also flew over just before we returned to the parking lot.

Carpooling to the next stop, the Pleasant Valley Swimming Area, we spotted Pied-billed Grebes, a small flock of Double-crested Cormorants, Eastern Bluebird, and our first Killdeer. As we were leaving, a Bald Eagle flew over and was still visible when we arrived at the Pleasant Valley Overlook. It was breezier at this location, but a close study of the lake revealed Gadwalls, an American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Pied-billed and Horned Grebe, and Bonaparte's Gull. Common and Red-breasted Mergansers were present, too.

At the Windy Knob Picnic Area, we enjoyed watching half a dozen Cedar Waxwings eating Virginia Creeper berries high in a tree. They were well camouflaged, but their high-pitched lispings gave them away. We added White-breasted Nuthatch and Northern Cardinal to our list. A Red-tailed Hawk soared overhead, and we saw another Pileated Woodpecker winging through the trees.

It was chilly and breezy at the Bear Run Boat Launch. A Great Blue Heron hunkered down in the cove, and only a few gulls were flying. We did note Bonaparte's and a Herring among them though. On the Old Route 422 Observation Deck, we tried to see how many birders and scopes we could squeeze onto the platform. We are a happy, tight-knit group! People called out Wood Duck, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe. A few people caught a glimpse of a Golden-crowned Kinglet.

With a brisk wind blowing at the Route 528 Boat Launch, we headed down a sheltered road that runs along the side of the shore and were rewarded with a small flock of Dark-eyed Juncos, a first-of-season species for most of us. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was exploring the bushes closer to the parking lot. A lucky few saw a Bald Eagle carrying a fish into the trees on the far side of the lake. Scopes were immediately hauled out and set up so that everyone could see it.

At the Upper Route 528 Boat Launch, an immature Bald Eagle was doing lazy circles in a bright blue sky. We noted Pied-billed Grebe and more American Coots, as well as a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and American Goldfinch. The sudden appearance of a Nashville Warbler caused great excitement, as we followed it along the shore. It dodged a fisherman and his two young sons before coming to rest in the open on a small, bare tree, giving almost everyone a good look before it dashed across the parking lot and disappeared into the woods.

From there, it was on to the McDanel's Boat Launch on the North Shore for our picnic lunch. Besides being a talented bunch of birders, we are also amazing cooks! There was a good variety of food, and the star of the show was Sherron Lynch's two-layer carrot cake featuring a picture of a Blue Jay on top. Hot apple cider was much appreciated. It was another great day of birding and eating with friends! We recorded 53 species for the day. —**by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Yellow Creek State Park – November 1: Six birders attended the joint Todd Bird Club and 3RBC outing in spite of the predicted all-day rain, wind, and cooler temperatures. Two of us were Todd members (Lee Carnahan and Tom Glover), two were 3RBC members (Todd Hooe and Oliver Lindhiem), and two were members of both groups (Roger and I).



PICNIC HIGHLIGHT –All eyes were on baker Sherron Lynch, above, as she cuts the club's birthday cake at our annual picnic. The hungry participants, below, were trying to leave room for her delicious dessert. (photographs by Tom Moeller)



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Outings Revisited

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There was little activity at the park office, but we did list Blue Jay, Brown Creeper, Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Cardinal. Because of the group's small size and the amount of exposed mud at the eastern end of the lake, we decided to hike the trail from the first parking lot to the water. As we walked through the forest, we added White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-capped Chickadees, and several robins.

Approaching the mud, we heard Killdeer and soon spotted 13 of them. A flock of Green-winged Teal numbered 31. The roughly 300 Canada Geese became upset, started honking, and flushed in spite of our attempts to sneak quietly to the edge for a better look. Two Lesser Yellowlegs were feeding on the mud with the Killdeer, and 5 Rusty Blackbirds perched in one of the trees along the water's edge. Three American Pipits landed on the mud and provided excellent scope views for all. We heard a Pine Siskin and immediately spotted it high in another tree behind us. This was a life bird for two of the participants. Perched on a snag in the water was a distant Merlin. Special thanks to Tom for counting the 418 American Coots and to Lee for tallying the 360 Ruddy Ducks at this location.

We continued to the maintenance building where we listed 5 Pied-billed Grebes, one Great Blue Heron, another 62 coots, and 2 Greater Yellowlegs. From this vantage point we spotted a Common Loon and 4 Double-crested Cormorants perched on snags in the water close to the cove. Circling overhead were two adult Bald Eagles.

By the time we reached the boat launch, the wind had whipped up and the rain had become heavier. Looking into Little Yellow Cove we added another 395 coots, 19 Pied-billed Grebes, 51 Ruddy Ducks, and one Redhead. A Purple Finch flew overhead ticking, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler was foraging in the willows.

We drove a bit farther to the curve where we pulled off to get a better look at the mud in Little Yellow Cove. Here were 13 Rusty Blackbirds, 2 more Green-winged Teal, 6 additional Killdeer, and another Great Blue Heron. A Ring-necked Pheasant crowed and Song Sparrows were calling from the low vegetation along the edge.

A walk through the main recreation area yielded an Eastern Bluebird and 9 starlings. Continuing to the beach, we spotted a Northern Flicker and a soaring Red-tailed Hawk.

Our next destination was Observatory Trail, which was pretty quiet, yielding only Golden-crowned Kinglets, 2 more White-breasted Nuthatches, and several chickadees. The observatory, however, was productive. Here we added 3 Tundra Swans, 3 Wood Ducks, 8 Gadwalls, 12 American Wigeons, 3 Ring-necked Ducks, and a Hooded Merganser. The highlight here was a Northern Harrier hunting the marsh.

We ended the outing with 47 species, including 1,442 coots, 16 pipits, and 20 Rusty Blackbirds, before three of us headed to the Chinese buffet in Indiana for lunch. **—by leader Margaret Higbee**

Montour Woods Conservation Area – November 16: Eight birders, including three members of Hollow Oak Land Trust, braved cold temperatures and flurries plus the closures of the Fort Pitt Tunnel and Route 51 North to meet Sean Brady at the Montour Woods Conservation Area, a new birding spot for 3RBC. Sean's enthusiasm showed as he described the 260-acre hiking/biking/birding spot with 10 miles of trails he helped construct with volunteers. He hoped this outing would open up the area for more

use by birders.

We began on the Oil Well Trail, which indeed led to the remains of an oil well on the property. The oil boom was in the 1870s, and the rusting remains were testament to that history. Along the way, woodpeckers were abundant – Downy, Red-bellied, and Pileated. The trail meandered up and down through the trees till we descended to the Meeks Run Trail, where a meadow opened before us.

At the meadow, we spied bluebirds and juncos. A Red-tailed Hawk flew across the Meeks Run valley, and it landed in the trees on the opposite ridge next to its mate. At the far end of the meadow was a small marsh where Sean had seen Red-winged Blackbirds. A boardwalk ran through the marsh for close-up looks at the flora and fauna.

As we proceeded back down the trail following Meeks Run, one of the cleanest streams in Allegheny County, the Pileated Woodpeckers became more active. One bird on the far ridge flew out and circled back to its side of the valley. Then a second Pileated flew from the near side of the valley toward the meadow. Both were very vocal. Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, and Northern Cardinals were also active along Meeks Run.

We climbed the far ridge on Honeydew Trail which has switchbacks up the slope to ease the ascent. The prominent birds were downies and chickadees. This ridge trail led to the Powerline Trail, where we found a White-breasted Nuthatch and some robins.

We descended back to Meeks Run Trail and continued down along Meeks Run to a small waterfall in the stream. Farther down we saw an old, stone spring house which volunteers from Pitt had cleared out. Finally, Meeks Run emptied into Montour Run, where a cave had been hollowed out in the rock face. Stories abound as to the possible past uses of the cave.

Sean said Bob Mulvihill had had an owl prowl on the property and heard screech-owls, a Barred Owl, and a Great Horned Owl there. Sean also described the herpetology and fish studies of Meeks Run, which supports 20 species of fish.

Our bird count for the morning was 17 species. More use by birders should give a better picture of bird life in Montour Woods. For photos and maps of the area see: tinyurl.com/hollow-oak and tinyurl.com/Montour-Woods. **—by participant Tom Moeller**

Moraine State Park –November 23: A report will come in the next issue.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is scheduled for February 12 through February 16, 2015. The results of this annual count provide a huge database telling us which species are where—not only in North America but around the world.

It's fun! Count the birds you find around your house, in your neighborhood, at your local park, or anywhere you happen to be during that five-day period. Spend any amount of time, and travel any distance.

You'll be part of an immense group of observers. Worldwide in the 2014 count, observers submitted 144,109 checklists, observed a total of 4,296 species, and tallied 17,748,756 individual birds.

Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Bird Studies Canada cosponsor the count. For information on how to participate, see www.BirdCount.org.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area Avocet Was Best in Aug.–Sept. 2014

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

Blue-winged Teal numbers peaked 9/21 with 20 in Leetsdale and 15 at Imperial (MV). A **Green-winged Teal** was at Wingfield Pines 8/24-26 (MJ, DHi), one was at North Park 9/11-16 (MJ), and 2 were at Imperial 9/16 (GM). A few **Common Mergansers** remained at Duck Hollow the entire reporting period (v.o.), and a flock was at Dashields Dam in September with a maximum of 14 on 9/16 (MV).

A **Common Loon** was at Dashields Dam 9/28 (MV).

Double-crested Cormorants were present the entire period with a maximum of 11 at Dashields Dam 9/6 and 9/8 (MV).

An **American Bittern** was a nice find at Wingfield Pines 8/27-29 (MJ et al). Normally this species is reported in spring, so this represented just the second fall record in the past 16 years. Two other county fall records listed in Todd's *Birds of Western Pennsylvania* are from the early 1900s. **Great Egret** reports were single birds at Wingfield Pines 8/1-8 (MJ), Boyce-Mayview Park 8/24 (MJ), and North Park 8/26-9/16 (MS et al.). Usually reports are of single birds, so an eBird entry of 3 along the Monongahela River at Elizabeth 8/17 with photographs was noteworthy (GS). **Green Herons** remained in the area through September (v.o.).

An **Osprey** was at North Park 8/27-9/4 (PL, AH, PM, MJ). The pair near Dashields Dam were seen to 9/13 (MV). A number of **Red-shouldered Hawks** were reported. Although resident, this species is local, and reports vary greatly during the year; it's always a nice surprise to come across one. Residents in Pine Township, were reported through the season (PL, SL). Single birds were at Harrison Hills Park 9/7 (PH, TH) and 9/27 (TRBC). A resident pair at Beechwood Farms were also seen and heard during the reporting period (v.o.). One was seen at Sewickley Heights Park 9/27 and 9/30 (GM). Two **Broad-winged Hawks** were at Knob Hill Park 8/4 (KD) and 3 were at Harrison Hills Park 8/26 (SG). The leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** that has been in the Clinton area was seen at Imperial 8/3 (MV).

The Wingfield Pines wetlands are a regular host for migrating rails. A **Sora** was found 8/24 (JHa) and 2 were there 9/3 (DW).

A **Semipalmated Plover** remained at Duck Hollow from late July to 8/2 (JC) and one was at Imperial 8/27 (MV). An amazing surprise was a low-flying **American Avocet** over Pine Township 8/24 (PL, SL), just the fifth county record. Three **Greater Yellowlegs** were at Imperial 8/12-9/1 (GM, MV), and 3 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were there 8/17 (MV). **Solitary Sandpipers** were at Imperial the entire month of August (MV, GM), and singles were reported at Wingfield Pines 8/30-31 (AP, TH) and at Beechwood Farms 9/14 (MF). Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at Imperial 8/12 (GM) and 3 were there 8/31 (GM). There was only one **Least Sandpiper** report this fall, at Imperial 9/21 (MV), and 3 **Short-billed Dowitchers** were there 8/11 (GM).

Bonaparte's Gull is more common in spring, so 3 along the Allegheny River at O'Hara Township 8/11 (PB) were a bit unusual. Eight **Caspian Terns** passed by Dashields Dam 9/13 (MV). A **Black Tern** was at Imperial briefly during a thunderstorm 8/3 (MV) and another was there 9/1 (MV). A flock of 12 terns were seen in flight over the Allegheny River at Harrison Hills Park, then nearby at Tarentum 9/21 (AH, PM). Due to the altitude of

the flock, a conclusive identification was not made although the observers leaned toward **Common Tern**.

High counts of migrating **Common Nighthawks** include 63 over Beechwood Farms 8/19 (BSh), 150-plus over Homewood Cemetery 8/22 (JC), 80 over Pine Township 8/29 (PL, SL), and 75 at Cheswick 8/31 (DYe).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher reports were all on 8/30: single birds were at Wingfield Pines (TJ, KJ), Harrison Hills Park (AH, PM), and Sewickley Heights Park (GM). **Acadian Flycatchers** were at Sewickley Heights Park 8/30-9/12 (GM). The only report of **Willow Flycatcher** was at Wingfield Pines 8/18 (ST) where 3 were tallied. The last **Great Crested Flycatcher** report was at Harrison Hills Park 9/27 (TRBC). The only report of **Eastern Kingbird** was 3 birds at O'Hara Township 8/11 (PB).

A **Fish Crow** flew over calling at Duck Hollow 8/22 (MF, MVV). One was at Beechwood Farms 9/28 (DYe), the first report I've received from there, and one was in Shadyside 9/29 (AP).

Six **Bank Swallows** were at Imperial 8/13 (GM) and 3 were there 8/17 (MV). Five **Purple Martins** were at Hartwood Acres 9/2 (DN), a rare fall report.

The first **Red-breasted Nuthatch** report of the fall was at Boyce-Mayview Park 9/23 (ST). A **Marsh Wren** was a nice find at Boyce-Mayview Park 9/18 (ST), and 2 were at nearby Wingfield Pines 9/29 (GM).

Single **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** were at Sewickley Heights Park 9/19 and 9/27 (GM). A large nocturnal movement of **Swainson's Thrushes** 9/7 was detected in Moon Township, where 150 were counted (GM). Two **Brown Thrashers** were at Sewickley Heights Park 9/7 (GM), one was there 9/12 (GM, BVN, SD) and one 9/27 (GM). Two were at Harrison Hills Park 9/21 (AH, PM).

A total of 29 species of warblers were tallied this fall. The following highlights include:

A "**Brewster's**" **Warbler** was at Sewickley Heights Park 9/12 (GM, BVN, SD, et al.), the first report of this hybrid since 2010. A **Northern Waterthrush** was found and photographed at Harrison Hills Park 9/13 (SG). This species is rarely reported in fall, but September is the expected time period. **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported at Beechwood Farms 9/12 and 9/29 (BSh), along the Montour Trail in Findlay Township 9/22 (ST), and Sewickley Heights Park 9/27 (GM). A **Connecticut Warbler** was seen off and on at Beechwood Farms 9/12-20 (BSh et al.); it was also photographed at a water drip 9/20 (MH). A **Mourning Warbler** was at Beechwood Farms 9/13-29 (BVN, SD et al.). A **Kentucky Warbler** was singing at Beechwood Farms 9/12 (BSh) and one was at Harrison Hills Park 9/13 (SG). **Cape May Warblers** are always a welcome sight. Two were at Sewickley Heights Park 9/7 (GM), 4 were at Beechwood Farms 9/12 (BSh), single birds were found at Knob Hill Park (KD), Frick Park 9/18 (JS, SS), and Natrona Heights 9/23 (PH, DH). Up to 5 were at Natrona Heights 9/28 (PH). Four **Cerulean Warblers** were at Beechwood Farms 9/12 during a fallout of migrants (BSh). **Northern Parulas** were at Beechwood Farms 9/4-12 with a maximum of 6 on 9/9 (BSh). Single birds were at Frick Park 9/15-19 (JS, SS) and 2 put on a show there during a TRBC outing 9/20. One was at Harrison Hills Park 9/27 during another TRBC outing. **Pine Warbler** reports include singles at Beechwood Farms 8/25, 9/4 and 9/12 (BSh, DN), Knob Hill Park 9/18 (KD), and 9/21 at Harrison Hills Park (AH, PM). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a nice find at Homewood Cemetery 8/22 (JC). There were only 2 **Canada Warbler** reports: single at Pine Township 9/2-7 (PL, SL) and Sewickley Heights Park 9/19 (GM). A tally of 7 **Wilson's**

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The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

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Warblers at Beechwood Farms during a heavy migration day 9/12 are likely the highest total at one location ever reported (BSh). This species is uncommon and normally seen singly. Other reports include one at Sewickley Heights Park 9/12 (BVN, SD), 2 there 9/19 (GM), one at Harrison Hills Park 9/13 (SG), and single birds at Frick Park 9/15 and 9/18 (JS, SS).

A **Vesper Sparrow** was seen at Imperial 8/13 (GM) and 2 were there 9/20 (MV). A **Savannah Sparrow** was there 8/13 (GM) and 7 were found 9/20 (MV). **Lincoln's Sparrow** reports include one at Boyce-Mayview Park 9/23 (ST), several at Beechwood Farms 9/25 (BSh), one at Harrison Hills Park 9/27 (TRBC), one at Sewickley Heights Park 9/27 (GM), two there 9/30 (GM) and two at Wingfield Pines 9/29 (GM). The first **White-throated Sparrow** report of the fall was at Frick Park 9/23 (DWe).

There were interesting post-breeding concentrations of **Indigo Buntings**, including 13 at Wingfield Pines 8/30 (AP) and 10 at Sewickley Heights Park 9/19 (GM). Two **Purple Finches** were in Pine Township during the entire reporting period (PL, SL).

Observers: Paul Brown, Jack Chaillet, Sheree Daugherty, Karyn Delaney, Mike Fialkovich, Steve Gosser, Jim Hausman (JHa), Amy Henrici, Deborah Hess, Paul Hess, Dan Hinnebusch (DHi), Maureen Hobma, Todd Hooe, Karena Johnson, Tim Johnson, Matthew Juskowich, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Pat McShea, Geoff Malosh, Dick Nugent, Aidan Place, Meg Scanlon, Gay Schiff, Brian Shema (BSh), Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, Shannon Thompson, TRBC (Three Rivers Birding Club members), Bob VanNewkirk (BVN), Mark VanderVen (MVV), Mark Vass, Dan Weeks (DWe), Dave Wilton, David Yeany (DYe), various observers (v.o.).



AUTUMN TREAT – Lincoln's Sparrows are always high on birders' hopes to list during fall migration. Geoff Malosh found this one on September 30, 2014, at Sewickley Heights Park.

BirdSafe Pittsburgh Listed 164 Victims Last Autumn

By Matt Webb, BirdSafe Pittsburgh Coordinator

I'm writing to give you all a long anticipated update about BirdSafe Pittsburgh's efforts this fall. From September 7 to November 1, a total of 22 volunteers spent 195.5 hours looking for birds that had collided with windows in the Golden Triangle area of downtown Pittsburgh. A grand total of 164 birds from 45 different species were found, 115 dead and 49 live.

We also found one live Little Brown Bat at the bottom of a window. The live birds (and bat!) were taken to the Animal Rescue League's Wildlife Center for rehabilitation and eventual release. The dead birds were collected and will become part of the collection at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

The top five birds found were Ovenbird (23), White-throated Sparrow (16), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (11), Common Yellowthroat (9), and Tennessee Warbler (8). We found 4 birds that are listed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as Birds of Conservation Concern: Bay-breasted Warbler, Wood Thrush, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Here is a complete list of birds found:

American Redstart (1), American Robin (2), Bay-breasted Warbler (1), Blackpoll Warbler (4), Black-throated Green Warbler

(2), Blue Jay (1), Brown Creeper (6), Carolina Chickadee (2), Cedar Waxwing (1), Common Grackle (1), Common Yellowthroat (9), Connecticut Warbler (3), Eastern Wood Pewee (1), European Starling (2), Field Sparrow (1), Golden-crowned Kinglet (1), Gray Catbird (6), Gray-cheeked Thrush (3), House Sparrow (4), Magnolia Warbler (3), Mourning Dove (1), Mourning Warbler (2), Nashville Warbler (2), Ovenbird (23), Red-eyed Vireo (1), Rock Pigeon (4), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (1), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (3), Savannah Sparrow (1), Scarlet Tanager (1), Song Sparrow (3), Swainson's Thrush (3), Swamp Sparrow (1), Tennessee Warbler (8), Tufted Titmouse (1), Veery (1), White-throated Sparrow (16), Winter Wren (1), Wood Thrush (2), Yellow Warbler (1), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (11), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1), Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) (3), Yellow-throated Warbler (1), unknown sparrow (1), unknown species (5), unknown warbler (11).

If you would like to learn more about BirdSafe Pittsburgh, or would like to get involved with our efforts in the coming year, please visit our website at birdsafepgh.org. If you have any questions, please email me at birdsafepgh@gmail.com.