



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 15, No. 1, January/February 2016

We'll Visit Southern California with Mike Fialkovich

Mike Fialkovich, one Pennsylvania's foremost birders and 3RBC's Bird Reports Editor, will take us on an exciting tour of Southern California's diverse habitats, birds, and other wildlife at our meeting on Wednesday, February 3, 2016.

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

From 234 feet below sea level at the Salton Sea to just over 8,000 feet above sea level in the San Bernardino Mountains, to the Channel Islands and deserts, Mike's program will show us a wide variety of nature offered by the Golden State. His presentation covers places he visited as part of an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania tour in September 2015.

He is vice president of the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology and a member of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC). For the journal *Pennsylvania Birds*, he has been a county compiler for Allegheny and Fayette Counties since 1994 and a seasonal editor since 2001. Mike has also authored seven articles published in *Pennsylvania Birds* and has submitted 35 rare bird reports to PORC.

Mike has led many outings for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and the Three Rivers Birding Club since the 1990s. He is a founding member of 3RBC, and he has served not only as the bird reports editor but also as the club's historian.

He was a regional coordinator for the second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project and authored the Killdeer and Eastern Phoebe accounts for



BLACK TURNSTONE – Mike Fialkovich photographed it at Ventura, California, during the tour he'll describe at our February 3 meeting.

the atlas. Mike has conducted a breeding bird survey for the U.S. Geological Service in Butler County since 1995, made winter raptor surveys in Allegheny and Butler Counties since 2001, and served as a Christmas Bird Count leader and data compiler in Pittsburgh since 1992.

Mike's awards and activities go beyond ornithology. He received the W.E. Clyde Todd Award from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania for significant contributions to conservation in the region. He has been an instructor for the Conservation Ecology Certification program at Chatham College, was a volunteer assistant at Powdermill Nature Reserve catching, processing and recording data on small mammals, served as a consultant in plant and habitat identification for the Nine Mile Run Watershed project, and participated in surveys for the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas.

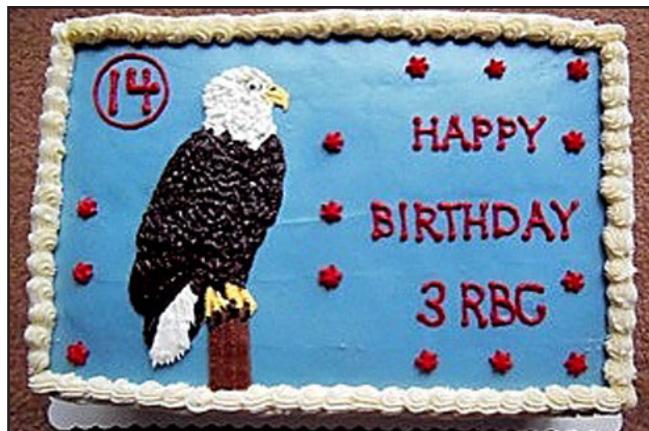
Another Happy Birthday

Sherron Lynch's baking and decorating artistry, at right, tells the story at a glance. The Three Rivers Birding Club celebrated 14 years of fun, fellowship, enjoyment, and ornithological education for those who love birds.

Tom Moeller, our treasurer, keeps constant track of our membership numbers. The memberships, though usually hovering around 260 recently, is always in flux. As of November 30, we had 259 active subscriptions for the club. Including the additional people in family memberships, we have more than 350 members.

Tom says that 36 of those subscriptions come from generous members who pay \$50 or more each year (32 at \$50 and four at \$100) – plus we have seven who are full-time students or young people. All of us can be proud to share this extraordinary success.

See the outing revisited on pages 4 and 5.



See *The Peregrine* in beautiful color at 3rbc.org

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President's Message

Winter Weather: You Could Say It's for the Birds

By Bob VanNewkirk

The Farmers' Almanac has predicted a snowy and cold winter for our region. What did you expect in the Pittsburgh area? Despite the prospects of enduring cold, rain, or snow, the elements are made more bearable for bird watchers by focusing attention on species that overwinter here. These species give birders good reasons to head outdoors and chase away the winter-time blues.

Late fall and winter are good times to check out bird activity on area lakes and rivers. Because the Great Lakes froze over during the past two winters, many waterfowl and gull species showed up on Pittsburgh's three rivers. Tundra Swans, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneye, Surf Scoters, White-winged Scoters, and many other species thrilled birders.

Pittsburgh's Point provided the setting for a rare sighting of a Kelp Gull, a possible first state record. Thayer's, Glaucous, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Great Black-backed Gulls were also recorded. Seeing great birds like these brought many warm-hearted smiles to birders who ventured outdoors to search for them. Many birders who want a good view of the Point go to the Fred Rogers memorial statue on the North Shore. A good-sized observation platform can accommodate spotting scopes and a dozen or more birders. Lake Erie, Pymatuning Lake, and Lake Arthur are three other great locations for similar sightings.

If you enjoy watching diurnal raptors such as Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel, travel northward to my three favorite sites: Pymatuning State Park, the New Wilmington area, and the Volant Strips. Directions can be found on the club's website at www.3rbc.org. Check out the Birding Locations section for directions and more suggestions to other prime areas.

The Snowy Owl irruption into the eastern United States in the winter of 2013-2014 was captivating and thrilling to birders and non-birders alike. Although some people speculate that food shortage drove these beautiful Arctic Snowies southward, no one knows for sure. Many people wondered if anything like that could occur again. According to October eBird reports from the Upper Midwest, there is a chance that another irruption could happen this winter. If this is the case, the owls could show up just about anywhere and at any time, just like the young Snowy observed one afternoon on a North Side church roof on March 31, 2009.

If snowy roads limit your excursions, consider participating in projects sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders, usually in backyards, nature centers or school grounds from November to April. You can do this indoors if you have a good view of at least one bird feeder. Observers of any age and skill level submit their reports to scientists who use the results to track bird movements and trends in species abundance. The Great Backyard Bird Count, February 12-15, invites birders to get outside on one or more days to record the kinds and numbers of birds observed. First-time participants must register online. For more details about these projects, visit www.birds.cornell.edu.

Here are more ways you can enjoy winter birding:

- Take your binoculars to the National Aviary and see tropical birds in their natural habitats. Visit the penguins. Look for the Andean

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Condors in their new exhibit. See the Snowy Owl performances.

- Read *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen to your children or grandchildren, and then take a moonlit walk in a nearby park and listen for owls.
- Spend a snowy or blustery afternoon making suet cakes. You'll find many recipes online. Or spread peanut butter on pine cones, then roll them in bird seed and hang from branches.
- If you yearn to see birds, but the weather is just too nasty outside, view northern birds on your computer via a live FeederWatch Cam in Ontario, Canada. Commonly viewed avian visitors to this backyard feeding station may include Common Redpolls, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Gray Jays, and Ruffed Grouse, as well as the usual backyard birds. Type: www.allaboutbirds.org.
- Take a walk anywhere you can interact with nature. Current research in the December issue of *Psychological Science* by the University of Michigan shows that going outside even in the cold improves memory and attention.

So, dust off your binoculars and get outdoors. Winter is time for the birds – and birders.

Outings to Come

Winter Birds First, Then Early Spring Specialties

Saturday, February 13 – Sewickley Heights Park: The 3RBC and the Fern Hollow Nature Center will team up again to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. We will meet in the upper parking lot at 9AM and bird until noon. Following the outing, we will have a potluck luncheon at the nature center. Birders who attend the luncheon are asked to bring a dish that can be shared. If you have any questions, contact Bob Van Newkirk (412-366-1694 or email van126@comcast.net). Directions to the park are on the 3RBC website.

Saturday, March 26 – Pymatuning Area: Meet leader Bob Van Newkirk (412-366-1694 or email van126@comcast.net) at the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center (Waterfowl Museum) at 8 AM for this all-day outing. Waterfowl, Bald Eagles, and Rough-legged Hawks are likely, and Horned Larks are possible. Take I-79 north to Route 6, and go west to Linesville. Turn left at the light in Linesville where the sign points to Pymatuning spillway. The sign for the center will be on the left, past the fish hatchery and before the spillway. Lunch will be at the Spillway Inn for those interested.

In Memoriam

Randi Gerrish: Fine Gentleman, Scientist, Scholar, Birder, and Friend

By Jack Solomon

After a stroke disabled him, Randi Gerrish, a fine and stalwart friend and birding buddy to many of us, died on October 11, 2015. He was 76.

As long as I knew him, he was always a leader and contributing member to the birding and conservation community. I knew him first, decades ago, as an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania Trustee, and later as an active member of 3RBC's newsletter distribution staff. He served 3RBC from day one of the club, through my seven-year presidency, and long after I stepped down. Randi also worked as a volunteer for at least three years at Powdermill Nature Reserve, assisting the bird banders.

Randi worked in a technical capacity for Pittsburgh Corning for 36 years. There, says his friend, 3RBC member Tony Schryer, Corning's customers would insist that the company bring Randi in to explain to them how a particular product would meet their needs. No one else would do.

I found him conversant and knowledgeable about almost any subject that exists. Paul Hess, editor of *The Peregrine* and another long-time friend, agrees: "I fondly recall the times when he would offer a sharp interpretation I hadn't considered, or ask a perceptive question I couldn't answer. Randi required me to think longer and harder. In other words, he was a true educator."

After retirement, Randi and his wife, Sarah, got in some great eco-travel, birding hotspots in places like Costa Rica, Florida, and Maine. You could count on their presence each spring at Magee Marsh. We all lost a good friend and capable helpmate.



MYSTERY SOLVED – A strange tapping on Sam and Dorothy Sinderson's hotel window in Bergen, Norway, turned out to be this Herring Gull. It had been banded about 10 miles away in 2013 and was seen repeatedly by hotel guests since then. Sam was able to get this closeup through the window.

A Birding Surprise in Norway Began with an Odd Tapping

By Sam Sinderson

While on a trip to Norway in August 2015, I had a close encounter with a bird of the most unusual kind.

This trip was a coastal cruise that began with an overnight in Bergen. On the first afternoon, after walking for an hour or so in a steady drizzle in a successful attempt to stay awake and immediately get on Bergen time to avoid jet lag, we were in our room arranging clothes and repacking for embarkation on the ship the next day.

Our room was on the fifth floor, and the curtains were drawn over the single large window. Sitting next to the curtain, I was aware of a tapping sound. It seemed to come from behind the curtain, but I wasn't sure. I ignored it.

A second tapping, and I said, "What is that?" We drew back the curtain, and there staring at us through the window was a Herring Gull that appeared to be an adult. It was standing on a ledge that was slightly below the window sill.

I tapped on the window, and the gull tapped back with its beak! It left in few minutes, but later it was back tapping. I was able to get very close-up pictures through the window and discovered that this was a banded bird. The right-leg black-and-white band was clearly visible.

Later we learned that other people had been feeding pigeons and gulls through their open windows on this fifth-floor ledge. This bird has apparently become conditioned to "asking" for food.

At home, with the help of Paul Hess and the internet, I discovered that this bird had been banded as an adult on an island about 17 kilometers west of Bergen in 2013 and was sighted more than 15 times, several from the exact location as my observation. Apparently, it had been using this ledge for some time.

What an amazing experience!

(Editor's note: Ornithologists in Europe classify the European Herring Gull as a separate species from our American Herring Gull.)

Outings Revisited

“Pinballing Warblers” and a Tasty Bald Eagle

Riding Meadow Park – October 4: Nine people gathered on a pleasantly cool morning with intermittent sunshine and the fragrance of fallen leaves. We walked for three hours along the creek, fording the stream twice, birding the upper ridge along Lockhart Loop, then on trails between the creek and the park entrance area.

We spotted Canada Geese, Turkey Vulture, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Chimney Swifts, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (juvenile), Northern Flicker (a pair), Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Philadelphia Vireo, Blue Jay (many!), American Crow, chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch. A mixed flock of blackbirds flew overhead. Heard but not seen: Carolina Wren and Eastern Towhee.

Highlights of the walk were several waves of warblers (more than we could identify) and a feisty Cooper’s Hawk harassing a Red-tailed Hawk directly overhead. We had a total of 30 species.
—by Leader Cecelia Hard

Pymatuning State Park – October 11: Seventeen birders met at the Wildlife Center expecting to find a good diversity of resident and migratory birds. Although the early morning temperature was on the cold side, the forecast called for light winds, sunny skies, and mild temperatures. While waiting for some late-arriving birders, a flock of very vocal crows flew overhead, as did several Blue Jays. Both species were quite conspicuous everywhere we went during the day.

As we walked toward the museum, we observed Yellow-rumped Warblers pinballing around branches in several trees. All ears perked up suddenly as we heard the rattled call of Sandhill Cranes coming from across the marsh. Despite many scopes searching for these charismatic birds, we could not locate them. Scanning the waters of the impoundment revealed adult and juvenile Double-crested Cormorants resting on tree stumps, and scattered flocks of swimming Canada Geese. Two juvenile Bald Eagles were perched in a leafless tree on a small island, and another juvenile eagle was flying along the shoreline. As we walked back toward the parking lot, we watched three familiar woodpeckers – a Downy, a Hairy, and a Red-bellied – branch-hopping in search of food.

We caravanned to the Spillway hoping to find a gull that wasn’t a Ring-billed or a duck that wasn’t a Mallard. But that was not to be the case. Both of those species were in large numbers. A Great Blue Heron was standing motionless under a tree and more cormorants were found grouped against the shore. We crossed the street to scan the lake. No waterfowl except geese were in sight, but we did find three Bald Eagles – two adults and a juvenile – sitting at the top of a large oak on Glenn Island. No matter how many times these large raptors were discovered during the day, no one jokingly complained about these sightings becoming common.

The group next walked a portion of the old railroad bed,

which is called the Spillway Trail. In addition to more Yellow-rumps, we caught glimpses of a kiting Belted Kingfisher, some Pied-billed Grebes that were hard to follow as they swam in a mass of lily pads, and a fast-flying Pileated Woodpecker.

The Hartstown Propagation Pond and fields can be quite birdy, and we quickly discovered that it would be when we arrived. Waterfowl and shorebirds were present in the pond. American Wigeons, Hooded Mergansers, and Gadwalls were slowly swimming around, while Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs scurried around in the shallows. Five Pectoral Sandpipers were probing the shoreline for food. As an adult Bald Eagle soared over the pond, ducks and shorebirds immediately flushed and scattered, but they returned soon after the eagle passed. A Northern Harrier glided over the corn rows of the surrounding fields, and then two more harriers suddenly flew into view. As they coursed back and forth, we would see one occasionally drop suddenly to the ground but rise with nothing in its talons.

Our next stop at the Miller Ponds offered us a large flock of 50 or more Tree Swallows perched on power lines near the Game Commission’s maintenance building. As we parked, the swallows swarmed over grassy areas in search of insects. Both ponds were void of waterfowl and waders. Three Red-tailed Hawks passed over the tree line, and two Bald Eagles soared in the distance.

After lunch at the Spillway Inn, we birded the Fish Hatchery where Green-winged Teal and Wood Duck were added to our waterfowl list. A Semipalmated Sandpiper was in a muddy spit jutting into the marsh. Almost directly across the road and up from the hatchery is an area of the lake that presents good shorebird habitat. Here we located Killdeer, a Semipalmated Plover, and a couple of Semipalmated Sandpipers and Pectoral Sandpipers.

At the outing’s beginning, I told the group to expect some surprise sightings. So far, the outing seemed to be a bit lackluster in fulfilling that expectation. We drove to the Tuttle’s Beach parking lot, and then proceeded to walk the campground road until we came to a swampy inlet. My surprises were revealed: a relatively close view of an unoccupied eagle’s nest and sightings of Red-headed Woodpeckers. Two adults and one juvenile woodpecker appeared soon after we did. Besides admiring their beauty, we also observed them caching acorns in trees.

A few participants headed home, but the rest decided to head back to the Miller Ponds for another look. As we proceeded down Swamp Road, we noticed a flock of five Sandhill Cranes flying southeast. That meant they would pass near our position if they continued in that direction. As people got out of their cars to look at the cranes, we noticed other small flocks consisting of two to seven birds at a time calling and approaching from the same area. Nine groups totaling 51 cranes had flown almost directly overhead.

Now that’s a way to end an outing! We totaled 41 species. It turned out to be a wonderful day that brought pleasant weather, lots of smiles, and some unforgettable surprise sightings. —by leader Bob VanNewkirk

Moraine State Park – October 25: It was a crisp fall morning when 24 birders met at the South Shore for 3RBC’s 14th annual outing and picnic. Rain had drenched the area the night before, and some people reported running into scattered showers on the way. While we waited, a flock of 50 American Crows streamed over the trees, probably coming from their roost. They may have spent the night in Pittsburgh! There were also many Ring-billed Gulls, 85 Canada Geese, and 165 American Coots. A few people

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Outings Revisited

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heard a Belted Kingfisher. Across the water, two raccoons, one of them a youngster, investigated the shoreline.

After welcoming everyone and doing introductions, Bob VanNewkirk led us to the Sunken Garden Trail. We were happy to welcome Mike Shaffer, the new Environmental Education Specialist for Moraine, and hope he will join us on many more walks! Mike comes to us from Yellow Creek State Park.

As we walked, we paid particular attention to the weeds along the side, as Bob had seen a Fox Sparrow there earlier in the week. Today, however, only the chips of a Song Sparrow could be heard. It was mostly quiet on the trail except for the calls of Blue Jays and a Red-bellied Woodpecker, until we came to the second little wooden bridge. A small flock of Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and a Downy Woodpecker started moving through the trees. Sharp eyes spied both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets among them. Eight Double-crested Cormorants flew over in formation. A Great Blue Heron was sighted in the distance. Back at the parking lot, we heard a White-throated Sparrow singing, and a couple of them popped up for a second or two.

Our group caravanned to the Pleasant Valley Overlook, briefly pausing by the beaches to look for any odd-sized geese or gulls. Two more Double-crested Cormorants were seen flying. At the Point, scopes were set up on a small flock of about 25 Ruddy Ducks. There were also three Gadwalls on the water. Our first Bald Eagle of the day was circling in the sky, and three Red-tailed Hawks could be seen drifting over the horizon.

Former 3RBC President Jack Solomon and his wife Sue arrived late at the Windy Knob Picnic Area, and they seemed to be accompanied by a Pileated Woodpecker flying in with them! We saw another Bald Eagle, this one closer than the first, as we walked up the hill. While we watched a Downy Woodpecker, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was spotted in a brush pile, and we had good looks. Four Eastern Bluebirds in the field below were a welcome sight. Bluebirds always make a good day even better.

On our way to the Bear Run Boat Launch, some birders saw at least a hundred Cedar Waxwings crossing the road. Lake Arthur was quiet, so we took a walk in the field, lured by the songs of Song Sparrows and American Goldfinches. Three of the goldfinches took flight, and another Red-tailed Hawk soared in the sky. We got a good look at the bird using his tail as a rudder as he stalled in the wind, searching the ground.

Several scopes were set up at the Waterfowl Observation Deck, and we took turns scanning the lake. American Wigeons, Ring-necked Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Ducks, and several Pied-billed Grebes were among the many Canada Geese, American Coots, and Mallards. There were 93 Wood Ducks, and at least four Great Blue Herons.

At the Route 528 Boat Launch, we realized that the day was getting colder, not warmer! The birds must have been hunkered down, too, as we noted only a couple of Blue Jays, American Crows, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker. A couple of people spotted a Northern Harrier swooping out of sight.

Bob remarked that the Barkley Road was in terrible shape, and that he did not expect anything new at the Upper 528 Boat Launch. His suggestion that we all head to lunch at McDanel's Boat Launch was enthusiastically seconded.

I believe it's been mentioned before that 3RBC has more than its fair share of good cooks. There were many excellent dishes to sample, but Sherron Lynch's cake depicting a Bald Eagle was



WIDE-WINGED BEAUTY – Sherron Lynch's 3RBC birthday cake, pictured on page 1, was a fine choice for our club's annual picnic on October 25. We saw this and another Bald Eagle at Moraine State Park. Fred Young photographed it and the kinglet below.



TINY MIGRANT – Fall foliage surrounds a Ruby-crowned Kinglet spotted during the club's picnic outing. Almost everyone had a good look at the sprite.

undeniably the hit of the picnic! We counted 40 species for the day.
–by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch

Yellow Creek State Park –November 7: Yellow Creek regulars Tony Bruno, Tom Glover, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Roger, and I met on the north shore prior to the joint Todd-3RBC outing. With an overall view of the lake, our goal was to determine where the best birding would be for the group. We were pleased to see that the Long-tailed Duck was still present as well as a nice assortment of waterbirds. The only species we noted from the north shore that we did not later see were the 150 Canada Geese that noisily departed and a Common Loon, which was probably still present, just not visible from our south shore vantage points.

When we arrived at the park office, we all introduced

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ourselves and arranged carpooling to reduce the number of vehicles as there were 20 of us. The only birds listed at the park office were Downy Woodpecker, 2 Tufted Titmice, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. Our first stop was at the maintenance building where we walked across the road to bird the lake. It was overcast and windy. Two Killdeer were visible on the distant mudflat behind the park office. On the water were one Double-crested Cormorant, 2 Buffleheads, 102 Ruddy Ducks, 6 Pied-billed Grebes, and 147 American Coots. (Special thanks to Tom Glover for counting the ruddies and the coots at each location!)

On the spit to our right was a hunter unsuccessfully stalking a striking rooster Ring-necked Pheasant; we never heard a shot. A Great Blue Heron was feeding in the cove while overhead we watched a circling Red-tailed Hawk. A flock of 4 Mallards flew by high overhead. When we had checked all the birds on the lake, we walked to the park manager's home to see his gorgeous chickens called Cochins, a breed that originated in China. Jim Tweardy, the park manager, writes, "They are a lot of fun and have very docile personalities and are surprisingly cold-weather hardy."

Our next destination was the boat launch where once again we watched 50 Ruddy Ducks, 9 Pied-billed Grebes, and 241 coots that were joined by 16 Ring-necked Ducks. Two Great Blue Herons were visible across the cove. In the shrubbery behind us Donna Meyer found one Dark-eyed Junco hunkered down, feeding on the ground. Two small flocks of Mallards and a Green-winged Teal flew past, heading toward the dam.

The only shorebird on the mud in Little Yellow Cove was a Killdeer. Thinking we might find other shorebirds, we headed to the curve along Route 259 where we pulled off for a better look at the mudflats. Unfortunately, we saw only one Killdeer, but we added a Golden-crowned Kinglet to our meager list.

We continued to the main recreation area for a pit stop and a raisin bread snack. We heard our first two Black-capped Chickadees and a Pileated Woodpecker. Scoping the trees at the eastern end of the lake, we spotted a rather late Osprey perched in one of the larger trees. We walked along the edge of Little Yellow Cove, checking the vegetation for sparrows. We lucked out, spotting 3 Song, 3 Swamp, and a Fox Sparrow. We also saw one Downy Woodpecker, one Red-winged Blackbird, 2 Northern Cardinals, and 5 American Goldfinches.

Our next stop was to be the beach, but Glenn and Mabel Matteson had checked it out while we were looking for sparrows and reported no birds. We therefore decided to head to Phalarope Flats. Walking out the Observatory Trail toward the flats, we listed 2 Downies, 2 more Blue Jays, one White-breasted Nuthatch, 2 Black-capped Chickadees, a Brown Creeper, and 2 more Golden-crowned Kinglets. Phalarope Flats unfortunately did not yield the expected Wilson's Snipe; 3 had been present the previous Tuesday. Instead the area yielded a nice assortment of waterfowl. The highlights were a female Long-tailed Duck on the water and the first-of-the-season Tundra Swans, a flock of 42 overhead. Other waterfowl here included 4 Gadwalls, 8 Redheads, 4 Lesser Scaup, and, of course, the ever present Ruddy Ducks. A Sharp-shinned Hawk flew low over the water and disappeared into the trees on the north shore. Two Ring-billed Gulls resting on the water were new to the day's list.

It was approaching noon, and stomach rumblings as well as mumblings about the Chinese buffet were heard, so we decided to

head back to the parking lot. At the trailhead the day's only Eastern Bluebird flew high overhead, bringing our list total to 41.

One birder left early, and two others had to return home. Another two decided to return to the main recreation area for a better view of the Fox Sparrow. Three others headed to the trail to the eastern end of the lake, which we had skipped because of space limitations. That group added Cooper's Hawk to their day's list. Twelve of us continued to the Fortune Buffet in Indiana where we enjoyed a delicious meal and interesting conversation. What a great group of birders! Thanks to everyone who came. —by leader Margaret Higbee

Moraine State Park –November 22: No report was received for our leaderless outing, but Kate St. John filed exciting news of her own on the Pabirds listserv. She missed the outing, but when she arrived later in the morning, she made an astonishing discovery on the Sunken Garden Trail.

Kate expressed her amazement this way on the Pabirds listserv: "Along the trail I found a small flock of Golden-crowned Kinglets and chickadees. Among them foraging in the low bushes was a bright yellow bird. I was stunned to see it was a Blue-winged Warbler: bright yellow head and chest, yellow-olive-ish back, blue-gray wings, wing bars, thin black eye line. I was surprised it was so bright yellow. I wondered, Could it be an adult?"

Her highlights included "seven flocks of tundra swans passing overhead in the two hours I was there. (eBird squawked at me when I recorded 500 but really I did count them.) All were heading southeast. Only one flock looked as if it might land at Moraine. If so, it was heading for the Frank Preston propagation area."



A FINE FORMATION – 3RBC Treasurer Tom Moeller found this towering quartet of Sandhill Cranes at Pleasant Lake, Michigan, on October 16, 2015, and photographed it at just right moment.



Powdermill Bird Banding Gave Us Close Looks

By Amanda Haney

As fall migration heated up on September 2, 2015, nearly 100 birds were banded at Powdermill Nature Reserve near Ligonier in Westmoreland County. Four of us observed banding of a wide variety of local and migrant birds including Common Yellowthroat and Blue-winged, Black-throated Green, Hooded, Wilson's, Mourning, Canada, "Western" Palm, Magnolia, and Chestnut-sided Warblers.

The Empidonax flycatchers were especially interesting. These birds look almost identical, but at a distance of five feet, we could see a few differences, especially the coloring of the Willow Flycatcher. The other flycatchers we observed being banded included Alder, Least, Yellow-bellied and Eastern Wood-Pewee.

Several Red-eyed Vireos and a Philadelphia Vireo were also memorable. I was interested to see the birds so close and will have an easier time remembering the markings on the Philadelphia.

An abundance of common birds also were caught in mist nets including an Eastern Towhee, Purple Finch, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, and numerous Grey Catbirds. Powdermill provides a unique opportunity to see many local and migrant birds up close. The banding staff were extremely helpful, holding birds for photographs and answering many questions.

Banding began at 6:30 AM and ended at 10 when the temperature got too hot. We didn't arrive until 8:15, but we saw plenty. Walking along the extensive mist netting and observing the staff untangling birds gave us a better understanding of the banding process. Two of us got the opportunity to release juvenile Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. My husband Bob and I, plus two novice birders were enthralled at this wonderful opportunity to view birds only a few feet away.

Since 1956, Powdermill has been the environmental research arm of Carnegie Museum of Natural History. One of the oldest continuous bird banding sites, this facility supports researchers conducting a variety of bird research including testing bird-friendly window glass.

Visitors are welcome Tuesday through Sunday during spring and fall banding. Call 724-593-7521 for reservations, which are required. The banding website, tinyurl.com/see-banding, offers many details about this research at Powdermill.



COULD YOU IDENTIFY THESE? – Amanda Haney took these warblers' portraits during a banding session at Powdermill Nature Reserve. The answers, clockwise from top left, are a Canada, a Wilson's, a Mourning, and a Hooded.

The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

29 Warbler Species Were Noted in Aug.-Sept. 2015

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

August begins the waterfowl migration with a few species starting to gather on area ponds. **Blue-winged Teal** reports include one at North Park 8/27 (DP) and 2 in Findlay Twp. 9/7 (MV). The only **Green-winged Teal** report came from Imperial 9/12 (MV). Two **Ring-necked Ducks** were in Findlay Twp. 9/7 (MV), and 2 **Buffleheads** were at Imperial 9/7 (MV). A **Northern Pintail** at a small pond in Monroeville 9/3-5 (DK) was unusually early.

Although **Northern Bobwhite** sightings are all released birds, I like to collect reports of them. A covey of 10 walked across a road in Robinson Twp. 8/8 (MF). One visited the feeders at the nature center at Harrison Hills Park 9/2 (PK).

The **Osprey** pair at Neville Island fledged one chick this year, seen 8/7 (PB). A **Sora** was at Boyce-Mayview Park 8/27 (FK). This is shorebird season, and sightings are dwindling as development at the Imperial Grasslands progresses. A **Semipalmated Plover** at Duck Hollow 8/18-19 (MD, TH) and one at Fox Chapel 8/27 (TH) provided rare records away from the usual location for this species in Allegheny County – Imperial. **Solitary Sandpiper** reports include one at Fox Chapel 8/16 (TH), one at Beechwood Farms 8/23 (TH), and 3 in Findlay Twp. 9/6 (MV). The only **Semipalmated Sandpiper** report was one at Duck Hollow 8/27 (MJ). **Least Sandpiper** was the most reported migrant shorebird: 3 at Fox Chapel 8/16 (TH) and one still there 8/27 (TH), one at Duck Hollow 8/19 (TH), one at Janoski's Farm pond in Findlay Twp. 9/7 (MV) and 2 there 9/16 (MV), and one at Imperial 9/12 (MV). A **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Imperial 9/12 (MV) and one (probably the same bird) was at Janoski's farm pond 9/16 (MJ). Janoski's farm pond hosted a **Pectoral Sandpiper** 9/7 (MV). A **Wilson's Snipe** was at a small pond in a housing development in Findlay Twp. 9/6 (MV).

A **Forster's Tern** was at Dashields Dam 8/11 (MV) and a **Caspian Tern** was there 8/13 (MV).

Reports of migrating **Common Nighthawks** were few. The highest count was 75 flying over Aspinwall 8/28 (STh, SuT). A large flock of over 100 **Chimney Swifts** were over the McKees Rocks Bridge 10/9 (LA). **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** remained through these two months.

An **Acadian Flycatcher** and a **Willow Flycatcher** were at Harrison Hills Park 9/6 (JV). There were four **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** reports: Sewickley Heights Park 8/29 (GM), Beechwood Farms 8/30 (DYe), Barking Slopes 9/5 (TH), and Sewickley Heights Park 9/6 (GM). **Great Crested Flycatcher** reports are sparse in fall the only two were singles at Sewickley Heights Park 9/4 (GM) and Barking Slopes 9/5 (TH). **Eastern Kingbirds** were reported twice: one at Harrison Hills Park 8/15 (PH, JS, SS) and 2 at Barking Slopes 9/6 (TH).

Common Raven reports continue from new areas. One was observed in Harmar Twp. for the first time 9/5 (JV) and one was along the Allegheny River at Barking Slopes 9/6 (TH). A rare breeder in the county, six active **Cliff Swallow** nests were at North Park 8/6 (OM) – the only known breeding site currently.

A **Marsh Wren** continued its lengthy stay at Wingfield Pines and was seen 8/11-12 (FK, ST). **Cedar Waxwings** become widespread in the fall with ripening fruits, particularly Black

Cherry, so reports increase during this season. The largest flock was at Sewickley Heights Park 9/25 (GM) where 200 were tallied.

Twenty-nine species of warblers were reported. Fall **Northern Waterthrushes** are rarely seen because of their secretive nature during migration. Reports are welcome to shed light on the timing of their passage through the county. One was photographed at Harrison Hills Park 8/30 (SG) and relocated the following day (DYe), and one was at Barking Slopes 9/5 (TH). A **Golden-winged Warbler** was a great find at Beechwood Farms 8/22 (TH, OM, SD). It was relocated there 8/29 (DYe, TH, OL, KC). A **Black-and-white Warbler** near Duck Hollow 8/4 (YC) provided an interesting record. They are not known to breed at that location, but the habitat could support them. On the other hand, it could have been an early migrant. **Mourning Warblers** were detected by nocturnal flight calls in Moon Twp. (GM) 9/5 (four calls) and 9/11 (one call). A female was at Sewickley Heights Park 9/27 (GM). A **Kentucky Warbler** at Harrison Hills Park 8/31 (DYe) was the only report. **Cape May Warbler** nocturnal flight calls were detected in Moon Twp. 9/5 and 9/11 (GM). Other reports were 2 at North Park 8/29 (SC), one at Harrison Hills Park 8/30 (SG), 4 at Knob Hill Park 9/10 and 2 there 9/16 (KD), and 2 at Harrison Hills Park 9/20 (DYe). Single **Northern Parulas** were noted at Barking Slopes 9/6 (TH), Frick Park 9/14, Beechwood Farms 9/22 (MD, DYe), and Sewickley Heights Park 9/25 (GM).

A **Pine Warbler** appeared at Harrison Hills Park 8/28 (PH). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was found in Jefferson Hills 8/24 (JHa) in an area where they breed. They sing into July, so this was probably a local bird that nested in the area. One at Boyce-Mayview Park 9/24 (FK) may have been a breeder. Rarely seen in migration, a **Prairie Warbler** was a great find at Beechwood Farms 9/10 (TH). **Canada Warbler** reports were numerous. Nocturnal flight calls were detected in Moon Twp. 8/26 and 9/5 (GM), and singles were at Beechwood Farms 8/26 (BSh), 8/30 (DYe) and 9/13 (DYe); Sewickley Heights Park 8/31 (BVN), and Frick Park (DWe, MF), Beechwood Farms (DYe, TH, OL, KC) and North Park (SC) 8/29. **Wilson's Warbler** was also frequently reported. Four reports came from Harrison Hills Park: one 9/5 (DYe, MF), 2 on 9/6 (JV), one 9/13 (AP), and one 10/1 (PH). Two were detected migrating at night in Moon Twp. 9/5 (GM), and singles were at Beechwood Farms 9/10 (TH) and 9/13 (DYe).

Two **Lincoln's Sparrows** were reported: Beechwood Farms 9/27 (MD) and Sewickley Heights Park 9/27 (GM) and 10/5 (BVN). Two **Swamp Sparrows** were at Wingfield Pines 8/11 (FK).

Two **Orchard Orioles** were photographed at Beechwood Farms 8/23 (TH). Last dates are difficult to determine with this species, which seems to depart undetected.

There are always a few **Purple Finch** reports, usually from the northern part of the county. One was at Knob Hill Park 9/16 (KD) and a male was in Pine Twp. 9/7 (PL, SL).

Observers: Lorraine Asturino, Paul Brown, Kyle Carlsen, Yale Cohen, Shawn Collins, Michael David, Karyn Delaney, Steve Denninger, Mike Fialkovich, Steve Gosser, Jim Hausman (JHa), Paul Hess, Todd Hooe, Matthew Juskowich, Fred Kachmarik, Dave Kerr, Patrick Kopnick, Oliver Lindhjem, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Geoff Malosh, Oscar Miller, David Poortinga, Brian Shema (BSh), Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, Julia Tebbets, Steve Thomas (STh), Sue Thomas (SuT), Shannon Thompson (ST), Jim Valimont, Bob VanNewkirk, Mark Vass, Dan Weeks (DWe), David Yeany (DYe).