



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

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New President's Message

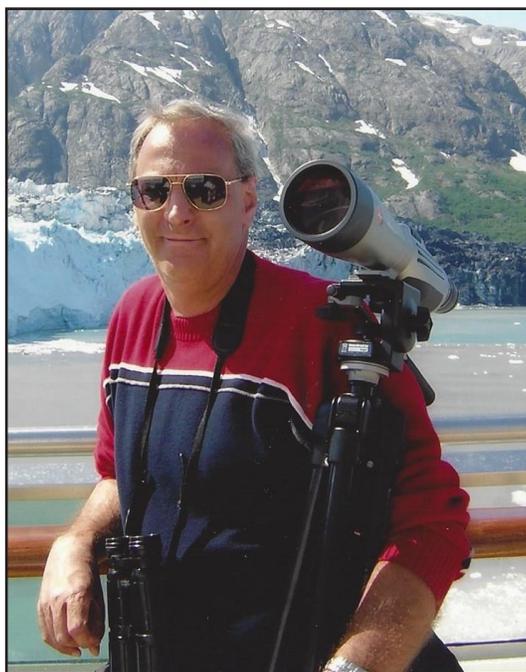
Evolution of a Birder

By Bob VanNewkirk

While growing up in the 1950s in a Ross Township neighborhood surrounded by wooded lots, my friends and I developed a fascination for natural places and things found there, like anything that bloomed, flew by, ran on four legs, had scales, or was considered edible. During those impressionable years, my parents took my three brothers and me on many a Sunday car trip to places where my dad could fish and his sons could explore the shoreline and wade in the water turning over rocks for crayfish and salamanders. From childhood into adulthood, I followed in my father's footsteps and fishing became my prime interest.

Shortly after my 50th birthday, a very close friend, whose family also shared a strong tie to nature, invited me to attend a fall bird walk led by Chuck Tague at Pymatuning State Park. I had fished this lake many times, and I couldn't wait to return. There

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HAVE BINOCULARS, WILL TRAVEL – Bob VanNewkirk, our club's new president, poses with his optical gear at Glacier Bay, Alaska, in June 2004.



WHAT A FACE! –Geoff Malosh marvels at how closely Atlantic Puffins let him approach for photographs in Iceland. You'll see more in his August 6 program.

We'll Visit Iceland on Aug. 6 With Geoff Malosh's Photos

The Three Rivers Birding Club meeting on Wednesday, August 6, will take us on an unforgettable trip. Geoff Malosh titles his program "Journey to the North Atlantic: Iceland," and if you've been thrilled by Geoff's previous photo shows, you'll be equally enthralled with this one.

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.

Geoff will take us across the "Land of Fire and Ice." In the summer of 2013, he and his wife, Kristin, spent two weeks traveling in Iceland, which is famed for its spectacular beauty and unique culture. Iceland is small (about the same area as Kentucky) with a population to match – just a bit over 300,000 people.

"Of course, there are birds in Iceland. Millions of them. Iceland is not home to a large diversity of species, but it more than makes up for this shortcoming by the sheer volume of birdlife on the island. It is said that the puffins in Iceland outnumber the humans three to one in the summer months," Geoff comments.

Geoff and Kristin say they couldn't get out of their car anywhere within 20 miles of the coastline without getting harassed by a nesting Common Redshank or dive-bombed by a territorial Arctic Tern. His photos include world-renowned bird cliffs famous for remarkably tame Atlantic Puffins and summer home to millions of seabirds, including 40% of the world's population of Razorbills.

"Add Whimbrels, Black-tailed Godwits, Parasitic Jaegers, golden-plovers, seabird colonies, ponds dotted with Red-throated Loons, waterfalls, icebergs, great seafood, 23 hours and 22 minutes of daytime, and getting strafed by

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must have been about 30 other bird watchers participating in this trip. What an outing! We found meadowlarks, hawks, eagles, gulls, woodpeckers, and ducks. Many bird names were completely new and sounded strange to me. My friends and other birders showed me pictures of my newly discovered birds in their field guides. Never could I have envisioned how this Sunday outing would lead me to what I now call "my magnificent obsession."

I credit Chuck for developing my obsession mainly through his production of the *Nature Observer News*, a bi-monthly periodical filled with articles and information regarding the natural history of birds, flowers, insects, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians, and astronomical events. Bird sightings were reported and became especially interesting to me. I always checked this list to see if my observations were noted. A calendar posted meetings and outings sponsored by local nature centers, bird and garden clubs, and events at state parks.

Soon I became aware of other wonderful places to look for birds, such as Frick Park, Sewickley Heights Park, Moraine State Park, Pennsy Swamp, Ohiopyle State Park, Magee Marsh, Raccoon State Park, and Presque Isle State Park. With each new birding destination, I met new mentors who led me in the joy of discovering life birds and offered tips on identifying them. Outing leaders Jack and Sue Solomon, Jim Valimont, Mike Fialkovich, Bob Machesney, Joyce Hoffmann, and Chris Knoll became my mentors.

Eventually, I developed enough confidence in my identification abilities to want to be an outing leader. Becoming one for the bird club, the Fern Hollow Nature Center, and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has provided me with lots of opportunities to share my favorite birding locations with people of all ages and lead them to find a wide diversity of birds.

It didn't take long for me to realize my new hobby was going to require a sizeable monetary investment. Over the course of a half dozen years, three different pairs of binoculars and a spotting scope were purchased. To attract birds to my backyard, more money was allocated to buy feeders and seeds. To develop my skills, I needed to purchase a variety of reference sources including general and specialized field guides for IDing raptors, hummingbirds, warblers, shorebirds, gulls, and bird nests. There are now 29 field guides on my bookshelf. It has been a pleasure to meet two of my favorite authors, Scott Weidensaul and Kenn Kaufman, when they presented programs for Three Rivers Birding Club meetings.

Reading about birds that live west of the Rockies makes you aware that eventually you will want to travel to see them. Since 1998, when my birding frenzy began, I have birded in 13 of those states. Many of the trips have been on ASWP's sponsored outings led by Brian Shema.

Even family vacations began to center on locations that were near good birding destinations. As a special vacation one year, my wife, Mary Ann, and I traveled to Ireland, a place Mary Ann had always wanted to visit. Since it wasn't meant to be a birding trip, I left my spotting scope at home. However, I did take my binoculars. My favorite destination, which also appealed to both Mary Ann and our daughter, Lori, was a cruise to the Galapagos Islands. The most attractive feature on the islands was how close you can get to the birds, reptiles, and aquatic mammals without scaring

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them away. At times, we were only an arm's reach away from frigatebirds, Wave Albatrosses, Blue-footed Boobies, land iguanas, lava lizards, and the giant tortoises.

On reflection of my experiences as a birder, being a member of the Three Rivers Birding Club has had the most impact on me. From my rank beginnings, I have had the opportunity for fun and learning by meeting knowledgeable colleagues and professional ornithologists who have served as our guest speakers. As people gathered before the start of each meeting, it was and still is a joy to watch the room fill with people greeting each other, sharing their recent sightings, talking about future outings and trips, enjoying the treats on the snack tables, and seeing longtime members greet first timers with a smile and a handshake.

As the newly elected president of the club, I feel a responsibility to "pay it forward" to our members and to the birding community at large by continuing the club's tradition of providing quality programming and services. I also look forward to future opportunities for the 3RBC to work together with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania on conservation projects and sharing interesting guest speakers for future programs.

Outings to Come

Look Ahead to a Fall Filled with Migrants

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

Fridays, September 5 and 12 – Sewickley Heights Park: Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; van126@comcast.net) will lead these walks in collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center. Meet at 8 AM in the upper parking lot of the park. The walk will begin at the park, not at the Nature Center. For directions to the park, see 3RBC's website (www.3rbc.org). Be prepared for muddy trails. It is also advisable to bring water and a lunch. We will bird the park and along Little Sewickley Creek Road. Warblers, flycatchers, thrushes, and vireos will be our target species.

Saturday, September 13 – Woodcock Lake: Meet Shawn Collins (pabirder1974@gmail.com) at 8 AM at the Woodcock Lake dam. This is the first 3RBC outing here. After visiting the lake, Shawn will take us to Conneaut Marsh and then possibly to Pymatuning to see what shorebirds are around. Please bring a lunch. Travel directions will appear in the September/October issue of *The Peregrine* and on the 3RBC website.

Saturday, September 20 – Presque Isle State Park: Join Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; van126@comcast.net) at one of the state's prime locations for seeing fall migrants. Meet at 8 AM in the first parking lot (Vista 1) on the right as you enter the park. The park is at the north end of Route 832 just west of the city of Erie. Bring a lunch. Presque Isle is often colder and windier than in southwestern Pennsylvania, so be prepared for the weather.

Saturday September 20 – Frick Park: Sue and Jack Solomon (412-521-3365) will lead this outing. Meet at 8 AM. Note: Since the Environmental Center is scheduled for construction activity, we'll meet at the Blue Slide Park entrance to Frick Park, at the corner of Beechwood Blvd. and Nicholson St. in Squirrel Hill. Go south on Braddock Avenue from Forbes Avenue (or north from the Parkway) to the stoplight at Hutchinson, west to the park entrance at Lancaster, turn right and follow Lancaster to the lot. Fall warblers and other migrants are our targets

Saturday, September 27 – Harrison Hills Park: Meet leader Jim Valimont (412-828-5338) at 8 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. We will meet at the parking lot near the pond. As you enter the park, bear right and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers and vireos.

Sunday, October 12 – Pymatuning Area: Meet leader Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; van126@comcast.net) at the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center (Waterfowl Museum) at 8 AM for this all-day outing. Plenty of waterfowl, lots of Bald Eagles, and migrant songbirds should be around. Arrangements will be made to have lunch at the Spillway Inn for those who are interested.



ARE YOU LOOKIN' AT ME? – Steve Gosser took this inquisitive Hooded Warbler's portrait at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve in Fox Chapel on May 12, 2004.

We'll Visit Iceland

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nesting Great Skuas, and it all adds up to a very memorable country that invariably leaves an indelible impression on people who visit there," Geoff says.

He is a 1997 graduate of Michigan State University with a major in physics. He started birding in 1983 just before his eighth birthday, and he says, "One of my earliest memories is a Red-eyed Vireo just ten feet away outside the bedroom window of my childhood house in Scott Township. Another early formative memory from 1984 was holding a Black-throated Blue Warbler and an American Redstart in my hand at Ron Leberman's banding station at Presque Isle State Park."

Geoff's yard list in Moon Township, Allegheny County, is 117 species. The last two came this spring: a Northern Waterthrush (the 25th warbler species for the yard) and a White-crowned Sparrow. His Allegheny County list is 278, and his Pennsylvania list is 363.

He has recorded birds in 39 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces, and has traveled to Mexico, the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom including Scotland, and Iceland. He's not sure how many species he has photographed, but says it is over 500.

Geoff is an avid tennis fan. He attended the U.S. Open (2009), Australian Open (2011), and Wimbledon (2012). He is also an avid Michigan State fan and attended the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on Jan 1, 2014. He recorded 16 bird species while tailgating that day.

(Editor's note: Geoff's program will conclude with what I consider the most beautiful example of all his photographic artistry. Bird, landscape, and sky combine breathtakingly.)



Thank You, Jim!

A luscious surprise awaited Jim Valimont, the Three Rivers Birding Club's retiring president, at our June meeting. It was a new example of Sherron Lynch's baking and decorating artistry.

Jim was the second president in the club's history. He succeeded founding president Jack Solomon in 2008, and the club has continued to grow as it did during Jack's term.

Below, Jim shows great patience, posing for a photo before taking a bite and sharing the cake with us. Above, Sherron's design depicts a Roadrunner on a path between Pennsylvania and Arizona. It represents Jim's and wife Dorothy's frequent travels to Phoenix to visit their daughter and family: Lauren and Aaron Torres, and grandsons Ethan and Lucas.



Outings Revisited

It Was a Wonderful Spring With Life Birds for Many

Yellow Creek State Park – April 5: Eleven birders met for the joint 3RBC-Todd Bird Club outing. It was a cool 37 degrees and breezy as we gathered at the park office. There were amazingly few passerines moving about.

Our first stop at the maintenance building yielded a nice assortment of water birds, including 30 noisy Canada Geese, 6 Gadwalls, 30 Canvasbacks, 42 Lesser Scaup, 30 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 2 Ruddy Ducks. The entire lake appeared littered with Buffleheads while numerous Tree Swallows fed low over the water. A pheasant called several times, and 4 Rusty Blackbirds landed briefly in a willow near the water's edge.

At the boat launch, we added 2 Mallards, 3 Green-winged Teal, 45 more Lesser Scaup, one Great Blue Heron, and a Belted Kingfisher in Little Yellow Cove. Lee Carnahan counted the 84 American Coots hugging the opposite shore. We continued into the main recreation area where we added the day's only Eastern Towhee and 2 Northern Flickers. Walking along the vegetation lining the lake, we flushed a Wilson's Snipe and counted 4 Song Sparrows. A stop at the beach afforded us close views of 120 Red-breasted Mergansers and a soaring Turkey Vulture.

Near the parking lot for the Observatory Trail, a Brown Creeper was singing. We continued along the trail to the Wetland Walkway where we found 5 Northern Shovelers, a Double-crested Cormorant, and 2 Swamp Sparrows.

The observatory itself yielded the day's highlights, a Long-tailed Duck and a Red-throated Loon. Here, too, were 5 Wood Ducks, 4 Northern Pintails, 10 Redheads, and a Killdeer. We also upped the totals on most other ducks that we'd listed at the maintenance building. We estimated that there were 200 Ring-billed Gulls, we counted 54 Bonaparte's Gulls, and we found one Herring Gull in the flock.

In all, we tallied 54 species. Following the outing, nine of us headed to the Fortune Chinese Buffet for a very enjoyable lunch. It was sad to say farewell to Ian and Margaret Haigh, who have been regulars on our Yellow Creek field trips and are returning to the United Kingdom. We will miss them! –by **Margaret Higbee**

Woodcock Walk – April 9: Five people participated, all first-timers. Apparently, I left the meeting spot a little too early. When I got home, I had a message that seven others showed up after we left the meeting place. In the future, I'll make it a point to wait half an hour after the meeting time to make sure everyone is there.

At the marsh, we only had geese and Mallards. A few Tree Swallows were flying around, and Red-winged Blackbirds were very vocal. The Allegheny River island rookery was fairly active, with Great Blue Herons flying in and out of the nests. Some flew overhead, giving us nice views. It appeared that the birds in the nests were hunkered down, as if sitting on eggs.

The sky was clear and sunny, and the temperature was very mild. We got really nice views of the American Woodcocks. Up at the field, the first "peet" was heard about 15 minutes after the sun went down. Unlike previous outings, we were only hearing and seeing three birds, not the half-dozen or more we usually get. I feel that the loss of the brush in the middle of the field is having an

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Outings Revisited

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effect on the birds. We also didn't hear the usual towhee. Spring peepers were calling down over the hill. —**by leader Tommy Byrnes**

Woodcock Walk – April 16: It was a very nice evening, clear, sunny, and mild. Twenty-four people, including myself, gathered for the outing. I think 14 of them were first-timers. Some were 3RBC members, and others had read about it on our website.

At the marsh, a few people got to see a male Redhead, and a male Wood Duck courting a female Mallard. Wherever she went, he was right beside her, nudging her away from the other birds. Tree Swallows, blackbirds, geese and Mallards, along with Great Blue Herons flying overhead kept us busy. We were able to carpool in six vehicles, with people from Washington and Westmoreland counties.

The heron rookery on the Allegheny River island wasn't very active, though we could see birds sitting on nests. A few flew in or out, which helped to show the big nests throughout the tops of the sycamores. After about 15 minutes, we headed up to the field.

On our way, we heard robins, Song Sparrows, Field Sparrows, and a pair of Eastern Towhees. It didn't take long after the sun went down for the woodcocks' "peeting" to start. Soon we had at least four males "peeting" and displaying around us. It was a much better night than the week before. —**by leader Tommy Byrnes**

Sewickley Heights Park – April 25: After a very long winter, nine birders gathered at Sewickley Heights Park on a chilly spring morning ready to search for spring migrants. Just in the parking lot, we counted 17 species! An Eastern Towhee was one of the first to announce his presence, followed by Song and Chipping Sparrows, a very loud titmouse, a cardinal, a Downy Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbirds, and American Goldfinches. Eastern Bluebirds and chickadees flitted about, and a White-throated Sparrow chimed in. Robins were everywhere, and we heard a Carolina Wren and a Northern Flicker. Blue Jays were scolding something in the woods, and a grackle passed overhead. A Hairy Woodpecker swept low and landed close by on a tree, giving us an excellent look. We were off to a great start!

We began on the Butterfly Trail, hoping the predicted rain showers would hold off until the afternoon. A mystery bird silhouetted in a tree turned out to be a Brown-headed Cowbird. A male Eastern Bluebird briefly posed for us in the sun. Near the Wildflower Meadow, a Broad-winged Hawk flew over, and it was easy for us to see the broad white band on its tail. We took the Bridle Trail up to the horse fields and soon heard a Northern Mockingbird going through its repertoire, accompanied by Red-winged Blackbirds. Another flyover was an American Crow. The highlight, however, was a pair of Eastern Meadowlarks in the field.

On the way back down the hill, we detoured to check out last year's Red-shouldered Hawk nest, which is currently unoccupied. Our search for warblers was finally rewarded with a Black-throated Green on Waterthrush Way, flitting about in the treetops. A Barred Owl must have been perched close to the Waterfall Trail, as it flushed and went winging down the hill. Almost as exciting, a Pileated Woodpecker passed us going in the opposite direction.

As we took the Chestnut Path, the owl was briefly sighted

again. We heard a Hooded Warbler and were quite surprised when a Prairie Warbler popped up in the bushes. A Red-bellied Woodpecker called in the distance, and we were delighted to see a tiny Spring Azure, our first butterfly, on the path. Close to the park road, we watched a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers as they put the finishing touches to their nest. The Pipeline Trail was quiet, but as we came out onto the road again, we spotted another pair of gnatcatchers only just starting their nest.

The group traveled to Snead's, also known as Creek Trail, where a Louisiana Waterthrush greeted us with its song as soon as we piled out of the cars. Two startled Wood Ducks took off following the stream. Overhead, a Red-tailed Hawk passed by. More Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were buzzing, and an Eastern Phoebe, towhees, and titmice were all singing, and one birder picked out the song of a Northern Parula. Soon we were all looking up at the little songster and giving it our undivided attention.

Just down the road, another Louisiana Waterthrush was singing at Walker Park. A Belted Kingfisher darted up the stream, and we heard more phoebes and towhees. A Yellow-throated

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SITTING PRETTY – Yellow-throated Warblers are among spring's earliest warbler arrivals in our region. Steve Gosser photographed this one along the Butler-Freeport Trail in Butler County on April 27, 2014.

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Outings Revisited

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Warbler was our sixth warbler of the day. Some people caught a glimpse of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. A Turkey Vulture circled overhead in the darkening sky as drops began to fall.

With the rain, most people decided to call it a day, but a few went on to Pontefract Park where we found another Louisiana Waterthrush. Two Northern Flickers fed on the ground with the robins, and a Chipping Sparrow came quite close to check us out.

At the Edgeworth dump, we saw our first Killdeer and watched a Northern Rough-winged Swallow appear and disappear over the trees. We were pleased when the resident mockingbird put in an appearance. A Belted Kingfisher rattled into view and settled on a branch nearby. Canada Geese and Ring-billed Gulls were added to the list. Down on the shore, we studied a pair of Spotted Sandpipers. Our best reward for birding in the rain, though, was a Caspian Tern flying up the river!

We had 46 species for the day. **—by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Wingfield Pines – April 27: Eight people gathered at this fine birding location owned by the Allegheny Land Trust. With good reports of migrants coming in over the past few days, I was hoping that we would come away with some good birds. We were not disappointed.

Warbling Vireos sang from the sycamores along the bank of Chartiers Creek as we descended into the property. While nothing of note was actually seen as we walked down, as soon as we hit the bottom, bird activity began to increase. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers flitted in the branches, and we briefly heard a Northern Waterthrush as we turned to parallel the creek. We all got good looks at Yellow Warblers and, of course, the Yellow-throated Warblers that are always a highlight of birding at Wingfield.

Tree, Barn, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows flew around the pools as we walked into the wooded area on the far side of the property. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were good to see and hear. I was glad to hear two Wood Ducks taking off from one of the pools. As we started back toward the entrance, Yellow-rumped, Palm, and a few more Yellow-throated Warblers appeared.

As we left the woods, a Baltimore Oriole flew into a nearby sycamore. Everyone got fantastic looks at this beautiful bird, and it was a first of the year for many (including myself).

To finish the outing, we crossed the boardwalk through the marsh. This turned out to be fruitful as a Solitary Sandpiper and two Greater Yellowlegs flushed up from the water. The sandpiper didn't stick around long, but the yellowlegs circled around for a few minutes before flying off in the direction of the woods.

The last bird highlight came as we were almost back to the parking lot. I noticed something odd sitting on the ground, and I realized that my suspicions were correct: It was an Eastern Kingbird (another first of the year for me). After everyone saw the kingbird well, we returned to the cars for the walk's conclusion.

Our species total was 42. It was a nice morning, and we had fine looks at many newly returned migrants. **—by leader Aidan Place**

Sewickley Heights Park – May 2: The threat of rain and muddy trails did not deter 11 birders from searching for warblers

and other migrants. The flute-like song of Wood Thrushes filled the valley along the main driveway. Songs and calls from Chipping Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, towhees, kinglets, and goldfinches alerted us to their presence. This would be a good day to get reacquainted with birds' vocalizations. Before heading for the Wildflower Meadow, we watched a pair of bluebirds going in and out from a box near the parking lot. We wondered if House Wrens would compete with the bluebirds for this nesting box.

Overcast skies made it difficult to see the colors and field marks of small birds flitting near treetops in the meadow. We patiently waited for the birds to move downward and identified a Black-throated Green Warbler, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a pair of Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Our walk continued along the Bridle Trail and horse pastures. With open fields on one side and woods on the other, this area offers good habitat for a variety of species. Another nesting box had a female bluebird inside, and she watched us walk by. A Northern Mockingbird was perched on a fence rail. A Killdeer foraged along the ground near a pair of grazing horses. Flyovers by a Cooper's Hawk and a Turkey Vulture reminded us to look in all directions. In a tangle of vines near a small snag, two White-crowned Sparrows preened and gave everyone long looks at them.

A search for meadowlarks found during the previous week's outing was successful. A singing meadowlark from a hilltop fence post was eventually seen. The high, green grassy area where the meadowlarks have been sighted is not scheduled for cutting until later in May or June, according to a birder who lives nearby. This raised the question as to whether this species might try to nest here.

As we headed back toward the parking lot, we were treated to good sightings of a pair of Scarlet Tanagers that seemed to be hunting for food in a slow-paced manner. This was a life bird for one participant who recently moved here from New Mexico and a first of the year bird for nearly everyone else. Along the trail, a Red-eyed Vireo sang its familiar phrases. A Blue-headed Vireo was spotted soon farther down the trail.

We left the muddy trails and proceeded onto more sure-footed pathways. A beautiful Hooded Warbler provided us with a ground-level view on the Pipeline Trail. Another first of the year bird – a Rose-breasted Grosbeak – was picked out from a lofty perch on an oak branch. More warblers were encountered on the gravel path. The flaming-orange throats of two Blackburnian Warblers grabbed our attention. One birder heard the buzzy notes of a Blue-winged Warbler, and this helped us to locate the singer.

The group caravanned to Snead's on Little Sewickley Creek Road. Two singing Louisiana Waterthrushes were heard when we stepped out of our cars, but we couldn't find them. In the tall sycamores near the creek, Yellow-throated Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireos, American Redstarts, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers pin-balled through the trees. We heard the soft, buzzy notes of another warbler, a Northern Parula, but we couldn't see it. A flock of six Chimney Swifts passed overhead, as did a Red-tailed Hawk and a Great Blue Heron.

Farther down the road at Walker Park, we had an unexpected sighting of an adult Bald Eagle that seemed to be ascending on a thermal. Closer to the ground, Northern Rough-winged Swallows were strafing the field for insects. The clear whistled call of a Baltimore Oriole revealed its position on a low branch. Only a few birders saw a Louisiana Waterthrush as it foraged along the creek bank. A short time later, everyone enjoyed looking at a

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OUTING HIGHLIGHTS – Michelle Kienholz photographed two birds in action at 3RBC's outing at Harrison Hills Park on May 3.



A Barn Swallow carries a grass stem into a nest box near the pond, and a Scarlet Tanager bites on a tasty larva in the woods.

Outings Revisited

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Black-and-white Warbler clinging to the trunk on a hillside tree.

It was past lunchtime, and most of the birders headed for home. Four of us continued to Pontefract Park where we found first of the year Gray Catbirds. A few Northern Flickers flushed from the lawn as we approached. A Pileated Woodpecker surprised us when it flew from a stump beside the Quaker Valley Shopping Center.

At the Edgeworth dump we saw our first of the year Yellow Warbler, a Warbling Vireo, a pair of Killdeer, and another Yellow-throated Warbler. Scanning the Ohio River near the Dashields Dam, we saw Ring-billed Gulls flying overhead, and a Double-crested Cormorant was perched on a branch along the shoreline. We located two Spotted Sandpipers on a small gravel bar where Little Sewickley Creek runs into the Ohio River. Usually this would have been our last stop for the day, but we had one more place to scout – a place we will now call Little Beaver Dam.

Sue Moffett, a Fern Hollow Nature Center educator, mentioned to me that a beaver had dammed a section of Little Sewickley Creek. The dam is on private property on Little Sewickley Creek Road just before Audubon Road. There is a dirt pull-off on the left side for about three or four cars. Viewing is easy by cautiously moving along the road and staying close to the guard rails.

On the day before the outing, I had scouted this section of creek and saw a Green Heron, a Great Blue Heron, Mallards, a drake Wood Duck, Yellow Warblers, a Belted Kingfisher, and lots of Red-winged Blackbirds. On our outing, we observed a foraging Solitary Sandpiper in the creek plus the usually present blackbirds. Along the wooded border just off the road, we found Yellow Warblers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Three Mallards made several passes over the creek, but we didn't see them land.

As we prepared to return to our cars, we discovered a beaver with gleaming reddish-brown fur and black paddle-shaped tail on the woody edge of the creek. We spontaneously broke into applause when we sighted this marvelous builder.

On a rather glum-looking day, our birding spirits were lifted

by 10 colorful warbler species, a total of 66 avian species, and one beautiful mammal. –by leader **Bob VanNewkirk**

Harrison Hills Park – May 3: A good turnout of 20 birders gathered at this popular Allegheny County Park to see spring migrants. We began by exploring the area around the pond.

On the way we saw a pair of Eastern Bluebirds at a nest box. Approaching the pond and meadow, we heard a White-throated Sparrow singing. Upon our arrival at the pond, a Solitary Sandpiper greeted us, offering close views. We watched a Tree Swallow carrying nesting material to a nest box, flying within a few feet of our group.

Other highlights in the area included a Least Flycatcher, a Blue-winged Warbler, a Common Yellowthroat, three Baltimore Orioles in a single tree, and a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird that perched on a bare branch allowing the group to see it well. Near the parking lot we heard a Yellow-throated Vireo and saw a Great Crested Flycatcher. A Hooded Warbler was singing off the trail but remained out of sight. A Black-capped Chickadee was observed gathering nesting material.

We walked the creekside trail, but it was very quiet. Continuing on to the trail along the ridge overlooking the Allegheny River, we had better luck. From the observation deck, a Blackburnian Warbler was spotted in a tree down the slope. A Herring Gull was winging its way along the river, and Turkey Vultures were soaring over the valley.

Continuing along the ridge we finally saw a Hooded Warbler, heard a Blue-winged Warbler, played hide-and-seek with a Nashville Warbler, and enjoyed two male Scarlet Tanagers. A Louisiana Waterthrush sang in the distance. A Black-throated Green Warbler and a singing Rose-breasted Grosbeak were seen well. Our species total was 56. –by leader **Mike Fialkovich**

(Editor's note: Additional spring outing reports will appear in the next issue.)

Ralph K. Bell (1915-2014): A Legend to Remember

By Paul Hess

Ralph K. Bell died on May 20, 2014, at the age of 99. By any measure, he was assuredly not an old man. Ask anyone who respected him, honored him, and loved him.

His legacy is measured in astounding numbers: As of May 2013 he had banded 142,255 birds since 1954, including more than 7,000 Eastern Bluebirds. He wrote more than 200 scientific articles.

It is measured in countless accomplishments such as founding the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory in West Virginia in 1958, the oldest continuous bird banding station in North America.

It is measured in many honors including the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's prestigious Earl L. Poole award for significant contributions to ornithology in the state.

It is measured by the thousands – yes, thousands – of people young and old whom he taught the value of studying nature and the importance of conservation for more than half a century.

In the end, perhaps his legacy is measured most wonderfully by the pure spirit of the man. Words like “icon,” “legend,” “mentor,” “educator,” “wit,” “fun,” and “wisdom” are frequent in anything anyone ever said about Ralph. How many people have we known who could be measured by a combination of all those accolades?



OUR ESTEEMED FRIEND – After climbing a tall ladder, Ralph Bell reaches into his American Kestrel nest box to capture the nestlings for banding. Ralph was able to do this well into his 90s, and seeing the chicks was always an exciting climax to the annual May outings at his Greene County farm. Tom Moeller captured the iconic portrait at the 2010 outing.

Many of our region's birders and other naturalists, including Three Rivers Birding Club members, first met Ralph at one of his annual spring outings at his Greene County farm. After their first time, most of them made the outing an annual pilgrimage.

His friend Paul Beck, who wrote reports of the outings for *The Peregrine* during recent years, was fortunate to spend a few minutes with Ralph on this year's outing on May 17. Paul commented, “I think that he timed his departure so that he could be present for one last outing at the farm.” Knowing Ralph, that makes perfect sense.

Please consider sending a memorial contribution to the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, c/o Marjorie Howard-President, 149 Preachers Road, Waynesburg, PA 15370, or to the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, c/o Joan Bell Pattison, Project Leader, 10391 Glastonbury Circle #202, Fort Myers, FL 33913.

See the Three Rivers Birding Club website next month for a biographical account of Ralph's life and achievements, as well as complete comments from friends and colleagues that are merely excerpted on this page. If you would like to add a comment, send it to me at p Hess@salsgiver.com.

Marjorie Howard, President of the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club: “Greene County lost a good man who was a teacher, mentor, conservationist, citizen scientist, local ornithologist and a dear friend. Ralph enjoyed teaching others about nature but especially about the birds. I had the pleasure of birding with him many times including at Enlow Fork, at his annual farm walk, and at Dolly Sods. He had a way of making the walk interesting by telling a story or a joke. He now is flying with the birds he loved.”

Carol and Fred McCullough, President and Trustee, respectively, of the Brooks Bird Club in Wheeling: “Meeting Ralph was a life-changing event for us. We heard bird banding occurred at Dolly Sods in the fall so we went there in the fall of 1969. Ralph was banding and short-handed, and that was the beginning of us spending a significant portion of each fall there. We are very fortunate to have worked with this remarkable man.”

Bob Leberman, Bird Bander Emeritus at Powdermill Nature Reserve: “I have known Ralph as a friend since the late 1950s. For several decades he was a beloved fixture at the annual Eastern Bird Banding Association meetings, where he was appreciated for his sense of humor, dislike of cowbirds, and folksy ways. And he was, of course, the star of the Allegheny Front banding station in West Virginia. He certainly will be missed.”

Larry Helgerman, Trustee of the Brooks Bird Club: “‘It sure is nice to know famous people.’ This is what Ralph would say to me (and many others) when I saw him as he would reach out to shake my hand. Funny thing is, Ralph K. Bell was the famous man, though you would never hear that from him. Ralph was one of the most modest gentlemen I ever knew. I'm sure he's in good company with other past birders. He's probably teaching Wilson or Audubon to bird by ear.”

Jack Solomon, Past President of the Three Rivers Birding Club: “Back in the early 1970s when I started birding, Ralph was already a legend, not only for his annual outing, but also for his ornithological skills and personality. My favorite activity on his outings was talking to Ralph, enjoying his sense of humor, and learning about all aspects of nature. I'm pleased to have known the man who epitomizes the joy of making a major contribution to science while having fun and enriching many lives.”

Magee Marsh 2014 Was a May of Many Memories

By Sue Solomon

It's encouraging to see so many young birders at Magee Marsh in May. One of my finest memories was asking a young birder named Eddie, who carried a three-foot camera lens, what his favorite bird was that day. He showed me a photo of a King Rail he had discovered while birding on an Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge bus trip.

One of 3RBC's own young birders, Aidan Place, was among about 60 Pittsburghers who visited the marsh this May to relish such sights as Blackburnian Warblers glowing in warm sunshine or five Canada Warblers on the boardwalk in one morning. On this page, Aidan offers us a wonderful narrative of his experiences

Besides warm sunshine, we had temperatures in the 40s, with gusty winds, as we searched for a White-rumped Sandpiper along the Krause Road fields, aided by Chuck Tague's skill in shorebird ID.

Another highlight occurred at Ottawa's auto tour. As we scanned for an Eared Grebe in breeding plumage, a birder suddenly shouted "Yellow-headed Blackbird!" We forgot the grebe momentarily and enjoyed our best look in years at a male Yellow-headed feeding on the dike 20 yards away. Finding the grebe minutes later was a bonus.

Magee is a great place not only to see birds, but also to see them up close. Some birders watched a Merlin munching on a Tree Swallow for several minutes near the boardwalk tower. Others observed the Bald Eagles carrying fish, a gull, and some mammals to their nest near the boardwalk parking lot.

At nearby Oak Openings Preserve, after finding the nesting Lark Sparrows, Summer Tanagers, and Red-headed Woodpeckers, I searched a woodlot for a Kentucky Warbler (the species my husband Jack got at Magee and I missed). I heard a Barred Owl calling and then watched as it flew to a whining fledgling with a fat chipmunk.

The total list for Pittsburgh area birders was 219 species, with 34 warbler species. The sought-after Kirtland's Warbler was found only in two locations that were inaccessible to our group. The list will eventually be posted on the club's website. Here's a short list of the unusual sightings by folks from our area:

- * Red-necked Phalarope and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks at Pierson Metro Park.

- * Black-necked Stilts along the Magee Marsh causeway (later seen mating at Ottawa).

- * American White Pelicans flying over the marsh.

- * Ken Behrens of Tropical Birding, a Pittsburgh area native, perched on a log, describing the location of an Olive-sided Flycatcher.

- * A Worm-eating Warbler in the beach scrub, attracting a swarm of birders.

The Friends of Magee Marsh (friendsofmageemarsh.org) are currently holding a \$300,000 fund-raising campaign to restore the 25-year-old boardwalk. "The Biggest Week in American Birding" festival was a success for the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. All of their bus trips and many of the lectures were sold out, including the great ornithologist David Sibley as a keynote speaker.

At a talk we attended, birding guru Kenn Kaufman said, "Each new wave of birds ignites new sparks." I hope the many novice birders at Magee catch the spark this year, and by next year will learn not to call a chickadee a Blackpoll Warbler.



STRIPED BEAUTY – Cape May Warblers are dazzling highlights of a birding visit to the Magee Marsh boardwalk in May. Chuck Tague photographed this bright male there on May 6, 2014.

"Biggest Week" Brings Spectacular Birding

By Aidan Place

The highlight of my May birding every year is usually going to the Biggest Week in American Birding in Oak Harbor, Ohio. This festival, for those who don't know, takes place in early May and celebrates the large numbers of birds (specifically warblers) that migrate through northwestern Ohio.

The birding is, in a word, spectacular. Migrants that do not wish to cross Lake Erie immediately, put down in huge numbers in wooded areas along the shoreline. One of the best, and most heavily birded, places is the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Because these birds are more interested in looking for food than they are in you, they afford amazing views and often can be watched from close range. This is especially amazing for warblers – birds that, for the most part, we expect to see high up in trees and far away from us.

Besides the amazing birding, The Biggest Week is run by and visited by some amazing people. The famous Black Swamp Bird Observatory organizes and hosts the event every year.

This year, I went down for the weekend of May 10 and 11. I was quite excited to be going back, as I hadn't been to Magee since last year's festival. We had to leave very late on Friday night and as a consequence, we arrived at around two in the morning on Saturday. We quickly unloaded the car into our hotel room and then tried to get as much sleep as we could before getting up.

Because we weren't going to get much sleep, we decided to leave a little bit later than we normally would, so we left the hotel at around 7:30. Reports of a Kentucky Warbler and other good birds were already streaming in, which worked to build my excitement for the morning.

Getting out of the car at the parking lot for the Magee Marsh boardwalk, I was immediately inundated with bird song. One of my favorite things about Magee is how many species you can get without leaving the parking lot. This year was no

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Biggest Week

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exception as I was able to hear Black-throated Green, Tennessee, and Blackburnian Warblers before I had even stepped onto the boardwalk.

That first morning on the boardwalk, I was able to get great looks at many species of warbler and other birds. There was always something interesting around. Whether it was an American Woodcock foraging in the underbrush just off the boardwalk, a Chestnut-sided Warbler singing not 10 feet away from me, or a Gray Catbird, completely oblivious to the hordes of birders watching it, scratching in the leaf litter directly below the boardwalk.

After I had walked the length of the boardwalk, we decided to drive to a bait shop down the road where there was a large continuing flock of American Golden-Plovers. We pulled into the parking lot of the shop and scanned the fields in a scope. At first it seemed like the plovers weren't there. However, when we were about to leave, the flock took flight allowing us to locate and get good views of these beautiful shorebirds.

We did a bit more birding that afternoon (mainly at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge where we missed a King Rail by about 20 minutes). It wasn't long before we had to head to the Maumee Bay Lodge for a keynote lecture by Kenn Kaufman. The lecture was about the connection between birds and people, and about how birds are not as instinctually driven as many people think. Birds can show complex, human-like emotions. It was quite a good lecture and very interesting.

The lectures and keynotes organized as part of the Biggest Week are really highlights of the festival. They are extremely interesting and informative (and presented by some fantastic birders and ornithologists), and I try to go to at least two or three every year.

After the lecture, we had dinner with some of the birders



BRIGHT EYE – White-eyed Vireos are less frequently seen than many spring migrants at Magee Marsh. This one, photographed by Chuck Tague at the boardwalk on May 7, 2014, seems to be staring intently – perhaps watching for a potential snack.

who were visiting from Pittsburgh (thanks again to Jack and Sue Solomon for organizing that). It was great to be able to share stories from the day and hear other people's birding highlights.

After dinner, we headed back to Magee (which had a lot fewer birders around now) to do a bit more birding. An Ovenbird and a roosting Eastern Screech-Owl were the only new birds.

By this time, it was starting to get dark. As we were about to leave Magee for the night, we started to hear a woodcock peenting. We waited a bit, and it wasn't long before it burst up from the woods and began its display flight. When it came down, it landed about 20 feet from us, which allowed us to watch it peenting up close!

We watched it display a few more times before we decided to head out. We made one last stop in the marshes that surround the boardwalk. We were hoping to hear some nocturnal birds, and we were not disappointed. A Sora called a few times, as did a Black-crowned Night-Heron. In addition, a Wilson's Snipe could be heard winnowing from the far end of the marsh. It was really a very lovely way to end the day.

The next morning we got up early and headed back to Magee. An early highlight of the morning was observing two Prothonotary Warblers flying around and singing near the boardwalk entrance. These are beautiful warblers that I don't get to see as much as I would like, because they are pretty localized around Western Pennsylvania.

Another highlight was a Mourning Warbler, which I was able to see after about 50 minutes of standing in one place at the boardwalk waiting for it. This was my lifer (though I've heard them before) and was a great and very handsome bird to see.

By this point, we had seen most of the commoner birds in the area, so most of the rest of the day was spent in pursuit of some of the rarer species. For instance, we went to Ottawa NWR where we were able to see the Eared Grebe that had been seen there. We were also able to see three Soras foraging right out in the open! Other rarities we had were White-faced Ibis, White-rumped Sandpiper, and three very late (and very beautiful) Lapland Longspurs, one of which was in breeding plumage.

We also attended two more lectures. The first was about threats to Golden-winged Warblers and actions that are taking place to try to save them. That was a fantastic lecture on a very interesting (though at times saddening) topic. The second lecture was my personal favorite of the trip. It was by Neil Hayward, who holds the North American Big Year record. He talked about his Big Year in 2013 and how he managed to set the new record. It was a fascinating lecture, which was extremely well given and very entertaining. Neil is a great speaker who is very talented with words and is someone whose lectures I would love to see again in the future.

After that lecture, we had to head back to Pittsburgh because I had school in the morning. Overall, it was a fantastic trip that produced some great looks at some great birds, and allowed me to meet many interesting people.

If you haven't been to Magee before, I highly suggest that you try to go next year, as it is really fun and a great birding experience. If you go, I recommend that you go when the Biggest Week is going on. It is very crowded (especially along the boardwalk), but is well worth being there. Northwestern Ohio is an amazing part of the world that is very birder friendly. (Where else do you see billboards for field guides?)

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

An Extraordinary Winter Ends in Feb.-March 2014

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

The long cold winter continued into February. The harsh conditions resulted in waterfowl and gull diversity rarely seen here, as well as a rare visit by two Red-throated Loons and many Red-necked Grebes.

Four **Mute Swans** were at the Pittsburgh Point 2/14 (GM), and an immature was at Dashields Dam 2/23 (GM). A weather system moving through 3/12 dropped **Tundra Swans** into the area. A flock of 73 landed on the Ohio River at Dashields Dam (GM). Flocks flew over Natrona Heights (DH) and Wingfield Pines (ST), but were unable to be counted. A flock of 77 landed on a frozen pond on Moody Road in Findlay Township (GM). On 3/14, 23 were on the main pond at Imperial (MV). A flock of 83 flew over Findlay Township 3/15 (GM).

A blue morph **Snow Goose** was a surprise at North Park 3/18 (BM). A **Cackling Goose** was at Wingfield Pines 3/2-3 (ST et al.), providing the fourth county record. A leucistic **Canada Goose** was at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Township 3/23 (MV) – the same bird that was at Imperial in March 2011 and 2013.

A **Ruffed Grouse** was at Imperial 3/19 (GM), the first reported there since 2006. A flock of 57 **Wild Turkeys** were at South Park 3/28 (JHa).

Two **Gadwalls** were at Fox Chapel 2/21 (AH, PM), singles were at Harmar Township 3/15-23 (AH, PM, TB), and Imperial 3/17-21 (GM, MV), and 4 migrated past Dashields Dam 3/22 (GM). Small numbers of **American Wigeons** were reported: 3 at Wingfield Pines 3/1-2 (DW, ST), 2 at Dashields Dam 3/7 (GM), and 12 in Findlay Township 3/15 (MV). A flock of 12 **American Black Ducks** at Imperial 2/7 (MV) was the high count for the season; others were one at Wingfield Pines 3/2 (ST), 2 at Janoski's Farm 3/15 (MV), and 6 at the Moody Road Ponds 3/15 (MV).

A **Green-winged Teal** was at Dashields Dam 2/23 (GM), and **Blue-winged Teal** arrived in early March. Two **Northern Shovelers** continued from the last reporting period at Wingfield Pines until 3/16 (DW, ST, GG), 3 were at Duck Hollow 3/12 (TM, NM), and 6 migrated past Dashields Dam 3/22 (GM). Two **Northern Pintails** continued at Wingfield Pines from the last period until 3/2 (DW, ST), one sat on the frozen pond on Moody Road in Findlay Township 3/12 (GM), 2 were at Duck Hollow 3/14 (BMa, TM, NM), 9 were at Imperial 3/14 (MV), and 2 were there 3/17 (GM).

Canvasbacks were present in good numbers during the entire winter. A high count of 22 were on the Allegheny River at Natrona 2/17 (DY), and the species was seen all along the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers. Similarly, **Redheads** were present in good numbers, with a high count of 30 at Dashields Dam 3/12 (GM). Small numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** were present in February, and more arrived in March. The high count was 25 at Imperial 3/17 (GM). Both scap species continued from January. The high count of **Greater Scaup** was 40 on the Allegheny River at Oakmont 2/17 (DY). A flock of 130 **Lesser**

Scaup were at Dashields Dam 3/12 (JM).

A few **Surf Scoters** included 2 at Dashields Dam 3/7 (GM) and one at Lock and Dam No. 3 in Harmar Township 3/8 (DY). **White-winged Scoters** first found in January remained into February along the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers through March (v.o.). **Long-tailed Ducks** were reported through March along the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers in unprecedented numbers. High counts included at least 35 at Fox Chapel 2/11 (VM), 36 at Lock and Dam No. 4 in Natrona 2/17 (AL, CK, DYe, RHo), 43 at that same location 2/17 (DY), 23 at Blawnox 2/18 (MHo), and 25 at Lock and Dam No. 3 on 2/23 (DY). A raft of 28 were on the Allegheny River at Lock and Dam No. 4 on 3/2 (DY), and probably the same group (this time 29 birds) were just downriver at Lock and Dam No. 3 on 3/3 (JV).

Buffleheads were in the area in small numbers during the entire period. The high count of **Common Goldeneye** was 24 at Emsworth Dam on the Ohio River 2/24 (PB). A nice count of 19 **Hooded Mergansers** were in Harmar Township 3/16 (AH, PM). A good count of 64 **Common Mergansers** were at Blawnox 2/17 (DY), and 30 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Pittsburgh 2/12 (JM) was the high count. Five **Ruddy Ducks** at Dashields Dam 3/11 (GM) were the maximum for the season, and a male spent the second half of March at Duck Hollow (v.o.).

Two **Red-throated Loons** appeared at the Pittsburgh Point 2/12 (JM, MD, DY, GM, et al.) and remained until the following day. One was photographed at Duck Hollow 2/18 (BB), which may have been one of the individuals from Pittsburgh. This was the seventh record for the county. Small numbers of **Pied-billed Grebes** and **Horned Grebes** were present during the entire winter. **Red-necked Grebes** were widespread, the first time since 2003. After a single bird in February, many more arrived in March. Most reports were from various locations on the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers, with a few on the Monongahela River, which receives less coverage than the other two. Maximum counts include 8 on the Allegheny River at O'Hara Township 3/15 (TM et al.) and 8 at Dashields Dam 3/23 (GM).

A **Great Egret** was at the McKees Rocks Boat Dock 3/22 (MV), the earliest first date that I am aware of.

An early **Osprey** was seen in O'Hara Township 3/24 (PB). An intermediate morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was in Findlay Township from January to 2/18 (GM). A light morph was in another part of Findlay Township 2/12 (KJ), and a dark morph was there 2/21 (GM). Single **Merlins** were in Tarentum 2/16 (AL, CK, DYe, RHo) and one was seen near the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh 2/25 (GM).

Two **Killdeer** at Imperial 2/21 (GM) and one in Plum Borough 2/22 (PM) were likely arriving migrants. **Wilson's Snipes** were numerous at Imperial this spring. Three were first noted 3/7 (GM) and by mid-March numbers increased; 10 were there 3/30 (GM, MV). March 15 must have been the unofficial **American Woodcock** search because there were reports from several locations: 4 at the PennDot Wetlands in Upper St. Clair (JM), 3 at Imperial (MV), 2 at Wingfield Pines (ST), and one in Franklin Park (OM). Seven were in Jefferson Hills 3/21 (BMu, JHa), and one or two were heard displaying at the wetlands in Frick Park 3/29 (KW).

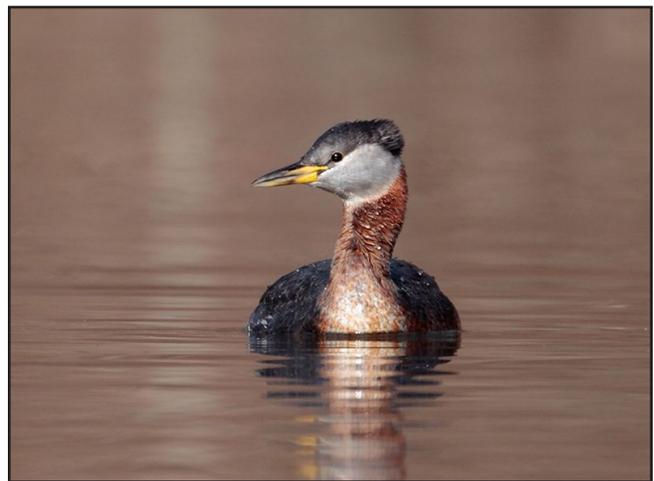
The gull show at The Point intensified and peaked in

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The Peregrine



SHOW-OFFS – Grebes' toes are made for efficient diving. The Red-necked Grebe at left shows us this specialized design. These paddle-shaped "lobate" toes are edged with lobes of skin that expand and contract as the bird dives. The dull winter plumage



contrasts with the bright breeding plumage shown on the bird at right. Jeff McDonald took the left photo on February 5, and Geoff Malosh took the one at right on March 21 during the species' unusually good presence on the Pittsburgh area's rivers in 2014.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

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February, then quickly came to a close in March. Totals for the rare gull species were the maximums recorded in the county thus far. A summary follows.

* **Ring-billed Gull** numbers maxed at an estimated 7,000 and Herring Gull at an estimated 1,000.

* **Thayer's Gull** – A first-winter bird continued from January to 2/6 (fourth county record), an adult was present 2/8-11, and a different adult appeared 2/25. Observers were careful with identification, and these birds' characters looked good for Thayer's Gull. The adults were the second and third ever recorded in Allegheny County.

* **Iceland Gull** – Birds were present to 2/21 including 4 first-winter birds, one second-winter, and at least one adult. The first arrival represented the tenth Allegheny County record.

* **Lesser Black-backed Gull** – It was quite a showing of this species with up to 4 adults and at least one first-winter and one second-winter bird. All 4 adults were seen 2/11. On 2/15, there were 3 adults, a first-winter, and a second-winter.

* **Glaucous Gull** – Totals of this species were unprecedented. A first-winter bird was found 2/6 (fifth county record) followed by an adult 2/8 (only the second adult ever recorded in the county). Various birds were seen almost daily to 2/19. Four adults were present 2/12, and a second-winter, a third-winter, and an adult were there 2/10 and 2/14. At least 7 birds were tallied during the invasion.

* **Great Black-backed Gull** – An adult, first-winter, and third-winter birds were present. Four birds of various ages were the high count 2/15. There are over 20 records of this species in the county.

Three **Short-eared Owls** were found at the traditional location at Imperial 2/8 (MV). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited a feeder in Natrona Heights 3/5 (PH, DH). A **Winter Wren** was at Frick Park 3/23 and 2 were there 3/27 (JS, SS). The only report of **American Pipit** was at Imperial 3/30 (MV, GM).

A few **Lapland Longspurs** continued from the previous reporting period in Findlay Township through 2/8 (v.o.). Small numbers of **Snow Buntings** were also reported through 2/8 (v.o.), and 2 were at the Bald Knob pond at Imperial 2/9 (AP).

A **Chipping Sparrow** visited the feeders at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve until 2/5 (BSh). Yet another rare winter sparrow, a **Fox Sparrow** visited a feeder in Ross Township 2/14 (BVN), one visited a feeder in Moon Township 2/15 and 2/21 (GM), one was in South Park 2/16 (JF), and 2 were at Frick Park 3/27, followed by a single bird 3/28 (SS).

A flock of 500 **Red-winged Blackbirds** were in Findlay Township 2/23 (GM) and one was in O'Hara Township 2/25 (PB). Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were with the flock of **Red-winged Blackbirds** mentioned above in Findlay Township 2/23 (GM), 3 were in Hampton Township 3/13 (DN), one was in Findlay Township 3/22 (GM), and 9 were in Schenley Park 3/30 (KSJ). A male **Baltimore Oriole** continued to visit a feeder in Aspinwall through March (CH).

Two **Purple Finches** visited a feeder in Pine Township 3/16-17 (PL, SL), and one visited a feeder in Ross Township 3/28 (BVN).

Observers: Bill Brown, Paul Brown, Tommy Byrnes, Michael David, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Cecelia Hard, Jim Hausman (JHa), Amy Henrici, Deborah Hess, Paul Hess, Maureen Hobma, Robert Hosner (RHo), Karena Johnson, Chad Kauffman, Alex Lamoreaux, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Pat McShea, Bob Machesney, Barb Madaus (BMa), Geoff Malosh, Oscar Miller, Tom Moeller, Nancy Moeller, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Virginia McQuown, Dick Nugent, Aidan Place, Kate St. John (KSJ), Brian Shema (BSh), Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, Shannon Thompson, Jim Valimont, Bob VanNewkirk (BVN), Mark Vass, Dave Wilton, Kristen Williams, Dan Yagusic, David Yeany (DYe), various observers (v.o.).