



# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 22, No. 2 March/April 2023

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### We'll See Our Members in Person at the April Meeting!

**By President Sheree Daugherty**

We'll meet in person, for our April 5 program! The social aspect of 3RBC has always been important to us, and now, with precautions, we can once again safely meet face-to-face.

We are no longer able to meet at the Phipps Garden Center due to a remodeling project. Instead we will meet at the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's Beechwood Farms auditorium in Fox Chapel, at 614 Dorseyville Road north of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County.

Doors will open at 6:30 PM for an hour of socializing

including refreshments. The business meeting will start at 7:30 followed by the program at 8:00.

The raffle of nature-related items will be back along with the free magazines. If you have a large supply of these items, it may be wise to spread them out over a few meetings. Please!

And our goody table will be back! We hope a number of folks bring snacks and treats to share.

For those who wish to socially distance or are unable to come in person, the meeting will also be available on Zoom. Watch for further information on the 3RBC website and social media sites!

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### Female Birds Sing, Too! We'll Hear Some on April 5

Male birds aren't the only singers. Females of some species do. Speaker Bridget Butler, who studies such songs, cleverly titles her presentation "The Herstory of Birding."

Bridget describes her program this way: "Think of it as the lost legacy of women in ornithology and the celebration of noticing female birds. Let's face it, there's a bit of bias in the birding world when it comes to females. I'll explain current research on gender and birding, retelling stories about 'the Mothers of Ornithology,' and make its connection to the current science on female birds."

She has worked in conservation and environmental education for more than 20 years in New England. She owns a small business, Bird Diva Consulting, which provides presentations, outings, and online courses for folks interested in exploring their connection with birds.

Bridget lives in St. Albans, Vermont with her husband and three young children.

The meeting starts at 6:30 PM ET in-person at Beechwood



*SHE'S A VOCALIST – This female Yellow Warbler carries some fluff for her nest lining at Frick Park. (photo by Charity Khesghi)*

Farms auditorium, and a Zoom meeting (7:00 PM) for those who cannot attend. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Bridget's presentation will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the event will be supplied a few days before the meeting.



*SURPRISING VISITOR – This Greater White-fronted Goose at Calvary Cemetery was a notable rarity for the Pittsburgh CBC. (photo by Malcolm Kurtz)*

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### Pittsburgh CBC Counters Found a Good 75 Species

**By Brian Shema, Pittsburgh CBC Compiler**

The Pittsburgh Christmas Bird Count on December 31, 2022, attracted 149 field observers and 36 feeder watchers. The annual count is hosted and coordinated by Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and always occurs on the Saturday after Christmas.

Weather for count day was mild and rainy. The temperature ranged from 48 to 55 degrees at the count's geographic center in Shaler Township. Water was frozen on all lakes, due to very cold temperatures just a week before, but rivers and large streams were generally open. Just chunk ice was floating on the rivers.

The weather was less than ideal for a bird count. As in previous years, birds were seemingly capable of finding plenty of

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See *The Peregrine* in beautiful color at [3rbc.org](https://www.3rbc.org)

## President's Message

### The Land of Enchantment

By Sheree Daugherty

In December 2022 I traveled to New Mexico with a group of Pittsburgh area birders on an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania Eco-Tour. The lure of birding Bosque del Apache and a chance to see some high-elevation specialties was irresistible. And the chance to visit this rugged and beautiful state added to the trip's appeal.

We gathered at Pittsburgh International Airport at an uncivilized hour, but our early departure allowed us to land in New Mexico with time to bird from the Albuquerque airport. We visited the nearby Rio Grande Valley State Park where we got a first look at western species including Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Lesser Goldfinches, and Phainopeplas.

We headed south to Socorro, our base for three nights and the lowest elevations of the trip. Elevation is a factor when birding in New Mexico. At our lowest elevations of around 4,500 feet at Bosque del Apache, we were still more than 3,000 feet higher than Pittsburgh. Spending a few days at lower elevations would give us a little time to acclimatize before moving on to the thin air of the 10,000-foot elevations we would experience later in the trip.

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is a well-known hotspot. The spectacle of thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese taking flight before dawn is unforgettable. Driving the loop road we added over a dozen species of waterfowl to our trip list, including impressive American White Pelicans and an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron. Northern Harriers gracefully glided over the ponds and grasslands. The distinctive call of Sandhill Cranes was pleasant background music to our stay here.

The small garden at the Bosque del Apache visitor center showcased local plants where Gambel's Quail meandered through the undergrowth with their little top knots bobbing. A feeder station attracted Pyrrhuloxias, sparrows, and finches. We hiked a trail down the road and were treated to the usually shy Crissal Thrasher calling from the top of a shrub.

Next we headed north to Albuquerque. Since some birds can be found only at higher elevations, we took a winding road up to Sandia Crest, east of the city, at an elevation of more than 10,000 feet. The visitor center was closed, but, fortunately, someone had filled the bird feeders. We positioned ourselves in the ice-covered parking lot, bundled up against the windy 20-degree temperature and waited. Soon a flock of Black Rosy-Finches flew into the feeders! After several minutes, they took off never to return. Other sightings kept us busy. Noisy flocks of Red Crossbills swirled overhead and filtered through a stand of conifers.

We left Albuquerque and headed north to our hotel in historic Santa Fe. Outside of town we visited the Randall Davey Audubon Center. The feeders provided a good opportunity to study the variations among western Dark-eyed Juncos, and to enjoy the antics of Mountain Chickadees and Juniper Titmice.

We also visited the Santa Fe Ski Area, where a raucous flock of Steller's Jays didn't seem to mind us and put on quite a show.

On our last morning we had time to bird La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs Recreation Area. Ancient petroglyphs of birds, mammals, and abstract symbols decorated the rocky spine that ran across the park. A beautiful male Ladder-backed Woodpecker perched atop a cholla cactus. The low, early morning sun lit up its red nape like a blaze, the perfect final sighting of the trip.

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Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Published bimonthly:

January, March, May, July, September, November

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*SHEREE'S NEMESIS – In the last newsletter our president left us wondering what is her “nemesis bird” – a species that refuses to let her see it. Answer: Montezuma Quail. (photo by Brian Shema)*



## Outings to Come

### What a Great Selection on Our Spring Menu!

#### By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

*It is our intention to follow the CDC and local county guidelines that are in place during this 2023 spring. We request that social distancing still be observed, and encourage people not to share equipment. The leader may have other restrictions in place and can end a walk if an uncomfortable situation arises.*

#### Wednesdays, March 22 and March 29: Woodcock Walks:

Enjoy these walks again with leader Tom Byrnes (724-715-7184). Meeting time will be 7:00 PM. We will drive a short distance to a field in Harmar Township that has produced lots of American Woodcocks in the past several years. Be prepared for a muddy walk and bring a flashlight. Before going to the field, we will check the Great Blue Heron nesting colony across the Allegheny River, which in previous years was an exciting find on this trip.

**NOTE:** New directions: The meeting place is at the shopping center off Exit 11 of Route 28 and Freeport Road in Harmar Township. Meet in the parking area located near the intersection of Anchor Drive and Alpha Drive within the shopping center (behind Gino's Restaurant). GPS coordinates. 40.5394261, -79.835610.

**Saturday, March 25 – Moraine State Park:** Meet Michael David ([michaeldavid@gmail.com](mailto:michaeldavid@gmail.com)) at 8:00 AM at the South Shore Pleasant Valley parking area.

Directions: From I-79, take Route 422 east toward Butler and exit at the Moraine State Park exit. Turn left at the end of the ramp and travel straight into the park until you see the first large parking lot on the right with the boat ramp/dock at the end. GPS coordinates: 40.94110, -80.09234. Allow one hour driving from Pittsburgh.

**Sunday, March 26 – Pymatuning State Park Area:** Ken Knapp ([kcknapp50@gmail.com](mailto:kcknapp50@gmail.com)) will lead us for a visit to this traditionally bird-rich area. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the Spillway parking lot. Ken will be accompanied by Ray Morris, Julie Jansen, and Dave Brooke to help on this half-day trip. They will lead us to various stops such as the Spillway area, the old wildlife center area, and the Miller Ponds to hopefully find many waterfowl and early migrants, maybe even Sandhill Cranes.

The Spillway parking lot is at 12318 Hartstown Rd, Linesville, PA (41.6308, -80.4407)

*Please email Ken at [kcknapp50@gmail.com](mailto:kcknapp50@gmail.com) to register for this outing.*

**Saturday, April 1 – Yellow Creek State Park:** This will be a joint outing of the 3RBC and the Todd Bird Club. Meet Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) at the park office at 8:00 AM. The office is on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and a half to drive from Pittsburgh. The park has a wide variety of habitats and a large lake that attracts a wide variety of waterbirds and sometimes exciting rarities.

*Please email Margaret at [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net) to let her know you will be attending.*

**Sunday, April 2 – Maurice K. Goddard State Park and State Game Lands 270:** Linda Croskey ([lcroskey@consolidated.net](mailto:lcroskey@consolidated.net)) and Dave Brooke ([davbrooke@gmail.com](mailto:davbrooke@gmail.com)) will lead us at this

hot spot in Mercer County. Meet at 8:30 AM at the Lake Wilhelm Marina parking lot, 540 Lake Wilhelm Road, Sandy Lake. There is a sign "Marina, Boat Rental, Bait-Tackle" on the right before the causeway. Park in the lot by a tan building (restrooms). See the 3RBC Birding Locations page online for directions.

We will look for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, warblers, and Bald Eagles. Last year around this time, there were several rare gulls and large numbers of Bald Eagles at the lake. Dress for ticks, bring your spotting scope, water, snacks, and lunch.

Nearby Wilhelm Winery offers beverages plus cheese/snack trays. There is a lot to explore at this 2,856-acre State Park, including 1,860-acre Lake Wilhelm, plus State Game Lands 270 which is 2,027 acres.

*Please email or text/call 724-487-3586 if you wish to attend.*

**Wednesday, April 12 - Woodcock Walk:** This will be the final woodcock walk this spring with leader Tom Byrnes (724-715-7184). See the March 22 listing above for information.

**Saturday, April 22 – Raccoon Creek State Park:** This is a combination bird and wildflower walk with the Brooks Bird Club, which is based in West Virginia. Ryan Tomazin (412-220-9726, [vwwarblers@hotmail.com](mailto:vwwarblers@hotmail.com)) will lead the bird walk. We will meet at the Roadside Picnic Area West at 9:15 AM.

We will check the picnic parking lot area, then drive to the beach and around the lake. There are no plans for a potluck lunch. People can bring their own lunches and everyone can use the picnic tables at Roadside Picnic Area West.

If there is any interest, and if the weather holds, we can bird and botanize the Wildflower Reserve.

If you have questions or would like to RSVP, contact Ryan either by phone or by email. In case of inclement weather, the outing will be canceled and not rescheduled.

Directions: From Pittsburgh take Route 22/30 and exit at Imperial. Take Route 30 west to the Raccoon Creek State Park entrance, and drive through the park to the Roadside West picnic area.

**Sunday, April 30 – Frick Park:** We will meet Tessa Rhinehart at 7:30 AM at the Frick Park Environmental Center, 2005 Beechwood Blvd. in Squirrel Hill, 15217. *Please email Tessa at [tessa.rhinehart@gmail.com](mailto:tessa.rhinehart@gmail.com) to tell her know you'll be coming.*

**Friday, May 5 – Sewickley Heights Park:** In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, join Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)) for our spring bird walk starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

**Saturday, May 6 – Powdermill Avian Research Center:** This will be a free guided tour from 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM. After the tour we will be able to walk the paths to spot more birds.

Meet at the Powdermill Avian Research Center Building (not the Powdermill Nature Reserve Headquarters building). Be sure to arrive before 8:00 AM to begin the tour.

Address: Parc Pl and Route 381 -- Google coordinates (40.163874, -79.267424). (See map on our 3RBC website.)

Powdermill's description of the tour: "These behind-the-scenes experiences allow people to visit the bird banding lab and see up-close how researchers safely capture and band birds, and learn about the data they gather. Visitors will also be guided to PARC's flight tunnel to hear about how we're studying avian perception of glass to provide glass manufacturers and building

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## Outings to Come

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designers with important information that will help reduce bird-window collisions. On your tour, you'll have the opportunity to chat with the scientists on staff, and perhaps visiting researchers, about the other projects being conducted at PARC."

**NOTE: You must pre-register at [Powdermill Avian Research Center Free Guided Tour \(carnegiemnh.org\)](http://PowdermillAvianResearchCenter.org) and arrive before 8:00 AM. The tour is limited to 30 people.**

**Sunday, May 7 – Hays Woods:** Ken Behrens will lead us on this new outing location within the city of Pittsburgh.

Meet Ken at 8:00 AM at the Hays Woods Trail -- Agnew Road Trailhead at 1015-1011 West Agnew Road (40.39835, -79.96327).

*(Editor's note: Ken, a western Pennsylvania native, is an internationally known naturalist and expert on birds of Africa. His books Wildlife of Madagascar and Wild Rwanda are the most inclusive natural histories about those under-birded areas.)*

**Please e-mail Ken at [ken.behrens@gmail.com](mailto:ken.behrens@gmail.com) to let him know you will be attending.**

**Saturday, May 13 -- Deer Lakes County Park:** Meet John Vassallo ([johnvassallo@yahoo.com](mailto:johnvassallo@yahoo.com)) at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russelton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then make a right turn and proceed to the last parking lot. Although the trails are pretty well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud and rainfall.

**Saturday, May 20 -- Hartwood Acres County Park:** Malcolm Kurtz ([malcolmgardener101@gmail.com](mailto:malcolmgardener101@gmail.com)) will lead us on this bird walk starting at 8:00 AM. We will meet at the Mansion Parking Lot off Saxonburg Blvd. in Indiana Township. The parking lot address is 200 Hartwood Acres (40.5687, -79.9090).

**Malcolm is limiting the number of participants to 15. Please email him at [malcolmgardener101@gmail.com](mailto:malcolmgardener101@gmail.com) to register.**

**Sunday, May 21 - Glade Run Lake Park:** Join Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this park at Lake Road in Valencia, which is off Route 228 in southern Butler County. Google maps co-ordinates are 40.716229, -79.901211. We will survey the lake from the dam and the boat ramp for waterfowl. Then we will walk a trail about 2 miles out and 2 miles back. It can be muddy in places, so boots are highly recommended.

**Saturday, June 10 – Picnic at Harrison Hills Park:** We will hold our annual 3RBC picnic at this popular Allegheny County Park in Natrona Heights in northeastern Allegheny County. It will be a bring-your-own-lunch picnic starting at noon at the Yakaon Pavilion. The pavilion is across from the environmental center. As you enter the park, take the left fork of the road, then turn left at the first intersection and go up the hill to the large parking lot.

Prior to the picnic we will have a bird walk starting at 9:00 AM. This walk will start at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the pond. For this walk, as you enter the park, take the right fork of the road and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road.

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**(Be sure to check the outings lists on our 3RBC website. They are available much sooner than in *The Peregrine*.)**



**LAKE WILHELM RARITY** – Don't expect to see a super rarity like this Franklin's Gull on Linda Croskey's April 2 outing at Maurice Goddard State Park, but an extraordinary aggregation of rare gulls came to the park's lake on the first week of April last year. You never know what to expect. (photo by Dave Brooke)

## Outing Revisited Winter Wasn't "Dead" for Us

**Frick Park, January 28:** Our "Dead of Winter" outing went on as scheduled, on the one-year anniversary of the collapse of the Fern Hollow Bridge. That event last year closed the park temporarily delaying the outing. That was followed by winter weather that left the trails dangerously icy. The outing was finally held on the first day of spring.

This year the weather cooperated and the bridge was replaced, so the outing went on as scheduled.

A great turnout of 28 people attended the outing! A number of participants were new birders and experienced members of the group provided valuable assistance to me.

We started at the feeders near the Environmental Center. There have been over 100 Mourning Doves around the center's feeders. We counted around 80. Two Red-winged Blackbirds were seen near the feeders, perhaps overwintering in the area. A small group of European Starlings showed some color change in their bills, with yellow near the base, a very early sign of spring. By March their bills will have changed from dark brown to yellow. A Downy Woodpecker joined the others at the feeders. A Cooper's Hawk flew in and scattered the Mourning Doves and the other birds.

We continued up Clayton Hill where we were treated to the sight of two Pileated Woodpeckers. They didn't disappoint as they worked the trees just off the trail. I recalled the days when this species was unheard of in the city parks.

We continued on South Clayton trail and up Riverview Extension, passing an Eastern Screech-Owl roost, but the resident was not sitting in the opening of the cavity. On the trail around the dog run where we saw Northern Cardinals, a few American Robins, and a Hairy Woodpecker. **—by leader Mike Fialkovich**





*BLUE BEAUTY – Author David photographed this marvelous male in the Imperial area of Allegheny County in August 2021.*

## Blue Grosbeak Searches Succeed by Persistence

**By David Bennett**

*(Editor's note: Most birders haven't seen a Blue Grosbeak in western Pennsylvania. This author, who just began birding in 2020, tried hard to find one in the Imperial area of southwestern Allegheny County. It didn't take long. He found a male in August 2021 and another in August 2022, and he photographed both.)*

With the beginning of COVID-19, I began to work from home, and that was the start of my first year of birding in earnest. I remembered meeting the esteemed Old Testament scholar, James Luther Mays, and was fascinated by his love of birds. Dr. Mays once said that observing birds enhanced his appreciation and enjoyment of God's creation. Now I had a chance to see if birdwatching was something I could learn to love.

I started close to home in nearby Riverview Park and began learning everything I could about woodpeckers and owls. I saw nesting pairs of Great Horned Owls and Pileated Woodpeckers, which strengthened my resolve to go birding nearly every day.

Soon, I was ready to take on other challenges, and I could find no greater quest than the pursuit of a Blue Grosbeak. I was completely captivated by the bird, especially by its striking color, rarity, and beauty. The deep blue color and chestnut wing bars, paired with a large bill captivated my imagination. The flamboyant personality of a bird that sometimes can be seen singing from treetops was enticing.

Blue Grosbeaks have always been somewhat scarce, but their numbers are stable. They are naturally rare here in western Pennsylvania, which makes the quest more challenging, but additionally rewarding.

I returned more than seven times to look for a Blue Grosbeak at King Road in the Imperial area of southwestern Allegheny County, and I was beginning to have doubts. Then on August 1, 2021, I heard the distinctive song and moved toward the sound. I saw something move, so I relocated, and there was the bird, singing from the top of a small tree.

Some small details about the Blue Grosbeak expanded my interest. Many times they will have two broods in a single season. Would that apply in the northern limit of their range? I was curious to know.

The following year, I was unsure if I would see the Blue Grosbeak again. The bird was already a rare sighting, and over the course of the year, a large portion of their habitat had been destroyed. Great swaths of trees were cut and fields were plowed under. The original nesting location was nearly unrecognizable.

There had been some sightings in May 2022. Photos in July and August gave hope. I returned more than five times, then finally, on August 26, I saw a Blue Grosbeak flying back and forth, singing, and seemingly unaware of my presence.

I tried to balance documenting the event with times of standing in awe and pure joy. My viewing of the bird the previous year was more than accidental; I was honing my birding skills and proving to myself that I could find wonderful and unusual birds on my own.

## Three Events of Interest

**The Biggest Week in American Birding** will take place May 5-13 at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in northwestern Ohio along Lake Erie. The speakers and tour guides are outstanding. Many birds are often too close to get in focus with binoculars. See [biggestweekinamericanbirding.com](http://biggestweekinamericanbirding.com) for details.

**PSO Birding Festival:** This year's Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology event will be in State College on May 19-21. Watch for details at [pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org). Programs will cover our upcoming third Breeding Bird Atlas, Tree Swallow and Wood Thrush ecology, and population decline of the American Kestrel. Field trips will visit many birding hot spots, and nocturnal outings will seek American Woodcocks, Eastern Whip-poor-wills, and owls.

**Festival of the Birds at Presque Isle:** This year's event is scheduled for May 12-14. Keynote speaker is David Lindo, famed "Urban Birder." Every registrant will receive a copy of his book, *How to be an Urban Birder*. Full weekend and partial day registration is open now. Read the details and register at [presqueisleaudubon.org/information.html](http://presqueisleaudubon.org/information.html).

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*SEASONAL CONTRAST – Male American Goldfinches differ dramatically in the non-breeding (left) and breeding season (right). Tom had the fall bird at his Pittsburgh feeder after its molt in October 2020 and the bright one in thistles in August 2008 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

## Observations

### The American Goldfinch: What a Golden Treasure!

By Tom Moeller

As we stood on the beach at Cape May in 1996, Peter Dunne, our outing leader, began his introductory remarks when a *per-chick-o-ree* call came from above. Peter noted, “Goldfinch going over,” and continued his remarks. Few looked up to see the undulating flight of the American Goldfinch, the bird being such a familiar, “background” species. But it was the first bird of the outing.

The American Goldfinch used to be separated into three geographically disparate subgroups: the Eastern Goldfinch found east of the Rocky Mountains, the Pale Goldfinch of the Rockies, and the Willow Goldfinch of California and the West Coast. United under one name, the American Goldfinch is truly American, found in all the lower 48 states as well as southern Canada and northern Mexico. Two other distinct species in the West are Lesser Goldfinch and Lawrence’s Goldfinch of California and northern Baja.

The two goldfinch sexes both have different plumages in summer and winter. The male is lemon yellow with a black cap and black wings with a white wing bar in summer. His bill changes from a pinkish brown hue to bright orange. In the fall he molts into an olive yellow shade, with no cap and less deep black wings. He usually bears a yellow shoulder patch. His beak reverts to the brown of winter. Legs of both sexes remain orange to yellow-brown throughout the year.

The female looks similar in winter to the male but lacks the yellow patch. She may be a bit browner overall. In the spring as the male molts back to the lemon yellow, the female takes on a brighter olive yellow body, more distinct color on her wings and wing bar, and her beak changes from a dull pinkish brown to orange like the male. A bright orange bill in a female indicates her good health and aggressive potential toward other females vying for males. Oddly, the bright orange is caused by carotenoids influenced by testosterone! Bright orange beaks are status symbols for males and females, and a visual signal to other goldfinches.

Male goldfinches are not territorial except around their mates, guarding them from other males. Once a nest is constructed and eggs are laid, the male will allow other goldfinches nearby. They

attract their mates with songs, chasing the female, and circling, fluttering flights, plus skirmishes with other males. Once paired off, goldfinches spend about a month together before mating.

Breeding does not take place until midsummer, past the time most birds breed. It is coordinated with the maturity of thistle seeds, the main food for their young. The female alone builds the nest, incubates the eggs (average of five), and broods the young nestlings. Late egg-laying makes the goldfinch nests much less susceptible to parasitism by cowbird females, who are mostly done with their egg-laying. The small cup nest is tightly woven of thistle fibers, spider or caterpillar webs, and other plant fibers. It is so tight it can hold water. The male feeds the female during this time with regurgitated seeds. Just like cardinals, the female on the nest sings to her mate for food.

The goldfinch nestlings are altricial (needing care in the nest) with grayish down. At first they are silent when hungry, but that changes in a week. Both parents feed them, but the male does more so. Goldfinch nestlings are not fed insects like other birds, but only regurgitated seeds. Fecal sacs are removed or eaten by the parents at first, but chicks will later defecate on the edge of the nest, leaving a messy look and possible disease potential. They leave the nest in 11 to 17 days. By then, they resemble the parents’ appearance but are brown instead of olive yellow. The male feeds the fledglings alone as the female may be off building her second nest. In late summer, one often hears the *che-wee* calls of young chasing their father near a feeder. Goldfinches usually produce two broods per season.

In autumn, the goldfinches experience a full-body molt. As in the spring, each feather is replaced individually giving a mottled look to these transitional birds. In winter, the various small finches gather in mixed flocks for food and protection. Goldfinches in our area do migrate a bit south. Like robins, the local goldfinches are replaced by those from farther north – Canada.

Feeding goldfinches is easy. They are attracted to Niger seed feeders, but also eat small seeds like millet and hulled sunflower seeds. Natural seeds like thistle, dandelion, and seeds of various garden flowers are also consumed by them. Water is very important to attract goldfinches too.

The distinguished lemon yellow male American Goldfinch with his jaunty black cap and his more demur partner are staples in most gardens. Do not overlook this colorful little finch as an asset in your birding world.

See more of Tom’s fine photos on our 3RBC website.



## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

### Autumn 2022 Featured Grosbeaks and Siskins

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

**Tundra Swans** arrived on schedule in mid-November. Flocks of 20 were over Franklin Park 11/12 (OM), 80 were at Gibsonia (KP), 70 over Blawnox (RBU), and 2 over West Deer Twp. (LC) on 11/13. A small flock was heard over Boyce-Mayview Park 11/14 (DW), a flock was heard after dark over Pine Twp. 11/14 (PL, SL), 75 were counted over Squirrel Hill 11/18 (MK), and 2 were at Imperial 11/26 (MV).

An **American Wigeon** was at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 10/16-22 (CB, AB and others). **Gadwalls** included 3 at Duck Hollow 11/13 (MK), 1 at Harmar Twp. 11/13 (AH, PM), and 2 at Imperial 11/26-30 (BL, RL, MV). A **Surf Scoter** at Duck Hollow 10/26 (JF) remained to 11/3 (many observers). A **White-winged Scoter** was on the Ohio River in Pittsburgh 10/6 (ROR and others). A **Black Scoter** was at Sharpsburg Marina 11/13 (AF, many observers). **Common Merganser** groups included 28 at Dashields Dam 8/16 and 43 there 10/2 (MV).

A flock of **Wild Turkeys** in Pine Twp. maxed at 64 birds in November (PL, SL).

A **Horned Grebe** was at Aspinwall 11/12 (JVA, OL) and 2 were at Dashields Dam 11/17 (MV).

Reports of large flocks of **Chimney Swifts** included 250 in Oakland 10/4 (KSJ) and 400 at McKees Rocks 10/6 (DBE).

A late **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was reported 10/13 (JSa) at a reported location.

A **Virginia Rail** continued at Wingfield Pines 10/9 (eBird) and 11/14 (BV).

**Killdeer** flocks included 35 at South Park 11/1, 46 there 11/12, and 32 on 11/29 (JF), 64 in Findlay Twp. 11/4 (MV), and 31 at Imperial 11/12 (MV). A **Dunlin** was at Imperial 10/2 (AF, many observers). A late **Least Sandpiper** was at Imperial 10/30-11/1 (MV, many observers). Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Imperial 10/23-11/1 (MV, many observers). One remained 11/5 (eBird). An **American Woodcock** was in Gibsonia 11/1 (KP). Three **Wilson's Snipes** were at Imperial 10/30-11/13 (MV) and 2 were there 11/12 (MV). Late **Solitary Sandpipers** included 1 in Indiana Twp. last observed 10/10 (BSh), 2 at North Park 10/13 (AF), and 1 in Robinson Twp. 10/28 (SM). A late **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Duck Hollow 10/30 (KSJ). A late **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at North Park 10/2 (DN).

Uncommon in fall, a **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Chapel Harbor 11/20 (AH, OL).

**Green Herons** remained through October at various locations: 1 at Wingfield Pines 10/16-25 (BV and others), 1 at Boyce-Mayview Park 10/18 (JF), and 1 at North Park 10/30 (MD).

**Black Vulture** reports included 1 at Leppold Lake Park in Imperial 10/10 (JMo), 3 at Beechwood Farms 10/29 (DWA), 2 in Fox Chapel 11/1 (BSh), and 4 at Hartwood Acres 11/12 (MK).

A male **Northern Harrier** flew high over North Park 11/23 (SG), an unusual location for this species.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** banding continues at Sewickley Heights Park where at least 24 were captured in October (BMu). Captures continued through November with a high of 4 on 11/14 (TB). Another banding site was started at Harrison Hills Park where 4 were banded 11/4 (NL, LK).

**Merlin** reports included 1 at Harrison Hills Park 10/8 (many observers), 1 at Boys Home Park 10/20 (JF), 1 at North Park

10/22-27 (eBird, AF) and 1 at Calvary Cemetery in Greenfield 11/12 (EH).

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was at South Park 10/2 (JF, JP).

A **Marsh Wren** continued from September at Wingfield Pines to at least 10/30 (many observers), and 1 was photographed at Hartwood Acres 11/12 (MK).

A late **Veery** was at Frick Park 10/16 (KSJ, CK).

Late October brought a movement of **Evening Grosbeaks** and **Pine Siskins** across the state. Observers in Allegheny County were fortunate to see them at their feeders. Reports included 1 at a feeder in Oakmont 10/27 (RBU), single flyovers in Indiana Twp. 10/30 and 11/2 (DYE), 3 at a feeder in Gibsonia 11/15 and 1 there 11/29 (KP). Siskins included singles in Ross Twp. 10/27-28 (LN), Upper St. Clair 10/27 (JM), Bethel Park 10/28-29 (JP) and 10/30 (AN), Allison Park 11/16 (eBird), and Squirrel Hill 11/18 (MK). A flock of 50 flew over in Indiana Twp. 10/29 (BSh).

Eight **Purple Finches** were at North Park 10/24 (AF), a male visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 10/25-27 (PL, SL), and there were numerous reports in eBird.

Two **American Tree Sparrows** were seen at Peter's Creek 11/27 (JF). **Fox Sparrows** lingered well into November this fall with a number of reports including 1 at Bethel Green 11/18 (EH), 2 at a feeder in Upper St. Clair 11/16-20 with 1 remaining 11/21 (JM), 1 at a feeder in Baldwin 11/18-20 (LK), 4 at Churchill Valley Greenway 11/19 (MF), 1 at Homewood Cemetery 11/19-26 (MK, SN), and 1 at Beechwood Farms 11/2-22 (many observers). A late **Savannah Sparrow** was at Imperial 10/8 (TB).

About 70 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were at Imperial through October. A late **Brown-headed Cowbird** visited a feeder in Upper St. Clair 11/25 (JM). Good counts of **Red-winged Blackbirds** included 64 on 11/12, 72 on 11/13, and 62 on 11/16 in Pine Twp. (PL, SL). A **Rusty Blackbird** was at North Park 10/28 (DBr), 7 were at Imperial 10/9 and 4 were there 10/23 (MV), and 1 was at Wingfield Pines 10/29-30 (JO, AN, FK). A **Common Grackle** in Mount Lebanon 10/19 (CP) had white patches on the head, the bill was pale, and the legs and feet were pinkish.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at Beechwood Farms 10/19-31 (DM) and 11/4-5 (eBird). A **Connecticut Warbler** was at Penn Hills Park 10/8 (eBird). A leucistic **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was an interesting find at Beechwood Farms 10/13 (DM). Photos show the bird with a pale head and breast, the normal markings overall were faint, and the bill was pale yellow.

A late **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Duck Hollow 10/29 (MF).

*Observers: David Bennett (DBE), Trip Bondi, Al Borek, Carole Borek, Dave Brooke (DBr), Run Burkurt (RBU), Linda Croskey, Michael David, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannagan, Steve Gosser, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Fred Kachmarik, Lisa Kaufman, Charity Khesghi, Michelle Kienholz, Lucy Klimko, Nick Liadis, Oliver Lindhiem, Brandon Lowden, Randall Lowden, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Pat McShea, Dan Mendanhel, Oscar Miller, Susie Moffett, Jeff Moore (JMo), Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Lauren Nagoda, Alyssa Nees, Steve Northrop, Dick Nugent, Jim Offhaus, Ryan O'Rourke, Joe Papp, Kevin Parsons, Christine Phillips, Kate St. John, James Saracco (JSa), Brian Shema (BSh), Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVa), Brian Vitunic, Diane Walkowski (DWA), Dave Wilton, David Yeany II (DYE).*



# The Peregrine



*LOOKING FOR LUNCH – Mark McConaughy photographed this dark morph Rough-legged Hawk hovering in search of prey while he made a Pennsylvania winter raptor survey in Westmoreland County with 3RBC members Tom and Janet Kuehl on January 24, 2023. This was a notable sighting. Wintering rough-leg numbers were far below average in this year's survey.*

## **Pittsburgh CBC**

*continued from page 1*

natural food sources because of the mild weather; therefore, feeder count numbers were low. Despite the rain, 75 species were found on the count, bettering our 10-year average by two species.

A total of 39,997 birds were counted on count day. Most individual numbers hovered around their 10-year averages. Poor weather reduces visibility, ability to detect birds by sound, and also often decreases participant effort afield (meaning participants spend less time trying to find birds), so it is tough counting in these conditions. But a few species were found in high numbers – their highest in recorded history during this count. These include Redhead (5), Common Merganser (55), and Canada Goose (1,716).

The notable find this year was a Greater White-fronted

Goose in Calvary Cemetery near Greenfield. This bird should be wintering in the Gulf states. A Marsh Wren that had been wintering at Hartwood Acres was also tallied on count day.

The effort to tally American Crows was hugely successful. With some intel from area residents, our crow team was positioned at Duquesne University, which provided an excellent vantage point: 20,000 crows were tallied while returning to their roost.

Audubon Society of Western PA would like to thank each of the participants who contributed to the count – and special thanks to the area leaders who help compile bird numbers and participant information. Their work makes compiling data for the count much, much easier, and undoubtedly more accurate.



*PITTSBURGH CBC HIGHLIGHTS – A wintering Gray Catbird (left) is seldom recorded in southwestern Pennsylvania Christmas Bird Counts, so this one was a surprise on the Pittsburgh CBC. American Tree Sparrows (right) are regular but in much lower numbers than they were counted a half-century ago. Steve Gosser photographed both in his Indiana Township section of the Pittsburgh CBC on December 31, 2022.*