



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol 3, No. 1, October 2003



BEAUTIFUL VISITOR – Scott Kinzey froze this Black Tern in flight at Bald Knob near Imperial in Allegheny County on May 19, 2003. Check *The Peregrine* on our website to see the tern's black-and-silver pattern against a bright blue sky.

Our Talented Photographers Will Star at Nov. 3 Meeting

Some of our members have been fine photographers for many years. Others have progressed from beginners to experts in a remarkably short time. You will be able to see – and be amazed at – these photographers' favorite slides at our meeting on Monday, November 3, at the Phipps Garden Center in Shadyside.

Any member is welcome to be part of the show. Doors will open at 7 PM for socializing, and the meeting will begin at 7:30. Those who wish to show slides are asked to be there at 7 to get their slides into a carousel.

(Speaking of fine photography, did you know that all of the pictures appear in beautiful color in the electronic version of *The Peregrine* on our club's website? For example, Scott Kinzey's photo at left is indeed a black-and-white bird – but take a look at it against a dazzling blue sky in the web edition. Stunning!)

The Garden Center is at 1059 Shady Avenue, directly behind the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts at Fifth and Shady Avenues. Enter the cobblestone driveway from Shady Avenue at the sign for the Garden Center. Detailed directions are on the Phipps website: <<http://www.phipps.conservatory.org/information/directions.html>>.

There is a metered lot where parking is 25 cents per hour. More parking is available nearby on Shady Avenue. In addition, Beechwood Boulevard, the street parallel to Shady and a block east (i.e., away from Downtown), has free parking and is a short walk through Mellon Park to the Garden Center.

Our 2004 meeting dates will be January 12, March 8, April 26, July 12, September 13, and November 8 – all the second Monday of the month except the fourth Monday in April.

Goodbye to the Rock Dove. Now It Is the "Rock Pigeon"

By Paul Hess, Editor

The bird we all know and love so dearly as the Rock Dove has an "official" new name -- the Rock Pigeon.

For the sake of uniformity, names adopted by the AOU, North America's foremost ornithological association, are generally accepted as the standard usage – so we will shortly be seeing the name Rock Pigeon in new editions of field guides, checklists, and other publications. The AOU announced the new name in its 44th Supplement to the *Check-list of North American Birds* published in July 2003.

The dove's name was changed to conform to the name adopted recently by the British Ornithologists' Union (just as when our Marsh Hawk became the Northern Harrier, our Pigeon Hawk became the Merlin, and our Common Gallinule became the Common Moorhen many years ago). Another bird's English-language name has changed from Band-tailed Gull to Belcher's Gull. This Southern Hemisphere species is on the North American list based upon only three records from Florida in the 1970s, so the new name is of minimal significance to birders in the northern regions of the New World.

A momentous change is a ruling that the ducks, geese, and swans (the taxonomic Order Anseriformes) now start the official sequence in which species are listed. They are followed directly by the group that includes species such as quails, grouse, ptarmigans, and turkeys (the Order Galliformes). After those two Orders come the loons and grebes, which traditionally came first on the AOU list for as long as any of us can remember. Soon, as with Rock Pigeon, we will begin to see this change in new editions of field guides and checklists.

Among other actions, two birds have been split into two different species. Neither split adds a new check mark to birders' North American life lists:

* North American populations of the Three-toed Woodpecker have been split into a separate species from the populations in the Old World, based on a genetic analysis. Now our version is called the American Three-toed Woodpecker, with the scientific name *Picoides dorsalis*. The Eurasian species keeps the name *Picoides tridactylus*, which is now outdated in our North American field guides.

* A distantly isolated form of White-winged Crossbill that

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President's Message: Here Is a Bit of Background on Who and What We Are

By Jack Solomon

Here are some things that even many of our club's members don't know about us.

The Three Rivers Birding Club is about two years old now. Our organizational gathering was at the end of July 2001, our first "official" meeting was in September that year, and our first outing was in October 2001. So while it's open as to exactly when our birth date is, we definitely are past it. Mike Fialkovich, who serves as our Bird Reports Editor and ace outings leader, is also the club historian. He compiled dates for the events mentioned above and other club history and data, all of which can be found on our website <www.3riversbirdingclub.org>.

The July 2001 organizational gathering led to a club that now has over 200 members, and that's counting each family membership (two or more people) as a single "member." We have a budget of over \$3,000 a year. Most of that is spent on publishing *The Peregrine*, paying speakers, renting our meeting room for six evenings a year, and maintaining the website.

Our club follows the same model of organization as the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club, to which more than a few of us belong. Like them, we have no bylaws. We are an unincorporated association. Therefore, we are not a 501c(3) tax-exempt organization. We have a checking account in the club's name, so, as required, we have a federal Employer ID number, even though we have no employees.

Our officers, the president, vice president, secretaries (we have two co-secretaries) and treasurer, serve at the pleasure of the members. There are no fixed terms of office. And our rules are just the minutes of decisions made by the officers and the Steering Committee. Most, if not all, of those minutes are also on our website, and eventually the earliest ones will be posted there.

I appointed the Steering Committee, which consists of the officers, heads of committees and a few others I regarded as sources of good ideas. It exists as an attempt to have a decision-making body large enough to be representative and small enough to allow us to meet in the Marchbein/Staples residence. We regard the Steering Committee's decisions as the club's rules.

Some decisions, such as election of officers and adoption of the club's Latin motto, have been on an ad hoc basis and raised before the general membership as a whole. In such cases, I regard it as best to inform the membership in *The Peregrine* when an issue will be raised at the next meeting, so all who want to have a say on the matter will have notice that they must be present to vote.

Maybe some day we'll become more formal. Right now, small as we are, I think the simple model works for us. Let me know what you think.

Thanks to Mabel and Glenn!

Our Hospitality Chairwoman Mabel Matteson is retiring after two years of providing treats, setting up the treat table, making sure that name tags were available for members and visitors, and always starting our pre-meeting socializing in fine order. Thanks to her husband, Glenn, the name tags are now computerized. And to both of them, a hearty "Thank you" from the club.

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Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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Letter from the Editor

By Paul Hess

Last month I invited members to send a comment for a "Getting Started" feature on the topic: "My most difficult bird to identify, and how I have learned – or haven't learned – to identify it." Well, it was a lousy idea, and I received only one reply, from Mark McConaughy. He was kind enough not to say that it was lousy, but he explained:

"That is certainly a difficult question to answer! When I first started birding, everything was difficult to identify since it took me a long time to fix on important diagnostic characteristics. The empid flycatchers, sandpiper peeps, grassland sparrows, fall warblers, etc., were all especially hard to identify. Experience gained by viewing various species and learning the songs and calls of many species resulted in my picking up diagnostic characteristics much more quickly and making identifications more reliable. There are still times when a bird of any of those species may fool me when lighting or other conditions hide key markings and they are not calling or singing."

Mark was, of course, absolutely right.

So now I'll make a new member-participation request: Send me your ideas for future "Getting Started" columns that will be helpful to beginning birders. If you are a beginner, tell me what topics you would find valuable for our experienced members to discuss. My address is <pjhess@salsgiver.com>, and I'm hoping that this is a better idea than my last one.

Outings to Come: We Will Find Hawks and Waterfowl

By Jim Valimont, Outings Chairman

Saturday, October 4 -- Sewickley Heights Park: Chris Knoll (412-741-0203) will be our leader again. Meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM. See the September 27 listing for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. Chris will guide us through the park, then possibly on to Walker Park and Ponifrac Park in Sewickley.

Sunday, October 12 -- Presque Isle: This will be a leaderless outing. The group will meet in the first parking lot on the right at 9:00 AM. No matter who shows up, there are bound to be lots of birds! At this time of year, expect to see waterfowl, lingering shorebirds, migrating hawks, lots of sparrows, and still a few species of warblers. But Presque Isle always seems to have that real rarity lurking in some corner, waiting to be found. Carpool at 6:30 AM at the park-and-ride lot at the intersection of Routes 19 and 228 (across from Denny's) in Cranberry Township. Enter the lot from the service road behind, which is accessible from the Burger King on Route 19.

Saturday and Sunday, October 18-19 -- Hawk Mountain: Jack Solomon (412-521-3365) and George Bercik (412-655-4701) will co-lead this outing to Pennsylvania's most famous hawk watch and sanctuary. Participants must make their own hotel reservations. Contact Jack for information on hotels in the area and where the group will meet. Jack will also try to arrange carpooling for those who are interested. Be prepared for all kinds of weather! It can get very cold and very wet on the lookout! (See details on page 4.)

Thursday, October 23 -- Allegheny Front Hawk Watch: Bill Judd (412-571-2057) and Che Mincone will lead this outing to one of the most reliable locations to observe Golden Eagles and Northern Goshawks in migration. October is best to see the greatest variety of hawks. The Allegheny Front is one of the closest hawk watches to western Pennsylvania that reliably produces good numbers of migrating hawks (weather permitting). It saves driving the long distances to some of the more famous hawk watches farther east. Parking is limited, so meeting at a remote location is necessary to make sure we don't exceed the capacity. Take the Turnpike East to the Somerset exit, then Route 281 North to Stoystown and Route 30 East to Reels Corners. Meet at Adele's Restaurant at the intersection of Routes 30 and 160 at 9:30 AM. Bring a lunch and dress warmly. Be prepared for changes in the weather!

Sunday, October 26 -- Lake Arthur: This outing will be led by Bob Machesney (412-366-7869). Besides the nice variety of waterfowl expected, other species could include Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, and Ruffed Grouse. Lake Arthur is a man-made lake that is the heart of Moraine State Park. Although it is heavily fished, waterfowl are more comfortable with the fishermen than they are with hunters. Therefore, the lake gets large (sometimes spectacular) numbers and a variety of waterfowl in migration. Meet in the Moraine State Park Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right at 8:00 AM. From I-79, take Route 422 East toward Butler and exit at the Moraine State Park exit. At the end of the ramp, turn left and go straight into the park until you

see the first major parking area on your right. This is where we will meet. Allow one hour driving time from Pittsburgh. Carpool at 7:00 AM at the park-and-ride lot at the intersection of Routes 19 and 228 (across from Denny's) in Cranberry Township. Enter the lot from the service road behind, accessible from the Burger King on Route 19. After the morning outing, we will have a picnic lunch at one of the park pavilions near the McDaniel's boat launch, celebrating the second anniversary of the first 3RBC outing. Bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share with the group. A main course will be provided.

Saturday, November 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 located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and 15 minutes to drive from Pittsburgh. The park, which has been the prime outing location for the Todd Bird Club, contains a wide variety of habitats and a large lake that attracts a wide variety of species. Some of the waterfowl numbers have been spectacular in the past, with real rarities showing up on a fairly regular basis.

Sunday, November 9 -- Lake Arthur: Jack and Sue Solomon (412-521-3365) will lead the fall's second outing to this great hotspot for water birds. Meet in the Moraine State Park Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right at 8:30 AM. See the October 26 Lake Arthur listing for directions to the park, and for carpooling at 7:30 AM. After the morning outing, we will probably go to Eppinger's Restaurant on Route 19 for buckwheat pancakes and possibly more birding in the afternoon.

Thursday, November 20 -- Lake Arthur: Carol and Fred McCullough (412-921-6873) will lead the season's third outing to the lake. Meet in the Moraine State Park Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right at 8:00 AM. See the October 26 Lake Arthur listing for directions to the park, and for carpooling at 7:00 AM.

Sunday, November 23 -- Pymatuning Area: Meet leader Mike Fialkovich (412-731-3581) at the Pymatuning Visitor Center (Waterfowl Museum) at 9:00 AM for this all-day outing. Plenty of waterfowl, lots of Bald Eagles, late migrant songbirds, and winter species should be around for this trip. Dress appropriately for the weather. Bring a lunch or join us as we stop for lunch at a local restaurant. Carpool at 7:30 AM at the park-and-ride lot at the intersection of Routes 19 and 228 (across from Denny's) in Cranberry Township. Enter the lot from the service road behind, accessible from the Burger King on Route 19.

Tuesday, December 2 -- Pymatuning Area: Meet leader Scott Kinzey (412-766-8813) at the Spillway at noon to search for early-winter migrants, including gulls and waterfowl. Dress appropriately for the weather. Carpool at 10:30 AM at the park-and-ride lot at the intersection of Routes 19 and 228 (across from Denny's) in Cranberry Township. Enter the lot from the service road, accessible from the Burger King on Route 19.

Sunday, December 7 -- Lake Arthur: This outing will be led by Jim Valimont (412-828-5338). Two years ago, it was warm enough for butterflies on this weekend, while last year there was barely any open water. Regardless of the weather, we will find the birds. Meet in the Moraine State Park Day Use Area (South Shore)

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in the first parking lot on the right at 8:00 AM. See the October 26 Lake Arthur listing for directions to the park, and for carpooling at 7:00 AM. After the morning outing, we will probably go to Eppinger's Restaurant on Route 19 for buckwheat pancakes and possibly more birding in the afternoon.

Saturday, December 27 -- Pittsburgh Christmas Bird

Count: Call Jim Valimont (412-828-5338) or Mike Fialkovich (412-731-3581) to inquire about when and where to meet to help out on this annual event. Further information will appear in the December issue of *The Peregrine*.

Hawk Mountain Trip Details

Here are details about the club's trip to Hawk Mountain on October 18-19. If you have further questions, phone Jack Solomon at 412-521-3365. The number for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary is 610-756-6961.

Jack recommends that you arrive on Friday, October 17, and stay at a motel in the vicinity of the Sanctuary, which is north of Hamburg, so you can get an early start to the hawkwatch on Saturday morning. Two local motels are listed below.

Bring binoculars, a field guide, water, and a lunch or snacks (because no food or water is available at the lookout), a pillow or something else to sit on, rain gear, sturdy shoes for the rocky half-mile hike to the lookout, and cash for the \$7.00 entry fee each day. Bring warm clothes because it can be very cold on the mountain in October.

Directions from the Pittsburgh area (five to six hours travel time): Take the Turnpike east to I-81; then I-81 northeast to I-78; then I-78 east to the Hamburg exit for PA Route 61; then Route 61 north about four miles to PA Route 895; then 895 north about two miles to the village of Drehersville, where the sign shows a right turn (east) to Hawk Mountain; make the right and go a mile or two up the mountain to the well-marked parking lot. There is a very interesting visitor center and gift shop adjacent to the lot, open from 8 AM to 5 PM daily.

Suggested motels (reservations advisable):

* Country Squire, Route 61 north of I-78, a short distance north of the intersection with Route 895. Room with two double beds \$43.60. Phone 570-385-3559. This is 25 minutes from the hawkwatch. Leaders Jack and Sue Solomon will be staying there.

* Fort Motel, Route 61 north of I-78. Phone 570-366-2091. Room with two beds, \$43.60.

On Saturday morning those who wish can meet for breakfast at 7:45 AM in the Country Squire restaurant. Then we will meet at 9:10 AM at the gate to the lookouts, where the fee is paid (across from the parking lots), and walk to the lookout. We often stay until 4 or 5 PM, but those who want to leave earlier can easily find their way back to the cars.

On Saturday evening those who wish can dine at the Country Squire. Brian Wheeler, one of North American's top raptor experts, will present a wildlife photography program at the Hawk Mountain Visitor Center at 6 PM.

Sunday's agenda begins the same as Saturday's. Of course, anyone can leave for home at any time.

October has the most raptor diversity. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks should be moving in good numbers. Red-shoulders, Red-tails, Harriers, a few Golden Eagles, maybe a Bald Eagle, and other species fly past the lookout on a decent day.



REMEMBER THE NAME – *The bird that was officially named the Rock Dove, photographed nicely here by Dan Weeks, is now officially named the Rock Pigeon. The accompanying article tells why. For many people, of course, just plain “pigeon” is fine.*

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occurs only on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola was split from our North American species and named the Hispaniolan Crossbill. The English and scientific names of our continent's White-winged species stays the same.

There are four changes in the scientific names of birds that occur in Pennsylvania:

* Eastern Screech-Owl changes from *Otus asio* to *Megascops asio* because DNA and vocal differences with Old World species of *Otus* indicate that it should be placed in a separate genus.

* Snowy Owl changes from *Nyctea scandiaca* to *Bubo scandiacus* because genetic studies show that it is closely related to other *Bubo* species. The Great Horned Owl is the only other North American species in the genus *Bubo*.

* Black-capped Chickadee changes from *Poecile atricapilla* back to *Poecile atricapillus*. It originally had the *-us* ending, but the AOU wrongly changed it to *-a* in 2000. By rule, it must retain its original name to conform to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, the worldwide standard for Latin scientific names.

* Ovenbird changes in the opposite direction, from *Seiurus aurocapillus* to *Seiurus aurocapilla* for the same reason. You can read about these and many other taxonomic and nomenclatural changes in the July 2003 issue of the AOU's journal, *The Auk* (Vol. 120, pp. 923-931).

Let's see. Maybe repeating the new name will help us to change our old “dove” habit: “Rock Pigeon, Rock Pigeon, Rock Pigeon...”

Outings Revisited: We Had a Full Slate of Fall Birding

Enlow Fork -- July 20: This outing led by Walt Shaffer was the club's second concentrating on butterflies. Enlow Fork Natural Area is a heavily wooded stream valley nestled in the hills of Greene County. The area is known for its display of spring wildflowers, but it is also a great place for birds, amphibians, and butterflies. Plants more typical of the South and Midwest can be found here. It is a Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Natural Area and, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, it is also State Game Lands 302.

Thirty-four participants attended the outing, many of them visiting the site for the first time. Butterflies were seen from the start. A Summer Azure, Silver-spotted Skipper, Cabbage White, and Red-spotted Purple were found in the parking lot. We walked through an open field and found a Little Wood Satyr, Horace's Duskywing, Wild Indigo Duskywing, Pearl Crescent, Tiger Swallowtails, Red Admiral, Summer Azures, Wood Nymph, Great Spangled Fritillary, and Silver-spotted Skippers.

Although butterflies were the focus of the outing, we could not turn our attention away from birds. A Black-billed Cuckoo perched in the open and gave the group good views. An Eastern Wood-Pewee was seen at a nest, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Indigo Buntings were heard.

Leaving the heat of the open fields, we entered the shady woods and found a striking black-and-yellow moth called the Clymene. An Eastern Comma and a Red-spotted Purple were flying around a series of rain puddles.

The group enjoyed a family group of Scarlet Tanagers (an adult male, a female and a begging juvenile). Yellow-throated Warblers were singing from the large Sycamores along the stream's floodplain. One Louisiana Waterthrush was singing along the entrance road, and another was seen walking along a wet area of the access road that serves as a trail through the area.

Throughout the wooded trail we saw a plant that a few of us knew, but could not remember the name. I found it in my book just after I left. It was Small Flowered Leafcup.

After returning to the parking lot we saw a Hummingbird Clearwing Moth, a Question Mark, and a Spicebush Swallowtail. Our day's total was 23 butterfly species. **--by participant Mike Fialkovich**

Shenango Reservoir -- August 2: Things don't always go as planned. This outing was to focus on shorebirds, but the summer has been exceedingly wet, and recent heavy thunderstorms in the area produced flooding, so I knew shorebird habitat was unlikely at Shenango. The water level was so high that our group of 18 birders could not drive the road to our starting point. My plan was to walk this road and look for birds in the adjacent field, which is planted with seed-producing plants for wildlife, but the road and field were underwater. Undaunted, we began birding.

What would normally be a dry field was now the hunting ground for three Ospreys and two Belted Kingfishers. Barn and Tree Swallows were skimming the water for insects. In the woods along the road we heard and saw Eastern Wood-Pewee, Indigo Bunting, House Wren, Eastern Towhee, Wood Thrush, several Yellow Warblers (probably on their way south), Cedar Waxwings, and a Red-shouldered Hawk.

At an access on the western side of the lake, we saw a few Double-crested Cormorants in flight and had great looks at an immature Bald Eagle perched on an Osprey nest. Another immature



OUTING HIGHLIGHT – *Butterflies were the theme of Walt Shaffer's butterfly outing at Enlow Fork in Greene County on July 20, but this Clymene moth was a beautiful bonus. Liz Barrow couldn't pass up the opportunity to photograph it.*

was perched in a distant tree. A third eagle was in flight.

We managed to see four species of shorebirds at this location. Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper are breeding species, but a Greater and a Lesser Yellowlegs were "official" migrants. One participant found an American Wigeon among a group of Mallards loafing on the shore.

An Osprey and Bald Eagle put on an aerial show as we observed the Osprey repeatedly dive at the Bald Eagle. The eagle responded with outstretched talons as the Osprey passed near it.

A lunch break at the lake's recreation area yielded an active colony of Purple Martins, a Caspian Tern, nesting Eastern Bluebirds, and two Eastern Kingbirds. A final walk along roads at the eastern end of the lake (where numerous trees were down from recent storms) provided us with nice views of three American Redstarts, and we heard a Hooded Warbler and a White-eyed Vireo. **--by leader Mike Fialkovich**

(Note: The shorebirding weekend scheduled for August 9-10 was cancelled because high water minimized the shorebird habitat.)

Frick Park -- September 6: I thought the recent cold front that passed through would bring in numbers of migrants, however the woods were quiet. The 15 people on the outing managed to find the following warblers: Magnolia, American Redstart, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, and Blue-winged. We had close views of a male Black-throated Blue along Falls Ravine Trail, but all other birds were in the canopy.

A few Red-eyed Vireos were mixed with the warblers, and a calling Scarlet Tanager managed to stay out of sight until it flew off. American Goldfinches and Northern Cardinals were feeding juveniles. These two late-nesting species are often seen tending young into September.

A Cooper's Hawk was calling along South Clayton Trail. I have never heard one so vocal in the fall. We did not get good looks at the bird as it stayed hidden in the trees.

There were plenty of fall wildflowers blooming, and Pat Lynch found an American Toad. **--by leader Mike Fialkovich**

Harrison Hills Park -- September 7: Jim Valimont's outing started out as a challenge. Fog made it difficult to identify the birds in the parking lot area, but we all tried our best and were

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rewarded with Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Northern Flicker, among others. Pileated Woodpeckers vocalized, but we got only a short glimpse of a fleeing bird. Some little birds that we were certain were warblers really presented identification problems because it was difficult to see any color or field marks. We did a lot better after the fog lifted and we traveled along the Cardinal Trail. The weather turned out to be beautiful.

A very active male Black-throated Blue Warbler was seen along the road. An unidentified Buteo swooped down and caused some excitement but was gone so fast no one could focus on it quickly enough to say what it was.

Most of our warblers were seen along the Cardinal Trail, where we had excellent eye-level views of Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers. Some of the other warblers, however, were hidden in the shrubs or high in the tree tops. Not everyone saw every warbler, but we all had fun trying. Cape May, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Nashville, and Ovenbird were spotted, sometimes only giving fleeting views before disappearing among the leaves.

American Robins, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, and Common Grackles were present in large numbers, with many juveniles among them. Several Wood Thrushes were heard, and a few of us saw a Swainson's Thrush. Flycatchers included Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian, Great Crested, and Eastern Phoebe. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird whizzed by. Red-eyed Vireos were singing and feeding high in the trees.

Harrison Hills can be a very good place to find migrants. Even though we saw a total of only 39 species, I think we all felt that it was time well spent. In fact, I was still feeling aftereffects the next day: Oh, my aching neck! "Warbler neck" isn't something that just gets you in the spring! **—by participant Margie Kern**

Buffalo Creek Valley -- September 8: A half-dozen birders met for an outing to the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's new Horigan property in southeastern Butler County. Although the Horigan parcel was visited, the outing would be more properly titled the Important Bird Area No. 22 outing, as the majority of the walk took place on properties surrounding the new parcel.

Clear skies and very comfortable 60-something temperatures set the stage for an enjoyable walk. It was noted early on that bird-

ing this area would introduce "warbler neck" very quickly. The day started off with a number of warblers flitting about the canopy, the first of which was a Cerulean Warbler in the highest branches of a tall oak. Then a Yellow-rumped Warbler was pointed out in the same tree. An oriole, numerous waxwings, and even a hummingbird made their way through the mature canopy.

We continued, but the birds didn't seem to cooperate. When birds were lacking, the physiognomy of the site was discussed. The riparian zones along Little Buffalo and Buffalo Creeks are very diverse and contain combinations of flora which are breathtaking at times. Large sycamores line the banks of Little Buffalo and then, as if there were an imaginary line, the canopy changes to a mature oak forest. Likewise, impatiens, lobelias, and ironweeds are replaced with sunflowers, coneflowers, and sneezeweeds.

We were fortunate enough to witness some of the birds that call this forest home: Pileated, Red-bellied, and Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, and Tufted Titmice. A Red-tailed Hawk performed as if on cue above the Horigan house...then finally another glimpse of migrants. A Black-throated Green Warbler showed itself in the understory along Buffalo Creek, and a Black-throated Blue was noted. An Eastern Wood-Pewee, which apparently sang from the same perch all day, was noted again and again. And, oh, this outing would not be complete without a Great Blue Heron, which delicately landed on a dead limb highlighted by beams of sunlight filtering through the canopy overhead.

In all, 31 species were recorded, and five new faces witnessed the diversity of the Buffalo Creek Valley. **—by leader Brian Shema**

Frick Park -- September 13: Under partly cloudy skies, 12 birders met with the hope of seeing some migrating warblers. The birding got off to a quick start with Cedar Waxwings and a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak spotted in the parking lot. Near the wildflower garden a pair of Black-throated Green Warblers were seen chasing each other. As luck would have it, we were able to get a good look at nine different warbler species: Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Blue-winged, Nashville, Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Yellow-throated, Pine, and American Redstart. Most of these birds were located in three different areas of the park and were very good at playing hide-and-seek with us as they flitted and darted among tree branches and thickets.

Besides the warblers, there were lots of Northern Flickers.

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NO MUD THIS TIME --
The Golden Run Access at Shenango Reservoir did not lead to shorebirds this fall because of high water. At our outing on August 2, Mark McConaughy photographed the disappointed participants when they were halted by flooding. Mike Fialkovich reports in his Outing Revisited that what was normally a dry field was the hunting area for Ospreys and Belted Kingfishers. Maybe next fall will bring us better shorebirding. We deserve it!

The Peregrine

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Most were spotted flying overhead, especially in the meadow area. Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were also found.

What also made the outing enjoyable was spotting a variety of birds. In addition to the year round residents, we also saw: Chimney Swifts, Eastern Wood-Pewees, a Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireos, and a Gray Catbird. On the Falls Ravine Trail, an Accipiter flushed, but we could not follow it long enough to get a positive identification.

In all, 30 species of birds were observed. The warblers sure kept us alert and busy. --by leader **Bob VanNewkirk**

Fox Chapel Area -- September 14: Eight people endured the gnats to explore Beechwood Farms, Salamander Park and Squaw Valley Park for fall migrants and neighborhood birds. We saw 34 species.

At Beechwood Farms, after a slow start, we found some American Redstarts and Magnolia and Hooded Warblers in the brush along Spring Hollow Trail in the upper fields. Later, at the intersection of Goldenrod Trail and Upper Fields Trail a wave of warblers came for a short visit. With so many birds it was hard to know where to look, and they certainly did not sit still. The majority of the birds were Magnolia Warblers, but mixed in were Black-throated Greens and Nashville.

Many of Beechwood's resident birds were spotted, including Downy Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, and Black-capped Chickadee. A Sharp-shinned Hawk and a Cooper's Hawk flew over. Several Eastern Towhees and American Goldfinches were heard but not seen. We had a mystery bird that was seen in several places: small, warbler size, with gray top and white underneath and no wing bars. Any thoughts? (*Editor's note: possibly a Tennessee Warbler.*)

At Salamander Park the highlights were a Blue-winged Warbler and several Chestnut-sided Warblers. Good looks at Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren added to our list.

In all, it was a nice morning walk in which each area we went to had different species to observe. --by leader **Steve Thomas**

Audubon Prints in Oakland Include "Vigors's Warbler"

We have a rare opportunity to see original prints from Audubon's *Birds of America*, thanks to the University of Pittsburgh. A major exhibition titled "Taking Flight: Selected Prints from John James Audubon's *Birds of America*" is open through December 5 at the University Art Gallery in the Frick Fine Arts Building in Oakland. The show features approximately 60 hand-colored prints in "double elephant folio" size. (The original sheet was approximately 38-39 inches by 25-29 inches, depending on how it was trimmed.)

Meanwhile, single original hand-colored prints are on view at Pitt's Hillman Library through December 22, with a new print featured every two weeks. Charles Aston, head of the Special Collections Department and the Darlington Memorial Library in the University of Pittsburgh Library System, announced the remaining schedule:

- * Song Sparrow, September 30 - October 13
- * Red-headed Woodpecker, October 14 - 27
- * Solitary Flycatcher or Vireo, October 28 - November 2
- * Towhe Bunting, November 3 - 17
- * Vigors's Warbler, November 18 - December 1



QUITE A FEEDER BIRD! – Brian Shema, manager at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve in Fox Chapel, was surprised to see and photograph this Chukar at the nature center's feeder on July 12, 2003. A member of the partridge family, it is not native to North America, but many are introduced across the continent every year as game birds. Wild populations thrive in arid areas of some western states, but it has not become established in the East..

* Black-billed Cuckoo, December 2 - 15

* American Goldfinch, December 16 - 22

Editor's note:

We might guess that the "Solitary Flycatcher or Vireo" refers to what we call the Blue-headed Vireo and that the "Towhe Bunting" refers to the Eastern Towhee. But what about Vigors's Warbler?

It is now known to be an immature Pine Warbler, and it has a special connection to Pennsylvania. Audubon collected the bird in 1812 during a visit to his father's former estate, Mill Grove, along Perkiomen Creek in Montgomery County. The young Audubon had lived there for several years after arriving from France in 1803.

In his *Ornithological Biography* (1831-39), Audubon was apologetic in introducing the bird to his readers: "I regret that I am unable to give any account of the habits of a species which I have honoured with the name of a naturalist whose merits are so well known to the learned world." He was the British ornithologist Nicholas Vigors, who published the first formal descriptions of the Hawaiian Goose, the Montezuma Quail, the Scaled Quail, and the Kittlitz's Murrelet.

Interestingly, Audubon said that he "never met with another of its kind." Later he did find and correctly identify a pair of Pine Warblers in Louisiana (which he called "Pine Creeping Warblers"), not realizing that they were adults of the same species as his Pennsylvania bird.

A footnote: I have seen the warbler's name spelled in two different ways, and I asked Charles Aston at the library about that. He explained that the warbler's name was spelled incorrectly as "Vigor's" in the first state, or issue, of the engraving. It was corrected to "Vigors's" in the second issue. So you might encounter either spelling in a reproduction.

An IBA Volunteer Travels, Counts, and Learns a Lot

By Donald L. Gibbon

Birding for me started about 40 years ago in Houston, Texas, where I was a graduate student. Houston is unbelievably flat and was unbelievably boring until I was introduced to birding, and ever since then, everywhere I go is fascinating. I literally wore the covers off Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds of Texas*, carrying it in the back pocket of my Levis while doing field work in far western Texas for my geology degree.

Flash forward to Pennsylvania and the blooming of more organized birding under the aegis of the Three Rivers Birding Club. I had mounted a tiny "warbler watch" with the Sierra Club in the early 1980s, but just for fun. Now with the formal North American Migration Count, the time spent in the field watching warblers becomes "data" and the effort much more valuable. But with all this in my past, I was still an avid but untrained birder, often traveling long distances just to see birds, but never to make anything of it.

And now I am birding for the Important Bird Area (IBA) program. Suddenly audio skills development becomes a really important part of the tool set you need (one I didn't have) to make a significant contribution. But the point is that you can learn, and there are lots of more skilled and generous people out there who will help you.

In Pennsylvania under the leadership of PA Audubon, 79 widely-scattered areas have been identified as IBAs. As an aside, for several years I have been working with the Bureau of Forestry in Harrisburg to create an auto tour of old-growth forest sites in Pennsylvania. By an interesting coincidence, several of the IBAs are on my auto tour. So it worked out perfectly for me to be doing field work on my tour development and those IBAs at the same time. Thus, when the counts were announced for the Southern Sproul State Forest in Clinton County and the Pine Creek Gorge in Tioga County, I signed on as a volunteer.

The two weekends of June 14-15 and June 21-22 were devoted to counts. A superb part-time Audubon volunteer coordinator, Kim Van Fleet, organized the staffing of the counts. She also did everything else, including shopping for groceries and cooking the Saturday night dinners! We stayed Friday and Saturday nights in private hunting camps, more or less near the sites to be counted. The camps were loaned to the groups by Audubon members. Some people camped, others bunked down wherever they could find a horizontal space inside. About 15 or 20 people were involved on each count: singles, couples, parts of couples, all possible combinations, but all willing and enthusiastic.

The plan was to get up at 4 AM Saturday and Sunday mornings, be on your assigned "first point" by about 5:30 or 6 AM, and set off. In the Southern Sproul IBA three prior years of field work had laid out, mapped, and determined geographic positioning coordinates at some 180 points scattered across almost 300,000 acres of plateau and ravine. It's an astonishing job of planning and data gathering, and the counts are to be repeated annually. This is a LONG-TERM job!

I was assigned as recorder with Nick Bolgiano, a skilled State College birder, who has many other data-gathering responsibilities with the Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies. We were given two trails to cover, about six miles total in and out. It was no nonsense: find the point, start the stop watch, listen carefully for three minutes, record the species and number of birds heard, move on, and do it again. We were mostly in fairly dense forest, often near streams, following established trails. Unfortunately it had

been and was still raining, so the streams were full and the noise sometimes completely drowned out the birds. But that's part of the data. Part of our route was in "The Burn," an area near PA 144 that burned some 20 years ago and is still in the early succession stage of field-turning-to-forest. There we had completely different birds, notably Golden-winged Warblers. But mostly we had Red-eyed Vireos, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Eastern Wood-Pewees, a few American Redstarts, Blackburnian Warblers, Eastern Towhees, and LOTS of Ovenbirds! We were thoroughly soaked by the end of our route, but then the sun came out and we ended Saturday morning in a blaze of sunshine. The end of our route had required a 700-foot climb back out of the ravine, so this was not just a stroll in the park!

Sunday's route was on similar but flatter terrain and in much nicer weather. I was again recorder with two other more skilled birders as observers. After each day's assignments were completed, we were free to seek our own entertainment. I was doing field photography to illustrate my auto tour brochure, so I took advantage of the time to search out choice locations. It was a real gift to have all this free time to concentrate on that type of work.

The next weekend was at the Pine Creek Gorge. Our sites were along the trails on the West Rim. I had slept out in my tent at Southern Sproul, but this time it was pouring rain. (You had almost five inches that day here in Pittsburgh while I was gone!) I slept inside this time, along with about 15 others. (Take your ear plugs!) We were up before dawn with no complaints from anyone, and everyone was throwing energy into doing the job well. But fortunately this time the rain stopped for us while we were in the field. I wore my Wellington rubber boots on both days, which turned out to be a good decision, since trails were running high with water and most people's hiking boots were soaked through.

There were fewer points in this site, so we actually duplicated each other's work on the two days, counting each site twice. With about 20 hours in the field focusing almost entirely on the bird songs, I was able to improve my skills on "birding by ear." I'm still a long way from feeling confident to be a trusted full-fledged observer, but I know that I can make a contribution. It's all very serious work, but it's taken with a light heart and lots of camaraderie.

These two areas are truly magnificent country, varied and always interesting. Slight drawback: I put about 1,400 miles on my car getting to and from the sites. It takes three to four hours to get to each one from Pittsburgh.

The IBA program will give the conservation community a much more powerful voice as we speak in public forums about habitat preservation, management of the parks and forests, and zoning decisions. And by the way, the program is supported by grants from Pennsylvania's Wild Resource Conservation Fund, which is in desperate need of funds itself. Support it by purchasing the Otter license plate, and you'll be supporting the IBA program!

Member's Website Features Allegheny Front Hawk Watch

Club member Mark McConaughy has opened a terrific new website featuring the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch in Somerset County, where our club will have an outing on Thursday, October 23. (See Outings to Come on page 3.)

Mark offers detailed directions to the site, a discussion about the many raptor species that have been observed at the site, and much more information is available. Check it out at: <<http://people.delphiforums.com/MCCONAUGHY/birding/alfront/alfront.htm>>.

The Peregrine



A GREAT FIND – Brown Creeper nests are not around every corner. Even if they were, they would be difficult to discover. Scott Kinzey was very fortunate to find this one while conducting an Important Bird Area survey at Raccoon Creek State Park on May 20, 2003. The nest is a typical one for the species, hidden behind the loose flap of bark at lower left. One of the adult pair is on the other side of the tree at upper right.

Briefly...

Same-name IBAs: Some club members have been confused about PA Audubon's "Buffalo Creek" Important Bird Areas in our region. There are two: the Buffalo Creek Valley in Washington County and the Buffalo Creek Watershed in Butler and Armstrong Counties. Washington's was established first, then Butler-Armstrong's was approved this year with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania taking the lead role.

Want to Talk about Birds? PABIRDS is a free e-mail discussion list that serves as a daily forum for birders to discuss all aspects of birdlife in Pennsylvania. Topics include rare birds, bird finding, bird identification, bird behavior, backyard birding, trip reports, bird counts, and bird club information. The list is open to all skill levels from professional ornithologists to beginning backyard birdwatchers. Information on subscribing is at www.audubon.org/net/list/PABIRDS.

Birding Away: Members Get Treats on Land and at Sea

Oregon with the ABA...

By Mary Stefanacci

I attended the 2003 American Birding Association convention in Eugene, Oregon, during the first week of June. The convention had over 600 attendees. There were many booths for exhibitors (such as Leica, Nikon, Swarovski), and numerous excellent speakers including Kenn Kaufman and Pete Dunne.

Of course the best part was the birding. The field trips were led by volunteers, many of them local birders. Others were professional tour leaders from Wings who were volunteering their time and expertise. The combination of professional leaders and local birders made for wonderful trips despite the large size of the groups. The locals were familiar with the area and the nesting species. They even had nests staked out so we would be sure to see the species. (In all cases we were careful to watch from a safe distance so we did not disturb the nesting pair.) The professionals brought organization and communication skills to the tours. They made sure everyone knew what to expect at the field trip location (terrain, distance to walk, time spent at each spot, species expected, etc.) and that everyone was seeing the birds. The birding was in various habitats including mountain elevations of 5,000 feet, high desert, marshes, old growth forests, and coastal areas.

Sisters, part of the Cascade range and mostly ponderosa pine, is where we watched a nest tree of the Lewis's Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker. White-headed Woodpeckers and Black-backed Woodpeckers were in an area that had been burned in a forest fire last year. We saw Calliope Hummingbird, three species of Empidonax flycatchers, Say's Phoebe, Common Raven, Mountain Chickadee, American Dipper, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Cassin's Finch, Black-headed Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, and many others.

We visited Salt Creek Falls, also in the Cascades, which is a beautiful waterfall. It drops 400 feet to a small creek. There were Black Swifts flying above the falls and American Dippers in the creek at the bottom of the falls.

Waldo Lake is at 5,000 feet and still had snow. The road was closed because of the snow, so we parked and hiked the rest of the way. Can you imagine...snow in June? It was 80 degrees and we were all wearing shorts and T-shirts walking in snow. The lake was ice cold, full of snow melted water.

The Newport area on the Oregon coast is rocky cliffs, which gave us a perfect vantage point to look out over the ocean for pelagic birds. We saw Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Tufted Puffin. There were three species of loon, three species of cormorant, and three species of scoter. It was nice to see Clark's and Western Grebes side by side to get a close comparison of the differences. We watched Harlequin Ducks bobbing in the surf. Shorebirds included Black Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, and Marbled Godwit. Gulls included Glaucous-winged, Heermann's, California, and Western.

We had a special tour with a wildlife biologist studying Spotted Owls. We were taken to an area of old-growth forest where the owls were nesting, and the biologist called them out by hooting. Both the male and female responded. They came so close and seemed not to be afraid of people. The biologist then fed them by putting a live mouse on a large stick and extending the stick into the air. The mouse ran up and down the stick trying to get off, but before it got away the owl swooped down and took it. The

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The Peregrine

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owl was only 15 feet away from the group when it came in for the mouse, so it was an impressive sight. The biologist told us that feeding the owls is part of the study to determine whether the pair has an active nest. If the owls have a nest, they take the mouse to the nest instead of eating it themselves. The biologist then monitors the nest and bands the young. Spotted Owls are endangered in Oregon, so the study is important to determine the stability of the population.

The Fern Ridge reservoir area was a marsh habitat that had Yellow-headed Blackbird, Marsh Wren, Black Tern, Virginia Rail, American Bittern, Cinnamon Teal, and numerous other dabbling ducks. Near the reservoir is an oak tree stand that has nesting Acorn Woodpeckers. We watched a family group foraging and saw them caching the acorns in a tree

I ended up seeing 149 species including 33 life birds. Oregon was a spectacular place to bird.

Seabirding off Hatteras...

By Sam Sinderson

Paul Hess and I had planned a trip to North Carolina for pelagic birding for several years. We figured that if we drove almost 600 miles to get there, we might as well do two trips. We made our reservations with Brian Patteson in January for trips out of Hatteras on May 30 and June 1. Also, feeling that after two days on the ocean we might need a day of rest, we made our motel reservations in Buxton (12 miles from Hatteras) for Friday through Monday so we would travel home on Tuesday.

Everything was going according to plan until Paul heard from Brian that the boat, Miss Hatteras, had blown an engine on Memorial Day. Our trips were cancelled. However, the following weekend, June 7 and 8, space was available. We quickly made the decision to go that weekend and were able to change our motel reservation. Fortunately, a new port engine was successfully installed in time and the trip was on.

We left Natrona Heights at 6:20 AM. With surprisingly light traffic, even around D.C., we arrived in Buxton before 6 PM after a 570-mile drive. After dinner we drove down to Hatteras to make sure we knew how to get to the dock. We were to be at the dock at 6 the next morning. The weather on Friday had been very good all the way to Hatteras. We awoke on Saturday morning to fair weather, but the forecast was for showers and rain later. We arrived on time and Miss Hatteras was ready. There was a sell-out crowd, some 50 birders. The boat left the dock at 6:30 and after about 10 minutes we left the sound and entered Hatteras inlet and the open ocean. Waves were 4 to 5 feet, and it wasn't long before some of our crowd were seasick. Paul and I had no trouble. We have never been seasick on a pelagic trip.

The objective of the trip is to get to the warm water of the Gulf Stream about 30 miles south of Hatteras where the sea birds find the best food source. We were there in about 2.5 hours, leaving about 5 or 6 hours to cruise the Gulf Stream looking for birds. Hit-and-miss is the nature of pelagic birding. If you find the birds, there may be a bonanza, and that was to be true this day. Cory's Shearwaters are the most abundant shearwater in these waters at this time of year, and we saw plenty. Among the Cory's were lesser numbers of Greater Shearwaters and Audubon's Shearwaters. I had seen these species before. Wilson's Storm-Petrels, a mite of a bird with a white rump and long legs, were most abundant; there were nearly always some in sight. This too was not a new bird.

My first new bird was a Black-capped Petrel. We were to see maybe a dozen during the day. At one point we had numer-

ous Wilson's Storm-Petrels near the boat on the water, and flying low among them were several Leach's Storm-Petrels, which was my second life bird. About the same time the first of two or three Band-rumped Storm-Petrels showed up, another life bird. As we cruised along, one of the spotters tossed "chum" over the stern, which keeps the birds following the boat. Mostly these were Cory's Shearwaters, but suddenly an all-dark smaller bird showed up off the stern. Brian quickly identified it as a Herald Petrel, and many of us got good looks at this rare visitor as it moved off to the starboard and disappeared. Unfortunately, Paul had taken this moment to visit the head and missed this one; however, he has seen two Heralds on previous trips off North Carolina.

Four life birds in one day hasn't happened for me in many years, but another one was to come. While I was in the cabin cleaning my glasses, which got covered with spray rather quickly in the rough seas, someone shouted "Red-billed Tropicbird!" There was a mad dash for the doors, as even the seasick ones rose to the call. The bird had been spotted on the water but was now flying around the stern and soon passed us on the starboard side. Most everyone got good close looks at this rarity. Paul has been in these waters many times before, but the Red-billed Tropicbird was a lifer for him too. Among the 12 species recorded was a Parasitic Jaeger, which only a few of the birders were able to see, and Paul and I did not. Excellent looks at an adult Arctic Tern cruising around the boat was another highlight. The twelfth species was a briefly seen Bridled Tern. It was a rough and wet 2.5 hours back to the inlet as the captain dodged the biggest waves and cut through others to surf down the backside in a steady rain.

On Sunday we were promised an even rougher ride, because there had been high winds at night. This day there were only about 25 birders, about half of whom were repeats like Paul and myself. Fortunately, the sea really wasn't any rougher than the day before, though seven or eight of the passengers were seasick. After the exciting Saturday, Sunday was fairly boring. None of the rarer birds showed up, though we cruised the Gulf Stream for about an hour longer than on Saturday. Instead of 12 species of seabirds we had seen on Saturday, there were only six. A Pomarine Jaeger was the only different bird. The most exciting moment and disappointing for me may have been when my rain hat blew off and was last seen floating in the wake of the boat. Again, the ride back was rough and wet (if you sat on the outside, as I did).

Despite the relatively boring second day, this was an exciting trip. We are looking forward to doing it again, maybe a week or two earlier in May next time.



FAMOUS CRANES – Among the most sought-after birds in western Pennsylvania for nearly a decade have been Lawrence County's Sandhill Cranes. Scott Kinzey photographed four of them in Plain Grove Township on September 12, 2003.

The Peregrine



YOUNG BUT POWERFUL – One of the Outings Revisited reports in this issue tells of participants' disappointment in not finding shorebirds at the Shenango Reservoir trip on August 2. But there was some compensation in birds like this immature Bald Eagle, perched on an Osprey nest at the lake, which was photographed by Mark McConaughy



IT'S A RED-TAIL – This partial albino Red-tailed Hawk, almost entirely white, has been a dazzling feature for many years near the Müller Ponds near Pymatuning in Crawford County. Albinism seems to be more frequent in Red-tails than in other raptor species. Mark McConaughy made this portrait near the ponds on August 15, 2003.

Bald Eagle Shooter Pays \$4,000 Fine and Restitution

The Bald Eagle shooting case in Westmoreland County has been solved. Pennsylvania Game Commission Southwest Region Director Matt Hough announced the news, praising the public for assistance and Wildlife Conservation Officer Gary Toward for his investigative efforts.

The injured male eagle was found in the county's Bell Township area by a local resident who reported it to the Game Commission. The eagle was taken to Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Crawford County. After an examination revealed that the bird had been shot, Toward began a criminal investigation.

An off-duty Jeannette police officer was charged with the shooting. He was assessed \$4,000 in fines and restitution, waived his right to contest a three-year loss of hunting and fur-taking privileges, and forfeited his shotgun to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"This investigation began and ended with information provided to us by the public. Without that help, this case might never have been solved," Southwest Region Law Enforcement Supervisor John Smith said. As of mid-September there was no word whether anyone would receive the \$1,500 reward from donations by groups and individuals, including our club.

"This was a case of an individual mistakenly identifying a mature Bald Eagle as a roosting turkey. Of course, that doesn't excuse the hunter's actions, but we should all feel better knowing it was not an intentional act," Toward said.

The eagle has recovered from most of its injuries but cannot be returned to the wild because it has lost sight in one eye. It was one of a pair with an active nest near the spot where the injured bird was found. The State Police gave Toward helicopter time to search for the nest, and he found two eaglets in it.

To reduce the increased food-gathering burden on the female, Toward placed road-killed deer near the nest tree. His aid was sufficient, because both eaglets fledged.



WATCH FOR HIM – Hooded Mergansers will almost certainly be on our outing lists at Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park this fall. Scott Kinzey photographed this one at Marshall Lake in Allegheny County's North Park, also a good place to find one.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area: June-July 2003

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

The trend for this season was late dates for several species, perhaps delayed in their migration due to the rains in May. Interesting were late dates of **Red-necked Grebe** and **Black Tern** following their presence in the county for the first time in several years.

A very late **Red-necked Grebe** was found at Imperial 6/3 (DW,MV, GM). **Double-crested Cormorants** remained in the area through June and July (v.o.). A high count of 12 were at Coraopolis 6/7 and one was still seen at the Ohio River 7/21 (MV). Unusual was the presence of a **Great Egret** at the Mayview Wetlands 7/13-22 (NN).

Rare in the county (and western Pennsylvania), a **Black Vulture** was seen in Harrison Township 7/18 (PH, DH). This species was last recorded in the county at Tarentum on 6/25/00 (PH, DH).

The **Peregrine Falcons** nesting at the University of Pittsburgh in Oakland fledged four young. The entire family of six were seen in flight 6/18 (KSJ). The pair nesting on the Gulf Building in downtown Pittsburgh had difficulty this year. Kate St. John writes: "Unfortunately there has been a double territorial battle at the Gulf Tower. In early March the original female (a wild bird banded in her first nest-year at Gulf) laid two eggs and then stopped. In late March she quit incubating and disappeared, and an unbanded female appeared and laid four eggs next to the original female's two. The original male and the new female began incubating. Then late last week [the first week of April] no birds were incubating at all. By Friday morning the reason was apparent. In the foreground of the webcam image, was a dead Peregrine. The male had been beheaded, indicating a probable male-vs-male territorial battle. So neither adult Peregrine who started the nesting season at Gulf Tower is alive, and there are now six untended eggs." The new pair re-nested, producing four chicks that fledged in mid-June (KSJ, WPC). The new male was hatched at the nest site in Oakland in May 2002 and was probably responsible for the death of the original male that had been nesting at the Gulf Building since 1991 (WPC).

A **Bald Eagle** was an unexpected summer visitor at the Dashields Dam on the Ohio River on 7/21 (MV).

A few shorebirds passed through in June. The following reports were all at Imperial: a **Greater Yellowlegs** 6/1-2 (MV) and one on the late date of 6/22 (WS, DS); a **Lesser Yellowlegs** 6/9 (GM) and two 7/19 (MV), perhaps already moving south; two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** 6/1 (MV); a **Least Sandpiper** 7/18 (MV); 13 **Dunlin** 6/1 and two remaining to 6/2 (MV); and a late **White-rumped Sandpiper** 6/9-10 (GM, RT, MV), which appeared to be slightly injured and perhaps was put down by thunderstorms. A **Solitary Sandpiper** appeared at Barati's Pond in South Park Township 7/30 (SS).

Ring-billed Gulls are normally gone by May, but 13 along the Ohio River 6/1 were late (MV). Also unusually late was a **Caspian Tern** at the Dashields Dam on the Ohio River 6/22 (MV). A **Forster's Tern** was seen at that location 6/1, which is a bit late (MV). A late **Black Tern** was at Imperial 6/5 (GM).

A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was seen carrying food to a Russian Olive at Imperial 6/7 where it probably had a nest. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was seen in the same area carrying food (MF, BM). A juvenile **Barred Owl** was seen in Sewickley 7/12-31 (CK). Many observers reported a lack of **Ruby-throated Humming-**

birds this year.

A **Least Flycatcher** was at Sewickley 6/4 (CK), a bit of a late date for this species which is normally not reported after spring migration. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was seen feeding a juvenile **Brown-headed Cowbird** in Pine Township in July (PL, SL). A **Purple Martin** was seen in Sewickley 7/1 (CK). Previously I reported that the only known **Purple Martin** colony in the county was at Butler's Golf Course in Elizabeth Township. I learned that there is another colony at the Youghiogheny Country Club in McKeesport (KK, PMPA).

A **Yellow Warbler** was seen 7/19 at Snowden Wetlands in Jefferson Borough (MF), and at least six were at Barati's Pond 7/21 (SS), probably southbound migrants. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was heard singing at that location the same day (MF). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was also singing in Sewickley 7/25 (CK). Interesting was the presence of a **Black-throated Green Warbler** 7/19 at Sewickley Heights Park (CK). This species is not known to breed in the county, and it is unknown if this was a lone male holding territory, or if nesting occurred. Another species whose breeding status in the county is unknown is **Ovenbird**. A bird was heard singing at Imperial 7/4 (MF), and they were present at Sewickley in July where three were heard on 7/15 (CK). The last **Blackpoll Warbler** of the spring was reported 6/1 at Imperial (GM). **Louisiana Waterthrush** was present in Sewickley in July, which may shed some light on when they leave. Two birds were there 7/5, three 7/17, and one was last reported 7/25 (CK).

An orange variant **Scarlet Tanager** was seen at Imperial 6/7 (BM, MF).

Savannah Sparrows are normally the most common grassland sparrow, but they did not appear to be numerous at Imperial this summer (MF). One of the two **Clay-colored Sparrows** reported in late May was seen up to 6/1 at Imperial (MV). **Bobolinks** were present along Bald Knob Road at Imperial this year. Although they can be found nearby, they have not been in this area of the strip mines for several years.

Purple Finches were reported through July at Pine Township (PL, SL) and Sewickley (CK). Normally they are not seen during the summer, but they have bred in the county in the past. This year breeding was confirmed in Pine Township where three juveniles were seen on 7/13 (PL, SL).

OBSERVERS: Mike Fialkovich, Deborah Hess, Paul Hess, Chris Knoll, Ken Kostka, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Bob Marchesney, Geoff Malosh, Neil Nodelman, Purple Martin Preservation Alliance (PMPA), Kate St. John, Dana Shaffer, Walt Shaffer, Sam Sinderson, Ryan Tomazin, Mark Vass, Dave Wilton, various observers (v.o.), Western PA Conservancy (WPC).

Wildlife Center Needs Help

The Wildlife Center of the Animal Rescue League of Western Pennsylvania operates solely on donations and needs \$30,000 by the end of the year or it will cease to exist. A serious shortfall in donations has already forced the elimination of one of the center's two paid positions. Except for Director Jill Nadzam, the center is operating entirely with volunteers.

About 2,000 injured or orphaned animals and birds of more than 100 species are rehabilitated each year. About 80% of them are birds, including a Pennsylvania-endangered Short-eared Owl this year, Jill said. To help, make your check payable to the Animal Rescue League of Western Pennsylvania Wildlife Center and mail it to the center at 6000 Verona Road, Verona, PA 15147.