



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 20, No.1 January/February 2021



A SUCCESSFUL BANDING – Sarah Sargent releases a bird at the Presque Isle banding station. (photo submitted by Sarah).

We'll Learn What's Special About Presque Isle's Birds

Ask a 3RBC member to name the best birding hotspots in western Pennsylvania, and Presque Isle along the Lake Erie shore is sure to be among them.

We'll see why when Sarah Sargent, executive director of the Erie Bird Observatory, presents her program at our meeting on Wednesday, February 3.

She will tell us how the Observatory is preserving Presque Isle's environmental treasure in a program titled "Erie Bird Observatory: Bird Monitoring and Conservation in Northwest Pennsylvania."

Again, this will be a Zoom meeting online starting at 7:00 PM ET, giving you access to log on. The business meeting will begin at 7:30, and the presentation will start at 8:00. Details on joining the meeting (Zoom passwords and other instructions) will be supplied in the days before the meeting.

Observatory projects include banding migrants to monitor their timing and numbers, monitoring shorebirds, marsh birds, and water birds, and maintaining Osprey nesting platforms in cooperation with utility companies. A new study examines birders' economic impact on the Erie region (See page 3 for how to participate.)

Dr. Sargent has spent over 30 years working on avian ecology and conservation. Most recently she cofounded the Observatory in 2018 and has been its Executive Director since then. Before that she spent over 10 years with Audubon Pennsylvania working on bird conservation programs in northwestern Pennsylvania.

She has a bachelor's degree in biology from Swarthmore College, and master's and PhD degrees in ecology and evolutionary biology from Cornell University.

President's Message

Three Rivers Birding Club: 20 Years Old and Growing

By Sheree Daugherty

Three Rivers Birding Club reaches a milestone in 2021: This marks the beginning of the club's 20th year! In those twenty years the club has grown and flourished. Even with the challenges of a pandemic and venue changes for our meetings, 3RBC today boasts more than 400 members.

As Jack Solomon, the first President of 3RBC stated, "The club has grown beyond what I ever imagined." He would know, since he was there from the very beginning as one of the club's founding spirits.

The idea of a local club devoted to birds and birding was hatched by Jack and a group of like-minded people in the summer of 2001. The first order of business was to find out if there was enough interest to form a bird club. The initial group passed one question from birder to birder by word of mouth: If a birding club

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Our First Issue



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

No. 1, October 2001

Join the fun in Three Rivers Birding Club

By Jack Solomon, Club President
Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals, and Baltimore Orioles in your yard... Green Herons, Canvasbacks, and Kentucky Warblers elsewhere in the Pittsburgh region... and uncommon visitors to western Pennsylvania such as Surf Scoters, Baird's Sandpipers, and Connecticut Warblers.

Fifty-four people who like to see and hear those and other birds, gathered July 29 at the Frick Park Nature Center in Squirrel Hill. They gave the Three Rivers Birding Club its name, elected Jack Solomon president and Bob Machesney treasurer. Mike Fialkovich, who will be the club's bird reporting and recording officer, provided a memorable color slide show of -- no surprise here -- bird photographs, stunningly beautiful ones.

The club's founders hope to provide an opportunity for fun and learning aimed at birders of all levels of experience, from rank beginners to reincarnations of W. E. Clyde Todd (more about him in a future newsletter). New birders can meet and learn from their more knowledgeable colleagues, the experienced members can share their knowledge with each other, and everyone will be able to report their observations, talk about birds, birding and natural history subjects, enjoy each other's company, and encourage beginners and non-birders to dive right in, find out where to bird, how to do it better, and share the fun. Outings to bird-rich locations near and far will be among the club's most important activities. Jim Valimont is acting vice president and will direct the outings committee. Paul Hess is this newsletter's editor, with production and distribution by Chuck Tague, editor and owner of the highly respected Nature Observer News. Susan Sunseri is acting secretary. Other volunteers who have stepped forward are Mabel Matteson who, with help from Becky Byerly, will run the hospitality committee, and Julia Palomino-Osacic who will head the web committee assisted by Dave Wilton. Check out Julia's web site at <www.birdnature.com>. Someday we hope to have a site approaching its quality which would include recent bird sightings, directions to and maps of good local birding areas, plus information about other local birding and natural history organizations like the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Todd Bird Club in Indiana County, the Westmoreland County Bird Club, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and conservation groups.

The other article on this page has information about our first regular meeting on October 17. Come and find a new opportunity for birding fun!
You are receiving this newsletter because you attended the club's inaugural meeting, or you subscribe to Nature Observer News, or you were considered potentially interested by a club member. You can continue to receive it by joining the club. (Elsewhere in this issue, editor Hess describes the newsletter's current and planned features.)

Future issues of Nature Observer News will, from time to time, include the newsletter if the recipient is a Three Rivers Bird Club member. Members who don't subscribe to the Nature Observer News will receive the newsletter by 1st-class mail or possibly in the future by e-mail for those who choose that medium.

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Northern Pintail - Esther Allen

Our October 17 Meeting will feature waterfowl ID

Just in time for the peak waterfowl-watching season, the Three Rivers Birding Club meeting on Wednesday, October 17, will feature a color slide program on waterfowl in western Pennsylvania. The meeting will be held at the Frick Park Nature Center, opposite 1960 Beechwood Blvd., in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill section. The doors will open at 7 p.m. for socializing, so feel free to bring something to eat or drink while you chat with other people who have the same birding interests as you. The meeting will start at 7:30.

Chuck Tague, editor and publisher of the Nature Observer News, will present a slide show including tips for identifying many species of water birds that migrate through this region. Chuck's program is especially timely because waterfowl will highlight the club's inaugural outing on Oct. 21 at Lake Arthur in Butler County. (See Page 3 for all the outings in store.)

Joanne Caine of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy asks those attending to bring a field guide or other book of periodical about birds or birding. Joanne, who offered the Conservancy's support to the club at our organizational meeting July 29, would like to see what the Conservancy might want to obtain for its new Schenley Park facility to be completed this fall. You can take your books home -- she just wants to look. Not only can you show Joanne what's out there, you can give the other members an opportunity to see good publications that are available.

Come and make new friends, see old ones, report recent bird sightings and, we hope, learn something about birds and birding that you never knew before.

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

The Peregrine

President's Message

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existed, would you participate?

Back then communication was mostly by phone or in person. Email was not as common then, and texts, tweets, and Facebook were non-existent. Eventually the word came back from everyone who was polled: YES! Let's start a club!

As Jack tells it, in response to the strong interest, more than 80 people gathered at the Frick Nature Center on July 29, 2001, to discuss forming a club. Mike Fialkovich provided inspiration by showing slides of birds. The nascent club needed a leader, so Jack Solomon was nominated to fill that role, becoming the first President, with Jim Valimont as Vice President.

Others were assigned to fill officer positions, and a steering committee was formed. To give you an idea of how things were done in that not-too-distant-past, contact information for the fledgling club members was gathered and written on actual paper!

After an initial steering committee meeting in August, the club was officially established. In September of that year, a bank account was opened, and membership dues were collected. The first issue of our newsletter, *The Peregrine*, was published on October 1 as a four-page insert to the September 29, 2001, edition of Chuck Tague's *Nature Observer News*.

Shortly thereafter, the first official membership meeting of Three Rivers Birding Club was held on October 17 at the Frick Nature Center. Seventy-four new members showed up to see and hear Chuck Tague present the program "Waterfowl Identification."

The new club didn't waste any time. It organized its first outing to Moraine State Park, which took place on October 21. Founding member Bob Machesney led 33 people through the park in search of birds, and our first potluck picnic was enjoyed afterward.

Despite getting a late-in-the-year start, the club held eight outings that year. As the club grew, so did the number of member-guided outings. In 2019, 3RBC hosted 34 outings to 17 different birding hot spots in Western Pennsylvania. The importance of outings continues to be paramount to the club. Today, as in the beginning, outings, along with our six annual membership meetings, are the core and essential purpose of the club.

To the dozens of people who have led outings and done programs over the years, I offer a very heartfelt "Thank you!" You, our amazing members, deserve all the credit for the success of the club, so congratulate yourselves for making your club great!

The club's mission statement perfectly recaps the past 20 years' activities: *To gather in friendship, to enjoy the wonders of nature and to share our passion for birds!*

I'm confident that together we will continue to thrive. Our future is bright!

(Editor's note: This is an appropriate time for me to thank all of our newsletter and website contributors during the past two decades. They include our presidents, program planners, outing directors, bird reporters, columnists, and other writers. These contributors have rarely missed deadlines and have enabled timely publication of The Peregrine as well as articles and photos on the 3RBC website. Again, thank you all.)



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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Letter from the Editor

By Paul Hess

On the front page you see the origin of *The Peregrine*. This is only one part of our club's outreach. Two others are more important for attracting new members.

One is word-of-mouth, which we hear at our meetings when new members tell us a friend recommended our club.

The other, even more important, is our website. It is governed expertly by our Webmaster Tom Moeller (not to mention that he is also our club's Treasurer and "Observations" columnist).

Birders who recently moved into southwestern PA tell me how pleased they were to learn about our club by Googling something like "bird clubs in Pennsylvania" on the Internet and finding us.

A bit of ancient history: Julia-Pahountis-Opacic, an internet technology expert at the Alcoa Technical Center in Westmoreland County, originated our website. (Forgive me for mentioning that my father was titled as a "senior scientist" in aluminum research at that laboratory).

Back to the important point: Tom worked with Julia until he was her successor as Webmaster in 2017. Year by year he has built a website envied by many other bird clubs. If you are as impressed by the website as I am, thank Tom.

Outings (Not) to Come

We're Still Missing Our Fun

Just as all birding clubs are doing, our Outings Director Steve Thomas tells us disappointingly that we must continue to cancel not only our enjoyable in-person meetings but also our outings in this ghastly COVID-19 period.

Another Disappointment: "The Biggest Week"

Jack Solomon, 3RBC's founding president, regrettably adds more sad news for our dozens of members who visit the migration Mecca of Magee Marsh in Ohio every year.

The famous boardwalk at Magee Marsh in northwest Ohio was open as of late 2020, but uncertainty over the course of the pandemic has led Black Swamp Bird Observatory to decide to hold The Biggest Week in American Birding totally virtually from May 6 to 10, 2021.

Pittsburgh area's birders, usually 60 or more of us, have been visiting Magee Marsh each spring for decades, attracted by the ease of seeing warblers in remarkable numbers and at close range, often so close that binoculars can't be focused on them. An hour's walk often results in a tally of 20+ warbler species, including an occasional Connecticut or Kirtland's, not to mention some even more exciting rarities in the vicinity.

Updates and details on the status of The Biggest Week festival can be found at biggestweekinamericanbirding.com, the BSBO Facebook page, and at BSBO.org. The entire virtual Festival will be free to BSBO members.

Please Describe Your Fall Visits at Presque Isle S.P.

Did you bird Presque Isle State Park in September or October? If so, Erie Bird Observatory needs your help!

EBO is collecting information about birding visits to Presque Isle State Park in Erie during the months of September and October 2020. Your response will help us document the economic impact of birding on the region and assist in the development of services, infrastructure, and facilities to enhance birders' experiences.

EBO is conducting the study as part of a program funded by a grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Conservation.

The survey is confidential (and can be completed anonymously if you choose) and will take approximately 10 minutes.

Include your email address to hear back about the study's result. Take the survey at this link: [Erie Bird Observatory Survey](https://www.eriebirdobservatory.org/survey).

EBO is dedicated to "fostering enthusiasm for birds and conservation through ornithological research and public engagement."

Besides Executive Director Sarah Sargent, our February program speaker, the leaders are Assistant Directors Mary Birdsong, who monitors shorebirds, and Laura-Marie Koitsch, bander-in-charge of the migration monitoring station.



WELCOME VISITOR – This winter Evening Grosbeaks are exciting visitors from the north. Flocks move down from Canada when their food is scarce up there. One of their favorite restaurants is a feeder in Forest County. (photo courtesy of David Yeany II)

Look for Banded Grosbeaks

For over a decade, winter populations of Evening Grosbeak have occurred at a site at Marienville in Forest County.

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program has documented these during 7 of the last 14 years, with 100 or more individuals recorded during the winter of 2012-2013 and again in 2020.

Some of the birds were captured, color-banded, and tagged with tiny radio transmitters in a collaborative project by the Conservancy and Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Powdermill Avian Research Center.

Transmitters track a bird so researchers can see its movements from place to place and learn about its travels.

Preliminary returns show a link between Pennsylvania's wintering grosbeaks and their breeding locations in Quebec.

Project leaders ask observers who see grosbeaks in western Pennsylvania to report color-banded and/or tagged birds. To report these, and for more information on the project, contact David Yeany II, Avian Ecologist at the Conservancy, dyeany@paconserve.org.

Meanwhile, birders are welcome to visit the Yeany family's site in Marienville to view the grosbeaks' feeding flocks. It is a private residence, and if you want to visit, contact David by text, phone, or email: dyeany@paconserve.org; cell: 814-221-4361.

Rules: 1—view from the sidewalk near the blue spruce. 2—park on the street or at the nearby church (if not in session). Keep social distance and wear a mask when around others. 3—Please submit observations to eBird and use hotspot "Yeany residence (private/permission required)" and look for banded or tagged birds.

See <https://tinyurl.com/evening-grosbeak-study> for more information about this research.

Meanwhile, shirts are being sold to help support the project. See details here: waterlandlife.org/buygrosbeakshirts.



Observations

Watch Feeders Closely: You Might Have Siskins

By Tom Moeller

They first appeared in early October. Reports on eBird were coming in from Allegheny County and other parts of Pennsylvania. More came from Ohio, West Virginia, and even Virginia. Large and small flocks of Pine Siskins were popping up all over. This was definitely an irruption year for these boreal birds.

I first saw a single Pine Siskin at my feeders on October 20. Initially I thought it might just be a melanistic (dark) House Finch, but it was smaller than the other House Finches on the feeder. I could not make out its pointy beak at that time. A couple of days later five showed up on that feeder of mainly sunflower chips, and the following day we counted seven in the yard. Two to four siskins showed up each day for about a week. A single siskin remained loyal to our feeders until November 12. One cold morning it looked like a puff ball sitting on our nyjer seed feeder, insulating itself from the low temperature.

This is not the first year Pine Siskins have been to our feeders, but the first time more than two showed up and then stayed for days. Our first sighting of siskins was one day in April 2009, but that was the beginning of the spring migration. Pine Siskins had been reported throughout that winter, but ours finally came on their return trip to the Canadian boreal forests. Therefore, the irruption began in late 2008. The next visit was in December 2014. We saw a small flock in Frick Park making a return trip in early May 2015. November 3, 2018, brought a pair of siskins to our feeders and birdbath. And then the flood of siskins came last fall. The appearances were all in even-numbered irruption years, 2008-2009, 2014-2015, 2018-2019, and 2020-2021, which is consistent with recorded observations over the years.

Two articles in my References (Strong, et al. 2015 and BirdSource 2010) show a pattern of biennial irruptions by Pine Siskins based on CBC and Project FeederWatch results. Yet, the pattern is not always true-to-form – sometimes irruptions come one year apart. In eastern North America the irruptions usually go north-south, while in the West, they may go east-west, down out of the Rocky Mountains to lower elevations or north-south. Plus, there seems to be a correlation between the amount of snowpack in the western mountains during the previous winter and an irruption the next fall. A high snowpack leads to a small irruption (because these birds do move somewhat every year), while a low snowpack means less water for the trees upon which the montane birds depend (pinyon pine, Engelmann spruce, white fir, etc.). A further wrinkle in this biennial irruption pattern is that an eastern North American irruption often means no western irruption, and vice versa. In western Canada, the cone crop is good now, so boreal birds are not moving south from that area. 2020 is breaking the mold with irruptions all across the United States reported from New York City to Los Angeles, even a so-called “biblical irruption” in British Columbia. The western birds are descending east-west from the Rocky Mountain chain, not moving south from western Canadian boreal forests.

Another reason for irruptions is the cyclic pattern of conifers in their production of cones. The trees may take two years to produce abundant cones with seeds after dropping a crop. If a boreal/montane finch species reproduces well during a good cone crop season, there will be too many birds to support during the following lean year. The excess birds must roam to find food. It has also been discovered that not as many birds return from an



BATTLE CRY – Watch your feeder closely in winters when Pine Siskins invade from the north. We might think House Finches and American Goldfinches could successfully defend their normal winter territories here at home, but the invaders often win. Tom Moeller photographed this battle at his feeder in Squirrel Hill.

irruption as departed originally. Starvation and predation have most likely lowered their numbers.

Pine Siskins are not the only finches that move in irruptions. Purple Finches and Evening Grosbeaks are also irrupting this fall because their food sources in Canada are poor. Redpolls may have a small irruption as winter begins, too. What do you feed these birds at your feeding station? Pine Siskins are attracted first to nyjer seed in tube feeders as well as sunflower hearts, suet, millet, and nutmeats at platform and hopper feeders. Purple Finches like sunflower seeds, suet, safflower, flax, and peanut hearts, preferably on a tray (platform) feeder. Evening Grosbeaks do not eat a wide variety of seeds and usually only on a platform feeder or on the ground. They may feed from a hopper feeder. Almost exclusively they prefer sunflower seeds, although they will eat safflower, peanuts, and melon or apple seeds. Common Redpolls can only consume hulled sunflower seeds (The hull is too much for them to crack.), canary seed or thistle, plus suet. They do well on most types of feeders.

At the feeder, the Pine Siskins are rather aggressive, even combatting bigger birds that try to land near them. I have witnessed them successfully scaring off bigger House Finches from feeders. They threaten the other birds with an open beak, spread wings and tail, and gang tactics if more than one siskin is present. The spread wings display yellow patches on the inner linings to startle the other bird. Of course, they shy away from much bigger birds like Evening Grosbeaks.

Another bird that is irrupting this season is the Red-breasted Nuthatch. Obviously, it is not a finch. Their northern food sources are also poor, and they are spreading as far south as Oklahoma and Alabama. These small nuthatches remain loyal to a feeder once

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Observations

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they find one, so if you have a frequent visitor to your yard, as we have, you should feel lucky and proud you are helping this little bird survive the winter.

Hopefully, you have had Pine Siskins and some of the other northern birds at your feeders. And perhaps you have been able to observe their unique behaviors. Plus, you are witnessing this unusual, historic phenomenon of Nature.

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SISKIN-STYLE BATH – On a day of furiously hassling House Finches, these Pine Siskins felt they needed a good bath. Tom photographed these (and the battling siskin on page 4) on November 3, 2018.

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Sandhill Cranes Set a PA Record

By Paul Hess

Before you see them, you may hear them. They are loud. Two field guide descriptions are "a trumpeting gar-oo-oo audible for more than a mile" and "a hollow bugling audible at a great distance." Each of us might describe it differently, and we would all be correct.

They are Sandhill Cranes, and they are increasing remarkably in our state. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has surveyed our population each fall for seven years. The most recent count was a record of 288 cranes in 2019.

Lisa Williams, a game commission wildlife biologist, reports that the October/November survey nearly doubles the previous high count. Cranes were observed in record highs for eight counties: highest in Crawford, Lawrence, Mercer, Erie, Sullivan, Lackawanna, Wyoming, and Lancaster.

Sandhill Cranes have expanded rapidly here. Modern sightings came in the late 1980s in the northwestern corner of the state. Since then they have been spotted in more than 30 counties. The first breeding record came in 1993 when a pair accompanied by a juvenile were found in Lawrence County.

Pennsylvania's data will be sent to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which surveys the entire eastern population. The widespread total is estimated at 60,000 birds in their fall staging areas during migration.

Allegheny County's five sightings since 2005, were virtually all fly-overs.

Tom Moeller nicely photographed the group at right in Michigan in September 2015.



Two House Finch Males: Red and Yellow Variants

By Paul Hess

The two House Finches at right are both males, and Mike Fialkovich was lucky enough to photograph them together at his feeder in Allegheny County on April 18, 2020.

One is the typical color we regularly see. The other, dull yellowish where it should be red, is an uncommon variation.

Geoffrey Hill, Professor of Biology at Auburn University, is the world's foremost authority on House Finch coloration and behavior. He explains the color difference personally for 3RBC members:

"House Finches and Purple Finches use carotenoid pigments to produce red feather coloration. There are no red carotenoids in their diets, however--only yellow pigments. Thus, both species get red by biochemically converting yellow pigments to red pigments.

"House Finches whose color tends toward orange or even yellow have done a poor job of modifying their yellow pigments. Old hypotheses about the factors that would make a bird less red focused on dietary access to pigments, but that idea is now largely disproven. New theory and data have focused on the biochemical conversion of yellow pigments to red pigments, and it turns out that this conversion takes place in the mitochondria of liver cells.

"As many of us learned in health or biology class, mitochondria are the powerhouses of the cell, producing most of the energy an animal needs for proper function. So, tying the production of red pigments for feather coloration to core energy production potentially explains the observation that red males are more robust than yellow or orange males and that females prefer



red males as mates. A great unsolved mystery is why House Finches commonly show orange or yellow feathers but Purple Finches almost never do."

If you'd like to read more – a lot more -- about House Finch biology and behavior, you can learn 318 pages of details in Dr. Hill's classic book *A Red Bird in a Brown Bag* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Don't let the title fool you. It's deep science.

A Purple Finch Puzzle: Why Such Intense Red?

By Paul Hess

Here's another topic about finch coloration, this time for the Purple Finch. A male rarely shows plumage so dark red as the one at right. We typically call it a soft "raspberry."

Google "Purple Finch images" on the Internet, and you'll see very few as dark and extensively red as this one.

It visited Janice Dembosky's feeder in Marion Center, Indiana County, on July 19, 2020. Margaret Higbee was there, recognized its oddity, photographed it, and sent her photos to Bob Mulvihill, ornithologist at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh.

Bob advised Margaret to send her photos to Jocelyn Hudon, Curator of Ornithology at the Royal Alberta Museum in Canada, a prominent expert in the biochemistry of feather coloration.

Dr. Hudon replied to Margaret, "Thank you for sending this image. It is a very interesting bird indeed!"

Variations in red, orange, and yellow colors are obtained from the chemical carotene in plants, then processed internally within the birds until pigments are deposited in feathers. Combinations of different plants and varying processes produce different colors, sometimes far from normal.

About this Purple Finch, Dr. Hudon said, "Yes, the bird is unusually red, but it doesn't show the blotchiness we typically associate with diet-derived reddening, but rather a somewhat uniform intense redness. It is hard for me to judge whether this

explains the unusual coloration of your bird.

He concluded, "Without the ability to identify the pigments involved from a photograph, this color aberration may unfortunately have to remain unexplained. Let me know if you ever found a feather of this bird. I could then identify the pigments involved." Alas, no feather could be found.

If you would like to read more about this subject, Dr. Hudon and Mulvihill summarized the role of diet in the journal *North American Bird Bander*. They reviewed findings for 15 species (<https://sora.unm.edu/node/153224>), but the list does not include the Purple Finch. Evidently, no one has studied its variations.



Birds in the Three Rivers Area

Best in Aug-Sept. 2020: Shorebirds and a Pelican

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

This report covers the start of fall migration that features shorebirds and warblers.

Early migrant ducks began to arrive in August. A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Wingfield Pines 8/16 (BV), one was at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 8/31 (MV) and 4 were at Imperial 9/27 (DE).

Migrant **Common Nighthawks** were reported in August and early September. High counts include 62 in Pine Twp. 8/23 (PL, SL) and 85 in Bethel Park 9/1 (MM). The high count of **Chimney Swifts** was 2,260 in Oakland 9/27 (KSJ).

A dead **Virginia Rail** was found on a sidewalk in East Liberty 8/26 (OL). A **Sora** was at North Park 9/25-26 (MB et al.).

A juvenile **American Golden-Plover** was at Imperial 9/7 (MV, various observers) the 11th county record and the first since 2016. All county records except one have been at Imperial. Two were at Imperial 9/27 (MV, TRh) and 1 nearby at Janoski's Farm in Clinton 9/28 (MV). A **Semipalmated Plover** was at Imperial 8/23-9/17 (AP, MV, various observers) and 3 were there 9/9 (MV). There was quite a concentration of **Killdeer** at an athletic field in Clinton in September: 194 on 9/7 (AP) and 221 on 9/11 (MV).

A **Stilt Sandpiper** was photographed at Imperial 9/27 (DE, eBird). A juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Imperial 8/22-29 (MF, various observers), the first in five years. **Least Sandpipers** were reported in August and September with a high count of 5 at Imperial 8/29 (AH). Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Janoski's Farm 8/11 (MV). **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at Imperial 8/11-29 with a high of 3 on 8/22 (various observers.). A juvenile **Long-billed Dowitcher** was at Imperial 9/6 through the end of the month (MV, various observers), providing the fourth county record. All four records have been from this pond. A few **Solitary Sandpipers** were reported in various locations. Up to 3 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at Imperial 9/7-8 (ST, RB, JVA, MV).

Caspian Terns have traditionally been a spring migrant at Dashiels Dam on the Ohio River, but there were a few this fall at that location including 1 on 8/23 and 3 on 9/3 (MV). A **Forster's Tern** was there 8/16 (MV).

A **Brown Pelican** was reported on eBird flying down the Allegheny River in Tarentum 9/11. It was never relocated or confirmed, but this bird should be unmistakable. Furthermore, a Brown Pelican was photographed along the Ohio River in Wood County, WV on 9/12. Could that have been the same wayward bird that traveled downriver to the West Virginia/Ohio border?

Single **Great Egrets** were at Duck Hollow on the Monongahela River 8/2 (LK) and Etna on the Allegheny River 8/26 (DY). One was at Boyce-Mayview Park 8/1-17 (FK, various observers). A juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was at North Park for several days before being reported 8/17 (SG). It was seen to at least 8/29 (various observers). A juvenile was also found at the Gulf Road Wetland in Harmar Twp. 8/23 (MD).

A **Barred Owl** was reported at Frick Park in August and September (various observers), a rare find at that location.

Single immature **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were found at Harrison Hills Park 9/23 (DB) and Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 9/24 (AH).

A very early **Merlin** was at Frick Park 8/1 (AP). One was at Hartwood Acres 9/20 (MB).



RARITY AT FRICK PARK – Fortunate birders saw this Barred Owl during August and September 2020. Charity Khesghi photographed it wonderfully on September 13.

Olive-sided Flycatcher reports came from Hartwood Acres 9/6 (MKu) and North Park 9/8 (DN) **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were reported from six locations through most of September.

Philadelphia Vireos are more common in fall than spring with numerous reports in mid-September. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was observed feeding a begging juvenile at Frick Park 8/29 (MF) revealing a late nesting.

Fish Crow flocks were reported again this season with 56 counted in Shadyside 8/21 (AP) and 14 at Carnegie Mellon University 9/8 (AP).

Three **Cliff Swallows** were flying around with **Barn Swallows** at Imperial 8/1 (MF). Cliff Swallows are one of the less common swallows in the county.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widely reported this fall. The first report came from 8/26 in Brentwood (DF) and reports continued through the reporting period.

A **Marsh Wren** returned to Wingfield Pines again this year, first reported 9/24 (JM). One was found in a dry meadow at Frick Park 9/29 (NH) and 2 were seen later that day (ST, TRh, MK) and again 9/30 (MK).

Two **American Pipits** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 9/28 (MV).

I don't often mention **House Finch** in this report, but the highest count I have ever had reported occurred this season: 185 at a small park in Lawrenceville 9/15 (NL).

The birding press covered a widespread movement of northern finches this fall. **Pine Siskin** reports started in mid-September and continued through this reporting period at many locations.

Large flocks of **Common Grackles** were flying over Hilltop

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The Peregrine

Allegheny County Highlights

The Barred Owl in Frick Park pictured on page 7 is an exciting bird highlighted in Mike Fialkovich's August-September report. This page features three more nice-to-find species

Red-headed Woodpeckers were never abundant in southwestern Pennsylvania, but decades ago they were much easier to find than today. Dave Brooke photographed this immature bird at Harrison Hills Park on September 23.

Marsh Wrens' breeding habitat is limited to the environment in its name. Nathan Hall was fortunate to photograph this migrant at Frick Park on September 29, unusual in an urban setting.

Connecticut Warblers are uncommon migrants in both spring and fall, and they are always high on birders' "want lists." Dave Brooke found this one at Harrison Hills Park on September 24.

Birds in the Three Rivers

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Park in Cecil Twp. on several evenings in August and September. Counts include 1,373 on 8/23, 1,503 on 8/31, 1,448 on 9/3, and 2,000 on 9/10 (RT). An **Eastern Meadowlark** was at Imperial 9/30 (MV).

Thirty-three species of warblers were reported. A late **Louisiana Waterthrush** was well described at Frick Park 9/16 (LF). A **Northern Waterthrush** was photographed at Boyce-Mayview Park 8/23 (JF, JP). One was at Frick Park 9/16-30 (JF, JP, various observers) at the same location as the long-staying bird in the spring. Fall reports of waterthrushes are rare and both species reported in a fall is extremely rare.

A **Golden-winged Warbler** was a nice find at Frick Park 9/12 (NL) and it continued to the next day. **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported more frequently than usual. I'm sure it was due to more birders in the field during migration. Several reports came from Frick Park, and 1 each from Pine Twp., Boyce-Mayview Park and Beechwood Farms. A few **Connecticut Warblers** were gleaned out of thickets: singles at Wingfield Pines 9/9 (LN), Tom's Run Nature Preserve 9/10 (KSJ, KS, BG, RS), Frick Park 9/15-16 (LFH, DYe, various observers), and Harrison Hills Park 9/24-26 (DB, various observers). A **Mourning Warbler** was also at Frick Park 9/16 (NL, MK, MB), an uncommon find in fall. Rather unusual for this time of year, a **Kentucky Warbler** was heard singing at Beechwood Farms 9/9-10 (BSh).

The **Blue Grosbeaks** reported last season at Imperial continued to at least 8/24 (various observers). A female **Indigo Bunting** was feeding two fledglings during the first week of September in Frick Park (MK and others), a late nesting.

Correction from the editor: In the last edition, I incorrectly dated the American Avocet in Mike Fialkovich's photo caption. It was on July 24, as Mike reported in his summary.

Observers: Michael Barney, Dave Brooke, Ron Burkert, Michael David, David Esterline, Leslie Ferree, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Donna Foyle, Louis Freeland-Haynes, Steve Gosser, Barb Griffith, Amy Henrici, Fred Kachmarik, Michelle Kienholz, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Lisa Kaufman, Nick Liadis, Oliver Lindhiem, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Michele Mannella, Lauren Nagoda, Dick Nugent, Joe Papp, Aidan Place, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Kate St. John, Ramona Sahn, Kathy Saunders, Shannon Thompson, Brian Shema (BSh), Ryan Tomazin, Brian Vitunic, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVA), Dan Yagusic, David Yeany (DYe).

