



# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 17, No. 4, July/August 2018

### Let's Visit Southeast Asia for Birds and Photography



**ASIAN SPECIALTY** –This Rufous-bellied Niltava is a member of the avian family called Old World flycatchers. The unfamiliar name “Niltava” is adapted from the Nepalese name for the bird. Our August speaker photographed it in northern Thailand.

How about this combination? “Mealworms and Megas: Photography and the Changing Face of Birding in Southeast Asia.” Phil Chaon, a worldwide birding tour guide, will cover this wide-ranging topic at our 3RBC meeting on Wednesday, August 1. His presentation will explore the growing popularity of photography among birders not only in Asia but everywhere.

The meeting will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue in Shadyside. Doors will open at 6:30 PM for socializing, a business meeting will begin at 7:30, and Phil’s program will start at 8:00.

A lifelong naturalist, Phil found an interest in birds while coping with the crushing reality that there were not, and never would be, alligators in Cleveland. At age 18 he left behind the power plants and gull flocks of his childhood and spent a year in the Andes of northwestern Ecuador. Life among Lyre-tailed Nightjars and Ocellated Tapaculos taught him that, for him, the U.S. was only a place to visit between forays to the tropics.

After studying botany and wildlife biology in the redwoods of northern California, Phil spent a few years of fieldwork, which included banding birds in Peru, monitoring fairy-wrens in Papua New Guinea, and surveying bird communities in Kenya.

Data collection interfered with quality birding, so he turned to other activities. When not guiding, he searches out areas with new birds, occupies himself with long night hikes, diving, horticulture, fishing, and divining the secrets of perfect barbecue.

### Another Year to Remember for Our Members at Magee

By Sue Solomon

More than 60 club members joined throngs of smiling birders at Magee Marsh this May. The boardwalk at Magee is always a focal point for those enjoying almost “pettable” warblers.

Southwest winds blew four overshoot species

– Prairie, Kentucky, Hooded, and Worm-eating Warblers – to Magee in early May. Claire Staples tallied 32 warbler species in an amazing few days at Magee and nearby Metzger Marsh. Later, our usual 20-warbler days featured multiple sightings of Cape May, Blackburnian, and Canada Warblers. We missed Connecticut and Kirtland’s for the first time in many years.

The highlight at Magee was a female Black-throated Gray Warbler over a thousand miles east of its usual range and a lifer for many of our birders. Another unusual bird, a Sedge Wren, posed nicely near the boardwalk with a Marsh Wren and a House Wren nearby for comparison. Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Tennessee Warblers, known as the “spruce budworm specialists” seemed



**SUPERSTAR AT MAGEE** – This Black-throated Gray Warbler, a rare visitor to Ohio from the West, thrilled birders on the Magee Marsh boardwalk in May 2018. Some fortunate 3RBC members were on hand to enjoy it. One way to distinguish it from Blackpoll and Black-and-white Warblers is a bright yellow spot behind its bill. (photograph by Keith Barnes [www.tropicalbirding.com](http://www.tropicalbirding.com))

continued on page 6

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

## President's Message

# Playing Favorites with My Bird Sightings

By Bob VanNewkirk

Back in the late 1960s, Tom and Dick Smothers starred in the "Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" TV show. Tom played acoustic guitar, and Dick played a string bass. They frequently began their popular comedy routine by playing and singing a folk song. Their act was frequently interrupted when one of the brothers stopped playing to recall a childhood memory that would trigger an argument between them. Tom, the older brother, acted slow-witted while his brother always displayed a superior attitude. The trademark of this comedy skit was when Tom complained of maternal favoritism when they were growing up with the line, "Mom always liked you best!"

My brothers and I always liked to borrow this line when one of us would try to settle a dispute between us. Mom was the family arbitrator.

Well, what does this have to do with birds? Sometimes on club outings, I am asked if I have a favorite bird. My initial reaction is usually, "Not really." Of all the ones I have seen both in the U.S. and abroad, how could I possibly chose the one(s) I liked best? But that question kept simmering in my brain, until I decided the criteria to assist with my selection choices. I'm limiting the choices to North America.

The **American Robin** makes my list because it was my first experience with birds at a young age. My mother called them "robin redbreasts." She enjoyed feeding them stale bread and sometimes wild berries. I think her personality matched her beloved robins perfectly – always cheery and close by when her family needed her. From childhood on, I came to enjoy their presence in my life. They were everywhere in my neighborhood. My brothers and I looked for robins nesting in bushes by our front porch. We protected the nestlings like they were our family pets.

Two other yard birds I especially enjoy are American Goldfinch and Northern Cardinal. They brighten up any gloomy day with their bright plumage and distinctive songs. Both species are easily attracted to bird feeders.

While roaming the woods as a free-range nine-year-old near my grandfather's farm one day, I spied a bird with such a deep crimson body and dark black wings perched low in a tree. When I got back home, I leafed through a Golden Guide book with pictures of birds. Eventually I found the page with a picture of my bird – a **Scarlet Tanager**. I have since seen many Scarlet Tanagers, but my memory of this first one remains the very best one ever.

"As any beginning birder might tell you," I never knew there were so many wonderful birds living all around me." That's what I told my friend one day while I was staring in wonder at my first **Eastern Bluebird** on the Skyline Trail in North Park. The male bird's reddish brown breast is a beautiful soft contrast to its blue plumage. Its soft, delicate song seems to be a perfect complement to match its appearance. In my travels I have been also fortunate to see both Western and Mountain Bluebirds. Bluebirds are often referred to as a symbol of good cheer. Seeing one sure brings an instant smile to my face.

When it comes to waterfowl and Spring migration, there are quite a few beautiful ducks to choose from such as Common Goldeneye, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, and Long-tailed Duck just to name a few. My

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### Send articles and/or illustrations to:

Paul Hess, Editor

[phess@salsgiver.com](mailto:phess@salsgiver.com)

1412 Hawthorne St., Natrona Heights, PA 15065

### Send ideas or items for the website to:

Tom Moeller, Webmaster

[thosjmoel@gmail.com](mailto:thosjmoel@gmail.com)

### Send questions and suggestions to:

Bob VanNewkirk, President

[van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)

126 Timberlane Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15229-1059

### Suggest or volunteer to lead outings to:

Steve Thomas, Outings Director

[thomassj22@verizon.net](mailto:thomassj22@verizon.net)

309 Center Ave., Aspinwall, PA 15215

### Report bird sightings to:

Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

[mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net)

805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

### Membership: FREE Student-Youth, \$15 Individual, \$20 Family, \$50 Contributing, \$100 Sustaining

Send check to Three Rivers Birding Club

c/o Thomas J. Moeller, Treasurer

6357 Ebdy St., Pittsburgh, PA 15217-3035

[thosjmoel@gmail.com](mailto:thosjmoel@gmail.com)

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personal favorites are the **Wood Duck** and the **Harlequin Duck**.

A male woody has a green crested head with white stripes on the sides, bright red eyes, a white pattern around the neck, a chestnut colored breast and buffy yellowish sides. Often I find them swimming in a group or perched on logs along the shoreline in woody swamps or marshy habitats.

The drake harlequin is a gorgeous sea duck with an interesting name. Harlequin was a comic character in a 16th-century play. The actor wore a mask and was dressed in dark trousers with multicolored patches. The duck's facial pattern is very striking in its complexity. My best looks at them were near rocky shorelines on the Pacific coast in Washington. They can also be commonly found in winter along the rocky Atlantic coastline.

Watching hawks soar has always sparked my curiosity to wonder what it's like to fly. But my all-time favorite gravity resister is the aptly named **Swallow-tailed Kite**. My first sighting of one occurred quite unexpectedly one summer day at the Sandy Ridge Preserve in Ridgeville, Ohio. The kite's deeply forked tail and black and white plumage looked spectacular against the blue sky. I followed the bird's graceful flight as it passed over the wetland's ponds. As for this raptor's diet, I find it very interesting that they eat mostly flying insects.

Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, and American Kestrel

*continued on page 4*

# The Peregrine

## Outings to Come

# Fall Season Winds Up With Our Annual Picnic

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

### **Thursday, September 6 – Sewickley Heights Park:**

In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; [van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)) will lead this bird walk beginning at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot.

For directions to the park, see [www.3rbc.org](http://www.3rbc.org). Be prepared for muddy trails. It is also advisable to bring water and a lunch. Besides birding in the park we will drive and make stops along Little Sewickley Creek.

**Saturday, September 8 – Presque Isle State Park:** Join Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; [van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)) at one of the state's prime locations for seeing fall migrants. Meet at 8:30 AM in the first parking lot (Vista 1) on the right as you enter the park. The park is at the north end of Route 832 just west of the city of Erie. Bring a lunch for this all-day outing.

**Saturday, September 8 – Deer Lakes Regional Park:** Todd Hooe ([hooe@verizon.net](mailto:hooe@verizon.net)) and Oliver Lindhiem will lead this outing focusing on fall migrants (warblers, flycatchers, vireos, etc.) at this under-birded park. The outing will begin at 7:30 AM and run until about 11:30AM. We will meet in the lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371.

From Creighton-Russellton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then turn right and proceed to the last parking lot. We will hike approximately 4 miles. Although the trails are fairly well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud, and rainfall.

**Sunday, September 9 – Harrison Hills Park:** Meet leader Jim Valimont (412-828-5338) at 8:00 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. We will meet at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the pond. As you enter the park, bear right and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. Please note: This is not all the way down to the soccer field parking lot. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers and vireos.

**Sunday, September 16 – Glade Run Lake Park:** Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) will take us on a second outing to this park in southwestern Butler County. Meet at 8:00 AM at the park on Lake Road in Valencia, which is off Route 228. Google maps coordinates are 40.716229, -79.901211.

We will survey the lake from the dam and boat ramp for waterfowl. Then we will walk a trail that is about 2 miles long out and 2 miles back, which can be muddy in places, so boots are highly recommended. The outing last spring was very successful, and the fall should be just as exciting.

**Sunday, September 23 - Pymatuning Area:** Meet leader Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; [van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)) at 8:00 AM in the parking lot at the former site of the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center (Waterfowl Museum), 12590 Hartstown Road in Linesville (41.635779, -80.436634) for this all-day outing. Plenty of waterfowl, lots of Bald Eagles, and migrant songbirds should be

around for this trip. Arrangements will be made to have lunch at the Spillway Inn for those who are interested.

### **Saturday, September 29 – Frick Park:**

Jack and Sue Solomon, (412) 521-3365 will be our leaders. Meet at 8:30 AM at the "Blue Slide" entrance to the park, where Nicholson St. meets Beechwood Boulevard. We will look for lingering migrants on an easy walk around Riverview Hill.

Traditions of this outing include a good chance of a drive down to Duck Hollow to check for Northern Mockingbird and lingering waterfowl; and a near certainty that we'll head to a good spot for brunch afterwards. If you're a beginner, tell Jack when you arrive and he'll give you tips from his self-described "vast store of birding lore."

### **Wednesday, October 3 – Moraine State Park – North Shore:**

Meet our leader Karyn Delaney (724-713-9474) at the McDaniels Boat Launch in front of the Owlet Gift Shop on the North Shore at 8:30 AM for a morning walk. We will walk a portion of the North Country Trail and/or the Butterfly Trail depending upon the bird activity. Both trails can have a variety of migrating species, including warblers. Note: Rain date will be Friday, October 5.

### **Saturday, October 6 – North Park:**

Meet leader Steve Denninger ([sjdenninger@gmail.com](mailto:sjdenninger@gmail.com)) in the parking lot at the Round Top shelter (shelter 101 on the North Park map) at 7:00 AM, and depart from the parking lot at 7:10.

We will walk on established and overgrown trails, so there is a chance for ticks. The walk would be for two miles on flat to hilly terrain and take between 1.5-2.5 hours depending on bird activity. Please note that there is only a port-a-john at the parking lot.

Target birds will be Lincoln's Sparrow and late warblers.

Shelter 101 is located on South Ridge Drive at 40.5883685, -79.9819363. The North Park map is available online at: [alleghenycounty.us/parks/north-park/index.aspx](http://alleghenycounty.us/parks/north-park/index.aspx)

### **Sunday, October 21 – 3RBC Picnic at Moraine State Park:**

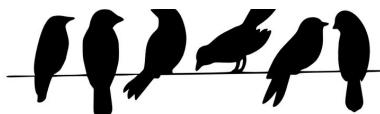
Mark your calendar for our annual picnic and bird walk. We will meet in the Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right at 8:30 AM. After the morning outing, we will have the pot-luck picnic at one of the park pavilions near the McDaniels Boat Launch. Please bring a dish that will serve 4-6 people to share.

Directions to the Day Use Area: 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. Allow one hour driving from Pittsburgh.

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*Outings are free and open to the public. In the event of inclement weather, call the leader in advance to confirm whether the outing is on or canceled. Call the leader, too, with other questions about weather, driving, or trail conditions.*

*Sometimes events occur on short notice. So, "Like" the Three Rivers Birding Club on Facebook and watch our website for late-breaking news of outings, cancellations, and other events that couldn't make our newsletter's deadline.*



# The Peregrine

## President's Message

continued from page 2

are also highly regarded birds on my raptor list. Sometimes while birding at Pymatuning State Park in winter, I have been fortunate to watch them hunt the cornfields.

It's not the first migrant to return or the most attractive, but it's the one I look forward to hearing the most each spring – the song of the **Wood Thrush**. Hearing its melodic flute-like notes grabs my attention instantly. If I hear and manage to spot one in my yard, it's like double icing on a cake. I feel a sense of relief upon their arrival from Central America. Unfortunately, due to many reasons, especially habitat loss and cowbird parasitism, Wood Thrush seem to be declining. This thrush will only be here for a few short months to breed. Meanwhile, my nature will soar with every note and sighting of this charming bird.

Perhaps it's their large eyes, their variety of vocalizations, their soft, velvety feathers, or their silent flight, but owls have always fascinated me, especially the largest North American species, the **Great Gray Owl**. I have only seen this large, big-headed owl with yellow eyes and a black-and-white bowtie across its neck once on a birding trip to Minnesota's Sax-Zim Bog, but it's still my most memorable and favorite one.

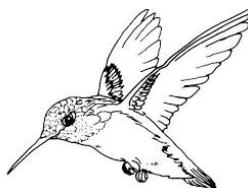
A close second favorite owl sighting was of a juvenile Snowy Owl I observed at Gull Point in Presque Isle State Park in November 2004. Within the last decade it seems that more snowies are showing up along the Lake Erie shoreline for reasons not quite fully understood.

The population of **Sandhill Crane**, my favorite crane, seems to be increasing in Pennsylvania's northwestern counties. I regularly find them in the Volant Strips area near Grove City in various-sized groups. During the winter, unrelated cranes tend to increase in numbers as they feed in the numerous cultivated fields in surrounding areas. Usually cranes are first heard giving out their loud trumpeting call before you see them coming into view.

In November 2013, I went with an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania group to Bosque del Apache in New Mexico for the Festival of Cranes. Thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese winter there. Such a sight of these birds lifting off the water in early morning light is absolutely breathtaking.

I have been feeding **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** for 32 years, and I love every season when they are here. Since I have been keeping records of their arrival, I can predict to see my first between May 5 and 10. I hang three feeders and plant flowers to attract these high-octane hummers. Sometimes one will fly into my garage or through an open deck door and need a helping hand to find its way out. While sitting on the deck, hummers will occasionally fly only a few feet away from my wife and me as if it is checking us over. Although there are many other North American hummingbirds that have a more attractive plumage, I favor my ruby-throats the most of all.

I find birdwatching to be a simple joy for feeling at ease in nature and open to what it can show and teach us. It's only natural to choose birds you enjoy seeing no matter if they are common or not. It's what makes you happy.



## Outings Revisited

## **Our Leaders Treated Us to Another Great Spring**

**Glade Run Lake – April 8:** Fifteen birders met at this new outing location in Butler County on a brisk 26-degree morning. We started by scoping the west side of the lake for waterfowl. We were going to go out on the fishing pier until we noticed about 40 Tree Swallows and two Barn Swallows perched on the pier's railing.

We then walked the trail about 3/4 of a mile along the lake to the east end where we saw the most species of ducks. They included 5 Wood Ducks, 14 Blue-winged Teal, 3 Green-winged Teal, 12 Ring-necked Ducks, a Lesser Scaup, and 4 Hooded Mergansers, as well as 2 Pied-billed Grebes, and 2 Horned Grebes.

A highlight was seeing a Great Egret take off and fly up the lake. We also ran into a pocket of Golden-crowned Kinglets and Eastern Phoebes that gave us the opportunity to have four or more of each in view at once. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen by some and heard by others.

When we ended the walk at about 11:30, the temperature was up to a balmy 34 degrees with snow flurries. We listed 44 species, and we all agreed that Glade Run should be an annual spring and fall destination. –by leader **Dave Brooke**

**Raccoon Creek State Park – April 21:** As we usually do, the Brooks Bird Club of West Virginia and Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Birding Club had a joint outing on the third Saturday in April. The weather, as usual was only semi-cooperative, with cool temperatures and weather that held the migrants back.

By the end, 23 birders found 45 species of birds, and a reasonable number of wildflowers. Lunch was very good, as usual when we have so many birders (i.e., cooks), and some members took the opportunity to sample food from the Dutch Oven Society cookout that always shares the picnic area with us.

Bird highlights included two very visible Ospreys, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, a Brown Thrasher, and Solitary Sandpipers. Only three species of common warblers! –by leader **Ryan Tomazin**

**Frick Park – April 29:** Twenty people, including a few new birders, met leaders Jack and Sue Solomon on a chilly, gray day, necessitating hats and gloves for this uncharacteristically cold spring jaunt.

We started at the Frick Environmental Center where we spotted three Red-winged Blackbirds, one Brown-headed Cowbird, and three neon yellow American Goldfinches snacking at the feeders. We next headed through the field to the Clayton Loop Trail, where we caught a brief romantic moment between a male and a female Brown-headed Cowbird in a nearby tree. We spied a Downy Woodpecker, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, a White-throated Sparrow and two Carolina Wrens while an Eastern Towhee serenaded us with his telltale "drink your tea" call from a nearby treetop. Shortly thereafter, we were delighted to see one spectacular Ruby-crowned Kinglet and one Black-throated Green Warbler flitting from branch to branch in a high treetop.

A Cooper's Hawk was spotted surveying the land in the distance, and we caught a glimpse of a Great Blue Heron as it flew away. A pair of Mallards floated in Fern Hollow Creek in the valley below. When we descended into the valley along the Biddle Trail, Jack and Sue introduced the group to a flowering Wild Ginger along the hillside. We continued along the Tranquill Trail where

*continued on page 5*

# The Peregrine



This Blue-winged Teal pair was a highlight of 3RBC's first outing at Glade Run Lake on April 8. (photo by leader Dave Brooke)

## Outings Revisited

continued from page 4

a Black-and-white Warbler and another Black-throated Green Warbler were spotted in a tree along the stream.

The group ascended the Falls Ravine Trail, which was peppered with clusters of early spring blooms including Large Flowered Trillium, Nodding Trillium, Red Trillium, and Toad Trillium (also known as Sessile Trillium) along with False Solomon's Seal and Dutchman's Breeches. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was busily skirting from branch to branch where the trail bends sharply up the hill. As we continued up the trail, we spotted three Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and, at the top of the hill, we were greeted with a clear view of a Red-tailed Hawk with a prominent belly band.

The promising signs of spring could be seen throughout the woods, and despite the cold weather, there was a great turnout for birds and birders alike. —by participant Lauren Kester

**Sewickley Heights Park – May 4:** Arriving in the park before the outing's starting time, I felt that despite the overcast sky and threat of rain, it would be a good day to see spring migrants. In the parking area, I recorded 15 species including a Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Kingbird, Field Sparrow, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebirds, and a Northern Flicker.

So, expecting a good birding day, 12 participants met at the Fern Hollow Nature Center. Eastern Bluebirds nested in a box next to the parking lot, and the male was a beautiful sight on this gray morning. As we watched a pair of Chipping Sparrows foraging in the leaf litter, a Hooded Warbler's call led us to its perch.

Near Pine Tree Trail, we watched a Blue-winged Warbler dart through a tree. A few of us glimpsed a Gray Catbird, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler farther along the path. A White-eyed Vireo was heard, but we couldn't locate it. A sharp-eyed birder spotted a Broad-winged Hawk high atop a sycamore tree, which gave us admiring looks before it flew off.

We headed toward the gravel road. Several Wood Thrushes were singing, but we wanted to see one. Finally, on a high branch and partially hidden by a grape vine, we saw one. Next, we found two Scarlet Tanagers singing toward each other in the same tree. Other finds were a Hooded Warbler, several Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, and a Cerulean Warbler. A Cooper's Hawk briefly sailed overhead.

On the Spruce Run Trail we glimpsed a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. As we proceeded, it seemed like we were just birding by ear as a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Scarlet Tanager, a Blue-headed Vireo, and several Ovenbirds were identified. A Swainson's Thrush sat on a log, and farther along the trail an Ovenbird remained still for many of us to watch the singer.

We returned to the parking lot for a welcomed break, we

headed to the butterfly meadow. Near the entrance to Chestnut Path, we found Palm Warblers, a Red-eyed Vireo, and a Chestnut-sided Warbler. We also saw a Black-throated Green and a female Hooded Warbler. Along Black Cherry Run we found a Magnolia Warbler, and a pair of Red-tailed Hawks flew overhead.

Five birders continued to Walker Park, where we saw an American Redstart, a Louisiana Waterthrush, a Baltimore Oriole, and a Least Flycatcher. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak and a Scarlet Tanager were also good finds.

The last two birders visited the Edgeworth Dump to view the Ohio River, where we saw two Herring Gulls and two Yellow Warblers. The day began under dark, rain-threatening weather and ended with bright sunshine and bluebird-colored skies. The final list was 56 species. —by leader Bob VanNewkirk

**Harrison Hills Park – May 5:** Seventeen participants (several newcomers among them) arrived for the annual spring outing. We first walked to the pond and found a Solitary Sandpiper and Blue-winged Teal. Other birds seen (or heard) in the pond area included Indigo Bunting, Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, and Field Sparrow. Nashville and Tennessee Warblers were singing as we took a woodland trail back up to the entrance road. This longer trail allowed a more gradual climb back up the hill. A Hooded Warbler provided quick looks for some of the group, while a Swainson's Thrush eventually was seen by most. A Northern Flicker looked into a tree cavity high in a tree and quickly backed out when a Pileated Woodpecker poked its head out!

The Creekside Trail was excessively muddy, so we skipped it and proceeded to the parking area for the Cliff Trail. We heard a Louisiana Waterthrush, then found our first Scarlet Tanager, followed soon by a Black-and-white Warbler. As we left the observation deck, a Cerulean Warbler sang and was seen by everyone. For once, this species was perched relatively low! Most of this trail was quiet, but eventually we found several warblers and a small flock of Cedar Waxwings. Farther along, Mike Fialkovich heard the distinctive trill of a Worm-eating Warbler. The bird was below us on the cliff side, and we never saw it. The location is near the spot where Mike, Paul Hess, and I found a Worm-eating nest several years ago.

At the Environmental Learning Center, the different habitat and the feeders provided new species for the day. Purple Martins were life birds for several in the group. We saw Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at the feeders along with a White-throated Sparrow. The walk to the fields produced excellent looks at several species, including a Brown Thrasher. Our outing ended at the parking lot with two pairs of Red-tailed Hawks soaring in the sky at the same time. For the day we had 62 species, including 14 species of warblers. —by leader Jim Valimont

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Look for more spring outing reports in the next issue.

# The Peregrine

## Magee Marsh

continued from page 1

more abundant this spring. This is likely due to a major outbreak of these larvae last year in these species' Canadian breeding grounds.

The dependable American Woodcocks drew small crowds, with birders offering helpful tips such as "behind the arch near the big tree" so all could see the camouflaged bird. On Estuary Trail, while we followed a crowd to where we could see a Golden-winged Warbler, we hadn't seen it for more than a minute when a Blue-winged Warbler popped up 20 feet away. On many days, warblers were dripping from the trees like the good old days.

Three Ohio agencies funded a \$6-million new wetland habitat called Howard Marsh, creating a thousand acres of ponds for birds, kayakers, and fishermen. More than 400 American Golden-Plovers fed there, rested, and sometimes took flight in a huge flock. Other shorebirds included many Dunlin, a Marbled Godwit, Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, both yellowlegs species, Semipalmated Plovers, and several Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. At least eight duck species lingered in the ponds, and an Osprey occupied a new nesting platform. It's a well-designed new hotspot for birders.

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge drive featured some shorebirds, waterfowl, and many Trumpeter Swans. A highlight was a pair of Black-necked Stilts. A few miles south of Magee, a lingering Snowy Owl got a lot of attention. Oak Openings southwest of Toledo is a great day-trip to observe breeding Lark Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks, Blue-winged Warblers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and Summer Tanagers. A lingering flock of Red Crossbills near the lodge was unusual. We saw at least a dozen flying and chittering after picking seeds from red pines.

My highlight was spotting a Mourning Warbler near the bird platform at the boardwalk's entrance as I helped a lady from Butler identify a female Baltimore Oriole. My husband Jack relished seeing a Fox Snake curled on a branch above the boardwalk.

Grandma Mary Sterrett, age 98, saw her orioles at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory headquarters with help by Kim Kaufman, BSBO's Executive Director. Afterwards we celebrated at Blackberry Corner with rhubarb pie. 3RBC members tallied 211 species including 34 warbler species.

## "Our Best Visit Yet"

By Bob Haney

This year's trip to Magee Marsh left no doubt that the park has been aptly referred to as the warbler capital of the United States. Our visit May 7-11 coincided with the "Biggest Week in American Birding" events and hundreds of other birders. We arrived Monday afternoon and took our first stroll on the boardwalk. Highlights included Black-throated Greens, Blue-winged, Northern Parulas, and Prothonotary Warblers as well as a Summer Tanager and the ever-present American Woodcocks.

On Tuesday both the number of birds and the number of species began to increase, and by Wednesday the trees seemed to be raining warblers. Cape Mays showed up in high numbers including females. A rare (for this locale) Yellow-throated attracted a crowd. Blackpolls were fairly numerous, and it seemed like there was a Blackburnian in every tree. Black-throated Blues, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, and American Redstarts also were common.

Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos were present throughout Wednesday and Thursday, visiting the parking lot to eat berries. The numbers slowed down on Thursday and Friday,



MAGEE MARSH FAVORITE – Most 3RBC members don't often see Prothonotary Warblers, but they are almost always easy to find at Magee Marsh. Mike Fialkovich photographed this one along the boardwalk in May 2018.

but there was still a good selection. Even with a high number of birders, there were only a few congested spots on the boardwalk, due to the huge number of birds.

Overall we saw 118 species of birds including 26 warblers, 6 vireos, 7 thrushes, and both of the cuckoo species. We also stopped at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge where we saw Trumpeter Swans and an amazing Horned Grebe in breeding plumage. At the Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area we encountered many warblers and Common Terns; and at Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve 4 Red-headed Woodpeckers joined us on our walk toward the beach. This was our best visit yet to this birding paradise.

## "Dawn Chorus" Trip Report

"Dawn Chorus" is a birder-oriented blog written by Melissa Melan, which posts at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings. 3RBC member Claire Staples recommends it as well worth looking up for bird and birding information.

On May 20 Melissa posted an essay designed especially for new birders who have not visited northwestern Ohio's birding hot spots. Read it at [tinyurl.com/Northwest-Ohio](http://tinyurl.com/Northwest-Ohio).

Melissa concludes her report with this advice: "If you ever get the chance to visit this area in the spring — do so. It is definitely worth visiting and you will not be disappointed."

## Excitement Beyond Magee

David Yeany II, Matt Webb, and Jon Rice decided to travel beyond Ohio to Michigan in search of Kirtland's Warblers on their breeding grounds. They were successful, and David tells their story enthusiastically in an illustrated article on our 3RBC website. Don't miss it. You'll wish you were there.



JUST SAY "WOW!" – No matter how many Cape May Warblers you see, the next one is just as wonderful as the last one. This species was especially common in May 2018 along the Magee Marsh boardwalk. (photo by Amanda Haney)



WEARING A TUXEDO – Dapper in crisp black and white, this Blackpoll Warbler was another especially common species at Magee Marsh in May 2018. Read Sue Solomon's article to learn why it was so abundant this year. (photo by Amanda Haney)

## Warblers Weren't the Only Exciting Birds in Ohio

Warblers in the photos at the top of these two pages were just the most beautiful finds for our club members at Magee Marsh and other birding hot spots in northwestern Ohio during May 2018. The area is an annual mecca for many 3RBC enthusiasts. Some birders find new birds for their life lists just a few feet away from their eyes. But experienced birders always thrill at new close-up sightings of species they have seen many times before.

For example, Tom Moeller discovered a Great Crested Flycatcher building a nest along the Magee boardwalk. It is easy to assume that the photo at right shows the bird holding the nesting

material before depositing it in the nest hole. But no. Tom says the bird looked into the nest hole first, in the photo at left, and then came back out with the material. It wasn't satisfied with the hole? It was already being used by an incubating bird? Or what?

See many more photos from Ohio in a gallery on our website compiled expertly by webmaster Tom Moeller from images sent to him by *Peregrine* Editor Paul Hess. The pictures were taken by (in alphabetical order) Mike Fialkovich, Amanda Haney, Michelle Kienholz, Tom Moeller, Rick Nirschl, Claire Staples, and David Yeany II. Enjoy!



## A Rainy Big Day at Fern Hollow – But Still, 86 Species



*"BIG DAY" BEAUTY* –This Eastern Bluebird posed nicely for Michelle Kienholz's camera during the "Big Day" at Fern Hollow Nature Reserve. Michelle was a member of 3RBC's team, which had the day's high count: a great total of 72 species.

**By Susie Moffett, Program Coordinator at the Fern Hollow Nature Center**

We had a real challenge this year for the Big Day of Birding at Fern Hollow in Sewickley Heights on April 28. With a high temperature around 50 degrees, rain showers off and on all morning, high winds in the afternoon and a very cold spring, many of our usual birds were not around.

Still, we had a very good showing of birds with 86 species as a group total. The 32 participants included a troop of 11 Daisy Girl Scouts and four of their leaders. Looking at the history of the Big Day, this is a tie for our lowest species count, which was in our first year, 2014. Our record remains from last year at 104 species for an overall group.

Congratulations to the Fishers for their second straight year of winning the Big Day with 72 species (Bob VanNewkirk, Michelle Kienholz, and Ryan Tomazin). They found our only vireo of the day, a Yellow-throated, as well as a Northern Waterthrush and a Hermit Thrush. Bob's favorite moment was an Osprey flying overhead while they were eating lunch at Sewickley Heights Park.

Sameer Apte and Tessa Rhinehart birded for team Son of a Twitch and came in second with 66 species. They logged the only Bank Swallow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Purple Finch.

Great Moff Heron, (Susie and Felicity Moffett) saw 54 species, a personal best for both of us. Our favorite find was an American Woodcock that walked across the road in front of us at Sewickley Heights Borough Park.

Team Eagle Eyes won the youth division again with 48 species, even though they had to finish around lunchtime when their team leader, Alexander Clifford, started feeling ill. They spent a lot of time by the river and were able to add a Pied-billed Grebe, a Common Merganser, a Purple Martin, and a Northern Parula to our list.

The Wrenegades (Lauren Nagoda, Lisa Kaufman, and Casey Davidson) also had a great showing with 46 species. They were able to find a Solitary Sandpiper which I've decided I will finally add to our list for next year.

Finally, Daisy Troop 16547 found seven species on our hour-long walk around Fern Hollow. The girls were excited to watch an Eastern Bluebird perch on a fence post long enough for every scout to get a good look at it through the binoculars. We also really enjoyed a pair of Mallards that flew overhead and, of course, a Turkey Vulture!

We are also having a very successful year of fundraising. As of April 30, we raised \$510 for our avian education programs at Fern Hollow. I will be shopping for binoculars later this week to pick out a good style for our eager students. If you would still like to donate or you know someone who would like to contribute, you can direct them to our website at [fhnc.org](http://fhnc.org) or have them mail a check to P.O. Box 8, Sewickley, PA 15143.

Thanks again to all who made the Big Day such a fun and exciting event. It's amazing what you see when you take the time to look. Keep birding, and I'll see you on April 27, 2019, for our next Big Day of Birding!

## We Are Saddened to Lose a Charter Member of 3RBC

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our long-time member and friend Sarah Gerrish. She and her husband Randi were original members of the Three Rivers Birding Club in 2001.

For many years Sarah and Randi volunteered to help in distribution of our newsletter, *The Peregrine* – one of those time-consuming behind-the-scenes tasks that assured that the printed issues would reach your mailbox.



Sarah's quiet, friendly manner will be sorely missed by many in the club. More than a dozen 3RBC members attended her memorial service. Will Hope, her nephew, said, "My family and myself would like to thank everybody who came out to remember our dear Sarah. We appreciate everything that

everybody has done, and you're forever in our hearts."

As a memory of a happier time in the Gerrish family, please check our club's website for an article by Sarah and Randi about a wonderful trip the family made to Maine in 2015.



## Observations

### Elaborate Bird Nests

By Tom Moeller

Cavity nests that I wrote about a few months ago are used by around 50% of birds. These are often simple affairs. In contrast, there are some very elaborate constructions by birds to house their eggs and young including hanging baskets and enclosed nests. Both types of nests help to protect the eggs and young from predators and the weather.

Common hanging (pensile) nests in western Pennsylvania are those of orioles. Both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles weave pensile baskets. While the Baltimore Oriole's nest is usually placed out on the end of branches and often easily seen, the Orchard Oriole finds a more secluded spot hidden in leaves. The female of each species does the constructing. She attaches long plant fibers to a branch and loops them up again. Then she strings more plant fibers between the hanging loops to end up with a woven basket. Other materials used may be wool, string, hair, grapevine bark, or Spanish moss in the South. The nest can take up to a week or more to complete. Most often, a new nest is woven every year. Once in a while, an old nest may be repaired.

Both oriole species will lay about five pale-bluish eggs. The females will brood the eggs, being fed by the males. Incubation lasts about two weeks, followed by two weeks with the nestlings. A week later the nestlings will fledge.

Western orioles – Altamira, Bullock's, Streak-backed, and Spot-breasted – also construct "hanging bag" nests similar to those of the Baltimore and Orchard. Other western orioles – Audubon's, Hooded, and Scott's – build cup-shaped nests that may be partially suspended.

The Bushtit nest is an elaborate pouch-like structure, too. It is a stretchy, sock-like assembly up to a foot long, suspended from a ring attached at the top to tree branches and held together by spider webs. A breeding pair constructs the nest of twigs, lichen, moss, spider cocoons, and other materials and camouflages it with flowers, moss, and leaves. Feathers, fur, and plant down line and insulate the interior. The nest may take from two weeks to 50 days to build. Both parents including other helpers (surprisingly, single adult males!) sleep in the "sack" while it is active.

Five to seven or more white eggs are laid in Bushtit nests. Both parents and their helpers incubate the eggs for about two weeks, and all may care for the nestlings for another two weeks. The chicks' eyes do not open for about a week, yet they are self-sufficient just over a week after fledging, three weeks after hatching.

Vireos also build a type of hanging nest. With most vireo species, both parents build the nest, although Red-eyed, Yellow-green, and Black-whiskered Vireo females only work on the nest. All species will build at a twig fork with a cup hanging from the two branches. It is made of grasses, bark strips, rootlets, even paper, and bound to the twig fork with spider silk. All species lay three to five eggs, which are white with brown spots or speckles. With most vireo species incubation is by both adults, as is care of the nestlings. Generally, all vireo young fledge in about two weeks after hatching.

Verdins are western birds a little smaller than chickadees. Their enclosed nests are built by the male, who makes more than one nest, but the female finishes the one she prefers. The nest with an entrance on the side is placed on a low tree limb, in shrubs, or on cactus. The outside is built of thorny twigs, while the inside is lined with spider webs, fine grass, dead leaves, and feathers. The



*FABULOUS BIRD, FASCINATING NEST* – Tom Moeller took this photo at the exact moment for a wonderful look at a Baltimore Oriole at its nest near Taylorstown in Washington County. The occasion was an outing led by Larry Helgerman in June 2008.

Verdin's "extra" nests can be used as roosting spots in the winter.

The female Verdin generally lays four eggs. They are pale blue or greenish-blue with red-brown speckles. Only the female incubates the eggs for about two weeks. The nestlings are fed by the female at the beginning, and the male also feeds them later. They fledge in around three weeks, but they use the nest as a roost for a while.

Another southwestern bird, the Cactus Wren, creates a similar nest. Both the male and female construct the nest either on Prickly Pear or Cholla cactus. These cacti with their dense spines are chosen as a natural defense against predators. Again the entrance is at the side, often facing the prevailing breezes for ventilation like the Verdin's nests. Also like the Verdin, more than one nest is built, with some being used for roosting. Construction is with twigs and dried grasses. The entrance is at the end of a tube which leads to a nest chamber lined with fine grass, plant down, and feathers.

The Cactus Wren lays from three to seven pinkish eggs. The female incubates the clutch just over two weeks. Both parents tend to the chicks that do not open their eyes for about a week like Bushtits. The young fledge in another two weeks and become independent 30 days later. Some juveniles help to care for the later broods of their parents.

Magpies also assemble elaborate nests, which are quite large and domed. The dome is for protection against predators,

*continued on page 10*

# The Peregrine



*CRISP AS A TEACUP – This nest in the crotch of two twigs is typical of a vireo's architecture – in this case, most likely a Red-eyed Vireo. Tom Moeller photographed it in 2009 at an outing led by Bob VanNewkirk at Sewickley Heights Park in 2009.*

## Observations

*continued from page 9*

especially crows and ravens. The Black-billed Magpie's nest may be three feet in diameter with one or more entrances. The Yellow-billed Magpie builds a smaller domed nest. The egg cup is made of mud or dung and sticks, lined with grass, rootlets, and hair. Both sexes work on the nest, the male doing the 'heavy lifting' of the larger sticks, while the female finishes the mud-based cup.

The magpies lay many eggs: Black-billed, five to nine; Yellow-billed, six to seven. Only the females brood the eggs for roughly three weeks in both species. The nestlings spend about four weeks in the nest fed by both parents. Not until they are around four months old are they completely self-sufficient. These relatively large birds of the crow family need more time to learn and mature.

The birds in this article spend a lot of effort to protect their young. There is something to that, since none are considered endangered. Plus, these intricate birds' nests are works of art!

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**Check out Tom's gallery of photos on the 3RBC website for more examples of "avian architecture." Tom, our Webmaster, and Peregrine Editor Paul Hess are collaborating closely to develop online "extras" for many articles in the newsletter, enabling more illustrations and details.**

**Tom has a fascinating sequel to his May/June 2017 Observations column: photographs of a melanistic Mourning Dove sporting a brownish black patch of feathers appearing almost as a crest on its crown.**

## Our Club Can Help Chimney Swifts

It's Chimney Swift nesting season. Your help is needed to track Chimney Swift Tower usage in southwestern Pennsylvania, enhancing Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's (ASWP) Chimney Swift conservation efforts for this severely declining species.

ASWP has installed more than 100 towers (example at right) in Allegheny County parks and other public spaces in our region. Swifts nest in late spring and early summer, entering and exiting a tower to bring food to nestlings. Next, in late summer and fall, you can see them entering the tower around dusk to settle in for the night.

These towers substitute for open-topped chimneys formerly used by swifts. Many older chimneys are no longer available because today's chimneys are often screened at the top.

You can help the conservation effort by recording a tower ID number on the green plaque, time of day, date, and swifts' activity. They may be entering or exiting the tower, or you may see them flying near the tower. Learn more about swifts and their need for conservation, and submit your observations to [www.aswp.org](http://www.aswp.org). See tower locations at <http://areg.is/1fPT9W> and click on the stars for details at the sites.

For questions, contact Sarah Koenig, ASWP Conservation Director, at [skoenig@aswp.org](mailto:skoenig@aswp.org) or (412) 963-6100 x26.



## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

### Nice Waterfowl Arrived in February–March 2018

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

A **Ross's Goose** was a nice find at Wingfield Pines 2/11-12 (DW, ST) providing the ninth county record. Another was found in Findlay Twp. 3/17 (GM). It flew off with a flock of Canada Geese and was not relocated. A white morph **Snow Goose** was found near Wingfield Pines 2/11 (FK). A flock of 53 **Tundra Swans** migrated past Dashields Dam 3/17 (GM) and 30 flew over Squirrel Hill 3/25 (TRh).

An **American Wigeon** was at Imperial 2/25 (MV), 2 were there 3/17 (GM), 2 were in Harmar Twp. 4/11 (TRBC) and 1 was at Wingfield Pines 4/21 (MJ). **Green-winged Teal** were reported on just two days in March. Single birds were in Aspinwall (JM, LN) and Imperial (GM), 6 were at Duck Hollow (SA, TM, NM) all 3/17, and 1 was at Wingfield Pines 3/18 (JF, MJ). Six **Northern Shovelers** were at Imperial 2/24 (MV). An immature male **Long-tailed Duck** settled at Riverfront Park on the Southside in Pittsburgh 2/20 (SA). It remained at least to 3/10 (v.o.) and offered extremely close views. It was associating with a female **Greater Scaup**, last seen 3/11 (v.o.). Two **White-winged Scoters** were found on the Allegheny River at Blawnox 3/18 (AH, PM).

A **Horned Grebe** was on the Allegheny River at Chapel Harbor 2/24 (SG). A **Red-necked Grebe** was a good find on the Allegheny River at Chapel Harbor 3/12 (MD). What was perhaps the same bird was found at Brunots Island on the Ohio River 3/17 (JM).

A **Greater Yellowlegs** first reported 3/30 at Imperial (MV). **Wilson's Snipe** has become a fairly regular, local winter resident. A single bird continued at Imperial from the last reporting period 2/14 (GM). A flock of 27 were there 3/30 (GM). **American Woodcocks** were first noted at Imperial 2/20 (AB) and at Boyce-Mayview Park 2/28 (GG).

A **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Dashields Dam 3/17 (GM). Continued cold weather in February resulted in rare gulls continuing in Pittsburgh. An interesting first-winter **Herring X Glaucous Gull** was a great find 2/9 and 2/12 (DW, ST, GM, SD). It looked like a first-winter Glaucous with dark wing tips. An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at The Point 2/8-10 (ST, DW, GM). A first-winter **Great Black-backed Gull** was at The Point 2/10 (ST). **Ring-billed Gull** numbers maxed at 6,800 at The Point 2/9 (DW, ST, GM).

**Short-eared Owl** sightings at Imperial continued from the last reporting period with a high count of 5 on 2/27 (JM). A light morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported at Imperial 2/8 (RMP) and 2/9 (GM, MV, JHA), and a light morph was at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. (GM) and nearby at Imperial (JM) 3/14. **Red-shouldered Hawks** were reported in West Deer Twp. 2/1 (AB) and at Imperial 2/17 (MF). A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** were observed on the Elizabeth Bridge 3/4 (KSJ). Observers will be keeping watch on this potential new nest site.

Two **Common Ravens** were in Greenfield 2/2 (KSJ). Eight **Fish Crows** were at Duck Hollow 3/17 (SA). This has become a very reliable location for this species.

A **Fox Sparrow** continued from January at a feeder in Pine Twp. up to 2/11 (PL, SL). Winter reports of **Rusty Blackbirds** are rare: 2 visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 2/28 (PL, SL), 2 were in Frick Park 3/9 (SA), and 2 were in South Park 3/17 (JF). Three



*SURPRISING VISITOR – Long-tailed Ducks were unusually abundant in western Pennsylvania during their migration northward in 2018. One spent several weeks on the Mon River in Pittsburgh where Mike Fialkovich photographed it closely (top), and Geoff Malosh saw it flexing its throat to gulp down a meal (middle). It was a short-tailed immature male. Steve Gosser shows what “long-tailed” means in his photo of an adult male at Kahle Lake on the Clarion/Venango County border on March 3, 2018.*

*continued on page 12*

## How to Save a Hungry Purple Martin Colony: Use Scrambled Eggs!

(Editor's Note: The author, a Natrona Heights resident, is a prominent Purple Martin expert. We asked him to describe his extraordinarily successful feeding method to save martins' lives during long bouts of bad weather. Read more about these marvelous birds at [www.purple-martin.org](http://www.purple-martin.org).)

By Ken Kostka

On April 26, 2018, I arrived at the Harrison Hills Purple Martin colony in Natrona Heights with a small tub of scrambled egg and a pocketful of plastic spoons. The martins at this colony had never been trained to accept supplemental feedings, but I had a hunch.

There were about 10 martins perched on the housing. It had been cool and rainy during the previous two days, with high temps in the 50s – not martin-killing weather, but I was sure the martins hadn't been finding many flying insects for the past few days and were hungry. As I approached the housing and flung a marble-sized chunk of scrambled egg about 20 feet into the air, three or four martins flew after it. One snagged it in midair and swallowed it! My hunch was correct!

Let me explain. I have a colony of martins in my yard about two miles away from the park, and "my" martins have been trained to accept supplemental feedings for quite a few years. But there had been a larger number of martins hanging around my colony for the previous week or so during cold snaps, and I suspected that this surplus of martins were possibly from nearby colonies. Also, I had removed one of my martin houses, and may have displaced some of my birds. Either some of my displaced martins had taken

### Birds in the Three Rivers

continued from page 11

**Red-winged Blackbirds** were in Jefferson Borough 2/11 (SSN), probably early migrants. An **Eastern Meadowlark** was at Imperial 2/25 (MV). A **Common Grackle** visited a feeder in Squirrel Hill 2/24 (MV) and 3 were in South Park 2/23 (DF), probably spring migrants. Eighteen **Brown-headed Cowbirds** visited the feeders at Beechwood Farms 2/2 (BSH) and three visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 2/3 (PL, SL).

A few **Pine Siskin** reports continued from the winter. One was in Franklin Park 3/4 (AH), one was in Sewickley Heights Park 3/29 (JM)

A leucistic **Northern Cardinal** was photographed in Hampton Twp. where it was observed during March. The first **Louisiana Waterthrush** report of the spring was 3/31 at Sewickley Heights Park (JM).

Observers: Sameer Apté, Alan Buriak, Michael David, Steve Denninger, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Donna Foyle, Gigi Gerben, Steve Gosser, Jim Hausman (JHA), Amy Henrici, Matthew Juskowich, Fred Kachmarik, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Rich McPeek (RMP), Pat McShea, Geoff Malosh, Nancy Moeller, Tom Moeller, Lauren Nagoda, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Kate St. John, Brian Shema (BSH), Sam Sinderson (SSN), Shannon Thompson, TRBC (Three Rivers Birding Club Members), Mark VanderVen (MVV), Mark Vass, Dave Wilton, various observers (v.o.).



FACING DANGER – These two Purple Martins arrived at Harrison Hills Park in Allegheny County on April 13 and faced possible starvation when rains made flying insects unavailable. Ken Kostka tells how he kept them alive. (photo by Dave Brooke)

up residence at the Harrison Hills colony, or some of the Harrison Hills martins had been hanging out at my colony, and had learned to feed while there.

I developed the emergency supplemental feeding technique while working as a research assistant and writer for the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) in Edinboro, Pennsylvania. Prior to the development of this feeding method, martins would simply die of starvation after three or four days of continuously cold or rainy weather, which deprives the air of flying insects, the martins only source of food.

Perhaps the best example of this is the massive die-off during Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972. In June, Agnes stalled over Pennsylvania and dumped 7 inches of rain over the course of six days, killing almost every Purple Martin adult and nestling in western Pennsylvania. Since constant, heavy rain prevents flying insects from taking flight, and since Purple Martins are "obligate aerial insectivores" – which is a fancy way of saying that they eat only flying insects – all the Purple Martins starved to death during the continuous rains associated with this 100-year weather event.

The idea for the emergency feeding technique came in part from an archived letter from a PMCA member who had witnessed martins landing on the ground to eat discarded crickets from a bait store. During a period of prolonged cold weather, I decided to take a fish tank full of live crickets to an Amish farm where the owner had reported his martins being close to starvation. I arrived and started tossing the crickets into the air near the perched martins.

After several dozen were flung, a martin took off and caught one in mid-air! The other martins soon caught on and within an hour, all 40 martins were hovering above as I madly flung more and more crickets into the air! Once the martins are trained to accept crickets, they will accept mealworms or scrambled egg if hungry enough.

When I returned to Harrison Hills on April 29, after another couple days of poor weather, there were about 20 martins present, and almost all went after and caught the tossed eggs!