



# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 18, No. 4, July/August 2019

### Roger Tory Peterson's Legacy Will Enthrall Us on August 7

Roger Tory Peterson, as most birders know, opened the gates to birding's golden age in 1934 with his pioneering *A Field Guide to the Birds*. The book not only offered a new method for identifying species but also inspired new interest in bird conservation.

We will learn about that achievement at the Three Rivers Birding Club meeting on August 7 in an inspiring program by Dr. Twan Leenders, President and Executive Director of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History in Chautauqua County, New York. His topic is "Continuing Roger Tory Peterson's legacy – Promoting the Study of Natural History to Better Protect Birds."

Twan's presentation will be in the Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue in Shadyside. Doors open at 6:30 PM for socializing, a business meeting begins at 7:30, and the program starts at 8:00.

He will tell us about the Institute's work with the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds in Connecticut and about his research trips to the tropics several times a year where he bands birds along with students. Twan is also a world-class photographer and will have an accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

A biologist from The Netherlands with a doctorate in biology, he specializes in animal ecology and conservation management. For more than 20 years Twan has carried out research on birds, mammals, and plants in various places on the planet.



*TROPICAL RESEARCH – Banding birds with his students in the tropics, Twan Leenders, our August 7 speaker, links science to conservation. (photograph from Roger Tory Peterson Institute)*

### "The Warbler Capital" Lives Up to Its Name – and More



Magee Marsh in Ohio is "The Warbler Capital of the World," as May 2019 proved. Two coveted species were a Kirtland's (left, photographed by Robert Greene) and a Connecticut (photographed by Phil Chaon). See Sue Solomon's report on pages 8 and 9, along with more photos taken by 3RBC members in northwestern Ohio. Those include coveted species besides warblers.



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



*GOLDEN GEM – A variety of tropical tanagers, such as this Golden Tanager, dazzled Sheree Daugherty and birding friends on their recent trip to Ecuador. (photograph by Michelle Kienholz)*

## President's Message

# Ecuador Thrilled Us with Mind-boggling Birds

**By Sheree Daugherty**

The Andes! Home to soaring peaks and the ancient Inca Empire. Also home to one of the most diverse birding hotspots on the planet. Fourteen intrepid adventurers set out on a birding tour arranged by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania through Holbrook Travel.

We arrived at the Mariscal Sucre International Airport 18 kilometers east of Quito at well past 10:00 PM. A glowing, golden half-moon hung sideways in the sky. Even the moon looks different at the equator!

Our trip covered a wide variety of habitats that ranged from an elevation of 3,000 to 4,000 feet to an ear-popping high of 14,295 feet. Quito, the second highest capital in the world, is nestled in the Andes at 9,350 feet, nearly two miles above sea level. We would explore both the eastern and western slopes of the Andes.

Ecuador's bird list is mind-boggling with more than 1,600 species. More than 130 species of hummingbirds have enticing names: Tourmaline Sunangel, Empress Brilliant, Shining Sunbeam and the largest hummingbird on earth, the aptly named Giant Hummingbird.

Our first stop to look for birds was on Nono Road in the Tadayapa Valley. A Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, a red and yellow bird, was one of the first birds spotted.

We enjoyed lunch al fresco at the Guaycapi Cafe near multiple sugar water and fruit feeding stations. Hummingbirds included Green-crowned Brilliant, Booted Racket-tail, and the dazzling Violet-tailed Sylph.

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Just down the road we made a stop at the Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve. Feeders were busy. A pair of Red-headed Barbets and a shy Crimson-rumped Toucanet feasted on fruit. Some tanagers enjoyed the bananas too, including Golden, Silver-throated, and Flame-rumped. We took a hike and quickly found a Crested Quetzal, a Great Thrush, and a Squirrel Cuckoo. At the river we watched a Torrent Tyrannulet perched on a rock in midstream.

Along with the incredible birds, the flora was spectacular. Orchids of all sizes and shapes were found high and low.

The variety of butterflies was impressive too. The big Blue Morphos were breathtaking, and dozens of unfamiliar species had cameras getting a workout.

An early wakeup at Sachatamia Lodge and off to the blind before sunrise. A lighted sheet had lured in an assortment of insects overnight, a smorgasbord for the birds. Fortune smiled, and a female Long-wattled Umbrella Bird cautiously approached the blind. A pair of Masked Trogons, Mountain Wrens, and Uniform Antshrikes snatched bugs from the sheet.

We started the day with a drive on a red dirt road along the Silanche Rio. At the river we saw both Ringed and Green Kingfishers and a Black-crowned Tityra. Heading up and away from the river, new birds were showing up one after another. Raptors included a Hook-billed Kite, Gray Hawk, and several Roadside Hawks. Lineated, Guayaquil, and Golden-

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## Outings to Come

### Let's Look for Fall Migrants on These Early Fall Walks

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

**Friday, August 23 – Sewickley Heights Park:** In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)) will lead this early-fall migration walk. Meet at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. For directions to the park, see the 3RBC website. Be prepared for muddy trails, and bring water and lunch or a snack to continue birding in the afternoon.

**Sunday, September 8 – Glade Run Lake Park:** Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at the park located along Lake Road in Valencia, which is off of Route 228 in southern Butler County. Google maps co-ordinates 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 out and 2 miles back. The trail can be muddy in places, so boots are highly recommended.

**Sunday, September 8 – Toms Run Nature Reserve:** Dave Yeany ([dyeany@paconserve.org](mailto:dyeany@paconserve.org); 814-221-4361) will lead us starting at 8:00 AM.

Meet at the parking lot at Toms Run Road, Sewickley, PA 15143 (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/fPjTYXi2gQrTFTqZ8>). The reserve is a 369-acre property protected by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, which is creating a new trail system and parking access. We should see variety of migrant passerines.

**Thursday, September 12 – Sewickley Heights Park:** In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694 or email at [van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)) will lead this outing. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the August 23 listing for details. After lunch, we will drive and make stops along Little Sewickley Creek.

**Saturday, September 14 – North Park:** Meet leader Steve Denninger ([sjdenninger@gmail.com](mailto:sjdenninger@gmail.com)) at a new location this year: the parking lot on Bucktail Drive (40.581146, -79.979668). We will start at 7:00 AM and head out at 7:05. The walk will include established paths and overgrown, potentially muddy trails, so hiking boots will be appropriate. The walk will include the main trail through the North Park Mine Waste Field/Pine Creek area, which is an eBird hot spot. The walk will take about 1.5-2.5 hours depending on bird activity. There are no restrooms in this area, but they are available at other places in the park.

**Saturday, September 21 – 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 (not all the way down to the soccer field). Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers and vireos.

**Sunday, September 22 – Pymatuning Area:** Meet leader Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; [van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)) at 8:30

AM in the parking lot at the former site of the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center (Waterfowl Museum), 12590 Hartstown Road, Linesville, PA (41.635779, -80.436634) for this all-day outing. Plenty of waterfowl, lots of Bald Eagles, and migrant songbirds should be around. Arrangements will be made to have lunch at Scooters by the Lake, near the Ohio side of the causeway, for those who are interested.

**Sunday, September 22 – Frick Park:** Jack and Sue Solomon (412-521-3365) will lead us starting at 8:30 AM. Meet at the Frick Environmental Center, 2005 Beechwood Boulevard, in Squirrel Hill. Frick can be an excellent migrant trap, where we hope to find lots of fall warblers.



*BRINGING UP BABY – Julie Zickefoose's June program was among our club's most memorable. Think about this: Every 30 minutes she had to interrupt her talk to feed a wee fledgling Orchard Oriole! Find out many more delights about this amazing experience on our 3RBC website. (photographs by Tom Moeller)*



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## President's Message

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olive Woodpeckers represented that family. Some birds were unbelievably colorful: Bay-headed Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, and Maroon-tailed Parakeets.

How hard is it to find a Choco Toucan? Easy for others, but it took me forever! "It's in the big leaves next to the white barked tree," I was told. Frustrating! Finally, with a lot of help, I was able to see the endemic toucan. Thanks! Black-mandibled Toucans and Collared Aracaris were easily spotted. Even by me!

We left Mindo early to get to Refugio Paz de las Aves in the Sangolqui Valley before dawn to witness the spectacle of a Cock-of-the-rock lekking site. We could hear the loud calls while hiking down a steep path. In the dim light, the cocks could be seen ping-ponging from tree to tree. As the light improved, the brilliant orange plumage was stunning. At least a dozen males displayed.

The lek is managed by Angel Paz and his extended family. Angel is best known as the "Antpitta Whisperer." He has trained the shy antpittas to respond to the call of names he has given them and come out of the dense forest for a tasty worm. Angel's brother, Rodrigo, first took us to see Dark-backed Wood-Quail which, after some coaxing, came out for an easy snack. Next we were led to see three antpitta species: Chestnut-crowned, Yellow-bellied, and Ochre-breasted. The small Ochre-breasted Antpitta was my favorite. Two came into view and put on a show with wing twitches and a little shimmy. Angel has christened the Ochre-breasted "Shakira" after the dancing Colombian singer.

After being charmed by the antpittas, we were treated to some traditional Ecuadorian food made by Rodrigo's wife, Diana Vera. Angel's son, Vinicio, served us big puffy empanadas and a dish made of green plantains, *bolón de verde*.

Leaving Refugio Pas de las Aves was bittersweet. We were all moved by the warmth and hospitality of the Paz family. They have found a new and satisfying way of life by showing others the avian treasures of the region. Previously, they had farmed and cut down trees to support themselves. In this case, the transformation to an ecotourism economy has been a win-win-win situation for wildlife, birders, and the people who live in Ecuador.

**(Part 2 in the next issue will take us to the high Andes.)**



*A TAIL TO REMEMBER – The tropics' famous hummingbirds include this Violet-tailed Sylph that delighted Sheree Daugherty in her recent tour of Ecuador. (photograph by Michelle Kienholz)*

## A Flying Pirate Steals a Meal

Amanda Haney photographed a rare example of behavior in May 2019 at Ohio's Howard Marsh Metropark:

"A Great Egret flew by with a goldfish. Suddenly, a Great Blue Heron swooped in and chased the egret. After a few minutes, the egret dropped the fish. The heron immediately grabbed it and gulped it down."

Heron sometimes chase egrets from a fishing spot, but *The Peregrine* editor found only two other cases of actual piracy: Great Blues pursued a Double-crested Cormorant and an Osprey until they dropped their fish.



# The Peregrine

## Outings Revisited

### We Enjoyed Another Migrant-filled Spring

**Yellow Creek State Park –April 6:** Fifteen birders gathered in the best weather yet for this outing. No fog, no rain, no snow... but waterfowl were sparser than normal for the first week of April.

Roger and I had arrived early to fill the bird feeder behind the office because the park manager had informed us that something – a raccoon or a bear – had been eating the seed at night. Birds were already feasting by the time everyone arrived. At the feeder were a Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2 Blue Jays, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches, 4 Black-capped Chickadees, 2 titmice, a goldfinch, and a cardinal. Under the feeder were 2 American Tree Sparrows and 3 juncos. In the surrounding trees we added a phoebe, a robin, and 2 cowbirds.

After we all introduced ourselves, we headed to the maintenance building. On Dragonfly Pond were 3 Ring-necked Ducks and 4 Buffleheads. The Canada Goose was on her nest with her mate in attendance.

We walked across Route 259 to check Yellow Creek Lake where we added 3 American Wigeons, 2 Mallards, 9 more Buffleheads, 3 Ruddy Ducks, 6 Horned Grebes, and 2 Common Loons. Lee Carnahan spotted an Osprey perched in his usual tree, so everyone was able to get excellent scope views. Tree Swallows were swooping about, with several landing on the nearby nest boxes. A bluebird perched on the speed limit sign. Other passerines here included another phoebe, a singing Chipping Sparrow, 3 Song Sparrows, 3 Red-winged Blackbirds, and a cardinal.

Our next stop was the boat launch, where ducks were 3 Blue-winged and one Green-winged Teal, 16 Gadwalls, 1 Mallard, 3 more Buffleheads, and a female Hooded Merganser. A kingfisher was perched across the cove, and 5 coots were feeding near the boat rental. Two Killdeer were on the mud. Four loons were visible, and we watched a Ring-billed Gull fly by. Feeding over the water were at least 2 Northern Rough-winged Swallows among the hungry Tree Swallows. A Downy Woodpecker rattled from the willow. As we prepared to head to the recreation area, 4 Golden-crowned Kinglets flew into the hemlocks and then moved closer to our group as they landed and flitted about in a nearby pine.

The recreational area is in poor condition with downed trees, no shrub understory, beach construction, and a lot of potholes in the roads. Lately we have seen few birds here, but we were happily surprised to find a nice variety today. Highlights included 2 Brown Creepers, a singing Pine Warbler, and a flicker. We also heard a Pileated Woodpecker. As we drove through the park to the parking lot for the Observatory Trail, we saw 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and at least 10 Rusty Blackbirds. A Turkey Vulture circled overhead. Everyone got a scope view of the sapsuckers.

A walk to the observatory yielded more species including a towhee along the trail, 2 Greater Yellowlegs and a Great Blue Heron in the marsh, and a fly-over Snow Goose! On the water we counted 58 Red-breasted Mergansers, 12 Horned Grebes, 15 American Coots, and 14 Ring-billed Gulls.

Seven of us went to Indiana for lunch at the Fortune Chinese Buffet. We enjoyed conversation and stories of birding trips. and said our good-byes till fall. **–by leader Margaret Higbee**

**Sewickley Heights Park – April 26:** The phrase “weathering the storm” was appropriate for the six birders who came for a joint outing with the Fern Hollow Nature Center. The outing was briefly



*SITTING PRETTY –Tree Swallows are typically the first swallows to appear in western Pennsylvania each year, and this one perched for a nice portrait by Roger Higbee at the April 6 outing at Yellow Creek State Park.*

delayed as we waited for a drenching shower to pass. A quick check on an iPhone weather map indicated that there would be a lull in the rain for about three hours. Prompted by that encouraging report, we were eager to see what species we might find.

Birding in the parking lot revealed the presence of goldfinches, cardinals, robins, and bluebirds. The bluebirds were nesting in the bird box close by. We took this level of activity as a good omen. Soon, we noted some migrants including Eastern Towhee, Blue-headed Vireo, Chipping Sparrows, Purple Finches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. We heard the calls of a Pileated Woodpecker and Carolina Wrens.

The horse pastures along the Bayberry Trail turned out to be birdy with sightings of many Barn Swallows and a few Tree Swallows constantly coursing their way over the fields in search of insects. A Killdeer was briefly sighted before it flew off. Scanning a cluster of trees on the hillside revealed a dark silhouette perched

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*LOOK CLOSELY – See those little black spots at the lower left? They are Brown-headed Cowbirds living up to their name by feeding among long-horned cattle on April 26 at the Sewickley Heights outing on April 26. (photograph by Michelle Kienholz)*

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## Outings Revisited

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in one. It was identified as an American Kestrel as it flew away.

There was one pasture sectioned off that I was anxious for everyone to see. If we were lucky, I told everyone, we might see a group of Long-horned Cowbirds. The Cowbirds were really Texas Longhorns. There were four of them along with three calves. Like a pastoral scene reminiscent of the Old West, there were six Brown-headed Cowbirds and some Red-winged Blackbirds on the ground close to the bovines.

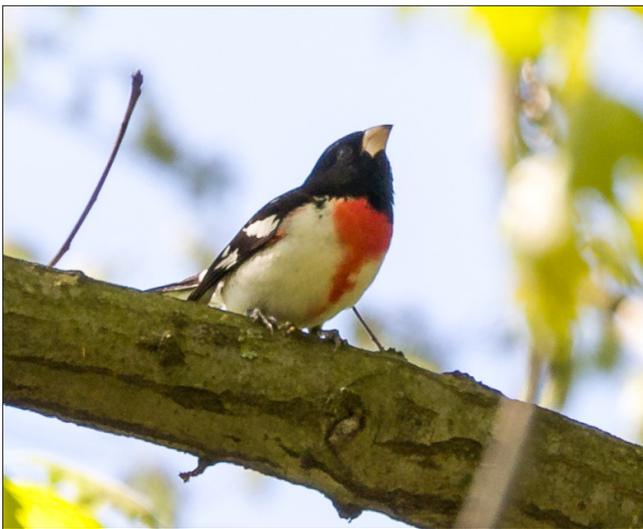
As we headed back via Laurel Trail, a Broad-winged Hawk flew overhead. Our only White-breasted Nuthatch was also discovered. We spied a flock of warblers foraging high in the tree canopy consisting of Yellow-rumped Warblers and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Picking out other warblers was made difficult by the increasing wind and darkening clouds.

As we rushed back to the parking lot to avoid an imminent downpour, a Field Sparrow was heard calling. This was the last bird for our list of 30 species. Despite the rain, it was a wonderful morning to be out on the trails. **—by leader Bob VanNewkirk**

**Frick Park –April 27:** After several rainy spring days in a row, Jack and Sue Solomon led a group of approximately 40 birders on a hike through Frick Park on a sunny Saturday morning. The birders met at the Environmental Education Center at 8:30 AM arriving alongside many volunteers coming to support the EEC’s Earth Day celebration. Everyone was greeted at the feeders by starlings, Chipping Sparrows, a Hairy Woodpecker, and the first Rose-breasted Grosbeak of the season.

Jack and Sue started the walk through the windy meadow on the Clayton Hill trail down to the South Clayton Loop where Song Sparrows, and a Carolina wren took shelter in deer-deterrent brush fences built by park staff. At South Clayton loop, the birders split into groups for ease of communication, either following Jack around the Clayton Loop or following Sue up Riverview Extension to the Great Horned Owl nest.

Birders of all experience levels contributed their eyes and ears to the cause, spotting several Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, White-throated Sparrows, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet alongside Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern Towhee, Carolina



*A NICE FIRST – This Rose-breasted Grosbeak was the first of the year for many participants on the April 27 outing at Frick Park. (photograph by Dave Brooke)*



*PEEK-A-BOO –A mostly hidden Virginia Rail is often the best look at this marsh-dweller that birders have. Sally Ingraham managed to photograph this one at Frick Park on April 19. Unfortunately, it was not seen on the April 27 outing at the park.*

Chickadees, Blue-headed Vireo, and two Yellow-rumped Warblers. The ones that got away without confirmed ID were a gull, a small bird of prey, and a possible Least Flycatcher. One highlight of the morning was viewing a Great Horned Owl pecking its head out of the nest waiting for its parents to bring back some breakfast.

A couple who are new to the area, Alex Tausanovitch and his partner Cyndee, took the walk around the Clayton Loop. According to Alex, “At first, it was looking like the birds had taken the day off, but after a while – thanks to Jack’s intrepid leadership – our luck changed, with a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, and a few others all in the same spot. We were excited to join the club for the outing. We look forward to the next outing!”

A small contingent of birders had such a wonderful morning that they decided to carry on after the official walk was over, taking a loop around the Riverview Trail. They were rewarded with sightings of a Wild Turkey, an adult Great Horned Owl, several Purple Finches, a flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Yellow Warbler, a Nashville Warbler, and a few Black-throated Green Warblers. It was a morning to remember, and a lovely time was had by all. **—by participant Charity Kheshgi**

(Co-leader Sue Solomon added, “As four of us wended our way back to the parking lot, Dan Weeks found us our first Blue-winged Warbler of 2019 –a great way to conclude our walk.”)

**Glade Run Lake – April 28:** Twelve hearty birders showed up in 43-degree, damp and overcast weather for our Glade Run Lake spring outing. We walked out on the fishing pier and were treated to good views of a male Belted Kingfisher flying past us and a Spotted Sandpiper walking across the walkway. We also had a Warbling Vireo singing first in the parking lot and then close to the lake.

When started along the trail, some of the group turned back while the rest slogged on through ankle-deep mud in search of a Virginia Rail and a Sora. We found both in the same locations where I had found them in earlier in the week. On the way back 2 Soras were heard, one in the same place as earlier and one out on an island across from that location. We covered 3.5 miles in 3 hours

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## Outings Revisited

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and 24 minutes, and we listed 44 species. —by leader **Dave Brooke**

**Moraine State Park – May 3:** Thirteen birders led by Karyn Delaney met at the McDanel's Boat Launch on the North Shore. It was a bit cool with an overcast and threatening sky. As I drove into the parking lot, I got my first look at Purple Martins this year as they clustered and chattered around the Martin House. It's so nice to see them, although we always worry that the weather will turn too cold for them!

While we waited for late-comers, we listened to a spring symphony of Eastern Phoebes, American Robins, Eastern Towhees, Yellow Warblers, American Goldfinches, Chipping Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Northern Cardinals. With the announcement that the Osprey was back and on the nest, the group migrated closer to the boat launch for a better look. An Orchard Oriole was singing and was easy to see at the top of a tall tree. A Double-crested Cormorant flew over. In addition to the martins, Tree and Barn Swallows were also flying.

Setting off on the North Country Trail, we heard an Eastern Kingbird, a White-eyed Vireo, a Blue-winged Warbler, and a Common Yellowthroat calling from the bushes, but they stayed well-hidden for most of us.

Quite a few people remarked that this two-mile loop was new for them, as they generally do most of their birding on the South Shore of the park. As we continued, a House Wren dared other birds to invade his territory and a few people in the back spotted a Tennessee Warbler. Everyone saw a Great Crested Flycatcher, and most of us were able to get on a Cape May Warbler. A buzzing in the tree tops alerted us to a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher while Song Sparrows and Baltimore Orioles sang around us. Although a Yellow-rumped Warbler was the only one we saw, our first Hooded Warbler was one of at least half a dozen that would sing throughout the morning.

Carolina Wrens and Scarlet Tanagers were singing, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker and a Black-capped Chickadee called as we crossed the recently-built bridge over Muddy Creek. A pipe with water gurgling out of the ground has puzzled many of us over the years, and Karyn reported that she had learned from a geologist who had formerly worked at the park that it is an artesian well. This has always been a good spot for warblers, and we noted Blue-winged, Palm, and Black-throated Green Warblers in the area.

Karyn also learned from the geologist that, in addition to the artesian well, the concrete pad to the left of the well was the remains of a roller skating rink which was part of an old amusement park called Shawwood Park. There is very little information online about the former park, unfortunately, other than a few comments found online on The Butler Pennsylvania Blog. Apparently Stanley Shaw owned and operated the park for years until the Moraine State Park takeover. There was an entry road off Route 422, and the road and roller skating rink pad are now being used for maintenance purposes by the park personnel. There were several picnic pavilions, row boats, a "dance land," a merry-go-round, bumper cars, and other carnival type activities. Martin Carlin mentioned that he has many photos of the area and park, which we hope he will share one day.

While we admired a tree full of white blossoms, we were thrilled to see a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a first of the season for many of us. A second hummer appeared and they did what Ruby-throats usually do, which is to chase each other!

As we walked back up to the Lake Arthur dam, we noticed

Northern Rough-winged Swallows flying over the water. Continuing along the North Country Trail, a Forster's Tern was seen sitting on a buoy, and we saw another fly over it. Searching the rocky bank for shorebirds, we saw a Spotted Sandpiper bobbing along. Waterfowl were becoming scarce. We saw one Canada Goose, one Mallard, and one Ruddy Duck. We glimpsed a Great Blue Heron. A little later, a birder in the back came up to report that he had seen five Ring-billed Gulls after most of the group had moved on.

We were in a good area for warblers and other small birds, but the rain which had held off until now began in earnest, and we decided to retrace our steps back to the parking lot as quickly as we could. People's raincoats, including mine, were beginning to fail!

Most people left at this point, but six of us took shelter in one of the pavilions, hoping that the rain would let up. Mike Shaffer, the Education Specialist for Moraine, was talking to some young schoolchildren in the pavilion, and Martin Carlin and Ray Delaney wandered over to tell them about the birds we had been seeing. While we waited to dry off, we spotted a warbler in a nearby tree and were able to determine that it was a Chestnut-sided Warbler, finally getting an excellent look when it came lower in the branches.

After drying off, those who remained walked to the Purple Martin field and started off toward the Butterfly Trails, dodging numerous earth-moving machines. Karyn had found the last time she was here that part of the trail from the back of the pavilion was a six-inch-deep mud field. The park people were in the process of moving gravel to improve the path. The usual Common Yellowthroats and Yellow Warblers were singing, and we also heard an Eastern Phoebe and more Towhees.

At the Butterfly Trails, we glimpsed a Green Heron, a Blue-winged Warbler sang, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, hopped acrobatically in a tree, and a Broad-winged Hawk called.

We listed 62 species, including nine warblers. Thank you, Karyn, for introducing us to a wonderful birding habitat! —by participant **Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Look for more May and June outing reports in the September/October issue of *The Peregrine*.



*A BETTER LOOK – Dave Brooke photographed this Virginia Rail on April 22 at Glade Run Lake in Butler County. Birders on his April 28 outing at the lake also listed this often hard-to-see bird.*

## “Biggest Week” Indeed: 3RBC Members Tally a Record 215 Species

By Sue Solomon

“The Biggest Week in American Birding” is sponsored by Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO). It attracted more than 90,000 birders to Magee Marsh and other birding hot spots in northwestern Ohio, who spent an estimated \$40 million dollars there during May 2019.

This year our combined Three Rivers Birding Club members listed at least 215 species – a record total since I started collecting data many years ago. The tally included 36 species of warblers.

We saw more young birders, many with the Ohio Young Birders Club. A birder named Travis celebrated his 16th birthday by finding the first Townsend’s Warbler ever seen during the festival. His Tweet alerted 3RBC member Sally Ingraham and guides from Wildside Nature Tours who shared his find near Maumee Bay Lodge. Tweets and sharing birds are a big part of the Magee magic.

Driving back from lunch on May 15, we saw Chuck Herrold, who said, “There’s supposed to be a Connecticut here.” For more than two hours, hundreds of birders swarmed along the road to see the rare and elusive warbler. (See Chuck’s comment below.)

Not one, but three Kirtland’s Warblers shared the woods with us. I saw the first one on the big loop of the boardwalk on May 3. On May 7, one appeared on Estuary Trail and another near Howard Marsh. Other rarities included Geoff Malosh’s rare Ruff, Bob Machesney’s Red Knot, Rebecca Serey’s King Rail, Deborah Kibble’s (“Kibby’s”) American Avocet, and Claire Staples’ Prairie Warbler.

Seventy 3RBC members and friends visited Magee Marsh this May. Some came for only a day, and others came for a month. We ranged in age from 8 months to 80 years. Magee (called “The Warbler Capital of the World”) did not disappoint. We shared meals and stories with many friends from all over. My favorites: seeing three Black Terns at dusk with Joan Tague; eating “lifer pie” at Blackberry Corner with Chuck Herrold, and getting my husband, Jack, on a singing Connecticut Warbler. (See Jack’s comment below.)

Those Connecticut and Kirtland’s warblers are “the most photographed in the world,” according to world-renowned expert Kenn Kaufman. I enjoyed one of Kenn’s sold-out talks about his newest book *A Season on the Wind*. He shares his love of the birds and the struggles they face during migration. He hopes more birders will aid conservation efforts.

Many bird tour companies donate their time to BSBO leading walks and tours, giving talks, or just aiding birders in the field. Guides from Wildside Nature Tours have led tours in nine of the ten festival years. Tropical Birding Tours has been a colorful and helpful aid all 10 years. Their wild tropical PJs caught everyone’s attention for 21 days at the Magee boardwalk.

Next year’s festival starts on May 8. Hope to see you there.

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### Some Samples of the Thrills

**Chuck Herrold and Bill Moore:** We have visited Magee Marsh every year since 2006 or so for the great variety of



*OHIO HIGHLIGHTS – Mike Fialkovich offers us a dramatic look at a Baltimore Oriole at Magee Marsh this spring. Not so dazzling but much rarer in Ohio were these pairs of Wilson’s Phalaropes (center) and courting Black-necked Stilts (bottom) photographed by Robert Greene in May at Howard Marsh. Stilts bred at the marsh for the first time last year. Wilson’s Phalaropes have been confirmed breeding only a few times in northwestern Ohio, but this pair may not have remained to breed.*



*continued on page 9*

# The Peregrine

## Biggest Week

*continued from page 8*

migrating warblers. Most of them are now familiar, but others are a great surprise. We were coming off the boardwalk one afternoon when we spotted a cluster of people intently looking for a bird along the edge of the woods. Their leader described what could only be a Connecticut Warbler, though he didn't name the bird and sought as much information as he could from his companions. The bird seemed to have disappeared, but some minutes later another person found it nearby, and soon a crowd gathered hoping for a good look as the warbler walked back and forward, left and right, at times obscured by brushy tangles but then in the open. While I had never seen one, I knew exactly what to look for, and after some tense moments got a very clear view, thereby filling a longstanding gap in my warbler list. And that's why Bill and I come to Magee every May.

**Rebecca Serey:** I was able to spend several days in the Magee Marsh area during the spring migration this year. It was time enough to explore Howard Marsh (a new Toledo Metropark) where Yellow-headed Blackbirds and a King Rail provided spectacular views. Also, the Horned Larks were "lifers" and put on a great display on the parking lot stones. It was also time enough to introduce a couple of non-birder friends from Pittsburgh to birdwatching. Spring migration on the Magee Marsh boardwalk is an amazing way to introduce newcomers. My friends were enthralled by the Bald Eagle's nest, the tiny, colorful warblers, orioles, tanagers, herons, and even the common Red-winged Blackbirds, grackles, and catbirds which are also quite beautiful and amazing when you're noticing them for the very first time. Seeing all the birds, even the "commoners," with this perspective really added to the spring migration experience for me.

**Jack Solomon:** Though some are discouraged from going to Magee Marsh because of the crowds on the boardwalk, the presence of lots of birders rarely bothers me. To the contrary: if it weren't for the presence of so many birders, many better at spotting and naming birds than I, much of what's on my list would have been missed. And it's great to see the friends that I only see once a year, on the boardwalk at Magee. Finally, though of course like everyone else it's the warblers that I want, it would be a sad note had I missed Blanding's turtle, which I've seen nowhere else than Magee or the spots nearby.

**Debbie Kalbfleisch:** Kate St. John motioned toward the ground in front of us. "Female Yellow-headed Blackbird! Do you see it?" The short grass at Howard Marsh was populated by many dandelions in bloom, but I was having trouble spotting a bird . . . any bird! As I anxiously scanned the ground, one of the dandelions slowly shuffled to the right. Lifer!

3RBC members sent us dozens of photographs from Magee Marsh and other areas in northwestern Ohio. Among the photos, besides the illustrations in this issue of *The Peregrine*, look for two more by member Geoff Malosh, featured on our website.

One species is a rare shorebird anywhere in the U.S. The other is a specialty in northwestern Ohio at the eastern edge of its breeding range. Geoff recently moved from Allegheny County to Ohio but remains enthusiastically interested in Pennsylvania's birds.



*BEAUTIFUL SINGER – Birders sometimes see Yellow-headed Blackbirds in northwestern Ohio in May, but the birds are not usually singing. Lauren Nagoda photographed this songster broadcasting its territory during “The Biggest Week” in 2019.*



*EXCITING RARITY – One of the rarest birds found in Ohio during May 2019 was this Townsend's Warbler, a breeding resident of the far western U.S. and Canada. Roger Neckles managed to photograph it high in a tree. Celebrating the discovery (below) are Sally Ingraham and guides from Wildside Nature Tours. Sally was the only 3RBC member fortunate enough to see it. The cards are not always dealt fairly to birders, as we all know.*



# The Peregrine

## Observations

### Chipping Sparrows: Persevering Parents

By Tom Moeller

Robins are often cited as harbingers of spring, but Canadian robins migrate south to our area to spend “milder” winters here. Thus, we can find robins here long before spring. A truer harbinger of spring is the Chipping Sparrow, which arrives in April. These sparrows mostly winter in the southern U.S, while some may go as far south as Nicaragua. Few if any remain in Pennsylvania for the winter.

After a spring head molt, losing their winter caps of brown streaked with black, Chipping Sparrows become delicate, little sparrows with distinctive rufous caps, bold white eyebrows, and crisp black eye lines. In breeding colors their beaks are dark, and the breasts are clear gray lacking any central spot such as many sparrows have. The Chipping Sparrows’ rumps are also gray while their backs are brown with splashes of black. Two white wing bars can be seen, the upper one more distinctly. There is no appreciable difference between the sexes.

The Chipping Sparrow gets its name from its song, which is really just a series of chips – not complicated and not very musical. Males use this song to establish their territory from high points in trees, but a softer series of chips can be used by both males and females to communicate. As with most sparrows, a sharp chip may indicate danger while a soft chip is another communication between mates. I’ve also seen two males defend their territories in confrontational flights at each other up into the air.

Chipping Sparrows are relatively tame, not startled by humans. In fact, the birds can readily be seen nearby on the ground in parks, yards, or gardens. Normally the birds forage for seeds on the ground, but a “chipper” will use unoccupied feeders, too. Its small size and generally docile nature make it shy away from larger feeder birds.

The female Chipping Sparrow will build its nest alone as the male keeps watch nearby. Nests are often placed in evergreen trees or bushes, although vines or other trees or bushes may be used. The female collects grasses, rootlets, and hair to build the cup-shaped nest, constructing it during the mornings in about 3 or 4 days. She lays an average of four eggs, one a day. She alone begins incubation at the next-to-last egg for an 11- to 14-day period, being fed by the male. The eggs are light blue with dark markings around the fatter end of the shell. The nestlings spend 9 to 12 days in the nest, brooded by the female but fed by both parents. The young can fly at two weeks, but the adults will still feed them for three or four more weeks.

Juvenile Chipping Sparrows do not look like their parents. Like several other sparrow species in which adults have clear breasts (American Tree, Field, Lark, Swamp, etc.), the juveniles have streaked breasts. The young “chipper’s” streaks may cause a casual observer to think it is a Song Sparrow. (See “Observations: The Next Generation” in the Sept/Oct 2018 edition of *The Peregrine* [Vol. 17, No. 5] for other juvenile birds that do not look like their parents.)

Chipping Sparrows usually raise two broods in a season. The parents may still be feeding their first fledglings while preparing for the second nest and clutch of eggs. Well into their second round, the crisp, bright colors of the spring have become faded and worn on the parent birds. The bright rufous cap is now a dull chestnut, wing and tail feathers show fraying, and the birds are



*SPRING BEAUTY* – Tom Moeller photographed this Chipping Sparrow in fresh spring plumage at his feeder in Squirrel Hill. In Tom’s 3RBC online gallery, compare its plumage to a fall adult’s worn feathers, and see a whole chronicle of this species’ year.

ready for their fall molt into basic plumage.

Despite their tiny stature and rudimentary song, Chipping Sparrows still can bring new lives into the world through perseverance and dedication to their offspring.

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Check out Tom’s online photo gallery depicting facets of Chipping Sparrows’ behavior, the subtle seasonal differences in adults’ plumage, and the heavy streaks on juveniles that camouflages them so well that we can barely discern a fledgling against its background. There is a lot we can learn about even the most common backyard species if we watch them closely.

## A Visit to the World's Most Remote Archipelago: Hawaii

By Kate St. John

In early March four members of Three Rivers Birding Club – Karyn Delaney, Kathy Saunders, Donna Foyle, and I – went on the spring 2019 Victor Emanuel Nature Tour to Hawaii. We expected to see a tropical paradise, we hoped to see Hawaii's endemic birds, and we were surprised at the number of introduced species on the islands, many of them life birds.

The long flight across North America and the Pacific Ocean convinced us that Hawaii is truly remote. Once there, we adjusted rapidly to the five-hour time zone change. The scenery was gorgeous, our guides Erik Brunhke and Jacob Drucker were excellent, the accommodations were comfortable, and the food was delicious. The tour was great.

Donna Foyle took photographs, and I was our scribe. Before the trip I learned about the birds and landscape and wrote about them ahead of time, scheduling my blog posts at *Outside My Window* ([www.birdsoutsidemymywindow.org](http://www.birdsoutsidemymywindow.org)) to coincide with the birds we'd see each day. Rather than repeat those 13 posts, which you can read at [<https://tinyurl.com/y4grvrdj>] I'll leave you with my impressions of the trip:

- Hawaii is the most remote archipelago in the world. It rivaled the Galapagos for biodiversity until humans arrived in 400 A.D. Since then, most of the endemic birds have gone extinct including 70% of Hawaiian honeycreepers. This has made Hawaii the Extinction Capital of the World. However, it is also the most forward-thinking place for saving endangered species. [<https://tinyurl.com/y2ddmauf>]

- By the early 1920s so many birds were gone that people introduced tropical species from around the world. The introduced species tend to live in towns. The most common bird in Honolulu is the Common Myna, a distant relative of our European Starlings. [<https://tinyurl.com/y2qrljll>]

- Mosquitoes didn't exist in Hawaii until 1826. Avian diseases, caught from mosquitoes, are driving many endemic birds toward extinction. [<https://tinyurl.com/y2ddmauf>]

- In Hawaii you can see land creation and erosion happening every day. Last year's eruption made huge fissures, and lava flowed to the sea, closing quite a few roads. Volcanoes National Park is well worth a visit. [<https://tinyurl.com/y5ju5cp9>]

- Hilo, Hawaii, is the origin of the Pacific Tsunami Warning System because they were wrecked without warning by a 26-foot tsunami in 1946. [<https://tinyurl.com/yxsddcmh>]

- We saw 78 species, of which 50 were life birds for me. My favorites were:

White Tern [<https://tinyurl.com/y4p5c331>],  
Laysan Albatross [<https://tinyurl.com/yxxtqtxp>],  
and the bright red I'iwi [<https://tinyurl.com/y4llsmva>].



*JAVA SPARROW* – This species, unrelated to our “sparrows,” is a southeastern Asia native introduced to Hawaii by humans, where it has found a fine new home. (photograph by Donna Foyle)



*RED-CRESTED CARDINAL* – Native to South America, this photogenic species is another of many birds introduced into Hawaii by humans. (photograph by Donna Foyle)



*HAWAIIAN GOOSE* – Also known as the Nene, it lives only in Hawaii, where it neared extinction in the 20th century. Captive breeding revives its population. (photograph by Donna Foyle)

## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

# Feb.–March 2019 Brought a Good Waterfowl Variety

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

**Tundra Swans** were heard over Verona after dark 2/27 (SK). The white morph **Snow Goose** reported during the last period in Allegheny Cemetery continued in the Lawrenceville area and was noted on the Allegheny River 2/2 (JVA, OL, TH). Perhaps the same bird was at North Park 2/21 (LS).

**American Wigeons** are never common in the county at any time. Four birds were on the Allegheny River in Cheswick 2/10 (BMu, JHa), 3 were at Imperial 3/1-2 (MV et al.), up to 3 were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 3/2-9 (JHa, MV), 2 were at Wingfield Pines 3/10 (GG), and 1 was at Duck Hollow 3/12 (TM, NM). Three **Gadwalls** continued from January at the small wetland behind the Target shopping center in Harmar Twp. during February (v.o.), 4 were at Duck Hollow 2/3 (MJ, RT, JHa), and 7 were there 3/12 (TM, NM). Two **Northern Shovelers** were at Imperial 3/15 (MV). Two **Northern Pintails** were present at Imperial 3/1-2 (MV et al.).

A few **Canvasbacks** were present for most of February with a high count of 8 at Duck Hollow 2/2 (TM, NM, AP). Two **Ring-necked Ducks** were at Woods Run 2/1 (AP et al.) and 1 was at Duck Hollow 2/19 (TM, NM). At Duck Hollow, 2 two **Greater Scaup** and 3 **Lesser Scaup** were identified on 2/2 (TM, NM).

A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Cheswick 2/10 (BMu, JHa). **Red-breasted Merganser** is the least common merganser here. Two were at Duck Hollow 2/3 (JHa, RT, MJ) and 3 were found on the Ohio River at Brunots Island 2/10 (JP, JF, MJ, MM) and 2/16 (RT). Nine **Redheads** were at Imperial 3/1 (MV) followed by 17 on 3/2 (MF, JHa, LN, LK). A nice count of 8 **Long-tailed Ducks** were on the Allegheny River at Aspinwall 3/30 (OL, JVa). Eight **Ruddy Ducks** were at Duck Hollow 3/25 (JF, MJ).

A **Common Loon** was at North Park 3/26 (OM), and 3 were at Duck Hollow 3/31 (LN, MK). **Red-necked Grebe** is an uncommon migrant and always a nice find. One was on the Allegheny River at Chapel Harbor 3/8 (TH et al.) and one was on the same river at Tarentum 3/11 (DB). A **Horned Grebe** was present at Duck Hollow 2/22-24 (reported to TM) and 1 at Brunots Island on the Ohio River 2/27 (eBird).

An adult **Northern Goshawk** was a surprise sight perched in a tree in Natrona Heights 2/5 (PH). The bird remained for only a few minutes before flying off. Three **Merlins** were at Schenley Park 2/9 (KSJ). An eBird entry with a photo came from North Park 2/5, and the bird was seen into March (BM). Two Merlins were at Mt. Royal Cemetery in Shaler Twp. 2/9 (JH) and 1 was seen in flight in Bethel Park 2/13 (GG).

A bit unusual for March, 10 **Bonaparte's Gulls** were a nice find at Duck Hollow 3/25 (JF, MJ).

A **Barred Owl** was found at the PennDot wetlands in Upper St. Clair 3/8 (JP, JF) where they are resident. A **Northern Shrike** was at Imperial 2/3 (MV) and relocated 2/18 (MV). The last occurrence in the county was at Imperial in 2015.

**Fish Crows** were daily visitors in a Verona neighborhood during the season (SK). This is a new location for this localized species.

Returning **Tree Swallows** were reported at Wingfield Pines 3/29 (2 birds) (JP), 3/30 at Harrison Hills Park (2 birds) (DB), and 6 at Lock and Dam No.4 on the Allegheny River at Natrona 3/30 (AH, PM).

A few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** remained at feeding stations through the season. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** are not winter residents here, so 1 visiting a yard in the East End of Pittsburgh in mid-February (MD) was unusual.

A rare winter **Gray Catbird** reported in Monroeville in January remained until 2/18 (RH). Another extremely early (or perhaps overwintering) individual was at North Park 3/2 (MJ, SR, JB).

**Purple Finches** were present throughout February in Pine Twp. (PL, SL) and North Park (v.o.). **Pine Siskins** visited feeders in small numbers during the season. The highest number were at North Park, where 12 were tallied (v.o.) at the Latodami Nature Center feeders.

Two **Eastern Towhees** were at Harrison Hills Park 2/10 (AH, PM). This species is an uncommon winter resident here. **Chipping Sparrows** are rare in winter, so any reports are unexpected: 6 were in Cheswick 2/10 to at least 2/22 (MJ, MM, JP, JF et al.), and 1 visited a feeder in Harmar Twp. 2/23 (JV). **Field Sparrows** are uncommon in winter. Up to 2 were in Pine Twp. in early February (PL, SL). Very unusual in winter, 2 **Vesper Sparrows** visited a feeding station in Pine Twp. 2/8 (PL, SL).

Reports of arrivals and migrant **Red-winged Blackbirds** occurred during most of February. An **Eastern Meadowlark** was a surprise at Imperial 2/2 (MF, MVV). There have been late fall reports and a few winter reports in recent years, so this species may winter at the site. That may change as development continues to consume the grasslands.

A flock of 10 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** visited Findlay Twp. 2/24 (MV). Almost every winter there are a few reports of a small flock that appears at a location briefly, then moves on. Five **Rusty Blackbirds** stopped by a feeder in Pine Twp. 3/13 (PL, SL). A total of 60 **Common Grackles** were with them, which is a bit early for this species to return.

The only report of **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was 1 at Cheswick 2/22 (AP, LC, SA, TRh).

*Observers: John Bauman, Dave Brooke, Michael David, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Rebecca Hart, Jim Hausman (JHa), Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Joyce Hoffmann, Todd Hooe, Mathew Juskowich, Lisa Kaufman, Michelle Kienholtz, Scott Kinzey, Oliver Lindhiem, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Pat McShea, Bob Machesney, Michelle Mannella, Oscar Miller, Nancy Moeller, Tom Moeller, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Lauren Nagoda, Joe Papp, Sheila Rygwelski, Aidan Place, Kate St. John, Liz Spence, Ryan Tomazin, Jim Valimont, Mark VanderVen (MVV), Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVa), various observers (v.o.).*

