



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 19, No. 3, May/June 2020

Safety First: Our May and June Outings and the June Meeting Are Cancelled

To help protect our members' health and in an abundance of caution over the spread of COVID-19, the Three Rivers Birding Club is cancelling our June 3 meeting and all of our May and June outings.

Public health experts emphasize the danger of direct person-to-person contact, and our club's leadership team will

continue to monitor the experts' advice and government rules and recommendations.

We hope to resume our regular meeting schedule with the August 5 program by Dr. Bruce Beehler as well as resume our popular array of fall outings. Please check the 3RBC website frequently for further updates.

Are You Staying at Home? Watch Birds on Webcams

Peregrine Falcons - Cathedral of Learning

<https://tinyurl.com/yaas4kxl>

Pittsburgh Hays Bald Eagle Nest

<https://tinyurl.com/yvzv2ejs>

Hanover Bald Eagles (Hanover, PA)

<https://tinyurl.com/soxpwgy>

Moraine State Park Osprey Cam

<https://tinyurl.com/y7ed4kq9>

Bird Feeder Webcams

<https://tinyurl.com/y8fffdk7>

The Cornell Lab's "All About Birds" Cams

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/all-cams>

PixCams Live Streaming Cameras

<https://tinyurl.com/ydb222s3>

Big Sur Condor Cams (California Condors)

<https://tinyurl.com/yc4ysjyx>

Chesapeake Bay Osprey Cam

<https://tinyurl.com/y7jccfn5>

Monterey Bay Aquarium Aviary Cam (California)

<https://tinyurl.com/ycthoppp>

Paton Center for Hummingbirds (Arizona)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9smuvu7>

Penguin Habitat Webcam (Aquarium of the Pacific)

<https://tinyurl.com/yaoryl55>

Sabal Palm Sanctuary Webcam (Texas)

<https://tinyurl.com/ybcaxbmr>

Tucson Audubon Society Western Screech-Owl Box

<https://tinyurl.com/yd3s756v>



A PITTSBURGH FIRST—The now-famous Hays Bald Eagle nest overlooking the Monongahela River began to be streamed online in 2013 thanks to a collaboration by the CSE Corporation and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. Each year we have been able to watch these eagles' historic urban nest.

Watch Your Yard, Too!

Dave Brooke photographed this Rose-breasted Grosbeak at his feeder in Natrona Heights, Allegheny in May 2017. You may have such a treat and many other surprises if you pay lots of attention to your feeders every day.



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

President's Message

Whooping Cranes in Texas

By Sheree Daugherty

For the first time since the late 1800s there are more than 500 Whooping Cranes in the Aransas/Wood Buffalo population. In 1941 there were only 15 birds. All of the Whooping Cranes alive today, both wild and captive, are descendants of that small group.

This flock winters in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in coastal Texas and breeds in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada's Northwest Territories. The park has the only natural nesting habitat for the endangered crane. Twice a year the cranes make a 2,500-mile migration. It is the only self-sustaining flock in the world (although a small non-migratory population has been artificially introduced into central Florida with mixed success).

I recently traveled to Aransas NWR hoping to see the rare cranes. We arrived at the Fulton Harbor dock for a half-day Whooping Crane and Coastal Birding Tour aboard the *M.V. Skimmer*. You can choose a seat on the enclosed lower deck of the boat and enjoy a complimentary hot beverage and a snack or stand on the upper deck with a 360-degree view of the open bay and the shallow inlets. Of course, I opted to spend the entire trip on the upper deck so that I wouldn't miss a thing!

The knowledgeable captain pointed out birds and explained the history of both the area and the cranes. His narrative was informative and educated the boatload of birders and tourists about the complex life cycle of the birds and the rare mix of marsh, estuary, and wetland habitat required for their survival.

Once across the bay, the low-draft vessel allowed us to explore the shallow shoreline. Long-legged waders patrolled the estuaries: Great, Snowy, and Reddish Egrets, including a white morph Reddish Egret. Great Blue and Tri-colored Herons, White Ibis and a Roseate Spoonbill were in the mix. American White Pelicans stood beside the waders and shorebirds, with a Lesser Black-backed Gull thrown in see if we were paying attention. Northern Harriers cruised low over the marsh. A curious Bottlenose Dolphin rode the bow wave for a time.

Two distant white specks turned out to be our first Whooping Cranes. During the morning we saw cranes far away, up close, hunting for small crabs, in flight, and in family groups of three. In the excitement, I forgot to keep an accurate count but would guess that we saw around 30 individuals. I had hoped to see just one!

Whooping Cranes do not reach breeding age until four to five years old. They usually have two eggs but most of the time put all of their energy into raising only one colt. In the wild they may live to be 25 years old and mate for life. Attempts to breed birds in captivity for reintroduction into the wild have failed.

One of the rarest birds in North America, Whooping Cranes are charter members of the Endangered Species Act in 1973. The flock has doubled in size since 2010. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers the current flock of 500 the halfway point. For the cranes to be down-listed from endangered to threatened, the flock must reach 1,000 birds and maintain it for 10 years. Given current growth rates, this milestone could be reached in 20 years.

The return of the Whooping Crane may be a rare success story, a bright spot in the often dour news about wildlife and the environment. But they are not out of the woods yet. Threats include climate change, oil and chemical spills, wayward hunters, and habitat loss. I choose to be optimistic and hope that the cranes will meet and exceed that 1,000 population goal soon!

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WHITE SPECKS BECOME WHOOPING CRANES – Sheree Daugherty happily joined the numbers of birders who were able to see wintering Whooping Cranes in Texas. (photo by Kip Miller/High Lonesome Bird Tours)

Observations

Watch for Birds Hiding in Plain Sight

By Tom Moeller

Many animals and birds are hiding in plain sight in our neighborhoods. We have built our houses, farms, cities, and industries in the former wilderness where animals and birds roamed freely. We have tried to set aside areas like parks where we can confine Nature. But Nature will not be confined. As the other fauna have gotten used to humans, they have moved back into the former wilderness. Raccoons, rabbits, opossums, groundhogs, and deer live amongst us. Usually they are seen only at night, but deer become bold enough during rutting season to wander through the neighborhood in daylight hours. Others appear early in the day or late in the afternoon.

Many birds can be seen in the neighborhoods, whether at our feeders or in a robin's or wren's nest in a backyard tree. Other birds are there too, but not in direct eyesight. I wrote an article for *The Peregrine* (Vol. 10, No. 2 March/April 2011 – "Life (and death) goes on in the birding world!") about a Cooper's Hawk feeding on a bird 15 feet above the heads of my neighbors. They were unaware of the bird as they went on with their daily lives, segregating Nature in their minds to somewhere in a park or the woods, not in their neighborhood. Yet Nature will not be confined.

In late 2012, a pair of eagles quietly took up residence in the Hays neighborhood of Pittsburgh. No one really noticed except some workers at the Keystone Iron & Metal Company Inc., a scrap metal dealer located below the area these eagles were searching for a nesting site. In fact, the scrap metal workers kept the fact to themselves, so no one else knew that eagles, BALD EAGLES, were settling in Pittsburgh. Although reports of individual eagles along the Monongahela River appeared on the PABIRDS email list from November 2012 through early February 2013, the first one outside the scrap metal group to really notice was a birder, Cory DeStein, who saw the eagle pair performing mating flights over the Monongahela River on February 18, 2013. Surreptitiously the two eagles had moved into an unsuspecting city. Cory's discovery opened the facts to the birding world and to the city of Pittsburgh – the rest is history.

Eastern Screech-Owls have been moving into the city for many years. For years two dependable owl roosts have been seen in places where we confine Nature, Frick and Schenley Parks, but screech-owls have been heard in the neighborhoods at night too. Two recent sightings are of screech-owls hiding in plain sight, both discovered by birder Todd Ladner. In January 2018, an owl used a hole in a tree right across the street from the entrance to the Garden Center parking lot. Motorists could see the hole as they drove down Shady toward Fifth Avenue, but only a birder like Todd would recognize there was a "face" in that hole. Todd's video of the owl in its Shady Avenue tree can still be found on the 3RBC website.

The same is true of a discovery Todd made on a street in Squirrel Hill. A large knothole in a tree that faces the afternoon sun and passing motorists went unnoticed until a small gray body appeared for Todd. The tree is on a street with several apartment buildings where residents return home in the afternoon. They park right under the knothole, walk to their homes, and do not take the time to look up at that gray spot in the dark wood of the knothole. Nature is not on their minds. Only a birder would look twice.



SUCH EXTRAORDINARY CAMOUFLAGE! – You needed good eyes, and you had to pay extraordinary attention to spot this Eastern Screech-Owl “hiding in plain sight,” as Tom says. He photographed this one on February 19, 2020 in Pittsburgh’s urban Squirrel Hill neighborhood. As Tom notes, it’s not the first time an owl has been spotted along a busy street in Pittsburgh.



THANK GOODNESS FOR CROAKING – If you didn’t happen to be looking toward the sky when Common Ravens flew over, you might never have known they were there – unless you heard their weird croaking vocalizations. It’s another example of what Tom refers to as birds “hidden in plain sight.” He photographed these two flying over Duck Hollow along the Monongahela River in Pittsburgh on October 24, 2019.

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Observations

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Another bird moving into the city is the Common Raven. Ravens were not known west of the forested Laurel Highlands perhaps 30 years ago, but more and more this near twin of the crow appears in the area. Allegheny County's first two breeding records were confirmed in 2008 and 2009 for the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*. I photographed a raven on my street in Squirrel Hill in 2014. On the first day of 2018, Todd Ladner and I heard and saw a raven fly past the tree on Shady Avenue where the screech-owl was roosting. Last fall, I found four flying over Duck Hollow. Casual observers still might think they are seeing crows if they do not notice the raven's wedge-shaped tail, its soaring flight rather than the constant wing beats of crows, or its distinctive croaking calls. A bird hiding in plain sight.

Unusual birds have passed through the area: a Marbled Godwit at Duck Hollow on December 20-21, 2013, a Kelp Gull at the Point and Duck Hollow on January 17-18, 2015, a Varied Bunting in Elizabeth, PA on May 5-7, 2018, and the recent Painted Bunting in O'Hara Twp., since January 20, 2020. Again all these birds were observed first by birders who alerted others in the birding community. These short-term visitors indicate that there may be others not noticed passing through or stopping permanently. Be on the lookout, there may be a bird hiding in plain sight in your neighborhood.

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Tom's gallery for this issue is a diverse array of urban Pittsburgh birds and other wildlife.

One photo highlight is a Cooper's Hawk staring at Tom threateningly as if to protect its captured snack in case Tom tries to snatch it.



A HAPPY ENDING – How would you like to conclude a 3RBC outing with a Barred Owl? Malcolm Kurtz did and photographed one after the outing at Fern Hollow on February 15, 2020.

Outing Revisited

A Barred Owl Made the Day

Sewickley Heights Park – February 15: It is an annual tradition for the Fern Hollow Nature Center to team with 3RBC birders to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Fifteen birders, including several new to the park, participated in this important citizen science project. Although the temperature was around freezing, the sun was shining, the wind was calm, and everyone was warmly dressed.

One advantage of the temperature was that all the muddy trails I had encountered while scouting previously were now frozen, which made walking easier. Our first birds along the Pipeline Trail were Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, American Goldfinches, Tufted Titmouse, Blue Jays, and White-throated Sparrows.

Along the gravel road, the woods came alive with woodpeckers. Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and a Northern Flicker made for good observations as they moved about the trees.

Next, on Black Cherry Trail, we discovered a Cooper's Hawk flying through the woods. It landed briefly, enabling everyone to observe it before it flew off.

The horse pastures along Barberry Trail turned out to be quite productive. Two Red-tailed Hawks flew overhead, and Dark-eyed Juncos foraged along the grassy trail.

Heading back along Chestnut Path, we saw a flying Pileated Woodpecker, a pair of Blue Jays, two American Crows, and two Golden-crowned Kinglets singing.

The day ended as it began, with everyone energized by what we had seen and our fun searching for birds. A few of us went on to the Fern Hollow Nature Center to enjoy a potluck luncheon. At the bird feeders, a Red-shouldered Hawk flew into view and landed in a pine tree close by.

There is a postscript to this outing. As we left the park, a father and his son decided to hike Spruce Run Trail to seek a pair of Barred Owls that had been seen on the previous afternoon. Not only did they find the owls, but Malcolm, the son, got a great photograph to document his life bird. He showed off his photo to those who remained after lunch.

The day's results were 24 species, 183 total birds, and one very happy young birder and photographer. –by leader **Bob VanNewkirk**

A Birding Day to Remember: Our Great Antillean Palm-Swift Adventure in the Florida Keys!

THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, DOES IT? – Maybe not, but swifts are small and they often fly high overhead. So Frank Izaguirre's photo was good enough to document that he and Adrienne saw the second-ever record of this species in North America. The only previous record was two birds observed in 1972 at Key West.



By Frank Izaguirre

This past December, as we typically do, Adrienne and I drove down to visit my parents in Miami for Christmas. Along the way, we often try to stop somewhere and either bird a special hotspot or chase a rarity. In the past, we've picked up Groove-billed Ani and American Flamingo among other goodies, and so it was on this trip: We knew there had been an immature Heermann's Gull, a potential lifer for us, bouncing up and down the Atlantic Florida coast that seemed to have settled into a reliable beachside park in Palm Beach County.

Getting a good bird after a vigorous chase or a grueling stakeout feels great, but it also feels great when your rarity is the first bird you see when stepping out of the car. "Hey, I think that's it," I said to Adi before even closing the car door. A chocolate-brown gull hovered in the air above the waves, and I was pretty sure we had our Heermann's.

We hustled over and saw it dive through the air with some food object in its mouth, which it would spectacularly drop and catch mid-air while being harassed by other gulls. After a few minutes, it disappeared, and we shortly located it on the other side of the pier it liked, where the bird posed for plenty of portraits. Onward to my parents' house!



NOT OUR USUAL OSPREY – You'll need to go the Florida Keys to find one of these Ospreys in the U.S. It's a Caribbean subspecies named Ridgway's Osprey, which has more white on its head than the subspecies we see elsewhere on the continent. Frank's photo shows a particular feature on the side of the face: There is a white gap between the black eye stripe and the black shoulder.

There was not much more time for birding during our visit, apart from walks in the neighborhood savoring the wintering warbler flocks of South Florida, but we did set aside a day, indeed the last day of the year, for chasing the long-reported Antillean Palm-Swift in the Marathon area. The Middle Keys are about a two-hour drive from Miami, and we knew that the bird was sometimes seen around 9:00 AM, so we got up early and arrived in time for this first interval.

The palm-swift had been around for several months, originally observed in a residential area of Grassy Key a few miles north in mid-summer. It was relocated feeding with migrating Barn Swallows on the Sombrero Key Golf Course in late September, but it was not reliable and often resulted in a "dip" for enterprising birders. Successful sightings might result in just a few minutes of observation while the bird passed through and looped a few times before moving on. Its roost was not known.

Once on site, we rushed to the bathroom after our long drive, anxious about the possibility of missing the bird, and Adrienne noted a Limpkin feeding calmly on the lawn. I had walked right by it! This was a new Monroe County bird for me and Adi.

We settled into the spot, Hole 8, right on time and waited with excitement. No other birders were there, but soon enough two couples arrived, one from Key Largo and another from Connecticut. For a while we were joined by three other birders, making us a party of nine. But some peeled away as the bird failed to show in the first couple of hours, and the day started getting hot and sunny. Golfers gawked, and one asked what we were looking for. I felt really cool when I took my review copy of Lynx's *Birds of the West Indies* out of my backpack and was able to show him the swift.

It required some discipline to stay at the stakeout because it was clearly a very birdy area, with many flocks of wintering shorebirds wheeling by, along with gulls and the occasional Magnificent Frigatebird hovering past. Monk Parakeets streaked by as well, and you could hear the chip notes of mixed feeding flocks moving through the clumps of golf-course trees and along the mangrove forests that edged the nearby road.

But stay we did, and a little past 11:00 AM we were rewarded with a couple minutes of this fast-flying Caribbean swift whirling around Hole 8. "Happy New Year!" I exclaimed, and those of us remaining savored our brief encounter with this ultra-rarity, only once before seen in the American Birding Association listing area, a Key West appearance in 1972!

It was life bird number 1,183 for me, a truly exceptional end to 2019. The Antillean Palm-Swift is probably the second rarest vagrant I've seen in the ABA Area, exceeded only by the Black-backed Oriole that visited Reading, Pennsylvania. Florida, such a magnet for rarities, may always be a step behind Pennsylvania on my personal rarest birds list.

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Bob Leberman (1937–2020): Scientist, Educator, Birder, and Friend of Many in 3RBC

(Editor's note: At my request, Bob Mulvihill, ornithologist at the National Aviary, wrote this memorial tribute to Bob Leberman for The Peregrine. See the 3RBC website for a longer version with additional photos.)

By Robert S. Mulvihill

After a courageous battle with cancer, Robert Charles (Bob) Leberman, passed away peacefully at his Powdermill home in the woods of Westmoreland County, on March 10, 2020. He was almost 83 years old.

In his long professional lifetime, Bob was a life-changing mentor to a lucky few (this author included) and a beloved friend and esteemed colleague to countless others.

Born in Meadville on April 3, 1937, Bob was the second child of Charles and Mary (Nodine) Leberman. His surviving brother, Ronald F. Leberman, is a year and a half older. The Lebermans were a nature-loving family, and Bob grew up exploring nature in the rich hemlock woods, glacial lakes, swamps, and bogs all around his boyhood home.

In 1958, Bob obtained a federal bird-banding permit. Soon after that initiated a seasonal, migration banding project located within Presque Isle State Park, an effort that continues to this day under the auspices of the Erie Bird Observatory.

Bob's mother and brother participated with him in banding at Presque Isle, and they continued the banding there for many years following Bob's own migration, in June 1961, to the newly created Powdermill Nature Reserve of Carnegie Museum. At the invitation of then-director, Dr. M. Graham Netting, Bob went to Powdermill and, using the relatively new technique of mist-netting, banded some 1,500 birds that summer and fall. By that effort, the world-famous Powdermill bird-banding station was born!

With strong support and professional guidance from the Senior Curator and Assistant Curator of Birds at the Museum, Dr. Kenneth C. Parkes and Dr. Mary Heimerdinger Clench,



HELLO TO A FRIEND—Bob Leberman banded thousands of birds during his pioneering work at Powdermill Nature Reserve. One of his welcomed acquaintances was this Gray Catbird.

respectively, Bob quickly established Powdermill as one of the premiere bird-banding research stations in North America. As Bob put it in an interview in *Birding* magazine (July/August 2013), “With their [Ken’s and Mary’s] enthusiastic mentoring, they turned a young, green birder into a working museum/field ornithologist.” See the interview at:

https://www.3rbc.org/documents/birding_with_the_bobs.pdf

The Powdermill banding database now contains well over a half-million records—a true treasure trove of data for decades to come! Alone and with others Bob has contributed many dozens of scientific and popular articles about birds based on these data.

However, Bob's contributions to field of ornithology extend far beyond the invaluable data he helped collect and the studies he completed. In the course of his career, tens of thousands of visitors of all ages and all walks of life were welcomed and educated in Bob's easy and good-natured way. For example, on any given spring day near the peak migration time for colorful spring wood warblers, Bob might invite into the banding lab a group of neighbor children and a Lord and Lady visiting from London, England!

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A Birding Day

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With the Antillean Palm-Swift accounted for, and the golf course getting hot, our minds turned to birding on the way back, and we stopped at two state parks, Curry Hammock and Long Key, the former famed for its raptor migration counts and the latter one of my favorite birding places and also known for hosting many rarities in recent years. Neither yielded any exceptional avians, but we did get some invertebrate lifers, including a very reluctant-to-be-photographed white checkered-skipper (*Pyrgus albescens*), an almost equally fidgety and rather stunning hemipteran called a cotton stainer (*Dysdercus suturellus*), and four cute and charismatic Caribbean hermit crabs (*Coenobita clypeatus*).

It was time to head back to Miami, but the day's surprises were not yet done.

For many years, since I learned of their existence, I'd wanted to find a Ridgway's Osprey, the Caribbean subspecies of Osprey, which has a much whiter head and is rare in the Keys. We had so

far seen many Ospreys on our day-long jaunt, but all of those had seemed like the *carolinensis* subspecies we are all familiar with.

Of course, I was still glancing at perched Ospreys as we headed back to Miami at 60 mph on the Overseas Highway (maybe faster than I should've been), and wouldn't you know it: One seemed to have a pretty white head, unlike the others.

Turning around on the Overseas Highway can be a bit tricky, someone might admit, but I did manage to cut across oncoming traffic, turn around, and pull over near our Osprey, where I got some photos of this long-coveted lifer subspecies, *Pandion haliaetus ridgwayi*.

As of this writing, the Antillean Palm-Swift has not been reported since our encounter with it on 12/31/2019, and one wonders whether New Year's Eve fireworks may have disturbed the bird and its feeding habits. At any rate, we will not soon forget our exceptional luck on the Great Antillean Palm-Swift Adventure.

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Bob Leberman

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As crucially important as Bob's contributions to bird banding and ornithology were and are, it was his energy and commitment to everyday birding that endeared him to the local birding community. When he was still living in Meadville, and even after he became established at Powdermill, Bob was a very active member of the Meadville Bird and Tree Club. In 1958 (the year *this* younger Bob was born!) he became the Editor-in-Chief of *The Sandpiper*, a joint quarterly publication of the Meadville Bird and Tree Club, the Presque Isle Nature Club, and the Sam Wharram Nature Club. Published by mimeograph, the stapled journal went to members of those clubs and other interested people. In addition to editing the journal, Bob served as one of the regional editors for its bird record summaries, a regular feature contributor, and a frequent illustrator, too. In fact, Bob's artistic hand created a great many of *The Sandpiper's* wonderful cover illustrations, which were always a shorebird species.

Once he was at Powdermill, Bob became a regular contributor to the monthly bird summaries in the *Bulletin* of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, and to the seasonal summaries compiled four times a year in a national bird journal then known as *American Birds*. For many years, he supplied details on significant Powdermill banding records, along with important Ligonier Valley area field observations, to Appalachian Region editor, Dr. George Hall; later, Bob took over as regional editor from George. Bob also was important as a member of the Pennsylvania's Ornithological Records Committee, reviewing hundreds of observations submitted for formal recognition in the official record of the state's birds.

Bob also served as a county compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* for many years. Among more than a hundred publications written

by Bob in his career, two were of particular use and interest to birders: *Birds of the Ligonier Valley* published in 1976; and, in 1988, he published a revised *Birds of the Pittsburgh Region*, an updating of Ken Parkes's classic 1956 work.

Bob was one of the organizers for the first breeding bird atlas in Pennsylvania, served as a regional coordinator for the seven-year project, was on the verification and publication committees, and authored more than 20 species accounts for the book. Bob also contributed block coverage and species accounts for the second breeding bird atlas in 2004-2010. Bob was semi-retired (after 43 years!) from the Powdermill bird banding program during those second atlas years; nevertheless, he continued to spend time in the banding lab whenever he wasn't doing field work for the atlas.

In addition to Bob's very significant contributions to ornithology, in general, and Pennsylvania birding, in particular, it might not be widely known that Bob also had significant expertise with regard to the birds of Belize. He participated in expeditions and banding projects in Belize in the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in an avian distribution paper in the *Annals of Carnegie Museum* and the publication of a new *Checklist of the Birds of Belize*, co-authored with D. Scott Wood and Dora Weyer.

In his career, Bob never focused for very long on any one particular bird species; nevertheless, he had a special fondness for Kentucky Warblers, the nesting ecology of which he studied in his spare time in the early years at Powdermill. Although he never published them, his expert observations of the Kentucky Warbler found their way into his friend, Hal Harrison's popular work, *Wood Warblers World*.

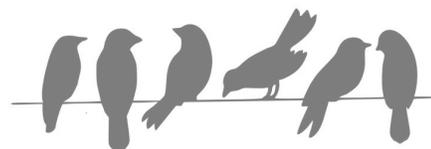
Bob Leberman may well be the last of an era of largely self-taught ornithologists. In high school he focused more on classes related to business and art than the natural sciences, and his college experience was limited to assisting a professor at Allegheny College in teaching the field component of his ornithology class. His career at Powdermill overlapped with the career of another self-taught ornithologist, Curator Emeritus of the Section of Birds at Carnegie Museum of Natural History, W. E. Clyde Todd. Bob had largely committed to memory Todd's classic, *Birds of Western Pennsylvania*, and he admired the work so much that he proudly named his house at Powdermill "Todd Manor" in honor of Mr. Todd.

For generations to come, Bob Leberman will continue to shape our understanding of birds thanks to the dedicated works of all the students and young professionals (myself included) whom he inspired and mentored in his characteristically genial and humble way. Bob did not only feed our hunger for knowledge and satisfy our craving for experience; he literally fed us, too. I would not even hazard a guess as to how many volunteers, visitors, and interns Bob nourished from his own kitchen and cupboards! Today, a great many of Bob's well-fed "kids" have gone on to important careers in academia, conservation, wildlife management, and education.

Robert C. Leberman—a true gentleman and *bona fide* Renaissance man—made an indelible mark on Pennsylvania birding and a positive impression on every Pennsylvania birder lucky enough to have known him.



*A BOOK AND A BIRD—Bob's book *The Birds of the Ligonier Valley* published in 1976 is a regional classic. Its cover depicts a Henslow's Sparrow, and here Bob happily holds one.*



Birds in the Three Rivers Area

Geese, Loon, and Cranes Topped Winter 2019-2020

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

Four **Ross's Geese** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 12/13-19 (MV and others), the 12th Allegheny County record. A flock of late **Tundra Swans** were heard flying over Hampton Twp. 12/18 (DN).

Two **Gadwalls** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. during most of December (MV) and 1 was in Harmar Twp. 12/28 (AH, PM). A **Blue-winged Teal** at Wingfield Pines 1/2 was notable for January (JM). I can't think of any winter records in recent years.

Two **Northern Shovelers** were in Harmar Twp. 12/5 (RB). A male **Northern Pintail** was at Wingfield Pines 1/4-8 (MT, JM, JP). A **Green-winged Teal** was at Imperial 1/2 (MH, RH) and 1 was in Harmar Twp. 12/30-1/28 (AH, TA, and others).

A **Red-throated Loon** was found on the Allegheny River at Verona 12/1 (AH, PM) providing the 11th Allegheny County record. It was last seen 12/2 (v.o.).

Killdeer lingered in December with up to 18 at South Park late in the month (MM and others). One was found during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/28.

Turkey Vultures were seen regularly at various locations throughout this reporting period. Five **Black Vultures** were photographed in Bethel Park 1/2 (AN), a rare sight here.

A flock of 10-16 **Sandhill Cranes** were reported from various locations in the northern part of the county 12/25-28 (LC, eBird, EL, BD) providing the 12th county record.

A **Short-eared Owl** was at Imperial 1/9 (DYE). An immature **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a nice find at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 12/13 (AP). It was relocated 1/1 (AP) and was reported through January (v.o.).

Merlins were reported from a number of locations during the season. Single birds were at Blawnox 12/2 (RT), 12/6 at Dashields Dam (MV), 12/28 at Schenley Park (MF), 12/28 at Mt. Royal Cemetery in Shaler Twp. (JH) and 2 there 12/29 (JH), 1 at Frick Park and North Park during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/28 and 1 at O'Hara Township 1/23 (MH).

A **Northern Shrike** was found at Imperial 12/7 (GG, MV). It remained at least into early January (v.o.).

A late **Eastern Phoebe** was at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 12/11 (CK). Another was found on the Pittsburgh CBC at Duck Hollow 12/28 and was there through January. It preferred the area around the bridge over Nine Mile Run, probably because insects were active during the mild weather over the stream mouth.

Surprising in winter, a **Blue-headed Vireo** was photographed at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 1/1 (AH, PM).

A flock of 70 **Horned Larks** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 12/16 (AP, JC).

The **Marsh Wren** reported at Wingfield Pines in the fall remained through January (v.o.). This site has become a regular wintering spot for this species that is rare in the county.

A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Blawnox 12/2 (RB), 1 was at Wingfield Pines during the first half of January (AP, TRh, SA, et al.), and 1 visited a feeder in Gibsonia 1/17 through the end of the month (reported to MV). There are several other entries in eBird for the season. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** are very rare in western Pennsylvania in winter. Could the mild weather be the cause of so many reports?

Two **Hermit Thrushes** were found during the Pittsburgh

CBC at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve and Kilbuck Twp. Out-of-season mimids included **Gray Catbird** at South Park 1/22 (JF, LF) and in Swissvale during December and January (Rbi). A **Brown Thrasher** was found during the Pittsburgh CBC in Fox Chapel 12/28 (BSh) and another was in Gibsonia 1/8 (BMu).

Seven **Eastern Towhees** were tallied during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/28: 2 in Squirrel Hill (MK), 1 in Indiana Twp. (SG), 1 in Fox Chapel, and 3 in Penn Hills. One was in Findlay Twp. 1/1 (AP, TRh, SA).

Chipping Sparrows are uncommon in winter, so reports are notable. One visited a feeder in O'Hara Twp. 12/23 (BSh) and 4 were at Harrison Hills Park 1/11 (DB). **Field Sparrows** are also uncommon here in winter. One was in Pine Twp. 12/26 into January (PL, SL) and 2 were in Gibsonia 1/4 (BMu). **Swamp Sparrows** wintered in the wetlands at Wingfield Pines (v.o.). A number of observers noted an absence of **Dark-eyed Juncos** this winter with only small numbers seen.

Blackbirds are rare here in winter. **Red-winged Blackbirds** were present at Wingfield Pines during the period (v.o.). A late bird was at Imperial 12/21 (MF), 1 was found during the Pittsburgh CBC, and 40 were at Imperial 1/12 (BQ). Three **Common Grackles** were found at Chatham College in Squirrel Hill 12/28 (MK). Six **Brown-headed Cowbirds** stopped at a feeder in Natrona Heights 12/30 (PH).

A very surprising eBird entry of an **Ovenbird** in downtown Pittsburgh was accompanied by a photograph 1/19 (HJ). The observer also shared a short video of the bird on the Groupme text alert. It was walking among very small shrubs in a small landscaped area in front of a building.

A male **Painted Bunting** appeared at a feeder in O'Hara Twp. 1/20 (BSh) providing the third Allegheny County record. It remained through the month. Many observers were able to see and photograph this beautiful visitor.

Observers: Sameer Apte, Tammy Arnold, Roy Bires (Rbi), Dave Brooke, Ron Burkert, Jack Chaillet, Linda Croskey, Barbara Drennen, Leslie Ferree, Mike Fiakovich, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Steve Gosser, Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Joyce Hoffmann, Hannah Jones, Michelle Kienholz, Chris Kubiak, Eileen Luba, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Pat McShea, Michele Mannella, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Alyssa Nees, Dick Nugent, Joe Papp, Aidan Place, Brian Quindlen, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Brian Shema, Ryan Tomazin, Molly Toth, Mark Vass, David Yeany (DYE), various observers (v.o.)

Disappointment in Ohio

The annual May pilgrims to Magee Marsh Wildlife Area and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge were disappointed to learn that this year's "Biggest Week in North American Birding" is cancelled because of the COVID-19 concern.

The Magee Marsh area is closed including the boardwalk, parking lots, roads, and trails. At Ottawa the boardwalk, trails, and indoor facilities including restrooms are closed.

Toledo Metroparks including Oak Openings are open, but restrooms and playgrounds are closed. Come only alone or with household members, stay at least six feet from others, and walk, run, and bike in single file.

