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The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Vol. 25, No. 3 May/June 2026

Birds of Trinidad and Tobago, Where Bird of Paradise (the plant) grows wild!

Our June speaker, Amanda Haney, and her husband Bob are life-long residents of Pittsburgh and have always been interested in birds. They joined 3RBC in 2002.

The Haney's started birding in earnest upon retirement—for ten years, they went to Florida in winter to bird; since 2019, they spend three months in Arizona, birding nearly every day. In addition to birding, Amanda is a nature photographer who never goes birding without her Sony A6700 with 350 mm lens.



Her first trip to Trinidad and Tobago was in 2008, when she and Bob stayed at world-famous Asa Wright Ecological Preserve. The preserve there is an amazing place to view and photograph birds in the mountains of Trinidad. They liked it so much that they decided to go again, this time staying at another fantastic ecododge in Tobago, the Cuffie River Preserve, where they hiked less and focused especially on birds visiting the feeders and landscaping right there on the grounds.

Amanda's favorite place to bird here in Pittsburgh is Fall Run Park in Shaler, but like many of our local birders (especially, our bird photographers), she also enjoys going to the incredible Magee Marsh in northwestern Ohio in May.

Amanda worked as a special education teacher in Pittsburgh Public Schools and as an administrator in mental health and adult literacy nonprofits. She gives her presentations to other groups, including gardening, travel, and nature clubs. She has taught basic birding classes for OSHER and Frick Environmental Center.

This will be a Zoom presentation starting at 7:00 PM (ET) on Wednesday, June 3, giving you time to log on. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Amanda's program will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the Zoom event, including passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied a few days before the meeting.



LONG-BILLED STARThROAT; PHOTO BY OUR SPEAKER.



GREEN HONEYCREEPER; PHOTO BY OUR SPEAKER



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

Future 3RBC Meeting Presentations

Don't forget to save the date for these upcoming speakers:

- August 5, 2026 - **Frank Izaguirre** - "Proofs, Posts, and Peents"
- October 7, 2026 - **Brian Shema** - "Chimney Swift Research"
- December 2, 2026- **Member Slide Slam**

President's Message

Watching the Documentary *Listers*

By Mike Fialkovich

The film *Listers* has been getting a lot of attention over the past several months. It seemed to come out of nowhere. I was made aware of this film from other birders at least a year ago and considered watching it at some point. Recently, one of the film makers was interviewed on the ABA Podcast, and I didn't know what to make of the interviewee—he sounded like he just woke up. I kept hearing about the film, and it was reviewed in the December 2025 issue of *Birding*, where a link to it was provided (tinyurl.com/YouTube-Listers). You can also just go on YouTube and search for it, which is what I did. Recently, I decided to sit down and watch the two hour film.

If you are unaware, the film chronicles a birding year that brothers Owen and Quentin Reiser embarked on in 2024. They were not birders but decided to give this a try. Their parents had the *Golden Guide to Birds of North America*, which they used to begin their quest of a birding big year in the U.S. They wanted to learn about birding and birders.

Their mode of transportation was a Kia mini-van, which they cleverly converted into a living space complete with bunk beds and all the stuff they needed for the trip. It was a hot mess inside, but that's okay; it fit them perfectly.

The guys found a lot of great birds during the year, but they also talked to other birders they encountered about various aspects of birding ranging from listing, call play back ethics, trespassing, hotlines, social aspects, etc. In one scene, what appeared to be for fun and curiosity, they actually tried calling old telephone bird hotlines, realizing most were not functioning; however, they found one that was still working. A functioning telephone hotline is about as rare as some birds they chased after.

Pennsylvania birder and tour guide, Alex Lamoreaux, made several appearances in the film, providing a Pennsylvania connection. The guys ran into him leading a tour (much like I did the last time I was in Texas). The guys used eBird to track their birds. They mentioned some of their eBird entries were subject to review and read the reviewer's comments about why the bird was misidentified and marked as invalid. Initially they seemed to understand the process and were okay with it. Near the end, they were a bit annoyed by someone telling them they didn't see something they thought they saw.

The videos of birds during the film varied from okay to very good. I came to learn Owen is a professional photographer. Perhaps the contrast in video quality was intentional. It seemed to be. The final tally for the year was 579 species. Towards the end they sort of gave up the chase as fatigue was setting in.

Overall I found the film entertaining and interesting. What started as some crazy quest, actually turned into a learning experience in many ways for the brothers, and they even got a bit philosophical. It seemed they got more out of the experience than just listing birds, as most big year participants do, based on reading their accounts.

They also produced a book about the adventure. The book is similar in design to the *Golden Field Guide to Birds of North America*, with simpler, almost caricature type illustrations of the birds. That isn't a criticism; it fits the event and the brothers. Each bird illustration has a short account describing the circumstances surrounding the sighting.

If you have not seen the film, be aware that some of the language is crude (there were some f-bombs among other things), so it's not for

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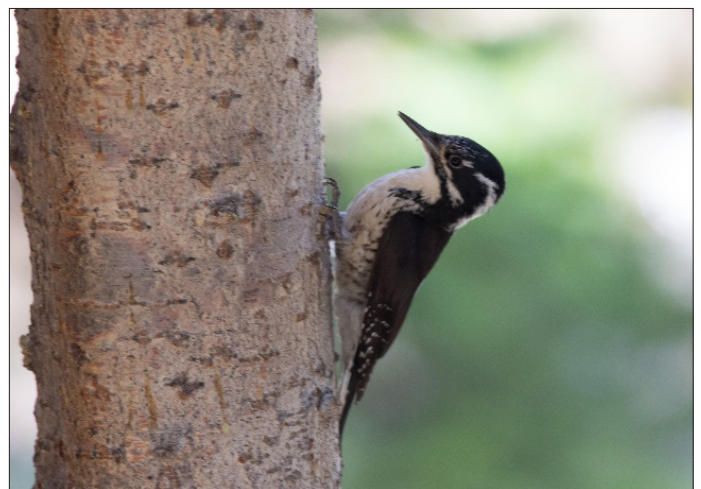
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kids or anyone sensitive to that type of language. If you can look past that, the film is actually an interesting and entertaining take on birding and birders.



AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, HIDDEN VALLEY, ROCKY MT. NATIONAL PARK. PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.



Outings to come

Late Spring Outings

April – June 2026

Saturday, April 25 – Sewickley Heights Park. This walk is intended for beginning/inexperienced birders and will be limited to the first six people who email the walk leader **Adrian Fenton** at AF9963285@aol.com. Sewickley Heights Park is an excellent location to see spring migrants. We will go slowly to give everyone the opportunity to see and identify birds. The starting time will be at 7:30 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Please bring binoculars.

Friday, May 1– Sewickley Heights Park. Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) for our spring bird walk starting at 8:00AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. This park is noted for having a variety of spring bird migrants such as warblers, vireos and other bird species surprises.

Saturday, May 2 – Boys Home Park in South Fayette Township. Meet Malcolm Kurtz (malcolmwkurtz@gmail.com) at 8:30AM at the parking lot at the end of Rutherglen Drive. This birding location is an eBird hotspot and an opportunity for an outing in the South Hills. **Boys Home Park** GPS coordinates: 40.385180, -80.175165.

Sunday, May 3 - Frick Park. Join Michelle Kienholz (mlkienholz@aol.com) for a morning bird walk in Frick Park starting at 8:00 AM. We will start our walk at the Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill, 15217. Frick Park is an excellent location for the spring migration. We're hoping for lots of warblers!

Friday, May 8 - North Park. We will meet our leader Adrian Fenton (AF9963285@aol.com) at the Gold Star Pavilion in North Park on Lake Shore Drive at 7:30 AM **GPS coordinates: 40.593884, -80.003844**. We will bird Gold Star wetlands area, Marshall Lake and if time permits, part of Latodomi Nature Center. *Adrian would like participants to email him to let him know you plan to attend.*

Saturday, May 9 – Harrison Hills. Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport at the Environmental Learning Center parking lot. **GPS: 40.6572, -79.7024**. As you enter the park stay left and then turn left at the first intersection and go up the hill to the large parking lot. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous spring outings have produced a nice variety of migrants, including warblers, and vireos.

Saturday, May 16 – Deer Lakes County Park. John Vassallo (johnvassallo@yahoo.com) and Todd Hooe will lead us on their annual Deer Lakes County Park outing. Our 7:30 AM meeting place will be at the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: **40.618722, -79.815371**. From Creighton-Russelton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then make a right turn and proceed to the last parking lot. Although the trails are pretty well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud and rainfall.

Tuesday, May 19 - Frick Park. Meet Charity Ksheshgi (charityksheshgi@gmail.com) and co-leader Kate St. John (birdsoutsidemymywindow.org) for a mid-week bird walk in Frick Park. We will start at 8:30 AM and continue until 10:30AM. Meet at the Blue Slide entrance (intersection of Beechwood Blvd. and Nicolson St.) <https://bit.ly/blueslidefrick>. We will do our best to avoid the worst of the hills and hope to see the spring migrants that visit here.

Saturday, May 23 – State Game Land #330 (Piney Tract). Michael Leahy, from Seneca Rocks Audubon Society in Clarion will

show participants some of the highlights around a very special place in Clarion County - State Game Land #330, also known as Piney Tract. This 2,300 acre reclaimed strip mine located in central Clarion County holds arguably the densest population of Henlow's Sparrows and other grassland breeding birds in Pennsylvania and, likely, the eastern United States. It has been designated as a Global Important Bird Area (#21).

We will meet at 9:00 am in the game lands parking area on Mt. Zion Road. **Note:** there are NO facilities in the area; bring plenty of water and snacks. Also, insect repellent for ticks is recommended. We will walk a couple of areas here and then drive to a couple of other areas nearby to look for more good grassland birds.

Some species to be expected are Henslow's, Savannah, Grasshopper, Clay-colored and possibly Vesper Sparrows. Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Bobolink, Prairie Warbler and Eastern Meadowlark are fairly common. Breeding Upland Sandpiper and Short-eared Owls have been documented. There is no address here to put into your GPS coordinates for the parking area just off Mt. Zion Road are: **41.147074, -79.499197**. In case of inclement weather, the field trip will be canceled. Call or text Michael to confirm details. For directions, questions or more information contact Michael Leahy at mrl706@gmail.com; or phone/text him (814-229-1648). You can also find more site information on the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) website: <https://bit.ly/PineyTract>

June 6 2026 - Cook Forest. Make plans to get your spring "warbler fix" with an outing to one the best migrating warbler traps in Western Pennsylvania, one of the gems of the Pennsylvania State Park system, Mike Leahy has invited us to join him for an outing at Cook Forest with the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society in conjunction with the Cook Forest Conservancy. Located along the picturesque Clarion River, Cook Forest has some of the largest tracts of ancient and virgin forest remaining in Pennsylvania. Classified as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service, Cook Forest State Park is often referred to as the "Black Forest" of Pennsylvania. The park's 11,586 acres contain some of the largest specimens of eastern hemlock and white pine found in all of the eastern states. At 184.7 feet tall, the "Longfellow Pine" was the tallest white pine tree in the Northeastern United States and the 3rd tallest east of the Mississippi River. Unfortunately, it was felled during a micro-burst in May of 2018. We will visit the remains.

We will meet at the Park office at 9:00 am and then proceed to the Log Cabin Interpretive Center, where we will begin our adventure into the "Forest Cathedral". Depending on time and group preferences, we may visit the fire tower, where you can climb to the top and maybe look a Blackburnian Warbler right in the eye, and then visit Seneca Rocks overlook for spectacular views of the Clarion River valley and surrounding countryside. Set your GPS to **100 State Route 36, Cooksburg, PA** to reach the park office. There are restrooms available there and at the Log Cabin Interpretive Center. Bring water and snacks, but there also are several nearby restaurants. In the case of inclement weather, the outing will be canceled. Check with Michael to confirm details, and if you have any other questions, at 814-229-1648 or mrl706@gmail.com.

Sunday, June 7 - Frick Park. Meet Michelle Kienholz at 8:00AM at the Frick Park Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill, 15217 for a morning bird walk in Frick Park. Michelle will be conducting a Breeding Bird Atlas survey, so this would be a great opportunity to learn about the protocol. There will be a limit of 10 participants. Please register with **Michelle** at mlkienholz@aol.com.

Saturday, September 26 - 3RBC Picnic at Boyce-Mayview Park. *Mark your calendar now!* Details forthcoming.

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Outings revisited

Woodcocks and Pymatuning – Early Spring Birding Rewards

Wednesdays, March 18 – April 1, Woodcock Walks. Ten people showed up on an early spring evening, perfect for a light jacket or hoodie. Activity at the Great Blue Heron rookery was pretty good. We could see birds sitting on the few remaining nests that were not torn up by the recent wind storms. Others were perched on branches or flying in and out. It's always neat to watch as these huge birds glide in and land in such tight spaces.

Thanks to club president, Mike Fialkovich, for bringing out his scope. He was able to identify a Bonaparte's Gull, out on the river. It seemed to just enjoy drifting downriver on the current to the upriver end of the island, then flying back upriver about twenty or thirty yards, then sitting back on the water, starting the trip all over.

There wasn't much other activity other than a small group of Canada Geese flying in and a large flock of European Starlings flying around us while we loaded up to head to the field. As we gathered around to introduce ourselves, we had the youngest participant on an outing yet, four-going-on-five-year-old Maya.

As we got out of our vehicles at the viewing site, the overwhelming chorus of spring peepers could not be missed. Once again, as we walked along the trail, the distant peenting of the American Woodcock could be heard off in the field. It was a lovely symphony of woodcocks, American Robins, and spring peepers.

Once positioned at a decent viewing spot, as the peepers continued calling and the robins singing, the woodcocks could now be heard taking off. Again, we had a good spot to hear, watch takeoffs, and watch landings. Thanks to a perfect cloudy sky, even young Maya was able to watch as birds took off, climbed into the sky, and came back down to the ground. Another nice outing produced life birds for three participants.

One person showed up for the final outing of the season. Sarah said she was a fairly new member of the club and was looking forward to getting a life bird. Once again, the Great Blue Herons were very active in, around, and on the nests. It seemed there were more nests from the week before. Other activity had robins, House Sparrows, and European Starlings flying around, making a lot of noise. On the island a lone Canada Goose was on the downriver shoreline. High up in the sky, some type of shorebirds circled around for a few minutes, then continued upriver and out of sight. A little bit later, a pair, then three or four, and finally well over a dozen Turkey Vultures enjoyed soaring way up high in the sky.

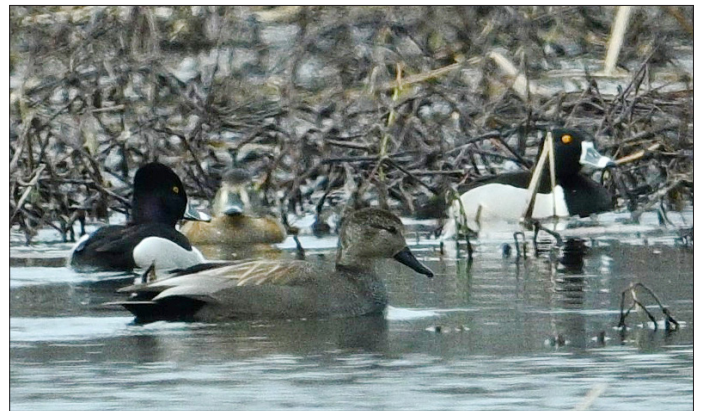
Once again, as we got out of the vehicles, the spring peepers were very loud. Along the trail, robins and an Eastern Towhee were just as loud as the peepers. Other odd noises sounded like a Gray Catbird and an Eastern Screech Owl, but I could not be sure. Once in position, and listening, a variety of birds were heard: White-throated and Song Sparrows, and more towhees, robins and cardinals.

The whole time, the woodcocks were also peenting, till finally we heard the fluttering of a male taking off. Sarah could not believe how close the birds were to us. I too, was amazed how close one male was landing, just feet away. He had no problem with us standing where we were. With Sarah getting her life bird, that brought a total of eight people getting life birds this season. All three outings were very successful. As we headed back to our vehicles, I noticed headlights by where we were parked. An Indiana Township police officer was waiting for us. He wondered who was there and what they were doing this late. We explained and then chatted for a bit. He was originally

from Butler County, near Moraine State Park, and was a hunter—by leader, Tommy Byrnes.

Sunday, March 22, Pymatuning Area. Fifteen birders ventured up to the Pymatuning area for our annual spring bird outing. Despite a few sprinkles in the beginning, we had the best weather we've experienced in quite a while. We started at the Spillway, but there weren't many birds to be found. From there, we ventured over to the Hartstown project and Miller Ponds, and things began to pick up.

Two of the special species we spotted there were the Greater White-fronted Goose amid a grouping of Canada Geese and two Rough-legged Hawks. Throughout the day, we spotted numerous eagles and Sandhill Cranes. We ended our day at Conneaut Marsh on McMichael Road and were not disappointed. We saw hundreds of ducks and were excited to watch a Bald Eagle sitting on a nearby nest. In all, we spotted 48 species and over 900 birds! It was another great trip to the Pymatuning area.—by leader, Ken Knapp (photos by Chris Jansen)



RING-NECKED DUCKS AND GADWALL



JUVENILE AND ADULT BALD EAGLE

The Peregrine

Manitoba Owls – Winter Birding

Story and photo by Sam Sinderson

I never had the chance to travel to Canada in the winter to seek wintering owls, so the Eagle-Eye Tours trip to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in late February into March looked like my last chance. The tour was from February 27 thru March 3, 2026, the first and last days being travel days. Thus, there were just three days of actual birding.

My flights took me thru Minneapolis and on to Winnipeg. Despite the partial government shutdown, my flights were all on time. I had learned that a participant, who is from the UK, would be on my flight from Minneapolis to Winnipeg, and we arranged to meet in Minneapolis, which we did, and he was a big help in quickly getting us through immigration, when we got to Winnipeg. We were to be the last of 12 participants to arrive, and our scheduled arrival time made it unlikely that we could get to the hotel before the group left for dinner at 5:15. (This Hampton Inn served only breakfast.) However, our flight was almost 30 minutes early, and we got to the hotel about 20 minutes before the group was to leave.

After dinner and back at the hotel, we had a presentation by an expert researcher on the life history of the Great Gray Owl, a primary target of the tour. He had with him a captive Great Gray that was really a pet and, for a reason I didn't get as I was a few minutes getting to the presentation, was unable to be released into the wild. What a magnificent bird. As it turned out, Great Gray Owls were not being seen locally this winter and this was the only one we saw. Of course, there were other life birds for me to see. High on my list were Spruce Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Bohemian Waxwing, and Northern Hawk-Owl.

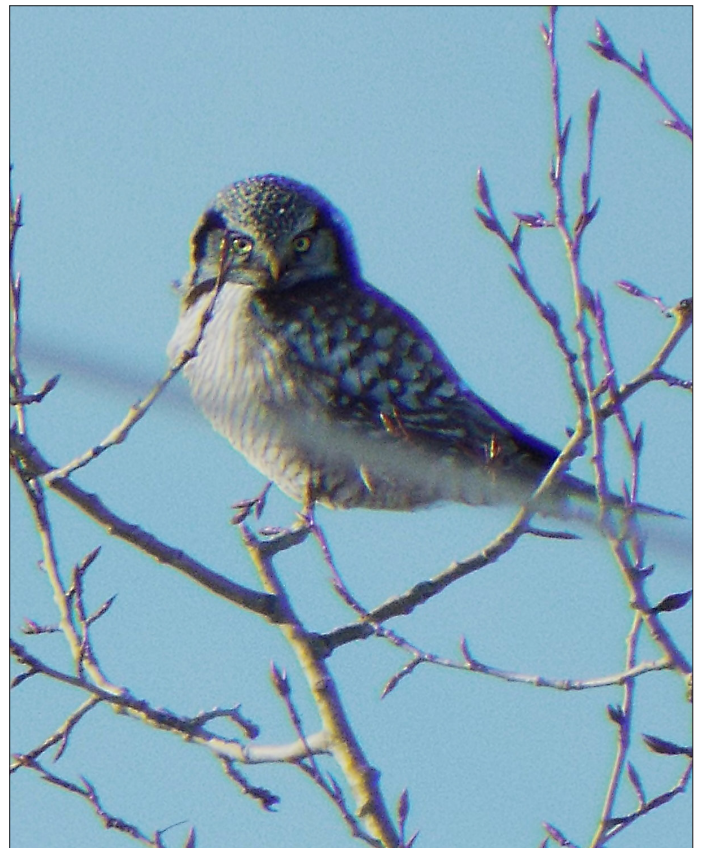
The weather the first birding day, Saturday, was brutal. The high temperature was -4 °F and the low was -15 °F. I was prepared with plenty of warm clothing, including insulated pants, insulated boots, a heated vest, electric hand warmers, and multiple head coverings. In addition, we were not out of the vans for very long at a time in the morning, when it was coldest. In the afternoon, back in the city, we did walk on a snowy trail behind homes looking at feeders. In the morning we were mostly southwest of the city looking for Snowy Owls, which was not a life bird for me, and we saw several. Also present in some numbers was Gray Partridge, a life bird for me that I had not anticipated. Also present were Horned Larks. The highlight of the afternoon walk was a flock of about 75 Bohemian Waxwings. As we were observing them, the rarest bird for this time of year, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, appeared and scarred off the Waxwings. Sharpies are so rare here in winter, that they were not even on the checklist. For the day, I had two life birds: Gray Partridge and Bohemian Waxwing. We also had great views of a nesting pair of Great Horned Owls. We missed Eastern Screech-Owl, when we found a known nest hole was empty. Northern Ravens and Black-billed Magpies were common, and we saw several Bald Eagles.

The next day, Sunday March 1, was a bit warmer, and we headed northeast from town looking for Northern Hawk-Owl, a life bird for me. We found at least four, and I got good photos of one of them. We checked out feeders along the way and picked up Black-capped Chickadee, Pine Grosbeak, Redpoll, including one Hoary type, Black-backed Woodpecker, Evening Grosbeak, Blue Jay, Starling, House Sparrow, and my final life bird, a Sharp-tailed Grouse. We also saw two mammals: Coyote and North American River Otter. We ended the day at a nice hotel restaurant for dinner.

For our last day of birding we headed for the Lake Winnipeg area, our best chance to find a Great Gray Owl. We stopped at several spots along the lake shore as we made our way north to an island, where a Great Gray had been reported in the past, and where we hoped to

find Boreal Chickadees. We stopped at several feeders and had good views of Common Raven, which was very common, American Crow, which was rare, Pine Grosbeak, Redpoll, Pileated Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Black-billed Magpie, Gray Partridge, and Sharp-tailed Grouse. We also saw several mammals including Eastern Cottontail, Eastern Gray Squirrel, and American Red Squirrel. When we finally arrived at the Island we could not find a Great Gray or a Spruce Grouse. Spruce Grouse are notoriously hard to find and usually seen briefly flying up from a roadside in the spruce forest, and Great Gray Owls had not been seen yet this season. We did find Boreal Chickadees, though I never got a view. It was getting late, and we made our way back to our hotel, stopping only if we saw a new bird. Although I didn't see them, the van in front of ours saw a flock of Snow Buntings. We arrived at our hotel a bit late and went out to our final dinner together.

The next day was getaway day and checkout was 11 AM. My flight wasn't until 5:15 PM, so I hung around the hotel and had some granola for lunch and got the shuttle to the airport in plenty of time to clear US Customs, which is done in Winnipeg, and got to my flight gate early. Again, my flights were on time or early, and I arrived back in Pittsburgh before midnight, where my son picked me up and got me home. A busy three birding days in sometimes brutal temperatures, but the adventure was worth it to see four species that I may never have a chance to see again.



NORTHERN HAWK-OWL, A LIFE BIRD FOR THE AUTHOR.



The Peregrine

Texas Prairies and Marshes

Story and photos by Dan Mendenhall

Several Three Rivers Birding Club members traveled to Texas this March on an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP) Eco-Tour. Led by Brian Shema and myself, the tour set out to explore the prairies and marshes of the Texas Gulf coast.

Starting north of Houston, the group explored W.G. Jones State Forest, a yellow pine forest ecosystem, maintained by Texas A&M Forest Service. While exploring the park, we observed five Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers, including one that was excavating a nesting site. It can take this species several years, and sometimes over six years, to dig out the live pines they choose to nest in. On this day we were able to see the seeping sap holes that they create to deter predators. In addition to nesting behavior, we observed two woodpeckers actively peeling off plates of bark from the trees, probing for food. Brown-headed Nuthatch trading turns lining their nesting hole with woodchips, was another great moment.

Moving west of Houston, we explored the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. After an unsuccessful first drive around their Auto Loop, Brian spotted male Attwater's Prairie-Chickens displaying. The group was able to observe males chasing each other around, stomping their feet, puffing up their air sacs, and catapulting themselves in the air. The booming ceremony was a great sight to see, as the female prairie-chickens quietly observed from the sidelines. In addition to the breeding behavior, we observed several prairie-chickens flying around the area. White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-bellied Plover, Short-eared Owl, Horned Lark, and Eastern Meadowlark, were some of the other grassland species at this refuge, but the flock of Northern Bobwhites roaming the prairie and the entrance road was a highlight many participants spoke fondly of.

While around the Houston area, we visited several city parks. At Archbishop Fiorenza Park, a Least Grebe was associating with a raft of American Coot and put on quite a show. Sheree spotted it approaching us through a channel, and we observed it foraging, flying briefly, and vocalizing. "Cutie patootie," is a term reserved for this species. Cullinan Park turned up a multitude of herons and waterbirds. We observed at least thirty Limpkins at this spot, along with American Coot, Common Gallinule, Anhinga, over eleven Wilson's Snipe, a Cinnamon Teal, and many other species of duck.

Heading south toward Corpus Christi, we explored many coastal hotspots. At Goose Island, we observed a Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Inca Dove, American Oystercatcher, and Reddish Egret. At the Lamar Beach area, we had great views of eleven Whooping Cranes foraging the field and grass areas, and we had several views of them flying into and out of the area. In addition to adults, one immature was present, with noticeably brown and orange plumage. Once down to fifteen individuals left in the Texas wintering population, it was an honor to see this many individuals of a still endangered species. Hazel Bazemore Park, west of Corpus Christi, is home to several South Texas specialties. We observed Green Jay squawking and bathing, and White-tipped Dove casually walking along the ground. Long-billed Thrasher, Black-crested Titmouse, Golden-fronted Woodpecker and Vermillion Flycatcher were exciting finds. Point Aransas, especially Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, was an especially beautiful set of boardwalks, along wetlands and marshes. An American Flamingo, among the multitude of ducks, shorebirds, and wading birds, was a lifer for many. Aplomado Falcon was sitting on a hacking platform of Mustang Island, another endangered species we were lucky to see.

Heading northward to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, the scenery of this iconic park was a sight to see. A Pyrrhuloxia singing

and foraging in a parking lot, along with javelinas (especially young ones) running across the road were memorable. At our lunch spot on the final day, many Couch's Kingbirds were seen in an adjacent park, finishing out an amazing trip.

Finding over 130 species was great, but the openness of the prairie, the glistening water of the Gulf, and the camaraderie felt observing species we are lucky enough to still experience, will be my greatest takeaways. Thanks to all the participants, and my co-leader, Brian, for another memorable ASWP trip!



LEAST GREBE AT ARCHBISHOP FIORENZA PARK IN HOUSTON, TX.



WHOOPING CRANE TAKING OFF, LAMAR BEACH AREA, ROCKPORT.



GREEN JAY AT HAZEL BAZEMORE PARK IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TX..

The Peregrine

Observations

Mating Season Behaviors – How Birds Attract Each Other

Story and photos by Tom Moeller

As the leaves on trees begin to appear, spring flowers bloom, and birds return from migration, their thoughts turn to finding a mate, building a nest, and starting a new family. How do these couples find each other, secure their mates, and insure their bonds?

Many couples, separated during migration or the seasons, return to a certain breeding site to find each other, perhaps an established colony, the place they were born, or even an old nest they built together. Somehow they know exactly where to go. When couples first meet or when they get back together, there is often a ritual they go through to establish or re-establish their relationship.



RAVENS IN LOVE, GAMBEL, AK

Being flying animals, many rituals involve flights together or flights meant to impress. The very first pair of Hays Bald Eagles were seen in early 2013 flying together over the Monongahela, grasping talons, tumbling, calling, and eventually making history. Many bird pairs, especially raptors, do a similar sky dance. I've seen Common Ravens in Alaska doing the same sky dance – flying together, grasping claws, and calling. To impress a female, an Osprey male will perform a solo sky dance, wherein he flies quickly up hundreds of feet in the air and hovers, dangling his legs, then swoops down, stops, and flies rapidly up to hover again, then repeating his flight. The male Mourning Dove flies high up, then glides down in circles on stiff wings and narrow tail, resembling the flight of a hawk. Red-winged Blackbird males engage in “Song Flights,” which include flying slowly with stalls and singing. Anna’s Hummingbird males will fly up 100 feet and dive sharply down. At 60 mph, he spreads his tail to make a sonic “chirp.” He’ll then shuttle fly back and forth in front of a female, displaying his flared gorget in the sunlight.

A host of birds sing to attract mates. The *Meistersinger* (master singer) is the Northern Mockingbird. Female mockingbirds hear something in his songs - duration, singing quality, or quantity of phrases - that may indicate experience, ability to survive, or potential to defend a territory. Red-winged Blackbirds sing at the tops of reeds, sign posts, or trees, while displaying their bright red epaulets, an extra added attraction, like the hummingbird’s gorget. Mourning Doves and Rock Pigeons are constantly cooing to attract females, because they can breed up to five times a year.

Dancing together can attract or re-attract a mate. In Hawaii, Laysan Albatrosses perform an elaborate dance on land involving bowing, bobbing heads, jutting wings out, even “kissing.” Canada Geese will dance on the water by swimming together, honking, stretching out their necks, and head dipping. Red-neck Grebes also



LAYSAN ALBATROSS MATING DANCE, KILAUEA POINT, HI

dance on the water. A pair will meet, face one another, then, swimming in unison, they will rise up, stretch up their necks, and swim across the water side-by-side together. Other grebes will dance similarly. The male Evening Grosbeak will perform an individual dance for a female by raising his head and tail and fluttering his lowered, outstretched wings, while swerving back and forth.

Some birds present gifts to one another. Northern Cardinals are often photographed passing a nut from male to female, as if they were kissing. I witnessed a male Lark Bunting in Colorado presenting a sprig of prairie grass to female just before they mated. Terns may present a fish to a potential mate along with a “Happy Feet” dance with alternating high-stepping of each foot.

Birds have many ways to attract or re-establish relations with their mates. Special flights and melodious songs top the list, but just as we humans have more than one way to attract a mate, so do the birds.



“KISSING” NORTHERN CARDINALS

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

October – November, 2025

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

A dry and warmer early October with gave way to a mid-October with more seasonable temperatures and sunny skies. The fall warbler migration was good with observers enjoying a variety of birds, but no big days. Red-breasted Nuthatches were numerous in September, but by early October most seemed to move through.

Two immature white morph **Snow Geese** were at the mouth of Flaugherty Run near Dashields Dam 11/30 (AP). **Tundra Swan** reports include two in West Deer Twp. 11/11 (LC), six at Dashields Dam 11/12 (MV), a flock flying over Sewickley Heights Park 11/16 (WB), an immature at Duck Hollow 11/16-30 (MKu, VS, et al.), 33 over Gibsonia 11/16 (KP), a flock flying over Squirrel Hill 11/28

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The Peregrine

(MVV), two flocks of 20, and 15 flying over Franklin Park 11/28 (OM) and one at Oakmont 11/30 (DM).

Three **Northern Shovelers** were at North Park 11/1 (RH, SS, et al.). **Gadwall** was reported most of November. The first report was a single bird at Highland Park 10/29 (JDz, et al.). Two were on the Ohio River near Wood's Run 11/3 (JC, DBE), one at the Gulf Lab Wetland in Harmar Twp 11/10 (AH, PM) and two there 11/22 (EM). Two were on the Ohio River at Dashields Dam 11/14 (MV), three on the Allegheny River at Cheswick, and two on the Monongahela River at Bunola 11/15 (JF). **American Wigeon** reports include three flying past Oakmont 11/7 (DM), and three nearby at the Gulf Wetland in Harmar Twp. the following day (AP, et al.), which might have been the same birds. One was at the PennDot Wetlands in Upper St.Clair 11/27-29 (ST). A female **Northern Pintail** was at Janoski's Farm 11/10-23 (MV, m.ob.). She was joined by another female 11/24-26 (EPH). A **Surf Scoter** was at Aspinwall 11/21 (JDz), and a female plumaged **Black Scoter** was at Duck Hollow 11/7-9 (EH, m.ob.). A **Ruddy Duck** was at Dashields Dam 11/15 (DNe, CT), seven were at Duck Hollow 11/20 (NA) and two were at IMP 11/22 (AF).

A **Northern Bobwhite** was at Boyce-Mayview Park 10/14 (GG). As always these sightings are released birds. A **Horned Grebe** photographed at the Highland Park Reservoir 10/16 (LB) was quite early. A nice count of 119 **Mourning Doves** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 11/21 (MV).

A late **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** visited a feeder in Squirrel Hill 11/15-26 (EW). A female **Rufous Hummingbird** visited a feeder in Oakmont from 11/2 through the end of November (RBU).

Up to two **Virginia Rails** remained at Wingfield Pines through November (m.ob.). Typically rails migrate out of Pennsylvania by this time. South Park seems to be a gathering spot for **Killdeer** late in the fall. Up to 38 were there 11/23-30 (JT, MM). A **Dunlin** was at Imperial 11/21 (MV, AF).

American Woodcock is rarely reported in fall. One was at Beechwood Farms 10/6 (SD, JDz, TC). One was flushed at Hays Woods 10/28 (AG), and one was at the upper fields in North Park 11/12 and 11/30 (KE). This area hosts displays by this species in spring. Up to three **Wilson's Snipe** were at North Park 10/25-11/23 (m.ob.). A late **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Bunola in the southern part of the county 10/16 (JF). **Solitary Sandpipers** were widely reported during the fall migration.

An out of season **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Chapel Harbor on the Allegheny River 10/2 (DBE). The bird was a juvenile/first winter bird. Perhaps they are around more than we think but overlooked due to the difficult identification of this species at this age. Unfortunately, no terns were reported this fall.

A **Green Heron** at Flaugherty Run 10/29 was on the late side (MV). Four **Black Vultures** were at Beechwood Farms 10/20 (DM), one was feeding on a dead raccoon at Brownhill Road and Saxonburg Blvd intersection in Fox Chapel 10/27 (JC), four were at Greensburg Pike and Braddock Road intersection in Churchill 10/28 (EH) and two were at Beechwood Farms 10/31 (DG).

Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded at three locations this fall. The single evening high count that I'm aware of was seven at Harrison Hills Park 10/28.

The **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at North Park continued through the period. The birds at Highland Park disappeared, unfortunately, due to removal of several dead trees in the vicinity of their nest (Amanda Haney *pers. comm.*). I am not certain the nest tree was removed, but I suspect it was.

There were numerous reports of **Merlin** in October and November from various locations, likely representing migrants and birds arriving for the winter.

A late **White-eyed Vireo** was at Frick Park 11/1 (MK).

Interestingly, a very late bird was photographed in Westmoreland County in early December.

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued from September in many locations. A late **Northern House Wren** was photographed at Boyce-Mayview Park 11/2 (KH). Up to two **Marsh Wrens** continued through October at Wingfield Pines and last reported 11/2 (m.ob.).

American Pipit is a regular migrant in small numbers. One was at Hilltop Park in Collier Twp. 10/17 (JSa). One was heard 11/27 over Duck Hollow 11/18 (MF), two were at Aspinwall Riverfront Park 11/20 (DM) and one was there 11/24 (AF). The open grassy area in this newly expanded park along the Allegheny River has been reliable for finding this species in recent years. Another one was at Duck Hollow 11/29 (JFe).

Hot on the heels of the Winter Finch Forecast, a few **Pine Siskins** were reported in the county this fall. Single birds were at Dead Man's Hollow 10/9 (KB), Frick Park 10/12 (CM), Homewood Cemetery 10/16 (MK), Hampton Twp. 10/24 (DN) and Beechwood Farms 10/26 (DM, et al.). Two were at North Park 10/10 (SG). Two were at Imperial 11/12 (DBE), one was at Chapel Harbor 11/16 (MKu) and one was at Beechwood Farms 11/19 (JL). Unfortunately, it appears they were just passing through the area.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was a great find at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 10/6 (DM, m.ob.). The bird was well documented and seen by many observers but could not be relocated the following day. A **Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** was at West Deer Twp. 10/19-28 (LC). The last report in eBird is 11/8, but this subspecies has wintered at this site in recent years, so it may appear in the next report. **Vesper Sparrow** is rarely reported away from Imperial, so two observations were notable. One was at Allegheny Memorial Park Cemetery in Allison Park 10/1 (NB) and one was photographed at North Park 10/25 (EM).

A few **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported this fall. Single birds were at Duck Hollow 10/13 (Corvus) and Wingfield Pines 10/14 (APe) and two were there 10/15-11/13 (Corvus, m.ob.) One was at North Park 11/2 (eBird), one at Hartwood Acres 11/4 (JDz) and three were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 11/21 (MV).

A somewhat late **Northern Waterthrush** continued at Chapel Harbor from 9/29 on 10/1 (JDz). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at Beechwood Farms 10/12 (JDz) and again 10/25 (SD). One was at Frick Park 11/1 (TR). A **Nashville Warbler** in Squirrel Hill 10/20 (AD, WZ) was late. The last (and third) **Connecticut Warbler** reported was at North Park 10/1 (KE). A **Mourning Warbler** was at Homewood Cemetery 10/1 (MK), and one was at Boyce Park 10/13 (EH), which was late. A **Common Yellowthroat** at Homewood Cemetery 10/26 (MK) was on the late side. A very late **Yellow Warbler** was photographed at Frick Park 10/24 (BL).

A very late male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed at a feeder in West View 11/11 (DBI).

Observers: *Ken Behrens, Douglas Bell (DBI), David Bennett (DBE), Wilson Biggs, Nathaniel Bowler, Liz Buchanan, Ron Burkert (RBU), Thomas Connor, Jeannette Cordell, Corvus, Linda Croskey, Sofia D., Ankur Dave, John Dzikie (JDz), Kevin Evilsizor, Joe Fedor (JFe), Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannagan, Ross Gallardy, Andy Georgeson, Steve Gosser, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Karen Himmler, Rob Hooton, Michelle Kienholtz, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Bryon Langerman, Judy Lesso, Ed McKaveney, Pat McShea, Michele Mannella, Dan Mendenhall, Cole Miller, Oscar Miller, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Dick Nugent, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Kevin Parsons, Amber Pertz, Tessa Rhinehart, James Saracco (JSa), Scott Sisco, Victoria Streeton, Shannon Thompson, Connor Tompkins, Joe Triglia, Mark VanderVen (MVV), Mark Vass, Ezra White, Wenting Zheng, m.ob (many observers).*