

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

The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Vol. 24, No. 6 November/December 2025

The Annual Slide-Slam will highlight our next meeting!



EASTERN SCREECH-OWL: PHOTO BY TOM MOELLER

The club's favorite annual night of photos is coming up at our next meeting on December 3, 2025 - the Slide-Slam. It will be a Zoom meeting with dazzling images from club members' cameras. Our many talented photographers will be able to present their beautiful bird photos directly on your personal screens, giving you an even better viewing experience.

Relatively new members may wonder why we call this a "Slide-Slam." Well, the Three Rivers Birding Club was founded in 2001, and our first photo show was in the ancient pre-digital year of 2003, when images were projected onto a screen from "color slides." Remember those?

Possible participants for this year's Slide-Slam can sign up with Dave Brooke at davbrooke@gmail.com to reserve a spot. He will explain the details about how to participate. Dave would like to limit the participants to 8-10 photographers to give each person about 6 minutes to present. Cutoff date for applying will be November 19, 2025.

This will be a Zoom meeting online starting at 7:00 PM (ET), giving you access time to log on. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM (ET), and the **Slide-Slam** will start at approximately 8:00 PM (ET), but tune in early since it may begin *before* 8:00. Details on how

to join the event, including Zoom passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied a few days before the meeting.

A Historic Milestone for 3RBC: First-Ever Board Elections

By Frank Moone

October 8, 2025, marked a momentous day in the history of Three Rivers Birding Club. For the first time the club held elections to form its board of directors—a significant step in 3RBC's continuing growth and organizational development. Members will recall that the club became an official non-profit corporation in January 2024. As part of that reorganization, 3RBC is now governed by a Board of Directors, nominated and approved by the membership at large, in accordance with its new by-laws.

At the October meeting, Dave Brooke, chair of the new Nominating Committee, presented a slate of eleven candidates, all of whom were approved unanimously by voice vote from those attending both in-person and via Zoom. The newly elected 3RBC Board, serving for the 2026–2027 term, includes: Christine Best, Sheree Daugherty, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, Carol McCullough, Dan Mendenhall, Tom Moeller, Frank Moone, Claire Staples, Steve Thomas, and Suzanne Thomas.

While many of these individuals are long-time members familiar to the 3RBC community, we are especially pleased to welcome two newer members—Christine Best and Dan Mendenhall—who are joining the club's leadership team.

Christine spent more than a decade working with birds as a professional zookeeper. She now lives in the South Hills with her husband and young children, volunteers with bird banding projects, and delights in sharing her passion for birds and nature with others. Her spark bird is the Andean Condor, and her favorite birding tradition (besides the camaraderie) is celebrating a "lifer" with a slice of pie.

Dan is the Facility Steward at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve for Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. Certified as an ASWP Master Birder in 2021, Dan is applying his background as a science educator to leading weekly guided bird walks, as well as eco-tour leadership involvement. He helped to develop ASWP's recent College Birding program, building partnerships with universities in the Pittsburgh area. In his spare time he photographs and paints birds and wildlife, volunteers with local environmental cleanup groups, and enjoys spending time with his wife and their rescue dog, Bo.

The new board will officially take office on January 1, 2026, with terms concluding on December 31, 2027. In accordance with the club's by-laws, the board will meet early in the new year to select 3RBC's officers from among its members. All eleven board members were nominated either by themselves or by fellow members during the open nominations period, which runs annually from June 1 through September 1. Any member in good standing, age 18 or older, with at least one year of continuous membership, is eligible for nomination.

With new energy and fresh ideas, the Three Rivers Birding Club is poised to soar into its next chapter—continuing to build community, inspire conservation, and celebrate the joy of birds.

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

President's Message

Let's Have Some Fun

By Mike Fialkovich

Back in 1996 I purchased a book called *Birder's Dictionary* by Randall T. Cox. The book contains terminology used in the study of birds, and I thought it would be a useful reference. At the time I was getting more involved with birding projects and writing, so I wanted to learn more terminology.

The book lists many colloquial bird names, many I had never heard. Colloquial is generally defined as informal, as in conversation. I was aware of some of the duck names, that hunters referred to, including Bluebill for Ruddy Duck and scaup, Baldpate for American Wigeon, and Rain Crow or Rain Bird for cuckoos, because they have the habit of calling just before rain storms, although I have never personally experienced that. Some of the entries explain the names {which I included}, but most do not. I included my thoughts regarding some of the names. There are many names I never heard of that I would like to share with you. Are you familiar with any of them?

- *Baldface* – American Coot
- *Buffalo Bird* – Brown-headed Cowbird or Lark Bunting. Background not given, but I suspect it's from the habit of following Bison to gather insects flushed by the animal's movements.
- *Butterball* – Bufflehead
- *Devil-diver* – any of the grebes
- *Fish Cranes* – any of the herons
- *Flying Sheep* – Whooping Crane
- *Frate* – Great Crested Flycatcher
- *Hag or Hagdom* – Greater Shearwater
- *John Crow* – Black Vulture
- *Judas-bird* – Dickcissel
- *Levee-walker* – Little Blue Heron for the habit of hunting crayfish along levees.
- *Little Black-breast* – Dunlin
- *Little Dukelet* – any of the screech owls
- *Little Striker* and *Silver Ternlet* – Least Tern
- *Lizard bird* – Roadrunner
- *Logcock* – Pileated and Ivory-billed Woodpecker
- *Long john* – Great Blue Heron
- *Longshanks* – Black-necked Stilt
- *Long white* – Great Egret
- *Short white* – Snowy Egret
- *Marble-belly* and *Speckle belly* – Greater White-fronted Goose. Obviously for the black barring on the belly.
- *Marbleheader* or *Sea Horse* – Northern Fulmar
- *Moose Bird* – Canada Jay
- *Nun* – female Scaup due to the dark plumage and white face.
- *Picket-tail*, *Spike-tail* or *Sprig* – Northern Pintail
- *Pill-will* – Willet. I imagine it's based on the call.

The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Published bimonthly:

January, March, May, July, September, November

Send articles and/or illustrations to:

Bob Mulvihill, Editor

Robert.Mulvihill@aviary.org

Send ideas or items for the website to:

Tom Moeller, Webmaster

thosjmoel@gmail.com

Send questions and suggestions to:

Mike Fialkovich, President

mpfial@verizon.net

805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Suggest or volunteer to lead outings to:

Steve Thomas, Outings Director

thomassj22@verizon.net

309 Center Ave., Aspinwall, PA 15215

Report bird sightings to:

Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

mpfial@verizon.net

805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Membership: FREE Student-Youth, \$15 Individual,

\$20 Family, \$50 Contributing, \$100 Sustaining

Send check to *Three Rivers Birding Club*

c/o Thomas J. Moeller, Treasurer

6357 Ebdy St., Pittsburgh, PA 15217-3035

thosjmoel@gmail.com

Copyright © Three Rivers Birding Club. All rights reserved.

Photographers and illustrators retain their copyrights

- *Pink-eyed Diver* – Horned Grebe, from the eye color.
- *Pocket-bird* – Scarlet Tanager
- *Poke* and *Stake-driver* – used for several herons and bitterns
- *Politician* – White-eyed Vireo for its habit of placing bits of newspaper in its nest. I never knew this species used newspaper in its nest.
- *Pond guinea* – American Bittern
- *Pond hen* – coots and gallinules
- *Pond Sheldrake* – Common Merganser
- *Pope* – Painted Bunting
- *Quandy* and *Scoldenore* – Long-tailed Duck
- *Rain-goose* – Red-throated Loon
- *Red-bill* – Black Oystercatcher, Royal Tern and Caspian Tern. Obviously given the bill color of these birds. I always considered the bill of the Royal Tern orange and Caspian Tern red.
- *Red-hammer* – Red-shafted Flicker
- *Redleg* – American Black Duck
- *Reed-bird* and *Ricebird* – Bobolink
- *Rock-trotter* – Horned Lark

continued on page 3

President's Message

continued from page 2

- *Rock-bird* and *Sand Runner* – Ruddy Turnstone
- *Rockweed bird* – Purple Sandpiper
- *Saddleback* – Great Black-backed Gull
- *Sea-crow* – Razorbill
- *Sea-dog* – Black Skimmer for its call that sounds like a dog barking
- *Sea Eagles* or *Sea Swallows* – collective term for terns
- *Sea-goose* and *Sea-snipe* – phalaropes
- *Sea Mouse* – Harlequin Duck for its squeaky call.
- *Sea Parrot* – Puffins
- *Sedge Hen* – Clapper Rail
- *Sea Saw* – Spotted Sandpiper surely for its bobbing movements
- *Short-neck* – Pectoral Sandpiper
- *Shot Pouch* and *Leatherback* – Ruddy Duck for its resistance to shot. Also, Sleepy Brother for unknown reasons.
- *Sickle-bill* – Long-billed Curlew
- *Silver Tongue* – Song Sparrow
- *Sizzle-britches* – Common Goldeneye for its high speed whistling flight
- *Spike-bill* – Marbled Godwit
- *Stage-driver* – King Rail
- *Swamp Angel* – various thrushes



RED-NECKED GREBE OR DEVIL DIVER? PHOTO DAN MENDENHALL

It's Christmas Bird Count Time!

When you join a local Christmas Bird Count, you are taking part in a community science project that has been running since 1900! The data from the annual count is used to show changes in bird populations and inform conservation decisions.

Why not start (or continue) an end -of-year tradition? Counts must take place within pre-determined count circles. Bird feeder counts within circles are welcome. The Pittsburgh Area count will take place on Saturday, December 27th, but our region hosts several counts between December 14th and December 27th. For more information on how to participate, visit aswp.org/the-christmas-bird-count.

ASWP Welcomes a New Executive Director

By Tom Moeller

Chris Bason assumed the role of executive director of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania on September 2, 2025, replacing Jim Bonner, who retired after 21 years of service to ASWP.

Chris came from Delaware, where he was the executive director at the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays for ten years. He is also knowledgeable in renewable energy through work with Ørsted, a global leader in offshore wind development.

Chris wants to learn as much as he can about ASWP's programs, staff, and volunteers. He hopes to maintain and expand the environmental education programs at ASWP. He came to ASWP because he saw the organization had his same goals.

Chris looks forward to building on established partnerships in the area to improve environmental efforts in southwest Pennsylvania. "Birding plays an increasingly important role in connecting people to nature and encouraging its protection. ASWP's partnership with the Three Rivers Birding Club is a great example of how organizations can work together to protect bird life," says Chris.

Chris received his master's degree in biology at East Carolina University and his bachelor's degree in agriculture at the University of Delaware. Chris, whose mother-in-law grew up in Mercer County, is relocating to the Fox Chapel area with his family.



Outings to Come

Late Fall Bird Outings 2025

By Steve Thomas

Saturday, November 1 – Yellow Creek: This outing will be a joint outing of the 3RBC and the Todd Bird Club. Meet Roger and Margaret Higbee at the park office at 8:00 AM. The Park office is located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and a half to drive from Pittsburgh. The Park has a wide variety of habitats and a large lake that attracts a wide variety of waterbirds and sometimes exciting rarities. **Please contact Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) or Roger's cell (412-309-3538) if you plan to go.**

Saturday, November 22 –Panhandle Trail Midway (Midway-Bulger): Meet Conor Tompkins (conorotompkins@gmail.com) at the Midway parking lot of the Panhandle Trail at 3:45 PM. We hope to see Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls, along with evening flights of passerines. This area can be very windy, so over-dress for the weather. The trail is paved with a very gentle uphill grade. The outing will last about 1.5 hours. There is a port-a-john at the trailhead. The parking lot located just south of the intersection of Washington Ave and Prospect Street in Midway PA, GPS coordinate: [40.3693449, -80.292479](https://www.google.com/maps/place/40.3693449,-80.292479)

Outings Revisited

Early Fall Outings Proved Well Worth Attending

Sewickley Heights Borough Park – August 29: With not one, but three road closures leading to Sewickley Heights Borough Park, 17 birders eventually found their way to the outing for a great day of fellowship and birding. Confusing fall warblers are the focus for these early migration walks. We did have some, but a few surprises made for a very good morning of birding.



THE SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS GROUP. PHOTO BY KEVIN SMAY

A Chestnut-sided Warbler started our list in the parking lot. At the forest opening on Butterfly Trail we patiently waited for the chilly morning to warm, and the birds started to move. Blackburnian, Nashville, Tennessee, Hooded Warblers and an American Redstart played hide and seek in the foliage.

Moving on we had a few drab Indigo Buntings. Taking a spur trail beyond the Butterfly Trail, we found both Yellow-bellied and Least Flycatchers, a Yellow-throated Vireo, and good views of Cape May Warblers.

Next we headed to the Polo Field for a change of habitat. Fortunately, John Dzikiy snapped a photo of a distant flock of birds. When the image was reviewed, it showed the distinctive white “bracelets” of 50+ migrating Common Nighthawks!

Continuing down the gravel path, two Common Ravens were heard and then seen flying through the tree line. This was the first time that I’ve seen ravens at this location.

To top off the outing, a Broad-winged Hawk was heard. The calls were stationary, and the bird was found perched in a large Sycamore tree. Bird list: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/406721> –by leader Sheree Daugherty

Harrison Hills Park – September 6: Ten birders enjoyed a lovely fall morning of birding at Harrison Hills Park, where we observed 38 species. Some of the highlights were four Pileated Woodpeckers, with two of them sharing the same tree, a kettle of at least 28 Turkey Vultures, and a very active wave of warblers at the north pond. We walked about 1.5 miles in three hours from the Environmental Learning Center, through the Goldenrod Meadow, and down to the little visited North Pond, which gave many participants an introduction to a section of the park they hadn’t seen before. –by leader Dave Brooke

Sewickley Heights Borough Park – September 12: Reminiscent of our spring outing, we had a chilly start to the day with temps struggling to get into the 50s as our group of 17 gathered around leader Sheree Daugherty. A Barn Swallow overhead was our only

swallow of the day.

Starting off on the Butterfly Trail, we were surprised when we noted a Red-breasted Nuthatch calling in the distance. September seems a bit early for them, but they are being reported in other areas. Wood and Swainson’s Thrushes were lurking in the bushes. A Hooded Warbler was singing its alternate song, and as we spread out on the path, it was one of the first warblers we saw. American Redstart, Cape May, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Green Warblers were flitting about. A family group of three Scarlet Tanagers were high in the trees, and a few people caught a glimpse of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. It was hard to count a flock of Cedar Waxwings, as they moved through the trees. A Least Flycatcher posed in front of us.

Two Indigo Buntings, one of them a juvenile, were spotted as we moved through the meadow. A Turkey Vulture soared overhead, and an Eastern Wood-Pewee sounded off. A few more warblers popped up, including a Blackpoll, and we added another Swainson’s Thrush. We watched a Broad-winged Hawk on outstretched wings as we walked the Pipeline Trail. Our only warblers here were Hooded and American Redstart. As the day warmed, and the birding slowed, people turned their attention to wildflowers and insects.

Sheree had to depart early and turned the group over to Adrian Fenton. Others said their goodbyes a little later, and Adrian led those of us remaining to a thicket of Devil’s Walking Stick, where we were rewarded with close looks of male and female Black-throated Blue Warblers and a fleeting glance at a Great Crested Flycatcher. A Gray-cheeked Thrush made scolding calls, and a small wave of Tennessee, more Hooded, American Redstart, Bay-breasted, and Blackburnian Warblers engaged our attention.

We had a total of 42 species, including ten warblers: Tennessee, Hooded, American Redstart, Cape May, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green. Bird list: <https://ebird.org/atlaspa/checklist/S272901329> –by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch

Deer Lakes Park – September 13: Eleven enthusiastic birders gathered on a beautiful September morning at Deer Lakes Park in Allegheny County for what turned out to be a truly memorable outing. The mild weather and plentiful sunshine made for perfect birding conditions, and the birds certainly did not disappoint.

For the first ninety minutes or so, the group was treated to an excellent show of warbler activity. We tallied 11 warbler species, with especially nice looks at Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, and Bay-breasted Warblers—always a treat to see in migration. The mixed flocks kept us busy and entertained, as birds foraged actively through the canopy, offering great opportunities for comparison and discussion.



JUVENILE RED-HEADED WOODPECKER. PHOTO BY DAVE BROOKE
continued on page 5

The Peregrine

Outings Revisited

continued from page 4

One of the morning's highlights came when a single tree seemed to come alive with four Philadelphia Vireos, all feeding together and giving everyone extended, satisfying views—an uncommon sight and a real thrill for the group. Other notable sightings included a Brown Thrasher, a vocal White-eyed Vireo, and a cooperative Yellow-billed Cuckoo that lingered long enough for many binoculars to lock on.

As the morning wore on, we followed the gravel road at the top of the park, where a large flock of Cedar Waxwings kept us entertained as they fed actively in the treetops, passing berries back and forth and fluttering between branches. Then came another surprise—a sharp-eyed participant spotted a juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker perched atop a distant snag, capping off the walk's highlights beautifully. A few Red-breasted Nuthatches were also heard calling—part of what was shaping up to be a good fall for the species in our region.

In total, the group covered a pleasant distance over the course of the outing, enjoying not only the birds but the camaraderie that comes with shared discovery in the field. A full checklist of the species observed, along with duration and route details, can be viewed here: [eBird Checklist S273121554](#) —by coleader **Todd Hooe**

Wingfield Pines – September 14: 16 birders gathered at Wingfield Pines in Upper St. Clair to see what fall brought us. There was a nice mix of experienced and new birders in the group, and people were eager to share their experiences with each other. To maximize treetop sun exposure, we started along the Chartiers Creek, where we saw multiple mixed flocks of warblers with the typical associated chickadees and titmice. We got good looks at Magnolia, American Redstart, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. There was a Belted Kingfisher perched along the creek, with Green Heron and Common Merganser further upstream. One attendee found an American Toad along the creekside trail.



THE WINGFIELD PINES GROUP. PHOTO BY LAURA FLANNERY

As we approached the boardwalk area, we began listening intently for the resident Virginia Rail and Marsh Wren. After a few minutes the rail sounded off deep in the cattails. The Marsh Wren also started vocalizing, and the group triangulated the sound in a typically dense set of reeds. After getting brief looks there, we moved to the filtration ponds, where we saw clear views of the Marsh Wren at the top of the reeds. The group hypothesized that this was a second individual. We wrapped up the trip with good views of Wood Ducks in the flooded woodlands. We ended the morning with 38 species and an unidentified Empidonax, which is pretty good for this hotspot.—by leader **Conor Tompkins**

Raccoon Creek State Park – September 20: Our outing began at the Lake and Valley Trail parking lot. The hillside above the parking lot was full of activity in the morning sun. Bay-breasted Warblers, a Black-and-white Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanagers, and a Wood Thrush were active here. A weedy patch at the start of the trail was full of Magnolia and Tennessee Warblers. We later found several Indigo Buntings along with two Black-throated Green Warblers and a Warbling Vireo. We reached a mowed meadow and began walking along its brushy edge, when a Northern House Wren popped up. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet emerged from the same area along with a Canada Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. A male Hooded Warbler gave us very close and extended views as it foraged in the understory. We walked to the lake and found multiple Great Blue Herons, Killdeer, and a Green Heron before deciding to turn back. A Swainson's Thrush flushed from the trailside, and a Yellow-throated Vireo began singing. Back at the parking lot, we found a Yellow-billed Cuckoo perched calmly in a walnut tree, occasionally hopping to a nearby branch to grab a large caterpillar. A Philadelphia Vireo in a tree near the creek and a couple Turkey Vultures flying over wrapped up this enjoyable outing. —by leader **Malcolm Kurtz**

Linda's Farm – October 4, 2025: Twenty birders introduced themselves to start a quintessential birding morning and then enjoyed apple cider and donuts. We were treated to an azure sky, bright sunshine, with calm warm temperatures. First, we watched an area created by a deadfall pine tree now adorned with hanging bird feeders, a peanut butter log, and bird bath. There we observed White-throated Sparrows and Song Sparrows, plus a quick look at a Lincoln's Sparrow.

Walking along goldenrod paths provided looks at a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and four Northern Mockingbirds. A nature highlight was a beautiful Variegated Fritillary Butterfly; a species widespread and common in



VARIEGATED FRITILLARY BUTTERFLY: PHOTO BY LINDA CROSKEY

the south. This was a new or "life" butterfly for many of the birders!

We proceeded through a woods opening to see two Blue-headed Vireos, two Red-tailed Hawks, a flyover flock of fourteen Killdeer, and a Lincoln's Sparrow. Plus, the melodic song of an Eastern Meadowlark was heard across the farm fields.

Changing habitats to a pond area yielded several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Black-throated Green Warblers, and two Red-shouldered Hawks.

We welcomed several new birders at this outing, and it was enlightening to see experienced birders helping the newcomers. It was a great day with a great turnout. Thank you all for coming ~ our total bird species was 44. —by leader **Linda Croskey**

The Peregrine

Observations

San Joaquin Marsh – A Watery Oasis in an Urban Landscape

Article and photos by Tom Moeller

When I lived in California from 1962 to 1973, I identified two birds, both crows. I have been back many times and discovered vast numbers of bird species live there. One outstanding place to visit, full of birds, is less than ten miles from my high school – San Joaquin Marsh.

San Joaquin Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Irvine, California, right across from the entrance to the University of California at Irvine. Although one may think of Orange County, where it is located, as a dry area, the freshwater marsh is bordered by San Diego Creek and is only six miles from the Upper Newport Bay on the Pacific Ocean. It is maintained by the Irvine Ranch Water District with ties to the Sea and Sage Audubon Society and UC Irvine.

The 300 acres of San Joaquin Marsh comprise many pools of water surrounded by connecting causeways. These pools clean water from the San Diego Creek, removing nearly 75% of the nitrogen from the urban waste water. It is then pumped back into the creek to aid the ecologically sensitive Upper Newport Bay. Other parts of the marsh are wetlands with aquatic plants, coastal sage scrub with native California flora, as well as riparian forests. It is an oasis for wildlife surrounded by growing urban sprawl.

During my high school reunion, my wife Nancy and I discovered San Joaquin Marsh. As we drove into the sanctuary, a White-faced Ibis greeted us from the bank of the San Diego Creek. Almost



WESTERN FENCE LIZARD

immediately we found a bird the marsh is most famous for, an Orange Bishop, which now called a Northern Red Bishop. This species is native to Africa, but escaped birds have established naturalized populations in southern California and less so on the Texas coast. San Joaquin Marsh is a perfect habitat for this non-native species.

In various pools we found Long-billed Dowitchers, a female Northern Shoveler (Pond E), and a flyover by an Osprey carrying a fish (Pond B). We only had an hour, so we vowed to return the next day.

We had more time to explore the marsh on Day 2, three hours. Four American White Pelicans circled overhead as we began our visit. Again, shorebirds were on the San Diego Creek's bank; this time a Black-necked Stilt and two Snowy Egrets. We ambled around the campus of buildings near the entrance. It was Sunday, so the shops were closed. We spotted a California Towhee, an Orange-crowned Warbler (Pacific), and a couple of lizards with blue dots on their backs. These were Western Fence Lizards, and if we turned one over, we would have found it had a blue belly.

Going out to one of the many ponds (Pond E) we found an American Avocet wading through very shallow water, sweeping its long bill across the water to stir up small aquatic insects to feed on. In a deeper pool (Pond 1) with a small island in the center, we found a goldmine of birds. American Coots were first up; then, a flying Brown Pelican drew our eyes to many birds on the island: Great Egret, shovellers, sandpipers, Killdeer, White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Western Gulls, a dowitcher, and more Coots. In the deeper water three grebes were swimming within feet of each other – a Clark's Grebe, a Western Grebe, and a Horned Grebe.

There were windbreaks of vegetation between the ponds, where we found a Bushtit and a Black Phoebe. Back at the shallow pool (Pond E), three Long-billed Dowitchers were probing the muddy bottom. Back at the marsh campus, where the building were, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher flitted near a large sycamore tree. And on San Diego Creek a Snowy Egret stood in the water on the opposite shore. As we watched, it took off gracefully and headed downstream.

Our third day at San Joaquin Marsh was only a short visit because we were headed for the airport that day to leave, and we had one more stop before departure. In Pond E, two American Avocets and a Black-necked Stilt probed the water for breakfast. We again got good, close looks at a pair of Orange Bishops (Northern Red Bishops). Suddenly, a swarm of 18 American White Pelicans appeared in the sky headed for the marsh. They circled over us and landed in various ponds.

Then, we visited a new pond (Pond D), where hundreds of birds were milling about, it being early in the day: Western Sandpipers, avocets, Black-necked Stilts, dowitchers, Northern Shovelers, Killdeer,



NORTHERN RED BISHOP

continued on page 7

The Peregrine

Observations

continued from page 6

other smaller sandpipers, a Green-winged Teal – most of the birds in large numbers. Reports of a Baird's Sandpiper had us looking, but that bird is a nemesis bird for me.

Excitement came as a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew over the water, with some birds flying off, but most stayed put, there being safety in numbers. It was a wonderful sight with birds feeding, flying to a new spot, napping, preening, etc. In the grass at the edge of the pond, a Solitary Sandpiper pecked at insects in the vegetation and the mud.

We went back to the Sage and Sea Audubon shop to find it open, so we could buy a few souvenirs. We spotted a hummingbird nearby

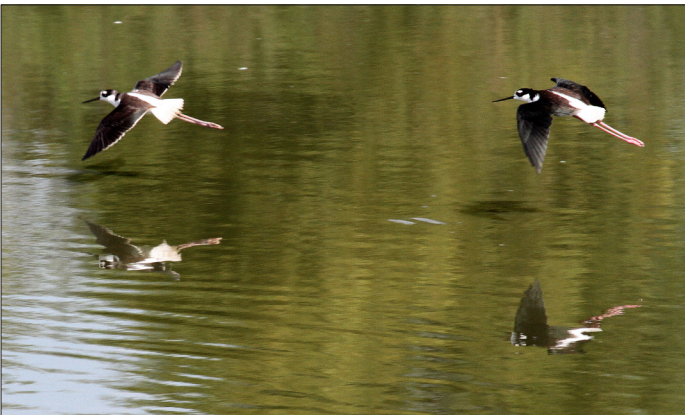


MALE ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

and went over to find it was a male Anna's Hummingbird visiting the flowers in the garden. Next, a White-crowned Sparrow appeared on the ground not far from us. Our final bird in the marsh was a Black Phoebe, ilhouetted in the morning sky.

San Joaquin is quite an attraction for birds. The fresh water ponds have much to offer for them in the dry southern California climate. It is well worth a visit.

I mentioned that we had one more stop that morning before our airplane departed. Twelve miles northwest of San Joaquin Marsh (as the crow flies) is an equally wonderful bird sanctuary, Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. And it was on the way to LAX! However, I don't have to tell you about Bolsa Chica, because I already have. See the September/October 2019 edition of *The Peregrine* (Vol 18, No. 5) along with my photo gallery of the wetlands on the 3rbc.org website.



BLACK-NECKED STILTS FLYING OVER THE WATER.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

June – July 2025

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

June was a rainy month. It seemed there were thunderstorms almost daily the first half of the month. Some storms were severe with high winds and hail. Trees and powerlines were knocked down, and there was localized flooding. Walking through parks revealed the storm destruction with numerous trees toppled over. It was also quite warm and humid. July began with a heat wave and additional storms that lasted the first half of the month at least. There were an interesting variety of late spring migrants in June and some potential rare breeders. One rare breeder was confirmed in two locations.

A lingering male **Bufflehead** was at the Edgeworth Dam to 6/22 (GH, et al.).

Two **Northern Bobwhites** were calling at North Park 6/7 (KE). One was seen in a different part of the park 6/14-17 (m.ob.). It's unknown who released the birds.

Black-billed Cuckoo was only reported at North Park and Imperial during the season. This species is really getting hard to find in recent years.

A pair of **Virginia Rails** were at Wingfield Pines during the winter and into spring. They went unreported for at least several weeks and were again heard calling 6/2 (BV) and 7/15 (TC) through the end of July. Observers are hoping to confirm breeding again at this site where a pair bred in 2016.

Rarely if ever reported in summer, an **American Woodcock** was reported at North Park 6/2 and 7/8 (eBird) at a location known for displaying birds in spring. Two were in favorable breeding habitat at Hartwood Acres 7/3 (eBird), and one was at Peter's Creek 7/2 (JF). A late **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Imperial 6/1 (MV).

Herring Gulls were reported at two long established breeding sites. High counts at the Highland Park Bridge on the Allegheny River include 42 on 6/4 (EH) and 68 on 6/24 (TC). A few chicks were observed both days. Counts at the Emsworth Dam on the Ohio River ranged from 26-102 during the season (m.ob.). A total of 17 chicks were counted 6/15 (ST).

The **Black Tern** found at Imperial in late May was last seen 6/1 (DM). A late **Common Tern** was at the Emsworth Dam 6/15 (SD, et al.). Two late **Forster's Terns** were photographed at Duck Hollow 6/22 (MK, JF).

A late **Common Loon** in non-breeding/immature plumage was at Edgeworth Dam 6/3 (GH).

A **Great Egret** was seen flying up the Allegheny River at the Strip District in Pittsburgh 6/26 (DBe), and one was at North Park 6/29 (JJ). This species is rare in June. An adult **Little Blue Heron** was at North Park 6/5-7 (HB), providing the second county record. The bird proved elusive and was only seen by a few observers.

There were just a few **Black Vulture** reports this season. Two were along Stoops Ferry Road in Frazier Twp. 6/7 and three 6/8 (CD). One was in Forward Twp. 6/10 (eBird), two were soaring with Turkey Vultures at Monongahela Cemetery in North Braddock 7/6 (MF), and one was at Buena Vista 6/17 (CC). One was at Deer Lakes Park 7/28 (AH, PM).

The **Osprey** nest on Neville Island had two young 6/29 (PB).

The **Barred Owls** in Frick Park were conspicuous along the trails with five chicks this year (m.ob.). The birds were confiding (showing no fear of humans), often perching along a busy trail through July. Other reports include single birds at North Park in June (eBird), Edgeworth 6/25 (JD), Sygan Hilltop in South Fayette Twp. 7/1 (DNe), Bridgeville 6/14 (SP), and Gibsonia 6/1-7/12 (KP).

continued on page 8

The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers

continued from page 7

Two pairs of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** nested in the county this year! This was always an uncommon to rare migrant, but birds were at North Park the entire winter and, at least, from early spring in Highland Park. The hope was they would stay and potentially breed, and that's just what happened with both pairs confirmed! This is the first nesting that I'm aware of since the 1980s.

Merlin once again were in the Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh. Breeding was not confirmed as of this writing but highly suspected after several successful breedings in the past few years. The bird observed in spring continued into mid-June (AD, WZ, MK). After a lack of reports for about a month, a bird was seen 7/28 (MMc), and two were spotted 6/17 (AD, WZ) and 7/29 (JWR).

Up to 45 **Fish Crows** were in Oakland 7/27 (KSJ, JSH).

Alder Flycatcher is a rare migrant here. One was at North Park 6/2 (KE), and one was in North Versailles 6/7 (MF) in less than optimal habitat. It was searched for later in June and was not relocated. Both birds were likely late migrants.

Two **Horned Lark** were at Imperial 6/1 (SG, EPH).

Two **Bank Swallows** were at Dashields Dam 7/11 (JB).

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was at Imperial 7/1 (PLi). This could be a breeder given the time of year. They do breed fairly close by at a site in Washington County, so it's possible a bird drifted to the area.

Also out of season and a potential breeder were two **Brown Creepers** at North Park in June (AP). A recording was submitted to eBird 6/26, and one was reported 7/1 (DBe). There is plenty of appropriate habitat at the park, so it's possible they could breed there.

There were two late **Swainson's Thrush** reports 6/1. One was in Sewickley Heights Park (RH), and one was at the Pleasant Hills Arboretum (BM).

A **Vesper Sparrow** continued at Imperial from the spring through June (AF). **Savannah Sparrow** was at three locations around Imperial in June (m.ob.). **Grasshopper Sparrow** was not reported this season.

Henslow's Sparrow continued from spring at the Burgettstown / Robinson Road intersection, where they have been regular the last few years. A very late **White-throated Sparrow** was in Hampton Twp. 6/1 (DN).

Yellow-breasted Chat is getting less common in the county, probably due to inadequate habitat. The Imperial Grasslands still have a few. One was along King Road since May (m.ob.), and two were reported there 7/13 (AF), the last report. One also continued from May at the intersection of Burgettstown and Robinson Road, last reported 7/8 (m.ob.). One was also at South Taylor Environmental Center in West Mifflin 6/22 (JF).

A small number of **Bobolinks** still remain at the Imperial Grasslands, viewed from what the locals call the Truck Stop. Up to two were observed at that site in June (m.ob.).

Ovenbirds are in only a few locations in the county in summer. Up to eight were heard singing at SGL 203 in Wexford in June (AF). One was heard at North Park 6/23 (DBe), but that's not a usual location. They were present at Deer Lakes Park in June into July (TC), one of the regular breeding sites, and one was heard in the woods along King Road at Imperial in June (m.ob.). This has been a regular location for them for many years. **Worm-eating Warblers** continued through June at Harrison Hills Park (m.ob.). A bird was observed carrying food to a spot in the leaf litter on the slope 6/28 (DB), certainly a nest site. **Black-and-white Warbler** is a local breeder in the county. A pair was regularly seen at Harrison Hills Park in June (m.ob.), the most reliable place to find them in June. One was at Frick Park 6/7 (CK, KSJ), perhaps a late migrant. One was at Karns 6/10 (DB), which is just south of Harrison Hills Park, and four were at

North Park 7/1 (eBird) with details regarding two begging juveniles. **Kentucky Warblers** were heard at several locations in North Park through June into early July (m.ob.). One was a former reliable location, the Braille Trail (AF, DN). These reports are welcomed, as this species was believed to disappear from this park over the years, as it continues to decline in the county. Single birds were heard singing at two locations in Indiana Twp. 6/29 (BSh) and 7/23 (eBird). They were present at usual breeding sites in Deer Lakes Park and Harrison Hills Park. There are three singing males at Harrison Hills Park this season (DB). One was heard singing at Frick Park 7/9 (DYe, SB, CC), not a usual breeding location. **Cerulean Warbler** is only regularly found in the Sewickley area during the breeding season. Several were reported along Little Sewickley Creek Road in June (m.ob.). One was at Boyce Park 6/5 (EH), two there 6/6 (CT), and one 6/12 (CT), which is encouraging. A **Northern Parula** was at the Scott Conservancy 6/25 (JSa). This species is sometimes heard singing during the breeding season in the county, but breeding has yet to be confirmed, at least in recent years. A late **Bay-breasted Warbler** was at Frick Park 6/1 (EO), and a late **Blackpoll Warbler** was at North Park 6/2 (TC). **Prairie Warbler** was present at Imperial June and most of July (m.ob.), where they continue to hang on amid industrial park development. A late **Black-throated Green Warbler** was at Sewickley Heights Park 6/1 (RH), and one singing at Crouse Run Preserve was unexpected 6/30 (NB). This was probably a bird trying to set up a territory in this wooded ravine that mimics habitat found in the mountains or further north that supports this species during the breeding season.

Observers: David Bennett (DBe), Justin Bosler, Nathaniel Bowler, Paul Brown, Dave Brooke, Stephen Bucklin, Haley Buchanan, Thomas Connor, Chapin Czarnecki, Ankur Dave, Casey Davidson, Sofia Di Gennaro, John Drake, Kevin Evilsizor, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Steve Gosser, Eric Hall, Gene Henderson, Amy Henrici, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Rob Hooton, Julie Jansen, Charity Khesghi, Michelle Kienholz, Patrick Lister (PLi), Michael McDewitt, Pat McShea, Dan Mendenhall, Bob Mulvihill, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Dick Nugent, Emmerson O'Donnell, Kevin Parsons, Amber Pertz, Brian Shema (BSh), Sigurdur Peturrson, Kate St. John, James Saracco (JSa), Judy Shimm, Shannon Thompson, Christopher Turbert, Mark Vass, Brian Vitunic, Jennifer Winter Wren, David Yeany II (DYe), Wenting Zheng, m.ob. (many observers).



DONNA FOYLE MADE IT OUT TO BELLEVUE MEMORIAL PARK LAST MAY TO SEE AND PHOTOGRAPH THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER ON ONE OF THE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN IT SHOWED ITSELF COMPLETELY.