# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

https://www.3rbc.org

Vol. 25, No. 6 November/December 2026


## The always-popular annual slide slam will entertain and inform us at the next meeting!

The club's favorite annual night of photos is coming up at our next meeting on December 2, 2026. 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 35mm color slides. Remember those?

Participants for this year's program have all been selected. Dave Brooke thanks those who showed an interest in sharing their photos and is happy that the roster is already complete. He will organize practice sessions for the participants. The ten presenter will give about a six-minute show of their photography. It is sure to be a good show!

Again, this will not be an in-person meeting. It will be a virtual-only online Zoom meeting, starting at 7:00 PM (ET) to give everyone time to access the site and log in. 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.

## Winter Birding is Coming!

**Story and photos by Jennifer Balsiger**

The forecast was 21 degrees. The sky was clear, but the air was frigid. On a day like this most people would not dream of leaving their warm home, but birders are not like most people. No, on this day several of my friends and I would be boarding the *Holiday* for an open-air cruise. We would travel through Cleveland's harbor, and weather permitting, past the break wall and onto Lake Erie. "Why?" you ask. To see birds, of course.



*The author all bundled up and ready to go gulling!*

Each winter Black Swamp Bird Observatory hosts a winter pelagic. It is an opportunity to see birds and other wildlife species that you may not get the chance to see while on land. In cruises from years past, attendees have caught glimpses of a variety of species of birds including Black-crowned Night Heron, Northern Pintail, and Long-tailed Duck. Most years produce large flocks, containing more than one hundred individuals of Common Merganser. One year, participants were lucky and spotted a Coyote on the grounds as the ship cruised past the Burke Lakefront Airport.

In between looking for an elusive Surf Scoter or Purple Sandpiper, attendees can't help but be amazed by the number of Gulls to be found. During the cruise a volunteer tosses chum, made of protein-rich pellets, out the back of the boat. This attracts hundreds, even thousands of gulls that not only trail behind the boat but also fly next to it. Many glide side by side with you as you cruise through the water, often coming within ten feet of the boat. Not only is this a captivating experience, but it provides great opportunities for photography.

While most of the gulls are Ring-billed, there are some rarities and surprises to be found in their midst. However, anyone who has tried to identify gulls knows that is a challenge. Fortunately, the pelagic has several guides who are stationed around the boat who locate, identify, and point out birds to attendees. On last year's cruise guests were lucky to have the author of *The Gull Guide*, Amar Ayyash, on board to help identify the gulls. Thanks to Amar's assistance and expertise and that of the guides, participants observed several gull species on past trips, including American Herring Gull, Iceland Gull, and Glaucous Gull.

Each pelagic trip lasts about four hours, and the boat contains several amenities for those who need a break from the cold. There is a restroom on board and an inner room, which provides a barrier against the winds that come off the lake. BSBO even provides a warm lunch on board to all participants.

Winter 2026 pelagic dates have not been announced yet, but cruises typically occur in mid to late December and on New Year's Day. Be sure to monitor BSBO.org for when this year's dates are released.



*Surrounded by gulls during the Black Swamp Bird Observatory's winter pelagic.*

**President's Message**

# Here's To Our Outings Leaders

**By Mike Fialkovich, President**

One of our main activities in the club are outings to see birds. We can't have these events without our outing leaders to guide us at the various locations we visit. Some trips are nearby in familiar local parks, while others are further afield from Pittsburgh. We try to offer a variety to meet the interests of as many people as possible.

When I attend outings, I always find it interesting how each leader approaches the introduction to the outing. There are many similarities where the leader introduces themselves, describes where the group will go, and what we will be looking for, etc., but each leader puts their own spin on it. I like seeing the individual personalities of each leader expressed in how they interact with the group, and I've learned from observing and listening to them.

Leading a trip takes preparation, and the leaders I have been with are always well prepared. Some scout the area for days in advance, if they live near the location of the trip, while others pay attention to bird reports for the area in eBird, on Discord, etc. Each leader has their method of preparation.

We have had some new leaders in recent years, which is very much appreciated. They have taken club members to new locations where many participants have not birded frequently, if at all, adding to the experiences for the club. They have also filled in gaps for leaders that can no longer volunteer for the club due to various reasons.

Going on an outing with experienced leaders helps us learn about sites we may have never visited. I had that experience on two trips this year, Boys Home Park and Hilltop Park. There is no better way to learn about a location than going there with someone who knows the area well and where to find the birds at the site. I made a point to attend those outings for that very reason.

Many thanks to all of our field trip leaders. It is a long overdue acknowledgement of what you do for the club and how important it is to all of us. If you have never led an outing and are interested in leading a field trip in the future, contact our Outings Coordinator, Steve Thomas. You can even co-lead with another birder, if you are more comfortable doing that. There are always experienced members along, who can also help spot birds and assist participants finding the birds.

We are also looking for new outing ideas, such as pop up outings to get out at short notice to look for birds currently in the area during migration. If you have any ideas for new outings, please share them with us. See you in the field!



*3RBC outings to Sewickley Heights Borough Park in spring are always popular!*


## The Peregrine

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*The butterfly meadow at Sewickley Heights Borough Park is often productive for uncommon warblers.*

## Outings to come

# Late Fall Outings November 2026

*Finish out the fall migration season with three walks in November!*

**Saturday, November 7 - Yellow Creek State Park:** Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493 or Roger's cell 412-309-3538) will lead this outing to Yellow Creek State Park. This is our annual fall joint outing with the Todd Bird Club. Meet at the park office at 8:00 AM, located on PA 259 just off US 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 Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493 or Roger's cell 412-309-3538) if you plan to go.***

**Saturday November 14 - Peters Lake:** We will meet Conor Tompkins (conorotompkins@gmail.com) at 8:00 AM at Peters Lake in Canonsburg. This large lake has a walking trail that goes around the perimeter of the lake with multiple viewing spots along the way. We hope to see migrating waterfowl and grebes, as well as resident herons and other fall birds. The trail system is partly paved and partly dirt and is generally flat. There is a port-a-john at the trailhead. GPS coordinates: 40.257897, -80.108303

**Saturday November 21 - Panhandle Trail Midway/Bulger:** We will meet Conor Tompkins (conorotompkins@gmail.com) at the Midway/Bulger Panhandle Trail trailhead at 3:45 PM. We have had good luck seeing Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers in the evening twilight here in the past few years. The trail is paved with a gentle but steady incline. The wind can be high here, so dress like it is 10 degrees cooler than the actual temperature. There is a port-a-john at the trailhead. The parking lot is located just south of the intersection of Washington Ave. and Prospect Street in Midway, PA.
GPS coordinates: 40.3693449, -80.2924795

## Outings Revisited

**Harrison Hills County Park—September 5**: Our walk took place on the morning after our first night of heavy migration for the season. BirdCast reported 1.8 million birds migrated over Allegheny County overnight. Warbler activity confirmed that indeed many more migrants had arrived to the delight of nineteen participants. Additionally, eight of those participants were very new birders and/or new to a 3RBC walk. Cape May Warblers were the most common of the species with a conservative count of nine. We had a very early Palm Warbler as well as really good looks at a couple of beautiful Yellow-throated Vireos. We ended up observing 34 species, nine of them warblers, for a total count of 138 birds recorded. **–by leader Dave Brooke.**

**Sewickley Heights Borough Park—September 11.** This birding destination certainly lived up to its reputation as a birding hot spot! Included in the group of 23 birders was a couple from Utah. It was a joy to watch them add eastern warblers and other migrants to their life list!

The best birding of the day was in the parking lot. A tsunami of warblers ricocheted through the trees and shrubbery, Cape May, Magnolia, American Redstart, Black-throated Green, Hooded, Nashville and Bay-breasted Warblers kept us busy before we even made it to the trails!

We spotted more warblers and had close looks at a Least Flycatcher and a recently fledged, stubby-tailed Indigo Bunting at the open area on Butterfly Trail—a favorite park hot-spot.

Migrants were the focus, and we added Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue, Tennessee, Black-and-white, and Blackburnians, bringing our total to 12 warbler species. Vireos were well represented with Blue-headed, Yellow-throated, and the resident Red-eyed Vireo. Throughout the day we heard several Swainson's and Wood Thrushes and one Veery. And, always a treat to see, we added three southbound hummingbirds zipping by. We ended the day with a hike down the flower-lined Pipeline Trail adding a pair of Broad-winged Hawks to our total of 47 species—**by leader Sheree Daugherty**.

**Wingfield Pines—September 26**: 23 birders went to Wingfield Pines as part of the Three Rivers Birding Club 25th Anniversary Picnic. After descending the initial hill, we were immediately greeted by an enormous flock of Cedar Waxwings. Our count of 100 was conservative. While counting the waxwings, we began finding other migrant birds in the scrub, including close looks at Northern Parula and Lincoln's Sparrow, as well as more distant Cape May and Palm Warblers.

While walking towards Chartiers Creek, the amount of biting insects increased, but we discovered even more warblers. The group got good looks at a Nashville Warbler and also saw Yellow-rumped and Magnolia Warbler. Some sharp-eyed birders saw a Northern Waterthrush deep in the swampy understory.

The group powered through the insect-laden creekside trail towards the AMD ponds. We scoured the area for Virginia Rail and Marsh Wren, which had been reported recently, but came up empty. We did see a lone Chimney Swift harass a Cooper's Hawk, which struck many of us as brave at best. While walking back along the hillside trail, we found the American Wigeon that had been reported recently. The entire group got great views of the bird through a scope. In the end the group saw 39 species in just over two hours of birding. The group eagerly returned to the picnic to eat cake and trade lists with the other group.--**by leader Conor Tompkins**



*Hen American Wigeon; photo by Dan Mendenhall*

**Frick Park—September 27:** Out of 30-plus attendees, Mike Fialkovich and I were the only long-standing 3RBC members on this outing in Frick. There were a few folks I recognized plus many new faces – including several who took the 61B from Carnegie Mellon University. Despite disruption by the Great Race start at the Frick Environmental Center, this wonderful group enjoyed a lovely fall migration outing on the trail circling the Nine Mile Run wetlands. All attendees got to enjoy a migrant mixed flock near the intersection with Fire Lane Extension, with most attendees moving on toward

*continued on page 4*

## Outings Revisited

*continued from page 3*

Commercial Street. A smaller group of us stayed to continue around to the boardwalk, where we were rewarded with several species chasing an abundance of tiny insects in the damp corner before we continued up on the eastern side of the wetland back to the lower parking lot. We saw a total of 37 species (nine warblers) plus, as always, some "New World warbler spp.?" that lacked confident identification, including likely Wilson's, Blackpoll, and Blackburnian. Highlights included a Red-shouldered Hawk who appeared to drop out of migration, circling down briefly to show us those lovely crescent windows on the outer wing edge before rising back up and out of sight. We were also surprised by a Ruby-throated Hummingbird along Commercial Street. Some migrants were singing, such as Blue-headed Vireo and Northern Parula, and we enjoyed several Black-throated Green Warblers with varying degrees of "five o'clock shadows." Special thanks to those in the group who shared their photos on the shared eBird checklists. I look forward to birding with everyone again! –**by leader Michelle Kienholz.**

**Linda's Farm -- October 3:** Azure skies and abundant sunshine greeted 22 birders for a quintessential birding morning at my West Deer farm in northern Allegheny County. After enjoying apple cider and donuts served in my ceramic "Cheese Duck," we started the day with a Northern Parula in a walnut tree along the driveway. Glistening goldenrod fields were full of sparrows and warblers in every direction. There were Nashville Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Palm Warblers, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Black-throated Green Warbler.



*This duck was more at home on the table at Linda's Farm.*

We were excited to see handsome White-crowned Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, and singing Song Sparrows throughout the paths bordering brushy woodlot edges. Farm fields full of hundreds of vegetable plant stakes provide an easy perch for the sparrow residents and migrants.

There was a flyover American Pipit and seven Eastern Bluebirds perched atop pine trees; four Red-shouldered Hawks, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Cooper's Hawk, two Red-tailed Hawks, and two majestic mature Bald Eagles soaring overhead as we visited the farm ponds.

A few unique nature discoveries were a Marbled Orb Weaver spider in a spiraling orb web, and a Virginian Tiger Moth caterpillar. Wildflower and milkweed meadows were buzzing with bees and butterflies, including several Monarchs and Meadow Fritillary.

The total number of bird species for our outing was 50. I thank everyone for attending and sharing fun, camaraderie, and my passion for the great outdoors! –**by leader Linda Croskey.**

**Gilfillan Park—October 10:** Fifteen birders gathered at Gilfillan Park in Upper St. Clair to walk the trail and see what birds fall had brought. We began as sunrise was finishing up, and observed many American Robins flying between trees across the Gilfillan Farms field. As we neared the first turn, a walker stopped to show us a picture of a Red-tailed Hawk she had taken minutes before. We continued down the trail and saw the hawk flying over the canopy. You can't beat local intelligence!

We entered a scrubby wooded area and found a Ruby-crowned Kinglet flitting among goldenrod and vines along a fence. All the attendees got good views of this energetic bird. We continued through the woods and found a large flock of Cedar Waxwings eating berries in the canopy. Many of them appeared to be first-year juveniles. A few feet down the trail, we got fleeting glimpses of fall-plumage warblers, including Cape May, Palm, and Yellow-rumped. While the party was searching for the warblers, we entered an expansive field of aster and goldenrod. We observed two Cooper's Hawks chasing prey in the distance, and saw the Red-tailed Hawk again. A sharp-eyed birder spotted six Wild Turkey skulking low in the field. They moved relatively stealthily, apparently spooked by the aerial predators. As we continued through the field, we heard a Swamp Sparrow calling from dense brush.

We finished the walk through a forested section and then along a stream. We saw another Ruby-crowned Kinglet and an unidentifiable warbler. While wrapping up the checklist in the parking lot, we saw a Red-tailed Hawk perched on the church spire. A smaller group got brunch at a local restaurant and traded stories. All in all, it was a great fall morning to be out birding. - **by leader Conor Tompkins**

## Reprise of Butterflies (An addendum to my previous column)

### Story and photo by Tom Moeller

My lilac bush had some stress from the lack of summer rains. In August it started to lose leaves, in spite of an unusually rainy month. In late September with many leaves gone, blossoms started to appear on the lilac caused by the stress on the plant. It seemed to be confused by a mild autumn. This may cause less blooms in the spring, but it was a boon to a late Monarch butterfly. On September 30, I took photos of a female Monarch flitting from bloom to bloom, bulking up for her long migration south. The lilac may have been stressed, but the Monarch found a treasure.



*A late Monarch Butterfly savors some lilac nectar.*

**Observations**

# My Friends, the Robins and the Cardinals

**Stories and photos by Tom Moeller**

I have written about befriending robins in my backyard. Three articles on the robins appeared in *The Peregrine* in 2021 and 2022.* They recount how I made friends with a male robin in the winter of 2021 through raisins. Our relationship developed through the spring and summer as he needed more raisins to feed his nestlings, and he even brought along his mate to help collect raisins. They got so used to coming to my house that they (she) decided to build a nest on my back



*Handsome male American Robin*

porch. We couldn't have that, so the nest disappeared. Then, avian flu forced us to stop feeding birds altogether.

In late winter 2022, the male robin came back to my house for treats, but in spring, he admitted a new female to be his mate. She had very distinct, white eye rings and was a little crazy, obsessed with confronting her own reflection on my neighbor's car mirrors and windows.

Soon, they both came for raisins. Even a "stray" female, who had head alopecia caused by feather mites, came around for the free raisins. Perhaps because of her condition, the resident robins didn't bother her. The paired robins went off to nest in the neighborhood, and my real life got in the way of feeding the robins as often as I could.

As an addendum to the robin saga, an old friend reappeared in 2023. I wrote in my third "Pet Robins" article, that the robins sort of disappeared after I stopped feeding them in summer 2022. The male never returned, but I am very sure a female did a year later. (Male and female robins are slightly different – females are a much lighter gray on their backs, and their breasts are a paler red.)

Here is her story:

"A female robin came to my back porch in summer 2023 looking for raisins. This was probably the female robin that had built a nest on the porch in 2021. She did not have the exaggerated eye rings of the female from 2022. I saw her out a window on the back brick railing, and she saw me, but she did not fly away. I sensed a connection. I got some raisins and went to the window where I had always fed them. The robin was still there, and she stayed as I opened the window. I threw a few raisins on the porch floor, calling to her, and stayed and watched. The female robin flew down onto the porch, eyed me (still a little wary), and took a raisin or two. I may have thrown out more, and she again went down to get one. I did not see her again, but the old connection between me and the robins had not died."

I recently found an old email I sent to a cousin in 2002 containing a story I had forgotten when I wrote about the robins in 2021, nineteen years later. The robins were not my first wild bird "pets." In the summer of 2002, a male cardinal recognized me as a source of "easy" food for his nestlings. Thus, he became my first "friend" in the bird world.

Here is my story from July 2002:

"I am godfather to some little cardinals in our own backyard. The father cardinal is my 'pet,' practically eating out of my hand. I used to put some peanuts out in a little feeder for the birds, and the cardinal was getting so anxious for food for his nestlings, that he'd wait in the tree about ten feet away for me to finish filling the feeder. Then I would step back several feet, and he would come right down, grab a peanut, and leave.

Soon, he got to recognize me and come if I appeared in the yard, landing on the feeder. We have progressed in our relationship. Now, I break open the peanuts (I am tired of the shells everywhere!), make some clicking or whistling noises, and he will appear for his (nestlings') food. Instead of flying off, he will eat for several minutes, then fly back to the nest with peanuts. I stood only five feet away today, and he came down with me right there.

I have even given him "showers." While watering our lilac bush, he will come along to bathe by jumping around in the leaves as I mist them with spray. The cardinals rarely take birdbath baths -- always seem to rub against wet leaves to bathe. I have seen the female in the birdbath twice, but never the male. [*Author's Note: My naiveté in 2002 caused me to think cardinals rarely bathed in water. I have taken photos of them in my birdbath since*.]



*Adult male Northern Cardinal*

Mrs. Cardinal still is wary of me, but both defend that peanut feeder vigorously from other birds. Anyway, he's my new pet."

Some things stand out for me in these two tales of befriending birds. Both begin with food as a catalyst – peanuts for the cardinals and raisins for the robins. Second, both times I broke the food down for the birds – I shelled the peanuts for the cardinals, and I cut the raisins in half for the robins. Calling or whistling to the birds became a part of the relationships. Finally, both times the female birds remained a bit more aloof than their bolder mates. I guess the female of the species – bird or human – has the more common sense!

*The three-part series on the robins appeared in these editions of *The Peregrine*: July/August 2021, Vol. 20, No. 4; September/October 2021, Vol. 20, No. 5, May/June 2022, Vol. 21, No. 3.

# Native Gardening, for the Birds

**Story and photos by Conor Tompkins**

Birdwatchers really enjoy springtime. It's a chance to see the "greatest show on Earth" play out around us. When I started birdwatching in the spring of 2020, I was only vaguely aware of this. However, I was fully aware of the hours I would be spending performing the typical tedious suburban yardwork.

As the summer of 2021 progressed, I began rethinking how much time I was spending "shoveling against the tide": mow, weed, rinse, repeat. I also wanted something more interesting to look at than grass and some sickly rose bushes. This led me to convert a small portion of my front yard into a flower bed. I planted all non-natives from the hardware store, but it quickly got me moving down the path to native gardening. I was fascinated by the insects that were attracted to the zinnia and salvia plants, so in 2022 I converted a small part of the backyard to native plants. After that, I began viewing the turf grass as largely non-functional. We just needed enough for our greyhound to do his weekly "zoomies".

By 2025, we had converted 90% of the front yard to native plants (think asters, goldenrod, and milkweed). We added plant beds to the backyard and replaced a decrepit pergola with a small recirculating pondless waterfall. We are waiting for the pawpaw and spicebush saplings to mature and bear fruit, for us and for the birds.



*Immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Cardinal Flower*



*Immature American Robin bathing*

To bring this back around to birdwatching, the native plants have made our property much more attractive to birds and other wildlife. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds zip between our Coral Honeysuckle vines, and Gray Catbirds hunt for insects in the flowerbeds. Monarchs sample our milkweed and coneflower. Blue Jays and American Robins love to take baths in the water feature.

The bath is also a migrant magnet; Swainson's Thrush, Ovenbird, and Magnolia Warblers flit in and out. I have observed that migratory birds are much more suspicious of their surroundings than our resident birds.

Native gardening is a rewarding activity for birdwatchers. I recommend it to anyone that wants to increase their enjoyment of their property and attract a greater diversity of birds! The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's "Certified Backyard Habitat Program" is a great educational resource for getting started: aswp.org/certified-backyard-habitat-program/

# An unusual stack of nests

**Story and photo by Amy Henrici**

If someone asked me to name things that can be stacked, money, pancakes, and paper is what comes to mind. I would never have mentioned American Robin nests, until this past spring when my husband Pat McShea and I spotted a stack of robin nests while surveying for breeding birds in Memorial Park, Westmoreland County.

The nest stack was on a windowsill of one of many outbuildings and pavilions utilized by nesting birds. The bottom-most nest resembles that of a Mourning Dove we found at a different building, but the rest appear to be robin nests. The occupied nest is made of sticks with a mud lining that can be seen peeking out of the nest's upper left side. Sticks have fallen off the sides of many of the lower nests, exposing more mud linings. Although it is difficult to tell where each nest begins and ends, we think there are at least nine nests.



*A stack of nests found this past spring in Memorial Park, Westmorland County. A Mourning Dove nest likely forms the base, and at least eight American Robin nests are stacked on top of it.*

We were looking forward to seeing young in the nest and checked it regularly. A couple of weeks after discovery we found the nest abandoned and tilted slightly outward. We're not sure what happened, but possibly eggs or newly hatched young were preyed upon by a Blue Jay, blacksnake, or chipmunk. Anything larger likely would have knocked over some or all of the stack. One wonders if the same robin pair built all the nests, or if multiple robin pairs built them over the years. We definitely plan to check next year to see if a new nest is added.

## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

# April-May 2026

### By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

Mid-April was unseasonably warm with record-breaking high temperatures. A cold front with rain showers moved through in late April bringing notable rarities into the county that added highlights to the season.

A **Northern Shoveler** was at Chapel Harbor 4/8 (SGr),` and two were at Aspinwall 4/11 (AW). Four **American Wigeon** were at Duck Hollow 4/18 (EH). A late **Canvasback** was on the Allegheny River at Chapel Harbor 5/3 (AH, PM). A male **Greater Scaup** lingered at Duck Hollow up to 5/7 (m.ob.), and a Scaup sp. was at North Park to 5/6 (m.ob.). A **Surf Scoter** was at Monongahela 4/2 (JF), and a male was on the Highland Park Reservoir 4/19 (JC, m.ob.), a rather strange place to see one. The reservoir is surrounded by a concrete walking trail and is sterile, so the bird would not find any food in the reservoir. That probably explains its short stay. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were at Dashields Dam 4/1 (AF), and one was in Aspinwall 4/2-4 (AW). Several female **Common Mergansers** with ducklings were reported this spring. One was with seven ducklings at Duck Hollow 5/10 (MJ), one with 12 at Wingfield Pines 5/21 (eBird), and one with seven at Boston 5/24 (AG). A nice count of 37 **Ruddy Ducks** were at Emsworth Dam on the Ohio River 4/2 (MV).

A **Northern Bobwhite** was in Findlay Twp. 4/9 (EHA). These released birds are sometimes reported anywhere in the county.

An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was recorded calling at Thornburg Conservation Park 4/10 (KE), and one was calling near Riverview Park 5/12 (BP).

A pair of **Virginia Rails** were discovered at Wingfield Pines and breeding was confirmed 5/31 (m.ob.), a good record for the Pennsylvania Bird Atlas. Virginia Rail bred at this site several years ago. A **Sora** was at North Park 4/24-5/10 (BK), and a **Sora** was also at the PennDot Wetlands 5/8-10 (m.ob.). A **Common Gallinule** was a great find at the PennDot Wetlands at Boyce-Mayview Park 5/2 (JSa, m.ob.). The bird was difficult to see, remaining hidden most of the time. The bird was relocated 5/7 (DT).

After January's large movement, there were several **Sandhill Crane** sightings in April. One was observed flying over Wingfield Pines 4/9 (JB), 4/19 (ZV, HB, RJ), and 5/5 (SKl). Four were photographed flying over North Park 4/19 (JFr), and three were seen flying over Frick Park 4/24 (MK).

A flock of 31 **American Avocets** were photographed flying up the Allegheny River at Aspinwall during a rainy day 4/12 (SGr), providing the 12th county record. A striking **Black-bellied Plover** was at a small pond at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 5/14-16 (MV, m.ob.), providing an opportunity for close views and photographs. Single **Semipalmated Plovers** were at Duck Hollow 5/6 (MKu) and at Janoski's Farm 5/14-17 (DBe, m.ob.). Two were at Oakmont on a rainy day 5/23 (SK) allowing close views. Four **Dunlin** were at Duck Hollow 4/24 (EH), and two were there 5/6 (JFz, MKu, m.ob.). A flock of 36 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at the Sewickley Boat Launch along the Ohio River 5/21 (JC). We typically only see a few birds at a time in the county. Seven **Wilson's Snipe** were at Imperial 4/18 (BK). Up to 11 **Solitary Sandpipers** were at North Park 5/5 (AF), and up to 12 were at Wingfield Pines 5/2-8 (JP, m.ob.). A **Willet** was photographed at Peter's Creek in Jefferson Borough 4/22 (KBa). Another **Willet** was at Duck Hollow 4/24 (EH), and 12 more were found just downriver that day (MKu, m.ob.). Rain brought the birds down to rest. These provided the 15th and 16th county records.

**Bonaparte's Gulls** are regularly recorded during spring migration. The high count at Dashields Dam on the Ohio River for the season was 55 on 4/1 (AF). Twenty were at Sharpsburg 4/2 (DM), 16 were at Emsworth 4/10 (MV), and 16 were at the Waterfront on the Monongahela River 4/10 (JDz, DM). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Dashields 4/18 (AP), and a third year bird was photographed in flight at Aspinwall 4/25 (JDz, DM).

There were only two reports of **Caspian Tern**, both 4/25. Two were at Emsworth (m.ob.), and two were at Sharpsburg 4/25 (DM). **Forster's Tern** is a regular migrant in small numbers. Three were at Dashields Dam 4/18 (MV), one was at Sharpsburg 4/19 (JDz), one was in Monongahela 4/19 (JF), one was at Duck Hollow 4/19 (BK), seven were at Dashields Dam 4/28, and one was there 5/3 (AF). Two terns were seen flying over Frick Park 4/25 (MK), but they could not be identified to species due to poor views.

Six **Common Loons** were on the Highland Park Reservoir 4/1 (JDz). Just like the Surf Scoter mentioned above, it's an odd place for them, but it provided an opportunity for close up views. One was at Aspinwall 4/1 (JDz), one at Duck Hollow 4/3 (DM), one was spotted flying over Chatham University 4/21 (MKu), and one was at Duck Hollow 5/12 (FI).

Four **Double-crested Cormorant** nests were discovered at Emsworth Dam 4/12 (MV, TC). This is the first known nesting in Allegheny County, and perhaps all of western Pennsylvania, or at least southwestern Pennsylvania.

An **American Bittern** was spotted flying out of a pond in a suburban neighborhood in Jefferson Hills 4/4 (MJ). A **Snowy Egret** was a rare find at North Park 5/28 (JF). The bird remained the following day giving a lot of birders a chance to see it. This was only the second county record. **Great Egret** reports include one in Indiana Twp. 4/5 (BSh) and three at Etna 4/25 (DM). A **Western Cattle Egret** was a great find at Emsworth Dam 4/25 (MV). The bird was sitting on the concrete dam structure, an odd place. It did not linger very long. This provided the fourth county record.

**Black Vultures** were reported from several locations.

A pair of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** returned to Highland Park this spring, after the dead trees they favored were cut down last fall, and the birds disappeared (PW). The pair at North Park remained through the reporting period (m.ob.).

At least one **Merlin** returned to the Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh this spring, where they bred previously (m.ob.). Other reports came from Bethel Park 5/1 (eBird), Preservation Park in South Fayette Twp. 5/3 (JSa), Leeland Park in Baldwin 5/8 (Corvus) and Castle Shannon 5/16 (JSa). Any Merlin sighting is notable for potential nesting.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** was reported in six locations between 5/16 and 5/25. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was reported in five locations this spring. **Alder Flycatcher** is a rare migrant here. One was at the PennDot Wetlands 5/16 (JF), one was at Hartwood Acres 5/20-24 (JDz, m.ob.), one was in Sewickley 5/24 (KM), one was at Harrison Hills Park 5/25 (MF), and one at Monroeville Community Park 5/25 (EY).

A **White-eyed Vireo** at Chatham University 4/5 (MKu) was early. **Philadelphia Vireos** were reported from nine locations this spring. A **Red-eyed Vireo** visited a feeder in Elizabeth Twp. to feed on mealworms 5/2 (SF). Vireos are certainly not an expected feeder bird. A somewhat late **Winter Wren** was at Riverfront Park on the Southside of Pittsburgh 5/10 (m.ob.). A **Sedge Wren** was a rare find at Harrison Hills Park 5/10 (EH), providing the sixth county record. Unfortunately, it was never relocated.

An **American Pipit** was at the Kilbuck Boat Launch 4/25 (MV), one was at Wingfield Pines 4/12 (DA), and one was observed in West Deer Twp. 5/3 (LC).

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## Birds in the Three Rivers

*continued from page 7*

A **Pine Siskin** was at Beechwood Farms 4/20-22 (DM); two were there 4/23 (LG), and one on 4/24 (eBird) and 5/3 (m.ob.). One was at Sewickley Heights Borough Park (SG) and Frick Park (eBird) on 5/2. Two visited a feeder in Ross Twp. 5/10 (LN). Two were at Settler's Cabin Park 5/12 (KE).

Two rare sparrows were found the same day in the county and surprisingly close to each other. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was discovered in Pittsburgh on the Northside next to the Fred Roger's Memorial from a photo posted to iNaturalist 5/11 (*fide* RBu). The bird continued the following day (m.ob.). Not only is the habitat incorrect, (but it was migration so anything can happen), but the area is quite busy with human activity. The area along a walking trail next to the river is landscaped with native plants, so that provided cover and food for the bird. There are twenty-two previous records in the county. An incredible **Harris's Sparrow** was found at Riverfront Park on the Southside of Pittsburgh 5/11, providing the third county record (DWr)! This is a busy area with a lot of people walking the trail, so it was a surprising location. The observer was at the park and sat at a picnic table and noticed the bird a few feet away on the ground! Reports were posted to Discord allowing many birders the chance to see this striking and rare visitor to the county. It continued to 5/12. The two previous records were December 1959 and August 1960, so we were well due to have one again. A **Vesper Sparrow** was photographed at Wingfield Pines 4/9 (JB), and one was at West Deer Twp. 4/9 (LC).

Up to three **Rusty Blackbirds** were at the PennDot Wetlands near Boyce-Mayview Park 4/21-5/4 (m.ob.).

A terrific total of 33 species of warblers were reported this season. **Worm-eating Warblers** returned to the reliable Harrison Hills Park location with three birds heard singing. It's possible more could be along the hillsides above the rivers in the area, but most of those are inaccessible. A migrant was at Frick Park 4/27 (Byron). **Golden-winged Warbler** reports came from Beechwood Farms 5/5 (JDz, DM, et al.), Boyce Park 5/5 (SM), Wilkinsburg 5/6-7 (including a nice video in eBird) (CT), Hays Woods (KB), Deer Lakes Park 5/8 (AH, PM), Castle Shannon 5/9 (RSh) (with a photo in eBird), and one at Sewickley Heights Borough Park 5/10-11 (SP, m.ob.), also with a photo in eBird. A **Brewster's Warbler** was at Sewickley Heights Borough Park 5/11 (AF), described as appearing like a Blue-winged with yellow wingbars. A "winged warbler" was heard at Frick Park 5/11 but never seen to determine the identification for certain (MK). Rare in spring, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was photographed at SGL 203 (SS). **Mourning Warblers** were reported at 11 locations. **Cerulean Warbler** is notable during migration. Reports include two in Sewickley 5/2 (BK), one at Beechwood Farms 5/4-7 (JDz, m.ob.), one at North Park 5/7 (DN), and one at Frick Park 4/26-5/12 (m.ob.). A **Northern Parula** at Frick Park 4/9 (ZV) was early. An eastern **"Yellow" Palm Warbler** was a nice find at Frick Park 4/15 (ME). Rarely encountered on migration, a **Prairie Warbler** was recorded singing at Wingfield Pines 4/15 (RS), which was early, and another was recorded at Carnegie Mellon University 5/5 (JFz, KK). A late **Wilson's Warbler** was at Dead Man's Hollow 5/30 (KB).

There were several **Summer Tanager** reports this spring. An immature male was at Duck Hollow 5/3 (FI), and one was heard at Hays Woods 5/7 (KB). One was at Frick Park 5/10-11 (EB, TF), one was heard at Harrison Hills Park 5/16 (KB), one was in Homewood, Cemetery 5/26 (MK) and again 5/28 (DN), and one was in Moon Twp. 5/27 (AZ).

A leucistic **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed at a feeder in Richland Twp. 5/8 (*fide* BSh). The bird was completely white with black primaries and a black bill. It looked like a Snow Bunting.

The **Painted Bunting** that wintered in Squirrel Hill continued at the feeder in March and was last reported 4/10 nearby in Frick Park (MK, JDz, DM). Two **Dickcissels** were found at Hays Woods Park 5/19 (AG), providing the twelfth county record. Unfortunately, they were never relocated.

*Observers: David Avery, Katherine Babilon KBa), James Baker, Ken Behrans, David Bennett (DBe), Eric Bennett, Hanna Blank, Bryon (last name not provided), Ron Burkert (Rbu), Jeff Cieslak, Thomas Connor, Corvus, Linda Croskey, John Dzikiy (JDz), Mel Everett, Kevin Evilsizor, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Ted Floyd, Joseph Franckiewicz (JFr), J. Frantz (JFz), Scott Furlong, Andy Georgeson, Lynn Goldbach, Steve Gosser, Sarah Grey (SGr), Eric Hall, Eugenia Hasenecz (EHa), Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Frank Izaguirre, Richard Johnson, Matt Juskowich, Brian Kaldorf, Kaleem Kheshgi, Michelle Kienholz, Scott Kinzey, Stephen Kleinhans (SKl), Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Ben M., Pat McShea, Steve Manns, Dan Mendenhall, Kathy Miller, Lauren Nagoda, Dick Nugent, Brad Peroney, Amber Pertz, Seth Pulver, Joseph Pumford, James Saracco (JSa), Brian Shema (BSh), David Teoste, Samuel Schmitt, Ryder Shelley (RSh), Radford Swent, Christopher Turbert, Mark Vass, Zachery Vaughan, Andrew Wood, Paul Worona, Dan Wryostek (DWr), Eric Yanyo, Anna Zizak, m.ob. (many observers).*



PHOTO TAKEN BY DAN WYROSTEK, WHO DISCOVERED THE HARRIS'S SPARROW AT RIVERFRONT PARK ON MAY 11.

## A Notable Anniversary

Our club had its annual picnic September 26th. Twenty-five years of outings, programs, and building our community of birders. That's worth celebrating!

