



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 21, No.5 September/October 2022



DISAPPOINTING LOSS – The Loggerhead Shrike’s history in our state is unfortunate. In his 1890 book Birds of Pennsylvania, B. H. Warren said it was a common summer resident in northwestern Pennsylvania. How times have changed! The last confirmed breeding record in our state was in May 2004 in Franklin County. Meanwhile, Loggerheads still breed south of us in West Virginia – although fewer. The 1984-1989 West Virginia breeding bird atlas listed nine confirmed breeding records, but the new 2009-2014 edition lists only seven. Is the breeding limit shifting southward?

How Are Bird Species Doing in Neighboring West Virginia?

Bird populations in Pennsylvania and neighboring West Virginia have expected similarities – but also notable differences. We’ll learn about those at our 3RBC meeting on Wednesday, October 5, thanks to Richard Bailey, the State Ornithologist who oversees the bird program for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

Rich will share his extensive knowledge of West Virginia species as the bird project coordinator of the State Wildlife Action Plan development and implementation. He represents the agency on state, regional, and national program-related councils, technical committees, and working groups. He also leads the agency on technical and regulatory issues, coordinating academic and agency research.

In addition, Rich shared in coauthoring, editing, and publicizing the recently published book, *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in West Virginia*. It will be interesting to learn how some of his state’s ornithological research and findings are compared to ours in Pennsylvania.

As if that isn’t enough, Rich also oversees public relations, education, and outreach pertaining to West Virginia’s birds. Prior to his 11-year service in West Virginia, he managed a park and environmental education center in northern Virginia.

This will be a Zoom meeting starting at 7:00 PM ET, giving you access time to log on. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Rich’s presentation will start before 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the event, including Zoom passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied a few days before the meeting.



What Was Your “Spark Bird”? Tell Us!

A “spark bird” is the species that first sparked your interest in birds.

In her President’s Message on page 2, Sheree Daugherty depicts her spark bird, a Bobolink, beautifully in her painting at left.

Our members would love to know about your spark bird. The array of different species should be amazing and entertaining.

Please tell us for *The Peregrine*, in up to four sentences, how it first caught your eye or ear: phess@salsgiver.com.

(Editor’s note: You’ll like mine.)

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

President's Message

The Spark!

By Sheree Daugherty

Wow! What's that! Such odd markings, such strange calls! Even as an eight-year-old, I knew that this bird was something special, not the ordinary robin or sparrow that regularly visited our rural western Pennsylvania property.

The strange bird perched on an old weathered fencepost that marked the corner of my yard. I carefully studied the visitor trying to memorize its markings until it called one last time and then took flight.

Without an adult who had more than a passing interest in birds to ask for help with identifying my discovery, I went straight to my bedroom "library" and found the *Golden Guide to Birds*. There on page 104 was an image of the very bird. A Bobolink! Not only was it beautiful, it had an exotic sounding name. Bob-O-Link! I couldn't stop saying the word.

I read that the bird was a pest in rice fields of the South, earning it the regional name, Ricebird. That was another interesting fact to a child who thought rice grew only in China. The fact that I could observe an unfamiliar bird, find an image that matched it in a book, get a lesson in geography, then identify it, was a revelation! This half-hour on a spring morning began my life as a birder.

What sparks an interest? I've just described the incident that started my life-long obsession with everything avian. Most of you reading this probably remember a similar incident. For some it may have been as simple as setting up a backyard bird feeder and finding the birds and their behaviors fascinating. Or, perhaps a particularly colorful bird you spotted while on vacation. If you're like me, you want to share the joys of birding, a pastime that makes life so much richer.

Many people are introduced to birding by a friend or mentor. When I talk to someone who expresses an interest in birds, I invite them to a 3RBC meeting and send a link to the club's informative website. After attending a 3RBC meeting, one of my neighbors made the comment that, "We (3RBC members) weren't at all weird!" She meant that as a compliment. Years of seeing "bird watchers" depicted as offbeat eccentrics left their mark.

Occasionally non-birding friends will ask to come along on an outing. Fortunately, for Liz and Frank, we visited Custards in Crawford County during one of those glorious March mornings when the marsh was blanketed with thousands of ducks, grebes, coots, and geese. The morning light was perfect for showing the incredible iridescent colors and intricate feather patterns through the scope. After an hour of observing waterfowl, Liz commented, "I'll never look at ducks the same way again!" I repeated to the novices one of my birding mantras: "Look for the odd bird." Soon Frank found a bird in the scope that he thought looked different from the others: a Eurasian Wigeon! A beginner found the best bird of the day. Even without the rare wigeon, it was a thrill for me to be able to share the beauty of the birds and an enjoyable day with friends.

Consider including a newcomer on your next birding trip. Imagine the thrill of showing someone their first Bald Eagle. They will never forget it. Invite someone to a meeting, an outing, or, best of all, mentor a young person with an interest in nature. Maybe the spark will catch and ignite a rewarding lifelong passion.

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Reminder: Learn Much More About Our Club on the 3RBC Website

Tom Moeller, 3RBC's Webmaster, has revised an extensive online introduction to the Three Rivers Birding Club. Be sure to check it out at www.3rbc.org/about.html.

Even long-time members will find information about the club's leaders, history, club leaders, and information that you may not have known. It includes our history, officers, steering committee members, Facebook page, goals, and other activities.

These and other features including future outings, past outing reports, *The Peregrine* newsletter in color, Tom's "Observations" photo gallery, and a video gallery.

Important, too, are newsworthy articles that didn't make it into the newsletter. For example, our long-time favorite magazine *Bird Watcher's Digest* is now revived as an entirely new and gorgeous publication. See the details at bwdmagazine.com.

Tell your friends that our website is available to non-members, too. They might be inspired to join the club and share the fun.

Outings to Come

Fall Migration Beckons Us: Don't Miss All the Action

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

This is a general statement applying to our outings. The leader may have specific requirements.

We intend to follow the CDC and local county guidelines during this fall. We request that social distancing still be observed and encourage people not to share equipment. The leader may have other restrictions and can end a walk if an uncomfortable situation arises.

Friday, September 9 – Sewickley Park: Collaborating with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, we'll join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Prepare for muddy trails.

Sheree will limit the outing to 15 participants. Please preregister at shereedaugherty@gmail.com

Saturday, September 10 – Harrison Hills Park: Meet leader Jim Valimont (412-828-5338) at 8:00 AM at this Allegheny County park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. We will meet at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the pond. As you enter the park, bear right and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. Dress for wet grass and mud.

Sunday, September 11 – Glade Run Lake Park: Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) will take us around this park in southern Butler County. Meet at 8:00 AM at Lake Road, Valencia, off Route 228. Google maps co-ordinates are 40.716229, -79.901211. We will survey the lake from the dam and boat ramp for waterfowl and walk a trail about 2 miles out and 2 miles back. The trail can be muddy, so boots are recommended.

Saturday, September 17 – Deer Lakes Park: Oliver Lindhiem (412-680-5642) and John Vassallo will lead this outing in northern Allegheny County focusing on fall migrants. Meet at 7:30 AM in the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russellton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive past two ponds on the right, then turn right and proceed to the last parking lot. We will hike approximately 3 miles. Dress for possible wet grass and mud.

Saturday, September 24 – Chatham's Eden Hall Campus: Join Malcolm Kurtz for our outing starting at 8:00 AM. About 35 minutes from Pittsburgh in Gibsonia, this is an ecologically rich site nestled within 388 acres of maintained meadow, sustainable farmland, and expansive hardwood and softwood forests. Expect a good list of fall migrants. We will also keep our eyes out for native wildflowers and the endangered American Chestnut on the site.

Please e-mail Malcolm (malcolmgardener101@gmail.com) to let him know you will attend.

Sunday, October 2 – Maurice K. Goddard State Park and State Game Lands 270: Linda Croskey will lead us at this Mercer County hot spot (lcroskey@consolidated.net; cell 724-612-9963). Meet her at 8:30 AM at the Lake Wilhelm Marina parking lot, 540 Lake Wilhelm Road, Sandy Lake. There is a sign "Marina, Boat



HISTORIC PHOTO – Steve Gosser, one of our finest local birders and photographers, made history with his discovery of this hybrid Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Read the science explaining his discovery on our 3RBC Facebook page.

Rental, Bait-Tackle" on the right before the causeway. Park in the lot by a tan building (restrooms). The 3RBC web page "Birding Locations" has directions.

This will be a four-habitat walk: Lake Wilhelm, wetlands, early-successional vegetation with warm-season grasses, and mature forest. We will look for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, warblers, and Bald Eagles. Dress for ticks, bring your spotting scope, water, snacks, and lunch. Nearby Wilhelm Winery offers beverages plus cheese/snack trays.

Please e-mail or text/call Linda if you wish to attend.

Saturday, October 8 – Frick Park Environmental Center: Stephen Bucklin will offer a joint event at Frick Park with 3RBC and the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy (PPC). There will be a registration and event description on the PPC website (pittsburghparks.org). Currently, there is a limit of 15 or fewer participants, depending on COVID conditions.

Saturday November 5 – Yellow Creek State Park: This will be a joint outing of 3RBC and the Todd Bird Club. Meet Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) at the park office at 8:00 AM. The office is located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and a half to drive from Pittsburgh. A variety of habitats and a lake attracts many water birds and sometimes exciting rarities.

Please e-mail Margaret (bcoriole@windstream.net) to let her know you will attend.

Outings Revisited

We Ended the Spring Nicely With Two Events in June

Harrison Hills Park outing and picnic – June 11: After a two-year absence, the annual 3RBC picnic returns! Twenty-one people gathered in the Rachel Carson Grove parking lot to enjoy some birding before the picnic.

We headed down the trail to a small open area in the woods. The overcast, cool morning was working against us, and the usually productive spot was almost birdless.

Down at the pond we found Canada Geese with almost adult-size goslings. At the pond's edge, several Red-winged Blackbirds were skirmishing with a Common Grackle. A molting Cooper's Hawk with missing secondary and primary wing feathers flew overhead.

Our next stop was a short drive away to the Environmental Learning Center where we enjoyed the Purple Martins swooping around the nesting boxes.

From the ELC we hiked the trail that leads to the fields and added multiple Indigo Buntings and Baltimore Orioles. A Broad-winged Hawk gave us a brief look as it flew over.

Club member Dave Brooke, who knows the park well, offered to lead the group to an area with a resident Kentucky Warbler. Yes, the warbler was there but only allowed us to hear the distinctive call coming from the dense underbrush.

As we headed back to the ELC and the Yakaon Grove for the noon picnic, several species including Orchard Oriole and Yellow-throated Vireo were added to our list. The morning's list totaled 48 species.

Unlike previous picnics, this one was not potluck. Due to pandemic recommendations, everyone brought their own lunch. I was happy to see some new participants included in the 18 people who gathered around the picnic tables for lunch. We may not have shared food, but we were grateful to be able to enjoy the companionship of those who gathered after the two-year absence of the picnic. **—by co-leader Sheree Daugherty**

Ohiopyle State Park – June 18: Ten birders met on a cool breezy morning at this beautiful park. We started along the Youghiogheny River observing the Cliff Swallow colony that has been in place for many years. There were more nests this year than I remember, and most were occupied. A few Barn Swallows had nests on the beams under the bridge.

A female Common Merganser with a single duckling was just upriver from us. A raptor soared overhead panicking the swallows, causing them to swirl around above us. The angle and poor light hampered our ability to identify the hawk but we were leaning toward Red-shouldered. Other birds included a few Cedar Waxwings, American Goldfinch, and Yellow Warblers. At the parking lot we heard Northern Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler.

We moved to the main parking area near the park office where we saw another female Common Merganser, Barn Swallows, two Red-eyed Vireos, a Baltimore Oriole, an American Redstart, and a Common Yellowthroat.

Near the campground on top of the mountain we were unable to walk the cross-country ski trails because they were not mowed. From the beginning of the trail we found two very cooperative Eastern Wood-Pewees, a Yellow-throated Vireo, an Ovenbird, a Cerulean Warbler, a Hooded Warbler, a very close pair

of American Redstarts, a Black-throated Green Warbler, and an Indigo Bunting. As we were returning to the cars, a cuckoo flew in but landed out of sight. Thankfully, it started calling revealing it was a Yellow-billed.

For the first time, I took the group to the Old Mitchell Place where we birded around the raft take-out parking lot and the nearby road, which offered brush and forest. We saw a Field Sparrow and enjoyed close views of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and at least two Indigo Buntings. We heard an Ovenbird and a distant Blue-winged Warbler, saw a Black-and-white Warbler and an American Redstart, and heard a Hooded Warbler and a Common Yellowthroat. A Broad-winged Hawk was perched in a tree, and as it took flight it was joined by another.

After a quick lunch, our last stop was Middle Ridge Road in the park, which goes through the forest. An Acadian Flycatcher and an Eastern Phoebe were calling. A distant Pileated Woodpecker called. It was fairly quiet with the breeze and the time of day, so we decided to end the outing. **—by leader Mike Fialkovich**



OUTING HIGHLIGHTS – Our spring adventures produced some outing favorites. Above is a Rose-breasted Grosbeak that Linda Croskey photographed during her May 15 outing at State Gamelands 95. Below is an Olive-sided Flycatcher Dave Brooke photographed during his May 14 outing at Deer Lakes Park.



A Tale of Two Merlins: First Nesting Record for Allegheny County

By Malcolm Kurtz

On March 18, during a stroll through the Chatham University campus in Pittsburgh, my local birding patch, I heard an unfamiliar bird call. At first, I thought it was a Northern Flicker, but when I got closer to the sound, I discovered a small falcon perched atop the windswept peak of a Ginkgo.

It was a Merlin!

It's always a treat to discover one of these diminutive raptors on campus, which sometimes happens in the winter months, but I had never seen one during spring migration. I photographed the falcon as it flew to a Pin Oak to stretch and preen.

A female Cooper's Hawk, which had been building a nest nearby, unassumingly flew past. As I watched in amazement, the Merlin flew from its perch and began to dive at the hawk as if defending a territory. Swooping and screaming, the Merlin chased off the hawk and returned to the oak, but this time, with company. Two Merlins, a female and a male, were now perched on neighboring branches, keeping watch over the campus. Was this pair just passing through, or would they stay to raise young?

Well, the Merlins persisted, and I often heard the pair while walking through campus, catching the occasional glimpse of an adult perched on a snag or flying over. It was obvious that they preferred the east side of campus, and I wondered if a nest could be located there. Searching the area yielded a potential location. An abandoned crow's nest within the canopy of a Norway maple was a promising possibility, and I had even seen the male perch briefly on the nest. However, by May the tree had fully leafed out, covering any signs of activity.

With little hope of observing the Merlins incubating, I diverted my efforts to discovering the other breeding species on Chatham's campus. A group of American Crows had raised a trio of fledged young, distinguished from the adults by blue eyes and pink gapes. A breeding pair of crows will often raise young with the help of offspring from the past two years, a behavior I was able to observe here for the first time.

I didn't forget about the Merlins, and they made sure I didn't forget about them either. Their persistent calls were a constant background noise during neighborhood walks.

On July 5, I spotted one of the adults perched on a large bald cypress and decided to watch it. Sitting beneath a sycamore, I watched the bird preen and stretch -- something Merlins seem to love more than other raptors -- through my binoculars. The clouds and blue sky behind the falcon were a pleasant backdrop as I observed, and eventually it flew off in the opposite direction. I noticed the Merlins perched on this tree a number of times throughout the following weeks, and it seemed to serve as a good lookout spot, located above a few backyard feeders.

On July 18, I heard the call of a juvenile raptor and sprinted to where I heard the noise. It was certainly a young Merlin, and I thought the begging juvenile was perched in the Norway maple where I had originally seen the old crow's nest. I got no visual confirmation and was only able to see one adult perched nearby.

Now that I knew the Merlins had nested at my local patch, I was ecstatic: a new breeding record for Allegheny County. How fantastic. If only I could get a look at the juvenile.



HISTORIC PHOTO – Malcolm Kurtz discovered and photographed this pair of Merlins and their juvenile (center) at Pittsburgh's Chatham University campus.

I sent an audio file of the juvenile Merlin to David Yeany, who works for the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program which gathers information about the location of important ecological features. For example, the program monitors threatened and endangered species and tracks those of interest. Since Merlins are a new nesting species in the county, David wanted to survey the campus to record the species and add it to the database.

On July 21, David and I looked for the Merlins. After showing him the birds' favorite hangouts, we waited for them to appear. However, after about an hour, there was still no sign of them, and we began to lose hope. I was shocked. Every neighborhood walk I had taken in the past month, even when I wasn't looking for them, was filled with the sound of calling Merlins. Walking through campus yielded nothing, and we started to leave.

Then we heard one. It was almost out of earshot, and if we had walked a bit faster, we would have missed it. Finally, we found one of them perched behind Berry Hall on a bald cypress. Soon it was joined by its mate and a fully-fledged juvenile.

The three birds flew from tree to tree, chased each other in flight, and even perched together on the same branch. The male Merlin was easy to distinguish from the other two because of its small size. However, the female and juvenile were quite similar in appearance, only distinguishable by small details like lack of wear on the tail, indicating the juvenile's newly acquired set of feathers.

Merlins have been expanding their range in the past few decades, a growth that is possible because of bans put on DDT, an insecticide which bioaccumulates in the food chain. This chemical caused eggshell thinning for many birds of prey across the U.S., rendering their eggs so fragile that adult birds often broke the shells during incubation.

Kate St. John, a Pittsburgh birder and 3RBC member, explains the history in her nature blog *Outside My Window* (July 24, 2022). Merlins retracted into Canada before DDT was outlawed but are now returning southward. Rachel Carson, a notable Chatham University alumna, warned against DDT's harms in her book *Silent Spring* in 1962. With her scientific thoroughness and riveting writing style, she is often cited as the catalyst for the environmental movement and the U.S. decision to ban DDT in 1972.

Although it might appear to be an unassuming location, it is quite fitting that the first Merlins to nest in Allegheny County decided to make a home at Chatham University, symbolizing the successes that can come from environmental protection, as well as carrying on Rachel Carson's legacy.

Observations

“Only” a Mourning Dove? No, Watch It More Closely

By Tom Moeller

I have observed Mourning Doves for many years, but my research into the birds has revealed a lot more than their feeding on the ground and cooing on telephone wires.

These birds are widespread throughout the United States, even into parts of Canada. Some may winter down into Mexico and Central America. Mourning Doves can survive in arid regions because they tolerate higher heat than most birds, enabling them to retain body water. Doves in the northern regions do migrate south in winter, and many do move farther south. However, a lot now stay near reliable sources of food and water like well-maintained feeder stations.

In spite of it being legal to hunt Mourning Doves in many states including Pennsylvania, their numbers remain strong in the hundreds of millions.

Mourning Doves eat seeds, grains, cracked corn, and nutmeats. Most often they feed on the ground, but they also use platform feeders. The doves have a large crop, so, if not disturbed, they will eat until the crop is full. Often one sees a group of Mourning Doves “resting” in the yard, when they have eaten enough. They rest after eating to digest their food. Grit pecked from roadsides, between the bricks on some Pittsburgh streets, or from sidewalk mortar help grind the seeds in their crops. They require a lot of water – a birdbath being a good source. Unlike other birds, doves can drink by sucking up water without lifting their heads. Most other birds must tilt back their heads after drinking to drain their beaks.

Most of us are familiar with the mournful call of this dove. Often they are seen with their long tails on overhead wires calling “coo-OO-oo-oo-oo.” This call is a male trying to attract a female dove. (The male can be distinguished from the female by the gray top on his head.) The fact that this sound is heard throughout the year is due to the dove’s ability to breed up to five times a year, even six in milder climates.

The male performs a mating flight where he flies high up, then glides down in circles on stiff wings and narrow tail, which may resemble the flight of a kestrel or a hawk. When a mating pair is formed, the male follows closely behind his mate as she feeds on the ground or on a tree limb, always protective and guarding. Often he may extend his neck or bulge up his crop to impress her. It looks comical as he bows to her in anticipation of mating. When ready, he will grab her beak in his, and the two will bob up and down before they copulate. Afterwards, I have witnessed ten minutes of preening by both birds. These doves are monogamous, and some are believed to be life-long partners.

The nest site is selected by the male Mourning Dove in a tree, shrub, cactus, or possibly on the ground. Both sexes work on the rather flimsy structure; the male bringing the female twigs so she can construct the nest, sometimes on top of other species’ nests. She lays only two white, ovoid eggs, rarely more, a day apart. The low count of eggs in a nest might not seem enough to maintain Mourning Dove numbers, but the fact they may breed three or more times in a season makes up for the difference. The male will incubate them during the day, the female at night. After 14-15 days, altricial nestlings covered with down hatch. For about ten days the nestlings are fed crop milk provided by *both* parents. Crop milk



A CLOSE LOOK – This inquisitive Mourning Dove seems to be watching Tom Moeller with interest while he photographed it in his Squirrel Hill yard. We should watch our yards so carefully.

is a protein and fat rich liquid secreted in the crop. The nestlings are fed this diet by putting their beaks in the parents’ beaks; later regurgitated seeds and insects are delivered. It’s important in the early days of life for nestlings to be fed only crop milk without other regurgitated foods.

The nestlings grow charcoal colored, scaly-appearing feathers in the nest, contrasting with their parents’ fawn brown plumage. Unlike other birds, Mourning Doves do not remove fecal matter from nests. Two weeks after hatching, nestlings fledge but remain in the nest area fed by the parents. The care of the fledglings falls to the male alone as the female prepares to start a second brood. The juveniles move off into flocks of young birds and unattached adults to forage and for protection. In the non-breeding season, these flocks become larger as more adults join.

Being a flock bird, the Mourning Dove has a certain non-vocal signal it uses to warn others. You may have noticed the sound of their wings as they take off. This noise is caused by certain feathers in the bird’s primaries which resonate as air passes through them, much like a kazoo. There are two distinct sounds made by the wings – normal take-off and alarmed take-off. The difference is the tempo in the beats of the wings. Doves will not react to the sound of a normal take-off, but the entire flock will leave if they hear the alarmed take-off sound. At the first sign of danger, the birds will stop and become alert. If they hear the alarmed take-off, they all move. The noise and confusion of many birds taking off will bewilder a predator. However, that split second of hesitation after becoming alert and taking off can prove fatal to some doves.

A Mourning Dove is cooing outside as I write this at the end of July. Another brood is coming before fall! This non-descript, everyday bird has many aspects to it that we do not realize. Appreciate the pretty warblers, the fearsome hawks and eagles, and even the mundane Mourning Dove.

See Tom’s gallery on the 3RBC website for more photos of Mourning Doves’ interesting behavior, plus his list of scientific references.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

We Had a Truly Exciting Spring in April-May 2022

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

April started cold and wet. The third week in April featured blustery conditions with snow showers followed by a weekend with summer-like temperatures in the 80s with sunshine. That was followed by the passage of a cold front that dropped in a flock of American Avocets, Forster's Terns, and Caspian Terns. There was a big push of migrants in the first week of May, the second week was very migrant-heavy, and then the migration fizzled out quickly.

Two **Mute Swans** were on the Ohio River near Neville Island 4/2 (EPH, EHo). A late **American Wigeon** was photographed at Wingfield Pines 5/5 (JH, JLH).

A **Northern Bobwhite** was recorded calling in Mt. Lebanon 4/15 (BSp, eBird), and 1 was photographed in West Deer Twp. 5/25 (LC). Periodic releases result in occasional reports.

There were quite a few shorebird highlights. A flock of 13 **American Avocets** were seen at Brunots Island and Dashields Dam. This is the second time a flock landed on the river and did not come ashore. A **Semipalmated Plover** was at Imperial 5/22 (MV) and 2 were at Dashields Dam 5/26 (MV). A **Dunlin** was at Imperial 5/1 (MV). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** was a great find at Imperial 5/26 (AF) where it was photographed. Unfortunately it did not stay long, but it was the first report of this species since 2008! An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. from late March to 4/6 (MV, m.ob.). A great count of 18 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at Chapel Harbor on the Allegheny River 5/27 (AH, PM). Six **Short-billed Dowitchers** were at North Park 5/19 (DNe, m.ob.). A maximum of 27 **Wilson's Snipes** were at Imperial during a rainy day 4/16 (MV) harkening to the days prior to development of the area when flocks of 50+ were not uncommon in the early spring. Contrary to their name, **Solitary Sandpipers** gathered at Wingfield Pines 4/10-5/19 with a high count of 34 (DNe, m.ob.). The highest count of **Greater Yellowlegs** was 8 at North Park 5/19 (DYe, DNe).

Bonaparte's Gulls were reported in small numbers.

Singles were at Verona (MD) and North Park 4/3 (AF), 4 were at Sharpsburg 4/11 (SK), 1 was in Harmar Twp. 4/16 (AH, PM), 1 was in Aspinwall 4/17 (AF), 4 were in Kilbuck Twp. 4/26 (KSJ), and 1 was at Brunots Island 4/26 (AP).

Three **Caspian Terns** flew over Frick Park 4/24 (TRh) and 3 were at The Point in Pittsburgh 4/26 (m.ob.). They continued down the Ohio River and were reported at Brunots Island (AF and others) and Dashields Dam (DBe). One was seen at the Kilbuck Boat Launch (KSJ), which is between the other two locations on the Ohio River. A **Common Tern** was at Dashields Dam 5/22 (MV). Three **Forster's Terns** were in Verona 4/16 (MF), 1 was at Chapel Harbor 4/21 (JV), 3 were at The Point in Pittsburgh 4/26 (BC, many observers), 7 were at Dashields Dam 4/26 (DBe), and 2 were in Lawrenceville 5/15 (AB, CB). A **Common or Forster's Tern** was at Verona 5/20 (SK), unidentified due to distance.

There are several **Great Blue Heron** rookeries in the county. The rookery on the Allegheny River at Lock and Dam No. 3 in Harmar Twp. continues to grow with 49 nests this year (AH, PM, m.ob.). A rather new rookery on the Allegheny on Six Mile Island has 5 nests (SK, MF). A few nests are at North Park (m.ob.), and the long established rookery in Collier Twp. has about 30 nests this year (PB, ST, MF). **Great Egret** reports include 1 flying over Bridgeville 4/6 (JO), 2 flying over Hilltop Park in Collier Twp. 4/12 (JSa), and 1 at North Park 4/14 (AF).

Two **Black Vultures** were in Millvale 4/6 (JV), and 1 was photographed at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 4/28 (PBr). An interesting very pale **Red-tailed Hawk** was photographed flying over Wingfield Pines 4/10 (eBird). It was entered as a "Kriders" color morph from the West, but was thought to be a leucistic bird of our Eastern population. Another pale red-tail was at Frick Park 4/30 (MK).

A surprising number of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported: 1 at Frick Park 4/46-28 (MK, RBu), 1 in Bethel Park 5/3 (JP), 1 in Baldwin that day (LK), 2 photographed in Wexford 5/20-24 (JoV), and 1 photographed in Shaler Twp. 5/24 (MN).

Two **Merlins** were at Chatham University in Squirrel Hill 4/26 and 1 on 4/28 (MKu) where they continued through May and are suspected of nesting (MKu). If confirmed, it would be a first for Allegheny and for southwestern PA.

continued on page 8



ONE CUTE, ONE LIVELY – Barred Owls nested this May in Allegheny County. Mike Fialkovich photographed the cutie at left in Frick Park as it rested while hopping and flapping its wings on the ground. Steve Gosser photographed an older youngster above testing its wings at North Park.

Dazzling Dowitchers

In one of the most beautiful photos ever published in *The Peregrine*, Steve Gosser treats us to a group of migrating Short-billed Dowitchers.

They stopped at North Park on May 19, 2022, on their long journey from far south to the Arctic breeding grounds.

In his *Field Guide to the Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson told us that it “feeds like a sewing-machine, rapidly jabbing its long bill perpendicularly into the mud.”



Birds in the Three Rivers Area

continued from page 7

Olive-sided Flycatcher reports included singles at Wingfield Pines 5/8 (IF), Sewickley Heights Park 5/10 (LG), Deer Lakes Park 5/14 (m.ob.), and Hartwood Acres 5/19 (LK, LG); 2 were at Frick Park 5/21 (NH, many observers). **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** is uncommon in spring. One was photographed at Deer Lakes Park 5/14 (AF and others), 1 was photographed at Harrison Hills Park the same day (DBe), and 1 was in Upper St. Clair 5/15 (NL). An **Alder Flycatcher** was recorded at Wingfield Pines 5/13 (TC), 2 were recorded singing at Frick Park 5/19 (DYe and others), and 1 was at Harrison Hills Park 5/28 (eBird with recording).

Philadelphia Vireo is uncommon in spring, but several were found this year. Singles were at Frick Park 5/3 (SB, JV), Deer Lakes Park 5/8 (DYe), Hays Woods 5/11 (NL), Wingfield Pines 5/13 (JF, JP), and North Park 5/16 (DN).

High counts of **Fish Crow** included 32 in Mellon Park 4/1 (MKu), 19 in Squirrel Hill 4/21 (MK), and 10 in Verona 5/21 (MF).

Four **Bank Swallows** were at Dashields Dam 4/26 (MV), 2 were at Duck Hollow 5/7 (MF), and 1 was at Dashields Dam 5/28-29 (AF, AK). A **Cliff Swallow** was in Clinton 4/18 (MV).

Two late **Winter Wrens** were reported: 1 at Barking Slopes 5/18 (EH, MS) and 1 at North Park 5/20 (RBu). A **Marsh Wren** was photographed at Wingfield Pines 4/27 (JV, SV).

There were only two **Gray-cheeked Thrush** reports: singles in Upper St. Clair 5/14 (MT) and Frick Park 5/17 (KSJ, CK).

Two males and a female **Purple Finch** were observed during April in Pine Twp. (PL, SL), and there were numerous eBird reports from various locations during April. There was an eBird report of 2 Pine Siskins visiting a feeder in Fox Chapel 4/12, and 1 was observed at Frick Park 4/13 (MK).

Vesper Sparrow is rarely reported during migration. Two were photographed Latodami Nature Center at North Park 4/10 (DBe) and 1 was in the fields above Latodami 4/12 (AF). A **White-crowned Sparrow** was discovered in a grocery store in Collier Twp. 5/7 and was lured out of the building by playing the song outside an open door (JM). Two late **Dark-eyed Juncos** were in Mount Lebanon 4/23 (SSn).

A **Rusty Blackbird** was at Harrison Hills Park 4/14 (PH, JS, SS).

A total of 35 species of warblers were reported this spring.

Two **Worm-eating Warblers** were counter-singing at Harrison Hills Park 5/2 (EH), a regular breeding site. They continued to be heard and seen through May. A **Golden-winged Warbler** was photographed at Boyce Park 5/2 (KZ), another was photographed in Schenley Park 5/4 (KSJ), 1 was at Frick Park 5/5 (DYe), and 1 was at Boyce-Mayview Park 5/9 (HJ, JF). A male **Prothonotary Warbler** was photographed at Peter's Creek in Jefferson Borough 4/24 (LK). Rare in spring, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was a good find at Walker Park in Sewickley 4/30 (LN), 1 was photographed at Boyce Park 5/5 (ABu), 1 was in Frick Park 5/3 (SB, MC), 5/5 (DYe) and 5/7 (MK). A local bird bander captured and banded a **Connecticut Warbler** in Hays 5/18 (NL), a very rare find in spring. A **Mourning Warbler** in West Mifflin 5/7 (KB) was the only report. A very early **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Wingfield Pines 4/23-27 (m.ob.). **Prairie Warblers** are rarely encountered during migration, and singles were reported at Chapel Harbor 4/24 (RBu and others) and at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 5/3 (BSh).

A male **Blue Grosbeak** was at Imperial 5/14 (MV). With the continued land development, time will tell whether they remain in that area for the breeding season.

Observers: Ken Behrens, David Bennett (DBe), Al Borek, Carole Borek, Paul Brant (PBr), Paul Brown, Stephen Bucklin, Ron Burkert (RBu), Alex Busato (ABu), Michele Carlson, Linda Croskey, Thomas Connor, Ben Coulter, Michael David, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, Ian Fitzgerald, John Flannigan, Lynn Goldbach, Eric Hall, Nathan Hall, Jeanne Haury, Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Ed Hogan, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Hanna Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Charity Kheshgi, Michelle Kienholz, Andrew Kingfisher, Scott Kinzey, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Jessica LaHurd (JLH), Nick Liadis, Jeff McDonald, Pat McShea, Lauren Nagoda, Matt Nelson, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Dick Nugent, James Offaus, Ryan O'Rourke (ROR), Joe Papp, Aidan Place, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Kate St. John, James Saracco (JSa), Brian Shema (BSh), Sam Sinderson (SSn), Mike Smith, Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, Beth Spindler (BSp), Shannon Thompson, Molly Toth, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JV), Samuel Vassallo, David Yeany II (DYe), Kristin Zagorac, many observers (m.ob.).