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# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Vol. 23, No. 5 September/October 2024

### Studying Migration across a *Landscape Gradient*: Bird Banding Results from *Urban*, *Suburban*, and *Rural* Sites

Our October 2 program presenter, Nick Liadis, is an avian conservation biologist and the founder of **Bird Lab**, a non-profit dedicated to studying and implementing solutions to human-related sources of avian mortality, particularly within cities. Nick's migration banding project explores how migrating songbirds interact with the urban, suburban, and rural landscapes in southwestern Pennsylvania, focusing on differences in their ability to successfully replenish fat reserves. By banding birds, his study hopes to reveal how different landscapes may impact the foraging success (as indicated by different fat deposition rates) of songbirds during migration. Understanding these dynamics will help clarify the advantages and challenges that migrating birds experience when trying to meet their high energy demands in those different landscapes.

During the breeding season, Nick and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Avian Ecologist, David Yeany II, run two MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) banding stations, one of which is in the Swainson's Warbler habitat near Bear Run Nature Reserve and Fallingwater, where they documented and confirmed for the first time that the species does, in fact, breed in Pennsylvania.

Nick is a trained architect, and he became involved with bird conservation by studying bird-window collisions. His work at Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California and at the Powdermill Avian Research Center showed him the problems birds face as they migrate, especially through urban areas. A research fellow at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Nick works with Bird Safe Pittsburgh. He also unites architects, planners, policy makers, and scientists around the protection of birds in cities.

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Again, this will be a *hybrid* meeting starting "live" at Beechwood Farms at 6:30 PM (ET), with a Zoom presentation starting at 7:00 PM (ET), giving you time to log on. The 3RBC business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Nick's program will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the Zoom event, including passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied to 3RBC members a few days before the meeting.



OUR OCTOBER SPEAKER, NICK LIADIS, WITH AN OVENBIRD READY FOR BANDING.



CONNECTICUT WARBLER Banded by Nick Liadis.

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

# The Peregrine

## President's Message

### Extra! Extra! Get Your Bird News!

By Mike Fialkovich

There has been some recent and not so recent news on birds, so I thought I'd summarize a few notable notes from the past few months.

In July, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) published the latest updates to the checklist of birds. Several birds familiar to all of us have been lumped or split.

#### Say goodbye to the Hoary Redpoll.

Three species of redpoll (Common, Hoary and Lesser) are now all lumped into one species, simply called Redpoll. Genetic analysis reveals all three are nearly identical genetically. So we lose the Hoary Redpoll from our life list and any other lists we keep. After all the work many of us went through to identify and see Hoary Redpoll, it comes to this. Reminds me of the Thayer's / Iceland Gull lump a few years ago.

#### Western Cattle-Egret

What is a Western Cattle-Egret? It's the new name given to the Cattle Egret that occurs in North and South America and sometimes in Pennsylvania. Cattle Egret was split into two species. The Eastern Cattle-Egret is found in Asia. The genus has changed too, from *Bulbulcus* to *Ardea*, the same genus as Great Blue Heron and Great Egret. Did you catch the name now has a dash between Cattle and Egret? Just a quick note that the dash between night and heron for Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned has been removed this year. So we went from Black-crowned Night-Heron to Black-crowned Night Heron. Got it?

#### Brown Booby Split

Brown Booby can be seen off the Gulf Coast of the U.S. and Florida. The formerly named Brown Booby along the west coast of North America is now called Cocos Booby.

#### Barn Owl Split

Barn Owl was split into three species; however, we still only have one in North America, which is now called American Barn Owl. The Western Barn Owl is native to Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Eastern Barn Owl is found in India, Southeast Asia, Australia, and many Pacific Islands.

#### Northern Goshawk

Did you know the Northern Goshawk is now called American Goshawk? This change occurred last year. It was split from the species in Europe, now called European Goshawk.

There are other splits, name changes, nomenclature changes, etc. A handy place to see these changes is on the ABA website under Birding Resources/Taxonomy. Just take note, it may make you cross-eyed.

#### No Limpkins this summer

Following last year's unprecedented movement north of Limpkins from their limited range in Florida, there was some thought that it may occur again this summer, but that's not the case. The Limpkin summer of 2023 will remain an anomaly for now. There are a few records this summer north of their range, but nothing approaching last summer's movement and none nearly as far north. The farthest north eBird entry this summer is in Virginia.

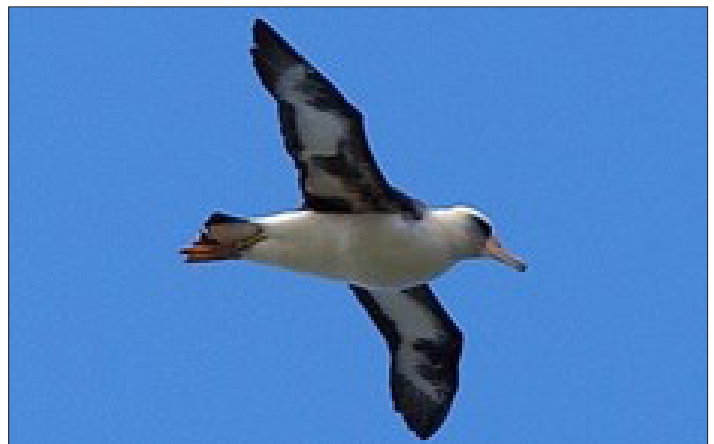
#### What about the American Flamingos?

Last year brought astounding records of American Flamingos far to the north as a result of Hurricane Idalia. A few are still in Florida this summer as well as Little St. Simon's Island in Georgia. If they remain, it's possible they may establish a small breeding population in the

southern U.S., most likely Florida.

#### Wisdom the albatross

Wisdom is the female Laysan Albatross that is the oldest known bird in the world. She was thought to be born in 1951 and was banded in 1956 at Midway Atoll. She still had young in 2020 and was seen alive and well in 2023. According to *Wikipedia*, she successfully hatched a chick annually since 2006, has laid 30-40 eggs in her lifetime, and had at least 30-36 chicks. This species of albatross lays a single egg during the breeding season. This is one amazing lady!



LAYSAN ALBATROSS BY TOM MOELLER

## The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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# The Peregrine

## Merlins vs. Merlin



ADULT MALE MERLIN



ADULT TEARING PREY TO FEED TO YOUNG.

### Story and Photos by Conor Tompkins, 3RBC Member

While visiting Seven Springs in mid-July, my wife, Christine, and I observed a breeding pair of Merlins. The birds were in an evergreen spruce/pine tree directly next to the golf center and restaurant. We initially observed the adults at dusk flying and calling loudly around the nesting tree. We did not get a good look and did not have binoculars with us, so naturally we tried to use the *Merlin* app Sound ID feature. We got a clear recording, but the app did not return any results. We studied the recordings and submitted them as Merlin in our eBird checklist and added field notes since eBird considers Merlin “Rare” for the area.

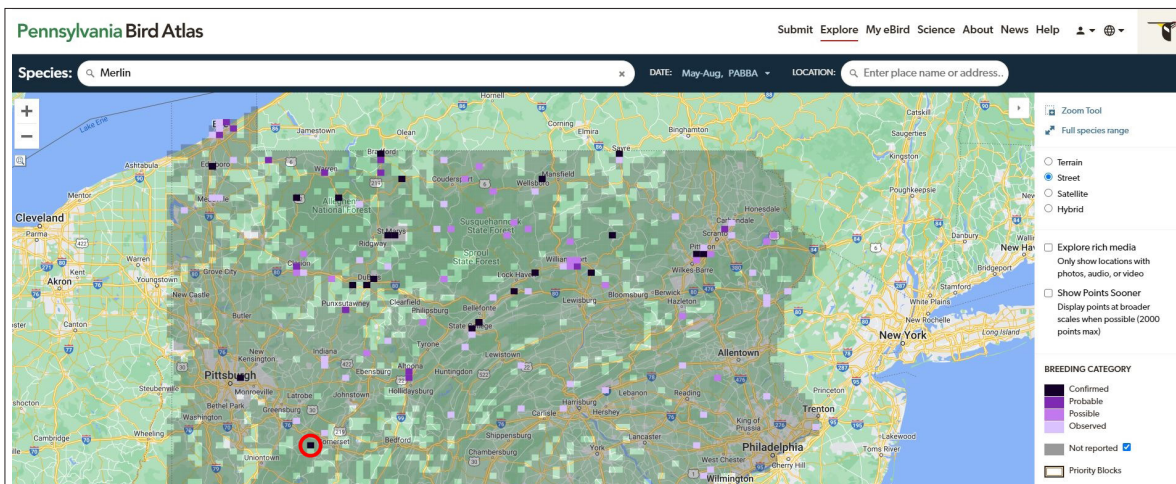
We returned the next day to visually confirm that the birds were, in fact, Merlins, and we took photos. We also observed multiple juveniles moving around the same tree. The *Merlin* app still did not identify the birds in additional audio recordings. Interestingly, the *Merlin* app also did not list the species Merlin in the “Explore” section for the area. I reported the sighting on the *PA Birds Discord* server to get feedback from other birders, who quickly confirmed our ID. During the discussion, Merlin researcher, Don Nixon, told us that Merlins have begun to nest south of their typical range in golf courses, cemeteries, and city parks. Apparently these habitats mimic their traditional taiga nesting habitats in northern Canada.

eBird accepted our submission overnight, and the eBird reviewer noted that “this is, as far as I know, the first confirmed breeding record



THREE JUVENILES FEEDING ON DELIVERED PREY ITEM.

of Merlin in Somerset County.” We returned to the nesting area over the next few days and observed three juveniles, two of which had begun moving between trees. After our report was accepted, the *Merlin* app began IDing the sound recordings as a Merlin. It seems that the system reacts very quickly to new data. It was very cool to see the breeding Merlins in novel territory, and we learned a little about how eBird works!



CURRENT (AS OF 8/14/24)  
PA BIRD ATLAS 3  
EBIRD MAP  
SHOWING THE  
MOST SOUTHERLY  
BREEDING  
CONFIRMATION  
FOR MERLIN,  
DESCRIBED IN THIS  
ARTICLE.



## Take Two Goldfinches and Call Me in the Morning

By Dave Kwasnick, *The Birdwatchers Store*

As nature lovers, we get a powerful sense of euphoria from the outdoors in general, and birds in particular. But it's hard explaining this to less bucolic-minded friends and family. They've dismissed my experiences (and perhaps yours) many times as the imagination of a tree-hugger run amok.

But science is on our side.

Studies at home and abroad are now affirming what we've known for so long: that nature produces quantifiable benefits for both body and mind. Florence Williams's groundbreaking (and eminently readable) 2017 book, *The Nature Fix*, offers a wonderfully simple hypothesis for why this is so. Williams posits that human physiology has become enmeshed in a symbiotic dance with nature across our species' approximately 1.5-million-year history. (The frustrations of packaging ourselves into cars, cubicles, and Starbucks's lines is, by this line of thinking, new and dangerously uncharted territory.) By venturing outdoors, we tap into our evolutionary heritage, rekindling physical, mental, and even spiritual benefits that past eons have literally hardwired into us.

And the proof is astounding. A study from London's Kings College reveals that many bird songs (not yours, Crow) lower mental fatigue, blood pressure, and stress. A study published by Canada's Environmental Design Research Association takes this a step further. It discovered that bird songs within certain levels of sound, harmonics, frequency, and complexity actually restore healthy, cognitive functioning in brains battered by the modern world.

And it's not just adults that benefit from nature-infused lives. A study printed by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences proved urban kids that romped in green spaces just 230 yards square from birth to age 10 experienced 55% fewer mental disorders as adults. Here's the kicker: this was after adjusting for factors such as household income, age, race, and familiar histories of mental illness.

These are just three poignant examples. The body of work on the good juju that comes from birdwatching and its natural setting is growing with a velocity born of both extreme public interest and importance.

"Why are you going outside?"

So, if you hear someone ask that the next time you grab your bins and head for the door, the only response is:

"Why aren't you?"

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*Editor's note: This article and photos are reprinted with permission from <https://thebirdwatchersstore.com/>. Western PA birders may already be familiar with The Birdwatchers Store. It has served the local birding community for 17 years from its location just outside of Slippery Rock on a 3.5-acre Audubon-certified Wildlife Sanctuary with a small pond and woodland trails. The back of the store is a birdwatcher's dream—a counter and chairs with available spotting scopes and binoculars and a fantastic view out a bank of huge windows at an always very active bird feeding setup! For great information about the store, including its monthly bird walks and more samples of Dave's writing, visit <https://thebirdwatchersstore.com/news-events/> and <https://www.facebook.com/birdwatchersstore/>.*



PHOTOS (TOP TO BOTTOM): THE BIRDWATCHERS STORE OWNERS, DAVE AND LORI KWASNICK; FRONT OF STORE ALONG RT. 108, WEST OF SLIPPERY ROCK; BANK OF LARGE WINDOWS AT THE REAR OF THE STORE; FEEDER SETUP BEHIND STORE.

## Outings to Come

### Lots of Fall Bird Walks Planned!

**By Steve Thomas, Outings Director**

**Friday August 23 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park**--Join Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)), for our first bird walk this season starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. We will look for the early fall migration birds.

**Friday September 6 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park**--Join Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)), for our second bird walk to Sewickley this season starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

**Saturday September 7 – Deer Lakes Park**--John Vassallo ([johnnvassallo@yahoo.com](mailto:johnnvassallo@yahoo.com)) will lead this outing focused on fall migrants including warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. The outing will begin at 7:30 AM and last approximately 4 hours. We will meet in the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russellton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then turn right, and proceed to the last parking lot. We will hike approximately 3 miles. Although the trails are fairly well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud, and rainfall.

**Sunday September 8 – Harrison Hills**--Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. Dave will be starting from a new location in Harrison Hills for this outing. We will meet him at the Environmental Learning Center parking lot at 8:00 AM. The Environmental Learning Center (GPS coordinates: 40.6572, -79.7024). As you enter the park stay left and then turn left at the first intersection and go up the hill to the large parking lot. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers, and vireos.

**Friday September 13 – North Park**--We will meet Adrian Fenton for a fall birding outing at 7:30 AM at the Gold Star Pavilion in North Park along Lake Shore Drive (GPS coordinates: 40.593884, -80.003844). We will bird Gold Star wetlands area, Marshall Lake, and, if time permits, part of Latodomi Nature Center. Adrian asks that participants to email him at [AF9963285@aol.com](mailto:AF9963285@aol.com) to let him know you plan to attend.

**Saturday September 14 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park**--This walk is intended for beginning/inexperienced birders and will be limited to the first seven people who email the walk leader Adrian Fenton at [AF9963285@aol.com](mailto:AF9963285@aol.com). Sewickley Heights Park is an excellent location for seeing fall migrants. We will go slowly to give everyone the opportunity to see and identify birds. The starting time will be at 7:30 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Please bring binoculars.

**Friday September 20 - Moraine State Park**--We will meet Karyn Delany at 9:00 AM at the parking lot at the end of Park Road. To get to the starting location on Park Road, which is just north of the Route 528 exit of route 442: turn onto Park Road and continue past the Waterfowl Observation Deck to the parking area at the end of the road (GPS coordinates: 40.9237, -80.0688). We'll walk the paved road (closed to traffic) to a trail into the woods that will take us back onto the road and back to the parking lot for a total of approximately 2 miles. The walk is mostly flat with one small hill at the end of the road. There may be some muddy areas in the woods if it has rained. Please text Karyn at 724-713-9474 if you plan to attend.

**Saturday September 21 - Frick Park**--We will meet Charlie and Ezra White ([chwhite@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:chwhite@andrew.cmu.edu)) at 7:30 AM at the Frick Park Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill, 15217 for a morning bird walk in Frick Park. Frick Park is an excellent location for the fall migration, and we're hoping for lots of warblers, other migrants, and local birds.

**Saturday October 19 - Panhandle Connector Trail**--Meet Malcolm Kurtz at the Panhandle Connector Trail Trailhead at 8:00 AM for this mid-fall walk. This will be the first time that the club will be going to Settlers Cabin Park for a bird walk. The trailhead is located at the end of Greer Road in Settlers Cabin Park. GPS Coordinates: 40.42258, -80.16206. Here is the location on Google Maps: <https://bit.ly/panhandletrail>

## Outings Revisited

### June Outing Offered Chance to Collect Breeding Bird Data

**Hunter's Lane, Forbes State Forest--June 22, 2024:** This year's summer outing to the Laurel Highlands was a visit to an area in Forbes State Forest called Hunter's Lane. It's a dirt road through various habitats, including a shrub wetland, forest, thickets, and a small pond. It was a hot morning for the ten participants during this summer's early heat wave, so we lingered in patches of shade and ended by late morning before temperatures soared to near 90 degrees.

In addition to enjoying bird song and summer breeders, the outing also provided an opportunity to collect data for the third breeding bird atlas project. We confirmed a few species, such as Field Sparrow. An adult was seen with a juvenile, and another bird was observed carrying nesting material.

Unfortunately, the Blair Brothers Railroad Trail was not mowed, so we had to walk Route 381 to Hunter's Lane, being mindful of passing traffic. There is good habitat along the road. Right at the parking lot we heard a Yellow-throated Vireo and Red-eyed Vireo singing. Walking along the road we saw a few Indigo Buntings, heard two White-eyed Vireos, Acadian Flycatcher, several Gray Catbirds, Swamp Sparrow, an Ovenbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Black-and-white Warbler.

Once on Hunter's Lane we heard an Alder Flycatcher singing. They breed in the shrubby wet area between Route 381 and the Blair Brothers Railroad Trail. We heard another further along the trail. An Eastern Bluebird was calling, and we spotted a pair. A House Wren was singing near an old tree that appeared to offer cavities for nesting, but we were unable to find a potential nest site, and a Cedar Waxwing was perched in the open on a snag.

Continuing along Hunter's Lane we found another Swamp Sparrow, added a few Eastern Towhees, Mourning Dove, Scarlet Tanager, only one Red-winged Blackbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and American Redstart. We heard a Pileated Woodpecker throughout the walk and saw one in trees over the trail. We reached a small pond across from what was an abandoned house, which is now renovated. The pond area produced Eastern Phoebe, Common Grackle, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Another shrubby wetland is just past the house, where we saw American Redstart, and an Eastern Bluebird perched on a snag. It was getting quite warm, so we decided to walk back and end the morning with a nice variety of species.

--by leader Mike Fialkovich



# The Peregrine

## Observations

### Barn Swallows Don't Only Live in Barns

#### Text and photos by Tom Moeller

Barn Swallows are the only bird species that have been found on all seven of the world's continents including Antarctica! Of course, the birds in Antarctica are vagrants, not residents. There are six subspecies of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) in the world with slight variations in appearance, but most follow the same habits. My German language source (*Amsel, Drossel, Fink und Star*) says the European "Swallow" (in German *Rauchschwalbe*) follows the same practices as our American birds. German farmers believed that a barn with swallows would never be struck by lightning. The name "barn swallow" comes from the Swedish word *ladusvala*, which means "barn swallow," from their custom of building nests in Swedish barns in that cold climate country. This truly international bird breeds in North America, northern Europe, Siberia, and East Asia, then migrates to South America, Africa, Malaysia and Indonesia, and even to Australia, respectively. Vagrants in Antarctica may come from southern Argentina.

Our North American Barn Swallow has a steel blue head, back, and wings. Its forehead and chin/throat are rust, with a dark blue collar separating the throat from the undersides. The darker the rust on the throat in males, the more offspring are produced, since that color is more alluring to females. The undersides and half of the underwings are a tawny color. European swallows have off-white undersides. The swallow tail with its classic V-shape ends in two long tines that stick out beyond the wingtips when folded. A band of white rectangles across the tail is very distinctive. Male and female Barn Swallows are of similar coloring, but the male's tail feathers are longer than the female's. Juveniles are paler versions of the adults.

Barn Swallows are aerial insectivores, catching flying insects on the wing. They spend hours in the air even drinking by skimming across water to take a sip on the fly. Bathing is similar with a quick dip into the water, hardly missing a beat as it flies.

The most common call of the Barn Swallow is the chit call given in rapid succession as the birds fly about. The call gets louder if danger is near. Pairs may whistle to each other, and whistles are often heard during courtship. Courtship usually involves males chasing females until they pair off. Repeated chit calls, whistles, and the male's song (a series of chits interrupted by grating noises – not very melodic) are heard during courtship. Once paired, a couple will perch together, allopreen (preen each other), and maybe bill (touch or clasp bills).

The next step is to build a nest. Like Cliff Swallows (see "Observations" in *The Peregrine*, Vol. 20, No.6 November/December 2021), Barn Swallows build their nests out of mud pellets they gather near water. The rare times one sees a Barn Swallow on the ground is to gather mud. Their nests are half cups usually built on a vertical surface, anchored on a projecting board, nail, peg, or even an old mud wasp nest. Sometimes they build on a flat surfaces. Originally swallows built their nests in caves or under cliff overhangs. Human outbuildings are now the main spots for swallows to nest, given the protection of a roof, vertical areas on which to build, and infrequent contact with humans. The mud and vegetation structure is lined with grass and an inner lining of feathers. Both males and females work to build their nests.

Nests may be built singly or in colonies, small or large. I've found single nests in a doorless men's room in a park, in the rafters of a picnic pavilion, and under the eaves of a cabin. A colony of swallows use an open freight garage under a local mall. The chit calls of the birds above the garage increase when a human (me) approaches. It is common for a group to band together against a threat.

Four to seven smooth, white eggs with spots of browns, lilac,

or gray are laid, and both parents incubate them, although she does a better job. In just over two weeks, altricial nestlings hatch covered in gray down. Both parents busily feed their young insects for about three weeks when fledging occurs. The fledglings may return to the nest for a while, with both parents still feeding them, even in mid-air.

In mid-August to September, flocks gather to migrate south. A large assemblage on telephone wires is common. Swallows in North America head to Mexico and South America all the way to Argentina. They fly during the day and roost in reed fields at night.

Barn Swallows prefer to live in open country, like the areas around farms. There grazing animals kick up insects for them to catch. However, a reduction has been noted in Barn Swallow populations due to use of insecticide to kill the bugs the swallows eat. Lower insect populations have caused the decline in swallow populations.

These maneuverable speedsters, ever on the wing, are a wonder to enjoy as they effortlessly glide over fields, farms, and parking lots.



BARN SWALLOW (ABOVE) PERCHED ON A RAIL AT MAGEE MARSH, MAY 2008. IN FLIGHT (BELOW) SHOWING THE LONG, FORKED TAIL WITH THE BAND OF WHITE RECTANGLES.



SEE MORE OF TOM'S BARN SWALLOW PHOTOS IN FULL COLOR AT [www.3rbc.org](http://www.3rbc.org).

## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

### April 2024 – May 2024

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

April was warm with rain and thunderstorms for several days with flooding and near record rainfall. Many migrants were exceptionally early this year. By late April temperatures were summerlike, and mid-May was also unseasonably warm resulting in most warblers and other Neotropical migrants apparently flying over and continuing north, rather than stopping in numbers.

A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Imperial 5/20 (MV). This species has bred at this location in the past prior to the development of industrial parks. There are still ponds in the area where they can potentially breed again. Late or lingering **Red-breasted Mergansers** include one at Tarentum 5/9 (AH), ten at Imperial 5/11 (MV), and one at Duck Hollow 5/13 (KSJ). Two were at Dashields Dam 5/31, ten were there 5/11, and two remained 5/31 (MV). A late female **Greater Scaup** was at Imperial 5/12 (MV). A male **Surf Scoter** was a nice find at Duck Hollow 4/24-26 (JK, m.ob.). Two late **Ruddy Ducks** were at Imperial 5/12 (AF).

**Northern Bobwhite** reports are always released birds with unknown origins. It seems every few years some turn up. One was in Mt. Lebanon 4/15 (eBird), one at Sygan Hilltop in South Fayette Twp. 5/2 (DNe), and one on the Montour Trail in Findlay Twp. 5/24 (MJ).

**Horned Grebes** were reported 4/1, including two at Bell Harbor (AH), three at Sharpsburg (JD), and four at Duck Hollow (JF).

An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was heard in Gibsonia 4/14 (KP).

A **Virginia Rail** was at Peter's Creek 4/21 (MJ), and a **Sora** was at North Park 4/13 (DBe, JD, DM). A late **American Coot** was at North Park 5/23-25 (AF).

Three **Sandhill Cranes** were spotted flying over West Deer Twp. 4/8 (EL, LC) providing the 14th county record.

Four **Semipalmated Plovers** were at Imperial 5/12 (MV). The first **Solitary Sandpipers** arrived in early April with one at Imperial 4/7 (MV) and one at Peter's Creek 4/10 (JF). Nine **Willetts** were a nice find at Sharpsburg 5/1 (JD). If they show up, it's always the first few days of May and typically during stormy weather. The day they were found was clear, so it was a bit surprising, but it was stormy in days prior. A **Dunlin** was at Imperial 5/12-13 (MV, et al.). The only **Pectoral Sandpiper** report was a single bird at North Park 4/17-18 (m.ob.). A nice count of nine **Short-billed Dowitchers** were at Imperial 5/12 (AF, m.ob.), an uncommon spring migrant. Up to 30 **Wilson's Snipe** were at Imperial 4/6-7 (DNe, MV).

A few **Bonaparte's Gulls** were noted this spring, including one at the Highland Park Bridge 4/11 (JD), nine in Aspinwall 4/12 (AH, JK, AF, NB), one at Herr's Island 4/14 (eBird), and two in Etna 4/19 (JD). Interestingly all were along the Allegheny River. In past years, the main counts came from the Ohio River at Dashields Dam. Coverage at that location isn't nearly as regular in recent years and neither are the weather conditions, so predicting the gull migration has been more difficult. Having said that, coverage on the Allegheny was spotty at best in past years, so birds using that route may have been missed.

April 12 was tern day in the county. A **Caspian Tern** was spotted flying down the Allegheny River at Washington's Landing on Herr's Island (DYe). A **Forster's/Common Tern** was also seen there (DYe). A **Forster's Tern** was at the Highland Park dam on the Allegheny River (RBU), one was at North Park (DBe, et al.), and two were in Elizabeth Twp. (JF). Two were at Chapel Harbor 4/25 (RBU), and one was at Six Mile Island 4/28 (SD).

**Common Loon** reports include single birds at Tarentum 4/26-5/14 (AB), Duck Hollow 4/26 (EH, m.ob.), and flying over at Frick Park 5/8

(KSJ, CK).

An **American Bittern** was photographed at Wingfield Pines 4/20 (TC). An early **Great Egret** was in Findlay Twp. at the pond on Moody Road 4/3 (MV). This pond used to be surrounded by a mowed field but is now surrounded by new homes. One was at Six Mile Island near the Highland Park Bridge 4/9 (JK, m.ob.), and one was nearby in Blawnox 4/12 (AH) that could have been the same bird. A photo of one was posted on the *Friends of North Park* Facebook page 4/17 (fide MV). One was at Wingfield Pines 5/6-11, and two were reported there 5/7 (eBird). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was photographed in a neighborhood on the Southside of Pittsburgh 4/14 (fide BMU). Another was in Lawrenceville 5/8 (CB).

**Black Vulture** reports continue to come in regularly with one at Oakmont 4/8 (PBr), one at Cheswick 4/9 (EPH), one in O'Hara Twp. 4/12 (CB), one near the Hot Metal Bridge in Oakland 4/17 (eBird), and one at Beechwood Farms 4/28-29 (KL, NB). One was seen in flight in Indiana Twp. 5/5 (BSh), one was at Beechwood Farms 5/8 (LK), and two were photographed perched on a sign in Cheswick 5/17 (SK).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** visited a feeder in O'Hara Twp. 4/30 (PB).

A **Merlin** was photographed at Deer Lakes Park 5/5 (MG), and another was photographed and recorded calling in Squirrel Hill 5/9-11; two were there 5/20 (TD). This could be a potential breeder and is not far from the first breeding location at Chatham University. One was recorded calling in Shadyside, which could be one of the Squirrel Hill birds (FW).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Frick Park 5/5 (JW, et al.) was early, but a lot of migrants were early this year. Uncommon in spring, a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was a nice find in Bridgeville 5/1 (ST), one was at Hays Woods 5/8 (NL, DY), one at Beechwood Farms 5/19 (WF), and one at Frick Park 5/30 (CK).

**Philadelphia Vireo** is rare in spring here. There were a few reports, including one banded in Upper St. Clair 5/4 (AZ), one at Sewickley Heights Park 5/11 (PR), one at Frick Park 5/19 (KSJ, CK), and one 5/22 at North Park (DN).

A late **Winter Wren** was in South Park Twp. 5/6 (KB). A **Marsh Wren** was found in South Park Twp. 4/23 (KB, RJ).

**American Pipit** reports include two at Duck Hollow 4/27 (AW), and one at Hilltop Park in Collier Twp. 5/6 (JS).

A yellow variant female **Purple Finch** visited a feeder in Harmar Twp. 4/22-23 (JV).

**Pine Siskin** reports continued from last season. A few were at Hartwood Acres in early April (DM, et. al.), two were in Fox Chapel 4/5 (DM), 4/12 and 5/4 (EL), two in North Park 4/1 (RBU), and four there 4/2 (JJ). One visited a feeder in Gibsonia 4/13 (KP). They continued at North Park to 5/6 (m.ob.).

Late **Dark-eyed Juncos** include single birds at North Park 5/3 (LF), Crafton 5/4 (EM), Wexford 5/4 (TC), South Park 5/6 (LF), Deer Lakes Park 5/8 (JVa), and Harrison Hills Park 5/11 (MT).

**Rusty Blackbird** observations continued from March. Two were at Wingfield Pines from March into late April (m.ob.), four were reported there 4/20 (eBird), two were at North Park 4/1 (DBe), eight were at Boyce-Mayview Park 4/2 (ST), one was at RIDC Park West 4/3 (JM), four were at the PennDot Wetlands in Upper St. Clair 4/16 (RBU), one was in Natrona Heights 4/23 (MG), and four were in Fox Chapel 4/29 (EL).

A total of 30 species of warblers were reported. Early warblers include a **Black-and-white Warbler** and a **Nashville Warbler** in Pleasant Hills 4/9 (BMU), **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Deer Lakes Park 4/14 (MG), and a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Wingfield

Pines 3/20 (TC). A rare for spring **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at Frick Park 4/27 (MK).

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## Birds in the Three Rivers

continued from page 7

A **Golden-winged Warbler** was a nice find at Sewickley Heights Park 5/3 (SD, m.ob.) and one was in Wexford 5/5 (NB). A bird singing like a Golden-winged was heard at Frick Park 5/5 (MK) but could not be confirmed visually. Similarly, an odd sounding “winged” warbler was heard at Imperial 5/25 (MF). A **Swainson’s Warbler** was recorded singing loud and clear at South Park 5/6 (JF). Subsequent searches the following day and beyond were unsuccessful. This provided the 7th county record. Interestingly, the first county record was at this same park in 1997. A **“Yellow” Palm Warbler** was at Chapel Harbor 4/18 (RBu). **Prairie Warbler** is rarely encountered in migration here. One was photographed at Wingfield Pines 4/20 (TC), one was at Frick Park 5/5 (MMc), and one was at Barking Slopes 4/29 (RBu). None of these sites are breeding locations. A few returned to the Imperial Grasslands in late May. No telling how long they will hang on as development continues.

A **Summer Tanager** was heard calling (and recorded) at Hays Woods 5/8 (DYe, NL). Another was recorded singing in Ohio Twp. 5/10 (SN). **Blue Grosbeak** returned to Imperial with one heard singing 5/10 (DBe). It continued through the season (m.ob.).

Observers: *Ken Behrens, David Bennett (DBe), Carole Borek, Al Bowers, Nathaniel Bowler, Paul Brant (PBr), Paul Brown, Ron Burkert (RBu), Thomas Connor, Linda Croskey, Sheree Daugherty, Talia Dubowitz, John Dzikiy, Wiltrud Fassbinder, Adrian Fenton, John Flannigan, Jonathan Frantz (JFr), Leah Fulton, Maggie Griffith, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Julie Jansen, Rojo Johnarson, Matt Juskowich, Charity Kheshgi, Michelle Kienholz, Scott Kinzey, Lucy Klimko, Justin Kolakowski, Nick Liadis, Ken Limmer, Eileen Luba, Michael McDewitt (MMc), Dan Mendenhall, Jeff Moore, Elizabeth Morgan, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Dean Newhouse (DNe), Steve Northrop, Dick Nugent, Kevin Parsons, Philip Rogers, Kate St. John, James Saracco, Brian Shema (BSH), Shannon Thompson, Molly Toth, Jim Valimont, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JV), Felix Weilacher, Andrew Wood, David Yeany II (DYe), Anna Zizak.*

## Book Review

### Personal Connections to Bird Conservation

By Sheree Daugherty

*Feather Trails, A Journey of Discovery Among Endangered Birds* by Sophie A. H. Osborn. Chelsea Green Publishing 2024.

In *Feather Trails* wildlife biologist, Sophie A. H. Osborn, tells her personal story of a trio of conservation projects with which she has been involved to save endangered and threatened bird species in the United States.

**Peregrine Falcons** — She first became involved in conservation in the early days of reintroducing Peregrine Falcons in the US. Living in a tent on a mountain in Wyoming she tended to five captive bred birds until they were ready to fledge and then monitored them as free flying falcons. As we know from our experience here in Pittsburgh, these efforts were successful.

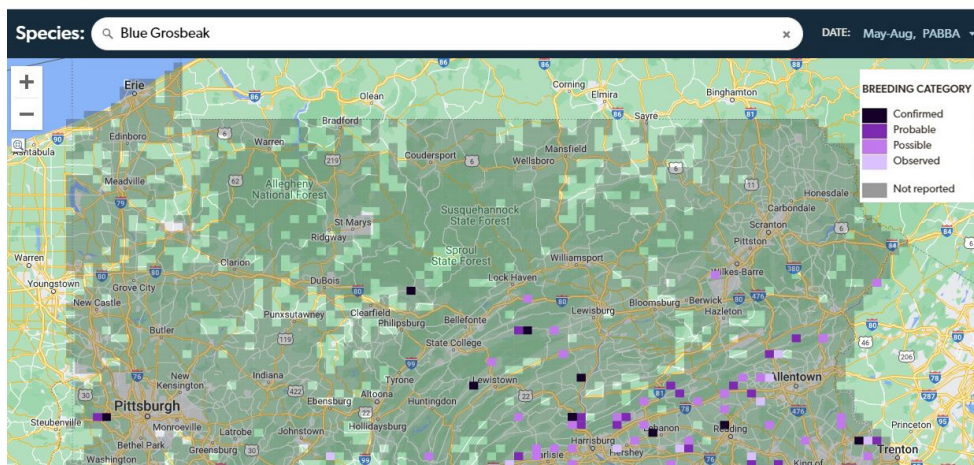
**Hawaiian Crows** — Osborn also describes in detail her time working with endangered Hawaiian Crows in the cloud forests of Hawaii. These playful birds may be the most imperiled of the three species profiled in the book. Osborn reports that habitat destruction and climate change may relegate this species to only existing in captivity.

**California Condors** — For many years California Condor numbers were in free fall. In the 1980s there were only twenty-two remaining. A debate raged on for years about what could be done. Some felt that the majestic birds should be allowed to become extinct with dignity. Others won the argument and started a captive breeding program. The author became involved after over a hundred captive-bred birds had been released. Her years working with condors in the Grand Canyon were fascinating.

*Feather Trails* paints a compelling picture of the dedication and commitment of wildlife biologists to protect wildlife and the environment. The book invites us to contemplate the many issues that contribute to why these species became threatened and what choices we can make to help with their recovery.

## Blue Grosbeaks Increasingly Found Breeding in SW Pennsylvania

### Pennsylvania Bird Atlas



CURRENT (8/14/24) PA BIRD ATLAS 3 MAP OF BLUE GROSBEAK BREEDING RECORDS. SEE [www.3rbc.org](http://www.3rbc.org) FOR OSCAR MILLER'S FULL ARTICLE ON THE GROWING NUMBER OF BREEDING RECORDS FOR THE SPECIES IN SW PA. BLUE GROSBEAK PHOTO BY DAN MENDENHALL.