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The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Vol. 25, No. 5 September/October 2026

Who would have thunk it? Chimney Swifts Need Chimneys!



A CHIMNEY SWIFT WITH A BOLUS — A THROAT POUCH FULL OF INSECTS TO FEED ITS YOUNG. PHOTO BY DAN MENDENHALL

Brian Shema, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's Operations Director, will present his program at our final hybrid meeting of the year on **October 7, 2026** at ASWP's Beechwood Farms auditorium. He has been working in Chimney Swift conservation for nearly two decades. In fact, Brian is responsible for the largest conservation program in the country and has recently completed research to guide the future of like-minded conservation strategies. Discover why Chimney Swifts are declining, and what is being done right here in Pittsburgh to lead an international effort for Chimney Swifts.

Brian last presented to the club membership on February 5, 2020, just before the pandemic closed everything down. He recounted the many eco-tours he led in his talk "Birds from Eco-tours to North, Central, and South America." Read the minutes for that meeting at [Feb 5, 2020 Minutes](#) on the website. Sadly, this was the last time we would ever meet at the Phipps Garden Center.

Brian has been with ASWP since 2000, serving as a naturalist, Property Manager, Conservation Director, and now, Operations Director. His role in Chimney Swift conservation has afforded opportunities to visit various portions of the country, to visit the birthplace of swift towers in National, Iowa, to evaluate grassroots efforts of Audubon chapters and councils, to serve as keynote speaker and panelist at conferences, and to consult with state, federal, and



BRIAN INVESTIGATING A CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER.

international agencies on conservation strategies. Brian has recently completed a project funded through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service to investigate ASWP's collection of Chimney Swift Towers to inform practitioners of best practices.

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

Future 3RBC Meeting Presentations

- December 2, 2026 – **MEMBER SLIDE SLAM**
- February 3, 2027 - Cindy Marple: *Antarctic Birding*
- April 7, 2027 – Bob Mulvihill: *My Serendipitous Journey to Ornithology*
- June 2, 2027 – Cassie Ziegler: *Avian Ecology and Diet*
- August 4, 2027 – Ezra White: *Life as a young birder in Pittsburgh*
- October 6, 2027 – Amy Henrici: *Alaska Birding*

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

President's Message

Breeding Bird Survey

By Mike Fialkovich, President

The North American Breeding Bird Survey is a project run by the U.S. Geological Survey's Eastern Ecological Science Center in Laurel, MD. The survey project was started by Chandler Robbins in response to chemical use (DDT) in the mid-twentieth century and habitat destruction and fragmentation to monitor bird populations and to determine how they were affected by these factors. A summary of the project can be found on the BBS website at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/about/. Chandler Robbins is also known for banding Wisdom, the female Laysan Albatross, who is the oldest known living bird.

I have been running a survey in Butler County since 1995. The survey is road based with a route length of 25 miles, stopping at every half mile for a total of 50 stops. The start time for my route is 5:16 a.m., 30 minutes before official sunrise. A survey of birds is made during a three minute period at each stop. Routes should be run in June and are only done once a year. There are just over 100 routes in Pennsylvania, and most of them are active. My route runs through eastern Butler County starting just outside of Chicora and ending near Sarver. My species totals range from 53 (2025) to 71 (1997 and 2006). This route was run prior to my involvement from 1966-1976. Species totals ranged from 37 (1975) to 50 (1969). The route was vacant from 1977 to 1994. I started it in 1995 and only missed conducting the survey in 2020 due to the Covid shutdown.

There has been some development along my route over the years, including well pads and some new homes, but most of the habitat along the route has remained stable over the years. Tracking birds with habitat changes over time is important to the survey.

Here is a broad overview of what has been recorded on the survey:

The species with the highest total for the survey is American Robin, followed by Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle. Thirteen species of warblers have been recorded over the years, plus a Brewster's Warbler in 2002. Regular warblers include Ovenbird, Blue-winged Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Northern Yellow Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Black-and-white Warbler is almost annual at one location but has been found at two stops on occasion.

Blue-headed Vireo is detected every few years. An Alder Flycatcher was found at a powerline cut in 2002. This could have been a migrant because I run the survey in early June (typically the first Saturday), which is within the migration period for this species.

Species that I no longer find during the survey include Ring-necked Pheasant, Yellow-breasted Chat, Golden-winged Warbler (last was in 2000), Prairie Warbler (found 1997-1999), and Vesper Sparrow. The last pheasant was in 2006. I typically found two a year early on, and in 1996 I had four birds. Golden-winged and Prairie Warblers were found at powerline cuts. Cerulean Warbler was regular from 1996 to 2016, but totals declined from four in 1996 to one or two birds from 2006-2016, and none since then. The first Northern Mockingbird detected was in 1995, when Mockingbirds were hard to come by north of the Pittsburgh area. Numbers increased on the survey over the years and became nearly annual starting in 2013. Two Vesper Sparrows were found in 1995 and one in 1997.

Two new species were added in recent years. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was found in 2024, and, although a surprise, this species does breed locally in northern Butler County. Common Raven was first detected in 2021 and has been annual since. With the expansion of ravens away from the mountains, Common Raven was not totally unexpected.

A flock of five Red Crossbills was quite a surprise in 2013. They

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YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, HARRISON HILLS PARK

were seen in a tall spruce tree in a cemetery at St. John's Church just south of Fenelton near route 422. They flew off after a short time, but the question remains, "What were they doing there in June?" They are not included in my dataset, because they were out of season and considered a non-breeding species.

I should mention spending just three minutes at each stop can result in missing some species that may be present.

Every year is different, so I look forward to new discoveries, but I also enjoy the expected regulars at the various stops.

Outings to come

Early Fall Outings August – September 2026

Saturday, September 5 – 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. We will meet him at the Environmental Learning Center parking lot at 8:00 AM. The Environmental Learning Center coordinates are [40.6572, -79.7024](#). As you enter the park, stay left, 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 11 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park. Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) for our fall bird walk to Sewickley starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. Also, be aware that there are no restroom facilities in the park. We will look for early fall migrants.

Saturday September 12 – Deer Lakes Park. John Vassallo (johnnvassallo@yahoo.com) and Oliver Lindhiem 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.

Friday September 18 – Hartwood Acres. Come explore the Saxonburg Blvd. Fields of Hartwood Acres with Dan Mendenhall and John Dzikoy. We will start at 8:00 AM at the Hartwood Acres Mansion parking area (200 Hartwood Acres), hiking down through the woods, around the meadow trails, and back up the hill to the mansion parking area (approximately 3 miles). The terrain can be steep in areas, and dress for possible wet grass, mud, and rainfall. Please email Dan (dmendenhall@aswp.org) to register as we will cap participants at ten people.

Saturday, September 26 - 3RBC's 25th Annual Picnic at Boyce-Mayview Park. To celebrate 25 YEARS as Three Rivers Birding Club we will meet at the Boyce-Mayview Pavilion in Upper St. Clair. (GPS: [40.335992, -80.105757](#)) There will be a choice of two bird walks both starting at 9:00 AM. A gentle walk will be at Boyce-Mayview, and the other will be at the neighboring Wingfield Pines. A bring-your-own-lunch-and-beverages picnic in the Boyce-Mayview Pavilion will be starting at 12:00 PM. There will be a celebratory cake. Bring your family and enjoy a fall day of birding and a picnic!

Sunday, September 27 – Frick Park. Join Michelle Kienholz (mlkienholz@aol.com) for a morning bird walk in Frick Park starting at 8:00 AM. We will start our walk at the Frick Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill, 15217. Frick Park is an excellent location for finding fall migrants. We're hoping for lots of warblers!

Saturday, October 3 - Linda's Farm. Linda Croskey has invited us to visit her farm for this bird walk. We will meet at 8:00 AM at 882 Deer Creek Road, Gibsonia 15044. Location is northern Allegheny County in West Deer Township; there will be a sign at the end of the driveway (Harvest Valley Farm is across the road). Linda's farm is

comprised of a variety of natural habitats: several acres of goldenrod fields, farm fields with brushy edges, mature deciduous trees, plus several wildflower and milkweed meadows. This area attracts grassland birds, warblers, and many fall migrants. Dress for ticks, and bring water and snacks. Walking is mostly level along paths with a few hills over uneven terrain. For additional directions call Linda at 724-612-9963 or email lcroskey@consolidated.net.

Saturday, October 10 - Gilfillan Park (Upper St. Clair)
We will meet Conor Tompkins (conorotompkins@gmail.com) at Gilfillan Park located in Upper St. Clair at 8:00 AM. We will meet in the parking lot of the Westminster Presbyterian Church along Orr Road. This is an active farm with surrounding fields and woodland. We will hope to see a mix of fall migrants, including warblers and thrushes. The extensive dirt/mulch trail system is mostly flat. There are no bathroom facilities. Afterwards we can get brunch at a nearby restaurant, if there is interest. Location: [40.340976, -80.0645403](#). Orr Road is off Route 19 South (Washington Road) just south of South Hills Village Mall.

Saturday, November 7 - Yellow Creek State Park Roger and Margaret Higbee 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 (412-309-3538) or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) 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. Location: [40.257897, -80.108303](#).

Saturday, November 21 - Panhandle Trail Midway/Bulger. We will meet Conor Tompkins (conorotompkins@gmail.com) again, this time 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 St. in Midway PA. GPS coordinates: [40.3693449, -80.2924795](#).

Outings Revisited

A Porcupine and Atlasing

Laurel Summit Outing—June 13. Four birders joined me for this year's outing to the Laurel Mountains. We visited Spruce Flats Bog at Laurel Summit, and then we hiked the Wolf Rocks Trail out to the Wolf Rocks overlook. Temperatures were pleasant, and it was a beautiful morning. We started with a short walk to the bog where we heard a Hermit Thrush singing and had looks at a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker that flew into the trees at the edge of the forest bordering the bog. Eastern Towhee and Common Yellowthroat were singing. On the trail to the bog, we heard Veery, Ovenbird, two Hooded Warblers, and an American Redstart. We were able to get a view of a Black-and-white Warbler. In all we spotted 31 species, including ten kinds of

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Outings Revisited

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wood warblers.

On Wolf Rocks Trail we heard many Canada Warblers but had difficulty seeing them in the thickets of blooming Mountain Laurel. Eventually, we did get to see a pair and another male. We heard Black-and-white, Hooded, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. On the way back, we had a Magnolia Warbler, which is one of the less common warblers on the mountain.

We saw a pair of Downy Woodpeckers and could hear young calling, but we could not find a nest cavity or the young that may have been out of the nest. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were very vocal and active—we saw six of them. Other forest birds included



PORCUPINE YOUNGSTER

Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Surprisingly, we only heard one Scarlet Tanager and one Dark-eyed Junco.

Other hikers alerted us that there were several Timber Rattlesnakes on the rocks. We were able to enjoy these reptiles as they sunned themselves on the rocks. There were dark and yellow colored individuals, and several had clouded eyes, indicating they would soon be shedding their skin. On the way back to the parking lot, a father and son pointed out a young porcupine in a small tree next to the trail, the second one we had seen on the walk. It was cute but not cuddly! The porcupines and rattlesnakes were definitely a highlight of the morning.—by leader, Mike Fialkovich.

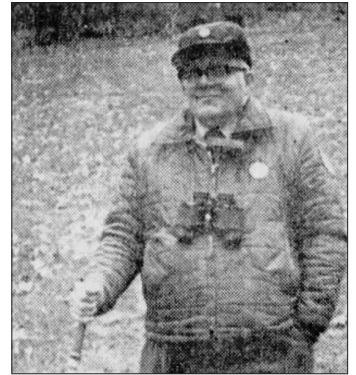
Frick Environmental Center--June 7. Eight of us met to learn about the 3rd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, starting with a review of the impressive and invaluable 586-page hardbound 2nd Atlas report (2004-2009, published 2012 - thank you, co-editor Bob Mulvihill!) to better understand how important these data are, and what we will learn. We then headed out for some “atlasing”, watching individual birds long enough to determine if they are engaging in a probable (e.g., visiting probable nest site) or confirmed (e.g., nest with young) breeding behavior. We walked from the Environmental Center back through Clayton Hill down Biddle Trail to Tranquil Trail and back through Falls Ravine. We documented 32 species, 20 of which received “breeding codes”. We saw Acadian Flycatchers, Northern House Wrens, Wood Thrush, House Finch, and Baltimore Orioles on nests, and families of Downy Woodpeckers and Carolina Chickadees with recent fledglings still being fed by their parents, plus lots of singing males and mated pairs together at some stage of breeding. Watch for a 3RBC Breeding Bird Atlas Outing again next spring in Frick.—by leader, Michelle Kienholz.



Joe Grom and State Game Lands 203 a Half-Century Later

By Ted Weller

I recently unearthed my stack of monthly Audubon Society of Western PA *Bulletins* from the late 1970s, when I began birding as a teenager. In addition to my dear friends Jim and Bonnie Baird, Joe Grom was a birding mentor to me during that era. Joe became the Park Naturalist at North Park in 1970 and was a true gentleman, expert birder, and overall Renaissance man, as the excellent article from the July-September 1988 edition of Pennsylvania Birds attests (see page 88: <https://tinyurl.com/PA-BIRDS-Vol2-No3-1988>).



PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/
APRIL 14, 1983

As summarized in the August 1976 *Bulletin*, Joe led an ASWP outing at State Game Lands #203 on June 19 of that year. Joe and “some 20 birdwatchers” noted 49 species that morning, including 12 varieties of warblers. I found that fascinating! Having not jumped into birding until later that year, I missed this field trip but later spent lots of hours at SGL 203, including some visits with Joe.



PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/APRIL 14, 1983

Spanning more than 1,200 acres, SGL 203 is located primarily in the high-growth area of Marshall Township in northern Allegheny County, where the population has expanded from approximately 2,500 in 1976 to over 10,000 today. I attempted to replicate Joe’s outing almost exactly 50 years to the day, when I birded SGL 203 on June 14, 2026. While I did not have the extra eyes and ears that accompanied Joe on his outing, I did have the Cornell Merlin app, which I used judiciously to supplement my own ears, listing only species that I was very confident as to sound if not otherwise seen. The somewhat disheartening aspect of my outing was that I noted only three warbler species (Ovenbird, Blue-winged, and Hooded), a big change from 1976. On the brighter side, SGL 203 continues to be an important oasis for a variety of summer residents, including several flycatcher species: White-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. My total for the morning was 32 species. I certainly missed some birds that absolutely inhabit SGL 203. Regardless, the value of this tract is more important than ever, and the birding community should continue to support the Pennsylvania Game Commission in their acquisition and stewardship of these properties.

Birding in Northeastern Brazil

Article and photo by Sam Sinderson

In January, already booked for a short tour with Eagle-Eye Tours to Manitoba to see wintering owls, I decided that the American Birding Association tour to Northeast Brazil was too enticing to pass up, so I booked that tour also.

I booked flights that took me through JFK going and coming back. A week before the departure date of June 25, I decided that the layover time in JFK was not sufficient, as the flight from PIT to JFK had often been late. Just a few days before departure I got on chat with Delta, and they found flights that took me through Atlanta and Miami and finally directly to Fortaleza. I had bought a multi-city refundable and changeable ticket, so there was no change in cost. The only disadvantage was that I had a more limited choice of seats than I would have had with the original itinerary. I arrived in Fortaleza on time on the 26th, the arrival day of the tour.

We stayed at the Blue Tree Towers hotel in Fortaleza the first night and gathered at 6:30 in the hotel lobby to get acquainted. We then headed out to a local restaurant for dinner. There we learned what to expect and the details of the next day. The group included twelve participants, plus two guides and two drivers. From time to time a local guide would also be with us. We had two vans that were in communication via radio, so we did not get lost from one another and enabled the drivers to relay information about any birds spotted from their van.

I will list some of the birds that I saw, mostly life birds, but there is not enough room to list them all! If one is interested in seeing what the bird looks like, download the "Brazil:Northeast" bird list into the Merlin app and look up the bird to see a photo.

The birding started the next day, June 27, and we were up early to have breakfast at 5:30 and pack all our gear into one of the two vans. We first visited an urban green space, where I saw my first four new species, including the Jandaya Parakeet, for which the area is named. Altogether, I saw 20 species at this site. We then traveled southwest to the town of Guaramiranga. Along the way we saw a flight of Biscutate Swifts. The official count was 30, but I estimated 300. It was a large flock for sure, and the only species of swift that flocks like this.

We had two walks at Sítio Guaramiranga, where I saw another fourteen life birds, including Fork-tailed Woodnymph, a hummingbird, Blue-crowned Trogon, Spot-backed Puffbird, Gould's Toucanet, several species of parakeets, and a Parrotlet.

The next morning, June 28, we spent some time at Sítio Guaramiranga birding in the rain, where I recorded just three species, two of which were life birds: White-browed Guan and Wing-banded Hornero. We then made our way to Quixada just 66 miles south. On the way we spotted a Savannah Hawk, also a life bird.

At Quixada we stayed at the Hotel Pedra dos Ventos Resort, where we had nice accommodations and an outdoor dining area. After lunch I went back to photograph the Pygmy Nightjar that we had seen on the rocky area just below our dining area. We took two walks here with the one in the late afternoon being most productive, and I added eleven life birds this day, the Nightjar being the highlight.

On June 29, we birded early around the hotel and then made our way towards Crato, 175 miles and six hours southwest, allowing for stops. On the way we observed a large flock of around 50 Black Vultures and at another stop, a Southern Pochard, a kind of duck, but no life birds for me. We had lunch at a buffet restaurant. We stopped at Barbalha – Arajara Park, where we observed the rare Araripe Manakin, among other species bathing in a pool of water. It took the rest of the day to get to our hotel in Crato. We had a change of hotels shortly before the tour, because the hotel originally chosen in Potengi,

about 48 miles west of Crato, did not have enough space for our whole group. Before dinner we took a short walk near the hotel and saw a flock of Saffron Finches. I added four life birds on this day: Pale Baywing (a blackbird), Araripe Manakin, Golden-crowned Warbler, and Black-tailed Flycatcher.

June 30: We were up early and on our way to Potengi and Sítio Pau Preto,

a small reserve where we had breakfast and lunch, took several walks in the area and spent much of the day watching feeders. It was a great day for me as I was able to get good photos of most of the species that came to the several feeders. I added 17 life birds this day, including Barred Antshrike, Red-billed Scythebill, Caatinga Cacholote, and Campo Troupial, an oriole-like bird. I have photos of an adult troupial feeding a young one.

July 1 was a long travel day from Crato to Canudos, about 220 miles, and with birding stops would take us about six hours. At the various stops I added six life birds, including Least Nighthawk and Cactus Parakeet.

On July 2, we were up at 4:30 AM to leave by 4-wheel-drive vehicles to the Indigo Macaw site, arriving before dawn. The macaws did not disappoint. We could hear their calls as they left their roosting sites in the early dawn and saw them perched on a cactus and flying about. We then walked to the edge of a deep valley, where we had excellent views of the macaws and other local birds, including Cliff Flycatchers. We returned to the hotel for a late breakfast and then departed for a six to seven hour drive to Chapada Diamantina National Park and to our hotel in Lencois, where we would spend three nights. The traffic was not in our favor, and we arrived at just about 5:30 PM, so there was no more birding that day. I did record two life birds, the Indigo Macaw and Cinnamon Tanager. While we were here, we ate all our dinners at a restaurant about a ten-minute walk from the hotel.

On July 3, we would be birding the northern part of the national park near Lencois. As for most mornings we were up for breakfast at the hotel at 5 AM and ready to leave at 5:30 to be at the birding site around dawn. When we started about 6:15, it was raining on and off, and that continued for most of the morning. The main quest of this walk was to find the Hooded Visorbearer, a hummingbird, which we did find. Of course, there were other sightings, and I added two other life birds here. This was for me the toughest hike of the tour. Going in was downhill at first and then fairly level, until we found the Visorbearer. However, it required crossing a two-part one-yard-wide planked bridge some 30 to 40 feet long over a rushing stream. Moreover, the planks were several inches apart. Because of the rain, everything was slippery including the planks on the bridge. One part had a handrail, but the other did not. I was carrying a walking stick, but I needed help getting over the unrailed portion, which Katinka, the ABA guide on the trip, was able to give me. In addition, since we returned the way we went, we had to cross this bridge twice. After crossing the bridge going out, we had to go up the same trail that we



RED-LEGGED SERIEMA SEEN IN CHAPADA DIAMANTINA NATIONAL PARK

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Birding in Brazil

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had come down so easily, but it was fairly steep and long going out, so I was pretty exhausted. I recovered quickly with some water and time in the van, while we traveled to our next site.

We birded another site later in the morning, and after lunch and some time off, a third site. For the day, I added 12 life birds, including Helmeted Manakin, Collared Crescentchest, Variable Oriole, Guira Tanager, and Pale-throated Pampa-Finch.

Our hotel was nice enough. Our dining area was open to an uncovered courtyard and steps that lead to the hotel exit. I was assigned what I would call a tiny room. The proprietor did bring me a bench, so I had a place to open up my luggage. Half of the bed was taken up by my carry on and camera bag. Perhaps I was lucky to be on the first floor. Some had to go up a narrow, metal, spiral staircase with their large bags, something I might not have been able to navigate as many times as I returned to my room for something.

On July 4, we birded several sites on the western edge of the national park. It was a good day as I added another eight life birds, including White-rumped Tanager, Blue Finch, Rufous-fronted Thornbird, Red-legged Seriema, and White-eared Puffbird.

On July 5, we were still at Chapada Diamantina, but it would be our last night here. We birded several sites further south and west of the park. I added ten life birds this day. The first lifer was the Diamantina Tapaculo, and I saw this one very well as it was singing. Some of the life birds seen were Scarlet-throated Tanager, Sao Francisco Sparrow, Gray Monjita, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Great Xenops, and Rusty-backed Antwren.

July 6 was another long day of travel to our last birding site. Traffic and the roads were so bad that we did not arrive until about 3 PM. Instead of checking into our lodging as planned, we went directly to some birding sites. This area is along the coast a couple hours north of Salvador, our departure city the next day. We had deep forest and open roads to explore. I was able to add eight life birds this day, including Yellow-backed Tanager, Red-headed Manakin, Planalto Woodcreeper, White-flanked Antwren, Sooretama Slaty-Antshrike, Golden-capped Parakeet, Orange-winged Amazon, and Golden-spangled Piculet.

Our lodging was at the Arua birding lodge, where we had dinner that evening and breakfast the next morning. We ate in an outdoor area, buffet style, where the meat dishes were prepared at an open barbecue pit. My room was just a short distance from the dining area. Some of our group stayed at a second lodge site, being shuttled back and forth in the vans.

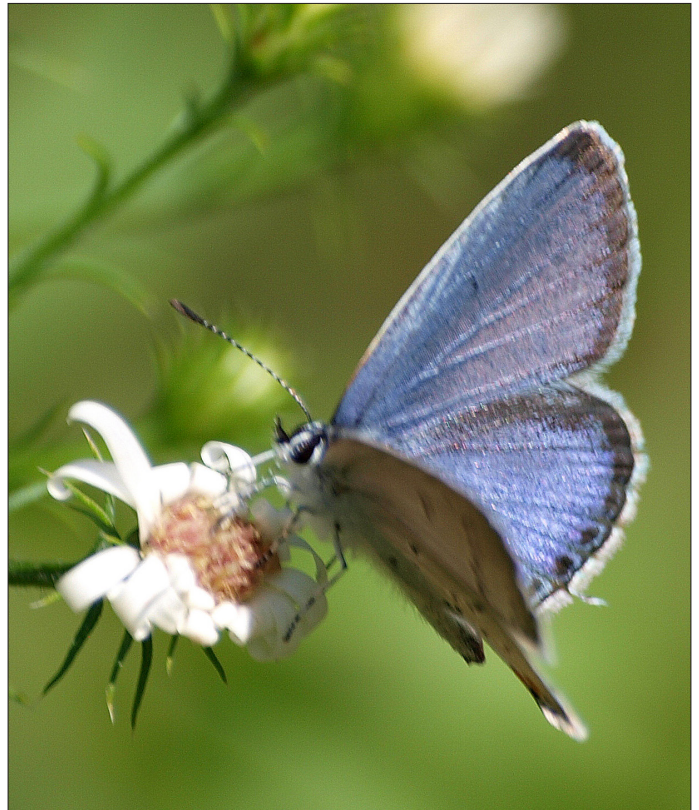
July 7 was our last day of birding. However, seven of us had our 6:20 PM flight from Salvador to Sao Paulo canceled and replaced by a flight at 3:20 PM. This meant that we would have to leave the lodge at 11 AM to get to the airport, miss one birding session, and have our lunch at the airport. The others all had evening flights to other destinations and would not leave for the airport until after lunch. We all had breakfast at 5:30 AM and were off birding at dawn. We covered some really dense habitat and the seven of us left the group and got back to the lodge by 10:00 to have time to pack our bags for our flights. I did record 13 species here of which five were life birds, including the spectacular Black-backed Aracari and Black-tailed Tityra. The other life birds were Grayish Mourner, Blue-backed Manakin, and Bahia Antwren.

Overall it was a great tour, and I added 102 birds to my life list. There would have been many more additions, except that I had been to Argentina and Brazil in 2005 and Southeast Brazil last year, where I recorded many of the birds that we saw again on this tour.

Observations

There are Other Winged Creatures to Observe – Butterflies

Story and photos by Tom Moeller



EASTERN TAILED-BLUE (BUFFALO CREEK SOUTH)

Whenever you are on a bird outing, with a group or alone, and things get slow, there are other winged creatures to observe – butterflies. These insects can be as colorful as warblers or as dull as dead leaves. They come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Plus, they have alter-egos in the form of caterpillars. Learning to identify these insects can add to your enjoyment of Nature.

Butterflies have four parts to their wings. Each side has a forewing and a hindwing. Many have one pattern on the upper sides of their wings and a different, paler pattern on their undersides. The body is comprised of the HEAD, with two compound eyes made up of thousands of lens to “see,” two rod-shaped antennae that end in antennal clubs, and a proboscis, which is actually two tubes that are usually coiled up but extended to drink nectar from flowers or minerals from wet soil. Then there is the THORAX to which the four wings and the six legs are attached; and the ABDOMEN with the heart, digestive system, and reproductive organs. The feet of the butterfly have chemoreceptors with which they smell and taste; a butterfly walks only with the middle and last pair of legs. Butterflies have a certain (stereotypical) posture whenever they sit. Some will land with their wings pressed tightly together above their bodies, some will spread them out flat, others will have them half open in a V shape, and some will spread their hindwings while holding their forewings up, looking like a jet plane! Like birds, butterflies have ranges where they occur. Some are throughout the country, some are only in the East or West, and others are rare and localized in their occurrence.

The Peregrine



PEARL CRESCENT (FRICK PARK)

Two easily identified small butterflies in our area are the Cabbage White and Clouded Sulphur. The Cabbage White has all white wings and a black body. The male has a black dot on its forewings, while the female has two black dots on her forewings. The Clouded Sulphur butterfly is all yellow with a pink edge on its wings. The male has a red circle on the underside of its hindwings and a darker spot on the underside of the forewings. The female has much lighter versions of these spots. These two butterflies seem to be in constant motion, hardly stopping to feed, but, whenever they do sit, they fold their wings tightly together. Another pair of common, small butterflies are the Spring or Summer Azure and the Eastern Tailed-blue. Their basic color is a light blue. Spring Azures fly in spring and summer, while the Summer Azure flies later in summer into the fall. The undersides are much lighter. The Tailed-blues do have tiny tails on their hindwings along with a distinctive pair of orange spots from which the tails extend.

A rather common, small butterfly is the Pearl Crescent. It holds its yellow-orange wings with thick, brown borders and Oriental-looking patterns out flat when sitting. Yet it also folds its wings up straight at times. It is very common in western PA; in fact, it occurs across most of the country.

A bigger butterfly is the Silver Spotted Skipper. It is a medium-sized, mostly brown butterfly. It gets its name from a large, white spot on the hindwings. There are also dull yellow spots on the forewings. Being skippers, they fold their wings in the jet-plane position.

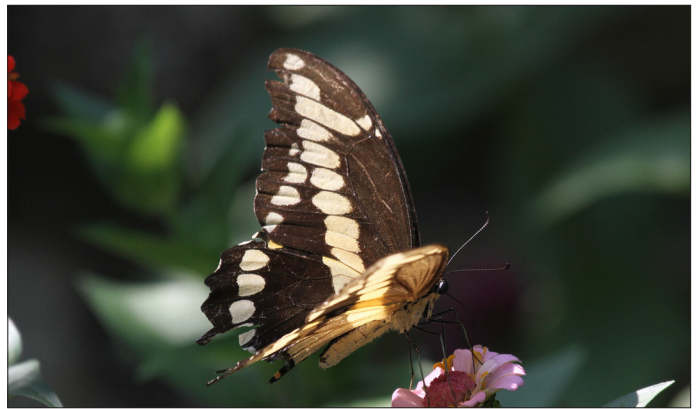
Certain butterflies startle or confuse predators with large eyespots on their wings. Common Buckeyes, light brown butterflies, have six large “eyeballs” that stare back at predators from the upper sides of their wings. Wood Nymphs, also brown butterflies, have two bright eyespots on each side of their forewings.

Monarchs are well-known, large butterflies with their distinct orange cells and black edges and veins. They may land and spread their wings, but also close and open them as they feed. Only the male has two dark areas in the veins near his abdomen. Their distinct coloration warns predators off, since they and their caterpillars contain toxins derived from their host plants, milkweeds. Only the western Black-headed Grosbeak is immune to these toxins – in small doses.

Swallowtails are the largest butterflies around here. All have a projection from the back of their hindwings, either pointed or round. The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail is familiar in gardens. Its name comes from the black tiger stripes on its mostly yellow wings. Some female Tiger Swallowtails are all black, confusing a new observer. A Black Swallowtail has blue spots on its hindwings, unlike the all-black female Tiger Swallowtails. Yet another black variety is the Spicebush Swallowtail with white spots on its fore- and hindwings.



CLOUDED SULPHUR (MALE)



GIANT SWALLOWTAIL (FRICK PARK)



COMMON BUCKEYE (PYMATUNING)

The biggest swallowtail I have seen is the Giant Swallowtail. It has a wingspan of five inches; Monarchs are only three-and-a-half inches across. I first saw one in Arizona, therefore thinking it was a western butterfly. I was surprised to find one two years later in Frick Park, which is a northeastern limit to its range. It has Pittsburgh colors - black with yellow highlights.

Butterflies are everywhere in the summer. Finding them is easy, while identification is best with a field guide or a photograph you can study later. Whether as a diversion while birding or as a butterfly hunt, pursuing these colorful insects can be rewarding.

The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

February – March 2026

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

The Great Lakes froze by February resulting in an influx of rare gulls and great numbers of waterfowl on the rivers.

A **Snow Goose** was spotted flying over Frick Park 3/12 (Bryon).

A **Northern Shoveler** was at North Park 2/14 (eBird), two were at Riverfront Park on the Southside 2/21 (JDz) and two were at the McKees Rocks Bridge 2/23 (JF). A single bird was on a small pond at Hazelwood Green 3/28-31 (TC, et al.). A great count of 10 **American Wigeon** were at North Park 2/25 (LF, JJ). A great count of 50 **Canvasback** were at the Emsworth Dam on the Ohio River 2/1 (GH). A great count of 92 were tallied at Duck Hollow 2/12 (FI) with 83 there 2/13 (m.ob.). These were the highest counts of Canvasbacks on the rivers for many years and may be record high counts. Up to 60 **Redheads** were also at the Emsworth Dam 2/1 (GH). A great count of 12 **White-winged Scoters** were at Brunots Island 2/1-8 (AF, m.ob.). One was at Emsworth Dam 2/3-9 (JC) and two were there 2/10-12 (m.ob.); one continued 2/13-20 (m.ob.). White-winged Scoters winter on Lake Ontario, so evidence of that lake freezing is manifested by their presence on local rivers. A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Dashields Dam 2/1-14 (m.ob.) and one was just upriver at Coraopolis 2/4 (MVV, EH). A great count of 82 **Common Goldeneye** were at the Natrona Dam on the Allegheny River 2/2 (DB), continuing high counts from the previous reporting period. **Common Mergansers** continued in great numbers on the rivers. A count of 97 were on the Ohio River at Brontos Island 2/1 (m.ob.).

A nice count of 14 **Horned Grebes** was made at Duck Hollow 2/22 (MKu). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Emsworth Dam 2/8-10 (EW, m.ob.).

Some **Killdeer** reported in February could have been overwintering birds or early retuning migrants. It's hard to tell sometimes. An early **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Wingfield Pines 3/28 (DNe).

Bonaparte's Gulls are rare here in winter. Twenty were at Brunots Island 2/4 (KC). One was at Harmar Twp. 3/29 (MF, et al.), seen by the TRBC Woodcock outing participants. A flock of 17 were at the Sharpsburg Marina 3/29 (JDz) and 7 were at the Highland Park Bridge 3/31 (m.ob.).

The gull invasion that started in January continued into February. An **Iceland Gull** continued at Duck Hollow up to 2/6 (m.ob.). An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** continued at The Point in Pittsburgh to 2/5 (AF) and one was at the McKees Rocks Boat Dock near Brontos Island 2/4 (AP). A third year bird was seen flying past the Sharpsburg Marina 3/8 (JDz). A **Great Black-backed Gull** continued from January at Duck Hollow to 2/11 (m.ob.). An adult was at the Braddock Boat Launch upriver a few miles from Duck Hollow 2/1 (EH), another adult was photographed at Aspinwall 2/3 (SGr) and at the McKees Rocks Boat Dock 2/3-4 (JF, LF, et al.). Two were at the Point in Pittsburgh 2/5 (AP) and one 2/8 (KSJ, CK). Three were at the Emsworth Dam 2/4 (eBird), two were there 2/6 (GH) and one 2/12 (DNe, RBu). It's hard to know for certain if these are the same birds moving up and down the rivers, or birds arriving or leaving the area. Most birds were adults.

An early **Great Egret** was at Imperial 3/29 (AF).

Black Vultures were reported from six locations in March. All were single birds with the exception of six at the Montour Trail at Piney Fork 3/4 (JF).

A **Red-throated Loon** was at Emsworth 2/8-10 (EW, m.ob.) and one was filmed on the Youghiogheny River at Dead Man's Hollow 2/24 (EY). Red-throated Loons are notable finds here, nearly annual

but still rare in the county.

An early **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Beechwood Farms 3/22 (SD).

An interesting **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was photographed at Frick Park 3/10 that had a red patch on the back of its head (Ben M). The question arose if it could be a Red-naped Sapsucker or a hybrid Yellow-bellied X Red-naped. The photos were inconclusive and the bird was never relocated. This species pair and hybrids can be nearly impossible to identify with certainty.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet is rare here in winter. One was photographed at a feeder in North Oakland 2/7 (eBird).

A **Marsh Wren** was a good find at Wingfield Pines 3/9 (TC). This bird probably overwintered at the site.

A flock of 19 **American Pipits** were found in Monongahela 3/17 (JF), one flew over Donaldson Park in Oakdale 3/21 (MF) and 11 were



FEBRUARY PINE SISKIN. PHOTO BY DAN MENDENHALL

at Imperial 3/22 (EW).

Two **Vesper Sparrows** were at Imperial 3/27 (AP) and one was there 3/29 (AF).

A nice count of **Purple Finches** were visiting a feeder in Indiana Twp. during the season. The high count was 13 on 2/2 (DYe).

Pine Siskins visited a feeder in Allison Park 2/3 (DM). Birds continued at this feeder through the month with a high of 21 on 2/8 (DM). One was in Hampton Twp. 2/14 (DN). The high count at the Allison Park feeder in March was 11 on 3/18 (DM). A large flock of 75 **American Goldfinch** were in Allison Park 2/15 (NB, JB).

The first **Louisiana Waterthrush** reports of the spring came 3/30 with single birds at Fall Run Park in Shaler Twp. (DM), Montour Woods in Moon Twp. (KE) and Tom's Run Preserve (KE). An extremely early **Yellow Warbler** was detected 3/7 on the North Side (DM). An early **Pine Warbler** was in Sewickley 3/15 (KS).

The male **Painted Bunting** in Squirrel Hill was seen daily and remained to 2/5 (m.ob.). It disappeared for a few weeks and was seen again 3/23-31 (eBird).

Observers: Bryon, Nathaniel Bowler, Jeffery Bowler, Dave Brooke, Ron Burkert (RBu), Craig Cawley, Jeff Cieslak, Thomas Connor, Sofia D, John Dzikiy (JDz), Kevin Evilsizor, Adrian Fenton, Leslie Ferree, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Sarah Grey (SGr), Eric Hall, Gene Henderson, Frank Izaguirre, Juli Jansen, Charity Kheshgi, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Ben M, Dan Mendenhall, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Dick Nugent, Amber Pertz, Kate St. John, Kathy Saunders, Mark VanderVen, Ezra White, Eric Yanyo, David Yeany II (DYe), many observers (m.ob.).