



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

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Frosty Forests, Frozen Fields: Winter Birrrding in Ontario

AN AVIAN GREETING – Wayne Laubscher will share stories about winter birds and birding in the frozen north at our August 2 meeting. Look at the end of his camera lens and you will see a Gray Jay welcoming him to Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario in February 2012. (photograph by Art Schiavo)

“Going north in the winter for birdwatching? Yes!” says Wayne Laubscher from Lycoming County, one of Pennsylvania’s expert birders. For seeing species, he says, “It’s quality more than quantity.” We will see excitingly what Wayne means at the Three Rivers Birding Club meeting on Wednesday, August 2.

The meeting will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue in Shadyside. Doors open at 6:30 PM for socializing, a business meeting begins at 7:30, and the program starts at 8:00.

Wayne’s program will highlight far-northern specialty birds that appear in Ontario and even the northeastern U.S. during certain winters. Irruptive species of raptors and finches, wintering northern species of waterfowl and gulls, and occasional western vagrants will be covered.

He will also discuss where and when to find them and reasons why they show up so far south of their usual range. The emphasis will be on southern and eastern Ontario and a few nearby areas in Quebec.

Wayne is the Clinton County compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* magazine and is a member of the Lycoming Audubon Society board as well as the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy Technical Committee. He is a native of the Lock Haven area in Clinton County, residing in Swissdale. Recently he served as a “bio aide” for the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

He is currently employed as a quality assurance technician for First Quality Water & Beverage in Lock Haven, and he bands owls and hummingbirds in his spare time.

3RBC Members Enjoyed Magic of Magee in May

By Sue Solomon

The 2017 Magee Marsh migration was an interesting spring. April’s warm days caused early leaf growth which frustrated the numerous photographers and hid the Ovenbirds and thrushes. Cold north winds kept many migrants south of Lake Erie. In early May we saw 10 warbler species but few individuals. More people than birds was the theme.

The south winds eventually arrived, and the birds came in great numbers. On May 18, I counted 13 warbler species in 20 minutes while standing near the tower behind six cheerful photographers. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo landed, and then called. Next, a Common Nighthawk soared overhead. Of the warblers, the singing Mourning was a favorite. These moments are the magic of Magee.

Some complain of the crowds and bird jams, but I love seeing all the birders young and old getting excited over a Prothonotary exploring a nest hole and the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher sitting on her nest 10 feet away. We hope the birders will help bird conservation

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OUT FOR A STROLL – A few 3RBC birders had a rare out-in-the-open view of a King Rail at Magee Marsh in May 2017. This one ventured out from behind roadside vegetation on the causeway across the marsh. (photograph by Rick Nirschl)

See *The Peregrine* in beautiful color at 3rbc.org

President's Message

"Pouring" Over the Shelves for Birds

By Bob VanNewkirk

Recently my wife and I spent some time with our young grandkids, Henry and George, and their parents in Vienna, Virginia. One morning, after spending serious playtime with the kiddies, Mary Ann and I hopped in our car to do something entertaining on our own.

Of course, when I have free time, my thoughts turn to bird watching. That's what I wanted to do, and Mary Ann wanted to do some shopping. We both got what we wanted when we entered a habitat called Total Wine and More. This is a supermarket-sized store in McLean that sells wine, beer, cheese, other snacks, and just about every accessory you can name to help you enjoy your beverage. Birding in a wine store? Yep!

During past visits to this megastore, I began to take more notice of wine labels featuring birds. I thought to myself, what's the relationship between a flavor of wine and a certain bird? How does the label entice and enhance a possible purchase? What role does symbolism play in the psyche of the consumer? So while Mary Ann shopped, I roamed the aisles with pen and paper with the intention of surveying only the domestic labels featuring birds.

It should not have been a surprise for me to discover that of the six wineries that featured bird labels, all of them were on the Pacific Coast. This premier area is the major wine-producing region in the United States due to its warm, stable weather, sustainable agricultural farm land, and a long growing season. Here are the results of my 30-minute BWS (Bob's Wine Survey).

Smoking Loon (Syrah)—San Sebastian Winery, California:

A 2014 bottle of Syrah features a bright red background with a yellow body of lines and curves and swirly ovals forming the shape of a loon swimming upon wavy lines. On closer inspection, the loon is smoking a cigar. This quirky label seems to suggest that a good wine does not have to be expensive or pretentious to be enjoyed. Watching Common Loons swim, they appear to me to be confident and project a sense that their lives are under control. Maybe the artist was trying to convey that the consumer doesn't have to take life so seriously. It's okay to be a little loony now and then and enjoy living in the moment with a glass of red wine.

The Pundit (Syrah)—Ste. Michelle Wine Estates,

Washington: This label design seems to leap right off the shelf and demand your attention. A pundit is a master, an authority. Representing the pundit on a black-colored bottle is the white face of an owl seemingly staring at you with its intense green eyes and a dagger-like beak. The label is really mesmerizing and seems to challenge the consumer with the suggestion that The Pundit will change how you perceive and taste a Syrah like no other competitor can. I would buy this wine just for the bottle alone. Perhaps on my next visit.

Kestrel (Cabernet Sauvignon)—Kestrel Vintners,

Washington: A kestrel depends on speed, accuracy, and patience when hunting, sometimes hovering over its possible target. At the right moment, it makes a quick, steep plunge on its prey. The black line drawing of a Kestrel on the 2013 bottle depicts a perched Kestrel on a mound, possibly scanning for prey. Perhaps the suggestion to the consumer is to recognize the opportunity to enjoy the good life with a glass of vino. The designer also added a nice touch to the capital K. This letter boldly stands out and is larger

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than the lower-case letters. A feather is used in place of the slanted lower line of the letter K.

Crow Canyon (Cabernet Sauvignon)—Crow Canyon Vineyards, California: As the label suggests, a crow is featured. A large dark bird is depicted as if it's looking back over its shoulder at the winery's name, region, vintage, and varietal. The crow symbolizes its intelligence, its curiosity, a sign of luck, and being a trickster. This wine is priced much cheaper than the others. Perhaps the wine's cost, and hopefully its taste, will provide the buyer with a feeling of satisfaction that a bargain was made, and the wine will be enjoyed when the time comes to taste it.

Decoy (Merlot)—Duckhorn Vineyards, California: A beautiful, realistic Northern Pintail wood carving rests above the 2014 varietal's namesake on this eye-pleasing label. The male pintail is such an elegant bird and the woodcarver, whose scripted name appears beside the bird, has captured this quality. I associate late winter and early spring birdwatching with waterfowl migration. I have been fooled several times by hunters' decoys while searching for ducks on the bay at Presque Isle and Pymatuning Lake. The decoy that graces this wine bottle is very eye-appealing and insinuates the quality of this wine and the care that went into producing it.

Rex-Goliath (Merlot)—HRM Rex-Goliath Winery, California: In the late 1900s, a Texas circus boasted that it had the

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Outings to Come

Early Fall Will Feature Our Annual 3RBC Picnic

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

Friday, September 1 – Sewickley Heights Park: In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) will lead this bird walk. Meet at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. For directions to the park, see the 3RBC website (<http://www.3rbc.org>). Be prepared for muddy trails. It is also advisable to bring water and a lunch. Besides birding in the park, we will drive and make stops along Little Sewickley Creek.

Sunday, September 3 – Harrison Hills Park: Meet leader Jim Valimont (412-828-5338) at 8:00 AM at this 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. This is not down as far as the soccer field. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants.

Friday, September 8 – Sewickley Heights Park: In collaboration with the Fern Hollow Nature Center, Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; email van126@comcast.net) will lead this bird walk beginning at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the September 1 listing for directions.

Sunday, September 17 – Presque Isle State Park: Join

Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; email van126@comcast.net) at one of the state's prime locations for seeing fall migrants. Meet at 8:30 AM in the first parking lot (Vista 1) on the right as you enter the park. The park is at the north end of Route 832 just west of the city of Erie. Bring a lunch.

Sunday, October 8 – Frick Park: Jack and Sue Solomon (412) 521-3365 will lead this walk starting at 8:00 AM at the newly rebuilt Frick Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Boulevard in Squirrel Hill. Frick can be an excellent migrant trap and, as usual, we're hoping for lots of fall warblers.

Sunday, October 8 – Pymatuning Area: Meet leader Bob VanNewkirk (412-366-1694; email van126@comcast.net) at 8:00 AM at the former site of the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center (Waterfowl Museum), 12590 Hartstown Road in Linesville (41.635779, -80.436634) for this all-day outing. Plenty of waterfowl, lots of Bald Eagles, and migrant songbirds should be around. Arrangements will be made to have lunch at the Spillway Inn for those who are interested.

Sunday, October 22 – Moraine State Park – Picnic: Mark your calendar for the annual 3RBC picnic and bird walk. We will meet at 8:30 AM in the Moraine State Park Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right.

After the morning outing, we will have the pot-luck lunch at a pavilion near McDanel's boat launch. Please bring a dish that will serve 4-6 people to share. Directions to the Day Use Area: From I-79, take Route 422 East toward Butler and exit at the Moraine State Park exit. At the end of the ramp, turn left and go straight into the park until you see the first major parking area on your right. Allow one hour driving from Pittsburgh.

President's Message

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world's largest rooster – a 47-pound bird dubbed HRM (His Royal Majesty) Rex Goliath. The winery pays tribute to this behemoth chicken with its larger-than-life drawing on its free-range fruity red vintage. The label replicates the artwork from the circus's banner. Rex has a red comb, a white head and neck, a black body, and very showy tail feathers. His bare toenails look more like small talons. He wears a red, white, and blue scarf adorned with a chain necklace bearing various symbols. The wine costs under \$10. So, if you feel capricious and whimsical, this might be the right wine for just that kind of occasion.

What did I learn from my survey? Probably what I expected all along. My wife and I choose wine because we are familiar with the brands. The price is right for the varietals we enjoy, and labels play no role in our selection. However, the birder in me is always on the "look" for those beautiful winged creatures no matter where I should find them or in what form.

Birds throughout the ages in every culture have always taken on various symbolic meanings such as freedom, joy, fearlessness, power, beauty, discovery, and playfulness to name but a few. Why wouldn't those same qualities be represented in a product like wine that is enjoyed throughout the world?

There is a postscript to this article. As I was conducting my survey, an employee asked me if he could be of service. He must have seen me walking up an aisle and taking notes. When I explained to him the purpose of my shopping, he just smiled. He told me that I should come back to the store to inventory the craft beer cans and bottles that also displayed birds.



Outings Revisited

Our Spring Events Attracted 220+ Birders

Woodcock Walk – March 22: Six people showed up, including five first-timers. After checking out the marsh, and seeing the Belted Kingfisher, we drove to see the heron rookery. As I explained what to look for, the Great Blues were already very active. Birds were flying in, and it seemed that some were chasing each other around. Once we focused in, we could see quite a few on nests. In the river and on the shore were Canada Geese, and we spotted a small raft of Buffleheads.

Next we headed to the woodcock field, hearing robins, cardinals, and Song Sparrows. Once we settled in at the field, it took roughly 15 minutes before we heard our first woodcock “peet,” and the birds started their aerial displaying. It was cold, so we agreed that about 10 minutes of the flights were enough. We called it a night. Five of the participants had life birds. **–by leader Tommy Byrnes**

Woodcock Walk – March 29: When we began, our seven participants saw the usual suspects as in the previous week. The kingfisher wasn't around, but we did have a female American Kestrel. We then carpooled to see the rookery. It wasn't as active as the week before. Birds were on the nest, but very few were flying around.

Arriving at the field, as we got out of the cars, Spring Peepers were very vocal over the hill. Once we were in position for viewing the woodcocks, we scanned the sky for the crescent moon, and just to the right below it above the horizon was Mercury, and to the right above it was Mars. Soon the space station flew over. Because of a few wispy clouds, we had some pretty good views.

As for woodcocks, as in the previous week, it didn't take them long to start “peeting,” and soon the display flights started. We stayed longer than the week before, because it was much warmer, and we enjoyed the night sky. This week three participants had their woodcock life birds. **–by leader Tommy Byrnes**

Yellow Creek State Park –April 1: Eleven birders gathered at the park office, and we were later joined by two IUP grad students. The area around the park office was pretty quiet. We listed only Red-bellied Woodpecker and Golden-crowned Kinglet and heard a distant Pileated Woodpecker.

After we made the usual introductions, we headed to the maintenance building where our first stop was at Dragonfly Pond, which harbored 12 Ring-necked Ducks and 4 Buffleheads. The Canada Goose that had been on its nest on the island for several weeks was still incubating and her mate was nearby. A Belted Kingfisher was a nice addition here.

We walked across the road for a view of the lake – boats! A fishing tournament seemed to be in progress. Our large flocks of ducks had dispersed, but we managed to see 2 Gadwalls, 4 Redheads, 2 Lesser Scaup, another Bufflehead, 32 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 97 Ruddy Ducks. Roger Higbee counted 66 Tree Swallows in a willow near the shallow end of the lake. Two Horned Grebes were diving in the middle of the Ruddies, and 7 American Crows were cawing loudly from the woods.

Because of the numerous boats in the launch parking lot, we pulled off along Route 259, where we counted only 8 Canada Geese, a Mallard, and 22 American Coots.

Our next destination was just around the corner in the main

recreation area. We were hoping to hear a Pine Warbler, and we were fortunate to hear two and spot one. Everyone had excellent views of this brightly plumaged bird. Here, too, were Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal – all singletons. We also listed 2 Eastern Phoebe, 2 Eastern Bluebirds, and 6 American Robins.

Our next destination was the beach, where 2 Bonaparte's and 2 Ring-billed Gulls rested on the sand. Amid the numerous Tree Swallows skimming over the water was a Barn Swallow.

Continuing to the Observatory Trail, we lucked out with passerines, adding 3 more chickadees, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, and 2 Brown Creepers. A Red-bellied Woodpecker called, and a junco flushed ahead of us. From the observatory we noted 8 additional Buffleheads, a Common Loon in basic plumage, and 6 more Horned Grebes. Having tallied 40 species, we headed to the Chinese buffet in Indiana, where 12 of us enjoyed a delicious lunch and good conversation. **–by leader Margaret Higbee**

Woodcock Walk – April 12: Six people showed up. At the marsh, the Belted Kingfisher was back, and there was a pair of white domestic ducks, larger than the Mallards they were swimming with. We moved on to the rookery, where the herons were more active than on the last outing. Many Double-crested Cormorants were flying around, and in the river was a small raft of Buffleheads. Later, a half-dozen Northern Shovelers flew in.

Once again, as we headed into the field, Spring Peepers were very vocal over the hill. Along with the cardinals, robins and sparrows, a towhee was singing. We also were hearing the woodcocks “peeting” as we walked to the main spot. As the display flying started, it didn't seem as if there were as many birds as last time. We were wondering, once the males mate, do they quit displaying? Out of this group, two people got life birds. **–by leader Tommy Byrnes**

Raccoon Creek State Park – April 22: Dawn rose cloudy with a slight chance of rain, with temps in the mid-40s. Yes, it was time for another Brooks Bird Club–Three Rivers Birding Club outing, and the weather was typical. We had 15 participants, some of whom stayed only for a while. Early on, the woods below Picnic Area West held a Wood Thrush, two Ovenbirds, a Hooded Warbler, and Yellow-rumps. Raptors seen or heard in that area included Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, and Cooper's Hawks. A pair of Common Ravens both called and then circled over us.

The trip to the beach area added Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, Brown Creeper, and three species of common swallows. The Osprey and eagle were not to be found, unfortunately. We picked up Yellow Warblers, a female Ruddy Duck, and Wood Ducks at the beach and in the backwaters. A number of wildflowers were identified in the gully behind the beach parking lot.

At this point, since the park road was closed after the beach, we all headed back to the Ranger's Station to see what we could pick up there. Only one Yellow-throated Warbler was heard briefly. A kingfisher ranged back and forth over the creek, and White-throated Sparrows sang. As temps headed towards 50 F, we had a small picnic lunch with the 10-11 people who remained. A good time was had by all! **–by leader Ryan Tomazin**

Sewickley Heights Park –April 28: It was a beautiful day for a walk led by Bob VanNewkirk, and 14 people were eager to explore the trails. Not only humans were enjoying the early spring sunshine. Carolina Wren, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray

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Outings Revisited

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Catbird, Hooded Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch all seemed to be singing at the same time, and it was sometimes a bit difficult to separate their songs. After a long, mostly silent winter, this is a problem we all look forward to!

Eastern Bluebirds were nesting in a box next to the parking lot, and the male was proclaiming this fact from the top of a large tree. The calls of Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, and chickadee followed us as we started down the Pipeline Trail. Which chickadee? Black-capped used to be the dominant species here, but Carolina Chickadees have been moving north in recent years and interbreeding with their northern counterparts. The park now lies firmly in a hybridization zone, so most park birds should be simply recorded as chickadee species.

In addition to Hooded Warbler, we soon heard a Black-throated Green and several Yellow-rumped Warblers sounding off, as well as a Blue-headed Vireo and a couple of Downy Woodpeckers. Through an opening in the trees, we spied a Great Blue Heron flying past. The first Scarlet Tanager of spring is always a treat, and all eyes scanned the leaves eagerly when we heard his burry song. This birder was startled when she caught a glimpse of the white eyebrow and head of a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak while searching for the tanager! Both birds eventually came into the open for great looks. A Red-eyed Vireo was another first-of-year bird for most people. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers had been there for a couple of weeks and kept us amused as they bounced from branch to branch.

Honeybees were swarming on a tree close to the trail, and most people tried to keep their distance as we went past their tree. Several photographers in the group, however, edged closer. We are happy to report that no bees were harmed during this filming!

A Hairy Woodpecker and a White-breasted Nuthatch were noted as we headed up the hill toward the horse farm. Long-horned

steers now graze in one of the pastures, and we examined the small herd as we paused to catch our breath. The bubbly song of a Carolina Wren beckoned us on, and some people caught a glimpse of the tiny bird. Two mimic species, a Northern Mockingbird and a Brown Thrasher, put on competing performances. Our first Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, and Broad-winged Hawk appeared in the sky. A very bland warbler appeared, and Bob pointed out that its plainness was a clue to its identity – Tennessee! There were not many butterflies about, but we were pleased to see a Spicebush Swallowtail, several Spring Azures, and Cabbage White.

Almost four hours had passed since we started, and back at the parking lot, several people said their goodbyes. Six of us went on to Walker Park, with the goal of finding a Louisiana Waterthrush (LOWA). This past spring, Adehl Schwaderer, an intern at Sewickley Heights Borough Park and a senior at Robert Morris University, devoted her thesis to a study of this warbler in the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed. Several members of 3RBC had shared their personal records of LOWAs with Adehl and accompanied her on walks of the watershed. By the end of April, she had found 11 male LOWAs that were establishing territories, including one at Walker Park. Adehl's study, which is ongoing, will add to our understanding of this rather plain and often overlooked warbler, and we wish her well in her future endeavors! On this day, we could hear a singing male, and a walk along the Little Sewickley Creek finally produced a good look at him.

We were also delighted to get our first look at a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak and an American Redstart. Cerulean Warbler had eluded us at Sewickley Heights Park, but we counted four of them at Walker Park. An American Robin was taking a bath in the creek, and two others were busily constructing nests. While enjoying a picnic lunch, we were serenaded by Carolina Wren, Eastern Towhee, Chipping and Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Baltimore Oriole, and American Goldfinch. Pileated Woodpecker

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BREAKFAST – This Red-tailed Hawk gave participants in the April 29 outing at Frick Park a good look at its morning meal. The morsel is so tiny that it's hard to see, but the hawk is pulling apart its prey in the image above. (photographs by Henggang Cui)

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Outings Revisited

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and Eastern Phoebe were added to our list.

At the Quaker Village Shopping Center, we spotted an adult Bald Eagle soaring overhead as soon as we got out of our cars. Counting this as a good omen, we entered Morrow Pontefract Park to hear our first Yellow-throated Warbler and the first of several Yellow Warblers. A Northern Flicker was focused on excavating a hole, while Gray Catbirds mewed in the shrubbery.

At the Edgeworth Dump, we were soon looking at our second honeybee swarm of the day. Several Northern Rough-winged Swallow zipped past us, and we picked up a few shorebirds: Killdeer, a Spotted Sandpiper, and a Solitary Sandpiper. Only five Double-crested Cormorants were observed on the river.

Three of us stopped at Sneed's on the way home, where we found a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on a newly-made nest. A Mallard was the only new bird added there. We were a tired but happy group at the end of the day after we had tallied 61 species. **—by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Frick Park – April 29: It was a misty April morning when 25 birders gathered at the environmental center for this outing led by Jack and Sue Solomon. It didn't take long for our first sighting: In the meadow a Red-tailed Hawk flew right past us carrying its breakfast: a delicious chipmunk. The group had great (slightly grotesque) views of the hawk feasting on its prey.

Farther down the hill we got our first look at a vireo and some warblers. They weren't singing much in the drizzle, but there were several good ones: Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Frick Park is always a good place to find warblers this time of year.

As we continued down the hill, walking right on the path was a Hermit Thrush! It posed for us a bit, and we took some photos. For many of us it was a life bird – they are easy to hear but surprisingly hard to see.

When we made it to the bottom of the hill for the big loop, the clouds parted, and finally we got some sun. We marveled at a Yellow-rumped Warbler, and we noticed that several Carolina Chickadees were making a fuss because an Eastern Screech-Owl was hanging out just yards from the trail. We had great looks at the owl before heading back up the hill.

Throughout our hike, Jack pointed out various blooming wildflowers: trilliums, Jack-in-the-pulpits, and Solomon's Seals. We also learned about various trees along the way, including the Plane and the Black Cherry.

When we finished climbing to the top the hill, our legs were tired but we were delighted at all the wonderful sights and sounds of the day. We had a total of 29 species. It was a great outing in a great place with great people. **—by participant Mike Hamberg**

Schenley Park – April 30: This morning there were 36 of us ready to go birding in the park at 8:00 AM. We searched for birds in the Bartlett area and part of Lower and Falloon Trails, then walked the golf course edge for a view of the treetops along Serpentine Road.

The birds were quiet at first but became more active when the sun broke through the clouds. Best birds of the day were Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, the first-of-year Ovenbird, and a Green Heron at the lake. I wish we'd seen the Blue-winged Warbler (heard singing), but we did see a Peregrine Falcon flying around the Cathedral of Learning. **—by leader Kate St. John**

Riding Meadow – April 30: On a beautiful spring morning nine participants gathered at this park in Fox Chapel. We birded the lower fields at Shadyside Academy and then crossed the road into the park.

Species heard and/or seen included Canada Goose, Mallard, Wild Turkey, Chimney Swift, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, vireo (Blue-headed?), American Crow, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Black-and-white Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Wood Thrush, and American Robin.

Though the dearth of warblers was disappointing, it was a fine day to be birding! **—by leader Cecelia Hard**

Linbrook Park and Woodlands – May 3: The weather was more November-ish than spring-like for the 12 participants who attended the morning bird walk beginning in the park. Although the overcast sky and intermittent showers tended to quiet the birds, the birders were in good spirits as we headed for the Wildflower Trail that runs parallel to Big Sewickley Creek.

The Eastern Phoebes that nest under the bridge were noticeably absent. Only some scattered robins, doves, and towhees were first observed. Since the birding was slow at first, our attention was diverted to admire blooming trillium, violets, phlox, golden ragwort, and wild geraniums.

As we wended our way to a grassy field, the sun popped out and the birds suddenly seemed to appear. Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a few Barn Swallows swooped overhead. A Northern Mockingbird sang from a light post by the road. A Louisiana Waterthrush was briefly heard calling. Others noted were American Goldfinches, Red-winged Blackbirds, a Carolina Wren, a Blue Jay, and Song Sparrows. A Solitary Sandpiper surprisingly flew near us to forage in the field. A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers provided good looks while flitting about the limbs of a small tree. We noticed single Great Blue Herons flying in the distance. Perhaps these herons were part of the nearby rookery.

As we headed back to the parking lot, the call of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo grabbed our attention coming from the hillside across the road. Chipping Sparrows, a Northern Flicker, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Scarlet Tanager also vocalized.

We then drove to the top of the park to access an unnamed and unmarked trail. Along the way, a Blue-headed Vireo was heard. The dirt trail begins near the Whispering Pines pavilion, and as we walked toward there, an Ovenbird's call rang out. The trail heads downhill, crosses a small stream, and at the top of the ravine leads to an open field and an area that was once timbered. This section is known as the Linbrook Woodlands. As we ambled along this dirt road, the bird action picked up. We were thrilled to discover a Baltimore Oriole, a White-eyed Vireo, a pair of Indigo Buntings and Scarlet Tanagers, flyovers from some Turkey Vultures, three Red-tailed Hawks, and a Pileated Woodpecker. Hooded Warblers were frequently heard but never sighted.

Forty-two species were tallied on our four-hour walk through the Linbrook Park and Woodlands Conservation Area in Franklin Park Borough. With numerous athletic fields, a wildflower trail, a disc-golf course and hiking trails, this is a great community park. It has lots of good habitat that with more trail development over time will attract more birds and birders. **—by leader Bob VanNewkirk**

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A GOOD BIRDING WEEKEND – Todd Hooe’s May 6-7 outings at Barking Slopes in northeastern Allegheny County produced good lists of birds – as is normal, some were seen, others only heard. Todd photographed his Sunday group exploring the foliage hoping to add another species to the list.

Outings Revisited

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Barking Slopes – May 6 and 7: A total of 15 birders participated in 3RBC’s second year of outings to Allegheny Land Trust’s Barking Slopes. Five joined the Saturday outing, which began just as rain from a slow-moving cold front came to a temporary halt.

After hiking up the steep slope from the parking lot, we were treated to the sights and sounds of Yellow Warblers, Field Sparrows, and Orchard Orioles, as a Brown Thrasher foraged along the trail in front of us. A Yellow-breasted Chat called from the thicket but did not grace us with an appearance, as was the case with a second chat heard farther down the slope.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, and a Black-and-white Warbler sang as we headed into the wooded portion of the property. As we walked along the muddy trail that wound through some young forest to Black’s Run, the rain returned. This mattered little to the group since we were treated to our first large wave of migrants, which included a Yellow-throated Vireo, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Yellow-rumped, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warblers. The highlight was an unusually cooperative Ovenbird.

Along Black’s Run were Scarlet Tanagers, more Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Swainson’s Thrush, and a Louisiana Waterthrush. We exited the forest and headed up to the ridge trail where we had our second large wave of warblers, including Blackburnian, Tennessee, and very good looks at a Black-throated Blue Warbler. Overall, the group tallied 66 species, including 16 warbler species.

We estimated that as many as 50 Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen and heard during the outing, but surprisingly no raptors.

Ten birders joined the Sunday outing with partly cloudy skies, strong northwest winds, and cool temperatures. The steady rain overnight made for difficult hiking conditions, but some good birds along the way more than made up for it.

We had very good looks at a female Orchard Oriole in the meadow. Two Yellow-breasted Chats called from the thickets and bushes below us, but never revealed themselves to the group. A House Wren, Yellow Warbler, and Baltimore Orioles sang nearby

as we descended the rocky access road toward the ridge trail.

Along the ridge overlooking the Allegheny, we heard our second singing Black-and-white Warbler as we came across the largest wave of warblers of the day, which included Blackburnian, Tennessee, Nashville, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and many Yellow-rumped.

We paused at the scenic overlook, where we were treated to an Osprey flying down the Allegheny. Then, we heard an alternate song of the Northern Parula, and soon found the singing male perched nearby in a small tree. The group enjoyed outstanding views of this beautiful bird for at least five minutes, before we headed down a trail to Black’s Run.

Along Black’s Run, we had a singing Northern Waterthrush, a singing Swainson’s Thrush, and a Yellow-throated Vireo. White-throated Sparrow, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Tennessee Warbler were among our birds as we headed out of the forest toward the parking area. In four and a half hours, we had 59 species including 13 warbler species. **–by leader Todd Hooe**

Sewickley Heights Park – May 12: A dozen birders met on a dreary morning for a joint outing of Fern Hollow Nature Center and 3RBC. Migrating warblers and returning resident birds are the focus of these spring hikes. What an exciting time of year for birders!

Eastern Bluebirds were spotted busily making trips back and forth to nest boxes near the parking area. Throughout the day we saw many birds in the process of nest building: a Red-eyed Vireo weaving the first strands in a thin forked branch, a Baltimore Oriole busily doing the same at Pontefrac Park, and many other species carrying nesting materials.

The light was poor, making even the intense blue of the Indigo Buntings appear as a dark silhouette. It was a good day to practice “birding by ear,” and we quickly added Yellow-throated Vireo, Carolina Wren, Hooded Warbler, and Eastern Towhee.

The trail was muddy on the way to the horse pastures. We were rewarded for our sloppy slog uphill with an Eastern Meadowlark and a Northern Mockingbird. Turning into the woods we looked unsuccessfully for a persistently calling Hooded Warbler. Farther along the trail we spotted a Yellow-rumped Warbler and heard a Black-throated Green Warbler and an Ovenbird.

The woods were fairly quiet, so we headed down the park road. Our luck improved at the gate where the trail meets the road. Within a few minutes we had one each of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue and Magnolia warblers.

“Heard only” birds were added at Walker Park: Cerulean Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Acadian Flycatcher. Chimney Swifts swirled overhead, and a couple of active American Redstarts entertained the group.

Highlights at Pontefrac Park included good looks at a Yellow-throated Warbler, many Cedar Waxwings, and a lone Ruby-throated Hummingbird that buzzed by to perch in the top of a tall Sycamore tree.

On the way to the Edgeworth Dump we added Warbling Vireo and House Finch to the day’s list. The only additions at the Ohio River were a few Double-crested Cormorants and two very distant unidentified gulls. A first-year male Orchard Oriole flew into a small bare tree while we hiked back through the dump. It was a good opportunity to study this often challenging bird to identify.

We ended the day with a total of 63 species including 12 warbler species. **–by leader Sheree Daugherty**

Spring outing reports will continue in the next issue.

The Peregrine

Observations

Eastern Screech-Owls Come in Three Color Morphs

By Tom Moeller

After I published a photo of a gray morph Eastern Screech-Owl that I took in Schenley Park, my birder cousin wondered about gray and rufous (red) morph screech-owls. He had not seen many gray owls and asked if there were many in Pittsburgh. (He lives in Virginia.) I know I have seen both morphs in our area, but it was a good question to research. Turns out there are actually three morphs of Eastern Screech-Owls – gray, rufous, and a rare brown or intermediate morph.

Screech-owls are polymorphic regardless of sex or age. The gray morph dominates in colder, northern regions of the owl's range, while the red morph increases proportionally in more southern regions. The morphs are not subspecies; all can be found within the same breeding areas, and more than one morph can occur in the same brood of owlets. The rufous morph is an example of normal erythrism, the intensification of red pigments. Abnormal erythrism can be found in birds with red carotenoids in their plumage, such as Ruffed Grouse, Bobwhites, and Purple Finches, which results in odd-looking reddish birds. The "brown" color of intermediate morph birds is a mixture of the rufous and gray pigments of the other two morphs. The Florida subspecies of screech-owls (*Megascops asio floridanus*), however, is not said to be polymorphic.

Gray morphs comprise around 80% of the population of screech-owls in their Canadian range, while they are only 25% to 50% of the birds in the South. They are better suited to the drier, colder areas in the northern and western parts of their range. Rufous morph owls inhabit more humid, warmer areas, predominating in the middle of their range. However, their number is reduced near the Gulf Coast, where brown morph owls replace a portion of their population. A majority of the red morph owls are female. Brown (intermediate) morph owls may be 2% to 8% of a population depending on the location. They are commonly found

in the northern parts of the owl's range or in Florida and along the Gulf Coast.

The metabolisms of the gray and red morphs are different, too. The gray morph birds tolerate cold better than the red morph birds, with many rufous morphs being killed by severe winter weather. The "grays" have a lower metabolic rate than the "reds." Rufous morphs need more oxygen at temperatures below 20° F. Gray morphs need less prey than the red morphs, so a hard winter with fewer rodents to feed on is more survivable to a "gray." The "reds" pick their winter territories for the higher number of mice available in order to survive. They also spend more time in roosting cavities than gray morphs during winter. Also, as a cold weather difference, gray morph screech-owls have denser feathering on their legs than red morphs.

This is not to say screech-owls dine exclusively on rodents. Actually, they are opportunistic hunters taking rodents, small birds especially fledglings, bats, insects, fish right out of the water (!), snakes, lizards, and even carrion. Their early nesting periods coincide with spring migration, to take advantage of the influx of tired migrants as prey. Is that why there are always screech-owls at Magee Marsh in Ohio? Of course, screech-owls are prey for the larger owls, particularly Great Horned Owls.

Gray morph screech-owls are common in the Pittsburgh area, being found in both Frick and Schenley Parks. I have found a red morph owl at Independence Marsh. I have seen and photographed a pair of owls, one gray, one red, roosting together at Magee Marsh. The one screech-owl caught at the Sewickley Park Owlnet in December 2013 was actually a brown morph!

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DIVERSE TRIO – Tom Moeller illustrates the three color morphs of the Eastern Screech Owl he describes in this issue's installment of "Observations": a rare brown morph at left, a rufous morph at center, and a gray morph at right.

The Peregrine



Look at Two Subspecies: A Difference Worth Reporting

These are both White-crowned Sparrows, photographed by Mike Fialkovich together within a small group of migrants in May 2017 at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio.

Something significant differs between these two birds. Ignore the difference in the crowns of the head—slightly crested in one, and smoothly rounded in the other. These merely indicate the crested bird's relative alertness and the other bird's relatively relaxed "mood."

The important difference is in the facial plumage—the area between eye and bill. Notice that the bird at left is blackish between the eye and the bill. This area of the face is called the "lores," and the dark-lored bird at left is the White-crowned subspecies *leucophrys* that breeds in the eastern Canadian tundra

and is the subspecies we normally see in Pennsylvania during spring and fall migration.

Now look at the area between the eye and bill of the bird at right. It is pale, with no dark area. This is the widespread *gambelii* subspecies which breeds from Alaska to Hudson Bay and migrates only through the central and western U.S.

These pale-lored individuals show up once in a while in Pennsylvania, east of their normal migratory range. They are worth reporting to eBird, to your county compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds*, and to birding friends who may be able to pass along your observation to the appropriate authorities.

It pays to look closely between the eye and the bill of every White-crowned Sparrow.

Observations

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Raptor Ride Thrills Cyclists

The Steel Valley Trail Council's "Raptors Row Ride" on April 29 was an exciting success. Mary Ann Thomas, Tribune-Review staff writer, reported that participants saw Bald Eagle, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel nests.

"More than 50 cyclists pedaled the 18-mile route with stops at raptor nests where volunteers were stationed with spotting scopes and telescopic cameras offering up-close views, Mary Ann wrote. A captive Great Horned Owl was stationed along the trail, maintained by the Humane Animal Wildlife Rescue Center."

Highlights also included the new eaglet at the Hays Bald Eagle nest and confirmation of nesting by American Kestrels in McKeesport.

Roy Bires, event organizer and a Three Rivers Birding Club member, said, "The ride was very successful and seemed to be enjoyed by all. We could not have done so without the help of the 3RBC." Volunteers included members of the birding club, the National Aviary, and the wildlife rescue center.

The route followed the Monongahela River, traversing the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and the Steel Valley Trail from Pittsburgh's Hays neighborhood to McKeesport. For a guide to finding the Homestead area nests, see steelvalleytrail.org.

PSO Annual Meeting Will Feature Ted Floyd

For a tremendous birding and educational experience, go to the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's annual meeting September 15–17 at Carlisle, Cumberland County.

A long list of outings include the Blue and Kittatinny ridges in the Michaux and Tuscarora State forests, the Audubon Hawkwatch at Waggoner's Gap during the peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration, a mix of history and birds at the Gettysburg battlefields, and many other hot spots in this diverse ridge-and-valley region.

The banquet program will feature Pittsburgh native Ted Floyd, now living in Colorado, who is editor of the American Birding Association's prestigious *Birding* magazine. Ted's presentation is titled "Birding in the 21st Century." He will explain the many ways birding has changed in the past decade.

Ted has a unique approach to the topic. All of his photos on the screen will be created on the day of his program – something that would have been impossible back in the days of 35mm slide presentations. "We will see how eBird, birding apps, Xeno-Canto, smartphones, digital cameras, inexpensive recorders, social media, etc., have affected every aspect of birding. Such technical advances during the past decade have made birding far different from what we engaged in during the past century," Ted says.

The PSO newsletter (<https://tinyurl.com/PSO-annual>) has full information about the meeting, field trips, and how to register. Beginning birders will be welcomed warmly. Experienced members will enjoy passing along their knowledge.

An Evening of "Vespers": an Experience to Share

By Jack Solomon

Here's one of many reasons to "Like" and "Follow" the 3RBC Facebook page. If you did, you'd have known that an "Evening Vespers" outing was announced for last June 10 with just a few days' notice – too late to publish in *The Peregrine*.

"Evening Vespers," or just plain "Vespers," is the title of an annual outing usually held in early June by the Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club. The event consists of a dinner at the Darlington Inn near Ligonier followed by a visit to Laurel Summit State Park to hear the ethereal songs of Veeries and Hermit Thrushes.

This year the club held it in May, while I was away. In June, a thought came to my mind that we ought to repeat it in a joint outing with 3RBC, so I posted it on Facebook on short notice.

The dinner is always pleasurable, with a buffet that usually features Hungarian food. On June 10, eight of us enjoyed dinner and good company, then drove up the mountain where several more participants met us, including the venerable Bob Leberman, Powdermill Nature Reserve's pioneer ornithologist.

On the summit we enjoyed the Veeries' and Hermit Thrushes' music, viewed pitcher plants and sundew, met new friends, and enjoyed sharing the wonders of nature and our passion for birds.

Next year I hope that I, or someone, can arrange this outing early enough to publish in *The Peregrine* and on our website. Meanwhile, check the 3RBC Facebook page regularly for information about events such as this one.



WARBLERS, WARBLERS, EVERYWHERE – Sue Solomon reports that 3RBC members tallied a grand total of 32 warbler species, as well as a rare Brewster's hybrid of the Blue-winged and Golden-winged, during "The Biggest Week in American Birding" in May 2017. Dave Brooke photographed these two on the Magee Marsh boardwalk: an unusual head-on view of a Palm Warbler above and a classic portrait of a Yellow Warbler below. Warblers are a main attraction, but many other species make up birders' typically long lists at this remarkable hot spot for seeing migrants of all kinds.



Magic of Magee

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and preserve more habitat, advocate bird-safe windows, buy bird friendly coffee, and support groups like Black Swamp Bird Observatory.

After our mornings on the boardwalk each year, we visit Blackberry Corners or the food trucks at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Often we sit with fellow birders to share our finds and cookies. We meet old friends from all over and meet new ones every year. After lunch we explore nearby areas or attend a lecture to learn from the experts about bird ID, behavior, or conservation. The evening social hour at Maumee Lodge offers hors d'oeuvres, vendors and more socializing.

More than 60 3RBC members visited Magee, and we totaled 211 species including 32 warbler species plus a Brewster's hybrid of Golden-winged and Blue-winged. With so many birders in the field, rarities are always found. See Joan Tague's story on this page. Only a few heard the elusive Connecticut Warbler or the King Rail at Pearson Metropark. Some lucky birders saw both. It's always a good day when birding at Magee, and we look forward to next year's "Biggest Week in American Birding."

Determined Birder Shows Us a Connecticut Warbler

By Deborah Kibbel

Since I retired in 2007, I have been fortunate enough to spend a whole month at Magee Marsh during spring migration. I have birded this wonderful hot spot since 1995, and over the years, I have met many, many people who share this special hobby. Two friends, Marie and Craig, played a vital role in what happened this year.

It is very difficult for these two people to make it to Magee with any frequency. As luck would have it, their first of only two visits to the marsh turned out to be the best birding day of the season. By the time I caught up with them, they had just made it to the steps of the tower on the boardwalk not far from the west entrance – a true sign that this was going to be a great day. As we pointed out species to each other, word quickly spread that a Connecticut Warbler was heard – and seen – at Pearson Metropark just east of Oregon.

What to do? Leave a hot spot that was offering all the birds we had been waiting to see? Or, do you chase? We looked at each other and decided to take up the hunt. After hearing the location details – parking lot No. 3, follow the footpath beneath the flagpole to the left, etc. – we jumped into the car. By the time we arrived a half-hour later, it wasn't hard to find the exact location of the vigil.

The warbler was semi-cooperative, popping up periodically and, most importantly, singing. With all the people standing around, eagerly hoping to see this bird, surely luck would be with us. Here is where Marie revealed just how skilled a birder she is. Soon, a sharp, quick song was heard in the thicket in front of us – but no sighting.

Disappointed, most birders returned to soft conversations about their previous quests for this bird. But not Marie. I soon noticed that she was carefully scrutinizing the vegetation where the song originated. Gradually, her search widened a bit. By this time, Craig and I had joined her efforts. "There it is!"

We tried hard to direct other people to the exact spot, but as any birder knows, this is not always easy – and there is a risk the observer will lose sight of the bird while trying to explain the directions. It turned out that we were the last people to see the Connecticut that day. We owed it to Marie's tireless efforts.

Reward for Persistence: a Le Conte's Sparrow

By Joan Tague

It had been three years since I last traveled to Ohio in May. Since my arrival on May 1, 2017, I had been walking the boards, hiking the trails and combing the fields looking for the birds that I rarely see in Florida. I thrilled to hear the songs of Song and Swamp Sparrows.

Several of my Florida friends were up for the festival and were agog with Horned Larks and Groundhogs. Margie Kern from Pittsburgh joined us on Saturday when we were treated to a great look at Upland Sandpipers. Even though the Black Swamp experience was off to a slow start in terms of warblers and others, we were having a great time.

Margie and I stopped by the vendor tent at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. She was considering a major purchase, and I love to watch people spend money. She took the plunge when a savvy sales person pointed out that you should buy new optics at the start of a birding vacation, not at the end. We were anticipating what bird would be the first viewed through the new bins when Jeff Bouton showed us a photo taken at Metzger Marsh of a Le Conte's Sparrow that had been present all day. We were off...

You can see the dike by Lake Erie as you pass the marina. A crowd was lined up along the dike staring hopefully toward the marsh. A tour van or two had disgorged their passengers, who quickly joined the throng. We parked the car and waited 20 minutes. The bird stayed snug in a small patch of grass below the dike. We decided to move on.

Two hours later, passing the entrance to Metzger, we decided to try again. The crowd was still hopeful. The bird had popped up 30 minutes earlier. Our anticipation was elevated. About 40 minutes later, after watching twitching grass and reeds tip us to the sparrow's possible location, we reached a saturation point and surrendered to the Le Conte's Sparrow. It just seemed not to be.

Margie was anxious to get back to the motel after a full day of birding. I was staying at Maumee Bay State Park, so I turned my car to the west. Again I passed the entrance to Metzger. It was 7:30 PM, and I was hungry, but what the heck, it might be worth trying again. When I arrived, about 20 people were on the dike.

Again, we watched twitching grass for a peek. Thousands of dollars of optics and cameras were pointed at the patch of vegetation that the bird had worked all day. I now knew every blade by heart. How could the bird hide from all of this scrutiny? Suddenly, it popped up on a dead reed for all to see for maybe 10 seconds. The photographers could not even react. I tried to burn every detail of the sparrow into my brain. Then it was gone, diving back into the grass – and again he was lost to us.

One observer peered into a small tunnel in the vegetation. He thought he saw a feather, or maybe just a dried stem, but he decided to shoot a picture of the tunnel. He examined the picture, zoomed in on the image and laughed. The bird's head was perfectly framed by the tunnel entrance. It was a blurry but unmistakable look at the Le Conte's.

The next day I was congratulated for seeing the bird that very few had. What patience! I thought about the times I had walked away and realized that it was not patience, but, more accurately, persistence that finally got me the bird. Or was it the chance of experiencing a special moment that northern Ohio delivers over and over again year after year? I will be back.

The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

Winter Sora Highlighted Feb.–March 2017 List

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

This period features wintering birds and the earliest spring migrants. Most reports consist of water birds passing through this area.

A **Snow Goose** was a nice find at Wood's Run 2/2-5 (JM et al.). This species is always a pleasant surprise in Western Pennsylvania. Two **Tundra Swans** were seen along the Allegheny River 3/20 (JS, SS), the lone report.

Two **Gadwalls** were at Imperial 2/11 (MF) and a nice count of 21 were there 3/10 (MV); 1 was found along the Allegheny River in Harmar Twp. 3/11 (AH, PM), and 6 remained at Imperial 3/12 (AP, SA). **American Wigeons** are surprisingly uncommon migrants here, but 2 were at Duck Hollow 2/9 (JF, AB), 6 were at Imperial 2/10 (MV), up to 14 were present at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 2/19, and 18 remained to 3/20 (MV). Five **Northern Pintails** were at Imperial 2/16 (MV), and 2 remained 2/18 (MF). Two **Green-winged Teal** were at Imperial 2/11 (MF). **Redheads** were at Imperial for most of March (v.o.) with a maximum of 8 there 3/17 (JHA et al.). **Long-tailed Ducks** included 1 at Dashields (GM) and 4 at Wood's Run 3/31 (MJ). Four **Ruddy Ducks** were at Imperial 3/10 (MV) and 6 at Duck Hollow 3/21 (JS, SS).



WAY OUT OF SEASON – An extraordinary winter visitor appeared at Duck Hollow along the Monongahela River in Allegheny County from early February to early March. In the East, Soras regularly spend the winter no farther north than southern Maryland, and the main spring migration into our area does not occur until April. Photograph by Todd Hooe

A **Common Loon** was seen in flight along the Ohio River at Wood's Run 3/31 (BP). **Horned Grebes** seem to appear just for a few days at any time during the winter; 5 were at Duck Hollow 2/25 (AB) and 2 were there 3/21 (JS, SS).

There were two reports of **Great Egret** 3/28: single birds at Beechwood Farms (BSH) and along the Allegheny River (SK).

Six **Turkey Vultures** were observed feeding on a deer carcass in Pine Twp. 2/5 (PL, SL). A light morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Imperial 2/11 (MF). A dark morph was found there 2/18 along with the light morph (TH, LK, LN, DY, MV, MD). The dark morph was reported up to 2/27 (AB et al.). Two **Ospreys** were at Neville Island 3/25 (PB) and 1 was at Leetsdale 3/29 (MV). Both locations are nesting sites. The **Peregrine Falcons** downtown nested on the Gulf Tower after a three-year hiatus. By 3/10 two eggs were laid. A **Merlin** was at Mt. Royal Cemetery 3/19 (JH).

Six **Wilson's Snipe** were at Imperial 2/23-24 (MV, JHA), 1 was there 3/5 (AB), 10 on 3/10 (MV), and 8 on 3/12 (AP, SA). A very early **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Imperial 2/24 (JHA, TH, LN). The first **American Woodcocks** of the spring were heard 2/17-19 at four locations (GM, JM, GG, DN).

A **Sora** was an unexpected find at Duck Hollow 2/1 (DM). The bird stayed in thick vegetation on a mudflat at the mouth of Nine Mile Run where it enters the Monongahela River. It remained at the site at least to 3/4 and was observed and photographed by many observers. It endured rising water levels following rain that nearly submerged the entire mudflat. I believe this is the first winter record of this species in the county.

An early **Forster's Tern** passed by Dashields 3/31 (GM). Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were banded at Sewickley Heights Park 2/24 (BMu). Five **Fish Crows** were at Duck Hollow 2/10 (GM), one of the most reliable places to find them in the area, particularly in numbers.

Red-breasted Nuthatches visited a few feeders in the area through the period. A **Gray Catbird** was photographed near downtown Pittsburgh 2/14 (AL) near the same location where one spent the winter last year. The first **Louisiana Waterthrush** report came from Tom's Run Nature Reserve 3/26 (KSJ).

An **Eastern Towhee** was in Findlay Twp. 2/18 (TH, LN, LK). Towhees are uncommon and irregular here in winter. Also uncommon in winter, up to 4 **Field Sparrows** were in Pine Twp. in February (PL, SL). A **Vesper Sparrow** was a great find at North Park 3/26 (AH, PM). It is one of the few reports away from Imperial. **Fox Sparrows** are always a favorite; reports included 1 at Franklin Park 3/14 (OM), 1 in Squirrel Hill 3/15 (TM, NM), 1 in Findlay Twp. 3/17 (JHA), 2 at Frick Park 3/23 (JS, SS), 3 at Knob Hill Park 3/24 (KD, RD), and 3 at North Park 3/25 (AB). An early or overwintering **Eastern Meadowlark** was at Imperial 2/27 (AB).

Observers: Sameer Apte, Paul Brown, Alan Buriak, Michael David, Karyn Delaney, Ray Delaney, Jim Hausman (JHA), Jeff McDonald, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Amy Henrici, Joyce Hoffmann, Todd Hooe, Matthew Juskowich, Lisa Kauffman, Scott Kinzey, Andy Lariviere, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Pat McShea, Geoff Malosh, Oscar Miller, Tom Moeller, Nancy Moeller, Dan Muller, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Lauren Nagoda, Dick Nugent, Brad Peroney, Aidan Place, Kate St. John, Brian Shema (BSH), Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, Mark Vass, David Yeany, various observers (v.o.).