



# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 22, No. 4 July/August 2023



### Birds of Madagascar? Yes! They'll Dazzle Us on Aug. 2

We'll have a very unusual program at our 3RBC meeting on Wednesday, August 2, presented by Ken Behrens, a former young southwestern Pennsylvania birder who eventually has become an expert on African wildlife.

Ken's program title is "Madagascar, an Introduction to Earth's 8th Continent." He is a passionate birder, field naturalist, world traveler, and biologist. Ken has worked for more than 10 years as an international birding and natural history guide for the Tropical Birding organization.

He sent us photos of two of Madagascar's most interesting birds – not only the birds but also their names. At right is a Long-tailed Ground-Roller. At left is a Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher.

Among the books he has authored or coauthored are *Wildlife of Madagascar*, *The Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching*,

*Habitats of the World*, *Wild Rwanda*, and *Birds of Kruger National Park*. Now he's wrapping up two more books: *Photographic Guide to Malagasy Birds* and *Wildlife Habitats of Africa*.

Ken was born in Idaho, then became a birder when his family moved to Pittsburgh. After living outside the United States for 15 years, most recently in Madagascar, he and his family have relocated to the Pittsburgh area.

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This will be a *hybrid meeting* starting at 6:30 PM ET in-person at Beechwood Farms auditorium and the Zoom meeting will begin at 7:00 PM. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Ken's presentation will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the event, including Zoom passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied to members before the meeting.

### The Wonders of Birding in a Famous Ohio Area

Many 3RBC members have spent exciting weeks of birding in northwestern Ohio in May during an annual event appropriately named "The Biggest Week in American Birding."

Most of the excitement comes at the famous Magee Marsh boardwalk, where you can enjoy watching many warblers closely, even at eye-level.

Nearby hotspots add many water birds including such highlights as American White Pelicans, Black-necked Stilts, shorebirds, and land birds such as Lark Sparrows and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Inside this issue you'll find an array of photos submitted by our members during May 2023. We hope these will inspire you to join the birding fun in coming years.

The Canada Warbler at right, photographed by Dave Brooke in May 2023 along the boardwalk, is an example of the delights you might discover.



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

## President's Message

### Talking to Strangers

By Sheree Daugherty

Your mother warned you, "Don't talk to strangers!" I break this rule on a regular basis. Mom was right to be concerned for your safety. There are dangers, to be sure. I'm not suggesting that you strike up a conversation with someone who's acting weird, looks sinister, and is driving a windowless van. But, by trusting my gut when choosing who to approach, I've gotten great tips on birds.

Talking to strangers is standard behavior during "The Biggest Week in American Birding" in northwestern Ohio. Sure, technology has become the most useful and immediate way to communicate what bird is being seen where, but it's not the only way. Private conversations can be much more enjoyable than peering at a screen. Most birders are eager to share information, help find a bird, or share a local spot that you may not otherwise find.

On my most recent visit to Magee Marsh in May, I decided to conduct an experiment, birding the entire trip without the aid of eBird or Merlin. I had several casual conversations with other birders that were helpful and enjoyable. Relying on tips from others and my own knowledge proved to be a good strategy. It was too early for the large numbers of warblers, so I only saw 18, but the waterfowl and shorebirds in the "Biggest Week" area more than made up for it, and I was able to find a total of 147 species.

On another visit to Magee several years ago, I noticed someone with piles of bird-related materials. He was there for the festival to distribute the brochures and was happy to share them with me. He gave me a tip that there was an Eskimo Curlew somewhere just north of Oak Openings! Not wanting to embarrass him with the sad fact that the mentioned curlew was considered extinct, I filed the information away and did some research. He was half right. Later that day I added a Curlew Sandpiper to my life list (*photo at right*).

A friendly conversation with non-birders can also go a long way to building goodwill for birding. We've all responded to rare bird sightings, which often take us to unusual locations. To some people, a person with binoculars hanging around their neighborhood can look suspicious. It's a good policy to share why you are there and tell those you encounter how lucky they are to have a unique bird in their neighborhood. It may be a cliché, but I've never talked to anyone who wasn't thrilled that I saw a special bird in their neighborhood.

Locals often don't realize how special the birds are in their region. In southern Arizona, I had a delightful conversation with a picnicking middle-aged couple. When they heard that I had traveled from Pennsylvania to look at birds, they were stunned. The wife lit up when I asked her where I could find *chili tepín*. Later, I found it in the Mexican grocery store she had recommended. The wild pea-sized balls of heat are also known as "bird chilis."

I'll admit that the bird content in the last few sentences was a stretch. The interaction was memorable, the couple were delightful, and it was an opportunity to be a goodwill ambassador for birding.

Talking to strangers has always worked for me. It has been rewarding to tell someone about a bird, as well as to get tips from non-birders and fellow birders alike. Birders are typically friendly and interesting folks.

As you can tell, many of those conversations have become pleasant memories that add to my birding experience. I'll leave it up to you whether or not you tell mom that you broke the "Don't talk to strangers" rule.

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Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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SHEREE'S CURLEW SANDPIPER – The rare bird was photographed nicely by Bob Greene on May 13, 2016.



## Outings to Come

### We'll Find Fall Migrants at Favorite Birding Areas

**By Steve Thomas, Outings Director**

**Friday, August 25 – Sewickley Heights Park:** Join Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)) at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions.

**Saturday, September 2 – Deer Lakes Park:** Oliver Lindhiem (412-680-5642) and John Vassallo will lead us. Meet at 7:30 AM in the parking lot at GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russellton Road, enter the park at Kurn Road, drive past two ponds on the right, then turn right and proceed to the last parking lot. We will hike about 3 miles.

**Friday, September 8 – Sewickley Heights Park:** Join Sheree Daugherty ([shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)), for our second bird walk starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot..

**Saturday, September 9 – Harrison Hills Park:** Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this 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.

**Saturday, September 16 - Butler-Freeport Community Trail in Butler County:** Linda Croskey will lead us on this county's Rails-to-Trails trail. We will meet between 8:30 and 8:45 AM at the Sheetz Drive Trailhead off Bonniebrook Road. (This is not a Sheetz gas station. See below for directions.)

We will bird about a mile past a pond, fields, and woods for a variety of habitats. Around 11:00 AM we can have lunch at Deraillleur Bike Shop Cafe, which offers wholesome food, refreshing beverages, and ice cream. Then we will walk back to our vehicles. There is a restroom at the cafe but not at the trailhead.

This trail is beautiful and under-birded. Bring water and snacks, and enjoy this new outing location plus a delicious lunch in the Herman area. RSVP me by e-mail ([lcroskey@consolidated.net](mailto:lcroskey@consolidated.net)) or by phone at 724-612-9963.

Directions:

\*North from Pittsburgh – Take Route 28 north from Pittsburgh to Route 356 (Exit 17, Butler Road), which is just a mile north of our usual Harrison Hills Park outing location. Turn right onto 356 and travel about 8 miles north until you see Penn United Technologies buildings with blue and yellow buildings on the right. Turn right there onto Bonniebrook Road. Travel about 2 miles and turn right onto Sheetz Road. Proceed about one-fourth mile past a pond on the right and Core Cement Co. on the left to the Sheetz Drive Trailhead.

\*North from the North Hills in western Allegheny County – take Route 8 into Butler and turn right at East Wayne Street onto Route 356 and head south 7.5 miles to Bonniebrook Road. Turn left onto Bonniebrook and to Sheetz Drive as above.

\*From farther west, I-79 meets Route 422. Go east on 422 past Butler. 422 crosses Bonniebrook Road 3/4 of a mile later. Turn right onto Bonniebrook, and head south 4 miles to Sheetz Drive. Route 422 could also be a good route west from Indiana County.



*NICE DISCOVERY – Lauren Nagoda treated participants on our May 5 outing at Sewickley Heights Park when she discovered this Orange-crowned Warbler and enabled the birders to see it.*

## Outings Revisited

### It Was a Great Spring in Spite of Some Rain

**Yellow Creek State Park – April 1:** Nine birders gathered for the joint Todd Bird Club-3RBC outing, a low turnout because of the ominous weather forecast. Fortunately, the weather predictions were wrong, and we enjoyed a beautiful, calm, sunny day.

Sixteen species of waterfowl included 2 Blue-winged Teal, 5 Northern Shovelers, 52 Buffleheads, and 56 Red-breasted Mergansers. We spotted Pied-billed and Horned Grebes, 169 American Coots, single Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer, and a plethora of gulls: 58 Bonaparte's and 22 Ring-billed. We were also graced with a nice assortment of raptors: a Turkey Vulture and a Red-tailed Hawk, two Red-shouldered Hawks, and three Bald Eagles.

A walk to the wetlands and to the observatory yielded Golden-crowned Kinglets and Brown Creepers. Other highlights included a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, two Rusty Blackbirds, and a Pine Warbler. We ended with 61 species. **—by leader Margaret Higbee**

**Raccoon Creek State Park – April 22:** Due to forecast high wind and storms (never materialized), I canceled my outing, but three brave souls drove down from Butler County, and we birded for an hour between showers. We had an early singing Cerulean Warbler, as well as Hooded and Yellow-rumped warblers, an Ovenbird, White-throated Sparrows, and 21 other species. After that, in other parts around the lake, there was the obligatory Osprey, Blue-headed Vireo, and all the expected swallows and early warblers. **—by leader Ryan Tomazin**

**Frick Park -- April 30:** As we gathered at the Environmental Center, we enjoyed Baltimore Orioles singing and

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## Outings Revisited

*continued from page 3*

showing off in their typical haunts near the parking area, and a Cooper's Hawk darted low overhead.

A few birds feasted at the feeders, including Mourning Doves and House Finches, plus a Song Sparrow popping up nearby. A group of Blue Jays flew over us heading north, likely in active migration--a common sight in the spring if you can remember to look up! Continuing to the wooded section of the trail, we took a moment to appreciate a group of Gray Squirrels and Fox Squirrels gnawing on seeds in the trees hanging over the trail.

The meadow was relatively quiet. We followed a loud drumming sound to find a Downy Woodpecker displaying in the field below the meadow loop. We took a moment to discuss the recently-expanded deer exclosure, thinking about how deer overpopulation affects wildflowers, trees, and birds in Pennsylvania.

Back on the loop, two feisty Tufted Titmice buzzed in front of us. Although both were adults, one made a high-pitched begging noise and fluttered its wings--the sure sign of a birdy courtship! An active group of songbirds flitting in the trees resolved into distant views of Yellow-rumped Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos.

Bird activity began to pick up in the Clayton Loop. Two male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks sang and perched in the open while nibbling fresh buds, allowing for excellent views and photos. More Blue-headed Vireos noodled around in the trees above Falls Ravine, distant but at eye level from our high vantage point.

As we made our way back to the Environmental Center, an Eastern Towhee sang and played hide-and-seek in the brush. Near Beechwood Boulevard, we enjoyed watching a House Wren figure out how to maneuver a long twig into a nest box. A Purple Finch sang across the boulevard, continuing an influx of observations of this species in the area this spring.

Despite the slow start and threat of rain, we were pleased to end our walk relatively dry having encountered 32 species (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S135542637>). We were also joined by a reporter and photographer for the Pittsburgh Public Source, whose photos can be found in a recent article (<https://www.publicsource.org/birds-migratory-southwestern-pennsylvania-habitat-ecosystem-pittsburgh/>). **—by leader Tessa Rhinehart**

**Sewickley Heights Park – May 5:** Plans changed quickly on where to start when Lauren Nagoda showed us a beautiful photo taken minutes before. She graciously led us on the Butterfly Trail where a singing Orange-crowned Warbler moved through the treetops -- a great find and a life bird for at least one of our group of 15 birders. Thank you, Lauren!

Temperatures were barely in the 40s and the trails were muddy as we made our way around the Pipeline Trail. The bright sunlight soon warmed both birds and birders as we added many common birds to our lists.

Despite much effort, two incessantly calling Ovenbirds refused to be seen. We soon had better luck with a small wave of warblers that included Blue-winged, Yellow-rumped, Nashville, Black-throated Green, Hooded, and a Cerulean.

An odd, almost scolding call caught our attention. It was a surprise to find that the sound was coming from an Eastern Towhee.

Other highlights among our 35 species were a Scarlet Tanager and a Baltimore Oriole, the first of the season for many of us. **—by leader Sheree Daugherty**

**Powdermill Avian Research Center – May 6:** Fifteen bird enthusiasts ventured out for a demonstration of bird banding. The Powdermill outreach coordinator showed us the mist nets used to catch the birds and told us how the birds are placed in a bag. Each bag has a colored clip that indicates the bird's size.

We also visited a nice demonstration room with a large projection screen where we could watch the banding process. The bird's wings, weight, and fat deposits are measured, and an appropriately sized band is attached to a leg. All the data goes into a database for later analysis. The bird is then released unless it is a candidate for a "flight tunnel." Birds captured included a Gray Catbird, a Blue Jay, a Northern Cardinal, and a surprise Solitary Sandpiper.

We also had a demonstration of Powdermill's famous "flight tunnel," where birds are placed to fly toward sunlit windows, to test various types of glass that might prevent them from crashing. Two windows are placed side by side, one a test window and the other plain. Each flight is videotaped to see which window the bird flies toward and which it avoids. The bird does not strike the window because of a protective netting. Once the bird has traveled the length of the tunnel, a side door is opened and the bird flies out.

Powdermill is one of very few places in the world with a flight tunnel. The researchers receive window avoidance samples from all over the world to be analyzed.

It was a very good and informative tour. The Powdermill Avian Research Center schedules many of these demonstration events throughout the banding season. The demonstrations are free. They are definitely worth a visit. **—by participants Steve and Suzanne Thomas**

**Hays Woods – May 7:** It was an excellent morning with lots of migrants, including birds flying high overhead. There was a significant movement of Blue Jays flying high and headed north across the river, off the Hays Woods bluff.

We tallied 35 species, including 9 species of warblers. Highlights included Red-breasted Nuthatch, Great Crested Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler. Good heard-only birds included Cerulean Warbler and Blue-winged Warbler.

Here's the full eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S136498456>. **—by Leader Ken Behrens**

**Deer Lakes Park – May 13:** Threats of storms kept all but nine participants away, yet spring migrants provided an enjoyable morning. Gathering at the parking lot, this merry band ascended the service road amid songs of Black-throated Green and Hooded Warblers, and we saw a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Magnolia Warbler and Northern Parula.

After a Nashville and Tennessee Warblers pulled us up the hill, a Blackburnian Warbler met us at the top, and Indigo Buntings singing from treetops led us off the road and into the wild field. While following the upper trails, we were treated to a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a White-eyed Vireo, and a Black-throated Blue Warbler darted across the path.

Sounds of Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes permeated the forests as light rain fell off and on that mid-May morning. Sightings of Swainson's Thrushes, an Eastern Wood-Pewee and an Eastern Kingbird accompanied us down to the upper lake, but not before we viewed a large Opossum cross the trail in front of us. At the lake's upper end the group posed for a quick photo before noticing a Green Heron close by on a log. Several Spotted Sandpipers were scurrying along the banks as we crossed and headed upstream.

Chip calls of a Louisiana Waterthrush guided us up the hill,

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## Our Birders Had a Lot of Fun during a Fabulous May in Ohio

Each year an extraordinary May extravaganza in northwestern Ohio has enticed our members to share “The Biggest Week in American Birding.” It is a famous hotspot for migrants along a boardwalk at Magee Marsh but covers many other nearby areas.

Here are examples of our birders’ photographs. Clockwise from top right to top left:

Prothonotary Warbler by Lauren Nagoda

Cape May Warbler by Lauren Nagoda

Lark Sparrows by Donna Foyle

American White Pelicans by Donna Foyle

Black-necked Stilts by Dave Brooke

Blackburnian Warbler by Lauren Nagoda

*(Editor’s note: The Lark Sparrows are quite distant in this image, but Donna’s is the first time I’ve received a photo of this western species in its unique eastern bit of breeding area at Oak Openings Metropark southwest of Magee.)*



## Observations

### A Laughing Gull Is Worth Much More Than Its Name

By Tom Moeller

For summer vacation you may want to visit an Atlantic Ocean beach. One gull you're sure to find on the Atlantic or Gulf shores is the Laughing Gull. This medium-sized gull has a distinct dark gray/black head, white eye crescents, a red beak, and it may steal your beach snacks.

Laughing Gulls, named for their calls which sound like "ha, ha, ha, ha," were given their Latin species name *Larus atricilla* by Linnaeus in 1758. However, in 2008 the former American Ornithologists' Union changed that species name to *Leucophaeus atricilla*.

The gull has two subspecies – the most common is found along the Atlantic Coast from Canada to Florida and the Gulf Coast to Texas. They rarely stray inland from the coasts. These gulls breed along the eastern and southern coasts with some attempts on the Great Lakes, and on the Mexican coast of the Gulf of California. Vagrants even spend time in Hawaii or Asia. They do migrate in winter from the north to Florida and the Caribbean. The southern subspecies breeds in the West Indies, Venezuela and French Guiana and populate the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of northern South America.

Like the Ring-billed Gull, which I covered in the March/April 2022 edition of *The Peregrine*, the Laughing Gull takes three years to reach adulthood. The Laughing Gull is slightly smaller than the Ring-billed. Its legs and bill are black throughout the cycles, except the legs and bill turn a dull red in breeding adults. White crescents above and below the eyes are visible in all cycles too. The gull's wings are long almost like a soaring shearwater's wings.

The bird goes through several phases before adulthood: juvenile, first cycle (first winter and first summer), second cycle, and adult. Each phase has its own plumage characteristics:

--Juveniles appear scaly with brown feathers edged in white, but in the fall their backs become gray and the face paler. Their rumps are white, and the tail is white with a black band extending fully across. Wingtips are dark brown to black. The gray areas increase as the bird moves into the first summer looking more like adults.

--The second cycle gulls are even more like adults, but there is a gray wash on the nape and sides of the breast. The black tail band has faded considerably. Their wingtips are more extensively black than adults but lack white tips.

--The adult Laughing Gull has uniform gray back and wings (trailing edges are white) and white breast, underwings, undersides, and tail. The wingtips are black with white spots seen as dots when folded.

--Breeding adults sport a slate hood, the white crescents, and the beak and legs are a dark red. Non-breeding adults lose the black hood to gray stippling on their heads, and the legs and beak revert to black.

Being gulls, Laughing Gulls are opportunistic omnivores as well as thieves. They eat insects, snails, crabs, and crab eggs, along with fish, squid, berries, garbage, and handouts from beachgoers. One may land on the head of a Brown Pelican that has just scooped up a fish. When the pelican opens its beak to adjust and swallow the fish, the gull will reach down and grab the fish out of the pelican's pouch! Laughing Gulls have also been recorded stealing eggs right out from under nesting Black Skimmers. (See References



*HOW TO ATTRACT ATTENTION* – Tom Moeller photographed this noisy Laughing Gull in full breeding plumage in a parking lot at Cape May, New Jersey, in April 2009.

*online for videos.)*

Laughing Gulls breed along the Atlantic Coast from Maine to Florida and along the Gulf Coast, as well as western Mexico and the Caribbean. They build nests in often large colonies (in the thousands) on the ground of beach grass, seaweed, sticks, and stems. They like to nest among vegetation – beach grasses, low bushes, etc. – in salt marshes, or on sand dunes, shell heaps, or offshore islands. Both parents build the 18-inch nest, lined with lighter material.

One brood is produced each season of 2-4 olive-colored eggs. The eggs are speckled with brown, black, or lilac spotting. Both parents incubate the eggs for about three weeks. The hatchlings are downy with basic light brown streaked and spotted with darker browns on the back as camouflage. They leave the nest within days, able to run and hide in vegetation if necessary. Again, both parents tend to the hatchlings, which are able to fly in 38-50 days.

Franklin's Gulls appear similar in coloring to Laughing Gulls, but Franklin's are found down the middle of the U.S. not near the oceans. The Laughing Gull's beak is longer and droops at the front unlike the Franklin's. The "jizz" (overall shape) of these two gulls is different, with the Franklin's seeming pudgier, short-tailed, and less stretched out. Geography plays the most important part in distinguishing these two gulls.

On a summer visit to our eastern or southern coast you'll surely run into these gulls in breeding plumage, making them very easy to identify. In September and beyond, as they revert to basic plumage, identification can be slightly tricky. Just look for the eye crescents in all phases to be sure.

See Tom's photo gallery and references for this article on our 3RBC website.



## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

### February-March 2023 Brought Winter Rarities

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

It was a mild winter season with very little snow and cold temperatures, so waterfowl numbers were low, and we did not get an influx of rare gulls because the Great Lakes and other bodies of water to the north did not completely freeze.

A **Snow Goose** was discovered at North Park 2/10 (reported to MV). It moved to a pond outside the park and remained to 3/20 (m.ob.). Another was found at the Waterfront shopping complex in Homestead 2/23 (CM) where it fed on an open lawn with Canada Geese regularly in the afternoon through 3/10 (m.ob.) (photo on page 8). One was at Allegheny Cemetery 3/15 (CB, AB) and later that day one appeared on the Allegheny River at Sharpsburg (RBu) where it remained in the area to 3/17. A flock of 14 flew over Franklin Park 3/27 (OM). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at the PennDot Wetlands at Boyce-Mayview Park in Upper St. Clair 2/20 -23 (RBu and others), providing the seventh Allegheny County record.

**Tundra Swans** migrated through in early March: a flock over Gibsonia 3/1 (KP), 48 over Verona that day (SK), 45 over West Deer Twp. 3/6 and 46 there 3/8 (LC), and 1 at Blawnox 3/10-11 (RBu and others.).

Several **Gadwalls** continued from January at a small wetland in Harmar Twp. to 2/16 (LK, m.ob.) with a high count of 10 on 2/10; 2 were at Emsworth 2/5 (AK), and 2 were at Wingfield Pines 2/13 (m.ob.). Four **American Wigeons** were on the Allegheny River at Sharpsburg 2/21 (RBu), 6 at nearby Aspinwall 2/24 (JK), and 2 nearby at Chapel Harbor 2/25 (JV). One was at Chapel Harbor 3/6 (LK and others), 2 were at the PennDot Wetlands next to Boyce-Mayview Park 3/7 (RBu), 2 were at North Park 3/5-25 (m.ob.), and 3 were at Sharpsburg 3/30 (DB). **Northern Pintail** is an uncommon migrant, so any reports are notable. Singles were at Dashields Dam 2/3 (MV), Wingfield Pines 2/5 (JF, m.ob.), Fox Chapel 2/6 (JK) and at the Highland Park Bridge on the Allegheny River 2/7 (NB). One was at North Park 3/3 and 2 on 3/4 (AF and others.). Six at Sharpsburg 3/3 (JK) was a good count.

Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were on the Ohio River near Dashields 2/24 (OL, MF) and 8 were at Sharpsburg 3/7-9 (JV, IR, PR). A great count of 59 **Common Mergansers** were at Chapel Harbor 2/5 (AF). A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at Chapel Harbor on the Allegheny River 2/28 (DM), and there were single-digit numbers through March at various locations. A **Ruddy Duck** was at Duck Hollow 2/7 (JC) and 4 were at Brunots Island 2/5-25 (LG, m.ob.).

A **Horned Grebe** was at Brunots Island 2/9-10 (TC), and there were regular reports from all three rivers in March.

A **Virginia Rail** was recorded calling at Wingfield Pines 3/6, which is early (DNe, NN). It remained through the month.

An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Imperial 3/26 (TC and others). Two **American Woodcocks** were at Peter's Creek 2/16 (JP, JF) which is early by a few weeks.

A flock of 50 **Bonaparte's Gulls** were spotted along the Allegheny River at Oakmont 3/29 (MS).

An early **Great Egret** was at Duck Hollow 3/24 (JF). An immature **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was photographed at Brunots Island 2/14 (NB), an uncommon visitor here at any time and rare in winter.

Up to 3 **Black Vultures** were in the Fox Chapel area during

February (DM, m.ob.), and 5 flew over Verona 2/23 (MD).

**Northern Saw-whet Owls** continue to be banded at Sewickley Heights Park. Two captured 2/22 were recaptures from the fall (TB). One was heard in Franklin Park 2/25 (OM).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was spotted flying over Route 28 in Blawnox 2/19 (BSh).

**Merlin** reports included 1 at Heidelberg 3/16 (RT), 1 at Bell Harbor 3/18 (DWr, JK), 1 at Chatham University 3/21 (MKu), and 1 continued at Schenley Park into March (m.ob.).

A good count of 26 **Fish Crows** were in Verona 2/22 (SK) and 30 in Squirrel Hill 3/25 (MKu).

**Horned Lark** is only found in the Imperial area regularly. Singles were found at Janoski's Farm 2/9 (AF) and at the Imperial Grasslands 2/16-18 (MV).

The **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** photographed at Carnegie Mellon University in December was seen again 2/16 (JFr); 1 at a feeder in Bethel Park in late December was still there 2/2 (JP), 1 was at The Waterfront in Homestead 2/6 (RBu), 1 was at Wingfield Pines 2/12 (MKu) and one was at North Park 2/28 (EPH). This species is not reported annually in winter.

The **Marsh Wren** reported in the fall at Hartwood Acres continued to 3/18 (m.ob.).

**Hermit Thrushes** were reported through February at several locations including South Park, North Park, Hartwood Acres, Frick Park, Boyce Park, and Imperial. An **American Pipit** at Wingfield Pines 2/10 (TC) was the only report. Up to 3 **Purple Finches** were at Beechwood Farms in February (DM, m.ob.).

Seven **Field Sparrows** were at Harrison Hills Park 2/5 (AH, PM) and 4 were there 2/20 (DG), 2 were at Hartwood Acres 2/20 (AF), and 4 were at Hays Woods 2/26 (MK). Field Sparrows are uncommon this time of year. A **Fox Sparrow** was at Duck Hollow 2/12 (MT), 1 was at South Park 2/16 (JF), and 1 was at North Park 2/26 (SD). Fox Sparrows typically don't winter in Allegheny County. A **Gambel's** western subspecies of the **White-crowned Sparrow** reported previously continued at a feeder in West Deer Twp. (LC).

A **Brown-headed Cowbird** that visited a feeder at Beechwood Farms 2/1-7 (DM and others) could have been an early migrant. Two were in Oakmont 2/28 (RBu). An early, wandering, or overwintering **Rusty Blackbird** was at Frick Park 2/7 (AF). Six visited a feeder in Pine Township on 3/19, 3 on 3/20, and 2 on 3/31 (PL, SL) (photo on page 8).

*Observers: David Bennett (DB), Carole Borek, Al Borek, Trip Bondi, Nathaniel Bowler, Ron Burkert (RBu), Jack Chaillet, Thomas Connor, Linda Croskey, Michael David, Steve Denninger, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannagan, Jonathan Frantz (JFr), Amy Henrici, Pat McShea, Candice Morgan, Lynn Goldbach, Dean Griffith, Michelle Kienholz, Andrew Kingfisher, Scott Kinzey, Lucy Klimko, Justin Kolakowski, Malcom Kurtz (MKu), Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Oliver Lindhiem, Dan Mendenhall, Oscar Miller, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Norma Newhouse, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Kevin Parsons, Joe Papp, Isaac Rogers, Philip Rogers, Brian Shema, (BSh), Mike Smith, Ryan Tomazin, Molly Toth, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JV), Dan Wryostek (DWr), m.ob. (many observers).*



# The Peregrine



*LATE WINTER HIGHLIGHTS – Mike Fialkovich's bird report on page 7 includes two especially welcome species: a Snow Goose photographed by Charity Kheshgi on February 25 at the*



*Waterfront shopping complex, and a Rusty Blackbird photographed by Sherron Lynch in the Lynches' Pine Township yard on March 19.*

## Outings Revisited

*continued from page 4*

and we heard the croak of a Common Raven as we rejoined the service road at the top. By the time we parted ways, we had experienced a morning filled with pleasant conversations and various migrants. Avoiding heavier storms, the light rain had covered our binoculars and the habitats around us but did little to dampen the time we spent together. –**by leader John Vassallo**

**Hartwood Acres – May 20:** Rain forced cancellation, but leader Malcolm Kurtz reported that the participants saw a Great Crested Flycatcher before the rain started.

**Glade Run Lake – May 21:** Nine birders met, on a lovely spring morning, at Glade Run Lake for a leisurely walk on the trail and boardwalks along the lake.

We tallied 47 species while finding all of the expected birds plus a few less common ones.

A singing Bay-breasted Warbler was the first I've had here in the spring. Finding two Spotted Sandpipers and an Osprey flyover were other less common birds for the lake.

There are always good numbers of Warbling Vireos here, and we heard or saw six of them. Hearing Veery songs in two spots was another highlight of the morning. – **by leader Dave Brooke**

## Do You Have a Local Bird List?

### Tell Us All About Your Totals

Paul Hess and Dave Brooke have compiled a list of 189 species for Harrison Hills Park in Natrona Heights, Allegheny County, since the park opened in 1970.

The two newest are Virginia Rail confirmed breeding by Dave Brooke, and Northern Saw-whet Owl added by a recent banding project in the park. Rarities in "the old days" have included Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Shrike, Sedge Wren, Western Tanager, and Summer Tanager.

Of particular interest would be for Frick Park. A few years ago an amazing one-day total of slightly over 100 species was tallied there. Many years ago on one 24-hour day and night in Allegheny County Ted Floyd and Paul Hess had a combined total of 132.

Members would like to see your park lists, yard lists, or county lists in southwestern Pennsylvania. All lists are welcome.

## Notes About Our Birders

A new 3RBC retirement: Glenn and Mabel Matteson and Becky Byerly have retired after serving many years of volunteering as Hospitality Coordinators at our meetings. Thank you!

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Three of our photographers offer us colorful photo galleries online from their recent birding trips. See the photos here:

–Steve Gosser in southern California

<https://youtu.be/b825yUixzIQ>

–Mike Fialkovich in Costa Rica

<https://tinyurl.com/2jdwumpa>

–Dave Brooke in southeastern Arizona

<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjABT9b>

–Dave Brooke in New Mexico

<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjABjgW>



*CLOSE LOOK –Donna Foyle spotted this Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Brentwood, Allegheny County, on May 15, 2023.*