



# The Peregrine

## Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 16, No. 6, November/December 2017



*FASCINATION—This female American Redstart is intently interested in something, perhaps Dave Brooke and his camera or maybe a meal somewhere on a leaf. Dave photographed her at Harrison Hills Park in northeastern Allegheny County on September 15, 2017.*

### Our Photographers Will Dazzle Us on December 6

Our club's photographers will entertain us again at one of 3RBC's most popular annual traditions: the "slide slam," although not with old-fashioned slides but with flashy digital images.

Wednesday, December 6, is the date. 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.

Contact Program Director Debbie Kalbfleisch by Nov. 29 to register: [d.kalbfleisch@hotmail.com](mailto:d.kalbfleisch@hotmail.com) or by phone at 724-651-5426.

Rules to make sure participants have an equal opportunity:

\*The first 10 photographers to respond will be able to present their show. Because of time limitations, only 10 can be accepted.

\*Each photographer will be allowed up to 6 minutes of time. If fewer than 10 photographers pre-register, the presenters' time will be adjusted upward.

\*Photos must be contained on a thumb drive and be compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint. No images may be stored and downloaded from the Cloud.

## Pittsburgh Christmas Count Will Be Held on December 30

**By Brian Shema, Pittsburgh CBC Compiler**

The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania hosts the Pittsburgh Christmas Bird Count (CBC) annually. This year it will be held on Saturday, December 30.

The CBC is an important source of information on the distribution and abundance of bird species. For over a century this information has been collected by people who band together to develop bird lists in the field and by individuals who count birds at their feeders. We need you to help continue this tradition!

Participants tally all the birds they find on that day. The CBC is divided into 13 areas based on geo-political boundaries.

Participation is free, and inexperienced birdwatchers are welcome.

Please also join us for the count dinner at 6:00 PM on Sunday, January 7 (a week later than usual to avoid New Year's Eve) at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve in Fox Chapel. Bring a covered dish, salad, or dessert to feed 10, or make a donation to help cover costs. After dinner, the area leaders will announce their results.

For general questions, or for suggestions of where to participate, please contact Brian Shema at 412-963-6100.

If you know where you would like to participate, please contact one of the area leaders listed below for instructions on where to meet, or if you prefer to watch your bird feeders, so the leader will be aware of your participation and can send you the appropriate materials:

- **Fox Chapel** – Brian Shema, 412-963-6100; [bshema@aswp.org](mailto:bshema@aswp.org)
- **Franklin Park/Ohio Twp. (N)** – Stacey Widenhofer,

412-741-7536; [stacey.fhnc@gmail.com](mailto:stacey.fhnc@gmail.com)

• **Hampton Twp.** – Brady Porter, 412-337-7397

• **Indiana Twp.** – Steve Gosser, 412-855-5220;  
[smgosserv@verizon.net](mailto:smgosserv@verizon.net)

• **Kilbuck Twp. & Ohio Twp. (S)** – Paul Brown, 412-963-1979;  
[pmbrown1944@gmail.com](mailto:pmbrown1944@gmail.com)

• **North Park** – Sheree Daugherty, 412-322-5371;  
[shereedaugherty@gmail.com](mailto:shereedaugherty@gmail.com)

• **Oakmont & Harmar Twp.** – David Yeany, 814-221-4361;  
[dyeany@paconserve.org](mailto:dyeany@paconserve.org)

• **O'Hara Twp.** – Steve Thomas, 412-782-4696;  
[thomassj22@verizon.net](mailto:thomassj22@verizon.net)

• **Penn Hills & Verona** – Mike Smith, 412-526-8360;  
[skeetor72@yahoo.com](mailto:skeetor72@yahoo.com)

• **Frick & Highland Parks** – Mark VanderVen, 425-273-1786;  
[nevrednav@gmail.com](mailto:nevrednav@gmail.com)

• **Pittsburgh (rest of city)** – Mike Fialkovich, 412-731-3581;  
[mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net)

• **Ross & McCandless Twps.** – Bob Machesney, 412-366-7869;  
[remach@aol.com](mailto:remach@aol.com)

• **Shaler Twp.** – Joyce Hoffmann, 412-487-0921; [ibird@juno.com](mailto:ibird@juno.com)

Check the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania website ([aswp.org](http://aswp.org)) near the count date in case an area leader changes after this article was published. See page 8 for other CBCs in the Pittsburgh area..

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

## President's Message

# Assessing Our Mission Statement

By Bob VanNewkirk

*“To gather in friendship, to enjoy the wonders of nature, and to share our passion for birds!”*

Having recently celebrated the 16th anniversary of our club's formation with our annual picnic at Moraine State Park, I started thinking about how the club has evolved over that time, and if it has measured up to the high expectations of its founding members and the mission statement above.

*“To gather in friendship...”* Since the very first meeting at the Frick Environmental Learning Center, the hospitality team of Becky Byerly and Mabel and Glen Matteson have usually been the first members who welcome all comers. They display members' ID badges and make temporary ones for newcomers, provide a shoebox for door prize entries and place covers on the treat tables. Those tables quickly become the gathering spot most attendees gravitate toward. You never know what wonderful homemade or store-bought goodies members will bring to share, but they are always delicious and enjoyed before and after each meeting.

The highlight of every meeting is our guest presenter. Program Coordinator Debbie Kalbfleisch, with occasional support from Vice President Sheree Daugherty, does a great job of booking nationally known ornithologists, authors, avian rehabilitators, local photographers, and well-traveled birders that fascinate us with their photo shows and presentations. Sometimes the speakers travel from out-of-town. Many times Claire Staples offers to provide lodging for them at her home. She also acts as a dinner hostess so that other Steering Committee members may meet and greet the guests to help make them feel relaxed and comfortable before their presentation.

Tom Moeller, our treasurer, does a wonderful job managing the club's finances, keeps track of membership renewals, updates email addresses, and with assistance from Sarah Gerrish, prepares each issue of *The Peregrine* issue for mailing. New members are warmly greeted in a letter of recognition and an invitation to attend meetings and participate in the club's outings. According to a December 2001 *Peregrine* article, the membership totaled 110 people at that time. Tom estimates that the latest figure is about 375. Wow!

*“to enjoy the wonders of nature...”* Just as importantly as club meetings, the regularly scheduled free outings to many of Western Pennsylvania's major birding locales, and some of its lesser known but also bird-rich parks, attract lots of members and non-members alike. Outings Director Steve Thomas does an excellent job of scheduling these bird walks with his usual reliable leaders, while always looking to recruit new ones. The outings are posted on the club's website and in *The Peregrine*. They provide opportunities to explore new habitats as well as become familiar with favorite destinations visited during spring and fall migrations. The outings also offer birders chances to build upon whatever lists they keep, search for rarities, and hopefully to meet and make future bird-buddies. From 2015 to the present, there have been 90 outings offered by 19 dedicated and enthusiastic leaders who have invited us to come along with them.

Sometimes on an outing, especially when the birding gets quiet, participants begin to divert their attention and stop to admire blooming native plants, examine the undersides of milkweed

## The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter  
Published bimonthly:  
January, March, May, July, September, November

### Send articles and/or illustrations to:

Paul Hess, Editor  
[phess@salsgiver.com](mailto:phess@salsgiver.com)  
1412 Hawthorne St., Natrona Heights, PA 15065

### Send ideas or items for the website to:

Julia Pahountis-Opacic, Webmaster  
[3RBC.website@gmail.com](mailto:3RBC.website@gmail.com)

### Send questions and suggestions to:

Bob VanNewkirk, President  
[van126@comcast.net](mailto:van126@comcast.net)  
126 Timberlane Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15229-1059

### Suggest or volunteer to lead outings to:

Steve Thomas, Outings Director  
[thomassj22@verizon.net](mailto:thomassj22@verizon.net)  
309 Center Ave., Aspinwall, PA 15215

### Report bird sightings to:

Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor  
[mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net)  
805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

### Membership: FREE Student-Youth, \$15 Individual, \$20 Family, \$50 Contributing, \$100 Sustaining

Send check to Three Rivers Birding Club  
c/o Thomas J. Moeller, Treasurer  
6357 Ebdy St., Pittsburgh, PA 15217-3035  
[thosjmoel@gmail.com](mailto:thosjmoel@gmail.com)

Copyright © Three Rivers Birding Club. All rights reserved.  
(Photographers and illustrators retain their copyrights.)

leaves for monarch caterpillars, stop at large puddles to notice a myriad of active tadpoles, search for edible mushrooms, take photographs of anything of interest or pause to listen to birdsongs or calls. Nature always has something to show us if one chooses to take notice. Having these or related experiences on outings is a great way for everyone to bond and share their knowledge of birds and the natural world with others.

One unique way that members experience birds up close and personal are through the club's annual "slide slam" each December. It is consistently one of the best attended meetings. Photographers share their favorite digital photos of breathing-taking scenery, avian aerial displays, rare birds, and beautiful portraits of a wide variety of species. Each edition of *The Peregrine* also features members' photographs that enhance the articles and demonstrates their skill, talent, and artistry with a camera.

*“and to share our passion for birds!”* Communication with its members has always been a high priority of the 3RBC. Its two main components to achieve that goal are *The Peregrine* and its website.

One only has to pick up a copy of the club's exceptional newsletter, *The Peregrine*, to see our passion for birds expressed in various ways on each page. Editor Paul Hess always tries to get members involved in writing articles and submitting photographs. Regular features in the newsletter include the next meeting date

*continued on page 3*

## Outings to Come

### Enjoy Three Last Looks at the Autumn Migration

#### Sunday, October 22 – 3RBC Picnic at Moraine State Park:

Mark your calendar for our annual picnic and bird walk. We will meet at 8:30 AM in the Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first large parking lot on the right. After the morning outing, we will have the pot-luck picnic at a pavilion near McDanel's boat launch. Please bring a dish to share that will serve 4-6 people. Directions: 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.

#### Saturday, November 4 – Yellow Creek State Park:

This outing will be a joint outing of 3RBC and the Todd Bird Club. Meet Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) at the park office at 8:00 AM. The park office is on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and a half to drive from Pittsburgh. The park has a wide array of habitats and a large lake that attracts a great variety of waterbirds and sometimes exciting rarities.

#### Sunday, November 19 – Moraine State Park:

We will gather at 8:00 AM in the Day Use Area (South Shore) in the first parking lot on the right. This will be a leaderless outing. See the October 22 listing for directions. Waterfowl and late fall migrants make this outing a highlight of the season. Allow one hour driving from Pittsburgh.

\*\*\*

Outings are free and open to the public. In the event of inclement weather, call the leader in advance to confirm whether the outing is on or canceled. Call the leader, too, with other questions about weather, driving, or trail conditions. Please check the 3RBC website, too, for any last-minute changes in leaders to contact.

## President's Message

*continued from page 2*

and a brief bio about the program's presenter, upcoming outings, a President's Message, a summary of recent bird sightings reported in the Three Rivers area, write-ups of past outings, a letter from the editor, ID tips, notices of birding festivals, and activities of other nature-related organizations or featured stories about local birders or professional ornithologists.

Paul is ably assisted by his dependable team of Gabi Hughes, Patience Fisher, Tom Moeller, and Sarah Gerrish. From start to finish each person plays an important role with copy editing, proofreading, layout design, placing the final copy on the computer, sending the final copy off to the printer, and stuffing and addressing envelopes for mailing.

The club's website and Facebook page were developed and continue to be maintained by Julia Pahountis-Opacic with assistance recently provided by Tom Moeller. An incredible number of links are found here related to birds and birding, such as archived club newsletters, upcoming outings and past outing reports, directions to prime birding locations, the Audubon



## The Peregrine

### Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

No. 1, October 2001

### Join the fun in Three Rivers Birding Club

By Jack Solomon, Club President

Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals, and Baltimore Orioles in your yard... Green Herons, Canvasbacks, and Kentucky Warblers elsewhere in the Pittsburgh region... and uncommon visitors to western Pennsylvania such as Surf Scoters, Baird's Sandpipers, and Connecticut Warblers.

Fifty-four people who like to see and hear those and other birds, gathered July 29 at the Frick Park Nature Center in Squirrel Hill. They gave the Three Rivers Birding Club its name, elected Jack Solomon president and Bob Machesney treasurer. Mike Fialkovich, who will be the club's bird reporting and recording officer, provided a memorable color slide show of... no surprise here - bird photographs, stunningly beautiful ones.

The club's founders hope to provide an opportunity for fun and learning aimed at birders of all levels of experience, from rank beginners to reincarnations of W. E. Clyde Todd (more about him in a future newsletter). New birders can meet and learn from their more knowledgeable colleagues, the experienced members can share their knowledge with each other, and everyone will be able to report their observations, talk about birds, birding and natural history subjects, enjoy each other's company, and encourage beginners and non-birders to dive right in, find out where to bird, how to do it better, and share the fun. Outings to bird-rich locations near and far will be among the club's most important activities.

Jim Valimont is acting vice president and will direct the outings committee. Paul Hess is this newsletter's editor, with production and distribution by Chuck Tague, editor and owner of the highly respected Nature Observer News. Susan Sunseri is acting secretary. Other volunteers who have stepped forward are Mabel Matteson who, with help from Becky Byerly, will run the hospitality committee, and Julia Pahountis-Opacic who will head the web committee assisted by Dave Wilton. Check out Julia's web site at <www.birdnature.com>. Someday we hope to have a site approaching its quality which would include recent bird sightings, directions to and maps of good local birding areas, plus information about other local birding and natural history organizations like the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Todd Bird Club in Indiana County, the Westmoreland County Bird Club, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and conservation groups.

The other article on this page has information about our first regular meeting on October 17. Come and find a new opportunity for birding!

You are receiving this newsletter because you attended the club's inaugural meeting, or you subscribe to Nature Observer News, or you were considered potentially interested by a club member. You can continue to receive it by joining the club. (Elsewhere in this issue, editor Hess describes the newsletter's current and planned features.)

Future issues of Nature Observer News will, from time to time, include the newsletter if the recipient is a Three Rivers Birding Club member. Members who don't subscribe to the Nature Observer News will receive the newsletter by 1<sup>st</sup>-class mail or possibly in the future by e-mail for those who choose that medium.

...continued on page 2



Northern Pintail - Esther Allen

### Our October 17 Meeting will feature waterfowl ID

Just in time for the peak waterfowl-watching season, the Three Rivers Birding Club meeting on Wednesday, October 17, will feature a color slide program on waterfowl in western Pennsylvania. The meeting will be held at the Frick Park Nature Center, opposite 1960 Beechwood Blvd., in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill section. The doors will open at 7 p.m. for socializing, so feel free to bring something to eat or drink while you chat with other people who have the same birding interests as you. The meeting will start at 7:30.

Chuck Tague, editor and publisher of the Nature Observer News, will present a slide show including tips for identifying many species of water birds that migrate through this region. Chuck's program is especially timely because waterfowl will highlight the club's inaugural outing on Oct. 21 at Lake Arthur in Butler County. (See Page 3 for all the outings in store.)

Joanne Caine of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy asks those attending to bring a field guide or other book of periodical about birds or birding. Joanne, who offered the Conservancy's support to the club at our organizational meeting July 29, would like to see what the Conservancy might want to obtain for its new Schenley Park facility to be completed this fall. You can take your books home - she just wants to look. Not only can you show Joanne what's out there, you can give the other members an opportunity to see good publications that are available.

Come and make new friends, see old ones, report recent bird sightings and, we hope, learn something about birds and birding that you never knew before.

*CHAPTER 1 OF A GREAT SUCCESS STORY—This front page is the first edition of our club's newsletter. Founding President Jack Solomon notes in his welcome to new members that 3RBC began at a meeting of 54 birders. Our total membership is now approaching 400! No one "present at the creation" could have imagined that so many people would eventually "join the fun." Our current leader Bob VanNewkirk tells the story in his President's Message.*

Society of Western Pennsylvania and other Pennsylvania Audubon chapters, the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, the Todd Bird Club, and the Brooks Bird Club, live wildlife webcams, wildlife rehabilitation centers, and many nature-related organizations. There are even links to online field guides.

Sharing our passion for all things bird-related is truly the heart and soul of the Three Rivers Birding Club. Its founders started the club to provide opportunities for its members, regardless of their skill level or age, to have fun and learn about the many facets of bird watching. Its members continue to reflect this attitude by producing an outstanding newsletter and superb website, scheduling eminent speakers, participating in citizen-science projects, volunteering their time and talents with other nature organizations, joining other bird clubs, donating money to support conservation causes locally and worldwide, leading outings, attending club meetings, sponsoring birding festivals, posting checklists on eBird, and always looking for good fellowship and good birding whenever the opportunity arises.

## Outings Revisited

### Birds Mobbing a Snake Were a Nice Surprise

**Harrison Hills Park – September 3:** Usually after leading an outing, I wait until the evening or the next day to write the outing report. Today, I couldn't wait to write it. The morning was mostly overcast and dreary. Overnight rain had stopped just before the outing began.

Our walk to the pond produced mostly residents, including Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, a distant Empidonax flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and House Finch.

The creekside trail and the cliff were almost devoid of birds, except for Downy, Red-bellied, and Pileated Woodpeckers. Starting back to the parking lot, we stopped where we had heard a Kentucky Warbler on the spring outing. This day, we found a feeding flock that included chickadees (mostly hybrids here), Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, and Pine Warbler. Two Wood Thrushes and two Indigo Buntings also showed nicely. A distant Eastern Wood-Pewee called.

Farther along the ridge, we found another chickadee-led flock that included Pine Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. Two more Wood Thrushes and another Hooded Warbler also called from the dense shrubbery. A Hairy Woodpecker showed very nicely on a dead tree trunk.

On the road from the Environmental Learning Center, we added House Wren, Mourning Doves, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Bluebirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and more juvenile brown Indigo Buntings. We were about to call it a day when we saw a flock of birds low in a cherry tree. The flock had lots of warblers.

When we got close, we found that the birds were mobbing a large Black Rat Snake sprawled along a horizontal branch. In or near the mob were chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Gray Catbird, Carolina Wren, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Canada Warbler!

Our 16 participants tallied 50 species, seven more than last fall's outing. We had 15 species of warblers, 12 of which were part of the mob. We watched the mob for 30 to 40 minutes. The birds were usually slightly above eye level just 20 feet away. What a great experience for the novice birders in the group to see fall warblers very close!

With everyone feeling so good about the outing, 12 of us went to Eat'n Park for lunch. What a memorable outing! **—by leader Jim Valimont**

**Sewickley Heights Park – September 8:** Bob VanNewkirk greeted nine birders at the park. It was chilly enough in the early morning to see our breath, but it looked like it would turn into a beautiful day. April Claus, the park naturalist, reported that the bittersweet bushes that had taken over one of the upper fields had been removed and that native wildflowers and other plants had been put in. We were eager to see the results, so we took the path up to the Wildflower Meadow. Blue Jays, Tufted Titmice, and a



*A BIT OF A HOOD—First-fall female Hooded Warblers show only a vague trace of a hood, but it is enough for a satisfactory identification. Dave Brooke photographed this one during the 3RBC outing at Harrison Hills Park on September 3, 2017.*

Carolina Wren were calling as we walked.

An Eastern Phoebe was the first bird spotted in the meadow. There were numerous American Goldfinches, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker called from the top of a tree. A Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Pileated Woodpecker were also calling. A flock of Cedar Waxwings congregated in a tree, and a Baltimore Oriole flew over. A Song Sparrow moved in and out of a brush pile. We almost missed a Great Blue Heron, but someone turned around and noticed it flying behind us. A Common Raven isn't that common at Sewickley Heights, so it was exciting to hear one call!

The old field that had once been choked by bittersweet looked completely different. Tall Coreopsis, Black-eyed Susan, Ironweed, Goldenrod, and other wildflowers were in bloom, and a new path stretched into the woods. Even better, chickadees and other small birds were calling and darting here and there. A few people caught a glimpse of a Philadelphia Vireo, and most of us got good looks at Yellow-throated and Red-Eyed Vireos. We started calling out warblers: Ovenbird, Nashville, American Redstart, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, and Black-throated Green. Other birds included Mourning Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, and Eastern Towhee.

We had been moving slowly along, strung out in single file on the narrow path, and Bob in the lead was now at the edge of the woods, when April suddenly shouted "STOP!" We froze in place while April hurried to the front and pointed out a Yellowjacket nest which we had almost walked into! Sewickley Heights Park has its share of these wasps and they can be quite dangerous when they feel threatened. Unlike bees, they can sting multiple times. A few people experience a severe allergic reaction, and in worst cases, go into anaphylactic shock. We very quickly executed an about-face and thanked April for keeping us safe!

We retraced our steps to the Wildflower Meadow, flushing a Northern Flicker on the way, and headed to the corner of the field which is usually good for warblers. However, only two American Redstarts were moving through the trees. Back in the woods, we were delighted when a young Broad-winged Hawk landed on a tree directly above us. It glared at us for a minute before taking off, and we started climbing the hill to the horse pastures. Two Pileated Woodpeckers took off as we approached. A family of Carolina Wrens foraged in the bushes, and another flock of Cedar Waxwings

# The Peregrine

## A Successful Day at a New Location

Todd Hooe (far left) led this happy group on September 16 at a new outing location, Deer Lakes Park in northern Allegheny County. Any outing that produces a Philadelphia Vireo and 12 warbler species is a good one, and a Common Raven was a nice surprise. (photograph by Oliver Lindhiem)



## Outings Revisited

*continued from page 4*

had settled into a tree bordering the field. Our first Canada Geese went winging over us. We counted four Turkey Vultures circling in the sky, and noted a few Barn Swallows and Chimney Swifts. Eastern Bluebirds and Northern Mockingbirds are usually found here, and they did not disappoint us this day.

The park staff this summer had been busy re-routing a muddy section of the Laurel Trail and put in a new “turnpike” which certainly made walking easier! Along the path, we noticed a small tree that had rows of fuzzy white dots along the branches. April invited Bob to touch the dots, and the branch came alive, shimmering and shaking! These were Beech Blight Aphids, more commonly known as “boogie-woogie aphids.” You never know what you might find, once you go walking in the woods!

Back in the Wildflower Meadow, we spied a new woodpecker, a Hairy, making a quintet of woodpeckers for the day.

It had warmed up considerably since we started out, and we eagerly shed our jackets in the parking lot. A few people left, but the rest of us continued down the Pipeline Trail, enjoying different kinds of butterflies, among them several Monarchs, and managing to find a Monarch caterpillar on a milkweed plant. We added Great Crested Flycatcher, Swainson’s Thrush, and Scarlet Tanager to our list. A small wave of warblers were disappearing into the woods, but aside from a Magnolia and a Black-throated Green, most of them went unidentified.

Back at the parking lot, most people left, as it was already after noon, but a couple of us went on to Walker Park for lunch and then to Pontefract Park, where we snagged a Green Heron. It had been a lovely day for a walk with friends! We had 49 species, including 10 warblers. —by participant **Debbie Kalbfleisch**

**Deer Lakes Park – September 16:** Eleven participants led by Todd Hooe and Oliver Lindhiem gathered at the park. Most were seasoned birders, but it was exciting to have a first-time birder on the outing. It was unseasonably warm, and fall colors were beginning to show on many trees making for a spectacular morning.

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen in the top of a tree from the parking lot while the group was gathering. The first treat of the day was a Philadelphia Vireo perched on a snag, allowing for good views by the group. The vireo sang intermittently helping to confirm its ID. There were fewer flycatchers than expected, with just two Eastern Wood-Pewees, two Least Flycatchers, and a single Eastern Phoebe.

The highlight of the day was a good number of warblers,

12 species in total. Throughout the morning small but steady waves of warblers made their way through the treetops close to the path. Many allowed for good views. The most common were Magnolia (6), Black-throated Green (5), and Hooded (4). At least two of the Hooded Warblers were still singing. The other warblers confirmed were Ovenbird, Black-and-white, Tennessee, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Blue. Other warblers passed too quickly to be identified confidently.

Halfway through the outing we were surprised by the loud croak of a Common Raven overhead. Near the end, we enjoyed a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Other highlights included Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Swainson’s Thrush, Wood Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, several Brown Thrashers, and a large flock of Cedar Waxwings. We identified 52 species. —by co-leader **Oliver Lindhiem**

**Presque Isle – September 17:** Seven birders gathered on a sparkling sunny morning at the Vista One parking lot to explore the peninsula for migrants. A few Ring-billed Gulls, Pied-billed Grebes, Mallards, and Wood Ducks were scattered over the bay. A juvenile Bald Eagle flying over was deemed a good omen.

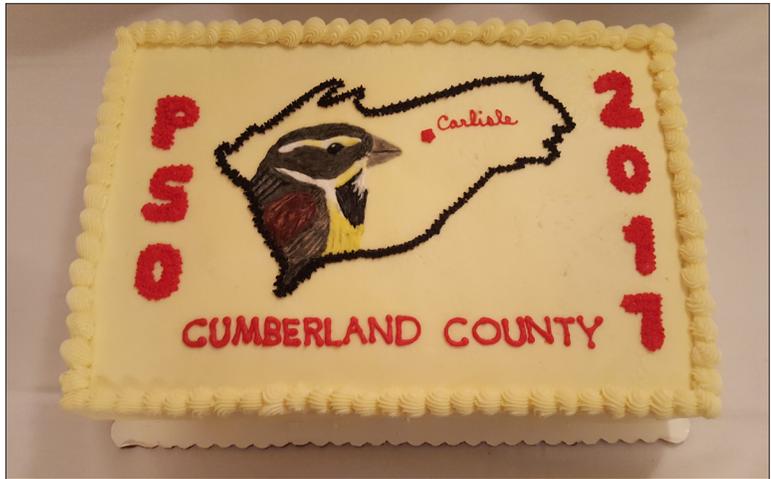
I arrived 45 minutes before our meeting time to scout the beach on the lake side. A foraging flock of 26 Sanderlings was a good find as they wandered over the sandy shore. Many Ring-billed Gulls rested farther up the lake on some of the breakwalls near Beach 1. In one patch of woody vegetation, I discovered a pair of Brown Thrashers, a Nashville Warbler, a Bay-breasted Warbler, and two Northern Flickers. Since this location was quite active, it was where I wanted to explore first with the group.

What serendipitous luck! The juvenile Sanderlings were rediscovered combing the shoreline just a short distance from where we entered the beach. But this time, there were more of them scattered around. After several attempts to try for an exact count, we decided 42 was our best total. A small shorebird was noticed among the Sanderlings – a Semipalmated Plover. A check of the gulls revealed they were all Ring-billed. We heard a Warbling Vireo on the walk back to the parking lot.

A few Wood Ducks were quickly spotted against the shoreline at Leo’s Landing, but our attention was drawn to a Great Egret that flew into the marsh. At the end of the landing, we scanned the cattails and noted a Great Blue Heron, 14 Pied-billed Grebes and four American Coots. A Belted Kingfisher announced its presence when it flew overhead. As we walked back down the road, the

*continued on page 6*

# The Peregrine



## It Was a Big Year for Dickcissels

Pennsylvania birders saw a substantial invasion of Dickcissels into the eastern U.S. in June, far from their normal breeding range in the Midwest. Todd Hooe photographed this one beautifully on June 3 near Blairsville in Westmoreland County. Sherron Lynch, famous for her cakes at 3RBC picnics, demonstrated her cake-decorating artistry by depicting a Dickcissel for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's annual meeting banquet at Carlisle in September. At least 24 3RBC members attended the meeting, which featured a program on modern-day birding by Ted Floyd, the editor of *Birding* magazine.

## Outings Revisited

*continued from page 5*

egret gave us an even better admiring look by foraging in the open. We spotted our first warbler, a Common Yellowthroat, under the observation deck.

The area around the ranger station was quiet, except for a fledgling American Goldfinch that begged noisily to be fed by its parent. We moved on to check the area around the Waterworks and to walk the Old Gas Well Trail. This area was mostly quiet except for a Red-bellied Woodpecker, some Blue Jays, and two White-breasted Nuthatches. A flock of Double-crested Cormorants flew overhead as we exited the trail. Well, at least we knew where the birds were not and headed to the Long Pond Trail which can be very productive. Birds there included a juvenile Bald Eagle perched near the top of a gigantic oak tree, two Great Blue Herons flying over the marsh, a Downy Woodpecker, a Black-capped Chickadee, a Carolina Wren, an Eastern Towhee, and our second warbler for the morning – a Nashville.

During a picnic lunch at the Pery Monument, we watched a Caspian Tern flying repeatedly over Misery Bay. On one pass, it plunged into the water. Our first Herring Gulls were also noted. The Graveyard Pond trail is just across the road, so it is where we ventured next. We were disappointed again by the lack of warbler activity. I was the only one to see a fleeting glimpse of a Wilson's Warbler. Two Eastern Phoebes were spotted flycatching. Gray Catbirds were frequently heard or seen, as well as some robins. A Swainson's Thrush was discovered hiding in dense cover.

Finding warblers was becoming a challenge, so we drove to Fry's Landing, a prime banding area during spring migration. Our first Turkey Vultures flew overhead. A Philadelphia Vireo was a good discovery. Gray Catbirds and Blue Jays were there, too. A Swainson's Thrush perching low provided a satisfying look. Finally, near the end of the wooded trail, three Bay-breasted Warblers were discovered bopping around the leaves, but stopping

long enough to be identified. Hallelujah, I silently cried!

Our final destination was Pine Tree Trail, and we had a bit of activity that produced a Blackburnian Warbler, two Brown Thrashers, and our only Tufted Titmouse. A very unexpected sighting was a mystery at first. The bird was discovered on the grassy edge of this brushy trail. Its back was facing us, and it was definitely shaped and colored like a sparrow, but which one? As we approached, the bird slowly turned, and we saw it had a red crown and a pale breast. It was a juvenile White-crowned Sparrow. This species only begins to pass through Presque Isle in September. Now that was an unexpected sighting!

Despite the lack of warblers, other birds put smiles on our faces. Some birders even got to see one or more lifers. We tallied 41 species. –by leader **Bob VanNewkirk**

## Tony Schryer Passed Away

Our club was diminished when George Anthony Schryer, known to us as "Tony," passed away on September 20. Tony was an active birder and 3RBC member, frequently attending our outings and meetings with his wife Judy.

His quick wit and sharp mind made him a welcome companion. He and Judy served on our club's hospitality committee for a period in the past, bringing refreshments.

Tony served as a supply officer in the U.S. Navy. Most of his professional career was spent with Westinghouse. Memorial donations may be made in Tony's name to the Blackridge Civic Association, PO Box 10684, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.

# The Peregrine



*AN EXCITING TREAT: BIRDS OUT OF RANGE*—Tom Moeller's topic in this installment of "Observations" is the excitement of finding an extralimital species – which means far from its normal



range. Two such experiences which he photographed were a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (left) and two Black Skimmers (right). Tom also discusses "extra-seasonal" birds in his essay.

## Observations

### Extralimital Birds: Keep Looking and Keep Reporting

By Tom Moeller

Birds do not read the birding guide books! Especially the parts about ranges and range maps! Two recent examples: a first-time state sighting of a White-winged Tern was made on August 11, 2017, at Nessmuk Lake in Tioga County. This bird normally winters in Africa, India, and south Asian waters, and it summers in Eastern Europe and Russia. On September 5 there was a Sabine's Gull at Kahle Lake in Clarion County, far from its normal range in the Pacific or Arctic Ocean.

A bird can be "out of range" of its own volition or as a result of some natural cause, such as weather, depletion of food sources, or inhospitable conditions. Birds out of range are said to be *extralimital*.

My wife Nancy and I encountered our first extralimital bird at Pymatuning State Park in September 2008. After a 3RBC Presque Isle outing, we stopped at Pymatuning on the way home to find a reported Black-bellied Whistling Duck. Although it was late afternoon, right at the Spillway parking lot we spotted the bird. It slept and drifted on the water at lot, but it did fly back toward the spillway after the current pushed it north. The duck had most likely been swept up from Texas by Hurricane Ike as the remnants of the storm traveled to our area. Unfortunately, there was little chance the bird made it back to Texas.

We found our next extralimital bird in September 2009. We had traveled up to Shenango Lake in Mercer County. We found good birds there, 23 species, but the 24th did not belong. On a cove on the north shore under an Osprey nest pole, a shorebird was foraging in the shallow water. It had a curved beak, brown back, and a white belly. What was it? After studying our Sibley Guide, Nancy found the exact bird – a juvenile White Ibis. But the guide book also said that bird belonged down on the southern coast of the U.S., not in Mercer County with the Appalachian Mountains between it and the nearest coast! I took photographs and sent them off to the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC), where the bird was eventually accepted as a rare find for the state. A young bird sowing its wild oats?

In November 2012, probably as a result of Hurricane Sandy, a pair of Black Skimmers were found in the Ohio River at McKees Rocks near the mouth of Chartiers Creek. These two birds were

juveniles far from their normal home along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Again, extreme weather had put birds in a place they did not belong and where they probably would not survive.

There is a magnet for extralimital birds in Pittsburgh – Duck Hollow. This nondescript spot is found where Nine Mile Run empties into the Monongahela River. A sandbank, built up by the river's current, sometimes floods over it. Vegetation grows here at times, but it is often the resting place of junk and debris from upriver. Mallards are the usual denizens of the area.

Yet Duck Hollow has attracted over 90 species of songbirds, gulls, shorebirds, raptors, and ducks just in the last 10 years. Eastern Willets belong along the Atlantic Coast, but we found nine at Duck Hollow in May 2012. In December 2013, Jack and Sue Solomon found another coastal wader there – a Marbled Godwit.

The rarest bird at Duck Hollow had been spotted the day before down at Pittsburgh's Point – a Kelp Gull, a species that belongs in South America! Our sighting was made along with other reputable birders on January 18, 2015. This may have been the same bird that was later seen at Springfield Lake in Ohio. Observers submitted photos and detailed descriptions from both Pittsburgh locations, and the PORC has accepted the identification of Pennsylvania's bird.

Two more extralimital birds appeared at Duck Hollow in 2016. On April 2 we were still looking for winter ducks when our friend Todd Ladner pointed to two unusual birds in the thick clouds above: American White Pelicans! These birds are rare east of the Mississippi except down in Florida. Both were in breeding plumage complete with nuptial tubercles on their beaks. They were on a long honeymoon trip!

On August 26, an American Avocet, another shorebird that is supposed to be on southern and Gulf shores or out west, was found resting in the shallow water of the Monongahela River. We saw the bird as darkness fell and watched it take off to continue its journey.

An *extra-seasonal* Sora appeared early in 2017 at Duck Hollow. It was the first February sighting of that species in Pennsylvania. The bird stayed around from early February to early March when it should have been down south in warmer climes.

What makes Duck Hollow such an attraction for birds is a mystery. Or is it that so many observers watch the site often,

# The Peregrine

## Birds in the Three Rivers Area

### Red-headed Woodpecker Is Best of June–July 2017

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

A **Common Merganser** was along the Ohio River near Dashields Dam 7/12 (MV). After last year's first confirmed nesting in the county, no nesting was detected this year.

The first shorebird migrant noted was a **Least Sandpiper** at North Park 7/18 (AB). Among 32 **Herring Gulls** at the Emsworth Dam on the Ohio River were 2 downy chicks 7/18 (PB).

**Northern Bobwhites** seem to appear in various places as birds are released. One visited a yard in Natrona Heights 6/10 (DH, PH) and 1 was recorded calling in Hays 6/17-20 (LS, eBird).

A **Virginia Rail** was seen regularly at Wingfield Pines in June (JM, FK, LN) although no evidence of breeding was observed. This is the location where a pair bred last year.

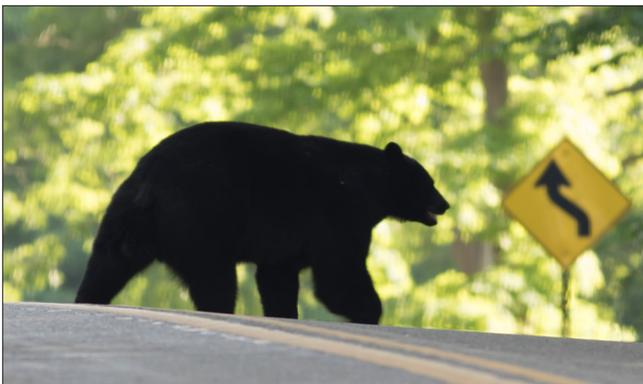
**Common Nighthawk** reports include 4 at Greenfield 6/4 (KSJ), 1 in Oakland 6/8 (RT), and 2 again in Greenfield 7/12 (KSJ). Chimney Swift towers have been erected in the Allegheny County parks and other locations in the Pittsburgh area. A tower in Harrison Hills Park was being used in July (DB).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** visited a feeder in a yard in Hampton Twp. 7/1, a first there (DN). The **Purple Martin** colony at Harrison Hills Park had 46 pairs (DB). A **Bank Swallow** was near Dashields Dam on the Allegheny River 7/24 (MV).

A **Veery** was in Pine Twp. 6/21 (PL, SL), the only known area where they breed in Allegheny County. Late **Swainson's Thrushes** were detected by a night call recorder at Moon Twp. 6/1-3 (GM).

A leucistic **European Starling** was seen at Shouse Park near Dashields Dam 7/4 (MV). Pine Twp. is the county's place for summer **Purple Finches**, where 2 visited a feeder in July (PL, SL).

*Observers: Dave Brooke, Paul Brown, Alan Buriak, Deborah Hess, Paul Hess, Fred Kachmarik, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Geoff Malosh, Lauren Nagoda, Dick Nugent, Kate St. John, Leah Szczepanski, Mark Vass.*



*BIRDING SURPRISE— Each June Mike Fialkovich, assisted by Paul Hess, conducts a 25-mile breeding bird survey in Butler County for the federal government. They count adult breeding-season birds enabling researchers to analyze long-term population trends. They did not count this huge adult Black Bear which came a little too close in Winfield Township. Mike photographed it while – happily for the observers – it slowly ambled away.*

## Observations

*continued from page 7*

making it almost impossible for any odd species to escape notice? This is probably why so many extralimital and extra-seasonal birds are being reported – there are just more birders out there reporting! Plus, there are many more ways of identifying and reporting birds than in the past, as *Birding* magazine editor Ted Floyd demonstrated in his presentation for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's annual meeting at Carlisle in September of this year (which, incidentally, at least 24 3RBC members attended).

Keep looking for birds and keep reporting your findings on eBird, PABirds, Facebook, Instagram – wherever. Also report birds found in Allegheny County to Mike Fialkovich, 3RBC's bird reports editor. We may find that the guide books, which the birds don't read, have it wrong, and our winged friends go to many more places than the books say!

## References:

"American White Pelican - *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*." 2017. New Hampshire Public Television: Nature Works. Accessed September 23, 2017. <http://tinyurl.com/ybtgldqr>

Ben Morrison. "The Ohio Kelp Gull." *The Ohio Cardinal*, Winter 2015-16, Vol. 39, No. 2: pages 69-72. Accessed September 26, 2017. <http://tinyurl.com/y9fsd9t8>

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. "White Ibis Records - September 1, 2009." December 21, 2011. Accessed August 25, 2017. <http://tinyurl.com/yd8esqh5>

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. 352-01-2015 Kelp Gull. January 17 2015. Accessed August 26, 2017. <http://tinyurl.com/y6ug37mr>

David Allen Sibley. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.

## See These on Our Website

- If you missed Noah Strycker's exciting program on October 4, listen to his complete presentation.
- Find complete lists of species found on the club's outings, which are not included in "Outings Revisited" summaries.
- Prevent birds from hitting your windows with methods available from a project called "BirdSafe."

## Other CBCs Are Scheduled in the Pittsburgh Area

Other Christmas Bird Counts in the Pittsburgh area include the following:

- South Hills, December 16 – Nancy Page, 412-221-4795; [nanpaul@verizon.net](mailto:nanpaul@verizon.net).
- Buffalo Creek Valley, December 16 – George Reese, 724-353-9649; [g.reese@gaiconsultants.com](mailto:g.reese@gaiconsultants.com).
- Buffalo Creek (Washington County), December 17 – Larry Helgerman, [bobolink1989@gmail.com](mailto:bobolink1989@gmail.com).
- South Butler, January 6 – Chris Kubiak, 412-963-6100; [ckubiak@aswp.org](mailto:ckubiak@aswp.org).

A list of all Pennsylvania CBC dates and contacts will be available in the December issue of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology newsletter, the *PSO Pileated* ([pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org)).