



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

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SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH -- In 2021, Noah earned a master's degree with honors from New York's Stony Brook University, after his extensive studies of the Chinstrap Penguins. He traveled to Elephant Island with a team of Stony Brook researchers on the Greenpeace ship Esperanza. (photo by Noah Strycker)

We'll Visit Antarctic Penguins on Oct. 4

Antarctica's windswept Elephant Island, known as the refuge of Ernest Shackleton and his shipwrecked crew in 1916, is a stronghold for thousands of nesting Chinstrap Penguins. Noah Strycker traveled to the island in 2020 with a team of researchers to find out how these penguins are faring. Their mission was to count the penguins breeding there, done only once before, 50 years ago.

At our Wednesday, October 4, 2023 meeting Noah will relate this adventure on the Southern Ocean and follow the changing fortunes of the Chinstrap Penguins of Elephant Island.

He appeared at our October 4, 2017 3RBC meeting when he discussed his 2015 world Big Year record and related book *Birding Without Borders*. You can read the minutes of that meeting and listen to a recording of it here: [October 4, 2017](#).

Noah is now Associate Editor of *Birding* magazine, the author of six well-regarded books about birds, a penguin scientist, and a regular contributor of photography and articles to all major bird magazines as well as other media. His other books include *Among Penguins*, *The Thing with Feathers*, and *Birding Basics*. Noah also works as a naturalist guide on expeditions to Antarctica and Norway's Svalbard archipelago.

* * *

This will be a *hybrid meeting* starting at 6:30 PM ET: in-person at Beechwood Farms auditorium (6:30 PM) and a Zoom meeting (7:00 PM) for those who cannot attend. The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Noah's presentation will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the event, including Zoom passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied a few days before the meeting.

For Spotted Sandpipers, Females Are in Charge

Steve Gosser photographed this strutting Spotted Sandpiper in a courtship dance at North Park on April 26, 2023. Perhaps surprisingly, it was likely a female, not a male

Cornell Lab's "All About Birds" online tells us that this was the first bird species described in which the roles of males and females are reversed.

"The females perform courtship behavior, usually an elaborate swooping flight with the wings held open while the bird gives its *weet-weet* song. She may also give a strutting courtship display from the ground.

"Females that are looking for mates over a wide area may do this up and down considerable lengths of shoreline. Interested males remain on the territory while uninterested males are chased away.

"Males tend to have more of the pituitary hormone prolactin than females. Prolactin promotes parental care, which may explain how the role reversal develops each season."



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

President's Message

We Found Birding Riches in Far-West Washington

By Sheree Daugherty

I was excited to be traveling to Washington state with five other birders on an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania eco-tour led by Brian Shema on June-17-24, 2023. It was my first trip to Washington, home of Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains.

Our first stop was Puget Sound Discovery Park. From the driftwood-strewn beach we scanned for birds beyond the West Point Lighthouse. This was our opportunity to look for seabirds, and we spotted Pigeon Guillemots, Marbled Murrelets, and Rhinoceros Auklets. A vagrant Brown Pelican and a Clark's Grebe were a surprise. Curious Sea Otters and a Harbor Seal watched us while we watched them.

Heading eastward, we stopped in the Mount Baker Snoqualmie Forest. The rocky Lake Serene Trail climbs through enormous, moss-covered trees, a likely setting for elves, hobbits, or perhaps Sasquatch! Soon a Red-breasted Sapsucker swooped across the trail.

The scenery was stunning as we continued east. Temperatures dropped from the high 50s to the mid 30s as we climbed to Steven's Pass at 4,061 feet.

We arrived in Leavenworth, a former logging community that has transformed itself into a quaint Bavarian-themed village. Each of our modest rooms at the Alpine River Inn had a balcony overlooking the Wenatchee River, the perfect perch to watch a family of Pygmy Nuthatches.

The sandy trails at the historic Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery gave us some new birds. A well-timed (for us) hatch of mayflies lured swallows, flycatchers, and tanagers. At one point we had five Western Tanagers at once! An American Dipper was spotted foraging in the stream. Once it had a bill full of food, it flew toward us and veered under a footbridge at the spillway. There, on a diagonal steel beam, was the bulky nest with young inside. We watched the parents make several trips to feed the hungry brood.

The Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort, a center for the arts, was a short drive across the river from the fish hatchery. Birding through the well-manicured grounds, we enjoyed unique sculptures along with the birds. From a rocky outcropping, we were treated to a female Harlequin Duck with five very active, very cute, ducklings.

Hiking the narrow switchbacked Icicle Trail led us upward. Was it worth it? Most definitely!!! A White-headed Woodpecker swooped to a broken snag just off of the trail. One very demanding, soon to fledge, male peered from a cavity begging for food while constantly squawking, waiting to be fed by the harried parents.

Frenchman Coulee is a wide, flat-bottomed canyon framed by 300-foot cliffs. It is a well-known destination for rock climbers. Rock Wrens, perched on the tops of the basalt columns, called as we walked the dusty path through sagebrush. We also found Black-billed Magpies and White-throated Swallows. The trail led us to a pond where we flushed two Black-crowned Night-Herons, along with a female Bufflehead. Back on the canyon's edge, a Prairie Falcon flew overhead. While looking at the falcon, we spotted five distant White Pelicans soaring against the brilliant blue sky.

Our next destination was Swakane Canyon. The narrow unimproved road quickly deteriorated, with large rocks poised to cause severe damage to the undercarriage of the rental SUV. The decision was made to park and walk. A covey of birds flew

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across the hillside but disappeared in the brush, so we moved on. Fortunately, on our hike back, we heard a sharp call and found a Chukar standing sentinel on a boulder. Retracing our way back down the rocky road, we stopped at a cluster of maintenance buildings. A loud call caught our attention, and soon we were enjoying three Lewis's Woodpeckers.

We birded a few campgrounds along Icicle Road. At Eight Mile Camp Ground, Black Swifts swirled overhead. Smaller swallows flew among the swifts, conveniently giving us a good comparison for scale.

The time had come to head back toward Seattle on what is always a bittersweet last day of a trip. For a complete change of habitat, we stopped at Swauk Prairie just east of Cle Elm. Both Mountain and Western Bluebirds were busy at nest boxes mounted on fence posts. Western Meadowlarks sang and cowbirds walked among a small herd of "domestic" bison.

As a final treat, we stopped at a sewage treatment plant, something only a birder would understand as a destination. We were rewarded with a female Barrow's Goldeneye floating in one of the ponds.

The trip was well planned to cover a variety of habitats, each with a new group of birds. The seven participants were treated to great scenery, most got multiple life birds, many fine meals, and lots of laughter. Thanks to everyone for sharing the experience and making it a great trip!

Outings to Come

Fall Promises Us a Wealth of Birds

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

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

Saturday, September 2 – Deer Lakes Park: Meet Oliver Lindhiem (412-680-5642) and John Vassallo at 7:30 AM in the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russellton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then turn right and proceed to the last parking lot. We will hike approximately 3 miles. The trails are fairly well maintained, but dress for wet grass and mud.

Friday, September 8 – Sewickley Heights Park: Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot for our second outing to Sewickley this fall. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

Saturday, September 9 – Harrison Hills Park: Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. We will start at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the pond. As you enter the park, bear right at the fork and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. Dress for wet grass and mud.

Friday, September 15 – North Park: Meet Adrian Fenton at 7:45 AM at the ice rink parking lot on Pearce Mill Road. We will check Marshall Lake, Gold Star Mothers wetlands in North Park Lake, and then walk some trails off South Ridge Drive. **Email Adrian at AF9963285@aol.com if you plan to attend**

Saturday, September 16 – Butler-Freeport Trail: Linda Croskey (lcroskey@consolidated.net) will guide us along Butler County's only Rails-to-Trails trail. Meet between 8:30 AM and 8:45 AM at the Sheetz Drive Trailhead (not a Sheetz gas station).

See directions to this location, unfamiliar to some members, on the "Outings" page of our 3RBC website.

We will walk about a mile past ponds, fields, and woods for a variety of habitats. Around 11:00 we can have lunch at Deraillleur Bike Shop Cafe, which offers wholesome food, refreshing beverages, and ice cream.

After lunch we will walk back to the 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 near the Herman area. **RSVP Linda by e-mail or text 724.612.9963.**

Sunday, September 17 – Frick Park: Meet Tessa Rhinehart (tessa.rhinehart@gmail.com) at 7:30 AM at the Frick Park Environmental Center at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill. **Please email Tessa to tell you you'll attend.**

Saturday, October 14 – Chatham's Eden Hall Campus: Join Malcolm Kurtz at 8:00 AM in the North lot next to the blue water tower. The Campus about 35 minutes from Pittsburgh is

an ecologically rich area in 388 acres of maintained meadow, sustainable farmland, and expansive hardwood and softwood forests.

It is an under-birded location despite its high avian diversity. The National Aviary has begun a banding project at the site. Besides birds on this scenic hike, we will identify plant species we encounter. **Malcolm will limit participants to 20. Email him if you plan to attend: malcolmgardener101@gmail.com.**

Sunday, October 15 – Moraine State Park, Davis Hollow Marina (North Shore): Meet Karyn Delaney (724-713-9474) at the marina parking lot, the far end of the lower level at 9:30 AM. We will begin on a flat trail along the lake edge, then head uphill through wooded areas, eventually finding the lake edge again. Our return will retrace our steps for a total of approximately 2 miles.

For those interested, we can take a short walk from the parking lot to the Davis Hollow Cabin. While the Cabin is generally locked, it is a beautiful piece of early American architecture. Bring water and snacks.

Directions: Take I-79 North to the Route 422 exit, turn right at the exit and stay in the far-right lane marked North Shore Exit. (You won't need to merge onto 422). At the exit, turn right, and then turn right at the North Shore Drive sign. The marina is at the end of North Shore Drive. Allow approximately 20 minutes from the North Shore Exit to the end of North Shore Drive.

The outing is limited to 14 participants. Call Karyn at 724-713-9474 if you plan to attend.

(See the outing list on our 3RBC website for an interesting history of the Davis Cabin, which was built before the American Revolution.)

Saturday November 4 – Yellow Creek State Park: This is a joint outing of 3RBC and the Todd Bird Club. Meet Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) at 8:00 AM at the park office on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Allow an hour and a half driving from Pittsburgh. The park's many habitats include a lake that attracts water birds and sometimes exciting rarities. **Email Margaret at bcoriola@windstream.net if you will attend.**



HARD TO IDENTIFY? You may need a good leader to identify this bird on of our fall outings. It's a Blackpoll Warbler Mike Fialkovich photographed in his Allegheny County yard

Outings Revisited

These Two Walks Included a Cake and Some Snakes

Harrison Hills Park – June 10: On a beautiful morning, 13 birders met for a walk before the club's annual picnic. As we gathered around co-leaders Sheree Daugherty and Steve Thomas in the Rachel Carson parking lot, we listened to a Red-eyed Vireo, an Eastern Towhee, and a Northern Cardinal singing. While we walked through the woods down to the pond and the surrounding meadow, Sheree Daugherty spotted an Orchard Oriole in a large tree, and she was able to get most of us on it. Chimney Swifts were twittering overhead, and people called out Red-bellied Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher, Tree and Barn Swallows, Yellow Warbler, and Indigo Bunting. Numerous Red-winged Blackbirds were bouncing around in the field, and some people heard a Hooded Warbler.

We didn't linger long there, but drove to the playground area to check out the steep cliffs for Worm-eating Warbler; several had been reported this spring. No luck on the warbler, but hopefully they were sitting on nests! The river was quiet, as well, but we heard a couple of Eastern Wood-Pewees, and got an excellent look at one of the singers. Several Wood Thrushes were trading songs back and forth, and we spent a few minutes enjoying the concert. A Turkey Vulture floated by, and Scarlet Tanagers were singing their scratchy songs. We were delighted when a male tanager dropped down from the treetops for us to admire!

Before heading to the Yakaon Pavilion for lunch, we stopped at the Blue Jay parking lot and walked across the road into the woods, hoping to hear a Kentucky Warbler, but they were also quiet. We did, however, hear a Great Crested Flycatcher sounding off at this location.

The group split up at the pavilion, with half walking a short distance up the road, while the rest of us opted to take a break and watch Purple Martins and Eastern Bluebirds. When the walkers returned, they reported that they had added a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-tailed Hawk, Cedar Waxwing, Field Sparrow, and Baltimore Oriole to the day's list. Eight members who hadn't been able to make the morning walk joined us for lunch, and it was fun catching up with everyone. The only thing that could possibly top such a good day was one of Sherron Lynch's wonderful cakes decorated with an Ivory-billed Woodpecker on top! –by participant **Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Laurel Summit and Wolf Rocks Trail – June 17: A nice group of 17 people attended the annual June outing in the Laurel Mountains for breeding birds. The location changes every year, and this year we returned to the summit of Laurel Mountain and Spruce Flats Bog. The high-elevation forest is a breeding area for a variety of warblers, vireos, thrushes, and more.

It was a bit foggy, cool, and breezy at the start of the outing, requiring layers or a jacket. We started by taking a short walk to the bog. Before we left the parking lot we saw a Great Crested Flycatcher and an Indigo Bunting. Along the trail to the bog we heard Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, and Canada Warblers, and saw a Veery on the trail. At the bog we were treated to two singing Hermit Thrushes, a Blue-headed Vireo, a singing Purple Finch.

Returning to the parking lot, we started the hike out to the Wolf Rocks overlook. The Mountain Laurel was in peak bloom, providing colorful surroundings as we walked. We had good looks at a Canada Warbler and heard several others. We also had a look at a Magnolia Warbler, one of the less common species that breeds



QUITE A CONTRAST – Sherron Lynch, our incomparable cake-maker, created this one for our picnic on June 10. Her Ivory-billed Woodpecker recalls Steven Latta's 3RBC program on June 7. The cluster of five Timber Rattlesnakes was a non-avian highlight of Mike Fialkovich's outing at Wolf Rocks Trail on June 17.



here. A number of Black-throated Blue Warblers were singing, several American Redstarts, but surprisingly only one Black-throated Green Warbler. We heard two Yellow-billed Cuckoos calling. The group enjoyed nice views of a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. As we observed them, the female entered a cavity, a likely nest site.

The Wolf Rocks overlook was quiet. A Dark-eyed Junco sang for an extended time from a dead tree as we enjoyed the scenic view. Two men showed us a group of five Timber Rattlesnakes that were piled and entwined with one another. They may have been trying to warm themselves on the rocks. This was an exciting highlight of the outing. Some participants were treated to the sight of a Porcupine climbing a tree. –by leader **Mike Fialkovich**

Let's Welcome an Author to Our Membership List

By Tom Moeller

One of the newest members of Three Rivers Birding Club is Lisa Donovan, an author of children's books on birds.

She recently moved back to our area from South Carolina with her husband Will. Lisa has roots in western Pennsylvania, having attended Grove City College and Carnegie Mellon University.

I downloaded a Kindle version of her latest book *Birds at the Beach and Beyond*. It's a cute, introductory book on shorebirds for children (even for new birders), either to be read to small children or as a first reader for young school-age kids. Each page has a wonderful illustration of a bird with a rhyming quatrain describing its most salient aspect.

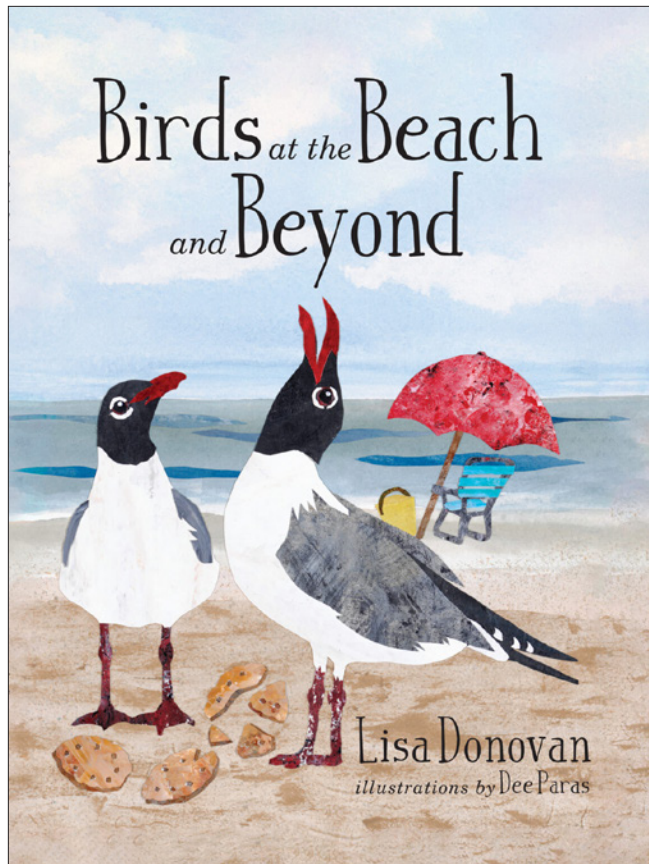
Anhinga's long neck
Is thin as a stem.
When drying his wings,
He makes a big "M"!

Lisa's illustrator, Dee Paras (also a Grove City College graduate), provides excellent, colorful representations of each bird. She makes collages using cut paper, paint, and pieces of photographs.

The last pages include do's and don'ts around birds at the beach, a plug for the National Aviary, and a "thank you" to Bob Mulvihill for his input.

Lisa has an earlier book *Birds in my Backyard* very similar to this book about common birds in the neighborhood. Again, Dee Paras did the excellent illustrations.

Lisa is definitely an asset to the club!



TIMELY COLORS – Steve Gosser told his friends, “You know, since I’m from Pittsburgh, I gotta love any bird that sports the black and gold!” He photographed this Prairie Warbler at the Piney Tract in Clarion County in May 2023.)

Notes About Our Birders

Susanne Varley, a long-time member of the Wissahickon Nature Club died of heart failure on June 2, 2023. She was that club's program coordinator, and was known and respected by many 3RBC members for her fervent love of nature.

Sue passed along her love with enthusiasm and success to all who knew her.

The January/February 2023 issue of *The Peregrine* included a brief note and photos about a birding trip to Scandinavia by 3RBC members Pat and Sherron Lynch.

Their complete report with many photos is now available at “Trip Reports & Articles” on the 3RBC website. Photographer John Caddick tells us “the gallery looks great.”

Internationally recognized research into bird song continues to emerge from the University of Pittsburgh.

Most recently an extensively detailed scientific paper dealing with bird song was published in the British ornithological journal *Ibis*: “When birds sing at the same pitch, they avoid singing at the same time.”

The authors are Lauren Chronister, Tessa Rhinehart, and Justin Kitzes. Read the paper at onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ibi.13192.

Incidentally, Tessa is an expert 3RBC outing leader. Her next one will be on September 17 at Frick Park. See “Outings to Come” on page 3.

One more thing: The Timber Rattlesnakes clustered in the tangle on page 4 were originally described by Carl Linnaeus in 1758 in his landmark *Systema Naturae*, which categorized living things in groups of genera and species.

He named this species *Crotalus horridus*. The genus *Crotalus* is derived from a Greek word meaning “rattle,” and we can well appreciate why he chose the Latin *horridus* for the species.

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MEMORABLE BIRDS – Tom photographed these three in Connecticut during his many trips around the continent (top to bottom): a stately Great Black-backed Gull, a Herring Gull carrying a clam for lunch, and a Lesser Yellowlegs, although much smaller but stately enough in its own species.



Observations

Looking with New Eyes

By Tom Moeller

My family moved from Greenwich, Connecticut to California when I was 14. From those 14 years, I remember only two birds: a baby robin and a pair of migrating eagles. I discovered the baby robin in our yard, but my brother and his friend took over its care – putting it in a box, feeding it, and eventually letting it go. They even got their photo in the local paper with the robin on a stick between them, but I was not included. The pair of eagles was pointed out to me by our neighbor as they flew high overhead. I've been back to Greenwich several times since, and more birds have popped up there since my childhood.

I often go back to see relatives or for funerals, but I also take some time to see birds. Visiting beaches on Long Island Sound, I've found Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Laughing Gulls, and Great Black-backed Gulls. It was at Greenwich's Tod's Point (Greenwich Point Park) that I first witnessed gulls dropping clams onto rocks or pavement to open and eat them in 2013. Double-crested Cormorants, Common Terns, Mallards, and Mute Swans populate the various beaches in the area. Snowy and Great Egrets can be found at Tod's Point. Geese include both Canada Geese and Brant; the Brant found at the salt water, the Canada Geese at any water. At Byram Beach, where I swam as a child, there is now a tower with an Osprey nest.

During a high school reunion trip, I stopped at the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch (Greenwich Audubon Center) for a couple of hours. Just like at Allegheny Front, a plastic owl was set up to attract attacks by passing raptors. Again I saw a Bald Eagle in Connecticut there. Other raptors were a Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. A Common Raven flew over too.

Also during that trip I visited several nearby parks. Cummings Park in Stamford had tons of Laughing and Herring Gulls, cormorants, and even a few Fish Crows. Again gulls and shore birds were plentiful at Gelfi Park on an estuary of the Noroton River. A pair of Lesser Yellowlegs waded through the shallows, and a family of five Mute Swans (two adults and three goslings) lolled in the sunshine.

Of course, the "usual" birds are to be found in Connecticut too -- robins, pigeons, doves, Blue Jays, House Sparrows, and Song Sparrows to name a few. On another (funeral) trip this past spring, I had time to see a close Red-tailed Hawk, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Hooded Merganser in a nearby pond. Can't stop birding.

It's surprising how we miss things as we grow up or just living our daily lives. In Connecticut, as I said, I only remember two species from my childhood. I'm sure I saw others including gulls at the beach. In my 11 years in California, I remember watching crows for a high school assignment but not much else, although I know there were a lot of others. Many more birds have appeared in both those states on my return visits. It's always good to see "old" places with new eyes.

See a photo gallery on the 3RBC website depicting more birds that remain alive in Tom's memories.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

We Found Exciting Birds During April and May 2023

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

April brought a few cold fronts with storms and very high winds. The neotropical migration was disappointing with just a day or two of good numbers of migrants.

Some waterfowl were still present in April. Four **Northern Shovelers** were at Imperial 4/3 (JK, DBE, MV). A **Gadwall** was at North Park 4/15 (DB). An **American Wigeon** was in Findlay Twp. 4/3-7 (MV) and 1 was in Harmar Twp. 4/12 (TB, m.ob.). There was an eBird entry of a **Redhead** at Wingfield Pines 4/1. A **Common Merganser** with 6 young was at Oakmont 5/19 (SK). Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Dashields Dam 5/20 (MV). A **Ruddy Duck** was at Allegheny Cemetery 4/1 (JL) and 5 were at Dashields Dam 4/17 (ST, JK).

A **Northern Bobwhite** appeared in Franklin Park 5/22 (eBird).

The **Virginia Rail** at Wingfield Pines in March continued through April (DNE, NN). Two were there in May (m.ob.), so breeding at this site again is a possibility. Two **Soras** were at Wingfield Pines 4/27 (JK), and 2 were in a patch of cattails at Panther Hollow Lake in Schenley Park 4/30 (SR) with 1 seen up to 5/7 (m.ob.). Another **Sora** was at North Park 5/8-14 (AF, m.ob.). A **Common Gallinule** was a nice find at a pond on Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 5/8 (MV); it remained to 5/10 (m.ob.).

A **Semipalmated Plover** was at North Park 5/17-19 (IF, m.ob.) and 1 was at Peter's Creek 5/20 (JF, JP). Two **Dunlin** were at North Park 4/20 (AF). **Least Sandpiper** was present at Imperial 5/9-19 (RBu, m.ob.) with a high count of 4 on 5/12 (RBu) and at North Park 5/5-18 with a high count of 8 on 5/14 (m.ob.). One

was at Chapel Harbor 5/23 (RBu) and 1 was at Dashields Dam 5/24 (MV). Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at North Park 5/8-18 (m.ob.), 1 was along the Allegheny River at Oakmont 5/20 (SK) and 2 were at Dashields Dam 5/24 (MV). A good count of 44 **Wilson's Snipes** were at the main pond at Imperial 4/9 (MV). It's been a long time since such counts appeared in the area.

All gull and tern reports were from Dashields Dam. A total of 38 **Bonaparte's Gulls** flew past 4/6 (ST), 1 was there 4/7 (ST) and 1 on 4/16 (MV). A **Caspian Tern** flew past 4/17 (JK) and 4 were there 4/22 (AF). Fifteen **Forster's Terns** flew past 4/6 (ST), 1 was perched on a buoy there 4/7 (MV), and 2 were there 4/22 (AF).

A **Common Loon** was at Duck Hollow 4/10-12 (JSh, m.ob.), one was at Harmar Twp. 4/12 (MF, m.ob.), and 1 lingered at Chapel Harbor 5/24-30 (RBu).

An **American Bittern** was discovered in the same patch of cattails at Panther Hollow Lake in Schenley Park as the **Soras** 4/29-5/7 (AF, m.ob.). It was amazingly tame close to a busy trail. It was often seen capturing fish and frogs - a rare opportunity to see one at close range in the open. It's amazing that the 2 **Soras** and this bittern were found in the same small patch of habitat in a city park! An early **Great Egret** was seen at Sharpsburg flying down river 4/6 (RBu). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was at the PennDot Wetlands next to Boyce-Mayview Park 5/20 (JSa).

A **Black Vulture** was in South Park Twp. 4/4 (JF) and 1 flew over I-79 near the Route 51 exit 4/10 (JP).

A **Merlin** was in Squirrel Hill 5/30 (MKu) near the breeding site used last year, so they may have returned to breed again.

Two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were at Frick Park 5/7 (AF and others) 1 was at a feeder in Moon Twp. 5/8 (JB), and 1 visited a yard in Pine Twp. 5/27 (PL, SL).

A **Fish Crow** was at Harrison Hills Park 4/1 (MF, OL) and 19 were in Verona 5/3 (SK).

continued on page 8



HARD TO SEE – American Bitterns and Soras are notoriously hard to see in their thickly vegetated marshy habitats. Birders were fortunate and excited to see both of these at Panther Hollow Lake



in Pittsburgh's Schenley Park in late April and early May. Charity Kheshgi managed to photograph both of them while they were hiding from predators. See Mike Fialkovich's report for details.

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Birds in the Three Rivers

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A **Common Raven** nest with 3 chicks was on a highway overpass near Imperial 4/20 (MV). A pair nested there in the past.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was at Harrison Hills Park 5/20 (MG) and another was at Frick Park that day (RH), surprisingly the only two reports this season. An **Alder Flycatcher** was in Hays 5/4 (KB), a rare migrant here. Uncommon to rare in spring, single **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were at Boyce Park in Plum 5/16 (EH), Beechwood Farms 5/18 (DM), and Schenley Park 5/18 (FI).

Bank Swallow reports included 1 at Duck Hollow 5/2 (JF), 1 at North Park 5/2-4 (RBu, LG), two there 5/13 (LF), and 2 in Findlay Twp. 5/5 (MV). Two early **Cliff Swallows** were at Wingfield Pines 4/1 (RBu), 3 were at Imperial 5/9 (LS and others), and 4 were near the Point in Pittsburgh 5/26 (JK). Both are the least common species here.

A **Marsh Wren** continued at Wingfield Pines from March to 4/7 (DN, NNe, RBu) and 1 was photographed at the pond in Homewood Cemetery 4/26 where it remained to 5/5 (ZV, m.ob.).

A great count of 14 **Purple Finches** visited a feeding station in Indiana Twp. 4/20 (DYe) and 30 were at Bethel Green 4/23 (MJ). Other reports included 1 at a feeder in Harmar Twp. 3/30 (JV) and 6 in Pine Twp. 4/17 (PL, SL), and 2 there 5/27 (PL, SL). Surprisingly there were two **Pine Siskin** reports: 2 were photographed at a feeder in Brighton Heights 5/18 (AT) and 1 was at Dead Man's Hollow 5/19 (KB).

A **Dark-eyed Junco** lingered at a feeder in South Park Twp. through May (PS). The "**Gambel's**" **White-crowned Sparrow** continued from the winter in West Deer Twp. to 5/10 (LC). Two **Vesper Sparrows** were at Imperial 4/17 (AF) and 1 continued in May (DBe). This species is fast declining and probably won't be at this site in a few years. **Savannah Sparrows** were in the Imperial area throughout May (m.ob.). A **Henslow's Sparrow** was heard singing in the Imperial Area 5/4 (AF, m.ob.) through the month in one of the last grassland sites that isn't developed. There were only three reports of **Lincoln's Sparrow**: 1 along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in Lawrenceville 5/7 (CB, AB), 1 at North Park 5/12 (LF), and 2 at Barking Slopes 5/10 (RBu).

Bobolinks are holding on at the Truck Stop at Imperial where some grassland remains (m.ob.) and up to 9 were at Boys Home Park in May (m.ob.). **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported at several locations: 1 at Harrison Hills Park 4/1 (AH, PM), up to 6 lingering into May at Wingfield Pines (m.ob.), 2 at Bridgeville 5/5 (JO), and one at Dead Man's Hollow 5/6 (ABu).

Warbler migration was poor but not without notable species. A total of 34 species were reported. Two **Worm-eating Warblers** returned to the breeding site at Harrison Hills Park 5/6 (OL). Two hybrids were found: A "**Brewster's**" **Warbler** at Chatham University 5/7 (MKu), and a "**Lawrence's**" **Warbler** at Sewickley Heights Park 5/6 (SM). There were three reports of the rare **Golden-winged Warbler**. 1 each at Sewickley Heights Park 5/7 (LN), Beechwood Farms 5/7 (DM), and in Wilkinsburg 5/8 (CT). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was a good find at Frick Park 5/25-26 (CK, KSJ, m.ob.). In recent years this species has been found in the park along Nine Mile Run in the wetlands, but this one was in a dry wooded area of the park. Rare in spring, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was in Sewickley Heights Park 4/26 (JK), 5/4 (RH) and 2 were there 5/5 (LN). A **Mourning Warbler** was at Frick Park 5/12 (RBu) and 1 was in Indiana Twp. 5/20 (BSh). An early **Palm Warbler** was in West Deer Twp. 4/1 (LC). **Prairie Warbler** is rarely detected during migration. This spring 3 were found: 1 at Hays 4/22 (RH), 1 at Beechwood Farms 5/7 (PB, DM), and 1 at



WARBLER HIGHLIGHTS – Two warblers attracted attention on 3RBC outings in May: a "Lawrence's" hybrid of Golden-winged and Blue-winged photographed by Sean Mueseler and an Orange-crowned photographed by Lauren Nagoda. See Mike's report.



Deer Lakes Park 5/7-8 (DYe and others).

A pair of **Blue Grosbeaks** returned to Imperial: 1 was found 5/14 (DBe) followed by 2 on 5/15 (RBu), and they were seen through May (m.ob.). The area they favor is brushy from initial preparation for development. So far, it remains open and brushy, but it's only a matter of time before development takes over.

Observers: Jim Barcaskey, Ken Behrens, David Bennett (DBe), Al Borek, Carole Borek, Dave Brooke, Paul Brant, Ron Burkert (RBu), Tom Byrnes, Linda Croskey, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, Ian Fitzgerald, John Flannigan, Leah Fulton, Lynn Goldbach, Maggie Griffith, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Rob Hooton, Frank Izaguirre, Matt Juskowich, Charity Khesghi, James Kellam, Scott Kinzey, Justin Kolakowski, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Judy Lesso, Oliver Lindhiem, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Pat McShea, Dan Mendenhall, Sean Mueseler, Lauren Nagoda, Dean Newhouse (DNe), Norma Newhouse, Jim Offhaus, Joe Papp, Samuel Reinert, Kate St. John, James Saracco (JSa), Brian Shema (BSh), Judy Shimm (JSh), Linda Sporrer, Paul Smith, Alyssa Thompson, Shannon Thompson, Christopher Turbert, Jim Valimont, Mark Vass, Zachary Vaughan, David Yeany II (DYe), m.ob. (many observers).

