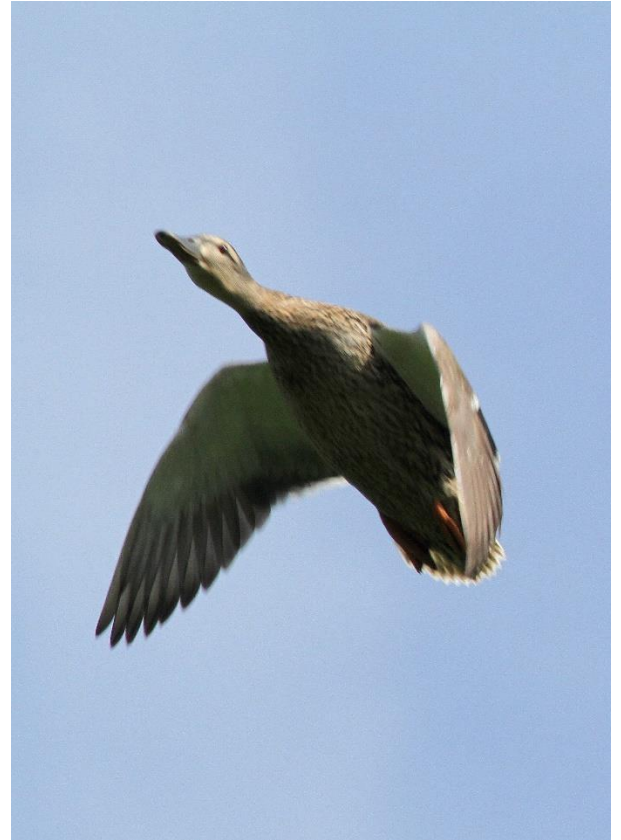




At the mouth of Nine Mile Run, the spit looks desolate at times, not boding well for birdwatching. Or is it?



Two reliable denizens of Duck Hollow are Mallards, like this flying hen, or Canada Geese, all in a row.

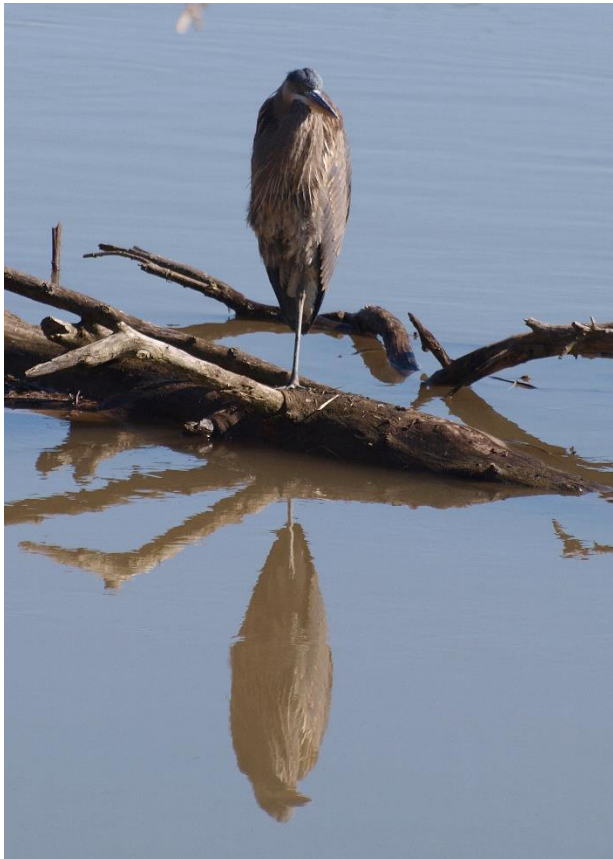


They may disappear shortly in winter, but Killdeer are seen on almost every visit to the area.

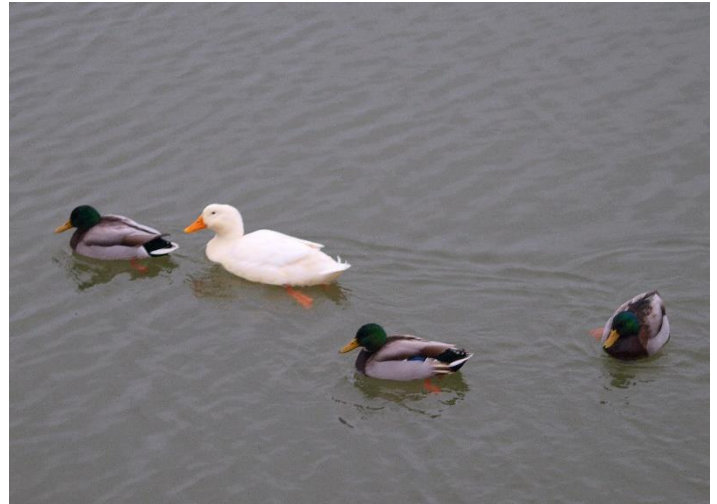




Often the rattle of a Belted Kingfisher lets you know he or she is there, whether perched or flying to another spot.



In cold weather or warm, a Great Blue Heron may turn up either resting or actively hunting..



“Moe” was a Peking Duck that hung out with the Mallards for years.



**TURKEYS**

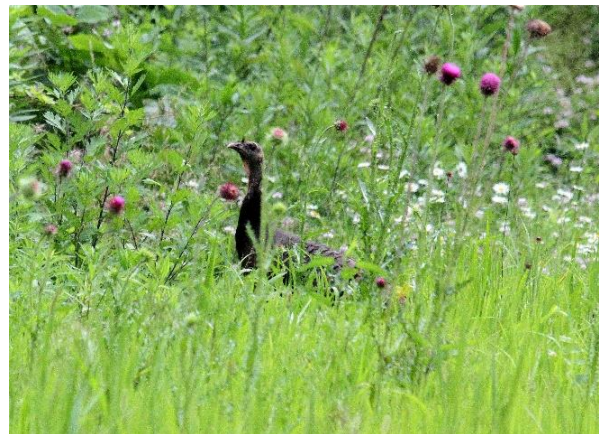


2007

Wild Turkeys have usually been seen as individuals over the years, except for a flock of nine in 2011. (above)



2014



2018

The following two pages show the various 22 other species of duck I’ve seen at Duck Hollow, except Mallards.

The final duck is a hybrid of a Redhead and a Ring-necked Duck from 2015.

**DUCKS AT DUCK HOLLOW**



Common Merganser Pair



Hooded Mergansers



Red-breasted Mergansers



Redheads



American Black Duck



Blue-winged Teal Pair



Common Goldeneye hens



Ring-necked Ducks



White-winged Scoter (hen)



Bufflehead Pair



Canvasbacks

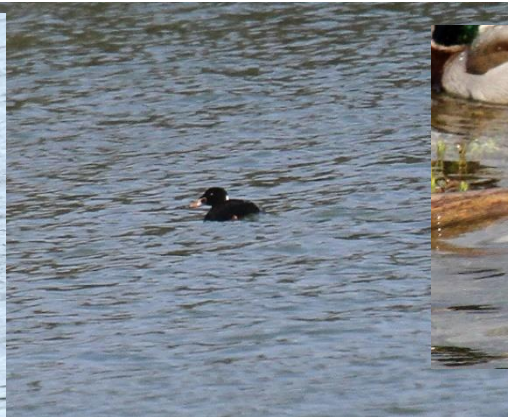


Lesser Scaup

**MORE DUCKS AT DUCK HOLLOW**



Wood Duck Pair



Surf Scoter (April 2024)



Green-winged Teal



Northern Shovelers



Ruddy Duck Drakes



American Wigeon



Greater Scaup



Gadwal Pair



Northern Pintail



Long-tailed Ducks

Redhead x Ring-neck  
Duck Hybrid





### GREBES

Pied-billed Grebes often arrive here in the spring. The distinctive bill with its dark stripe is diagnostic



Horned Grebes are also spring migrants. Some are close to breeding plumage with the golden “horns” on their heads, while others are merely gray and white.

The two grebes in flight show how the horns are swept back against their heads.





Red-necked Grebes have a very long, yellow beak as well as a long neck. A black cap and white stripe adorn their heads. The flying grebe again shows the long beak.



### LOON

Common Loons drop by Duck Hollow in migration on their way to northern lakes to breed..

### CORMORANTS



Double-crested Cormorants pass through too. On the left is a raft of 28 cormorants swimming up the Mon. Two others made a pass over me heading to the river.

**GULLS AT DUCK HOLLOW  
STUDYING THEM HELPS TO KNOW THEM**



In the winter especially, large numbers of gulls gather at Duck Hollow, mostly Ring-bills interspersed with interesting others. This group will later fly downriver to the Pittsburgh Point.

Picking out individuals in the crowd leads to the discovery of the age cycles of gull species. Ring-billed Gulls surround several Herring Gulls – some are adults while the darker birds are younger Herring Gulls. Look for the pink legs of the Herring Gulls.



The very dark gull on the log is a first winter Herring Gull. Other cycles of Herring Gulls are also on the log. The lone gull to the left is a first winter Ring-billed Gull.



This graceful flyer can be identified as a first winter Ring-billed Gull by its dark-edged tail and the brown/black on its wings.





**KELP GULL**

An exceedingly rare gull showed up at Duck Hollow in January 2015 – a Kelp Gull, a native of South America!

On the same evening an Iceland Gull made its way through the throng of gulls near the Kelp Gull.



Here the Iceland Gull passed in front of the Kelp Gull as it preened – two rarities at once!

Do you remember what that dark gull on the right could be?



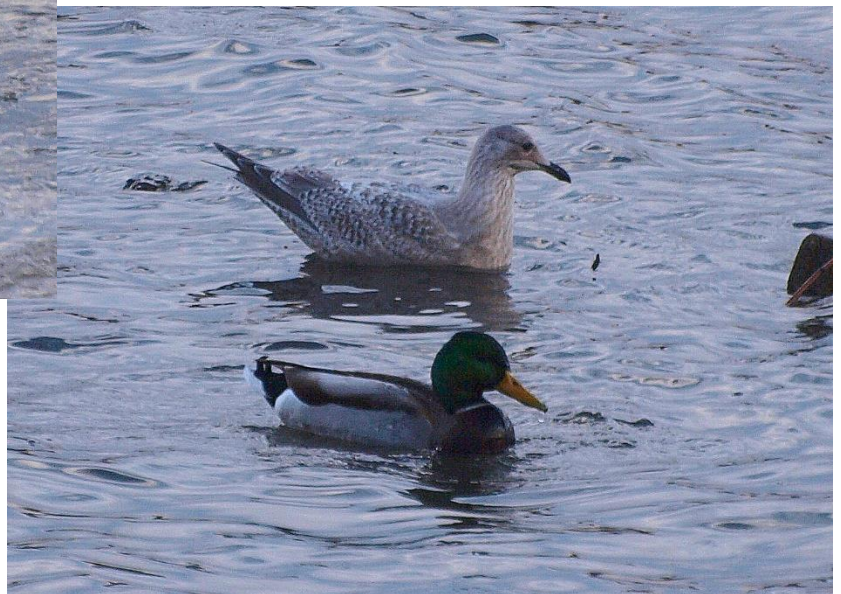
Several photos, including this one, helped show this was not a Great Black-backed Gull with pink legs, but the Kelp Gull and its yellow legs and feet.

**THAYER’S GULL  
A SUBSPECIES OF  
ICELAND GULL**

Another winter gull came in January of 2014. It was a first winter Thayer’s Gull, since 2017, a subspecies of the Iceland Gull.



The Thayer’s Gull found unsure footing on a broken piece of ice in the Monongahela.



For size comparison, the Thayer’s Gull swims next to an adult Mallard.

### BONAPARTE’S GULLS

In migration, Bonaparte’s Gulls stop by Duck Hollow on their way north. This trio in breeding plumage appeared in the sky in April 2018.



Later in July 2018, this single Bonaparte’s Gull stayed about a month, an unusual time for it to be at Duck Hollow.



This second cycle gull was going through a molt. Its wings could not take it on long journeys. It needed a spot to rejuvenate its feathers.



Short flights were possible, especially to escape predators. With its wing feathers restored, the bird left the area by August.

**TERNS AT DUCK HOLLOW**

Common and Forster’s Terns may visit Duck Hollow in spring or fall. A first fall Common Tern stopped by in late September 2012. The black on its wings and unfinished cap are diagnostic of its age.



These two Forster’s Tern arrived in April of different years, both in breeding plumage. The one above in 2012; the soaring bird in 2019.

**WILLETS AND WATERFOWL**

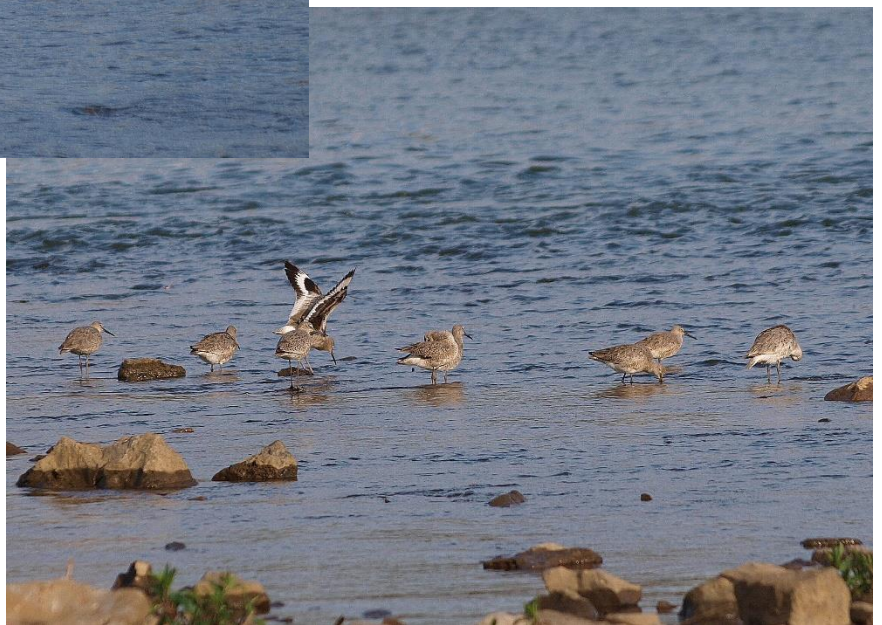


A flock of nine Willets spent an afternoon at Duck Hollow in May 2012. The 10<sup>th</sup> bird in this photo is a yellowlegs.

Below one Willet spread its wings to show their distinct pattern.



Several other shorebirds were there in May – like the Lesser Yellowlegs above and a Spotted Sandpiper with the yellowlegs on the right.





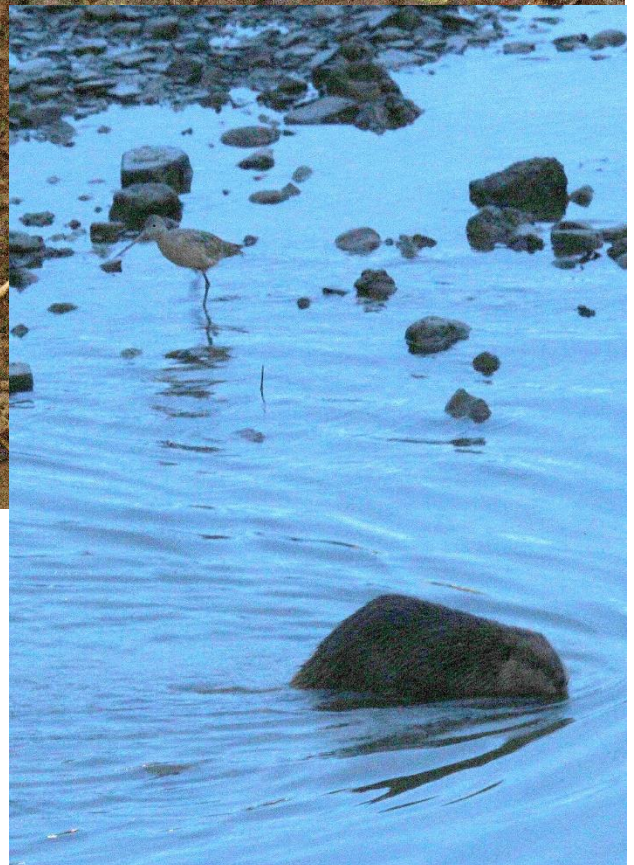
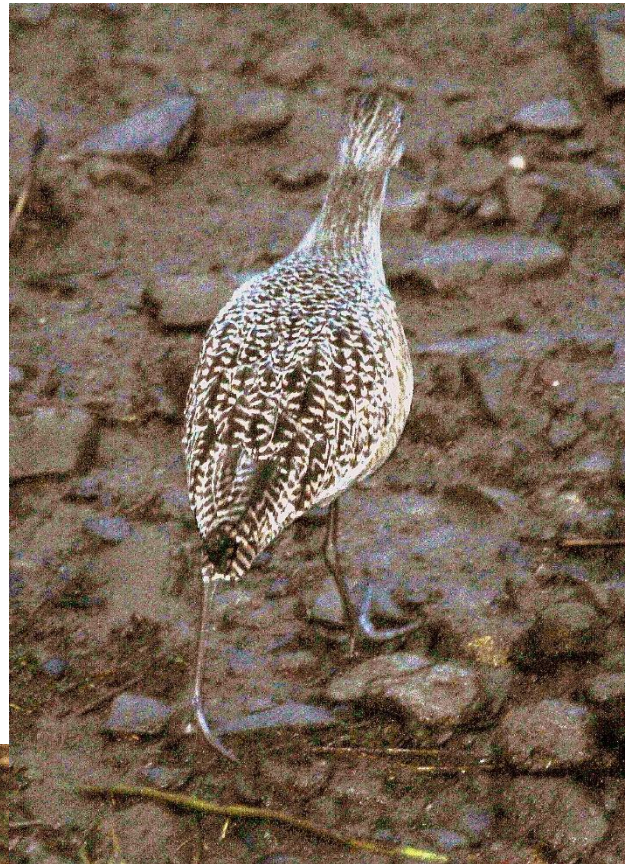
While watching the Willets, a Green Heron unexpectedly flew by resulting in a blurry shot of it passing in front.

### MARBLED GODWIT



In late December 2013 a Marbled Godwit brought many photographers and birders out to Duck Hollow. It actually stayed overnight!

The godwit competed with a beaver to claim the limelight, causing the beaver to photobomb the godwit's photos.



**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON**



The night-heron flew out of the trees to a log in the Monongahela near the winter gulls.

March 2015 saw a Black-crowned Night-Heron in the woody area of Duck Hollow.



The big bird remained on the log, staring around. A Ring-billed Gull slipped behind it on the left. The wind picked up the heron's white plumes above.

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS**



A rare day came in April 2016 as a pair of American White Pelicans showed up above the Mon.



The bills of the pelicans had flat “horns” which appear during their breeding season.



The pelicans appeared briefly out of the overcast skies, took a few turns over the river, and then disappeared back into the clouds.





**SORA**

Reports came in February 2017 of a Sora at Duck Hollow – a bird out of season and out of place. I went down and sat on the spit to check it out. When the bird and I made eye contact, I was convinced.

The Sora stayed for a month, giving many the opportunity to see this usually hard bird to spot.



Even in winter, there was enough cover and enough to eat for the bird to remain for several weeks..



**GREEN HERON AND COOTS**



Green Herons are found intermittently along the Mon. I've seen one at least five times over the years. I was lucky to catch the one on the right nabbing a fish out of Nine Mile Run.



American Coots are as infrequent as Green Herons, usually coming singly. The coot on the left shows off its individually webbed toes. Very unusual was the threesome below.





Shorebirds like the Solitary Sandpiper (left) and the Semipalmated Plover (above) are treats when they stop by Duck Hollow.

## CORVIDS



American Crows (above) and the smaller Fish Crows turn up along the river often. In the colder months it's easier to separate the nasal sounding Fish Crow from the American Crow's call. In summer juvenile American Crows can sound "nasal" too.

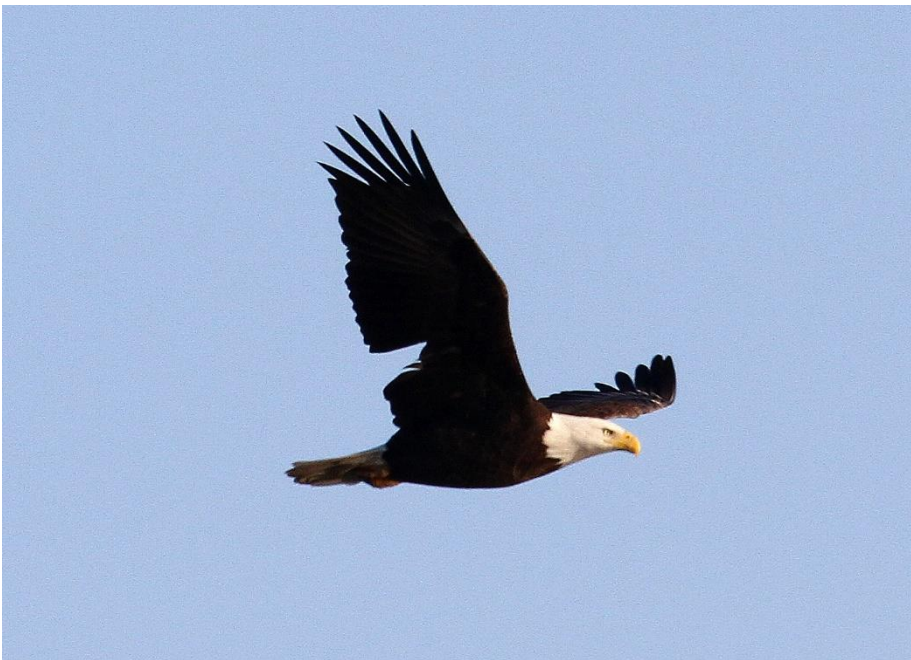


Fish Crow



A pair of Common Ravens flew overhead on their way out over the river, Their wedge-shaped tails distinguish them from the straight-edged tails of other corvids.

## RAPTORS



Bald Eagles that nest n Hays and Ospreys that nest in Duquesne may fly over Duck Hollow in search of fish.





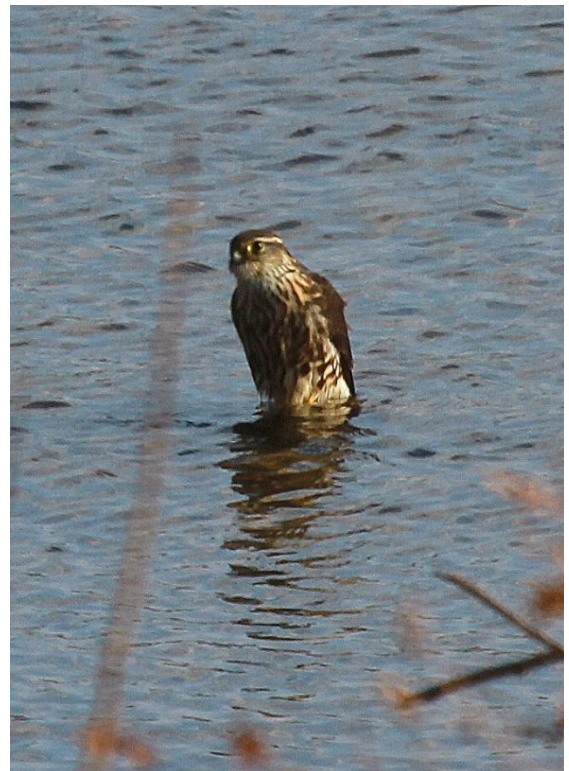
On three occasions I have seen Marlin's at Duck Hollow. The raptor on the left stared me down in February 2011.



Very unusual was a pair of Merlins in December 2012. The larger female stayed in a parking lot tree while the male flew down to the water.



He landed on a rock or log sticking out of the water, but in a few minutes discovered he was sinking and decided to abandon ship.

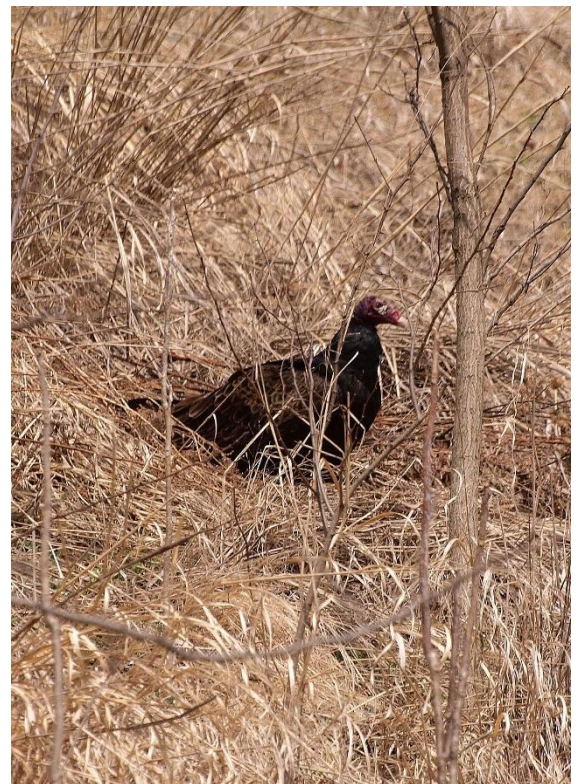




American Kestrels have been at the top of the hills above Duck Hollow. On the left, the little raptor is puffed up against the March winds. The bird on the right is atop a telephone pole along Old Brownhill Road.



Turkey Vultures often soar over the area looking for carrion. The vulture on the right had found something to eat and was now ready to slip down the dried grass to an open space to take off.





A well-used nest has been on the Homestead Grays Bridge near Duck Hollow for years. In April 2016, a Great Horned Owl (left) raised one chick in that nest.  
In May 2019, a female Red-tailed Hawk (below) fed her chicks in the same nest.

Comparing the two photos, one can see the outward appearance of the nest is little changed from year to year.



### LANDBIRDS



Red-winged Blackbird



Northern Rough-winged Swallows



Willow Flycatcher



Yellow Warbler



Indigo Bunting



Orchard Oriole (male)



Orchard Oriole (female)



Baltimore Oriole  
divebombing unperturbed  
Red-tailed Hawk



Warbling Vireo





Gray Catbird



Chimney Swift



Downy Woodpecker (juvenile)



Tufted Titmouse



Northern Mockingbird



Carolina Wren



Northern Cardinal



Mourning Doves



American Goldfinch pair  
female                      male

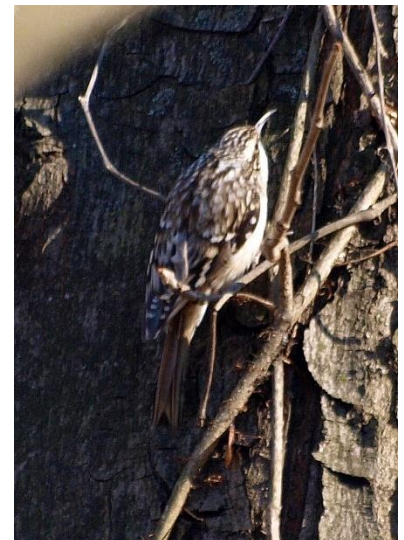
**OTHER BIRDS NOT MENTIONED IN TEXT**



Sharp-shinned Hawk



Eastern Phoebe



Brown Creeper



Chipping Sparrow



Blue-Gray  
Gnatcatcher



First fall Yellow-rumped Warbler



Duck Hollow Trio:  
Hooded Merganser hen, Common Merganser  
hen, and Pied-billed Grebe



Song Sparrow and female Northern Cardinal



American Robin on her Nest



Song Sparrow



The End  
of a DH Red-tailed Hawk