



The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 23, No. 4 July/August 2024

Migratory Timing and Environmental Conditions: *When Do Prothonotary Warblers Arrive in Spring?*

Becca Ralston will present our August 7 meeting's program about her ongoing research into arrival timing of Prothonotary Warblers on their breeding grounds for her Master's degree with the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Ohio State University. Becca has long had a fascination for migration ecology, and a strong interest in using new methods and technologies to study and understand birds' movements.

Becca's passion for avian research began early—in 2014 she became a National Aviary teen volunteer. Through that program she learned of Bob Mulvihill's work banding birds for Pittsburgh Neighborhood Nestwatch and Project OwlNet. Her supportive parents, Jim and Sue Ralston, enabled Becca to regularly help on both of those projects, notwithstanding the commitment to get her to and from Bob's study sites very early in the morning and late at night! In fact, Becca credits the National Aviary and its programs for inspiring her interest in ornithological research.

In 2020, Becca graduated from the University of Delaware with a B.S. in wildlife conservation and ecology and a B.A. in environmental humanities. Prior to beginning her graduate studies, she participated in field research projects focused on endangered Golden-cheeked Warblers, Common and Arctic Terns, and Nelson's Sparrows. She is also passionate about environmental education and has previously worked as a naturalist at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Minnesota. Becca is a passionate and very articulate communicator about birds and bird conservation, and her program promises to be among the more engaging ones that we have seen at 3RBC!



This will be a *hybrid* meeting that starts “live” at Beechwood Farms at 6:30 PM (ET), with the Zoom presentation starting at 7:00 PM (ET). The business meeting will be at 7:30 PM; Becca's presentation will follow at around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the Zoom event, including passcodes and other instructions, will be supplied to 3RBC members a few days before the meeting.



OUR AUGUST SPEAKER, BECCA RALSTON.

(PHOTOS BY BECCA RALSTON)

Mark your calendars for these upcoming 3RBC Programs!

- **October 2, 2024:** Nick Liadis (Bird Lab) - “*Banding Spring and Fall Migration in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Sites*”
- **December 4, 2024:** Photo Slide Slam - Our annual showing of photographs by our talented members

Members Enjoy Biggest Week!

Several 3RBC members attended the Biggest Week in American Birding (BWAB) from May 3-12, 2024 in northwestern Ohio at Magee Marsh, hosted by Black Swamp Bird Observatory. More than 2,000 visitors from 49 states and 11 countries went on 198 field trips and tallied 232 species! Wood Warblers are the stars of every BWAB, and they showed off again this time, with an a-May-zing 36 species observed!

Turn to page 7 to enjoy a selection of photos taken by Donna Foyle and Amanda Haney during their time at the BWAB!

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

President's Message

My Favorite Month

By Mike Fialkovich

I usually can't pick a favorite of anything, songs, foods, birds, places, etc. Every choice has something unique to offer leaving me indecisive when asked what my favorite—fill in the blank—is.

But, I do find out of all months of the year, June is my favorite. June is the start of summer, which is a good feeling. The rush of migration is over, and I can settle into the breeding season, where the birds are in place, and everyone is in their finest plumages and singing.

The dawn chorus in June is something to behold. It starts well before dawn and sometimes is so full of birdsong, it's difficult to pick out individuals or to determine how many individuals of each species are singing. My first stop on my annual breeding bird survey route in Butler County is filled with so many singing birds, it can be overwhelming. Yet, it's a great soundscape. It's not completely known why birds start singing so early. Theories include the air in the morning allows song to carry further, the birds are warming up for the rest of the day, predators are not active so birds can afford to make their presence known. Nobody knows for certain, but we as birders enjoy the show.

Birdsong makes it easier for birders to find birds. If you think about it, how much birding do you do by ear? Probably more than you think. I know when I am traveling and in a place where I am not familiar with the local birdsong, I realize how much I rely on sound to find birds. When I was a beginning birder and heard a bird that was unknown by sound, I found it very helpful to find it and observe it singing or calling. That connected the sounds with the bird for me. One of the earliest examples of this in my birding was the danger call of the Wood Thrush. I heard this unfamiliar sound in Schenley Park, so I tracked it down and found the bird producing the sound. I knew the song but not the chattering call indicating possible danger. Once I saw the bird making the sound, it stuck with me.

I also like to see birds building nests in June. It's always special to me to see birds transporting materials for nesting and to try to follow them to the site. It requires patience because they sometimes stop on the way and seem to take a long time to continue to the site. Perhaps they are checking for danger. I sometimes have to give up because they won't move. There are a number of common birds that I don't see building nests very often, Blue Jays for example, so I find that special.

Now you know the reason for my annual June outings in the Laurel Highlands. We bird by ear a lot on these outings, but we also get to see a variety of breeding species. June is here, and I'm excited to get out and see what I can find!



BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER IN FULL VOICE. PHOTO: STEVE GOSSER

The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Published bimonthly:

January, March, May, July, September, November

Send articles and/or illustrations to:

Bob Mulvihill, Editor

Robert.Mulvihill@aviary.org

Send ideas or items for the website to:

Tom Moeller, Webmaster

thosjmoel@gmail.com

Send questions and suggestions to:

Mike Fialkovich, President

mpfial@verizon.net

805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Suggest or volunteer to lead outings to:

Steve Thomas, Outings Director

thomassj22@verizon.net

309 Center Ave., Aspinwall, PA 15215

Report bird sightings to:

Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

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

Copyright © Three Rivers Birding Club. All rights reserved.

Photographers and illustrators retain their copyrights

PSO Meeting Highlight

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology held its annual members meeting at the Doubletree Hotel near the Meadow Lands in Washington, PA May 31– June 2. Almost 100 birders attended the meeting for the chance to visit vendors, hear talks, take bird walks, and to enjoy a Saturday evening banquet. There were many 3RBC members in attendance, some led walks or gave talks, and one, our very own president, Mike Fialkovich, received the prestigious Earl Poole Award, given each year to a person who has made significant contributions to Pennsylvania ornithology.



MIKE FIALKOVICH RECEIVING EARL POOLE AWARD FROM PSO PRESIDENT BRIAN BYRNES. PHOTO: BOB MULVIHILL

Outings to Come

Early Fall Bird Outings Include One Just for Beginners

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

Friday August 23 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park: Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) for our first bird walk this fall starting at 8:00AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. We will look for the early fall migration birds.

Friday September 6 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park: Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) for our second bird walk to Sewickley this fall starting at 8:00AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

Saturday September 7 – Deer Lakes Park: John Vassallo (johnnvassallo@yahoo.com) will lead this outing focused on fall migrants including warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. The outing will begin at 7:30 AM and last approximately four hours. We will meet 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 three miles. Although the trails are fairly well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud, and rainfall.

Sunday September 8 – Harrison Hills: Meet leader Dave Brooke (cell ph.: 724-487-3586) at 8:00 AM at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. Dave will be starting from a new location in Harrison Hills. Look for forth coming details. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers, and vireos.

Friday September 13 – North Park: We will meet Adrian Fenton (AF9963285@aol.com) for a fall birding outing at 7:30 AM at the Gold Star Pavilion in North Park on Lake Shore Drive GPS coordinates: 40.593884, -80.003844. We will bird Gold Star wetlands area, Marshall Lake and if time permits, part of Latodomi Nature Center. **Note:** *Adrian like participants to email him at to let him know you plan to attend.*

Saturday September 14 – Sewickley Heights Park: This walk is for *beginning/inexperienced* birders and will be limited to the first seven people who email the walk leader, Adrian Fenton (AF9963285@aol.com). Sewickley Heights Park is an excellent location for seeing fall migrants. We will go slowly to give everyone opportunity to see and identify birds. The starting time will be at 7:30AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Please bring binoculars.

Saturday September 21 - Frick Park: We will meet Charlie and Ezra White (chwhite@andrew.cmu.edu) at 7:30AM at the Frick Park Environmental Center located at 2005 Beechwood Blvd, in Squirrel Hill, 15217 for a morning bird walk at Frick Park. Frick Park is an excellent location for the fall migration, and we're hoping for lots of warblers, other migrants and local birds.

Red-eyed Vireo

By Ryan Walsh*

*"I am alarmed when it happens
that I have walked a mile into the
woods bodily, without getting there
in spirit." - Henry David Thoreau,
in Walking*



Voice of summer
high in your canopy
I know you by ear
most common bird
of my home range
Swannanoa to Coddling Hollow

Your song rings out
from the first cool light of spring
through deepest August swelter
spilling from the broad leaves
constant as a brook in season

Field guides call your
song monotonous
tireless persistent
but I too know the need to be
asking and answering
the same spare question

Here I am! Where are you?

We assign words to shape
meaning and remember
making syllables from sounds
notes repeating like a kind of
koan, some green mantra
from deep in the trees

Here I am. Where are you?

Not in my senses
attention trailing my steps
like a shadow most days
preoccupied distracted
a mile or more along the path
before I'm awake

Here I am. Where are you?

A ringing bell
20,000 times a day
If I listen even once
I'll arrive here yes here
mind and body keeping pace
and the spirit? Just this
steam rising from a patch of moss
in the bare morning light

*This poem originally appeared in the anthology *A Literary Field Guide to Northern Appalachia* (University of Georgia Press). Ryan Walsh is author of the poetry collection *Reckonings* (Baobab Press). He grew up next to Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia, made his home in mountains from North Carolina to Vermont. Now living in Pittsburgh, he walks daily in the 644-acre forest (Frick Park) at the end of his street.

The Peregrine

Observations

Red-winged Blackbirds

By Tom Moeller (text and photos)



MALE DISPLAYING

“Konk-la-ree!” The song of the Red-winged Blackbird may be heard along Nine Mile Run, at Independence Marsh, or around a small cattail-lined pond in Homewood Cemetery. A birder can quickly identify the song and the bird, and just as quickly move on to a “more interesting” bird. The Redwing and his song are now background noise. Yet, do not be so hasty to dismiss this marsh dweller. He leads an interesting life.

The Red-winged Blackbird is aptly named being black from beak to tail and down to its toes.

Even its eyes are black. Each “shoulder” of its wings, however, is a scarlet red bordered on the bottom by a yellow fringe. Unlike many black birds, (crows, cowbirds, Brewster’s Blackbirds) there is no iridescence to these black feathers. The cortex, the transparent outer layer of the feather barbule, either reflects light back, causing iridescence, or not. This depends on whether there is a black melanin layer under the cortex.

Redwings do not have this layer, the melanin being dispersed all through the barb’s keratin, the material that makes up the cortex. Thus, the blackbird’s main color is not a shiny black, but a deep, velvet black. The red “epaulets” and their yellow borders are colored by carotenoid pigments strategically placed through evolution. Flashing the red can intimidate rivals or attract possible mates. The red shoulders can be covered by black scapular feather to lessen their effect.



FEMALE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

A female Red-winged Blackbird, on the other hand, can be mistaken for a sparrow. She is dark brown on her back and heavily streaked with dark brown/black alternating with gray on her undersides. Her neck has an orange/pink wash on her chin and throat. Her camouflaged

coloring is ideal for her nesting duties. Juvenile blackbirds have coloring similar to the females.

The range of the Red-winged Blackbird covers all the United States into Canada as far northwest as Alaska and into Ontario and Quebec in the east. They do migrate out of the northern extent of their range in winter going as far south as Honduras in Central America but mainly into the southern United States. They are usually the first migrators back north with males arriving in February and March, while females and younger males arrive in the following weeks. Red-winged Blackbirds are more harbingers of spring than robins!

Males migrate back north in large single-sex flocks with little conflict between individuals as they consciously cover their

red patches. However, once the males begin to establish their own territories conflicts arise. The red epaulets are bared and loud “o-ka-lee” singing begins. The older males, filled with more testosterone than younger birds, aggressively take the prime spots for themselves. Prime spots include enough area and cover for nesting. Singing on elevated spots, displaying their red shoulders, and aggressive moves such as spreading their wings to emphasize their red shoulders or bills tilted in the air before other males maintain the territories. Large marshes may have many established male territories, territories which are centered on nesting. Food sources are not included in territories, the birds foraging far and wide.

When females arrive, the males’ sing and display their epaulets along with “Song Flights,” which includes flying slowly with stalls and singing, and males chasing females as they feign eluding the chasers. All this to attract mates. Yes, mates, plural. Red-winged Blackbirds are polygamous. Unlike many birds, breeding pairs do not mate for life – they are only there to procreate. Yet, while they are together, they do all they can to care for their offspring. The male may have a harem averaging three females in his territory, each having her own territory within his, but the females are not on the same breeding cycle. Once the first mate begins her nest, a second may be wooed by the male. The first may have laid her eggs as the second begins building her nest.

The nests are woven only by the females in about five

days around shafts of reeds, cattails, shrubs, sedges, even low trees almost always near water – a pond, a marsh, a swamp, or a river. Unfortunately, a nest built early in the season on growing supports may tip over as the supports on one side outgrow those on the other side. This could be after eggs are laid or young are hatched, ending in disaster. The tightly woven cup nest of stems, long grasses or leaves is lined with finer material. Three to five, very pale blue eggs with brown or purple squiggly designs on the large end are laid. The female incubates them alone for 10-12 days. The chicks are altricial, with red skin and white down. Caterpillars are stuffed down their throats, which elicits a reflexive swallowing response. Feathers begin in a week, and the young climb out of the nest ten days after hatching but remain under cover nearby, staying for about two weeks longer. Both parents tend to the nestlings and fledglings, the mother more earlier, the father more in later days. When the young do leave the nest area, they form age-related flocks to forage and roost together.

Like the first-year birds, after breeding season the males (with epaulets covered) and females also form into separate flocks to forage and roost together, and eventually migrate south. In the South these large flocks, which include grackles, cowbirds, and starlings, may descend upon grain or rice fields to forage, but the good they do in insect control outweighs the meager damage they may do to crops.

In June and July when you hear the *Konk-la-ree*, do not stray too near, or you may be the object of harsh clicks, *Chit-chit-chit-check-check* calls from a female, or sharp *check* calls as a Red-winged Blackbird pair warn you that you are too close to their nest. They may not be life-long partners, but they will defend their young fiercely together.



MALE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Outings Revisited

Breeding Activity and Beautiful Migrants fill April and May

Sewickley Heights Borough Park – April 26: Even though the morning temperature was in the low 40s, 23 people showed up for this first of two spring Sewickley Heights outings.

The park was very quiet with only a few resident birds spotted during the first half hour. Things picked up when a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher flew into view. The gnatcatcher was joined by its mate, and we watched as they started construction of a nest. Surprisingly, we found three pairs of nest building gnatcatchers on the outing. While we were watching the busy nest-building gnatcatchers, an agitated Ruby-crowned Kinglet showed up in the same small clump of trees and flaunted its ruby crown.

My hopes of bird activity increasing as the temperature rose into the 50s proved to be too optimistic. We only had two warbler species; a single Yellow-rumped Warbler and a distant calling Black-throated Green Warbler. Other highlights included a female Purple Finch, a Broad-winged Hawk and first of season Barn Swallows.

Singing Eastern Towhees, lingering White-throated Sparrows, and a group of happy birders entertained us with song during a delightful day of birding! Here are our eBird checklists from the morning:

<https://ebird.org/atlaspa/checklist/S170391335>

<https://ebird.org/atlaspa/checklist/S170391307>

<https://ebird.org/atlaspa/checklist/S170391271>

--by leader Sheree Daugherty

Sewickley Heights Borough Park – May 3: Twelve birders showed up for the second club outing on May 3 at this excellent spring birding locality. A Yellow-breasted Chat had been seen in the park the day before our outing, so our first stop was to the area where it was spotted. We did not see the chat, but found a very vocal White-eyed Vireo and found the camouflaged lichen covered gnatcatcher nest that was under construction on the outing the week before. We also learned that it was not wise to stand for a long period of time near an Allegheny mound ant anthill!

Several colorful birds were FOY for many of the birders; Indigo Bunting, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole and Scarlet Tanager.

Warblers were found throughout the day with one nice wave containing at least five different species in one spot; Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green and American Redstart. Down the trail we had another wave and added Cape May, Black-and-White, Nashville and Tennessee. Throughout the day we heard many Hooded Warblers and Northern Parulas but never laid eyes on the singers.

One of the last birds of the day and probably the “best” was a Golden-winged Warbler found high in a treetop on the Pipeline Trail. The bird flew across the pipeline and called repeatedly from the thick hedgerow. We ended the day with 49 species, including 15 warblers. —by leader Sheree Daugherty

Deer Lakes Park - May 11: With the threat of incoming storms, eleven excited and experienced birders gathered at Deer Lakes Regional Park on a beautiful May morning. After brief introductions, the group slowly ascended the access road from the upper parking lot to the sights and sounds of a Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Parula, and Black-throated Greens.



BIRDING DEER LAKES PARK—DAVE BROOKE, OLIVER LINDHIEM (FOREGROUND) AND A HALF DOZEN OTHER BIRDERS PAUSE ALONG THE ROAD TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR WARBLERS. PHOTO BY MIKE FIALKOVICH

As we swept across the upper meadow, we unsuccessfully searched for a White-throated Vireo singing from a thicket. Pulled along the trail by the song of a Kentucky Warbler, we were called back to the access road by one of our crew who expertly pointed out the song of a Canada Warbler. Although unable to get a view, we began spotting Magnolia, Tennessee, and Cape May Warblers, as well as a Chestnut-sided, Nashville, and a brilliant Blackburnian. Several Scarlet Tanagers flew above with one boldly posing in the sunlight.

We moved down the road amidst sounds of Ovenbirds and Hooded Warblers, along with the darting of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Toward the end of the access road we were treated to a Red-shouldered Hawk gliding directly overhead. Passing by a cheery Kentucky Warbler and morning's last plumes of fog, we made our way down to the lakes accompanied by the singing of an Eastern Wood-pewee.

The three lower lakes brought good views of several Baltimore Orioles and Warbling Vireos building nests and of Eastern Kingbirds hunting for insects over the waters as Tree, Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows did the same. Our group trekked back up the forest trail past glimpses of a Swainson's Thrush and singing Red-eyed Vireos, returning to where we began almost four hours before. Seeing over 60 species, 18 of them warblers, over 2.5 miles we couldn't find any drops of rain until they pattered our windshields on our journeys home. This great variety made for an enjoyable morning, but experiencing it with this fine collection of birders made it even more of a delight. —by leader John Vassallo

Harrison Hills – May 19: Nineteen birders gathered at Harrison Hills Park on Sunday, May 19th for our spring outing in perfect weather of sunshine and 60-75 degree temperatures. We covered nearly four miles as I took the group on some different trails than the ones we typically hike.

We had 45 species, although many were only heard as the leaf-out made getting eyes on birds difficult. Highlights were getting to hear a number of Kentucky Warblers and one Worm-eating Warbler. Both species were in their traditional locations in the park. Another highlight was seeing a Hairy Woodpecker nest with a nestling poking its head out of the hole while begging to be fed. Here is my trip report and eBird checklist for this outing. <https://ebird.org/tripreport/246911>. —by leader Dave Brooke

The Peregrine

Annual 3RBC Picnic Brings Old and New Friends, Vocal Warblers, and Purple Martins

By Dave Brooke (*text and photos*)

Prior to the annual 3RBC gathering, which took place on June 8th at Harrison Hills Park, twenty-one members and guests took a mile and a half walk on the Pond Loop Trail. Our goal was to find the Kentucky Warbler that had been seen on that trail as it leads out of the back of the pond area. As we got closer to the area where it had been seen earlier in the week by Kate and Charity as well as Ron a few days later, we heard the unmistakable loud call of our Kentucky Warbler. In the eight years I've birded in this park, I've not had one in that section before. This Kentucky was difficult to see, as they so often are, but most of us got glimpses of it as it moved around the area. Meanwhile, at least four Hooded Warblers were singing around us and we actually saw a male and female pair! We had several newer birders with us, so the Kentucky was a lifer for them. We were also able to hear a Worm-eating Warbler singing along the Scout/Carson trail where they breed. Even with all of those eyes we were unable to see it even though it sounded close. In all we have 36 species for the morning.

Many of the folks on our walk drove to the Yakaon shelter for our picnic lunch. We were joined there by a handful of members that didn't go on the walk. Three young ladies spent the morning

with us with all of them being new birders of varying degrees. Emme, Virginia, and Laura found out about the walk online and decided to join us. All three are recent college grads, and we hope to see them at one of our bird club meetings.

After the picnic several people chose to stay for the Purple Martin presentation sponsored by the Friends of Harrison Hills Park. Ken Kostka gave a terrific presentation on the origin of the colony he cares for just feet from where we had the picnic. He told us this is a record year for this colony. He has 42 nesting pairs, which if they all produce 3-7 offspring will result in a couple hundred Purple Martins this summer. Of note, another young lady on our walk, when asked what bird she hoped to see, said a Purple Martin as it would be a life bird for her. I told Sofia that this was her lucky day because she would see lots of them. Not only did she see dozens of Purple Martins, when Ken lowered the Martin house and pulled out the nest trays, she got to see seven nestlings that were only a day old and seven more that were four or five days old.

Seventy-degree temperatures and sun made for a perfect day for a bird walk and picnic. Thanks to all who participated to help make it a memorable experience.



ANNUAL PICNIC HIGHLIGHTS—BEAUTIFUL SKIES AND FINE WEATHER ADDED TO THE FESTIVITIES. (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) MANY OF THE ATTENDEES BIRDED THE TRAILS AT HARRISON HILLS BEFORE THE PICNIC; KEN KOSTKA LOWERS THE PURPLE MARTIN HOUSE THAT HE MANAGES AT THE PARK; AND SOME LUCKY PICNIC GOERS GOT TO SEE EGGS AND NESTLINGS

The Peregrine

Lovely Photos Showcase a Few of the (Mostly) Avian Stars at the Biggest Week in American Birding at Magee Marsh



TWO BEAUTIES—AMANDA HANEY CAPTURED A CHESTNUT-SIDED (LEFT) AND BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (RIGHT) LOOKING THEIR FINEST. BWAB OFFERS EXCELLENT CHANCES TO SEE A HOST OF WARBLERS AT CLOSE RANGE.



NOT EVERYONE'S "JUST PASSING THROUGH" MAGEE MARSH. DONNA FOYLE CAUGHT THIS TREE SWALLOW EXITING A NEST CAVITY.(LEFT). A GARTER SNAKE (RIGHT) SHOWING ONE OF SEVERAL DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS. PHOTO AMANDA HANEY



A GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (LEFT) STOPS ON ITS WAY WAY TO BREEDING LOCATIONS IN THE FAR NORTH. A TRUMPETER SWAN (RIGHT) WITH RUSTY STAINING ON THE NECK AND HEAD, WHICH IT PICKS UP WHILE FEEDING. PHOTOS BY DONNA FOYLE

The Peregrine

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

February – March 2024

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

A flock of 29 **Snow Geese** flew over Franklin Park 3/7 (OM). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found at a pond in a housing plan in Findlay Twp. 3/1-3 (MV, m.ob.). Ten **Tundra Swans** flew over Allison Park 3/6 (BP).

A **Northern Shoveler** was at North Park 2/10-11 (AF, TC) and two were at Duck Hollow 2/16 (EO). A great count of 40 **Gadwall** were at Duck Hollow 3/17 (KSJ). A nice count of 10 **American Wigeon** were at Duck Hollow 2/16 (eBird) and three remained there 2/29 (DBe, MG); four were there 3/14 (LK). Three were at Peter's Creek 3/22-23 (JF), five were at the pond on Moody Road in Findlay Twp. 3/17 (MV). Up to two **Northern Pintail** were at Wingfield Pines 2/1-20 (m.ob.). Two were at Tarentum 3/8 (DN), one was at the pond on Moody Road in Findlay Twp. 3/17 (MV). A **Canvasback** at Brunots Island continued from January to 2/8 (m.ob.). A **Redhead** first noted in late January at Wingfield Pines continued through February (m.ob.) and one was at Duck Hollow 2/5 (TC). A female **Long-tailed Duck** was filmed at Duck Hollow 2/24 (Duck Hollow Facebook page). A great count of 16 **Long-tailed Ducks** were at the Highland Park dam on the Allegheny River 3/23 (OL), likely brought in from a rain event the prior day. Up to six **Common Goldeneye** continued at Brunots Island from January, last reported 2/4 (m.ob.). Eight **Red-breasted Mergansers** were on the Allegheny River at Etna 2/20 (NS). After a few were at Duck Hollow in January, one remained 2/17 (DBe, AF, APe). Up to four **Ruddy Ducks** were at Brunots Island through mid-February (m.ob.), one was at Chapel Harbor 2/3 (JVa, OL, SS).

Early **American Woodcock** include one flushed at Boyce Park 2/4 (eBird) and two calling at North Park 2/9 (AF). **Wilson's Snipe** were in good numbers at Imperial 3/11 through the end of the month with a high count of 28 on 3/20 (NB, et al.).

Black Vultures were reported regularly. Two were spotted at Beechwood Farms 2/17 and one 2/19 (eBird), three were in Sewickley Heights 2/25 (TB, DB) and two in Fox Chapel 2/24 (OL). One was in Natrona Heights 3/11 followed by eight 3/13 (PH), four were at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 3/24 (EPH)

and one was in North Braddock 3/30 (LKI),

Horned Larks were only reported from Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 2/3-5 with a max count of 27 (DBe, TC).

An extremely early **Barn Swallow** was at Gibsonia 3/29 (KP).

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are rare in winter with reports from the last period continuing. One continued at a feeder in Etna from the last reporting period to 2/10 (DY). One continued at Hartwood Acres to 2/20 (AH, AF), one at Millvale from January up to 2/24 (JD) and one at Fox Chapel 2/9 (LK).

First reported in January, a **Gray Catbird** continued at Peter's Creek 2/4 (JF). After several reports during January, one at Duquesne University 3/12 (BSh) was likely an overwintering bird.

Pine Siskins continued at Hartwood Acres during the period. Other reports were scattered around the north suburbs.

A **Dark-eyed Junco** was photographed at Frick Park 3/27 (NB) that appeared to be a female Oregon junco, but the Cassiar Junco subspecies always adds complexity to the identification.

The first report of **Louisiana Waterthrush** was 3/28 (DM) which is early. They are usually not reported until early April but can arrive earlier and go undetected.

Red-winged Blackbirds were present in several locations all season. Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were at Frick Park 2/23 (MK). One was in Schenley Park 3/3 (JK), two were at Wingfield Pines 3/10 (JF), three were at North Park 3/12 (AF, et al.), two were there 3/14 (DN), one was at Frick Park 3/15-19 (m.ob.), one was in Gibsonia 3/15 and 3/23 (KP), two were at Hartwood Acres 3/23 (DM), four were at South Park 3/24 (PB) and three were on the Montour Trail in the Piney Fork/South Park area 3/31 (JF, MM).

Observers: David Bennett (DBe), Dick Bondi, Trip Bondi, Nathaniel Bowler, Parker Bradley, Thomas Connor, John Dzikiy, Adrian Fenton, John Flannigan, Maggie Griffith, Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan, Lisa Kaufman, Michelle Kienholz, Lucy Klimko (LKI), Justin Kolakowski, Oliver Lindhiem, Dan Mendenhall, Dick Nugent, Michele Mannella, Oscar Miller, Emerson O'Donnell, Kevin Parsons, Amber Pertz (APe), Brady Porter, Kate St. John, Sam Shaaban, Brian Shema (BSh), Nickolus Stahlman, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVa), Dan Yagusic, many observers (m.ob.)

PA BIRD ATLAS NOTES

Sherron and Pat Lynch have been up and running with the first summer of PBA3, and Sherron shared these notes and photos from their yard. Visit <https://ebird.org/atlaspa/home> to learn more about participating. :

Clockwise from top left: NEST WITH YOUNG—The speckled eggs cannot help to distinguish whether these chickadees are black-capped, Carolina, or a combination. One parent looked like it was the Carolina species. RECENTLY FLEDGED YOUNG—A young cardinal is old enough to feed itself some mixed seed. It was not traveling with an adult, but the bill color gives away the bird's early age. A robin has just left the nest and is hopping through the grass to follow one of its parents. The long gape helps it to eat worms stuffed into its mouth.

