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The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

Vol. 24, No. 4 July/August 2025

Crocodiles, Lions, and Babblers, Oh My!

Take a Safari Trip to Southern Africa with Tom and Janet Kuehl, who were on a September 2019 *Rockjumper Birding Tour* trip through the southern African nations of Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

At our August 6th meeting, Tom will present a photographic tour through the arid savanna, dry highlands, and coastal deserts of Namibia, the seasonal wetlands of Botswana and end at one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World – Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. This is a safari trip, so expect to see not just the many birds photographed on the tour, but also flora and fauna, and some of the culture of the areas visited.



LIONS AT ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK IN NAMIBIA. PHOTO BY OUR SPEAKERS.

Tom and Janet became avid birders in the late 1990s and are hawk watchers and prolific participants with Christmas Bird Counts, Winter Raptor Surveys, and the current Pennsylvania Bird Atlas 3, for which they serve as Southwestern Regional Coordinators and Westmoreland County Compilers. They also served as regional coordinators in the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. Tom is the Westmoreland County Compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds*, and he served two-year terms as Vice President and President of the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology.



OUR SPEAKERS IN FRONT OF VICTORIA FALLS.



TOP TO BOTTOM: NILE CROCODILE, BARE-CHEEKED BABBLERS, CRIMSON-BREASTED GONOLEK. PHOTOS BY OUR SPEAKERS.

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

President's Message

Birds Create Memories and Connect Us

By Mike Fialkovich, Three Rivers Birding Club President

Over the past several months I have been entering sightings from years past into *eBird*. This is easily an overwhelming task, so I started by entering the rare birds I've seen across the state. It was a good place to start, breaking down the activity into a specific category, lessening my feeling of not knowing where to begin.

As I went through my notes from years past, memories of the bird sightings were fun to relive. I also realized how long I've known some birders, whom I ran into during rarity searches.

I usually remember all the rarities I've seen and a lot of the details about the day birding. Seeing a bird that is potentially a life bird, or one I've not seen the Pennsylvania, is exciting, and so the experience is burnt into my memory. Having said that, I surprised myself by not remembering a Rufous Hummingbird, that I went to see in Hopewell Township in Beaver County on December 3, 2005. I found some old slides of this bird, so I was obviously there to see it, but I don't have any recollection of it. I could not remember the exact location (my slide was labeled Hopewell Township with the date). I searched *eBird* and found the location thanks to a checklist submitted by Geoff Malosh. I vaguely remember the location, but the memory is still unclear.

Using *eBird* itself has been a great help in knowing the exact locations of rarities I've gone to see. Often birds were along some back road in some location in Pennsylvania, that I don't exactly remember because of time, not driving there myself at times, and just not writing it down in my notes (many trips were taken before the age of computers). If I can't recall the location, I search for the species in *eBird*, and there's always other observers, who entered the bird with the location. This feature is one of the most valuable to me, because I like to know the exact location I visited, and I'm thankful to those who entered their old data.

I often remember where I met other birders by the birds I've gone to see, both rare and not so rare. I developed friendships with many of those birders, that started by mutually visiting a location somewhere in Pennsylvania to see an unusual bird. Birds brought us together. I also enjoy anything along the way to a birding adventure, including the scenery, other animals, general nature, old buildings, Amish farms, etc. that add to the memories of the day.

Attending the annual PSO Meetings also resulted in meeting birders from across the state. I can remember the first one I attended at State College in 2001. At that time I was new to the organization, which started as a result of Pennsylvania's first breeding bird atlas. Frank and Barb Haas enjoyed the connections made with birders across the state, that developed from the atlas project and wanted those connections to continue, so PSO was born along with the journal *Pennsylvania Birds* as a means of connecting the birding community of Pennsylvania. Thanks to Frank and Barb for carrying on those connections through the organization.

Using *eBird* has also connected me with other birders. Having review responsibilities sometimes results in reaching out to observers. Putting *eBird* user names with faces is a continuing way to connect with others, which happened on outings this year and at the Barnacle Goose and Pacific Loon gatherings.

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Of course that brings us to the **Three Rivers Birding Club**, where we gather at our meetings and outings. Birds bring us together and create friendships, memories of other birders, times, and places, in addition to the birds. I hope you have and continue to make memories through our club's activities.



MORE THAN 75 BIRDERS CONNECT(ICUT)ED WITH ONE ANOTHER OVER THIS VERY COOPERATIVE SINGING MALE CONNECTICUT WARBLER AT BELLEVUE MEMORIAL PARK MAY 18-25. PHOTO BY PHILLIP ROGERS.

Outings to Come

Early Fall Outings August-September 2025

By Steve Thomas

Friday August 29 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park: Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com) for our first bird walk this fall starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails. We will look for the early fall migrant birds.

Friday September 5 – 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: Please email Adrian to let him know you plan to attend.**

Saturday September 6 – Harrison Hills Park: Meet leader Dave Brooke (724-487-3586) at this county park off Freeport Road between Natrona Heights and Freeport. We will meet at the Environmental Learning Center parking lot at 8:00 AM. GPS coordinates: [40.6572](#), [-79.7024](#). As you enter the park, stay left, and then turn left at the first intersection, and go up the hill to the large parking lot. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous fall outings have produced a nice variety of fall migrants, including warblers and vireos.

Friday September 12 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park: Join Sheree Daugherty (shereedaugherty@gmail.com), for our second bird walk at Sewickley this fall starting at 8:00 AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

Saturday September 13 – Sewickley Heights Borough Park: This walk is intended for beginning/inexperienced birders and will be limited to the first seven people who email the walk leader Adrian Fenton at 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. Meet at 7:30 AM in the upper parking lot. Be sure to bring binoculars. For directions to the park go to 3RBC.org.

Outings Revisited

May Brings Warblers and Barred Owl Babies!

Sewickley Heights Borough Park--April, 25: Thirteen birders started the day in a light drizzle hoping to find some first of season migrants. Eastern Towhees and Hooded Warblers, two species that are plentiful at this location, called from heavy cover. Even the poor light couldn't dim the brilliance of a Scarlet Tanager that sang from a treetop. We had a high count of Purple Finches, mostly females with a couple of bright males. The variations of a double phrased call alerted us to the presence of a Brown Thrasher. A few minutes later the actual bird presented itself as a dark silhouette high on a bare branch. With our rain jacket hoods up, it was difficult to hear, except for the exuberant "queep" call of a Great Crested Flycatcher. Everyone got good looks at the russet-crested, lemon-yellow bellied bird. Rain continued all day with only a few breaks. Despite the damp weather, we still found five warbler species: Hooded, Black-and-white, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green with a spectacular look at a Blue-winged Warbler for a total on the outing of just over 30 species! --by leader Sheree Daugherty

Deer Lakes Park - May 10, 2025: On a beautiful, cool morning in early May, fourteen birders gathered at Deer Lakes Park's upper parking lot anticipating a great day of birding. Some new and some seasoned, the birders were greeted by numerous singing warblers welcoming them to a sunny adventure that would excite them at many turns. From Northern Parula to Black-throated Green, and Black-and-white to American Redstart, the continuous songs and sightings just above their cars would not let them begin their trek, pleasantly surprising them that so many warblers would present themselves right from the start.

The group pulled themselves from the lot to begin their ascent up the access road toward the big day of birding that awaited them. As they swept across the upper field and streamed through the trails, they were met by a Great Crested Flycatcher and the songs of Blue-winged,



A CLOWNISH JUVENILE BARRED OWL DELIGHTED THE GROUP!
PHOTOS BY DAVE BROOKE.

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Outings Revisited

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Tennessee, and Nashville Warblers, as well as the sweet sight of a Cape May. After hearing a Brown Thrasher and sweeping around the upper trail system, a thorough search led them to finally spotting the Kentucky Warbler that had been singing in front of them for several minutes, as well as a White-eyed Vireo from a similar endeavor.

After hearing what sounded like a whining, juvenile raptor, the group was delighted to hear a member point out, "An owl, an owl!" as a Barred Owllet sat on a branch 30 feet above them. The adorable, gray, fluff ball yawned in the understory and eventually laid down, balancing its body, lowering its head to get a better look at the odd creatures goggling up at it from the forest floor. The group peeled itself away from such a privileged treat, so that they could spend some time experiencing the riches of the lower lakes.

As the band of birders curled around all three lakes, they passed Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, a Spotted and a Solitary Sandpiper, Warbling Vireos, and Eastern Kingbirds. As the long morning of birding came to a close the group was pleased to total 72 species, 17 of them warblers. The comradery of the birders, beautiful weather, and expansive signs of spring migration truly led to a grand morning of birding, from the very beginning to the end.—**by leader John Vassallo**

Sewickley Heights Borough Park -- May 9, 2025: The calendar said May 9, but the temperature hovered in the low 40s as eleven birders gathered in the parking lot around leader Sheree Daugherty. Not many birds were vocalizing in the cold, but we were thrilled when we recognized a Kentucky Warbler singing just a short distance away. We quickly made our introductions and welcomed a couple of new birders, and then we were off to stalk the Kentucky! A few lucky people were able to catch a quick glimpse, before it headed away into thicker brush. We also heard a second bird a little later. Kentucky Warbler has been rare here for the last few years, so we hope they will begin breeding in the park again.

After the Kentucky excitement, we wandered back to the parking lot and crossed the road to the Butterfly Trail. A Wood Thrush and a Scarlet Tanager were trading songs back and forth, and an Eastern Towhee called. A few people spotted a Magnolia Warbler as it sang its short and sweet song. Lining up on the path, we spotted the Scarlet Tanager across a brushy field. An Indigo Bunting flew to a tree next to the trail, giving everyone a great look. We were almost as startled as the bunting, when an agitated Ruby-throated Hummingbird showed up and buzzed the bird, daring it to fight! The bunting stood its ground for a minute or two before fleeing, followed by the psycho hummer.

We moved on to the Upper Fields, and the mounds of the Allegheny Mound Ants were pointed out to our new birders. Only a few ants were active, and we didn't linger but hurried towards the sound of a bubbling House Wren, recently renamed the Northern House Wren in North America. There are now six Caribbean and tropical species that split, so if you had managed to snag a House Wren in the tropics earlier, your life list just expanded!

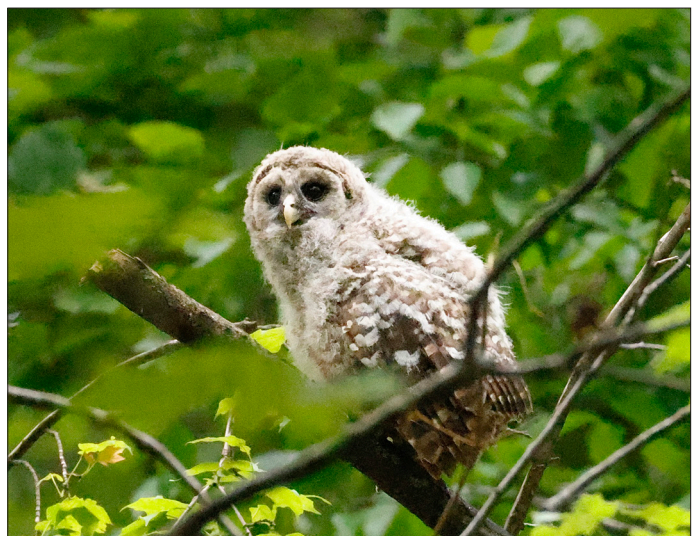
We circled back to the top of the Pipeline Trail and followed it down to the bottom of the hill. Bird activity slowed to a crawl, and we decided that our feathered friends had decided it was too cold to be out and had gone back to bed. Hooded Warblers, the most numerous warbler in the park, were almost always within earshot, however, and we were happy when one popped up next to the Nature Trail.

Any day out birding is a good day -- thanks to Sheree for a good day out with old friends and new! We had 31 species, including seven warblers: Ovenbird, Tennessee, Kentucky, Hooded, American Redstart, Northern Parula, and Magnolia Warbler.—**by participant Debbie Kalbfleisch**

Frick Park—May 25, 2025: This was advertised as a Frick Park Breeding Bird Atlas Walk. Ten enthusiastic birders, ranging from novice to knowing, joined me on a delightful walk through Clayton Hill, down Biddle, across on Tranquil, and back through Falls Ravine Trails. We discussed the PA Bird Atlas 3 and looked at the published book from the 2nd *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, so attendees could see how the data are used.

We got to enjoy both several migrants, including eight species of warblers (lovely to see Blackburnian Warbler before they leave) and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (found by Sofia DiGennaro and Eric Hall), as well as many breeding birds in the park for a total of 47 species observed. A pair of Scarlet Tanagers came down low to give everyone great looks at both the male and female (pair in suitable habitat), and we saw Downy Woodpeckers tending their nest with young along South Clayton Trail.

But the highlight [*Ed. note: just like the Deer Lake outing revisited above!*] was finding one of the Barred Owllets in Falls Ravine. I heard one hissing, and Sofia spotted him on the ground, hopping around and wing-ercising, much to the delight of our remaining group, Eric and Sue Solomon (whom we met with Jack on Tranquil Trail after Eric's outing), and several passersby. Shernaaz Kapadia went back after lunch and relocated the fledging, taking some wonderful photos that she graciously allowed us to share here.—**by leader Michelle Kienholz**



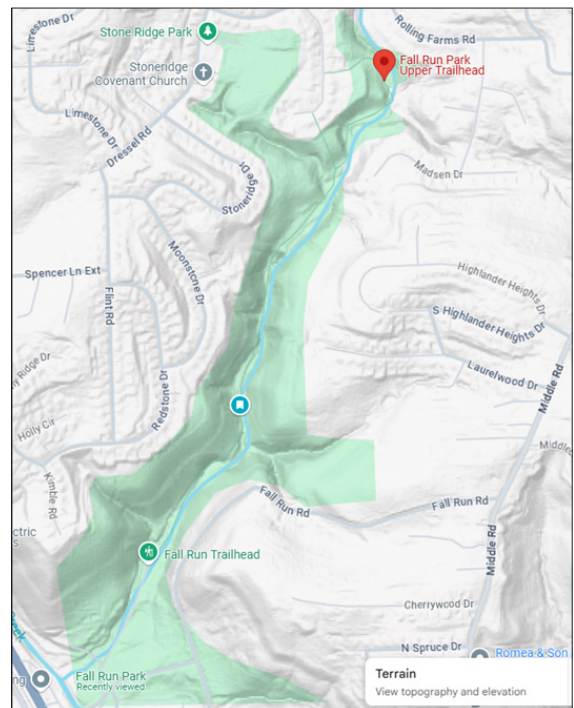
NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED, FRICK PARK'S BARRED OWLETS SHOWED OFF FOR THE GROUP. PHOTOS BY SHERNAAZ KAPADIA.

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Fall Run: A Gem of a Park

Story and photos by Amanda Haney

Fall Run Park in Shaler is a magical place for wildflowers and birds. In April and May the hillsides are covered in spring wildflowers, and the air is filled with birdsong. A half mile up an easy trail, a two story waterfall spills from the cliff. Located in Shaler Township just off Route 8 the park is on Fall Run Road, only 3 miles from the Fleming Bridge. A steep valley is shaded by tall trees and in spring, water cascades off the clifftops. In early spring, the hillsides are covered in Dutchman's Breeches and red (see photo) and cream colored Wakerobins (*Trillium erectum*). Bloodroot, bellworts, violets and phlox are scattered on the steep hillsides. Later, *Cimicifuga*, bladderwort and jewelweed appear. In August, great blue lobelia blooms among logs dotted with garter snakes warming themselves in the sun. Be sure to start the app, Merlin, as soon as you arrive. Birds are hard to see in the high treetops, but by April Tufted Titmice and Winter and Carolina Wrens may be singing. Other birds, such as Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo and Chickadees, populate the site. Red-tailed hawks and Blue Jays scream at each other. Eastern Phoebe and Louisiana Waterthrushes (see photos) breed here, as do Acadian Flycatchers. Hummingbirds often hover among the blooming jewelweed. Kids and dogs romp below the falls, and it is often crowded after 10 a.m. Nevertheless, Fall Run is a great place for birding or just a stroll on a hot summer day. As of May 2025, *eBird* lists 74 species from this hotspot (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L868804/bird-list>), but that number certainly will go up if more birders visit this beautiful little park in the future.



BREEDING EASTERN PHOEBES (ABOVE) AND LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (LOWER RIGHT) SHARE THE STEEP WOODED RAVINES WITH RED TRILLIUM (TOP RIGHT) IN EARLY SPRING. GOOGLE MAP IMAGE OF FALL RAVINE TRAIL (MIDDLE RIGHT)..

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Observations

Mallard: A Ubiquitous Duck Recognized Around the World

Article and photos by Tom Moeller



His distinctive green head, dark eyes, and yellow duckbill with a white collar bordering the green, separating it from his chestnut colored breast make the Mallard drake a standout in the crowd. His back is a mottled brown/dark brown, and his underside is whitish. His black rear with curly feathers contrasts with his white tail feather edges. His legs and webbed feet are orange. He is recognized by birders, non-birders, and duck hunters throughout the North American continent, Europe, and northern Asia.

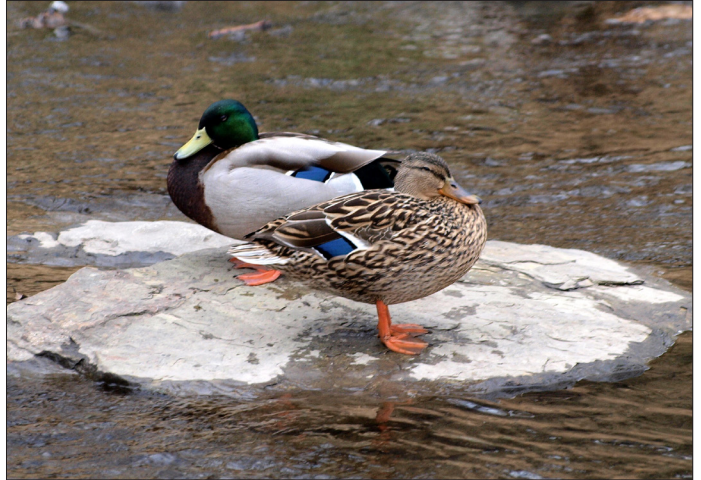
The various colors of the drake derive from many different pigments (carotenoids) and light interaction with the structure of the feathers. The Mallard's green head is actually from a yellow carotenoid in the feathers that absorbs some light wavelengths and feather structure that scatters blue light, resulting in the green appearance. At some angles in the sun, a Mallard drake's head can appear bluish purple!



The Mallard hen is just the opposite. Due to her many duties as nest builder, egg layer, sole incubator, and protector of fledglings, she wears a drab, dark brown and camel plumage helping her to blend into her nesting surroundings. Both drakes and hens display a blue speculum bordered in white in their wings. However, at certain times of the year (June through September), the drake loses his bright

plumage and molts into an eclipse phase, where he looks similar to the dull hen.

Mallards are dabbling ducks – they eat by plunging their heads down to the bottom of shallow water to eat aquatic plants and invertebrates, plus other small animals (insects, fish, and frogs) and algae. Their bodies remain on the surface with their tails high in the air. They “dabble” in shallow water near shorelines of ponds, lakes, and rivers. They prefer fresh water but are found in brackish or salty water near the ocean. When not dabbling in water, Mallards will eat seeds in wild fields or harvested stubble fields, often including waste corn. Being dabbling ducks, Mallards can take directly off into flight from water. They push down with their wings to propel themselves up and out of the water. With several more vigorous wing beats they get up to speed and can fly off.



However, their flying pattern makes them a good target for hunters. Mallards fly slower than most other ducks. Their wing beats are limited up and down to their body size; thus, not very fast. Mallards often fly in flocks along the various flyways in the United States; the main ones are in the Mississippi River basin. Hunters lay in wait for them during migrations and set out decoys along shores to attract them to slow and land. Although they are widely hunted, Mallards are still the most numerous ducks in North America.

Why are they so numerous? One reason is that first-year birds can breed in their first year, although many are unsuccessful. More important is the dedication of Mallard hens. First, she has to find a mate. In late fall and winter drakes that have now regained their breeding plumage start vying with each other to attract hens. By late winter hens start to select a drake as a mate. They have certain displays between them, swim and rest together, and he wards off any other males from his chosen mate. Mating occurs after the pair pump their heads down as they face each other. They repeat until they reach a certain crescendo, and the drake can then mount the hen.

At this point the Mallard pair search for a suitable nest site. Actually the hen searches, while the drake follows her about. She is often quacking as she searches, which may take a week. (Only hens *quack*; drakes only make a nasal *rheab* sound.) When she finally decides on a nest site, she clears a little scrape and lines it with grasses. Egg laying usually occurs as she builds her nest. She covers the eggs with down from her breast whenever she has to leave. She alone will incubate her clutch of ten eggs (average). Now the drake's role in breeding is over. The hen is the sole adult responsible for the eggs and hatchlings.

Being footloose, many Mallard drakes may now sully their reputations. Still filled with testosterone, they may force themselves on hens that seem unattached – those that have lost their first clutch,

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hens who have lost a mate, or hens that have remained single. Such encounters can be brutal as a gang of drakes may assault one hen, even drowning her during a violent assault.

The hens with clutches incubate their smooth, glossy eggs (colored pale green or blue/green) for around four weeks (26-29 days). They'll cover them with down when they must leave to eat. When the eggs hatch, the downy nestlings are precocial with dark brown backs and heads and buffy bellies and faces. They head for water right away, encouraged by their mother. They can find their own food, but their mother will show them good spots for feeding. She will also brood them at night until they can maintain their own body temperatures.



Sadly, the ducklings are very vulnerable to predation by foxes, hawks, cats, crows, even snapping turtles and bullfrogs. Maybe two or three of a brood will survive to adulthood. The Mallard hen is also susceptible to predation, especially during incubation on the ground, with a 30% loss of hens during that time. Hunting statistics bear this out. The percentage of hens killed during migration compared to their total population is higher than for drakes, meaning the total population of hens is lower than for drakes before hunting season due to losses in caring alone for their offspring.

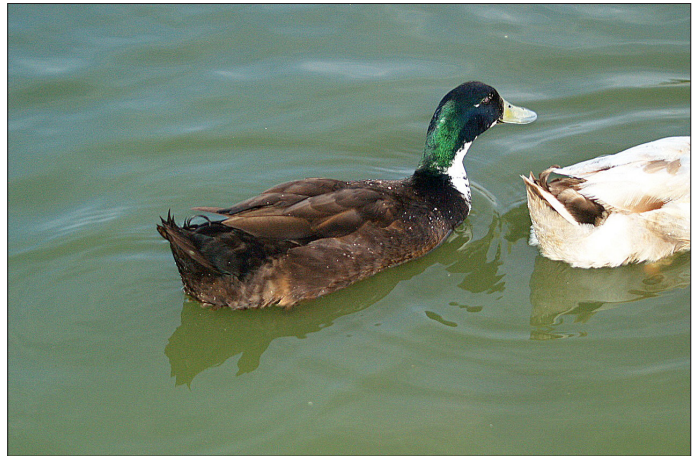
After breeding season, Mallard drakes molt to their eclipse plumage (June) looking similar to hens. Once a hen's brood can fly, she also undergoes a molt, joining males in large flocks. As they molt their wings, the Mallards are flightless. Soon the drakes molt yet again (August/September) into their breeding plumage. Then the cycle begins again.

Mallard migration usually occurs late in fall as the water they depend on freezes over, particularly in central Canada, where most breed. Dabbling ducks need open water to feed. Many birds along the coast, such as in Alaska, do not need to migrate far since the ocean waters do not freeze. In fact, much of Mallard migration is not too far. Spring migration north begins early, in February and March, with most reaching breeding grounds by mid-April. Migration is the time of most hunting of Mallards.

Mallards are the progenitors of domestic ducks, such as the all-white Pekin duck, among other variants. One such Pekin duck, Moe, lived at Duck Hollow in Pittsburgh for years, hanging out with the regular Mallards. Given their proclivity to force themselves onto unattended hens, Mallard drakes often attack domestic ducks too. Variations of hybrid Mallard X domestic ducks with their mixes of colors confuse new birders. Wild hybrids are often seen on our rivers. But remember, if you see "duck" on the menu of your favorite restaurant, it's most likely a domestic descendant of a Mallard.



UNLIKE THE REST OF THE PHOTOS IN TOM'S ARTICLE, THE PHOTOS ABOVE AND BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF MALLARD HYBRIDS.



New Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center Being Built

By Tom Moeller

Many of us can remember gathering at the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center with Bob VanNewkirk for a day of birding in the area. We could see Bald Eagles, Sandhill Cranes, and all kind of passerines and waterfowl from the front of the building. That 75-year-old building was torn down in 2014, having become too expensive to maintain.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission broke ground on a new Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center on May 19, 2025. Participants were Game Commission Northwest Region Director Jesse Bish, Game Commission Executive Director Stephen Smith, retired Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center manager Terry McClelland, and state lawmakers Sen. Michele Brooks and Rep. Brad Roae.

The new learning center will be much bigger, more modern, and more user-friendly than the old building. There will be many informative and interactive displays with a life-sized Bald Eagle's nest on permanent display. The project will cost \$8.8 million. Completion date will be in 2026 with a grand opening in early 2027.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

February – March 2025

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

Some early spring migrants, waterfowl, and continuing unusual wintering birds are the features of this report. March was unseasonably mild for the most part.

There were quite a few reports of **American Wigeon**, a surprisingly uncommon migrant in Allegheny County. One was at The Point in Pittsburgh 2/26 (PLi). One at Sharpsburg 2/26 (DM, JD), Blawnox the same day (AH, PM), and Oakmont 2/27 (AH, PM) were probably the same bird as all locations are close to each other. There were numerous reports in March. One was at Boyce-Mayview Park 3/1-4 (JF, m.ob.), three in Findlay Twp. 3/1-9 (MV, m. ob.), one in Oakmont 3/1 (AF), eight at Emsworth 3/3 (JF), one at the Sharpsburg Docks 3/9 (DM, SB), a great count of 28 at Tarentum (DB), two at the Gulf Lab Wetland in Harmar Twp. 3/11-15 (AF, m.ob.), and five at the Moody Road Ponds in Findlay Twp. 3/17 (MV). **Northern Pintail** reports include four at Imperial 2/8 (MV), two 2/10 (MV), and seven 2/12 (AF). Three were at Verona 2/8 (AH, PM), one was at Wingfield Pines 2/20-21 (JF, m.ob.), and single birds were at Sharpsburg 2/24 (DM) and at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 2/28 (MV). Three **Canvasbacks** were at Wingfield Pines 2/24-28 (DAR, m.ob.). The high count of **Redhead** was 20 at Bell Harbor on the Allegheny River 2/18 (AH, PM). Both species' presence may have been due to the freezing of the Great Lakes during a period of below freezing temperatures. A **Scoter sp.** was photographed from the Sharpsburg Boat Docks on the Allegheny River 2/22 (SD) but could not be conclusively identified due to harsh and poor lighting. Single **Long-tailed Ducks** were on the Allegheny River upriver from The Point in Pittsburgh (JSa) and in Oakmont (LS) 12/28. One was at Duck Hollow 1/12 (MKu, m.ob.), one was at Lock and Dam #4 in Natrona Heights 1/17 (DB, m.ob.), and one was at the Highland Park Bridge and nearby Six Mile Island 1/23-2/7 (AH, PM, m.ob.). Three **Long-tailed Ducks** were at Aspinwall 2/6 (EH). A few **Red-breasted Mergansers** and **Ruddy Ducks** were reported at various locations on the three rivers in February.

A large flock of 59 **Wild Turkey** continued from January in a yard in Pine Twp (PL, SL). A **Virginia Rail** was found at Wingfield Pines 2/11 (TC) and remained through the end of the reporting period. I believe this is the first winter record of Virginia Rail in the county. A **Red-necked Grebe** was a good find at Sharpsburg 2/21 through March (DM). What was likely the same bird was at The Point in Pittsburgh 2/26-27 (m.ob.). Red-necked Grebe has not been reported in the county since 2021. An early **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Boyce-Mayview Park 3/5 (ST). Three early **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Imperial 3/27 (MV), and two were at Wingfield Pines 3/28 (MM).

A few **Black Vultures** continued to be reported at various locations during the reporting period. High counts include six in Glenshaw 2/9 (EPH), six were feeding on a deer carcass in Fox Chapel near Beechwood Farms 2/10-18 (DM, m.ob.), and several were lingering in North Versailles 2/18 (eBird), where large numbers were present this winter.

The two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** continued at North Park (m.ob.) through the reporting period. **Merlins** were reported in many locations this season. Four were seen in Schenley Park 2/14 (KSJ), harkening back to the past when several were regularly found there in winter for several years. An early **Tree Swallow** was at Wingfield Pines 2/28 (SD, m.ob.), and an early **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was at Wingfield Pines 3/22-23 (TC). A **Marsh Wren** continued at Wingfield Pines through March (m.ob.). Following

wintering **Gray Catbird** reports in January, one was at Frick Park 2/1 (MK). Three **Field Sparrows** were in West Mifflin 2/21 (JF), an uncommon species here in winter.

The hybrid male **Eastern X Spotted Towhee** reported at Beechwood in the previous report was seen sporadically during this reporting period. There was an *eBird* report of an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Schenley Park 2/12. The description seemed to be correct, but the bird was never relocated or confirmed. An early **Eastern Meadowlark** was in West Deer Twp. 2/12 (LC).

An amazing count of 76 **Northern Cardinals** were tallied on a semi-rural property in West Deer Twp. near Deer Lakes Park 2/15 (AA). Three feeding areas are scattered on the property, and a photo of one of the feeding areas shows part of the large number of cardinals (and other birds).

Observers: Alvin Anthony, David Argent (DAR), Dave BrookeThomas Connor, Linda Croskey, Sofia D, Michael David, John Dzikiy, Adrian Fenton, John Flannigan, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Michelle Kienholz, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Patrick Lister (PLi), Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Dan Mendenhall, Pat McShea, Elizabeth Pagel-Hogan (EPH), Larry Sachs, James Saracco (JSa), Shannon Thompson, Mark Vass, m.ob. (many observers).



BLACK VULTURES CONTINUE TO BE SEEN IN OUR AREA IN WINTER. FREEZING ON THE GREAT LAKES BROUGHT REDHEADS AND OTHER WATERFOWL TO THE ALLEGHENY RIVER. PHOTOS BY DAN MENDENHALL.

