

The Peregrine

Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter

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

Vol. 23, No. 3 May/June 2024

Peregrine Falcons: An Environmental Success Story!

Our June 5 meeting will again be a *hybrid* meeting, with both a live presentation at Beechwood Farms Nature Center, and also an online Zoom meeting

Peregrine Falcons are an environmental success story from their extinction in eastern North America in the 1960s to their reintroduction and removal from the Endangered Species list in the US and most eastern states.

As the lead volunteer peregrine monitor in Southwestern PA, Kate St. John has over two decades of experience observing these charismatic birds. She will describe their breeding behavior, the history of their population crash and recovery, as well as notable breeding sites and peregrine dynasties in western Pennsylvania. Her engaging account of their lives and histories will give you a new appreciation for these fierce and beautiful raptors.

Fascinated by birds, curious about nature, and addicted to Peregrine Falcons, Kate St. John is a birder, blogger, and Pittsburgh's lead Peregrine Falcon monitor. She writes about birds and nature every day at *Outside My Window*, birdsoutsidemymywindow.org.

Kate also is generous supporter and principal consultant for the National Aviary's Peregrine nest cam at the Cathedral of Learning (aviary.org/birds-habitats/live-streams/), serving as the intermediary with the streaming provider and troubleshooting any and all problems that may crop up!



KATE ST. JOHN WILL SHARE HER UNIQUE INSIGHTS ABOUT PITTSBURGH PEREGRINES AT OUR JUNE 5 MEETING.

Outside My Window

A Blog of Birds & Nature with Kate St. John

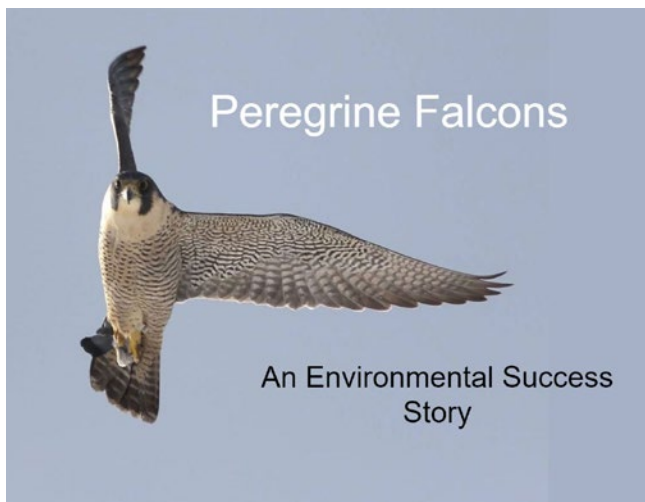


Again, this will be a *hybrid* meeting starting "live" at Beechwood Farms at 6:30 PM (ET), with a Zoom presentation starting at 7:00 PM (ET), giving you time to log on. The 3RBC business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and Kate's program will start around 8:00 PM. Details on how to join the Zoom event, including passcodes and other instructions, are supplied to members a few days before the meeting.



Mark Your Calendars For These Upcoming 3rbc Programs!

- **August 7, 2024:** Becca Ralston - "*Prothonotary Warbler Research*"
- **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



See *The Peregrine* in beautiful color at 3rbc.org

President's Message

Pennsylvania Bird Atlas 3

By Mike Fialkovich

As I mentioned during our last membership meeting, Pennsylvania is starting the states' third Breeding Bird Atlas project this year!

A state bird atlas is a multi-year project to document the presence, abundance and distribution of species breeding in that state. The end result is an atlas book (or online site) of maps illustrating the status for every species detected breeding or possibly breeding in a state. Pennsylvania's first atlas ran from 1983 to 1989, the second from 2004 – 2008.

The first atlas resulted in the discovery of the expansion of Common Merganser as a breeding species in the state. At that time, they were restricted to the northern counties. Currently, they are much more widespread and have bred here in Allegheny County.

During the second atlas, Fish Crow was confirmed breeding here in Allegheny County. Fish Crows were formerly only found along the Susquehanna River in the Harrisburg area. They were discovered in the county prior to the second atlas but breeding was confirmed because of the focused effort of searching for breeding species. The birds were found with juveniles at a location that is not regularly birded.

So what discoveries will be made during the third atlas? Time will tell, but one bird to look for that has expanded into western Pennsylvania is Black Vulture. Black Vulture has nested in Fayette County in recent years, but so far it's not known to nest in Allegheny or counties to the north. Will that change during the project? Reports have been increasing over the last two years, so it's very possible.

Other important results from previous atlases include the decline of Golden-winged Warbler and Northern Bobwhite (bobwhite is now extirpated in Pennsylvania). We also know a significant percentage of the world population of Scarlet Tanager breeds in the state. This knowledge has implications for habitat conservation efforts.

The difference with the current atlas compared to past projects is the method of data entry. This time the atlas is eBird based, so you will enter your sightings just as you do in eBird. There is an eBird portal for the atlas. Entering observations through this portal ensures the data is captured for the atlas. These observations will also appear in "regular" eBird.

I hope our club members participate in this important project. You can participate at any level you like from entering a few species to owning blocks and entering as many species as possible. We will be providing information to club members to promote the project over the next several months at least.

A unique aspect of this project is the addition of a winter atlas, showing the distribution of species that winter in the state. Information about this part of the project is not available in detail from the atlas team at this time, but it is something to be thinking about.

Happy Atlasing,

Mike Fialkovich
3RBC President

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Three Rivers Birding Club Newsletter
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We Want You!

You can be a part of *The Peregrine*! Are you an Outings leader? Don't forget to write a paragraph or two (or ask one of your participants to write it) of your most recent trip for *Outings Revisited*. Do you have a tidbit that might fit our *Birders News and Notes*? Let us know! And photographers, let our editor know if you are willing to share your work for articles and features.



GREEN-WINGED TEAL AT NORTH PARK – DAN MENDENHALL

The Peregrine

Outings to Come

Bird Walks to Welcome Returning Neotropical Migrants and Breeding Birds, Too!

By Steve Thomas, Outings Director

Friday, May 3 – Sewickley Heights Park: Meet Sheree Daugherty (shreedougherty@gmail.com), for our second spring bird walk starting at 8:00AM in the upper parking lot. See the 3RBC website for directions. Be prepared for muddy trails.

Friday, May 10 - North Park: We will meet our leader Adrian Fenton at the Gold Star Pavilion in North Park on Lake Shore Drive at 7:30 AM GPS coordinates: 40.593884, -80.003844.

We will bird Gold Star wetlands area, Marshall Lake, and, if time permits, part of Latodomi Nature Center. *Adrian would like participants to email him at AF9963285@aol.com to let him know you plan to attend.*

Saturday, May 11 – Deer Lakes County Park: Meet Oliver Lindhiem (ojlindhiem@gmail.com) and John Vassallo (johnvassallo@yahoo.com) at 7:30 AM at the park. Our meeting place will be at the parking lot at these GPS coordinates: 40.618722, -79.815371. From Creighton-Russelton Road, enter the park (Kurn Road), drive by two ponds on the right, then make a right turn and proceed to the last parking lot. Although the trails are pretty well maintained, please dress for possible wet grass, mud and rainfall.

Saturday, May 18 - Linda's Farm: Linda Croskey has invited us to visit her farm for this bird walk. We will meet at 8:00 AM at 882 Deer Creek Road, Gibsonia 15044. Location is northern Allegheny County in West Deer Township, there will be a sign at the end of the driveway. (Across the road is Harvest Valley Farm). Linda's farm is comprised of a variety of natural habitats; several acres of goldenrod fields, farm fields with brushy edges, mature deciduous trees, plus several wildflower and milkweed meadows. This attracts grassland birds, warblers, and many spring migrants. Dress for ticks and bring water and snacks. Walking is mostly level along paths with a few hills over uneven terrain. For additional directions call Linda at 724-612-9963 or email lcroskey@consolidated.net

Sunday May 19 – Harrison Hills: 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 be meeting and starting our walk at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the pond. As you enter the park, bear right and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. Dress for wet grass and mud. Previous spring outings have produced a nice variety of migrants, including warblers and vireos.

Saturday, June 8 – Picnic at Harrison Hills: We will hold our 3RBC picnic this year at Harrison Hills Park on Saturday June 8th. This will be a **bring your own lunch picnic** starting at 12:00 PM at the Yakaon pavilion. The pavilion is located across from the environmental center. 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. Prior to the picnic we will be having a bird walk starting at 9:00 AM. The walk will start at the Rachel Carson parking lot near the

pond. As you enter the park, bear right and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road.

Saturday June 22 - Hunters Lane, Forbes State Forest:

Our leader will be Mike Fialkovich, who will be taking us on his annual summer outing to the Laurel Highlands. For this outing, we will be returning to this productive trail in Forbes State Forest. This trail goes through various habitats, including forest, brush, and a scrub wetland. Alder and Willow Flycatchers breed here along with various warblers, including Chestnut-sided, Blue-winged, Black-throated Green and possibly Golden-winged. Other forest birds such as Scarlet Tanagers, Wood Thrush, and various vireos should be in the area. This will be a good opportunity for us to contribute data to the Pennsylvania Bird Atlas 3.

The trail is level throughout, so it is easy walking. We saw a Black Bear on a previous outing to this site, so you never know what to expect! We will meet at the *Sheetz* off the Donegal Exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike at 7 AM. The trail is a five-minute drive from the Sheetz. Feel free to bring something to eat if you like for after the walk, and it is always a good idea to bring water. Note: there are no restroom facilities at the trailhead.

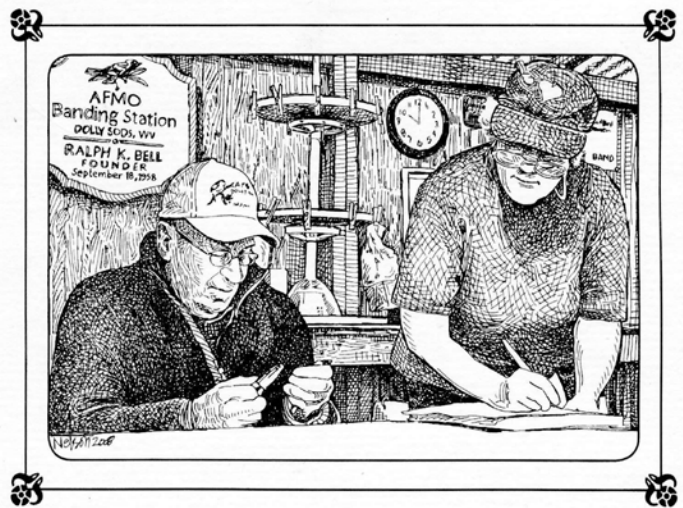
3RBC Birder News and Notes

As we enjoy spring outings in western Pennsylvania, many of our members can recall with great fondness our annual outings to Ralph K. Bell's Green County property. One of the highlights of these walks, (aside from just walking with Ralph and soaking up his decades of knowledge and experience) was watching him band American Kestrels at the nest boxes on his farm.

Ralph's many accomplishments include founding the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AMRO) in 1958. Our former editor, Paul Hess, sent this cartoon that friend Colleen Nesldon had drawn of the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (banding station). She also happens to live nextdoor to Ralph's farm.

What a nice memory!

Do you have something that you think would be a nice addition to Birder News and Notes? Send it along to our editor, Robert Mulvihill at Robert.Mulvihill@aviary.org.



ALLEGHENY FRONT MIGRATION OBSERVATORY WITH RALPH BELL ON THE LEFT. ILLUSTRATION BY COLLEEN NELSON.

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Outings Revisited

An Outing from October 2023 and Spring Woodcocks

Davis Hollow Marina, Moraine State Park – October 15, 2023: The downpours of the previous day ended, and the skies cleared for our walk at Davis Hollow on the North Shore of Moraine State Park. Eleven birders joined me for a walk in anticipation of some fall newcomers and some lingering migrants. What we did not anticipate was a mountain bike race held on this usually quiet and uncrowded trail! We shared the trail with 125 bikers of the Month of Mud club which provided some excitement during the quiet bird moments. In addition to the year-round species, we found a Towhee, a Swamp Sparrow, and some Red-winged Blackbirds. We welcomed both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Dark-eyed Juncos, and White-throated Sparrows. The fall foliage didn't disappoint nor did our views of the area before it was closed for the season by the park service on October 31. I enjoyed our fall walk, meeting new birders and seeing some birding friends. --by leader **Karyn Delaney**

Woodcock Walk – March 27: Twenty-two people showed up on a decent night, about sixty degrees and lightly cloudy. A far different night than the week before. Half of them were first timers. With so many people, we had to car pool. After pairing up, we headed up to the rookery site. Once again, no one had a problem spotting the big sycamore tree on the island. Once they saw it, they then were able to pick out the nests in the top of the tree. Some of the folks enjoyed seeing a few of the Great Blue Herons carrying sticks to the nests.

Besides the herons, we had a female Common Merganser in the water, just sitting. Someone brought out a scope so that people were able to get a nice view of the bird. As I spotted a Double-crested Cormorant flying up river from the island, others spotted three or four more headed in the same direction, till they flew ought of sight. We had a few Canada Geese on the island and in the water. Over half a dozen Turkey Vultures were flying around, showing off their wobbling style of soaring. We then headed up to the field.

As we got out of the vehicles, we could hear the loud chorus of spring peepers in the creek, Cove Run, over the hillside. The chilly weather the week before kept them from singing. Heading into the field, we heard a loud tree frog. Once again, robins and cardinals were very vocal, flying around. The steady rain the day before made for a slightly sloppy walk along the main trail. Once we turned into the brushy field, the ground was a little more solid to walk on.

Once we got to the field, we were hearing two or three more tree frogs to the right, singing off and on. Eventually, we started to hear peenting coming from different directions. As we spread out, it was clear we had at least three males peenting. A few people were able to catch the males taking off, sometimes following their spiral climb up and their freefall down. There was a steady stream of peenting, twittering takeoffs, and fluttering landings. At one point, one of the participants pointed out that off to our right in the far distance, we could see the space station flying from the left to the right. It had a unique white light about it. After a bit, the action started slowing down, so we headed out. We had a much better night than the week before. As we parted, I invited everyone to the TRBC meeting next week. --by leader **Tommy Byrnes**



ABOVE: BEAUTIFUL FALL COLORS AND AN UNEXPECTED MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE DURING THE OCTOBER OUTING TO MORAIN STATE PARK. PHOTOS KARYN DELANEY.



TOMMY BYRNES'S SPRING WOODCOCK WALKS ARE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK OUT THE MALE'S EVENING DISPLAYS. BUT PHOTOS CAN BE A CHALLENGE AT DUSK. DAN MENDENHALL CAPTURED THIS SHOT IN MID-APRIL.

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Duck Hollow: A Deceptively Grand Place To Bird

by Tom Moeller

Duck Hollow is not very impressive - at first glance. There is a wide, long parking lot above the Monongahela River. A stream, Nine Mile Run, empties into the Mon at one end of the lot, forming a spit of land at its mouth. Fishermen angle off the parking lot or out on the spit. Some wear waders and stand in the shallow water casting their lures. Often people park to hang out, walk their dogs, or jog along the river trails. Some ill-advised souls toss out bread to the ducks and gulls.

Normally, the only birds in the water are Mallards and Canada Geese, while a Belted Kingfisher may hunt from the shore. Robins, cardinals, and sparrows may dot the trees or venture down to the spit vegetation. Killdeer and gulls often populate the spit, and an occasional Great Blue Heron will show up. Yet, somehow this unassuming spot attracts wonderful birds.

I started visiting Duck Hollow in 2007 when a white Peking Duck "Moe" was a regular resident. He (she?) hung out with the Mallards. An unusual bird I found there then was a Wild Turkey traipsing through the area, a bird I saw there twice more in 2011 and 2014.

During migration, various ducks and grebes pass through. The many ducks we've seen at Duck Hollow have earned the place its name: American Black Ducks, American Wigeons, Buffleheads, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, Gadwall, Long-tailed Ducks, Common, Hooded, and Red-breasted Mergansers, Northern

Pintails, Northern Shovelers, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, White-winged Scoter, and Wood Ducks. In 2015, one very odd duck was a hybrid between a Redhead and a Ring-necked Duck. Pied-billed, Horned, and, occasionally, Red-necked Grebes as well as Common Loons and Double-crested Cormorants pass through too.

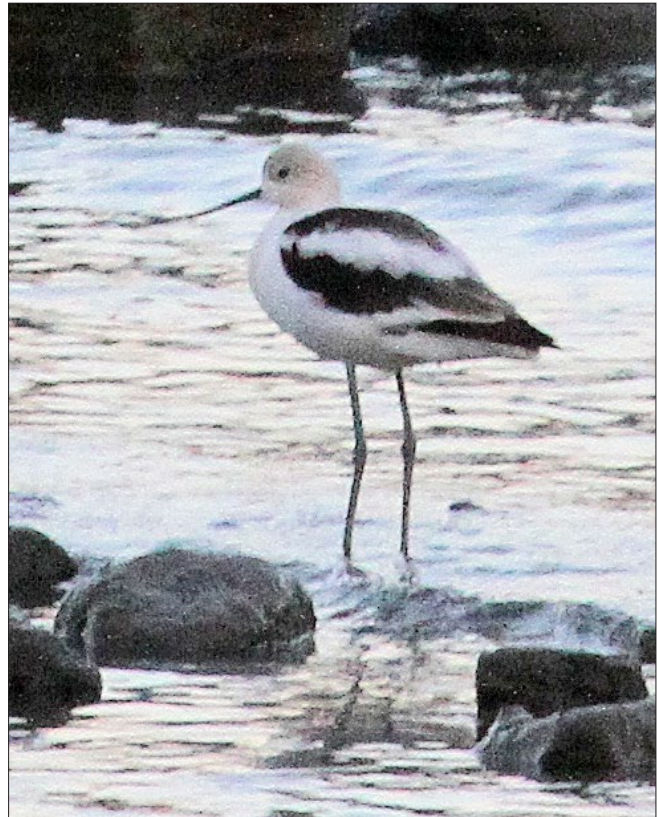
Nancy and I started going to the Hollow in the winter when Ring-billed and Herring Gulls gathered in large numbers. This was a good time to study the various plumage cycles (ages) of these birds. Bonaparte's and Iceland Gulls (including the Thayer's subspecies) have joined the regulars.

An extraordinary gull appeared in January 2015. After being seen and identified at the Pittsburgh Point, a South American Kelp Gull made its way to Duck Hollow the next day. As it preened at the water's edge, a first-cycle Iceland Gull walked by, two rarities at once!

A single Bonaparte's Gull showed up on the spit in July 2018, a very unusual time for it to be there. Individual Bonaparte's may find a secluded spot to molt during the summer. This second-cycle gull went through a heavy molt for several weeks in a place where it felt safe and had plenty of food.

Terns visiting include Forster's Terns and Common Terns.

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TOM MOELLER'S PHOTOS FROM DUCK HOLLOW INCLUDE BEAUTIES LIKE THIS AMERICAN AVOCET (TOP RIGHT), AND REDHEAD (BOTTOM LEFT). THE KELP GULL (TOP LEFT) WAS A REAL RARITY.

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Duck Hollow

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They usually spend a day but are soon gone on their journey.

Waterbirds have stopped by too. A Brant was there years ago. May 2012 saw nine Willets foraging in the shallows. Other waterfowl on the same day included a Lesser Yellowlegs, a Spotted Sandpiper, and Killdeer. A Marbled Godwit caused quite a stir in late December 2013. It stayed overnight and attracted all kinds of birders to the Hollow. At one point a beaver came by gathering sticks while photobombing pictures of the godwit. A Black-crowned Night-Heron spent a day there in March 2015. Very unusual for Duck Hollow and Pennsylvania was the brief appearance of a pair of American White Pelicans flying over the river in April 2016. American Avocets have also turned up like one in late August 2016, but they always leave after sunset. In February 2017, a Sora spent a month on the spit. Green Herons and American Coots have been seen there as well as Solitary Sandpipers and a Semipalmated Plover. Even a Mute Swan happened by one day.

Corvids found at Duck Hollow are American Crows, Fish Crows (naturally), Common Ravens, and, of course, Blue Jays.

Raptors soaring over include the Hays Bald Eagles and the Duquesne Ospreys. More than once Merlins have roosted in the

parking lot trees. One day a pair of Merlin was there - the male tried to stand on a stump in the water, but it sank into the creek making the raptor fly back up to the trees. American Kestrels have been seen in the hills above the Hollow, and Turkey Vultures patrol the skies. A Red-tailed Hawk and a Great Horned Owl have both used a nest on the Homestead Grays Bridge near Duck Hollow to raise their young.

Additionally, passerines and other landbirds are found along Old Brownhill Road, Nine Mile Run, and the riverbanks. The water attracts Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Willow Flycatchers, and Yellow Warblers. Indigo Buntings and both Orchard and Baltimore Orioles are regular summer residents, as are Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos and Gray Catbirds. Chimney Swifts chase bugs overhead. Downy Woodpeckers, titmice, mockingbirds, and Carolina Wrens also reside there. Other birds are Mourning Doves, goldfinches, and starlings.

Over the years many splendid birds have visited Duck Hollow, and they continue to come, making it a deceptively grand place to bird.

N.B.: Club members and other birders have submitted 3500 eBird checklists from this favorite birding hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1136752>

Another Birding Gem: Gold Star Mothers Wetlands



If you've been to Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve's Nature Store, you may have stopped to admire some of Dan Mendenhall's beautiful photographs in the entryway. One of his many birding hotspots is North Park's Gold Star Mothers Wetlands, the site of Adrian Fenton's May 7 outing. Here are a few of Dan's shots taken this past April at that location.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: PECTORAL SANDPIPER; SORA; OSPREY WITH A FRESH CATCH.

Birds in the Three Rivers Area

Some unexpected sightings for December 2023 – January 2024

By Mike Fialkovich, Bird Reports Editor

The winter was mild for the most part, but there was a short period of frigid weather and snow in late January, freezing lakes, ponds and the rivers in the area. That was followed by a lot of rain for a few days in late January as temperatures warmed into the 40s. Notable were several unusual winter visitors this year.

Unusual was a flock of 8 **Mute Swans** (two adults and six immatures) found on the Allegheny River just downriver from the Highland Park Dam 1/20 (MS). They drifted downriver quite a distance. The following day, seven of them were back near the Highland Park Bridge and observed taking off and flying upriver (DY). I would guess they came from a pond to the north that froze during a short period of very cold temperatures. A single bird was seen near Brunots Island on the Ohio River 1/23 (JK). **Tundra Swans** after November are difficult to determine if they are late migrants or birds moving around the local area. Ten were noted flying over Brunots Island 12/30 (SN) which could have been late migrants. On the other hand, a flock of 40 flying over Natrona Heights 1/23 (PH) remain a mystery in terms of their destination.

A good count of 11 **Northern Shoveler** were at Blawnox 1/16 (DM), one was at Duck Hollow 1/17 (m.ob.) and two were at Wingfield Pines the same day (eBird). **Gadwall** were at the Gulf Lab Wetland in Harmar Twp. most of December with a high of 10 birds 12/7 (JK), one was at Imperial 12/17 (TB). **American Wigeon** is an uncommon migrant here (but regular), so any reports are notable. Three were at Blawnox 12/2 (MF, JVa, OL), one was at Duck Hollow 1/16 (NB) and two were at Wingfield Pines 1/17 (JF). A **Northern Pintail** was at Wingfield Pines 12/1 (PBr, et al.), one was in Findlay Twp. 12/14 (MV), one was at Imperial 12/15 (RBu) and three were at Bunola 1/23 (JF). **Canvasback** is another duck that is uncommon but regular here. Four were at Duck Hollow 1/16 (JK, et al.), two were at Emsworth and two at McKees Rocks/Brunots Island 1/22-26 (JF, DM, m.ob.). A few **Redhead** were at Blawnox 1/16 (AF), a great count of 19 were at Duck Hollow 1/16 (JF, JK), two were at Wingfield Pines 1/21 (eBird), eight were at Dashields Dam 1/21 (MV) and two were on the Ohio River at the McKees Rocks Bridge 1/20-22 (JF). Single birds were on the Ohio River at Emsworth 1/22 (JF) and McKees Rocks 1/27 (DBe, JVa, OL). A **Surf Scoter** was at Blawnox 1/16 (MD). Fourteen **Ruddy Ducks** were at Duck Hollow 1/16 (JF).

A gathering of 110 **Mourning Doves** were around the feeders at Frick Park 12/30 (SB). This is the second winter in a row with triple digit counts at this location.

A female **Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird** visited a feeder in Penn Hills 11/11-12/13 (LM). Unfortunately the bird was not caught and banded for a firm identification before it moved on. The bird was photographed but could not be identified with certainty from the photos.

A flock of 15 **Sandhill Cranes** were observed flying over Ross Twp. 12/27 (SN). The birds were well described and others searched the local area unsuccessfully, so they must have kept moving. While unusual, in 2019 a flock was observed by several birders in the northern part of the county at the same time of year.

Killdeer lingered into December and were surprisingly

present in January. A flock was in Hampton Twp. 12/3 – 1/10 with a max count of 17 (DN). Killdeer have been lingering in South Park for several years. They were there up to mid-Jan with a max count of 43 (JF). One was in Oakmont 1/19 (RBu). Quite a surprise, a **Dunlin** was along the Ohio River just down river from Dashields Dam 1/21 (MV). I don't recall ever having a winter record of Dunlin in the county. A **Wilson's Snipe** was at Peter's Creek 1/23 (JF). Snipe are occasional in winter in the county.

A Thayer's type **Iceland Gull** was photographed at Duck Hollow 12/19 (RBu). The brief cold and frozen rivers in late January produced a first winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the point in Pittsburgh with the Ring-billed Gulls 1/20-21 (TB, m.ob.).

Turkey Vulture in recent years has become expected all winter, and this winter was no exception with regular reports the entire season. I think the days are gone of looking up and noticing the first migrant in March.

A **Short-eared Owl** was a nice find in a field near Bridgeville 1/16 (JO).

An immature **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a great find at Sheridan Park in Pittsburgh during the Christmas Bird Count 12/30 (OM). It was seen at least up to 1/12 (m.ob.).

Merlin was reported from at least 17 locations.

As if the Red-headed Woodpecker wasn't enough excitement at Sheridan Park, a birder searching for the woodpecker came across a **White-eyed Vireo** 1/5 (APe, et al.)! The bird was photographed very well by two observers independently that day. Searches the following day were unsuccessful. This is the first winter record that I'm aware of since I've been compiling.

American Crows tallied for the Pittsburgh CBC 12/30 totaled 15,000 (KSJ, CK). **Fish Crows** and **Common Ravens** continue to be regularly reported.

Horned Larks were only reported from Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. most of the period (eBird).

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are rare in winter, but there were a surprising number of reports. One was appropriately outside of the National Aviary 12/1 (RM), one visited a feeder in Etna 12/21 through the period (DY), one was at Chapel Harbor 1/3 (PB), one at Sheridan Park 1/5 (APe), one at Hartwood Acres 1/18 through the month (AH, AF) and one at Millvale 1/19 through the month (JD).

An **American Pipit** was at West Deer Twp. Recreational Park along the Allegheny River 1/18-20 (MG, m.ob.). The same bird moved upriver to Tarentum Bridge Park 1/21 (MF, RBu).

A few **Gray Catbirds** were also present this winter, including single birds at Beechwood Farms 12/3-10 (DM, et al.), Wilksburg 12/5 (CT), West Deer Twp. 12/31 (LC), Peter's Creek 1/4 (JF), Bethel Park 1/29 (eBird) and at the Fox Chapel Marina 1/30-31 (APe, DBe). A rare for winter **Brown Thrasher** was at North Park 1/6 (AF). An **American Robin** with a white cheek patch was photographed at Homewood Cemetery 12/2 (MK).

An **Evening Grosbeak** was well described visiting a feeder in Penn Hills 1/16 (SS) but only for a few minutes. **Pine Siskins** were reported fairly regularly during the season in small numbers. Most reports were from Hartwood Acres, where they were reported off and on.

Field Sparrows are uncommon but probably annual in winter. Up to six were at Harrison Hills Park most of the season (m.ob.), one was at North Park 12/6-21 (m.ob.), two were there 1/6 (AF), two were at Frick Park 12/30 (SA, AP), one was in West Deer Twp. 1/2 and 2/28 (LC), four in West Mifflin 1/7 (JF) and two there 1/20 (JF). There were quite a few **Fox Sparrow** reports, unusual for

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Birds in the Three Rivers

continued from page 7

the season. One visited a feeder in Etna in Nov and Dec, and three were there 1/15-16 (DY). One was at Beechwood Farms 12/2-3 (m.ob.) and one was at Hartwood Acres 12/2-2/6 (m.ob.). One was at Chatham University Eden Hall Campus in the northern part of the county 12/7 (MKu). Single birds were at Gibsonia 12/14 (KP), Pine Twp. 12/31-1/7 (PL, SL), Sheridan Park 1/15 (EH), Hartwood Acres 1/15 (PR, SN) and Frick Park 1/25 (MK). An apparent female **Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco** was photographed in Indiana Twp. 1/14 and 1/19 (DYe). Females can be tricky to assess with 100% certainty, but this one showed characteristics of this subspecies. A **White-crowned Sparrow (Gambel's)** was at West Deer Twp. 12/27 (LC). This is the same location an individual of this subspecies wintered last year.

Red-winged Blackbirds were present in several locations all season. Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were at Frick Park 2/23 (MK). A late **Common Grackle** was at Chapel Harbor 12/2 (MF). A flock of 80 at Bethel Park 1/6 (JP) was out of season. One was at Frick Park 1/16-19 (ZV) and one was in Pine Twp. 1/24 (PL, SL).

Any warbler other than **Yellow-rumped Warbler** is newsworthy in the winter. A female/imm. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was at the Carnegie Mellon University Campus 12/10 (TF) and an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at the Churchill Valley Greenway 1/8-14 (NS, DM, et al.). It was last seen during the cold snap, staying close to the ground in dense vegetation.

Observers: Sameer Apte, David Bennett (DBe), Trip Bondi, Nathaniel Bowler, Stephen Bucklin, Paul Brown, Parker Bradley (PBr), Ron Burkurt (RBu), Linda Croskey, Michael David, John Dzikiy, Adrian Fenton, Mike Fialkovich, John Flannigan, Ted Floyd, Eric Hall, Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Charity Khesghi, Michelle Kienholz, Lucy Klimko, Justin Kolakowski, Malcolm Kurtz (MKu), Oliver Lindhiem, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Linda McNair, Dan Mendenhall, Oscar Miller, Robert Mulvihill, Steve Northrop, Dick Nugent, Jim Offhaus, Joe Papp, Kevin Parsons, Amber Pertz (APe), Aidan Place, Philip Rogers, Kate St. John, Nickolus Stahlman, Shane Studer, Christopher Turbert, Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVa), Zachary Vaughan, Dan Yagusic, David Yeany (DYe), many observers.

Pennsylvania Society For Ornithology Annual Meeting Is Here In Southwestern PA

Join birding enthusiasts from across the state at the 2024 PSO Birding Festival in Washington County, May 31 – June 2, 2024. Registration opens on April 1st at 8 am. The Festival is the best place to enjoy great birding trips, learn from experts, and meet or re-connect with birding friends. This year we'll be gathering at the DoubleTree by Hilton – Pittsburgh/Meadow Lands; our 33rd gathering will be the first in Washington County.

This year's festival features an impressive line-up of field trips, speakers, and vendors. Choose from 16 field trip destinations across five southwestern PA counties, led by knowledgeable guides, including a special opportunity to tour the National Aviary. Saturday afternoon's session includes presentations on bird song, hawkwatching, the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and Pennsylvania's Third Bird Atlas. The 2024 PSO Birding Festival is being held at the beginning of peak nesting season for many Pennsylvania birds to highlight the Atlas, a community science project that started this year. Vendors will include art, optics, apparel, conservation nonprofits, and a "leave one, take one" bird book exchange.

Join the Saturday evening banquet as we honor our club president, Mike Fialkovich, with the prestigious Earl Poole Award, and our local Allegheny Land Trust with the Conservation Award. We are thrilled to welcome Katie Fallon, acclaimed author of *Cerulean Blues* and Executive Director of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, to present the keynote address, *Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird*, based on

her latest book.

The Friday agenda includes a volunteer conservation project with Hollow Oak Land Trust, time to visit with vendors, and PSO's annual meeting, which includes updates on PSO initiatives and the election of directors and officers.

There is a fantastic slate of field trips to choose from, many of them being led by past and current members of our club, including Ryan Tomazin, Adrian Fenton, Michelle Kienholz, Dan Mendenhall, Trip Bondi, Kate St. John, Malcolm Kurtz, Bob Mulvihill, Ezra White, Shannon Thompson, Marc VanderVen, and Michael David.

To register go to: <https://psoticketspice.com/psot-annual-meeting-2024>.

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology 2024 Birding Festival (and Annual Meeting)



May 31 – June 2, 2024

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Pittsburgh – Meadow Lands
Washington, Pennsylvania

Co-sponsored by the National Aviary

