

# The Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club

March 2008

## Meetings

Todd Bird Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month, September through April, at Blue Spruce Lodge in Blue Spruce County Park, located just off Route 110 east of the town of Ernest. Arrive early to socialize. In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.

**Tuesday, March 4** – Member Walt Shaffer will present a program entitled *2007: The Switch to Digital*. The year 2007 was the year of Walt's plunge into digital photography. This presentation will chronicle some of his experiences with digital bird and butterfly photography. The pros and cons of digital photography as well as some of the advances in lens technology will be discussed in a manner that everyone can understand. Walt will include images from Crane Creek State Park in Ohio, "the Brig" in New Jersey, and many sites in Pennsylvania which should make an interesting program.

**Tuesday, April 1** – Wildlife Conservation Officer Patrick Snickles from Marion Center will present a program detailing the life history of one of our uncommon nesting birds, the not-so-common Common Merganser. Do you know where the Common Merganser nests? According to Arthur Cleveland Bent, it nests in hollow trees, on ledges under low bushes, in piles of loose boulders, in remote crevices, in abandoned buildings, and in old hawk or crow nests. Come to learn more about this very adaptable bird as Patrick discusses the species' distribution, physiology, habitat, and nesting success in our county.



Barn Owls will be the focus of our May meeting.

Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath

**Tuesday, May 6** – This is our annual banquet meeting. Dinner begins at 6:00. Please bring your own place settings and a dish to share. The evening's speaker will be Tammy Colt, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Southwest Region. As a Wildlife Diversity Biologist, Tammy Colt assists private landowners in managing their properties for wildlife, particularly for species of concern. Her job also entails assisting in research and management projects for Barn Owls, bats, and other species of concern. Tammy previously worked as a Habitat Biologist for PGC, mainly assisting with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) planning. She holds a B.S. in Animal Bioscience from Penn State University and an M.S. in Biology from Indiana University of PA, where she focused on ecological herpetology.

She was formerly an environmental educator for Powdermill Nature Reserve and a field biologist for the Loyalhanna Watershed Association. She served as Project Coordinator and principal author of "Pennsylvania Amphibians and Reptiles: A Curriculum Guide," published in 2001 by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

The PA Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Biologists began the Barn Owl Conservation Initiative in spring 2005 in the Southeast and Southcentral Regions; in 2006, the program was expanded to a statewide effort. Since little is known of the conservation status of Barn Owls in PA, and they are a Candidate-At Risk species on our special concern list, one of the project's main objectives is to estimate the distribution and abundance of the species in the Commonwealth. In addition, they are evaluating Barn Owl habitat and prey usage, looking at survival and

dispersal of young Barn Owls, improving habitat, protecting and improving existing nest sites, and studying their genetic diversity. Public response to this effort has been tremendous, resulting in the discovery of active nests in five of PA's six regions. In 2007, they monitored 47 active nests statewide and banded 130 young Barn Owls.

## Outings

Tuesday morning outings will continue at Yellow Creek State Park.. In case of inclement weather, contact Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323) to determine whether the Tuesday outing has been canceled. All Yellow Creek outings meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana.

**Saturday, March 15** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323).

**Saturday, April 5** – Joint Todd and Three Rivers Birding Club outing at Yellow Creek.

**Saturday, April 19** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). This joint outing with Friends of the Parks will target late waterfowl and early migrant passerines.

**Saturday, April 26** -- Blacklick Valley Natural Area, led by Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323). From Indiana, take Route 56 to Armagh; turn left (or east) onto Route 22. Continue past the Dilltown exit to McFeaters Road on the left, and follow McFeaters to the parking lot at the end of the road. We will meet here at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 3** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). This is our annual warbler pilgrimage, so be prepared to hike.

**Saturday, May 12** – Pennsylvania Migration Count, both Indiana and Armstrong Counties. Please contact Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) if you can participate.

**May 18-20** – PSO Weekend at Pittsburgh. In conjunction with the Three Rivers Birding Club and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the 19<sup>th</sup> annual PSO meeting will be held at The Sheraton Pittsburgh North. This is a great opportunity to meet birders from across the state, attend outings in new areas, and learn from the afternoon presenters. For further information, see pages 7-8 or contact the Higbees (724-354-3493).



One of the Volant owls perches on a shrub.

## New Wednesday Outings

We are starting a new set of outings at Yellow Creek State Park, led by Mary Assenat. Mary would like to tailor the trips to accommodate those who are attending. Some of these outings will be cross-country ski trips; others, hiking, easy walking, or kayaking. Mary will be doing some freshwater temporary pool research on some of these trips so interest in invertebrates and amphibians as well as birds will be welcome!

Please contact Mary (724-465-6146 or 412-418-1583) if you are able to attend.

## Birding My Way Home from Work



Linda Wagner birds her way home from work.

As I was leaving work in Grove City around 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 13, a flock of crows was mobbing a Red-tailed Hawk behind the building.

On my way home I drive through the Volant strips. What a bonanza! Here were 4 Short-eared Owls, one Northern Harrier, and one American Kestrel. Wow! I thought – a seven-raptor day!

As I continued driving on Route 208 between Volant and Mercer Road, I spotted another Red-tailed Hawk.. And finally on my lane, our resident Great Horned Owl was perched on her nest, keeping her babies (or eggs) warm on last year's Red-tailed Hawk's nest. She seemed very content up there! So on my way home from work I observed 9 raptors in a very short period of time! Not too shabby!

On Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>, an early Killdeer appeared in the parking lot at work. Twenty-four Sandhill Cranes flew over the field near the intersection of Bonanni and Old Ash Roads on the 21<sup>st</sup>. I never know what I'll see on my way home, but it is always a great ending to a day of work.

– Linda Wagner

## From the President's Desk

Did you know that the ear slits on some species of owls are asymmetrically placed? This was just one thing that I learned about owls from Georgette's presentation at the last meeting. Not only was her discussion of owl characteristics interesting, her hand-crafted models of each species beautifully illustrated the facts she presented. As I've said, I never fail to come away from each meeting not having learned something new about the birds around us. And I am still pondering that fact about the owls' eyes being larger than their brains. How have they been able to survive on this earth for more than 50 million years? Birds are wonderful!



Georgette Syster discusses the occurrences of Great Gray Owls in PA as she presents her artwork during our February meeting.

Check out our program offerings for the next few meetings. I hope to see more of our members attending the meetings and outings. If you have any ideas for programs or outings, please don't hesitate to contact me. We're working to arrange topics and times for outings that will suit everyone's busy schedules.

One more thing—thank you to everyone who responded to my request in the last newsletter and promptly sent in his dues. We are operating on a tight budget and rely on you members to keep up to date and to attend meetings and support our auction items, too. You'd think that with a small number of people attending meetings and with a good number of auction items that I would have won that book on the red tails! Better luck at the next meeting! See you there.

– Linda Jones, President

## Todd Members Participate in Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count, an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent, was held February 15 through 18 this year.

Participants counted birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wished during the four-day period. They tallied the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they filled out an

online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site.

In 2007, participants reported a record-breaking 11 million birds of 616 species. They submitted more than 80,000 checklists, an all-time record for the ten years of the count.

Todd members and friends who participated this year include the following: Pat Andrascik, Sharon Baldrige, Deb Beisel, Ken Byerly, Lawrence Crespo, Dan and Marcy Cunkelman, Randi and Sarah Gerrish, Paul and Debbe Hess, Roger and Margaret Higbee, Bob Jackman, Anna Jennings, Pat Johner, Tom and Jan Kuehl, Jim and Flo McGuire, Marilyn Moore, Nancy Smeltzer, John Taylor, Marge Van Tassel, Marge Vatter, and Ronald and Alice Wohler.

Sharon Baldrige noted two Red-breasted Nuthatches and a Pileated Woodpecker on her count.

Highlights for Dan and Marcy Cunkelman were their Carolina Chickadee, Eastern Towhee, and 30 Brown-headed Cowbirds. John Taylor was surprised to see an Eastern Towhee at his feeder and a Northern Harrier fly over for a new yard bird record.

Members Randi and Sarah Gerrish write, "We did a list for our yard all four days. Friday was great. We had two new birds for the year and one was first ever. It was an American Tree Sparrow. Other highlights were a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches and four woodpecker species. We had 18 species the first day which is terrific for our yard and a total of 20 species for the weekend."

"Still a little bleary eyed from my cataract surgery last week, but I kept an eye (just one) on all my feeders Friday through Monday and reported my sightings to the GBBC site," reports Bob Jackman.

Flo and Jim McGuire counted all four days at their feeders. Their highlight was a flock of 28 Common Redpolls.

For Roger and Margaret Higbee the highlights were Great Gray Owl, Pine Grosbeaks, Mountain Chickadees, Bald and Golden Eagles, American Dippers, Barrow's Goldeneyes, and a field of 61 Greater Sage-Grouse. No, they weren't in Pennsylvania. These species were listed on a short trip to Wyoming.

Pat Andrascik sums it up well, "That site is great, and it was easy to do."



## Birding Thrills

## Birding Thrills – A Review

[Editor's Note: Many of you who have attended PSO meetings know Aden Troyer, owner of the Lost Creek Shoe Shop and distributor for fine optics. We've all drooled over his scopes and binoculars at one time or another. Aden has recently received a shipment of the book he has written. He worked with Carlisle Printing, a publisher in Sugarcreek, Ohio.]

by Evelyn Fowles

Aden's book is called *Birding Thrills*, and on the cover it says, "An Amish, Nature-Loving Family's Birding Journal." His wife did the artwork for the cover as well as all of the artwork in the book.

This 232-page book encompasses eight years' worth of birding for which he has kept a journal. These short stories have appeared in Amish/Mennonite publications during that time. The book's style reminds me of Ned Smith's "Gone for the Day" journals he wrote for *The Pennsylvania Game News*.

Many will recognize both the places and the people Aden includes in his book. He includes trips to Middle Creek, Waggoners Gap, Hawk Mountain, and Bombay Hook, as well as tales of Christmas Bird Counts, Migration Counts, and special birds he has seen. He also tells about his start in birding. I view his book as an attempt to spark the interest of birding in today's youth, getting them to pay attention to what is actually going on in nature – if one just takes the time to stop and look and listen. Aden seems to think that hardcore birders may be bored with the book, but I disagree. I think anyone who loves nature will enjoy his stories in monthly chapters.

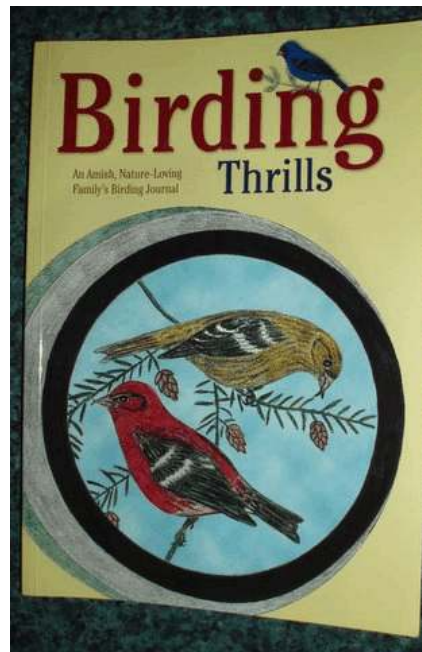
For anyone interested in purchasing a copy of this book, you may visit him at his shoe shop in Oakland Mills, call him at 717-463-3117 and leave a message on his answering machine, or write to him at:

The Wonder of Wings  
RR 1 Box 586  
Mifflintown, PA 17059

The price of the book is \$13.95 plus \$.84 cents tax in PA. Shipping is \$2 if you would like it mailed.

– Chad Kauffman

If you like to read journals, you'll enjoy Aden Troyer's *Birding Thrills: An Amish, Nature-Loving Family's Birding Journal*, 2006. Aden wrote it "to share the experiences, the enjoyment, and awe" one finds in observing birds. The journal covers April 1998 through December 2005.



Sketches, done by Aden's wife Mary with concise but very informative captions, illustrate the chapters. The author hopes that even if young readers look mainly at the drawings, they would also learn something about the birds from the captions.

Most chapters describe either a day's outing or a specific species. I found both types enjoyable and informative. A day's entry might include the usual local birds, or it might include the unusual such as Lazuli Bunting, LeConte's Sparrow, or Harris's Sparrow. Other chapters highlight events such as the Christmas Bird Count or the North American Migration Count. Excursions to Middle Creek, Waggoners Gap, the Delaware Bay, and canoe trips along the Juniata River are also included.

When a specific species is featured, the chapter includes information about nesting, habitat, behavior, food, and more. Aden writes about an Eastern Kingbird that landed on his head as a boy giving him "a sharp whack with its bill." These personal experiences make the journal all the more memorable.

Aden's enthusiasm for birding and for sharing birding with his family and friends permeates the book. Interwoven with his experiences is a tremendous amount of information about many aspects of birding. I found it to be very enjoyable reading, and an added bonus was to read about the special birds that we had traveled to the Troyers' to see – LeConte's Sparrow in 1998 and Harris's Sparrow in 2005. I am waiting for the sequel to read about the Bullock's Oriole we saw at Aden's in 2008.

I would like to add that the Troyers are very helpful to visiting birders. We have been very generously assisted by three generations on our trips there. I highly recommend this very readable journal.



# Indiana Christmas Bird Count Results

25<sup>th</sup> Annual CBC – December 26, 2007

Snow Goose (CW)		Killdeer (7)		Savannah Sparrow (2)	
Canada Goose (1369)	947	Wilson's Snipe (1)		Fox Sparrow (3)	
Mute Swan (4)		Am. Woodcock (2)		Song Sparrow (152)	138
Tundra Swan (200)	4	Bonaparte's Gull (6)		Lincoln's Sparrow (1)	
Wood Duck (2)	1	Ring-billed Gull (50)	8	Swamp Sparrow (14)	1
Gadwall (30)		Herring Gull (1)		*White-throated Sparrow (175)	214
American Wigeon (14)	7	Rock Pigeon (366)	166	White-crowned Sparrow (36)	29
American Black Duck (190)	16	Mourning Dove (906)	689	Dark-eyed Junco (2272)	1299
Mallard (670)	664	Eastern Screech-Owl (13)	4	Lapland Longspur (6)	
N. Shoveler (2)		Great Horned Owl (10)	3	Snow Bunting (225)	
*N. Pintail (5)	10	Barred Owl (5)	1	Northern Cardinal (584)	259
Green-winged Teal (3)	1	Long-eared Owl (1)		Red-winged Blackbird (3570)	11
Canvasback (9)	1	Short-eared Owl (2)		Eastern Meadowlark (10)	1
Redhead (14)	CW	Belted Kingfisher (9)	6	Rusty Blackbird (13)	1
*Ring-necked Duck (32)	41	Red-headed Woodpecker (1)		Brewer's Blackbird (CW)	
Greater Scaup (2)		*Red-bellied Woodpecker (70)	72	Common Grackle (503)	5
Lesser Scaup (24)		*Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (5)	8	Brown-headed Cowbird (46)	3
White-winged Scoter (1)		Downy Woodpecker (177)	102	Pine Grosbeak (1)	
Long-tailed Duck (3)		Hairy Woodpecker (58)	24	Purple Finch (84)	43
Bufflehead (52)	14	*Northern Flicker (21)	40	House Finch (1563)	363
Common Goldeneye (7)	1	Pileated Woodpecker (25)	20	**Red Crossbill	9
*Hooded Merganser (19)	22	Northern Shrike (1)		*Common Redpoll (40)	63
Common Merganser (5)		Blue Jay (566)	524	Pine Siskin (23)	6
Red-breasted Merganser (2)	CW	American Crow (2432)	965	American Goldfinch (409)	326
*Ruddy Duck (43)	69	Fish Crow (5)	CW	Evening Grosbeak (566)	
Ring-necked Pheasant (21)	3	Common Raven (5)	4	House Sparrow (746)	510
Ruffed Grouse (22)	10	Horned Lark (200)	95		
Wild Turkey (345)	172	Black-capped Chickadee (808)	634	Total Individuals (18,833)	14,344
N. Bobwhite (1)		Tufted Titmouse (394)	212		
Red-throated Loon (1)		Red-breasted Nuthatch (51)	26	82 Species on 12/26/07 + 3 for CW	
Common Loon (9)		White-breasted Nuthatch (201)	199		
Pied-billed Grebe (29)	18	Brown Creeper (25)	15		
Horned Grebe (4)	3	Carolina Wren (61)	26	CW = Birds Seen During Count	
Red-necked Grebe (1)		Winter Wren (4)	2	Week but Not Count Day	
Double-crested Cormorant (1)		Golden-crowned Kinglet (106)	26	CW = December 23-29	
Great Blue Heron (8)	4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (4)	1		
Turkey Vulture (2)		Eastern Bluebird (152)	102	* Record-breaking or Equal High	
Bald Eagle (1)		Hermit Thrush (6)	2	Tally (11 species!)	
Northern Harrier (9)	4	Wood Thrush (CW)			
*Sharp-shinned Hawk (14)	14	American Robin (1626)	407	**Species New to the Count (One)	
Cooper's Hawk (15)	9	Gray Catbird (2)			
N. Goshawk (1)		*Northern Mockingbird (11)	12	( ) Highest No. Seen on Any	
*Red-shouldered Hawk (2)	5	Brown Thrasher (1)		Previous Indiana CBC, 1983-	
		European Starling (8656)	3474	2006	
Red-tailed Hawk (65)	54	Cedar Waxwing (212)	176		
Rough-legged Hawk (3)		*Yellow-rumped Warbler (17)	18		
Am. Kestrel (26)	14	Pine Warbler (1)			
Merlin (2)	1	Eastern Towhee (3)	1	127 Species on Count since 1983	
Peregrine Falcon (1)		American Tree Sparrow (483)	391	(including 3 CW only species)	
Virginia Rail (1)		Chipping Sparrow (2)			
Am. Coot (811)	494	Field Sparrow (13)	6		

# Christmas Bird Count

This year's Christmas Bird Count, our 25<sup>th</sup>, tied with the best on record. Forty-one field birders and 33 feeder-watchers listed a total of 14,344 individuals including 82 species. In 1998 we also tallied 82 species, but only 10,873 individuals. This was the most comfortable count we've ever had – no snow, no rain, no wind, not too cold. Although Yellow Creek Lake was mostly frozen, there was some open water with a nice variety of waterfowl for the two Yellow Creek crews, Georgette Syster and Gloria Lamer on the south shore and John Taylor, Ed Donley, Sue Donley, Mark Strittmatter, and Jim Dearing, on the north shore. Two Lick Reservoir which seldom freezes also yielded waterfowl for Lee and Roger Carnahan adding several species to our total.

New to the count was a flock of 9 Red Crossbills, spotted by Dan and Marcy Cunkelman. The following 10 species hit all-time highs: Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Northern Mockingbird, and Common Redpoll. In addition, Sharp-shinned Hawk tied with the previous high tally of 14.

A Merlin was a nice find for John Taylor near St. Bernard's. Bill and Tom Betts spotted a Wood Duck on

Crooked Creek; the previous day Tom had seen a pair at the same location. This is only the fourth time for Merlin or Wood Ducks to have been found on the Indiana CBC. Len and Linda Hess found the only Swamp Sparrow, an incredible flock of 29 White-crowned Sparrows, and one of the two Winter Wrens while the other wren was listed by Matt Sarver, Lauren Morgens, and Tom Pearson. Members of this latter group were also responsible for all 18 of the Yellow-rumped Warblers. Exploring a new area along a gas well road, they hit a bonanza including this flock of warblers. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet and two Hermit Thrushes made appearances along the trails at Yellow Creek for Susan Comfort and Roger and Margaret Higbee. The only Eastern Meadowlark was found by Beth and Ken Marshall and Chris and Paula Williams. The Williams are New Jersey birders who happened to be in town for the holidays. Common Redpolls were listed by Matt Sarver's group and by Dan and Marcy Cunkelman, but the largest flock appeared at Pat Johner's feeder.

Because the Red Crossbills were new to the count, the Cunkelmans received the "Bird of the Count" award at our dinner. Special thanks to everyone who participated this year.

Note: Several additional species are still pending review.

## Christmas Bird Count Observers

Dan Andrascik  
Pat Andrascik  
Mary Assenat  
Bill Betts  
Tom Betts  
Rachel Beiler  
Sid Blair  
Vernon Blystone  
Ken Byerly  
Lee Carnahan  
Roger Carnahan  
Shirley Chase  
Susan Comfort  
Dan Cunkelman  
Marcy Cunkelman  
Jim Dearing  
Kristi Dearing  
Ed Donley

Sue Donley  
John Ewart  
Betsy Fetterman  
Tom Fetterman  
Gary Ferrence  
Don Frew  
Sue Gatti  
Ed Griffith  
Joyce Griffith  
Carol Guba  
Len Hess  
Linda Hess  
Margaret Higbee  
Roger Higbee  
Leon Hue  
Pat Johner  
Linda Jones

Carol Kerr  
Janet Kuehl  
Gloria Lamer  
Dave Little  
Mary A. Little  
Howard Mandigo  
Beth Marshall  
Ken Marshall  
Mary Martin  
Flo McGuire  
Jim McGuire  
Gib McLaughlin  
Lauren Morgens  
Tom Pearson  
Marjorie Peterson  
Sara Pulliam  
Pat Rawls

Don Rodgers  
Matt Sarver  
Jared Smelko  
John Somonick  
Linda Stormer  
Luke Stormer  
Rodger Stormer  
Mark Strittmatter  
Georgette Syster  
John Taylor  
Mary Lu Tucker  
Ila Tuorinsky  
Steve Tuorinsky  
Marge Vatter  
Chris Williams  
Paula Williams  
John Wilson  
Ray Winstead

# Farewell to Rory Bower

Rory Bower, assistant park superintendent at Prince Gallitzin State Park, has been promoted to park manager of Reeds Gap State Park, located east of State College off Route 322 in Mifflin County. His last day at Prince Gallitzin was Friday, February 15. Rory has been one of our most consistent Cambria County contributors to our county reports at the end of this newsletter. He has also contributed several articles and many photographs (six in this issue!) for the Todd Bird Club newsletter.

Rory has served as the Regional Coordinator for Region 60 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> PA Breeding Bird Atlas which includes parts of Indiana, Cambria, Clearfield, and Jefferson counties.

We wish him well in his new position, but we will certainly miss him!

## Afternoon Sessions Planned for Annual PSO Meeting

"A Story of Recovery: Peregrine Falcons in Pittsburgh and Beyond"

Dan Brauning, one of PSO's founding members and winner of its Earl L. Poole Award, coordinated the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He is currently Supervisor of Pennsylvania Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Program.

"Migrating Eagles and Wind Power: Conflict Potential in an Information Void"

Dr. Todd Katzner, director of the Dept. of Conservation and Field Research of the National Aviary, also serves as Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and is a Research Associate at Powdermill Avian Research Center, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

"Pennsylvania eBird: New Frontiers in Pennsylvania Citizen Science"

Doug Gross, past PSO president and recipient of its Earl L. Poole Award, is Endangered Species Specialist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. He has served as member and chair of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Technical Committee.

"Developing Artificial Nest Site Fidelity in Barn Owls (Tyto alba)"

Brian Shema, Director of Conservation for Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, is administering a DCNR sanctioned Rivers Conservation Plan for a 120,000-acre watershed in Butler and Armstrong Counties and directs ASWP's Barn Owl research.



Rory Bower (right) poses with member John Salvetti on a recent bird outing at Prince Gallitzin.

## Outings for the PSO Meeting in Pittsburgh May 2008

Friday, May 16

### National Aviary

The National Aviary houses more than 200 species of birds from around the world. Registered PSO members are admitted at half price this afternoon and any time this weekend. Identification will be required.

### State Game Lands #203

Located in Marshall Township, just minutes from the hotel, these 1240 acres contain many breeding species and are a good place to search for migrants.

Leader – Bob VanNewkirk

### University of Pittsburgh in Oakland

This outing will feature the unique experience of viewing a collection of original Audubon prints at the University's Hillman Library. The Cathedral of Learning on the campus is the site of Pittsburgh's second nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons; to observe this pair meet Kate St. John at 3:00 p.m. at the performance tent in the Schenley Park Plaza near Hillman Library.

Leaders – Eric Marchbein and Kate St. John

### Whip-poor-wills at State Game Lands #203

Located in Marshall Township, just minutes from the hotel, Game Lands #203 is also the most reliable (and perhaps the only) location in Allegheny County for Whip-poor-will. This outing will follow the PSO business meeting. The birds are normally found near the parking area, so minimal walking is required.

Leader – Bob Machesney

**Saturday, May 17**

**Breakfast with the Birds at the National Aviary**

Cost is \$12 per person. A minimum of 12 people is needed to conduct this event.

Leaders – Aviary Staff

**Beaver County Raptors**

Several species of raptors nest in nearby Beaver County, and this tour will take visitors to view the nests (from a respectable distance), including Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, and perhaps others.

Leader – Scott Gregg

**Frick Park**

Frick is a large Pittsburgh city park that boasts an impressive list of birds. Many trails provide access to the birding hotspots including forest, clearings, and recently constructed wetlands as part of the restoration of Nine Mile Run. Leaders – Jack and Sue Solomon

**Harrison Hills Park**

Located in northeastern Allegheny County, Harrison Hills, a migrant hotspot with an impressive list of 180 species, is part of the Buffalo Creek IBA. Habitats include deciduous forest, a small pond, and adjacent wetland and meadow.

Leaders – Jim Valimont and Paul Hess

**Imperial Grasslands**

The Imperial Grasslands are a vast expanse of reclaimed strip mine land in the western part of Allegheny County and adjacent Washington County. The area is well known for a long list of county and state rarities, so almost anything is possible. Leader – Chuck Tague

**Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve**

Headquarters for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Beechwood Farms is a 134-acre tract of natural habitat in the suburbs of Pittsburgh.

Leader – Brian Shema

**Settler's Cabin Park**

This Allegheny County Park is an untapped resource located near the Pittsburgh Airport. Terribly under-birded, it is a great location for migrants and contains a large amount of good habitat.

Leader – Scott Kinzey

**Sewickley Heights Park**

This borough park has a high density of birds and great

habitat including woodland with many brushy clearings, wet thickets, and an old beaver pond and associated wetland. This is an excellent location for migrants, and Cerulean Warblers breed here in good numbers  
Leaders – Geoff Malosh and Bob VanNewkirk

**Raccoon Creek State Park**

Located in eastern Beaver County, a mere 25 miles from Pittsburgh, this forested park is a good place to search for migrants, and the lake sometimes attracts waterfowl, but the best feature is a Wildflower Reserve that is the gem of this park.

Leader – Deuane Hoffman

**Sunday, May 18**

**Schenley Park and the Cathedral of Learning**

Schenley is a Pittsburgh city park that does not receive the attention or coverage that Frick Park does from birders. Nestled between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University, it provides green space for migrants in an urban area.

Leader – Mike Fialkovich

**Boyce-Mayview Park**

Located just south of the city of Pittsburgh in Upper St. Clair, this park began as mitigation for wetlands lost due to construction projects. The wetlands, woodlands, and fields attract a nice variety of local rarities, migrants, and breeding birds.

Leader – Neil Nodelman

**Todd Nature Reserve**

Located just over the border in southern Butler County, this reserve is owned and operated by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. The reserve has the look and feel of a mountain forest with rocky outcrops and deep ravines dense with Eastern Hemlocks and cut by roaring streams. This habitat attracts birds more typical farther north and in the mountains.

Leader – Brian Shema

**Frick Park**

This will be a second outing to this city park. See Saturday's outings for details.

Leaders – Jack and Sue Solomon

**Harrison Hills Park**

This will be a second outing to this county park. See Saturday's outings for details.

Leaders – Jim Valimont and Paul Hess



# Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Hosts 10th Annual Conference at Toftrees Conference Center State College, PA April 4-5, 2008

For early arrivals on Friday night, April 4, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. a program and social will be held. On Saturday, the All-Day Conference, will run from 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Join us for this wonderful event, featuring speakers, displays, live auction, raffles, quilt raffle, and luncheon.

Scheduled speakers include:

“Cavity-Nesting Songbirds”– presented by Terry Neumyer  
Discover the beauty, fascinating behaviors, and diversity of birds that depend on cavities, both natural and man-made (like nest boxes), to raise their young.

“Conservation and Development of Shelters Used By Bat Maternity Colonies” presented by Jerry Hassinger.  
The bat is a creature with fascinating behaviors and nesting needs, is very important to the ecology of Pennsylvania, and serves a very beneficial role. Bats occupy some of the largest cavities (mainly caves) and the smallest crevices (3/8 inch) found in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. They are found in attics, barns, sheds, behind shutters, and in houses specifically designed to

accommodate bats. There is a great need to promote the future conservation of bats, and Jerry will discuss the design, placement, and use of bat boxes.

“Purple Martins – How to Promote Nesting Success” presented by the Purple Martin Conservation Association in cooperation with the Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. This organization is the only group devoted exclusively to the scientific study of the Purple Martins, their biology, and habitat requirements. This interesting program will focus on the nesting and habitat needs of the Purple Martin, a beautiful and beneficial cavity-nesting songbird that can breed successfully if provided assistance. The program will provide information about the status of the Purple Martin colonies in Pennsylvania and what bluebird landlords can do to assist the Purple Martin species.

“What Bluebirds Love To Eat” presented by BSP Member, Amy Boyer. This informative program will provide useful information about the many types of food sources, both natural and manmade, that nourish bluebirds during each season of the year. It will also provide tips on how to create a backyard habitat that includes plants and shrubs that produce fruits and berries and also the importance of providing a water source. See their website for a printable conference registration form, <http://www.thebsp.org>

## A Note from Our Treasurer

Todd Bird Club dues are due and payable on January 1 each year. If your address label has a red star, your membership has expired and this is your last newsletter. Please remit your \$10 individual membership or \$15 family membership dues to:

Gloria Lamer, Treasurer  
515 Laurel Run Road  
Penn Run, PA 15765

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This newsletter is produced four times a year by the Todd Bird Club.

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# Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County Report

Winter 2007- 2008 – December 1, 2007, through February 28, 2008

Please submit your reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee, 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701-7934 or e-mail to [bcoriole@alltel.net](mailto:bcoriole@alltel.net).

**Locations:** Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Indiana (IN), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rosston (RT), Rural Valley (RV), Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), Yatesboro (YB), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).



This Canvasback lingered at PG 1/22.

Photo by Rory Bower



This Northern Pintail rested at PG 1/22.

Photo by Rory Bower



This Short-eared Owl was one of three sighted near Patton.

Photo by Rory Bower

**Canada Goose** maxima included 78 at Manorville 12/1 (JV,JVa), 380 at PG 12/18 (JS), 947 on the IN CBC 12/26 (v.o.), 247 at KR 12/30 (MH, RH) and 530 at TL 1/5 (GC, MH,RH). A single **Mute Swan** continued at PG through 1/12 (RB,JS) while 2 were noted at RT 1/31 (JV,JVa). **Tundra Swan** reports mentioned one at KR 12/2 (MH,RH), 33 at PG 12/7 (RB,JS), 100 near Penn Run 12/14 (TF), and 4 at TL on 12/26 (LC,RC), 12/29 (MH, RH) with last report of 5 at PG 2/13 (RB).

Single **Wood Ducks** were listed at PG 12/12 (RB) and 12/24 (JS) and on the IN CBC 12/26 (BB,TB). Eight **Gadwalls** lingered at YC 12/6 (LC,MH) while 9 were found at PG the same day (RB); 12 was PG's high 12/31 (RB,JS) while last noted were 9 at PG 1/3 (RB). Last **American Wigeons** were one at PG 12/12 (RB), 2 at TL 1/5 (GC,MH,RH), and 3 at YC 1/7 (LC). **American Black Duck** maxima included 47 at TL 12/29 (MH,RH), 54 at PG 1/3 (RB), and an estimated 30 at YC 1/22 (LC,MH); 2 at PG 2/13 (RB) were last. Top **Mallard** counts were 185 at PG 12/12 (RB), 664 on the CBC 12/26 (v.o.), and 346 at TL 12/29 (MH,RH). A single **Northern Shoveler** at PG 12/6 (RB) was the only one listed. First **Northern Pintails** arrived 12/6, both at YC (LC,MH) and at PG (RB) where 1 and 2 were respectively noted; high counts were 9 at YC 12/26 (GL,GS) and 10 at PG 1/6 (RB). Last were 4 at PG 2/8 (RB,JS). The only **Green-**

**winged Teal** were 2 at KR 12/2 (MH,RH), one at YC 12/26 (GL,GS), and one at PG 2/8 (RB, JS). Forty-four **Canvasbacks** arrived 12/6 (LC,MH) at YC where one lingered 1/15 (LC); PG yielded a singleton 1/22, 2/13 (RB). Single **Redheads** were noted 12/6 (RB) at PG, 12/23 (MH,RH) at YC, and 1/15 (LC) at YC. The IN CBC yielded 41 **Ring-necked Ducks** 12/26 (v.o.) while last reports included 6 at TL 1/6 (LC) and 2 at PG 2/13 (RB). Two **Greater Scaup** at YC 12/6 (LC,MH) were the only ones noted; strangely, no **Lesser Scaup** were reported. A **Surf Scoter** was a good find at YC 12/18 (LC,MH,GL). PG yielded a single **Long-tailed Duck** 12/11 (JS). Lingered **Buffleheads** included 3 at YC 1/15 (LC), 2 at KT 1/21 (RH,DY), and 3 at PG 2/13 (RB). First 2 **Common Goldeneyes** arrived at PG 12/24 (JS) while YC's first appeared 12/26 (GL,GS); last noted were single birds at YC 1/15 (LC) and at PG 1/25 (RB). **Hooded Merganser** maxima included 43 at KR 12/2 (MH, RH), 131 at PG 12/7 (RB,JS), and 20 at YC 12/6 (LC,MH) and 12/26 (SC,MH,RH, GL,GS); 2 remained at PG 2/13 (RB). **Common Merganser** reports included 3 at PG 12/11 (JS), 36 at Crooked Creek Park 1/1 (JV,JVa), 55 at RT 1/25 (JV, JVa), 65 at RT the following day (DY), and one on Mahoning Creek 2/22 (PS). The only **Red-breasted Mergansers** noted were 3 at YC 12/23 (LC) and 7 at PG 2/13 (RB). Many **Ruddy Duck** reports were received, with high counts of 27 at PG 12/6 (RB) and 143 at YC 12/23 (LC); a singleton was last seen at PG 2/1 (RB).



December 26 yielded 10 **Ruffed Grouse** for the CBC (v.o.) in addition to another near Dilltown (TR). The largest flock of **Wild Turkeys** was observed almost daily north of IN with high of 126 on 1/24 (SB). A **Red-throated Loon** was a good find at PG 2/13 (RB). KR yielded the last **Common Loon** 12/30 (MH,RH). High **Pied-billed Grebe** counts were 18 at PG 12/6 (RB), 16 at YC 12/26 (GL,GS) and 1/22 (LC,MH), and 5 at KR 12/30 (MH,RH). Ten **Horned Grebes** were present 12/2 (MH, RH) at KR where one lingered until 12/30 (MH,RH); YC's last were 2 on 12/26 (GL,GS) while 2 remained 2/13 (RB) at PG. Only two **Great Blue Herons** were noted in 2008, a single bird at PG 2/8 (RB,JS) and another at the IN mall 2/25 (CG).

PG yielded a **Bald Eagle** through 2/8 (RB,JS); away from PG the only eagle noted was an adult on Plum Creek 1/4 (BR). **Northern Harriers** were found at PG 12/7 (RB,JS) and 1/10 (RB), near J.S. Airport 12/8 (BF,TF), near LV 2/6 (MC), near Dilltown 12/26 (TR), at YC 1/15 (LC), and near Home 2/16 (JT); in addition, 4 were noted on the CBC (v.o.); 2 WRS in Indiana yielded one 2/10 (MH,RH) and a second 2/24 (MH,RH) while another WRS in *Armstrong* produced 3 on 2/16 (MMc). Both **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and **Cooper's** were noted at 12 locations (v.o.) while 14 Sharp-shins and 9 Cooper's were located for the CBC (v.o.). Besides the 5 **Red-shouldered Hawks** spotted on the CBC, the only reports included singletons at YC 1/5 (GC,MH,RH), at PG 1/12 (RB,JS), and near Five Points 2/10 (MH,RH). Light morph **Rough-legged Hawks** were nice finds near Marion Center 1/27 (MH,RH) and near Gipsy 2/24 (MH,RH). WRS produced 2 American Kestrels in *Indiana* 2/10 (MH,RH) and 5 in *Armstrong* 2/16 (MMc). A **Merlin** was a good find in IN 12/26 (JT) while another was at Dilltown 12/29 (TR).

The high **American Coot** count this season was 546 on 12/23 (MH,RH); last noted included an estimated 125 in the last puddle of open water at YC 1/22 (LC,MH), one at RT 1/26 (DY), and one at PG 1/28 (RB). An **American Woodcock** found near Loretto 2/14 (TR) and a single **Bonaparte's Gull** visiting PG 12/11 (JS) were the lone Cambria reports; 4 Bonaparte's Gulls stopped at YC 1/14-15 (LC). **Ring-billed Gulls** included 30 at RT 12/1 (JV,JVa), 20 at KR 12/2 (MH,RH), and 12 at PG 2/18 (RB, JS); all other reports were in the single digits. The only **Herring Gulls** listed were one at PG 12/12 (RB) and 6 at KT 1/21 (DY).

An **Eastern Screech-Owl**, wintering in a nest box near SH, was present through 2/20 (MH, RH); another was heard at Nolo

12/13 (AB) while the CBC yielded an additional 2 (v.o.). After few reports in recent years, 8 **Great Horned Owls** were noted this winter (v.o.). A **Barred Owl** on RH 12/26 (PJ) was the lone report. The West Lebanon area yielded at least 2 **Short-eared Owls** 1/1 (MH,RH) while 3 were present near Patton after 1/24 (DG) and photographed by RB 1/25.

Among many reports, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** included singletons at PG on various dates (RB) and 2 north of IN 1/21 (SB); in addition, a bird sporting a red nape visited Marjorie Peterson's yard in IN 12/27 (MH, MP). A **Northern Shrike**, found 1/5 (RB) at PG, continued through 2/8 (RB,JS); another stopped at LV 2/15 (MC); a third was found near Gipsy 2/24 (MH,RH). A **Fish Crow** was heard in IN 12/24 (RW). **Common Ravens** continue to be widespread with 10 reports this season (v.o.).



This Northern Shrike was a great find at Prince Gallitzin.

Photo by Rory Bower

**Horned Lark** reports included 12 near Tunnelton 12/7 (DC), 150 near Patton 12/10 (RB,DG), 86 near Edgewood 12/26 (DC,MC), 374 near Marion Center 2/10 (MH,RH), 50 near Rexis 2/15 (LC), and at least 500 south of Worthington 2/16 (MMc). A **Carolina Chickadee** continued near LV throughout the winter (MC). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widespread in *Indiana* with numerous reports; the only *Armstrong* report included 2 at YB (PB) throughout the period; Cambria reports included one at PG 12/31 (RB,JS) and one at Ebensburg 1/10 (JS). The only **Winter Wrens** noted were 2 on the CBC (LH,LHe,LM,TP, MSa) and another the same day near Strongstown (TR). A single **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and 2 **Hermit Thrushes** at YC 12/26 (SC,MH, RH) were the lone reports for these species. **American Robins** wintered locally in good numbers with many reports (v.o.). A **Gray Catbird** at PG 1/5 (RB,JS) was a good winter find. Eighteen was a fine **Yellow-rumped Warbler** count 12/26 (LM,TP,MSa) near IN; a singleton visited MP's backyard 12/27 (MH).

Wintering **Eastern Towhees** included singletons at YC (LC,MH,RH), near LV (MC), and in IN (MP); another was seen near Home 2/17 (JT). Three **Field Sparrows** were found at YC 1/5 (GC,MH,RH), the last report. A **Fox Sparrow** stopped at a Penn Run feeder 1/3,5 (BF). Last **Swamp Sparrows** occurred 1/5, both at YC (GC,MH,RH)



This is one of 3 Lapland Longspurs found near Patton 12/18.

Photo by Rory Bower

and at PG (RB,JS). An amazingly large flock of 29 **White-crowned Sparrows** was a nice bonus for the CBC 12/26 (LH,LHe); another White-crowned, Gambel's race, appeared near SH 1/20 (MH, RH) and remained through the end of the period. An all-time high of 142 **Dark-eyed Juncos** was reached at a SH feeder 2/12 (MH,RH). Three **Lapland Longspurs** and 50 **Snow Buntings**

accompanied a flock of larks near Patton 12/18 (RB,DG). Two Snow Buntings were also found in the flock of larks south of Worthington 2/16 (MMc).

Last **Red-winged Blackbirds** were 4 near IN 12/29 (MH, RH) and 2 at PG 1/12 (RB,JS). A late **Eastern Meadowlark** appeared near IN 12/26 (BM,KM,CW,PW). Two **Rusty Blackbirds** still lingered at YC 12/26, one on the north shore (JD,ED,SD,MSt,JT) and one on the south shore (MH,RH). **Common Grackle** reports included 50 at PG 1/12 (RB,JS), one at YB 1/20 (LU), and 10 in RV 1/31 (PB). Among numerous reports were 7 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** at RV 12/25 (LU), 5 at PG 1/12 (RB,JS), and 150 near LV 1/24 (MC).

It was an exciting season for winter finches. **Purple Finches** were found across the region in small flocks.

**Common Redpolls**, unreported in our region since 1998, began appearing at feeders at the beginning of the period.



At least 50 Snow Buntings were near Patton 12/18.

Photo by Rory Bower

Reports included one near LV (DC,MC) and 38 on RH (PJ) 12/8. The LV bird was last seen 1/12 (MC). The RH flock grew to 60 by 12/10 (PJ) with last report of 2 on 1/14 (PJ). The Morgans-Sarver-Pearson crew eeked out one redpoll for the CBC while the Cunkelmans found a flock of 24 near IN and PJ counted 38 of hers that same day. In *Cambria* 2-3 were present at PG 12/30-1/4 (RB) and 2 visited an Ebensburg feeder 2/2-3 (JS). First **Pine Siskins**

were 15 at PG 12/11 (JS); up to 11 continued near IN through the end of the period (CG); not too far from CG's feeder 4 visited HM's feeders 12/26. Two **Evening Grosbeaks** were a nice surprise in IN 12/2, 6-7 (SBu); 2 females briefly visited a feeder near SH 11/7 (MH).

**Observers:** Patty Barnett, Alice Beatty, Bill Betts, Tom Betts, Sid Blair, Rory Bower, Sandra Burwell (SBu), Lee Carnahan, Roger Carnahan, Susan Comfort, Greg Cook, Dan Cunkelman, Marcy Cunkelman, Jim Dearing, Ed Donley, Sue Donley, Erma Dovenspike (EDo), Gary Ferrence, Betsy Fetterman, Tom Fetterman, Cindy Gardiner (CGa), Dave Gobert, Carol Guba, Len Hess, Linda Hess (LHe), Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Pat Johner, Linda Jones, Gloria Lamer, Mary A. Little, Howard Mandigo, Beth Marshall, Ken Marshall, Mark McConaughy (MMc), Flo McGuire, Jim McGuire, Marilyn Moore (MM), Lauren Morgans, Tom Pearson, Marjorie Peterson, Bob Ramsey, Tom Roberts, John Salvetti, Matt Sarver, Patrick Snickles, John Somonick (JSo), Mark Strittmatter (MSt), Georgette Syster, John Taylor, Lorraine Uplinger, Joe Valasek, Josie Valasek (JV), Chris Williams, Paula Williams, Ray Winstead, Dan Yagusic.