

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club
www.toddbirdclub.org

October 2012

Meetings

Todd Bird Club meetings are held at 7:00 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. We will socialize till 7:30 when the meeting will promptly begin. Refresh-ments are provided at each of our meetings. In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 6 – Member Tom Glover will present *Night with a Novice*, incorporating untold tales of birding Texas, Ohio, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Don't miss this meeting.

Tuesday, December 4 – This is our annual Christmas cookie extravaganza. Please bring a dozen cookies to share. Emily Thomas will present "Getting in Touch with Birds: Bird Banding in the Name of Science!" at this meeting. She will share her bird banding experiences from intense fall migrations to Golden Eagle banding and explain why the data collected are important tools in avian conservation. Emily holds an Associate degree in Wildlife Technology from Penn State DuBois and Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University Park. She has been employed as a wildlife biologist by the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station in Irvine, PA, since 2005 where she has worked on various research projects on the effects of forestry practices and oil and gas development on songbirds in the Allegheny National Forest. She is currently an instructor in the wildlife technology program at Penn State DuBois. She has been banding birds since 2005 and has banded more than 4,000 birds of 111 species.

Tuesday, January 8 – *Please note the date change. Because the first Tuesday falls on New Year's Day, we have changed our meeting to the second Tuesday of January.* This is our annual Members' Night. Please bring stories, photos, slides, digital pictures, memorabilia, or anything else you'd like to share with club members.

Tuesday, February 5 – Come and learn about the Winter Raptor Surveys and their results when Dr. Greg Grove from Penn State presents his findings at this meeting. Winter raptor surveys (WRS) have been conducted annually in Pennsylvania since 2001 to assess and monitor the winter distribution of raptors. All raptors and vultures are recorded during driving routes designed by volunteers. Routes are run once a year between mid-January and mid-February, with results reported by county. In 2012, 200 routes were run, at least one in each county. Results are summarized in detail for the four open-country raptors: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Rough-legged Hawk, and Northern Harrier. Age, sex, and color-morph data are also reported.

Dr. Greg Grove lives in Huntingdon County, PA, and works in the DNA analysis lab at Penn State. He and his wife Deb started birding as graduate students at Ohio State University in 1979. After the initial exciting years of learning birds and finding new birds, his interest moved to the dynamics of bird populations and ways of surveying populations. He founded the Stone Mt. Hawk Watch, the Lake Raystown Christmas Bird Count, the Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey, and three Breeding Bird Survey routes in Rothrock State Forest. He is past president of the State College Bird Club and the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and was a Regional Coordinator during the Breeding Bird Atlas.

Outings

Tuesday Morning Outings at Yellow Creek will continue until deer season and will resume afterwards. Meet at 8:00 at the park office located on Rt. 259 just off Rt. 422 east of Indiana. Everyone – from beginner to expert birder – is welcome. If you have questions, contact Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323) or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

Saturday, November 3 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). This is a joint outing with the Three Rivers Birding Club. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. We'll bird until lunch time then head to Indiana to the Chinese buffet.

Saturday, November 10 – The Mahoning Shadow Trail, led by Tom Glover (tomnglover@comcast.net). Meet in the parking lot at Fordham at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, November 17 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office.

Saturday, November 23 through Monday, November 26 – Birding the Niagara Frontier. *You must have a passport or a passport card to enter Canada and return to the US.* This four-day trip will cover Dunkirk Harbor en route to the Peace Bridge as well as areas along the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. We plan to stay at the Days Inn near the falls on the Canadian side. You may take part in the entire trip or in only a day or two by meeting us there. If you are interested in going or have questions, please contact the Higbees (724-354-3493). Last year's Niagara highlights included Greater White-fronted Geese, all three scoters, American White Pelican, Red-necked Grebe, Peregrine Falcon, Little Gull, Franklin's Gull, California Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Pomarine Jaeger, and Razorbill. A detour to Ashtabula, OH, on the way home yielded two Snowy Owls. For a complete report, go to our website: <http://www.toddbirdclub.org/cgi-bin/events.pl?ACTION=DESCRIPTION&EVENTID=50>

Christmas Bird Count

The 30th annual Indiana Christmas Bird Count will be held on Wednesday, December 26. The 15-mile-diameter count circle is centered at the intersection of Second and Grandview in Indiana. If you live within 7.5 miles of that intersection as the crow flies, your home is within the circle. We need feeder watchers as well as field birders.

We will meet at 6:00 p.m. on the 26th to compile the count and eat dinner, probably at Hoss's. Our count dinner is always a lot of fun. If you haven't come before, give it a try this year. It's fun listening to tales from the field as well as stories from feederwatchers. Please contact the Higbees if you have any questions or plan to participate (724-354-3493; bcoriole@windstream.net).

During the past 29 years, we have listed a total of 123 species on the various count days, always December 26 or 27 if the 26th happened to fall on a Sunday. Some of our previous highlights include Red-throated Loon, Red-

necked Grebe, Northern Goshawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, and White-winged Crossbill. An additional four species, never listed on count day, were seen during count week, three days bracketing the actual count. Those four species are Snow Goose, Wood Thrush, Brewer's Blackbird, and White-winged Crossbill.

Our counts with the greatest variety occurred in 1998 and in 2007, the two years we listed 82 species. Much depends upon the weathers and whether Yellow Creek Lake freezes over. When we have open water, we see waterfowl; but when the lake is frozen, the possibility of seeing those species evaporates.

Plan now to participate!

Festival of Lights

The Todd Bird Club helps the park by collecting money at the gate at Blue Spruce County Park for the Festival of Lights. Our date this year will be Tuesday, December 11, 2012. The display hours are 5:30 to 10:00 p.m., but the gift shop closes at 9:30. Please come, join us as we always have a lot of fun. Dress warmly if the evening is chilly. The more the merrier!

From the Co-President's Desk...

I hope all Todd Bird Club members have had the opportunity to take advantage of this beautiful fall weather we have been experiencing to get outside and go birding. The Tuesday morning outings at Yellow Creek have yielded a large variety of shorebirds, and there are still several Saturday morning outings planned. Maybe some of you have been able to add life' birds to your list. A few weeks ago at Yellow Creek State Park, I was able to add the Black-bellied Plover to my list. It's always a thrill to see a bird species for the very first time.

You can imagine the thrill of seeing a species for the first time that no one else has ever documented. That is exactly what happened on October 8, 2008, to Mike Harvey while on a Cornell Laboratory sponsored expedition in Peru. While hiking on a ridge of montane cloud forest in the Cerros del Sira Range in the eastern Andes, he spied a brightly colored bird perched 60 feet up on a bare branch.

At first, the fruit-eating, black-masked, pale-bellied, and scarlet-breasted bird appeared to be a Scarlet-banded Barbet. However, closer observation revealed there was a

notable difference in plumage. Further DNA testing proved indeed that it was a new species in the barbet family. The bird was named Sira Barbet (*Capito fitzpatricki*) in honor of the ex-director of the Cornell



When water levels are low, Yellow Creek yields a nice variety of shorebirds.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

seeing a brand new species such as the Sira Barbet, there are still many birds right here in our area that we can add to our life lists. I hope you're able to participate in a future outing, and maybe you will also have the thrill of adding a lifer.

– Donna Meyer, Co-President

Laboratory of Ornithology, Dr. John W. Fitzpatrick. In the 1970's and 1980's Dr. Fitzpatrick discovered and named seven new bird species in Peru and helped to mentor the graduate students on this current expedition. This three-week expedition into an area that had never been the subject of an ornithological study also resulted in the documentation of 670 species and brought back 490 sound recordings for the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library's archives. Even though we will never have the thrill of

A Note from Steve Graff

[Editor's Note: Steve Graff served as Todd Bird Club's president from 2000 to 2002 and remained an active member until his move to Delaware.]

Steve writes:

I got back home from vacation on September 24. My aunt and I did a big loop around New England and we stopped in Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada, located just off Lubec, Maine. I had a nice trip even though I was traveling with a non-birder.

I did manage to squeak out two life birds – Boreal Chickadee in Baxter State Park and Spruce Grouse on Katahdin Iron Works Road, just southeast of Baxter.

I also got a life mammal – Sei Whale. We took a boat ride out of Bar Harbor, Maine, for a few hours. Unfortunately, it was the only whale we saw, but it was nice. Also seen were about 20 Great Shearwaters. I had never seen so many together before.

We also rode the Cog Train up Mount Washington in New Hampshire. It was neat to see American Pipits on top of the mountain.

Till later.

Steve

Did You Know?

The Pine Siskins are here already, but keep your eyes peeled as a major Red Crossbill movement has been predicted. Already there have been at least four sightings of Evening Grosbeaks in the state!

Outing Revisited

The regular Tuesday outing at Yellow Creek took a bit of a detour on October 16 as we traveled to the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. That morning four of us members, Gloria Lamer, Margaret and Roger Higbee, and Tom Glover, met at 8:00 a.m. at the Yellow Creek park office, and proceeded to the Hawk Watch located about 4.5 miles, as a crow flies, southeast of Central City, PA. Waiting for us at the Allegheny Front was a fifth club member, Richard Nugent.



A Turkey Vulture circling near the hawk watch was photographed by Roger Higbee.

The Allegheny Front is on the eastern edge of the Allegheny Plateau, and the western edge of the Ridge and Valley system of Pennsylvania. The last part of the drive to the site passes through a relatively flat area, and in fact the landscape is flat right up to the edge. After parking the car it was a short walk to the observation area. For a first-timer, a surprise is in store as the abrupt vista is spectacular. At an elevation of 2,780 feet, the site overlooks a vast valley that drops off to an elevation of about 1,200 feet at Shawnee State Park about 6 miles east. Upon arrival we were greeted by Ed Gowarty, the official counter for the day. The temperature was about 41° F early and increased to 47° later in the day, and the wind was out of the NNW averaging around 10 mph with an occasional gust to 20 - 25 mph. Ed explained that the wind direction was not ideal. The best direction for this hawk watch are winds from the east, which provide an uplift of wind, thus allowing for favorable wind conditions for migrating birds.

After we settled in and started watching, we quickly realized that conditions were not favorable. But we did see birds, and most of the birds were migrating hawks, 11

Sharp-shinned and 18 Red-tailed Hawks. We also saw one Red-shouldered Hawk, one Bald Eagle, numerous Turkey Vultures, besides three Common Ravens. Other birds of note in the surrounding trees and brush were a Blue-headed Vireo, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and four Tree Swallows. And in a field down in the valley we spotted two Wild Turkeys.

Most of the migrating birds we observed were flying in a southerly direction out over the valley, except for one Sharp-shinned Hawk that flew just almost overhead. It was

interesting to watching this bird flying in a southerly direction. With the steady wind out of the NNW this bird was actually flying almost sideways; the bird was tacking into the wind like a sailboat.

About an hour before we departed, Ed Gowarty pointed at what had to be the most unusual observation of the day. We put our scopes on this strange high flier and found the Goodyear Blimp which was heading west, bucking a head wind. We watched the Blimp for an hour, and as it approached, we could see it dancing up and down and sideways in the wind. And as we were loading the car to leave, the Blimp flew directly over our heads.

The poor conditions had an impact on the migrating birds, but we still had an enjoyable time. The spectacular view was well worth the trip. And on our trip home, which included a stop at the Main Moon Chinese buffet in Johnstown, we were already planning next year's outing to the Allegheny Front.

– Tom Glover

Gull Point Update

For those of you who have walked out to Gull Point at Presque Isle State Park and discovered that the shorebirds were too distant to identify, there is good news. Jerry McWilliams has informed us that he received word from Harry Leslie, Park Manager, that work will soon begin to move the observation platform and to begin mowing. The PA Game Commission, Pennsylvania Audubon, and the park staff have agreed to place the platform where the last row of cottonwoods meets the open sand plain at the far eastern end of Gull Point where all of the new sand spits

and pools have formed. The platform will be less than 100 yards from the shoreline and very near the ponds where shorebirds were active this past fall. A roped trail will permit birders to hike to the platform. The mowing will allow a 360-degree view of the point. Besides better visibility of the shorebirds, birders will be able to locate any Short-eared or Snowy Owls that land on the point.

Notes from a Novice Geology and Birding

by Tom Glover

This past summer I discovered Sandy Ridge Road, located seven miles outside Punxsutawney off of PA Route 36 toward Mahaffey. The road is about three miles long and passes through a reclaimed strip-mined area. The western third of the road is in Jefferson County while the eastern two-thirds is in Clearfield. I found this location as the result of a chance meeting on June 19 along the Mahoning Shadow Trail with Jim Dunn, a birder from the State College area. He told me about birding State Game Lands #87 that morning. That meeting inspired me to plan a trip to SGL 87 located in west-central Clearfield County.

On June 23 I started out for the SGL, but I ended up spending most of that day on what I thought was a short cut, Sandy Ridge Road. I shared my experience with fellow club member Margaret Higbee, and she told me that she and Gloria Lamer had also birded the same road a few weeks earlier. Later on August 10, 2012, Elyse and Tom, my daughter and son-in-law, and I birded the road, and to our amazement we saw and/or heard 18 Henslow's Sparrows along the length of the road. After some research I concluded that the abundance of Henslow's Sparrows at this location is due to geology.

Sandy Ridge Road's name describes the nature of this rough, ill maintained road. Only short sections of each end of the road are maintained, and the base of the road is nothing more than hard naturally occurring sandstone. The "ridge" part of the name comes from "Chestnut Ridge" over which the road passes. In fact Chestnut Ridge marks the top of the Chestnut Ridge Anticline that generally runs southwest to northeast in the local area. The area around the road is dominated by the 30- to 40-foot thick Upper Mahoning sandstone of the Conemaugh group, and below the Upper Mahoning sandstone is a layer of sandy shale 50 to 80 feet thick. The bottom of this shale layer marks the boundary between the Conemaugh and Allegheny groups. At the top of the Allegheny group is the Upper Freeport coal seam. In the area of Sandy Ridge Road this coal seam is 36 inches thick, and about 30-35 feet below the Upper Freeport is the 28-30 inch thick Lower Freeport coal seam. These two coal seams play an important part in the creation of the environment around Sandy Ridge Road that supports Henslow's Sparrows and other grassland bird species. These coal seams were mined for local use via shafts as early as the 1870s, and by the end of the 19th century commercial

underground mines were established. Starting around 1940 and into the '50s, strip mining nibbled at the edges of the surrounding area, and between 1960 and the '80s vast areas around the road were stripped and reclaimed, creating a mostly flat grassy area of approximately three square miles.

After researching online the relationship between strip mining in Western Pennsylvania and the impact on grassland bird populations, I cannot help but to note the oxymoron quality of that relationship. This procedure has an extensive impact on the environment, creating a habitat that is conducive to grassland bird populations. A number of studies detail that reclaimed strip mines provide grassland habitats that support threatened populations of different bird species. My own experience this past summer birding Sandy Ridge Road supports this relationship.



This Dickcissel was photographed by Tom Glover in Clearfield.

I birded Sandy Ridge Road on six different occasions this past summer and fall. On my first outing on June 23, 2012, it took me four hours to traverse the three-mile-long road, but I tallied 31 species during that time, and two of those were life birds. I found Field, Savannah, and Grasshopper Sparrows, along with Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks. My two life birds were Henslow's Sparrows and a pair of Upland Sandpipers. Other birds of note were Killdeer, Northern Flickers, Eastern Kingbirds, Wood Thrushes, Northern Mockingbird, Indigo Buntings, and Brown Thrashers. When Elyse, Tom, and I birded Sandy Ridge Road on August 10, we found 18 Henslow's Sparrows along with 21 Field Sparrows. But the highlight of that outing was a Dickcissel Tom found in a bush about 10 feet from the road.

My discovery of Sandy Ridge Road prompted me to explore the surrounding area, and I found other smaller mined and reclaimed areas that support grassland birds. I also expanded my knowledge on SGL #87, located a couple miles northeast of Sandy Ridge Road. I found that as of last year, 2011, the state of Pennsylvania, through a land purchase of more than 9,000 acres, expanded the acreage of #87 by almost tenfold, and this new purchase is dominated by outcrops of the Upper Mahoning sandstone and large areas of reclaimed strip mines. So this coming 2013 spring and summer I plan to spend a lot of time birding my new found grasslands.

Cape May Autumn Weekend, 2011

by Jack Solomon

When I read that 3RBC's Ted Floyd shared equal headliner status with the great Pete Dunn at the NJ Audubon Cape May Autumn Weekend (<<http://www.birdcapemay.org/autumn.shtml>>) this past October, my wife Sue and I had to go. We each had our motives although any excuse to visit South Jersey, a birder's Mecca, is more than sufficient. Ever since the early seventies, when Analee Fitzgibbons and Betty Ware annually attended the spring and fall birding festivals and sang their praises, I wanted to be in Cape May for one or the other. Besides the varied activities and famous people who swarmed the events, there's also a plethora and variety of birds. I've known Ted Floyd since he was a teenager in Pittsburgh and have observed his career with a personal interest.

It's always great to bird Cape May. Our local club had week-long trips there twice in the early part of the last decade. Those made us famous as "The Group from Pittsburgh," because we found Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and other rarities. On one early trip we met Pete Dunne, who works as director of NJ Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory, when he called us over to see an Arctic Tern on a nearby jetty. It was years ago, but the memory remains fresh. Most of the Eurasian Wigeons I've seen have been in or near there, and scores of my life birds were spotted in that area. Some of those sightings, like the Barnacle Goose, represent the one and only member of the species I've ever seen in North America. On the 2011 trip, another bird was added to that short list of birds I've seen only once on the North American continent. It was the best on the list, but that comes later in this story. That's because in the course of this birding trip, much like it is when I bird locally or afar, my birding companions and the people I meet birding are incorporated into my treasured memories, maybe even more so than the experience of observing the birds.

For example, there was the pleasant surprise on the Hawk Watch platform at Cape May State Park, at the very tip of the South Jersey Peninsula, a few years ago, of running into a local birder who's now hitting the big time. I only found out who he was when I started talking to the official counter on the platform and asked where he was from. When he said Pennsylvania, and he wasn't recognizable to me, I pestered him for exactly where, until I dragged West Mifflin out of him. "Are you Ken Behrens?" I queried, naming the only West Mifflin birder I'd ever heard of. He was. Last time I saw him was when he was too young to drive a car. More recently, Behrens is a tour guide for the prestigious Tropical Birding tours <<http://www.tropicalbirding.com/meet-your-guides/>> and author of *Birding Ethiopia* <<http://www.amazon.com/Birding-Ethiopia-Ken-Behrens/dp/8496553558>>. He also has another book

on seabird ID which has not yet been published. When he told me that he needed help finding records of pelagics near Pittsburgh, I put him in touch with some of our local birders who are providing information about birds that appear in our region when hurricanes push them inland.

Also a few years ago, on that same hawk watch platform, I overheard a man talking quite familiarly and authoritatively, to the official counter and other NJ Audubon staff. He mentioned that he had a publisher for his upcoming book of bird photography, and he hadn't yet picked a subject. Someone who had a publisher lined up for anything he wanted to put together seemed like someone I wanted to meet, so I told him exactly that, and asked his name. "Kevin Karlson," was his reply. Immediately, I recognized his name as a famous wildlife photographer, best known to me as a bird photographer. <<http://www.kevinkarlsonphotography.com/index.htm>>. He was quite friendly and the hawks were coming through slowly enough that I felt only a bit of initial awkwardness engaging him in conversation. Eventually Sue asked him about any local rarities, so he gave us directions to a Eurasian Wigeon, a few hundred meters away.

Fast forward our fall 2011 trip for the Cape May Bird Observatory's fall festival. On the platform, I exchanged a few pleasantries with a man who had a thick Brit accent, a man who very obviously knew his birds by the way he helped even the official counter with some tough calls. He was quite eager to talk about encouraging young birders here in North America. He claimed youth birders swarm over Britain like wildebeests on the Serengeti, but this is not the case in North America. His comments, many quite caustic, on the failure of North American birding groups to foster the same level of enthusiasm in youth, were amazingly candid inasmuch as we didn't even know each other's names. Eventually, I introduced myself and found out his name was Crossley, Richard Crossley. Well, that's surely a name I've heard before, having seen his famous new bird guide published by Princeton University Press <<http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9384.html>>.

I love to meet birders and ornithologists I've admired from their writing or art. (And yes, it's obvious, I love to be able to drop names). In 2011 at Cape May, I paid \$200 for Sue and me to bird with Pete Dunne and Ted Floyd in a small group, in a drizzling rain on a chilly October day. It pleased me to tell Floyd that when I used to have him come along with me on ASWP bird outings as my "assistant" leader when he was a 13- or 14 year-old kid, I never dreamed I'd ever pay that much to bird with him. He admitted that, back then the thought did not enter his

mind, either. (I wonder how long it took him to figure out he was the leader, and I wasn't even really assistant leader. I was just his chauffeur since he was under 16.

Yet my fondest memory from the 2011 Cape May fall weekend was the story about meeting two people whose names I've forgotten. We were at the reception prior to a talk by Kenn Kaufman that we were sure we'd heard before. So, since it was an extra expense to attend, and I had just blown big bucks birding with celebrities, Sue and I were skipping it. While hobnobbing with authors (Pete Dunne and Kaufman, etc.) at the table where they signed books, I was interrupted by Sue who had a ticket in her hand. "A guy who can't attend gave me this, and there's a little girl who wants to go to the dinner and hear the talk. She's with her mother, and she can go if we can find someone we know with an open spot at their table." I went back to Sue and met the girl, who seemed to be about 13 years old, and her mother. I talked to them while Sue searched for a guardian pro tem. The girl was fairly new to birding but quite enthusiastic, and her mother was very supportive, attending the entire, three-day weekend with her. The dinner and talk, however, cost a goodly chunk extra, and would have exceeded her budget. Sue came back with the news that she'd arranged for the kid to sit right up front at the speakers' table, with Floyd, Dunne, both Kaufmans (Kenn and Kim), and other luminaries.



This Brown Booby was photographed perched near a Double-crested Cormorant at Cape May on October 17, 2011.

Photo by Mike Fowles

Sue and I took her mother to dinner at the hotel's restaurant, then came back later after the dinner and talk. Mom was grateful, and the girl was happy. I was happy with the outcome and proud of Sue for immediately thinking of the kid as soon as she got the ticket then working the whole deal. Far and away, it was the best experience of the trip.

On the last day we were there, we took our second shot at finding the Brown Booby that had, oddly enough, been hanging around a nearby bay, way out of its usual range in the Caribbean. We had looked a day earlier to no avail with Ted Floyd and one of his stellar birding buddies. This time we paid for the boat trip associated with the festival. The boat had gotten right up to the bird on the previous trip. Sure enough, we got nice and close to the booby. It was perched on a sign on a post way out in the bay, where we now knew it was a "gimme." Too bad none of us knew that the day before. Sue and I are both too lazy to carry a camera, so, as she often does, Sue asked a nearby photographer to email us a picture of the booby. In due course, that picture arrived and remains on the bulletin board in our kitchen, lo these 11 months later. I look at it daily. It elicits happy memories, happy memories of a great trip. And the best of those memories, far and away, is the happy face of a little girl.

Special Thanks!

Sincere thanks to Alice and Buck Beatty, Gloria and Clayton Lamer, and Lee Carnahan for doing the water stops for the Deer Fly Race on July 29. Their water stop was set up at the Boy Scout Camp at Yellow Creek. Another thanks to the same crew for manning the waterstops for the race at Dilltown on Sunday, August 12. The Indiana Roadrunners donated \$50 to us each time for our help.

Todd Bird Club recently donated \$100 to the Indiana Roadrunners as a sponsorship for the marathon for the Veterans on November 11. This race will start at Saylor Park. As a sponsor Todd will have our name on the banner as well as in the *Indiana Gazette*. This time Todd Bird Club will man one of the aid stations. For further information, contact Gloria Lamer (724-349-1159).

Join Todd Bird Club

Todd Bird Club dues are due and payable on January 1 each year. Please remit your \$10 individual membership or \$15 family membership dues to:

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

Amount Paid _____

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Blue Spruce Garden Planting a Success

At our March meeting, we voted to donate \$400 to plant a bird friendly garden in front of the park office at Blue Spruce County Park. On Friday, May 4, six Todd members – Alice Beatty, Lee Carnahan, Margaret Higbee, Gloria Lamer, and Ed and Donna Meyer met at the park to start the planting under the guidance of park employee and landscape architect Kristi Helfer. Thanks to Marcy Cunkelman, Ed Donley, Gloria Lamer, Donna Meyer, and Twolick Valley Nursery for donating several plants.

The water feature didn't look like much when we had finished, but thanks to Ed Donley, who later donated and planted the water plants, it took on an entirely different appearance. The garden prospered this summer with all of the plants filling in to create a dense planting. Thanks to all who helped.



The new garden is located in front of the park office.



Ed Meyer and Lee Carnahan spade while Gloria Lamer removes a shrub from the pot and Alice Beatty weeds.



Lee Carnahan shovels mulch into the wheel barrow for Gloria Lamer.

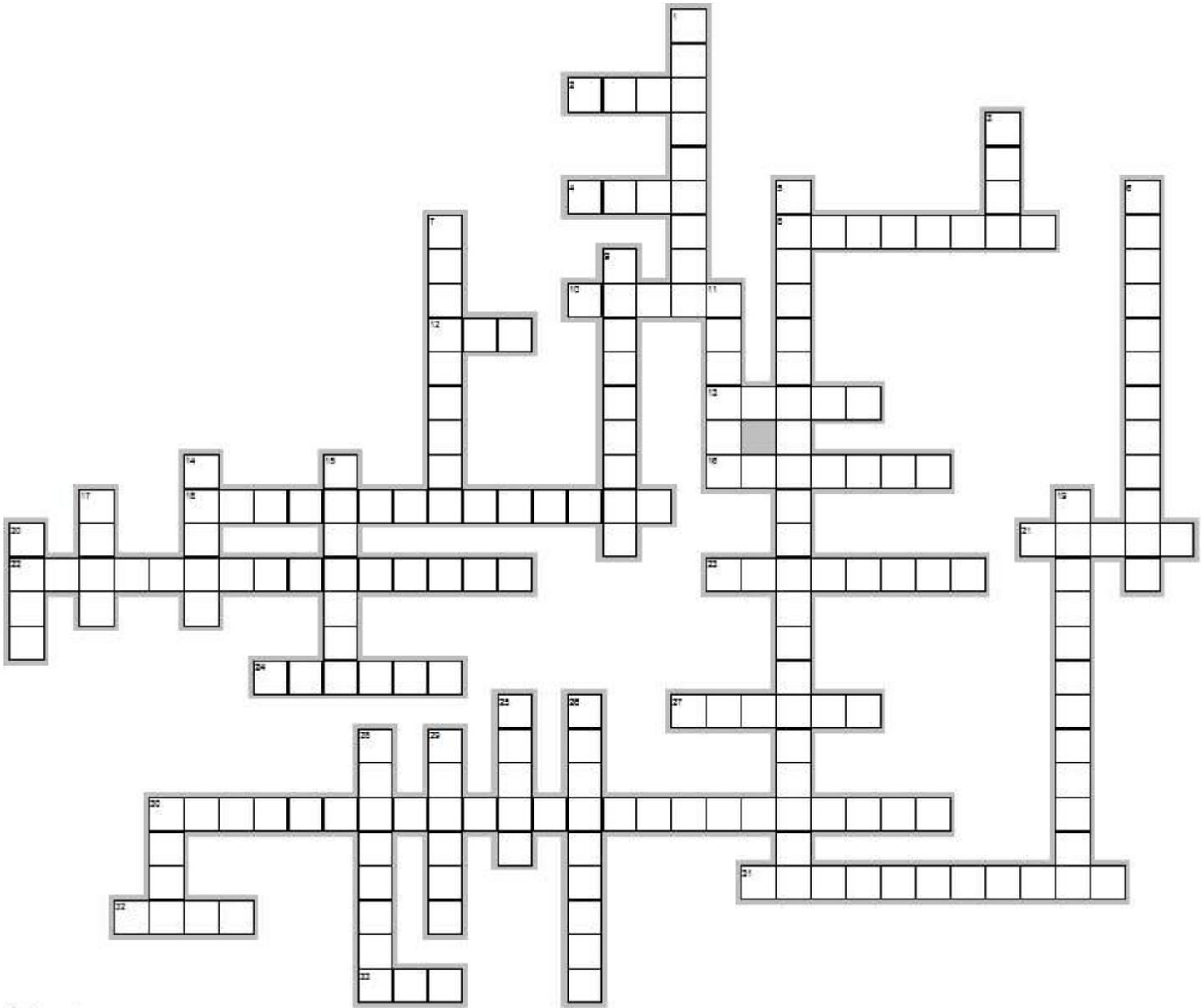


With the first step of the work completed, the group poses for a photo. From left to right are Lee Carnahan, Gloria Lamer, Donna Meyer, Ed Meyer, Margaret Higbee, and Kristi Helfer. Missing from the photo is Alice Beatty.

Some of the plants in the garden are Stiff Goldenrod, Winterberry Holly, Dwarf Fothergilla, Red Osier Dogwood, Sweetfern, Lowbush Blueberry, Black-eyed Susan, Butterfly Weed, Liatris, Purple Coneflower, and Little Blue-stem. Be sure to stop by the park to check out the garden.

Thanks to Ed Patterson, Director of Indiana County Parks and Trails, for providing the photos.

Todd Bird Club Puzzle



©CiphaCrossword.com

Across

2. a National Wildlife Refuge
4. a nest predator
8. sparrow with the shortest song
10. the last name of our co-president
12. our "state bird club"
13. ID mistake
16. the bird that accompanies you at every meal
18. hairlike feathers at the base of a bird's bill
21. reproduce
22. Father of American ornithology
23. an extinct bird
24. Tringa semipalmata
27. first name of the person after whom Todd was named
30. a bird with a man-made object in its name
31. Breeding Bird Survey founder
32. a swallow found once in the county
33. a gregarious species with a tail that looks disjointed

Down

1. Winter Raptor Survey originator
3. noted for its intelligence
5. a species that may be split next year
6. an old name for a flicker
7. Common Tern has one
9. a cavity nester with a serrated bill
11. American football team
14. a bird that can carry the most weight
15. duck with black tail coverts
17. "I didn't see it because it ____"
19. Christmas bird count originator
20. two
25. a bird with reddish legs
26. the potato chip bird
28. a new genus
29. the only storm-petrel on the Indiana County list
30. the rail most commonly found at Yellow Creek

Indiana-Armstrong-Cambria Counties

June 1-July 31, 2012

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@windstream.net.

Locations: Crooked Creek Park (CC), Duman Lake (DL), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Margaret (MG), Margus Lake (ML), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rochester Mills (RM), Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Yellow Creek (YC).

At least 23 Wood Ducks and 17 Mallards, including many young, were counted at YC 6/12 (MB,LC,TG,MH,DM,DW) while the Armstrong Trail yielded 10 Wood Ducks on 7/22 (TR). Five Common Mergansers were spotted along the Butler-Freeport Trail 7/3 (TR). A drake Ruddy Duck in alternate plumage lingered at YC through 7/8 (LC), providing only the second summer record but the first July record. A Common Loon, also in alternate plumage, was last spotted at YC 6/19 (LC,TG,MH,DM). A single Double-crested Cormorant appeared at YC 6/5 (LC,SD,TG, MH,GL,ML,KT), the only sighting this summer. A Great Egret was photographed near Buttermilk Falls 7/29 (fide EP).

A Northern Harrier east of PG 6/27 (JH) comprised the lone report. Bald Eagle sightings included an adult near Ambrose 6/6 (JSh). A pair of American Kestrels, accompanied by 3 fledglings, was observed copulating near Penn Run 6/16 (MH,RH).

By 7/3 (LC,TG,DM) Killdeer had already begun congregating on the mudflats at YC; the numbers built to 23 by 7/8 (LC). Five American Avocets were a nice surprise at YC 7/24 (LC,TG,DM); this is the largest group on record with the previous high of 3 spotted 5/15/2007 (BF,TF,MH,GL). First southward bound Greater Yellowlegs arrived at YC 7/17 (LC,TG) after the appearance of the first Lesser Yellowlegs 7/13 (LC). Arriving a little earlier with less distance to travel, first Solitary Sandpiper stopped at YC 6/26 (LC,MH,GL,ML). At least 6 Spotted Sandpipers were noted 7/21 (LC). Less than a mile from the compiler's home, a Long-billed Curlew was observed in a farm field 6/20 (ED) by the observer on his way to work. Least Sandpipers began arriving at YC 7/3 (LC,TG,DM) and were sighted on ten dates through the end of the period with top count of 10 on 7/21 (LC). One to 2 Pectoral Sandpipers were noted on four days between 7/19 (LC) and 7/26 (LC). A single Short-billed Dowitcher was present at YC 7/17 (LC,TG) through 7/21 (LC). An American Woodcock at Blue Spruce 7/11 (MA) and one near DL 7/16 (AF) comprised the entire report for this species.

Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found both on the KT BBS 6/3 (MH,RH) and along the Armstrong Trail 7/22 (TR); singletons were noted near Penn Run 6/21 (BF,MH)

On June 20, 2012, between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., I was driving to work. In the front yard of a farmer's house, on Creekside Road, between Shelocta and Indiana, PA, Indiana County (coordinates 40.662, -79.256), I saw a brown bird standing in the lawn with its back toward me. It was about 10 m from a stream that flowed near the house. I was trying to figure out what it was when it turned its head in profile. It had an unmistakable long, down-curved bill. The length and curvature matched that of the Long-billed Curlews that I had seen in the western U.S. I drove by too quickly to see any other identifying features. Margaret Higbee, who lives about a half-mile from the sighting, was unable to find it 15 minutes later because several farm vehicles had arrived at that location and scared off the bird.

Ed Donley

and near DL 7/25 (AF). Single Black-billed Cuckoos were listed on the MG BBS 6/2 (MH,RH), at YC between 6/7 (BF,MH) and 6/19 (LC,TG,MH,DM) and at Chicora 7/29 (DMC); 2 were at the Gipsy Strips 6/15 (MH,GL).



Marcy Cunkelman located and photographed this Ruby-throated Hummingbird's nest in her yard on June 23.

An Eastern Screech-Owl near SGL 247 on 7/28 (TR) was the only one reported. Barred Owls were heard 7/31, both near Blue Spruce (EP) and near Shelocta (MH,RH). A Northern Saw-whet Owl tooting in the early morning near Penn Run 6/21 (BF,MH) was unusual.

An Alder Flycatcher was found at SGL 108 on 7/3 (MD). Two White-eyed Vireos near Elders Ridge 6/30 (MH,RH) and singletons at SGL 247 on 7/1 (TR) and at YC 7/31 (LC,SD,TG,MH,LR,KT) were the only ones noted; this species has become increasingly difficult to find. Yellow-throated Vireos noted included one on the MG BBS 6/2 (MH,RH), 2 on the KT BBS 6/3 (MH,RH), one at Smicksburg 6/28 (DM), one at Elders Ridge 6/30 (MH,RH), one at ,CC 7/4 (MVT), and 3 on the Lenape Golf Course 7/10 (RH). Warbling Vireos were listed only on the MG BBS 6/2 (MH,RH) and near CC 7/24 (MVT).

Fish Crows were present throughout the season on the IUP campus with the best count of 5 on 6/18 (JT); one was also reported at PG 6/4 (DBu).

Forty was an excellent count of Purple Martins at PG 7/20 (IG). Two Bank Swallows appeared near DL 7/4 (AF); a singleton was observed at PG 7/20 (IG). Twenty-five Cliff Swallows were counted at PG 6/24 (JS).

A Veery was found at KT 6/3 (MH,RH) while 5 was a good count on the Virginia BBS 6/9 (MH,RH). Single Hermit Thrushes were listed 6/10 (MH,RH) on the Patton BBS, 6/16 (MH,RH) at Beaverdam Run Dam, and 7/25 (AF) near DL.

June 7 (BF,MH) yielded both Ovenbirds and Louisiana Waterthrush feeding young at YC, where a rather late singing Northern Waterthrush lingered 6/5 (LC,SD,TG,MH,GL,ML,KT). A Blue-winged Warbler was singing near MG 6/2 (MH,RH); a territorial male at YC was not reported after 6/5 (LC,SD,TG,MH,GL,ML,KT); 2 were listed near CC 6/20 (MVT). A three-mile stretch of the Ghost Town Trail yielded two singing Black-and-white Warblers 6/13 (BF,MH). Two Cerulean Warblers were noted on the KT BBS 6/3 (MH,RH). Three Northern Parulas were present on the north shore at YC through 6/12 (LC,TG,DW); one pair was certainly nesting in one of the large spruce near the pavilion; an individual was also present 7/2 (JS) at PG. Two Magnolia Warblers were counter-singing near the dam at YC 6/7 (BF,MH); another was listed at PG 6/4 (DBu) and again 7/2 (JS). A Blackburnian Warbler spotted at YC 6/12 (MB,LC,TG,MH,DM,DW) was still present 6/26 (LC,MH,GL,ML). YC's Pine Warblers were still singing through 6/26 (LC,MH,GL,ML); one was also heard near Shelocta 6/29 (MH); PG yielded yet another 7/2 (JS). A Yellow-rumped Warbler at St. Lawrence 6/11 (JS) was the only one noted. Single Prairie Warblers were listed only near Dayton 6/3 (MH,RH), on the Patton BBS 6/10

(MH,RH), at St. Lawrence 6/11 (JS), at the Gypsy Strips 6/15 (MH,GL), and at Rock Run ATV Park 6/29 (MD). Single Yellow-breasted Chats were noted on the KT BBS 6/3 (MH,RH), at Crooked Creek 6/27 (MVT), and near Elders Ridge 6/30 (MH,RH).

Grasshopper Sparrow reports included 7 at the Gypsy Strips 6/15 (MH,GL), 2 near Shelocta 6/20 (MH), and 2 near West Lebanon 6/28 (MC). The fields near West Lebanon harbored 4 Henslow's Sparrows 6/14 (MH,RH) while only one could be located at the Gypsy strips 6/15 (MH,GL). Three Dickcissels were first spotted near WL 6/13 (EF,MF); MC confirmed nesting with her photos of adults carrying food 6/28. Three BBS routes, KT, Virginia, and Patton, yielded a total of 12 Bobolinks; 2 found above the Armstrong Trail 6/10 (KSJ) and 4 near Penn Run 6/21 (BF,MH) were the only other ones noted.



This Grasshopper Sparrow was at West Lebanon 6/28.
Photo by Marcy Cunkelman



This male Dickcissel was photographed by Marcy Cunkelman at West Lebanon on June 28.



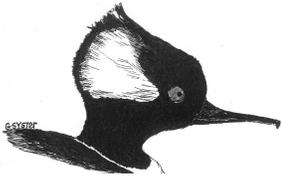
Observers: Mary Assenat, Maria Bodenschatz, Dan Bukowski, Lee Carnahan, Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Anna Fasoli, Betsy Fetterman, Tom Fetterman, Evelyn Fowles, Mike Fowles, Ian Gardner, Tom Glover, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Jason Hill, Gloria Lamer, Melissa Little, David McCartt (DMc), Donna Meyer, Richard Nugent, Ed Patterson, Theo Rickert, John Salvetti, Jerry Shipe (JSh), Kate St. John (KSJ), John Taylor, Ken Truitt, Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Daniel Winstead.



Marge Van Tassel confirmed the West Lebanon Dickcissels with this photo where the female is gathering nesting material.

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

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