

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

October 2014

Meetings

Todd Bird Club meetings begin 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. The first half hour we socialize, so the meeting can begin promptly at 7:30. Refreshments are provided at each of our meetings. In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 2 – Dr. Andrew L. Mack will give a presentation on the birds of Papua New Guinea. A conservation professional, he has lived and worked in some of the world's most diverse and exceptional ecosystems.

Searching for Pekpek: Cassowaries and Conservation in the New Guinea Rainforest, is the chronicle of Andy's personal and scientific journey. His adventure is akin to stepping through a portal into a time and place where ancient cultures clash with modern sensibilities, of surviving in a country where there is no access to electricity, health care, roads, telephones, or police, all while searching for a dinosaur-like bird, some species of which can reach 6 feet, weigh 120 pounds, and are one of the few birds that can easily kill people.



The Northern, or Single Wattled Cassowary, is one of three species found in New Guinea. It is the least known, never studied, and rarely seen.



The Superb Fruit-Dove, one of 56 dove species in New Guinea, is a good example of how colorful many Old World tropical pigeons and doves are compared to their relatives here in the temperate zone.

In Melanesia, in the wilderness of Papua New Guinea, Andy Mack completed some of the first in-depth and long-term ecological studies ever undertaken in the region. After decades of research, he came away with insights into conservation, economic development, and the global politics of earth stewardship.

This is also our Christmas Cookie Extravaganza. Please bring a dozen cookies to share.

Tuesday, January 6 – This is our annual Members' Night. Please bring something to share – photos, stories, memorabilia, etc.

Tuesday, February 3 – D.J. McNeil is a second-year graduate student at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania working under the guidance of Dr. Jeff Larkin. He completed his undergraduate degree in Fisheries & Wildlife at the Michigan State University where his research primarily focused on monitoring the response of passerine birds to habitat management, focusing particularly on Golden-winged Warbler densities in aspen timber harvests.

His current work at IUP is aimed at studying Golden-winged Warbler response to private land management strategies where he explores nesting success, territory attributes, and post-fledging habitat-use. The biology program at IUP hosts an array of ecological research spanning everywhere from systematics and evolution to habitat-requirements and management. McNeil and Larkin's work, facilitated by IUP's biology department, are a deliberate attempt to collect/analyze data that will directly contribute to the recovery of the

Golden-winged Warbler and the entire suite of birds that require the habitat created through private forestland management.

Tuesday, March 3 – Patrick Snickles, the PA Game Commission's Wildlife Education Supervisor, will present a program about the life history of the American Woodcock, its range, its habits, and its elaborate mating system.

Outings

Tuesday morning outings, mostly at Yellow Creek, will continue until deer season. 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 (724-388-4667) or Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

Saturday, November 8 – PSO trip to the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch near Central City. If you're planning to go and would like to carpool, meet at the Yellow Creek State Park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, November 15 – Pine Ridge County Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667). We will walk the level trail and focus on the area's wintering birds and late fall migrants. Meet at the park entrance road at 8:00 a.m.

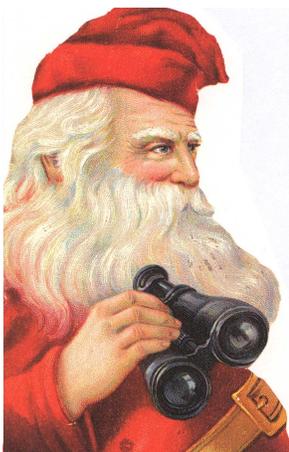
From Indiana and the north: Follow Route 119 south to Route 22. Go under Route 22, passing the entrance and exit ramps for Route 22. Turn left onto Pine Ridge Road, staying left at the Y, and proceed to the park entrance which will be on your right.

Saturday, November 22 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Ray Winstead. Target species are our winter resident birds. Highlights will include feeding Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted Nuthatches in your hand.

Friday, November 28 through Monday, December 1 – Birding the Niagara Frontier. *You must have a passport or a passport card to enter Canada and return to the US. We will bird mostly in Canada.* 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 Super 8 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).

Friday, December 26 – Indiana Christmas Bird Count. Contact Roger or Margaret Higbee if you plan to participate.

Christmas Bird Count



Our 32nd annual Indiana Christmas Bird Count will be held on Friday, December 26. The count's 15-mile-diameter circle is centered at Second and Grandview in Indiana, so if you live within 7.5 miles of that intersection, you live inside the circle. If you live in the count area, you may count the birds at your bird feeders, in your yard, or nearby. Otherwise,

you may join one of our field parties. Either way, it's a lot of fun. New birders are always welcomed! Beginning birders as well as the more advanced are invited to participate. Then after a cold day hiking or driving around with the car windows open (or sitting inside a warm house looking out the windows), it's always fun to come to the Christmas Bird Count dinner which will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, the 26th at Hoss's. During the dinner, we'll compile the list and vote for "the bird of the count." The recipient receives the James Dearing Award. If you have any questions, please contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

Allegheny Front Outing Revisited

The normal Tuesday outing on October 14, 2014, took on a different spin. Todd Bird Club members Lee Carnahan, Sue Dickson, Tom Glover, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, and Gloria Lamer met at the Yellow Creek State Park office at the regular starting time of 8:00 a.m. for a trip to the Allegheny Front. And the highlight of the outing proved to be a surprise.

After loading all our gear into the Higbees' van, we piled in and made our way to the Front. We arrived about 9:25 a.m. Now it is always a treat when you first walk up to the edge, and take in the vastness of the view, particularly when it is your first time at the Front. The view is awesome. The landscape seems to go on forever. But the reason for the trip to the Front is for the birds.

Hawkwise for us, it turned out to be a bit slow. We saw 9 Turkey Vultures, 28 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1 Cooper's Hawk, and 8 Red-tailed Hawks. Other birds noted were 8 Blue Jays, 6 American Crows, 2 Common Ravens, 4 Dark-eyed Juncos, and the best bird of the day, an Orange-crowned Warbler. We were sitting in the van waiting out the rain when a small flock of Dark-eyed Juncos appeared on the left in some thick low brush. Among the Juncos was the Orange-crowned Warbler. Of course this bird got everyone's attention. Windows were opened, wipers were turned on, and fog was wiped off the windows to get a better view of the bird. Now for Gloria and Sue in the third row of seats, the view was limited. After some contorted attempts, they still did not get a good look at the

Orange-crowned Warbler before it flew off. Luckily the flock of juncos returned with the Warbler in tow. This time after some scrambling everyone got a chance to see the bird. Now the Orange-crowned Warbler was a neat bird, but it was not the highlight of the outing.

The weather was the highlight of the day! The average temperature was 15° C with 100% cloud cover, and visibility anywhere from 32 km to nothing. The wind was out of the southeast with gusts up to 35 mph. The ridge on which the Allegheny Front is located runs for the most part north to south. With a strong wind out of the southeast the migrating hawks were fighting a head wind. Six of the local Turkey Vultures were thrown about by the wind as they flew back and forth across the valley. Throw in the rain, and the day was a bit on the miserable side. With the vast eastern view we watched the rain coming toward us; and when it hit the ridge, we took shelter in the van. Looking on the positive side, if it were not for the rain's chasing us into the van, we would have missed the Orange-crowned Warbler. After consulting the weather on Sue's smart phone, we gave up about 1:30 and headed home.

We want to thank Jim Rocco, the counter for the day, and Ed Gowarty for hosting the Todd Bird Club at the Allegheny Front for what turned out to be a challenging day.

– Tom Glover

Joint Todd-Three River Birding Club Outing Revisited

Six birders attended the November 1 outing at Yellow Creek in spite of the predicted all-day rain, wind, and cooler temperatures. Two of us were Todd members (Lee Carnahan and Tom Glover); two, 3RBC members (Todd Hooe and Oliver Lindhiem); and two, members of both groups (Roger and I). There was little activity at the park office, but we did list Blue Jays, Brown Creeper, Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Cardinal.

Because of the group's small size and the amount of exposed mud at the eastern end of the lake, we decided to hike the trail from the first parking lot to the water. As we walked through the forest, we added White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-capped Chickadees, and several robins. Approaching the mud, we heard Killdeer and soon spotted 13 of them. A flock of

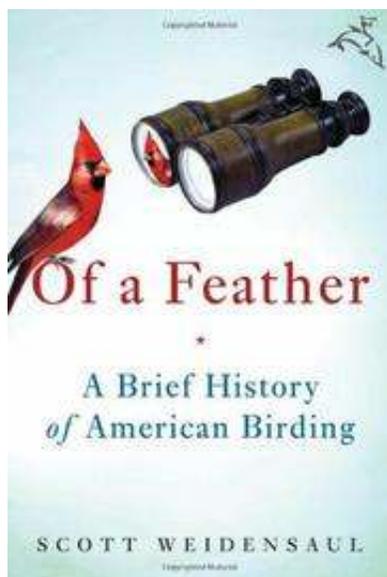
Green-winged Teal numbered 31. The roughly 300 Canada Geese became upset, started honking, and flushed in spite of our attempts to sneak quietly to the edge for a better look. Two Lesser Yellowlegs were feeding on the mud with the Killdeer, and 5 Rusty Blackbirds perched in one of the trees along the water's edge. Three American Pipits landed on the mud and provided excellent scope views for all. We heard a Pine Siskin and immediately spotted it high in another tree behind us. This was a life bird for two of us. Perched on a snag in the water was a distant Merlin. Special thanks to Tom for counting the 418 American Coots and to Lee for tallying the 360 Ruddy Ducks at this location.

(continued on page 6)

Book Review

by Tom Glover

Weidensaul, Scott. *Of a Feather – A Brief History of American Birding*, Harcourt, 2007.



Now if you are a birder and a history buff you will have to read Scott Weidensaul's *Of a Feather - A Brief History of American Birding*, published in 2007 by Harcourt. Not only is this book about birding, but it delves into the history of American birding. Starting with Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon, the book takes you to present day professional birders including Ken Kaufman

and David Sibley. Scott also goes into detail about the history of birding literature, and he covers the changes in the techniques of birding throughout history.

The North American continent was alive with healthy and large populations of birds when the first settlers arrived. The book explores the history of the extraordinarily huge flocks of Passenger Pigeons and their demise. The Passenger Pigeon represents the darker side of the exploitation of birds from the beginning of the history of the first Europeans explorers. Even the techniques used by those initially studying birds seem archaic by today's standards. Scott tells us how those early birders would identify birds by first shooting them and then, with the bird in hand, proceeded to work out the details. He also covers how Audubon had a network of observers who collected birds throughout the country and then shipped

those specimens to him in kegs of whiskey to preserve the birds. He notes the friction that developed between the "shoot and ID crowd" and those who were starting to observe birds to identify them. I enjoyed Scott's detailing of how those who studied birds early on reacted to the growing popularity of birding by the "opera glass" crowd. It seems that early optics for observing birds for the masses were limited to opera glasses.

Scott traces the early roots of modern day birding with the likes of a nerdy bunch represented by Roger Troy Peterson and the Bronx County Bird Club. If you are serious about the history of birding, Scott will walk you through the life of Peterson and other modern day birders. Peterson's field guide represents the breakthrough for the masses of a long history of birding books. His technique of presenting birds set the standard for field guides to follow.

Scott's treatment of modern day birding proves how far birding has come over the centuries. He details how listing for some has become an obsession, and to what lengths some birders will go to expand their list of species. He also points out that some birders are more interested in what the birds are doing rather than viewing them as just another check mark.

For me the book was a win-win effort. Not only did it satisfy my late in life birding interests, but it was a good healthy history lesson. So if you are a true birder, you are obligated to read this book to gain a better understanding of birding's origins and its future.

– Tom Glover



Thanks, Marcy & Dan Cunkelman

Special thanks to Dan and Marcy for once again hosting the joint Todd Bird Club and Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club annual picnic at their home.

The weather was great, and the food and fellowship were exceptional. Thanks for all you do!!!

[Photo to left: Dan Cunkelman, Zoe, and Steve Gosser]

Songbird Fallout at PISP

By Richard Nugent

On May 8, 2014, I birded at Presque Isle State Park in Erie County. The weather forecast called for morning showers followed by a pleasant day. Before I left Pittsburgh, I checked the radar and saw that a band of thunderstorms had passed from west to east across Erie County between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m. This meant that some migrants may have been forced to land. Driving north on I-79 the road was dry until I reached Erie County, and then it was wet.

As soon as I entered the park, I saw birds everywhere – on the road and many on the sides of the road. So many birds were flying in front of my van that I had to drive 10 mph, and I soon realized that I was witnessing a fallout. One of the most common roadside birds was White-crowned Sparrow and I estimated that more than 1,000 were in the park. Everywhere I went in the park birds were in large numbers with many on the ground or in low shrubs. The birding was excellent all day long with no mid-day lull.

My first stop was Vista #1 where I found the resident Trumpeter Swan. Other birds of note were:

Warbling Vireo	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Palm Warbler	Great Crested Flycatcher
Baltimore Oriole	

I then moved on to Leo's Landing where I was greeted by a Great Egret. Highlights here included:

Palm Warbler	Veery
Horned Grebe	Lesser Yellowlegs
Green Heron	Spotted Sandpiper
Sora	Warbling Vireo
Common Loon	Blue-winged Teal
Field Sparrow	Caspian Tern
Brown Thrasher	

I drove to Fry's Landing and was almost overwhelmed by a multitude of birds including both Lincoln's Sparrow and a Clay-colored Sparrow on the ground near each other and only about 30 feet from me. My list of highlights follows:

Wood Thrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Black-and-white Warbler	Blue-winged Warbler
Least Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Clay-colored Sparrow	Lincoln's Sparrow
Veery	Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Palm Warbler
Cape May Warbler	Hermit Thrush

Black-throated Blue Warbler

Pine Tree Trail was also excellent. Yellow-rumped Warblers were very numerous with a conservative estimate of more than 100. An early Philadelphia Vireo was a pleasant surprise as were about 15 somewhat late White-throated Sparrows. My highlights were:

Blue-headed Vireo	American Redstart
Veery	Hairy Woodpecker
Pine Warbler	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Black-and-white Warbler	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Philadelphia Vireo	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Great Crested Flycatcher	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Black-throated Green Warbler	Cooper's Hawk
Nashville Warbler	Scarlet Tanager
Common Yellowthroat	

I then spent about 20 minutes on Dead Pond Trail. For several days a Red-headed Woodpecker had been seen at the beginning of the trail, and I quickly found the bird. Other highlights were:

Baltimore Oriole	Palm Warbler
Great Crested Flycatcher	Hooded Warbler
Ovenbird	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
American Redstart	Magnolia Warbler
Veery	

Next I birded part of Sidewalk Trail and the adjacent Ridge Trail. Here I encountered a flock of apparently exhausted Gray Catbirds on the ground. They allowed me to get within about 10 feet before reluctantly flushing. Also on the ground was an early Gray-cheeked Thrush. Other highlights were:

Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Palm Warbler
Great Crested Flycatcher	Hermit Thrush
Virginia Rail	Lincoln's Sparrow
Veery	Hooded Warbler
American Redstart	Common Yellowthroat
Wood Thrush	Swainson's Thrush
Swamp Sparrow	Eastern Kingbird
Black-throated Green Warbler	

It was now 1:08 p.m. and I returned to Fry's Landing where I spotted the following:

American Redstart	Veery
Swainson's Thrush	Palm Warbler

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Northern Parula
Hooded Warbler
Nashville Warbler

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black-and-white Warbler
Magnolia Warbler

Greater Yellowlegs
Swamp Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper
Mallard
Common Tern
Hooded Merganser

Lesser Yellowlegs
Wood Duck
Baltimore Oriole
Caspian Tern
Redhead

North Pier Trail also had yielded lots of birds. The only surprise here was an Eastern Meadowlark, an uncommon species at Presque Isle. Other highlights were:

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black-and-white Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Great Crested Flycatcher
Swainson's Thrush
Baltimore Oriole

Having by now almost overdosed on warblers, I went to Beach 11 to look for lingering waterbirds. Highlights were:

Bald Eagle
Lesser Scaup
Common Tern
Bufflehead
Greater Scaup
Spotted Sandpiper

Thompson Bay was also productive:

Finally I birded Long Pond Trail. A mixed flock of swallows provided the only new birds for the day. Highlights here were:

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black-and-white Warbler
Wood Thrush
Great Crested Flycatcher
Swainson's Thrush
Tree Swallow
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Palm Warbler
Veery
Swamp Sparrow
Purple Martin
Barn Swallow

At 4:25 p.m. I headed home tired, but happy, as at Presque Isle I had seen thousands of birds and about 30 very lucky birders. My species total was 104. I had read about fallouts, but I never expected to experience one. WOW!

Joint Todd-Three River Birding Club Outing Revisited

(continued from page 3)

We continued to the maintenance building where we listed 5 Pied-billed Grebes, one Great Blue Heron, another 62 coots, and 2 Greater Yellowlegs. From this vantage point we spotted a Common Loon uplake and 4 Double-crested Cormorants perched on snags in the water close to the cove. Circling overhead were two adult Bald Eagles.

By the time we reached the boat launch, the wind had whipped up and the rain had become heavier. Looking into Little Yellow Cove we added another 395 coots, 19 Pied-billed Grebes, 51 Ruddy Ducks, and one Redhead. A Purple Finch flew overhead ticking, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler was foraging in the willows. We drove a bit farther to the curve where we pulled off to get a better look at the mud in Little Yellow Cove. Here were 13 Rusty Blackbirds, 2 more Green-winged Teal, 6 additional Killdeer, and another Great Blue Heron. A Ring-necked Pheasant crowed and Song Sparrows were calling from the low vegetation along the edge.

A walk through the main rec. area yielded an Eastern Bluebird and 9 starlings. Continuing to the beach, we spotted a Northern Flicker and a soaring Red-tailed Hawk.

Our next destination was Observatory Trail which was pretty quiet, yielding only Golden-crowned Kinglets, 2 more nuthatches, and several chickadees. The observatory, however, was productive. Here we added 3 Tundra Swans, 3 Wood Ducks, 8 Gadwalls, 12 American Wigeons, 3 Ring-necked Ducks, and one Hooded Merganser. The highlight here was a Northern Harrier hunting the marsh. We ended the outing with 47 species, including 1442 coots, 16 pipits, and 20 Rusty Blackbirds, before three of us headed to the Chinese buffet in Indiana for lunch.

– Margaret Higbee

Did you know...

In China the pheasant is considered a rain or thunder bird. To bring rain to the countryside, pheasant dances were performed with dancers imitating the pheasant's movements and flapping of its wings.

First Time Birder: Yellow Creek State Park Life Birds: Practically All of Them

By Jan Woodard

I haven't joined the Todd Bird Club yet, but I'm about to. In case you're thinking a preposition is an inappropriate word to end a sentence with (or phrase), I know, I know. I'm a writer. I'm *not* a birder. I'm so pumped by my first birding experience however, that I'm willing to break the rules of standard English.

I may not know birds, but I do know deadlines. Thus, I'm furiously trying to remember all the stuff that came to mind when Margaret Higbee requested a newsletter article as we scanned the horizon together and I was introduced to those little guys with the white heads – were they Buffleheads? Or Coots? Whatever. Once she said the deadline is *tonight*, I thought of little else. I asked Margaret wherever I inserted a (blank) if she would kindly fill in the appropriate nomenclature, like the one with green legs that looks so cute the way it moves in the water. Coot. That's it. I remember now, it rhymes with cute. Oh Margaret, help me if I've totally screwed this thing up.

This morning was my first time birding. Ever. At least officially. My longtime friend Donna Meyer invited my husband Jim and me to give birding on Tuesday mornings at Yellow Creek a try. I could have been swimming laps or doing yoga at the Y (...or sleeping), but this looked like the perfect day to join her. Due to a competing invitation, Jim elected at the last minute to go fishing off a pier on Lake Erie. It's noon, we just spoke, he's been up since 3:30 a.m., rode almost three hours in a car, and just caught his first steelhead. So I'd say I'm having a better day – if seeing some crazy number of life birds makes for a good day! I really should be able to say the specific number of my life birds today, but I wasn't counting. Too busy going, “O-h-h, cool...” and “Was that to the left or right of the willow?” When Margaret posts the list of what we saw, I'll be able to sound more like I know what I'm talking about.

I say this was my first official time birding, but Jim and I've been watching birds for years. And after all, we saw *The Big Year*. I know the jargon – or at least that term! Jim began saying a few years back that you could tell we're old(er), because we “like flowers and birds.” And photographing them. Now I understand why my late dad (who was *never* late for anything and would be offended by that adjective) took all those slides of birds and flowers that now occupy four shelves in our attic. Since I usually can't name the birds that cross my path, I figure all that flower-and-bird stuff doesn't really count as

“birding.” But for a couple of winters now we've been thrilled to feed White-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees and such, out of our hands at a spot Ray Winstead told us about. (“And such” is code for: “I don't know the name.”) We have a feeder that fits over the deck rail a few feet from our living room, so we are entertained by a great variety of birds daily. And last week Jim and I went to our first bird club activity to hear about the National Aviary's incredible program called Neighborhood Nestwatch. We plan to participate next spring.

This is how I look at birding. I learned about Howard Gardner's list of Multiple Intelligences in college. These are ways that people “learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways,” according to this guy, Gardner. Word smarts, numbers smarts, music smarts (and such) – these are on the list. Later “naturalist” or “nature smarts” was added to the original seven forms of intelligences. Jim has this in spades. I don't. But that doesn't mean I'm not interested. Or don't care. This fall I spotted a Double-crested Cormorant preening at Blue Spruce. The next week I followed a small Green Heron along the edge of Keystone Dam while kayaking. I know this, thanks to my cell phone camera and Donna, who ID'd them for me. So I am capable of learning about birds, just not on the level of some of you.

I was the first person to arrive at the Yellow Creek State Park office this morning at 7:45. An over-eager first-timer, you say. Out came my collapsible walking poles, ancient binoculars, and a backpack with pad, pencil, extra pair of socks, and Tootsie Rolls for nourishment. I meant to bring granola bars but forgot to pack them. I also forgot gloves, and with the temp in the high 30s, I could have used a pair, but later found one under my car seat, which was better than none. I may not know much about birding, but I'm passionate about creature comforts. I quickly discovered I didn't need the walking poles and that no one else seemed interested in food or drink, so I left my lemon-ginger tea in the car, sipping it between stops as we caravanned along the south side of the lake. I didn't keep a bird list since Margaret did for all of us. So really, except for sunblock, sunglasses, and binocs (told you I've seen *The Big Year*), I really didn't need any of the gear I lugged along.

The big news today was that the “early birds” who first visited the north side of the lake, even before our meeting time of 8 a.m., saw a Brant. We didn't see it on the south

shore during the almost four hours I was there. Having just this moment visited Cornell's website, I can tell you the Brant is an "abundant small goose of the ocean shores... the Brant breeds in the high Arctic tundra and winters along both coasts. The Brant along the Atlantic have light gray bellies while those off the Pacific Coast have black bellies and were at one time considered a separate species." The second person to arrive this morning was Debbie Kalbfleisch, a birder from Zeligople. She came to see the Brant. This amazed me. She drove an hour and a half to see a goose. Our group counted some 243 Canada Geese and one Cackling Goose, but nary a Brant among them.

I wish I could have introduced Debbie to Matilda. Last summer Jim and I camped at Yellow Creek in one of their fine cabins for a few days. While kayaking, a goose approached us, circled our kayaks, and adopted us. We later learned from the park office that she and her mate, who had been killed, had arrived at the park "people-friendly," and snubbed her beak at flocking with other geese on the lake. Matilda, as we called her, slept under our car, excreted on our parking pad, and waddled around our campfire. When I went to leave, she flew in front of my car, stomped the ground if a goose can do such a thing, and flapped her wings. I hope by now that Matilda is over her hissy fit and has found a family of her own.

Getting back to my birding adventure, the first one I spotted on my own was a Red-bellied Woodpecker just after we saw a Downy Woodpecker. There were thousands of birds at Yellow Creek on this gorgeous day, and I was told if the weather had been worse, we would have seen more. It's pretty amazing that some of these people do this week after week, year in and year out, and still get excited

to see an Eastern Phoebe, a cheerful little bird that for some crazy reason reminded me of Mary Poppins. Club members graciously shared their scopes, time, and nature smarts with me. The least I could do is share these words, with you.

We saw 44 species of birds today, and Roger and Lee counted American Coots and Ruddy Ducks by the hundreds. Zillions of birds in all. Most were in the water. It makes me profoundly sad to think in another week the flight of some of these migrating creatures will end with bullets. They're able to fly thousands of miles on their own wing power, yet a stop in Indiana County may prove deadly. We eat venison at our house (indeed, Jim says we *raise* venison and vegetables), and I understand that hunters keep the size of the deer herd down. But I also appreciate beauty, like a doe sipping from our bird bath. To see a flock of geese rise to the sky is a thing of beauty and mystery. Thankfully hunting season doesn't last forever.

While the temperature began this morning in the 30s, it was 53 degrees and sunny by the time I headed home. The sky was blue, the water sparkled, and the scent of pine needles filled the air as I walked away from the observatory. I had met new people and was introduced to wonderful new species of birds. I'll write today's date beside their pictures in my bird book like Donna suggested. Will I be back? Definitely. Someday I may even be able to say, "I'm a birder."

Oh, and thanks to Margaret's list via the wonders of email, I now can say I saw 17 life birds, today. I can't wait to pull out the binocs and see more American Coots, Fox Sparrows, Northern Shovelers, Pine Siskins ... and such!

Neighborhood Nest Watch Comes to the Pittsburgh Area

At our November 4 meeting at Blue Spruce County Park, Bob Mulvihill, the National Aviary ornithologist, spoke about the Neighborhood Nest Watch Program. This is a study that focuses on the following eight common backyard birds found throughout the eastern U.S. and in a variety of landscapes from urban to rural:

American Robin	Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird	Carolina Wren
Northern Cardinal	House Wren
Black-capped/Carolina Chickadee	
Song Sparrow	

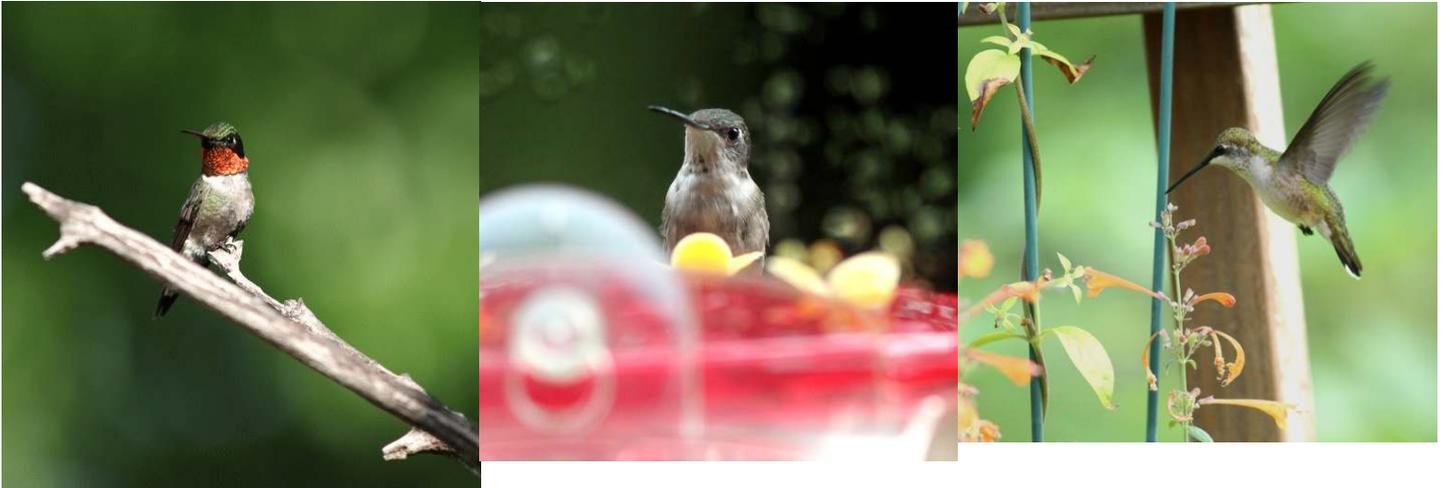
Participants in this program who belong to Todd include Ray Winstead and Marcy Cunkelman.

Bob visits backyards and spends an entire morning banding birds using unique color bands so that individual birds may be easily recognized by the home owner. After the birds are banded and Bob has left, participants keep track of the banded birds and record dates on which they are seen. In addition, participants are encouraged to look for nests and monitor them to determine nesting success.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Bob before March 31, 2015, at robert.mulvihill@aviary.org or 412-258-1148.



The Breeding Season – A Photo Essay by Marcy Cunkelman



Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County

Please submit your reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee, 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701-7934 or e-mail to bcorole@windstream.net or marghigbee@gmail.com.

Abbreviations: Armstrong Trail (AT), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), Cochran's Mill (CM), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Ghost Town Trail (GTT), Kittanning (KT), Nanty Glo (NG), Polka Hollow (PH), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Rexis Branch (RB), Rochester Mills (RM), Waterworks Conservation Area (WCA), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Hemlock Lake Co. Park yielded a pair of **Wood Ducks** with 10 young 6/21 (TG, MH, RH, WL, FM, DM); a hen Wood Duck with 3 young was noted 7/18 (MVT) at Parks Industrial Park. A count of 50 **Wood Ducks**, including many young, was obtained at YC 7/30 (TS), and according to the observer, was likely an undercount. Parks Industrial Park hosted a **Ring-necked Duck** 7/15-20 (ph. MVT). Hooded Mergansers were confirmed nesting for the first time in

Cambria on 6/23 (DG). A hen **Common Merganser** with 4 young on her back floated along Blacklick Creek and a pair was found on Two Lick Creek at the WCA, all 6/9 (GC, MH, RH). A **Red-breasted Merganser** lingered through 6/1 (RL) at PG.

A **Common Loon** remained at YC through 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT). Unusual was a **Red-necked Grebe** at YC 6/24 (LC, TG, MH, RH) and yet another

7/1 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT). After viewing side by side the digiscoped photos taken on both days, we realized that these were two different individuals.

PG harbored one **Double-crested Cormorant** 6/1 (RL); YC, 2 on 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT); and CC, 2 on 6/14 (MVT), the only reports.

A **Great Egret** landed in the Kiskiminetas River near Leechburg 7/5 (MVT).

An **Osprey** was sighted 6/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DM, KT) at YC, and another visited Mahoning Dam 7/9 (MVT). Two adult **Bald Eagles** were spotted at YC 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT); their nearby nest apparently failed this year; 2 immature eagles were present at YC 6/7 (KT). Four Bald Eagles were noted at CC (MVT) and one on Creek Road (JB) on 6/14; one was found along the Kiski near Leechburg 6/20 (MVT) and another along the Allegheny n. of Dam 8 on 6/21 (TR). In *Cambria* one was spotted in Croyle Twp. 7/4 (MHu); 2 were found at PG 7/19 (PB).

Three young **Red-shouldered Hawks** were very close to fledging at CC 6/24 (MVT); by 7/5 (SG) they were not too far from the nest site.

A **Virginia Rail** was walking among the cattails at the WCA 6/16 (SD), calling noisily and apparently agitated; one was seen again 7/9, 10 (SD). On 7/15 (LC, SD, TG, DM) two adults and one older juvenile were spotted. By 7/22 (LC, SD, TG, LM, DS) the adult pair was seen with 4 “black, fuzzy, feathered chicks.” This is the first confirmed nesting for *Indiana*. Not usually found in the county during the breeding season, an **American Coot** appeared at YC 6/24 (LC, TG, MH, RH) and was present through 7/1 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT).

Eleven **American Avocets** appeared at PG 7/14 (KL, RL); this is the largest flock on record in our tri-county area; the previous high was 7 on 8/16/2013 (DG), also at PG. First 2 **Semipalmated Plovers** arrived at YC 7/24 (TS). By 7/22 (LC, SD, TG, LM, DS) 27 **Killdeer** had already congregated at YC. An adult female **Spotted Sandpiper** with 3 very small young was found at the WCA 6/9 (GC, MH, RH); one to 2 spotties were spotted at YC throughout the

season, but no young were observed; one along the Kiski near Leechburg 7/20 (MVT) was *Armstrong's* lone report. Two **Solitary Sandpipers** and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** were noted at YC 7/15 (LC, SD, TG, DM) and again 7/24 (TS). An **Upland Sandpiper** in s. *Cambria* was a nice find 7/1 (LG). First 2 **Least Sandpipers** arrived at YC 7/8 (LC, TG, RH); best count was 5 on 7/15 (LC, SD, TG, DM). PG hosted 2 on 7/19 (PB).



Eleven American Avocets at PG 7/14 (RL) were a great find.

Photo by Renee Lubert

Ring-billed Gull sightings at YC were limited to one on 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT) and 2 on 7/24 (TS); 2 stopped at PG 6/22 (RL). A **Herring Gull** visited PG 6/1 (RL). An early **Caspian Tern** was feeding near the YC beach 7/29 (LC, SD, TG). A **Common Tern** was an unusual find at YC 7/1 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT). Three adult **Forster's Terns** were spotted at YC 6/24 (LC, TG, MH, RH).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos

were much more numerous than Black-billed this summer with many sightings in all three counties. Only 2 **Black-billed Cuckoo** sightings were mentioned: singletons at PH 6/15 (MVT) and at WCA 7/29 (SD).

A **Chimney Swift** tower, built this spring near Shelocta, was used by one pair this year (ED); the remains of a nest was found when the tower was opened after the breeding season.

The only **Eastern Screech-Owl** reported was found near RM 6/2 (TS). A **Barred Owl** was noted only at Nolo 6/6 (AB, DB).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a great find near RM 6/18 (TS); this is the first June record since two pairs deserted their nest sites near Homer City in 1998 (LC) when the nest trees fell; they had nested at that location from 1995 through 1997.

Two migrant **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were found at YC 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT). An **Alder Flycatcher** was singing near YC 6/9 (GC, MH, RH); another Alder was observed near RM 7/9 (TS); YC's Alder continued at least through 7/22 (LC, SD, TG, LM, DS). YC hosted only two nesting pairs of **Willow Flycatchers** this year (v.o.).

A **White-eyed Vireo** was reported at YC 6/17 (LC,

TG, MH, RH) through the end of the season; *Armstrong* yielded White-eyed Vireos at four locations this summer (v.o.). Single **Yellow-throated Vireos** were listed at Smicksburg Park 6/5 (MH, RH) and near Shelocta 6/23 (MH); always more numerous in *Armstrong*, they were found at five locations, including CC where one was photo-graphed 7/6 (MVT). **Blue-headed Vireos** were listed at six *Cambria* locations this summer. **Warbling Vireos** were noted near YC and at YC 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT) through 6/24 (LC, TG, MH, RH); 2 were at PH 6/2 (MVT); the KT BBS yielded 5 singing males 6/5 (MH, RH) while the Virginia BBS produced 6 individuals 6/14 (MH, RH). Warbling Vireos were confirmed feeding young at PG 7/24 (DG); there were no confirmations of this species in *Cambria* during either of the two Atlas Projects. Three **Fish Crows** at SGL 262 on 7/26 (TS) marked a new location for this species. Single **Common Ravens** were at Nolo 6/1, 2 (CL, GL), on the Virginia BBS 6/14 (MH, RH), at SGL 108 on 6/21 (JD), and at PG 7/19 (PB). The raven nest at CC fledged two young; all four ravens were present 6/9 (MVT) near the beach.

Two **Purple Martins** appeared at CC 6/5 (MVT); 3 at YC 6/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DM, KT) were unusual as there are no known nearby colonies; 8 were still present at the PG colony 7/14 (RL). Last **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were 3 at YC 7/15 (LC, SD, TG, DM). PG hosted 2 **Bank Swallows** 6/1 (RL) and one 6/22 (RL); one stopped at YC 7/30 (TS). *Indiana's* lone **Cliff Swallow** was spotted at Hemlock Lake 6/21 (TG, MH, RH, WL, FM, DM); 7 were counted at NG 7/3 (MH, RH).

Single **Veeries** were at CC (MVT) and along the RB of the GTT (GC, MH, RH), both 6/9; 2 were listed on the Virginia BBS 6/14 (MH, RH); one visited KT's Riverfront Park 6/21 (TR); 6 were tallied along the GTT between Twin Rocks and NG 7/3 (MH, RH); 4 were counted along the AT near KT 7/9 (MH, RH). **Hermit Thrush** reports included 2 on the Patton BBS 6/13 (MH, RH), one along the Roaring Run Trail 7/24 (MVT), one at SGL 262 on 7/26 (TS), and four others in *Cambria*.

Best **Ovenbird** tally was 23 on 6/13 (MH, RH) on the Patton BBS. A **Worm-eating Warbler**, the only one reported, was noted along the AT n. of Dam 8 on 6/21 (TR). July 12 (KSJ) produced the last 2 reported **Louisiana Waterthrushes** along the Rock Furnace Trail. The only **Blue-winged Warblers** were found 6/13 (MH, RH) on the Patton BBS and 6/29 (MVT) at CM. Top **Black-and-white Warbler** tallies were 3 at the S. Sixth Street SGL 6/9 (GC, MH, RH)

and 9 along the GTT between Stiles Run and Dilltown. The season's only **Kentucky Warblers** were observed on Creek Road 7/21 (MVT) and near RM 7/22 (TS). **Hooded Warblers** were widespread (v.o.) with the best counts of 4 at YC 6/3 (LC, TG, MH, RH, KT), 6 along the GTT between Dilltown and Stiles Run, and 7 at Pine Ridge Co. Park 6/28 (LC, DC, EHC, SD, TG, JG, MH, RH, LJ, WL, DM, JS). **American Redstarts** were widely reported across the region (v.o.). **Cerulean Warbler** reports mentioned singletons at CC 6/5, 7/12 (MVT), along the GTT between NG and MM 27/5, and on Creek Road 7/13 (MVT). Two **Northern Parulas** were singing on territory at YC on various dates between 6/3-24 (v.o.). *Armstrong* sightings included one at CC 6/14 (MVT), one the same day at Creek Road (JB), and one at CM 6/5, 17 (MVT); PG yielded one 6/28-29 (GH). Single **Magnolia Warblers** were singing near YC 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) and along the GTT between Twin Rocks and NG 7/3 (MH, RH); another was found at CM 7/26 (MVT). A **Blackburnian Warbler** was found at YC 6/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DM, KT) and another along the GTT between Twin Rocks and NG 7/3 (MH, RH). The RB of the GTT produced 4 **Chestnut-sided Warblers** 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) while the Patton BBS yielded 6 on 6/13 (MH, RH); 3 were at YC 6/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DM, KT) while Hemlock Lake Co. Park harbored one 6/21 (TG, MH, RH, WL, FM, DM). The GTT was the spot for **Black-throated Blue Warblers** with counts of 9 on the RB 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) and 3 between Twin Rocks and the mine road to the west on 7/2 (MH, RH); another was a nice find near RM 7/22 (TS). **Pine Warbler** was listed only near Shelocta through 7/11 (MH, RH) and at YC till 7/13 (JD). The **Yellow-throated Warbler** continued at CM 6/29 (MVT) while another was along Rock Furnace Trail 7/12 (KSJ); the Conemaugh wetlands hosted *Indiana's* only Yellow-throated Warbler 6/24 (MM).

The S. Sixth St. SGL yielded 2 **Prairie Warblers** 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) while the only other report mentioned one on the Patton BBS 6/13 (MH, RH). Best **Black-throated Green Warbler** tallies included 8 along the RB 6/9 (GC, MH, RH), 7 at SGL 262 on 7/26 (TS), and 6 at PG 6/28 (GH). A **Canada Warbler** along the RB 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) comprised the entire report for this species. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** at CC 7/12 (MVT) was the only one reported.

Breeding grassland sparrows seem to be on the decline in our region. A **Vesper Sparrow** near the Babcock Mine in *Cambria* 7/1 (LG) and one at Loretto 7/9 (DG, JS) were the only reports. **Savannah Sparrows** are becoming much more difficult to find in the region with the increased

planting of corn where hayfields had once existed; the only ones noted were singletons on 6/5 (MH, RH) s.w. of Dayton, 6/9 (GC, MH, RH) s. of YC, 6/13 (MH, RH) near N. Cambria, and 7/1 (MH, RH) n. of YC. A lone Savannah Sparrow and 2 **Grasshopper Sparrows** were counted on the KT BBS 6/5 (MH, RH); 2 Grasshopper Sparrows were at Mahoning Dam 7/9 (MVT).

Six **Bobolinks** were noted 6/5 (MH, RH) on the KT BBS, and another 6 were seen s.w. of Dayton the same day.

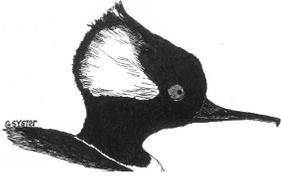
Observers: Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Paul Bernhardt, Jessica Botzan, Lee Carnahan, Derek Clawson, Emily Hughes Clawson, Greg Cook, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Jim Dunn, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Linda Greble, Justin Gross, Garth Harwood, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Matthew Hunt (MHu), Linda Jones, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Wendy Leuenberger, Kathy Lubert, Renee Lubert, Lorie McCann, Mark McConaughy, Flo McGuire, Donna Meyer, Theo Rickert, Kate St. John, Deanna Schaeffer, Tim Schreckengost, John Somonick, Ken Truitt, Marge Van Tassel.

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

Co-President - Linda Jones	724-463-0651	joneslinda@hotmail.com
Co-President - Donna Meyer	724-349-2787	donna.meyer36@gmail.com
Vice President - Pat Johner	724-463-7414	johner.p53@gmail.com
Secretary - Georgette Syster	724-349-6293	
Treasurer - Gloria Lamer	724-349-1159	wimp88@gmail.com
Webmaster - Ed Donley		hedonley@iup.edu
Publicity - Pat Johner	724-463-7414	johner.p53@gmail.com
Newsletter - Margaret Higbee	724-354-3493	bcoriole@windstream.net



Nancy Murphy photographed this Cooper's Hawk at her home near Tunnelton.



Todd Bird Club
c/o Roger V. Higbee
3119 Creekside Road
Indiana, PA 15701-7934