

# The Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club

December 2007

## 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, January 1**– There will be NO meeting in January since the first Tuesday falls on New Year's Day.

**Tuesday, February 5** – Georgette Syster will present *The Owls of Pennsylvania* at this monthly meeting. Don't miss this interesting program which will include Georgette's original artwork as well as slides of these nocturnal creatures. We will listen to calls of each of our state's owls and learn about their habits, distribution, and migrations.

**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.



The Barred Owl is one of Georgette Syster's favorite birds.

**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.

**Tuesday, May 6** – This is our annual banquet meeting. Our speaker will be announced in our next newsletter. Dinner begins at 6:00. Please bring your own place settings and a dish to share.

## Outings

Tuesday morning outings have resumed at Yellow Creek State Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. In case of inclement weather, contact Lee Carnahan (724-465-7323) to determine whether the outing has been canceled.

**Wednesday, December 26** – 25<sup>th</sup> Indiana Christmas Bird Count. Both field birders and feeder watchers are needed. If you plan to participate, please contact Roger or Margaret Higbee at 724-354-3493 or e-mail [bcoriole@alltel.net](mailto:bcoriole@alltel.net). We plan to meet at 6:00 p.m. at Hoss's the day of the count to compile the data. We have reserved the large room closest to Wayne Avenue.

## A Note from Our President

Did everyone see the photo of the Todd Bird Club in the *Indiana Gazette*? A number of my friends and colleagues sure did. They were all quick to remind me that they already knew what the caption of photo read—that I was going “batty.” Ha! Ha!

If you missed the December meeting, you missed a good one. The cookies were only part of it. They were all delicious.

Naturally, I took it upon myself to personally sample each one to check it out. (An aside to Tom F. I have some extra you-know-whats for you.)

In addition to the cookies though, we had a unique hands-on meeting. Under the expert guidance of Mike Shaffer, our favorite naturalist at Yellow Creek State Park, two crews of birders built bat boxes. Mike brought all the necessary materials pre-cut and ready to assemble. I’d like to say that the instructions were “easy” to follow, but let’s just leave that word in quotes. At any rate it was interesting to observe the two crews working feverishly trying to keep up with one another. After all was said and done, two absolutely perfectly constructed bat boxes came off the assembly line. (See page 7.)

Perhaps the highlights of the evening were that everyone had fun and learned something new about the nine species of bats found in Pennsylvania. Also, one of the bat boxes will be graciously donated to Blue Spruce Park for use on the premises. It was just a great fun evening.

On a more serious note, we have a little situation in our club that I would like to address. Our club treasury is in dire straits. It will be almost empty after we pay the Christmas Bird Count participation fees. I am kindly asking everyone to take note of our slight dues increase – \$10 for individual and \$15 for family – and to take time to send your checks to Gloria as soon as possible. We would like to know that we have some funds available before proceeding with arrangements for a May banquet speaker. Thanks in advance for taking prompt notice of this at this busy time of the year. I hope to see you at the Christmas Bird Count at Hoss’s on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

– Linda Jones



President Linda Jones presides at the December meeting.

## Outings Revisited

### Yellow Creek – November 3

A chilly morning greeted the 23 participants of the Yellow Creek outing on November 3. The first stop below the maintenance building yielded 6 Ruddy Ducks and 7 Pied-billed Grebes. At the boat launch 3 Pine Siskins flew over calling as did several Eastern Bluebirds. Most of the American Coots had congregated in Little Yellow Cove, and one stalwart counter, aka Bob Jackman, tallied 472. Here, too, were Mallards, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, one female Hooded Merganser, and an even 50 more Ruddy Ducks. Twenty Killdeer, 9 Wilson’s Snipe, and a Dunlin fed on the sparse mud in Little Yellow Cove. We continued into the main recreational area where we parked and walked back to the bridge over Little Yellow Creek. Kate St. John and I were the only two to spot two Evening Grosbeaks flying overhead while the other birders were peering into the shrubbery at Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets. A Swamp Sparrow perched atop a weed gave everyone a nice look.



The group stops to check the lake again for any ducks they may have missed.

A walk through the islands of habitat in the main recreational area yielded 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 4 Purple Finches, 2 Eastern Towhees, and a nice flock of Rusty Blackbirds. Neil Nodelman, who left the group and approached the blackbirds from the opposite direction, identified a female Brewer’s Blackbird. Unfortunately, he was the only lucky observer. A stop at the beach added Great Blue Heron, Common Loon, and Red-shouldered Hawk to our list. Our final destination was the observatory. Along the trail were more Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Brown Creepers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets. From the observatory we spotted more of the same waterfowl we had seen earlier as well as 7 Gadwalls and another Common Loon. Our species count for the field trip was 44.

After the outing thirteen of us headed to the Mayflower Chinese Buffet for lunch where we spent an enjoyable hour or more eating and reliving the outing as well as other birding adventures.

– Margaret Higbee

## Niagara and Environs – November 23-26



Jim and Flo McGuire and Roger Higbee are smiling after successfully spotting the Common Redpolls at Presque Isle.

Roger and I left home Friday morning at 5:50, heading for Presque Isle where we planned to meet Flo and Jim McGuire in the first parking lot to look for the redpolls that Jerry McWilliams has been reporting.

We found a nice assortment of waterfowl in the park. When we stopped to look across at Gull Point, a flock of about 12 Snow Buntings swooped by. As we were leaving the road to the Coast Guard station, we spotted a flock of redpolls in the birches. Presque Isle was not a bad stop!

Our second destination was Dunkirk Harbor where we had planned to meet Ian and Margaret Haigh from Pittsburgh. After birding the harbor and surrounding area, the six of us ate lunch at the first of the trip's many Tim Horton's. The Haighs continued their birding in New York, and we headed toward Ontario.

We enjoyed the beautiful drive along the Niagara River from Fort Erie to the falls area, listing Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, and Red-breasted Mergansers along with the many other species. Late that afternoon we also had a flock of redpolls at the Whirlpool and a Thayer's Gull at Sir Adam Beck. We ate dinner at Lee's Chinese Restaurant which we had discovered on our last Niagara trip.

Most of Saturday morning we spent in

the Brantford area. We walked all around the Brantford airport then drove all the suggested roads looking for Gray Partridges, but we had no luck. We then returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where we added Red-throated Loons and more Red-necked Grebes to our list. We were checking the lake from the golf course overlook when I heard a call note. Looking up, one Pine Grosbeak was feeding on ash seeds in the tree above us. Dinner that evening was delicious hot pizza on Clifton Hill.

On Sunday morning we met our Ontario friends Frank and Sandra Horvath in Grimsby at another Tim Horton's. Since the Horvaths are local, they know exactly where to go. At Green Road we watched Surf, Black, and White-winged Scoters bouncing on the waves. We found a pair of Barrow's Goldeneyes at Gray Road. When we first arrived



A Pine Grosbeak was feeding on ash seeds above us.

at Gray Road, Sandra and Frank were distressed as there weren't enough golden-eyes present. I commented, "That will make it easier," but I really didn't believe it. Within seconds we found the male Barrow's. It was unbelievable! We stopped for lunch at Van Wagner's Beach, where Jim

spotted an Iceland Gull in flight. We all had great views of it. At Burlington, two Peregrines were flying around and finally perched on the bridge. We drove back to the falls that afternoon where we added several Lesser Black-backed Gulls to our lists. The six of us returned to Lee's Restaurant for dinner.

Monday morning the McGuires and Roger and I birded the area around the falls before heading back toward Fort Erie, birding along the way. Although rain had been predicted, it did not start until we had reached Fort Erie and said our good-byes to Flo and Jim.

We listed only 64 species on the trip, which is low, but nevertheless, the birding was great, and it is always fun to bird with good friends.

– Margaret Higbee



The Barrow's Goldeneye, one of the trip's highlights, was a lifer for Flo and Jim.



Numerous Black Scoters were found along the Ontario Lakeshore.

## Find the Bird

Are you a good birder??? How many birds can you spot in the following two paragraphs? No, this isn't a Big Day! But there are 50 birds hidden below. Hint: Two birds appear twice.

Once upon a time there was a little girl, Wilhelmina Swanison, who liked every morning to eat her one egg with rashers of bacon. From this she would never veer. Yapping loudly, her beagle Martino could swallow an inconceivable amount in one gulp as he craned his neck begging for more taste of pig. Eons ago Millie's parents were flutists and pipers who worked at night. Her onslaught of craving included sandwiches lacking lettuce. But now they were employed at Dovenspike's baking fish. Erstwhile Wilhelmina and brother Bob rant, rave nastily, and fish. What malarkey!

Whenever she stands by swift streams with rushing water, her frail frame, dressed in pantaloons and an archaic hat, seems limp. Kingston is her home. Her speech seems stilted, so she appears weak. But this is not so. Radically she began netting fish along the river trail at an early age, but nets were tough, and she often had to snip each strand that the fish would clasp. Arrows she wouldn't consider. Her nets were black; those belonging to her brother Bob, white and red. Starting by wrenching the nets, she would arduously puff in freeing her fish.

One morning she herself inched all the way across billowing water and fell into a boobytrap. "Love rashers of bacon," she howled, realizing how gullible she had been. Spotting a card in a line of mud, she reached, grabbed it, and killed a fly. "Catch errant fish," the card read. Ever dingy, Wilhelmina started creating alibis using star lingo. "I regret my narrow thinking. Silence is golden. Eyes are poor. Will's not strong. Don't whip poor Willie."

### Answers to Find the Bird

Swan, ani, thrashers, veery, eagle, Martin, swallow, ani, crane, pigeons, sandpipers, night-heron, kinglet, Dove, kingfisher, brant, raven, lark.

swift, thrush, rail, loon, chat, limpkin, stilt, sora, gannet, rail, snipe, sparrows, Bobwhite, redstart, wren, puffin, finch, crossbill, booby, plover, owl, gull, cardinal, flycatcher, verdin, ibis, starling, egret, myna, goldeneyes, poorwill, whip-poor-will.

## Prince Gallitzin Boasts Successful Bluebird Season

Prince Gallitzin State Park hosts a volunteer bluebird program that has been in place for over 20 years. Bluebird volunteers monitor the park's 100 nesting boxes on a weekly basis throughout the spring and summer months,



recording bird species, number of eggs laid, and number of hatchlings fledged from each. A total of 202 young bluebirds fledged from the nesting boxes at Prince Gallitzin during the 2007 season. In addition to the bluebirds, 257 tree swallows, and 27 house wrens began their existence from the boxes at Prince Gallitzin. The 486 hatchlings can be attributed to a number of contributing factors.

All species need three main requirements – food, water, and shelter – in order to survive. The presence or absence of any one of these determines whether or not a species is capable of inhabiting an area. Shelter for a bluebird's nest comes in the form of a nesting cavity. A small portion of bird species build nests in hollowed out cavities rather than constructing the more common nest on a tree branch or in a shrub. These cavities are generally found in trees or fence posts. Wooden fence posts have become almost nonexistent, and trees with cavities are few and far between in open areas that bluebirds require. To help, the park has erected 100 nesting boxes to provide homes for cavity-nesting birds.

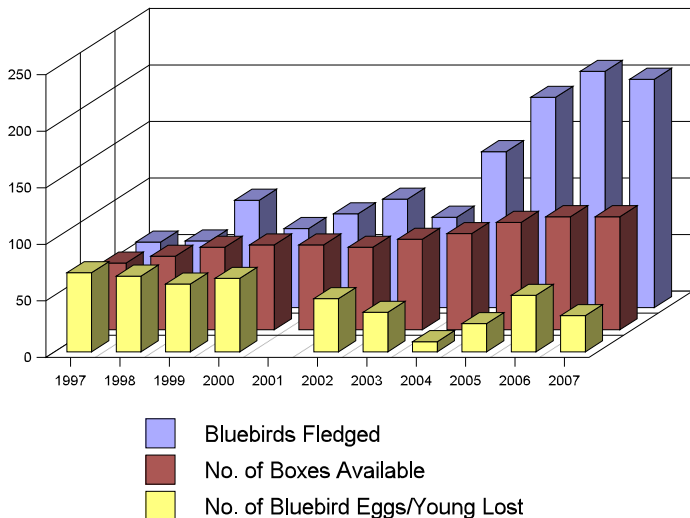
Bluebirds are insectivores, meaning they predominantly eat insects. Subsequently, bluebirds require wide open fields, meadows, and yards to locate and catch food for themselves and their young. Over the course of the past three years, Prince Gallitzin has been actively removing invasive honey-suckle and autumn olive from the fields throughout the park. To date, more than 100 acres of these invasive species have been removed. One of the many benefits of clearing the fields is that habitat preferential to bluebirds is much more abundant, which is evident in our numbers.

Weather and predation play a large role in the success of a bluebird program. Bluebirds typically nest twice per year, spring and mid-summer. Spring nesting is often affected by cold and damp conditions that may lead to the death of newly hatched young. Predators such as snakes, cats, raccoons, and mice all have a liking for either birds or eggs,

sometimes both.

To combat these intruders, predator guards have been placed on all posts that support the nesting boxes to help protect the nests. The project has been a tremendous success. In 2006 and 2007, there were 206 and 202 bluebirds fledged from park boxes compared to 80 in 2003. The combination of predator guards, habitat improvement,

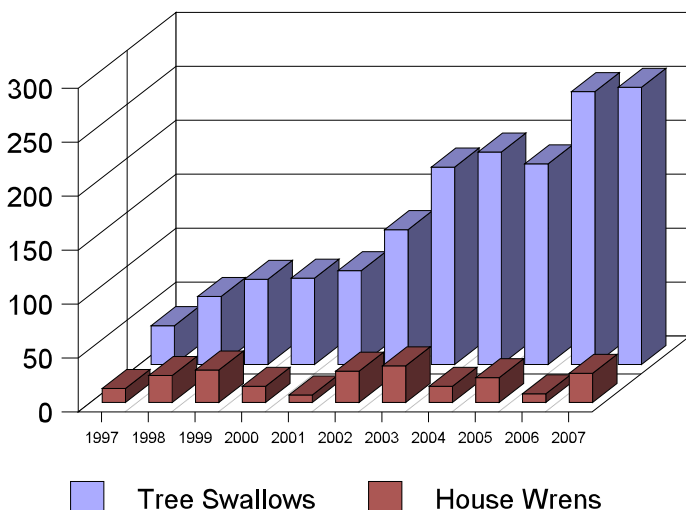
### Bluebirds at Prince Gallitzin



20 additional boxes, and nesting box relocation has benefited not only the birds, but also those of you who are able to see and enjoy them as well. We would like to encourage everyone to venture out to explore the park in search of not just bluebirds, but the many other beautiful sights and sounds that are readily available to those with the ambition to find them.

We would like to thank our bluebird volunteers – John Salvetti, Arlene Eyer, Ken, Judy & Blaise Letso, and

### Tree Swallows and House Wrens Fledged



Jackie Stinson – for their hours of time and effort which help make the program a tremendous success for both birds and park visitors.

John Salvetti notes that of the 57 nestings 11 young bluebirds were lost to cold, wet weather and 7 for unknown reasons. In addition, 14 eggs did not hatch this year. There were 52 nestings of Tree Swallows which produced 284 eggs of which 257 fledged. Only 6 nestings of House Wrens occurred which produced 27 eggs; all 27 fledged.

## Time to Focus on Feeders!

The 21<sup>st</sup> season of Project FeederWatch is underway, but you can sign up at any time. Your counts will help scientists monitor changes in feeder-bird populations over the winter from year to year. New participants receive a kit with a handbook, a bird-identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet.

Join the flock! For more information about Project FeederWatch or to sign up, please visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/) or call (800) 843-2473. There is a \$15 fee to defray the cost of the materials (\$12 for Lab members). You can learn more about the project and how to attract birds to your feeders by watching two segments devoted to these topics on the Martha Stewart Show. Follow the link on the All About Birds home page at [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org).

## 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count!

People have been enthusiastically taking part in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) every year since December 1900. It's a great way to expand your birding horizons beyond your backyard. The CBC is run on one calendar day between December 14<sup>th</sup> and January 5<sup>th</sup> each year. Our Indiana CBC is scheduled for December 26. For us it is a special year as this is our 25<sup>th</sup> Indiana CBC!!! As a field observer, you will bird with a group of observers or cover your own territory. The birds you count will be included with those of others out counting birds in a 15-mile diameter circle during census day.

If you live within 7.5 miles of Second and Grandview in Indiana, you live in our CBC circle. If so, you can count birds at your feeder. CBC data are of growing importance to bird conservation efforts, and in 2007 the new Audubon WatchList of birds at risk was released including, for the first time, trend data from the CBC. For more information about the CBC please visit: [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/) or contact the Higbees at 724-354-3493 or [bcoriole@alltel.net](mailto:bcoriole@alltel.net).

# Count for Fun, Count for the Future!

That's our theme for the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count coming up February 15-18, 2008. We're hoping you'll help top the record-breaking 2007 count, when participants submitted more than 80,000 checklists! Consider becoming a GBBC ambassador to help us spread the word about this great event, whether it's by putting up posters in your neighborhood, contacting newspapers, or leading workshops. For more information, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and click on the "Get Involved" button. You'll find a new online ambassador sign-up form where you can specify the kinds of activities you'd like to do.

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15-18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

"These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future," said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. "It's fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment."

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

"Literally, there has never been a more detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history," said John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own!"

Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

"People who take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count see the results of their efforts in the news and in bird conservation work taking place across the country, said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Whether the counts occur at home, at schools, or nature centers, they're more than engaging and educational science activities for young people and adults; they're a way to contribute to the conservation of birds and habitat nationwide."

Lt. Daniel Britt, who served in Iraq 16 months, is glad to be back home in Zimmerman, MN, where he and his sons plan to join the GBBC. "We get a bunch of birds in our backyard," Britt said, "but my oldest son, Daniel, and I may cross country ski into the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge to count birds there."

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on more than 500 bird species, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

Comments from last year's participants:

"I was thrilled to be part of something that would help shed light on the environment and the impact that humans have on this earth. It was a chance to use my hobby for a greater good."

—Lauren, North Carolina

"My 4½-year-old grandson is very excited about it; he can already identify Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and woodpeckers in general. We're working on identifying Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers. It's very rewarding for me, and it makes him very proud of himself."

—John, Maryland

*(continued on page 6)*

## Meeting Highlights



John Taylor presented a great program on his African trip at our November meeting.



Gloria Lamer, Mike Shaffer, and Lee Carnahan study the bat box pieces and instructions.



Mike Shaffer, presenter at our December meeting, lays out the materials for building bat boxes.



Mary Assenat and Alex pose for a photo at the December meeting.



Jean Blystone works on the assembly of one of the bat boxes while husband Vernon pauses for a cup of coffee.



### More Comments from the Backyard Bird Count:

"I am eight years old and have loved birds since I was a baby. Birds are very beautiful and the backyard bird count is a lot of fun."

—Breanna, Ohio

"I had great fun participating. It is a quiet and peaceful project. In today's busy and exhausting lifestyle, everyone should sit still and observe birds."

—Helen, Massachusetts

"I always feel honored that we citizens can contribute to science with our home observations."

—Linda, Alaska

# 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 [bcoriole@alltel.net](mailto:bcoriole@alltel.net).

**Locations:** Blue Spruce County Park (BS), Crooked Creek (CC), Dayton (DT), Indiana (IN), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Lewisville (LV), Mahoning Lake (ML), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Reservoir Hill (RH), Rural Valley (RV) Shelocta (SH), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Highlights of the season include a Brewer's Blackbird at YC and the beginning of a winter finch invasion, complete with redpolls, siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks.

**Canada Goose** maxima included 82 at KR 10/7 (MH), 316 at YC 11/17 (LC,MH), 145 at PG 11/19 (JS), and 273 at CC 11/29 (JV,JVa). A **Mute Swan** was spotted at Rosston 10/29 (JV,JVa) while PG hosted one 10/24-11/23 (JS). **Tundra Swans** began moving through our area 11/6 when the first 2 were spotted at YC (LC,MH) and the first 8 at PG (JS); next reports 11/15 included 45 at YC (BF) and 55 at PG (RB). Away from YC, swan numbers totaled roughly 200 over SH 11/18 (MH, RH) and 60 over LV 11/17 (MC). Twenty-two **Wood Ducks** 8/14 (JB,VB,BF, TF,MH,KM,MM) included a group of late young half-grown ducklings; top PG count was 18 on 11/10 (RB). First 6 **Gadwalls** arrived 10/29 (RB,JS) at PG; YC's first 5 arrived the following day (LC,MH) while top counts



This is one of the 6 Gadwalls present at Yellow Creek 11/6.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

reached 8 at YC 11/13 (LC,MH) and 15 at PG 11/15 (RB). Eight **American Wigeons** were first arrivals at YC 10/12 (PS); 3 on 11/10 (RB) were PG's only wigeons. **American Black Ducks** remained in low numbers throughout the period with reports of only 1-3 at YC on five dates; 12 were listed 11/29 (JV,JVa) at CC; 11 was the high count at PG 11/15 (RB). High **Mallard** counts included 50 near Worthington 9/8 (MH,RH), 36 at YC 10/12 (PS), 45 at PG 11/15 (RB), 17 at KR 11/18 (MH, RH), 57 at YC 11/20 (LC,MH), and 15 at Manorville 11/29 (JV,JVa). **Blue-winged Teal** reports included only one at YC 10/16 (MJA,MH), 2 a week later at YC

(CG,MH), and 2 at PG 10/31 (JS). The only **Northern Shovelers** noted were 6 at YC 9/25 (MH,GL), 2 at YC 10/12 (MH,GL), and 2 at PG 10/25 (JS). No **Northern Pintails** were reported. Six **Green-winged Teal** arrived at YC 9/18 (MH); top count was 48 at YC 10/16 (MJA,MH); PG's high tally was 7 on 11/10 (RB). A hybrid **Redhead** was photographed 10/2 (CG,MH) in Little Yellow Cove. **Ring-necked Ducks** arrived 10/23 with counts of 10 at PG (RB) and 4 at YC (CG,MH); ring-necks were in low numbers this fall at YC with best counts of 18 on 11/6 (LC, MH). PG, however, harbored 90 on 11/15 (RB) while Two Lick Reservoir produced only 2 on 11/22 (LC). PG yielded 25 **Lesser Scaup** 10/23 (RB) and 20 the following day (JS); only 1-3 were counted at YC between 10/27 (MH,RH,LS,LW) and 11/6 (LC,MH). A raft of 350 **Long-tailed Ducks** was a great find at PG 11/19 (JS), the highest tri-county count on record for this species. **Buffleheads** began arriving 10/23 (RB) at PG where highs reached 205 on 10/25 (JS) and 230 on 11/19 (JS); first arrivals at YC occurred 11/6 (LC,MH) when the first 10 appeared; YC's peak reached 155 on 11/24 (LC). Seven **Buffleheads** stopped at KR 11/18 (MH) and were still present 11/22 (LC), the only *Armstrong* report. High **Hooded Merganser** counts were 38 at YC (LC) and 31 at KR (MH, RH) 11/18; a singleton at PG 10/29 (RB,JS) was PG's lone report. Four **Common Mergansers** at KR 11/18 (MH,RH) were the only ones noted in the region. First



Pied-billed Grebes are common migrants at Yellow Creek. This bird was one of 56 present on 11/13.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

**Ruddy Duck** arrived 9/29 (LC,MH,BJ) at YC where numbers peaked 11/6 (LC,MH) at 73; PG produced good counts of 235 on 10/25 (JS) and 130 on 11/15 (RB).

**Ruffed Grouse** continue on the low side with only eight reports (v.o.), all singletons. **Wild Turkey** reports included 20 in Creekside 9/1 (CD) and 42 west of Creekside 11/30 (MA,EU). PG was the hotspot for **Common Loons** this fall with reports of 60 on 10/23 (RB), 41 on 11/15 (RB), and 92 on 11/19 (JS); 93 was a good count at KR 11/18 (MH,RH) while YC's top tally was only 11 that same day (LC). The season's first **Pied-billed Grebes** appeared 9/17 (MH) at BS and 9/18 (MH) at YC; PG's high of 20 occurred 10/25 (JS); by 11/13 (LC,MH) 56 were present at YC. PG yielded the first 5 **Horned Grebes** 10/25 (JS); 11/10 was the day YC's only 2 were found (MH,RH,JES,LW) and PG's high of 11 (RB) was reached. **Double-crested Cormorant** counts included single birds at PG 8/2 (JS), at BS 9/1 (SG,SGr,MH,RH), at ML 10/8 (CG,MH), and at YC 11/17 (LC,MH); 25 appeared at YC 10/12 (MH,GL); 3 visited PG 11/13 (RB); and 5 were at KR 11/18 (MH,RH). A **Great Egret** stopped at PG 8/2 (JS) and two months later one was found at YC 10/2 (CG,MH), the only reports this season. Last **Green Herons** were 3 at YC 9/25 (MH,GL).

**Turkey Vulture** maxima included 15 near LV 10/4 (MC) and 16 near SH 10/25 (MH); 5 were at ML 10/8 (CG,MH) and 2 in RV 10/12 (LU); last reported was one 11/22 (LC) at YC. First **Osprey** arrived at YC 8/28 (MH) and at CC



These 2 Black Terns visited Yellow Creek 9/15.

Photo by Bob Klaput

9/6 (CG,MH) while another 10/12 (PS) at YC was last. YC yielded the first **Bald Eagle** 9/29 (MH,RH,BJ); an immature was sighted at KR 10/7 (MH,RH); adult eagles were also seen near Homer City 10/13 (JW), at Blacklick 10/30 (JW), and near Clarksburg 11/18 (JSo). The only **Northern Harriers** reported, all singletons, occurred 10/6 (MC) near LV; 10/18 (MH) flying over SH; and 11/7 (KJ,MLS), 11/13 (LC,MH), 11/15 (RB) at PG, 11/18 (LC) at YC, and 11/19 (JS) at Patton. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** with 29 reports were listed at 11 locations this fall; **Cooper's**

**Hawks**, with 14 reports, at 6. One to 2 **Red-shouldered Hawks** were nice finds at CC 9/15 (LC,MH,RH); at YC 9/18 (CG,MH), 9/29 (BJ,MH,RH), and 11/3 (TBC,3RBC); and at Red Mill 9/21 (CG,MH). Migrating over YC were 5 **Broad-winged Hawks** 9/18 (MH); last was listed 9/22 (LC), also at YC. A **Merlin** was a nice find for a school group at YC 10/12 (MH,GL). Another strafed the yard and the observer's head near SH 11/1 (MH) then circled back for a second look.

The first 58 of many **American Coots** arrived at YC 10/9 (MH,MS); by 11/18 at least 1150 were present (LC) at YC; PG harbored 240 on 11/19 (JS).

The shorebird migration was rather poor this season because of high water levels. The high **Killdeer** tally was 32 at YC on 9/25 (LC,MH); PG's high was 8 on 8/2 (JS). In *Armstrong* Killdeer reports included 7 at CC 9/6 (CG,MH), 7 at KR 10/7 (MH,RH), and 6 at CC 10/17 (JV,JVa); last noted was one at KR 11/18 (MH,RH). Two **Greater Yellowlegs** stopped at PG 8/2 (JS); 23 rested on the beach at YC 10/23 (CG,MH), the only two reports. First **Solitary Sandpiper** was observed at Ebensburg Reservoir 8/24 (JS); 2 were listed at BS 9/8 (MH) while YC yielded single birds 9/25 (MH,GL) and 10/30 (LC,MH). PG and BS yielded the only **Spotted Sandpipers**, 4 at PG on 8/2 (JS), 3 at BS 8/24 (CG,MH), and one at BS 9/8 (MH). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** visited PG 8/2 (JS) while 2 were found at YC 9/22 (LC). Single **Least Sandpipers** were spotted 9/29 (MH,RH,BJ) and 10/2 (CG,MH) at YC. Four **Pectoral Sandpipers** 10/2 (CG,MH) and 2 on 10/9 (MH), all at YC, were the only reports. Single **Dunlin** were noted 11/3 (MH,RH,TBC,3RBC) and 11/6 (LC,MH) at YC. **Wilson's Snipe** were noted at YC on 12 dates between 9/25 (MH,GL), when 3 were noted, and 11/13 (LC,MH) when the last 13 appeared; YC's peak of 17 occurred 10/23 (CG,MH). A snipe was also found at KR 11/5 (MH). Fall **American Woodcock** reports included 3 near SH 9/27 (JSo), one at YC 10/2 (CG,MH), one near New Florence 10/17 (CT), and last one near Ford City 10/29 (JV,JVa).

Single **Bonaparte's Gulls** 11/10 (MH,RH,JES,LW) and 11/20 (LC,MH) at YC comprised the entire report for this species. Five **Ring-billed Gulls** arrived at YC 10/9 (MH,MS) where best count of 43 occurred 11/24 (LC). Six **Common Terns** were well studied 10/20 (LC) at YC. Two **Forster's Terns** arrived at YC 8/25 (MH,RH,PJ) while 4 were noted 11/18 (LC). Two **Black Terns** were photographed at YC 9/15 (BK).

Last dates included 9/10 (MH) for **Black-billed Cuckoo** and 9/26 (MH) for **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, both at BS. **Eastern Screech-Owls** were noted at 5 locations, single birds 8/4 (DL) near Home, 8/24-11/30 (MH,RH) in a roost box near SH, 10/30 calling near IN (HP) and on a golf course near Ford City (RH), and 11/2 (RB) at PG. **Great**



This Eastern Screech-Owl peers from this nest box on sunny afternoons. This photo was taken 10/7 near Sheloceta.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

**Horned Owls** were unreported. A **Barred Owl** was calling near Home 8/4 (DL) while 2 were hooting on Reservoir Hill 9/20 (PJ). Nine **Common Nighthawks** flying over Margus Lake 8/25 (MH,RH) and one at YC 9/3 (MS) were the lone reports. October 27 was the last date near SH (MH) for **Chimney Swift** while 9/17 (MH) was last for **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at BS. A late hummingbird, either **Rufous** or **Allen's**, was reported and photographed near Creekside 9/30-10/5 (MA,NA *et al*). First **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** arrived at Red Mill 9/21 (CG, MH) and at BS 9/26 (MH); among many reports were 2 in IN 11/18-19 (DJ) and up to 3 near LV 11/26 (MC). RB noted that he has seen more Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers this season than in all the time he's been at PG.

**Eastern Wood-Pewees** were still feeding young 9/1 (SG,SGr,MH,RH) at BS; last were found at CC 9/15 (LC, MH,RH) and at BS 9/26 (MH). This was once again a good season for **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**, all at BS; first arrivals were 2 on 8/15-16 (MMA); a singleton was also seen 9/8,26 (MH). Other last dates include: 9/14 (MH) for singing **Acadian Flycatchers** at BS; 8/7 (MH) for **Willow Flycatcher** at YC.; 9/19 (MH) for **Least Flycatcher** near SH; 10/13 (LU) at RV and 10/27 (MH,RH,LS, LW) at YC for **Eastern Phoebe**; 9/14 (MH) for **Great Crested Flycatcher** at BS; and 9/4 (MH) for **Eastern**

**Kingbirds** at YC. Vireo dates of departure included 10/16 for **Blue-headed** on RH (PJ); 9/6 (CG,MH) for **Yellow-throated Vireo** at CC; 9/14 (MH) for **Warbling** at BS, and 9/28 (MH) for **Red-eyed Vireo** at BS. **Philadelphia Vireos** included one at YC 8/28 (MH), 2 at BS 9/8 (MH), 3 at BS 9/14 (MH), and one on RH 9/23 (PJ).

A **Fish Crow** was heard calling repeatedly over the Ghost Town Trail near Vintondale 9/3 (MH,RH), the lone report. **Common Ravens** continue to be widespread with reports from five localities this period. Thirty-five **Horned Larks** gathered in the potato fields near Patton 11/19 (JS). After a five-week absence, late **Tree Swallows** were noted at PG 10/24 (JS) and at YC 10/27 (MH,RH,LS,LW). Last dates included 8/7 (MH) for **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** and 9/18 (MH) for **Barn Swallow**, both at YC.

One to 4 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were present near SH throughout the period (MH,RH); away from SH where they nest, first arrivals included individuals both at YC (MH) and near LV (MC) 8/28; two days later 2 appeared on RH (PJ); single birds were also found at CC 9/6 (CG, MH), at KR 10/8 (CG,MH), and at RV 10/12-27 (LU). Top count of **Brown Creepers** was 5 at YC 11/3 (MH, RH,3RBC,TBC). Last **House Wren** lingered at YC 9/29 (MH,RH,BJ). First **Winter Wren** was found at BS 9/26 (MH); by 10/3 (MH) 3 were present at BS; another was near SH 10/14 (MH,RH). **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were found between 9/21 (CG,MH) and 10/30 (LC,MH) with 12 reports of 1-3 birds. Two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** lingered at BS 9/8 (MH). Two **Veeries** at Ebensburg Reservoir 8/24 (JS) comprised the entire report for this species. **Swainson's Thrushes** migrated through the region 9/14-28 (MH) with top reports of 4 on RH 9/16 (PJ) and 5 near SH 9/22 (MH). BS harbored the last **Wood Thrush** 9/28 (MH). Late **Gray Catbirds** lingered near DT 10/8 (CG, MH) and near LV 11/26 (DC). Last **Brown Thrasher** was found near SH 10/4 (MH).



This Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird visited a feeder near Creekside 9/30-10/5.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

The warbler migration was not quite as good this fall as last year with fewer birds reported. Last **Blue-winged Warbler** was noted at BS 9/17 (MH). **Tennessee Warblers** moved through the region between 9/8 (CG,MH) and 10/3 (MH). Single **Nashville Warblers** were listed on RH 8/28,30 and 9/21 (PJ) and at BS on 4 dates with best count of only 3 on 9/24 (MH). A **Northern Parula** along the Ghost Town Trail was the lone report 9/3 (MH, RH). Last dates included 9/26 (MH) for **Chestnut-sided Warbler** and 10/3 (MH) for

**Magnolia Warbler**, both at BS. After higher numbers of **Cape May Warblers** last year, the Cape May migration was disappointing. One to 2 were reported on 14 dates between 8/24 (CG,MH) and 10/3 (MH) in addition to 7 near Red Mill 9/21 (CG,MH). **Black-throated Blue Warblers** appeared 8/31 (PJ) on RH, where 3 were counted 9/21 (PJ); singletons were seen 9/14 (MH) at BS and 9/29 (MH,RH,BJ) at YC. **Yellow-rumped Warbler maxima** included 17 at YC 9/25 (MH,GL) and 10 near LV 10/21 (MC). Top **Black-throated Green Warbler** count was 26 at BS 9/26 (MH) while 2 at YC 10/9 (MH,MS) were last. First migrant **Blackburnian Warbler** appeared on RH 8/28 (PJ); last noted was one at BS 9/26 (MH). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a nice find at BS 9/3 (SG, SGr,MH,RH). A yard near SH produced last dates for both **Pine Warbler** 9/20 (MH) and **Prairie Warbler** 9/7 (MH). A **Palm Warbler** near LV 10/2 (MC) was the lone report. **Bay-breasted Warblers**, noted at BS on six dates between 9/8-10/3 (MH), included 4 on 9/26 (MH); singletons were at CC 9/6 (CG) and at YC 9/25 (MH,GL). One to 5 **Blackpoll Warblers** were noted at BS on 5 dates beginning 9/1 (SG,SGr,MH,RH) through 9/28 (MH); YC yielded only 2 on 9/29 (MH,RH,BJ). Last were 2 **Black-and-white Warblers** at YC 9/22 (LC); an **American Redstart** and an **Ovenbird** at BS 9/28 (MH); and a **Northern Waterthrush** at YC 9/25 (MH,GL). A **Mourning Warbler** was a good find at BS 9/24 (MH). A **Common Yellowthroat** lingered at YC 10/16 (MJA,MH) while last **Hooded Warbler** remained at BS 9/28 (MH). No **Wilson's Warblers** were listed and the only **Canada Warbler** stopped on RH 8/30 (PJ). Last **Yellow-breasted Chat** was near SH 8/15 (MH).

**Scarlet Tanager** was last found at BS 10/3 (MH) and near DT 10/8 (CG,MH). At least 2 **Eastern Towhees** continued at YC through 11/17 (LC,MH). Arrival date for **American Tree Sparrow** was 11/13 (LC,MH) at YC.



This Fox Sparrow appeared in the fog at Yellow Creek 11/10.  
Photo by Margaret Higbee

Two **Chipping Sparrows** were last observed at RV 10/29 (LU). A large flock of sparrows at YC 10/16 (MJA,MH) included one **Vesper Sparrow** and a **Savannah Sparrow**. **Fox Sparrows** moved through *Indiana* 10/29 - 11/20 (LC,MH) with 11 reports involving 4 locations (v.o.). **Lincoln's Sparrows** recorded included 2 at YC 9/25 (MH,GL) and 10/2 (CG, MH) and one near LV 9/30 (MC). A flock of sparrows at KR 10/8 (CG,MH) included one **Lincoln's Sparrow**, at

least 3 **Swamp Sparrows**, and 8 **White-throated Sparrows**. At least 4 Swamp Sparrows remained at YC 11/14 (LC,MH). First White-throated Sparrow appeared 9/24 (MH) at BS; 18 were counted at YC 11/13 (LC,MH). **White-crowned Sparrow** arrived 10/2 at YC (CG,MH) where at least 10 were present in a hard-to-count mixed flock 10/16 (MJA,MH). BS produced the first **Dark-eyed Junco** 10/3 (MH); 25 was a good junco count at CC 11/22 (JV,JVa). A flock of 20 Snow Buntings was a nice find near Patton 11/16 (DG).

Last date for **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was 10/1 (MC) near LV; for **Indigo Bunting**, 10/8 (CG,MH) at KR and 10/9 (MH,MS) at YC. Three **Eastern Meadowlarks** lingered at PG 10/25 (RB). **Rusty Blackbirds** were first noted at YC on 10/2 (CG,MH); high counts included 236 at YC 10/20 (LC), 500 near LV 11/1 (MC), and 200 at PG 11/9 (RB). During the joint TBC-3RBC YC outing, Neil Nodelman spotted a female **Brewer's Blackbird** in a flock of rusties; unfortunately the other participants were approaching the flock too slowly from the opposite direction and failed to see the Brewer's. This is the fifth county record. **Common Grackle** maxima included an estimated 500 in RV 9/14 (LU) and 565 at KR 10/8 (CG, MH); last were 5 near Ford City 10/28 (JV,JVa). Two **Baltimore Orioles** at BS 9/14 (MH) were last. **Purple Finches** were numerous and widespread with as many as 11 at YC 10/16 (MJA,MH); a RV feeder hosted 1-4 **Purple Finches** throughout the period. A flock of 12 **Common Redpolls** stopped in a yard near LV 11/30 (MC); the same yard hosted 2 **Pine Siskins** on 10/6,5 on 10/21 and 11/11, and 7 on 11/18 (MC); as many as 4 were sighted near SH 10/29 (MH) and 1-2 remained through 11/3 (MH,RH); one visited an Ebensburg feeder 11/11 (JS); a singleton appeared at a feeder near IN 11/18 (CG). **Evening Grosbeak** reports included 2 at an IN feeder 11/2,6-7 (SB) and 2 females near SH 11/7 (MH).

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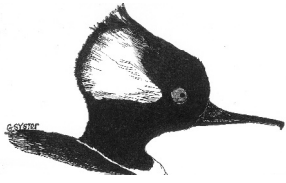
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