

# The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club  
[www.toddbirdclub.org](http://www.toddbirdclub.org)

April 2015

## 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. Refreshments are provided at each of our meetings. In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.



Blue-footed Boobies feed by plunge diving to fish.  
Photo by Jeffrey Hall

**Tuesday, May 5** – This is our annual banquet meeting which begins at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share and your own place settings. The evening’s speaker is Jeffrey Hall whose presentation is entitled, “**Blue-footed, Red-billed, and Magnificent: a Galapagos Adventure.**”

Known also as the “Enchanted Islands” at the time of Darwin’s visit in 1835, the Galapagos Islands are still a place of enchantment for the naturalist today. The volcanic archipelago on the equator was settled by a few species of plants and animals. Over the millennia, these took advantage of the many available ecological niches to evolve into the Galapagos inhabitants that can be seen going about their lives, unafraid of humans, each adapted to its unique setting. This presentation will highlight many Galapagos denizens, from Blue-footed Boobies and Darwin’s Finches to Sally Lightfoot crabs and marine iguanas.

Jeffrey Hall is president of the Bartramian Audubon



The Galapagos Flamingo lives in the saltwater lagoons close to the sea and filter feeds primarily on brine shrimp.

Photo by Jeff Hall

Society, and he is also active in the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. His articles and photographs have appeared in many publications, including *Living Bird*, *NJ Audubon*, *Underwater Naturalist*, and *Cassinia*, as well as Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology’s *Birds of Pennsylvania* website. He has presented more than 100 programs to birding, nature, and photography groups, and is an instructor at the Institute for Learning in Retirement at Slippery Rock University. A retired biology teacher, he lives in Franklin.



# Outings

**Tuesday morning outings**, mostly at Yellow Creek, will continue. 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). If the weather is questionable, please call!

**Saturday, April 18** – Waterworks Conservation Area and the Gary Ferrence Farm, led by Sue Dickson (724-388-5000). Meet at the conservation area at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, April 25** – Eagle Watch on the Mahoning Shadow Trail, led by Tom Glover (814-938-5618). We'll check to see if the resident Bald Eagles are nesting this year, and we'll bird the trail for migrants. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Valier trailhead parking lot.

**Saturday, May 2** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). This is our annual Warbler Walk. Meet at the park office at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared to hike.

**Saturday, May 9** – PA Migration Count. Count birds in your yard or out in the field. If you plan to participate in either Indiana or Armstrong counties, please contact compilers, Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

**Saturday, May 16** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan. This should be the peak of the warbler migration. Meet at the park office at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 16** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan. This should be the peak of the warbler migration. Meet at the park office at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 23** – Sandy Ridge Road Grasslands in Jefferson/Clearfield Counties, led by Tom Glover. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the small cemetery about seven miles south of Punxsutawney on PA Route 36 toward Mahaffey. Expected species include Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, and Field, Savannah, Grasshopper, and Henslow's Sparrows.

**Friday, May 29 through Monday, May 31** – Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology meeting in Chester County at the Days Hotel West Chester - Brandywine Valley. For further information, go to [www.pabirds.org/](http://www.pabirds.org/). This is a great opportunity to meet birders from across the state and sample other habitats.

**Friday, June 19 through Monday, June 22** – Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Blitz. Bird any or all of the days and pretend you're atlasing again. Watch for signs of nesting and jot them down, using the old Atlas codes. Then after you've birded, enter your data on eBird. If you participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, use the same password to access the PA eBird site. Let's put *Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria* on the map! For more information, contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

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## Looking Ahead

### Todd Bird Club Picnic

Once again this year, Dan and Marcy Cunkelman plan to host the annual Todd Bird Club picnic at their home. The date is set for Sunday, August 23. Details will be in the July edition of *The Todd Nuthatch*.

### Delaware Trip

Former Todd Bird Club president Steve Graff, who has moved to Delaware, is leading a four-day Todd trip along the coast. Plans are to meet near Dover on Friday, September 11, and bird through Monday, September 14. Possible birding locations include Bombay Hook, Port Mahon, Ted Harvey Conservation Area, Cape Henlopen State Park, Mispillion Point, Prime Hook, and other special locales favored by Steve.

Steve was very active in Todd Bird Club, attending and leading many outings. He served as president from 2001 through 2002. Details will follow in the July *Nuthatch*.

# Subzero Birding in Canada

by Richard Nugent

I participated in the PSO (Pennsylvania Society For Ornithology) birding trip to Canada from February 13, 2015, to February 16, 2015. We met at 5:00 a.m. in the lobby of the Hampton Inn of Hazleton, PA. After relocating several cars to a Park and Ride lot, 16 people settled into four four-wheel drive cars for the long drive to Ontario. The drive north on I-81 was hazardous with snow falling and drifting. We saw numerous cars and trucks in the ditch and one multivehicle accident with a several-mile-long backup in the southbound lane. By the time we reached the Thousand Island Bridge to Canada, the snow had stopped, and we easily passed through customs and changed our US dollars into Canadian dollars.

A relatively short drive later, we arrived at the dock for the car ferry to Amherst Island. Lake Ontario had 18 inches of ice, but the ferry maintained an ice cube filled channel to the island. On the ferry ride we saw our first Snowy Owl. Nearby we also saw a coyote on the ice. The next 2½ hours were spent driving around the island. The road to Owl Woods was impassible, so we stayed on the main roads. There were numerous birds of prey, and it was really nice to get out of the cars occasionally to stretch our legs. Highlights for Amherst Island were:

Snowy Owl (10)	Rough-legged Hawk (9)
Red-tailed Hawk (6)	Bald eagle (1)
Common Merganser (1)	

A couple-hours' drive brought us to Ottawa and Webb's Motel. After we checked into the motel, we had a late supper at the motel's restaurant, The Rose Bowl.

On Saturday morning we slept in a little and met in the lobby at 7:00 a.m. About two inches of snow had fallen overnight and three to five more was forecast for the day in spite of the 0° F. temperature. A five-minute drive brought us to Al's Diner, where we had breakfast and met our guide, Ben Di Labio. We then drove to the Lafleche Landfill east of Ottawa, where we endured the cold and wind for almost an hour before the Gyrfalcon made an appearance. This intermediate morph bird was a life bird for me and most of our group. It perched on a pole close enough that everyone got good looks in spite of the falling snow. Besides the Gyrfalcon, we were entertained by numerous American Crows and a few Common Ravens.

We drove back to Ottawa to Bate Island in the middle of the Ottawa River to look for Barrow's Goldeneye. The river was ice-choked with modest areas of open water.

Between snow falling and mist rising from the river, our visibility was very limited, and we saw no Barrow's Goldeneye. We did see Common Goldeneye and Bufflehead. We also enjoyed watching Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, and black squirrels feeding where people had placed a lot of food on the ground under the "Do not feed the wildlife" sign.

Next we went to Grimes Road, where an American Three-toed Woodpecker was being seen. This was a lovely suburban neighborhood with many trees including hundreds of dead white ash trees. By now the snow had almost stopped, and we saw several woodpeckers...but no American Three-toed Woodpeckers.

We returned to Al's Diner to pick up our guide's car and to eat lunch. After lunch we followed our guide to several locations looking for Bohemian Waxwing and Gray Partridge. Along the way we noticed that a number of farmers had left three or four rows of corn standing parallel to the road to act as a windbreak/snowfence. We failed to find any of our target birds, but we did manage to get one of our vehicles stuck in a ditch in sub-zero weather. Using a tow strap, we managed to get the car out of the ditch. By now it was almost dark, so we started the drive to Motel 6 in Huntsville, Ontario. The Mad Musher Restaurant stayed open late for us and served us supper at 10 p.m. After we ate, we drove through Algonquin Park and arrived at the motel at 1:00 a.m.

On Sunday our trip leader let us sleep in, so we met in the lobby at 8:00 a.m. In spite of a temperature of -21° F, all the vehicles started, but one had a flat tire caused by a nail. We attempted to change the tire in our sleep-deprived state, but we ended up calling a service vehicle. It was a clear, sunny morning and after getting gas and a quick breakfast at McDonalds, we headed into Algonquin Park. We made a quick stop to buy permits then drove to the Visitor Centre. Our hopes of watching the feeders from a warm building were dashed when we discovered that it was necessary to go outside onto the deck to see the feeders. Braving the bitter cold rewarded us with eight Common Redpolls and one much-desired Hoary Redpoll, which was a life bird for many of our group. Another treat was a Ruffed Grouse sleeping under a pine tree. Our list at this location included:

Black-capped Chickadee (12)	Common Redpoll (8)
Hoary Redpoll (1)	Ruffed Grouse (1)
Red-breasted Nuthatch (1)	Hairy Woodpecker (2)

We then drove across the road to the Spruce Bog Boardwalk. A short walk brought us to several feeders with very tame birds. We had brought bird seed and soon had both Black-capped Chickadees and Boreal Chickadees feeding from our hands. A Gray Jay came close but would not hand feed. The Boreal Chickadee was a life bird for me and for most in our group. About two feet of snow covered the ground, making walking off-trail very difficult. In spite of that, several of our party waded through the snow looking for Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpeckers. We eventually did find a Black-backed Woodpecker, a life bird for many.

Our next destination was Opeongo Road, where we found more tame birds and lots of food scattered on the ground. About four Gray Jays were especially tame and readily fed from our hands and even landed on our heads. The jays especially liked chunks of bagel and peanut butter crackers, which they carried off to cache and then quickly returned for more. Gray Jay was also a life bird for many.

The day's last destination was a nearby campground, where a pine martin was fond of feeding at the dumpster. I wondered what food would be in a campground dumpster in the middle of winter, but we saw ten occupied campsites, mostly tents. We found some very hardy Canadians, but no pine martins.

Arriving back in Huntsville, we had supper at Moose Delaney's Sports Bar & Grill. A pleasant meal allowed us to thaw out before returning to our motel at 10:00 p.m.

On Monday morning we met in the lobby at 7:00 with a long day ahead of us. The motel provided us with coffee

and muffins for breakfast, and we ventured out into -31° F weather; this was an all-time record low for this date and location. The previous evening we had been too tired to get gas and Monday was a holiday and most gas stations were closed or did not open until 9:00. We finally got gas and headed back into the park. We spent another 30 minutes at Spruce Bog looking for Spruce Grouse with no luck. I did discover that at -31° F with no wind, my exhaled breath formed a cloud of steam which rose rapidly straight up like smoke from a chimney. A little down the road we stopped to watch a young bull moose about 200 feet from the road. It was huge and walked through two feet of snow with ease.

We made the long drive back to Ottawa and Bate Island. With good visibility we saw numerous Common Goldeneyes, but no Barrow's. Next we returned to Grimes Road where we were immediately greeted by Bohemian Waxwings – about 250 waxwings! We saw them on the road, in the trees, and in shrubs. They were eating small round black fruit. A local birder had seen the American Three-toed Woodpecker and helped us find it. We all got good looks at this gorgeous male woodpecker. Both the waxwing and the woodpecker were life birds for me and for most in our party. It was a great way to end our serious birding.

The long drive back to Hazleton was uneventful with a quick passage through customs. As we drove south, the temperature climbed above zero and was +10° F when we arrived in Hazleton at 10:00 p.m. to find our cars covered with about one inch of snow. Most of those in our group lived less than two hours away and drove home. I had a five-hour drive, so I stayed another night in Hazleton.

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## Pennsylvania Migration Count

PAMC (formerly North American Migration Count) has taken place in Pennsylvania on the second Saturday of May since 1992. Birders across the state go into the field and count all the birds they can find; it's very similar to the Christmas Bird Count, but the counts are county wide and not limited to a circle. Results are sent to your county compiler. We've averaged about 1,000 participants and 3,000 field hours over the past several years. Last year nearly 190,000 birds of 236 species were counted. Not bad!

Birding for the PAMC isn't difficult...you just need to do what you usually do, but keep track of your totals. You may go out for a few hours, or do a 24-hour county Big Day. In counties with high participation, areas are

assigned to avoid double-counting. In other counties, there may be only one or two participants.

Some birders go for maximum number of species; others bird within a specific area, like an IBA, a state park, or even their own property. All have a good time birding, and the resulting data are tabulated in the *Pennsylvania Birds* magazine.

Go to the PSO web site at <http://pabirds.org/PAMC> for forms and more information.

Good birding to all!

Chuck Berthoud, State PAMC Compiler

# Building a Home for Chimney Swifts

by Ed Donley

The Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas reported a 27% decline in the state's population of Chimney Swifts since the First Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas two decades earlier. Chimney Swift populations are limited by the availability of nesting sites. Before Europeans arrived in North America, Chimney Swifts nested mostly in large hollow trees, such as old sycamores. Chimney Swifts quickly adopted European-style brick and stone chimneys, silos, air shafts, and wells. However, most chimneys now are either capped or lined with ceramic or metal, preventing swifts from nesting in them. Only one pair will nest per chimney, usually helped by some offspring from the previous nesting season. I only occasionally see Chimney Swifts where I live on Five Points Road between Indiana and Shelocta, in spite of the ideal feeding habitat. I have many flying insects over my pond and meadow. My neighbor has many over his livestock pasture and garden. We see swallows every day, but few swifts.

In October 2013, my neighbor, Kurt Dudt, and I decided to do something about the Chimney Swift problem. I bought the small book, *Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds - a Construction Guide*. The book gives step-by-step instructions for building a simple wooden chimney swift nesting tower or for building one surrounded by a kiosk for public sites. We bought the materials for the simpler version. Kurt and I built a tower on each of our properties, with the help of Alex Rudowski, a former student of mine who had asked if he could help me with any of my wildlife enhancement projects. Construction



Ed Donley poses on a ladder near the top of his Chimney Swift tower.

was straight forward, requiring only moderate skills. The project took about four hours on each of three days. Visitors were curious about these towers. The UPS deliveryman conjectured that they were for smoking meat.

I was disappointed in summer 2014, because I didn't see any swifts during the first half of the summer. But the situation changed around the Fourth of July. My neighbors and I were seeing them every day throughout most of the day. They were flying back and forth between the two towers and between our two ideal feeding habitats. Most swift nestlings have fledged by early July, so I figured that these were young swifts who found our towers and were planning to nest during the next summer. I was excitedly anticipating the coming breeding season.

In October or November, I removed the bottom panel from the tower so that snow would not accumulate. The moisture of the melting snow would shorten the life of the tower. I was shocked to see nest debris and more than a ¼-inch-thick layer of insect exoskeletons on the panel! These swifts had been nesting in my tower and I didn't even know it! Kurt and I were very excited, and I showed the panel to everyone who was willing to look at it. Ellen Yerger, an entomologist at IUP, Ray Winstead, a retired IUP biology professor, and Xinjiang Li, a visiting entomologist from China, brought a microscope out to my place to examine the



Note the partial nest on the right on the bottom panel.  
Photo by Ed Donley

(continued on page 7)

# Outings Revisited

## Yellow Creek, April 4, 2015

The joint Todd Bird Club-Three Rivers Birding Club outing was held on Saturday, April 4. A group of 14 birders met at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the Yellow Creek State Park office. The temperature was 29 degrees F, and the wind was brisk. The lake was still frozen in places.

Our first stop was below the maintenance building where we scoped the lake as the wind whipped our faces driving tears from our eyes. Here were 10 Redheads, 34 Ring-necked Ducks, Common Loon, 11 Double-crested Cormorants, 7 Bonaparte's Gulls, and 8 Ring-billed Gulls. Standing on the ice eating what appeared to be a fish was an immature Herring Gull. Along the north shore were 2 Wood Ducks. Perched on the ice and swarming above were at least 120 Tree Swallows. Fifteen Hooded Mergansers and 3 Horned Grebes swam into view. Passerines were hard to come by, and the only ones listed here were Song Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, and crows.

We continued to the boat launch where the wind actually seemed worse. Here were 6 Canvasbacks, 3 more Redheads, 30 additional Ring-necked Ducks, 3 Lesser Scaup, 2 Pied-billed Grebes, and 6 American Coots.

Next we headed to the main recreation area where the highlight was a very cooperative Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Several of us missed an Eastern Meadowlark fly-by, spotted by Rich and Jeremy Carlson, as we were munching chocolate chip cookies. We continued to the beach from which we spotted several Tundra Swans, 2

Green-winged Teal, and a second Herring Gull. We all briefly glimpsed a Bald Eagle as it flew around the cove and disappeared. A request for a stop at the portajohn yielded a perched Osprey and a Killdeer.

Our next destination was the observatory trail, but before we had gone 100 feet, a Common Raven croaked several times. We were able to see it through the trees as a few crows began harassing it. Along the trail we listened to the beautiful song of a Brown Creeper and heard just a few notes from a Black-capped Chickadee, the only ones noted on the field trip. We detoured to the Wetland Walkway where some of us spotted 2 Gadwalls, 5 American Wigeons, and 2 Northern Shovelers. The shovelers were not very cooperative as they swam back into the vegetation moments after they'd been identified.

We continued walking the trail to the observatory. Besides many of the same waterfowl, we added a pair of Common Goldeneyes, 6 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 9 Ruddy Ducks. We estimated that the flock of Ring-necked Ducks here contained about 250 individuals. We also increased our Common Loon count to 4 and the Tundra Swan tally to 12 and everyone got to see those previously uncooperative shovelers. The day's list included 45 species.

Since it was after 12:00, we returned to our cars and made plans to stop at the Fortune Buffet in Indiana where eight of us enjoyed a leisurely lunch.

– Margaret Higbee

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## Ghost Town Trail – April 11, 2015

Eight birders met at 8:00 a.m. at the Vintondale access for Lee Carnahan's outing on Saturday, April 11. The temperature was 41°, but the wind made it feel colder. Plans were to hike the Ghost Town Trail to mile marker 21, a distance of about 2.25 miles...but we also had to hike back. Before we left the parking lot, we added 10 Turkey Vultures, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Common Grackles. While we were waiting for everyone to arrive, several of us – Susan Comfort and Roger and Margaret Higbee hiked an additional 0.5 mile round-trip to the restroom where we added American Robins and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Both Song and Field Sparrows were singing along the

beginning of the trail, and a Broad-winged Hawk circled overhead giving everyone great views. Jim McGuire spotted two Tree Swallows perched on poles. One of the ponds harbored a Mallard, and shortly thereafter, thanks to Sue Dickson, we sighted two Eastern Phoebes at the pond's edge. Two Wood Ducks flew by, then Roger informed the group that he had heard a raven. We all watched as two Common Ravens appeared and headed toward the other side of Vintondale.

Farther along a very cooperative Louisiana Waterthrush landed in a shrub then flew into the open at the edge of the water where it stayed long enough for everyone to get good looks. Continuing out the trail, we heard a second

Louisiana Waterthrush, but this one we did not see. Several members of our group had to leave early as they had other plans.

On the return trip John Kilmarx found a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on a tree riddled with sapsucker holes. Two of us had to backtrack to see it, but it remained in view for several minutes. We also watched a pair of Black-capped Chickadees excavating a hole in a dead snag.

The sun finally came out, and the winds calmed, so it did not seem nearly so cold on the trip back. Returning to the parking lot, we found we had tallied 30 species. Special thanks to Flo McGuire who treated us to her delicious, home-made pumpkin muffins.



Lee Carnahan, John Kilmarx, Roger Higbee, Jim and Flo McGuire pose at trail's end. Missing from the photo are Susan Comfort and Sue Dickson.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

## Building a Home for Chimney Swifts (continued from page 5)

insect exoskeletons. Most of the identifiable remains were from beetles and ants. Since flies have somewhat softer exoskeletons that are not as distinctive, they would not show up in the debris, even though mosquitoes and other flies are common in swifts' diets.

If you want to build your own tower, I recommend buying the inexpensive book that I got, or borrowing my copy.

Maintenance is very low. All you have to do is remove the bottom panel and clean off the debris each fall. You have to be willing to shell out a few hundred dollars on materials, though. But it was worth it to me to add another regular species to my yard. Plus, it keeps the UPS deliveryman guessing!

## Your Dues Are Now Due

January 1 started a new year for Todd Bird Club. Please remit your \$5 student, \$10 individual, or \$15 family dues to our treasurer ASAP:

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

Amount Paid \_\_\_\_\_

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I prefer: a hard copy G the electronic version G.

## Did You Know...

Besides their expected diet of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and insects, the Barred Owl will also prey upon crayfish.

# Great Backyard Bird Count Participants

There was quite a bit of participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count, held February 13-16, in our three-county area this year. Below are listed those who participated. The asterisked observers are Todd members.

## Indiana County

\*Pat Andrascik  
 David Barber  
 Casey Cattie  
 Deborah Cinnamon  
 \*Marcy Cunkelman  
 Edward Davis  
 \*Sue Dickson  
 Jennie Henry  
 Carol Hoover  
 Alan and Jeanne Ludwig  
 William McConnell  
 \*Donna Meyer  
 David Morfenski  
 \*Nancy Murphy  
 Sandra Newell  
 Joseph Pumford  
 James Richburg  
 George Rittenberger  
 Betsy Sisitki  
 \*John Taylor  
 Laura Tobin  
 Bill Yackuboskey

## Armstrong County

Jeanne Emigh  
 William Hamilton  
 Terry Kirkpatrick  
 Deborah McCann  
 Shelly McDermott  
 Lynn Ramage  
 Donna Romanowski  
 Deb Smulik  
 Regina Stevenson  
 Jill Stoddard  
 \*Josie Valasek  
 Lawrence Valasek  
 \*Marge Van Tassel  
 Jackie Yockey

## Cambria County

Barbara Carrier  
 Cindy Chulick  
 William Dembowski  
 Mary Donnelly  
 Linda Greble  
 Dawn Jenkins  
 Ali K.  
 Kathy Lubert  
 Renee Lubert  
 Bill Martyak  
 Bev Ramsdell  
 \*John Salvetti  
 Sherry Sauter  
 Lori Schrifft  
 Helen Sorchilla



## Farewell to Mike Shaffer

Mike Shaffer has recently accepted the Environmental Education Specialist job at Moraine State Park. Mike has held the same position at Yellow Creek for the past 15 years. Todd Bird Club members have been very active, helping Mike with his programs, and he has become a true friend. We will truly miss him. We will schedule at least one trip to Moraine State Park this coming fall and again in the spring. Best of luck, Mike!

Four of us, Lee Carnahan, Tom Glover, Roger and Margaret Higbee accompanied Mike on a check of the Yellow Creek Wood Duck boxes. One box contained a clutch of six Wood Duck eggs. Two poles and boxes were completely missing, probably thanks to the iced conditions this winter.



One box contained six Wood Duck eggs.



Mike Shaffer pilots the pontoon across the lake.



Lee Carnahan and Tom Glover pole the boat after Mike has checked and cleaned the box.

# Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria Counties

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](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net) or [marghigbee@gmail.com](mailto:marghigbee@gmail.com).

**Locations:** Crooked Creek Park (CC), Freeport (FP), Indiana University of PA (IUP), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Leechburg (LB), Lewisville (LV), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Shelocta (SH), Worthington (WT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Most area lakes and ponds had frozen almost completely by the first week of January; large sections of the Allegheny and other streams froze shortly thereafter, so the best winter water birding was along the Allegheny River near the dams. All KT and FP water bird reports are at the lock and dams unless otherwise indicated. Yellow Creek Lake began to freeze early; there was little open water for the CBC 12/26. By 1/6 the lake was 99 percent frozen with small patches of slush.

**Canada Goose** maxima included 80 at PG 12/14 (RL), 125 at YC 12/23 (LC, TG, MH, RH, GL), 200 still at CC 1/4 (SG), 260 congregated at KT 1/31 (TR), and 350 at FP 2/20 (TR). WRS #3 on 1/19 (MH, RH, GL, DL) yielded 204 Canada Geese. A single **Mute Swan** was on Redbank Creek at New Bethlehem 1/4 (JK).

**Tundra Swans** continued at PG and at YC with counts of 4 at PG on four dates 12/14, 21, 28 (RL) and 12/27 (JS) and 5 at YC on 12/7 (LC, JD) till the last 2 were sighted at YC sleeping on the ice 1/6 (MH, RH). At nearby Timber Lake, 11 was the count on 12/3 (AB, DB). Flying over Smicksburg on 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL) were the last 46 southward-bound birds; this is the largest Jan. flock on record for *Indiana*. In *Armstrong* three reports of a single **Tundra Swan** included an individual 1/21 (MVT) near LB, 2/20 (TR) at FP, and 2/22 (TR) at KT.

The winter's best-ever *Indiana Gadwall* count of 57 occurred 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH) at YC; last noted were one at KR through 12/16 (MH, RH), 3 at YC on 12/24 (LC), and one at PG 1/1 (RL). One appeared at KT 2/7 (TR). Two **American Wigeons** lingered at YC till 12/23 (LC, TG, GL) while Two Lick still yielded 3 on 12/26 (LC, RC, DL). Twenty-eight **American Black Ducks** were at the CC dam outflow 1/11 (MVT). Four very late **Blue-winged Teal** were noted at PG 12/1 (JS). Interesting were 35 American Black Ducks and 4 **Mallards** feeding in a cornfield s. of Indiana on 1/19 (MH, RH, GL, DL). A single **Green-winged Teal** at FP 2/28 (GK, MK) was the only one noted. The season's best **Northern Pintail** tally was 30 on 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH) at YC; 2 pintails stopped at KR 12/21 (LC) while one at YC 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH) was last.

Fourteen **Canvasbacks** were listed on 12/7 (LC) at YC where one remained through 12/26 (GL, GS). KT hosted 4 **Canvasbacks** 1/17 (TR) and one remained through 2/28 (TR); 37 was an amazing count at FP 2/25 (MVT). Two Lick harbored 8 **Redheads** on 12/6 (LC) and YC, 14 the following day (LC, JD); 8 at YC 12/21 (LC) were last while one at PG 12/27 was *Cambria's* last. First Redhead

showed up at KT 1/17 (TR) while 3 on 1/11 (TR) at FP had increased to 8 by 2/28 (MK, GK). **Ring-necked Duck** tallies included a flock of 43 at YC 12/7 (LC); KR still harbored 3 on 12/16 (MH, RH); PG's high was 8 on 12/21 (RL). YC's flock had dwindled to 9 by 12/26 (GL, GS), the same day one visited Musser's Pond (JG, TG). Last seen were singletons at PG 1/1 (RL) and at KT 1/22 (MH, RH) and 1/31 (TR). Five **Greater Scaup** lingered at YC through 12/26 (GL, GS). Top **Greater Scaup** counts included 27 at FP 2/28 (MK, GK) and 20 at KT 2/26 (MH, RH). Last **Lesser Scaup** was still present at YC 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH). Lesser Scaup numbers at KT ranged from 2 to 7 between 1/22 (MH, RH) and 2/26 (MH, RH). A **Surf Scoter**, photographed on the AR at Parker 12/3 (DH), was a nice find. A single **White-winged Scoter** appeared at PG 12/14 (RL) where it was photographed; another lingered at KT between 2/22 (TR) and 2/26 (MH, RH). A **Long-tailed Duck** was photographed at PG 12/20 (RL). One of the 2 Long-tailed Ducks found 12/23 (MH, RH) at YC remained through 12/26 (GL, GS). Single Long-tailed Ducks were noted at FP between 2/20 (TR) and 2/28 (MK, GK) and at KT only 2/22 (TR) and 2/23 (MH, RH). **Bufflehead** maxima included 120 at PG 12/4 (JS) and 54 at YC 12/7 (LC) with the last 7 noted at YC 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH). There were numerous Bufflehead sightings on the Allegheny River with the high tallies of 6 on 1/31 (TR) at KT and 10 on 2/25 (MVT) at FP. Two **Common Goldeneyes** appeared 12/14 (LC) at YC where they stayed through 12/23 (LC, TG, GL); only one was still present the following day (LC). Six goldeneyes visited KR 12/21 (LC) while numbers on the river increased to 33 at KT on 2/7 (TR).

**Hooded Merganser** highs of 84 at KR (LC, MH, RH) and 25 at YC (LC, JD) occurred 12/7; the 84 is *Armstrong's* highest winter Hooded Merganser count on record. Fifteen stopped 12/4 (JS) at PG, where 7 remained through 12/27 (JS). The Indiana CBC yielded a total of 16 at three locations (v.o.). CC's top count of 160 **Common Mergansers** occurred 12/4 (TR); this report was untopped by previous winter records. December 7 yielded 76 **Common Mergansers** at KR and 3 at YC (JD); one on 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH) was YC's last; Two Lick, however, still harbored 15 on 12/26 (LC, RC, DL). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were in low numbers with the only reports mentioning singletons at YC 12/26 (GL, GS), at FP on both 2/20 (TR) and 2/28 (MK, GK), and 4 at CC 2/23 (MVT). In southern *Cambria* the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail produced one on 2/10 (LG) and 2 on 2/24 (LG). **Ruddy Duck** maxima at YC included 181 on 12/7 (LC) and 139 on 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH); a singleton, standing on the ice

and possibly injured, seemed unable to fly long distances 1/6 (MH, RH). PG hosted 6 Ruddies on 12/20 (RL).

The CBC yielded 6 **Ruffed Grouse** 12/26 (v.o.); the only other reports mentioned singletons at Nolo 12/7, 2/14 (CL, GL), 2 at KR 1/4 (LC), and one at Colver 2/14-15 (DJ). **Wild Turkey** high was 30 at FC 2/16 (TK). **Wild Turkey** count on the CBC 12/26 (v.o.) was 116; largest flocks reported were 25 at Clymer 1/7 (CL, GL), 50 near Timber Lake 1/9 (AB, DB), and 30 both at Penn Run 2/14 (DMo) and near FC 2/16 (TK).

YC's last **Common Loons** were 2 seen 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK, DM, JW) and one 12/21 (LC) while at KR 4 remained 12/28 (MH, RH). Nine **Pied-billed Grebes** were listed 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH) at YC; last sightings occurred 12/28 (MH, RH) at KR, 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH) at YC, and 12/31 (RL) at PG. Fifty **Horned Grebes** was KR's best-ever winter tally 12/7 (MH, RH); PG hosted only one individual 12/7, 20 and 1/1 (RL); other last dates were 12/23 (LC, TG, MH, RH) at YC and 12/28 (MH, RH) at KR.

**Bald Eagles** were widely reported this winter. An adult was sighted at PG 12/1 (JS) and 2 on 12/4 (JS); 2 adults flew across Rt. 422 near Two Lick Reservoir 12/23 (MH, RH). Another Bald Eagle was seen on the CBC 12/26 (PJ). WRS #2 yielded 2 immatures along Mahoning Creek 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL); 4 were noted near LB 1/15 (MVT); another adult was seen in Creekside on WRS #1 on 1/28 (MH, RH, GL, DL) in a field eating what appeared to be carrion. Two adults were perched along the Conemaugh on 1/31 (WM). Five were at CC 2/7 (SG); along the Allegheny numbers ranged from 1 to 3 individuals between 1/10 - 2/27 (v.o.). An adult was photographed along the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail 2/18 (LG). A second-year eagle flew over a home near LV 2/25 (MC).

A **Northern Harrier** was found at Widnoon 12/6 (MMo). WRS #2 yielded an adult male plus an immature harrier 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL) while another was spotted on the *Armstrong* WRS 1/17 (MM). WRS #3 produced 4 harriers 1/19 (MH, RH, GL, DL); another was seen 1/24 (PF) at Elders Ridge; the WT area harbored one 1/22, 2/4 (MH, RH). A male harrier was also observed near Indiana 2/6 (CL, GL). **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were listed at 14 locations this winter (v.o.); **Cooper's Hawk**, at 27. A light morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was spotted at Elders Ridge 1/24 (PF); dark morph **Rough-legged Hawks** were noted near Ford City 2/4 (MVT) and near WT 2/26 (MH, RH); another Rough-legged Hawk of undetermined morph was listed near WT 1/24 (MW).

Two **Sandhill Cranes** (a new species for the CBC) were spotted flying southwest on 12/26 (DC, MC). The observers were awarded the James Dearing Award for the best bird of the count.

**American Coots** were spotted in *Cambria* only at PG on 12/1 (JS) when 40 were tallied and in *Armstrong* only at KR with counts of 44 on 12/7 (LC) and the last 7 on 12/21 (LC). The flock of 226 coots tallied on 12/9 (LC, TG, MH,

RH) at YC had dwindled to 36 by 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH); with most of YC Lake completely frozen, concern was expressed for the remaining 10 huddled in a very small puddle of slush on 1/6 (MH, RH).

The only **Bonaparte's Gull** listed were one at YC 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH), 5 at KR on 12/21 (LC), and 4 also at KR on 12/26 (MVT); these were the only ones reported this season. YC **Ring-billed Gull** reports detailed 15-16 on 12/7 (LC, JD) at YC where the last 4 were recorded on 12/24 (LC); northward-bound birds began appearing 2/8 (MH, RH) when 19 were counted flying over a yard near SH and 2/15 (JT) when 2 were migrating over IUP. On the Allegheny the Ring-billed Gull maxima were 15, both 1/22 (MH, RH) at KT and 2/8 (MH, RH) at CC.

Two **Eastern Screech-Owls** were listed for the CBC 12/26 (DC, MC); one was found 1/10 (SG) along the Roaring Run Trail; another was listed after dark on 1/20 (TR) near SGL 247; yet another was found peering from a natural cavity in a red maple near SH 2/27 (MH, RH). **Great Horned Owl** reports included 4 on 12/26 (v.o.); one was heard near SGL 247 on five dates bracketed by 12/29 and 2/23 (TR); on the latter date, two were noted. Two were heard near LV 2/6 (DC, MC). A **Barred Owl** was heard near SH 12/11, 1/21-22, 28 (MH, RH); 2 Barred Owls were heard near Homer City 1/22 (LC); the following day (LG) one was photographed at PG; n. of Ebensburg on Buck Road one was listed 2/13 (JS). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was a great find at SGL 108 on 12/29 (LG).

After missing this species on the day of the CBC, it was surprising to find one **Belted Kingfisher** 1/10 (SD) at the Waterworks Conservation Area, two on WRS #2 on 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL), and one on WRS #1 on 1/28 (MH, RH, GL, DL); the WRS kingfishers were all found on very small runs.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** sightings included birds at CC 12/4 (TR), near LB 1/27 (MVT), and along the Armstrong



Two Sandhill Cranes on 12/26 (DC, MC) set the seventh county record.

Photo by Marcy Cunkelman

Trail near KT 2/4 (MH, RH). Another visited a Nolo yard from 1/26 (CL, GL) through the end of the season; yet another spent 2/15-26 (MH,RH) eating crabapples near SH; and a sixth was spotted 2/14 (DM) near Lions Health Camp.

A **Merlin**, near WT 1/1 (MVT), was a nice find. A **Peregrine Falcon** spent 1/9 to 2/24 (LG) in downtown Johnstown.



Linda Greble photographed this Peregrine in Johnstown on 1/13.

Another species new to our CBC, an **Eastern Phoebe** was found 12/26 (LC, RC, DL); the Waterworks Conservation Area yielded another on 1/3 (SD). There are no other *Indiana* December records and just one January phoebe report on record; one had been seen at Conemaugh Dam 1/29/2007 (MF).

On 12/26 the Homer City area yielded 35 **Horned Larks** (CW, PW) and the farm fields near YC, 36 (ED, SS, GSt, IS, MS, JT). WRS #2 produced 120 larks near Dayton 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL). The WT area hosted at least 200 larks on 1/22 (MH, RH) with 165 still present 2/26 (MH, RH); 50 were sighted there 2/28 (TR). These are the highest counts since 2008. A WRS on 2/3 (MH, RH, GL, DL) yielded 65 larks near Widnoon.

A single **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited a SH feeder sporadically on 13 dates bracketed by 12/21 and 2/4 (MH, RH), after which it was not seen again until March. Two feeders, both near FC, hosted 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** 2/13 (LR) and one on 2/14 (DR); 2 were also noted w. of Jacksonville 2/14 (BY). **Winter Wren** reports included singletons at YC 12/26 (GL, GS), at the Waterworks Conservation Area 1/1 (SD), along the Conemaugh 1/25 (WM), and near Marion Center 2/13 (BS). Two Winter Wrens appeared at CC 2/7 (SG). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** feeding in an apple tree in Ambrose 1/28 (MH, RH, GL, DL) was unexpected; this was our seventh January record.

A late **Gray Catbird** was both heard and well observed at YC 12/9 (LC, TG, MH, RH); this is our eighth Dec. record.

A wintering flock of **Cedar Waxwings** near SH was seen on 17 dates between 12/14 and 2/27 (MH, RH); peak number was 28 on 12/28 and 1/1 (MH, RH); they often roosted in an Am. Holly. The only other waxwing reports mentioned 10 near Dark Hollow on 1/17 (DBa), 9 on the *Armstrong* WRS 2/3 (MH, RH, GL, DL), and 20 at SGL 247 on 2/7 (TR).

**Yellow-rumped Warblers** were uncommon this winter; reports included one 12/26 (CW, PW) for the CBC and 1-2 on six dates near LV between 1/2 and 2/11 (DC, MC). In *Armstrong* the only ones sighted, all at CC, included 2 on 1/31 (JB) and one 2/7 (SG).

The CBC yielded 3 **Eastern Towhees**, one in White Twp. (CG) and 2 at Homer City (SP); a towhee was an irregular visitor to feeders near SH this winter, beginning 12/16 (MH, RH). One to 2 **Chipping Sparrows**, an adult and an immature, were present at SH feeders between 12/10 and 1/26 (MH, RH), after which the immature was no longer seen; the adult was last seen 2/21 (MH, RH). Two **Field Sparrows** lingered near Elderton 1/1 (MH, RH) but went unreported for the rest of the period. A **Savannah Sparrow** was found at YC 12/7 (JD). A **Fox Sparrow** was a regular visitor to SH feeders 12/18 (MH, RH) through the end of the period. A **Swamp Sparrow** lingered at YC through 1/6 (MH, RH). **White-crowned Sparrow** reports included 4 on the CBC 12/26 (CW, PW), one on WRS # 2 on 1/14 (MH, RH, GL, DL), 3 on WRS #3 on 1/19 (MH, RH, GL, DL), 5 at Tunnelton 2/13 (NM), and 4 near FC 2/16 (TK).

No **Red-winged Blackbirds** were noted after the 2 found on the CBC (v.o.) till one was spotted by an anonymous birder on 2/14 in n.e. *Indiana*. *Armstrong's* first returning flock of 49 **Red-winged Blackbirds** gathered in a marsh n.w. of KT 2/26 (MH, RH). On 1/6 (MC) a LV area feeder hosted a **Rusty Blackbird**; another visited a yard near SH 1/8, 13 (MH, RH). Last **Common Grackle** visited Nolo 12/31 (CL, GL); 2 visited feeders near LB 1/24 (MVT); a Patton yard yielded 4 on 2/14 (KL). Appearing at a Tunnelton feeder were 9 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** on 1/22 (NM), but the flock had increased to 20 by 2/3 (NM); 3 were observed on the *Armstrong* WRS 2/3 (MH, RH, GL, DL).

On 2/16 (MVT) a **Common Redpoll** visited a LB feeder, the same feeder that hosted 6 **Pine Siskins** on 1/7 (MVT). Best siskin count at CC was 10 on 1/4 (SG) while 25 visited a FC feeder on 2/15 (LR). Eighty was the siskin count at PG 12/4 (JS); YC yielded 60 **Pine Siskins** on 12/30 (LC, TG, MH, RH). Pine Siskins were present near SH throughout the winter with peak numbers of 110 on 1/21 (MH, RH) and 106 on 1/26 (MH, RH); a feeder n. of Indiana hosted triple digits on multiple occasions, including 133 on 12/10 (SB) and 132 on 1/10 (SB); the high February count was down to 50 on 2/14 (SB). These are the highest siskin numbers since 2009.

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Dan Cunkelman, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Jim Dunn, Patience Fisher, Mike Fowles, Jud Glover, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Linda Greble, Carol Guba, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Daniel Hinnebusch, Dawn Jenkins, Pat Johner, Debbie Kalbfleisch, John Keener, Terry Kirkpatrick, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Kathy Lubert, Renee Lubert, Mark McConaughy, William McConnell, Donna Meyer, David Morfenski (DMo), Mark Moore (MMo), Nancy Murphy, Sara Pulliam, Lynn Ramage, Theo Rickert, Donna Romanowski, John Salvetti, Scott Simms, Betsy Sisitki, Garrett Strittmatter, Ian Strittmatter, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Lawrence Valasek, Marge Van Tassel, Chris Williams, Marci Williams, Paula Williams, Ray Winstead, Jan Woodard, Bill Yackuboskey.



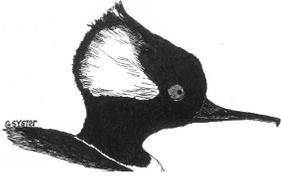
Roger Higbee photographed this Osprey flying over Yellow Creek Lake on 4/14.



Marcy Cunkelman photographed this banded Carolina Wren in her yard near Lewisville, where it had been banded last spring.

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

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