

# The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

April 2017

## 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. *Please bring a covered dish to share and your own place settings.*

**Tuesday, May 2** – We are privileged to have Mike Fialkovich as May's banquet speaker. His presentation is entitled "Birding and Nature in Southern California." From 234 ft. below sea level at the Salton Sea to just over 8000 ft. in the San Bernardino Mountains, to the Channel Islands and deserts, this program will show the wide



Black Turnstone is just one of the many interesting species that Mike Fialkovich photographed in southern California.

variety of nature the Golden State has to offer, even in the midst of a historic drought.

Mike Fialkovich has been interested in birds and nature as far back as he can remember. He is the current president of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and a member of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. Mike is a founding member of the Three Rivers Birding Club in Pittsburgh

where he serves on the steering committee as Bird Reports Editor and Club Historian. He was a Regional Coordinator for the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. Mike has led numerous outings for the Three Rivers Birding Club and the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, and in 2011 he was presented the W. E. Clyde Todd Award by the Audubon Society of Western PA. Mike is not a stranger to Todd Bird Club as he has presented several other great programs to our group.

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## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, August 20** – Once again this year Marcy and Dan Cunkelman are graciously hosting our Todd Bird Club picnic at their home. If you plan to attend, please RSVP (724-459-7229; [plant4nature@gmail.com](mailto:plant4nature@gmail.com)).

**Tuesday, September 5** – This is our next meeting after the May banquet as we don't meet during June, July, or August.

## Outings

**Saturday, May 6** -- 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 13** – PA Migration Count. Count birds in your back yard or out in the field. If you plan to participate in either Indiana or Armstrong Counties, please contact Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

**Saturday, May 20** – Five Bridges Trail in Jefferson County, led by Tom Glover (814-938-5618). This trail was discovered last fall and has the potential to be a birding hotspot. Note that the trail surface is not finished; the surface is the old ballast from the original railroad. Habitats include low brush to beaver ponds. Make sure you bring your bug spray! To carpool from the Indiana area, contact the Higbees (724-354-3493).

**Directions:** From Indiana, take US 119 north; turn left onto PA 436 just before Punxsutawney. Turn left just after a bridge onto PA 36 toward Brookville, then make a right at the first stoplight in Brookville onto PA 28/US 322. Continue through Brookville toward I-80. At the PA 28 and US 322 split, turn left onto PA

28 north toward I-80. Go about 12.7 miles and turn right onto Shugar Road. Continue about a mile and turn right onto Beechton Road. The trail will be about 300 ft. down the road.

From I-80 take Exit #81 (Hazen) onto PA 28 north. Go about 11.5 miles and turn right onto Shugar Road. Go about a mile and turn right onto Beechton Road. The trail will be about 300 feet down the road.

The Google address is 1555 Beechton Rd, Brockway, PA 15824.

**Saturday, May 27** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan. We will be looking for late warblers and breeding birds. Meet at the park office at 8:00 a.m.

**Friday, June 16, through Monday, June 19** -- 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 Count, use the same password to access the PA eBird site. For more information contact Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

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## Blinky, the Eastern Screech-Owl



One morning in early March our seven-year-old granddaughter Ella was getting ready for school in her bedroom upstairs in their Indiana home. Her mother Stephanie, who was downstairs, heard Ella loudly calling, “Chickadee-dee-dee, chickadee-dee-dee dee” repeatedly while her three-year-old sister was asleep in the next room. Steph went up to see why Ella was calling chickadees in her room. Ella quickly explained that there were birds right outside her window – chickadees, Blue Jays, cardinals. Steph looked out the window, and there in a fir was a gray morph Eastern Screech-Owl being noisily mobbed by a flock of birds.

After Ella was on her way to school, Steph called, explained the situation, and said, “I need an owl box *stat!*” (She’s an RN.) Knowing that Lee Carnahan is a fantastic carpenter and builds the best bird boxes, we contacted him. He had several already built. Roger stopped by, picked one, and delivered it to Steph. Several workmen were making repairs on their house at the time, so Steph had them install the box in a tree in their backyard. On March 10 I received an email, “No owl yet...” but the box had been up only two or three days. Two days later, our son Rob sent this picture that he took. Ella named her owl Blinky.

Build it, and they will come. Or better yet, buy a nest box from Lee!

–Margaret Higbee

## From the President's Desk...

Sometimes it is not to be. I do not have a Snowy Owl on my life list, despite the fact that I have tried to add the bird on two previous occasions, first in 2012 in Clarion County, and again in 2013 in Indiana County. It should be noted the attempt in 2013 required my truck's being rescued from a ditch. A Snowy Owl had been reported in Crawford County starting March 13, 2017.

Ken Burkett, the director of the Jefferson County History Center, and I had a meeting to attend in Erie, PA, starting on Sunday, March 26, and I saw an opportunity to add the Snowy Owl to my life list. I continually checked eBird, and the bird was reported daily for almost two weeks on North Center Road in Crawford County. I checked on Sunday morning the 26<sup>th</sup> of March before leaving for Erie, and the bird had been noted Saturday in the afternoon. So I figured Sunday was the day that I would finally add the bird to my life list.

We arrived on North Center Rd about 3:30 p.m. and slowly cruised up the road. We spotted a gentleman who was parked along the road, and naturally we inquired about the Snowy Owl. He said that he had been reporting the owl daily including the previous day, but he had not



Grandma Fuller's Slate Painting of House Wrens

seen the owl today on Sunday. That did not sound promising. We drove slowly around the area checking the fields, but we found no Snowy Owl. I had a premonition that with the warm weather we had been experiencing that the owl figured it was time to head back to the Arctic. Apparently the bird decided to leave on Sunday. I am still looking for my "white whale." My son-in-law Tom says that is why they call it bird watching and not bird spotting.

Now on a more pleasant subject, here's a Phoebe update. Believe it or not she celebrated her first birthday this past March 22. She has come a long way on her birding adventures this past year. I have to share with you her latest birding accomplishment. Last

week while birdwatching out the dining room window Tom was talking about a Carolina Wren that had been visiting the window feeder. Phoebe started pointing up at the wall in their dining room at a Grandma Fuller painting on slate of House Wrens. We will have to forgive her for not knowing the different wren species. Like I always say, you got to love it!

Good birding,

Tom Glover

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

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# Jersey Shore Trip

By Debbie Kalbfleisch

Snowstorms, gale-force winds, heavy rain -- a journey to the Antarctic or Iceland? No, just a March trip to the Jersey coast with the Todd Bird Club! At o'dark o'clock on Monday, March 13, Tony Bruno and I set out with Margaret and Roger Higbee for the wilds of New Jersey. The temperature registered 11 degrees with some snow cover, and a beautiful full moon hung in a clear sky. As the day got brighter, we began to pick up the usual suspects along the highway: Red-tailed Hawks, Mourning Doves, American Crows, European Starlings, Northern Cardinals, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and House Sparrows.

Entering New Jersey, we quickly added Turkey Vultures, Ring-billed Gulls, Rock Pigeons, and American Robins to our list. Boat-tailed Grackles signaled that we were getting close to the shore. A pair of American Kestrels were spotted along the Atlantic City Expressway. A nice surprise were two Cooper's Hawks, one in Gloucester County and the other in Cape May County. Our first official stop in New Jersey was at the soccer fields at Cape May County Park East to look for a Pink-footed Goose. We sorted through 154 Canada Geese but could not find the goose with pink feet! From there, we went to the Davies Sports Complex, on the hunt for a male Tufted Duck that had been reported hanging out with a flock of Ring-necked Ducks on several ponds on private property. Although there were no odd ducks, this small park was a real delight. We walked a little over half a mile along a dirt track to the pond that was visible and had a nice variety of birds, including Mute Swans, American Black Ducks, one Hooded Merganser, one Double-crested Cormorant, Black and Turkey Vultures, an adult Bald Eagle, a Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmice, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wrens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a single Field Sparrow. Flocks of American Robins kept popping up and flying over, at least 105 of them. We were quite excited when a large flock of approximately 150 Ring-necked Ducks flew in, but they all landed on the distant pond which was hidden from our view.

It was almost 2:00 p.m., so we left to grab a quick bite



Near Sunset Beach late on our first evening Margaret Higbee photographed this Merlin.

then headed to Stone Harbor where we had our first Brant, Northern Gannet, Northern Harrier, American Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings (over 100), Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, Northern Mockingbird, and Song Sparrows. Another Cooper's Hawk was also seen here. While the sun was still out, it had turned biting cold, and we were well aware of the change in the weather. Winter Storm Stella was on her way, and a noreaster was predicted for the Jersey coast!

After checking in at the Camelot Motel in Cape May, we took advantage of the late afternoon light and went to check the Second Avenue Jetty. Black Scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers, Red-throated Loons, and Horned Grebes rewarded our efforts.

We circled Lily Lake next to the Cape May Bird Observatory, but there were only a few Canada Geese, Gadwalls, Mallards, and an American Coot on the water. On our way to Sunset Beach, we saw a Merlin perched on a pole and were able to creep up on it until we were right under it, getting a great view of this bewitching little raptor! Dinner that night was at Lucky Bones in Cape May, and snowflakes were swirling as we left the restaurant to go back to the Camelot.

We were relieved to wake up to a mere downpour on Tuesday morning. While the eastern part of Pennsylvania and most of New Jersey were being buried by snow, the warm waters around Cape May provided a buffer for the state's southern tip. After breakfast at McDonald's, we drove to Rotary Park and the ferry landing. Along the way, we saw a Great Blue Heron, and Margaret and Tony spied a Great Egret in the marsh. We continued to bird from the car and had the following new species: Long-tailed Ducks, Bonaparte's Gulls, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull, along with more Red-breasted Mergansers, Northern Gannets, Sanderlings, and Great Black-backed Gulls.

Around 9:30, the rain started to let up and the skies seemed to be clearing. Buffleheads and a Sharp-shinned Hawk flying over were new for the trip. Just north of Cape Island, along Ocean Drive, a strange-looking bird flying over the docks turned out to be a juvenile Black-

crowned Night-Heron. It landed next to a houseboat where we were able to get quite close without spooking it. When Tony enlarged his photo of the heron's head, we could see the reflections of the surrounding boats in its eye!

On Nummy Island, we added more birds to our list: American Wigeons, over 50 Northern Pintails, Greater Yellowlegs, and Fish Crows. There were many Brant and Buffleheads, and we were pleased to see more American Oystercatchers, including two that let us get quite close. We got very nice looks at a small flock of Ruddy Turnstones running around a deserted parking lot. The rain by now had stopped, but the winds were increasing to near gale force and rocking the van!

Throughout the afternoon, as we zig-zagged across Cape May County, we collected a few new species: Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Snipe, and Wild Turkey. The Coral Avenue Dune Crossing produced a Surf Scoter in with 25 Black Scoters. There were a few Long-tailed Ducks, a Red-throated Loon, and more than 100 Northern Gannets here as well. We braved the gusts at Cape May Point State Park and ventured onto the Hawkwatch Platform, where we added Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Flicker to our list.

As we passed the Cold Spring Cemetery, Tony remarked on an extremely large stick nest in a tree, so we decided to check it out with our scopes. Indeed, an adult Bald Eagle was hunkered well down in the nest! There were about 30 gulls at Miami Beach in the Villas, but just the usual assortment of Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, Herring, and Great Black-backed. A single Black-bellied Plover and a few Dunlin were new for the trip. Sixty-five Sanderlings skittered over the sand.

Jakes Landing is one of our favorite places at Cape May. The pine woods provided a shelter from the worst of the winds, so we had a nice variety of woodland birds, including Carolina Chickadees, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robins, White-throated Sparrows, and Northern Cardinals. It was exciting to see a Hermit Thrush and several Fox Sparrows dodging in and out of the tree branches. We had our first Snow Geese on the marsh (at least 200), along with Gadwalls, American

Wigeons, American Black Ducks, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, and a Pied-billed Grebe. Three Northern Harriers and a Bald Eagle were actively hunting. Dinner was at an Italian restaurant that evening, and we spent another night at the Camelot.



Tony Bruno photographed this Harlequin Duck on the Barnegat Lighthouse State Park jetty.

Before dawn on Wednesday, we were heading north to Brigantine, arriving at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge a little after 7 a.m. We were disappointed to find the gate down and the refuge temporarily closed, apparently due to high water. We made the best of the situation by birding the surrounding area. At the Mill Pond, we picked up Common Merganser, Downy Woodpecker, and Brown-headed Cowbird. A House

Finch was new at Motts Creek, and we snagged a White-breasted Nuthatch and another Fox Sparrow at Motts Creek West. By 10:30 a.m., we had made it to Lagoon Boulevard on Brigantine Island. We shouldered our scopes and walked the sandy path to the beach, straight into wind gusts of 50 mph. I would like to hereby note for the record that Roger and Tony spent all of 60 seconds looking out at the lagoon before turning back to the van, while Margaret and I bravely swayed in the wind, clutching our scopes, and counted 68 Brant and 23 American Oystercatchers! Well, Margaret counted while I offered moral support!

The only other new bird we picked up that morning was a Peregrine Falcon at the East Brigantine Ocean Overlook. We had lunch at Arby's and returned to the refuge at 1:00 p.m., where the wildlife drive had reopened. The wait was well worth it for this enchanting area. We listed a total of 38 species, including four new trip birds: Wood Ducks, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, and Savannah Sparrows. High counts among the waterfowl were 300 Snow Geese, 150 Brant, 158 American Black Ducks, 111 Northern Pintails, and 269 Green-winged Teal. Six Northern Harriers and a Peregrine Falcon hunted over the marsh, and Herring Gulls smashed clams on the hard roadway. Sporadic snow flurries started at the beginning of the drive. Snow Geese, by the way, look lovely in the snow! We took our time and spent 4½ hours driving the loop. In the final stretch, the flurries turned into a real snow squall, with the temperature dropping to 28 degrees and the wind gusting to 30 mph.

We spent Wednesday night at a Travelodge in Absecon

and celebrated Roger's birthday at a Chinese restaurant just up the road from the motel. Early Thursday morning found us heading toward Barnegat Lighthouse State Park. The sun was shining when we arrived at 7:30 and started walking down the beach to the end of the jetty. It wasn't long before we noticed a Peregrine Falcon cruising the area and coming straight toward us. It was flying low, just over our heads, and we were thrilled to get such an amazing look. It circled a couple of times before finally drifting off toward the lighthouse. We continued walking and soon noticed that there were quite a few feathers on the sand, some of them rather bloody. Roger and Tony ventured into the weeds to investigate, and quite suddenly an injured female Wood Duck fluttered into the air, only to sink back into the vegetation. We realized that we had interrupted the Peregrine at a kill and quickly left. Wood Ducks are not common at Barnegat, so this duck may have been migrating when she was attacked. Interesting to realize that a Peregrine can bring down a bird close to its own size and weight!

We spent most of that morning on the beach. Among the Surf and Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Red-throated Loons, were four new waterfowl for us – one Common Eider, 11 Harlequin Ducks, 4 White-winged Scoters, and 41 Common Loons. It was a bit windy, but it didn't bother me until Roger pulled me up on the jetty so I could see the Harlequin Ducks. Three Harlequins, a drake and two hens, obligingly swam by at that moment. Charming creatures! At the same time, the wind gusts at that height frankly terrified me, so I was more than happy to slither back down to the sand!

On our way back to the parking lot, we spotted two Savannah Sparrows of the very pale Ipswich race foraging on the rocks. A couple of Yellow-rumped Warblers flitted among the juniper trees, making us think that in spite of the nippy weather, spring might be just around the corner!

Driving the back streets of Barnegat, along Bayview Avenue, we enjoyed the sight of more Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, Red-throated and Common Loons, and American Oystercatchers. After lunch, we continued driving north, stopping at Manasquan Inlet, Shark River, and Deal Lake, simply enjoying the

common birds of New Jersey that we don't find in land-locked Pennsylvania. It was wonderful to see scads of Brant, Long-tailed Ducks, Red-throated and Common Loons, Horned Grebes, Northern Gannets, and Great Black-backed Gulls!

We enjoyed dinner at a Panera's and spent the night at a Super 8 in Asbury Park. Friday morning dawned clear and cold, with temperatures in the 30s, and the wind seemed to have died down a bit. We grabbed coffee and a quick breakfast at the motel then headed north once more, pausing briefly at Deal Lake and Lake Takanassee. A stop at Seven Presidents Park was my first visit there, and I was tremendously impressed by the large, heated restrooms! Black Scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Red-throated and Common Loons could be seen in the ocean. Two Northern Mockingbirds were loudly announcing their presence, and we caught a quick glimpse of a Yellow-rumped Warbler.



This is one of the Sandy Hook Fox Sparrows.

Photo by Roger Higbee

We arrived at Sandy Hook National Park a little before 9:00 a.m. and were greeted by the sight of thousands of Black Scoters on the water. There were hundreds of Surf Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks, as well, and we also noted Brant, American Black Ducks, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, and both Red-throated and Common Loons. We pulled into a little parking area where we noticed some sparrow activity and were pleased to find half a dozen Fox Sparrows with a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos and Song Sparrows. Taking a walk

through the woods, we noticed water dripping off the roof of a pavilion into a puddle which attracted some birds, including a Hermit Thrush. A Gray Catbird chattered to itself in the bushes. Two Bald Eagles flew by, one an adult and the other an immature. We took the Proving Ground Trail to the beach and had several Field Sparrows along the way. Gulls were following a distant fishing boat, and after Margaret told me to look for a bird with a different shape, I was pleased that I could actually pick out a Northern Gannet! As we left the park, we flushed a Red-shouldered Hawk from the side of the road – a very nice end to our journey!

Thank you, Margaret and Roger, for proving that birding can be fun in any kind of weather! We totaled 98 species for the trip.

# Joint Todd - Three Rivers Birding Club Outing Revisited

By Margaret Higbee

Eleven birders gathered at the park office at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 1. We were later joined by two IUP grad students. The area around the park office was pretty quiet. We listed only Red-bellied Woodpecker and Golden-crowned Kinglet and heard a distant Pileated Woodpecker. After we made the usual introductions, we headed to the maintenance building where our first stop was at Dragonfly Pond which harbored 12 Ring-necked Ducks and 4 Buffleheads. The Canada Goose which has been on nest on the island for several weeks was still incubating and her mate was nearby. A Belted Kingfisher was a nice addition here. We walked across the road for a view of the lake – boats! A fishing tournament seemed to be in progress. Our large flocks of ducks had dispersed, but we eeked out 2 Gadwalls, 4 Redheads, 2 Lesser Scaup, another Bufflehead, 32 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 97 Ruddy Ducks. Two Mourning Doves flew overhead while the shrubbery yielded a Northern Cardinal and a Song Sparrow. In a willow near the shallow end of the lake Roger counted 66 Tree Swallows. Two Horned Grebes were diving in the middle of the Ruddies, and 7 American Crows were cawing loudly from the woods.

Because of the numerous boats in the boat launch parking lot, we pulled off along Route 259 near the curve. Here we counted only 8 Canada Geese, one Mallard, and 22 American Coots.

Our next destination was just around the corner in the main recreation area. We were hoping to hear the Pine Warbler, but we were fortunate to hear two and spot one. Everyone had excellent views of this very brightly plumaged bird. Here, too, were Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal – all singletons. We also listed 2 Eastern Phoebes, 2 Eastern Bluebirds, and 6 American Robins.

Our next destination was the beach where four gulls were resting on the sand – 2 Bonaparte's and 2 Ring-billed. Amid the numerous Tree Swallows skimming over the water was one Barn Swallow.

Continuing on to the Observatory Trail, we lucked out with passerines, adding 3 more chickadees, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, and 2 Brown Creepers. A Red-bellied Woodpecker called below the trail, and a junco flushed ahead of us. From the observatory we noted 8 additional Buffleheads, a Common Loon in basic plumage, and 6 more Horned Grebes. Having tallied 40 species in the park, we decided to head to the Chinese buffet in Indiana where 12 of us enjoyed a delicious lunch and good conversation.

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## Purple Martin Box Project Well Underway

Lee Carnahan has completed construction of the Purple Martin nesting box for Blue Spruce County Park. He brought one of the completed sections to our March meeting so that the group could see it up close. We have ordered the pole for the box, which Lee picked up this past week. The box will be installed at Blue Spruce in an open area with clear flyways. The holes, however, will remain closed for a while.



The closest nesting colonies of which we are aware are located in Armstrong County near Elderton, at Smicksburg, and near Marion Center.

Purple Martins in the East nest only in human-constructed nest boxes, but those west of the Rockies use natural cavities. In our area adult martins have arrived by mid-April. Over in Butler County at Moraine State Park, three were first found April 1. This year birds arrived at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County on April 7; at Raccoon Creek State Park in Beaver, April 8.

Adult martins arrive early, but first-year birds come four to six weeks later. When establishing a new colony, the goal is to attract the yearlings. The nest holes in our

box will be opened at the end of May or around the first of June to encourage first-year martins who are arriving to start a new colony. If the holes are opened too early, non-native species like House Sparrows or European Starlings will be encouraged to nest.

If you would like to help with the installation, please contact Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667) for details.

## Plan Now to Attend Fall PSO Meeting

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) will hold their annual meeting this fall, September 15-17 in Cumberland County. Don't let the organization's name intimidate you. PSO is our state bird club. We include everyone from beginning birders to professional ornithologists. Best of all, we're all birders and we know how to have a great time. This is a great opportunity to meet birders from across the state, renew friendships, and learn more about birds.

The headquarters for our meeting will be the Comfort Suites, 10 South Hanover Street, Carlisle. Registration will begin in June, and more information will be available on the PSO website at [www.pabirds.org/Index.html](http://www.pabirds.org/Index.html).

On Friday evening after our social, Ian Gardner will present "Fall Warbler Identification" to teach us how to distinguish those nondescript migrants.

Vern Gauthier, this year's organizer, has planned Saturday and Sunday field trips to various sites including the migrant rich ridges of Michaux State Forest, Wildwood Lake Park, Millers Gap, Little Buffalo State Park, Gettysburg, and Waggoner's Gap which is a popular hawkwatch. Mid September will be the height of the Broad-winged Hawk migration. Fall warblers and other passerines will be moving, so we expect to see a long species list.

Saturday afternoon Andy Wilson will discuss "The Use of Drones in Bird Research" followed by Art McMorris's talk entitled "Peregrine Falcons in PA." The evening banquet will include the compilation of the birds seen, but the evening's highlight will be our banquet speaker, Ted Floyd, the editor of the American Birding Association's magazine, *Birding*. If you've ever heard Ted speak, you know that it will be a treat. Don't miss this great weekend!

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## Pennsylvania Migration Count

This year's PAMC (formerly North American Migration Count) is scheduled for Saturday, May 13. This count has taken place in Pennsylvania on the second Saturday of May since 1992. Birders go into the field to count all the birds they can find; it's very similar to the Christmas Bird Count, but the counts are county based and not limited to a 15-mile-diameter circle. Results are sent to your county compiler. Compiling for Indiana and Armstrong is Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493; [bcoriol@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriol@windstream.net)). Please contact the Higbees if you plan to participate.

Birding for the PAMC isn't difficult; just bird as 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. Some people count birds coming to their feeders and in their yards. To avoid double-counting, we need to know where you plan to bird.

A few 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 more information.

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## Articles Needed for August's Edition of *The Todd Nuthatch*

If you've had an interesting birding experience, have seen unusual birding behavior, or just want to write about birds, please submit your articles for consideration by July 20 for printing in the August newsletter. Thanks for your support!

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## ABA Code of Ethics

Because of recent events across the state, we are enclosing a copy of the ABA Code of Ethics which the Todd Bird Club has long supported. Please read it and remember that the welfare of the bird comes first.

# Great Backyard Bird Count Revisited

The 19th annual GBBC was held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017.

Once again this year, Pennsylvania ranked No. 2 nationally in the number of checklists submitted during the 2017 GBBC; the number was 6,983 checklists. In Pennsylvania 147 species were tallied.

Below is a list of those who participated in our region which includes Indiana, Armstrong, and Cambria counties. Those asterisked are Todd members.

We realize that some of our members participated in other counties; these are not recognized here because of the difficulty in obtaining that information. Please let us know if anyone who birded Indiana, Armstrong, or Cambria has been omitted.

Of the 36 listed participants, only 10 of them are Todd members. If you know any of the non-members, please invite them to join us.

Erin Becker  
Tom Betts  
John Boback  
Barbara Carrier  
\*Marcy Cunkelman  
Michael David  
Michele Davis  
Terry DeBiase  
\*Sue Dickson

Mary Eyman  
George Gleich  
William Hamilton  
Jennie Henry  
\*Margaret Higbee  
\*Roger Higbee  
Carol Hoover  
Winnie Illig  
Donna Klaput

Carrie Lingle  
Kathy Lubert  
\*Nancy Murphy  
Tom Murray  
\*Sandra Newell  
Sigurdur Petursson  
\*Joseph Pumford  
Lynn Ramage  
James Richburg

Theo Rickert  
Lori Schriff  
Liz Spence  
\*John Taylor  
Lawrence Valasek  
\*Mary Jo Valasek  
\*Marge Van Tassel  
Matt Webb  
Misti West

## According to eBird...

The top ten birding hotspots in Pennsylvania are listed below. Please note that Yellow Creek State Park comes in at No. 5 but is actually tied for fourth place!

Location	No. of Species	Location	No. of Species
1. Presque Isle SP (IBA)	316	6. Middle Creek WMA (Lancaster)	269
2. John Heinz NWR – impoundment	293	7. John Heinz NWR – wetlands (IBA)	268
3. Peace Valley Park (IBA)	290	8. Green Lane Reservoir (IBA)	266
4. Bald Eagle SP (IBA)	273	9. Conejohela Flats (IBA)	264
5. Yellow Creek SP (IBA)	273	10. Presque Isle – Gull Point	263

## Todd Embarks on Northern Rough-winged Swallow Project

Year after year members of Todd Bird Club's Tuesday group have witnessed the failure of the Northern Rough-winged Swallow nests at Yellow Creek State Park. This cavity nester builds its nest in the drain pipes under the bridge in the main recreation area. Every year they are washed out.

Lee Carnahan decided to do something about this. He found plans for a Northern Rough-winged



This is one of the Yellow Creek swallows nesting in the drain pipe  
Photo by Roger Higbee.

Swallow nesting box in Andrew Troyer's new book. Lee purchased the materials to make a prototype which he shared with us at our April meeting. We gave him permission to spend \$100 to proceed with the project. Plans are underway for Lee to build as many as he can for this amount. We will then install these nest boxes at various places throughout the county.

# Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County – Winter 2016 - 17

If you notice that the species in the following report are in a different than normal order, check out the new American Birding Association's checklist at [http://listing.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist\\_v7.9.0.pdf](http://listing.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist_v7.9.0.pdf). There has been a major reshuffling of species.

Please send your bird reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee at [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net) or mail to 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701.

**Abbreviations:** Armstrong Trail north of Lock & Dam 8 (AT), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Crooked Creek (CC), Indiana (IN), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Lewisville (LV), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Shelocta (SH), Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

A **Ross's Goose** was a nice find along the Kiski in Parks Twp. 1/8 (KK); it was photographed 1/11 (MVT) and 1/15 (AH, who commented it has an injured leg). Another Ross's Goose was observed across the Redbank Creek from Hawthorne 2/5 (JHe). A large flock of an estimated 500 **Canada Geese** passed over the SH Beagle Club 2/21 (BR). The YC **Mute Swan** was last noted 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK). Twelve **Tundra Swans** were reported near Aldi's in IN 12/9 (DL). CC hosted 55 on 12/10 (TR). Dec. 14 (DL) yielded a flock of an estimated 100 over the Hoodlebug Trail. Flying over a LV yard were an unspecified number on 12/5, 14 (MC) and 50 on 12/10 (MC); PG yielded 64 on 12/18 (TA). A total of 6 were listed on the IN CBC 12/26 (LC, RC, DL, RS, DW, RW) by three separate parties.

A single **Wood Duck** continued through 12/13 (TG, DK) at YC then Wood Ducks were absent until 1/24 (LC, MH, RH) when a pair reappeared; this is only the second Jan. record in *Indiana*. Other first returnees included 3 along the AT on 2/20 (TR) and 3 at Wilmore Dam 2/24 (TA). The last departing **Gadwalls** peaked at 32 on 12/13 (TG, DK) at YC where 3 resurfaced 2/7 (LC, MH, RH, DK). CC's last Gadwalls were 8 on 12/10 (TR) while 10 remained at KR through 12/14 (TB, MH, RH); 12 had returned to PG by 2/20 (JS). Returning *Armstrong* Gadwalls included 2, both at CC 2/18 (TR) and along the AT 2 n. of L&D 8 on 2/20 (TR). The first **American Wigeons** were 24 on 2/7 (LC, MH, RH, DK) at YC, 6 on 2/18 (JS) at PG, and one on 2/20 (TR) along the AT. Thirteen seems to be the magic **American Black Duck** number. Thirteen were spotted north of Dayton 1/15 (JB). After almost a full month's absence at YC, 13 American Blacks appeared 1/25 (PF); Armstrong returnees included 2 at KR 2/4 (TB, MH, RH) and 13 at CC 2/25 (JB). Three **Blue-winged Teal** were very early arrivals at YC 2/28 (LC, RC, TG, DK, GL, DP, SW); the previous earliest date was 3/5/1991 (BF, MH, GL). **Northern Shovelers**, too, were early with one listed at PG 2/18 (MH, RH); on 2/21 (LC, RC, DK, KT) 2 were counted at YC; the previous *Indiana* first date was 2/26/2012 (TR). Four shovelers were seen at Logansport 2/25 (JB). Eighteen **Northern Pintails** flew over frozen YC Lake 1/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) looking unsuccessfully for a place to land; open water at YC – approximately 15 percent of the lake – on 2/7 (LC, MH,

RH, DK) provided refuge for the next 8 pintails. **Green-winged Teal** were last noted 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) at YC and 12/14 (TB, MH, RH) at KR but had returned to the Allegheny River along the AT by 2/20 (TR) and to YC by 2/22 (RLo), not the earliest dates on record but well ahead of the norm.

PG hosted a single **Canvasback** and 8 **Redheads** 12/18 (TA). Two Canvasbacks and 5 Redheads still lingered at YC 1/3 (LC, DK); 2 Canvasbacks arrived at PG 2/20 (JS); by 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK) 14 Redheads had returned to YC; by 2/18 (JS) 4 were at PG. The last large flock of 51 **Ring-necked Ducks** was tallied 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) at YC, but one remained for the CBC 12/26 (LC, RC, DL) at Two Lick Reservoir, and one continued through 1/1 (MH, RH) at YC; by 2/18 (JS) 40 were tallied at PG. Eight **Greater Scaup** appeared at PG 12/5 (JS); 2 were spotted 2/26 (JD). Last **Lesser Scaup** were noted 12/13 (LC, TG, DK) at YC and 12/14 (TB, MH, RH) at KR while first returnees arrived 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK) at YC. A drake **Black Scoter** was observed 12/4 (SG) and again 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK); this is the third Dec. record. Eight **Buffleheads** remained at KR through 12/26 (MVT), 4 at YC through 12/27 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK, KT), and 10 at PG through 1/1 (TA); next spotted were 2 at KR 2/6 (MVT), 11 at PG 2/18 (JS), and 10 at YC 2/21 (LC, RC, DK, KT). Two Lick hosted 2 **Common Goldeneyes** 12/21 (MH, RH); 1/1 produced one at Rosston (TR) and 2 at PG (TA). YC harbored 2 on 1/31 (LC). Among numerous reports of **Hooded Mergansers** were notes of 46 at KR 12/22 (MH, RH), 10 at Two Lick 12/26 (LC, RC, DL), 14 at PG 1/2 (JS), and 14 at YC 1/31 (LC, MH, RH). **Common Mergansers** were widespread with top counts of 200 at CC 12/10 (TR), 66 at KR 12/14 (TB, MH, RH), 76 at CC 2/8 (MVT), and 65 at PG 2/18 (MH, RH). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were noted only on 12/4 (SG) and 1/1 (MH, RH), and both reports at YC mentioned 2 individuals. November's huge numbers of **Ruddy Ducks** at YC had decreased to 281 by 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) and by 1/3 (LC, DK), only 3 remained on the lake. KR hosted 16 on 12/14 (TB, MH, RH) while 4 visited PG 12/18, 1/1 (TA).

**Ruffed Grouse** continue in low numbers with few reports in *Indiana*, none in *Armstrong* or *Cambria*, and only 3 counted on the IN CBC 12/26 (v.o.). Single grouse were

listed 12/12 (AB, DB, GL) and 1/18 (DB) at Camerons Bottom, 12/25 (FM) at Pine Flats, and 2/27 (DB) near Heilwood.

First 3 **American Coots** arrived at YC. 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK), but by month's end (LC, RC, TG, DK, GL, DP, SW), the flock had built to 48.

An **American Woodcock** lingered at the SH Beagle Club 12/6 (BR); there are only three previous Dec. records. Two returning birds were first seen at Nolo 2/15 (AB); 3 were already displaying at YC 2/19 (MW); these are the second and third earliest Feb. records; the other involved two birds at Timber Lake 2/5/2004 (AB). Other early reports included 3 at the SH Beagle Club 2/23 (BR), one in IN also 2/23 (JK), 2 at Wilmore Dam 2/24 (RL), and 6 at PG 2/28 (TA).

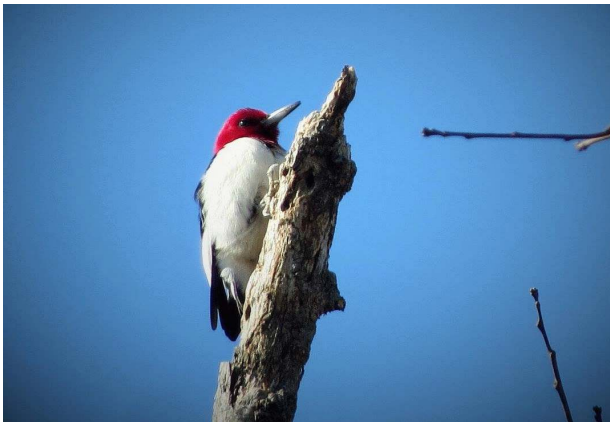
**Ring-billed Gull** maxima included 51 at PG 12/14 (TA), a mere 9 at YC 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK), and 38 at CC 2/20 (MVT). A total of 8 **Herring Gulls** noted at YC 2/22 (RL) was a high count but not unprecedented; most records are of one or 2 individuals. The Allegheny River produced 1-3 on various dates (v.o.).

Last dates were 12/13 (LC, TG, DK) for 4 **Common Loons** at YC and 12/22 (MH, RH) for one at KR. A Common Loon showed up on a private pond near SH 1/27 (RA); this is only the third January record for this species in *Indiana*. **Pied-billed Grebes** lingered till 1/3 (LC, DK) at YC and 1/11 at both the AT (JB) and near Wehrum (MH, RH). Three **Horned Grebes** were last spotted at YC 1/3 (LC, DK); first returnees appeared 2/26 (MH, RH) at KR and 2/28 (LC, RC, TG, DK, GL, DP, SW) at YC.

A WRS yielded the first **Turkey Vulture** 1/25 (TG, MH, RH, GL); this, too, is only the third January record in *Indiana* for this species. By 2/23 (DL) 35 were tallied along East Pike and on 2/27 (JH) 33 were counted in the same area. Among the many **Northern Harrier** reports, four WRS routes in *Indiana* and *Armstrong* yielded a total of 9, all of which were either immatures or females. Other reports included one near Smicksburg Cemetery 12/1 (DM, EM) and adult males west of Kittanning 2/15 (RN) and near Patton 2/26 (RL). The Worthington area yielded 3 individuals 1/1 (MVT) as well as numerous other reports of 1-2 harriers (v.o.). Another harrier frequented fields



One of many reported Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, this one was photographed at Conemaugh Dam 12/14 by Margaret Higbee.



Marge Van Tassel photographed this striking Red-headed Woodpecker on the first day of the Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 17.

near Clymer 12/28 (CL, GL), 1/24 (AB, DB), and 2/10 (DB, CL).

Two light morph **Rough-legged Hawks** were observed near Worthington 1/11 (MVT); single light morphs were found near Dayton 2/1 (AD, DF, MVT) and near Homer City 2/3 (MH, RH, DK, GL); another was reported n.w. of Alverda 2/12 (WI).

**Eastern Screech-Owls** were noted at four *Indiana* and five *Armstrong* locations; **Great Horned Owls**, at four *Indiana* and three *Armstrong* locations. One to 2 **Barred Owls** were found at Nolo 12/19, 1/21, 2/19 (AB, DB) and 1/15, 25 (DB); one was heard once a month near SH 12/28, 1/19, and 2/27 (MH, RH). Two **Short-eared Owls** were found wintering near Dayton 1/5 (TB) with as many as 4 reported 2/11 (SG); last noted were 2 on 2/17 (MVT).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a nice find in a yard west of Rt. 28 on 12/27 (GM); 2 visited CC from 1/2 (SG) through the end of the period, allowing great views for a multitude of birders. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were widely reported at eight locations, many

on multiple dates (v.o.).

A **Merlin** was present on the IUP campus on five dates between 1/16 and 2/19 (JT); one was spotted near IN Hospital 2/24 (DL). Another was photographed near Dayton 1/16 (MVT), and one was observed near Worthington 2/11 (MH, RH). Johnstown's confirmed bachelor **Peregrine** was sighted 1/7 (LG). One of the Kittanning Peregrines was seen 1/22 (MH, RH) from the Graff Bridge; both were noted 2/23 (MH, RH) from the Armstrong Trail near Manorville.

A very early **Eastern Phoebe** appeared at Nolo 2/20 (AB); this is the earliest date on record as the previous early date had been 2/22/2001 (MH, RH) near SH.

A flock of 150 **Horned Larks** was present near Marion Center 2/2 (MH, RH, GL, LM); this is the largest flock on record in *Indiana* since 1/26/2001 (MH, RH) when a flock of similar size was found near Clarksburg.

Surprisingly, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were listed at only three locations (v.o.) in this invasion year. **Winter Wrens** exhibited a greater appearance this winter with five sightings, including an individual in the marsh at

Waterworks Conservation Area between 12/16 (DL) and 2/8 (SD, DL); another was near SH 1/29 (ED). Two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** lingered near LV through 12/9 (MC) but were otherwise completely absent from the county.

A **Fox Sparrow** showed up at a feeder near SH 12/11 (MH, RH) and remained through 2/10 (MH); another arrived near LV 2/27 (MC). The only **Rusty Blackbirds** noted were singletons near LV 12/15-16 (MC) and at YC 12/26 (AB, GL) and 12/27 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK, KT).

A **Pine Siskin** found s. of IN 12/26 (CW, PW) was the lone report.

**Observers:** Tina Alianiello, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Sid Blair, John Boback, Lee Carnahan, Roger Carnahan, Richard Chirichiello, Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Anna Donato, Ed Donley, Jim Dunn, Debby Fazekas, Betsy Fetterman, Patience Fisher, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Linda Greble, Justin Heasley (JHe), Amy Henrici, Jocelynn Higbee, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Winnie Illig, Debbie Kalbfleisch, John Kilmarx, Karlee Kocon, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Rita Lippert, Rich Love (RLo), Gregory McDermott, Lisa Meadows, Dan Perlongo, Bob Ramsey, Theo Rickert, John Salvetti, Rodger Stormer, John Taylor, Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Ken Truitt, Matt Webb, Susan Wheatley, Chris Williams, Paula Williams, Daniel Winstead, Ray Winstead.

## If you haven't paid your 2017 dues, please remit.

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

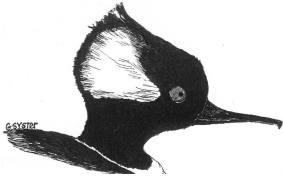
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