

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

October 2019

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 by 7:00 to socialize and snack. Refreshments are provided at each of our meetings.



Sandhill Cranes congregate by the thousands at Bosque del Apache.

Photo by Dave Brooke

Tuesday, November 5 – Dave Brooke will be the evening’s presenter. His wife Kathy was always a “backyard bird feeder” and got him interested in watching birds, but he didn’t really pay that much attention to them until about five years ago when he attended a bird hike at Harrison Hills Park, led by Steve Gosser and Mary Ann Thomas, during which he saw his first warbler, an adult male Hooded Warbler. Dave writes, “I was astounded that such a beautiful creature lived in the forest near me.” The following week, Kathy and he went to Magee Marsh

and Dave was hooked. Since then he has birded and photographed birds nearly every day. He loves to try to capture behaviors and interactions that tell a story.

Dave’s presentation is entitled, “Bosque del Apache’s Festival of the Cranes.” Dave will focus on the large number of Sandhill Cranes that depend upon Bosque as a wintering ground. He will also discuss the refuge and its importance in the Rio Grande Valley. Don’t miss this excellent program.

Tuesday, December 3 – This is our annual cookie extravaganza. If possible, please bring two dozen cookies to share.

John Taylor will present “The Final Push Toward a ‘Classic 600’” at our December meeting. When the Taylor brothers started watching birds half a century ago, truly elite birders in North America were members of the “600 club” whose life lists included 600 or more of the roughly 700 species of birds that were included in field guides at that time. Come and enjoy (or endure, survive, whatever) John Taylor’s celebratory presentation upon reaching that lifetime goal on a recent birding adventure to the West Coast with younger brother Wil and, albeit briefly, older brother Joe. In addition to the misadventures of their California trip this past September, the talk will include some highlights of earlier trips to other premier birding destinations such as Texas, Florida, and Alaska that set the stage for this year’s trip to put him over the top. Besides the extraordinary beauty of the birds and birding localities, there will be plenty of



Black-footed Albatross is just one of the life birds John Taylor added to his list in California.

amusing (or bizarre, disturbing, whatever) anecdotes to acknowledge the substantial contributions of other birders (including many Todd Bird Club members past and present) to his success in reaching his goal.

John Taylor, a native of Indiana, Pennsylvania, had the extraordinary good fortune to return home to western Pennsylvania in 1982 after his graduate work at the University of Missouri. He spent a third of a century as a professor in the Geoscience Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research projects on rocks and fossils of Cambrian and Ordovician age over the past four decades involved extensive travel throughout the US and Canada. These projects also provided many opportunities for “collateral birding,” as he will explain in his presentation. He will, of course, also point out the geologic significance of many of the birding localities visited. Don’t miss this one as John’s programs are not only educational but entertaining as well.

Tuesday, January 7 – Members’ Night. Please bring something to share – digital photos, printed photos, stories, memorabilia, etc. The more participation we have, the more fun it will be!

Outings

Tuesday morning outings will continue till deer season. Most outings, except for October 15, are at Yellow Creek. For all Yellow Creek outings, meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Early comers are invited to meet at the pavilion on the north shore shortly after dawn. Everyone is welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667) or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). Please note that there will be no outing on Tuesday, November 26, 2019, as it is the first week of deer season, and the park is open to hunting.

Tuesday, October 15 – Hawkwatch trip to the Allegheny Front. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Yellow Creek State Park office to carpool, or meet at the hawkwatch at 9:15 a.m. For information contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). Bring something to sit on and dress warmly as it is often cold and windy on the Front. Please bring your lunch.

Saturday, October 19 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Gloria Lamer (724-349-1159). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. We plan to head to the north shore to bird the Boy Scout camp area and environs.

Saturday, October 26 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office.

Saturday, November 2 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. This is the annual fall joint outing with the Three Rivers Birding Club. This field trip will culminate with lunch at the Chinese buffet in Indiana.

Saturday, November 9 – Ghost Town Trail at Dilltown. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trail parking lot in Dilltown.

Saturday, November 16 – Waterworks Conservation Area and the Gary Ferrence Farm, led by Tom Glover. Meet at 8:00 a.m. From Indiana, take South 6th Street (Rt. 954) south to Lower Twolick Drive; turn left on Lower Twolick for 0.2 mile bearing right onto Waterworks Road. Continue 0.8 miles to address 768 Waterworks Road.

Saturday, November 23 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Ray Winstead (724-349-2506). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the first large parking lot just past the park office.

Sunday, December 7– Wednesday, December 10 – The Niagara Frontier, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee. ***You must have a passport or a passport card to enter Canada and return to the US. We will bird mostly in Canada.*** This four-day trip will cover Dunkirk Harbor, New York, en route to the Peace Bridge, as well as areas along the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. We will meet

Frank and Sandra Horvath in Grimsby on Monday and bird two days under their leadership.

We plan to stay at a motel near the falls on the Canadian side. You may take part in the entire trip or in only a day or two by meeting us there. If you are interested in going or have questions, please contact the Higbees (724-354-3493 or 412-309-3538).

Last year's highlights included Tufted Duck; all three scoter species; Little, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls; Black-crowned Night-Heron; Rough-

legged Hawk; Merlin; Peregrine; and three warbler species.

Thursday, December 26 – Indiana Christmas Bird Count. The count is conducted in a 15-mile-diameter circle centered at the intersection of Second and Grandview in Indiana. If you live within 7.5 miles of this intersection, you are welcome to do a feeder or yard count. Otherwise, you may join one of the field parties or take responsibility for a section of the circle. Please contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) if you plan to participate.

North America Loses Nearly 3 Billion Birds Since 1970

By Tom Glover

A recent article published in the 20 September 2019 issue of *Science* details the loss of nearly three billion birds since 1970. Kenneth V. Rosenberg, of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology, and others studied 529 species of birds, including 519 native and 10 introduced species. This total represented about three-fourths of all species and more than 90 percent of the bird population in North America. The data sources for the study drew mainly from the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The study also used information from the International Shorebird Survey and aerial surveys of water bodies, swamps, and marshes for waterfowl.

The study broke the data into ten categories by species. The overall species analyzed found a 28.8% decline in the total population, and it was found that the decline in numbers was spread over 57.3 percent of those surveyed since the 1970s. The largest percentage loss of 62.9 percent was found within the introduced species category. The second highest percentage decline of 37.4 percent was in the shorebird category. The study also reviewed species within ten different habitats. Grassland bird species' populations showed the largest decline of 53.3 percent, and they were followed by boreal forest species with a 33.1 percent decline. Wetland species' populations

were the only habitat that showed a positive increase of 13.0 percent. The wetlands increase was primarily due to a 56.0 percent jump in waterfowl category counts. Raptors, turkeys, grouse, ducks, and geese recorded increases over the time period. The increases reflect conservation efforts to protect these species, and in turn this shows the importance of conservation efforts. I found the increase of gnatcatchers and vireos to be interesting.

The article used weather radar data to detect flocks of birds migrating during the time period between 2007 and 2017. The returns of 143 radar stations of detected bird flocks were converted into biomass. During the ten year study the biomass of birds declined by 13 percent. That decline was found in the eastern part of the United States. Other sections of the US did not change or showed increases over the time period. The radar results support the findings of reduced bird populations over the past 50 years.

It should be noted that Todd Bird Clubs members contributed to the published study. The information collected by members during Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Bird Counts was part of the data used for the study. Thank you!

Tallying the Losses

Annual surveys show that since 1970, North American birds have dwindled in all habitats except wetlands. Whereas most groups have declined, ducks and geese have flourished, as have raptors since the 1972 ban on DDT.

To learn more about the decline, go to www.pabirds.org, click on "Latest Newsletter" at the top of the page, scroll to page 16 and read the first section of "The Raven Reporter."

What Can Todd Bird Club Members Do?

Member Lee Schweitzer has suggested that a group of us gather to discuss the bird population decline and what the Todd Bird Club might do to promote public awareness and somehow make a difference. Several persons signed

up at the October bird club meeting, but a few probably forgot about this as the sign-up sheet was on the back table. If you are interested, please contact Lee Schweitzer at lcs47@verizon.net.

From the President's Desk...

It has been great seeing so many of our members showing up at our meetings. Mike Fialkovich presented an interesting and educational program at our October meeting about his trip to south Texas. I overheard Mike mention to someone present that this was his eleventh or twelfth presentation to Todd Bird Club! Thanks, Mike, for sharing your photos and your knowledge with us.

Our next two programs, too, will be interesting. At our November meeting Dave Brooke will present a program on Bosque del Apache, New Mexico, where thousands of Sandhill Cranes spend the winter. In December our own John Taylor will talk about his quest for 600 species in the ABA area. Don't miss either of these great programs.

Although I haven't been able to attend any of the outings, I have looked on eBird and noticed that we are getting a nice group of birders every Tuesday and also on Saturdays. I've also seen long lists of species seen. If you haven't been on one of our bird field trips, maybe it's time to head to Yellow Creek on Tuesday mornings or to one of the other Saturday locations listed above. The hawkwatch trip to the Allegheny Front near Central City sounds interesting. Fall is a great time to be outside to enjoy the beauty around you. Sitting on a mountaintop for a good part of the day in a comfortable chair just watching the skies might be pretty relaxing!

The Todd Bird Club was organized in 1982. That means we will be celebrating our 40th anniversary in 2022.

Maybe it's a little early, but we should start thinking about what we would like to do when the time for celebration arrives. I was told that our 30th anniversary almost slipped by without notice, so our celebration was actually held in April 2013. Discuss it among yourselves, but please bring your ideas to any officer.

And while I'm rambling on, I might mention that the Higbees have mentioned PSO to me. What exactly is PSO? The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology is actually our state bird club. It's a group of birders who meet once a year at a different location across the state. They also put out two publications – a quarterly newsletter and a journal that includes seasonal reports for many of the counties in our state. Margaret Higbee is the newsletter editor, but she has help from two other Todd members – Roger Higbee and Flo McGuire are her proofreaders. Margaret writes, "...and Flo and Roger do a super job of proofing and re-editing." Three of our members write three of the county reports for the journal – Tom Glover covers Jefferson County; Margaret Higbee writes Indiana's report; and Marge Van Tassel is responsible for Armstrong County. The Higbees are encouraging Todd members to join PSO. Next year's meeting will be in Lancaster in September.

Well, I hope you will enjoy the fall season. See you in November!

Co-Presidents: Linda Jones & Jim Woodard

Special Thanks to Dan and Marcy Cunkelman for Hosting the Todd Bird Club Picnic

Sincere thanks to Dan and Marcy for inviting the Todd Bird Club to their home for our annual picnic. Marcy always provides all of the paper products, utensils, buns, and drinks, beside making two types of sloppy joes for us to sample and enjoy. We all had a great time until the thunder and lightning began. Fortunately, everyone had

finished eating and had had a reasonable time to socialize before the skies opened up.

Thanks, Marcy and Dan! We missed the tour of your gardens which for many is the highlight of the day.

Warbler Road Trip

By Debbie Kalbfleisch

Last year, I heard about The Warbler Road in Virginia for the first time. Because of its isolation, just off the Blue Ridge Parkway in the southwestern part of the state, there are not many places nearby to stay, aside from a couple of campgrounds and the Peaks of Otter Lodge. I perked up when I heard this, as my parents used to make a point of staying at the Peaks of Otter at least once a year, and always talked about how beautiful it was, but I had never been there.

So, on April 27 of this year, a Friday, I set off with two friends, Kate and Judy, to explore The Warbler Road. While we could have driven six hours straight to the Peaks of Otter from Pittsburgh, we decided to stop at the New River Gorge in West Virginia and spend the night in Fayetteville. The plan was to look for the Swainson's Warbler at the Gorge that afternoon. Unfortunately, we hadn't gone south on I-79 very far when the weather turned ugly, and the rains came. Torrential rain! Driving was slow and since there was going to be very little birding that day, we decided to be practical and look for a good place to eat. The Thyme Bistro in Weston, West Virginia, turned out to be a lovely spot for a nice, leisurely lunch. It was still raining when we arrived at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, but we wandered among the displays and stood for a while on the covered porch, enjoying the view of the New River far below. Next, we checked into the Quality Inn then went to my favorite restaurant in Fayetteville, the Cathedral Cafe and Book Store.

The next day, after an early breakfast at the motel, we headed to the Endless Wall Trail at the bottom of the Gorge. If you bird this trail later in May or June, you will realize the name is perfect; the rhododendrons along the trail form an impenetrable wall of foliage. With the trees just starting to leaf out, however, we were hoping for good looks at the early migrants. We were still on the Lansing-Edmond Road when a large lump on a wire over the road brought the car to a sudden halt. A beautiful Barred Owl! We slowly inched forward and the owl stayed, letting us get wonderful looks. A car coming in the opposite direction finally flushed it into the woods. Obviously, the birding gods felt bad for raining on our parade the previous day! We spent the next three hours tramping the Endless Wall Trail where we scored Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. A bonus was watching a Blue-headed Vireo build a nest. After our walk, we got back on

the road for the three-hour drive to the Peaks of Otter, with a quick stop at a gas station and Burger King in the town of Buchanan, Virginia, for lunch. Dining tip: Next time, pick up something to go in Fayetteville!

In the early 1960s, The National Park Service constructed the Peaks of Otter Lodge and Lake Abbott. Nestled next to three peaks in the Appalachian Mountains, this area is still a bit remote from civilization. The rooms are simple and rustic but comfortable. My sister Patty, who lives in Virginia, was making the trip down to meet us, along with her friend Ann. I tried texting her when we arrived mid-afternoon, but cell phone and internet access is spotty, and the message didn't seem to be going anywhere. I dropped Kate at her room and then Judy. I then took a brief walk, and finally heading up the hill by myself to the main building, I was only mildly surprised to see that Kate and Judy, who had never met my sister, were already conversing with Patty and Ann on the lawn like old friends! Maybe binoculars act as a force field. Patty and Ann had already walked the mile-long loop around Lake Abbott earlier but were happy to do it again with us. A Black Vulture was soaring overhead with the Turkey Vultures, and Barn Swallows swooped over the lake. A Common Raven put in an appearance, and we heard two Ovenbirds calling from the woods. The Peaks of Otter may be isolated, but they run a first-class restaurant. We had a lovely dinner that evening, and I can recommend the Blackened Catfish!

The following morning, Judy and I sat and birded from our patio facing the lake until Kate wandered up from her room. We met Patty and Ann a bit after 8 a.m. and decided to explore one of the trails across the road, the Johnson Farm Loop. While Ann is not (yet!) a birder, my sister had loaned her a pair of binoculars and she did very well keeping up with us. We had a nice variety of forest species, including Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Carolina Chickadees, Wood Thrush, and Brown Thrasher. We tried hard to get Ann on a Scarlet Tanager, but the bird was not at all cooperative. We were surprised to hear a Fish Crow in the mountains, but apparently, it is not all that uncommon! We were, after all, not that far from the James River. By 10 a.m., we had worked up an appetite and sat down to a guilt-free, hearty breakfast in the dining room. Afterwards, we said our goodbyes to Patty and Ann, who were heading home.

Kate, Judy, and I then drove seven miles north on the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Sunset Field Overlook. Warbler

Road is actually a series of country roads, leading down a total of 2700 feet from the overlook. I was hoping for paved, but they are all narrow dirt and gravel roads, with pull-offs here and there. Most of the traffic starts at the top and descends down to the James River, but we did meet a few cars on their way up. Needless to say, there are no gas stations or rest areas on this route! Although it was noon when we started, almost immediately we heard the song of a Black-throated Blue Warbler and had to pull over to investigate. We noted numerous birds, including Acadian Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak flitting about in the treetops. Broad-winged Hawks soaring overhead were our first of the year.

We soon realized that we were making slow progress and wondered if we would need several days to make it to the bottom! At one of the pull-offs, however, we made the acquaintance of Mary F. of Danville, who told us she makes yearly trips to the Warbler Road in the spring. She was good enough to guide us down the mountain, stopping at all her best places! Here is our list of warblers: Ovenbird (lots!); Worm-eating Warbler (several); Black-and-white Warbler; Hooded Warbler; American Redstart (lots!); Cerulean Warbler (several); Northern Parula; and Black-throated Blue, Pine, Black-throated Green, and Canada Warblers. Mary seemed to know everyone on that road and no wonder, as she teaches Master Naturalist classes. Kate was in heaven as they both bent their heads over wood betony, large flowered bellwort, great chickweed, wild geranium, fire pink, and early saxifrage when we weren't distracted by birds. Judy and I were content to gaze at the spectacular scenery; this is truly a gorgeous area. Toward the end of the route, about 13 miles, we joined Rt. 59, which is paved and follows the North Creek. We stopped several times along the rushing creek to listen for Louisiana Waterthrush and were rewarded with nice views. Around 5 p.m. we thanked Mary profusely for the guided tour and headed back to the lodge and another excellent dinner.

We slept in a bit on Monday morning then headed to Babcock State Park, just over the border in West Virginia. We had not yet gotten a Swainson's Warbler, which would be a life bird for Judy and Kate, and we were determined to devote the next day in its pursuit! None of us had been to Babcock before, and we found it an absolutely delightful place. Fresh ground cornmeal isn't something you get at most gift shops, but the Glade Creek Grist Mill is a re-creation of an older mill that once stood at that spot. After making some purchases, we elected to walk part of the trail around Boley Lake. A few Northern Rough-winged Swallows swooped over the water, and we were delighted to find three Spotted Sandpipers on the shore. We only made it halfway around the mile-long loop

as we ran into a nice wave of migrants, including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Palm Warbler, and several Yellow-rumped Warblers, all new for the trip. A Great Crested Flycatcher announced his presence from the top of a tall pine. We found no Swainson's Warbler, however, so we decided to push on and try again at the New River Gorge.

We arrived at the Endless Wall Trail just before 4 p.m. and were happy to once again hear hooting from two Barred Owls. Checking eBird, we found that someone had found the first Swainson's Warbler of the year here the day before, and we realized that he had probably been quite close to the parking lot. The bird had to be here! We staked out a likely-looking section along the streambed and settled in. Movement caused a flurry of excitement until we realized that it was "only" a Black-and-white Warbler taking a bath in the stream! At last our patience was rewarded, and we heard the clear whistle of the Swainson's! How skulky and sneaky is this bird? In spite of sparse vegetation, and three pairs of eyes scanning the bushes, none of us was able to get on the little guy. Just to tease us, it sang only twice. Still feeling good about getting a life bird, Judy and Kate agreed that we would need a return trip back to West Virginia, hopefully next spring, to try to clap eyes on the actual bird!

Heading north again, we spent the night in Summersville, West Virginia. This is just a short drive from the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area in the Monongahela National Forest, and we were able to get an early start the next morning. A half-mile boardwalk makes a loop through one of the very few bogs left in the state. I had last visited the boardwalk in June of 2015 and was looking forward to walking it with Judy and Kate. As we got out of the car, we were thrilled to hear a Ruffed Grouse drumming close by. A small army of volunteers once kept up the battle to keep this a natural bog area, but it was obvious once we started walking that it had not been enough. The sundew and pitcher plants I remembered had disappeared, and Field Sparrows were singing from the dry fields. While no longer a bog, it is still a beautiful and pristine place. The boardwalk turned into the woods, and we entered the territory of several singing Canada Warblers and were able to get nice looks. Northern Waterthrush made the trip's 19th and last warbler species. Rounding a corner, we found that a pair of beavers had invaded and, unfortunately, the boardwalk had been flooded several inches in this section. We made our way gingerly across several narrow planks. Finally coming back to the parking lot, we were greeted by a singing Winter Wren. We watched as the tiny bird flitted over the rocks of a swiftly running stream. This seemed the perfect ending to our adventure! We had listed a total of 77 species for the trip.

Birding Anchorage, Denali, Seward

by Patience Fisher

I thought about titling this “Birding Alaska,” but that would be a bit like calling my trip to Magee Marsh, “Birding Ohio.” With an east-west width of 2,400 miles and a north-south length of 1,420 miles, Alaska covers a huge area. I got to see about 300 square miles of it. I joined my friend Kate St. John on a tour with Partnership for International Birding (PIB), led by David Trently. Only five of us were on the tour, so the leader was very accommodating.

We started our adventure in Anchorage on June 12 and got our best bird of the trip on the very first day – a Falcatad Duck at Potter Marsh! This gorgeous Asian bird had been hanging out with a group of American Wigeons for three weeks, and we were relieved that it stuck around for us. In fact, we saw it again when we passed through Anchorage at the end of the trip. We enjoyed excellent looks at it both times. Other birds seen in the Anchorage area included Red-throated and Pacific Loons, Red-necked Phalaropes, Arctic Terns, and Mew Gulls. And of course, the ubiquitous Black-billed Magpies. But my favorite was the American Dipper. This was the only Anchorage bird I had heard of for years but had only seen in nature documentaries. I was treated to two sightings, the first near Anchorage and again when heading south on the Denali Highway to Paxson.

After two nights at a hotel in Anchorage, we headed north to cabins near Denali National Park. The views were spectacular, even before our tour of the park the next day. You are allowed to drive your car only a few miles into Denali, so we took a tour bus to see more of the park. We had a congenial driver who told us to shout “Animal, animal” if we saw one and we wanted him to stop. I must admit that the first time I saw a Golden Eagle, I shouted “Bird!” to no avail, before quickly correcting myself and shouting “Animal, animal!” We saw many Golden Eagles, two of which were courting. What a sight! But best of all was the Gyrfalcon, perched on a rock. Lifer! Mammals included grizzly bear, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, snowshoe hare, and Arctic ground squirrel.

The next day we took the Denali Highway to a no-frills motel in Paxson in order to seek the Smith’s Longspur. We were treated to yet another Gyrfalcon sighting, this time two of them in flight. We also saw two more American Dippers, actively feeding in a creek and taking food to their young in a nest under the bridge. After dinner, we hiked across the tundra to where the Smith’s Longspur had been sighted. We did get a quick look at the bird in flight and saw the tell-tale white outer tail feathers.

But what impressed me more was the tundra itself. First of all, we were allowed to walk on it—anywhere we pleased! Second, how difficult it was to do so. The footing is highly variable and cryptic; you don’t know if where you put your foot will be hard as a rock or little more than water. Higher ground does not mean drier ground – stepping on the upper side of a swell to stay dry is no more likely to accomplish that than just walking on. With my eyes glued to the ground, I couldn’t help but notice the large variety of primitive-looking plants. I found it more exhausting to walk on the tundra than to walk on deep sand. However, I also found it thrilling. We walked out of sight of our van and could see for miles with no road, house, or manmade object in sight. It felt as if I were on an alien planet.

In the morning we drove back to Anchorage on the Denali, Richardson, and Glenn Highways, stopping to bird along the way. This time we scored the Hudsonian Godwits in Anchorage, four at close range. We also enjoyed watching a mother Red-necked Grebe carrying her babies on her back. We were trying to decide if she were carrying one or two, when Father came along with a tasty morsel. One baby left its mother’s back to swim to him for it, then another, and then another! Three babies!

In the morning we birded our way to Seward along the Seward Highway, picking up many good birds, including Varied Thrush, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, White-winged Crossbill, and Townsend’s Warbler. We arrived in Seward in the late afternoon. We stayed two nights in a bed & breakfast, my favorite accommodation of the trip. The first evening before dinner, I visited the Alaska SeaLife Center which was within walking distance from our B&B. As a Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium volunteer, I was very much interested in visiting this partner organization. Our zoo acquired their baby sea otter in 2012, and I have had the pleasure of watching him grow and thrive. He’s still there now.

At the SeaLife Center I got to see their newest rescue, a nine-month-old bearded seal. This baby seal was already huge – as the largest ice seal in Alaska, bearded seals can reach nearly 1,000 pounds. The native Eskimos do not allow rescued animals to be released in their waters after rehabilitation, and that is the only suitable habitat. So, she will be sent to a zoo some day. The SeaLife Center also had a wonderful bird exhibit. All of the birds were local, so I used this opportunity to study at close range what I hoped to see the next day. A large exhibit included both species of puffins, many ducks, and various gulls in a

large exhibit, complete with sea cliffs that looked very natural.

The following morning, we did a nine-hour pelagic trip from Resurrection Bay into the Kenai Fjords and around the Chiswell Islands. There were about 100 people on the boat. The Captain told us it was the best weather he had had all year. It was spectacular – sunny and windless. We saw rafts of Tufted and Horned Puffins; Common and Thick-billed Murres; Pigeon Guillemots; Marbled, Kittlitz's, and Ancient Murrelets; and Parakeet and

Rhinoceros Auklets. We also saw orca and humpback whales, sea lions, and harbor porpoises. It was so sunny, the glaciers were calving, which was interesting to see first and then hear a few seconds later.

June 20 was my last day in Alaska. The others were flying on to Nome, but I was going home. We were all headed to the airport, however. Our group had seen 91 species of birds, 88 of which I had seen. But the exciting number was my 23 lifers!

The Saga of the Trumpeter Swan Family Continues

By Tom Glover

In the August 2019 issue of *The Todd Nuthatch* we found the swan family on the same beaver pond where they had nested in 2018. The last sighting of the family mentioned was the first week of June 2019.

On September 6, 2019, Margaret Smith, Executive Director of the Trumpeter Swan Society, notified me that they had received a report detailing Z603, Z675, and a third swan on a pond just outside of Reynoldsville, PA, in Jefferson County. The new location is about 11.5 miles southeast, as a swan flies, of the beaver pond where the family had last been noted the first week of June. A gentleman had reported the three swans, and Margaret Smith relayed the information to me. I contacted the man who wishes to remain anonymous. He also wants the exact location of his family farm to remain anonymous.

He reported that Z603, Z675, and their young adult have been frequenting his pond through August of this year and through most of September. He feeds chickens and domestic ducks on his property, so the swans helped



Lisa Catarouche photographed the swans on the beaver pond on 29 September 2019.

themselves to the feed provided. He stated the swans show up at his farm like clock-work. They arrive about 7:45 a.m. and stay for a day, leave, then return a day or so later about the same time. While there, they feed, hang around the chicken coops, and swim in the pond with the domestic ducks. He stated that the swans are not bothered when he is tending to the chickens and ducks. He reported the swans have not been seen since the third week of September, but the story does

not end there.

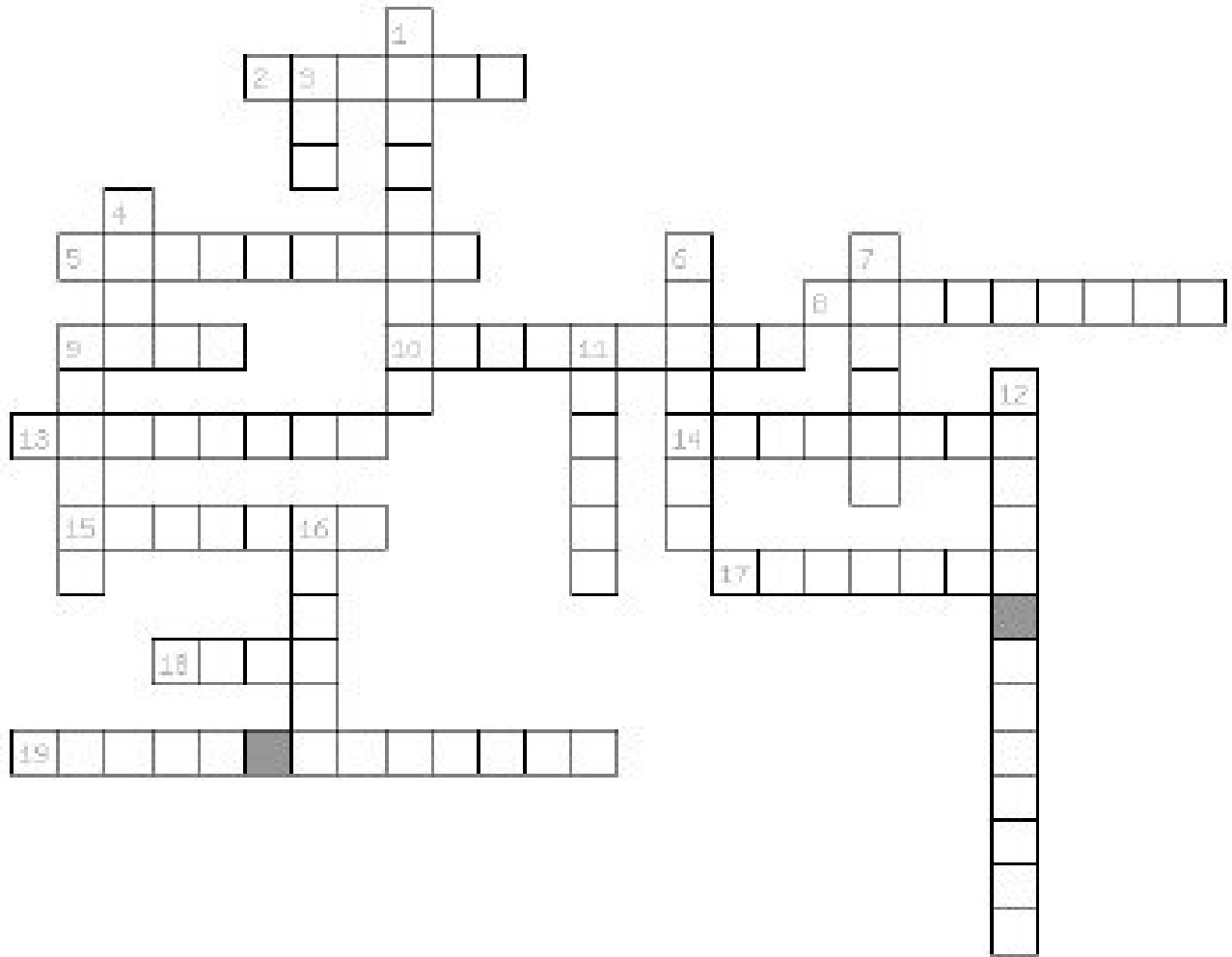
Lisa Catarouche reported that she and her family found the swans on the beaver pond on Sunday, September 29, 2019. She reported the swans were very friendly, swimming up to them and hanging out with them for ten minutes.

The swan family's reality story continues. I find it interesting that just when I think the swans have disappeared, they show up. The swan family's story started here in Pennsylvania in March of 2016, and they continue to add people to their story.

Trumpeter Swan Tidbits

Did you know that in 1933 the Trumpeter Swan population was at its lowest in the 48 contiguous states? A maximum of 66 birds were noted. The Trumpeter Swan is allegedly the tallest and "most statuesque" of all the swans and the largest bird of the subarctic.

Birds! Birds!!! Birds!!!!



Down

1. Male shorebird that does all of the incubating of eggs and care of the young
3. Nocturnal raptor
4. A marsh bird with rectangular tail and short yellow bill
6. Woodpecker with spotted underparts and barred upperparts
7. No longer Gray Jay
9. *Sayornis*
11. Game bird whose populations greatly reduced by West Nile Virus
12. A bird that works its way up the trunk of a tree, flies downward to base of another tree, then repeats the process
16. Gull with wedge-shaped tail

Across

2. Ground robin
5. Most recent Yellow Creek accidental
8. Previously Common Moorhen
9. Tail-wagging warbler
10. Falcon that nests in Armstrong Co.
13. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
14. Most common PA plover
15. Thunder-pumper
17. His bill can hold more than his belly can
18. Species with long, down-curved bill
19. Bird with longer lower mandible

Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County – Summer 2019

Please send your bird reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee at bcoriol@windstream.net or mail to 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701.

Abbreviations: Armstrong Trail (AT), Blue Spruce County Park (BS), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), Crooked Creek (CC), Dugan's Marsh (DM), Friends of the Parks (FOP), Hemlock Lake (HL), Homer City (HC), Indiana (IN), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Kovalchick's Pond (KP), Lewisville (LV), Lock & Dam (L&D), Manorville (MV), Margus Lake (ML), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Rosston (RT), Shelocta (SH), West Lebanon (WL), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

A **Wood Duck** with 4 young was spotted on the pond at Blacklick Valley Natural Area 6/4 (HH). Four **Hooded Mergansers** were noted at PG 6/4 (SVH); this is the only summer record this year in the region. Three **Common Mergansers** were sighted on the KT BBS 6/4 (MH, RH); again this is the lone report for this species this summer.

Single **Ruffed Grouse** south of New Bethlehem 6/26 (BR) and at Gipsy 7/13 (JaK, TK) were the lone grouse reports. Away from Nolo and PG, **Wild Turkey** reports received were all of singletons (v.o.); 6 poult accompanied by two hens were observed at Nolo 7/28 (CL, GL).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were noted much more frequently than **Black-billed Cuckoos** this summer. Three Black-billed were having a territorial dispute near SH 6/1 (MH, RH); the KT BBS 6/4 (MH, RH) yielded Black-billed Cuckoos at three separate stops.

On 6/1 (DL) a **Common Nighthawk** was observed over Virginia Farms; Ford City hosted 2 on 6/3 (SG). A single **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was calling near WL 6/2 (TB), 6/3 (MH, RH), and again 6/9 (DL); no other was reported.

Three **Least Sandpipers** arrived at YC 7/16 (LC, BF, MH, RH) while first southward bound **Pectoral Sandpiper** was observed there 7/30 (LC, BF). Three **American Woodcocks** were still peenting near WL 6/3 (MH, RH); at 4:43 a.m. on 6/7 (MH, RH) 3 woodcocks were sighted sitting along a road at PG. A dawn lawn mowing flushed a woodcock at the edge of the grass n.e. of KT 6/23 (ABu). **Spotted Sandpiper** reports included one at Pine Hollow 6/28 (JB); one 6/30 (TR) and 3 on 7/25 (TR), both at CC; 2 on 7/16 (LC, BF, MH, RH) and one on 7/23 (TaB, LC, TG, MH, RH), both at YC; and one at Lake Rowena 7/31 (AM). Two **Solitary Sandpipers** appeared both at KR 7/18 (SG) and at YC 7/28 (LC).

A single **Ring-billed Gull**, found on 7/16 (LC *et al*) and 7/23 (TaB *et al*) at YC, comprised the entire

report for this species for the region. A **Herring Gull** was listed at PG 6/2 (RL); the Herring Gull nest at KT was found to be empty on 6/23 (TR). Four **Caspian Terns** stopped at PG 6/16 (TD). An early **Forster's Tern** appeared at YC 6/25 (TG, DK).

A basic plumaged **Common Loon** was photographed at PG 6/9 (RL) and was seen again 7/28 (TD). First **Double-crested Cormorants** included 2 at PG 6/23 (RL), one at YC 6/25 (TG, DK), 5 at Wilmore Dam 6/30 (KS), and one at CC 6/30 (TR).

A **Great Egret** was a nice find 7/2 (LC, RC, TaB, TB, TG, DK), but by 7/30 (BF) 2 were present at YC; PG harbored one 7/28 (TD).

As **Black Vultures** continue to expand their northward range, 2 flew over a yard near LV 6/26 (MC). The late presence of an **Osprey** at YC 6/11 (DeB, TaB, EB, JBr, LC, BF, TG, DK, TR) and again 7/2 (LC, RC, TaB, TB, TG, DK) suggested a possible local nesting. The same is true at PG with sightings 6/16 (TD), 7/17 (DS), and 7/28 (RL, TD).

The only **Eastern Screech-Owls** noted were 2 south of New Bethlehem 6/25 (BR) and one near LV 7/31 (MC). Two **Great Horned Owls** "giving immature calls" were heard at PG 10:11 p.m. on 7/6 (TD); no others were reported in our region. **Barred Owls** were consistently heard at Nolo – singletons on 6/22, 28; 7/18 (AB, DB); 7/22 (DB); and 2 on 7/28 (AB, DB). The only other Barred Owls noted were singletons near Loretto 6/13, 18 (SVH) and near SH 7/25 (MH, RH).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** at Mahoning Creek Lake 7/7 (AK, JK) was a great find.

A **Merlin** was observed near Beyer 6/8 (PR); another was photographed in a yard in IN 6/10 (JaP, JP); the nest in Oakland Cemetery fledged 3 young on 7/4 (DL); this is the second year that Merlins have been confirmed nesting in IN; on 7/24 (DL) 3 Merlins were observed in the cemetery. One of the KT **Peregrines** was sighted from the Graff Bridge 7/13

(MH, RH) while 2 juveniles were observed at Manorville 7/30 (TB).

A **Fish Crow** was heard calling at Vandergrift 6/16 (MK); 2 were found at Lake Rowena 7/21 (AM); a nest containing at least 2 young was found in Oakland Cemetery 7/14 (DL).

On 6/4 (fide MH, RH) near Dayton a **Purple Martin** colony at an Amish farm had 53 eggs; for the first time ever, one of their nests contained eight eggs. The following day, 6/5, LC, while checking the martin box at BS, watched as a male martin flew in, circled the box several times, then flew off. Martin maxima included 16 at another Amish farm near Smicksburg 6/4 (MH, RH); 17 at PG 7/14 (RL); and 8 at CC 7/23 (MVT). See inset for more martin info.



Joseph Pumford confirmed nesting for Red-winged Blackbirds at the Waterworks Conservation Area when he sighted and photographed this female carrying food.

near Gipsy 7/13 (JaK, TK) were the only ones noted.

A single **Pine Siskin** visited a yard near LV 7/16 (MC).

The grassland sparrows continue in low numbers. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found on the KT BBS 6/4 (MH, RH), at SGL 108-23 on 6/5 (TD), and at SGL 108 Bellwood 6/22 (TA, SVH). The only **Vesper Sparrow** listed was one near Mayport 6/26 (BR). Two **Savannah Sparrows** were found on the KT BBS 6/4 (MH, RH) and one at Babcock Mine area in

Gallitzin SF 6/16 (JaK, TK); 3 were found near the latter area 7/16 (LP). Sandpiper Road in Gallitzin SF yielded 2 **Henslow's Sparrow** 6/17 (JaK, TK) and 6/29 (PI).

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was spotted at YC 6/1 (LG); another was near Adrian 6/23 (TR); these were the only reports.

The only **Bobolinks** reported were one on the KT BBS and 3 found near Dry Knob, all 6/4 (MH, RH) and 2 near PG 6/6 (MH, RH); 2 were noted north of Widnoon 6/10 (SJ).

Single **Worm-eating Warblers** at Polka Hollow 6/17 (SV) and along the Armstrong Trail near Cosmos 6/25 (TR) were the only ones reported. The lone **Kentucky Warbler** observed was found along the KT BBS 6/4 (MH, RH). A very late, but well described, **Cape May Warbler** was reported near KT 6/8 (SG). The CC valley and the AT n. of L&D 8 were the hotspots for **Cerulean Warblers** this summer. Two were near Cochran's Mill 6/1 (MH, RH). Up to 3 were counted along the AT 6/3, 19 (TR) n. of L&D 8; one was at CC 6/7 (TR) while another was found along the AT north of Cosmos 6/25 (TR). Last noted was one at Murphy's Bottom 7/6 (TR). **Magnolia Warblers** were listed at only two locations – one on 6/8 (RL) along the Ghost Town Trail near Dilltown and 2 at Gipsy 7/13 (JaK, TK). Only two **Blackburnian Warbler** reports were received – single birds near Gipsy 7/13 (JaK, TK) and along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 7/18 (TR). All 5 **Black-throated Blue Warbler** reports were from *Cambria* (v.o.). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** along the AT near Kelly Station 6/6 (JB) comprised the entire report for this species. Two **Canada Warblers** were sighted at SGL 108-27 on 6/5 (TD).

Ron Alsop near Penn Run writes:

“We had a total of 35 martin nests with 27 of those being “nesting pairs,” i.e., produced eggs and or babies. We ended up fledging 108 babies out of 130 eggs—so exciting! Only the last few that fledged and their parents are still here [Ed, Note: as of 8/12]. They return at night and leave very early in the morning. The parents spend a couple weeks teaching them how to fly, catch bugs in the air, and socialize with other martins. Then they join a roost somewhere before leaving en mass for Brazil. It's been said that once they hit the roost area, they are on their own...”

Ten **Cliff Swallows** at Hawthorn 7/30 (AK, JK) were amazingly the only ones noted in the region.

Two **Brown Creepers** along the West Penn Trail near Saltsburg on 7/8 (EC, MCo) were also the only ones reported in our region.

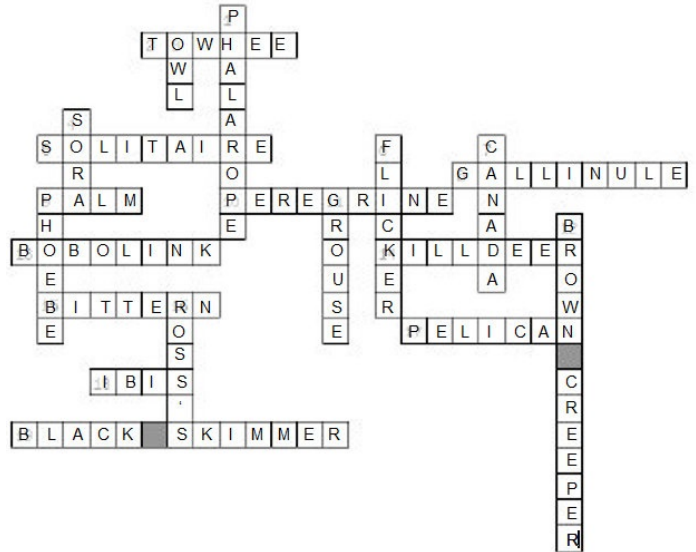
A single **Marsh Wren**, found at KR 6/11 (TR) and photographed 7/18 (SG), was a first at this location as well as the lone report.

Veery reports included singletons at SGL 108-22 on 6/6 (TD) and south of Worthington 6/20 (TR); 2 were near Loretto 7/2 (SVH) while another area near Loretto yielded one on 7/13 (TA). Two **Hermit Thrushes** at Hemlock Lake 6/24 (AK, JK) and 2

Observers: Tina Alainiello, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Dennis Blumling (DeB), Tammy Blumling (TaB), Elise Bradshaw, John Boback, John Bradshaw (JBr), Tony Bruno, Alan Buriak (ABu), Lee Carnahan, Richard Chirichiello, Ellie Conrad, Matthew Conrad (MCo), Marcy Cunkelman, Tony DeSantis, Barb Fletcher, Tom Glover, Linda Greble, Sam Guthrie, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Hope Huntington, Pam Illig, Sam Jolly, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Michael Kardos, Avis Keener, John Keener, Jan Kuehl (JaK), Tom Kuehl, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Renee Lubert, Andrew Mack, Laura Palmer, James Pumford (JaP), Joseph Pumford, Bill Reddinger, Theo Rickert, Penny Rose, Dave Sharp, Kim Shawley, Steve Valasek, Stewart Van Horn (SVH), Marge Van Tassel (MVT).



Answers to Crossword (page 9)



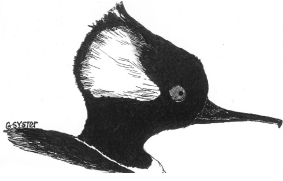
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