

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

August 2022

Meetings May Resume in September

As long as Covid does not spike again by early September, we plan to resume our monthly meetings. If you are not fully vaccinated, please wear a mask. Some members who are fully vaccinated also plan to wear masks.

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.

In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, September 6 – Take a Safari Trip to Southern Africa with Tom and Jan Kuehl, who were on the Rockjumpers Birding Tour trip through the Southern African nations of Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Tom will present a photographic tour through the arid savanna, dry highlands, and coastal deserts of Namibia;



These Bare-cheeked Babblers are just one of the amazing species photographed by Tom Kuehl on his African Safari. Don't miss this interesting and informative program.

the wetlands of the Okavango inland delta of Botswana; and a visit to Victoria Falls (one of the top natural wonders of the world) in Zimbabwe. The tour tallied 367 bird, 50 mammal, and 9 reptile species; and Tom will share his photographic highlights from among the most spectacular of these species.

Although the long drive from home in Murrysville limits their participation, Tom and Janet are longtime Todd Bird Club members, as well as being members of many other Western Pennsylvania bird and

nature clubs and Audubon chapters. Tom and Janet became avid birders in the late 1990s and are prolific participants in citizen science projects – Christmas Bird Counts, Winter Raptor Surveys, and Breeding Bird Surveys (now retired); they served as regional coordinators in the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. Tom is the Westmoreland County Compiler for the *PA Birds Journal* and served two-year terms as Vice-President and President of the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology. In retirement Tom serves on the Board of Save Our Allegheny Ridges, an organization that assists

communities that are trying to stop industrial wind development on ridgetop locations, and Janet is a Volunteer Naturalist at Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve and a hawk counter at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

Tuesday, October 4 – Mark Strittmatter and John Taylor will present *Bird Photography Done the Hard Way and the Easy Way*, an assortment of their favorite photos of birds, as well as a few other intriguing animals encountered along the way. All but a few of the striking digital images were captured by Mark over the past few

years. John, as Mark's technoparasitic sidekick on birding excursions for more than half a century, will provide some commentary on the interesting and/or amusing circumstances under which some of the photos were taken.

Tuesday, November 1 – Mark your calendars now for our November meeting as it will be held on the first day of the month. Our November speaker will be Anthony Frazier. Details will follow in our October *Nuthatch*.

Outings

Saturday, August 13 – Conneaut Harbor, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee. Meet at the Higbee home at 5:30 a.m. or at Conneaut Harbor at 8:30 a.m.

Saturday, September 10 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet in the large parking lot near the park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, September 17 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Ray Winstead (724-349-2506). Meet in the large parking lot near the park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, September 24 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Gloria Lamer (724-349-1159). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located on PA 259, just off US 422.

Saturday, October 8 – Harrison Hills Park, led by Dave Brooke (davbrooke@gmail.com). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Environmental Learning Center at Harrison Hills.

Saturday, October 15 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Court Harding (chardinglou@gmail.com). We'll target early waterfowl as well as other migrants. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located on PA 259, just off US422.

White's Woods Revisited

Eleven people showed up for the White's Woods outing, scheduled for April 30. This was a joint outing with Todd Bird Club and Friends of White's Woods. Participants included Dave Dahlheimer, Ed Donley, Jessica Jopp, Sara King, Trent Millum, Morrey Porter, Vicki Stelma, Cherie Widzowski, Ray Winstead, and Roger and me. We spent three hours hiking 1.62 miles of the park.



Jessica Jopp, David Dahlheimer, Ray Winstead, Trent Millum, Vicki Stelma, and Margaret Higbee search the skies for soaring raptors.

Among the 24 species we tallied, a few highlights included two Blue-headed Vireos, two Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a cooperative Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, single Black-throated Blue and Blackburnian Warblers, as well

as three Yellow-rumped Warblers. The Yellow-rumps were well seen by all.

Overhead soared five Turkey Vultures and a probable pair of Red-tailed Hawks; the Red-tails had been confirmed nesting at White's Woods during the last Atlas Project.

It was a very enjoyable spring morning with nice weather and good company.

Special thanks to Cherie, the official photographer, for sharing her photos and to Sara King for planning the field trip.

– Margaret Higbee

Nesting Flickers near Evans City

By Melissa Little

This spring I had the great pleasure of having a pair of Northern Flickers choose an old maple tree off the side of my porch to raise their young. This beautiful old tree has lost many large branches over the years. Beginning in early May, I noticed flickers spending a lot of time in this tree. On May 7, 8, and 9, wood chips were flying.

From May 10 onward, I think one of the flickers was in their cavity at all times. I would note the changing of the guard as one would fly in, call, and the other would fly out.

On May 15, I saw a Pileated Woodpecker on the tree trunk about 15 feet below the nest cavity. A flicker had its head partway out the cavity looking down at the

Pileated. I don't think the Pileated was aware of the flicker's scrutiny as it just gently probed the bark for food before flying off.

By June 17, the young in the nest were very noisy when a parent arrived with food. Every day they got louder. By this time, leaves were covering the cavity entrance, so I could no longer see the passing of the food. I could see only the tail of the parent.

I last heard them being fed on the evening of June 22. They fledged on June 23; of course, it was the day I left early to meet friends at Jennings. I surely miss them and hope they nest again next year.

Purple Martin Update

We have had a great year and some cool news to share! The first Purple Martins to arrive this year appeared on March 30, 2022. I had to provide supplemental feed (scrambled eggs) numerous times this spring because of inclement weather. We had a lot of snow, including a few inches on April 10 that blocked the entrances to the nest cavities!

During the first week of May, we got flooding conditions for a few days with temperatures in the low 40s. The martins were not getting any bugs to eat, so I was quite busy serving them eggs. On one Saturday I fed ten eggs in the morning, ten again at lunchtime, and six in the early evening for a total 26 eggs that day. I believe we didn't lose any this year to starvation as we have other years. The first sub-adults (last year's babies returning for the first time) arrived on May 9.

We count only those nests with eggs or babies as a "pair" since some martins do not produce anything beyond building a nest. As of June 21, our last nest check, we

had 53 pairs, 211 babies, and 42 eggs yet to hatch. I will have exact numbers when I make a final check after all babies have fledged. Suffice it to say, we will have fledged at least 230 martins out of a possible 253 total eggs and babies.

Two nests this year held seven eggs, a somewhat rare occurrence. Six eggs hatched in the one nest while all seven hatched in the other.

Our friends, who live in Penn Run just beyond the township building, have had a gourd rack of six small gourds for three years. This year they were extremely excited that martins moved into all six gourds where they currently have four babies they hope will fledge.

Thanks so much for giving me the opportunity to share our information.

– Ron Alsop
Penn Run, PA

“Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we'll soon be in trouble.”

– Roger Tory Peterson

Winter Birding in Texas and New Mexico

By Oscar Nigam

In mid-January, my dad and I traveled to Texas to do some winter backpacking in Big Bend National Park. I was looking forward to exploring the Chihuahuan Desert, a habitat I had never seen before, and seeing the many bird, plant, and animal species that call it home. We landed in El Paso late in the afternoon and began the five-hour drive to the park. After it got dark, I took note of the interesting mammal sightings. In just a couple hours of driving through the desert at night, we spotted a bobcat, a javelina, and a black-tailed jackrabbit crossing the road in front of the car. Off to a good start with a mammal list! The birds would have to wait for tomorrow.



Oscar photographed one of the two Acorn Woodpeckers with his clown-like face.

The following morning, I stepped outside into the mild, mountain air, the rising sun illuminating the towering cliffs surrounding me with a warm glow. Below and beyond the relatively lush vegetation of the basin, the Chihuahuan Desert stretched for miles, shrouded in a light haze. The vast openness of the landscape, surrounded by the mountains and cliffs, was astonishing. As soon as I stepped outside, I heard the grating song of a Cactus Wren. It didn't take long to find it, perched atop a prickly pear, singing away. Not bad for the first bird of the trip! Its boldly-patterned plumage easily makes it top-tier wren. I began to slowly walk up the road. Behind the Cactus Wren, moving through some bushes, was a Pyrrhuloxia. I enjoyed observing its stubby, misformed beak and washed-out plumage, providing a nice contrast to the ubiquitous cardinals back home. Turning my attention to the trees ahead, I heard the calls of a Black-crested Titmouse. It didn't take long for a small group to make an appearance as they inquisitively moved into some low branches to investigate my presence, joined by a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Making their way up the trunk of the same tree were two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. I carefully searched for justification to call them Red-naped Sapsuckers but unfortunately found none. A pair of Acorn Woodpeckers soon flew in to join them, their clown-like faces providing a nice change from the plainer woodpeckers I'm used to. We needed to start hiking soon, so I turned back and

began to walk toward the room, spotting a Canyon Towhee before heading inside, already thrilled with the start of what was bound to be a fantastic few days of desert birding and backpacking.

After picking up a permit, we walked out of the visitor center and hit the trail. White-winged Doves hooted their song, awkwardly walking through the grass. Rufous-crowned Sparrows darted in and out of the shrubs, and a small group of Mexican Jays called from a nearby tree. We hadn't even started walking yet. This was going to be good. We slowly ascended out of the Chisos Basin, heading towards Emory Peak, the highest point in the park. Above the mountains surrounding us, a lone Golden Eagle soared high above, and

a group of White-throated Swifts fluttered around the cliffs. I quickly came across a good-sized mixed flock foraging in a group of pinyons, junipers, and oaks. Among the ever-present Black-crested Titmice and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, I observed a few Bushtits, along with an Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler, actively moving through the low canopy. Nearby, a Ladder-backed Woodpecker was drumming, and a pair of Western Bluebirds was perched on a bare snag. A few Hermit Thrushes hopped across the rocky ground. We continued to climb, and I noticed a couple of Canyon Wrens, whose subtly gorgeous plumage may rival that of Cactus Wrens, creeping along rock faces and singing their ringing songs.

As we neared the summit, I encountered a large group of Dark-eyed Juncos and was able to pick out each of the four expected subspecies that winter in the park: Slate-colored, Oregon, Pink-sided, and Gray-headed. After a short, final rocky climb to reach the summit of Emory Peak, we were rewarded with incredible views. The various ridgelines and peaks of the Chisos Mountains stretched out below us for miles, dotted with patches of dry forest, shrubs, and interesting rock formations. Beyond, the flat desert extended for what seemed like dozens of miles, accented by the occasional canyon wall. A group of croaking Common Ravens flew over us as we started our descent.

We stopped for lunch and were quickly greeted by a group of Mexican Jays. Throughout this trip, Mexican Jays quickly became my new favorite species of bird. Their vibrant blue plumage stood out from the pale browns and greens of the desert, their friendly and inquisitive personalities, often hopping or flying within feet of us, and their behavior and interactions among their small social groups made them a joy to observe. Other species nearby during lunch included Pine Siskins and a group of House Finches. I gained a newfound appreciation for House Finches here after seeing them in their native range in the Southwest.



Mexican Jays quickly became Oscar's favorite species of bird.

Photo by Oscar Nigam

After lunch, the trail followed the edge of the South Rim, giving us incredible views of the expansive desert. As I was looking out over the edge of the cliff, my dad quietly beckoned me to look at something on the trail. As soon as I saw it, I stopped. A Greater Roadrunner was silently walking across the trail, one of my top targets for the trip. I was thrilled to get a clear view of this bird, enjoying its small crest, streaking across its body, and the red and blue-gray patches behind its eye. It was a brief but magical moment as it crossed the trail and quickly disappeared into the bushes. As we continued hiking toward the campsite, we came across a large group of Spizella sparrows. Among the Chipping Sparrows that dominated the group, I was able to pick out a few Clay-colored Sparrows and a single Brewer's Sparrow. After a while, we arrived at camp, ready to take off our packs and enjoy the evening.

I awoke the following morning to a group of Mexican Jays calling loudly nearby. After eating breakfast and packing up camp, we started hiking, descending down Juniper Canyon. Spotted Towhees were ubiquitous as we descended, hopping among the shrubbery. I also came across a Black-chinned Sparrow, an Orange-crowned Warbler, Bewick's Wrens, and a few Crissal Thrashers, whose extremely curved beaks I greatly enjoyed. The descent down Juniper Canyon spit us out into the Dodson, a relatively flat expanse of open desert far below the Chisos Mountains of yesterday's hiking. The lower elevation and open habitat provided a slightly different set of species to enjoy. A Say's Phoebe perched on an agave stalk, occasionally flying off to catch an insect and returning to its perch. Black-tailed Gnatcatchers actively foraged in the brush, and I picked out a single Blue-gray Gnatcatcher among the far more common Black-taileds.

Groups of Black-throated Sparrows lined the trail; their black throats contrasting with otherwise brown/gray coloration and distinct white facial stripes made for very handsome and enjoyable plumage. Nearby, a lone Vesper Sparrow flushed and landed atop a cholla, its white outer tail feathers distinct in flight. Farther along, an American Kestrel flew by, and I saw a Loggerhead Shrike perched on a yucca. A Sage Thrasher atop a shrub provided nice views of this small and streaky Mimid. Rock Wrens were an ever-present voice, often singing from steep slopes. One individual finally provided good views.

As we hiked through the desert, I took a keen interest in the various, unique species of desert plants. I identified about two dozen species of cacti and other succulents. I would love to return to the area when these species are in bloom. Additionally, I took note of several species endemic to the Big Bend region, including the Chisos Mountain Pricklypear and the Chisos Threeband, a species of terrestrial snail. Mammal species observed in the desert included a rock squirrel, a coyote, and a gray fox. As we neared the area where we were aiming to camp, we came across a large group of Scaled Quail. I enjoyed watching them dart through the shrubbery and take flight for short distances, but it was difficult to get a clear view of them as a result. As the sun was setting, we found an incredible campsite on the top of a hill, providing incredible views of the rolling hills, flat desert, and Chisos Mountains in the background. As the sky darkened, we turned our attention to the sky. Big Bend has some of the darkest skies in the country, and we enjoyed incredible views of the Milky Way and various constellations after it got dark. I didn't want to look away, but the distant calls of a Great Horned Owl reminded me that it was time for bed.

The following day, our final day of backpacking, we had a 12-mile ascent up Blue Creek Canyon back to the Chisos Basin. As we hiked, I enjoyed the species that had become familiar over the last few days. The only new bird of the trip I saw that morning was a male Northern Cardinal, providing nice contrast to the duller and more common Pyrrhuloxias. After returning to the car, we drove to Rio Grande Village, where we spent the afternoon exploring some trails along the river. Strong winds definitely dampened bird activity, but I still was able to see some

great species. We walked down to the Rio Grande, which was hardly a river or grand. Yellow-rumped Warblers and Black and Eastern Phoebes foraged on the shore of the narrow and shallow stream, flying back and forth across the US/Mexico border. They were accompanied by a Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper while a group of Black Vultures soared overhead. As we were leaving the riverbank, a Verdin foraged in a small tree. I enjoyed seeing its yellow head and rufous shoulders in contrast to its gray body. Away from the river, we walked along a road hoping to check off a few more targets from the area. Common Yellowthroats and Eastern Bluebirds called from the background, and I finally got eyes on one of my targets: a Vermilion Flycatcher. I watched a stunning male, with bright red plumage and a dark mask, fly from perch to perch in search of insects. In awe at this marvel, I continued to walk down the road searching for Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. This species' range just barely enters the United States in southern Texas, and as a result it was one of my top targets for the trip. I painstakingly searched every tree trunk and listened carefully for any distant drumming but came up empty. Finally, however, as I was about to call it quits, I heard a nearby shrieking call, similar to the call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker. Bingo. I quickly traced the call up a tree and got fantastic looks at a pair of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. I must have searched every single tree in the area but was finally rewarded with a view of this species. Satisfied with the targets that we saw, we left Big Bend National Park and drove to Van Horn to spend the night.

The next day, we drove to Guadalupe Mountains National Park to hike up Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas. As I stepped out of the motel room in the morning, I saw Great-tailed Grackles fly by and Eurasian Collared-Doves perched on the telephone wires. During the drive to the park, several Chihuahuan Ravens flew over the open desert. When we arrived at the park and stepped out onto the parking lot, we were greeted by a flurry of bird activity. Next to the parking lot was a pool of water below a pump. Eight species of sparrows, including a Black-chinned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrows, and Lincoln's Sparrows, were bathing and drinking in the water. A Lesser Goldfinch and a few Pine Siskins flew down to check it out as well. Perched in a nearby tree was a Phainopepla, a bird that I had missed in Big Bend and was thrilled to see here. It provided clear looks for a while, allowing me to observe its black crest and dark red eyes. On the hike up the mountain, I picked up a few new trip birds, including a Steller's Jay (Guadalupe Mountains are the only place this species can be found in Texas), Northern Mockingbird, and Green-tailed Towhee. The views from the top of the mountain were fantastic, and a

couple of calling Rock Wrens provided a pleasant break from the sound of the gusting wind.

After returning to the car, we began driving to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, across the state line in New Mexico. Along the way, we made a brief stop at Brantley Lake State Park. Here, Red-breasted Mergansers, Ring-billed Gulls, and American White Pelicans were swimming in the lake, while Least Sandpipers, a Greater Yellowlegs, and a few Snowy Plovers foraged on the shore. I particularly enjoyed watching the Snowy Plovers in their cute, non-breeding plumage.

When we made it to the hotel, we did some planning for the next day. In the morning, we would try to find the biggest target of the trip: the extremely rare, code 5 Blue Mockingbird that had been spending the winter in Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Much to my disappointment, the weather forecast for the morning showed strong winds, and this individual had not been reliable on windy mornings. Disheartened by this grim forecast, I went to bed, hoping for the best.

We awoke before sunrise the next morning and drove to Rattlesnake Springs, the area in the park where the Blue Mockingbird had been seen. To my amazement and delight, it was perfectly calm when we stepped from the car; there was no wind! Over the next half an hour, a crowd of about a dozen people arrived in search of this amazing rarity. Every call from a Gray Catbird or Brown Thrasher caught our attention, but none turned out to be the Blue Mockingbird. Finally, after around 45 minutes, we heard some nearby flicker imitations, and the Blue Mockingbird flew into a hackberry bush close to us. The bird provided incredible looks at its dark blue plumage, black mask, and red eye as it moved around the branches eating berries – it truly was a sight to behold. The sun illuminated its blue plumage, the feather patterns streaking its neck and breast beautifully. After a couple of minutes it was gone, but it left us all in awe at the sighting. Afterwards, we walked around the area a bit longer, adding a Sora, Marsh Wren, White-throated Sparrows, and Swamp Sparrows to the trip list and mule deer to the mammal list. Another interesting individual seen was a yellow-shafted x red-shafted Northern Flicker intergrade.

After enjoying the Blue Mockingbird, we walked for a couple of hours through Carlsbad Caverns, which was a breathtaking sight, with 250-foot tall underground chambers, towering stalactites and stalagmites, and other incredible rock formations. As we exited the caverns, a large group of Lark Buntings flew by. On the drive back towards El Paso, we stopped in Dell City, a town of

around 150 people, to target a few open country species and to refill the gas tank. I quickly spotted Northern Harriers and Ferruginous Hawks flying above the agricultural fields, and I observed a brightly-colored Western Meadowlark perched up on a wire. However, our successful birding did not translate to success at the gas station. When we arrived at the gas station – the only gas station in a few hundred miles – we found it closed. Luckily, we were able to call the store owner, who said he was on his way to pick up more gasoline and drive it back to the pumps. After filling up on gas, we hit the road again, making a few more stops in El Paso.

The first stop was at Rio Bosque Park, where I enjoyed several species of dabbling ducks, including Northern Shovelers, Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Northern Pintails, and Green-winged Teals, foraging in the wet-

lands, along with Black-necked Stilts nearby and a group of Cave Swallows flying above. The second stop was at Ascarate Lake, where a Mexican Duck and an array of diving ducks were added to the trip list. Other notable additions were a Western Grebe, Neotropic Cormorants, a Black-crowned Night-Heron, and a flock of Brewer's Blackbirds. Feeling satisfied with these stops, we ended the day with a nice Mexican dinner near the hotel.

Overall, it was a fantastic trip. I always delight in birding new areas, especially unique landscapes and ecosystems such as the desert. I'll eagerly await the next time I am able to travel to the southwest. We ended the week with 123 species, many of them range-restricted desert specialties. The desert yielded some excellent birding, and provided a welcome break from my busy life back home.

Indiana County Migration Count Revisited

This May the Indiana County Migration Count was held on the 14th, the latest possible date for the count which coincides with Global Big Day, always the second Saturday in May. Last year's count fell on the 8th, the earliest it can be. Personally, I prefer the later dates as the possibility for more warblers – and warmer weather -- seems greater. Those of you who participated in the 2020 count certainly remember the wind and blowing snow on May 9! We were wearing winter parkas and mittens!

This year's uncontested highlight was the Swainson's Warbler that has returned to the West Penn Trail (WPT) for the third year in a row. Thanks to Steve Manns and Rebecca Hart who hiked the trail and listed it, as well as many other species, for the count. Other highlights included the two Solitary Sandpipers and the one Greater Yellowlegs found by Ed Donley and John Taylor at IUP. The two parties previously named were also responsible for one Double-crested Cormorant, the former's along the WPT and the latter's near Climax. Dave Beatty retains his reputation as "owl master" when he walked outside his home the evening of the count and heard three Barred Owls hooting back and forth. No other owls were sighted or heard this year. John Taylor also located two Merlins at undisclosed locations in the county. Mark Strittmatter found a lone Fish Crow in Indiana. Roger and I listed one Golden-crowned Kinglet at SGL 174 where they nest. Pat

Johner found two of the three Swainson's Thrushes in her travels around Two Lick Reservoir. Marilyn Moore listed the two Vesper Sparrows near Smicksburg; Vespers, previously a common species in the county, are now extremely difficult to find anywhere in western PA. Both the Henslow's Sparrow and the two Grasshopper Sparrows were noted at SGL 262. The Climax area also yielded the only White-crowned Sparrow this year. Warblers are always of note. Bob Ramsey found two well-described Kentucky Warblers plus a Black-throated Blue Warbler near Shelocta. Rita Lippert photographed a striking male Cape May Warbler in her yard, and Joseph Pumford noted another at Conemaugh Dam for a total of two on the count. The WPT also yielded a Yellow-throated Warbler, as well as the count's only Cerulean Warbler, for Rebecca and Steve while Conemaugh Dam produced the lone Blackpoll Warbler for John and Ed. Single Canada Warblers were sighted by Mark at Blacklick Valley Natural Area and by Ray Winstead, John, and Ed at Blue Spruce.

Thanks to all who participated. The species mentioned above are just a few of the highlights. Everyone contributed to the success of the count. Next year's count will be on May 13, 2023.

– Margaret Higbee

Indiana Pennsylvania Migration Count 2022

Canada Goose	147	Blue-headed Vireo	19	Henslow's Sparrow	3
Wood Duck	6	Red-eyed Vireo	303	Song Sparrow	139
Mallard	10	Blue Jay	128	Swamp Sparrow	3
Common Merganser	5	American Crow	156	Eastern Towhee	155
Wild Turkey	26	Fish Crow	1	Bobolink	3
Rock Pigeon	25	Common Raven	13	Eastern Meadowlark	13
Mourning Dove	115	Black-capped Chickadee	76	Orchard Oriole	3
Black-billed Cuckoo	2	Carolina/Black-capped ?	4	Baltimore Oriole	101
Chimney Swift	62	Tufted Titmouse	104	Red-winged Blackbird	259
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	35	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	14	Brown-headed Cowbird	56
Killdeer	29	Purple Martin	9	Common Grackle	135
American Woodcock	4	Tree Swallow	35	Ovenbird	235
Spotted Sandpiper	4	Barn Swallow	95	Louisiana Waterthrush	6
Solitary Sandpiper	2	Cliff Swallow	3	Blue-winged Warbler	13
Greater Yellowlegs	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	Black-and-white Warbler	7
Double-crested Cormorant	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	33	Swainson's Warbler	1
Great Blue Heron	3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	9	Tennessee Warbler	14
Green Heron	3	House Wren	59	Nashville Warbler	6
Turkey Vulture	51	Carolina Wren	34	Kentucky Warbler	2
Cooper's Hawk	5	European Starling	236	Common Yellowthroat	153
Bald Eagle	1	Gray Catbird	178	Hooded Warbler	49
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	Brown Thrasher	21	American Redstart	35
Broad-winged Hawk	6	Northern Mockingbird	10	Cape May Warbler	2
Red-tailed Hawk	22	Eastern Bluebird	54	Cerulean Warbler	1
Barred Owl	3	Swainson's Thrush	3	Northern Parula	4
Belted Kingfisher	5	Hermit Thrush	5	Magnolia Warbler	4
Red-bellied Woodpecker	76	Wood Thrush	140	Bay-breasted Warbler	4
Downy Woodpecker	37	American Robin	499	Blackburnian Warbler	4
Hairy Woodpecker	7	Cedar Waxwing	36	Yellow Warbler	81
Pileated Woodpecker	28	House Finch	37	Chestnut-sided Warbler	12
Northern Flicker	43	Purple Finch	4	Blackpoll Warbler	1
American Kestrel	4	American Goldfinch	150	Black-throated Blue Warbler	2
Merlin	2	House Sparrow	83	Yellow-rumped Warbler	5
Eastern Wood-Pewee	21	Grasshopper Sparrow	2	Yellow-throated Warbler	1
Acadian Flycatcher	11	Chipping Sparrow	119	Prairie Warbler	4
Willow Flycatcher	2	Field Sparrow	38	Black-throated Green Warbler	49
Least Flycatcher	1	Dark-eyed Junco	2	Canada Warbler	2
Empidonax sp?	3	White-crowned Sparrow	1	Scarlet Tanager	95
Eastern Phoebe	39	White-throated Sparrow	4	Northern Cardinal	165
Great Crested Flycatcher	6	Vesper Sparrow	2	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	69
Eastern Kingbird	5	Savannah Sparrow	3	Indigo Bunting	78
Yellow-throated Vireo	6				

Total Number of Species = 122
Total Number of Individuals = 5,561

Note: The *Empidonax sp?* and *chickadee sp?* are not counted as species since other species in their families are already on the list, but the numbers are included in the final total.

“A bird does not sing because it has an answer; it sings because it has a song.”

— Maya Angelou

Indiana County Migration Count Observers

Pat Andrascik
Tawnette AP
Dave Beatty
Tom Betts
Jeremy Castle
Marcy Cunkelman
Sue Dickson
Ed Donley
Judy Emigh
Gary Ferrence

Carol Guba
Rebecca Hart
Margaret Higbee
Roger Higbee
Pat Johner
Gloria Lamer
Jeff Larken
Monica Lee
Rita Lippert
Steve Manns

Marilyn Moore
Nancy Murphy
Sandra Newell
James Pumford
Joseph Pumford
Bob Ramsey
Cindy Rogers
Henry Rummel
Nancy Smeltzer
Deb Sorce

Linda Stormer
Luke Stormer
Rodger Stormer
Mark Strittmatter
John Taylor
Gregory Tomb
Mary Lu Tucker
Dawn Winstead
Ray Winstead

Total Participants = 39
Total Parties = 30

Party Hours on Foot = 47.96
Party Hours by Car = 76.373
Party Hours by Other = 30.04 (Stationary)

Party Miles on Foot = 24.15
Party Miles by Car = 291.0

Total Party Hours = 154.173

Total Party Miles = 315.15

Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria Spring 2022

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), Blacklick Valley Natural Area (BVNA), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Lock & Dam (L&D), Prince Gallitzin S.P. (PG), Rosston (RT), West Penn Trail (WPT), Yellow Creek SP (YC)

A single **Trumpeter Swan** was photographed at YC 3/21 (DS, SS); this is the 5th *Indiana* record. First arriving **Tundra Swans**, numbering 426, appeared at YC 3/1 (SD, ED, CH, MH, RH, KT); PG hosted 108 on 3/4 (MH, RH) while 5 at KR was *Armstrong's* lone report 3/13 (ReH, SM). First 2 **Blue-winged Teal** were seen 3/17 (MH, RH) at KR and 3/23 (MH, RH) at YC where numbers remained at 4 or fewer all season; PG yielded 20 on 4/8 (TA), 18 on 4/10 (TA) and 12 on 4/15 (PI, WI). Two **Northern Shovelers** arrived 3/13 (TA) at PG and 3/20 (JaP, JP) at YC and also remained in single digits throughout the spring migration. **Gadwall** highs included 50 at YC 3/13 (TaA) and 16 at CC 3/16 (TR). Largest **American Wigeon** flocks included 30 at PG 3/13 (TA), 12 at KR 3/9 (MH, RH), and 10 at YC 3/22 (TR). **American Black Ducks** were more numerous in the western part of our region than in our other two counties; top counts included 14 on 3/1 (TR) along the AT n. of L&D 8 and 8 at CC 3/14 (DBr).

Northern Pintail numbers remained low with top counts of 6 at YC 3/15 (HR), 4 at PG 3/13 (TA), and 2 both along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 3/1 (TR) and at RT 3/3 (TR). **Green-winged Teal** appeared in good numbers with tallies of 22 at YC 3/15 (HR), 18 along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 3/18 (TR), and 20 at PG 4/3 (TA).

A count of 149 **Canvasbacks** at YC on 3/13 (MH, RH) was surprising as the past two years had yielded few Canvasbacks at YC; PG's only Canvasback sighting of 4 occurred 3/13 (TA) while 2 stopped at KT 3/4 (TR); the remainder of the sightings mentioned only singletons. Top **Redhead** tallies included 28 at PG 3/13 (TA) and 15 at KR 3/9 (MH, RH) while YC's high was 4 on 3/13 (TA) and 3/15 (DK). Best counts of **Ring-necked Ducks**, which were widespread, were 150 at YC 3/13 (TaA), 99 at KR 3/13 (ReH, SM), 41 at PG 4/2 (JD, SDo), 26 on Warren Road in IN 3/9 (MB), 11 near Marion Center 3/29 (SN), and 8 n. of

L&D 8 on 3/18 (TR). **Greater Scaup** notes listed 10 at East Brady 3/3 (TaA), 8 at YC 3/20 (JaP, JP), 6 at PG 3/19 (JC), and 3 at KR 3/9 (MH, RH). YC's high **Lesser Scaup** count was 154 on 4/3 (MH, RH); PG hosted 34 on 3/13 (TA) while 22 was CC's high on 3/30 (DBr). Unusual were 4 **White-winged Scoters** that visited YC 4/12 (SD, ED *et al*); two weeks later on 4/26 (SD, ED, MH, RH, DK, GL, DM, HR, KT) 5 were present; we are usually lucky if we see one in spring. **Long-tailed Ducks** reported included 3 near Elderton 3/9 (MH, RH), 2 at PG 3/19 (JC), and singletons at Hemlock Lake 3/7 (AK, JK), at CC 4/8 (MVT), at PG 4/10 (TA, JC), and at YC 4/12 (SD, ED *et al*). High **Bufflehead** tallies included 282 at YC 4/3 (MH, RH), 100 at PG 3/13 (TA), and 19 at KR 3/16 (MH, RH). All **Common Goldeneyes** noted were in single digits except for 10 at PG 3/13 (TA). YC hosted 108 **Ruddy Ducks** on 4/12 (SD, ED, PF, CH, MH, RH, DK, GL), the highest count in the region.

Top **Hooded Merganser** counts were 20 at PG 4/10 (TA), 16 at YC 3/8 (SD, ED, PF, CH, MH, RH, TR), and 6 at CC 3/14 (DBr). *Armstrong* boasted the bulk of the **Common Mergansers** noted, mostly along the AR and in the Crooked Creek basin. CC, on both 3/14 (DBr) and 3/16 (TR), harbored 53 Common Mergansers while 35 was PG's high on 4/3 (JD, SDo). **Red-breasted Merganser** highs included 27 at YC 3/15 (HR), 11 at RT 4/1 (TR), and 10 at PG 4/17 (RL).

Single **Ruffed Grouse** at four *Indiana* locations (LF, TH, MS, JT, GT) this season were a definite improvement over the past several years; none, however, was listed in either *Armstrong* or *Cambria*.

One to 4 **Pied-billed Grebes** stopped at PG between 3/13 (TA) and 4/22 (PI, WI); at YC one to 8 were noted between 3/8 (SD, ED, PF *et al*) and 4/12 (SD, ED *et al*). In *Armstrong* one to 3 were found at five locations between 3/9 (MH, RH) and 4/8 (JB). **Horned Grebes** peaked at 12 at PG 3/13 (TA), at 17 at YC 4/3 (MH, RH), and at 6 at KR 3/17 (MH, RH); last noted occurred 4/12 at three locations, PG (TA), Musser's Pond (HR), and YC (SD, ED *et al*).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were late arrivals this year with first reports on 5/21 at SGL 247 (TR), near Heilwood (HL), and at SGL 108 - Dean Twp. (BF); many first reports were 5/28 or later. **Black-billed Cuckoos** arrived earlier with first dates including 5/12 (HR) near White's Woods and 5/14 n.e. of KT (ABu), s. of Trusal Bridge (ED, JT), and at BVNA (MS).

Two **Common Nighthawks** flew over a yard near LV 5/23 (MC), the lone report in our region. Single **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** were noted n.e. of KT 4/24 (ABu), at White's Woods 5/10 (HR), near Penn Run 5/21 (HL), and at SGL 332 on 5/29 (DL).

The lone **Virginia Rail** reported was at PG 4/10 (TA). A **Common Gallinule** sighted at PG 5/7 (TA) remained through 5/8 (TA, JC, PI, WI, RL). Top **American Coot** counts were 45 at YC 3/23 (BF) and a mere 7 at PG 4/4 (JD, SDo). Four **Sandhill Cranes** flew over the WPT 4/23 (DL); this is the 10th county record, but only the 7th spring record for Sandhill Cranes.

Shorebirds were in short supply this spring. Single **Semi-palmated Plovers** were observed at West Lebanon 5/18 (MH, RH), at CC 5/25 (TR), and at YC 5/28 (JP). May 18 (MH, RH) also yielded a **Dunlin** at West Lebanon, the lone report in the region. The season's only **Least Sandpipers** stopped at Lake Rowena 4/24 (LS), on the beach at YC 5/24 (SD, ED, CH, AM, DM, TR, HR, JT, KT), and at CC 5/25 (TR). The only 2 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** popped up at YC 5/28 (JP). Three **Wilson's Snipe** were sighted 3/3 (TA) at PG where one remained 3/6 (JG, CK, NK); single snipe were listed at IUP 3/22 (JT) and 3/31 (MS, JT). The season's first 5 **Spotted Sandpipers** were listed 4/16 (TA) at PG; Hemlock Lake hosted *Indiana's* first 4/28 (AK, JK) while *Armstrong's* first was noted 4/29 (TR) along the AT n. of L&D 8. Two **Solitary Sandpipers** at YC 4/18 (JaP, JP) were first arrivals while 4 Solitaries appeared there 5/7 (ED, MH, RH, TM, JT); last noted was one at YC on 5/17 (ED, PF, CH, MH, RH, JT); none were listed in *Armstrong* or *Cambria*. First **Greater Yellowlegs** were at PG 3/19 (JC), at YC 4/5 (SD, CH, MH, RH, DK); and at CC 4/30 (TR); last reported were singletons at IUP 5/14 (ED, JT) and along the WPT 5/16 (MCa). Reported only in *Indiana*, 6 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were present at YC 5/7 (ED, MH *et al*); a singleton was at West Lebanon 5/18 (MH, RH).



Roger Higbee photographed this Laughing Gull at Yellow Creek on May 7, 2022.

Top **Bonaparte's Gull** tallies were 72 at YC 4/12 (SD, ED *et al*), 26 at PG 4/7 (SF), and 7 at CC 4/18 (JB); other reports included 7 at White's Woods 4/4 (HR), 4 at Brady's Bend 4/7 (KB), one at KT 4/9 (MD), and 3 at Hemlock Lake 4/12 (AK, JK). A **Laughing Gull** on the beach at YC 5/7 (ED, MH *et al*) was a surprise; this was a 3rd county record but the first spring record. A flock of 272 **Ring-billed Gulls** descended on YC 3/1 (SD, ED, CH, MH, RH, DK, KT), the largest flock since the 292 counted in a field near Shelocta 3/28/2002 (RH); 72 was PG's high 3/5 (JC); 20 were counted along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 3/1 (TR). The pair of **Herring Gulls** was present at KT near their former nest site between 3/1 (TR) and 4/9 (MD); Herrings are only occasional at YC, so it was surprising to spot one 4/26 (SD, ED, MH *et al*) and then 3 on 5/7 (ED, MH *et al*). PG hosted singletons 3/6 (JG, MH, RH, CK, NK) and 5/7 (TA, PI); 2 were also present at PG 4/3 (TA). One to 3 **Caspian Terns** stopped at YC on six dates between 4/5 (SD, CH, MH, RH, DK) and 5/24 (SD, ED *et al*); 2 visited PG 4/22 (TA, PI, WI) while 4 were there 5/7 (TA, PI). May 7 was the day for the migration of **Common Terns** – 9

landed at PG (TA) while 5 stopped on the YC beach (ED, MH, RH, TM, JT) where both flocks were photographed (TA, RH). At YC 3 **Forster's Terns** were present on the beach at the same time for good comparisons and photos while one was also at PG (TA).

A raft of 31 **Common Loons** dotted the water at PG 4/1 (JD, SDo) while 56 were tallied at YC 4/12 (SD, ED *et al*).

An **American Bittern** was a great find at South Fork 5/4 (SB). The only **Great Egret** reports mentioned single birds 4/9 (TA) and 4/10 (TA, JC) at PG, 4/16 (BS) at YC, 4/26 (MHu) in Croyle Twp., 5/1 (HR) at Margus Lake, and 5/14 (TR) along the AT n. of L&D 8.

Black Vulture reports continue to increase with reports of 2 along the WPT 3/30 (DL) as well as singletons near LV 4/13 (MC), along the WPT at Saltsburg 4/15 (MCa), at Blacklick 5/9 (MS), at YC 5/24 (SD, ED *et al*), and between stops on the Parkwood Breeding Bird Survey 5/30 (MH, RH). An amazing 53 **Turkey Vultures** were counted at Clymer 4/3 (CL, GL) coming off their roost. First **Broad-winged Hawks** were noted at Aultman 4/3 (DL) and at CC 4/14 (MVT). **Barred Owls** were most consistently reported at Nolo (AB, DB) with reports of 2 on 3/31 (DB) and 3 on both 4/12 (DB) and 5/14 (DB); near Heilwood one was spotted perched in a tree close to the road 5/29 (GL) early in the morning.

Single **Olive-sided Flycatchers** at SGL 137 s. of New Bethlehem and at SGL 262 on 5/24 (MS) were the season's lone reports. An **Alder Flycatcher** at YC 5/15 (MH, RH) was an apparent migrant this year as it could not be relocated later in the season; singletons visited the AT n. of L&D 8 on 5/19 (TR), Glendale All Round 5/21 (BF), and PG the following day (JC). Early **Eastern Phoebes** returned 3/9, both near Shelocta (BR) and near SGL 247 (TR).

Philadelphia Vireos were noted at only three locations this spring – one near Shelocta 5/11 (KL), 3 at YC the following day (KL), and one at PG 5/19 (TA).

A single first-year **Purple Martin** appeared at the martin box at Blue Spruce Park 5/31 (JT); this was the first record for the park, but so far no sign of nesting has been evident. Single **Bank Swallows** were noted 5/7, 17, 19 (m.ob.), and 5/24 (CH) when one was photographed, all at YC; in *Armstrong*, 3 along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 5/8 (TR) comprised the lone report; Bank Swallows were present at PG between 5/7 (TA) and 5/19 (TA) with top count of 10 on 5/15 (TA). Two Lick Reservoir is now the only known nesting location for **Cliff Swallows** in *Indiana*; 3 were present there 5/14 (MH, RH). At PG between 4/10 (TA) and the end of the quarter (BF), top count of this previously abundant nester was a mere 9 on 5/22 (JC). The Hawthorne Bridge in *Armstrong* yielded 5 Cliff Swallows on 4/28 (AK, JK), 8 on 5/2 (AK, JK), and 4 on 5/17 (CW).

A migrant **Marsh Wren** was a great find at the Waterworks Conservation Area on 4/27 (SD).

May 20 (DP, BS) yielded the only **Gray-cheeked Thrush** noted in the region, a single bird at Beaverdale Sportmen's Assoc.

Nolo was the most consistent spot for **Purple Finches** this spring with first sightings during the winter season (GL), peaking at 7 on 4/25 (GL) and continuing past mid-May when the last 2 individuals were noted 5/30 (CL, GL). Other winter finches were far and few between this spring; 3 **Pine Siskins** were spotted at PG 3/11 (TA) and 4/10 (JC); 4 were also found near Cresson 3/12 (TA).

Two **Lapland Longspurs** near Conemaugh Dam 3/23 (MCa) were nice finds. Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** at SGL 262 on 5/14 (MH, RH) were the only ones noted in *Indiana*, but single Grasshoppers were found 5/17, 31 (MK) near Carrolltown and 5/30 (PI, WI) closer to St. Benedict. **Fox Sparrows** were widespread with best counts of 8 at SGL 247 on 4/2 (TR) and 11 at PG 4/4 (JD, SDo). Two **Vesper Sparrows** appeared 4/3 (TA) at PG where one was listed 4/10 (JC); 4 between Plumville and Smicksburg 5/14 (MM) were encouraging as this previously common-in-the-county species has become much more difficult to find in recent years. The only **Savannah Sparrows** found in *Indiana* were one at YC 3/13 (JP) and 3 near Hillsdale 5/14 (MH, RH). *Armstrong* yielded reports at three locations – n.e. of KT 4/20, 5/3 (ABu), at Robbs Fording on 5/12 (MVT), and near Worthington 5/14 (TR). In *Cambria* the snow-edged puddles at Lake Rowena attracted 5 Savannahs 4/19 (MK) while one was found near St. Benedict 5/30 (PI, WI). Three **Henslow's Sparrows** at SGL 262 on 5/14 (MH, RH) and 2 at SGL 108 Bellwood 5/29 (TA) were the only ones eBirded. PG produced the season's only **Lincoln's Sparrow** 5/15 (TA).

Single **Yellow-breasted Chats** were reported at six locations, three in *Indiana* and three in *Armstrong* – Conemaugh Floodlands 5/8 (DL) & 5/20 (MH, RH), Blacklick Valley N.A. 5/22 (GT), and near Jacksonville 5/26 (MH, RH); one n.e. of KT 5/11, 21 (ABu), one s. of Cowansville 5/14 (TR), and one south of Worthington 5/23 (TR).

Thirty-one warbler species were sighted in *Indiana* this spring. Highlights include the returning **Swainson's Warbler** 4/26 (RC); this is its third year in residence along the WPT. Two **Mourning Warblers** were noted, one at Blue Spruce 5/13 (MH, RH), seen again the following day (JT), and another at YC on 5/19 (JT). Only two **Canada Warblers** were listed, both 5/14, one at BS (RW) and another at Blacklick Valley N.A. (MS). YC yielded the season's lone **Wilson's Warbler** 5/7 (SM).

Twenty-seven warbler species were found in *Cambria* this spring. SGL 108 - Dean yielded a **Golden-winged Warbler** on 5/21 (BF); a **Mourning Warbler** at Stackhouse Park 5/14 (DP) and a **Canada Warbler** at PG 5/8 (JC), all nice finds.

Armstrong boasted 28 warbler species this season. Highlights included a **Worm-eating Warbler** along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 4/29, 5/14 (TR),

A hemlock decorated with 24 **Northern Cardinals** at Nolo 3/29 (AB) reminded the observer of a well-decorated Christmas tree.

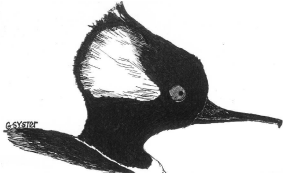
Observers: Tina Alianiello, Tammy Arnold (TaA), Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Kimberly Berry, John Boback, Moire Bridges, Dave Brooke (DBr), Alan Buriak (ABu), Seth Burnosky, Michele Carlson (MCa), John Carter, Richard Chirichiello, Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Josh Donaldson, Susan Donaldson (SDo), Ed Donley, Judy Emigh, Patience Fisher, Brian Freiwald, Steph Fulmer, Luke Fultz, Joe Gyekis, Court Harding, Rebecca Hart (ReH), Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Tyler Hodges, Matthew Hunter (MHu), Pam Illig, Winnie Illig, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Chad Kauffman, Noah Kauffman, Avis Keener, John Keener, Michael Kensinger, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Hunter Lieb, Renee Lubert, Karen Lucas, Steve Manns, Avi Marshall, Donna Meyer, Trent Millum, Sandra Newell, David Poder, James Pumford (JaP), Joseph Pumford, Bob Ramsey, Theo Rickert, Henry Rummel, Becca Sands, Bob Stewart, Damaris Stoddard, Sam Stoddard, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Gregory Tomb, Ken Truitt, Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Carole Winslow, Ray Winstead.

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How many species are present in this photo by Roger Higbee?
Can you identify them? See October's *Nuthatch*.



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