

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

August 2023

Meetings

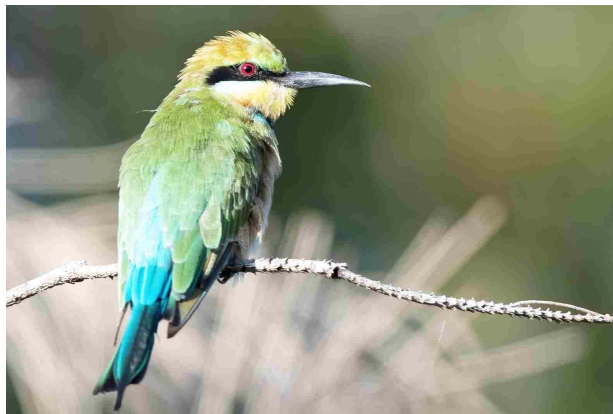
Todd Bird Club meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month September through May at Blue Spruce Lodge in Blue Spruce County Park. Blue Spruce County Park is located just off PA 110 east of the town of Ernest. Our meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. Arrive by 7:00 to socialize and snack. Refreshments are provided by various members at each meeting.

Tuesday, September 5 – Ron Burkert will present *Feathered Jewels and Their Southeastern Arizona Friends* at our September meeting. His talk will include shots of nine hummingbird species and a variety of other birds that he photographed on his trip to Tucson and the Sky Islands last September.

Tuesday, October 3 – *Exploring Australia, after the Fires and in the Floods of 2020* is the title of Kraig Cawley's presentation. Kraig and his wife Lisa planned 19 days away from home to celebrate 35 years of marriage in 2020. They spent



Ron Burkert photographed this gorgeous Vermilion Flycatcher at Arivaca Cienega at Buenos Aires NWR.



Does the Rainbow Bee-eater eat only Rainbow Bees?
Photo by Kraig Cawley

plenty of time as tourists in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide concentrating their trip on the most populous west side. With the long travel, this meant about 14 days in the nation, half of which were spent birding; almost all of those seven days were guided bird trips for the couple. The breathtaking endemic species from the simple remaining wildness of the nation and the diverse habitats combined for a memorable trip.

A bird photographer, Kraig will share highlights of the trip with a focus on the endemics of each region near the above-mentioned major cities. Having planned and replanned the trip start to finish before the fires and both before and then during the floods, they learned a great deal about planning a trip to OZ which Kraig is prepared to share with club members.

See page 3 for more information about our September speaker.

Outings

Saturday, August 12 – Pymatuning, led by Carol Guba (724-840-5700). Meet at 6:00 a.m. at the Higbees' or at the Pymatuning spillway at 8:30. Please call if you plan to attend.

Saturday, August 19 – Ghost Town Trail, the Rexis Branch, led by Todd Bird Club members. Meet at Rexis at 8:00 a.m. We'll walk the trail toward US 422.

Saturday, August 26 – Conneaut Harbor, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (412-309-3538; 724-354-3493). Meet at the Higbees at 6:00 a.m. or at Conneaut Harbor at 9:00 a.m. (If you are unable to find us at Conneaut, please call Roger's cell, the 412 number listed above.) We'll start searching for shorebirds at Conneaut Harbor, Ohio, where we'll spend the morning if there are shorebirds then head east to Pymatuning, stopping for fast food along the way.

Saturday, September 2 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet in the first large parking lot near the park office at 8:00 a.m. We'll hike the park's trails for warblers and other migrants. Blue Spruce is a hotspot for migrating Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Philadelphia Vireos.

Saturday, September 9 – Armstrong Trail, led by Theo Rickert (tjrickert33@gmail.com). Meet at the

parking lot near Lock & Dam 8 north of Kittanning at 7:15 a.m. If you'd like to carpool, meet at the Higbees' no later than 6:30 a.m. The trail is flat and we hike slowly as we'll be looking for migrants.

Saturday, September 16 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Ray Winstead (724-840-2123). Meet in the first large parking lot near the park office at 8:00 a.m. We'll hike the park's trails for warblers, thrushes, and other migrants. Blue Spruce is a hotspot for migrating Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Philadelphia Vireos.

Saturday, September 23 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Trent Millum (tmillum363@gmail.com). Meet at the gazebo on the north shore at 8:00 a.m. We'll be targeting migrants.

Saturday, September 30 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Sue Dickson. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located along PA 259 just off US 422.

Saturday, October 7 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Gloria Lamer (724-349-1159). We'll be targeting early waterfowl as well as other migrants.

Saturday, October 14 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Court Harding. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located along PA 259 just off US 422.

Penn Run Purple Martin Report

by Ron Alsop

Date the First Adult Scout (ASY) Arrived: 3/26/23

Date the First Sub-Adult (SY) Arrived: 4/23/23

Total Number of Martin Nesting Pairs: 56 (We have a combination of gourds and housing with 68 total compartments)

Total Number of Eggs Laid: 251

Total Number of Martins Fledged: As of our last nest check on 6/25/23, we had 203 babies and 41 eggs yet to hatch. Some eggs don't hatch or turn up missing from the nest. See note below.

Note: It is not possible to give a more accurate "fledge number" as we stop the nest checks when babies are

more than 20 days old. This prevents accidental pre-fledging of babies who get frightened and leave the nest too early. It is probably safe to assume that around 220 to 225 will actually fledge.

Fledging has been occurring almost every day and will continue until around the end of July. The parents spend these days training the babies to catch their own food mid-flight, show them areas to find food, etc. When the adults and babies (the total is easily over 200) return to the colony for the evening, it is quite the sight to see and hear– I absolutely love it!!! By mid-August most, if not all, of our colony will have moved on to a local "roost" believed to be at Lake Erie for the martins in our area of western PA. This is where they prepare for their return to South America/Brazil with thousands of other martins.

Stitt Property Outing

By Alice Stitt

Nine members of the Todd Bird Club gathered at the Robert and Alice Stitt property located in eastern Armstrong County on a cloudy Saturday this past April. Before the excursion began, Bob and Alice pointed out the pair of American Kestrels that were nesting in one of the powerline poles on their property. Easily seen from their front porch, the Stitts noted kestrels had been nesting in the poles or the kestrel box for several years.

The group traveled down through the property to a wooded area, viewing and/or hearing common birds including Northern Cardinals, Eastern Towhees, Common Grackles, Mourning Doves, American Crows and Tufted Titmice. Entering the woodlot, several woodpeckers and a Carolina Wren were observed.

Reaching the top of the property, which borders Keystone Power Plant, members were excited to witness a Northern Harrier gliding above the fly-ash mounds. Additional sightings included a Wild Turkey, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, and several Brown Thrashers. Moving on to the next wooded area several members pointed out some of the spring wildflowers in bloom. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, White-throated Sparrows, American Robins, and Northern Flickers were a few of the species both seen and heard among the trees.

Exiting the woods and into the agricultural fields, the members headed to the edge of the property where the Stitts constructed a pond and are in the process of establishing a wetlands area. Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, and American Goldfinches were viewed flying over the fields, while the two cavity nesters were observed checking out the numerous bird boxes available in the area. The pond offered the group a view of tadpoles and a couple of toads mating.

Roaming back towards the woods, the group entered a gas well lane to check one of the vernal ponds on the property. Members discussed the identification of the numerous tadpoles detected in the one pool. Alice had taken pictures of both Wood Frog eggs and Spotted Salamander eggs a few weeks prior.

Returning to the Stitt home, other noted birds seen were Field and Chipping Sparrows, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles, House Finches, European Starlings, Dark-eyed Juncos, Blue Jays, and White-breasted Nuthatches. Before dispersing, the group reviewed their excursion totals. Having walked approximately 1.25 miles, the members viewed 33 species and enjoyed the visit to the new property.

Special Thanks!

Sincere thanks to Robert and Alice Stitt for their invitation to the Todd Bird Club to bird their property. Everyone who attended had a very enjoyable morning hiking the woods and fields in a new area. Thank you very much for sharing your special place with us!!!

Ron Burkert

Our September speaker, Ron Burkert, grew up in the Oley Valley farm country east of Reading where he roamed the fields and forests of Berks County. After graduating from Penn State University with a BS in Forest Science ('74), he received a grant to work on his MS from West Virginia University in Wildlife Management ('78). His thesis title was "Wild Turkey Brood Range: Overstory Characteristics." His first full-time job with the University of Arkansas at Monticello was as a Research Associate and then as Administrative Assistant to the Forestry Department Head from 1978-1982. He worked on bobwhite, white-tailed deer and Wild Turkey habitat research projects. In October 1982 he returned to PA to

work with the non-profit Ruffed Grouse Society in Moon Twp. in a wide range of capacities from 1982 until the end of 2016.

In February 2017 Ron discovered eBird when he had just over 100 bird species on his life list. Currently he has seen more than 500 species, having birded in 28 states as well as in the Bahamas. He carries his camera/telephoto and Rode shotgun mic on almost every birding outing so that he can document the vast majority of his sightings with photos and/or audio recordings. He has participated in the Three Rivers Birding Club's Slide Slam for several years.

Alcatraz – May 2022

By Linda Wagner

Alcatraz? What's in a name? Depending on one's perspective it could strike terror into the hearts of criminals or sheer joy into the hearts of birders. Or... if you have a sensitive sniffer, maybe just the strong urge to put on a gas mask ASAP!

“Alcatraz,” aka “The Rock,” or “Isla de los Alcatraces” (Island of the Pelicans/ Gannets/ or strange bird, depending on the Spanish translation) was discovered by Juan Manuel de Ayala in 1775. Alcatraz lies 1.25 miles off of the coast of San Francisco.

In the 1850s the US Army built a citadel on top of the island to protect San Francisco Bay. By the late 1850s military prisoners were being held there, and that would continue for over 100 years. The prison closed in 1963 due to the high costs of operation. In 1972 the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established including Alcatraz.

The “Bird Man Of Alcatraz” was possibly the most famous inmate. The Bird Man or Robert Stroud was in the prison system for 54 years. He murdered two people and was a difficult prisoner to manage, spending 30 years at Leavenworth where he was permitted to study “canaries” and their diseases. He wrote two books on the subject. He was eventually transferred to Alcatraz where he spent 17 years. He was not permitted to continue his bird studies at Alcatraz because he had built a still for brewing alcohol with the bird study equipment he was given at Leavenworth.

On May 11, 2022, my son, daughter-in-law, and I took the ferry to Alcatraz. The historical significance of Alcatraz is impressive but more impressive in my “birder” brain was the sheer numbers of birds using the island as a sanctuary, nest site, and nursery. The proof of that hits you full in the nose when you step off the ferry and leaves



This Brandt's Cormorant on her nest is only one of more than 3,000 cormorant nests on Alcatraz.

Photo by Linda Wagner



This Western Gull has incorporated a blue face mask into her nest.

Photo by Linda Wagner



This Black-crowned Night-Heron nest is just one of 113 nests on Alcatraz.

Photo by Linda Wagner

you wondering why you didn't bring your gas mask along!

The dry erase board at the ferry landing gave a clue as to the source of the guano-fragranced air. Major contributors were the 3227 Brandt's Cormorant nests. Double that number to allow for pairs and add in some chicks and there were well over 6,500 cormorants!

Western Gulls seemed to be nesting in every nook and cranny. Often both members of the pair were guarding the nest. They didn't seem picky about nesting material. One nest even had a blue face mask worked into it, a real sign of the times. There were 800 Western Gull nests according to the list. Six pairs of California Gulls were listed, 70 Snowy Egret nests, 10 Great Blue Heron nests with 12 chicks, and 113 Black-crowned Night-Heron nests. I encountered a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron standing on a wall ledge enjoying the sun. I watched from just a few feet away as it proceeded to do bird yoga stretching each wing and warming itself in the sun. It was a very chilly day and the wind was brisk. In San Francisco you can count on chilly temps and wind! One Peregrine Falcon nest rounded out the list with Pigeon Guillemot and Black Oystercatcher nests to be determined. The lone Canada Goose family with one chick did not make the list but was busy standing guard in the Metal Detector Guard House.

After a long history of military and prison use, the island is alive with birds, wildlife, and beautiful flowers taking up every space in the ruins. The history

is fascinating and the birds are abundant! It can definitely put you into bird overload. Don't let the essence of guano stop you from visiting to enjoy the natural wonder of it all! Add Alcatraz to your “must do” list for your next trip to San Francisco!



Be Careful What You Wish For—You May Just Receive It!!!

By Ron Alsop

[Background - Ron Alsop, whom many of us know and who has spoken to Todd Bird Club, is a Purple Martin landlord in Penn Run, Indiana County, PA. He totally enjoys martins and likes to lecture/write about his eight-year pursuit of becoming a landlord. According to his family, he will talk about martins ad nauseam if you provide him with an audience! In 2015, he wrote a humorous landlord story entitled: *It's All About the Hat*. The article and pictures landed on the cover of *Purple Martin Update*, a national publication of the Purple Martin Conservation Association. Ron began his quest to become a martin landlord in 2010, at a time when there were no martin colonies nearby.]

From 2010 to 2016, as a Purple Martin landlord wannabe, I would often “wish” that I could someday get martins to arrive “early” in the season like other martin enthusiasts. I would watch the PMCA’s Scout Reports and see landlords reporting their first arrivals as early as March.

This was not the case for me. I only got martins that would visit for a short time during April or May and then leave. They not only arrived much later but never wanted to stay, so I could finally declare myself a bona fide “landlord.”

In 2017, it finally happened—I got martin pairs to take up residence at my site and I officially became a Purple Martin landlord! However, that year and for a few years to follow, my arrival dates were always in late April. How were those other landlords getting them so early?

Well, it seems that once martins decide to colonize a specific location, and start to return year after year, the older birds begin to arrive a little earlier each year. Also, it’s a known fact that the younger birds (known as sub-adults) are always about 5 to 6 weeks behind the adults in arriving at the site, so they, too, started arriving earlier. As I review my arrival dates over the years, I have discovered that the arrival timeline has moved up about one entire month! The adult birds arrive now in late March and the sub-adults, in late April. Bingo! My wish has come true! Fantastic! I now get to enjoy them longer than before, *and* I’m now one of those landlords who has early arrivals. But wait...

This *is* western PA. In March, we still get some significant snowstorms and rainy, cold weather that can last for several days at a time. The martins only eat flying

insects. How many flying bugs have you ever seen during a snowstorm or freezing temps?

Yep! Let me tell you—when the martins are here and those weather conditions appear, your heart goes into your feet. They are not accustomed to those kinds of conditions, and a sense of helplessness comes crashing in. Many landlords, me included, have learned how to “supplemental feed” during those times. It’s a matter of offering insects such as crickets and/or scrambled eggs to the starving martins. It’s not an easy process to initiate but can prove beneficial if it helps get them through the cold weather. Not all martins will accept the help and losses do occur.

I’ve been fortunate enough to have some martins “learn the drill” and immediately accept my help which then encourages others to join in and eat. They even carry this knowledge with them from one year to the next. However, I have other landlord friends who just can’t seem to ever get them to accept the help. They try and try, but the birds just don’t catch on and refuse to eat. It seems if you can coax even one to start eating the food, others will join in. Many landlords indicate that they have tried multiple times but without success. I must admit, it looks totally silly to see me flinging pieces of egg into the air to imitate a flying bug with the hope that they will catch and eat, but in my case, it works.

One friend commented, “It’s times like these that I find myself ‘wishing’ that the martins would have just waited a few more weeks to arrive.”

I said, “How true.” It’s times like these that I remind myself – *Be careful what you wish for, you may just receive it!*

Bird Quiz

(See Answers on page 12)

1. What two “hurricane birds” turned up at Yellow Creek on September 19, 2003?
2. What is the only North American gull that has a forked tail in adult plumage? Has it ever occurred in our region?
3. What are the three most recent birds that appeared in

Pennsylvania that were first state records?

4. Which common Pennsylvania species regularly begins nesting late in the summer?
5. What common Pennsylvania bird was formerly known as “hair bird” or “hair sparrow” and why?

Indiana Pennsylvania Migration Count 2023

Canada Goose	124	Eastern Wood-Pewee	15	Grasshopper Sparrow	2
Wood Duck	17	Acadian Flycatcher	15	Chipping Sparrow	142
Mallard	19	Willow Flycatcher	6	Field Sparrow	83
Ring-necked Duck	2	Least Flycatcher	3	Dark-eyed Junco	2
Lesser Scaup	2	<i>Empidonax sp?</i>	2	White-crowned Sparrow	5
Common Merganser	2	Eastern Phoebe	54	White-throated Sparrow	9
Ruddy Duck	3	Eastern Kingbird	24	Henslow's Sparrow	5
Ruffed Grouse	1	White-eyed Vireo	5	Song Sparrow	191
Wild Turkey	24	Yellow-throated Vireo	21	Swamp Sparrow	14
Rock Pigeon	10	Blue-headed Vireo	23	Eastern Towhee	195
Mourning Dove	166	Philadelphia Vireo	2	Yellow-breasted Chat	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Warbling Vireo	7	Bobolink	12
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	Red-eyed Vireo	277	Eastern Meadowlark	33
Common Nighthawk	1	Blue Jay	221	Orchard Oriole	18
Chimney Swift	107	American Crow	192	Baltimore Oriole	67
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	30	Common Raven	7	Red-winged Blackbird	581
Killdeer	50	Black-capped Chickadee	88	Brown-headed Cowbird	62
Semipalmated Sandpiper	2	<i>chickadee sp?</i>	5	Common Grackle	269
American Woodcock	2	Tufted Titmouse	91	Ovenbird	209
Spotted Sandpiper	10	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	17	Louisiana Waterthrush	12
Solitary Sandpiper	4	Purple Martin	37	Northern Waterthrush	2
Bonaparte's Gull	8	Tree Swallow	92	Blue-winged Warbler	6
Ring-billed Gull	38	Barn Swallow	163	Black-and-white Warbler	6
Caspian Tern	1	Cliff Swallow	4	Tennessee Warbler	37
Forster's Tern	21	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	Nashville Warbler	15
Common Loon	5	Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	Kentucky Warbler	6
Double-crested Cormorant	11	White-breasted Nuthatch	45	Common Yellowthroat	198
Great Blue Heron	12	Brown Creeper	3	Hooded Warbler	39
Green Heron	4	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	21	American Redstart	51
Black Vulture	1	House Wren	48	Cape May Warbler	7
Turkey Vulture	53	Winter Wren	2	Cerulean Warbler	4
Osprey	1	Carolina Wren	43	Northern Parula	11
Northern Harrier	1	European Starling	159	Magnolia Warbler	30
Cooper's Hawk	1	Gray Catbird	240	Bay-breasted Warbler	16
Bald Eagle	2	Brown Thrasher	30	Blackburnian Warbler	10
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	Northern Mockingbird	8	Yellow Warbler	147
Broad-winged Hawk	4	Eastern Bluebird	58	Chestnut-sided Warbler	11
Red-tailed Hawk	16	Veery	1	Black-throated Blue Warbler	3
Barred Owl	2	Swainson's Thrush	10	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
Belted Kingfisher	2	Hermit Thrush	3	Yellow-throated Warbler	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Wood Thrush	161	Prairie Warbler	12
Red-bellied Woodpecker	89	American Robin	493	Black-throated Green Warbler	51
Downy Woodpecker	42	Cedar Waxwing	14	Canada Warbler	2
Hairy Woodpecker	18	House Sparrow	121	Scarlet Tanager	133
Pileated Woodpecker	22	House Finch	37	Northern Cardinal	208
Northern Flicker	38	Purple Finch	4	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	60
American Kestrel	3	American Goldfinch	172	Indigo Bunting	65

Total Number of Species = 139
 Total Number of Individuals = 7,075

Note: The *sp?* are not counted as species since other members of those families are already on the list, but the numbers are included in the final total.

Indiana County Migration Count Observers

Dave Beatty	Barb Fletcher	Rita Lippert	Henry Rummel
Tom Betts	Don Frew	Frank Logue	Kira Smith
Alicia Cameron	Marie Frew	Linda Logue	Vicki Stelma
Lee Carnahan	Sue Gatti	Donna Meyer	Blair Stormer
Roger Carnahan	Carol Guba	Marilyn Moore	Linda Stormer
Cherie Cornmesser	Margaret Higbee	Nancy Murphy	Rodger Stormer
Marcy Cunkelman	Roger Higbee	James Pumford	Mark Strittmatter
Sue Dickson	Pat Johner	Joseph Pumford	John Taylor
John Dudash	Avis Keener	Bob Ramsey	Greg Tomb
Anita Duffalo	John Keener	Sharon Robson	Mary Lu Tucker
Judy Emigh	Gloria Lamer	Cindy Rogers	Nick Voris
Gary Ferrence			

Total Participants = 45

Total Parties = 36

Party Hours on Foot = 40.7767

Party Hours by Car = 37.78

Party Hours by Other = 63.757 (Stationary)

Party Miles on Foot = 29.51

Party Miles by Car = 248.28

Total Party Hours = 141.1137

Indiana County Migration Count Revisited

This year's count was held on Saturday, May 13, the same day as Global Big Day. Since our ICMC is always the second Saturday in May, this is one of our later counts. Later counts usually mean more species. On May 14, 2022, we tallied 122 species, but we had six fewer participants and six fewer parties as well. We surpassed last year's species count by 17 and the total number of individuals by 1,513.

We also had a lot of highlights this year, many at Yellow Creek SP. Gloria Lamer started her day with two Semipalmated Sandpipers on the beach at Yellow Creek while ending it there with a flock of 21 Forster's Terns and a Caspian Tern as well. She also found the only two Bald Eagles on the entire count and one of only two American Woodcocks. Over on Campground and Hoffman Roads, Lee Carnahan spotted a nice assortment of water birds on Yellow Creek Lake, including Wood, Ring-necked, and Ruddy Ducks, as well as five Common Loons and six Double-crested Cormorants. Lee also noted the only Osprey and the only Northern Harrier. His day was capped with a flock of 38 Ring-billed and eight Bonaparte's Gulls. Later in the afternoon Joseph and James Pumford arrived at the park and found the Semipalmated Sandpipers and three of the Forster's Terns still present. Other Pumford highlights included the count's only Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a Swainson's Thrush, and two Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Birding White's Woods, Henry Rummel added the third Yellow-rumped Warbler to the tally, as well as many other species.

Mark Strittmatter and John Taylor started their morning at the Newport Road trailhead for the West Penn Trail where their best

finds included a Barred Owl, two Common Mergansers, and one of three Red-shouldered Hawks. We also have Mark and John to thank for adding four of the five Henslow's Sparrows at SGL 273 to our list. In addition, they listed the only two Yellow-throated Warblers at Conemaugh Dam.

Covering Blacklick Valley Natural Area and Pine Ridge Park, as well as hiking several sections of the Ghost Town Trail, Greg Tomb spotted the count's lone Ruffed Grouse, Black Vulture, both Belted Kingfishers, and both Winter Wrens. He also added the second Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Philadelphia Vireo, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet to our list.

Marcy Cunkelman started her morning birding the area around her home near Lewisville. She picked up Anita Duffalo before heading to do some road birding, ending up at Elders Ridge where they sighted the only Yellow-breasted Chat and three of the four Solitary Sandpipers on the list. Marcy and Anita continued to West Lebanon before heading to Conemaugh Dam where they counted three Yellow-throated Warblers, adding one to the list since the Strittmatter-Taylor crew had already counted two at that location.

Walking out her side door, Carol Guba was astounded by the flocks of birds moving through her yard. She ended up spending ten hours counting a total of 80 species from her yard! Her highlights included the count's lone Cooper's Hawk and Yellow-billed Cuckoo; in addition, she listed one of two Philadelphia Vireos and the third Red-shouldered Hawk as well as two of the three Black-throated Blue Warblers on the count.

Sue Dickson at Waterworks Conservation Area found a White-

crowned Sparrow while Gary Ferrence, not that far away, noted the other four right at his feeder, bringing the total to five.

Rodger and Linda Stormer recruited their grandson Blair for his first Indiana County Migration Count. Highlights on their list included Purple Finch and four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Little Blair already has quite a bird list – I hope his grandparents made a checklist for him!

Near Shelocta, Bob Ramsey had a great day tallying 55 species, including the only Common Nighthawk, two-thirds of the

Hermit Thrushes, one of the two Northern Waterthrushes, and one of two American Woodcocks found on the count.

Pat Johner in her area of the county listed an amazing nine Nashville Warblers among her other goodies.

I apologize for not mentioning everyone here. You are all amazing! Thank you so very much for spending your day eeking out the most species and individuals possible!

– Margaret Higbee

Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria Spring 2023

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

Abbreviations: Armstrong Trail n. of L&D 8 (AT), Blue Spruce County Park (BS), Conemaugh Dam (CD), Crooked Creek (CC), Indiana (IN), Indiana County Migration Count (ICMC), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Lock and Dam (L & D), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rosston (RT), Shelocta (SH), West Lebanon (WL), West Penn Trail (WPT), Worthington (WT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Eight **Snow Geese** at YC 4/8 (TM) was the fourth largest YC flock on record with two previous highs of 400 on 3/6/1990 (GL) and 23 on 3/9/2004 (LC, CG, MH, SS). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** appeared 3/8 (TA) at PG; a single **Cackling Goose** in Croyle Twp. 3/29 (MHu) was the season's lone report. **Tundra Swans** continued to move through the region with top counts of 309 at PG 3/8 (JC), 81 near Plumville 3/1 (TH), 70 at YC 3/7 (LC, CH, MH, RH, GT), 63 at Pioneer Lake, also 3/7 (GL), and 43 at CC 3/9 (TR); movement had tapered off to singletons at Blairsville by 3/26 (KR) and at PG 3/22 (WI).

Top count of **Wood Ducks** was 119 as they left the marsh at YC 3/10 (MS, JT) in the late afternoon; this surpassed the previous spring high of 75 on 3/23/1999 (MH, CLaB, LW); Armstrong's high of 30 were along the AT 3/11, 20 (TR). First arrivals of **Blue-winged Teal** included 3 at YC 3/18 (ABu) and 10 at PG 4/2 (JC). **Northern Shoveler** reports between 3/11 (JC) and 4/11 (AM) included up to 6 at PG 3/12 (TA); last 8 were spotted at YC 5/4 (JT) while 2 **Gadwall** lingered at

YC till 5/18 (JT). The **Eurasian Wigeon**, found last quarter, lingered through 3/2 (AL, JS) at YC. Last two **American Wigeons** remained at YC 4/25 (HR) and at KR 4/26 (MS). Top **American Black Duck** tally was 14 along the AT 3/11 (TR). Last **Northern Pintails** in the region included 5 at YC 3/28 (MHu) and 4 at KR 3/31 (MH, RH). Two lingering **Green-winged Teal** were noted at YC 5/8 (MS).



Tina Alianiello photographed these Greater White-fronted Geese at Prince Gallitzin SP 3/8.



Sue Dickson photographed the drake Surf Scoter at Yellow Creek 4/24.



Joseph Pumford photographed this Greater Scaup at Yellow Creek 3/26.

Ten **Canvasbacks** and 4 **Red-heads** were still present at YC 4/6 (MSC); PG's last were 2 Canvasbacks and one Redhead, also 4/6 (MD). Late **Ring-necked Ducks**, both singletons, remained at YC 5/18 (JT) and at PG 5/26 (PI, WI). A high count of 50 **Greater Scaup** was tallied at PG 3/8 (TA); one of 2 at YC was photographed 3/26 (JP) while another lingered along the AT 5/13 (TR). Last **Lesser Scaup** included one at PG 5/26 (PI, WI) and 2 at YC through 5/23 (HR). Four **Surf Scoters** were a nice find along the AT 5/5 (TR). Lingered scoters are not a YC phenomenon. A drake and 2 hen **Surf Scoters** were first observed at YC 4/18 (JT) and amazingly remained through

4/25 (SD, MH, RH, TR, JT) and seen by many. A gorgeous drake **White-winged Scoter**, spotted by the Tuesday YC crew 3/28 (ED, PF, MH, RH, JT), was not as cooperative but was spotted later that same day (MW). A pair of **Black Scoters** was observed on Buffalo Creek near Freeport 3/1 (SW, StW). **Long-tailed Ducks** put in a good appearance this spring with sightings at YC on three dates – 21 on 3/7 (LC, CH, MH, RH, GT); 2 on 3/25 (MH, RH, NH, GT, RW); and 10 on 3/28 (LC, ED, PF, MH, RH, JT); singletons were listed at PG 3/12 (TA), 4/2 (JC, PI, WI), and 4/4 (JD, SDi). March 28 yielded 2 north of Templeton (GP) and one at Lake Rowena (AM). **Buffleheads** were last noted 5/4 (MS) at YC and 5/12 (PI, WI) at PG. Best **Common Goldeneye** tally was 12 on 3/7 (LC, CH, MH, RH, GT) at YC; the only others reported were one to 3 at PG on 3/5 (v.ob.). Top **Hooded Merganser** tally was 40 at PG 3/8 (TA). CC and the WPT were the hotspots for **Common Mergansers** this spring with respective counts of 24 on 3/9 (TR) and 11 on 3/21 (MM); although this is an uncommon local breeder, it was also unusual to spot a drake Common Merganser fly over a Shelocla BBS stop 5/27 (MH, RH). **Red-breasted Merganser** numbers at YC returned somewhat to what they had been in the past with counts of 99 on 3/21 (ED, MH, RH, DK, GT), 130 on 3/22 (AKi), 110 on 3/26 (KL), and 90 on 4/11 (JT, GT); PG's top count was 30 on 4/6 (MD, JD, SDo). High **Ruddy Duck** tallies of 65 occurred 3/26 (JP) at YC and 150 on 4/6 (MD) at PG.

It's good to report more **Ruffed Grouse** sightings that included one near Nolo 3/4, 4/24 (TH) and 4 along three sections of the GTT 3/24, 4/3, & 5/13 (GT); *Cambria* yielded grouse on four dates (TA, JC) at SGL 108 - Fallentimber and one 4/9 (PI) at SGL 198 on 4/9 (PI).

Only three reports of **Common Nighthawk** were listed – one roosting on a tree limb along the WPT trailhead 5/10 (MS, JT), one calling southwest of Cadogan 5/13 (TR), and another nocturnal sighting near IN 5/17 (DJ). The only reported but extremely early **Eastern Whip-poor-will** in *Indiana* was heard



Mark Strittmatter photographed this Ruddy Turnstone on 5/17 at Yellow Creek.



This White-rumped Sandpiper accompanied the above-photographed Ruddy Turnstone on the beach at Yellow Creek 5/17, and fortunately Mark Strittmatter was there to photograph both.

making “distinctive, half-hearted” calls along the Hoodlebug Trail 3/24 (JC); 2 were listed at PG 4/23 (JC) and one near Hastings 5/26 (PI, WI).

A **Virginia Rail** was heard calling and was recorded at the Waterworks Conservation Area 4/10,11 (SD); at PG singletons were found 4/15, 5/13 (TA) while 2 were present 4/23 (JC), the same time a **Sora** was also noted. **American Coot** numbers reached or surpassed 100 on ten dates at YC between 3/21 (ED, MH, RH, DK, GT) and 4/20 (JT); PG's high was 40 on 4/6 (JD, SDo).

Two **Semipalmated Plovers** at CC 5/3 (JB), the lone *Armstrong* report, and 3 at YC 5/17 (HR, MS, JT) were first arrivals; 3 were still present at YC 5/23 (HR) while one was noted 5/27 (TM, JT). A one-day-wonder **Ruddy Turnstone** appeared on the YC beach 5/17 (HR, MS, JT). A single **Dunlin** and a **Least**

Sandpiper were first noted at YC 5/12 (JT); 4 Least Sandpipers were first listed 5/10 (TR) at CC; one stopped at YC 5/23, 31 (HR) and another at PG 5/26 (PI, WI). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** accompanied the above mentioned turnstone 5/17 (MS, JT, MW). Three **Pectoral Sandpipers** arrived at YC 4/18 (MH, RH). First two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were observed 5/13 (GL, JP) at YC while a singleton was photographed there 5/30 (SD, CH, MH, RH). The YC beach also on 5/12 (JT) yielded a **Short-billed Dowitcher**. First **Wilson's Snipe** reports included one along the WPT at Blairsville (MCa) and one at PG (TA), both 3/18; 2 were at PG 4/1 (TA), where one was found the following day (JC); singletons appeared at IUP 3/22, 4/23, & 4/26 (JT). Other snipe included 2 at Conemaugh Floodlands 4/6 (MS), and one at YC 4/22 (MH, RH). First 2 **Spotted Sandpiper** stopped on the beach at YC 4/22 (JT) and at PG 4/23 (JC); high counts were 7 on YC's south shore 5/12 (JT) and 6 at PG 5/13 (TA). April 23 (JT) marked the first migrant **Solitary Sandpiper** at IUP; last northward bound Solitary Sandpipers were listed 5/14 (TA) at PG and 5/15 (MH, RH) at BS. Five **Greater Yellowlegs** flew into the south shore boat launch area 4/25 (MH, RH,TR) after the Tuesday morning YC outing; last noted was one

5/17 (GS, MS, JT) at YC; singletons were spotted 4/6 (JD, SDo) at PG, 4/26 (MS) at KR, and 5/10 (TR) at CC. The region's only **Lesser Yellowlegs** was listed at PG 5/13 (TA).

Top tally of **Bonaparte's Gulls** was 300 on 4/19 (JT) at YC. The nesting **Herring Gulls** at KT were still on nest 5/26 (TR). Single **Caspian Terns** visited YC 5/7 (EP) and 5/13 (GL); a **Black Tern** appeared at YC 5/15 (GS, MS). YC **Common Tern** sightings included singletons on 5/16 (MH, RH, JT) and 5/18 (JT). One to 3 **Forster's Terns** visited YC between 4/18 (SD, MH, RH, JT) and 5/23 (HR), but 5/13 (GL) yielded the YC high of 21 Forster's Terns. Five Forster's stopped 4/30 (RL) at PG where one was listed 5/13 (TA).

A **Red-throated Loon** at PG 4/23 (JC) was the lone report. There were no major **Common Loon** fallouts this spring with the high tally of 7 at PG 4/6 (MD).

An **American Bittern** was a great find at PG 5/12 (PI, WI). Three **Great Egrets** stopped by YC 4/15 (KL); another was there 5/23 (HR). Parks Bend Farm hosted single Great Egrets 4/1 (MVT) and 5/12 (MVT). Five **Black Vultures** were at McCreary's Pond 3/24 (ES); one was spotted along US 119 north of Blairsville 4/23 (MH, RH); another was possibly on eggs along the GTT 5/13 (GT); this is the same location where the observer confirmed nesting last year.

An **Osprey** at YC on 5/30 (SD, CH, MH, RH), carrying a fish while being pursued by a Bald Eagle, suggested nearby, but still unconfirmed, nesting. Once again, the most reliable spot for **Barred Owls** was at Nolo, thanks to DB's dog who needs to go out in the middle of the night. A **Short-eared Owl** was last seen near West Lebanon 3/8 (CH).

An adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** appeared near WT 4/30 (MiM) and was still present 5/4 (MiM); another adult arrived east of Kittanning 4/30 (RS).

A **Merlin** was found near Summerhill 4/21 (SB); Merlins were noted at various areas around IN throughout the spring (v.o.). A single **Peregrine** was found below the Graff Bridge 3/29 (MH, RH) and 4/1 (DBr).

Single **Alder Flycatchers** were found 5/21, both at YC (TM) and at Conemaugh Floodlands (MS); 5/29 yielded single Alders at Parks Bend Farm (MVT) and near Spring Church (MH, RH). Much less common

as a breeding bird than 20 years ago, **Least Flycatchers** were reported at only four *Indiana* locations between 5/8 (JT) and 5/16 (MH, RH, TR, JT); *Armstrong* yielded two reports – 2 individuals at SGL 247 on 5/6 (TR) and one west of CC 5/27 (MH, RH) while *Cambria* boasted Least Flycatchers at five locations and four of those were seen multiple times between 5/7 (TA) and 5/29 (PI, WI).

Philadelphia Vireos were spotted at 6 *Indiana* spots (v.o.) between 5/7 (AK, JK) at Hemlock Lake and 5/26 (Anonymous) near Blairsville; none were reported in either *Armstrong* or *Cambria*.

All six swallows were noted at YC this spring. Of note were one early arriving **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at PG 4/2 (JC) and 4 on 4/6 (MSC) at YC. One to 4 **Purple Martins** were hanging around YC between 4/4 (SD, ED, MH, RH, DK, JT, GT) and 5/23 (HR), roosting, but not nesting, in the martin house. Two **Bank Swallows** arrived 4/23 (AL, JS), and one or 2 were seen on four other dates through 5/16 (MH, RH, JT) at YC; PG hosted 3 to 4 between 4/29 (TA) and 5/12 (TA); 2 were observed along the AT 5/5 (TR). Two **Cliff Swallows**, the first of the season, graced YC Lake on 4/22 (MH, RH) and Glendale Lake at PG 4/23 (JC); the YC birds were seen sporadically through 5/2 (ED, MH, RH, JT); the PG birds, through 5/12 (TA).

Red-breasted Nuthatches showed a good spring presence with last sightings 5/13 at Carrolltown (PI, WI), near Elderton (AS), and near WT (MiM), and 5/15 (JC) at White's Woods. **Brown Creepers**, in good numbers this spring, continued through the end of the period only at YC (SD, CH, MH, RH).

An early **House Wren** popped up at YC behind the park office on 3/25 (MH, RH, NH, GT, RW); we first heard it singing, but Greg was able to spot it. Before the rest of us saw it, the wren flew farther into the forest. Two additional birders (TP, MJS) heard the House Wren singing near the maintenance building later that afternoon. This is the only March date in eBird for Indiana County.

Winter Wrens continued from the end of the previous period through 4/11 (SD, ED, JE, MH, RH, DK, GL, JP, JSC, MSC, GT) at YC; sightings along the GTT through 5/20 (CM) are probably locally breeding wrens as the habitat looks great.

Veeries were in short supply this spring in the western section of the region with only two *Indiana* reports – one 5/13 (MH, RH) at SGL 174 and the

other on 5/19 (MK) along the WPT; in *Armstrong* Veeries were found at only Freeport 5/2, 4 (SW), at SGL 247 on 5/6, 21 (TR), and west of Elderton 5/29 (MH, RH); *Cambria*, however, yielded reports at seven locations with as many as 3 or 4 individuals at several. Only two **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** were noted – singletons near Lewisville 5/18 (MC) and at BS 5/22 (MH, RH). **Swainson's Thrushes**, on the other hand, were listed at seven *Indiana* locations with multiple reports at some, between 5/10 (GT) when 2 were found at Pine Ridge Park and 5/22 (MH, RH) when the last was spotted at BS; *Armstrong* yielded only one Swainson's, a singleton at SGL 247 on 5/21 (TR); none were noted in *Cambria*. **Hermit Thrushes** started showing up 4/6 (MS) in IN, 4/11 (MiM) near WT, 4/16 (TA) at SGL 108 - Fallentimber, and 4/23 (MS) at the WPT trailhead. **Wood Thrushes** first appeared 4/29 (TA) at PG; 4/30, both at Murphy's Bottom (RD, BP) and near Shelocta (MH, RH), and 5/5 (MSC) near Brush Valley.

West of IN 2 **Evening Grosbeaks** stopped at a feeder 4/25, 28 (SA); north of Creekside one showed up 4/28 and 2 on 5/1 (Anonymous). Early **Purple Finches** included one near Lewisville 3/16 (MC) and 2 each on 3/31 near IN (SD) and at Nolo (GL); the Nolo flock had increased to 14 by 4/17 (CL, GL). First 3 **Pine Siskins** arrived near WT 4/10 (MiM), at Wilmore Reservoir 4/13 (TA), in IN 4/17 (JS); 5 individuals stopped at a feeder near Lewisville 5/6 (MC).

Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were observed 5/13 - 23 (v.o.) at four *Indiana* locations; top count was 5 at Babcock Mine Area 5/28 (TA). First **Fox Sparrows** appeared 3/4 (TR) near Kittanning, 3/5 (TA, PI, WI) at PG, 3/11 (GL) at a Nolo feeder; high tallies included 8 at Blacklick Valley Natural Area on 4/2 (GT) and 5 near Ernest 4/3 (MS). Becoming ever more difficult to find in our area, single Vesper Sparrows were noted 5/13-14 (TA) at PG, 5/21 (PI, WI) near Ebensburg, and 5/31 (MH, RH) northeast of Kittanning; 2 were listed at Babcock Mine area 5/28 (TA). The only *Indiana Savannah Sparrow* reported was present at SGL 273 on 5/7 (MS) and 5/10 (MS, JT); the WT area was the hotspot in *Armstrong* while *Cambria* reports included 2 Savannahs near Duman Lake 5/13 (PI, WI) and one that was photographed at PG 5/18 (HR, PH).

Henslow's Sparrows were listed at SGL 273 on 5/5 (MH, RH), near Glen Campbell on 5/13 (MH, RH), and at SGL 262 on 5/23 (SK); in *Cambria*, 2 were present at SGL 108 - Bellwood on 5/27 (TA) while 3

were counted at the Babcock Mine area the following day (TA).

Yellow-breasted Chat was found at only two *Cambria*, three *Indiana*, and four *Armstrong* locations, this spring (v.o.), and missing from what had been the most reliable spot near Clarksburg.

Bobolinks, too, were widespread but mostly in low numbers with best tallies of 8 in the Glen Campbell area 5/13 (MH, RH), 7 near WT 5/28 (TR), and 6 at SGL 108 - Bellwood 5/27 (TA). YC hosted the first 15 **Rusty Blackbirds** 3/3 (JT), but Rusties were present on eight other dates through 4/23 (JS) at YC. Best count of 19 was obtained along the WPT 3/31 (GT). Last Rusty was noted 5/5 (MK) at PG; all *Cambria* reports mentioned single birds.

Thirty-three was the warbler count for the region this spring.

Armstrong produced 29 warbler species. The definite highlight was the **Mourning Warbler** found along the AT 5/13 (TR) and seen again 5/18 (JeK, AR).

Birders reported 30 species in *Cambria* this spring. Highlights included two **Golden-winged Warblers** near South Fork 5/6 (SB) and a **Wilson's Warbler** at PG 5/14 (TA).

Thirty-one warbler species were sighted in *Indiana*. Highlights included 2 **Golden-winged Warblers** – one at BS 5/10 (MS, JT) and the other at SGL 273 on 5/12 (MS). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was another great find – first sighted at YC 5/7 (LR), relocated later that same day (HR), and spotted again the next day (JT). Interesting was the appearance of a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at a suet feeder near IN 4/24 (SD). **Wilson's Warbler** showed up only at YC on 5/11 (HR), 5/12 (JT), and 5/17 (JK).



Mark Strittmatter
photographed this Golden-
winged Warbler at Blue
Spruce Park 5/10.

See page 12 for Observers.

Observers: Tina Alianiello, Sue Appleby, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Kimberly Berry, Dave Brooke (DBr), Susan Burket (SuB), Seth Burnosky, Alex Busato (ABu), Michele Carlson (MCa), Lee Carnahan, John Carter, Jeremy Castle, Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Josh Donaldson, Susan Donaldson (SDo), Ed Donley, Judy Emigh, Mary Eyman, Patience Fisher, Carol Guba, Court Harding, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Tyler Hodges, Nick Hoffman, Matthew Hunt (MHu), Matt Hunter (MHunter), Pam Illig, Winnie Illig, David Janetski, Jeff Kenney, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Stefan Karkuff, Jeff Katen (JKa), Avis Keener, John Keener, Jeff Kenney (JeK), Michael Kensinger (MKe), Michelle Kienholz, Andy Kiester (AKi), Carrol Labarthe (CLab), Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Annie Lindsey, Renee Lubert, Karen Lucas, Andrew Mack, Mindy McClister (MiM), Mark McConaughy, Cody Miller, Trent Millum, Jimmy N, Tom Pearson, George Pegher, Eric Pilgram, Joseph Pumford, Kyle Rambo, Theo Rickert, Hank Rouland, Phin Rouland, Logan Rode, Angela Romanczuk, Henry Rummel, Jennifer St Clair, Matt St Clair, Joe Saxfield, Mary Jane Seipler (MJS), Robert Schall, Emma Skundrich, Scott Speedy, Liz Spence, Alice Stitt, Garrett Strittmatter, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Jenna Tishler (JT), Greg Tomb, Marge Van Tassel, Linda Wagner, Sierra Waltenbaugh (SiW), Stacy Waltenbaugh, Mike Weible, Ray Winstead.

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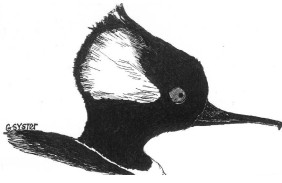
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Answers to Bird Quiz (page 5)

1. Sabine's Gull & Leach's Storm-Petrel
2. Sabine's Gull
3. Ferruginous Hawk, Limpkin, Neotropic Cormorant
4. American Goldfinch
5. Chipping Sparrow because it formerly used a lot of horse hair in its nests when horses were more common.





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