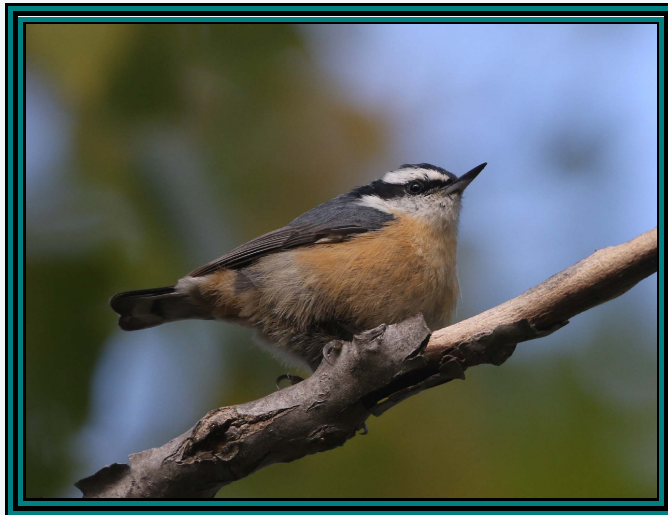


The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

April 2025

Meetings

May's Todd Bird Club meeting starts at 6:00 p.m. with dinner. Please bring your own place settings and a dish to share. The evening's presentation will begin immediately after we eat, and rearrange the chairs.

Tuesday, May 6 – Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. followed by our banquet speaker, Tom Kuehl. We look forward to this entertaining and educational talk. Borrowing heavily from a program recently prepared and presented by Atlas Coordinator Amber Wiewel, Tom will

provide a second-year progress report on the PBA3 and information concerning how to participate for those who have not yet started to contribute to the Atlas Project. Tom will demonstrate how to navigate all the information that is available on the eBird Project Website and available from the Atlas Map Tool. Tom will include a drill down into the progress towards the completion of blocks in Indiana County and a review of where volunteer



Tom Kuehl photographed this adult Red-shouldered Hawk in December 2024 in Beaver County during a Winter Atlas trip.

effort is most needed for the upcoming breeding season.

Tom has collected quite a few photos while he and Janet were doing the Atlas and Winter Raptor Surveys during the 2024-25 winter, and he will share photos and their adventures of the season.

Todd Bird Club members, Tom and Janet, have been avid birders for more than 25 years. They currently serve as the Southwest Regional Coordinators for the PBA3 and are also the Westmoreland County Coordinators and are serving as the long-distance coordinators for both Beaver and Lawrence Counties. Tom is the PA Bird Journal Westmoreland County Compiler and the Bird Reporter for the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club. He is a past Director, Vice-President, and President of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. We extend a warm welcome to Tom and Janet!

Did you know that Common Mergansers had been extirpated from the state over 100 years ago but are now repopulating Pennsylvania?

Outings

Saturday, April 5 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493; 412-309-3538). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office located on PA 259 just off US 422. This is a joint outing with Three Rivers Birding Club and Todd Bird Club.

Saturday, April 12 – Alice Stitt will lead an outing on the Stitt property near Elderton. For more information, please contact Alice (717-381-6306). Directions: From Indiana take US 422 toward Elderton. At the eastern most traffic light at the Log Cabin Restaurant, turn left onto PA 210 south. Follow 210 for less than 0.25 miles and watch for the driveway on the left (not Kimmel Plan Lane). Across the road from the Stitt driveway is a white farmhouse and a silo with a blue roof. Proceed up the driveway, past the first white and black house. Continue on the driveway past a green gas well, being careful of the dip in the road. Follow the driveway to the end of the road. Please park in front of the large green and white building.. (GPS coordinates: 40.681327 W, -79.341915)

Saturday, April 19 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Noah Jones. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office located on PA 259 just off US 422.

Saturday, April 26 – State Game Lands 79, led by Greg Tomb (gtomb22@gmail.com). Meet at 8:00 at the SGL parking lot, on Plank Road between the towns of Twin Rocks and Vintondale. **Directions:** From Indiana, take Rt 422 east for 17 miles to Belsano. Turn right onto Rt 271 south and travel about 2 miles through Twin Rocks. Turn right onto Plank Road toward Vintondale and travel 1.6 miles. The parking lot is on the left. On the right is another road with a brown gate across it. The GPS coordinates are 40.483021, -78.888916.

Saturday, May 3 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office located on PA 259 just off US 422.

Saturday, May 10 – Indiana County Migration Count. Bird anywhere in the county then either eBird your data or submit it to Greg Tomb (gtomb22@gmail.com). *Special thanks to Greg for compiling the count!!!* Last year 28 participants in 23 parties tallied a total of 125 species.



Can you guess which species had the highest tally of 456 on the 2024 Indiana Migration Count?

The total number of individuals tallied was 5,620. Let's try to increase our number of participants which will help increase our total numbers overall.

Please mark your calendars now to go birding on May 10. You may bird in your yard or afield. Please submit your results, either to eBird or to Greg ASAP. Thanks for your participation.

Saturday, May 17 – Muddy Creek Wetland Trail, Moraine State Park, led by Debbie Kalbfleisch (724-651-5426). Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot opposite the trailhead on Burton Road. Please note that the closest bathroom is at the Rt. 528 Boat Launch, about 10 minutes away. This is an easy-walking trail through woods and can be muddy in spots. In case of inclement weather, please check the Todd Bird Club web page, or call Debbie!

Directions: From Indiana, follow US 422 west, and take the exit for PA 528 toward Prospect. Make a right onto PA 528 north. You will pass the 528 Boat Launch on your right. Continue north on 528 and turn right onto West Liberty Road. In 0.7 mile, turn left onto Burton Road. The parking lot will be about a half mile on the right.

Saturday, May 24 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Trent Millum (860-921-7234). **Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the North Shore by the gazebo.**

Saturday, May 31 – Stavich Bike Trail, Lawrence County, led by Linda Wagner (724-944-6313). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Morgan Oil Gas Station which is just over the Ohio border, and only five minutes from the bike trail. Address is 127 Lowellville Road, Struthers, OH 44471. (You may want to keep in mind that gas is cheaper in Ohio!)

Please call or text Linda if you plan to attend, in case she has to cancel in case of inclement weather or an emergency. This is about two hours from Indiana, so birders may want to carpool. The path is easy walking on flat pavement, and we will plan to walk west to Ohio. Participants will be invited to follow Linda to a New Castle restaurant for lunch afterwards.

Confessions of a Beginning Birder

By Tiffany Chan

Seeing my friend Vicki Stelma light up when she spoke about the warblers she saw at Magee Marsh during spring migration, peaked my curiosity. I'm not sure if I had even seen a warbler before. If I did, I certainly didn't realize it. What makes them so special?

I grew up on a steady diet of PBS nature documentaries and camping. I've seen my share of cardinals, hummingbirds and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks when I had bird feeders. I have felt the magic of a chickadee or titmouse alight on my hand at Blue Spruce Park. But, I felt like I was missing something. There seem to be a lot of people into "birding." So, I decided to check it out.

I accompanied Vicki to a Todd Bird Club outing at Yellow Creek. We met at the park office and stood in a circle and introduced ourselves. I nervously blurted out that this was my first outing and I didn't know what I was doing. The underlying message was "If I say or do something stupid, please forgive me!!!"

My first impression was that everyone seemed very nice. This group of people included all ages but mostly retired folks who probably had more time on their hands. I was also surprised how many men were there. I have taught Yoga for 30 years and gone on many Yoga retreats where most of the participants are women. So, that was a nice change.

Then, we were off to see what we could find. We stopped at Dragonfly Pond. There had been a storm the previous day so the light and colors were vivid and bright. Even the Canada Geese looked majestic floating around the island and sitting on their nest.

We crossed the street to check out the water birds. They seemed so far away but the experienced birders could pick out what we were seeing. Grebes, 'mergs,' Gadwalls, Redheads, and people seemed particularly excited to see a "Long-tail." They all looked pretty cool to me. Especially considering how far they had come to get to our little Yellow Creek Lake. I looked them up when I got home



Trumpeter Swans with their "cute" cygnets at Magee Marsh, May 11, 2024.

since people didn't seem to carry their birding books. Maybe they had already memorized them.

I got a good look at a Bufflehead through someone's scope – definitely my favorite bird of the day. I found myself saying "how cute" many times. I noticed that the serious birders didn't say that the birds are "cute." Oh well. I guess that's just part of my personal enjoyment of them.

On another outing, the Club met at Blue Spruce. The leaves were out and it was definitely more challenging to see the birds. I was still getting used to spotting a bird and raising my binoculars up to the same place to find it. I don't think I actually got to see many birds with magnification that day. But I do remember seeing a Red-eyed Vireo. Everyone said this was a common forest bird, but I'd never seen it or even heard of it before! I was amazed by that little bird. I remembered its song and started hearing it everywhere I went. Its song used to be part of the background noise. Now, it was a beautiful detail that expanded my world and love of nature.

I started getting into this hobby a little more. I got the Merlin app and listened to the birds as I ate breakfast outside my house. I took walks with my birder friends looking for Short-eared Owls and Cerulean Warblers. I went to Magee Marsh and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio to see the migrating spring birds. What an adventure! But I am still very much a beginner. I can't tell you how many times I've been in the woods and asked "What is that chipping sound?" The response was "A chipmunk."

"Oh gosh! No wonder Merlin wasn't picking it up!!!"
Thanks for not laughing at me, Greg Tomb!

I think what impresses me most so far about this bird watching journey is how these small beautiful birds are opening me up to a much bigger world of nature. I now realize that cardinals, Blue Jays, and Carolina Wrens regularly nest in my yard. I now understand the joy of watching a Song Sparrow singing its little heart out and

observing the influx of birds on seasonal migrations connecting me to the far-away places from which they have traveled. It has left me in awe. It inspires me to learn more and see more.

On another note...I'm also in awe of how when the Club is on an outing how little people need to drink water or go to the bathroom! I guess the slow strolling pace and the mental engagement doesn't lend itself to taking care of bodily needs!

All the Todd Bird Club members have been so kind and generous. While watching the slide show of the glorious

photos that Margaret and Roger Higbee took in Costa Rica, I realized that I'm not alone in my love and interest in birds and nature. There is a community of people sharing in this common aspiration to participate in and understand the beauty of this world . (Also grateful for delicious brownies that Margaret makes and the other goodies at the meetings!)

I'm not sure if I will ever get to the point of being able to pick out the song of a Cedar Waxwing or be able to tell the difference between a Hairy and a Downy Woodpecker or be able to tell all the sparrows apart, and that's totally fine with me. I am learning about this amazing planet one bird at a time.

In Memorium

Members of the Todd Bird Club extend our sympathies to Sally Taylor on the loss of her husband Joe who passed away suddenly and peacefully on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, with his lovely wife at his bedside. We also extend our sympathy to his brother John who has written the article below as well as to the rest of Joe's family.

Dr. Joe Taylor, scientist and educator, passed at the age of 77 years. He was born in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania for his undergraduate degree. He earned his doctorate PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. Joe and Sally were active members of the Todd Bird Club till their move to California in 2002.

“It won't be the same this year”

Dr. Joseph R. Taylor (1946-2024)

Chapter 1: The Early Years by John F. Taylor

I borrowed the title of this article (in quotes above) from a wonderful Christmas album by country music artist Vince Gill. It's the title of a poignant song he composed in tribute to his brother who had passed away the previous year. The following lyrics of the second verse have special meaning to me this spring:

His favorite time of year was always Xmas
We'd reminisce about the days gone by
Oh, how I wish that he was still here with us
My memories of him will never die.

My brother Joe, an enthusiastic participant in Todd Bird Club outings when he lived in the area, died unexpectedly near the end of May this past year. Even after moving to California in 2000, he routinely called to hear how spring warbler walks had turned out. And, yes, to reminisce about memorable outings in prior years. Joe's favorite time of year was always May, when warbler migration reaches its peak. And it was he who invented the “Thirty

Warbler Game” that I play each year, either thanking him or cursing him (depending on how well the warblers are cooperating). Joe and I were drawn into birding near the end of the 1960s by the stunning sight of a Blackburnian Warbler in full breeding plumage in a pine tree in front of our parents' house. By 1970, when Yellow Creek Lake was created, we were out at every opportunity to see what gems the Alleghenies could deliver, and they rarely disappointed. But inevitably, as the number of new birds to be seen in this area dwindled, our sights turned to birding Meccas elsewhere.

In three consecutive summers in the mid-70s, with younger brother Wil then in tow and Mark Strittmatter's rebuilt Dodge van to haul us, the Taylor and Strittmatter brothers embarked on birding adventures to southeast Arizona and west Texas (1975), Newfoundland (1976), and Florida (1977).

On the Arizona trip, Joe fulfilled a quest to confirm that a

warbler he'd seen on the reservoir hill behind our house while birding solo on 5/2/70 was, indeed, a Painted Redstart. (I remember the exact date because I was taking the SATs that morning and MISSED it!) I still remember the smug look on his face when he got the first one in his binoculars on our first morning in the Chiricahuas and said "Yep, that's what I saw." The varied habitats of the desert



The highlight of our trip to Florida was a few days' camping on Little Talbot Island east of Jacksonville. In the group photo from that trip to your left, Joe is perched on the van's bumper in the lower right, opposite his (future) wife Sally in front left. Mark's brother John is behind Sally, while Wil, yours truly, and Mark (left to right) are perched on the roof. Note the height of 70s fashion: Joe and

southwest proved as captivating and productive as we had hoped, and the lifers came in droves. What we wanted to see most, of course, were the geographically restricted warbler species that lure birders to that area. Besides the Painted Redstarts, the upland forests also delivered the Red-faced and Grace's, but the Olive Warbler proved elusive.

Joe and I returned to the "Sky Islands" of southeast Arizona with our nephew Bob Simms in May of 1988 during the Olive's breeding season. We were rewarded for our efforts by a pair of males so intent on battling for territory that they fluttered between the two of us at eye level and at arm's length! Unfortunately, Wil wasn't free to join us on that trip, and the Olive Warbler remains his "nemesis bird" to the present day.

Sally in bell bottoms and Wil and me in babushkas, which were all the rage. They also kept our long hair out of our eyes as we tortured our necks to find the Northern Parulas calling from the moss-festooned live oaks or searched the adjacent salt marshes for the Clapper Rails that called from concealed locations. A diligent search late in the evening on the island eventually yielded a silhouette view of a Chuck-will's-widow in flight, the only sighting of that species I've ever had.

In the last few decades, Wil and I have enjoyed some real adventures, birding exotic places on several different continents. But those three trips with Joe rank right up there, on par with any that we've taken with respect to enjoyment and exhilaration.

Note: Chapters 2 and 3 will appear in future issues of "The Todd Nuthatch."

Birding Blitz for Conservation

Once again this year The Todd Towhees will be participating in the Birding Blitz for Conservation (B4C), sponsored by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. Our team includes Carol Guba, Gloria Lamer, and Roger and Margaret Higbee. We did fairly well last year logging more than 100 species in Indiana County.

With federal conservation funding facing drastic cutbacks, local grassroot efforts are more important than ever. That's why this year's B4C is launching 25 for 25, a campaign to raise \$25,000 for our 2025 conservation partners.

Since 2021, the Breeding Bird Blitz has united people across Pennsylvania, raising \$67,318 including \$22,290 in 2024, for vital bird-related conservation projects. This year, we're aiming even higher. Every dollar raised helps protect birds by preserving and improving habitat and supporting environmental education.

If anyone would be interested in creating another team or donating to our effort, go to <https://breedingbirdblitz.org> or <https://pabirds.org/breeding-bird-blitz-for-conservation-b4c/>.

Armstrong, Indiana, Cambria Counties - Winter 2024-25

Abbreviations: Armstrong Trail (AT), Brush Valley (BV), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Indiana (IN), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Lock & Dam (L&D), Logansport (LP), Manorville (MV), Marion Center (MC), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Rosston Boat Launch (RT), Worthington (WT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC)

Armstrong's precipitation for December was fairly evenly distributed throughout the month. Precipitation was 0.54" above the normal average of 3.26". Precipitation continued to be nearly evenly distributed throughout the month of January but below normal and ended the month 1.93" below the normal of 3.12". Precipitation was fairly evenly distributed for the month of February. Precipitation was above the normal average of 2.79" by 1.07".

Temperatures ranged from a low of 15° F in *Armstrong* to a high of 64° F for the month of December. The temperatures averaged 2.2° F above the normal of 33.4° F for the month. January's temperatures ranged from a low of -7° F to a high of 48° F and averaged 5.7° F below normal. February's temperatures were 0.8° F higher than normal. Temperatures ranged from a low of 7° F to a high of 61° F.

Precipitation in *Indiana* for December was fairly evenly distributed throughout the month. Even though it was evenly distributed, a deficit of 0.7" below the normal average of 3.64" occurred. Precipitation continued to be nearly evenly distributed throughout the month of January but ended the month 1.62" below the normal of 3.64". Precipitation was fairly evenly distributed throughout February and ended the month well above the normal average of 2.95" by 2.58".

Indiana temperatures ranged from a low of 10° F to a high of 63° F for the month of December. The temperatures averaged 1.1° F below normal for the month. January's temperatures ranged from a low of -14° F to a high of 51° F and averaged 7.0° F below normal. On January 3, temperatures fell below freezing and remained there until January 26, except for three daytime highs in the 30s. Temperatures fell below zero for five consecutive nights the 21st through the 25th. February continued the trend of below normal temperatures which were 0.7° F lower than normal. Temperatures ranged

from a low of 2° F to a high of 60° F.

In *Cambria* slightly less precipitation fell in the last part of December than the rest of the month. Overall, precipitation was 0.86" below the normal average of 4.02". Precipitation continued to be nearly evenly distributed throughout the month of January and ended the month 1.78" below the normal of 3.85". Precipitation for February was fairly evenly distributed throughout the month. It was well above the normal average of 3.21" by 2.37".

Temperatures in *Cambria* ranged from a low of 3° F to a high of 58° F for the month of December. The temperatures averaged 0.2° F above normal for the month. January's temperatures ranged from a low of -16° F to a high of 47° F and averaged 6.4° F below the normal of 24.3° F. February continued the trend of below normal temperatures which were 0.7° F lower than the normal of 26.3° F. Temperatures ranged from a low of -1° F to a high of 56° F.

This was the first time that YC Lake was almost completely frozen for the IN CBC 12/26. Some water remained open in the edges of the coves, but few ducks remained. Between December 1 and February 28, 107 species were listed in *Indiana*, including 19 species of waterfowl. During the same period *Armstrong* yielded 97 species of which 24 were waterfowl, and *Cambria*, 67 species of which 10 were waterfowl.



Theo Rickert captured this image of a Snow Goose on December 22 near Rosston.

Armstrong yielded three reports of a single **Snow Goose**, the first on 12/22 (TR) at RT, where this adult on the left was photographed; the second sighting at Riverside Park near Freeport involved an immature as it had also been photographed by the observer on 1/29 (CK). The third Snow Goose, also reported at RT, was observed 2/23 (LM). Nine **Greater White-fronted Geese**, first

sighted 1/26 (SG) along the AR at L&D 5, continued at the same location through 2/2 (AH); on 2/14 (TR) two showed up at RT. Another Greater White-fronted Goose in a flock of Canada Geese was noted in a field along Sugarcamp Run s. of Beyer 2/13 (MH, RH).

A **Trumpeter Swan** was spotted at RT 2/23 (LM). In *Armstrong* a lingering **Tundra Swan** was noted 1/1 (DB) near WT, where it was seen again 1/5 (DB); the observer commented on whether this swan was healthy or unhealthy as it was feeding but there was no water nearby. On 1/28 (TR) concern was expressed for yet another (or the same?) Tundra swimming in a small area without ice cover as the entire river was mostly frozen. Two more sightings of single Tundras near MV 2/7, 18 (TR) makes one wonder how many swans were really on the river. Another single swan was noted a bit upriver from RT 2/5 (TR). First arriving northward-bound **Tundra Swans** were two on the ice at YC 2/23 (TH, CL); flying over IN on 2/27 (MS) was a flock of 120 Tundras.

Last **Wood Duck** remained at the old VFW pond 12/26 (MS, JT) while first to appear were two along Anthony Run 2/23 (MW) and two along the AT at LP 2/28 (TR). A **Northern Shoveler** 12/3 (MHu), a **Gadwall** 12/20 (JM), and four **American Wigeons** 12/17 (TR) were all last noted at YC. Two Gadwalls 12/23 (TR) were *Armstrong's* last while four Gadwalls and four wigeons had returned at LP 2/28 (TR). Five **Northern Pintails** remained on the water 12/16 (AM) at YC while one was spotted on the AR at L&D 5 on 2/4 (TR); five was the high tally at LP 2/28 (TR). One **Green-winged Teal** remained at YC 12/17 (MH, RH, TR) while two were found at the Margaret Treatment Ponds 2/7 (JK,TK,MM); one appeared along the AT at LP 2/28 (TR).

YC hosted 27 **Canvasbacks** (TR) 12/17; another Canvasback, sighted 12/20 (JM) at YC, was *Indiana's* last. A single **Redhead** lingered at PG 12/17 (LD). The AR at L&D 5, Schenley, hosted as many as eight Redheads between 1/26 (SG) and 2/22 (TR). After a flock of 57 **Ring-necked Ducks** 12/17 (TR) at YC, only one lingered there 1/2 (AM, HR). The AR at LP harbored as many as 80 on 2/28 (TR). Top **Greater Scaup** tally was 10 at RT on 2/23 (LM). A **Lesser Scaup** was last noted 12/3



Theo Rickert photographed some of the Greater White-fronted Geese at L&D 5 on January 28.

(MHu) at YC. High counts of Lesser Scaup on the AR included 8 at Schenley 1/31 (DB) and 11 north of Clinton at “the tracks” on 2/28 (JB). A beautiful male **Long-tailed Duck** was photographed at RT with a flock of Ruddies; this was the region’s lone report. Fifty was the high **Bufflehead** tally at YC 12/16 (AM) while four were still found at YC 1/4 (JM) before total freeze-up. PG still hosted 37 on 12/17 (LD). By 2/28 (TR) nine Buffs had returned to the AR at RT.

The winter’s first **Common Goldeneye** was spotted on the AR at KT 1/20 (TR); high counts included 22 at Schenley 2/22 (TR), 14 at KT on 2/24 (TR), and 11 at RT 2/28 (TR).

PG harbored three **Hooded Mergansers** on 12/26 (PI, WI); a flock of 31 remained at YC 1/4 (JM); single digits of Hooded Mergs were noted on the AR between 12/3 and 2/28 with high tally of eight on 12/22 at RT (all TR). Thirteen **Common Mergansers** remained at PG 12/17 (LD) while six were last noted 1/5 (GT) at YC. Top counts of Common Mergansers on the AR included 60 at “the tracks” on 2/11 (JB) and 39 at L&D 5 on 1/29 (AH). Three **Red-breasted Mergansers** at PG 12/17 (LD) and one at YC (AM, JM, HR) 1/2 were the last reported.

Six **Ruddy Ducks** at PG 12/17 (LD) and one at YC through 1/2 (JM) were the last noted respectively in *Cambria* and *Indiana*. Fifty-six Ruddies stopped at RT 12/22 (TR). Last in *Armstrong* were two at L&D 5 on 2/5 (AH).

A **Ruffed Grouse** near Clymer on 2/3 (CG, MH, RH, GL) was the only one reported.

Best **American Coot** tallies at YC were 50 on 12/16 (AM) and 45 the next day (TR). The AR hosted single coots at two locations – one observed from N. Water St. in KT 1/26 (TR) and the second at MV 2/25 (KC).

Last lingering **Killdeer** were three noted at CC 12/11 (JB) and one near MC 1/13 (MH, RH); first returnees appeared 2/25 (AM) on Hospital Road in IN and the rest on 2/26 in IN (MS), near Clarksburg (MS), and at Rolling Hills (TR). Four **Wilson's Snipe** were present at the Windy Ridge Industrial Park 12/28 (MS, JT) while three were found near WT 1/19 (DB).

A single **Bonaparte's Gull** visited YC 12/16 (AM), the lone report. Last **Ring-billed Gulls** were two at PG 12/26 (PI, WI) and four listed 1/4 (JM) at YC before total freeze-up; a flock of 80 was spotted flying over the Tanoma Wetlands 2/24 (ED). Along the AR, flocks of 33 on 2/9 (JC, KT) at L&D 5, 41 on 2/10 (JB) at "the tracks," 65 at RT on 2/14 (TR), and 60 at L&D 7 on 2/25 (KC) were noteworthy. An **American Herring Gull** at YC was the season's only *Indiana* report. Two to three American Herring Gulls were noted at L&D 7 on 12/23, 1/26. and 2/24 (all TR).

High YC count of **Pied-billed Grebes** was a mere five on 12/10 (JM) while last noted was one 12/29 (LD). One to three Pied-bills were sighted along the AR at six locations between 12/1 (TR) and 1/25 (JB). Three single **Horned Grebes** were listed along the AR 12/22 (TR), 1/9 (TR), and 2/28 (JB).

January 1 (JM) produced the winter's lone **Common Loon** at YC. Single **Double-crested Cormorants** were found 12/1 (JB) at CC, 12/30 (JB) at "the tracks," and 1/9 (JK) at Ford City; four stopped at YC 12/4 (JM).

Single **Great Blue Herons** were last listed at YC 1/2 (AM, HR) and along McCarthy Run 1/4 (JT). By 2/5 (JT) one had appeared at IUP. With the AR's presence in *Armstrong*, Great Blues lingered till 1/12 (JB) at LP and 1/30 (SW, StW) at L&D 5.

As they continue to expand northward, three **Black Vultures** were noted this winter – one 12/10 (SS) near MC, another 1/23 (RK) near Clarksburg, and the third 2/24 (MSC) over IN. **Turkey Vultures** maintained an unusual winter presence this year, especially in *Indiana* and in parts of *Cambria*. In *Armstrong* only two TV reports were received, both near WT – one on 12/8 (TR) and the other on 2/17 (NT). A late **Osprey** was seen flying over the Kiski near Saltsburg 12/28 (MB, SM). A WRS near Rochester Mills yielded a circling **Golden Eagle** 1/12 (CG, MH, RH, GL), photographed by RH. Nineteen **Northern Harriers**, more than double last year's tally of eight, were noted in *Indiana* this season, largely due to Winter Atlas effort and four WRS routes. Two Northern Harriers were listed in *Cambria* – one on 12/20 (PI, WI) NW of Patton and one at Belsano 2/22 (TH). Ten of 13 *Armstrong* harrier reports were in the WT area, and five of them the result of Winter Atlas effort on 12/7, 2/21 (JK, TK, MM). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was found near Hastings 1/16 (DBu).



This Eastern Screech-Owl was a surprise on an Armstrong WRS on January 25.
Photo by Marg Higbee

Ten **Eastern Screech-Owls** were noted in both *Armstrong* (v.o.) and in *Indiana* with only one on the IN CBC 12/26 (NJ, WJ, MH, RH).

A **Great Horned Owl** was heard at Freeport 12/14 (SW). Two Great Horned Owls were heard hooting back and forth at 2:00 a.m. on 2/16 (KW) west of Paradise Park in *Armstrong*. Among the seven *Indiana* reports of **Great Horned Owls**, one pair, that had been hooting back and forth for quite a while, was observed copulating near Jacksonville 1/10 (MH, RH). *Cambria's* reports included one calling between 12/8 and 1/2 (ER) when finally on 1/2 (ER) a second bird was heard responding to the hooting.

In *Armstrong* only one **Barred Owl** was listed south of Ford City; in *Indiana* they were noted at six locations, but only one report detailed two owls calling along the GTT 1/30 (GT). Once again Nolo produced the most consistent reports for Barred Owls (DB, GL). Four Barred Owls were noted in *Cambria*, all singletons.



One never knows what to expect on a Winter Raptor Survey. This Barred Owl near Nolo was another surprise on an Indiana WRS.

Photo by Roger Higbee

The drilling of a large well pad near West Lebanon at the **Short-eared Owl** site has created disturbance; three Short-eareds were noted on 1/2 (JP) with last report of two on 1/25 (Mce); another was found in SGL 174 on 1/18 (MW). *Cambria* also yielded one near Chest Springs on 12/20 (PI, WI).



Roger Higbee photographed this Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2/20 near Shelocta.

Last YC **Belted Kingfisher** was listed 1/2 (AM, HR) with the impending freeze-up; one appeared along the Cone-maugh River 2/3 (JB, KB) and another near CC 2/9 (MH, RH).

Only 9 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were observed this winter (v.o.) in *Armstrong* (v.o.), 11 in *Indiana* (v.o.), and two near Spangler in *Cambria* on 1/10 (LD). Only one **Red-headed Woodpecker** was sighted southwest of IN 1/5-6 (JC).

Merlin reports included one on 12/30 (MVT) at CC and another near WT 2/26 (TR). Merlins were widespread across *Indiana* between 12/7 (JM) and 2/27 (TH); one was photographed near Johnstown 1/30 (SR). A single **Peregrine** was noted on four dates between 12/28 (TR) and (CK, DK) near the Graff Bridge.

A **Northern Shrike** watching a bird feeder in IN was an unusual find 2/17 (RL).

Two **Fish Crows** had returned to the western part of IN by 2/24 (MS).

Armstrong yielded large flocks of **Horned Larks** in the WT area – 300 on 1/4 (DB), 250 on 1/8 (DB), 200 on 1/19 (DB), 100 on 1/21 (DB), and 60 on 2/26 (TR), to mention only a few of the larger flocks. In addition to 15 sightings of smaller flocks in *Indiana*, Horned Lark reports included 60 near BV 1/2 (MH, RH), 88 near YC 1/5 (GT), 57 east of Aultman 1/17 (MH, RH), and 150 near Iselin 1/23 (RK). Eight *Cambria* sightings included 75 near Hastings 12/20 (PI, WI) and 21 W of Loretto 1/14 (CG, MH, RH, GL).

The AT yielded a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** 12/13 (TR) north of L&D 8 and one between LP and RT on 1/8 (JB). A single Ruby was found wintering at Waterworks Conservation Area 12/8 (TH) and again 12/26 (SD); a

little flock of four was noted NW of Blairsville 2/6 (MW). One Ruby was found at Northern Cambria 1/10 (LD). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were widespread across the region with numerous reports.

Sightings of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were spotty this winter with notes of six *Armstrong* locations, all mentioning single birds except for one sighting of two on Sportsman Road 1/13 (TR). In *Indiana*; all were single birds with four December reports between 12/14 (MS, MSC) and 12/27 (AM) and two February observations on 2/17 (SH) and 2/26 (MH, RH). *Cambria* yielded single Red-breasted Nuthatches just S of Johnstown 2/14 (JW) and at Carrolltown 2/16 (MK).

The AT from north of L&D 8 south to L&D 5 provided consistent hotspots for **Winter Wrens** (JB, TR). Two were listed north of L&D 8 on 12/13 (TR) and three were at Kelly Station 12/26 (JB). Consistent locations in *Indiana* for Winter Wrens included the Waterworks Conservation Area between 12/3 - 12/26 (SD) and YC between 12/21 - 12/31 (JP). A Winter Wren was spotted at PG 1/13 (MHu), *Cambria*'s lone report.

A **Swainson's Thrush** was an unusually late find, photographed near Brush Valley 12/22 (MSC). **Hermit Thrushes** were listed at four locations in *Armstrong* between 12/7 (TR) and 1/19 (TR). Hinkston Run Reservoir yielded one Hermit 1/25 (SR).

Three **Pine Siskins** appeared at a feeder near Shelocta 2/8 - 2/10. One returned 2/15 after several days' absence and continued through 2/28 (all MH, RH). A single siskin visited a feeder near LV 2/10 - 2/21 (MC).

One **Lapland Longspur** was photographed near WT 1/19 (DB), and another was observed near Brush Valley 1/2 (MH).



Dave Brooke photographed this Lapland Longspur near Worthington on January 19.

One **Chipping Sparrow** appeared in an IN yard 2/22 (MW) but had moved to the observer's neighbor's yard by 2/24 (MS).

Single **Fox Sparrows** appeared 12/1 (GT) near Armagh and continued through 2/15 (GT), 12/6 (MH, RH) near SH where it remained through 12/13 (MH, RH), and 12/7 (MC) near LV where it was a one-day wonder.

White-crowned Sparrows showed a greater presence in *Indiana* this winter than normal with flocks totaling 10 at Windy Ridge Industria Park 12/28 (MS, JT), 8 near Homer City Power Plant 1/2 (MS), 8 near Home 1/12 (CG, GL), and 13 near MC 2/14 (MH, RH), among reports of many smaller flocks and individuals. *Armstrong* yielded flocks of 5 near WT 1/9 (DB) and 5 near Rural Valley 1/18 (MH, RH). In *Cambria* single White-crowns were noted 12/15 (TA) at Colver Reservoir and 2/1 (SR) at PG.

One to three **Swamp Sparrows** were noted at three locations along the AT this winter; one was observed north of L&D 8 on 12/1, 13, 26 (TR). Farther south at "the tracks," just north of L&D 6, two were present 12/16, 27 (JB) but only one could be located there 1/1, 17 (JB). At restricted access Murphy's Bottom, still farther south, three were spotted by 12 observers on 12/14 (m.ob.). In *Indiana* Swamp Sparrows were listed at six YC locations between 12/3 (MHu) and 1/4 (JM), providing a total of three individuals for addition to the IN CBC on 12/26 (MCa, JP). In *Cambria* at SGL 79A on 12/15 (RG, GT), two Swamps were found in a flock of mixed sparrows. PG yielded single Swamps 12/26 (PI, WI) and 1/13 (MHu).

Eight reports of wintering **Eastern Towhees** in *Indiana*, were received with three in December and the remaining five in January (v.o.). Towhees were noted at 12 locations in *Armstrong* including flocks of 4 near WT on 1/11 (TR) and 5 at SGL 247 on 2/23 (TR).

In *Armstrong* two **Eastern Meadowlarks** had returned to West Valley by 1/18 (AB) and four were found at Lemmon Hollow near KT 1/21 (DB); three had also returned to the West Lebanon reclaimed strips by 2/7 (JK, TK, MM). Three **Rusty Blackbirds** stopped in a yard near Shelocta 12/1 (ED); five were listed along the West Penn Trail 12/6 (EH); a singleton appeared at a feeder near Armagh 1/2 (GT) and was joined by another 1/5 (GT). Four northward bound Rusties were observed just north of MC 2/3 (MH, RH).

An **Orange-crowned Warbler**, first found during the fall on Nov. 24 at Yellow Creek, very close to the location where one was seen in 2023 on the day following the

Indiana CBC (MH, RH), was re-found at YC 12/21 (JP), relocated 12/23 (MSC), and listed for the IN CBC 12/26 (RL).



Joseph Pumford photographed this Orange-crowned Warbler at Yellow Creek State Park on December 21, five days before the Indiana Christmas Bird Count.

Yellow-rumped Warblers were found along the AT from north of L&D 8 south to "the tracks." North of L&D 8 one to three were noted between 12/1 and 2/1 (TR). At MV one was listed 2/7 (TR) while between RT and LP one to two were spotted between 12/3 and 2/28 (TR). At "the tracks" one was observed 1/7 (JB). Yellow-rumps were difficult to find this winter with the only reports in the southern part of *Indiana* – two 12/6 (EH) along the West Penn Trail and two at the Conemaugh Floodlands 1/25 (BB, TH).



Observers: Dave Beatty (DBe), Brady Blackburn, John Boback, Mark Bowers, Dave Brook, Dan Bukowski (DBu), Alan Buriak, Michele Carlson (MCa), Jeremy Castle, Jeffrey Chamiec (JCh), Meredith Cellitti (MCe), Kathy Colvert, Marcy Cunkelman, Laura Davis, Susan Dickson, Ed Donley, Robert Gordon, Steve Gosser, Carol Guba, Susanne Haney, Amy Henrici, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Tyler Hodges, Matt Hunter (MHu), Robert Kamenic, Colin Keith (CKe), Dave Keith, James Kellam (JKe), Mike Kline, Charles Kollar, Janet Kuehl, Tom Kuehl, Gloria Lamer, Richard Love, Colin Lynch, Lynn Mamros, Avi Marshall, Mark McConaughy, Susan Miller, Joel Moore, Joseph Pumford, Theo Rickert, Elaine Rodriguez, Shane Ross, Henry Rummel, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Kasia Thomas, Greg Tomb, Nicholas Transue, Marge Van Tassel, Sierra Waltenbaugh, Stacy Waltenbaugh (StW), Mike Weible, Emily Wilson, Jill Witherell.

2024-2025 Winter Atlas Adventures in Beaver and Lawrence Counties

Todd Bird Club members stepped up this first Winter Season of the Pennsylvania Third Bird Atlas (“PBA3) to do critical survey effort in Beaver and Lawrence Counties. Per Atlas geography these two counties are part of the Southwest Region. Accordingly, they fall under the responsibility of the Southwest Regional Coordinators, Janet and me. To rally winter effort in these two counties I reached out to Todd members, Debbie Kalbfleisch (a Beaver County resident) and Linda Wagner (a Lawrence County resident). They both stepped up to become the Team that fully completed three of the five Priority Blocks which were designated for survey effort in the 2024-25 Winter Season.

As is often the case, birding for an Atlas project takes you to places you would not otherwise go birding. That was certainly the case for the blocks that the Team worked this



Debbie Kalbfleisch, Janet Kuehl, Linda Wagner, and Barb Griffith pose in Atlas Block Campbell SE in Lawrence County on December 13.

Winter Season. Some places we would happily return to; and other places, such as deep into the boon-docks of Swamp Poodle Road in the East Palestine, Ohio, border block in Beaver County. Some good, some bad, but certainly always an adventure. But all was Good Times for Janet and me to be out birding with Debbie, Linda, and Barb Griffith. Also, we had some good birds – among them were Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Yellow-rumped Warblers found in the bounty of poison ivy berries of Lawrence County; and Red-shouldered Hawks were all but unavoidable in both counties.

As time allows after the PBA3 program for the May meeting, I plan to share more photos and stories of our 2024-25 Winter Season adventures.

– Tom Kuehl, Southwest Regional Coordinator

Yellow Creek and Friends of the Parks Outings

Friends of the Parks Native Plant Fundraiser – April 1- May 4, 2025. Purchase Native Flowers, Trees & Shrubs Online.

Do you love beautiful wildflowers and shrubs? Enjoy seeing butterflies, hummingbirds, pollinators, and birds? You can support our local parks and help the environment by purchasing and planting native shrubs and flowers from the Friends of the Parks' Annual Plant Sale for Yellow Creek State Park and Indiana County Parks & Trails! Pick up will be at Blue Spruce Lodge at Blue Spruce Park, Indiana, PA on May 11. Great Prices!

<https://indiana-county-friends-of-the-parks-penguin-court-native-plant.square.site/s/shop>

Skydance: The Dance of the Woodcock – Thursday, April 10 – 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Program is weather dependent. Meet at the Environmental Learning Center, 25 Pond Lane, Penn Run, PA 15765.

Spring is in the air for one of PA's most unusual birds as the American Woodcock starts its fascinating mating ritual by performing aerial acrobatics! Come join us for a short discussion and then head out on a wildlife hike (up to one mile) to check out the amazing woodcock at Yellow Creek State Park. Please wear hiking shoes, long pants, and dress for the weather. Bring a flashlight. This program is geared for ages 8 to adult. Program is weather dependent with a back-up date of April 17. Please see the Yellow Creek State Park Official DCNR Page for the latest updates concerning weather changes.

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

President - Sue Dickson 724-388-5000 jscm130@yahoo.com
Secretary - Roger Higbee 724-354-3493 rvhigbee@windstream.net
Treasurer - Gloria Lamer 724-349-1159 michny9@gmail.com

Webmaster - Ed Donley 724-599-5886 hedonley@iup.edu
Scrapbook - Donna Meyer 724-349-2787 donna.moug66@gmail.com
Facebook - Cheri Widowski
Newsletter - Marg Higbee 724-354-3493 bcoriole@windstream.net



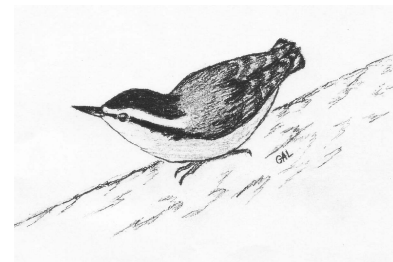
It's spring! Pine Warblers are back!!!

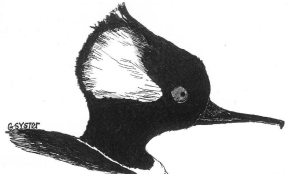
Dues Reminder

Todd Bird Club dues are due on January 1 each year. If you joined at or after our October meeting, you are paid through December 31, 2025. Dues are \$5 student, \$10 individual, or \$15 family membership which you may either pay at the meeting or mail to:

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

Please remember to indicate whether you prefer the electronic version or a hard copy of the newsletter.





Todd Bird Club
c/o Roger V. Higbee
3119 Creekside Road
Indiana, PA 15701-7934