

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

April 2026

Meetings

Tuesday, April 7 – 6:30 p.m.

Member Matt St. Clair will present "Common Dragonflies and Damselflies of Indiana County." Matt recently became interested in Odonata this past summer, and he quickly became the top *iNaturalist* observer of them in the county, documenting many first county records, endangered species, and even critically endangered species. Matt will teach us how to identify the common species, how to differentiate similar species, and where to look for them in their various habitats.



Matt St Clair photographed this Widow Skimmer at Yellow Creek's Dragonfly Pond.

Tuesday, May 5 – 6:00 p.m. This is our annual banquet meeting and last meeting until September. Please bring a dish to share, your own place settings, and a good appetite!

After dinner, Joe Gyekis will present a great program on nocturnal flight calls and migration. Chad Kaufman writes, "I didn't know if it would be over my head, but the program Joe did for the local nature society was awesome!"

Outings

Tuesday outings will continue at Yellow Creek *except on April 28 (See below)*. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the north shore. From Indiana take US 422 to South Harmony Road. At the "Right Turn Keep Moving" stop sign, continue right, past McFeaters Cove to the "North Shore" sign. Turn left, continue past the boat launch, heading left, and park.

Saturday, April 4 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Sue Dickson (724-388-5000). This is a joint outing with the

Three Rivers Birding Club. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office, located on PA 259 just off US 422 east of Indiana.

Saturday, April 11 – Yellow Creek State Park. This is a joint outing with Friends of the Parks, led by Ed Donley (hedonley2@gmail.com, 724-599-5886) and John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. We'll target waterfowl, resident birds, as migrants. If you have extra binoculars or a bird ID guide, please bring them to share with novice birders who are participating from Friends of the Parks.

Saturday, April 18 – Ed Donley (724-599-5886; hedonley2@gmail.com) will lead an outing on his property near Shelocta. Meet at Ed's home, 1243 Five Points Road, Indiana, PA 15701, at 8:00 a.m. Three driveways meet Five Points Road at the same location. The center one has a yellow iron gate. Ed's driveway is the paved one with the sharp left. If you get lost, call Ed's cell.

Saturday, April 25 – Alice Stitt will lead an outing on the Stitt property near Elderton. For more information, please contact Alice (717-781-6306); see directions below.

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)

Tuesday, April 28 – Moraine State Park, led by Mike Shaffer, Environmental Education Specialist, Bureau of State Parks. Come out and enjoy a spring day of birding at Moraine State Park in a joint effort with the Todd Bird Club and Bartramian Audubon Society members. The hike is relatively easy on a paved road that takes us through a variety of habitats.

Directions: Take the Prospect exit off US 422; turn right onto PA 528 then immediately turn left onto Park Road. You will pass the Waterfowl Observation Platform on your left; continue to the large parking area at the end of the road next to the boat launch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Old 422 Launch by Region 2 Office. Just bring your enthusiasm, water, snacks, and sharp eyes and ears.

Saturday, May 2 – Blacklick Valley Natural Area, led by Greg Tomb (gtomb22@gmail.com). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot on McFeaters Road.

Directions: Blacklick Valley Natural Area is located roughly 15 miles south of Indiana and 9 miles north of Johnstown. From Armagh, travel east on Rt. 22. Approximately one mile past the Rt. 403 intersection, turn left onto McFeaters Road and drive one mile to the parking lot.

Saturday, May 9 – Indiana County Migration Count. Bird anywhere in the county, then either eBird your data or submit it to Greg Tomb at gtomb22@gmail.com. May is a great time to get outside and observe migrating birds!

Saturday, May 16 – Blue Spruce Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet in the first large parking lot past the park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 23 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Debbie Kalbfleisch (724-651-5426) for warblers. Meet in the first large parking lot near the park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, June 6 – Pine Ridge Park, led by Tom and Jan Kuehl. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the end of Pine Ridge Road. This is a special Atlas outing in the Bolivar CW block and we will be using Atlas protocols. After birding the park, we will continue to Oaks Point Road to look for Prairie Warblers. Participants will be invited to follow Tom and Janet to a Blairsville restaurant for lunch afterwards.

Directions: Take Wayne Avenue in Indiana to US 119 south in Center Township. Follow US 119 south to Burrell Township and make a left onto Pine Ridge Road. Follow Pine Ridge Road to the parking lot at the end. Address is 998 Pine Ridge Road, Blairsville, PA 15717.

Saturday, June 13 – SGL 273, led by Trent Millum (860-921-7234). Meet at the gravel parking lot on Snyder Road, Indiana, which will be on your left as you drive up Snyder from PA 954 (S. Sixth Street). This is a special Atlas outing in the Brush Valley CW Block, and we'll be walking a grasslands area and possibly a more wooded area afterwards. Participants are invited to follow Trent to the Siam Thai Restaurant on Rt. 954 afterwards for lunch.

Directions: From Indiana, turn right on PA 954 south and continue south for about 5 miles. Turn left on Snyder Road and continue about a mile. Turn left onto the gravel driveway that leads up the hill to the parking lot. (GPS coordinates: 40.567667, -79.126694)

Saturday, June 20 – The Fordham access to the Mahoning Shadow Trail in Punxsutawney, led by Sue Dickson (724-388-5000), starting at 8:00 a.m. This is a special Atlas outing in the Valier SE Block, and we're hoping more eyes and ears will help us get some Probable and Confirmed breeding codes for our resident birds.

Saturday, July 11 – Dick Mayer section of the West Penn Trail from Tunnelton Road, led by Tom and Jan Kuehl. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Conemaugh Dam restrooms (40.466629; -79.368383) just off Auen Road. We will then carpool to the trail. This is a special Atlas outing in the Saltsburg NE block, and we will be trying to nail confirmations of breeding birds. We will be searching for Blue-winged, Kentucky, Yellow-throated, and Cerulean Warblers, as well as White-eyed Vireo. This is also an excellent butterfly area, and the ponds host frogs and dragonflies. You may want to pack water and a lunch as we plan to return to Conemaugh Dam to picnic afterwards.

A Winter's Tale of a Varied Thrush

By Vicki Stelma

"I'm not a birder," he said evenly. "Oh," I responded less evenly. There was no modesty in his tone and no shame; he was simply stating a fact.

About 30 minutes before this conversation, I was just about to make the turn from the main road onto a narrow two-lane track that would lead me into PA State Game Lands 95 where the rare (for Pennsylvania) Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) had been regularly appearing for the past few weeks. But this track was covered in snow, and so I paused. It wasn't fresh snow, and it wasn't deep, but there was a hill ahead along with twists and turns, and there I was without four-wheel drive, alone in the woods (at least for the moment) in single-digit weather. But, I had already come too far to not continue, despite my misgivings....

I made the turn. (And you're thinking, "Of course you did because that's what birders do.") As I cautiously navigated the road, the sun started shining, and although I had already driven more than an hour from Indiana to Butler in a heated car, I was barely warm and still had my wool scarf twisted around my neck, my coat zipped to my chin, and my hat pulled down firmly on my head. As I continued to shiver from time to time, I consoled myself with the thought that I'd probably be able to bird from my front seat; car birding, in all its glory, is kind of like car camping where you have everything you need at your fingertips or maybe just in the back seat or, god forbid, in the trunk which would actually require getting out of the car to retrieve whatever it is that you need, including what might be left of the hot coffee and snacks, of course. Also, there'd be no pesky hiking to undertake; the hardest work might just be rolling down the window (or not) and holding the binoculars in my gloved hands. These thoughts alone and the fact that I had noticed a couple of bluebirds, juncos, a Blue Jay, and a cardinal as I drove, helped me to forget about the weather and focus on what I hoped would be a successful sighting of the Varied Thrush.

When I arrived within the next few minutes, I was no longer alone in the woods in single-digit weather, but I also, luckily, wasn't lost in a scrum of birders; there were only four other birders and three other cars parked in the optimal sighting spot. I stopped at the back of the line then sought out the man in the front car to ask if he'd seen



This gorgeous male Varied Thrush was a great find in Butler County this past winter.

Photo by Roger Higbee

the Varied Thrush yet this morning. He replied that he had and that it had just flown away to our right; he expected, however, that it would soon return, as that seemed to be its continuing habit. I got back into my car, disappointed and buoyed simultaneously, hoping I hadn't scared away the thrush with my need to know the status quo.

Then...I waited....

And started counting other birds, of course. All told, I counted five Black-capped, incredibly active,

Chickadees, one Blue Jay who was unusually content not to dominate the scene, one Red-bellied Woodpecker working away on a tree trunk in the distance down the road, a White-throated Sparrow hopping and exuding that "cute" quality that I love so much in tiny birds, two goldfinches who showed up and then left rather quickly, one eagle flying in from the left over the frozen lake and heading toward the woods on the right before it landed in a distant tree to perch and look majestic, three robins with their yellow beaks so bright in the sunshine that I doubted I had ever really seen a robin before, and 10 cardinals, the males and females both so flashy and vibrant and together more than I had ever seen all at once in one place.

And it was with this thought that I consoled myself – "If I didn't see the Varied Thrush, I could still count this as a good birding day because of that abundance of cardinals. Of course, I was lying to myself, rationalizing, and preparing for disappointment.

Finally, after what felt like quite a long time but was only 24 minutes after my arrival, the Varied Thrush appeared, just like the man in the lead car had predicted. In fact, it was quite easy to capture the exact moment of its return because this same man thrust the immense lens of his camera out his car window and focused directly on the thrush. (If only all spotting of birds could be so simple; I didn't have to follow the pointed fingers of fellow birders as they gestured vaguely somewhere above their heads, and I certainly didn't need to know the types of trees or the left or right curves of branches or the Vs and other letters those branches might be forming to be able to lay my own eyes on the Varied Thrush.) Of course, the bird itself was a sight to behold and to be enthusiastic and perhaps even ecstatic about on a cold winter's day in Western Pennsylvania.

All of us looked and looked, but soon, it was only me and the man with the camera. We had left the warmth of our cars by this time to get a better view of the bird, which turned out to be not as shy as one might have expected, and we started whispering together and talking about the bird. That's when he revealed that he was the man who had first spotted the Varied Thrush a few weeks before this. We chatted and gazed at the bird a bit more, then I left, the heat in my car blasting, and began making my way back to the main road and another cup of coffee.

But when I got about halfway out, I thought, wouldn't it be great to write an article for the newsletter since so many of us have made this trek out to see the Varied Thrush? I thought why not go back and talk some more to the man who started all of this. And so I did a 14-point turn so as not to get stuck in any snow banks and went back.

When I arrived a few minutes later, he had been joined, coincidentally, by Ezra White, the young birder who spoke at our February meeting. His father wisely sat in his warm car while Ezra stood staring through his binoculars into the distance down the road. He had that look that we all have seen on each other's faces and felt on our own in just such a situation - hope and anticipation and eagerness mixed with just a little bit of fear that you will be the only one who doesn't get to see the coveted bird. I whispered briefly to him; he had just seen the thrush, but it was far away, and he was hoping it would come closer. I assured him in the same way that I had been assured earlier that it would and probably soon, fingers crossed.

And then I spoke to Jake Dingel, the man whose name I finally asked, the man with the immense lens and the earlier revelation that he had made this bird discovery. I explained that I was hoping to write an article about the Varied Thrush and my quest to see it today. I thought I'd

begin with an easy question. "How long have you been birding?" I asked. "I'm not a birder," he said evenly. "Oh," I responded less evenly.

There was no modesty in his tone and no shame; he was simply stating a fact, in the same pragmatic and unadorned way that he would tell the rest of his story.

"I'm a wildlife photographer for the game commission. There's not much to do out here during the winter, but this is my regular spot to take pictures," he added. I admit that I was a bit shocked at his response - I mean, why isn't he a birder? Why isn't everyone a birder? Right? At that moment, I lost track of my questions....

He told me that it was a few weeks before this when he was working on a Thursday morning taking photos. He noticed a robin that wasn't a robin - in his own words, - "Hmm...that's not a robin, I thought." According to him, he was unruffled by the vibrant orange and blue gray of the bird he was seeing, but he knew that, at the very least, it was unusual. And indeed, it was and is, and I guess the rest is local birding history.

Mr. Dingel went on to tell me that he comes to this spot most days now, meeting birders and talking about this Varied Thrush and its personality and his experience photographing it. He's the bird's human ambassador, and he couldn't be more gracious because so far, the thrush keeps showing up, and so do the birders. So really, I decided, there's not much difference between a birder and someone who doesn't call themselves one. After all, we were both out on a bitterly cold single-digit Sunday morning, parked back a snowy track in the middle of the state game lands grinning ear to ear over a bird who couldn't care less that we were there.

The Best Warbler Day Ever

By John Taylor

I had mixed emotions when I picked my brother Joe up at his house in Creekside at 6:30 on Saturday morning to start the 1996 Spring Migration Count. As usual, there was excitement at the prospect of waves of warblers and other migrants filling the treetops. But there was also no small amount of trepidation given the weather forecast, which called for off-and-on rain as a cold front made its way through the area. Yeah, I'm familiar with the adage "Bad weather is good birding." But I think that somewhere along the way an important word was dropped from the front of that saying...that word being "Sometimes."

As in previous years, Joe and I were to cover Rayne and Washington Townships for the count, so our first stop was Blue Spruce County Park where a hike on the Getty Run Trail got the warbler tally off to a decent start with lots of Yellows and Magnolias, a few "Greens" (Black-throated Greens), and a splendid Blackburnian. When the activity there subsided, we moved on to Chambersville Road to savor the annual spectacle of Baltimore Orioles and Scarlet Tanagers in radiant breeding plumage against a dazzling background of Great White Trilliums that carpet the precipitous slopes there each May. By then, raindrops began to fall, heightening the anxiety that the change in

weather would terminate the string of exceptional warbler days we'd enjoyed through the week, culminating in tallies of 20 warbler species on both Thursday and Friday. As we discussed other target species on our drive to the next stop on Hanging Rock Road and noted the need to watch for Wild Turkey, one appeared out of nowhere and trotted up the road in front of the Jeep. I took that as a good omen for the rest of the day.

Our destination on Hanging Rock Road was what we referred to as the Davis property, a parcel of land atop the drainage divide between the Plum Creek and Crooked Creek watersheds with an abandoned farmhouse and gas well roads that wind through a variety of bird-rich habitats. Years later, my IUP colleague Martha Troxell would buy that property and renovate the old farmhouse as a residence, and graciously grant us access every spring to continue our tradition of including it as a stop on our migration count. Parking the Jeep at the entrance to the driveway, we continued on foot up Hanging Rock Road, which provides excellent vantage for viewing birds in the trees and brush on the slope that falls away steeply to the left, toward the farmhouse. On the hike out and back along that stretch of road, we found the trees below alive with warblers! More Yellows and "Mags," but also Chestnut-sided, American Redstarts, and one magnificent Canada Warbler. A short distance farther up the road, right where Hanging Rock begins its descent toward Crooked Creek, a gas well road on the right provided us access to some abandoned pasture with saplings that delivered a Yellow-breasted Chat and an exquisite Blue-winged Warbler. The latter was claiming its part of the property with a resounding "BEE Buzz" loud and close enough that I could actually hear it! Impressive as these residents of the Davis property were, what we witnessed next was even more memorable.

Upon reaching the opening with the gas well at that end of the road, we realized that we were standing very high on the drainage divide, an ideal perch from which to watch the migration and, in awe, we did precisely that. Pointing our binoculars skyward, we watched as warblers in groups of 2 to 5 passed steadily overhead, following the prevailing wind. It was an extraordinary moment that I recorded in my journal with the following passage: "It was a Golden Moment of sorts on that hilltop, watching the migration/migrants and I glanced over to see Joe silhouetted against the hillside of magnificent spring-green foliage, and thought – it doesn't get any better than this!"

Little did I know how much more was yet to come. Another of our migration count traditions is to suspend all well-advised restrictions on diet and scarf down all the greasy, unhealthy fast food we want for a day. Back at the Jeep, we paused to clog our arteries with McMuffins and ramp up the blood pressure with caffeinated beverages. Joe plopped himself down in the passenger seat with his

McMuffin but dutifully kept an eye out for birds skulking in the brush. I put my cup of coffee on the hood to stir in some cream and sweetener. Noticing movement in the brush, Joe pulled up his binoculars, fully expecting to see yet another Common Yellowthroat. Instead, he nearly choked on his sandwich when he saw the gray hood and, as the bird turned, a black patch on the breast. I just about spilled my coffee when he shouted "shrouded" and strained desperately to find the bird in my binoculars. My heart sank as I saw it briefly and only from the rear before it disappeared from sight. An intense, frantic search for the next few minutes was rewarded with a brief but good frontal view as the Mourning Warbler slipped under a log that was barely above the ground and disappeared for good. I felt a bit bad afterward because I'd passed by an interesting, lightly streaked sparrow during that frantic search. Fortunately, we succeeded in relocating it a bit later and Lincoln's Sparrow was added to the day's tally, my Pennsylvania list, and Joe's Life List.

Still in shock from seeing the Mourning Warbler, having waited over 15 (me) to 20 (Joe) years to see that species again, we walked out the gas well road past the old farmhouse adding species as we went. At the far end of the road, we pushed on through fallen timber on logging roads and dropped down into the steep-sided valley above Plum Creek in pursuit of Hooded and Kentucky Warblers that sang from the slashings below us. Having one of those "good eye" days, when it seems you can spot anything that is moving (or even isn't), I managed to locate both of them. Our last chore at the Davis property was to search through the brush near an old spring house and a patch of overgrown pasture below the driveway. Both delivered, the former with a Wilson's Warbler, and the latter with a magnificent Golden-winged Warbler, singing on territory. A steady rain descended upon us as we drove to our sister Barb's place along Plum Creek where we waited out the downpour watching her feeders as we dined on re-heated McMuffins and tallied our warbler total. To our amazement, we found that we already had 19 (not counting the chat) with more than a few relatively common ones still missing.

The varied habitats of the Nesbitt farm, which surrounds Joe and Sally's property, was as good a location as any to try for them. So back to Creekside we went, hoping that we could score on a few more species before the deteriorating weather conditions put an end to our day.

Upon arriving, we quickly ascended the hill above their place to see if the pines on top would deliver a Pine Warbler. Not much was moving as we made our way through dense cover and some marshy spots, feeling all the while that it was probably too late. The wind was intensifying and the temperature was dropping rapidly as the cold air moved in. On top of the hill we were frustrated by hordes of migrants flying, non-stop overhead as

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Birding in Northern Costa Rica

By Tiffany Chan

In December, I had an opportunity to go to Northern Costa Rica on the Pacific Coast near Liberia, a small coastal town of Playa de Coco. My 91 year-old dad wanted to check out some beaches and relax in the sun. So, my sister and I accompanied him to a lovely airbnb with a view looking out over the rainforest and ocean. It was wonderful family time.

Mid-way through the trip, I had a day free. My dad was tired from going to the beach and site-seeing, and my sister and her husband had plans, so I

decided to jump on the opportunity to go on a guided bird tour. Thus far, I had seen a lot of interesting birds from our patio. Some chatty Orange-fronted Parakeets – so amazing to see so much green flying! And a Hoffmann's Woodpecker which visited our papaya tree every day. It pecked at the ripe fruit until it eventually fell off. I also loved seeing the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher with its peachy breast. So beautiful.

I called a local tour company and asked if they had any availability for a tour to a cloud forest the next day. It wasn't a tour focused solely on birds, so I thought I might have to compromise. Unfortunately, it was full. I told him that what I was really looking for was a birdwatching tour. He said no problem. He would send someone tomorrow.

The next day, a Costa Rican guide named Mainor picked me up. When I inquired about the rest of the group he said that I was getting a private tour today. Seriously??? Amazing luck!!! Turns out that Mainor was the expert birder at this tour company. The boss took him off a zip-line tour to guide me. He was happy to do so because he preferred birding to zip-lining too!

We chatted about all things birding, and he stopped the van along the way to check out some potential interesting birds on the two-hour trip to the cloud forest. The first stop was a small watering hole on the side of the road. In spite of all the cars rushing by, this little watering hole had some amazing birds. One striking one was the pink Roseate Spoonbill, swishing its head side-to-side in the muddy water. Its bill has a round flat disk at the end to syphon off crustaceans, mollusks, frogs, and small fish that the larger waders usually ignore. I have only seen these birds in zoos, so seeing one living a free, healthy life, albeit by a highway, was inspiring. Later in the day, we saw a few flying together, flapping their bright pink



Tiffany photographed this striking White Hawk as he perched in the rain and enjoyed his lunch.

wings with their outstretched necks and long bills out front. Their crazy nose cone apparatus was a sight to see!

So many birds to learn about and see! Another stop was at a pond by the side of a smaller country road. This pond had a lot of lily pads. Mainor was excited to show me the Northern Jacanas or lily trotters, known for their extremely long toes that distribute their weight so they can literally walk on the lily pads and water. They don't swim in the water like ducks. He said that the males take care of the babies. I

made a mental note to research them later. It turns out that females have a harem of males. No one is sure why they switched their roles. After she lays the eggs on a nest on a lily pad (which seems like a really bad idea), the male incubates, cares for and feeds the youngsters. The female is the one defending the territory while the male is homemaking. Of course, the chicks also have very long toes. When the father senses danger like a heron call, he will emit a specific call which the chicks know it's time to seek shelter. They slide up under the male's wings, and he carries them, usually with their super long toes hanging out like a branch is stuck to his undersides. This is truly a weird bird.

We arrived at the cloud forest near Parque Nacional Volcán Tenorio. We waited for our local guide at the bird feeding station. So many colorful birds that I had never heard of! Iridescent blue that seemed to glow. Orange, red, green in all shapes and sizes. Keel-billed Toucans, Honeycreepers, and more. There were a few drab birds like the Tropical Kingbird. With a name like that, you'd expect a kaleidoscope of colors, but nope – just gray and pale yellow. One that really lived up to its name was the Bare-throated Tiger-Heron with his stunning markings.

We spotted a few northern birds like the Baltimore Oriole, American Redstarts, and even other warblers including Chestnut-sided, Yellow, and a few Black-and-white Warblers – just like we can see at Blue Spruce!!! It's impressive to think how far those little birds had to fly to get here.

We stood in the rain watching a White Hawk that had landed on a branch in clear view. It swooped down to the ground and brought back its lunch with it. A snake! It was about the diameter of my pinkie and about a foot long. It was wriggling so much that it wrapped itself around the hawk's leg as he slurped down the other end.

He swallowed it like a thick piece of spaghetti 101 Dalmatians style. We marveled that it was probably still squirming around in its belly.

After a simple but delicious lunch of Costa Rican beans and rice with some lightly seasoned vegetables, I asked Mainor what his favorite bird was that we had seen thus far. I was surprised that his answer was the Black-and-white Warbler. A very nice bird indeed, but not as exotic to me as it was to him. Fair enough!

We started home with one more amazing bird to see. We stopped at a water treatment plant. This didn't seem that promising judging by the strong smell. But as we drove farther down the road, we spotted a bunch of large white dots in the trees. About 50 Wood Storks were getting their nests ready since it was the dry season as they were

flying and landing with enormous wings causing a commotion. But right in the middle was the main target – a Jabiru, the largest flying bird in South America. Standing five feet tall with an eight-foot wingspan, it took off and did a short maneuver before landing. Those wings are impressive! It was a huge stork with a large bill and a thick neck to hold all that weight. Part of the neck thickness is a gular sack, which is extra skin to protect its throat from all the sharp things it swallows like fish, reptiles, and even baby crocodiles. It has no vocal cords. Instead it communicates with body movements and bill clacks.

It was a momentous day, and we both agreed that the Jabiru was the favorite bird of an incredible day of birding.

I Really Need to Get My Altimeter Checked

By *Ron Alsop

People tend to enjoy martins for their social antics, singing, or their incredible flight characteristics. Personally, I've always enjoyed their amazing ability to glide almost better than most other birds. I jokingly refer to them as mini jets when I see them off in the distance, heading for home, and already on a glide path. They require no flapping of the wings to come completely in, circle a couple times, and then land exactly where they want.

I've had numerous discussions of this special ability with my son who also enjoys martins and is a private pilot. He says the martins accomplish flight and landings with ease while pilots need an array of instruments to do the very same thing. For example, the martins seem to know exactly how high or low they are in comparison to the ground while a pilot refers to an altimeter for that information. Well, apparently nothing ever functions with absolute perfection, even in nature.

One day as I was watching a couple of martins coming in to land, I saw another martin going in the opposite direction almost directly at the other two. For whatever

reason, the third martin did a sharp U-turn and joined the others in a glide path back towards the martin housing. It was a male, and he was behind the other two and slightly lower. Nothing unusual yet, or so I thought. For them to get to the housing, coming in from this direction, they need to fly over my shed roof which slopes upward. This is never a problem as I've observed them do it with ease routinely. Not this time!!! As the front two passed over the top edge, I saw the third guy was too low, and he didn't adjust for the up-slope of the roof. Plunk! My heart went into my feet as I saw him crash into the roof and fall over on his side.

My heart was pounding as I thought he maybe broke his neck. I was about to get a ladder to see if he was still alive when he suddenly got up on his own and sat there for a few minutes. Then he started walking around and to my surprise, flew away in fine fashion.

I mustered a huge sigh of relief as he flew away, probably thinking, "I Really Need to Get My Altimeter Checked."

*Ron Alsop is no stranger to Todd Bird Club. He has invited our group to his property and has spoken at our monthly meetings. Ron Alsop 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 martin landlord. Ron began his quest to become a martin landlord in 2010, at a time when there were no martin colonies nearby. He now fledges over 200 babies per year.

Please don't forget to bird on Saturday, May 9!

We are continuing our tradition of celebrating Global Big Day by focusing on the Indiana County Migration Count. If you eBird, just eBird as you normally do. Compiler Greg Tomb (gtomb22@gmail.com) will collect your data from eBird. If you don't eBird, please call the Higbees at 724-354-3493 with your lists; they will forward them to Greg.

The 2025-2026 Winter Season

Abbreviations: Allegheny River (AR), Armstrong Trail (AT), Barclay Road Pond (BRP), Brush Valley (BV), Brush Valley Twp. (BVT), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Ghost Town Trail (GTT), Indiana Borough (IN), Indiana University of PA (IUP), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Lock & Dam (L&D), Manorville (MV), North Buffalo Sportsmen's Club (NBSC), Prince Gallitzin S.P. (PG), Rosston (RT), Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TLR), Waterworks Conservation Area (WCA), West Lebanon (WL), Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), Yellow Creek S.P. (YC)

Single **Snow Geese** were found at MV 12/6 (TR), near SH 12/1 (ED), and at YC 12/5 (JT) and 12/7 (NL); two were noted at YC 12/4 (JT) and at PG 12/8 (CS). A **Ross's Goose** was photographed in flight at SGL 332 on 1/8 (MS). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** flew over a yard in IN 12/4 (MW); three visited YC 12/19 (MS) through 12/25 (TC, AM); 70 were counted and photographed 12/3 (CS) at PG where one was noted 1/5 (BV, NV). Forty-seven **Tundra Swans** were observed flying n.e. over a farm near West Valley 12/2 (AB) while 32 flew over IN 12/15 (JP); best YC count was 311 from the observatory at YC 12/5 (AM); PG yielded 84 on 1/10 (CS). Late winter counts mentioned six on 2/14 (JB) along the AR, another six at IUP South Campus 2/21 (JT), and six again at the old VFW pond in IN 2/21 (NL, MS).

A **Wood Duck** lingered at YC 12/1 (MSC), and five remained at PG 12/24 (TA) while first returnees appeared at IUP South Campus 1/13 (JT), in a flooded yard along Aultmans Run 2/21 (MW), and at YC 2/26 (MS). YC hosted two **Northern Shovelers** 12/4 (JT), the lone regional report. Lingering **Gadwalls** included five (RS) at YC and three at PG (MB), all 12/28; YC harbored the first two returnees on 2/27 (BB). Two **American Wigeons** remained along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 2/28 (TR) while one stayed at PG through 1/14 (CS); first wigeons to return were found 2/27 (BB) at YC. Two **American Black Ducks** were still present along the AR 1/7 (JB) while seven were noted at KT's L&D 7 on 2/1 (TR); two remained at YC 1/16 (MW) while first four reappeared at YC 2/26 (MS); by 2/28 the YC tally was 50 (AM, MM, HR). PG still hosted 41 on 12/28 (MB). A single hen **Northern Pintail** was sighted at L&D 7 on 12/12 (SGu); a hike along the AT n. of L&D 8 yielded 13 pintails for the observer to photograph on 2/28 (TR). A drake Northern Pintail was a nice find at WCA on 1/5 (SD); 12 had visited YC by 12/28 (TC, AC, ED, DK, MSC). Seventeen pintails were still present at PG 1/10 (CS), but by 1/17, the final count was nine (AdM) before freeze-up. One **Green-winged Teal** was found and photographed at L&D 5 (TR) on 2/14 (TR, DB); last three in *Indiana* were spotted from the North Shore at YC 12/12 (MH, RH); 20 at PG on 12/3 (CS) comprised *Cambria's* total report.

The AR was the best area to locate **Canvasbacks** this winter between L&D 7 and Ford Cliff; one was at L&D 7 on 12/12 (SGu) and 1/5 (TR); numbers varied from two to seven between 1/28 (DB) and 2/18 (TR); top count occurred 2/2 (DB) near the bridge at Ford Cliff. YC hosted six on 12/21 (AM) while three were still present for the Indiana CBC 12/26 (TM, MS, JT); the BRP in *Indiana* was the hotspot on 2/22 (RL, JT, MW) when 12 were sighted by three independent birders. One visited PG 12/3

(CS). Two **Redheads** first appeared along the AR at RT 1/24 (JB); three were listed at MV 1/29 (TR); last reported were two at MV 2/27 (TR). The Conemaugh River at the dam hosted two on 1/24 (MW) and on 2/3 (MS). YC's last Redhead was listed 12/9 (MS, JT) with the first five returning 2/27 (BB); 14 Redheads were present between 1/5 (CS) and 1/17 (AdM) at PG where 10 were last noted 1/18 (TeR). Two **Ring-necked Ducks** were found 12/12 (TR) at RT where, by 2/27 (TR), 13 were tallied; reports noted Ring-necks all along the AR from L&D 5 (MC, EY) to n. of L&D 8 (TR). BS, not noted for its abundance of waterfowl, hosted one Ring-neck on 12/1 (CW). YC harbored Ring-necks between 12/1 (DR) and 12/25 (AM) and from 2/27 (BB) when six were counted to 2/28 when the tally was 31 (MH, RH, MS). Ring-necked Ducks were reported at PG between 12/3 (CS) when 180 were tallied and 1/14 (CS) when the count was 11. **Greater Scaup** were noted along the AR between L&D 5 and L&D 7 between 2/1 (TR) and 2/27 (TR) by eight observers. L&D 7 harbored anywhere from two to 16 Greater Scaup between 2/1 (TR) and 2/18 (TR), also seen by four other observers; photos are on eBird; L&D 5 harbored 10 on 2/8 (SGo). Two Greater Scaup visited YC 12/3 (MS, JT) while single birds were noted there 12/7 (NL) and 12/8 (MW). Another was photographed at PG 1/17 (AdM). **Lesser Scaup**, too, had a presence along the AR between 2/3 (TR) and 2/28 (TR); numbers ranged from one on 2/3 (TR) to 12 on 2/15 (MC). Lesser Scaup visited YC between 12/3 (MS, JT) and 12/27 (BB); high YC count was 35 on 12/5 (MS, JT). PG harbored two on both 12/5 (CS) and 1/17 (AdM).

The AR was a hotspot for scoters and Long-tails this winter. A **Surf Scoter** was a nice find along the AR at L&D 7 on 12/12 (SaG) and 12/13 (TR). A **White-winged Scoter** stopped on 2/3 (TR) at L&D 5 where it remained through 2/15 (DB). A **Long-tailed Duck** visited RT 2/9 (TR).

Buffleheads moved through *Armstrong* between 12/1 (JB) when four were at CC and 2/27 (TR) when 11 were present at MV. Buffleheads appeared at YC between 12/1 (DR) when 26 were tallied and 12/10 (SD) when six remained. By 2/27 (BB) three had arrived, but the Todd outing on 2/28 (TC, AC, ED, DK, TM, MSC) reported only one. Nine Buffleheads arrived at PG 12/3 (CS), but by 12/9 (CS) only three were noted; by 1/6 (CS) three had arrived with top count of five on 1/15 (CS). December **Common Goldeneye** reports in *Armstrong* included one on 12/17 (JB) at "The Tracks" along the AR and one on 12/18 (TR) at MV. By 1/24 (TR) eight were present at L&D 7, but numbers built to 43 by 1/29 (TR) and finally to 75 by 2/13 (DB). MV yielded 25 on 2/27 (TR). YC hosted its first goldeneye on 2/26 (MS), but by 2/28 (AM, MM, HR) four were listed at YC. PG's

last goldeneye was observed 12/6 (AdM) until 1/5 (CS) when the first appeared; by 1/10 (CS) five were present.

Five **Hooded Mergansers** were listed 12/1 (JB) at “The Tracks”; by 12/7 (TR) five were also below River Pool 8. L&D 7 yielded two on 1/30 (TR) and 6 by 2/13 (TR). From Mill Street in Freeport four were noted on 2/26 (SW). February 27 (TR) produced 32 at RT. Farther north, the AT north of L&D 8 produced three on 2/28 (TR). A WRS yielded two Hooded Mergs on 1/16 (SD, MH, RH, GL) at Thomas Bridge. YC hosted 33 on 12/1 (DR) and 23 on 12/3 (MS, JT, MW); two on 12/27 (JP) were the last noted at YC until 1/14 (MS) when one was spotted. None were seen at YC again until 2/24 (MH, RH) when two were noted; by 2/28 (MH, RH) 11 were counted. PG harbored 236 Hooded Mergs on 12/3 (CS); by 12/29 (CS) 35 were present; last report of four occurred 1/15 (CS). Top tallies of **Common Mergansers** along the AT included 25 at L&D 7 on 12/15 (TR), 15 at RT on 1/24 (JB), and 30 at L&D 5 on 2/3 (TR). High count at CC was 215 on 12/1 (JB). Best YC count of Common Mergs was 52 on 2/28 (MS). PG’s high tallies included 40 on 12/28 (MB), 55 on 1/02 (CS), 80 on 1/15 (CS), and 50 on 1/17 (AdM). Four **Red-breasted Mergansers** appeared at YC 12/1 (DR); a singleton was spotted there 12/7 (NL) and 12/9 (MS, JT); these were the only reports in the region.

YC hosted six **Ruddy Ducks** 12/3 (MS, JT), two on 12/5 (MS, JT), five on 12/7 (NL) and 12/8 (CW), three on 12/9 (MS, JT), and two on 12/10 (SD); the only others noted were two on 2/27 (BB). At PG three were found 12/3 (CS) and one on 12/8 (CS). These were the region’s lone reports.

Top counts of **Wild Turkeys** in *Armstrong* included 16 in a backyard near KR 2/16 (JS) and 15 near CC 2/13 (JB); in *Indiana*, 13 near Tanoma 1/16 (CW); in *Cambria*, 16 near Carrolltown 2/13 (PI). The only **Ruffed Grouse** reported were at two locations in *Cambria*.

Few **American Coots** were listed – four on 12/7 (JT) and one on 12/9 (MS, JT), and one on 1/1 (AM), all at YC. PG yielded one on 12/3 (CS).

Seventeen **Sandhill Cranes** were an amazing sight at TLR 12/5 (MS, JT). John writes, “We heard their distinctive calls before we spotted the “V” of 17 long-necked and long-legged beauties flying west, high over the lake. Excellent views in scope as well as binocs.” Then on 2/27 (AM) in IN five Sandhills were heard and seen. Avi writes, “I was walking outside the church with my buddy, and out of nowhere, I heard the sound of CRANES! Five of them circling around the church backyard and the cemetery, unmistakable in appearance and vocalizations, long untucked necks, long legs, pale gray underbelly, and they were heard bugling. It seems God wanted to bless me today, and he did!”

First returning **Killdeer** included one on 2/19 (JB) along Butler Road in *Armstrong*. Lingering at YC were single Killdeer spotted 12/3 (JT), 12/9 (MSC), and 12/12 (MH, RH). Two near BV 2/25 (MSC) were probable returnees. PG yielded one on 12/3 (CS), three on 12/28 (JG), and three on 1/5 (BV, NV).

Two **American Woodcocks** were displaying on 2/26 (DB) near SGL 247 in *Armstrong*; another was flying near West Valley on 2/27 (AB); these were the lone ones in the region. The report of two **Bonaparte’s Gulls** at PG 12/3 (CS) was the only report. High tallies of **Ring-billed Gulls** included 100 at L&D 7 on 2/15 (TR), 49 along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 2/28 (TR), and 93 at YC on 2/28 (MH, RH). PG hosted seven on 12/25 (TR) while the tally on 2/28 (PI, WI) was six. L&D 7 hosted **American Herring Gulls** on three dates, two on 2/11, 18 (TR) with the high of seven in between on 2/15 (TR); Herrings were found at YC between 12/2 (MW) when two were listed, 12/9 (MSC, MS, JT) when one was noted, and 12/25 (AM) when five were present.

Indiana hosted two **Pied-billed Grebes** 12/3 (MS, JT) at YC and 12/5 (MS, JT) at TLR while a singleton visited PG 12/6 (AdM). Two **Horned Grebes** were present at RT 2/27 (TR) while later that same morning (TR) one was found at MV. YC’s lone sighting occurred 12/4 (JT). Single Horned Grebes were noted at PG 12/3 (CS) and 12/8 (CS). YC hosted one **Common Loon** 12/3 (MS, JT) while PG harbored individual Common Loons 12/3 (CS), 12/28 (MK, CS), and a second Common Loon 12/28 (MB) in the Mudlick sector of PG. On 12/28 (MK, CS) a **Double-crested Cormorant** was spotted at PG, the lone regional report.

Murphy’s Bottom (restricted access) hosted two **Great Blue Herons** 12/20 (EM, CZ). *Indiana*’s sightings included reports on seven dates between 12/3 (MW) and 2/22 (MH, RH) at eight locations. Dec. 6 (AdM) yielded the lone PG report.

Only two **Black Vulture** locations were noted – six were listed near SGL 276 on 2/14 (MW) while two were found in Croyle Twp., *Cambria*, on 2/27 (MHu). A **Golden Eagle** was a nice find soaring overhead, quite low, near Valier on 1/10 (MW). The WT area was a hotspot for a dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** between 2/2 (DB) and 2/5 (MMc); another Rough-leg was found 2/14 (PI, WI) n.e. of Chest Springs. As many as four **Short-eared Owls** were reported in the WT area this winter between 1/28 (DB) and 2/28 (JuK) while up to four were noted near WL 12/21 (RL).

Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered at two locations in *Armstrong* – one w. of Yatesboro 12/12 (TR) and another s.w. of Yatesboro 2/26 (TR). Near PG one Red-headed Woodpecker was reported 1/02 (CS) and another at a nearby location at PG 2/28 (PI, WI).

Single **Merlins** were listed at various spots around IN between 12/9 (JT) and 2/27 (MS, JT); one was spotted in Ebensburg 12/10 (MW) catching and eating a European Starling; another was photographed in Gallitzin on 2/11 (JM, CS). A **Peregrine** was observed s.w. of Penn Run 12/17 (JP); another was spotted perched near the Graff Bridge 1/23 (CG, MH, RH, GL).

A late **Eastern Phoebe** was found 12/28 (MeM) at Dysart. A late **White-eyed Vireo** was photographed 12/17 (JK, TK) along the West Penn Trail - Saltsburg. A **Northern Shrike** was photographed at SGL 332 on 2/21 (MS).

Last **Fish Crow** was observed and heard in IN 12/11 (CW) as it chased a Red-tailed Hawk. Fish Crows appear to leave Indiana during the winter; first to reappear was found on 2/4 (NL) at IUP. **Common Ravens** were widespread across our region this winter.

Large flocks of **Horned Larks** in the WT area were estimated to contain as many as 375 on 1/30 (DB) and 350 on 2/1 (AH).

Single **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were found at CC 12/25 (JB) and s. of Templeton 1/18 (TR). Four were eBirded at YC 12/7 (NL).

Widespread this year, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were spotted 1/18 (TR) n. of L&D 8 along the AT. One to two Red-breasted Nuthatches were found in the CC area at the fitness trail 12/18 (JB), along Beach Rd. 12/21 (SP), at the peninsula 1/12 (TR), and at the boat launch 2/20 (TR). In *Indiana* one to two visited feeders near SH between 12/1 - 2/28 (MH, RH). One stopped at a feeder n.e. of IN 1/4 (DW); three were spotted at SGL 332 on 1/13 (MS), single birds were noted s. of YC 12/1 (AM) and at YC 2/28 (MSC *et al.*). In *Cambria* up to four were observed along Red Mill Rd. during Winter Atlas on 12/25, 1/11 (GT); single birds were listed near Mundy's Corners 1/8 (ER), at Vinco 1/16, 2/16 (BS), near Elmora 2/14 (MK), and along the GTT 2/21 (TC, JG, VS).

A **Winter Wren** took up residence in a brush pile w. of CC where it was observed 12/1 (JB), 12/3 (JB), and 1/26 (JB). Singletons were listed between 12/20 when individuals were found at Murphy's Bottom (EM, CZ) and w. of RT (TR); on 12/24 (TR) one was present along the AT n. of L&D 8. In *Indiana* one was observed at the Tanoma Wetlands 12/5 (CW), at Graceton Park in Homer City 12/19 (SD), at the WCA 12/21, 1/5 (SD), and along the Hoodlebug Trail 1/10 (SD). *Cambria* sightings include one 12/12 (DH) at Crichton - McCormick Park and 12/28 (MeM) at Dysart.

Eastern Bluebirds were widespread across all three counties this winter. **Hermit Thrush** reports in *Armstrong* included one on 12/7 (TR) along the AT n. of L&D 8 and two on 12/20 (TR) near North Buffalo. *Indiana* hosted Hermits 12/2 (CW) when one was photographed; 12/3 (MS, JT), and 12/8 (CW) both at YC; and in *Cambria* 12/17 (BB) in Johnstown.

A flock of 30 **Cedar Waxwings** was *Armstrong's* lone report on 1/12 (TR). Waxwings showed up near LV between 12/5 and 12/11 (MC) with best tally of eight on 12/6 (MC); six were along Blacklegs Creek 12/28 (MS). YC's first winter report occurred 12/26 (TM, MS, JT) when 20 were tallied; waxwings continued at YC through 2/28 (MH, RH) with high counts of 25 on 2/17 (MR) and 2/27 (HR). PG's top tallies included 26 near Flinton 12/28 (MB) and 50 at SGL 184 on 12/29 (CS).

Two **American Pipits** showed up s. of WT 1/20 (MMc). YC hosted four on 12/3 (MS, JT), three on 12/5 (MS, JT), and one on 12/8 (CW), the last report.

One to five **Purple Finches** visited feeders near the NBSC

between 12/1 and 2/7 (TR). An *Armstrong* WRS along Dutch Run yielded four on 1/18 (CG, MH, RH, GL). Four showed up at a feeder near KR 2/16 (JS). Feeders near SH hosted mostly single Purples between 1/25 and 2/25 with high count of nine on 2/16 (MH, RH); by 2/24 the group of Purple Finches had decreased to five. YC harbored 12 on 12/3 (MS, JT) and four on 1/6 (ED, MH, RH, DK). PG and SGL 108 each respectively hosted single Purples on 12/5 (SR) and 12/28 (CS). A *Cambria* WRS on 1/24 (CG, MH, RH, GL) yielded three. Six **Redpolls** were found on the PG CBC 12/28 (MiK); 22 was the Redpoll count 1/15 (MW) in Ebensburg. Dec. 28 was the day to bird *Cambria* for **Pine Siskins**, and it was great that the PG CBC fell on that date! Two were listed at Flinton (MB), one at Dysart (MeM), and 21 at Ashville (MiK).

Lapland Longspurs showed up in the flock of larks near WT between 1/4 and 2/5 (DB) with the high tally of six on 1/29 (DB). **Snow Buntings**, too, were in the mix with the high tally of 45 on 2/5 (DB).

Single **Chipping Sparrows** were found at five locations this winter, all in *Indiana*, and between 12/2 (JT) on Warren Rd. in IN and 1/02 (MH, RH, NJ, WJ) at a feeder in Graceton. One **Field Sparrow** was found at IUP South Campus 12/20 (JT) while the only other one was listed at Dysart 12/28 (MeM). **American Tree Sparrows** were widespread this winter but not found in many large flocks except for flocks of 50 at Windy Ridge Industrial Park 2/4 (JT) and 45 near Dysart on 12/28 (MeM). A **Fox Sparrow** was found 12/1 (TR) and photographed 12/13 (TR) near NBSC; this was the lone report in our region. Single **White-crowned Sparrows** popped up at Slate Lick 1/3 (GM) and near WT 1/5 (RB); two were nice finds both in Smicksburg 1/16 (SD, MH, RH, GL) and near Freeport 2/25 (SVD). One visited a feeder near SH on four dates bracketed by 12/9 and 12/23 (MH, RH); three were also observed for the IN CBC 12/26 (JP) near Home. A WRS yielded a flock of 10 near Black Lick 1/20 (CG, MH, RH, GL). *Cambria's* lone report mentioned three at PG 12/5 (SR). **Swamp Sparrows** were listed at four locations in both *Armstrong* and *Indiana* and at six in *Cambria*. **Eastern Towhee** observations included one in *Armstrong* on 1/26 (TR) near NBSC and two on 2/13, 14 (SS) s. of W. KT; six in *Indiana*, all but one between 12/13 (KB) and 1/31 (MC); and three in *Cambria*, all between 12/9 (SaG) at PG and 1/3 (SaG) at Belsano. The only *Indiana* report with repeated sightings was MC's towhee which was present from 1/20 (MC) through 1/31 (MC); the remaining towhee reports were all one-day sightings.

Two **Eastern Meadowlarks** lingered at WL through 1/18 (MW). Winter **Red-winged Blackbird** sightings were sparse – three near WT 1/5 (RB); one to three were counted at feeders near LV 12/5 - 12/20 (MC). By 1/1 (MC) seven appeared near LV, but numbers dwindled to two the following two days, then totally disappeared until 1/25 (MC) when one arrived. BV arrival date was 2/8 (MSC). Feb. 21 seemed to be a popular arrival date at WL (MS), near SH (MH, RH), and at WCA (LP, KS). *Cambria's* first dates were 2/27 (JM) near Loretto and 2/28 near Flinton (MB) when 12 were tallied, at PG (PI, WI) when two were recorded, and at Dysart (MeM) where one appeared.

Three **Brown-headed Cowbirds** lingered near NBSC 12/4 (TR) and returned 2/28 (TR). Cowbirds peaked at 63 on 12/29 (MC) at LV feeders where by 1/25 numbers dropped to a lone cowbird which remained through 2/7 (MC). Single cowbirds lingered in the IN area 12/3 (MS) and 12/14 (SD); others appeared 1/17, 18 (MW) and 1/20 (JT). One **Rusty Blackbird** popped up for a brief feeder visit near SH 12/3 (MH, RH); next were two in BVT 1/23 (MSC); numbers increased to eight the next day and to 10 by 1/25 (MSC). The next BVT report mentioned 17 on 2/5 (MSC) down to 10 on 2/8 (MSC); n. of BV on 2/14 (MW) two were listed. These were the only Rusty reports.

Five **Common Grackle** reports in *Armstrong* all mentioned one to five grackles between 2/20 (TR) and 2/27 (TR). In *Indiana* the time period was a bit different, with one on 2/1 (MW), but most reports were between 2/18 (MS) and 2/28 (MSC) with four at BVT, four n. of Indian Springs Rd. 2/21 (NL), and one at Floodway Park in Homer City 2/28 (JC). One grackle was found on the PG CBC 12/28 (MK), and this was the lone *Cambria* report.

Yellow-rumped Warblers were found at three locations in *Armstrong* this winter – one 12/18 (JB) at CC, three along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 12/24 (TR), and one on 2/14 (TR) near NBSC. One at Saltsburg 12/27 (MBow) and one in *Cambria*,

on a WRS 1/24 (CG, MH, RH, GL) were the lone reports for *Indiana* and *Cambria*.

Observers: Tina Alianiello, Brady Blackburn, John Boback, Mark Bonta, Mark Bowers (MBow), Dave Brooke, Kurt Buttkevitz, Alan Buriak, Ron Burkert, Michele Carlson, (MCa), Tiffany Chan, Angel Conrad, Jim Coogan, Marcy Cunkelman, Ed Donley, Jacquie Gentile, Sally Gordon (SaGo), Steve Gosser (SGo), Sam Guthrie (SaGu), Marg Higbee, Roger Higbee, Noah Jones, Warren Jones, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Michael Kensinger (MiK), Matt Kline, Justin Kowlakowski (JuK), Jan Kuehl, Tom Kuehl, Gloria Lamer, Nick Logan, Adam Maddy (AdM), Avi Marshall, Mabel Marshall, Mark McConaughy (MMc), Gregory McDermott, Ed McKaveney, Justin Merry, Megan Mills (MeM), Trent Millum, Joseph Pumford, Theo Rickert, Terry Riggelman (TeR), Debra Rittelmann, Elaine Rodriguez, Henry Rummel, Mabel Rummel, Matt St Clair (MSC), Connor Schmitt, Beth Shoff, Ryan Spiardi, Shannon Stirling, Jill Stoddard, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Shirley Van Dyke (SVD), Bill Voris, Nick Voris, Sierra Waltenbaugh, Mike Weible, Cheri Widzowski, Daniel Winstead, Eric Yanyo, Cassandra Ziegler.

The Best Warbler Day Ever

(continued from page 5)

we'd seen earlier in the day. Still, we persevered and were rewarded with superb looks at a Palm Warbler (number 20 for the day), in the overgrown pasture as we began our descent. And shortly thereafter all Hades broke loose as an awesome wave of warblers boiled up and filled the trees in the adjacent woods. Most were species already on the list: Yellow-rumps, Redstarts, "Greens" and "Mags." But then I saw a flash of blue. Hoping for a Black-throated Blue, I followed it with my now murky, rain-soaked binoculars until it was positioned directly in front of a tree trunk, which rendered the colors more visible. It wasn't a "Blue," as I'd hoped, but at least as welcome a visitor... a Northern Parula! But the show wasn't over. First, Joe heard the song, and then I spotted the songster. There was a "Blue" in the wave after all, bringing the total to 22 warblers, what both of us were fairly certain matched our record for warblers in a single day.

For the next ten to fifteen minutes, we searched frantically through the hordes of warblers in the trees above us, ultimately locating a Nashville and a few Cape Mays to



This Black-and-white Warbler was photographed by Mark Strittmatter.

keep the total climbing. The rain was now steady and the temperature quite chilly, especially in water-soaked jeans. But the avalanche of warblers continued, and we again persevered, adding to the individual counts for species already sighted, and eventually spotting a Tennessee Warbler to top our warbler tally out at a mind-boggling 25 species. A second Tennessee, another Canada, several Blackburnians, a Hooded, and numerous Yellow-rumps then paraded past us in the cold rain until we surrendered to common sense and withdrew to the warmth of the vehicle.

I would add two Black Terns and several hundred Tree Swallows from Musser Lake on the way home before calling it a day. But it was the spectacular waves of warblers that broke over us repeatedly through the day that made it the most memorable of all my spring outings in western Pennsylvania. We've never come close to matching the list from that day when we identified 336 warblers representing 25 species, and that doesn't account for an even larger number that passed by overhead as specks in the binoculars.

2026 Todd Dues

Student \$5
Individual \$10
Family \$15

Please remit to:

Gloria Lamer, Treasurer
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Penn Run, PA 15765

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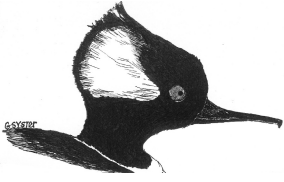
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Birding Blitz for Conservation

Once again this year Todd Bird Club is entering a team for the Birding Blitz for Conservation, sponsored by the PA Society for Ornithology. For details, go to <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/> to register another team, read the rules, or to donate to the Todd Towhees. Feel free to organize another team to participate.

**PSO Birding Festival at Blair County Convention Center, Altoona, PA
June 19 -21, 2026**

For more information, go to <https://pabirds.org/2026-overview/>



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