

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

October 2016

Meetings

Todd Bird Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month, September through April, at Blue Spruce Lodge in Blue Spruce County Park, located just off Route 110 east of the town of Ernest. Arrive early to socialize. Refreshments are provided at each of our meetings. In May we hold our banquet meeting which starts at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 1 – Lisa Meadows, Environmental Education Specialist at Yellow Creek State Park, will be the evening's speaker. She will present "Whose fur is it anyway?" which is based on an old game show with the comedian Drew Carey. One of the best ways that kids and adults learn is through experiential learning. This is an old-fashioned guessing game where participants work in teams to figure out which fur, fin, or feather matches a PA animal. Most people think it is relatively simple...yet start to laugh when they realize how challenging it is. After participants are finished with their guessing, we will go over their answers and share some little known facts about PA Wild Animals. In my two years of teaching this program, not one team has gotten 100% on their answers. Let's see if the Todd Bird Club members can best our park visitors in their quest.

Tuesday, December 6 – Extending far enough eastward from the Pacific coast to cross the Andes Mountains and catch the western edge of the Amazon

Basin, Peru spans an extraordinary range of environments and boasts roughly a fifth of all the world's bird species. In fall 2012, the Taylor brothers (John and Wil) enjoyed a marathon birding/naturalizing excursion that visited most of those varied habitats, tallying well over 400 bird species in the process.

Come and hear John describe their (mis)adventures and get a glimpse of the stunning beauty of the birds and other wildlife of this remarkable South American country.



John Taylor led the September 3 outing at Blue Spruce Park when 16 warbler species were identified.

Dr. John F. Taylor is a "retired" IUP professor in the Geoscience Department. Besides birds, his primary interests are invertebrate fossils and the depositional environments that produced the rocks in which they are found. In particular, his specialty is trilobites of Cambrian and Ordovician age and their utility for correlation and

paleogeographic reconstruction. Don't miss John's informative and entertaining program.

This is also our Christmas cookie extravaganza. Please bring two dozen cookies to share.

Tuesday, January 3 – This is our annual Members' Night. Please bring something to share – pictures on a flash drive, photos, stories, memorabilia, etc.

Outings

Tuesday morning outings will continue at Yellow Creek State Park till deer season; meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office located on Route 259 just off Route 422 east of Indiana. Early comers are invited to meet at the pavilion on the north shore shortly after dawn. Everyone –from beginner to expert birder – is welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667) or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

Saturday, October 22 – Mahoning Shadow Trail, 342 Water Street, Punxsutawney, PA 15767, led by Tom Glover (tomnglover@comcast.net). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the sewage treatment plant trailhead parking lot. This section of the trail has 50 well preserved, over-100-year-old coke ovens. Directions: take US 119 north from Indiana; just before Punxsutawney turn left onto PA Rt. 436. After about 1¾ miles turn right after crossing the bridge onto North Main St. In a short distance, turn right onto Grace Way, across from the Kwik Fill station, and then turn right onto Water St. Water St. follows the Mahoning Creek and takes you to the treatment plant parking lot.

Saturday, October 29 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office.

Saturday, November 5 – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. This is our annual fall joint outing with the Three Rivers Birding Club. Afterwards we will head to the Chinese buffet in Indiana for lunch.

Saturday, November 12 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Ray Winstead (724-349-2506). Meet at the large parking lot next to the park office at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, November 19 – Saylor Park & the Ghost Town Trail, south of Indiana, off US Rt 119, led by Lee Carnahan and Tom Glover. Meet at Saylor Park at 8:00 a.m.

Friday, November 25 - 28– The Niagara Frontier, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee. *You must have a passport or a passport card to enter Canada and return to the US. We will bird mostly in Canada.* This four-day trip will cover Dunkirk Harbor en route to the Peace Bridge, as well as areas along the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. We will meet Frank and Sandra Horvath in Grimsby and bird two days under their leadership.

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

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

From the President's Desk...

Yes, finally the weather is cooling off. And that means migration is in full swing. The last of the warblers are still moving through the area along with several species of thrushes. At Yellow Creek, as I mentioned in the August newsletter, shorebirds continue to appear. Just this past September 15 Steve Gosser reported a Sanderling in the beach area of the lake; this is the first Sanderling reported since September 6, 2011. Lee Carnahan located two Long-billed Dowitchers on October 2 that lingered through the 7th. The previous sighting of this species occurred eight years ago on November 18, 2008. On Tuesday, the 11th, Yellow Creek still harbored migrating

Least, Pectoral, and Solitary Sandpipers along with Greater Yellowlegs.

With the onset of cooler weather, start looking for the birds that overwinter in the area. Again this past Tuesday the 11th at Yellow Creek it was a good sparrow day. White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows were noted besides a migrant, first of the year, Lincoln's Sparrow and lingering Song and Field Sparrows. Yellow Creek also produced the season's first Dark-eyed Juncos. But two days earlier on Sunday, the 9th of October, my son Jud and I came across a few Dark-eyed Juncos here in Jefferson County.

But one bird has defied migration – the Lesser Scaup that has been present all summer on Dragonfly Pond. It will be interesting when his buddies show up. We will have to see if he moves on with the other migrating scaup.

Also mentioned in the August newsletter were Club projects. One particular project is a new Purple Martin house which will be located at Blue Spruce County Park. At our October meeting a motion was passed to fund a Purple Martin house up to \$500. The estimated cost for a completed 14-unit house and post is around \$450. We have permission to locate the house along the lake's edge in the open area just beyond the park entrance. And we plan to dedicate this martin house in the memory of Georgette Syster, a long-time Todd Bird Club member and officer who passed away this past February.



Elyse and Phoebe Fuller participated in the October 2 outing to Ed Donley's farm.
Photo by Margaret Higbee

for a long weekend visit this past October 1. Phoebe introduced herself to Todd Bird Club members during Ed Donley's outing on Saturday, October 1. Now Phoebe was carried around by Elyse, her mom, in a harness for the complete outing. That included hiking up and down the hills on and around Ed's farm. And she was a very attentive birder for the whole outing. She did not complain one bit. Now her dad Tom has taken over the household duties while mom has gone back to work full time. Dad's idea of 'Phoebe watching' involves the two of them going on bird outings with the dog in the local parks around their home in Tuxedo, NY. That has to be a lot more fun than housekeeping. We will keep you posted on Phoebe's progress.

Good birding!

– Tom Glover



Now I cannot let things go without a Phoebe report. She, her mom and dad along with Winnie, the black lab, came

Special Thanks and Congratulations!

Sincere thanks to Dan and Marcy Cunkelman for opening their home and property to the many Todd Bird Club and Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club members who attended the annual picnic on Sunday afternoon, August 21. Among the 28 attendees were Ed Donley, Mike and Evelyn Fowles, Steve Gosser, Cris Hamilton, Roger and Margaret Higbee, Karen Jackson, Linda Jones, Dennis Lauffer, Melissa Little, John Somonick, Marge Van Tassel, Jim and Jan Woodard, and Ellen Yerger. Marcy provided turkey sloppy joes, buns, drinks, gluten-free pie-filling cobbler, and paper products. Everyone brought a dish to share.

Walking around Marcy's yard after lunch, we viewed her islands of habitat



Marcy Cunkelman shows one of the two orchid species she found growing in her yard to Karen Jackson and Marge Van Tassel.

as well as numerous birds including Purple Finches, Tawny Emperor caterpillars, various moths, butterflies, other insects, and orchids.

It was easy to see why Marcy was the recipient of the Blue Ribbon for the Greening Award from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in the environmental initiative category. Judges looked at their water usage mitigating runoff (gutters draining into a wetland area, their cistern, and underground cistern) as well as all of their plantings. Congratulations, Marcy, and thanks for sharing your expertise with us at the picnic. It was a great day!

Conneaut Sandspit Trip Revisited

Three birders – Tom Glover, Debbie Kalbfleisch, and Kathy Saunders – joined leaders Roger and Margaret Higbee at Conneaut, Ohio, on August 27. We arrived at 8:47 and the first birds we saw were Ring-billed Gulls, about 60 of them, standing on the parking lot. We stopped first at the pond along the entrance road where we observed 9 Canada Geese, 13 Mallards, a Belted Kingfisher, a Great Blue Heron, and a Green Heron. As we continued to the sandspit, we spotted a Wood Duck on one of the other small ponds.

We parked on the sand and started birding. The day was warm with temps in the 70s. It was mostly sunny with a few clouds. The boaters were out in full force. One of the first birds we spotted was an American Golden-Plover. With the plover were 6 Least Sandpipers and 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers. We watched the little flock of shorebirds for a while then started noticing the Bald Eagles on the concrete jetty and on the sand piles. Usually we see six to eight, but today only four were tallied. We had only to wait about ten minutes before a Stilt Sandpiper put in his appearance. About 20 minutes later, Semipalmated Plovers were foraging on the sand. Shortly before 11:00 a Greater Yellowlegs flew in calling. The icing on the cake was a little group of 3 Baird’s Sandpipers near the edge of the lake. Tom counted the Double-crested Cormorants on the jetties and came up with 224. The gull flock contained only Ring-



American Golden-Plover 8/27 at Conneaut Sandspit, Ohio.



Stilt Sandpiper 8/27 at Conneaut Sandspit, Ohio.

friends.

billed and Herring Gulls, but 4 Caspian Terns were also present. Diving in the water was a single Pied-billed Grebe.

By 11:50 no new birds were arriving, I had photographed all the shorebirds multiple times, and the boat traffic and beach-goers had reached a peak, so we decided to head to lunch. Since the Subway was closed, we made a quick stop at Burger King just outside Conneaut. Our next destination was the Troyer farm where we stopped to pick up gourds for the Purple Martin box at Yellow Creek.

Next we headed to Millers Ponds at Pymatuning where we arrived at 2:16. The highlights here included three Sandhill Cranes and eight Blue-winged Teal. The ponds also harbored a few shorebirds – 2 Semipalmated Plovers, 2 Killdeer, 2 Greater Yellowlegs, and 6 Least Sandpipers. Three Barn Swallows were skimming over the water, and we added 2 Red-tailed Hawks and an American Kestrel to our list.

Our last stop at the Hartstown Project produced more additions – 1 Turkey Vulture, 2 Eastern Phoebes, 1 Eastern Kingbird, 3 Bank Swallows, and 11 Cedar Waxwings. It was a great shorebird day and a lot of fun with

– Margaret Higbee



Adult Caspian Tern watches over her youngster at Conneaut 8/27.



This is one of six Least Sandpipers at Conneaut 8/27.



Greater Yellowlegs at Conneaut 8/27.

Delaware Revisited

The Delaware trip, led by Steve Graff and Shirley Graff Martin, was a great success once again this year. Roger and I planned to leave Indiana at 5:00 a.m. on Friday, September 18. With us was Tony Bruno. We took the PA Turnpike to I-70 and crossed into Maryland at 6:47 a.m. We didn't see very many birds in PA as it was still dark. Once we crossed the state line, we started adding species – Pileated Woodpecker, Black Vulture, Ospreys, Great Black-backed Gulls, etc. A high flying Northern Harrier over the outskirts of Baltimore was obviously a migrant. As we left the bridge that crossed the Chesapeake Bay, we spotted a Peregrine Falcon perched atop a light pole. We reached Delaware at 9:44, called Steve, then stopped for breakfast in Dover. We made arrangements to meet Steve and Shirley at the Pickering Beach access. Here were Laughing Gulls, Sanderlings, and Semipalmated Plovers; but the highlight was a Merlin. Water levels across Delaware were extremely low because of drought, so the usual spots like Little Creek Management Area were dry and not productive.

Our next destination was Ted Harvey Conservation Area where the highlights included Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Forster's Terns, Black-bellied Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, White-eyed Vireos, Carolina Chickadees, American Redstarts, and Magnolia Warbler. Twenty Bobolinks in a field were a nice surprise. At Ted Harvey South we found our first American Avocets, Greater Yellowlegs, and Least Sandpiper.

Steve then led us to the very busy Mispillion Point Pond which produced Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Snowy Egret, and four Black-crowned Night-Herons as well as a nice look at a Clapper Rail. Right on clue, as Steve said that we should be seeing Seaside Sparrow, one hopped onto a reed and perched long enough for scope views for everyone. Our trusty leaders then dragged us onward to the point where we had excellent views of Royal Terns and Boat-tailed Grackles as well as numerous other species.

Because Steve wanted to add Barn Owl to our list, we quit early so we could stop at JP's on the Wharf, a seafood restaurant, for dinner and still have time for owling afterwards. However, we lingered over dinner a tad too



Brown-headed Nuthatch was one of the target birds at Cape Henlopen State Park.

Photo by Roger Higbee

long, so we missed the Barn Owl. We did, however, actually see two Great Horned Owls, one of which was at a location where Steve expected Barred Owl. Tony and we headed to the Super 8 in Dover for the night while Steve and Shirley went to their respective homes.

Saturday morning we met Steve and Shirley at the motel then headed to Turkle Pond at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The pond itself yielded both Wood Ducks and both Blue- and Green-winged Teal; the muddy edges,

Great Blue Herons, and one Semipalmated, and 37 Least Sandpipers. The surrounding woods harbored Great Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireos, Pine Warblers, Northern Parulas, American Redstart, and Black-and-white Warbler as well as Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers. Steve and Shirley next led us to Black Farm Trail where we saw many of the same passerines but added Blue Grosbeak to our list. Our next destination was the very birdy Dike Trail, aka Observation Point Trail, which starts near the refuge office. We had not walked far before we had found Northern Mockingbird and Brown Thrasher. A Lesser Black-backed Gull, 26 Great Egrets, 46 Snowy Egrets, 23 Northern Shovelers, and 2 Forster's Terns were just a few of the birds in or near the water. Suddenly everything took off, and we found the Peregrine circling over the marsh, making dives on the waterfowl and shorebirds. It finally perched in the top of a tree where we were able to scope it. Several minutes later a second Peregrine arrived. We were finally able to pull ourselves away and return along the trail to the Boardwalk Trail where we added more shorebirds including our first Lesser Yellowlegs and Black-bellied Plovers. Back near the refuge office a Merlin atop a tree was a nice find, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was nectaring on the wildflowers. Our next stop at the Broadkill impoundment was not as productive as last year, but it yielded our first Willet.

Noon was rapidly approaching and realizing we had to make the most of the time, Steve led us to Cape Henlopen where our first stop at the nature center did not pan out as the feeders were not filled. We immediately continued to the beach where a Piping Plover was foraging in the restricted nesting area. Terns here were cooperative as we listed one Caspian, 3 Royal, and about 30 Forster's Terns.

At least 7 Osprey were all visible at the same time as well as a single Bald Eagle.

To save time, Steve had purchased a wide variety of lunch meats, cheeses, all the condiments, two loaves of bread, sodas, and pumpkin cookies so we ate from the back of his vehicle. In addition, he brought his famous, delicious homemade sweet pickles (Thank you, Steve!!!). After an enjoyable lunch, we headed to a trail which we hiked to the end of Salt Marsh Spur. Tony got a few life birds here, including Brown-headed Nuthatches, Tricolored Heron, and White Ibis.

The day's final stop was at Indian River Inlet where two Brown Pelicans flew by and 21 Sanderlings were picking about in the sand for tidbits of food. The rocks yielded 2 Ruddy Turnstones and 3 Semipalmated Plovers. We could have spent hours here watching the Common Terns as they wheeled about. Three Black Scoters were unexpected but a nice ending to a great birding day

On Sunday morning at 7:00 a.m., the 18th, our last day in Delaware, we met Steve at Raymond Neck Road, which last year had been extremely productive. Shirley was exhausted and opted out for our early morning birding. This was not the case this year, probably because of the drought, but we did see another Blue Grosbeak. We quickly wrapped up the birding here and drove to the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge office where a swallow migration was in progress. We stood mesmerized for 25 minutes as we tallied 16 Purple Martins and 105 Tree, 3 Bank, and 2 Barn Swallows. Three hummingbirds were buzzing around the flowers and a Bobolink called from the field across from the building. We also added our first Red-eyed Vireos and cowbirds here. We slowly birded the refuge till we arrived at Shearneck Pond where

Roger and Tony were photographing flying terns. Steve and I were scoping the myriad of shorebirds when Steve directed my attention to a large rock near which he had spotted something unusual. I found the individual almost immediately among the Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers because it was so red. Steve and I started verbalizing field marks. I finally said, "I think we have a stint." Just as Roger approached my scope to take a look, a Peregrine swooped in, clearing the marsh. At first the stint ducked down beside a Semipalmated Plover, so we thought Roger would see "our bird," but it, too, took off. Steve wrote up our description: "There was rufous red coloring on the side of the face that went down onto the neck and the upper chest and throat. The belly and undertail coverts were white and the bird had dark legs. The bill was noted as short and thicker at the base and thinning slightly towards the tip." Consulting our field guides when we no longer had the bird in view, we identified it as a Red-necked Stint, a lifer for both of us. We birded till noon, adding a nice variety of species including Glossy Ibis; Stilt, Baird's, Pectoral, and Spotted Sandpipers; both dowitchers; Marsh Wren; and Savannah Sparrows. Once again Steve pulled out his coolers complete with lunch fixings. As we were eating, Shirley arrived. The five of us continued around the refuge, birding till 3:40 when we decided that we should probably start driving back to PA.

Our last stop of the day was at the potato fields just outside the refuge where we added Horned Larks to our list, bringing our trip total to 115. Special thanks to Steve and Shirley for their expertise and their friendship. We had a great time and appreciate all that they did to make the weekend so enjoyable!

– Margaret Higbee

Keep an Eye on the Sky

by Marcy Cunkelman

Always keep an eye on the sky because you never know what you might see!!! On September 21, 2016, Dan and I watched 39 American White Pelicans circle above our yard and head east. They were seen the next day near York at the Susquehanna River (about 200 miles in a day's travel) and headed south.



Why were they here, and where did they come from? I have no clue. But, I had one of those feelings telling me to go outside to see what was around, and I was so glad that I did. They were only in sight for about six minutes. I still can't believe we had these for a yard bird. They were No. 165 since we started making a yard list on 11/09/2001.

Donley Property Outing Report

by Ed Donley

On October 1, the Todd Bird Club went on an outing to a new location — well, new to most of us. We walked almost two miles around my property and my neighbors' properties on Five Points Road, near Shelocta. We started by observing birds around my front yard and the pond. This habitat has scattered trees, a meadow, and forest edge. We saw or heard five species of woodpeckers — Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Northern Flicker, and Pileated, and three species of warbler — Common Yellowthroat, Blackpoll, and Black-throated Green. The pond attracted a migrating Red-winged Blackbird and a Cedar Waxwing. Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and a White-breasted Nuthatch feasted on black-oil sunflower seed in the front yard. We also found Mourning Doves, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jays, American Crows, Field Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinals, American Goldfinches, and Eastern Phoebe.

Then we ventured back behind the house, walking along the edge habitat, visiting the neighbor's clearing and the

meadow around my gas well. A small flock of Eastern Towhees seemed to follow us for the first part of this journey. We added Turkey Vulture, Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, and another Field Sparrow. The highlight was a Gray-cheeked Thrush that Margaret Higbee saw drop into the underbrush. We unsuccessfully tried for some time to spot it again. But we did encounter a nice patch of Lady's Tresses, a native genus of orchid, in that same location.

We circled back through some woods, with very little avian activity. We walked past my other neighbors' pasture, which contains nice shrub habitat along a creek. We picked up Song Sparrow and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks there. Then we crossed the creek on a wooden pedestrian bridge and returned to my front yard. In all, we counted 31 species.

Chimney Swift Towers Successful

Before Ed Donley's outing began on October 1, he removed the tray at the bottom of his Chimney Swift nesting tower for the five participants to see.

The photo here shows several Chimney Swift feathers as well as an eggshell, numerous exoskeletons, and other debris. It was obvious that swifts had nested in Ed's tower once again this year.

Ed and his neighbor Kurt Dudt built two towers in 2013 and located one on each of their properties. Ed told us that Kurt's had also been successful this year.

Breeding Bird Survey data show that the Chimney Swift has experienced a range-wide decline of 2.1 percent per



Ed Donley removed this tray from the bottom of his Chimney Swift tower.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

year since 1966. Concern for this Neotropical migrant has caused it to be listed as a species of Maintenance Concern in PA's Wildlife Action Plan.

Swifts have been on the decline since the 60s, mainly because of loss of habitat. New chimneys are often screened or capped. Older structures that swifts used for years have been demolished.

For more information about swifts, check out the *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania* or the Chimney Swift Conservation Association. Their website, www.chimneyswifts.org, contains a wealth of information.

It's Fall Already!!!

It's fall, but where did the summer go? Did you notice how after 7:00 p.m., it's almost dark? Migration is in full swing, and the winter birds are already showing up at feeders. It sounds like it might be a great year for the northern finches to visit feeders because of poor seed production in Ontario. Keep an eye out for these northern species at your feeders. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins have already been reported in PA. I heard Red-breasted Nuthatches several times and finally saw one at my feeder.



Marcy finally was able to photograph a Red-breasted Nuthatch at her feeder.

Fall is a great time to plant natives. Gather some seeds from friends and scatter on the ground to start a meadow. Got lots of leaves? Cut your grass very low. Shred the leaves and pile them where you want to start a new pollinator garden. Sprinkle your seeds on top. If the leaves are thick enough, they will clear the grass, and the bed will be ready to plant in the spring. You can also add some thick layers of newspaper and then cover those with shredded leaves. I thought I would include some native plant suggestions that are very important for birds, butterflies, and pollinators:

Ironweed, Joe-pye-weed, many varieties of goldenrod, Golden Wingstem, and Brown-eyed Susans.

Many varieties of asters are among the best natives for pollinators. Monarchs, and especially the bees, are very happy to have these later blooming plants. Of course, the goldfinches love to gobble up the seeds. Other plants you could offer in your gardens (or containers) are native plants of Blue Vervain, Boneset, Bee Balm, Mountain Mint, Coneflowers, Jerusalem Artichokes. (Gather the seeds from your zinnias, *Verbena bonariensis*, Mexican Sunflowers, and Cosmos which are annuals, so you can plant them in the spring after the frost.) All these have tiny blossoms for all kinds of pollinators. When the plant is done blooming, leave the seedheads on, and the birds will feast on them from fall to early spring. This also offers cover for insects through the winter. Many animals and birds will use the beds, too, in the cold weather for shelter. And this is one less chore you need to do this fall.



American Goldfinches feed on the seeds of garden plants like this Lady in Red Salvia.

Photo by Marcy Cunkelman

The Virginia Sweetspire, Buttonbush, and Clethra (summersweet) shrubs smell awesome, and they are always used by bees, from the very tiny sweatbees to bumblebees, as well as butterflies and hummers. These native plants have served very well as substitutes for the butterfly bush. Serviceberry and Pagoda Dogwoods are native trees, and don't forget the smaller-fruited crabapples. These are great trees for any size of yard. There will be flowers for the pollinators in the spring and fruit for the birds later in the fall and winter.

If you do have to trim, make a pile with your trimmings, in case there are insects using the stems and flowers for winter cover. And don't forget to wear gloves and long sleeves for protection. Various stinging caterpillars hide under the leaves, and their stings hurt worse than nettles.

My rule for when to start trimming back the winter stems is right when you see the noses of the daffodils. Again, make a loose pile and let them go until after it warms up, so the good insects using the stems will be able to emerge and start their job of taking care of the bad bugs.

As a reminder, keep those hummer feeders up until you don't see them for at least a week. It takes a long time to migrate from Canada. And if you see a different hummer, let me know. It could be a Rufous Hummingbird that could stay for most of the winter with the right conditions. I keep hoping and watching for one here.

It's time to clean and fill your bird feeders, then settle in for winter and enjoy the birds.

Questions, contact me. I'll try to answer them....

Marcy Cunkelman,
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724-459-7229

Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County – Summer 2016

If you notice that the species in the following report are in a different than normal order, check out the new American Ornithologists' Union checklist at <http://checklist.aou.org/taxa/>. If you want to omit the Middle American species, go to the American Birding Association checklist at http://listing.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist_v7.9.0.pdf. There has been a major reshuffling.

Abbreviation: Armstrong Trail (AT), Cochrans Mill (CM), Ghost Town Trail (GTT), Lewisville (LV), Prince Gallitzin State Park (PG), Templeton (TT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

It was a strange summer for waterfowl with reports of unusual summering species.

Two **Mute Swans** continue on the Redbank Creek near New Bethlehem, crossing the county line into *Armstrong* on several occasions, including 7/31 (AK, JK). Top **Wood Duck** counts included 34 at YC 7/19 (DK) and 26 at Hemlock Lake 6/5 (AK, JK). An **American Wigeon** at the edge of the marsh at YC, viewed from the Wetland Walkway on 6/14 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK, DM, KT) was an unusual find for June. An **American Black Duck** near Lewisville 7/16 (MC) was the region's lone report. Two summering buddies, a drake **Ring-necked Duck** and a **Lesser Scaup** spent a good portion of the season on Dragonfly Pond at YC. The former was last seen 7/17 (TH), but the scaup continued into the fall. These are our first June records for all three species – American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Lesser Scaup. In addition a male **Bufflehead** summered at Colver Reservoir and was still present 7/2 (JS). **Common Mergansers** continue to increase in our area with reports of one at PG 6/4 (TA), 2 at Crooked Creek Park 6/20 (MVT), 5 along the AT between TT and Rimer 7/6 (MH, RH, FM, JM), one along Buffalo Creek 7/17 (DH), and 12 on Mahoning Creek Lake 7/30 (AK, JK). In addition, a one-time sighting of a **Red-breasted Merganser** occurred at YC 6/27 (LC).

Ruffed Grouse continue in low numbers with the only sightings of singletons at PG 6/4, 17 (TA), at Polka Hollow 7/9 (MVT), and at Nolo 7/11, 14, 18 (AB, DB); 3 at SGL 108 -- Fallentimber 7/4 (TA) was the high tally.

An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was heard calling near West Lebanon for about 20 minutes after sundown on 6/19 (SG); 5 were present 6/23 (JS) at St. Lawrence.

YC hosted 2 to 3 **Least Sandpipers** between 7/5 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK, DM) and 7/26 (ED, PF, TG,

DM, KT, EY). A **Short-billed Dowitcher**, found 7/16 (GS) at YC was still present the following day (TH). An **American Woodcock** was photographed near the YC boat rental 6/3 (RS); 2 were found at PG 6/12 (RL); one was spotted along the AT n. of Lock & Dam 8 on 7/11 (MH, RH, FM, JM); and another was spotted near Heilwood 7/19 (DB). First **Solitary Sandpiper** arrived at YC 7/16 (GS); 3 was the high count 7/19 (TG, MH, RH, DK, SM, DM); 2 appeared at Colver Reservoir 7/24 (RL). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** arrived at Crooked Creek Park 7/17 (MVT).

A single **Ring-billed Gull** 6/2 (RS) at YC, 2 at PG 6/5 (RL), and one at PG 6/11 (RL) were the only ones reported. The Allegheny at Kittanning yielded one **Herring Gull** 7/7 (MH, RH). One **Black Tern** flying low over the marsh at YC was a surprise 6/14 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK, DM, KT). Although unusual, the June date is not unprecedented at YC as a singleton spent 6/1-20 (GL) around the lake in 1989 and 2 were noted there on 6/3/2003 (MH, LW). Two **Forster's Terns** stopped at YC 7/22 (DP).

Single **Double-crested Cormorants** were present at YC on three dates – 6/3 (RS), 6/14 (LC *et al*), and 7/26 (ED, PF, TG, DM, KT, EY). PG harbored 4 on 6/4 (TA), one on 6/5 (RL), and 2 on 6/11 (TA); 3 visited Keystone Reservoir 6/6 (KB, NB); another circled over Lower Cowanshannock Creek on 6/26 (TR).

Black Vultures continue to expand into *Indiana* with reports of one near Fulton Run 6/7 (JA), 2 at Dilltown 6/11 (RL), and one over a yard near Lewisville 7/12 (MC).

Sightings of **Osprey** at YC 6/2 (RS), 6/25 (LM, KT), and 6/28 (LC, SD, TG, MH, RH, KT) caused us to question whether we had a nesting pair, but that was not yet confirmed. Single Osprey were sighted at PG 6/11 (RL) and 6/26 (TA) and at Keystone Reservoir 6/6 (KB, NB). **Bald Eagles** were noted at four

Armstrong locations and at PG this summer (v.o.). The nest at PG was lost this year when a strong wind destroyed the pine in which it was placed (JS). The only **Northern Harrier** report was one at SGL 108 – Fallentimber on 7/7, 9 (TA).

Sharp-shinned Hawks were listed only at Keystone Reservoir 6/6 (KB, NB), at Mahoning Creek Lake 6/23 (AK, JK), at IUP 6/29 (JT), and in IN 7/14 (GL) while **Cooper's Hawks** were noted at eight locations. **Red-shouldered Hawks** were confirmed nesting 6/20 (MVT) at Crooked Creek Park when a juvenile was spotted near the nest. Two downy **Broad-winged Hawks** were digiscoped in the nest near the observer's home near IN 6/15 (SD).

Eastern Screech-Owls were noted at only three locations this summer – one calling along the GTT near Dilltown 6/11 (RL), one along Buffalo Creek 7/17 (DH), and 1-2 near Lewisville 7/20, 27 (MC). **Great Horned Owls** appear to be in very low numbers with reports of only two, one at PG 6/12 (RL) and one at YC 7/23 (JP). A **Barred Owl** was photographed near West Lebanon 6/3 (MVT); one was heard calling from Stackhouse Park 6/30 (IR); a third was listed along Buffalo Creek along with a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** 7/17 (DH).

The Manorville **Peregrine Falcons** nested under the Graff Bridge once again this year and fledged 2 young (fide MVT); one was photographed 7/4 (MVT). A Peregrine was seen upriver near TT on 7/17 (TR).

An **Alder Flycatcher** was listed at PG 6/30 (TA); this was the only one noted in the region. Becoming more difficult to find in *Indiana* during the breeding season, a single **Least Flycatcher** was noted n.e. of Smicksburg 6/6 (MH, RH).

White-eyed Vireos were fairly common in *Armstrong* with reports from seven locations (v.o.). *Indiana* yielded records from only three locations – 2 separate areas near West Lebanon 6/17 (MH, JT) and at YC 6/21 (LC, ED, DF, DeF, SF, TG, MH, DK, DM) and 7/12 (TG, MH, RH, DK, DM, KT, EY). None were found in *Cambria*. **Yellow-throated Vireos**, too, were absent in *Cambria* and more common in *Armstrong* with 4 reports in the Mahoning Creek watershed 6/6 (MH, RH), one at CM 6/20 (SG), 2 along the AT 7/1 (MH, RH, FM, JM) near Rimer, one along Polka Hollow 7/9 (MVT), one along the AT s.



David Portinga photographed this juvenile Worm-eating Warbler at the C. F. Lewis Natural Area on June 18.

of TT 7/11 (MH, RH, FM, JM), and another along the AT n. of TT 7/17 (TR). **Blue-headed Vireos**, on the other hand, were much more common in *Cambria*, with reports of 2 at PG 6/4 (TA) and one at SGL 108 7/4 (TA); the GTT yielded one on 7/4 (MH, RH) near Twin Rocks and 2 on 7/9 (MH, RH) near Red Mill. In addition, the Patton BBS 6/13 (MH, RH) produced individuals at three stops. One or two were found at YC on four dates between 6/21 (LC, ED et al) and 7/17 (TH).

The hotspots for **Warbling Vireos** were Iron Bridge Road where 3 were listed 6/26 (TR) and the AT s. of TT which produced 4 on 7/11 (MH, RH, FM, JM).

At least 8 **Fish Crows** were present at IUP 6/18 (JT). The **Common Ravens** nesting at Crooked Creek Park fledged two young this year (fide MVT); reports were widespread across the entire region (v.o.). Five **Horned Larks** near Worthington 6/19 (TR) and one on the Patton BBS 6/13 (MH, RH) were the only ones reported.

A total of at least 20 **Purple Martins** were present in two colonies near Smicksburg 6/4 (MH, RH); PG harbored at least 15 martins on 7/1 (JS), and the reportere noted that all 12 nest cavities were occupied by young. Four **Bank Swallows** were found s. of Hawthorne in *Armstrong* 6/20 (MVT); one at YC 7/15 (MD) and 2 there 7/23 (JP) were noteworthy; as many as 4 were present at PG between 7/3-17 (RL). A **Cliff Swallow** colony under a bridge south of Hawthorne included at least 8 adults and 2 young on 6/20 (MVT); 11 was the count at PG 7/10 (RL).

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** appeared near Shelocta 6/22 (MH) and was sighted on six dates (MH, RH) thereafter. PG hosted a singleton 6/26 (TA) and 7/10 (RL). The only **Brown Creeper** sightings in the region were single birds at PG 6/26 (TA) and 7/12 (FK). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were moving off territory by 6/17 (MH, JT) when 2 were found at Conemaugh Dam; on 6/30 (MH) one was sighted in a yard near SH; 2 popped up at SGL 108 on 7/9 (TA) while another turned up at BS 7/12 (DK).

Veeries seemed in short supply with 4 on the Virginia BBS in *Cambria* 6/7 (MH, RH), one on the AT near Rimer 7/1 (MH, RH, FM, JM), and one at SGL 247 on 7/10 (TR). Single **Hermit Thrushes** were found at YC 6/3 (RS), on the Virginia BBS 6/7 (MH, RH), and

at Mahoning Creek Lake 7/10 (AK, JK); the GTT near Twin Rocks yielded 3 on 7/4 (MH, RH).

Worm-eating Warbler was confirmed nesting at Charles F. Lewis NA on 6/18 (DP) when a fledgling was spotted and photographed; 2 were singing along the AT n. of Rimer 7/1 (MH, RH, FM, JM) and n. of TT 7/6 (MH, RH, FM, JM). Last **Louisiana**

Waterthrush was found at YC 7/19 (TG *et al*). A **Northern Waterthrush** was at PG, where they breed, 7/3 (TA). A **Golden-winged Warbler** was reported at YC 6/14 (DM) near the bridge over Little Yellow. **Kentucky Warblers** were noted only n.e. of Smicksburg 6/6 (MH, RH) and on the north shore of YC 6/14, 28 (MH, RH). Conemaugh Dam yielded three singing **Cerulean Warblers** 6/20 (MH, RH, JT), the same day (SG) 2 were noted at CM; 2 were also still singing along the AT n. of Rimer 7/1 (MH, RH, FM, JM); another was listed along the GTT near Red Mill 7/9 (MH, RH). A **Northern Parula** was listed at CM 6/20 (SG); YC harbored 3 parulas 6/21 (DK); 2 were along Lower Cowanshannock Creek 6/26 (TR); single birds were found at YC 6/28 (LC, SD, TG, MH, RH, KT) and 7/5 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK, DM); 2 were heard along the AT n. of Rimer 7/1 (MH, RH). **Pine Warbler** continued at YC between 6/7 (MH, RH) and 7/2 (JP); another was reported at PG 7/10 (RL). A single **Yellow-throated Warbler** was observed at Conemaugh Dam 6/17 (MH, JT) and 6/20 (MH, RH, JT); one was still at CM 6/20 (SG). The Clarksburg

area yielded 6 singing male **Prairie Warblers** 6/17 (MH, JT). Two **Canada Warblers** were found along the Raxis Branch of the GTT near Red Mill 6/8 (SG). June 17 yielded single **Yellow-breasted Chats** near West Lebanon (MH, JT) and near CM (MVT); the later location harbored 2 on 6/27 (MVT); these were the only ones reported.

Four **Grasshopper Sparrows** and one **Henslow's Sparrow** at West Lebanon 6/19 (SG) comprised the entire report for these species. Unusual was a **Dark-eyed Junco** at Blacklick 6/28 (DL); although juncos nest in the northernmost part of the county, Blacklick is much farther south than its normal summer range.

Observers: Tina Alianiello, Josh Auld, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Ken Byerly, Norman Bond, Lee Carnahan, Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Patience Fisher, Daniel Foster, Denny Foster, Sarah Foster, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Darren Hood, Todd Hooe, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Avis Keener, John Keener, Florinus Kooyman, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Renee Lubert, Sue Mayer, Flo McGuire, Jim McGuire, Lisa Meadows, Donna Meyer, David Portinga, Joseph Pumford, Theo Rickert, Ian Russ, Gina Sheridan, Robin Smith, John Taylor, Ken Truitt, Marge Van Tassel, Linda Wagner, Ellen Yerger.

Carolina Parakeet

Conuropsis carolinensis

by Tom Glover

The Carolina Parakeet was a colorful bird measuring 13 inches long with a wingspan of 21-23 inches. The bird weighed about 3.5 oz. The adults had a greenish body with a yellow head and shoulders, and the face was orange. Both the males and females were colored the same with the males being slightly larger in size. Juveniles were, for the most part, green in their entirety. The original range of the bird covered an area north to New York and Wisconsin, from the Atlantic coast west to Colorado, and south to the Gulf of Mexico and the Florida peninsula. The preferred habitat was wet areas in old growth forest along water ways and in swamps. The Carolina Parakeet was found in noisy flocks of up to 200 or 300 birds. They nested in tree cavities laying two to five round, white eggs.

Carolina Parakeets were first noted in Florida by George Peckham during the 1583 exploration led by Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Of interest was Christopher Gist's recording in his travel diary a Carolina Parakeet presented to him as a pet by friendly Indians along the Ohio River in April of 1751. No studies have been recorded during the lifetime of this species. It is a sad fact that this species followed the same path as the Passenger Pigeon in that it is now extinct. In fact, the last captive bird, a male named Incas, died February 21, 1918, at the Cincinnati Zoo in the same cage that Martha, the last known Passenger Pigeon, died four years earlier.

The species started declining in the early part of the 19th century. John James Audubon noted the decline of the

bird in 1832. The reasons for the species' decline include the loss of habitat. As more forested land was changed over to agriculture, the ideal Carolina Parakeet habitat was greatly reduced. Hunting of the bird, because it was viewed as a pest that destroyed crops, put pressure on the species. Plus the colorful nature of the bird's feathers made it a target for the women's hat trade. One curious hypothesis was that the importation of European honey bees to the new world also impacted the birds.

Supposedly the bees competed for the same nesting cavities in trees. Other suspected deterrents to the bird's

continuation were domesticated poultry diseases. But no records exist of poultry diseases affecting New World parrot populations during the time of the Carolina Parakeet. In fact, large, vigorous flocks of juveniles and breeding pairs were reported as late as 1896, but by 1904 the wild population was gone.

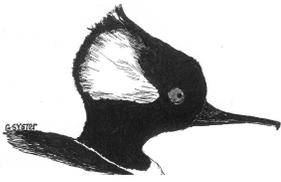
This is another example of a bird species that was prolific before the Europeans settled the New World. The Carolina Parakeet apparently could not adapt to the impacts brought on by the changes involved in settling of the New World.

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

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This Yellow-billed Cuckoo was photographed along the Armstrong Trail 7/11/2016 by Roger Higbee.



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