

# The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club  
[www.toddbirdclub.org](http://www.toddbirdclub.org)

October 2022

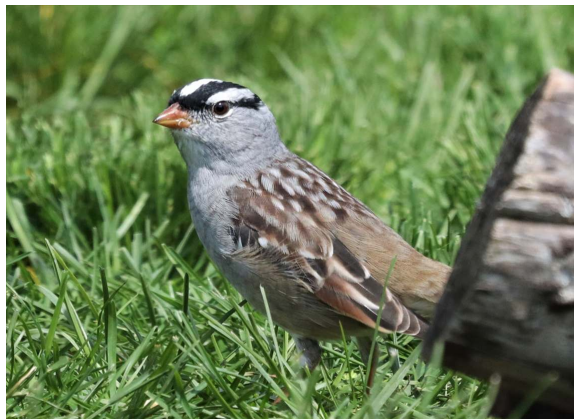
## Meetings Resumed in September and May Continue

As long as Covid does not spike again, we plan to continue our monthly meetings. If you are not fully vaccinated, please wear a mask. Some members who are fully vaccinated also plan to wear masks for added protection.

Todd Bird Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month, September through April, at Blue Spruce Lodge in Blue Spruce County Park, located just off Route 110 east of the town of Ernest. Arrive by 7:00 to socialize and snack. Refreshments are provided at each of our meetings.

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

**Tuesday, October 4** – Mark Strittmatter and John Taylor will present *Bird Photography Done the Hard Way and the Easy Way*, an assortment of their favorite photos of birds, as well as a few other intriguing animals encountered



This White-crowned Sparrow is just one of the great photos you'll see at our October meeting. Behind each picture, there will be a story.

Photo by Mark Strittmatter

along the way. All but a few of the striking digital images were captured by Mark over the past few years. John, as Mark's technoparasitic sidekick on birding excursions for more than half a century, will provide some commentary on the interesting and/or amusing circumstances under which some of the photos were taken.

Don't miss this entertaining and interesting presentation!

**Tuesday, November 1** – Anthony Frazier will present "What Raptors in the Wild Teach Us about Life." We walk; they fly!

Photographing raptors gives one an insight into their behaviors and their lives. Learn the secrets of their survival, their abilities, and their majesty.

Anthony is no stranger to Todd Bird Club as he has presented several excellent programs for us.



This is just one of the many striking images we will enjoy on November 1, thanks to Anthony Frazier.

In fact, he presented another program, “Photography, Nature, and Birds” at our last pre-Covid meeting in March 2020. We welcome him back.

Don’t miss this presentation as it will be informative and entertaining!

**Tuesday, December 6** – Court Harding is a graduate student at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the Townsend Lab. Last summer, Court spent two months in Honduras conducting research on the Utila spiny-tailed iguana and traveling across the country with her advisor, Dr. Josiah Townsend. The first half of the trip centered

around the first IUP Honduras study abroad course, headed by Dr. Townsend.



Court Harding photographed this dark morph Short-tailed Hawk carrying a Middle American ameiva lizard in Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meambar (commonly just called PANACAM) in Cortés, Honduras.

In June, Court traveled from mangroves to dry pine-oak forests then hopped from cloud forest to cloud forest searching primarily for endemic reptiles and amphibians. A young and avid birder, Court didn't pass up the opportunity of a lifetime to search for birds as well. Court tallied over 170 species of birds almost entirely alone in the month of June (having met just one local birder for a few days). She will share her photographic highlights and misses from the trip.

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## Outings

**Tuesday Outings** – Meet at the north shore pavilion, just off South Harmony Road, just after dawn. Tuesday outings will continue until deer season. Please note that the Tuesday outing on October 18 will be a trip to the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch near Central City.

**Saturday, October 8** – Harrison Hills Park, led by Dave Brooke ([davbrooke@gmail.com](mailto:davbrooke@gmail.com)). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Environmental Learning Center at Harrison Hills. If you wish to carpool, contact the Higbees.

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

**Tuesday, October 18** – Allegheny Front Hawkwatch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Yellow Creek State Park office if you wish to carpool. Otherwise meet at the hawkwatch between 9:20 and 9:30 a.m. If you need directions, please contact the Higbees at 724-354-3493 or 412-309-3538. The site is located near Central City which is in Somerset County, but the actual watch is in Bedford County. Please bring something to sit on and your lunch. Be sure to dress appropriately as it is often windy on top of the mountain.

We usually stay all day, but this is dependent upon the weather and whether the hawks are flying. If you're driving, feel free to leave whenever you wish.

**Saturday, October 22** – By special request, we've scheduled a hawkwatch trip on Saturday for our members who work weekdays to the Allegheny Front Hawkwatch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office if you wish to carpool. Otherwise meet at the hawkwatch between 9:20 and 9:30 a.m. If you need directions, please contact the Higbees at 724-354-3493 or 412-309-3538.

**Saturday, October 29** – Join leader Court Harding for an outing at the Blacklick Valley Natural Area. We'll walk the trails searching for late migrants. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead, located just off US 22 on McFeaters Road.

**Saturday, November 5** – This joint outing with the Three Rivers Birding Club, will be led by Roger & Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493 or Roger's cell - 412-309-3538) and Todd Bird Club members. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Yellow Creek State Park office, located just off US 422 on PA 259.

**Saturday, November 12** – This outing will feature a bird walk along the Ghost Town Trail. The section of trail to Clark's Run often produces a nice variety of wintering birds. We'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Dilltown parking lot.

**Monday, December 26** – Indiana Christmas Bird Count. The count is conducted in a 15-mile-diameter

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# Trip to Conneaut Sandspit and Pymatuning Revisited

By Debbie Kalbfleisch

On Saturday, August 13, the Todd Bird Club traveled to Conneaut, Ohio, to bird the sandspit and surrounding area. Indiana club members were invited to meet the Higbees at 5:30 that morning at their house. For some unknown reason, they had no takers, so they traveled alone! I was planning to meet them in Ohio, but we ran into each other at a rest stop on I-79, and I followed their van the rest of the way.

Conneaut is a favorite birding site for the Higbees. They first started going there for gulls in 1995, and introduced me to the sandspit in the fall of 2014. I got my life Least Bittern there in 2017, especially memorable for me as we had two juveniles! That is still my favorite sighting at the sandspit. I had last been there in August of 2018, and I was curious to see if the place had changed.

Unfortunately, we noticed almost immediately that the particular spot which sheltered bitterns and other wildlife has dried up.

We first made a quick loop at Conneaut Harbor, just in case any other Todd members had decided to go on their own. We saw the usual Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, but no birders, so we continued to the sandspit at the western edge of the harbor. On the way, we passed a narrow strip of marsh which sheltered Red-winged Blackbirds and a lone Great Egret. Turkey Vultures were warming themselves in the morning sun, and a few were just taking to the air. It was turning into a beautiful day, and the gatekeeper was opening up for people who wanted to drive onto the sand.

Because of record high water levels, the sandspit was closed in 2019 and has remained closed until this spring. Although closed to vehicles, it was possible to walk from the harbor, and the Higbees had last done a trip in November 2021. This past March, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the water levels of Lake Erie were three inches below what they had been twelve months ago, and the sandspit was reopened to vehicles, with a strong caveat that only four-wheel-drive vehicles



Roger Higbee photographed this Least Sandpiper at Conneaut Sandspit 8/13/20.



This is just one of the five Whimbrels that flew past us at Conneaut Sandspit.

Photo by Roger Higbee

should drive onto the sand. (There is a \$5 fee for each vehicle.) We elected to park outside the gate and gathering our scopes, we walked onto the sand.

We immediately noted an Osprey, obviously on the hunt, and several Bald Eagles. A Belted Kingfisher sounded off and was answered by a second rattle. A flock of Double-crested Cormorants flew over, and Barn Swallows constantly swooped over us. Our first shorebird of the day, was a Spotted Sandpiper bobbing up and down on the rocks of the jetty. Several Lesser Yellowlegs were at the edge of a pool where the marsh had been, and a Greater Yellowlegs flew in as we watched. A small flock of six Least Sandpipers accompanied by a single Semipalmated Sandpiper scurried along the water's edge, coming quite close to us several times.

As the sun climbed in the sky and the day got warmer, we gradually worked our way back the way we had come to stop in the shade of the observation tower. We were lounging at the picnic table when Margaret suddenly shouted. We looked up to see five large birds with long, downturned bills, flying overhead. Whimbrels! They circled several times before finally heading west and disappearing. This turned out to be a life Ohio bird for all of us, and when I asked Margaret what their favorite bird of all time at the sandspit, she answered "Whimbrel!"

The Whimbrels we saw were likely part of the eastern population that breeds south and west of Hudson Bay. (Another group nests in the far west). In the fall, those Whimbrels fly south through the Great Lakes, heading toward the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. Quite recently, up to 20,000 Whimbrels were discovered roosting at night on a tiny barrier island off the coast of South Carolina during spring migration. Smaller numbers stop there during the fall before continuing to the northeastern coast of South America.

By that time, we had been at the sandspit for almost three hours, and decided that our flock of Whimbrels was not likely to be topped. We were also getting hungry! We



went back to our cars and headed to McDonald's. From there, we decided to detour to Pymatuning on the way home.

Our first stop was the Fish Hatchery. Aside from noting our only Eastern Phoebe of the day and three species of swallows — Northern Rough-winged, Barn, and Cliff, the place was quiet.

Teakettle Road was also quiet, although we did add a Red-tailed Hawk, a Red-eyed Vireo, and an Eastern Towhee to the day's list.

The Miller Ponds were more productive. A Sandhill Crane tried to blend in with the Canada Geese on the hillside, and Margaret and Roger spotted a Short-billed Dowitcher from their van as we drove up. It took the three of us with scopes to relocate it again, but we also noted Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs foraging in the shallow water while we scanned the water's edge. A Great Egret

was more noticeable on the far side of the pond. A Tree and several Barn Swallows darted about with a small flock of Bank Swallows. As we made our way up the Swamp Road, another half dozen Sandhill Cranes could be seen at the far edge of the field near the trees, and we spotted a couple of Hooded Mergansers in another pond. We saw our only American Kestrel at this location.

At the Hartstown Project, we located two more Short-billed Dowitchers and several Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Four Hooded Mergansers were also at the pond. A quick stop at McMichael Road produced Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, and an Eastern Kingbird. Our only warbler of the day was a Common Yellowthroat, chirping quietly along the road.

We recorded 53 species for the day, including eight shorebirds: Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper, both yellowlegs, and, of course, the Whimbrels.

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## Birding the Easy Way

By Carol Guba

We have all gone birding, in one way or another, on many occasions. Sometimes it is an organized day trip, like the Tuesday and Saturday Todd Bird Club outings to Yellow Creek or Blue Spruce; or sometimes it is a longer trip, either on your own or with a group, to parts unknown for species not seen around home. And sometimes, it is fun to bird the easy way. For me, birding the easy way involves sitting on my screened porch, sipping a cup of coffee or some iced tea or other beverage, and letting the birds come to me.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have had a wonderful variety of birds come to visit me as I was sitting on my porch. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are still coming to my feeder every day. There are lots of "common" birds making an appearance, but let's not forget to enjoy and appreciate the common birds, for sadly, they may not always be common. And, common or not, they are still beautiful. So, I enjoy the Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrows, and most of the woodpecker species (still

waiting for a sapsucker to make an appearance) as they stop to check out the flowers now going to seed and other goodies in the garden. While I am enjoying these regulars, I have been rewarded by seeing some less common visitors, some of which I hear regularly but don't see quite as often. Scarlet Tanagers and Hooded Warblers have stopped by my hydrangea bush and my holly trees, as well as many Cedar Waxwings. Those areas seem to be magnets for the migrating birds as well as my resident birds. They have even drawn in the shy Yellow-billed Cuckoo that I had been hearing. I've added some nice warblers to my yard list lately. I had a Blackburnian Warbler and a Wilson's Warbler at the same time in the same tree! A Palm Warbler insisted I take a good look at him, so after flitting around in the hydrangea, he sat on the finial of my porch railing showing off his beautiful plumage and wagging his tail at me! Birding can't get any easier than that. That brings the total number of warbler species seen from my porch to 15, and my yard list to 72 species. Not too shabby for sitting on the porch with a cup of coffee.

# Birding in Honduras

By Court Harding

“Those are King Vultures!” I exclaim as I look at the poor images I had just captured of tiny specks soaring in the sky. Hours after the all-woman group of students had learned that their reproductive rights had been slashed in the US, they were trying to savor the cloud forest. They were all undergraduate biology students at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), and I was their teaching assistant for the study abroad course led by Dr. Josiah Townsend, my advisor. None of them were birders, and I didn’t exactly convert them, but they enjoyed viewing charismatic species and watching me explode with excitement over yet another lifer. We watched a white-nosed coati forage in the treetops for almost an hour. A few students got a glimpse of a Keel-billed Toucan flying away (I had heard it a few minutes prior). They watched in awe as the graceful Swallow-tailed Kites soared around us. Right before I saw the King Vultures, a dark-morph Short-tailed Hawk flew no more than 100 feet in front of us with a Middle American ameiva lizard in its talons. This checklist would not be long—only ten bird species over 57 minutes—but the experience would stick with me and the students.

I began June on the island of Utila, around 20 miles off the coast of Honduras in the Caribbean Sea. I was joined by Dr. Townsend, an undergraduate in our lab named Hannah, and a biologist who has been studying Utila’s wildlife for six years named Tom Brown. Our goal this week was to get a feel of the island for future study abroad trips and for my field research in July. My research is centered around the Utila spiny-tailed iguana, an endemic lizard to Utila and the only mangrove-obligate iguana species. If I didn’t choose to become a herpetologist, I would have studied my other love: birds. My first two lifers of the trip were Brown-crested Flycatchers and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. The bird diversity on Utila was low; I only observed 25 species of birds. However, several species that occur on Utila have subspecies that never leave the island. During June, you can reasonably assume that most if not all birds are breeders rather than just passing through on their migratory paths. I recorded endemic Utila subspecies of the Brown-crested Flycatcher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Plain Chachalaca, and Common Black Hawk on the island. We also found several endemic lizards including the Utila anole, Utila lesser gecko, and my study species, the Utila spiny-tailed iguana. My bird “lifer” count is only seven when we leave the islands.

We then traveled to the mainland of Honduras for the rest of the pre-field season trip. We stayed at a home belonging to an in-law of Dr. Townsend near the Zamorano Pan-American Agricultural School (hereafter Zamorano). We traded hot and humid mangroves for dry pine-oak forests and hotter valleys. Orioles of several species flew between the trees. Groove-billed Anis are also common in this habitat. Rufous-naped Wrens and saltators loudly call every morning. My near-daily eBird checklists jump from 8-10 species to 15+ as I learn to recognize the sights and sounds of birds in this new environment. In one location over two days, I gain nine more lifers; my favorite was the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl that popped up no more than 15 feet from me. Soon, we headed towards La Esperanza with another IUP professor in tow, Dr. Abigail Adams of the Department of Anthropology.

Near La Esperanza, we stayed at Finca los Jilgueros: Land of the Hummingbirds. I had spotted three on the trip so far, but I was about to experience just a taste of the Central American hummingbird diversity (and montane species). June isn’t the best month for hummingbirds, but don’t let that stop you from birding Honduras over the summer months. Azure-crowned and White-eared Hummingbirds danced and fought every morning. Every so often, I would watch a Rivoli’s Hummingbird zoom by. I watched as a male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird courted a female—she was so small, you might confuse her for a beetle buzzing past. In the higher-elevation pine-oak forests, I watched Northern Emerald Toucanets and Brown-backed Solitaires every morning. I was fortunate enough to see (and photograph) a few Mountain Trogons. Finca los Jilgueros is also home to several Honduras-endemic herpetofauna (our primary targets). Lenca frogs, similar to the pickerel and leopard frogs found in PA, called each night from a manmade pond on the property. Lenca emerald spiny lizards ran around our rental as I chased down a Yellow-backed Oriole and a non-migratory subspecies of House Wren. The indigenous Lenca people still thrive in montane regions of Honduras and El Salvador. They weave brightly-colored fabrics on ancient looms and speak out against developers and those who wish harm on the environment or its people. We encountered many endemic Berta’s anoles, a species of lizard named after Berta Cáceres by Dr. Townsend. Berta was assassinated in 2016 over her protests of a proposed dam that would have dramatically altered the flow of the Gualcarque River. The dam was not built. We paid tribute to Berta, and I gained another 30 lifers in this region.

We spent another day at Dr. Townsend's residence near Zamorano. I observed a few Streak-backed Orioles and Black-headed Saltators, two more lifer bird species. Then, we headed to Comayagua to pick up seven more undergraduate students for IUP's inaugural Honduras study abroad course. The primary goal of the trip was to prove to the IUP administration, students, and parents that we could design and hold an exciting, enriching, and safe course in a country which is often seen as unsafe to "westerners" because of its past. The same can be said of many "developed" countries. In reality, Honduras is a very safe and beautiful country. We stayed at a very old hotel within walking distance of the Central Plaza Leon Alvarado and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. This cathedral is one of the oldest in Central America and was blessed in 1715. The plaza is alive with activity every day. Hundreds of Rock Pigeons circle the plaza. The only lifer I see in Comayagua is a lone Yellow-winged Tanager at dusk. We take a night to let the students rest from their travels; then, we head back south.

Back in Zamorano, we stayed at the hotel on school grounds. Here, I met the only other birder I encountered on my trip, Dr. Oliver Komar, co-author of the Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America. Suffice to say, there were many more bird species he was able to point out to me that I would not have been able to ID or find myself! We bird together with and without my group of students. I captured images of a Common Tody-Flycatcher leaving its hanging nest. I photograph quick images of a Crested Bobwhite, Masked Tityra, Rose-throated Becard, and a Dusky-capped Flycatcher preening in a light rain. As the students observed the ubiquitous green iguanas, I saw my first Least Grebe foraging with a nest in the distance. Some lifers were merely heard or only very briefly observed: Ruddy Crake, Barred Antshrike, and the Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. Dr. Komar brought me to the local spots to look for a lone Harris's Hawk and a breeding pair of Fork-tailed Flycatchers. The Harris's Hawk is an oddity for Honduras; besides the coastal records near the Pacific Ocean, Zamorano is the farthest inland where this species can be reliably seen for this area. Even then, there are only a few birds observed. In total, I came away with 24 lifers from campus grounds. The montane cloud forests we hiked through next lack the diversity suite of wildlife we found in lower elevations. However, the forests made up for that in its beauty and the quality of wildlife we observed. After all, quality is better than quantity! In La Tigra National Park, I captured images of a mating pair of Wilson's montane pit vipers, another species described by Dr. Townsend just a decade ago. These beautiful vipers are the only terrestrial montane venomous snake species in the cloud forests of

Honduras. Unfortunately, the birds here were challenging to observe due to their secretive nature and the dark, misty conditions of the forest. Many were identified only by their calls or songs. I caught brief, but identifiable, glimpses of a Crescent-chested Warbler in the treetops and a Middle American Leaf-tosser on the ground. My greatest near-miss of the trip and the primary Honduran target for birders worldwide was in this forest: the beautiful Resplendent Quetzal. We heard the call near the peak of our hike, and the guide stopped our group. We watched the treetops for the long, flowing tail. I watched as a shadow of a beautiful bird flew in and was chased away by a pair of Northern Emerald Toucanets. We waited, and the bird never returned. This wouldn't be my last time to La Tigra. Just four lifers graced my eBird trip report.

For the last leg of our trip, we traveled to a lodge called Bioparque Paradise near Lake Yojoa in a wet, but cool, forest. A fast-flowing creek breaks up the property. The land was planted with fruit and coffee trees but still covered in plenty of native habitat, and the owners are familiar with birders and herpers (those who look for amphibians and reptiles) alike. During the day, I listened and watched for oropendolas and motmots. More hummingbirds graced the trails including Long-billed and Stripe-throated Hermits, Brown Violetears, and a few Violet Sabrewings. A Crimson-collared Tanager and many Yellow-throated Euphonias entertained us at breakfast. During the day, we hiked Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meambar (PANACAM) where we could watch hummingbirds at feeders overlooking a beautiful valley (and everything else in the first paragraph). At night, we hiked our lodge's trails (if it wasn't raining too hard). Porter's toads littered the ground while glass frogs secretly called from vegetation above the roaring creek. These glass frogs were our main target for this area. There are numerous cryptic species best identified by call and location (sound like any bird families you know?). This locality is a yet-to-be-described species awaiting publication. I gained another ten bird lifers at our lodge and four from PANACAM.

The last full day of the study abroad course landed us at Lake Yojoa itself. Most species on the lake were not new to me, a birder who started in Florida. Several black phoebes foraged at the edge of the lake. A Red-legged Honeycreeper and several Morelet's Seedeaters flitted around in the trees. A dozen (and likely more) Snail Kites gracefully plucked snails while Gray-breasted Martins and Northern Rough-winged Swallows flew around with purpose. I watched as a pair of Northern Jacanas reaffirmed their bond near a nest. We took a ride on a boat

to check out the tilapia farms on the lake. Great-tailed Grackles waited for scraps of dead fish. The lake probably used to have crocodiles, and every so often, one is found. We were not so lucky.

I ended June with a trip report totaling 170 bird species with 92 of them being lifers. The students left Honduras excited to tell their friends and family about all of their incredible experiences and the amazing food that they

enjoyed. For most of the students, this was their first experience outside of the US. They talked about returning to Honduras or traveling to other countries. The day after we dropped off the students, Dr. Townsend deposited me at the domestic airport in Tegucigalpa to return to Utila alone. I met up with Tom Brown again and started my iguana surveys. I really enjoyed my time on the mainland and was saddened to leave it. I look forward to returning next summer.

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## Outings - Christmas Bird Count (continued from page 2)

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 or yard 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) for more information or if you plan to participate.

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## Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C) Day 1

The B4C was held this year June 17 through the 20<sup>th</sup>. Carol Guba, Gloria Lamer, and Roger and I planned to participate for the second year in a row as The Todd Towhees. Sincere thanks to our families and friends who donated a total of \$500 which has been split among three conservation organizations – Erie Bird Observatory, Williston Conservation Trust, and the Ned Smith Center for Art and Nature.

Carol arrived at our house at 3:30 a.m. We met Gloria at Yellow Creek State Park at 4:00 a.m. with the hope of hearing at least one nocturnal species. We play no tapes, so everything we would hear would be sheer luck. We spent 55 minutes listening and tallied a mere five species, none of which were nocturnal. Our “best” species here was Willow Flycatcher, and we heard four of them. The morning was unusually quiet.

Our next destination was the Nolo - Penn Run area. Yellow Creek Road brought our species total to 21 with nothing spectacular but it’s always nice to hear Wood Thrushes singing their early morning choruses and to see a Brown Thrasher. Spruce Grove Road produced our first of many Hooded Warblers while Laurel Run yielded two Great Blue Herons and seven Ovenbirds. By 6:12 we had listed 50 species. On Sportsman Road we listed 36 species and added a family group of American Kestrels, at least 12 Purple Martins that had already departed the colony for breakfast, and two singing Swamp Sparrows. A Pileated

Woodpecker on North Harmony Road was a nice addition to our list.

Arriving at Yellow Creek’s north shore, we noted, among our 36 species, five fledgling Wood Ducks, a Warbling Vireo, an Orchard Oriole’s nest with young, and the day’s second Chestnut-sided Warbler. The south shore yielded a Green Heron, a Common Raven, one Purple Finch, and a Pine Warbler. A stop at Simon’s Rock for Barred Owl was unsuccessful. As we left the area at 9:18, we had already noted 64 species. We next headed to Ondo Road for grassland sparrows.

Ondo Road yielded both Grasshopper and Henslow’s Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks, but we fizzled finding Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrow. A brief stop at Two Lick Reservoir added our first Ruby-throated Hummingbird as well as our target species, Cliff Swallow.

We continued into Indiana to Carol’s yard as a Broad-winged Hawk had been frequenting her side yard. Michael had called to tell her that it was there. Unfortunately, it wasn’t when we arrived the first time. We had made several stops around Indiana when Michael called again to tell us the Broad-winged Hawk was back. It wasn’t there for our second trip either. Bad luck! Several other Indiana stops, including a ride down Gompers Avenue, yielded Fish Crow.

After a lunch break at Burger King, we headed to the Jacksonville area, specifically Aultman Run Road where we started with 74 species already on our checklist. Our target here was a Yellow-breasted Chat. Success! Continuing onward, we headed toward Conemaugh Dam to search for warblers. Conemaugh treated us well providing both Cerulean and Yellow-throated Warblers as well as Northern Rough-winged Swallows. We still needed a White-eyed Vireo and a Prairie Warbler, so we headed to Phillips Road. Once again we were able for all of us to spot both, bringing the day's total to 83. It was, however, already a few minutes after 7:00 p.m. We'd already been birding 15 hours. Phillips Road led us to the Indiana section of the Elders Ridge strips where we had a nice list of 29 species, including Wood Ducks, Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, and Pileated Woodpecker – but nothing new for our list.

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## Day 2

After being up by 3:00 a.m. yesterday morning and finally getting home at 10:30 last evening, the four of us opted for a later start today. Gloria and Carol arrived promptly at 5:15 a.m., and we headed north toward the Smicksburg area. Our first stop on McCormick Road yielded 29 species including one that we missed yesterday – Black-throated Green Warbler. Along North Creek Road we first heard then spotted a gorgeous Blue-winged Warbler, another bird we'd missed yesterday. Just before 7:00 a.m. we were on Goodville Road where we enjoyed watching a family group of five American Kestrels and heard the day's only Common Raven. We continued on North Northpoint Drive, previously named Allen Flats Road, adding a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and a Chestnut-sided Warbler among our many species. By 8:30 we had listed 54 species. Birding was good, and we were having a great time, but we were behind yesterday's totals. We birded several other roads, but we weren't finding anything new until we hit Windows Road where we saw and heard a singing Savannah Sparrow. By the time we finished our route in the Smicksburg area, it was almost 11:00 a.m. Our next destination was SGL 174 in the very northeastern corner of Indiana County. We knew that no food would be available in that area, so we headed north on US 119 to Punxsutawney for an early lunch at the Chinese restaurant near Walmart. Yes, we crossed the border into Jefferson, but we didn't count any birds that weren't in Indiana County.

Roger and I had scouted SGL 174 before the B4C. Our targets here included Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Magnolia Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco. The Magnolia Warblers were immediately cooperative as we

But West Lebanon was another story. As we were driving along Taylor Road, we picked up more meadowlarks and a Grasshopper Sparrow. Nice! Suddenly a Dickcissel sang loudly, very close to the road. Within a minute, Roger had pulled over, and we had our scopes set up. I was able to get several photos while Roger recorded the bird's song. (Both were later entered into eBird.) Wow! What a great find! This was the first 2022 report for Dickcissel in Indiana County. The Dickcissel energized us, but it was 8:55, and we had three more days of intense birding to look forward to. We ended the day on a high note with the Dickcissel at 84 species, just 16 shy of our 100 goal; but what a day!!! Carol reminded us that today was just practice for the next three days. Would we survive?

heard at least three singing males, but we completely dipped on the other three targets at this location. Although we stood in front of the spruce grove where the kinglets had been for more than half an hour, not one called or popped up into view. Neither the juncos nor the Hermit Thrushes were singing or showing themselves. I was feeling very guilty as the drive to this game lands ate up a lot of time with only one additional species counted. We finally decided we had to move on by 3:30 when our count was 69 species.

Fire Tower Road near Urey was our next destination. New for the day was a Henslow's Sparrow, but the shock was hearing another Dickcissel near the Urey Cemetery which had recently been renamed Pine Grove Cemetery. This Dickcissel was extremely cooperative as both Roger and I took many photos, but we had to keep moving as we were still at 71 species for the day.

Along Wilgus Road we were happy to see that the fields no longer were horse pastures as they had been for the past several years. This area had been a real hotspot for Bobolinks in the past; today we were delighted to see two, another new species, as well as a Red-shouldered Hawk. Snyder Road yielded a singing Hermit Thrush that gave us goose bumps as we listened to its ethereal song. We birded several other roads, but few birds were singing and our lists were sparse.

We continued on Nashville Road into Rochester Mills where we stopped to check Little Mahoning Creek from the Richmond Road Bridge. We were thrilled to find a hen Common Merganser with six young swimming in the stream. The Gipsy strips were not very productive, and



amazingly after two days on intense birding we had yet to see a Mallard. Carol suggested checking Musser's Pond, so once again we were driving back toward Indiana. On Richmond Road we noted the day's only Wood Duck, but Musser's Pond was productive as we counted three Mallards and two more Common Mergansers as well as

58 Canada Geese! We left Musser's Pond at 8:46 p.m. with a species total of 82 for the day and 96 for the two-day marathon. We had missed 14 species that we had seen on June 17 but we saw 12 additional species on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## Day 3

On June 19 we decided to bird a few of the locations where we had been successful on the previous two days plus a few new ones. Our goal was to see as many species as possible in one day. We met at our house at 5:00 a.m. and headed north to North Creek Road near Smicksburg where we listed 29 species. We continued to Windows Road to make sure we added yesterday's Savannah Sparrow, but we saw two of them today. By 7:12 a.m. we had already tallied 50 species! Turning right onto Hemlock Acres Road, we added two new species that we'd not listed on either Day 1 or Day 2 – first, 9 Wild Turkeys then a single Horned Lark. In addition we spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird that we'd missed yesterday. We were feeling pretty confident that Day 3 would be our best to date.

Next we headed to the Juneau area then east toward Rossiter and Johnsonburg, finally reaching SGL 174. Once again we bombed at the SGL, missing the same species we'd missed yesterday, but we had reached 67 species. A drive-by along Fire Tower Road added the Dickcissel to today's tally. We then opted for an early lunch at Subway after dropping Gloria at church in Clymer; Gloria had packed her lunch. The only species new for the day that we added at lunch was one House Finch which was countable as three of us had seen it. We picked Gloria up at noon, and while she ate in the car, we

continued to the Hillsdale area. Once again we picked up Bobolink along Wilgus Road then birded Shields and Snyder over to Walker for Hermit Thrush. Once again it was singing its ethereal song. By 2:01 we had noted 73 species, but we still had seven hours of daylight.

We birded our way to Two Lick Reservoir to tick our Cliff Swallow, but then things went wonky. Our destination was Conemaugh Dam, but our GPS led us across Camp Faith Road back to US 422. It took us 49 minutes to get to Auen Road near Conemaugh. At Conemaugh we hit our two targets – Cerulean Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo. By 4:45 we'd reached only 77 species.

Our next stop was Aultman Run Road where activity had picked up. Here we added the day's first Common Raven and Yellow-breasted Chat. On Phillips Road we dipped on White-eyed Vireo but picked up a Prairie Warbler. After birding the Elders Ridge area, we headed back into Indiana to find a Fish Crow on Philadelphia Street then to our best location – Yellow Creek S.P. where the north shore yielded a Bald Eagle and the south shore, an Eastern Kingbird. Now it was 9:18 p.m. and time to head home. We had tallied 90 species on the 19<sup>th</sup> and a total of 101 species in three days in Indiana County.

(To be continued in the January "Nuthatch")

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## Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County Summer 2022

Abbreviations: Allegheny River (AR), Crooked Creek (CC), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Prince Gallitzin (PG), West Lebanon (WL), West Penn Trail (WPT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC),

A late **Common Goldeneye** was spotted along the WPT 6/3 (RB); this is the only summer record for the county. The Ghost Town Trail near Dilltown yielded 3 **Common Mergansers** on 6/10 (GT); a hen with 6 young was sighted on Little Mahoning Creek 6/18 (CG, MH, RH, GL) while 2 hens were at Musser's Pond the same day (CG, MH, RH, GL); Common Mergs also peaked on 6/18 (TAr) at 26

along the AR n. of Brady's Bend. The only **Ruffed Grouse** reported in our region were 2 near Vintondale 6/24 (GT). An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was still calling at SGL 332 on 7/1 (MH, RH); this, too, was the only report in our region. An **American Coot** at PG 6/15 (CF) was unusual.

Six **American Avocets** landed at YC 7/12 (ED, MH, RH, DK) and were subsequently seen by many observers; a singleton flew over YC Lake 7/31 (JeK, AR) and was relocated at the western end of the lake where it was again photographed (JeK, AR); these were the sixth and seventh *Indiana* records for avocets but only the second June-July record with the previous being 7/17/98 (GC, BF, JF, TF, EF, GL, DL). First 2 **Least Sandpipers** were listed at YC 7/15 (HR) while *Armstrong* reports included 5 at KR 7/21 (MH, RH) and 2 at CC 7/24 (TR). YC hosted 2 **Semipal-mated Sandpipers** 7/15 (MW) and a single **Short-billed Dowitcher** 7/19 (LC, SD, ED, MH, RH, DK, TR), the only ones noted. An **American Woodcock** was still calling near Jacksonville 7/15 (MD). First **Solitary Sandpiper** was found at YC 7/15 (MW); KR harbored 3 on 7/21 (MH, RH) while CC yielded 2 on 7/24 (TR). Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** arrived at YC 7/31 (JeK, AR).

**Ring-billed Gulls** were difficult to find in the region this summer with the only reports of 1-2 at YC between 7/3 (CLu, MO) and 7/12 (ED, MH, RH, DK, MS, JT, ST). One adult **Herring Gull**, first swimming, then taking flight, and sounding the alarm on the AR at KT 6/13 (TR) with two chicks above on the pylon, was very upset with the observer despite the obvious distance between them. Two **Caspian Terns** at Beaverdam Run Reservoir 6/2 (MH, RH) were unusually early; 4 appeared at YC 7/12 (ED, MH, RH, DK); one week later a single Caspian arrived (LC, ED, MH, RH, DK, TR) at YC. A **Black Tern** appeared at YC 7/31 (JeK, AR). Two **Forster's Terns** took refuge at YC just before an impending thunderstorm on 7/5 (MH, RH).

One to 2 **Double-crested Cormorants** stopped at YC on two additional dates between 6/7 (ED, MH, RH) and 7/5 (MH, RH); PG yielded 3 on 7/31 (LB) while CC produced reports of 2 or 3 on five dates, 6/10 (TR), 6/26 (SP), 6/29 (DS), 7/1 (MVT), and 7/31 (AN, JN). First **Great Egret** arrival occurred at KR 7/21 (MH, RH) and at YC 7/31 (JeK, AR). A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was a great find at PG 7/4 (AE) and was subsequently seen by many.

As **Black Vulture** sightings continue to become more common in *Indiana*, the first confirmed nesting was found along the Ghost Town Trail near Dilltown on 7/23 (GT); 2 fledglings, still partly downy, stood at the opening to a cave while an adult perched nearby.



Roger Higbee photographed the six American Avocets 7/12 at Yellow Creek.

On 8/8, the male Swainson's Warbler along the WPT was color-banded by Western PA Conservancy and BirdLab staff with appropriate permits and permissions. Comprehensive measurements were taken, and the bird was aged as ASY (a bird hatched before last year), and it is presumed to be the same bird that has returned to the WPT site since 2020. Therefore, the warbler is also at least four years old. No female Swainson's has been observed along the WPT.

Once again the Nolo area was the **Barred Owl** hotspot; single owls were listed on 6/8, 24; 7/28, 31 (DB) while 2 were noted at the same location 7/3 (AB) and 7/7, 8 (DB). DB gets extra credit for his 2:30 a.m. reports as he often heard the owls when he got up to take the dogs out! Other Barred Owls were reported 6/7 (SVH) at Loretto, 6/11 (DB) near Strongstown, 6/12 (SP) at Ford City, and both on 6/24 (MW) and 7/3 (MS) at SGL 262.

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a well-described nice find on Birdsfoot Golf Course in *Armstrong* 7/26 (JCh).

A **Merlin** was spotted near Johnstown 7/19 (GG).

**Alder Flycatchers** were sparse this year with the only reports of a single bird 6/2, 25 (MVT) at Parks Bend Farm and at least one at Duman Lake 7/4 (AE).

**White-eyed Vireos** have become much more difficult to find in the

region with single birds noted at only two locations and no confirmed nesting – at YC 6/7 (LC, ED, MH, RH, KT) and 7/5 (MH, RH) and near Clarksburg 6/17 (CG, MH, RH, GL). **Yellow-throated** and **Blue-headed Vireos** were much more widely distributed with reports from 17 and 18 locations (v.o.), respectively. **Warbling Vireos** appeared along various streams in the region and were eBirded at 11 sites.

**Fish Crows**, previously reported mostly in the downtown *Indiana* area, were recently found 6/21 (MS) at SGL 276.

Only one **Horned Lark** was noted north of Smicksburg 6/19 (CG, MH, RH, GL).

Largely due to the Penn Run's **Purple Martin** colony successful fledge of more than 230 martins this year (RA), martins have begun to show up both at YC and at Blue Spruce where martin housing has remained unused. YC's high count was 15 on 7/19 (ED, MH, RH, TR) and BS's, 5 on 6/23 (MH, RH), giving us hope for nesting martins next year. Two **Bank Swallows** at YC 7/31 (JeK, AR) were the only ones noted.

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited a yard near Shelocta on 7/18 (MH, RH), the first sighting since early May. Unusual for *Indiana* were the reports of a **Winter Wren** near Vintondale 6/24, 30 and 7/29 (GT); the presence of 3 on 7/9 (GT) suggested possible breeding.

**Grasshopper Sparrows** were found only at one *Armstrong* location 6/26 -7/1 (ABu) when one individual was singing

from a cut hayfield; at three *Indiana* locations this summer – near Strangford 6/8 (BW), near Brush Valley 6/18 (CG, MH, RH, GL), and at WL 6/29 (MS); and only at SGL 108 - Bellwood in *Cambria* when 4 were tallied 6/2 (JC). The only **Vesper Sparrows** noted were 2 on 6/2 (JC) at SGL 108 - Bellwood, a singleton 6/4 (RK, WK) at WL, and one 7/21 (MS, JT) at SGL 79. **Savannah Sparrows** were a tad easier to find this summer with reports including 2 near McDowell Cemetery on 6/4 (MH, RH), 4 near WT on 6/15 (TR), 2 near Smicksburg 6/19 (CG, MH, RH, GL), one south of WT on 6/23 (TR), 2 at Loretto 7/4 (RH, SM) and 2 at WL 7/31 (CH).

**Henslow's Sparrows** noted were single birds at SGL 108 - Bellwood 6/2 (JC), near Brush Valley 6/13 (MH, RH) and 6/17 (CG, MH, RH, GL), one near Glen Campbell 6/18 (CG, MH, RH, GL), one at the Gipsy strips 6/20 (CG, MH, RH, GL), and one at WL both 7/4 (RH, SM) and 7/31 (CH).

**Yellow-breasted Chats** were listed at only three locations – one near Jacksonville 6/17, 19 (CG, MH, RH, GL) and 7/1 (MH, RH), another at SGL 273 on 6/18 (MS), and a singleton 6/23, 7/1 (ABu) northeast of KT.

Best count of **Bobolinks** was 7 at SGL 108 - Bellwood on 6/2 (JC).

Twenty-three warbler species were eBirded in *Indiana* this summer. A **Northern Waterthrush** was an unexpected

find near North Point 6/20 (CG, MH, RH, GL). The returning male **Swainson's Warbler** remained on territory along the WPT through at least 8/8 (NL, DY). Only 4 **Kentucky Warblers** were noted; 2 were observed at SGL 276 on 6/21 (MS) and two others – one along the WPT 6/22 (JK, TK) and one in the Conemaugh River basin at another WPT location 7/8 (KD, DF, DK, JS).



Court Harding photographed this Savannah Sparrow at West Lebanon 7/31.



This second Dickcissel near Urey on 6/18 was photographed by Margaret Higbee.

*Armstrong's* eBirded warblers included 17 species with highlights including a **Kentucky Warbler** near Dayton 6/1 (MH, RH) and a **Northern Parula** at CC 6/4 (SP) and 7/4 (ABu).

*Cambria's* 19 warbler species included single **Worm-eating Warblers**, both 6/5, at Mundy's Corners (MH, RH) and at Big Spring Gap (PI, WI). Other *Cambria* highlights included a **Golden-winged Warbler** at SGL 108 - Bellwood 6/2 (JC), 5 **Black-throated Blue Warblers** along various sections of the Ghost Town Trail (v.o.), a Pine Warbler at PG 7/13 (RF, DG).

A **Dickcissel** on the B4C at WL 6/17 (CG, MH, RH, GL) was a nice surprise and a great addition to the day's list. The following day (CG, MH, RH, GL), also on the B4C, another Dickcissel was spotted near Urey Cemetery; a driveby on 6/19 (CG, MH, RH, GL) yielded the same Dickcissel near Urey Cemetery.

## Corrigendum

Apologies to Clayton Lamer and Laura Steele whose initials were used in the Spring 2022 Report but unidentified in the August issue of "The Todd Nuthatch."

## Dues Reminder for January

Todd Bird Club dues are due on January 1 each year. please submit your \$15 family, \$10 individual, or \$5 student membership to:

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

**Observers:** Ron Alsop, Tammy Arnold (TAr), Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Lisa Blazure, Alan Buriak (ABu), Ron Burkert, Lee Carnahan, John Carter, John Charley (JCh), Greg Cook, Michael David, Karyn Delaney, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Amy Edwards, Cameron Farabaugh, Betsy Fetterman, Jed Fetterman, Tom Fetterman, Evelyn Fowles, Donna Foyle, Roana Fuller, Gina Gehosky, Deb Grove, Carol Guba, Court Harding, Rebecca Hart (RH), Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Pam Illig, Winnie Illig, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Jeff Kenney (JeK), Rick Koval, Wendy Koval, Janet Kuehl, Tom Kuehl, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Nicholas Liadis, Chris Lundberg (CLu), Steve Manns, Avery Nichols, Jeff Nichols, Mariam Ohanjanyan, Sebastian Picardi, Theo Rickert, Angela Romanczuk, Henry Rummel, Judy Schryer, Doug Spindler, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Shannon Thompson, Gregory Tomb, Ken Truitt, Marge Van Tassel, Mike Weible, Brian Wolker, David Yeany.



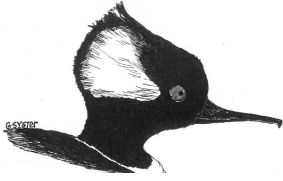


How many species are present in this photo by Roger Higbee? Four species are present. From left to right: Bonaparte's Gull, Forster's Tern, Caspian Tern, then two Common Terns.

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

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