

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Todd Bird Club

April 2012

www.toddbirdclub.org

Meetings

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

Tuesday, May 1 – 6:00 p.m.

This is our annual covered dish dinner. Please bring a covered dish to share and your own place settings. Drinks will be provided.

The evening's speaker is no stranger to our group. Patrick Snickles, a native of Warren PA, has been the northern Indiana County WCO for the past 16 years. Because his family's property bordered the Allegheny National Forest, he states that he has always felt like he "had the world's biggest back yard to grow up in...500,000 acres."



Come to our May meeting to learn about Pennsylvania's state bird, the Ruffed Grouse.

Photo by Steve Gosser

After spending five years in the US Navy, he graduated Penn State with a Wildlife and Fisheries Science degree and attended the PGC's training school.

WCO Snickles has presented several other great programs to our group, and he was a significant contributor to the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project. In addition, he has participated in several of our PA North American Migration Counts as well as our Christmas Bird Counts.

He is returning once again to present a program about our state bird, the Ruffed Grouse. Come and learn about the biology, habitat requirements, and management techniques associated with this interesting species.

Don't miss this excellent program or our banquet. Todd Bird Club boasts some of the best cooks in the county.

"During the first warm days of early spring the wanderer in our New England woods is gladdened and thrilled by one of the sweetest sounds of that delightful season, the throbbing heart, as it were, of awakening spring. On the soft, warm, still air there comes to his eager ear the sound of distant, muffled drumming, slow and deliberate at first, but accelerating gradually until it ends in a prolonged, rolling hum...."

Field Trips

Tuesday Morning Outings at Yellow Creek will continue. For all Tuesday Yellow Creek outings meet either at 7:00 a.m. at the north shore pavilion or at 8:00 a.m. at the park office located on Rt. 259 just off Rt. 422 east of Indiana. Everyone – from beginner to expert birder – is welcome.

Saturday, April 21 – Raccoon Creek State Park. This is a joint bird/wildflower walk and picnic with the Brooks Bird Club and Three Rivers Birding Club. The event will begin at 9:30 a.m. and is being hosted by Ryan Tomazin (412-220-9726; wvwarblers@hotmail.com). We will meet at the Roadside West area. Options include birding or looking for wildflowers along the trail/forest edge or visiting the Wildflower Reserve at Raccoon Creek State Park. We plan to eat at 12:30. Please bring a dish to share and your own place settings. After lunch we can bird other areas of the park. From Indiana, take Route 119 south to Rt. 22 west. Exit onto Rt. 18 north; after 5.9 miles, turn right into the park and proceed to the Roadside West picnic area. Allow about two hours. A park map is available at:

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/ucmprd2/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_003204.pdf

Saturday, April 28 – Mahoning Shadow Trail, led by Tom Glover. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Grisock Road access. If you wish to carpool from Indiana, contact the Higbees (724-354-3493).

Saturday, May 5 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by John Taylor (724-397-2040). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the first large parking lot past the park office. This is our annual warbler pilgrimage which usually yields a nice variety of migrants.

Saturday, May 12 – Pennsylvania Migration Count for both Indiana and Armstrong Counties. Please contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) if you'd like to participate.

This 21st annual count is similar to the Christmas Bird Count, but it is county-wide rather than limited to a 15-mile diameter circle; and there is no participation fee. Forms and instructions may be downloaded at <http://www.pabirds.org/PAMC/Index.html>, but it is not essential that you use the provided forms. Either call the Higbees (724-354-3493) or e-mail your data to bcoriole@windstream.net.

Friday, May 18, through Sunday, May 20 – PSO annual meeting in Lockhaven. This is a good opportunity to bird a new birding site. We'll bird all morning on both Saturday and Sunday and attend afternoon sessions at the Sieg Conference Center on Saturday afternoon. We will enjoy an evening banquet with Dan Brauning as our speaker. He will discuss the differences in the distribution of populations from the first to the second Atlas and tantalize us as we await the publication of the new Atlas.

For further information, check www.pabirds.org or contact the Higbees (724-354-3493).

Tuesday, May 22 – Our 4:00 a.m. pontoon ride has been scheduled with Mike Shaffer, Yellow Creek State Park Environmental Education Specialist. Participation is limited to the first nine who sign up. Please contact Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493) to register. We meet at Yellow Creek at the boat rental dock by 4:00 a.m. so that we are out on the lake before dawn. Watching the sun rise over the lake is an awesome experience. In the past birding has been productive. Species seen from the boat include Least Bittern and Sandhill Crane, and one year we heard a Long-eared Owl.

Saturday, May 26 – Blue Spruce County Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the first large parking lot past the park office. We plan to search for late migrants as well as breeding birds.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Thanks to all the Todd Bird Club members who participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count! They include:

Pat Andrascik
Sid & Jean Blair
Lee Carnahan
Marcy Cunkelman

Randi & Sarah Gerrish
Margaret Higbee
Bob Jackman
Fred & Carol McCullough

Donna Meyer
Richard Nugent
John Taylor
Marge Van Tassel

Blue Spruce Garden Plans Underway

by Donna Meyer

"To me, the garden is a doorway to other worlds; one of them, of course, is the world of birds. The garden is their dinner table, bursting with bugs and worms and succulent berries."

– Anne Raver

It is now the time of year when most of us start to work in our own gardens to provide a "dinner table" for our feathered friends. As most of you are aware, the Todd Bird Club is participating in our own bird-friendly garden project at the entrance to Blue Spruce County Park. This project is being completed under the direction of Kristy Helfer, an Ameri Corps worker who is currently employed by Indiana County Parks and Trails. This past week, Gloria Lamer, Margaret Higbee, and I met with Kristy to work on finalizing plans for the garden. Our area of planting will focus around the water feature. Plants to be purchased include winterberry holly, dwarf fothergilla, red-osier dogwood, sweetfern, and lowbush blueberry. If you have been pricing nursery stock, you know that planting an entirely new garden is an expensive project. We are fortunate that Kristy is able to purchase plants for us at a very reasonable cost. Now, we are asking for your

help. In order to extend the garden entirely around the water feature, we will need to purchase or have donated the following plants: black-eyed susan, globe thistle, purple coneflower, New England aster, bee balm, sweet false sunflower, foxglove beardtongue, meadow sage, tickseed, lillyturf, and catmint. Any plants you can donate from your garden or purchase for this project will be greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you are able to donate or purchase additional plants. The initial planting of purchased plants has been set for May 4 at 8:00 with a rain date of May 7. We would like as many members as possible to participate on these days. The dates for planting the additional donated or purchased plants have not been set but have been planned for some time in June. Please check our website for additional information and updates. Let's all get involved in this worthwhile project to benefit our birding community.

"I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than of cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their song."

-- Joseph Addison

Photo Quiz

Most of you recognized the Osprey in the last photo quiz in the January *Nuthatch*.

Marcy writes of this month's quiz bird:

"So you go down to get the mail, you always have your binos and camera just in case, and what do you know, something huge flies over low in the sun... but [I]couldn't get color because of the sun, and snow clouds were moving out. It soared a few times over the yard above the willow tree and then flew west toward Conemaugh Dam. Was my first impression correct? Yep it was...."

To make it a little easier, here are two shots of the same soaring bird in silhouette.



This Osprey in Marcy's photo exhibits typical crooked wings and obvious head shape as well as the white underwing coverts. In addition, its wings are not pointed.



April Photo Quiz Bird



April Photo Quiz Bird

Notes from a Novice – Observations from Texas

by Tom Glover

On March 14 my wife Emry and I returned to PA after a two month stay in Texas. A number of my outing reports about our Texas stay are on Todd's website. The reports detail outings with my daughter Elyse and her husband Tom over a two-week period in January of this year. I did a lot of birding after they departed, and this report highlights my observations and thoughts over the weeks after they returned to their home in New York.

The condo we rented was on Cape Velero just outside of Rockport, TX, overlooking Copano Bay off the Gulf of Mexico. From the condo's balconies we could see the salt ponds, mud flats, and marshes connected to Copano Bay. This view proved to be one of the best birding experiences during our two-month stay. I delighted in spending hours looking out the upstairs' balcony with my scope at the collection of waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds. Over weeks of observations some of those birds become familiar. A lone Long-billed Curlew was present almost every day, and the same small flock of Northern Pintails foraged in the salt ponds day after day. I particularly enjoyed a pair of Caspian Terns that showed up on a daily basis. The aerial antics of these terns was a delight – in fact they did just about everything while they were on the wing. These terns would shake water off themselves after diving for fish, devour the fish, scratch, yawn, and just about everything you can imagine a bird doing while flying. One amusing incident involved one of the terns presenting a very large fish to its mate. The second tern tried and tried to swallow that fish, but the fish was just too large.

One observation that intrigued me involved the interrelationship of the wind, mud flats, and shorebirds. The wind in this part of Texas blows almost constantly, so it was common to have days with winds blowing 20-25 mph with gusts up to 35 mph. In fact just six miles west and north of our location is a 16,000-acre wind farm consisting of an estimated 200 wind generators. The tides in this part of the Gulf of Mexico have little impact on the coast while the wind has a major impact. If the winds are blowing from the south and east, Copano Bay fills with water; however, if the winds are out of the north and west, the water flows out of the bay. The level of the water in the bay can change more than two feet with the direction of the wind. If the wind is out of the south, the mudflats are covered; but if the wind is out of the north, the mudflats are exposed and covered with shorebirds. It was common to see large mixed flocks numbering in the hundreds of Short-billed Dowitchers, Dunlin, and Western Sandpipers, mixed with fewer Long-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, and

Stilt Sandpipers, all foraging on the exposed mudflats.

From my perch on the balcony I also had the opportunity to view wading birds whether the water level was low or high. Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Reddish Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, and White Ibis were common, and on a few occasions I was treated to Tricolored Heron and Black-necked Stilt. Other common birds viewed included American White and Brown Pelicans; Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls; and Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants. One common occurrence involved Sandhill Cranes. About two miles from the condo was a pasture where anywhere from 75 - 100 Sandhill Cranes would congregate just before sunset, foraging alongside the cattle. Other common birds were Northern Harriers patrolling low over the marshes and mudflats, and Turkey and Black Vultures flying both high and low over the area.

I also took walks around the area. Just up the road north of the condo were large open fields that attracted Eastern Meadowlarks and in turn an American Kestrel. The kestrel was always perched on a utility pole overlooking one of the fields, and the meadowlarks were missing from this field. Farther down the road in an adjoining field away from the kestrel were the meadowlarks. The meadowlarks kept an eye on me as I walked past, appearing to stand on their toes to get a better view of me over the grass. On one occasion while watching the meadowlarks, I got a bonus bird – in the middle of the field was a foraging Whimbrel. I watched it for a good 20 minutes before it flew off.

It was interesting to see how the birds around the condo played into our everyday lives. A good example were the Loggerhead Shrikes. These birds were common on the Cape. Our condo was located on Cape Velero Drive, a little over two miles from the main road. As we traveled that distance, it was common to see the same three or four Loggerhead Shrikes. It was not long till we were saying as we passed each Shrike perched in a bush “Shrike 1, Shrike 2, and Shrike 3, and you are out!”

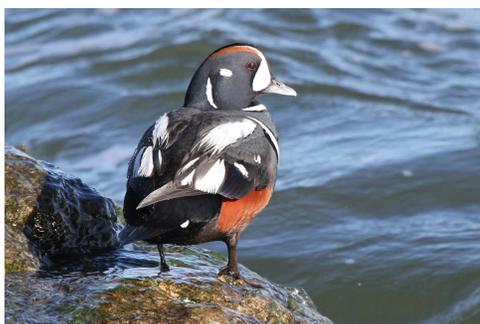
As I stated Cape Velero proved to be one of the prime birding areas on our Texas trip. I reviewed my birding diary, and I had a total of 94 entries for the trip, and 51 of those entries involved the area around our condo on Cape Velero. Now that leaves a lot of other birding in Texas this past winter that will be covered in future articles.

New Jersey Revisited

by Margaret Higbee



Monk Parakeets nest at Carteret.
Photo by Margaret Higbee



Harlequin Ducks frequent the Barnegat Light Jetty.
Photo by Roger Higbee



This was just one of the many Northern Shovelers at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.
Photo by Roger Higbee



Daniel spotted the Rufous Hummingbird well hidden in a low shrub at CMBO at Goshen.
Photo by Margaret Higbee

On Friday, March 9, members of the Todd trip to New Jersey met in the lobby of the Quality Inn in Easton, PA. Participants included Ray and Daniel Winstead, Claire Staples, Melissa Little, Richard Nugent, and Roger and me. Our first destination was Merrill Creek Reservoir, NJ, where our target species was a Snowy Owl. We stopped at the Merrill Creek boat launch where we had no luck spotting the Snowy Owl, so we headed to the visitors' center which was not open. Fortunately, just as we were walking away, an employee exited the building. We asked him whether he could tell us where to see the Snowy Owl. He unlocked the door to the center, turned on the lights, and proceeded to provide us with maps and directions. We learned we needed to walk about 1.5 miles out along the road from the boat launch. We returned to the boat launch and began the walk through the forest which was extremely quiet – we added no passerines or woodpeckers. The wind whipped as we walked across the first dam. We were all happy to reach the woodlot again as the trees cut the biting wind. When we reached the second dam, we walked around the gate to the area specified by the park employee. Almost immediately we sighted the Snowy Owl on the designated stump. It was about 600 feet distant, and we mostly saw the bird's back. Occasionally it turned and we could actually see its eyes. As we were standing on the dam, Melissa spotted a Tree Swallow overhead, the trip's first. As I was scoping ducks on the water, I spotted an Eurasian Wigeon which was one of the trip's target birds, but, to our knowledge, it had not been reported at Merrill Creek. What a great find! Overhead a

flock of Snow Geese passed then another and another. Roger started counting, reverted to estimating, then concluded 4,000 Snow Geese had passed while we were standing there. Delighted with our success, we started the return hike. Daniel spotted a Wild Turkey running across a path to our right.

Our second destination was Spruce Run where we added Cackling Geese and Iceland Gull. After lunch at McDonald's near Clinton, we drove to Carteret to look for Monk Parakeets at the intersection of Washington and High Streets. Upon arrival, we immediately spotted the nest and counted 8 Monk Parakeets on the wires.

Our next destination was Manasquan River Inlet. In the town of Manasquan we heard our first Fish Crows. Highlights at the inlet included Brant, Red-throated Loons, N. Gannets, Am. Oystercatchers, and Purple Sandpipers. We headed to Tom's River where we spent the night.

Saturday's first stop was at Barnegat Lighthouse State Park on Long Beach Island where we walked the jetty. The highlight here was the flock of Harlequin Ducks. Unfortunately, the wind was blowing steadily, and it was high tide with water splashing over the rocks near the far end. We walked out more than halfway, but when we saw that the rocks were wet and many gulls were perched on the jetty, we decided that we didn't want to chance slipping on the wet rocks, nor did we want to dislodge all of the gulls. We returned to our vehicles and drove to Ninth Street where we parked and walked out the boardwalk onto the sand, heading for the end of the

jetty. As we neared the beach, I heard Snow Buntings calling. Daniel spotted them first; Richard counted 7; and everyone saw them fly over the dunes. Highlights near the jetty included Black Scoters, Common Eiders, Purple Sandpipers, and Great Cormorant.

We walked back to the cars then drove the back street where the marina is located. Two Great Egrets flew past, then Melissa spotted two Tricolored Herons with just their heads appearing above the phragmites. Farther south Roger spotted a small group of four Am. Oystercatchers.

We spent an enjoyable afternoon birding the wildlife drive at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, affectionately known as "Brig." Afterwards, we spent the night in Absecon.

Sunday morning took us to Brigantine Island where we added 86 Willets to our list. Our next destination was Cape May Bird Observatory where we watched the feeders successfully for a very cooperative Dickcissel. Black-headed Gulls had been sighted at Miami Beach, so we drove to East Miami Street where we parked and walked along the beach, locating the Black-headed Gull almost immediately. The weather was amazingly warm,

and this was a great spot! Here were hundreds of Dunlin as well as a variety of gulls, Forster's Terns, and a few other shorebirds including Black-bellied Plovers and Sanderlings.

We failed to see the first state record Broad-tailed Hummingbird that had been visiting a feeder on Batts Lane, but we trolled the neighborhood around Whildon for Eurasian Collared-Doves after leaving Batts on Saturday. Claire was the first to spot the collared-doves on the sidewalk.

On Monday we again birded Batts Lane, Miami Beach, Cape May State Park, Cape May Meadows, Cape May Bird Observatory in Goshen, and Mannington Marsh. Highlights included 10 Wilson's Snipe at the park and a Rufous Hummingbird at Goshen.

It was a great trip with probably the best March weather we'd ever experienced in New Jersey. Although the total species count was only 109, we were satisfied because of the many incredible views we had of birds we don't see every day in PA. For a more detailed report, check the Todd website (www.toddbirdclub.org).

Joint Three Rivers Birding Club-Todd Outing Revisited

Twenty-seven birders gathered in the parking lot at the Yellow Creek State Park office on Saturday, April 7. We began the outing going around the circle having everyone introduce himself or herself. We'd not gotten very far when we noticed Ryan Tomazin's eyes were on the woods behind us. He had first heard then spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker that most in the group watched fly toward Laurel Run. Here at the park office a Hairy Woodpecker called and two E. Phoebes were perched in the top of a tree.

We proceeded to the maintenance building and first checked Dragonfly Pond on which were two Ring-necked Ducks and a pair of Canada Geese. A Pileated Woodpecker flew across the lake and returned several minutes later. We crossed Route 259 to check the lake. Tree Swallows were flying about the bluebird boxes, and one E. Bluebird was also present. Here on the water we added Wood Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Pied-billed Grebes, and Am. Coots. The season's first Brown Thrasher perched in the top of a tree providing scope views. A N. Mockingbird and singing Chipping, Field, Song, and Swamp Sparrows were listed.

Our next stop was at the boat launch from which we spotted in Little Yellow Cove both Blue- and Green-

winged Teal and Great Blue Heron. The mudflats yielded a Killdeer, a Least Sandpiper, and 10 Wilson's Snipe. An excited Ryan announced, "Surf Scoter!" The immediate response was "Where?" We soon had located the scoter in all the scopes so that everyone had excellent views. On the open water were one Gadwall, about 40 Red-breasted Mergansers, more than 100 Ruddy Ducks, and 10 Horned Grebes. We headed directly to the beach, hoping for a better view of the Surf Scoter; however, that didn't happen. We did have nice looks at the other species as well as Common Loon.

We backtracked to the bridge over Little Yellow where we paused for a coffee cake break. The woods were pretty quiet. We added only a Blue Jay and a Downy Woodpecker. We decided to walk through the pines with the hope of finding the Pine Warblers. We were not disappointed and almost immediately spotted two Pine Warblers as well as a Brown Creeper.

Our final destination was Observatory Trail. Again passerines were few, but a Mute Swan was feeding along the edge of the lake. Near the observatory, an E. Towhee

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Outings Revisited Redux Duck Boxes

by Tom Glover

Well, folks, it was that time of year again, for the reinstallation of Yellow Creek's duck boxes. The regular March 20 Tuesday Yellow Creek outing was the day chosen to remount the boxes removed last fall from around the shore of the lake. Fellow Todd Bird Club members Margaret Higbee, Gloria Lamer, Melissa Little, Lee Carnahan, and I, along with Mike Shaffer, Environmental Ed. Specialist at the park, made up this year's duck box team. Now if you want some background on the history of these duck boxes, I suggest reading previous issues of *The Nuthatch*. It seems that when the Todd Bird Club gets involved with duck boxes at Yellow Creek something happens, and this year was no exception.

We gathered at the boat launch ramp next to the boat rental building about 9:00 a.m. Mike arranged for the park's pontoon patrol boat to be delivered to the ramp along with the necessary tools to install the boxes. Since this was the third time we assisted with installing or removal of the boxes, the routine was familiar. The date was March 20, but the day was pleasantly warm, and we figured we would have the boxes up by mid to late morning, allowing time for us to do some serious birding. As is our habit, the first box we remounted was near Little Yellow Cove, and after a quick installation we worked our way along the shore installing boxes along the way.

One of the important items used in the installation of boxes are poles that aid in getting us to the location along the shore. The technique involves Mike's motoring as close as possible to the location and just before the motor strikes the bottom, he raises it, and we drift. But at some point we have to pole up to the posts along the shore. Now this year the poles proved to be 12-foot-long 2 x 4s, not the handiest things to maneuver in a restricted space. Now after we finished the boxes in the section of lake paralleling Rt. 259, we had a pleasant cruise across the lake toward Grandpa's



Lee Carnahan wades to the pole to install one of the Wood Duck nest boxes at Yellow Creek.



Before Lee had even returned to the pontoon, a Tree Swallow checks out the new box.

and Grandma's Coves.

When we first installed the boxes last spring, the water level was a lot higher, and that made it easier to get closer to the shore and into the beds of cattails and weeds. So as we approached two locations in a bed of grass, we picked one and Mike cut the motor and raised it. Lee and I poled like crazy toward the post, but the boat ran aground about 20 feet from the post. As we stood there on the bow of the boat mumbling comments like "We need waders," we decided to try for the second location in the grass bed. The water was too shallow to run the motor, so Lee and I pushed off and started to pole toward the next location. But as we approached the post, we ran aground again. And after some more mumbling, we pushed off, but this time as we were poling I looked at Lee, who was balanced on the edge of the bow with his boots half on and half off the edge. With everything happening in slow motion, I knew immediately that he was going to fall into the water. But to Lee's credit, he artfully flung his 2 x 4 to the side and managed to jump feet first into the water instead of landing on his face. Now if I had fallen off the boat, my mates would have had to pull me out of the mud by my feet!

Anyway there was Lee standing in water up to his knees with Mike holding onto his shoulders. Lee pulled himself back onto the boat. After some discussion, he decided that since he was already wet, he would wade over and install the box. As he waded the 20 or more feet, Mike repeated at least ten times, "We surely could use some waders."

Because the day was warm and pleasant, Lee said he would go ahead and wade to those locations that we could not approach with the boat. As it turned out, Lee slugged through the water on four occasions. Of the eleven

original boxes, we installed nine, found one box we lost last fall, but we are still missing the eleventh box.

It took us a lot longer to reinstall the boxes than we had figured, so we did not get to do that serious birding that we had planned earlier that morning. But despite what had happened, Gloria, Melissa, and Margaret did get a list of birds. We found a nice collection of waterfowl that included Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks,

both Pied-billed and Horned Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, American Coots, Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls, and in Little Yellow Cove, Wilson's Snipe. All and all it was not a bad day of birding. And we did see one Wood Duck, but it was not near any of the boxes we installed. It was a common sight to see Tree Swallows checking out the boxes as quickly as we put them up. In fact the swallows at times were buzzing around Lee as he sloshed through the water. Mmm...I bet this fall when we remove the boxes, waders will be on board.



"OK, we got another one installed. Let's pole to the next one," says Lee Carnahan on the right to Tom Glover, co-poler.



Supervisors Melissa Little and Gloria Lamer take a moment to relax while the boat is stationary.

Joint Three Rivers Birding Club-Todd Outing

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called. On the water were about 50 Bonaparte's Gulls and 8 Ring-billed Gulls. We also added quite a few Buffleheads, bringing that count to 309, and 20 more Red-breasted Mergansers. A Red-tailed Hawk soaring above the north shore was our lone raptor. On our return to the car we added the morning's only Tufted Titmouse.

Thirteen of the group headed to the Chinese buffet for lunch where we relived highlights of the outing, listened to tales of Costa Rica and other exciting birding adventures, and enjoyed a lot of other good conversation with good friends.

– Margaret Higbee

Join Us on Our Outings

If you haven't been on one of our outings, it's time to consider coming. We always see lots of birds, and members are willing to share information and optics.

Spring is one of the best times of year to be out in the field. The waterfowl migration is tapering off, but the movement of song birds is just beginning. When you go to Yellow Creek, Blue Spruce, or really anywhere, you never know what to expect. Our motto is "Expect the unexpected," and sometimes that happens!

Warblers will soon be coming through our area in numbers. So, grab your binoculars and show up for one or more of our field trips!



Birding Yellow Creek are Sue Dickson, Gloria Lamer, Tom Glover, and Marge Van Tassel.

Indiana County Winter 2011-2012

Please submit your reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee, 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701-7934 or e-mail to bcoriole@windstream.net.

Locations: Chest Springs (CS), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Indiana (IN), Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rosston (RT) Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Canada Goose maxima included an estimated 1000 heading south over IN 12/9 (GF), 500 at PG 12/16, 31 (DG,JS), 542 on TL 1/16 (LC), and 500 at KT 1/22 (MH,RH,DL). Two Mute Swans were sighted at CS 1/20 (DG,MHu). Four **Tundra Swans** visited CC 1/15 (TR,TS) while other winter Tundra Swan reports included 7 at TL 1/21 (LC) and 2 at YC 2/14, 17 (LC).

Early **Wood Ducks** appeared at YC 2/17 (LC) and at PG 2/28 (DG,JS). YC Lake remained open for most of the season with just a few days of freeze-up. With the open water many ducks lingered in *Indiana* into mid-January and those that left returned by late February.

Gadwalls were not reported in *Indiana* after 1/21 (MH,RH,DL), when 8 were spotted near Blairsville, until 2/25 (MH,RH) when 19 were listed at Margus Lake; 3 returned to PG 2/28 (DG,JS); high counts included 16 at YC 12/24 (LC) and the 19 Margus Lake birds mentioned above. **Am. Wigeons**, too,

lingered in the region with the last 2 spotted at YC 1/6 (TS) and a singleton found at RT 1/22 (TR); first 2 returnees were observed at YC 2/7 (LC,SD, MH) while PG's first were 8 on 2/20 (JS); top tallies included 20 at YC 2/14 (LC) and 28 at PG 2/28 (DG, JS). **American Black Ducks**, however, were present throughout the winter, with best YC counts of 30 on 2/17 (LC) and 62 on 2/28 (LC,MH,ML,RN), the same day (DG,JS) PG hosted 15; a marshy area near Dayton yielded 28 on 1/22 (MH,RH,DL). High **Mallard** counts included 126 at TL 12/15 (LC) and 152 at YC 2/19 (LC). First **Northern Shoveler** arrived at YC 2/26 (TR); 3 were counted there two days later (LC,MH,ML,RN), the only two reports for the region. **Northern Pintails**, listed on 8 dates, were more sporadic with 4 found at Musser's Pond 12/26 (BB,TB); the next sighting occurred 1/31 (LC, MH) when 4 were noted at YC; high YC tallies included 52 on 2/21 (LC,MH) and 42 a week later

(LC,MH,ML,RN); the only report away from YC occurred 2/28 (DG,JS) when 26 were counted at PG. Last **Green-winged Teal** were 4 at YC 12/26 (GL, GS); first 2 spring arrivals occurred 2/19 (LC); by 2/28 (LC,MH,ML,RN) 12 were present on YC Lake.

Canvasbacks, with 1-3 listed on 12 dates, evaded the Indiana CBC and could only be listed as a count-week bird; by 2/28 (LC,MH,ML,RN) 17 were on YC Lake; PG's lone report of 2 came 12/16 (DG,JS).

One to 3 **Redheads** were present through 1/3 (LC) when the last 2 were sighted. Small numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** wintered at YC and Margus Lake, but in *Cambria* the last noted were 24 at PG 12/31 (JS); KR still hosted 25 on 1/15 (TR), the only *Armstrong* report; the first 43 spring returnees arrived at YC 2/7 (LC, SD,MH); 12 were spotted 2/20 (JS) at PG, where 45 were tallied 2/28 (DG,JS); numbers reached 139 at YC 2/21 (LC,MH) and peaked at 338 by 2/28 (LC,MH,ML,RN).



Am. Wigeons were one of the ducks that lingered late into winter in Indiana.

Photo by Tom Fetterman

The last 12 **Lesser Scaup** at PG were noted 12/12 (JS) while one to 8 were listed at YC through the end of December (v.o.); 3 were still present 1/1 (LC,MH, RH,DL,TP,MJS); northward bound migrants appeared 2/17 (LC) at YC and 2/18 (JT) at Musser's Pond; top count of 15 was achieved at YC 2/28 (LC, MH,ML, RN). **White-winged Scoter** was represented by one at YC 12/6 (LC,JD,TG,MH,DM). **Long-tailed Ducks** reported were also singletons at RT 12/20 (DY) and at YC 12/26 (GL,GS), the lone reports. Twenty-one **Buffleheads** lingered at PG through 12/16 (DG,JS) while 4 were last seen at CC 12/20 (VR,MJV); small groups remained at YC through 1/10 (LB,LC,RK,RN, TS) when the last 2 were found; 2/14 (LC) marked the arrival of 2 migrants at YC while PG's first appeared 2/20 (JS). Four **Common Goldeneyes** were sighted at RT 2/12 (TR) while YC harbored one to 2 until 2/19 (LC)

when 9 were noted; 4 were still present at YC 2/28 (LC,MH, ML,RN). PG's last 32 **Hooded Mergansers** were counted 12/16 (DG,JS); Musser's Pond yielded 24 on 12/26 (EF,TF, TG); CC yielded a single merganser 1/8 (SG); KR harbored 10 on 1/18 (MH, RH) and 4 on 1/22 (MH,RH, DL), the same day (TR) 2 were at RT; small numbers wintered in *Indiana* but the first influx occurred at YC with a count of 51 on 2/19 (LC); first returnee to *Cambria* was in Croyle Twp. 2/25 (MHu).



This Cooper's Hawk was photographed near Lewisville on February 8.

Photo by Marcy Cunkelman

Dec. 16 (DG,JS) yielded the season's last 21 **Common Mergansers** at PG; CC was the place to go for high counts: 81 on 12/20 (MVT), 85 on 1/8 (SG), 34 on 1/17 (MVT); *Indiana's* reports included 2 drakes and a hen at Smicksburg 1/7 (MH,RH), 2 birds at TL 1/10 (LC,TS), and multiple sightings of 1-2 at YC beginning 1/10 (LB,LC,RK,RN,TS) through 2/28 (LC,MH, ML,RN) when 22 were listed. Four **Red-breasted Mergansers** at YC on 1/3 (LC) were the last reported; PG hosted the first 24 northward bound migrants 2/28 (DG,JS). Nine **Ruddy Ducks** were PG's last 12/16 (JS) while 5 lingered at YC through 1/5 (LC).

The IN CBC yielded 10 **Ruffed Grouse** 12/26 (v.o.), up from only one last year; only 6 other grouse were reported. **Wild Turkey** maxima included 60 at Nolo 12/28 (CL), 39 n. of IN 1/11 (SB), and 35 at Waterworks Conservation Area 2/1 (SD).

Last **Common Loons** were single birds at PG 12/16 (JS) and one observed by three birding groups 1/1 (m.ob.) at YC. A **Pied-billed Grebe** lingered at YC through 1/8 (LC) and reports of the species did not surface again till 2/7 (LC,SD,MH). YC yielded the last 20 **Horned Grebes** 12/6 (LC,JD,TG,MH,RH, DM); singletons were next noted 2/19 (LC) at TL and 2/26 (TR) at YC. Eight **Double-crested Cormorants** flew over Clymer 12/1 (CL,GL); one was at PG 12/16 (DG,JS); YC harbored a single cormorant 12/20 (LC,TG,MH) and 12/23 (LC), the only reports this season.

The first **Turkey Vultures** included one extremely early bird at CS 1/31 (DG,JS), one in Croyle Twp. 2/26 (MHu), and another over a yard n. of IN 2/29 (SB). Twenty **Bald Eagle** reports included individuals and/or pairs in all three counties (v.o.). **Northern Harriers** were listed only at CS 1/20 (DG,JS), near LV 1/21 (MC) and on WRS #1 on 2/4 (MH, RH, DL)

which produced 2 harriers near Marion Center. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were listed at 6 locations, all in *Indiana*, during the period; **Cooper's Hawk**, at 11 (v.o.). Two **Red-shouldered Hawks** were noted on the IN CBC 12/26 (GL,GS) and on WRS #1 on 2/4 (MH,RH,DL); a singleton was at Eensburg 12/29 (GL). Two WRS routes in the northern part of *Indiana* yielded 31 **Red-tailed Hawks** on 1/28 (MH, RH, DL, TS) and 25 on 2/4 (MH, RH, DL) while the

more southerly route yielded 37 on 1/21 (MH,RH, DL); two **Armstrong** WRS routes produced 41 on 1/22 (MH,RH,DL) and 17 on 2/5 (MM). A light morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was observed near Belknap 1/22 (MH, RH, DL). The five *Indiana-Armstrong* WRS routes yielded a low total of only 19 **American Kestrels** (MH, RH,DL,MM,TS). A **Merlin** was found at YC 12/2 (RN).

American Coots at YC had dwindled to 54 by 1/10 (LB,LC,RK,RN,TS), but a singleton remained on the lake 1/17 (LC); none were seen again till 2/14 (LC) when 4 appeared; by 2/28 (LC,MH,ML,RN), the flock had increased to 49; 2/28 (DG,JS) also marked the date of return for 2 at PG. Last **Killdeer** was one near Oakland Cemetery in IN 12/26 (MH,RH); one at the Conservation Waterworks Area 2/1 (SD) was either wintering or rather early; next 2 returnees arrived 2/25 (LC) at YC while PG's first was listed 2/28 (DG,JS). An early **American Woodcock** was peenting near Creekside 2/22 (MH,RH).

Single **Bonaparte's Gulls** were sighted at YC 12/20 (LC,TG,MH), 12/23 (LC), and 1/24 (LC,MH). A flock of 171 **Ring-billed Gulls** landed on YC Lake the evening of 2/25 (LC). Fifteen Ring-billed Gulls 2/12 (TR) and 5 **Herring Gulls** on 1/17 (MVT) were the high tallies at CC. Two Herrings were near the old nest at KT on 1/14 (MH,RH).

Only 3 **E. Screech-Owls** were reported, one near FC 12/16-17 (JV), another using an owl box near SH 12/26-2/5 (MH,RH), and another near LV 2/2 (MC). **Great Horned Owls** were listed at five locations (v.o.), all in *Indiana*, this winter. CC's **Barred Owl** was sighted 12/17 (VR,MVT) and 2/2 (PR,VR); one was observed near Penn Run dining on squirrel 12/21 (AB,DB); another was found near Cadogan 1/8 (TR); near SH one was heard calling 2/12 (RH). An area near St. Augustine yielded a **Short-eared Owl** 12/16 (DG,JS) and 2 on 1/12 (DG).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a surprising find on 1/22 (MH,RH,DL) southeast of Templeton. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** noted included one near LV 12/12 (MC), one on the CBC 12/26 (BM,KM,CW,PW), another visiting suet near Homer City 1/1-21 (LC), and one sporadically visiting a Nolo feeder between 1/4-2/12 (CL,GL). Two **Fish Crows** were actively calling at 5th and Water Streets in IN 12/26 (MH,RH); another visited the IUP campus 1/6 (TS). **Common Ravens** continue to be widespread with many reports from the YC area; ravens were also noted at CC, PG, Rexis, Homer City, Rochester Mills, and Sayler Park (v.o.). **Horned Lark** maxima were 100 near Rochester Mills 1/14 (TS), 300 at CS 1/20 (DG,JS), 72 on WRS #3 on 1/21 (MH,RH,DL), 39 near Belknap 1/22 (MH,RH,DL), and 80 on WRS #2 on 1/28 (MH,RH,DL, TS).

The CBC yielded 4 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at 3 locations (v.o.); 1-2 were found near SH (MH,RH) throughout the period while one was observed n. of IN 1/29, 2/16 (SB). A **Winter Wren** appeared at YC 12/26 (MH,RH). YC produced 2 **Hermit Thrushes** 1/1 (LC). CS yielded a flock of 25 **Snow Buntings** 1/20 (DG,JS). **Yellow-rumped Warbler** reports included 2 at Smicksburg Park 1/7 (MH,RH), 4 at Sayler Park 1/11 (LC), one near SH 2/1,3 (MH), and one at RT 2/4 (TR).

An **E. Towhee** continued at a feeder near LV



This Eastern Screech-Owl spent sunny days peering from the owl box.

Photo by Margaret Higbee



Yellow-rumped Warblers were a bit harder to find this winter even though the winter was a mild one.

Photo by Roger Higbee

Cris Williams, Paula Williams, David Yeane.

through 12/12 (MC); a female towhee wintered near SH (MH,RH) where it remained through the end of the period; a towhee appeared at CC 1/8 (SG). At least 4 **Swamp Sparrows** lingered at YC through 1/1 (MH,RH,DL,TP,MJS); CC yielded one 1/8 (SG) and another was found near Dayton 1/22 (MH, RH, DL). A **White-crowned Sparrow** was noted at YC 1/1 (TS), the only report. Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were nice finds 1/22 (MH,RH,DL) in Cowanshannock Twp.

Feeders near LV yielded a **Common Redpoll** 1/5 (MC) and 2 on 2/1 (MC). Three **Pine Siskins** were found near Home 2/11 (JT).

Observers: Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Louise Bem, Bill Betts, Tom Betts, Sid Blair, Lee Carnahan, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Jon Dunn, Gary Ferrence, Elise Fuller, Tom Fuller, Tom Glover, Dave Gobert, Steve Gosser, Margaret Higbee Roger Higbee, Matthew Hunt (MHu), Rita Kornberger, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Melissa Little, Beth Marshall, Ken Marshall, Mark McConaughy, Donna Meyer, Richard Nugent, Tom Pearson, Theo Rickert, Pat Rossi, Vic Rossi, John Salvetti, Tim Schreckengost, Mary Jane Seipler, Tom Skubel, Georgette Syster, John Taylor, Josie Valasek, Marge Van Tassel, Cris Williams, Paula Williams, David Yeane.

Congratulations, Daniel Winstead!

Seneca Rocks Audubon, Clarion County, recently offered a youth scholarship to the Audubon Camp in Maine. Youth in grades 9-12 were invited to apply. Todd member Flo McGuire remembered ninth grader Daniel Winstead from the 2011 PSO meeting in Bedford and suggested that he apply. Daniel had an interview in Clarion on Thursday, April 12, and was notified the following day that he had won the scholarship.

The full scholarship includes meals, lodging, expert instruction, boat trips, and field trips. The primary requirement was that the applicant should demonstrate an interest in the outdoors and natural sciences. Daniel will be heading to Maine in June and spending June 24-29 at Audubon's Coastal Maine Adventure Camp at Hog Island.

Congratulations, Daniel!

Todd Bird Club Celebrates 30 Years

Todd Bird Club was organized in 1982 by Pat Andrascik, Anne Hedgpeth, Anne Harrison, and Beth Marshall who had attended a birding class offered at IUP by Dr. Dwight Sollberger. It was formed to promote the appreciation and conservation of birds in Indiana, Armstrong, and Cambria counties.

This fall Todd will celebrate our 30th anniversary. At our May meeting we will brainstorm on possible ways to celebrate. Please come prepared to share your ideas!

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
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Join Todd Bird Club

Todd Bird Club dues are due and payable on January 1 each year. Please remit your \$10 individual membership or \$15 family membership dues to:

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

Amount Paid _____

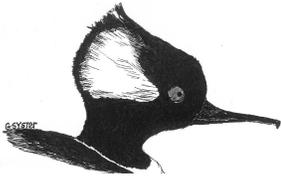
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Todd Bird Club

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