

The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

April 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.



David Yeany birds Dawson Run area.

Tuesday, April 5 – Patrick Snickles, PGC Wildlife Education Supervisor, will present a program on the life history of the American Woodcock, its range, habits, and its unusual mating system.

The evening's speaker is no stranger to our group. Previously serving northern Indiana County as WCO for 19 years, he has presented many interesting and informative programs to our group. You shouldn't miss this one! Come learn about this unusual shorebird.

Tuesday, May 3 – This is our annual banquet meeting which begins at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share and your own place settings. David Yeany will speak on his studies of forest interior birds.

Over the past three years, the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has been studying forest breeding birds across the state. A particular focus was directed at Forest Interior-dwelling Species or FIDS, which include birds like Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue Warbler, or Swainson's Thrush. FIDS generally need large contiguous blocks of unfragmented forest to breed successfully and maintain healthy populations. Utilizing off-road survey

methods, our research investigated cumulative disturbance impacts in the context of natural resource development, and bird-forest community relationships with implications for forest management on public lands. We established a better understanding of what disturbance may mean to FIDS and how relative high and low levels of disturbance can impact species' abundance and community composition. Also, by determining which forest community types support the highest densities of forest interior birds and by identifying some key forest characteristics for priority species, we can provide science-based conservation recommendations for these forest specialists, many of which are Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

! **Looking Ahead:** The Todd Bird Club picnic will be held at the home of Dan and Marcy Cunkelman again this year. The date will be **Sunday, August 21**. Save the date!

! If you haven't checked out our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/toddbirdclub/>, be sure to do so. Special thanks to Beth Nestor for starting it and keeping it going!

Outings

Tuesday morning outings, mostly at Yellow Creek, will continue. Either meet shortly after 7:00 on the north shore at the gazebo or at 8:00 at the park office located on Rt. 259, just off Rt. 422 east of Indiana. Everyone – from beginner to expert birder – is welcome. If you have questions, contact Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667) or Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). If the weather is questionable, please call!

Saturday, April 9 – Blue Spruce County Park, led by Tom Glover (814-938-5618). Come to feed the chickadees and search for early migrants. Meet in the large parking lot nearest the park entrance at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, April 16 – Saylor Park and the Ghost Town Trail, led by Lee Carnahan and Tom Glover. We will check Saylor Park for early migrants and hike part of the Ghost Town Trail. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Saylor Park parking lot. The park is located on Old Indiana Road off US Rt. 119 south of Homer City, PA.

Saturday, April 23 – Birding the Mahoning Shadow Trail, led by Tom Glover (814-938-5618). We'll check to see if the resident Bald Eagles are nesting this year; last year's nest fell and the young were lost. We'll bird the trail for migrants. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Valier trailhead parking lot.

Saturday, May 7 – Spring Warbler Walk, led by John Taylor. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Yellow Creek State Park office. Be prepared to hike.

Saturday, May 14 – PA Migration Count. Count birds in your yard or out in the field. If you plan to participate in either Indiana or Armstrong counties, please contact compilers, Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

Friday, May 20 through Sunday, May 22 – Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology meeting in Somerset. For further information, go to www.pabirds.org/. This is a great opportunity to meet birders from across the state and sample other habitats. This year it's actually on "our side of the state."

Friday, June 17 through Monday, June 20 – Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Blitz. Bird any or all of the days and pretend you're atlasing again. Watch for signs of nesting and jot them down, using the old Atlas codes. Then after you've birded, enter your data on eBird. If you participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, use the same password to access the PA eBird site. Let's put *Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria* on the map! For more information, contact Roger or Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493).

From the President's Desk....

Folks, there is a new birder in the birding world. My wife Emry and I are proud to announce the birth of our first grandchild, Phoebe Laurel Fuller. She was born Tuesday, the 22nd of March, and she came into the world at 9 lbs. Her parents, Elyse and Tom Fuller, who are also Todd members, are proud and happy.

Now as you can see, with a name like Phoebe, this young lady is the child of birders. Elyse and Tom did not want to know if they were having a boy or girl till the birth. Plus they did not announce the name till after the birth. And what a great name! Even her middle name has a significant nature. Elyse is from Pennsylvania and Tom, from Connecticut. And the state flower of both states is the Mountain Laurel. So Phoebe Laurel pays homage to both states.

Elyse and Tom's story is right out of a birder's novel. They met the very first day of classes during their fresh-

man year at college. Tom was an avid birder before meeting Elyse and quickly hooked Elyse on birding. Birding has been a major part of their lives. They have planned their vacations around birding, and the two years they lived in southern Texas they were in birding heaven. That is where they introduced me to birding in December of 2009.

In fact Elyse and Tom were birding the weekend before Phoebe's birth. Now that is dedicated birding. I will report to you on Phoebe's first birding outing. I have a feeling that there are a lot of birding outings ahead for Phoebe. I wonder if she has her own binoculars yet.

Tom Glover, President



Great Backyard Bird Count

The 19th annual GBBC was held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2016.

Holly Merker writes, "This year, Pennsylvania ranked No. 2 nationally (and globally) in the number of checklists submitted during the 2016 GBBC. This is an impressive feat considering we follow only California, which is a much larger state, has far greater bird diversity, and a lot

more people. But, this second-place ranking is no surprise, as it has been the trend for Pennsylvania in this count each year."

Below is a list of those who participated in our region which includes Indiana, Armstrong, and Cambria counties. Those asterisked are Todd members. Please let us know if anyone has been omitted.

Tina Alianiello
*Pat Andrasick
*Tony Bruno
Barbara Carrier
*Marcy Cunkelman
*Sue Dickson
Edward Davis
Annamarie Donato
Mary Donnelly
Kevin Drahnak
Barb Fletcher

Linda Greble
Wanda Grinder
William Hamilton
Susanne Haney
Jennie Henry
*Margaret Higbee
*Roger Hige
Carol Hoover
Ron Hostetler
Dawn Jenkins
Karlee Kocon

Kathy Lubert
Renee Lubert
*Andrew Mack
Deborah McCanna
David M. Morfenski
*Nancy Murphy
Tom Murray
Eugenia Pedley
*Joseph Pumford
Lynn Ramage
James Richburg

George Rittenberger
Lori Schrift
Jill Stoddard
*John Taylor
Lawrence Valasek
*Mary Jo Valasek
*Marge Van Tassel
Misti West
Jill Witherell
Bill Yackuboskey

Of the 43 participants, only 12 of them are Todd members. If you know any of the non-members, please invite them to join us.

Pennsylvania Migration Count

This year's PAMC (formerly North American Migration Count) is scheduled for Saturday, May 14. This count has taken place in Pennsylvania on the second Saturday of May since 1992. Birders go into the field to count all the birds they can find; it's very similar to the Christmas Bird Count, but the counts are county based and not limited to a 15-mile-diameter circle. Results are sent to your county compiler. Compiling for Indiana and Armstrong is Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493; bcoriole@windstream.net)

Birding for the PAMC isn't difficult; just bird as you usually do, but keep track of your totals. You may go

out for a few hours, or do a 24-hour county Big Day. Some count birds coming to their feeders and in their yards. To avoid double-counting, we need to know where you plan to bird.

Some birders go for maximum number of species; others bird within a specific area, like an IBA, a state park, or even their own property. All have a good time birding, and the resulting data are tabulated in the *Pennsylvania Birds* magazine.

Go to the PSO web site at <http://pabirds.org/PAMC> for more information.

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

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Trip to Coastal New Jersey Revisited

by Debbie Kalbfleisch

Memories of a March 14-18, 2016, birding trip to New Jersey: a Winter Wren, bouncing on a branch; hundreds of Snow Geese taking to the skies; a Seaside Sparrow, up close and personal; lovely Harlequin Ducks and Purple Sandpipers at our feet; hundreds of lispings Cedar Waxwings swarming around us; American Oystercatchers everywhere; and vast numbers of Brant, Long-tailed Ducks, scoters, and loons.



American Oystercatchers were seen every day of the trip.

Photo by Roger Higbee

In pre-dawn darkness on Monday, March 14, Kate St. John and I joined Margaret and Roger Higbee for the Todd Bird Club trip to coastal New Jersey. We had light showers on and off, but by the time we reached the Villas north of Cape May just after 2:00 p.m., the rain had stopped. Fish Crows were holding a convention of sorts; 33 of them were clustered at the bottom of West Miami Avenue. A Yellow-rumped Warbler darted across the street as we piled out of the van. At first glance, the beach seemed empty, but it didn't take long before we picked out a Ring-necked Duck, a couple of Lesser Scaup and Red-throated Loons, several Red-breasted Mergansers, 18 Surf Scoters, and 30 Black Scoters. Margaret and Roger were especially happy to see four American Oystercatchers winging by us, as they hadn't expected to see them this early in the trip. The scoters, Red-throated Loons, and oystercatchers were year birds for almost everyone. We tallied four species of gulls: Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed, as well as half a dozen Forster's Terns.

At Cape May Point State Park, we had the parking lot almost to ourselves. American Robins, European Starlings, and Common Grackles littered the grounds. A Eurasian Wigeon was in a far corner of the lake, but we all managed to get good looks. He was hanging out with a number of American Wigeons, as well as American Black Ducks, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, and Ring-necked Ducks. Gadwalls were the most numerous species with 35 individuals. A few Canada Geese and ten Mute Swans were also on the lake, as well as a lone American Coot. Among the smaller birds, we counted 11 Yellow-rumped Warblers, half a dozen Dark-eyed Juncos and House Finches, and a Song Sparrow.

As we explored the area, we added Wild Turkey and a Great Egret to our list. Jake's Landing is part of the Dennis Creek Wildlife Management Area. We drove first through large White Pines that were planted in the 1930s by the

Civilian Conservation Corps. With the windows down, we heard soft chipping, and finally caught a glimpse of an elusive tiny bird – a Winter Wren! It mounted the top of a low branch and performed a series of deep knee bends, all the while giving its signature double chip. We left the Pine Barrens and emerged onto a huge salt marsh. At least 250 Snow Geese were along the side of the road. We also saw Gadwalls, American Wigeons, American Black Ducks, Green-winged Teal, and a couple of Greater Yellowlegs.

Four Northern Harriers were working the marsh. We had planned to stay until dark, hoping to see a Short-eared

Owl, but it was windy and cold, and we doubted the owls would be flying. Only one Herring, a Great Black-backed, and a few Ring-billed Gulls were out. When all the geese and ducks suddenly rose into the sky, we looked up and saw an immature Bald Eagle. It was after 6:00 when we decided to head for warmth and food. At the edge of the wetlands where the marsh meets the pine woods, we paused once again and heard some interesting chips, which called for further investigation. Out of the van, we could hear a Northern Flicker in the distance. Movement in the treetops turned out to be Carolina Chickadees and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and we were delighted to see two Pine Warblers with them. A Swamp Sparrow was calling from the edge of the marsh, and Margaret and I walked back to look for it. Suddenly, a large gray-brown bird swooped low into the pines. Not enough of a look to make a definite ID, but we both leaned strongly to Great Horned Owl!

We spent the night at the Camelot on Howard Street in Cape May and were up early on Tuesday to check out the beach at the southern tip of the island. It was overcast and chilly, but there was, thankfully, very little wind. We observed 15 Surf Scoters, four Black Scoters, and six Red-throated Loons. A few Long-tailed Ducks, four Horned Grebes, and a Northern Gannet were new for the trip. Three American Oystercatchers were loafing on the beach, while a Sanderling scurried around on the sand. Most of the gulls were Herring, but there were a few Great Black-backed and one Lesser Black-backed among them.

At the Coral Avenue Dune Crossing on Cape Island, we viewed more Surf and Black Scoters, as well as a number of scoters that were too far out on the water to identify. We had a high count of 88 Red-throated Loons.

Surprisingly, there was another American Oystercatcher at this location, too. We also noted a Long-tailed Duck, a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers, a Horned Grebe, one Northern Gannet, a Double-crested Cormorant, and our first Common Loon. We spied three Ruddy Turnstones and a Purple Sandpiper on the rocks. It was sprinkling and still cool after a late breakfast at McDonald's. Rotary Park, at the end of Beach Drive, produced our first Laughing Gull, complete with black hood. We had more Red-throated Loons, Northern Gannets, and Sanderlings here as well.



Margaret and Roger again helped us to the top of the jetty and pointed out a pair of Harlequins standing just below us on the rocks.

Photo by Roger Higbee

We traveled to Sunset Beach where the remains of a concrete ship lie. Here again were good numbers of Surf and Black Scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Red-throated Loons. It's a bit disconcerting for me to see more Red-throated Loons than Common. Prior to this New Jersey visit, I had seen a grand total of four! Looking closely at the rocks, we found three Ruddy Turnstones and a Purple Sandpiper. A few Sanderlings were on the beach.

At Cape May Point State Park, we decided to go in search of a reported Orange-crowned Warbler since the wind had died down. The wooded trail was quiet, but we caught sight of an Eastern Phoebe, a Pine Warbler, and several Yellow-rumped Warblers. A Brown Thrasher showing off for us at the top of a shrub was a real treat and a year bird for everyone. We were able to get a closer look at the Eurasian Wigeon on the pond. We never did find that Orange-crowned, though!

At the Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge, also known as the Meadows, we enjoyed a leisurely stroll around the pond under a gray sky. Gadwalls, which totaled 58 individuals, were the most numerous birds here., Also seen were Mute Swans, American Black Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Surf and Black Scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers, Red-throated Loons, and Great Blue Herons. New for the trip were seven Buffleheads, a couple of Hooded Mergansers, and a Ruddy Duck. Carolina Wrens, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Common Grackles made up a background chorus of songs and calls.

The Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, formerly known as Brigantine, is about an hour north of Cape May, and we reached it a little after 2:00 p.m. We had experienced light rain on and off throughout the morning, but the weather had cleared and it was now mostly overcast. We got a quick look at a Hermit Thrush before it

disappeared. Noisy Red-winged Blackbirds were everywhere, and a Northern Flicker was calling. Before continuing on the eight-mile auto loop, we climbed Gull Tower, a tall observation tower, to survey the vast marsh spread out around us. There were many, many Snow Geese in the distance! A few early Tree Swallows were out. We saw our first Brant, Tundra Swans, Wood Ducks, Northern Pintails, and Common Mergansers. On the road, it wasn't long before we realized just how many Snow Geese there were; Margaret and Roger estimated well over 1,500! At one point, an adult Bald Eagle flew toward

us, and everything on the water exploded into the air, producing one of those WOW moments in birding. Once again, we spotted some American Oystercatchers! All three mergansers were in evidence: Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted, with Red-breasted the most common, with 23 individuals tallied. Our first Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin appeared. A Peregrine Falcon was surveying its kingdom from a high nesting tower. Margaret was the first to notice a large dark sparrow on the side of the road. Roger obligingly backed up the van, and Kate got her life Seaside Sparrow teed up on a tall weed. We were close enough to see his yellow lores! We counted 150 Herring Gulls and 25 Great Black-backed. Occasionally, a Herring Gull would drop a clam on the road from a great height and then fly down to pick it apart. Two Boat-tailed Grackles were duly noted. All this, while the lights of Atlantic City flickered across the bay!

We started Wednesday on the back streets of Barnegat. Bayview Avenue produced a pair of American Oystercatchers close to shore and right out in the open. Numerous Brant, Buffleheads, and Long-tailed Ducks swam around a small island. It was here that we got a call from Tony Bruno telling us he'd arrived, so we went to meet him. We took him back to Bayview Avenue, so that he could get photographs of the oystercatchers, but they turned shy of the paparazzi and retreated.

Next was a visit to Barnegat Lighthouse State Park. We started the walk on a nice, wide, concrete path that wound around the lighthouse and out along the beach. Many Brant were bobbing on the waves and resting on the sand. An aluminum railing was blocking the end of the path, with the rock jetty stretching endlessly out into the distance. It did not block Margaret and Roger! They slipped through it, and I was relieved to see that they scrambled down to the beach. We scanned the dunes as we walked and discovered a Piping Plover. A little farther on, the Higbees explained that the only way to see Harlequin Ducks was from the rock jetty. Kate and I bravely

mounted the rocks after them and slowly and very cautiously made our way.

After a while, Margaret decided that the female contingent could make better time walking on the sand. We were almost at the end when Roger and Tony on the jetty announced that they could see the ducks! Margaret and Roger again helped us to the top of the jetty and pointed out a pair of Harlequins standing just below us on the rocks. This was a life bird for me, and they were truly gorgeous! Roger and Tony continued out the jetty to photograph a dozen more Harlequins at the farthest end. No matter – I had seen my birds and wanted down! Back on terra firma, Margaret, Kate, and I turned our scopes onto the jetty and discovered 15 Ruddy Turnstones, six Dunlin and five Purple Sandpipers among the black rocks. In the rough, turbulent water, we counted 400 Long-tailed Ducks and 100 Black Scoters. We were able to pick out three Surf Scoters, a Red-breasted Merganser, and best of all, a Common Eider. One Red-throated Loon was in with a dozen Common Loons. Five black lumps in the distance proved to be Great Cormorants.

After leaving Barnegat, we continued our journey north, stopping at small lakes along the way. We recorded Brant, Mute Swans, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, and Ruddy Ducks. At the Bay Head Beach, 110 Northern Gannet were plunge diving into the ocean. Black Scoters and Common Loons were here, as well.

At the Manasquan Inlet, a Red-throated Loon was swimming in the channel next to two Common Loons, offering a nice comparison of the two species. The flat-headed Common Loon definitely looks huge and bulky next to the petite Red-throated! The jetty here had concrete poured between the rocks, making it extremely easy to navigate. We got our best look here at Northern Gannets plunge-diving into the ocean. Also at close quarters were 15 Purple Sandpipers, almost at our feet. This was the closest Kate and I had ever seen them, and we could actually discern a pale purple/pinkish cast to their feathers. Good numbers of Long-tailed Ducks, Black Scoters, and Surf Scoters were out on the water and flying along the beach. In addition to the Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, a pair of amorous Laughing Gulls bobbed and flirted with each other.

We stayed in Sea Girt Wednesday night and were up early the next morning to get in as much birding as we could before heading home. Just north of Manasquan is the Shark River Inlet. Here were 720 Brant, 227 Buffleheads, and 152 American Black Ducks. A pretty pair of Red-

breasted Mergansers were swimming close to shore. Also present were 33 Mute Swans, 12 Gadwalls, a Surf Scoter, 20 Hooded Mergansers, five Common Loons, and a Horned Grebe. A female Common Goldeneye lurked among the ducks while a pair of American Oystercatchers mingled with a group of Brant. An immature Bald Eagle came in, briefly scattering the waterfowl, before settling on a sandbar. Amazingly, a pair of oystercatchers flew in and settled on the opposite end of the sandbar! Other birds, including a flock of American Black Ducks, also decided the eagle wasn't much of a threat and drifted back.

We arrived at Sandy Hook National Park just before 10:00 a.m. It was nice to find a Common Eider in with the American Black Ducks, Surf and Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, and Red-breasted Mergansers in the South Beach area. A couple of Common Loons and some Northern Gannets were also present. It was not a surprise to see five American Oystercatchers; we had seen them every day of our trip! A Northern Flicker was active along the road. At the Visitors' Center, we were literally surrounded by 350 Cedar Waxwings. We picked out a couple



At close quarters were 15 Purple Sandpipers, almost at our feet.

Photo by Roger Higbee

of Mourning Doves and House Finches, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, 25 American Robins, a Northern Mockingbird, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler moving in and out of the constantly shifting flock. At the Sandy Hook Boardwalk, we observed 26 Brant, a Bufflehead, a pair of Common Goldeneyes, and two Horned Grebes. A Sanderling was the lone shorebird. Fort Hancock is a former army post that closed in 1974, after being in operation for a hundred years. There are still a number of rather attractive army houses, although many have fallen into disrepair. Our first Osprey of the trip was here, sitting in a tree. We walked the Proving Ground Trail to the beach and were able to see three Great Cormorants far in the distance. Of course, we had two more oystercatchers on the beach! Across the water, we could see the skyline of New York City. We were standing in bright sunshine, but a line of dark storm clouds was over the city, moving our way. On the way back, we added Field Sparrow, Cooper's Hawk, and Red-tailed Hawk to our list. A quick trip to Horseshoe Cove produced a Belted Kingfisher sitting on a snag. The sky was getting darker, and we hurried back to the van. As we left the park and headed for home, the first raindrops began to fall. Perfect timing!

Margaret and Roger, thank you again for a wonderful tour of coastal New Jersey and all the many wonderful memories! We tallied 106 species for the trip.

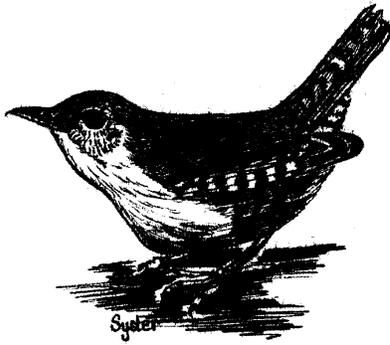
Remembering Georgette

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Georgette Syster on Saturday, February 13. Georgette served as Todd Bird Club's secretary for many years.

I first met Georgette Syster in 1983 when someone (I don't recall whom...maybe Etta Heinlen) gave me her name as a possible atlaser for the 1st Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project for which I was the Indiana-Armstrong regional coordinator. The first atlas took place between 1983 and 1988. It was my job to find birders willing to go into atlas blocks, often into unfamiliar territory, and list then code all the birds found in that block. I had received many suggestions and made numerous phone calls. Many declined immediately, but I had a spiel. Usually by the end of my cajoling, my "victims" would agree to atlas one block. I called Georgette, explained the project, and she completely threw me as she immediately said, "Yes, I'll do it," before I'd even begun my arm-twisting. I was speechless as I had been prepared to convince her to atlas, but I didn't need to. Instead of agreeing to do one block, she took 12! That was Georgette – always willing to go the extra mile. And Georgette got others involved, too – Gloria Lamer and Alice Beatty. The Nolo team did a fantastic job with the Atlas Project.

The first Indiana Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held in December 1983. Georgette first started participating in the CBC the following year and took part every year through 2014. She was an excellent birder and a reliable observer.

It wasn't long before Georgette was leading field trips for Todd Bird Club. One of the first she led on April 19, 1986, was a trip to Yellow Creek State Park then to Nolo. After that she was a regular leader. On May 6, 1986, Georgette was elected president of the bird club for a two-year term. But Georgette was not a "sit back and do nothing" president. She made the meetings interesting, and she continued to be active, leading outings, writing numerous articles, and providing fantastic artwork for our newsletter. Her first article, entitled "Vacation Birding" dealt with her trip to Eastern Egg Rock in Maine. Looking back through old newsletters, I suddenly realized what a prolific writer she had been. Through the year 2000, there were very few newsletters that did not contain an article,



sometimes two, by Georgette. In the January 2004 issue she had her granddaughter Amber Beaulé write about an experience they had with a pheasant. She continued to lead outings, including the one on our 30th anniversary celebration at Yellow Creek on April 13, 2013. Georgette's artwork still appears in every issue of our newsletter – the pair of binoculars often found at the end of articles and the Hooded Merganser by the return address.

Georgette was also instrumental in creating our first scrapbook and in Todd's participation in the All-for-Charities Fair at the Indiana Mall, which continued for many years. In 1990 Georgette was once again elected president of our group. In 1987 and again in 1992, as outgoing president, she hosted the May covered dish dinner meetings at her home. That same year, 1992, was the first annual Indiana County Migration Count in which she took part, and she continued to participate in this spring tally through 2015. In

May 1996 she was elected secretary, a position she held through 2015.

Georgette's interest in birds extended beyond Todd Bird Club's boundaries. On May 22, 1988, she taught her first Beginning Birding class for Friends of the Parks. She joined the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and attended their very first annual meeting at Lock Haven University's Sieg Conference Center in Lamar as well as many subsequent meetings across the state. In 1989 she convinced two of us to participate with her in a Big Day, a 24-hour birding expedition to tally the greatest number of species possible in our area. That first year we found 121 species, and this tradition continued for many years.

Georgette will truly be missed, not just for all she has contributed to Todd, but for herself. Her outgoing personality and positive attitude made her many friends. We had a lot of fun when Georgette was around. She has had a lasting influence on the Todd Bird Club and on many of its members. We will miss her.

– Margaret Higbee



Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County Winter Report

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 or marghigbee@gmail.com.

Locations: Auen Road Pond (ARP), Blue Spruce County Park (BS), Crooked Creek (CC), Kittanning (KT), Lewisville (LV), Lock and Dam (L&D), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rosston (RT), Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Worthington (WT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).



Highlight of the season was the occurrence of several flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese. Marcy Cunkelman photographed these at Auen Road Pond on 2/5. Note the lone Snow Goose in the center.

By January 5 only a small strip of open water remained at Yellow Creek. Yellow Creek Lake remained mostly frozen through 2/23 with just small puddles or strips of open water around the edges; we were told that ice fishermen had still been present 2/22.

Among many reports across the state this winter, 4 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found at CC 1/3 (SG) and were still present 1/9 (AK, JK). YC yielded the first 24 Greater White-fronted Geese 2/2 (LC, DK), the fifth county record; two days later (MH, RH, GL, DL) 29 showed up at the ARP near Conemaugh Dam; this is the second highest spring count on

record and the third overall. The high spring count of 31 occurred 2/21/2006 (LC, MH et al), but a large fall flock of 97 flew over YC 11/6/1999 (SGr, DJ). Top regional count was 42 at L&D 7 on 2/14 (TR); by the following day (TR), only one remained; the CC and L&D 7 sightings are the third and fourth *Armstrong* records for this species. Single **Snow Geese**, a species not seen in our area every year, appeared 2/1 (EP) near ARP (blue morph) and 2/2 (DL) at the VFW pond (white morph) where it remained the following day (LC, DL); another was spotted at the ARP 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL) and 2/5 (DC, MC, DG); a third was found standing on the ice at YC 2/9 (LC). A **Ross's Goose**, the second *Armstrong* record, was found and photographed on Crooked Creek from Scout Run Road 2/15 (TB); possibly the same bird was later found 2/20 (AK, JK, TR) at RT.



Tony Bruno photographed this striking Ross's Goose with a Canada on 2/15 in Armstrong Co..

Canada Goose maxima included 186 at PG 12/16 (LG), 320 at CC 1/9 (AK, JK), and 635 at TL 1/15 (LC). Three **Mute Swans** were found on a farm pond near Clarksburg 2/20 (SG). **Tundra Swans** continued to move through the region with reports of 21 over YC for the CBC 12/26 (ED, GS, MS, JT) and 5 on the water at TL the same day (LC, RC, DL); last southward bound reports mentioned one at PG 12/27 (RL), 12 at CC 1/8 (MVT), 76 near LV 1/12 (MC), and 15 at YC 1/16 (LC).

A **Wood Duck** was first seen n. of L&D 8 on 2/21 (TR), the second earliest *Armstrong* date of arrival with the previous being 2/19/2006 (DY); YC's first 2 Wood Ducks occurred 2/23 (TG, MH, RH, DK, KT) and PG's first 2 on 2/27 (TA). PG harbored 8 **Gadwalls** on 12/28 (RB, DGo, JS) and 4 on 1/17, 24 (TA); 2 Gadwalls at the ARP 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL) were joined by 2 more the following day (MC). Last southward bound **American Wigeon** lingered at PG 12/5 (TA); first arrivals occurred 2/20 (TR) at L&D 7 while 2 were spotted the next day (ABu) at RT; these are again among the earliest *Armstrong* arrival dates for wigeons; PG's first were 6 found 2/28 (TA). Two **American Black Ducks** remained at PG through 1/8 (LG); in *Armstrong* American Black Ducks lingered at CC through 1/9 (AK, JK) while small numbers were found throughout the season along the Allegheny. WRS #1 in *Indiana* yielded 4 black ducks 1/29 (MH, RH, GL, DL); 10 were at TL 2/3 (LC, DL); YC's first were 7 on 2/9 (LC, MH, RH). **Mallard** maxima included 320 at TL 1/30 (LC), 125 at L&D 7 on 1/31 (AK, JK), and 240 at YC 2/9 (LC). Only two **Northern Shovelers** were noted: one at PG 1/17 (TA) and one at YC 2/28 (AM). Two **Northern Pintails** were at the ARP 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL) and remained through the next day (MC, DG).

Two **Canvasbacks** at PG 1/17 (TA) were the only ones listed. A single **Redhead** lingered at YC through 12/15 (LC, PF, TG, MH, RH, DK, RN); 4 were still at PG 1/17 (TA). The last **Ring-necked Ducks** were 2 at RT 12/2 (MVT), 4 at YC 12/29 (LC, PF, TG, MH, RH, GL), and 9 at PG 1/17 (TA); by 2/23 (TG, MH, RH, DK, KT) 3 had returned to YC where numbers built to 32 by the end of the period (TA). Last 2 **Greater Scaup** remained at YC through 12/15 (LC, PF *et al*); 2/29 (TA) yielded 4 returnees at YC. Last report of **Lesser Scaup** included 5 at YC 12/26 (AB, DB, GL) and 30 at Musser's Pond (JP) the same day; one Lesser Scaup at L&D 7 on 1/23 (TR) was *Armstrong's* lone report; first spring migrant arrived at YC 2/9 (LC, MH, RH) to minimal open water. Highlight of the 33rd CBC and winner of the James Dearing Award for the "best bird" was the first **Black Scoter** to ever appear on our count on 12/26 (AB, DB, GL) at YC; the scoter was last seen 12/29 (LC, PF *et al*). This is only the second Dec. sighting on record. **Buffleheads** were noted this winter on the Allegheny with the largest flock of 8 at L&D 7 on 1/24 (TR); at PG 72 were tallied 12/16 (JS), and 4 still lingered 1/17 (TA); first northward bound Buffleheads were singletons found at TL, both 1/27 (LC) and 2/2 (LC, DK). Last **Common Goldeneye** was a count week bird for the CBC 12/23 (LC); they frequented the Allegheny again this winter with the largest flock of 11 at L&D 7 on 2/14 (TR).

Twenty-three **Hooded Mergansers** lingered at KR 12/11 (MH, RH); a nice raft of 43 was found 12/21 (LG) at PG where 12 remained 12/28 (RB, DGo, JS); in *Indiana* last Hooded Merganser was found at TL 1/15 (LC); a small farm pond in *Armstrong* Twp. hosted a female 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL); YC's first report cited a pair on 2/23 (TG, MH, RH, DK, KT). **Common Mergansers** were widespread throughout *Armstrong*, wintering on Mahoning Creek as well as the Allegheny. Thirteen Common Mergansers were last listed at YC 12/29 (LC, PF, TG, MH, RH, GL), but TL harbored one through 1/15 (LC), and PG hosted 8 on 1/17 (TA); other TL reports mentioned 2 on 2/2 (LC, DK) and 9 on 2/4 (LC); 3 visited a pond near Marion Center 2/24 (TN, SN), the same day (LC) 7 appeared at TL. YC used to host large numbers of migrant **Red-breasted Mergansers**, but this has not been the case in recent years; 3 on 12/29 (LC, PF *et al*) comprised the entire report; 2 at PG 12/13 (RL) were last. Last 2 **Ruddy Ducks** lingered at PG 12/16 (LG) and at YC through 1/5 (PF, TG, MH, RH, DK); 3 remained in a narrow strip of open water at TL 1/27 (LC).

Single **Ruffed Grouse** were reported at Nolo 12/2 (DB), at CC 12/5 (SG), and at YC 12/26 (MH). Top **Wild Turkey** counts included 58 at the Waterworks Conservation Area 12/22 (SD) and 36 near YC 2/12 (AM).

KR harbored the last 4 **Common Loons** 12/3 (MH, RH) while PG still hosted 4 on 12/27 (RL); 2 at YC 12/29 (LC, PF, TG, MH, RH, GL) were last. Six **Pied-billed Grebes** were last observed at KR 12/11 (MH, RH) while YC's last 25 Pied-billed Grebes were swimming in a very narrow strip of open water at YC 1/5 (PF, MH, RH, DK); one lingered at TL 1/15 (LC) in another narrow strip of open water; 2 at PG 1/17 (TA) were last. The only **Horned Grebes** noted in *Armstrong* were 3 spotted at KR 12/3 (MH, RH) and



Tony Bruno found this Double-crested Cormorant at Keystone Reservoir 12/24.

one early migrant at CC 2/29 (MVT). Two Horned Grebes and a **Double-crested Cormorant** were last noted at YC 12/29 (LC, PF, TG, MH, RH, GL). One cormorant was listed at PG 12/10 (LG). Another cormorant sighting occurred 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL) at the ARP. The only sightings of **Great Blue Heron** in *Indiana* after the 4 on the CBC 12/26 (v.o.), were one at Clymer 1/19 (AB, GL) and one along Creekside Road 2/22 (MH, RH); *Armstrong* sightings were much more plentiful (v.o.).

Single returning **Turkey Vultures** were observed 2/22 along Barclay Road in *Indiana* (MH, RH) and near Brush Valley (KT); most other first dates in the region were also early – 2/28 or 2/29 (v.o.).

Mahoning Dam hosted an amazing 16 **Bald Eagles** on 1/5 (AD); five were adults. Numerous Bald Eagles were reported in *Indiana*, all adults, including one over LV 1/9 (MC), a pair at TL 1/16 (LC), one on WRS #2 on 2/2 (MH, RH, GL, DL), one at YC 2/5 (GL), and another flying over the Center Twp. building 2/21 (BF); nest building was confirmed at PG 2/28 (TA), and another two pairs were on nest at two *Armstrong* locations 2/29 (TB, MH, RH).

This winter yielded an amazing number of **Northern Harrier** sights. Three WRS routes, one in s. *Armstrong* (MM) and 2 in *Indiana*, yielded a total of 5 Northern Harriers, one in *Armstrong* 1/30 (MM) and 2 on each *Indiana* survey 2/2, 4 (MH, RH, GL, DL). Other sightings included single birds at PG 12/5 (TA), 12/6 (RL), and 2/28 (LG); 2 at Chest Springs 12/28 (RB, DGo, JS), one near West Lebanon 12/26 (MVT); one near LV 1/21,24 and 2/3 (MC); a male near Elders Ridge 1/31 (MVT); and a female near Plumville 2/4 (CL). Two were found n. of L&D 8 on 2/15 (AD). The WT area was a hotspot for harrier sightings between 1/22 (MVT) and 2/20 (TR).

Sharp-shinned Hawks were noted at ten locations this quarter; **Cooper's Hawks**, at 21 (v.o.). Single **Red-shouldered Hawks** were listed on only three dates in *Indiana*: 12/28 (MC) near LV, 1/29 (MH, RH, GL, DL) on WRS #1, and 2/9 (LC, MH, RH) at YC; there were numerous sightings of single birds at CC between 12/20 and 2/29 (MVT), but on 2/25 (MVT) 2 were listed; 4 were noted at Mahoning Dam 1/5 (AD). Three *Indiana* WRS routes respectively yielded 29, 69, and 34 **Red-tailed Hawks**; the 69 on WRS #2 set all-time high record. Two *Armstrong* WRS routes produced 16 on 1/30 (MM) and 27 on 2/18 (MH, RH). Four **Rough-legged Hawks** were noted – a dark morph female near Elderton 1/30 (MM), a dark morph n.w. of Loretto 2/5 (GG), a light morph 2/14 (MVT) near KT, and a dark morph near West Lebanon 2/18 (PF).

Fifteen **American Coots** at YC 1/5 (PF, TG, MH, RH, DK) were last; 3 appeared at TL 1/27 (LC) while 2 were noted at YC 2/6 (KR); one at RT 2/20 (TR) was the only one found in *Armstrong*.

On 12/26, 8 **Killdeer** remained at CC (MVT) and 20 near the JS Airport (PJ) set a CBC high record; the first *Armstrong* returnee appeared at CC 2/28 (TR); WRS #3 yielded one on 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL).

Eight **Bonaparte's Gulls** visited RT 12/2 (MVT); this is only the third Dec. record in *Armstrong* for Bonaparte's Gull. Last **Ring-billed Gulls** were 2 at RT 12/19 (TR), 2 at YC 1/5 (PF, DK), and 13 at PG 1/17 (TA). Migrants began reappearing 2/14 (TR) at L&D 7; 2/23 (LC, TG) at YC; and 2/27 (TA) at PG.



This is one of the E. Screech-Owls found by Tony Bruno and digiscoped here by Margaret Higbee on 2/22.

Eastern Screech-Owls and **Great Horned Owls** were each reported at four locations. A **Snowy Owl**, the third *Armstrong* record, was photographed north of Mahoning Dam 1/22 (FP). **Barred Owls** were calling at Nolo 12/10 (DB) and 1/6 (AB, DB) and near SH 1/31, 2/18 (MH, RH). One was photographed at another *Indiana* location 2/16 (TB).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** lingered at CC through 1/3 (SG); another was consistently observed near LV between 12/1 and 1/11 (MC); a third was reported near Westmont 2/14 (EPe).

Single **Merlins** were good finds 1/22 (MVT) near WT and on the IUP campus 2/3, 13, 17/(JT). A single **Peregrine**, photographed in Johnstown, was present 12/3 to 2/17 (LG); a pair returned to the KT bridge again this year with the first sighting 2/2 (MVT).

A **Northern Shrike** was a great sighting at PG 1/24-2/17 (TA).

The largest flocks of **Horned Larks** included 57 individuals on 12/26 (PJ) near the Jimmy Stewart Airport and 25 on 1/5 (TG, MH, RH, DK) near YC.



Tony Bruno found this Barred Owl at an *Indiana* location.

One to 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** visited feeders sporadically near SH between 12/3 (MH, RH) and 2/7 (MH, RH); 2 were noted at Ford Cliff 2/12 (LR); singletons were found at YC 2/14 (PA), at Richland 2/15 (TM), and in a yard near Homer City 2/20 (BF). Single **Winter Wrens** were found only near LV 12/5 (MC), near Homer City 12/26 (SP), and near Smicksburg 2/13 (CH). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** 2/9 (MC) near LV was a nice find.

A **Hermit Thrush** at Conemaugh Dam 12/29 (MVT) and one near Saylor Park 2/22 (MH, RH) were the only ones reported.

Lingering **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were uncommon this winter with the only consistent report near LV where 1-5 were found between 12/1 and 1/31 (MC); CC harbored 2 on 2/7 (MVT).



This was one of two Yellow-rumped Warblers found and photographed by Marge Van Tassel at Crooked Creek on 2/7.

A **Chipping Sparrow** appeared at a feeder near SH 2/14 (MH, RH) where it visited sporadically through 2/28 (MH, RH). A late **Field Sparrow** was photographed along Creekside Rd. 12/26 (TS); next 5 were noted n.e. of Northern Cambria 2/12 (KD). **Fox**

Sparrows were found at three locations but was consistent only near SH where it was seen on 13 dates between 12/29 and 2/26 (MH, RH); one was heard near LV 1/27 (MC) and another was spotted on WRS # 1 on 1/29 (MH, RH, GL, DL). Single **White-crowned Sparrows** were listed on two dates – 2/10 (MH, RH, GL) on the n. *Armstrong* WRS and 2/13 (LV) s. of KT; 4 were at Ebensburg 2/13 (RHo).

In this northern finchless year, 3 **Pine Siskins** at Cochran's Mill 1/26 (MVT) and one at Leechburg 2/15 (MVT) were noteworthy; noted at only four *Indiana* locations, the best count was 30 near Indiana 2/9 (SD); in *Cambria* the high tally was 23 near Johnstown 1/1 (LG).



Marcy Cunkelman photographed this siskin at her feeder near Lewisville, one of only four *Indiana* locations this winter.

Observers: Tina Alianiello, Pat Andrascik, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Rory Bower, Alan Buriak (ABu), Lee Carnahan, Roger Carnahan, Dan Cunkelman, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Annamarie Donato, Ed Donley, Kevin Drahnak, Patience Fisher, Barb Fletcher, Tom Glover, Dave Gobert (DGo), Steve Gosser, Steve Graff (SGr), Linda Greble, Deb Grove, Greg Grove, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Carol Hoover, Ron Hostetler (RHo), Dory Jacobs, Pat Johner, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Avis Keener, John Keener, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Renee Lubert, Andrew Mack, Mark McConaughy, Tom Murray, Tony Nastase, Sandra Newell, Richard Nugent, Frank Pago, Ed Patterson, Eugenia Pedley (EPe), Sara Pulliam, Joseph Pumford, Lynn Ramage, Theo Rickert, Karli Rogers, John Salvetti, Tim Schreckengost, Garrett Strittmatter, Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Ken Truitt, Lawrence Valasek, Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Linda Wagner, Dan Yagusic.



Your Dues Are Now Due

January 1 started a new year for Todd Bird Club. If you haven't yet paid, please remit your \$5 student, \$10 individual, or \$15 family dues to our treasurer ASAP:

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

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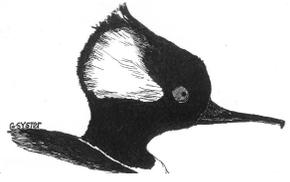
Dear Todd Bird Club,

Thank you very much for your donation to my Eagle Scout Project. Because of your donation, I was able to finish my chimney swift nesting tower. Now that the tower is finished, it will be able to house one nesting pair of birds each season and help stop the population loss of the chimney swift. Each generation of birds that hatch in this tower hatched because of your donation which made the construction of the tower possible. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Jack Ferguson





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