

# The Todd Nuthatch



Indiana, PA

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

April 2019

## 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 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, April 4** – Cory Wentzel, a Forest Assistant Manager with DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, Forbes Forest District, based in Laughlinton, has been with the PA Bureau of Forestry for 21 years. He will present the story of his involvement with the “Eastern United States Golden Eagle Research Project,” spearheaded by Dr. Todd Katzner with the U.S. Geological Survey. Cory manages one of many Golden Eagle camera bait sites in the eastern United States.

His presentation will include many photos of the Golden Eagles and other animals that visited his bait site. He will also show a great homemade video of capturing and



Golden Eagles will be the focus of our April meeting.



Cory Wentzel holds the Golden Eagle in preparation for its release.

processing a Golden Eagle at his bait site on Laurel Mt. in 2012. He states that getting to hold the Golden Eagle in his arms was one of the greatest experiences of his life. “Golden Eagles are amazing creatures,” Cory writes, “I’ve been a birder since I was six years old but did not know Golden Eagles were spending their winters in our PA mountains until I started working with this project.” Don’t miss this interesting program!

**Tuesday, May 7** – Our May banquet begins at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a covered dish to share and your own place settings.

Dinner will be followed by the program, "An Itch, a Twitch, and a Megatick: Stalking the Picathartes." MarLa Sink Druzgal is returning by popular demand!

BBC dubbed them "The Birds That Have Lived for 44 Million Years." Join the adventure as Traveling MarLa recounts her recent journey to the rainforests of Ghana in search of the White-necked Rockfowl, also known as the Yellow-headed Picathartes. We will explore a

variety of West African species encountered along the way and learn about the series of failures that nearly ended the search.

MarLa Sink Druzgal, an Indiana County native, is a freelance writer, digital photographer, and global explorer. She holds an IUP Bachelor's in English and an MFA from Chatham University. Her travel essays, poetry,

and photography have appeared in both print and online publications. She is currently revising a book about her years living and traveling throughout southern Africa. Follow her work on her website: [TravelingMarLa.com](http://TravelingMarLa.com)

This multi-media presentation will include a question-and-answer session. Don't miss Mar La's presentation!

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## Outings

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

**Saturday, April 6** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Roger and Margaret Higbee (724-354-3493). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. This is the annual joint spring outing with the Three Rivers Birding Club. This field trip will culminate with lunch at the Chinese buffet in Indiana.

**Saturday, April 13** – Blue Spruce Park, led by Ray Winstead (724-349-2506). Besides early migrants, we'll take some time to feed the Black-capped Chickadees and a few other species that will now land on our hands to feast. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the first large parking lot near the park office.

**Saturday, April 20** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by Lee Carnahan (724-388-4667). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the park office. We will target early warblers and other passerines.

**Saturday, April 27** – Mahoning Shadow Trail, led by Tom Glover (814-938-5618; [tomnglover@comcast.net](mailto:tomnglover@comcast.net)). Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the Fordham trailhead parking lot. We will check out the resident Bald Eagles and their 2019 nesting efforts. Take US Route 119 north toward Punxsutawney. Just before Punxsy, turn left onto PA Route 210. In about 2.5 miles Route 210 will take a sharp left but continue straight on Valier Drive for another half mile into Valier. Turn right onto Fordham Road. Just after the bridge turn right into the trailhead parking lot.

**Saturday, May 4** – Yellow Creek State Park, led by John Taylor ([jftaylor@iup.edu](mailto:jftaylor@iup.edu)). This is our annual warbler walk. Be prepared to hike. Meet at the park office at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 11** – PA Migration Count. If you plan to participate in Indiana County, please contact the Higbees by phone (724-354-3493) or email at [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net). If you're planning to bird Armstrong, please contact Marge Van Tassel at 724-845-1050 or [marvantassel@gmail.com](mailto:marvantassel@gmail.com).

**Saturday, May 18** - Blue Spruce County Park, led by Tom Glover. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the large parking lot near the park office. This is the best place in Indiana County for migrant warblers.

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## A Count to Remember – The Solitaire Saga

By John F. Taylor

Our spirits buoyed by a forecast of relatively warm temperatures and very light winds, Ed Donley and I drove east from Indiana to Yellow Creek State Park to fulfill our annual obligation as members of the Todd Bird Club's "North Shore Crew" for the Indiana Christmas Bird Count on December 26. We were feeling good about our chances of delivering a respectable tally of the birds from our assigned territory along the north shore of the lake, given the decent weather conditions and a larger crew than we normally field on the count. My brother Wil and

our nephew Scott Simms, both visiting for the holidays, would join us, at least for the morning. My good friend of many years, Mark Strittmatter, was also able to arrange his schedule to help out for most of the day. That meant not only three additional, experienced birders in our crew, but three pairs of *exceptionally* sharp eyes to find whatever was hanging out in our territory this year. Perhaps 2018 would be the year that we turn up something really unusual to report when the species are tallied over dinner the evening of the count. To keep the optimism from

running unchecked, however, I pointed something out to the group shortly after we convened at the north park boundary: We've been doing this for about thirty years now, and that rarity hasn't shown up yet!

Mark was already there when Ed and I arrived. In fact, he'd been out for over an hour already and had been rewarded for his early start with some good birds: a Brown Creeper in the woods and some Buffleheads and a Belted Kingfisher at the lake. Scott and Wil arrived just after we did, also with something noteworthy to report. They'd spied a Merlin before joining us. Ed and I fired back feebly that we'd seen some crows and starlings on the drive out.

Welcoming the opportunity to slink away and find something to prove that we had, you know, actually birded before, Ed and I followed the tree line that marks the park boundary down into the valley and made our way through the woods where we'd done well in previous years. By the time we reconvened, Ed and I were able to hold our heads higher having turned up a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers, a few Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and many of the unremarkable but nonetheless welcome "usual suspects" (cardinals, juncos, titmice, chickadees, etc.). Other spots along the lake yielded a pair of Ring-billed Gulls, several Eastern Bluebirds, a small flock of Hooded Mergansers, as well as a larger raft of Common Mergansers. We also spotted several Downy Woodpeckers and a Hairy Woodpecker, leaving only the Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker to complete a sweep of the local woodpeckers. The sapsucker is a particularly critical target species for our crew because the north shore territory includes the best habitat for that species that exists in the count circle. Failure to deliver the sapsucker guarantees us an accusatory glare and/or a verbal reprimand from Margaret Higbee at the tally dinner.

By mid-afternoon we'd reached my favorite location in the park, an area of the Seph Mack Boy Scout Camp with small patches of trees whose fruits attract species that can be tough to find on the CBC. It's also where we have most frequently succeeded in our search for the elusive sapsucker. To our dismay, we found the usually reliable groves completely devoid of birds – at least on our first trip through. Wil and Scott had already received a call that they were expecting, bringing an end to their day in the field. As they were leaving, I told them that we would probably find something really special after they left. If

not, I assured them that we would think of something sufficiently exotic to claim that we'd seen to make them regret their early departure. Little did I know! As we usually do in the camp area, we split up to cover more



The Townsend's Solitaire remained at Yellow Creek through 1/11/19.

Photo by Roger Higbee

territory. Mark had taken the upper road while Ed and I followed the road along the lakeshore into the camp. Ed and I parted company briefly once we'd reached the prime territory near the fruit trees. He took the road that led up to the shooting range (fortunately inactive at the time) while I hiked down the path that leads to a small, outdoor chapel where I've turned up the sapsucker on previous counts by standing quietly and watching the trees for a while. That trick didn't produce a sapsucker this time, but it did pay off when I found a mixed flock of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings sitting idly in the trees just off the trail. Some of them flew down the hill toward the lake as I retraced my steps up the path.

As I emerged from the entrance to the chapel trail, I found Ed standing there, looking down the hill. I filled him in on what I'd seen near the chapel, and he informed me that he'd also had a good sighting. "I think I got us a mockingbird," he said. This was good news, because the places in Indiana that we had relied upon for a mockingbird in previous years had not delivered one in the two months prior to the 2018 count. When I asked about the implied uncertainty in his statement, he said the bird he'd seen had the correct color of gray, but not the mockingbird's usual color patterns, and the tail seemed too short. So down the hill we went in the direction the bird had flown toward a stand of fruit trees lower on the slope, probably the same destination of the robins and waxwings I'd flushed earlier. This time that lower grove of fruit trees was alive with birds. It was mostly the robins and waxwings, but I soon spotted a bird off by itself, perched at the edge of the woods. Seeing the uniformly gray plumage with some white markings, I told Ed, "I think I've got your mockingbird." It was difficult, however, to make out the details with the bird partially concealed by branches and the sun shining in at a low angle behind it. Nonetheless, it wasn't long before it registered that the proportions weren't right. The bill was too short, the head more rounded, and the body too compact overall. It was then that we saw the prominent white eye ring, which laid to rest the possibility that we simply had a poorly illuminated mockingbird. "Ed, we might have a *really* good bird here," I said. "It looks like a solitaire!"

Having spent quite a bit of time doing geologic field work in the mountains out West, I'd seen Townsend's Solitaires before. But it had been a while, so I pulled out my field guide, and Ed called up images on his phone. (Not hard to tell which of us is the Luddite, is it?) Both sources singled out the buff wing patches as the species' most diagnostic feature. Needing a better vantage, with the sun somewhere other than behind the bird, we worked our way slowly through the tangle of branches between us and the open field beyond it. Unfortunately, it took exception to the two large, over-accessorized bipeds slinking through the brush below it, and it flew off into the woods. Mark arrived as we emerged from the brush, so we filled him in on what we'd seen to that point. I was fairly certain that I'd made out the fairly inconspicuous buffy wing patch while the bird was perched, but I really wanted a better look to lock down the identification. Fortunately, the bird had not flown far. We found it a short distance into the woods, feeding on the fruits and sparring a bit with the robins and waxwings. With the sun now behind us and the bird fluttering as it fed and interacted with the other species, the wing patches were conspicuous, and the identification unequivocal. At other times, as it sat looking toward the small flock of waxwings nearby, it fluttered its wings and bobbed its tail. At Mark's prompting, Ed used his phone to pull up some on-line videos that showed Townsend's Solitaires displaying that distinctive behavior. To our amusement, the bird responded to the video by looking in our direction and moving a bit closer to us.

We now had another decision to make. I'd often wondered what we would or should do if we turned up a rarity during the CBC. Should we notify our fellow birders immediately to afford them the opportunity to modify their schedules to swing by and see the bird before it disappears? Or should we hold off on notification so we don't disrupt the count by pulling participants off their assigned territories? We decided to do the latter, in part because the solitaire had been fairly easy to approach, and it seemed likely to stay put where it had settled in with food and cover in abundance. The three of us completed our scheduled hike to the breast of the dam, searching intently but in vain for a sapsucker. It really stung to miss that species this year because we had found a Northern Flicker near the solitaire spot, so the sapsucker would have given us all six woodpeckers for the day, something we've never accomplished on the CBC. We checked on the solitaire on the return trip to confirm that it was indeed still present as we left the area, and we headed home to Indiana for the post-count tally dinner at Hoss's restaurant over which Margaret and Roger Higbee dutifully preside as the count compilers.

Ed graciously suggested that I read off the species for the

North Shore Crew, so I looked forward to dropping the bomb at the end after all species previously sighted had been tallied, and Margaret asked whether any birds new to the count had been found. Except for Mark, who had a family commitment, the entire North Shore Crew made it to the dinner. To my surprise, Scott and Wil didn't accuse us of fabricating a rarity when we informed them of the solitaire sighting. I suspect Wil might have had a beer or two before he came to the dinner. I spoke briefly with Margaret when we arrived and simply told her that we'd had a really good day. It turns out we weren't the only ones. Quite a few good sightings were reported as Margaret called out the species while Roger, the long-suffering scribe, struggled to keep pace with the numbers flying at him. Ken and Beth Marshall had added a new species to the count, having spotted three Black Vultures at the southwestern edge of the count circle. As a species not previously seen on any of our previous CBCs, this almost certainly would be voted "best bird of the count" for 2018. In recent years, we have referred to this as the Dearing Award, in honor of James Dearing, who had consistently and enthusiastically participated in the CBC for many years as a member of the North Shore Crew prior to his passing in 2010. The Higbees always provide a stuffed bird (no, not a real one!) that is given to the awardee(s) at the dinner. Other candidates for the Dearing Award surfaced as the tally continued, among them Trumpeter Swans that Dennis Lauffer and Lee Carnahan had found in their territory. When Margaret called for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker sightings, we got not only the expected glare but a pointed comment, "I thought you said you had a good day!" After Margaret had gone through the list of species, she called for nominations for the Dearing Award, inadvertently skipping the request for species new to the count. This omission was promptly pointed out to her, and as she asked for any such sightings, I raised my hand and told her. "You're about to find out why I told you we had a really good day. One more species to add... Townsend's Solitaire!" To which she exclaimed, "You're kidding!" Which, of course, we weren't.

Fittingly, Ed Donley received the Dearing Award for finding the best bird of the count, and I am sure that he's found a suitable perch for it at his place as a reminder of both a remarkable bird and a departed good friend of many years. Ed cheerfully complied with numerous requests for directions to the solitaire spot as the group disbanded, and he later posted information to eBird to notify the broader birding community of the find. I took Wil to Yellow Creek the next morning to see the solitaire, which had indeed stayed put as we had hoped. The Higbees and Gloria Lamer were there when we arrived. Roger had gotten some splendid pictures, and Gloria lent a hand, relocating the bird for Wil, who needed it as a

lifer...and as proof that we didn't make the whole thing up.

Ornithological records for Pennsylvania indicate that the Townsend's Solitaire has been seen fewer than 20 times in the state, and only once previously on a CBC, on the Butler count in 1993. Our guy was quite cooperative and afforded splendid views and photo opportunities for a steady flow of birders who visited Yellow Creek over the next few weeks. The last sighting reported on eBird was by Jeff McDonald on January 11. Attempts to find the bird on the regular Tuesday morning Todd Bird Club outings at Yellow Creek since then have proven unsuccessful.

Hopefully the solitaire's faulty internal compass is working in reverse, taking it back to the coniferous slopes of the mountains out West. We'll never know, of course, but that's the scenario I choose to envision.

My Biology Department colleague Tom Simmons sent me a photo he had taken of the solitaire. I sent it to one of my good friends who'd asked how our count went. His response was...“Let me get this straight. I'm supposed to get excited about a little, lost, gray bird that doesn't know east from south?” He's a darned good friend, but he's obviously not a birder.



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## Odds and Ends

Todd Bird Club recently voted to make several donations:

At our December meeting, we voted to donate four 40-lb. bags of black oil sunflower seed to Yellow Creek State Park to fill the feeder behind the park office. The motion was made to donate one bag at a cost of \$14 for each of the months, December through March. Lee Carnahan built the feeder for the park several years ago, but money has not been available for the park to purchase bird seed. Some of the more interesting sightings at the feeder since it has been filled have included a leucistic Black-capped Chickadee which was still present on March 26 and a Pine Warbler spotted on Saturday, March 23.



This Pine Warbler was foraging at the base of the Yellow Creek State Park bird feeder for bits of sunflower seed dropped by other species.

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After receiving a request from former Indiana County birder Matt Sarver, we voted to donate \$100 to the Delaware Bird-a-thon. The Delaware Ornithological Society plans to use the money raised through the event to purchase crucial habitat for migrating Red Knots at Mispillion Point. Red Knots migrate through Pennsylvania on their 18,000-mile round trip from southern South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic then back to the southern tip of South America in the fall. In recent years the Red Knot population has declined by 80 percent with fewer than 35,000 along the Atlantic Flyway where they need to feast on horseshoe crab eggs to continue their journey northward. Because of overharvesting of horseshoe crabs, the quantity of available horseshoe crab eggs for migrating knots has been terribly diminished, making the migration difficult as the birds continue northward. The



These Red Knots were photographed by Margaret Higbee on a fall 2015 Todd Bird Club trip to Delaware.

purchase of critical habitat will not only benefit Red Knots but Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and other species will be helped as well.

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The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) is a partner in the Frontiers in Ornithology – A Symposium for Youth, which is being held on Saturday, September 28, 2019, at the Ashland Nature Center in Hockessin, Delaware. Hosted by the Delaware Nature Society, the collaborative event is sponsored by Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, as well as PSO, with the lead partnering organization being the Delaware Ornithological Society. The symposium will feature Scott Weidensaul as the keynote speaker, and other presentations and panel discussions will be led by renowned experts in today's cutting edge avian technology, research, and science. The Facebook page (Frontiers in Ornithology: A Symposium for Youth group) is still under construction but will soon include more details. A list of the other presenters is now available on that page. At our March meeting, Todd members voted to donate \$100 to support the symposium.

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The annual Todd Bird Club picnic will be held Sunday, August 18, at the home of Dan and Marcy Cunkelman. Details will follow in the August newsletter and on line.

# Jamaican Birding Adventures 2019

by Pat and Sherron Lynch

To escape the wintery Pittsburgh weather we visited Jamaica from January 16 to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Aside from its warmth (the 60s to the 80s) during the winter, it offers 29 Jamaican endemics as well as Caribbean endemics. Instead of trying our hand at exploring and driving on the left, we used the excellent guiding services of Ricardo Miller, owner of the local Arrowhead Birding (named for Jamaica's endemic warbler).

Ricardo is an accomplished birder, a biologist, works as an ecologist for the Jamaican government, and has attended international conferences. Arrowhead Birding specializes in tours for two to four persons but also will lead larger birding groups, such as tours for the Portland Audubon Society of Oregon. Having our personal guide allowed us to go at a more relaxed pace, although Ricardo certainly kept us busy. He has an engaging personality and impressed us with his broad knowledge concerning Jamaican history, nature, and culture, as well as world affairs.

We left Wexford during an early morning icy rain and arrived during a warm evening in Kingston. Customs were very efficient. Ricardo met us at the airport entrance and drove us to the Knutsford Court Hotel in Kingston. Because Ricardo resides in Kingston, his tours usually cover the eastern section of the island including the picturesque Blue Mountains. On the hotel's property we found a variety of birds, including two hummingbirds--the incredible Red-billed Streamertail and the Vervain Hummingbird, the world's second smallest bird.

Ricardo took us to the usually very hot Hellshire Hills which provided us with several endemics including the stunning Jamaican Mango (another hummingbird), Jamaican Vireo, Stolid Flycatcher, and Jamaican Oriole (a Caribbean endemic). We also had our first of several glimpses of mongooses. Greater Portmore provided ducks and waders, including the Northern Jacana. After an afternoon rest, we birded beautiful Hope Gardens. Among the many birds were the endemic Black-billed and Yellow-billed Parrots, Jamaican Woodpecker, and Jamaican Euphonia. Loggerhead Kingbirds seemed to be everywhere. We saw 16 warbler species during the tour, with the Prairie Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and American Redstart appearing frequently.



We arose early the next day and saw the Jamaican Owl and the Great Potoo, a strange-looking, large bird that blends in well as it perches in a tree. We then birded in the Blue Mountains for two days. The famous Blue Mountain Coffee is grown here. The mountain roads are narrow with many hairpin curves. The Jamaicans are accustomed to driving these narrow roads and beep their horns before entering a

particularly bad curve. Pat was very glad that he wasn't driving. Sherron was even more glad that Ricardo was driving.

During our two days in the Blue Mountains, we were thrilled to see Jamaican Spindalis, Crested Quail-Dove, Arrowhead Warbler, Rufous-throated Solitaire, Jamaican Tody, Jamaican Becard, White-eyed Thrush, the ubiquitous White-chinned Thrush, Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, and Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, among others. Watching a beautifully feathered Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo scale a tree was definitely special since we had missed seeing a lizard cuckoo in the Bahamas despite our searching intensely for it. Lyndon Johnson, who resides in the Blue Mountains and often guides for Arrowhead Birding, was excellent at finding our first cuckoos and the grassquit.

When the adorable Jamaican Tody began to show up in small numbers, Pat coined the expression "treasure of todies" for the collective noun. Ricardo liked it so well that he plans to campaign to have it used just like a "murder of crows." We hope it catches on!

During our stay at the Starlight Chalet which is under renovations, we enjoyed watching the alpha Red-billed Streamertail attempting to drive away other streamertails from *his* feeders and their maneuvering to drink. We often were within a few feet of these beautiful birds. The owners of the chalet are attempting to make it the most birder-friendly hotel in Jamaica.

After leaving the mountains, we birded along the way to Port Antonio and stayed at Bay View Eco Lodge for two nights. We added Magnificent Frigatebird, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Jamaican Parakeet (formerly Olive-sided Parakeet), White-tailed Tropicbird, Black-billed Streamertail, the rare Jamaican Crow, and the Cuban race of American Kestrel. The area has beautiful scenery

including the famous Blue Lagoon. To maintain one of Sherron's vacation traditions, the three of us walked along the sand and got our feet wet at Winnifred Beach.

The day before our departure, we returned to Kingston. Ricardo picked up his pretty five-year old daughter from school, and we all enjoyed ice cream cones for lunch at her favorite eatery. Since we had a late morning flight on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ricardo took us birding and also sightseeing at Port Royal. Once the home of infamous pirates, it had the reputation of being the richest and most notorious city in the world before Henry Morgan took control. About

two-thirds of it slipped into the bay during the earthquake and resulting tsunami of 1692.

The airport in Kingston wasn't crowded, and we were waved through customs in Atlanta. Unfortunately, the US government shutdown probably affected our scheduled flight leaving Atlanta because the assigned flight crew did not arrive on a previous flight. Instead of reaching Pittsburgh around 10 p.m., we arrived around 12:30 a.m. Of course, there was snow on the ground to greet us when we awoke in the morning.

Below is a list of our 111 trip birds.

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## Jamaican Birds Seen January 16-23, 2019

Endemics in bold italics (29) Life birds with asterisk\* (39) Total birds (111)

Least Grebe  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Brown Pelican  
Magnificent Frigatebird  
White-tailed Tropicbird  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Tricolored Heron  
Little Blue Heron  
Snowy Egret  
Cattle Egret  
Green Heron  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron  
Glossy Ibis  
Blue-winged Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Turkey Vulture  
American Kestrel  
Peregrine Falcon  
Osprey  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Purple Gallinule  
Common Gallinule  
Northern Jacana  
Black-necked Stilt  
Killdeer  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Sanderling  
Least Sandpiper  
Laughing Gull  
Royal Tern  
Rock Dove  
White-crowned Pigeon  
**Ring-tailed Pigeon \***

Mourning Dove  
Zenaida Dove  
White-winged Dove  
Common Ground-Dove  
Caribbean Dove \*  
**Crested Quail-Dove \***  
Ruddy Quail-Dove\*  
**Jamaican (Olive-throated) Parakeet \***  
Green-rumped Parrotlet \*  
**Yellow-billed Parrot \***  
**Black-billed Parrot \***  
**Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo \***  
**Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo \***  
Smooth-billed Ani  
**Jamaican Owl \***  
Northern Potoo  
White-collared Swift  
Antillean Palm Swift\*  
**Jamaican Mango\***  
**Red-billed Streamertail \***  
**Black-billed Streamertail \***  
Vervain Hummingbird \*  
Belted Kingfisher  
**Jamaican Tody \***  
**Jamaican Woodpecker\***  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
**Jamaican Elaenia\***  
Greater Antillean Elaenia \*  
**Jamaican Pewee \***  
**Sad Flycatcher \***  
**Rufous-tailed Flycatcher \***  
Stolid Flycatcher\*  
Gray Kingbird  
Loggerhead Kingbird  
**Jamaican Becard \***  
**Jamaican Vireo \***  
**Blue Mountain Vireo\***

**Jamaican Crow \***  
Cave Swallow  
Rufous-throated Solitaire \*  
**White-eyed Thrush \***  
**White-chinned Thrush \***  
Bahama Mockingbird  
Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
Blue-winged Warbler  
Northern Parula  
Yellow Warbler  
Cape May Warbler  
Black-throated Blue Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Prairie Warbler  
Palm Warbler  
**Arrowhead Warbler \***  
American Redstart  
Worm-eating Warbler  
Ovenbird  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Common Yellow-throat  
Bananaquit  
**Jamaican Euphonia \***  
**Jamaican Spindalis \***  
Yellow-faced Grassquit  
Black-faced Grassquit  
**Yellow-shouldered Grassquit \***  
**Orangequit \***  
Greater Antillean Bullfinch  
**Jamaican Blackbird \***  
Greater Antillean Grackle \*  
Great-tailed Grackle  
Jamaican Oriole \*  
Yellow-crowned Bishop  
Scaly-breasted Munia

# Trumpeter Swan Family Update

By Tom Glover

For more than a year and a half we have been following the story of Trumpeter Swans Z603 and Z675. And we can add their cygnet hatched on a beaver pond in Jefferson County, PA, in 2018 to the story. During the summer and into the fall of 2018 Lisa Catarouche provided updates on the swan family. She provided numerous photos detailing the progress of the adults and their cygnet. The last photos Lisa provide of the swan family were taken early September 2018. The last observation of the swans on the Jefferson County beaver pond was noted in mid-October 2018. That observation proved to be the last sighting of the swan family in 2018.

After the last noted October sighting I would frequently check eBird and the ABA rare bird sightings for Trumpeter Swan observations in Pennsylvania and states to the south with the hope that Z603 and Z675 would be found. As more time passed, I grew more concerned for the swans.

More than four months into my vigil I finally heard the good news. February 16, 2019, Pam Illig reported to Margaret Higbee that the swan family was found on



Pam Illig photographed "our swans" on Yellow Spring Pond in Blair County.



Last year's cygnet looks healthy!

Photo by Pam Illig swans.

Yellow Spring Pond in Blair County, PA. The pond is located at the intersection of US Rt. 22 and Yellow Spring Road. Pam reported that the pond is spring fed and stays ice free for most of the winter. She agreed to periodically check on the swans. Pam provided numerous photos of the swans, and to my delight those photos showed that the cygnet survived and developed into a healthy appearing swan. During the days that followed the swans were reported on eBird numerous times.

Of course the good news concerning the swans did not last. On February 28, 2019, Pam reported to me that the swans were gone. Her last observation of the swan family was on Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2019. On February 24 and 25 Pennsylvania was hit by a strong storm with wind gusts over 60 mph, severely impacting the state. It appears the storm also affected our swan family. Again I have taken up the search for the

Our swan family has provided us with an interesting on-going story. And I anticipate more chapters will be added, so stay tuned for the next installment.

## If you'd like to join Todd Bird Club...or pay your 2019 dues....

January 1 starts a new year for Todd Bird Club. Please remit your \$5 student, \$10 individual, or \$15 family dues to:

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

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# Indiana - Armstrong - Cambria County – Winter 2018-2019

If you notice that the species in the following report are in a different order yet again, check out the new American Birding Association's checklist at [http://listing.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist\\_v8.0.5.pdf](http://listing.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist_v8.0.5.pdf). There was another reshuffling of species in December and more changes will be coming in the near future.

Please send your bird reports at the end of each month to Margaret Higbee at [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net) or mail to 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701.

**Abbreviations:** Armstrong Trail (AT), Conemaugh Dam (CD), Crooked Creek Park (CC), Elders Ridge (ER), Indiana (IN), Kittanning (KT), Lock and Dam (L&D), Prince Gallitzin (PG), Rosston (RT), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), Worthington (WT), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

Thirty **Tundra Swans** were spotted flying over Walmart in IN 12/8 (DL); at YC 8 were noted on 12/9 (JaP, JP) with 2 remaining through 12/11 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK); L&D 7 yielded 4 on 1/31 (ABu, SG, TR); 25 flew over IN 2/26 (JT); a nocturnal flock passed overhead near SH 1/31 (MH, RH).

With only 10 previous *Indiana* Feb. reports since 1990, it is interesting to note that **Wood Ducks** have been noted in Feb. the past four years with most reports at YC. The only ones reported in 2019 were 2 near ER 2/9 (TB, MH, RH) and one at Blue Spruce 2/16 (HB). In *Armstrong* 2 Wood Ducks had returned to the backwaters along the AT n. of L&D 8 by 2/16 (TR); numbers increased to 16 by 2/27 (MH, RH). Two **Northern Shovelers**, photographed at the Hawthorne Bridge over Red Bank Creek on the *Armstrong* side 2/8 (AK, JK), comprised the entire report for this species. First **Gadwalls** noted were two near ER 1/27 (MH, RH); 4 were noted 2/22 (TR *et al*) at L&D 7 at KT, the same location of one of the winter's *Armstrong* highlights – a **Eurasian Wigeon**, first spotted and photographed 2/17 (TR); it was seen by many through 2/21 (MH, RH); this was a first county record. Twenty **American Wigeons** near Tunnelton 2/17 (NM), 10 at KT 2/17 (ABu, MD, RT), and 8 at RT 2/19 (MM) were first returnees. One to 8 **American Black Ducks** were listed at KT between 1/13 (ABu) and 2/4 (TR). Parks Bend Farm yielded



Theo Rickert found and photographed this Eurasian Wigeon on the Allegheny at Kittanning on Feb. 17.



A Long-tailed Duck visited the Allegheny at Rosston Feb. 1, where it was photographed by Theo Rickert.

its first 2 on 2/16 (MVT); 3 were found 2/29 (TB, MH, RH) near ER. A female **Northern Pintail** lingered at YC 1/2 (LG) while another turned up near ER 1/27 (MH, RH); 2 appeared near Tunnelton 2/17 (NM). In *Armstrong* 2/19 produced 4 at RT (TR) and one at KT (SM, MVT, RHa, LCr, RB, TR). Absent in *Indiana* and *Cambria* lists, **Green-winged Teal** had a definite presence in *Armstrong* with reports of one to 5 at seven locations; top count of 5 occurred 2/22 (PF, SM) at KT.

A **Canvasback** was last sighted along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 12/13 (TR); 21 were photographed 12/16 (TA) at PG; 3 Canvasbacks lingered at YC through 1/6 (RHa, SM, LN); by 2/4 (TR) the *Armstrong* Trail n. of L&D 8 yielded 2; numbers here built till 2/27 (MH, RH) when 11 were tallied. The KT L&D harbored 1-41 Canvasbacks between 1/23 (SG) and 2/27 (MH, RH) with that peak number tallied on 2/19 (LCr,

RHa). Last **Redheads** included 7 at CC 12/10 (PK), 3 at PG 12/16 (TA), and one at YC through 1/6 (RHa, SM, LN); KT yielded 2 on 1/21 (SG), but by 2/17 (ABu, MD, RT) 6 were present there. A farm pond near CD yielded another Redhead 2/9 (TB, MH, RH). The L&D at KT provided refuge for 1-11 **Ring-necked Ducks** between 2/4 (JKu, TK, MM, TR) and 2/27 (MH, RH, TR). In *Indiana* Feb. 26 (MH, RH) produced the first returning **Ring-necked Ducks** with counts of 7 at YC and 6 at the Barclay Road Pond. **Greater Scaup** reports included 14 at

CC 12/10 (PK), one at Parks Bend Farm 1/5 (MVT), one at RT 2/2 (JB), and one along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 2/4 (TR); top count was 24 at KT on both 2/19 (MM) and 2/25 (RB). First 2 **Lesser Scaup** were found near CD 2/9 (TB, MH, RH); 13 appeared at RT 2/19 (TR) while a flock of 137 arrived at YC 2/26 (MH, RH). An immature male **Harlequin Duck** was a surprising find 2/21 (MH, RH) at KT where it remained through 2/22 (m.ob.); this was a second county record. Late **Long-tailed Duck** reports included 5 at PG 12/16 (TA) and 2 at YC 1/2 (KB, MAK, GK); one was spotted at RT 2/1 (TR) and 2, along the AT n. of L&D 8, on 2/27 (MH, RH). At YC 2 **Buffleheads** remained through 1/8 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK), while the same date (JKa) still yielded 4 at PG. The L&D at KT harbored one to 4 after 1/18 (SG). First *Indiana* returnees were 3 Buffleheads on 2/26 (MH, RH) and 2 **Common Goldeneyes** 2/16 (LC, TG, DK) at YC. The Allegheny River yielded numerous goldeneyes with top counts of 12 at Freeport 2/16 (OL) and 8 at the KT L&D 2/19 (SM).

**Hooded Mergansers** were still noted 1/3 (EH, JH) at YC while 2/16 (LC, TG, DK) marked the "spring" return of the first 2 there; elsewhere in *Indiana* one was at the Barclay Road Pond 2/26 (MH, RH) and 2 at Smicksburg 2/27 (NS). PG's last 2 were sighted 12/17 (MSm, NW) with the first 9 returnees 2/23 (TA). With the river, *Armstrong* yielded numerous reports throughout the season (v.o.). Twenty-four **Common Mergansers** were counted at TL 1/1 (MH, RH); this is the second highest tally on record for TL; 21 was a good count 2/26 (WI) on Beaver Valley Rd near PG. Top counts along the Allegheny include 42 at RT 2/18 (LV) and 39 at KT 2/19 (MVT). A raft of 17 **Red-breasted Mergansers** graced YC Lake 2/26 (MH, RH); this was the only report in the region. Last **Ruddy Ducks** were 2 spotted at YC 12/30 (TR), one at Lake Rowena 1/6 (SGo), and 3 at KT 1/21 (SG).



This gorgeous Sharp-shinned Hawk, photographed by Tina Alianiello, was only one of the 14 reported this winter in our region.



Dave Brooke photographed this Short-eared Owl near Worthington on Feb. 4.

The only **Ruffed Grouse** noted this season were one at Blue Spruce 2/16 (HB) and 2 near Strongstown 2/23 (DB).

The season's last **Pied-billed Grebes** were listed at YC 1/1 (MH, RH) and at RT 1/17 (TR). The last 9 **Horned Grebes** were found at YC 12/4 (MH, RH).

The only **Killdeer** reported were 2 found on *Indiana's* WRS #2 on 1/22 (MH, RH, GL, LM) and one s. of WT 2/27 (TR).

Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** at RT 1/17 (TR) were the only ones noted in the region. A single **Herring Gull**, an infrequent visitor to *Indiana*, was sighted at YC 1/3 (JH); herrings were present on the Allegheny from 12/1 (TR) through 2/27 (MH, RH, TR).

A single **Common Loon** observed at PG 1/8 (JKa) and a **Double-crested Cormorant** at KT 12/13 (TR) were the lone reports for these species.

Three **Black Vultures** 12/26 (BM, KM) near Jacksonville were new to the CBC. Becoming more commonly reported during the colder months, first

**Turkey Vultures**, all singletons, were listed 1/8 (JKa) at Dugan's Marsh in *Cambria*, 2/15 near Locust (NSh) and s.e. of IN (SD), 2/18 (BK) near Creekside, and 2/19 both at IUP (JT) and s.w. of IN (MH, RH); the exceptions were 2 on 1/12 (AD) along Mahoning Creek and 2 near Dayton 2/23 (MCa). This is an unprecedented number of winter vulture reports. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were noted at 14 locations this period; **Cooper's Hawks**, at an amazingly high 35. Numerous **Rough-legged Hawks** were sighted this season. Dark morph Rough-legged Hawk sightings included individuals at West Lebanon 1/21 (TB); near Smicksburg 1/22 (MH, RH, GL, LM); near Homer City (ED, MH, RH, GL) and e. of Mayport (AKe, JKe), both 1/25; and near WT 1/28 (DBr). Light morphs were found 1/28 (MVT) and 1/29 (PF) near WT; 1/31 (AD) near Dayton. YC hosted rough-legs of undesignated morph 1/2 (LG) and again 2/16 (LC, TG, DK).

**Barred Owl** reports include single birds at PG 12/16 (TA), near CC 12/19 - 2/28 (JB), and at Loretto 1/26 (SVH); the Nolo area was the only consistent spot for 1-2 owls, but 3 were talking on 2/9 (AB, DB). **Short-eared Owl** was observed near Dayton 1/27 (MH, RH); another was found 2/4 (DBr) near WT where 2 appeared 2/9 (MD).

Single **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were reported only at YC 12/29,30 (m.ob.), at PG 12/29 (TA), and at CC 12/31 (MVT).

**Merlins** were seen in Oakland Cemetery 12/8 (DL), at YC 12/9 (JaP, JP), and on the IN CBC 12/26 (ED, TS, JT). A **Peregrine Falcon** continued at Johnstown 12/5 (LG) and one was seen at the Graff Bridge 2/19 (AD).

A late **Eastern Phoebe** lingered 12/14 (DL) in IN and at the Waterworks Conservation Area 1/3, 13 (SD); this is only the second *Indiana* Jan. record with the previous noted on 1/29/2007 (MF) at CD.

A **Northern Shrike** near ER 1/26 (TB), the only one observed in the region, could not be relocated.

**Horned Lark** maxima included 380 near WT 1/25 (DBr), 100 near Dayton 1/12 (EL), 80 near CD 1/25 (ED, MH, RH, GL), and 61 at West Lebanon 2/11 (SM).

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** were more widespread in the region than in recent years with all reports of only one or two individuals. Most *Indiana* sightings were clustered around the town of IN (v.o.); in *Armstrong*, the top count was 6 in the Central Valley area 12/2 (JB). Single **Winter Wrens** at Kelly Station 12/12,13,15 (JB); at Logansport 12/14 (JB); along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 12/20, 2/22 (TR); and at YC on both 12/27 (MH, RH, AKe) and 1/5 (RS, VS) comprised the entire report for this species. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** had a winter presence with sightings along the AT n. of L&D 8 on 12/1, 20 (TR) and on 2/27 (MH, RH); on the *Indiana* CBC 12/26



This Northern Shrike, photographed by Tony Bruno, was the only one reported in our region.



This Townsend's Solitaire, found by Ed Donley, was the highlight of the *Indiana* CBC as well as the "best" bird of the season for the county.

Photo by Margaret Higbee

(CW, PW); at YC 1/3 (EH, JH); at the Waterworks Conservation Area 1/8, 13 (SD); and at Dugan's Marsh 1/8 (JKa).

The highlight of *Indiana's* season was the CBC find 12/26 (ED, MS, JT) of a **Townsend's Solitaire** at YC on the north shore; this bird was seen by many between 12/27 - 1/11 (JM). **Hermit Thrushes** were noted only on YC's north shore between 12/27 (MD, DY) and 1/3 (EH, JH, FK, AN) and at SGL 247 on 1/5 (TR); the YC thrush was found again 1/29, 2/26 (MH, RH). A **Gray Catbird** continued along the Hoodlebug Trail in IN 12/9, 26 (DL).

December 5 was a day of **Evening Grosbeak** movement as single birds arrived at feeders near SH (JC) and near Jacksonville (BM); a male also thrilled the Good family near Kenwood with its presence 1/27 (fide GL).

One to 2 **Pine Siskins** were present at a home near Lewisville 12/1-3 (MC); one stopped at Nolo 12/31, 1/5 (CL, GL); one was near KT 1/17 (SG); up to 5 were counted at another feeder s.e. of IN 1/22-2/28 (SD); during

the solitaire's visit one was also listed at YC 12/30 (JV) and 1/3 (JH); and another was listed at Patton 2/16 (KL).

Two **Lapland Longspurs**, found 1/28 (DBr) near WT were relocated and seen by many through 2/3 (AP, TRh). A **Snow Bunting** was found and photographed 1/30 (MH, RH) near WT where it remained through 2/2 (JB, DBr, MD, TR).

A **Chipping Sparrow** visited a feeder near Shelocta irregularly on five dates bracketed by 1/7 and 2/16 (MH, RH). Single **Fox Sparrows** stopped at Nolo 12/3 (CL, GL), at CC 12/31 (MVT), and near McVille Airport 1/3 (TR); another visited a feeder near Shelocta irregularly between 1/9-2/25 (MH, RH); one was heard singing at YC 2/17 (JaP, JP). The only **Rusty Blackbirds** noted were 8 on WRS #3 on 1/25 (ED, MH, RH, GL), one at Nolo 2/11 (CL, GL), and 10 at Josephine 2/23 (DL).

A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was observed at Pine Ridge Co. Park 2/9 (DL) and another several days later near the Waterworks Conservation Area (DL).

**Observers:** Tina Alianiello, Hannah Barr, Alice Beatty, Dave Beatty, Kimberly Berry, John Boback, Dave Brooke (DBr), Tony Bruno, Alan Buriak (ABu), Ron Burkert, Martin Carlin (MCa), Lee Carnahan, Joann Condron, Linda Croskey (LCr), Marcy Cunkelman, Michael David, Sue Dickson, Anna Donato, Ed Donley, Patience Fisher, Mike Fowles, Tom Glover, Scott Godshall (SGo), Linda Greble, Sam Gutherie, Rebecca Hart (RHa), Eric Hartshaw, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Jason Horn, Winnie Illig, Fred Kachmarik, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Jon Kauffman (JKa), Avis Keener, John Keener, Andy Keister (AKe), Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Bonnie Kostella, Jan Kuehl (JKu), Tom Kuehl, Clayton Lamer, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Oliver Lindhiem, Eileen Luba, Kathy Lubert, Steve Manns, Beth Marshall, Ken Marshall, Mark McConaughy, Jeff McDonald, Lisa Meadows, Nancy Murphy, Lauren Nagoda, Alyssa Nees, Aidan Place, James Pumford (JaP), Joseph Pumford, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Theo Rickert, Natalie Shuey, Tom Simmons, Nancy Smeltzer, Michelle Smithbauer (MSm), Mark Strittmatter, John Taylor, Ryan Tomazin, Lawrence Valasek, Stewart Van Horn (SVH), Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Joe Verica, Nathan White, Chris Williams, Paula Williams, David Yeany II.

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Tony Bruno found this red morph Eastern Screech-Owl on Jan. 19.

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