



# The DISTELFINK

SPRING 2021

## Contents

President’s Message – Tony Grimm ..... 1

BOC meetings via ZOOM..... 2

Programs and Meetings - ..... 2

- Trinidad & Tobago Birding with Peter and Jane Wolfe..... 2
- Top End, Outback & Western Australia, a Travelogue" with Sheila Martin..... 2

Our Annual Banquet is rescheduled ..... 3

To November 12, 2021 ..... 3

A little bit of history about our Distelfink Logo..... 3

Peter & Jane Wolfe’s Big Year, 2020..... 4

2020 City of Reading Bird Count Yields 117 Species ..... 7

Book Review: A WORLD ON THE WING,..... 11

Berks County Birds, June – July, 2020..... 13

Berks County Bird Report, August – November 2020 ..... 16

B.O.C. Officers May 2020- May 2021 ..... 20

BOC -Covid 19 Field Trip Protocols ..... 20

Spring 2021 Field Trips ..... 21

## President’s Message – Tony Grimm

My time as president has flown by. I’ve missed the meetings at Nolde and the personal one-on-one, getting to know our members. It’s been an honor to serve. We all have had to make changes in our new lives due to the coronavirus. We hope you have been feeding and watching the birds in your backyard or the nearest park. We are fortunate to live in Berks, where it’s possible to walk the various birdwatching sites. while still maintaining a proper distance and enjoying nature. Many thanks to all of you who have connected with us through our zoom meetings. Special thanks to Mike Slater, our zoom master.

Recent happenings and changes:

- **BOC History:** People have asked me, “who is Baird?” The answer is this: Spencer Fullerton Baird was born in Reading, in 1823. He went on to become the second Smithsonian secretary and was recognized as one of the worlds most distinguished naturalists. Because of this, we have become the BOC to honor him and his love for nature.

The **BOC Annual Banquet meeting has been postponed to the fall**; working with our speaker, Scott Weidensaul, it will be November 12.

**100th Anniversary:** We hope many of you tuned into WEEU on December 29th for the Mike Faust show. Rudy Keller, Bill Uhrich, and I had fun talking about the BOC. We are working with the Reading Eagle, B C T V, and WFMZ tv to share our history. We will notify you by email about exact times and dates.

**Car Window Stickers:** Thanks to Linda Ingram, you now have a sticker for your car to promote the club.

**Brochure:** We are putting together a brochure for best birding spots in Berks. Bill Uhrich, Rudy Keller and I are working on this project. We hope to have this ready this summer or early fall.

Thanks again for your support and membership. Spring is almost here, so get out there and look for the spring warblers and other migrants!

*Tony Grimm*, President

## BOC meetings via ZOOM

Each meeting requires an invitation to the meeting with by having the **ID number and passcode**.

To get an invitation for each Spring 2021 meeting, send an Email requesting a link to us at [membership@bairdornithological.club](mailto:membership@bairdornithological.club)

You can share the meeting invitation by with other members email (for security reasons, please DO NOT share it by posting on social media like Facebook or Instagram). Please try to limit guests you share it with as we are limited to 100 participants per meeting.

Using zoom is easy all you need is a computer, a tablet or a smart phone. For information about it see this helpful link provided by the people at zoom where they show you how to join a meeting.

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-meeting>

We hope to see you all then. - Mike Slater, BOC Web Master and ZOOM Meeting Host

## Programs and Meetings - Mark Your Calendar!

- **Trinidad & Tobago Birding with Peter and Jane Wolfe** **April 9, 2021, 7:30 pm** Take a vacation trip to tropical islands featuring colorful birds and flowers. We stayed at the Asa Wright Nature Centre in Trinidad and then the Cuffie River Nature Retreat in Tobago. No passport or shots are required come along with them! Via Zoom.
- **Top End, Outback & Western Australia, a Travelogue" with Sheila Martin** **May 14, 2021, 7:30 pm** - Join in the fun for an irreverent, entertaining and eye-popping odyssey on the road, in the sky and on the water, to sights which even few Australians ever see! Travel lore, earth science and the "red" of it all - across cities, towns and the real



*A male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker shows his yellow belly while he feeds at a suet-feeder - Photo by Mike Slater*

Outback - will astound you! Sheila Martin has been traveling ever since her family-road-vacationing childhood, now journeying worldwide to less-predictable destinations, with an eye toward adventure, nature and wildlife. Her Top Twenty Birds of this amazing continent will be featured. Via Zoom.

## Our Annual Banquet is rescheduled To November 12, 2021

at the Berkshire Country Club with Scott Weidensaul as our Guest Speaker

## Our New BOC Distelfink Logo

Decals – Linda Ingram

All members recently received a distelfink decal to proudly display your membership in this venerable club, now **100 years old!** If you have ever wondered about our logo – here is the artist's explanation.

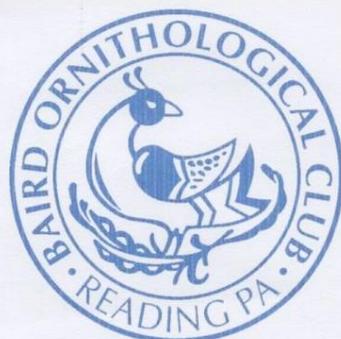


## A little bit of history about our Distelfink Logo

by William Fox Munroe

**A DISTELFINK** "...is a stylized GOLDFINCH, probably based upon the European variety as it frequently appears in Pa. Dutch folk art. It represents happiness and good fortune and the Pa. German people. It is a common theme in hex signs and fraktur."

Before my involvement with the B.O.C. in the late 1970's, the newsletter associated with the club was called *The Distelfink*. At some point it was decided to incorporate



The Birding Club of Berks County

the 'motif' itself into the masthead design format. Being a graphic designer, it was appropriate for me to accommodate that assignment and create fresh reproduction artwork so all communications and print materials in general could have that standard motif in

uniform usage. I proudly established the iconic bird symbol with embellishment within a circular shape as well as free-form display such as was on our most recent printed newsletter masthead series in soft blue ink on ivory stock. While the motif itself is not totally of original tradition, I did personalize it a bit to function for reproduction effectively in one color or multiple colors as employed on the new B.O.C. window decal recently made available to members. And now you know the rest of the story.

## Peter & Jane Wolfe's Big Year, 2020

By Jane Wolfe with photos by Peter Wolfe

8 AM January 1, 2020 Mike S, Russ H, Liz C, Linda I, and Art Z, met us at Breneman's Quarry for our annual first of the year birding tour. It was cloudy, breezy with a high of 39° F. After almost being fooled by decoys at State Hill we found some real birds including **Golden-crowned Kinglets**.

Our driving tour ended early at Sheetz on Rt 61 around noon, due to a threat of freezing rain.

In January, at Blue Marsh Dry Brooks beach, we saw, **Glaucous, Iceland, Great Black-backed, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, also 2 **Tundra Swans**. A dozen **Wild Turkeys** were feeding next to Adam's Hotel Road. At Peter's Creek, **Winter Wren** was seen in his usual creekside abode and **Swamp Sparrows** hiding in the tall grasses responded to our phishing. Union Meadows yielded a **Cooper's**, and 3 **Red-shouldered Hawks**. 6 **Wilson's Snipe** were in a creek near Rodale Farm. Jan 24 was our first birding "trip" to Lancaster County for the **Lark Sparrow** stakeout at Boyer's Run Creek. This bird was being well fed. But Jan 30 held the most unexpected bird. At Gotwals, Peter spotted a **Pink-footed Goose** buried in a crowd of **Canada Geese**, standing on ice with his pink feet showing. Quickly he came home to get his camera, took a picture, and contacted Linda I who came to see it. Later Jane and her friend Kathy came hoping to see the goose. Rudy K was there and set up his telescope giving Jane and Kathy good looks.

February was a month of ducks including **Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Green-winged Teal, and Common Goldeneye**. At Gotwals there were 2 **Greater White-fronted Geese**. Our first owl was a **Great Horned Owl**. Feb 26, our second birding "trip" was with Mike S to Lancaster County for a male **Painted Bunting**. We found him happily flying from his hideout in a thick rhododendron to the nearby feeder.





March 1, just after sunset, we heard and saw 3 **American Woodcock**. We think it is best to find this bird before the clocks are set ahead for Daylight Savings Time. **Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser, Redhead, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, Long-tailed Duck, American Coot, Horned Grebe,** and **Common Loon** were added to our waterfowl list. At Exeter Scenic Trail we watched a **Pileated Woodpecker** work on her hole very close to the trail. An early close **Osprey** and an unusual American [for the date -Ed.] **Tree Sparrow** were seen at Lake

Ontelaunee. A **Fox Sparrow** showed up in our yard March 14, 15, and 17.

Covid-19 has become an issue, churches and state parks close, therefore MNHS and Baird meetings will not be held. With everything closed, we realized that birding was an enjoyable activity that we could do outdoors, usually in remote places. Could this be our chance to do a "Big Year"? Our goal would be to find more birds than we have found before in one year for Berks County and also for Pennsylvania.

During April, at home we watched "Stumpy" our **Turkey Vulture**, who is missing a left foot, eat a squirrel who had tried unsuccessfully to cross Pricetown Road. Two territorial **American Crows** chased a vocal **Common Raven** from our yard. On different days, a **Brown Thrasher** was in our forsythia, a **Field Sparrow** on our feeder, while a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** gleaned insects. April 21, the first Ruby-throated Hummingbird drank heavily from our feeder before dusk. April 18, responding to a call from Matt W, we saw 2 **Surf** and 1 **White-winged Scoter** at Blue Marsh in windy, freezing cold conditions. The **Bald Eagle** near Rutters on Rt 61 was on his nest. We found the **Virginia Rail** on a cold rainy morning at Kernsville Recreation Area feeding in the marshy wet reeds. April 30, at School Road Pond we were amazed to discover a **Red-necked Phalarope**, while on our way to see warblers in Kutztown. By May, **Gray Catbirds** have arrived in our yard to stay the summer and eat our mulberries and raspberries. Skyline Drive has **Yellow-throated Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Veerys,** and **many warblers**. We often bird with Bill U and Russ H there. **Louisiana Waterthrush, Acadian Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler** and the nesting **Bank Swallows** were found at Hay Creek. The **Prothonotary Warbler** was found by Russ H on the Exeter Scenic Trail May 12. It became quite an attraction for over a week. Sue S helped us find a **Canada Warbler** at North Park, Kutztown. It truly helps to have good birding friends! We heard and saw **Northern Waterthrush** in the shallow rocky creeks at North Park and Bower's Park. After much searching in spruce trees at Lake Ontelaunee, we finally saw a **Blackpoll Warbler** with a **Magnolia Warbler**. A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** sang, and then was chased by a **Willow Flycatcher** at Hopewell Big Woods trail. We were pleasantly surprised to see a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at Rodale where we also watched a **Grasshopper Sparrow** singing with its barely audible voice. Our first brood of **Eastern Bluebirds** has fledged. Peter immediately cleaned the box. The next day they started to build another nest!



In June, we are still under Covid distancing orders. Birding has become our work and our fun. A **Great Crested Flycatcher**, **Eastern Wood-pewee**, **Eastern Kingbird**, and **Orchard Oriole** were seen singing at Daniel Boone. At Rodale a **Dickcissel** was singing from a high wire and **Bobolinks** calling from the field. The noisy **House Wren** took possession of the bird houses in our backyard. **Black-crowned Night-Herons** and **Cliff Swallows** have arrived at Lake Ontelaunee 73 bridge. Perhaps the best bird of the month was the **Wood Thrush** singing in our backyard almost every night.

July 1, Northkill Gap just after 9PM, **Eastern Whip-poor-will** were calling. July 17, as the stars appear after sunset, we aimed our telescope at the comet NEOWISE (the Near Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Solar Explorer satellite was the official named discoverer) then at Jupiter with 4 Galilean moons and Saturn with its rings.



August began with a lot of rain. By Aug 7 our rain gauge total was almost 10 inches! The farm ponds and fields, especially Mertz Road, were flooded. We found **Killdeer**, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Pectoral**, **Least**, **Semipalmated**, **Stilt**, **Baird's**, and surprisingly a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**. At Rodale, a **Blue Grosbeak** sat and sang from a wire. Russ H showed us an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Angora Fruit Farm sallying out from the top of a tree. Great sighting! The evening of Aug 30 was clear and cool. We picked up a small pizza and headed to Angora to eat it at a picnic table. At 7:45PM our target bird, a **Common Nighthawk** flew directly over our heads. Five minutes later an **Eastern Screech-Owl** called. But the month was not over. On the 31<sup>st</sup> we found a **Black-billed Cuckoo** and 4 **Red-headed Woodpeckers**.



*American Golden Plovers were also in fields in Lancaster County at the same time. Photo by Mike Slater*

Dozens of **American Pipits** were feasting on a farm field near Kutztown (Thank you Rudy K). A few days later many **American Golden-Plovers** were found in the same area.

November began with a **Ring-necked Pheasant** crossing the road at Blue Marsh. A flock of **Cedar Waxwings** and a few **American Robins** stayed about 2 hours to consume honeysuckle berries from our large bush. **Buffleheads** at Kaercher Creek looked like decoys until they began to swim away. We were

September came and brought an **Ovenbird** and **Chestnut-sided Warbler** to Wolfe Mt. The warblers heading south can be difficult to ID in their fall outfits! October already! We were visited by a **Nashville Warbler** eating our goldenrod, along with **Brown Creeper**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Eastern Towhee**, **Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos**, **Black-throated Blue** and **Black-throated Green Warblers**. We traveled to Mike Slater's for **Purple Finch**, **Pine Siskin**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and a **Tennessee Warbler!**

surprised to find 1 **Bonaparte's Gull** on School Road Pond until we discovered 36 more on Lake Ontelaunee an hour later. One **Red-throated Loon** at Blue Marsh, was a find by Jane that made us happy. Our backyard hosted a **Fox Sparrow** for a few days.

December arrives; can we break our state and county records? Dec 8, we drove to Caledonia State Park and saw both the **Townsend's Solitaire** and Evening Grosbeaks. Thanks go to Jo and Larry S who found a **Northern Wheatear** in Shoemakersville, and Rick W who called us when it was re-found on Dec 12. We had wonderful views of this Berks County rarity. 8" of snow brought **Horned Larks** and our last year bird, the **Lapland Longspur** along the farm field road edges.

We succeeded; we have broken both of our records. Berks County total was 218. Pennsylvania total was 222 species. Our 94 year-old Aunt Joyce remarks that to live through these days of isolation "You must have a good relationship with yourself" and we would add "and with the birds"!

## 2020 City of Reading Bird Count Yields 117 Species

By **Bill Uhrich**

I was looking for a sign.

Back in January 2020, I had thought about doing a city of Reading Big Year Bird Count but didn't know whether I wanted to commit myself to such an extensive undertaking. I had a precedent. In 2004 I undertook the project with fellow birder Ken Lebo as my coach and found 131 species. I didn't think I could top that one, especially knowing the time commitment it took to accomplish - three or four hours a day during the peak seasons. Plus I wouldn't have my former coach as Ken and his family moved to Ohio last year.



*A Winter Wren at Angelica Park one year later - Photo by Russ Hoffman*

On a chilly February Sunday afternoon, I went for a walk at Angelica Creek Park and decided that if I found a good bird, I would do the count. As if on cue as I looked up the Angelica Creek, a **Winter Wren** popped up and flitted among the underbrush. Darn, I thought. That's a good bird. So it began.

Even though the coronavirus lockdown has negatively impacted all of our lives, it has given me the time to pursue the Reading count, abiding by all the social distancing requirements. Reading is blessed with a variety of habitats that support bird life - from the Schuylkill River through Penn Square up to the top of Mount Penn at the Pagoda. The Schuylkill River Trail through the city is a productive walk from Heritage Park to Stonecliff. The trail between the Penn Street and Buttonwood Street bridges

was a particularly surprising spot early in the spring as it yielded at least seven pairs of **Wood Ducks**, two **Buffleheads**, several **Common Mergansers**, a dozen **Double-crested Cormorants** and a **Pied-billed Grebe** along with **Mallards** and **Black Ducks**.

Penn Square is the home turf of the downtown Reading **Peregrine Falcons**, and we can look for a falcon perched atop the cross of Christ Episcopal Church at Fifth and Court streets.

Duryea Drive to the Pagoda offers a variety of bird life from migrating warblers to nesting forest dwellers like **Wood Thrush**, Veery and the abundant **Rufous-sided Towhee**. The Bridal Path below the Pagoda has been a favorite haunt for **Hermit Thrushes** in the early spring and is home to a number of woodpecker species including **Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers** along with **Northern Flickers**. We can also see or hear one of the most spectacular birds of the woodlands - the **Pileated Woodpecker**.

Skyline Drive from the Pagoda to Drenkel Field was a warbler hot spot in the spring and fall and also produced **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Great-crested Flycatcher** against a chorus of **Gray Catbirds**.

At any place in the city we can look up and find turkey and black vultures riding the thermals or **Red-tailed Hawks** soaring. The 18th Ward, home to Angelica Creek Park, is also a city birding hotspot with an abundance of **Tree Swallows, American Goldfinches, Red-Winged Blackbirds** and **Indigo Buntings**. A walk up the Rose Valley Creek from Pendorf Park through Mineral Spring Park to Egelman Park is always good for bird life.

Occasionally, we may witness a bird drama unfold.

On April 23, I watched on the Schuylkill River near Fritz's Island as an **immature Bald Eagle** - perhaps a second-year bird- swooped down on a small raft of **Canada geese** with talons extended. The geese and a pair of **mallards** tightened up and flapped their wings to keep the eagle at bay. The eagle made at least two passes over the raft before flying up to a sycamore, undoubtedly frustrated by its failure in the hunt. About fifteen minutes later while walking along the trail, I saw both the immature and an adult Bald Eagle fly off together up the river.

It wasn't a bird that fascinated me on March 9, but a nest. Along the river, I found an old **Common Raven's nest** in the girders underneath the railroad bridge north of the Buttonwood Street Bridge. The presence of Ravens in the city is a remarkable occurrence, but nesting Ravens is even more so. A pair nested five years ago under a similar bridge in the city, but this one was more recent although abandoned. I saw and heard a Raven fly over the river trail and have seen and heard Ravens on Mount Penn and in east Reading.

Watching birds in Reading doesn't take an all-out commitment. It can be as easy as looking up. Or looking out a window. Right now, city residents can attract birds to their backyards by simply putting water out for them. We have a birdbath in our east Reading yard that has attracted **Catbirds** and **House Finches**. It's always fascinating to walk out the front door and listen for the neighborhood birds first thing in the morning. And we can all enjoy the aerial acrobatics of the **Chimney Swifts** that make Reading their summer homes.

Below are some highlights of the year:

**Old Faithful: Peregrine Falcon.** The pair returned to downtown Reading and nested for the 14<sup>th</sup> straight season. Four eggs yielded three young, and at least two survived fledging.

**One and Done:** A number of birds I saw only once, including that first bird of my count, the **Winter Wren**.

**Hardest Easy Bird: Northern Mockingbird.** I scoured the city of Reading for months looking for a Mockingbird and finally found one singing on a pole near George Field on June 19.

**With a Little Help from My Friends Part 1: Least Flycatcher.** Peter and Jane Wolfe are the good-luck charms. I ran into them on Duryea Drive as they were out pursuing their county list, and Jane picked out the che-bek! call of this flycatcher from a chorus of other birdsong along a power line cut.

**With a Little Help from My Friends Part 2: Rose-breasted Grosbeak.** I didn't have a backyard feeder running in the spring, where so many of these birds were sighted throughout the county, so finding this migratory bird out in the woods was a bit of a challenge until Mike Slater and Linda Ingram found one for me near Drenkel Field on May 11.

**Easiest Hard Bird:** Black-billed Cuckoo. Usually a very secretive bird, more often heard than seen, a Black-billed Cuckoo flew to a close branch above the Bridal Path Trail below the Pagoda and sat for several minutes, giving me my best view of this species.



*Not Bill's Black-billed Cuckoo but one at Buxton Conservancy in Brecknock Twp., Berks County by Mike Slater*

**Look Up!** I knew that to get **Snow Geese** on my count that I would have to look up at the right time to see them flying overhead. I looked up on Feb. 23 for my only sighting of this species.

**I'll Be Darned: Wild Turkey.** I didn't expect to hear the gobble and then see one off a trail near Drenkel Field although Wild Turkeys have been spotted on Mount Penn periodically over the years.

**Fowl Surprises: Bufflehead and Wood Duck.** Waterfowl will always be an iffy proposition in Reading since the Schuylkill is

the only place to find these species. I was surprised to find a pair of **Bufflehead** ducks on the river and at least seven pairs, a rather large number, of **Wood Ducks** during the spring on the stretch between the Penn Street and Buttonwood Street bridges.

**You Can Leave Now: Scarlet Tanager.** Usually this bird is more often heard than seen, and when it is seen it's high in the treetops hiding in the leafy canopy. But on one day in spring while looking for a **Mockingbird** in Nanny Goat Hill, I saw a **Scarlet Tanager** perched on a

tombstone for an extraordinarily long time. After taking in a close view that filled my binoculars with this spectacular bird, I finally had to walk away and leave it.

**Only at Our Feeder: Red-breasted Nuthatch.**

I thought for sure that I would find one in the many conifers atop Mount Penn or in the parks, but the only place I had one was at our feeder all fall and winter.

**Better Late Than Never: American Kestrel.** I finally found a Kestrel Dec. 30 at the end of South Ninth Street, giving me all three falcons for the city: Peregrine, Merlin and American Kestrel.

**Last, But Not Least: American Tree Sparrow.**

I found a Tree Sparrow on the last day of the year at Angelica Creek Park. It's noteworthy that the Tree Sparrow is one of only three birds that have been found on all of the Reading Christmas Bird Counts since the first in 1911 along with the **Common Crow** and the **Dark-eyed Junco**. The numbers of this bird wintering in Berks have diminished in the last few decades with fewer than a handful recorded on recent counts.

**Better Luck Next Year:** Any number of birds that I missed this year but should have found like **Golden-crowned Kinglet, Herring Gull, Great Horned Owl** and all the migrating warblers I was incapable of identifying.

**Bill's 2020 List:**

Pied-billed Grebe	Merlin	Eastern Phoebe
Double-crested Cormorant	Peregrine Falcon	Great Crested Flycatcher
Great Blue Heron	Wild Turkey	Eastern Kingbird
Green-backed Heron	Killdeer	Tree Swallow
Snow Goose	Solitary Sandpiper	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Canada Goose	Spotted Sandpiper	Barn Swallow
Wood Duck	Ring-billed Gull	Blue Jay
American Black Duck	Rock Pigeon	American Crow
Mallard	Mourning Dove	Fish Crow
Ring-necked Duck	Black-billed Cuckoo	Common Raven
Bufflehead	Eastern Screech Owl	Carolina Chickadee
Hooded Merganser	Chimney Swift	Tufted Titmouse
Common Merganser	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Black Vulture	Belted Kingfisher	White-breasted Nuthatch
Turkey Vulture	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Brown Creeper
Osprey	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Carolina Wren
Bald Eagle	Downy Woodpecker	House Wren
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Hairy Woodpecker	Winter Wren
Cooper's Hawk	Northern Flicker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Red-shouldered Hawk	Pileated Woodpecker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Broad-winged Hawk	Eastern Wood Pewee	Eastern Bluebird
Red-tailed Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Veery



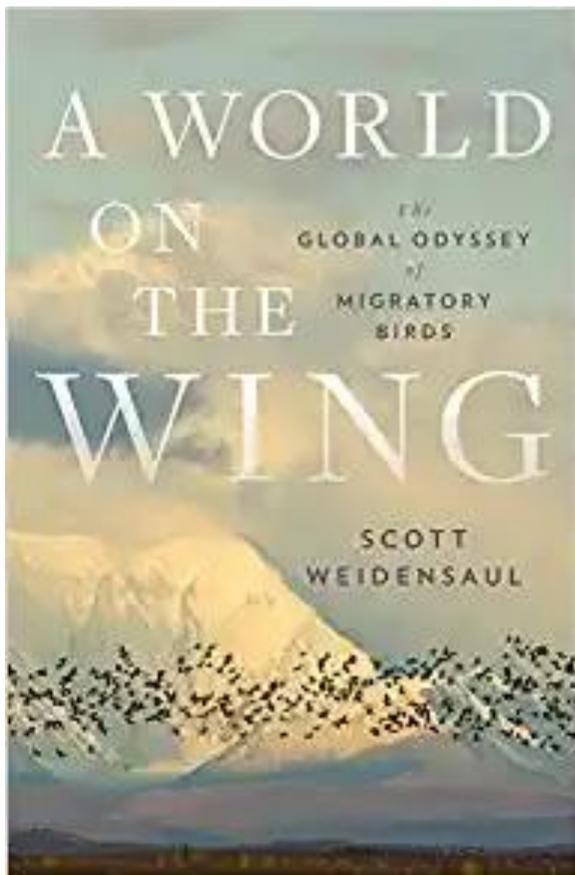
*Red-breasted Nuthatch at Mike Slater's Feeder in Brecknock Twp. - Mike Slater*

Swainson's Thrush  
 Hermit Thrush  
 Wood Thrush  
 American Robin  
 Gray Catbird  
 Northern Mockingbird  
 Cedar Waxwing  
 European Starling  
 White-eyed Vireo  
 Blue-headed Vireo  
 Warbling Vireo  
 Red-eyed Vireo  
 Northern Parula  
 Yellow Warbler  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler  
 Black-throated Blue  
 Warbler  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Green  
 Warbler  
 Palm Warbler  
 Bay-breasted Warbler  
 Black-and-white Warbler  
 American Redstart  
 Worm-eating Warbler  
 Ovenbird  
 Louisiana Waterthrush  
 Common Yellowthroat  
 Hooded Warbler  
 Canada Warbler  
 Scarlet Tanager  
 Northern Cardinal  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
 Indigo Bunting  
 Rufous-sided Towhee  
 American Tree Sparrow

Chipping Sparrow  
 Field Sparrow  
 Song Sparrow  
 Swamp Sparrow  
 White-throated Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Red-winged Blackbird  
 Rusty Blackbird  
 Common Grackle  
 Brown-headed Cowbird  
 Baltimore Oriole  
 Purple Finch  
 House Finch  
 Pine Siskin  
 American Goldfinch  
 House Sparrow

**Book Review: A WORLD ON THE WING, The GLOBAL ODYSSEY of  
 MIGRATORY BIRDS by Scott Weidensaul - By Linda Ingram.**



Scott Weidensaul, until recently a resident of Schuylkill County, is a friend or acquaintance to many of us in BOC. My anecdote about Scott is coincidentally crossing paths ages ago on dusty tropical airstrips in the middle of nowhere, not once but twice! In Scott Weidensaul's latest book we travel along with him and the migrating birds he follows to the world's far-flung places.

Weidensaul begins with a stake-out for 'spoonies' (spoon-billed sandpiper) on a heavily industrialized Chinese coast, a stopover site along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Gathered with him are an international collection of researchers and funders guided by local experts. What was once extensive tidal flats and marsh is now severely restricted by conversion to productive real estate.

Thus, begins the reader's journey exploring the world of migration as it is now understood, known from the uncountable hours of research, casual contributions of a long line of amateur ornithologists, naturalists, academics, and scientists, and truly ground-breaking advances in

technology. Weidensaul, whose own work and research contributions places him among them,

introduces you personally to this wide cast of characters, part of each and every chapter. This is a book that builds from what we thought we knew, what is known now, and finally what we need to know – and do. The wealth of data now available by tracking birds with micro tags has re-ordered our knowledge of migratory routes by providing vital information on life and death importance of stopover sites. Measured physiological changes give new insight to how these amazing journeys are possible. The Bar-tailed Godwit's digestive organs atrophy while pectoral muscles, heart and lungs increase capacity. Epic journeys and magnificent feats of flight are described through both the eyes of a scientist and a bird lover holding our attention even as the technical takes an occasional deep dive.

But Scott has always been a storyteller and rest assured there is a liberal sprinkling of anecdotes to engage and charm the reader. Weidensaul deftly provides a down-home story just in time to lighten a few pages of technical detail. Amusing anecdotes of personalities or field adventures enliven the pages of loss and urgency.

It appears a lifetime of natural history exploration and contemplation, world travels, wide-ranging research, and connections with everyone from leading scientists to backyard birders is behind this latest work.

Defying the plight of nature in the world today, this book brings hope.



## **B4C** - PA Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation - By Lucy Cairns

**The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO)** is sponsoring a birding contest/fundraiser in June to support the work of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Manada Conservancy (headquartered in Dauphin County), and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Specifically, funds raised will help protect the habitat needed by the Wood Thrush and the Northern Harrier. 8.5% of the global population of Wood Thrush are found in Pennsylvania forests, but that population has been cut in half over the past 50 years. Numbers of the Northern Harrier are declining so rapidly in Pennsylvania that it is state-listed as a threatened species. Development and intensive farming have eliminated many wetlands and old fields in the state, leaving reclaimed strip mines as the best remaining habitat in PA for Northern Harriers – and for Short-eared Owls and Upland Sandpipers as well. Contest winners will be determined by the number of species identified.

You can support the B4C by making a direct donation on the website: [breedingbirdblitz.org](http://breedingbirdblitz.org), or by participating in the birding contest and soliciting donations for your team (individuals may

also donate and submit a checklist or eBird data). Counting will take place on June 18 – 21, with the choice of counting on just one day or multiple days, but each species list submitted must be for a single calendar day. Participants can choose to count within a specific county or within one of the six state regions (which can be found on a map on the breedingbirdblitz website) on each day they participate. A team must consist of at least 2 members, but team composition may vary on different days. Team types will include Youth 7 – 12, Youth 13 – 18, and Low Carbon. Low Carbon teams may use motorized transit to reach and return from their start and end location, but all species counting must occur while using non-motorized transportation modalities. Reporting by submitting eBird Summary Reports is strongly encouraged, but a downloadable checklist is available for those who prefer it.

To be eligible to compete in any of the competitions, a minimum of \$50 in donations in the name of your team must be submitted through the Donations tab at breedingbirdblitz.org website by 5pm on Tuesday, June 22. Competition categories include Fundraising, Low Carbon, Numeric, Species Specific, and Youth Focus. Winners will be recognized on the B4C website, the PSO Facebook Page, and in the PSO newsletter PSO Pileated. Most importantly, everyone who participates in any way can take satisfaction in helping more Wood Thrush and Northern Harriers find a good home in Pennsylvania.

## Berks County Birds, June – July, 2020

By Rudy Keller

Abbreviations: *Blue Marsh L. (BML), French Creek State Park (FCSP), Hamburg Reservoir (HRes), Kernsville Dam & Recreation Area, Hamburg (KDRC), Kittatinny Ridge (KR), Rodale Experimental Farm, Maxatawny Twp. (Rodale), State Game Lands (SGL).*

Except perhaps during breeding bird atlas years, the headline bird of the breeding season is more likely to be a migrant, dispersing bird or stray than a local nester. That proved to be the case this year when a glittering adult male **Rufous Hummingbird**, the earliest Rufous yet recorded in Pennsylvania, according to Scott Weidensaul, took over a feeder at Knauers 7/29 (MS). The show was brief, as the bird left at 5:30 p.m. 7/31 immediately after it was banded by Sandy Lockerman, kind of like a rock star blowing town after a gig.



*Rufous Hummingbird photo  
by Mike Slater*



*The Rufous Hummingbird being held by Sandy Lockerman during the banding process - photo by Mike Slater*

A few Snow Geese, probably wounded birds unable to return to the arctic, were seen at two ponds in Jun. A **Blue-winged Teal** drake at KDRC 6/4 (KG) was a late migrant. A **Redhead** drake at Shartlesville 6/2 – 7/9 (KG, et al.) lingered for unknown reasons. This *Aythya* is very rare after May. **Common Mergansers**, now well established breeders, trailing broods of ducklings (four in each case) were reported in Jun and early Jul along the Schuylkill R. in northern Berks (KG), at BML (SC), and at FCSP (MR), the latter a new breeding location.

Single **Ring-necked Pheasants**, probably birds that survived the winter after release for hunting last fall, were seen or heard at three locations. Hens with chicks have not been reported for many years. A **Ruffed Grouse** was at SGL 110, Northkill Gap on the KR 6/1 (KG), where the species holds on due to favorable habitat management. **Wild Turkey** hens with broods were reported at four locations across the county. A non-breeding

**Pied-billed Grebe** was at Kaercher Creek Park, Hamburg 7/20 (EB) and 7/30 (SM). This species was a common breeder at Glen Morgan L. IBA, now closed to the public, in the 1990's.

Most reports of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at the Shartlesville colony were of one or 2 birds perched on utility wires along Main St. (mob.), but 5 doves seen in a side street backyard 7/9 (EZ) may have included fledged young. If this was the case, it is unknown where they disperse because the colony has not grown. Our default breeding season cuckoo is **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, but a few **Black-billed Cuckoos** may be found, especially where hairy caterpillars are abundant. Numerous fall webworms on black walnuts probably accounted for reports of **Black-billed Cuckoos** at BML during Jul (JS). The only reported **Common Nighthawks** were 2 northbound migrants over District Twp. 6/10 (RK). Up to 4 **Whip-poor-wills** were heard at SGL 110, Northkill Gap on the KR, their only current breeding location, in Jun and Jul (mob.).

**Virginia Rails** returned for the second summer to the small wetland at KDRC, where one or 2 were heard in Jun to mid-Jul (KG, RK). There was no breeding confirmation. Single **Sandhill Cranes** were flyovers at a home in Bern Twp. 6/7 (EB) and at a farm in Albany Twp. 6/11 (BB). Since their population has increased, these cranes might be seen in any season, whether flying overhead or on stopover. The only reported southbound shorebirds were 2 **Least Sandpipers** at Gotwals pond, Oley 7/24 (RK), another at Petsmart warehouse near Bethel 7/30 (TK), a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Petsmart 7/31 (TK), and a **Solitary Sandpiper** at Gotwals 7/27 (RK). Migrant shorebird diversity increased dramatically in Aug. **American Woodcocks** breed, but effectively vanish from detection after spring courtship. Singletons were seen or heard as flyovers at two KR sites 6/16, 29 (KG). The only reported terns were 2 **Common Terns** at BML 7/13 (JS). Non-breeding **Double-crested Cormorants**, here annually in summer, were at FCSP, LO and E.J. Bremen Quarry, where the seasonal high count of 9 was made 6/2 (NW). Post-breeding **Great Egrets** were first reported 7/7, then appeared at several places for the rest of the period. Adult **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were regularly reported, as usual, at the LO dam spillway and at BML, where the seasonal high count of 8 was made from a kayak 7/21 (EB). The only evidence that this heron may still breed in Berks comes from sightings of fledged juveniles in summer. This year one was seen at BML 7/21 and 8/14 (EB), and 2 at BML 8/7 (PJW).

Following years of absence, **Mississippi Kites** reappeared in Berks, with four sightings made along the KR from May to Jul. An adult was seen flying southeast along the ridge 5/17 (DB). A well described immature was seen just over the treetops at SGL 106, Pine Swamp Rd. 6/14 (MW). An unaged bird was seen flying over KDRC 7/3 (KG), and an adult, probably a female, made a leisurely, effortless flight over Shartlesville 7/12 (RK). All cited observers are experienced hawk counters. Non-breeding

**Ospreys** were reported from various fishy places all period, as during every summer. A **Northern Harrier** at SGL 280, BML (DM) provided a rare summer record. That there is a breeding population of **Red-shouldered Hawks** along the Schuylkill R. in southern Berks and in the large remnant Piedmont forest (the “Big Woods”) around FCSP has been confirmed by nesting reports over many years. Summer reports of birds around BML in recent years indicate a breeding population there as well, but it has yet to be confirmed. Hawk Mt. Sanctuary’s **Broad-winged Hawk** Project monitored six nests in Berks this year. Four of those nests produced a total of 9 young. Two nests were thought to have failed due to predation by **Common Ravens** (LG). A pair in District Twp. not monitored by the project also fledged young (RK).

Even though not all of their known breeding locations were visited by birders this summer, **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported at seven locations. Currently the largest known colony is located along Allendale Rd. near Shoemakersville, where 4 adults and one fledgling were seen 6/29 (SM). These woodpeckers often nest late, with breeding not confirmed by the presence of fledglings till Jul or Aug, as this year. Fledged young were not seen till Aug at the colonies on Kauffman Rd., Oley Twp. and Bastian Rd. near Bowers (RK). **Acadian Flycatchers** were again found in their two strongholds in different habitats at opposite ends of the county, with few between. Nine singing males were heard in the cool hemlock/rhododendron ravine at HRes on the KR 6/8 (KG), and 6 were tallied in the deciduous Piedmont forest at Hay Creek in southern Berks 6/12 (JT). One **Blue-headed Vireo** was reported singing in the hemlocks at HRes 6/8 – 7/6 (mob.); this is presently the species’ sole breeding location here.

The prairie subspecies of **Horned Lark** was “frequently heard under conditions that suggest nesting” by Earl Poole in the farmland of the Great Valley in the 1930’s and persists there to this day, having adapted to the intensive industrial agriculture of the 21st century. Recently fledged young in sparrow-like juvenile plumage were seen near Fleetwood in mid-Aug (RK). The May polar vortex was apparently not a swallow killer. **Purple Martin** colonies on Mennonite farms in the Great Valley between Fleetwood and Topton appeared to thrive, with 70 birds at one colony alone in early Jun (RK). At the county’s only known **Bank Swallow** colony at the Haines & Kibblehouse quarry near Birdsboro, 25 birds were visiting nest holes in hills of quarried sand 6/25 (PJW). There are four known **Cliff Swallow** colonies on bridges in Berks. The two largest colonies at LO had a total of about 60 birds in Jun (RK). There were 16 adults and fledglings at the Church Rd. bridge, BML 7/21 (EB), and 11 birds at Berne Bridge 6/25 (KG).

Without **Dickcissels** to attract birders to farmland, grassland sparrows would be less well reported than they have been in recent years. All three species were noted at Dickcissel sites, with **Grasshopper Sparrow** the most common (up to 7 at Monument Rd., Hamburg, and 6 at Rodale) and **Vesper Sparrow** the least common (one at Monument Rd. and a few scattered elsewhere). There were several breeding confirmations of **Grasshopper** and **Savannah Sparrows** at these sites. Four late migrating **White-throated Sparrows** were seen at three sites 6/10, 12 (KG, JSp, TW), part of a larger regional movement of stragglers that showed up on eBird. Two **Swamp Sparrows** seen at Green Hills Preserve 7/3 (AZ) may indicate that this site is a new nesting location for this highly localized and uncommon breeder. Weird and wonderful **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found in June at SGL 110, Northkill Gap (KG), Daniel Boone Homestead (SF), and along the new Big Woods Trail, FCSP (mob.). In most years, just one go-to location is known and gets all the birder visits. Fields at the largest known **Bobolink colony** along Grist Mill Rd., Douglass Twp. were cut in early May, a month earlier than usual, eliminating any possibility of nesting. Bobolinks persisted in smaller groups elsewhere, such as 7 birds at Rodale and up to 13 at Monument Rd. in Jun and Jul (mob.). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were found in lower numbers at most of the same places as Bobolinks. Timing of haying means everything to the nesting success of these icterids.

**Blue-winged Warblers** and **Prairie Warblers**, both of which breed in early successional edge and brush habitat, have been quick to colonize farmland converted to warm season grassland and edge at Green Hills Preserve and, more recently, the Big Woods Trail, FCSP, where a few pairs of each were

found this season. Both species also thrive at SGL 106, Pine Swamp Rd., where shrubland is razed every few years to maintain early successional habitat. A territorial **Kentucky Warbler** was reported at only one location, Sixpenny Creek, FCSP (RK, TU) this year. **Hooded Warbler** was common at opposite ends of the county, one population on the KR and the other at FCSP, especially in an area that burned a few years ago, resulting in regrowth of dense understory. Spring's last reported **Blackpoll Warbler** was in District Twp. 6/1 (RK). **Black-throated Blue Warbler** and **Black-throated Green Warbler**, both common further north, reach the southeastern limits of their Pennsylvania breeding ranges on the KR on the northern edge of Berks, where they are uncommon but stable. As many as 5 of the former sang in the rhododendron understory at HRes as 2 or 3 of the latter sang in the hemlocks overhead in Jun and Jul (mob.). **Blue Grosbeaks** were reported at eight places, mostly in farmland, a fairly typical number of locations for this species, which does not always return to places it occupied in the previous year.

**Dickcissels** returned for the fifth consecutive summer to Rodale, where grass pastures grazed in rotation ensure continuous cover for grassland birds. Most reports were of 2 males singing 6/15 – 7/19 from the same utility wires and fence posts they used in previous years (mob.). Four reports noted the presence of females, but breeding was not confirmed. Two other sites attracted **Dickcissels** this summer. At Monument Rd., Hamburg (where **Dickcissels** had been found in a previous year), one to 3 singing males were reported 6/27 – 7/15, but there were no reports of females. Habitat there is a patchwork of corn, soybeans and small grains alternating with strips of alfalfa and grass and clover hay. The last of the hay had been cut by early Jul, leaving no standing habitat for grassland birds. It is possible that one or 2 of the Monument Rd. birds moved to a nearby site close to Windsor Castle, where one or 2 males sang 7/7 – 8/9 and a female was sometimes seen vocalizing in response to one of the males while perched near him (RK). Breeding was not confirmed. Habitat there is similar to that at Monument Rd., with the addition of permanent stream bottom pasture. **Dickcissels** had not previously been reported there.

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## Berks County Bird Report, August – November 2020

By Matt Wlasniewski

Locations: Bartrum Trail (BAT), Berne Township, (BT), Blue Mountain Academy (BMA), Blue Marsh Lake (BML), Blue Marsh Lake State Hill Boat Launch (BMLSH), Blue Marsh Lake Sheidy Boat Launch (BMLSBL), EJ Breneman's Quarry (BQ), French Creek State Park (FCSP), Gotwal's Pond (GP), Green Hills Preserve (GHP), Hamburg Commerce Park (HCP), Hamburg Reservoir (HR), Hawk Mountain North Lookout Data (HMNL), Hawk Mountain South Lookout (HMSL), Hay Creek (HC), Kernsville Dam Recreation Area (KDRA), Kutztown University (KU), Lake Ontelaunee (LO), Lake Ontelaunee Bailey's Creek (LOBC), Lake Ontelaunee Blue Falls (LOBF), Lake Ontelaunee Water Street (LOWA), Lake Ontelaunee West Shore Drive (LOWS), Lowland Road Retention Pond (LRRP), Monacacy Hill Recreation Area (MHRC), Mount Penn (MP), Old Topton Road (OTP), Peter's Creek (PC), Pine Swamp Road (PSR), School Road Pond (SRP), Shartlesville Farm Pond (SFP), State Game Lands 52 (SGL52), State Game Lands 106 (SGL106), State Game Lands 110 North Kill Gap (SGL110), Trout Run Reservoir (TRR).

As the Covid-19 restrictions eased in Pennsylvania, birders who had spent the past few months cooped up were eager to get back in the field. Fall migration proved to be more interesting than usual

for shorebirds. Birders were in anticipation of a winter finch forecast which gave hope for birds missed in the past few years.

The first report of **Snow Geese** came from HMNL 10/3 (MW). On 11/12 at GP, RK found four **Snow Geese** mixed in a flock of 4500 **Canada Geese**. A lone **Brant** showed up at SRP 10/14 (JSp). A single



**Cackling Goose** at GP 11/13 was joined by a second **Cackling Goose** on 11/25(RK). Nine **Tundra Swan** stopped over at LO 10/29 (RK). Puddle duck activity consisted of the normal species; however, the more desirable **Blue-winged Teals** were seen by RK with six at LO 9/9 and by MSI with nine at SRP 9/26.

Storm bird activity was low this season as no major rain events passed through Berks. **Greater Scaup** were reported at LO on three occasions: three 10/26 (RK), two 10/29 (RK) and 20 11/12 (JW, PW). One **Lesser Scaup** rested at LOWS 11/4 (RK). A female **Black Scoter** was seen on a morning LO excursion by BS and PS 10/31. One **Long-tailed Duck** at BQ 11/13 (JSp) was the only report for the species this season. A raft of forty-five **Bufflehead** were reported at LO 10/31 (MW)—a familiar stop for those ducks.

The rare **Red-breasted Merganser** made three appearances in November: two at LO 11/12 (JW, PW), three at BML 11/18 (JSp) and one at LO 11/18 (RK). Single **Red-throated Loons** were found at BML on two occasions: 11/13 (JW, PW) and 11/18 (JSp). A lone **Common Loon** remained at LO 11/12 to 11/29 (JSp, JW, PW, RK). At LO, RK found a single **Red-necked Grebe** twice—10/29 and 11/22.

The fall dispersal movement of herons and egrets in Berks resulted in single **Great Egrets** on 8/6 BML (JS) and 8/20 BMA (MW). Reading Regional Airport is not often birded but a **Glossy Ibis** was seen there 8/9 (JSp).

Migration winds were seldom ideal at Hawk Mountain this season which resulted in lower than average totals for most species. Two exceptions were **Bald Eagle** and **Turkey Vulture** which might set new season highs. A full report will be included in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter issue of Pennsylvania Birds. The highest one day total for **Bald Eagles** was 32 9/18 (LG). An adult **Golden Eagle** made a rare appearance off ridge over Hamburg on 10/16 (MW). On 9/7, a single **Sandhill Crane** flew over Henningsville (PS).

Shorebird migration has recently been low due to the lack suitable mud flats and rain puddles in the surrounding countryside. A notable exception this

*Snow Geese migrating south. Photo by Mike Slater*

migration was an alfalfa field on Mertz Road near Lyons that was harvested just as shorebirds began to arrive. A large rain pool usually unseen when the usual crop of corn hasn't been harvested appeared making it easy to view shorebirds from the roadside. The School Road pond in Fleetwood, although smaller, provided suitable habitat. The water level at the retention pond at Hamburg Commerce Park remained high but is still the main spot to find shorebirds.

Shorebirds found at Mertz Road: one **American Golden Plover** 8/29 (MW) and eleven 10/17 (JV); three **Semipalmated Plover** 8/15 (EH) and one MW 9/10; 60 **Killdeer** was a high number on 10/19 (MW); three **Lesser Yellowlegs** 8/30 (MW); one **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** 8/29 (MW) and three 9/10 (MW); one **Western Sandpiper** 9/10 (MW); seven **Least Sandpiper** 8/19 (RH); one **White-rumped Sandpiper** 9/2 (RK) and 9/10 (MW); one **Baird's Sandpiper** 8/19 (RH, RW, JW, PW) and 9/26 (MW); ten **Pectoral Sandpiper** 9/10 (MW), six 9/18 (MW), three 10/19 (MW); one **Stilt Sandpiper** 8/11 (JW, PW) and 10/11 (RK); one **Wilson's Snipe** 8/19 (JW, PW); one **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** 8/27 (RW) and 9/1 (MW, RK, m. obs.).

The **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** is a sought-for but seldom reported wading bird during fall migration. The first record as noted in *A Century of Bird Life in Berks County Pennsylvania, 1997, William D Uhrich* was 9/6/1958 LOWS (RC, MS). On 9/8/1966 DK reported two individuals that he observed from close range at LOWS. Due to drought, the mudflats at LOWS were exposed more than usual and a single bird was observed 8/26-27/1995 (JH, KG). On 8/26/2020, JW and PW found a **Buff-Breasted Sandpiper** at the Mertz Road rain pool. It was seen the following day but not after until it was assumed to reappear at Mertz Road on 9/1. Upon close inspection, the obvious plumage differences showed the bird to be a new record (RK). These two latest reports were the fifth and sixth documented sightings in Berks.

Shorebirds found at the School Road Pond: one **Lesser Yellowlegs** 8/31 (MW); one **Semipalmated Sandpiper** 8/29 (MW); one **Pectoral Sandpiper** 8/31 (MW); two **Dunlin** 10/26 (JW, PW); one **Short-billed Dowitcher** 8/22 (RK); one **Wilson's Snipe** 9/25 to 10/9 (RK).

A nice flock of 36 **Bonaparte's Gulls** were observed at LO 11/12 (JW, PW) while only one was seen at GP 11/12 (RK). An early **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was found at BML 11/20 (JS). Single **Caspian Terns** fed at LO 8/6 BS, MW) and 8/16 DP while another fed at BML 8/7 (JS). The colony of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** has increased over their breeding season with 15 being found in Shartlesville 9/27 (MW). On 11/25, MW was surprised to find 18 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** seven miles east of Shartlesville along Berne Road near Hamburg. One wonders if their range is finally expanding. The doves were not found after three days.

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** apparently halted its southern migration near the home of RK in Boyertown 9/25. It responded to calls but wasn't seen. A number of **American Robins** seemed to have arrived at the same time. A **Common Nighthawk** was first reported 8/29 in Dryville 8/29 (SF) and 17 were active 8/31 near Henningsville (PS). Two **Common Nighthawks** were first heard then seen hunting over the Schuylkill River and a pasture near Berne 9/12 (MW).

**Rufous Hummingbirds** are becoming annual visitors to Berks. A male **Rufous Hummingbird** was banded 11/11 (SL) in Exeter Township. In 2020, a female **Rufous Hummingbird** visited same location 10/3 to 12/25. A Boyertown resident hosted a **Rufous Hummingbird** 10/17 to 11/27 (RW). SL banded a different hatch-year female Rufous Hummingbird in Boyertown 12/20 but missed the previous bird. The two nesting pairs of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** had offspring this year as immatures were seen at both locations—Allendale Road 8/20 (MW) and Bastian Road 8/27 (RK).

The wintering **Merlin** pair arrived at BML on schedule with appearing 10/16 and the second 10/19 (JS). Single **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were seen at HMNL 8/27 (LM) and 9/5 (MW). A migrating **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was a nice find at Angora Fruit Farm 9/6 (LI, MSI). On 8/22, MW spotted a **Least Flycatcher** at HMNL.

A **possible Western Kingbird** was photographed on Berk Road 9/13 (BS, PS) but its identity could not be confirmed. The bird could have been a Western Kingbird but Tropical or Couch's Kingbird could not be ruled out. The bird flew off after the birders exited their car.

A single **Philadelphia Vireo** was seen at HMNL 9/5 MW and a single **Philadelphia Vireo** was seen 9/13 to 9/20 on Mt. Penn (RH). **Common Ravens** are frequent at BML and JS spotted four there 8/4. They are also often seen at KDRA (MW). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were more prevalent this quarter with birds being seen throughout Berks in the proper habitat. **Marsh Wren** habitat has improved at KDRA since the wetlands have been expanded. A **Marsh Wren** was present at KDRA 9/20 to 9/23 (KG, MW). **American Pipits** found Mertz Road habitat their liking and were there in good number. On 10/19 MW found 50 in the mud flats while JW and PW saw 200 10/23.



The number of migrating warblers was not significant but some unusual warblers were seen. On 9/12, KW was surprised by a **Golden-winged Warbler** at HMNL. An expected migrating **Orange-crowned Warbler** was in Morgantown 10/13 (HH) and LRRP 11/1 (KG). Several **Nashville Warblers** were seen, including a brightly plumaged one that popped out of some goldenrod at KDRA 9/26 (MW).

*Nashville Warbler photo by Peter Wolfe at Wolfe Mountain*

There were two sightings of **Connecticut Warblers**—MHRC 9/15 (LI) and TRR 9/28 (DM). There were three sightings of **Mourning Warblers**—Leesport 8/24 (DK), GHP 9/10 (AZ), Union Meadows 9/25 (JT). 33 **Cape May Warblers** went past HMNL 9/5 (HM). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was a surprise window-kill at an office building in Reading 10/19 (TU).

Three **Fox Sparrows** were active at SGL106 11/8 (MW). Four **Lincoln's Sparrows** found the scrub vegetation to their liking at KDRA 9/21 (KG). A single **Lincoln's Sparrow** was still present 10/3 (MW).

The winter finch irruption was limited in numbers and locations but it was still great to have after years of absence. The greatest number of **Purple Finch** was 40 that fed at a feeder in Bernville 10/30 (JS). On 11/12, the number had dwindled to 12. Five **Red Crossbills** flew by HMNL 10/25 MW. KG had a single **Red Crossbill** flyover KDRA 11/14. Thirteen **White-winged Crossbills** in two groups flew over HMNL 11/14 (MW). On 11/22, MW saw 3 **Common Redpolls** at HMNL and on the same day, TU saw six **Common Redpolls** in Kutztown. On 10/18, MW and RK heard a single Pine Siskin fly by HMNL. Greater numbers were reported the following month.

**Evening Grosbeaks**, the most desired winter finches turned out to mostly avoid Berks County, but a few were reported. They flew by HMNL in unpredictable numbers and at unpredictable times. Five stopped at a Fleetwood feeder 11/1 and 2 (TS). Seven stayed one day at a feeder in Oley 11/5 (JD) and two flew over SGL110 11/8 (KG). Counties surrounding Berks seemed to have greater sightings of the winter jewels.

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\* **Newsletter Committee**

## BOC -Covid 19 Field Trip Protocols

**We are following PA guidelines for our field trips for the rest of this schedule;**

“When outdoors, a mask must be worn if you are not able to remain physically distant (at least 6 feet away) from someone not in your household the entire time you are outdoors.”

## Spring 2021 Field Trips

**APRIL 10 (Saturday) - Tulpehocken Creek - 8 AM**, Look for early spring migrants. Meet at the Berks County Heritage Center side of the Red Bridge. Coordinator: Katrina Knight, 610-372-3671

**APRIL 24 (Saturday) - Birds, Butterflies & Botany, Neversink Mountain, 10 AM**, (In conjunction with the Mengel NHS). Some butterflies fly only in early spring and this is one of the few Berks County locations to see them. Meet at S 10th & South Sts., Reading. (Park on South St.) Coordinators: Karl Gardner, 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine, 610-777-2333.

**April 25 (Sunday) - Union Meadows Park- 8 AM**, An easy walk on wide flat trail through wooded and open field habitats. Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, the Union Township Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. Coordinator: Linda Ingram, 610-326-9531

**MAY 2 (Sunday) - Pine Swamp - 7 AM** – Spring Migrants , This is a great location for migrants as well as uncommon local birds like Ruffed Grouse, and Kentucky Warblers. Meet in the parking lot on the west side of Pine Swamp Rd about 1/2 mile south of Hawk Mountain Rd. Coordinator: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310

**MAY 8 (Saturday) Hay Creek, 7 AM** – Spring Migrants. Easy walking in the Hay Creek Watershed and Reservoir for spring migrants. Access from Hay Creek Rd., park at south gate. Coordinator: Sheila Martin, 610-858-6005

**JUNE 5 (Saturday) Grassland Breeding Birds at Hopewell Big Woods Trail, French Creek State Park - 8 AM**. A wide trail meanders through open fields bordered by woodland. Previous seasons were excellent for field and edge species. Access the parking lot (adjacent Union Township maintenance buildings) from Center Rd., at the eastern end of Birdsboro. Coordinators: Rudy Keller, 610-845-7310 and Sheila Martin, 610-858-6005

**JUNE 12 (Saturday) - Green Hills Preserve - Butterflies, 10 AM** (In conjunction with Mengel NHS). Extensive open fields and some wooded habitat. From Rte. 10, go west on Rte. 568 (Kurtz Mill Rd.) Turn right onto Gunhart Rd. Parking lot is on the right. Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333.

**JUNE 19 (Saturday) - Moth Night - Nolde Forest EEC - 8:00 PM** (In conjunction with Mengel NHS) The leaders will bait trees and hang sheets to bring in the night insects. Bring a flashlight. Meet at the Nolde Forest Mansion parking lot. Coordinators: Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333, Jim Eckert 610-373-1064, and Karl Gardner 610-987-3281.

**JULY 24 (Saturday) Blue Marsh Butterflies-10 AM** (In conjunction with Mengel NHS) Meet at the Blue Marsh Visitor's Center off Palisades Drive. Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333

**AUGUST 7 (Saturday) Dragonflies & Damselflies - 10 AM**. Bartram Trail/Kernsville Recreation Area. (In conjunction with Mengel NHS)/ Directions: Rte. 61 north, right on Jetson Dr. (across from Cabelas), right on Industrial Dr., left on Kernsville Dam Rd. The parking area is on the right. Coordinators: Karl Gardner, Mike Slater 610-775-3757, and Rudy Keller 610 845-7310.

**AUGUST 21 (Saturday) - Butterflies - Angelica Park- 10 AM**. (In conjunction with Mengel NHS) Meet in the parking lot off Rte. 10 (the entrance is at the big sign for Alvernia University). Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333

**FLASH BIRD WALKS** - Additional field trips may be scheduled at short notice any time that it appears that conditions are right for an interesting outing. Sign up to get email or check the website for announcements.