

The Syrx

Voicebox of the
Westmoreland Bird &
Nature Club, Vol. 43 No. 2
April to June 2024

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Dues payable beginning January unless you joined after Sep. 1. \$15 Family or Individual. Supporting, optional -\$30, must be paid by the July issue.

May 7, 7:00 PM

Club Meeting

The Donohoe Barn

Doors open 6:30 p.m.

**See Field Trips and
Outings**

Of Mice and Men:

Understanding Rodenticides and Alternative Rodent Management Strategies

By Alex Busato

If you've ever gone to the pantry for a bowl of cereal only to find holes chewed through the box, you're familiar with the handiwork of the Eastern Deer



Mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*). Along with its close cousin the White-footed Mouse (*P. leucopus*), these rodents are incredibly abundant across North America across a range of forested and grassland habitats (in fact you're likely never more than a few dozen yards from one while outside in PA). And because of their extreme abundance, Deer Mice serve as an essential prey species for dozens of native predators across their range. This includes birds of prey like hawks, owls, kestrels, and shrike, mammals like foxes, weasels, and bobcats, a variety of snakes, and even some fish like bass and pike! Without mice in our ecosystem, many of these species would struggle to find enough prey to sustain them through the year.

Unfortunately, this same abundance and adaptability often finds mice in close proximity to people in search of an easy meal and lodging with consistent year-round temperatures. Here they can become problematic as disease vectors for Lymes and

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Field Trips & Outings



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NOTICE

All outdoor activities involve some risk, including falling trees and branches, wet or slippery conditions, and interactions with animals and insects, and other unforeseen risks. In attending any of our outings or events, you agree to assume those risks and to hold harmless Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club for those risks.

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Saturday, April 13 - Cedar Creek - Scenic Hike for Early Flora and Fauna

Meet at the parking lot by the confluence of Cedar Creek with the Youghiogheny River at 10:00 a.m. (Coordinates are 40°10'43.1"N 79°46'42.1"W.)

Leaders: Mark Bowers and Loree Speedy, monarda55@gmail.com, 724-454-4012

Directions: Address is 216 Municipal Drive, Belle Vernon, PA 15012. Whether driving north or south on SR 51 in Rostraver Township, turn onto Concord Lane. If driving north from the intersection of I-70 and SR 51, you will turn right onto Concord Lane at a red light by the Burger King, and then turn right onto Municipal Drive (roads here have been recently modified). If driving south on SR 51, turn left onto Concord Lane at a red light by Harper Drive and turn left onto Municipal Drive. Follow Municipal Drive

0.7 mile and turn left onto Evergreen Drive. This left turn is at the main entrance to Cedar Creek Park. Follow Evergreen Drive 1.4 mile to a parking lot at the end of Evergreen Drive.

Description: We will tour this scenic venue looking to ID early spring trees, plants, animals, and birds. The plan is to walk the flat floodplain trail in the gorge and/or the GAP bike trail. Of course, dress for the season and weather conditions, and be aware that some trail areas may be steep, wet, and slippery.

Saturday April 27 – Kooser State Park for Spring Wildflowers and Early Migrants

Meet at the long trailhead parking lot along Rt 31 at 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Denny McCarthy, dennymccarthy@comcast.net, 412-913-9064

Directions: From the Donegal Turnpike Exit, head east on Rt 31 for 9.2 miles and watch for the Main entrance on your right. You can follow Lake Loop Trail thru the park to the trailhead parking lot on the other end of the park. Or you can drive past the main park entrance and turn right after 0.2 miles to the big long parking lot visible from Rt 31.

Description: We will hike the Kincora, Tree Army, and Kooser Run Trails, which essentially loop around the park. Spring will just be arriving at this elevated park with migrants arriving and wildflowers blooming. Lake and stream areas along with deciduous and coniferous forests can be viewed. Picnic areas are available for those wishing to socialize over a brown-bag lunch.

**Saturday May 4 - Bushy Run
Battlefield State Historic Park for
Spring Migrants and Wildflowers**

Meet at the walking trails parking lot at 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Regina Gaison, rgaison1@gmail.com, 724-853-7715

Directions: The park is located off Rt 66 between Greensburg and Rt 22. From either direction, turn off Rt 66 (old 66, not the toll road) onto Rt 993 and drive until you come to the park. The GPS address is 1253 Bushy Run Road, Jeannette, PA 15644. Find and park in the lot near the entrance to the walking trails.

Description: We will hike the Edge Hill Trail, the main trail around the park, for the best chance for viewing wildflowers and migrating passerines. 114 bird species have been sighted. Time permitting, we may also walk Iroquois Trail and Flour Sack Trail. For those interested in brown-bagging a lunch, we can find an available picnic table.

**Tuesday, May 7, 7:00 p.m. - Club
Meeting at the Donohoe Center Barn.**

Meet inside the Donohoe Center at 7:00 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m.

Leader: Alex Busato, busatoalex67@comcast.net, 724-963-6612

Directions: Turn north onto Donohoe Road at the Route 30 traffic light near the overpass to the Westmoreland Mall in Greensburg. Drive north on Donohoe 1.7 miles past WOW Outlets until you see the sign on the right for the Donohoe Center. Address is 214 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA. 15601. “The Barn” is in the back.

Description: Please join us for our spring members meeting. We will provide updates on club goings-on including the upcoming Bird Atlas. Come, relax and enjoy socializing with other club members, listen to speakers, programs and other topics. Homemade

snacks and baked good contributions are always appreciated.

Special Guest Speaker – Don German, Plant Manager, Mon Valley Works, US Steel Corporation: “The Bald Eagles of US Steel “

**Saturday, May 11, 2024 - Global Big
Day Bird Count. Various locations.**

Leader: Steve Manns, psuloon@yahoo.com, 724-963-6612

Directions: Bird your favorite areas - Be a part of something bigger!

Description: Be a part of birding’s biggest team! [Global Big Day](#) is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on May 11, help celebrate [World Migratory Bird Day](#), and share the birds you find with eBird.

Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with the [free eBird Mobile app](#). If you have more time, submit several checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations.

Last year, Global Big Day brought birders together virtually from more countries than ever before. More than 51,000 people from 201 countries submitted 132,000 checklists with eBird, setting [new world records](#) for a single day of birding. Will you help us surpass last year’s records?

How to participate

- **Get an eBird account:** eBird is a worldwide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It’s what allows us to compile everyone’s sightings into a single massive Global Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data to help scientists better understand birds. **Watch birds on May 11:** It’s that simple. You don’t need to be a bird expert or go out all day long, even 10 minutes of birding from home counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report what you find from anywhere in the world.

- **Enter what you see and hear in eBird:** You can enter your sightings [via the website](#) or download the [free eBird Mobile app](#) to make submitting lists even easier. Please enter your checklists before 14 May to be included in our initial results announcement.
- **Watch the sightings roll in:** During the day, follow along with sightings from more than 200 countries in real-time on our [Global Big Day page](#).

Saturday, May 18, 8:30 a.m. - Westmoreland Heritage Trail for Migrating Songbirds.

We will meet at the Saltsburg, Pa Trailhead

Leader: Denny McCarthy, dennymccarthy@comcast.net, 412-913-9064.

Directions: Follow Rt 981 north from New Alexandria, about 8 miles, to PA 286 and turn right across the bridge into Saltsburg. After 0.2 miles, turn right on Salt Street and travel 0.4 miles to the playground and trail parking lot.

Description: We will walk this section of the trail out and back toward Sara Steele trailhead, approximately 5 miles round trip. This should be the peak time for spring wildflowers and migration movements for warblers and vireos.

Friday, May 24, 8:30 a.m.- Buffalo Creek Nature Park/Todd Sanctuary for an Audubon-Led Walk.

We will meet in the BCNP parking lot.

Leader: Tom Moser, mosertd@gmail.com, 412-478-5513

Directions: Address is 154 Monroe Road, Sarver, PA. From Route 28, take PA-356 North for 0.9 miles. Turn right onto Monroe Road and follow for 0.8 miles. The road will wind around as you make your way down a hill. BCNP will be on your left at the bottom of the hill. Todd Nature reserve is 2 miles further up the hill at 367 Kepple Road, Sarver, PA.

Description: Depending on the number of attendees, we will first car pool 2 miles to the Todd Nature

Reserve for an Audubon naturalist-led “Birds and More” walk on trails through ravines, forests and reverting meadows with streams and a pond. We will then return to the Nature Park for a level walk along Little Buffalo Creek via the Butler-Freeport trail. Buffalo Creek Valley is listed as Important Bird Area # 22. Last year in late May we identified 45 species. The Park facilities feature the Babcock Nature Center, an Audubon Nature Store, concessions and modern restrooms. You can bring a bagged lunch for socializing after the walks in the adjacent picnic pavilion.

Saturday, June 8, 4:30 p.m. - Evening Vespers at Spruce Flats Bog.

We will meet at the Darlington Inn

Leader: Denny McCarthy, dennymccarthy@comcast.net, 412-913-9064

Directions: We will begin at the Darlington Inn just off Route 30. Address is 1473 Darlington Rd, Ligonier, PA 15658. Following Rt. 30 east from Latrobe, bear right onto Darlington Road (2043) just before you cross Longbridge. In about a mile, you will see the restaurant on your right and the parking lot on your left. Please **RSVP** your dinner reservation to Denny McCarthy, 412-913-9064 or dennymccarthy@comcast.net **no later than May 24**. After dinner we will drive to the parking lot at Spruce Flats bog. For the bog, from Rt 30, drive two miles east to Ligonier, turn south onto Route 381 and drive 2 miles to Rector. In Rector, turn left onto Linn Run Road and drive 7.7 miles to Laurel Summit State Park. Turn left as you approach the pavilion and drive into the parking lot. Find a trail on the right side of the parking lot that leads to the bog boardwalk.

Description: It’s hard to beat a Hungarian buffet and a leisurely walk to the haunting songs of woodland thrushes and high elevation warblers. It is always a bit colder at the bog and may be muddy, although the actual viewing is from an elevated boardwalk. The bog contains many special flora including balsam fir trees, mountain laurel (our state flower), and carnivorous sundews and pitcher plants. Bring mosquito repellent.

Saturday, June 22, 8:30 a.m. - Wolf Rocks Trail for a Scenic Hike.

We will meet at the trailhead.

Leader: Denny McCarthy,
dennymccarthy@comcast.net, 412-913-9064

Directions: On Rt 30, drive 2 miles east of Ligonier. Turn south onto Rt 381 and drive two miles to Rector. In Rector, turn left onto Linn Run Road and drive 7.7 miles to Laurel Summit State Park. Turn left as you approach the pavilion and drive into the parking lot. Find the trail on the left side of the parking lot that leads to Wolf Rocks.

Description: We will hike this trail to the scenic Wolf Rocks Overlook. It is about a 4.5-mile forested loop over relatively flat but sometimes very rocky ground. Sturdy shoes and a hiking pole are helpful. Many breeding songbirds along with spring and summer wildflowers like Mountain Laurel can be seen. With a little luck we may spot Timber rattlesnakes sunning on the rocks.

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Nature soothes us. Nature heals us, and something more, the woods are a place of Power.
- Frederick Lenz

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Outings Revisited

Saturday, December 30: Bushy Run Christmas Bird Count

I am extremely grateful for all that participated and braved the cool, dicey weather to collect data for this citizen science project. The club had a great participation, and all sectors were covered by dedicated birders.

Although we did not have any really unusual species, we did turn out some record numbers and a few ties. 8,782 was the foremost individual birds that we have counted in the 50-year history of the Bush Run Christmas Bird Count. With 64 species this year, it was just under our 10 species average of 64.9.

Two **Greater Scaup** were tallied which is a tie from 2007. Two **Eastern Meadowlarks** also tied a record from 1980 before I started Christmas Bird Counts. Fifteen **Bald Eagles** were tallied surpassing the 2016 total of 12. They continue to show great recovery. The Bushy Run Christmas Bird Count started in 1974 and we did not have ONE **Bald Eagle** until 2001. Just in our little part of the world, this is an amazing return. Woodpeckers continue to surge. Both **Hairy** and **Pileated Woodpeckers** set records this year at 30. WBNC tallied 28 **Hairy Woodpeckers** in 2005 and 27 **Pileated Woodpeckers** in 2018. The biggest jump in numbers goes to the **Common Grackle** where the club tallied 306 in 1985 and 884 this year and most of those were in one flock. Maybe they are sticking around because it doesn't get that cold anymore?

Thanks again to all that participated:

Norman Bono, Dale Cwynar, Mary Galiszewski, Ken Byerly, Regina Gaison, Bob and Angie Kanenic, Marty Gagiszewski, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Georgia Shalek, Lucy Stanislaw, Julia Ecklar, Karen Rose Cercone, Sarah Poklembo, Michelle and Rich Carlson, Mark McConaughy, Linda Lou Baker, Jim Kellam, Karen and Dave Primm, Annie Lindsay, Joe Saxfield, Sue Miller, Loree Speedy, Mark Bowers, Margaret Higbee, Rodger Higbee, Court Harding, Tina McGivern, Dale Matzua, Patience Fisher, Pat Comas

By Steve Manns

Saturday, January 20 -Pittsburgh Aviary/Montour-Panhandle Trails Prowl

WBNC Members started off the 2024 events season right with this dual outing featuring a tour of Pittsburgh's acclaimed National Aviary partnered with a chilly evening walk to see some locally rare **Short-eared Owls!**

Twenty-two attendees enjoyed a full morning at the aviary including a live feeding demo of an African Penguin, the *Habitat Heroes* live bird show, and a guided tour of the many species that call the aviary home. Highlights were some fly-bys from a Eurasian Eagle-Owl and Harris's Hawk, looks at



Photo by Alex Busato

critically-endangered Saipan White-eyes and Guam Kingfisher, and immersive walks through the rainforest and newly-constructed wetlands habitats featuring countless tropical species! Additional species of note included Kodiak the Steller's Sea-Eagle, Victoria Crowned Pigeons (pictured), American Flamingo, Blue-billed Curassow, Inca Tern, Green-winged Macaw, Sunbittern, White-throated Bee-eater, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Toco Toucan, and many more! Thanks to club funds, entry to the aviary was free for all WBNC members with the opportunity for day-of enrollment resulting in 9 new club members!

After an early group dinner, attendees bundled up to brave an icy twilight walk along the Panhandle Trail starting from the town of Midway in northern Washington County. This section of trail is well known for overwintering Short-eared Owls (pictured) and Northern Harriers that hunt in the large meadows adjacent to the trail. Despite cold and windy conditions resulting in a slow start to the owl activity, no fewer than 6 owls were seen hunting low over the fields as the sun set. Several owls even flew directly overhead of the group providing great looks of what were life birds for several in attendance.



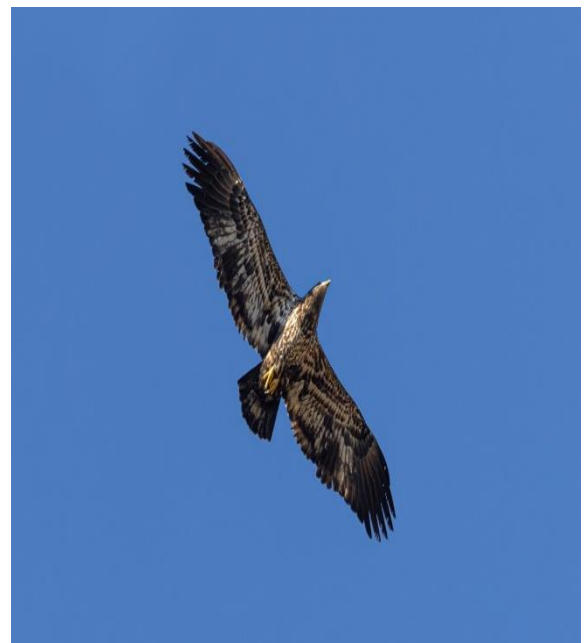
Photo by Alex Busato

Several Harriers were also seen hunting and even squabbling with the owls over territory. A few frozen toes aside, a great time was had by all!

By Alex Busato

Saturday, February 3 - Loyalhanna Dam Site – A Gathering of Eagles

My expectation of return on investment for this outing was somewhat low. Open water throughout the region left little reason for our local eagle population to congregate at the Loyalhanna dam tailwaters. That said, twenty-three outing



Immature Bald Eagle photo by Dale Matuza

participants were treated to several flybys of both adult and immature eagles. Some of these birds also chose to perch on various tree branches opposite our viewing area. A sufficient number of spotting scopes on hand gave everyone the opportunity for some up close and personal looks of these, while increasingly common, truly magnificent creatures.

In addition to the eagles, we had a pair of red-tailed hawks, two great blue herons, several common mergansers,

and a kingfisher, along with the usual cast of characters...blue jays, crows, pigeons, etc. One **inept** birder identified an immature eagle as a red-tailed hawk. **Yes, that was your outing leader!**

By Dale Matuza

Saturday, February 17 - Armchair Bird Outing at the Home of Georgia Shalek / Great Backyard Bird Count

Seven inches of snow fell during the night, but roads were relatively clear and 18 intrepid birders participated in this event at my home outside of Scottsdale. Delicious delicacies accompanied each one as they arrived, the first one a delicious coffee cake made by Ken Byerly. These set up the day for interesting and lively conversation as everyone settled in for a day of feeder and surrounding yard and woodland bird identification and counting. At 11:00 a.m., 12 hardy birders led by Mike Smith, trooped through the snow through a woodland, across the bridge over Mock Run and up the large hill to the cold and windy open fields, continuing their hike to Jacob's Creek and then returning to warm up and have lunch at the house. The day's count was 379 birds, made up of 36 species.

Highlights included a Savannah Sparrow spotted by Dale Matuza, a pair of Red-Shouldered hawks gathering nesting material, a Screech Owl and a Yellow-Bellied Sap Sucker.

The complete list can be viewed on ebird at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S161906049>.

Members attending the event were: Judy Wilson, Vicky Bromgard, Marcia Heisey, Eric Hall, Delia

White, Regina Gaison, Sue Miller, Angie and Bob Kamenic, Valerie and Jack Baker, Ken Byerly, Norm Bono, Dale and Xina Matuza, Denny McCarthy, Mike Smith, and myself, Georgia Shalek.

By Georgia Shalek

Saturday/Sunday, March 2 and 3 - Overnighter to Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area for Snow Geese

Sixteen WBNC members made the lengthy trek to enjoy the first weekend of March at the famous Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in south-central PA. Spanning the border of Lebanon and Lancaster counties, Middle Creek is renowned as an annual spring stopover location for hundreds of thousands of Snow Geese as they make their way north to breeding grounds in the Canadian tundra.



Photo by Alex Busato

The rolling farm fields surrounding Middle Creek provide a refueling station for these charismatic white birds while the lake in the park provides a protected overnight roosting area.

Participants met Saturday and weathered rainy and cold conditions in the pursuit of the wide variety of species that spend their early spring in Middle Creek. Despite a steady drizzle all day Saturday, members identified 47 different species including Snow Geese, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Shovelers, Eastern Meadowlark, and nearly a dozen Bald Eagles (including two pairs on nests). Several members that opted to participate in a dusk lap of the Middle Creek driving tour loop additionally encountered two Short-eared Owls, Tundra Swans, and a spectacular congregation of no less than 15 displaying American



Photo by Alex Busato

Woodcocks! In addition to birds, the late-night crew also stumbled upon an aggregation of breeding

told, the weekend yielded 66 species, lifer Snow Geese for several in attendance, and good times by all!

By Alex Busato



Photo by Alex Busato

Wood Frogs in a roadside vernal pool. After drying off and warming up, the group enjoyed a dinner at Snitz Creek Brewing Co. in downtown Lebanon.

Saturday, March 9 - St Vincent Wetlands & Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve.

The weather was damp and chilly, and the water puddles were many; but 13 hardy souls were up for the adventure to explore the St Vincent Wetlands and The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve.

The wetlands are more formally labeled The Monastery Run Improvement Project (MRIP). It is a broad-based effort to remediate abandoned mine drainage (AMD) discharges from Fourmile Run, Monastery Run, and Loyalhanna Creek and thus to restore water quality in the Loyalhanna watershed.

<https://www.stvincent.edu/academics/experiential-learning/community-outreach/monastery-run-improvement-project.html>

Rain clouds parted through the evening into Sunday morning, making for gorgeous conditions for attendees to view the annual morning take-offs of the lake's Snow Geese as they begin the next leg of their migration. Those that made it out to the park's Willow Point observation area by dawn were treated to a misty sunrise overtop around 25,000 Snow Geese, making for an unforgettable experience! Additional species of note include some early-season Tree Swallows and a pair of Cooper's Hawks. All

The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College is a 50-acre nature reserve adjacent to Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. The Reserve includes native landscapes, trails, meadows, gardens, Environmental Learning Barn, Nature

Explore Certified play spaces, pond, wetlands, and more! <http://www.wpnr.org/>

In no particular order, the following species were noted: Bald Eagle, Canada Goose, Ring-necked Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal, American Robin, European Starling, Carolina chickadee, Black-capped Chickadee, Mourning Dove, Song Sparrow, Eastern Bluebird, Killdeer, House Sparrow, House Finch, Tufted Titmouse, White-throated Sparrow, American Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, White-crowned Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren.

AND THE BIRD OF THE Day- spotted by Bob Kamenic and confirmed by Ken Byerly – **Fox Sparrow**. This Fox Sparrow, with his rufous tail and rusty coloring combined with gray around his neck was foraging on the ground near a feeder. Many birders know it only as a migrant or winter visitor. It is usually found on the ground under dense thickets, scratching busily in the leaf-litter with both feet.

Participants included: Bob Kamenic, Angie Kamenic, Norman Bono, Ken Byerly, Denise Hagumar, Tom Ritenour, Regina Gaison, Georgia Shalek, Denny McCarthy, Bernadette Farah, George Farah, Lucy Stanislaw and Jacob Stanislaw.

By Regina Gaison

Saturday, March 23 - Yellow Creek State Park – Migrating Waterfowl

Today’s Recipe: Mix 11 birders and 5 spotting scopes. Continuously sprinkle with cold water and keep chilled below 40°F. Let stand for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Serves up 44 species including 19 waterfowl.

We hit our usual spots including the Pond, the Lakeview, the Southlake put-in, the Beach and the Trail to the Blind. After bumping into Marg and Roger Higbee’s group, we took their advice and proceeded to the North Shore gazebo, racking up some key birds for our final tally. Attendees were Vicky Bromyard, Regina Gaison, Paul Fritz (guest), Dale Matusz, Angie and Bob Kamenic, Norm Bono, Ken Byerly, Mike Smith, Georgia Shalek, and

Denny McCarthy. Bird sightings were Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, Red-winged Blackbird, American Crow, WB Nuthatch, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Song Sparrow, Blue Jay, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Ring-billed Gull, Canada Goose, Kingfisher, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Red-headed Duck, Common Merganser, Common Loon, Green-winged Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Harrier, Common Pintail, Black Duck, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Duck, Killdeer, Tree Swallow, Bald Eagle, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Robin, Eastern Bluebird, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Northern Shoveler, Coopers Hawk, Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Bonaparte Gull, Turkey Vulture, and Wild Turkey.

By Denney McCarthy



Last stop was the North Shore for a long-range view of a dozen rafting Long Tail Ducks. (Text and photo by Denny McCarthy)

Saturday, March 30 - Morosini Reserve – Woodcock Stalk

Information not available at the time of printing



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There is a serene and settled majesty to woodland scenery that enters into the soul and delights and elevates it and fills it with noble inclinations.

-Washington Irving

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Westmoreland County - Sighting of the Season for the Fall Migration of 2023

By the PA Birds Journal Westmoreland County
Compiler Tom Kuehl

A very many observers provided an extensive amount of effort this season. Dry conditions provided mudflats at the Beaver Run Reservoir section of the Westmoreland Heritage Bike Trail and at Derry Lake (Ethel Spring Reservoir) and the birders were there to observe some species that are often not reported during Fall Migration. These locations and effort at Pleasant Valley Park, Donegal Lake and Mammoth Park provided very many candidates for Sighting of the Season. Let's hear about some of these reports with excerpts from my full Westmoreland County Compiler Narrative and then declare the Sighting of the Season:

- An exciting report was of two **Surf Scoters** found at Derry/Ethel Spring Lake (ESL) on 11/10 by Richard Chirichiello (RC).



Surf Scoter at ESL Photo by Richard Chirichiello

- Good to have this species reported; one Sora that was seen when it flushed from reeds and tall grass at Donegal Lake (DL) on 10/13 by Eric Hall (EH).
- A rare migrant in Westmoreland that has not been reported since 2017, so exciting to have report with

photos attached to an eBird Checklist that reported one Black-bellied Plover at ESL on 10/31 by Pat Comas (PC) and Patience Fisher (PF).

- For this Fall Migration season there was a modest irruption of **Dunlin** across Pennsylvania. Late in



Dunlins at ESL Photo by Richard Chirichiello

the season a **Dunlin** was found at two locations in Westmoreland County. At ESL the highest count of 30 **Dunlin** was also the earliest report – on 10/29 by Sue Miller (SM), and the latest report was of one on 11/18 (RC). At Mammoth Park (MP) the earliest of three reports of **Dunlin** was of two on 11/7 by Mark McConaughy (MM) and latest report was of two on 11/12 (RC).

- The only tern species for the season was a report of one **Forster's Tern** at MP on 9/9 (RC).
- A nice find was one immature **Little Blue Heron** at WHT-BRR that was first reported on 8/12 by Ken Byerly (KB) and continued to 8/27 (KB).
- One **Merlin** was among the 37 species tallied for the 10/7 Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club Big Sit at KSP.

- The only report of the season of **White-rumped Sandpiper** was documented with several



White-rumped Sandpiper
Photo by Richard Chirichiello

excellent photos that were uploaded to the eBird Checklist for MP on 10/18 (RC).



White-rumped Sandpiper
Photo by Richard Chirichiello

- **Pectoral Sandpiper** was reported at two locations for the season – on the Beaver Run Reservoir section of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail (WHT-BRR) there was one reported on 8/13 by Amy Henrici and two reported on 8/17 (PF), and later in the season at MP there was one reported on 10/19 (RC).



Pectoral Sandpiper Photo by Richard Chirichiello

- The one **Olive-sided Flycatcher** that was reported on 9/25 on the WHT-Delmont (KB, PF) was
- conveniently perched on a snag at the Athena Road trailhead – this was the only report for the season for this migrant species.
- An out-of-range **Western Wood-pewee** was captured at the Powdermill Nature Reserve (PNR) Banding Station on 10/12.
- Reports of the capture of one **Bicknell's Thrush** at the PNR Banding Station were made for 9/14 and 10/7 – smaller than the very similar **Gray-cheeked Thrush** so being able to take measurements is critical to making a positive identification of Bicknell's Thrush.
- Not routinely reported in fall migration so good to get a report of six **American Pipits** on the WHT-D/BRR on 10/24 (PF) and a report of two at MP on 11/5 (EH).
- In addition to captures at the PNR Banding Station **Connecticut Warbler** reports included two at MP on 9/13 by Natalie Donofrio, one at Pleasant Valley Park (PVP) on 9/15 by Micheal

McDevitt and on 10/10 (EH), and one on the WHT-D on 9/26 (KB).

- Away from PNR, where **Wilson Warbler** was reported on 9/13 to 9/17, one was reported at PVP on 9/14 (EH) and one was reported on the WHT-D on 9/19 (KB).

More for the body of work, and several excellent photographs, than for one specific sighting the Sighting of the Season is awarded to Richard Chirichiello. Hey, when your photos clearly show the white puff on the rump of a **White-rumped Sandpiper** and the pectoral chest line on the **Pectoral Sandpiper** an award is very justified! A very honorable mention to Pat Comas and Patience Fisher for their report of a **Black-bellied Plover** and other contributions for the season. And finally, with no intent to ignore any of the other observers mentioned, congratulations to Eric Hall and Ken Byerly for their field efforts that provided them with many excellent finds for the season, congratulations to Banding Manager Annie Lindsay and her staff at PNR for the unexpected **Western Wood-pewee** and kudos to the thirteen club members for the **Merlin** and the tally of 37 species for the October 7 Big Sit.

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Lose yourself in nature and find peace.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

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WBNC Dues.... Dues.... Dues...

This is a reminder: WBNC dues are due in January.

- \$15 individual/family.
- \$30 supporting membership.
- Donations are welcome!

All Membership Dues are due in January, unless you joined after September 1st. We will catch the new members next year.

Please send check or Money Order, made out to "Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club",

To: Georgia Shalek, WBNC Treasurer
1481 W Pittsburgh St.
Scottdale, PA 15683

Please include your Name, address with city and zip code, phone and email address. Also indicate your delivery preference for the newsletter e.g. Email or U.S. Mail. Please Note: Email is more timely & nearly free; Hardcopy costs approximately \$2.00 - \$2.75 + our labor and kills trees.

The Syrinx
Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club
197 Dickerson Run Road
Vanderbilt, PA 15486